

Easily Create Android and iOS Mobile Apps

Adobe RoboHelp (2015 release)



For a 30 day free trial of RoboHelp, visit www.adobe.com/go/tryrobohelp
To schedule a private demo, visit www.adobetechcommdemo.com

With the advent of smartphones and tablets, users are increasingly likely to read content on the go. As consumers gravitate towards the convenience of handheld devices and mobile apps, technical writers need to grapple with the easiest and most reliable way to present content for smartphones and tablets running the most popular platforms - Android and iOS.

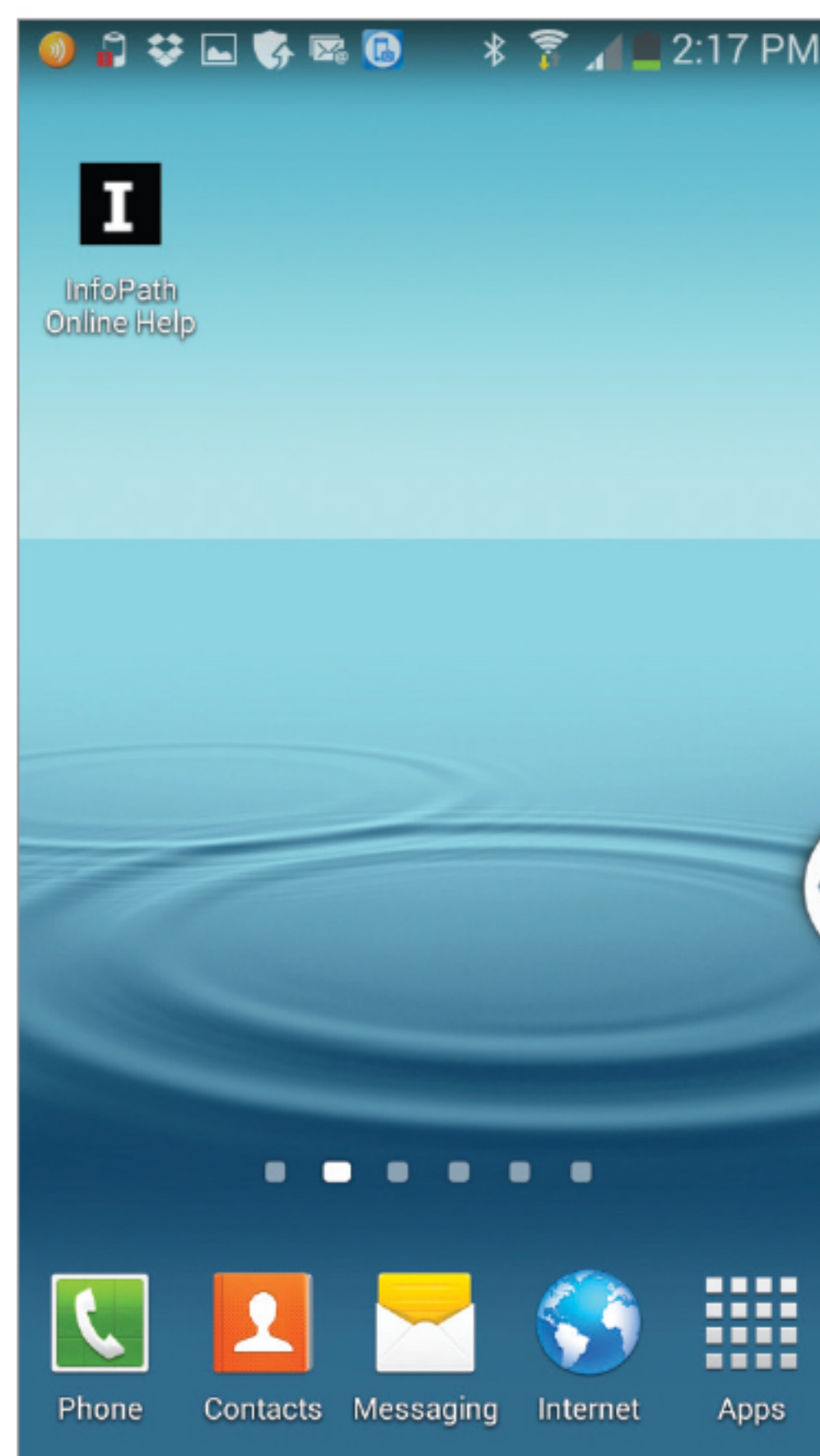
What is a mobile app?

A mobile application, most commonly referred to as an app, is a type of application software designed to run on a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet.

RoboHelp (2015 release) creates a "native app," a smartphone application that is coded in a specific programming language, such as Objective C for iOS and Java for Android operating systems. Native mobile apps provide fast performance and a high degree of reliability. Additionally, users can use some apps without an Internet connection. Typically, apps are distributed using Google Play or Apple's App Store.

The following images show a simple help app created by RoboHelp (2015 release) for a fictitious product called InfoPath.

Here's a screen shot of the downloaded app:



Here is an example of how the app displays.

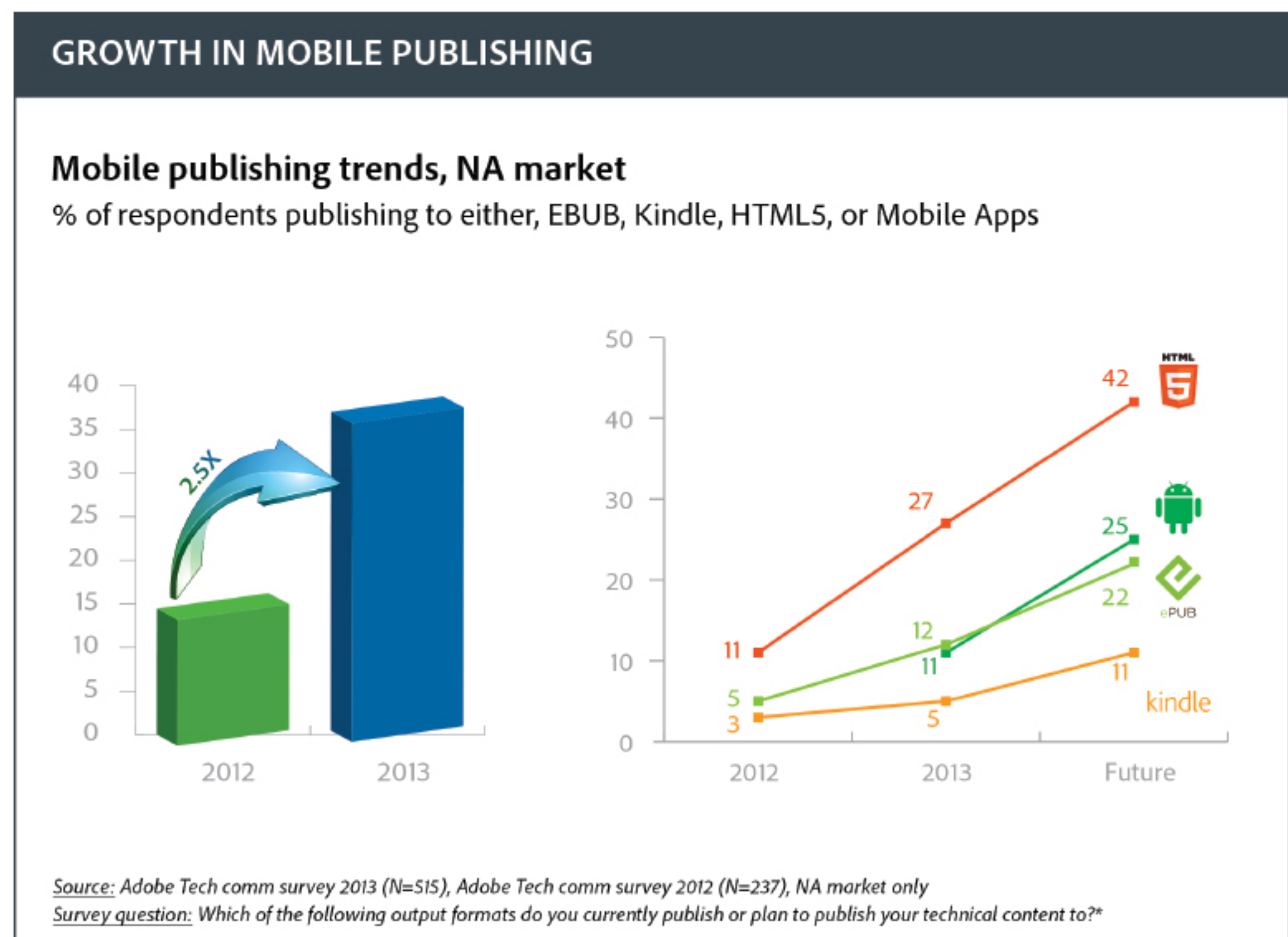


According to research gathered by Adobe in 2013, 38 percent of respondents were outputting their content to responsive HTML5 Help, apps, and EPUB files, up from 15 percent the year before.

Users have embraced mobile

Consider some of the recent mobile trends that affect how technical writers perform their jobs:

- Users are increasingly shifting to mobile devices. In 2016, the number of smartphone users is expected to surpass 2 billion (source: eMarketer). There were about 1 billion people worldwide in 2015 who used a tablet at least monthly (source: eMarketer).
- Research shows that 99.5 percent of users are using their mobile devices to access content and information (source: Search Engine Watch), which has significant ramifications for technical writers and how they perform their work.
- Users are primarily using mobile devices running Android and iOS. Globally, Android commands 81 percent of the smartphone market, although iOS leads in a few countries, such as Canada and the U.S (source: Wikipedia).
- The popularity of apps is undeniable. 85 percent of users said they prefer using apps compared to mobile websites. In addition, users are spending more time using apps—an increase of 21 percent in 2015 compared to the previous year (source: Business2Community).
- Technical writers recognize the importance of mobile and are embracing new technologies. According to research gathered by Adobe in 2013, 38 percent of respondents were outputting their content to responsive HTML5 Help, apps, and EPUB files, up from the 15 percent the year before.



Why create a mobile app?

You may consider creating an app for the following reasons:

- **Your users have an intermittent connection to the Internet**—Once the app is installed on a smartphone or tablet, it no longer requires a wireless or mobile connection to view the content. In contrast, HTML5 help systems require a browser, which usually needs an Internet connection to view the content (although some browsers, such as Google Chrome, can run in offline mode).
- **Speed**—Users will get the answers they need faster using an app versus launching a browser, navigating to your help page, and waiting for the content to appear.
- **Higher visibility**—An app is installed on a user's smartphone or tablet, making it easy to locate and launch. In contrast, an online help system is typically included in a software package and may not be easy to find or open.

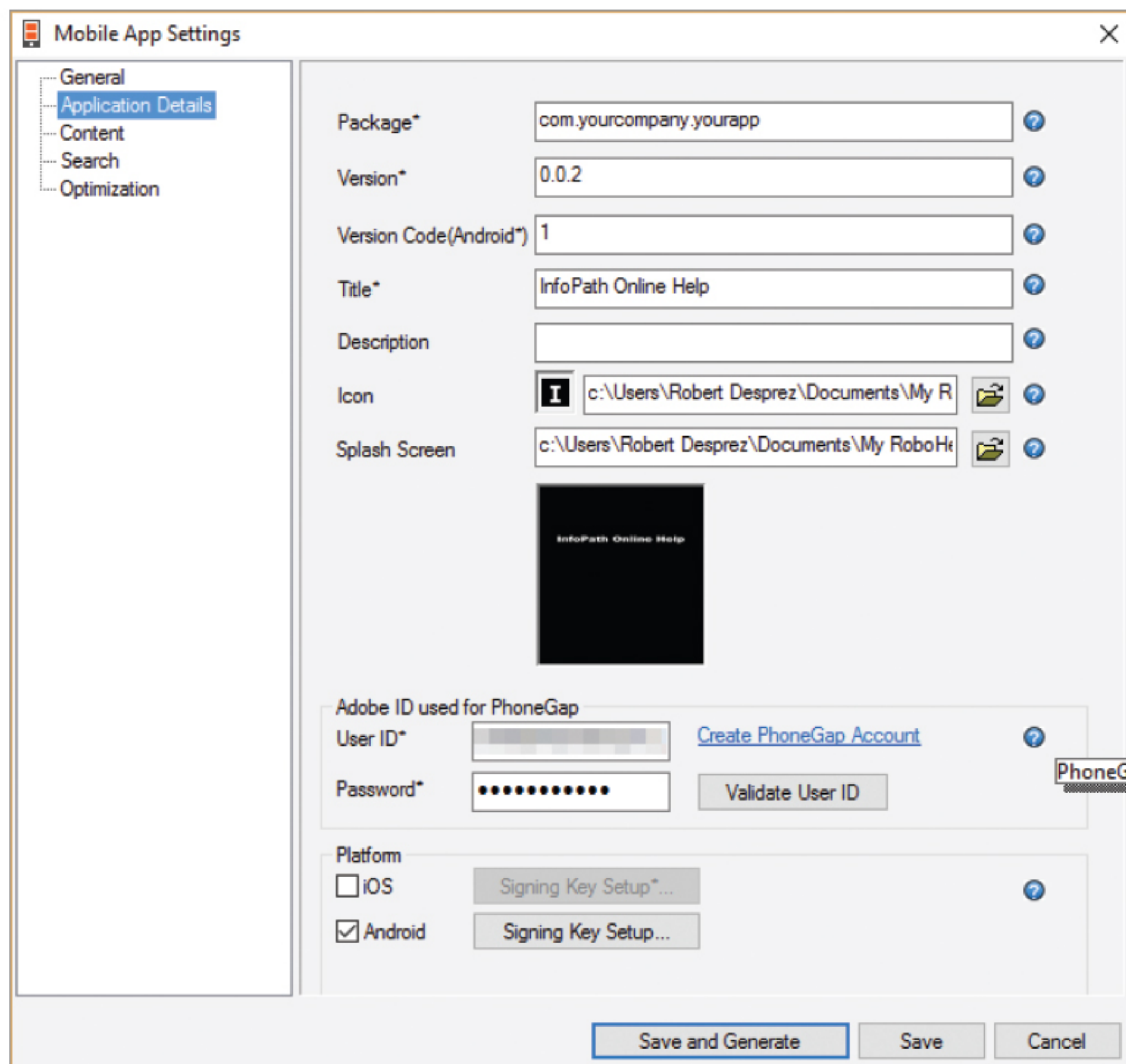
How creating mobile apps address the challenges of mobile

If you've written help in the past, the learning curve to create apps is low. RoboHelp (2015 release) provides a familiar environment to output and potentially customize your output.

Mobile apps that are quick to generate and load

RoboHelp uses PhoneGap, a mobile development framework that creates apps on iOS and Android smartphones and tablets.

In the Mobile App Settings dialog box, there's the *Adobe ID used for PhoneGap* section that provides an area to type your *User ID* and *Password*. As PhoneGap is owned by Adobe, you can use the same Adobe login information that you would use to download Adobe's software, including FrameMaker, RoboHelp, Captivate, Adobe Acrobat, or Adobe's Technical Communication Suite.



Once you have configured the details in the Signing Key Setup dialog box, RoboHelp (2015 release) and PhoneGap work together to quickly create apps. If you plan to create iOS applications, you need to purchase an Apple developer account for \$99 US per year.

PhoneGap's web site is <http://phonegap.com/>

Familiar authoring environment

If you've written help in the past, the learning curve to create apps is low. RoboHelp (2015 release) provides a familiar environment to output and potentially customize your output. The following images illustrate two screens you see when outputting apps.

Mobile App Settings

- General
- Application Details
- Content**
- Search
- Optimization

Table of Contents: <Default Table Of Contents>

Index: <Default Index>

Glossary: <Default Glossary>

Variables Set: <Default Variable Set>

Default Topic: First_Topic.htm Select...

Language: <Default Language>

Encoding: <Default Encoding>

Map Files: BSSCDefault.h

Browse Sequences:

Conditional Build Expression: (None) New...

Apply to all Topics

- Master Page
- CSS: default.css

Exclude Unreferenced Topics from Output

Exclude Unreferenced Baggage Files from Search

Save and Generate Save Cancel

Mobile App Settings

- General
- Application Details**
- Content
- Search
- Optimization


Package*: com.yourcompany.yourapp

Version*: 0.0.2


Version Code(Android)*: 1

Title*: InfoPath Online Help

Description:

Icon:  c:\Users\Robert Desprez\Documents\My R ?

Splash Screen: c:\Users\Robert Desprez\Documents\My RoboH ?



Adobe ID used for PhoneGap

User ID*: ? [Create PhoneGap Account](#)

Password*: ? Validate User ID

Platform

- iOS Signing Key Setup... ?
- Android Signing Key Setup...

Save and Generate Save Cancel

RoboHelp (2015 release) makes it easy to customize the look and feel of your apps. Using the Layout Customization dialog box, you can show or hide a table of contents, index, and glossary.

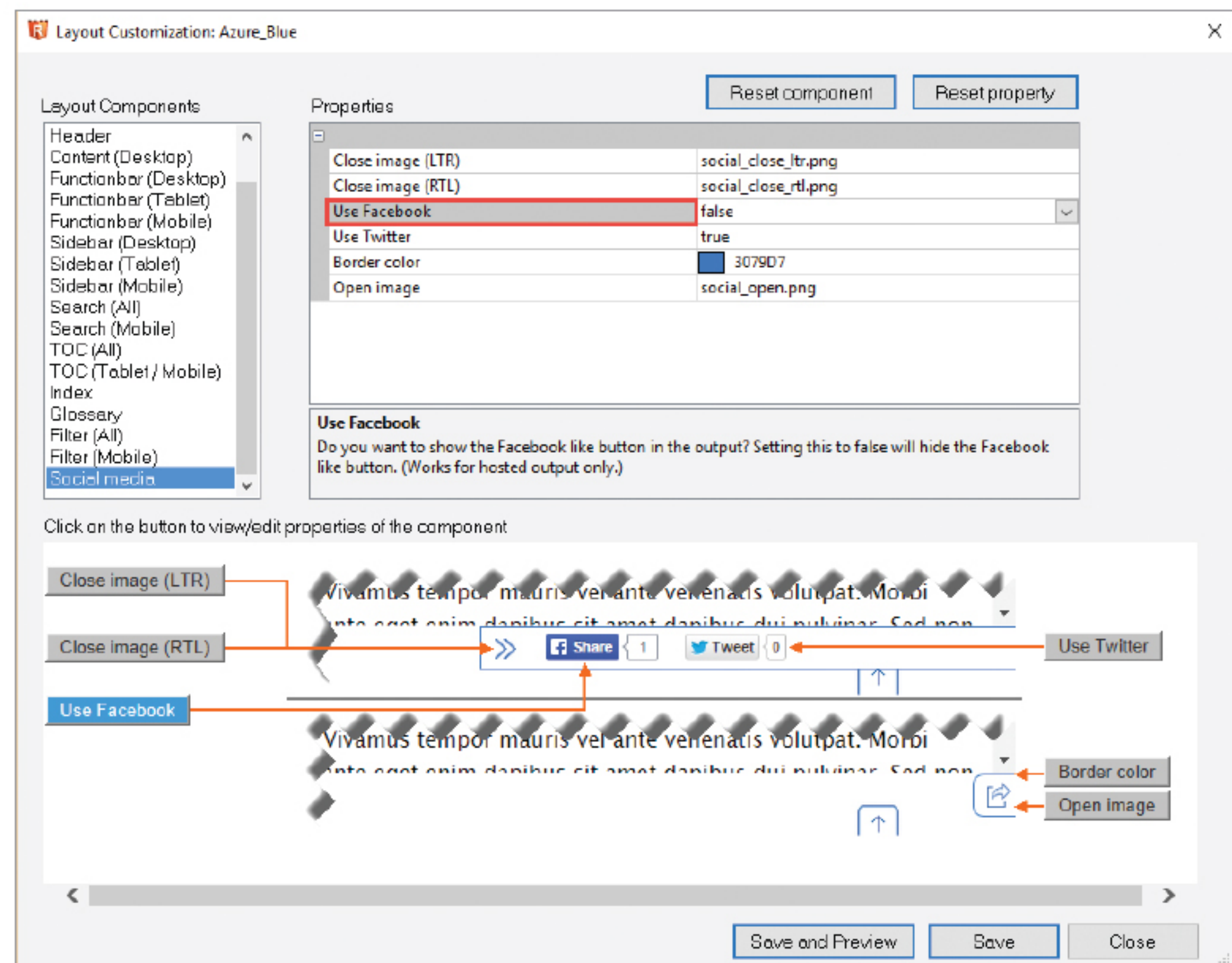
Write once and publish to multiple devices

One of the strengths of RoboHelp (2015 release) is its ability to generate content for multiple devices. As a technical writer, you can author new content or take your legacy content and quickly output it so that it can be viewed on smartphones and tablets running iOS, Android, or both. Of course, RoboHelp (2015 release) can also output content to Word and PDF files, Responsive HTML5 Help, Adobe AIR Help, WebHelp, Microsoft HTML Help, and EPUB files.

Easy to customize

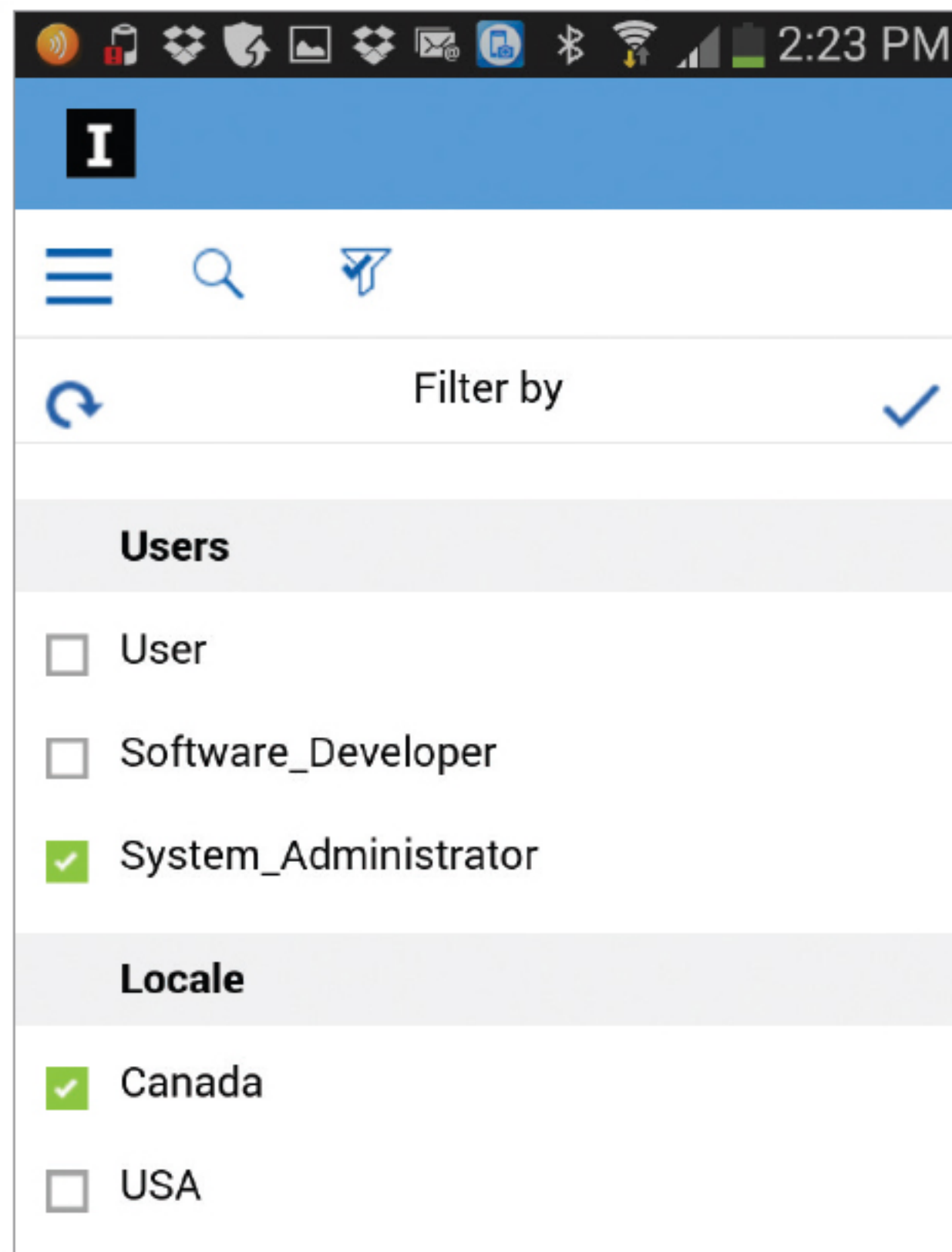
RoboHelp (2015 release) makes it easy to customize the look and feel of your apps. Using the Layout Customization dialog box, you can show or hide a table of contents, index, and glossary. In addition, you can add a logo, customize the colors and icons of your app, and even add Facebook and Twitter buttons to share your content using social media.

If you are unclear of the purpose of a specific component, highlight the element and RoboHelp provides an explanation. For example, if you need to know more about the Use Facebook property, click it and RoboHelp provides an explanation below as well as example of how the Facebook button appears in the output.



Dynamic content filters help users find relevant content faster

RoboHelp (2015 release) gives users more control over the type of content they read in app projects. For a given project, a technical writer may have two audiences for an app: system administrators and end users. With RoboHelp (2015 release), users can now control the type of content that displays in the app by clicking the Filter button and selecting the checkboxes for the different audiences. For example, by selecting System_Administrator, the app automatically displays the content for that audience. Selecting User will dynamically change the content for that user.



For some app projects, this may provide a lot of benefits to the user and the technical writer.

- **Benefits to users**—Dynamic content filters provide users with more control over the content they see. For instance, European customers may use dynamic content filters so that they only see technical support contact information for their region. When performing a task, users can change the content so that it pertains just to them.
- **Benefits to technical writers**—In the past, for projects that contained multiple audiences, technical writers used conditional text to tag content for different users and then output help projects for each audience. In some cases, this could mean generating an app for each audience, proofing it, and testing it. With dynamic content filters, technical writers create one deliverable and let the users filter what they want to view.

Consistent user experience across platforms

One of the benefits of apps is the ability to deliver a consistent experience to users, including branding and corporate colors that you can easily customize, across devices.

Purchase or upgrade to RoboHelp (2015 release)

In a world where users are increasingly using mobile devices to read content, technical writers struggle with the challenging task of publishing content optimized for smartphones and tablets.

RoboHelp (2015 release) addresses this challenge by making it easy to create apps for iOS and Android. In addition, RoboHelp (2015 release) includes a familiar authoring environment for writers, the ability to write once and output to many devices, and the option to easily customize the look and feel of the app. Adobe's latest help authoring tool includes dynamic content filters that streamline technical writers' work and provide readers with more control over the content they read.

For more information visit

www.adobe.com/go/tryrobohelp

Robert Desprez – Biography

Robert Desprez has worked as a [Vancouver technical writer](#) for more than 15 years in British Columbia, Canada. He regularly blogs about writing for smartphones, tablets, and PCs.



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