

Competitors in Collaboration

Adobe assembles the world's top technical communications experts to demonstrate DITA support with Adobe® FrameMaker®

Technical Communicators

In Partnership With

Andrea Sharp
 Backspace Ink
 Bright Path Solutions
 Chris Converse
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 Integrated Technologies
 Leximation
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 Publishing Smarter
 Scriptorium Publishing
 Silicon Publishing
 Tassos Anastasiou
 Text Structure Consulting
 Tobias Reif

Industry

Technical publishing

Challenges

- Make XML publishing based on DITA less daunting and expensive
- Combine intuitive authoring with DITA support
- Provide free plug-ins and resources to developers and authors

Solution

Assemble a team of top experts to put together the free Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA

Results

- Easier content reuse
- Intuitive authoring
- Less complexity and expense
- Easier to move to DITA based publishing

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe FrameMaker
- Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA

DITA: a standard with staying power

In the world of technical communications, acronyms come and go. There's one acronym, however, that technical communications experts say has the potential to transform technical publishing for many years to come, and in ways that were never before possible. The acronym is DITA, short for Darwin Information Typing Architecture. DITA is an open specification based on XML that is managed by standards consortium OASIS. It is used for designing, writing, managing, and publishing information in print and on the web that builds content reuse into the authoring process.

To date, however, a high degree of complexity, uncertainty, and expense has kept many organizations from integrating XML and DITA into their technical publishing processes. To provide a simpler and more cost-effective way for enterprises to take advantage of XML authoring to streamline their technical publishing efforts, Adobe assembled some of the best minds in the technical communications industry. Together, they created a reference implementation for how to use Adobe FrameMaker software with DITA. The ultimate result is the freely available Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, a comprehensive suite of plug-ins, templates, and other resources that showcase how DITA can be implemented with FrameMaker.

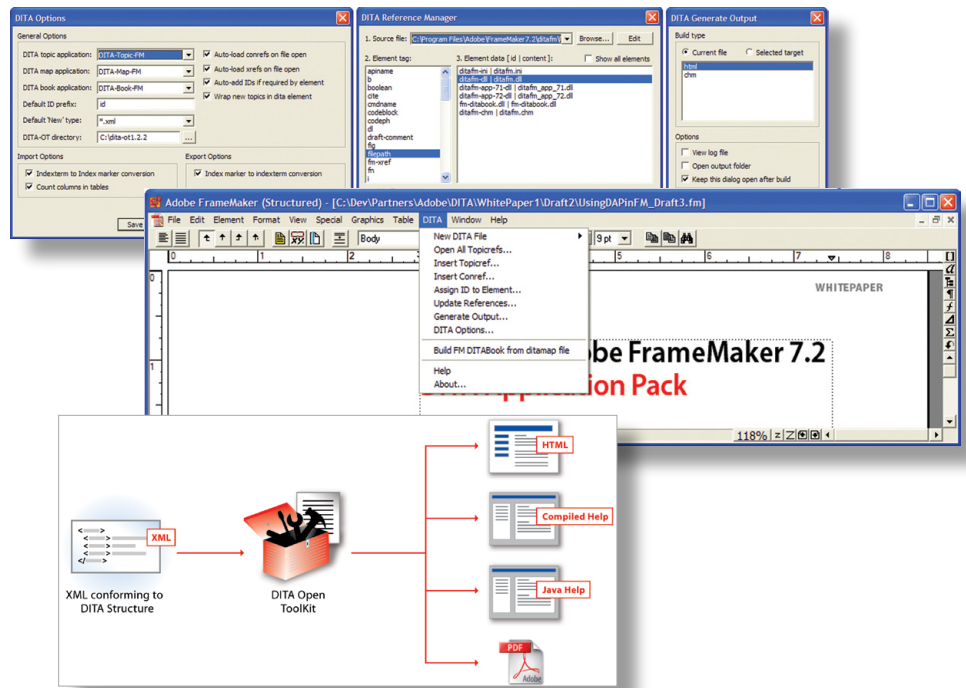
"It was an interesting challenge to bring together consultants who are also competitors to pool their expertise," says Max Dunn, co-founder of Silicon Publishing. "The Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA benefited from the collaboration of diverse talent across the structured FrameMaker community."

Putting DITA within reach

Originally developed by IBM, a company with a long track record of expertise and innovation in technical communications, DITA is now approved and maintained by the standards consortium OASIS. There are several XML data models like DITA available, but experts concur that the unique strengths of DITA make it exceptionally promising for increasing efficiency in technical communications. Using DITA, authors can describe a specific task, product, or other topic and reuse their content in different materials, simply by creating pointers or maps that refer to their original content. It's a matter of reshuffling versus reauthoring content—and in technical communications, this is an exciting proposition. What was missing until now was a starting point that illustrates how DITA can be supported in a popular, intuitive, off-the-shelf software application like FrameMaker.

"Adobe realizes that there are two sides to the equation: authors need a trusted, visually intuitive authoring environment like Adobe FrameMaker, along with FrameMaker's ability to create high-quality Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) output, auto-generate indexes, make tables of contents, and so forth. At the same time, enterprises need DITA support so that they can build reuse into every content element they create, right from the start," says Hayden Jones, XML solutions architect at Silicon Publishing. "With FrameMaker and the FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, organizations can now have both."

The Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA adds a DITA menu to the FrameMaker user interface. A series of dialog boxes in FrameMaker help provide fine-grained control over DITA functionality. In addition, integration with the DITA Open Toolkit lets users generate online help from DITA content authored in FrameMaker.



LEXIMATION



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Hayden Jones,
XML solutions architect,
Silicon Publishing

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/frameMaker

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Assembling a team of world-class experts

Silicon Publishing helped Adobe spearhead and manage the effort to create the Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, an effort that included numerous development partners. The team used several commercially available third-party FrameMaker DITA solutions such as those from Integrated Technologies and Publishing Smarter as starting points and incorporated feedback from customers and each other to devise a reference specification. Then, Scott Prentice, founder of technical communications consulting company Leximation, worked to code the primary DITA plug-in for the application pack. Tassos Anastasiou created a FrameMaker book building plug-in to streamline creation of long documents based on DITA. Bernard Aschwanden of Publishing Smarter created the core data-formatting model based on work he had previously done on a large DITA implementation.

“People are recognizing that structured authoring using XML and DITA makes a huge positive difference in the ability to reuse content, especially in the majority of cases where there are numerous versions of documentation that differ only slightly,” says Prentice. “For this reason, DITA has started gaining widespread acceptance, and, thanks to the fact that there’s now extensive support for DITA in FrameMaker, structured authoring using XML is no longer quite so daunting and complicated.”

A bright future for FrameMaker aficionados

By assembling some of the best minds in the technical publishing industry to create the Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA and provide valuable free resources to publishers and developers, Adobe believes it will have a significant impact on the industry. And, support for DITA makes FrameMaker a desirable option for technical communicators looking to move into structured XML publishing using DITA.

“Adobe put together the brightest minds in technical communications to develop the FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, and we’re understandably excited about the outcome of our collaboration,” says Aschwanden. “We often joke that if we lose a contract, we want someone else who participated in this collaborative effort to win it, because we know that the work will be done right. We can’t wait to see the impact of our efforts on the technical communications industry.”

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