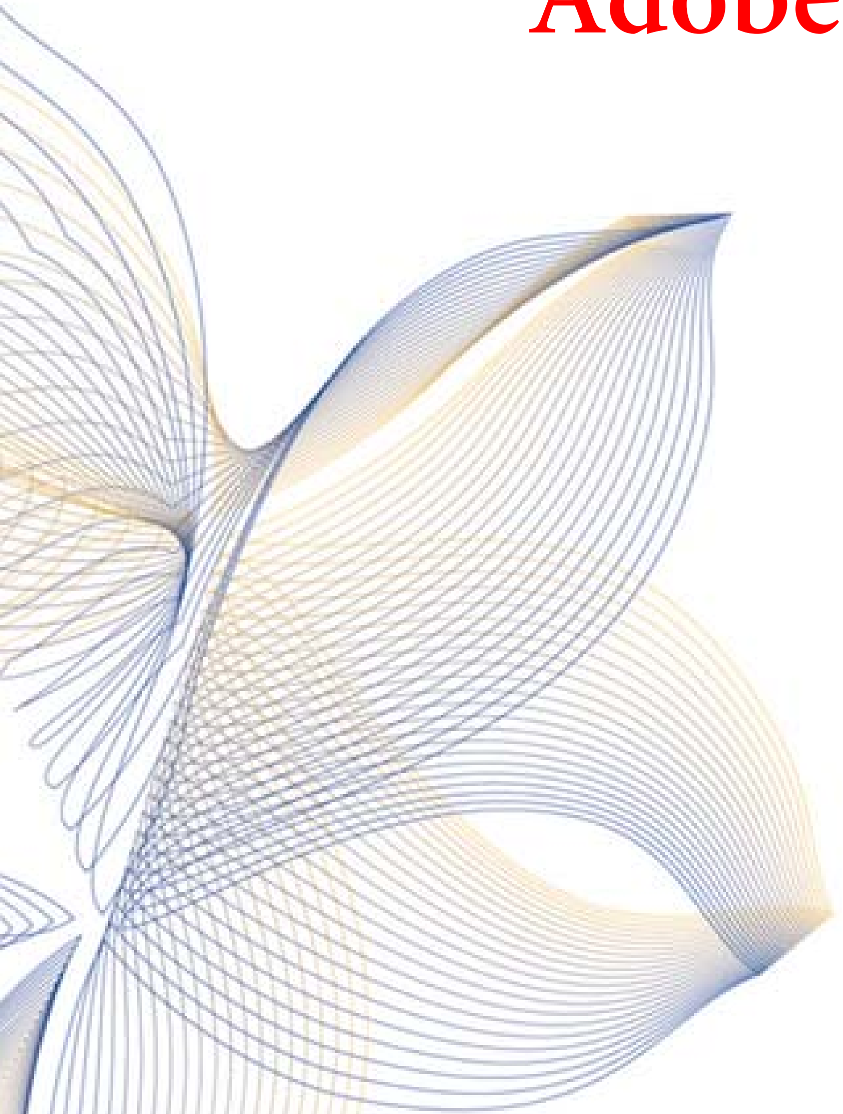
Adobe® Using DITA XML for Instructional Documentation



Andrew Thomas

08/10/2005

Publishing & localization at Adobe

- Direct localization of software, documentation, marketing materials, and web site into 14 languages
- Simultaneous announce and 2-week delta between English and French, German, and Japanese (T1) ship for most releases
- Simultaneous ship of English and T1 for some releases

Pre-DITA: Content sharing issues

- **Single-sourced Help, and PDF documentation since 1995**
    - FrameMaker and in-house scripts and plug-ins
- **Management of shared content across products**
    - Manual process resulted in minimal sharing of only very large blocks (e.g., entire chapters)
    - Content inevitably rewritten in editing and review process for each new context
    - Higher development and localization costs, longer lead times, and lower overall quality and usability

Business drivers

- **Introduction of product suites**
  - Precluded multiple writers, reviewers on shared content
  - Integrated UI and user experience critical to success of suites
- **Need to share content authored by different groups (documentation, support, training)**
- **Need for customized help systems for different target audiences**

Other challenges

- **Manual localization handoffs**
  - Handoffs had to be entire docs or large portions
- **Print DTP added approximately two weeks to schedules**
  - Handoffs had to be almost final and changes made in multiple places
  - Required early completion of English content

Why DITA XML?

- **Open standard and built-in with OpenTopic**
- **Very specific schema**
  - Helps clarify documentation
  - Easy to understand semantics
- **Modular content creation**
  - Topic-based, not book-based
  - Facilitates re-use of content
  - Allows content to be shared across products

Conversion from Unstructured FrameMaker to DITA

- **Mapped Frame paragraph styles and character formats to XML Elements**
  - FrameMaker has a conversion mechanism that allows this mapping to be specified
- **Although Frame's conversion mechanism is powerful, it did not get us all the way**
  - Concepts and references were easier than tasks
  - Post-processed the files using XSLT scripts to get the final output
- **Files had to be extensively edited**
  - remove overrides and apply correct paragraph styles and character formats in all cases
  - ensure editorial guidelines were followed
- **Marks such as [Reference], [Task], [Concept] were inserted to provide information to the XSLT scripts how the topics should be converted.**
- **A lot of iterations were made until the conversion was about 90% accurate**
- **After conversion, minor fixes had to be made manually to the files**
- **FrameMaker conditions were mapped to attributes**
  - Very complex to convert conditions automatically
  - Resorted to marking the content with square brackets where conditions existed, and re-inserting after conversion

DITA Usage

- **Conversion to DITA from unstructured FrameMaker files**
- **Core DITA DTDs left alone, except for ditabase.dtd**
- **Modified EDD to apply further constraints for authors to follow specific structure guidelines**
  - For example, for elements that allowed <TEXT> as well as <p>, we removed <TEXT>
- **Just 1 map file per product used to group chapter topics**
- **Nested topics to preserve hierarchy**
- **Metadata stored within topics (such as help and print outputs)**
- **Created Adobe domain for Adobe specific specializations**

DITA Challenges

- **Conditionality**
  - Try to enforce conditionality at the topic level
  - For more granular conditionality, specialize <ph> tag
  - Try to avoid conditionality using select attributes - limited set
- **Translation**
  - xml:lang only allows specification of single languages
  - Sort order for index and glossary elements missing

Process/management challenges

- Training and acceptance
- Information architecture: defining structure and scope
- Shared content requirements management
- Customization management
- Need for Japanese-specific changes (adaptations)

Successful Strategies

- **Previous doc structure maintained to enable gradual transition**
  - Review, localization handoffs in chapter units
- **No modifications to shared topics (100% common at topic level)**
- **Evangelists identified from each functional team**
  - Piloted system and features
  - Wrote and managed specs for functional team (editorial, design, production, localization)
- **System/new features adopted by larger team <u>only</u> when they resulted in no significant slow-down**

Authoring advantages using CMS with DITA

- **XML files accessed through GEP Explorer**
- **Easy management of structural files**
  - DTDs, EDD, etc.
  - Content validated
- **Cross References / Content References**
  - Can be placed to any topic in the repository
  - Referential integrity can be verified
- **Previews can be generated on any file**

Localization advantages using WorldServer with DITA

- Localization process fully integrated with domestic authoring process
- Segmentation filter allows us to leverage DITA translate attribute
- Translators have the same access to PDF generation as domestic team (great linguistic context)

Benefits for future releases

- **Schedule flexibility**
  - Smaller, more frequent handoffs
  - More time for writers/content developers
- **Improved quality/user experience**
  - 100% shared content: learn once
  - Reinforcement of cross-product workflows
- **Enablement of future content reuse/sharing scenarios (customized Help, training, support, etc.)**

Where we want to go with DITA

- **Maps, maps, maps**
  - More re-use of topics
  - Metadata at map level (instead of current topic level)
  - Flexible loc handoffs
  - Iterative authoring process (to integrate better with more iterative software dev. cycle)
- **Implement reltables**
  - More re-use (especially with shared content)
- **Better conditionality**
  - Implement DITA val attributes
  - Adding attributes without breaking DITA (looking for enhanced standard)
- **Conreffing software strings directly with documentation**

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