



The State of the DITA TC

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Who am I?

- OASIS DITA TC:
 - Secretary, 2008-2010
 - Co-Chair, 2010-2013
 - Chair, 2014-present
- Co-editor of the DITA 1.2, 1.3, and 2.0 specifications
- Trained as a historian
- Champion “cat herder”
- Consultant



Agenda

1. The OASIS DITA Technical Committee
2. History
3. Current challenge
4. Current work priorities
5. Where do we go from here?



DITA TC and OASIS

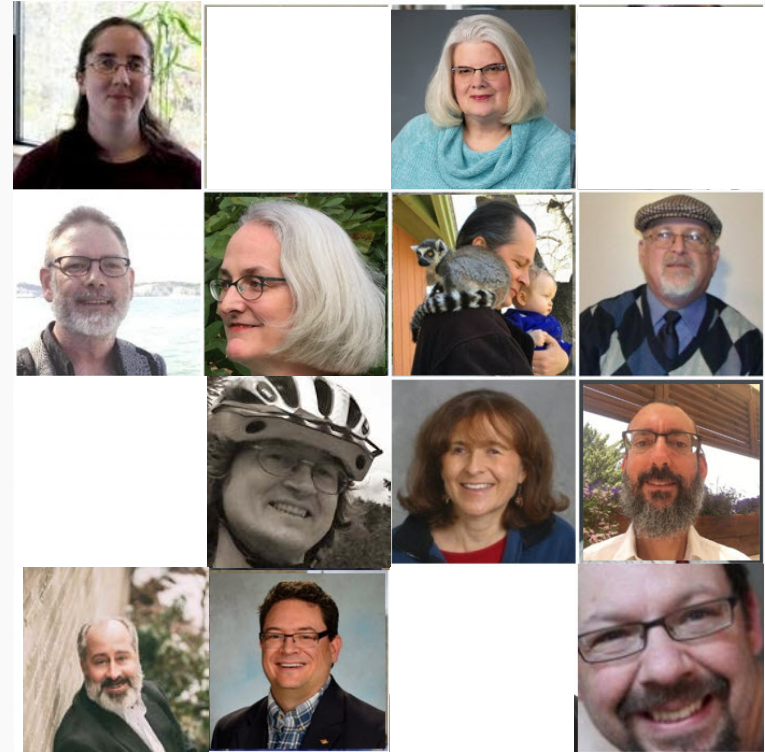
The OASIS DITA Technical Committee

12 voting members who meet weekly

Wide variety of professional roles:

- Information developers
- Information architects
- Content engineers
- Managers
- Consultants
- Application developers

See the blank spots? We've lost four voting members in the last year.



What is OASIS?

- OASIS = Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards
- A nonprofit consortium that drives the development, convergence and adoption of open standards for the global information society

Not your mother's standards body.

- Use REST, JSON, XML...
- Pick your IPR mode: non-assert, RF...
- Start new work with just five members
- Produce standards that are free forever

 *OASIS. You belong here.*



More about OASIS ...

- Distinguished by its transparent governance and operating procedures:
 - Membership is open to everyone.
 - Members set the OASIS technical agenda.
 - Specifications are ratified by open ballot.
 - Officers are chosen by democratic election.
 - Consortium leadership is based on individual merit and is not tied to financial contribution, corporate standing, or special appointment.

How we work

- Weekly 60 minute call
- Officially we use Robert's Rules of Order; practically, we operate by consensus
- All of our work – e-mail, documents, drafts, whatever – is visible to the public

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Typing Architecture (DITA) TC

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History

Background

- Developed at IBM
- Donated to OASIS in 2004, a very strategic financial decision ...
- Other companies jump on the bandwagon, join OASIS and the IDTA TC ...



DITA releases

Date	Event
March 2001	DITA package first posted on IBM DeveloperWorks. It includes both DTDs and XSLT.
2004	IBM donates DITA to OASIS.
09 May 2005	DITA 1.0 released.
01 August 2007	DITA 1.1 released.
01 December 2010	DITA 1.2 released.
17 December 2015	DITA 1.3 released.
25 October 2016	DITA 1.3 Errata 01 released.
19 June 2018	DITA 1.3 Errata 02 released.



Current challenge

Day job, night job ... Where to find time?

- Voting members of the TC struggle to find time to contribute
- Voting members are asked for a minimum of 4-6 hours per month
 - A hour per week for TC calls
 - Other time for spec reviews, volunteer tasks, proposals, etc.
- Everyone's day job is increasingly busy ...
- Spec editors are maxed out

Company involvement in DITA TC

- Has decreased over time
- In 2022, 18 companies are represented on the DITA TC
 - Adobe
 - Bluestream
 - Comtech Services, Inc.
 - Dell
 - Ericsson
 - HPE
 - HP Inc.
 - Huawei
 - IBM
 - IXIASOFT
 - Microsoft
 - Nokia
 - Precision Content
 - PSBT
 - SAP SE
 - SDL
 - Security Compass
 - Siemens AG
 - XML Inl

Company involvement in DITA TC (cont.)

- In 2022, only 6 companies sponsor voting members of the DITA TC
 - Comtech Services, Inc.
 - HP Inc.
 - IXIASOFT
 - Oracle
 - Precision Content
 - ServiceNow

COMTech



servicenow



IXIASOFT

ORACLE®



precision
content

Speculation ...

- **Why are fewer companies represented?**
- **FACT:** DITA is a mature technology now, not a “shiny new thing”.
- Companies don't feel a need to invest in DITA?
- Companies no longer sponsor employees to work on standards?
- Companies no longer see investment in OASIS and DITA TC benefits their business?
- The DITA TC doesn't do adequate outreach?
- We **have** lost active members to retirement ...



Current work

So, what's on the TC's plate?

- DITA 2.0 spec (base)
- DITA 2.0 spec (technical content)
- Lightweight DITA spec
- Committee notes:
 - Migrating to DITA 2.0
 - DITA 2.0 troubleshooting



**Darwin Information Typing Architecture
(DITA) Version 2.0**



**Darwin Information Typing Architecture
(DITA) for Technical Content Version 2.0**



Lightweight DITA Version 1.0

Base? Technical content? Uh ... Why?

- Beginning with DITA 2.0, the DITA TC has separated these, so that they can be released separately.
- Base:
 - Topic, map, subject scheme
 - Domains: alternate titles, emphasis, highlighting, map group, and utilities
 - Foundation for Lightweight DITA
- Technical content
 - Concept, task, reference, glossary entry, glossary group, troubleshooting, bookmap
 - Domains: hardware, markup, programming, software, user interface, and more

More modularity, more flexibility ...

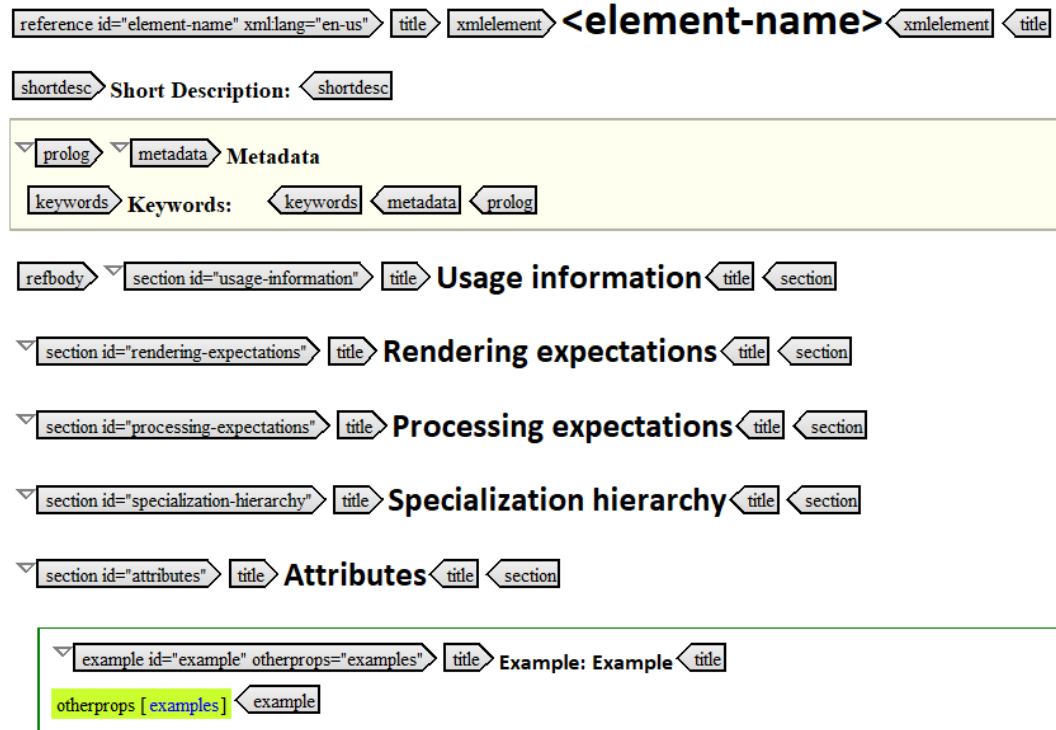
- But also more work for both spec editors and spec reviewers :(
- Clean-up, refactoring, planning for reuse
- Big picture goal:
 - Solid base DITA foundation
 - Post DITA 2.0, able to be more agile and release new editions quickly

Current editorial and review work

- We edit and review “targeted” sections of the spec. Examples:
 - Subject scheme: architecture topics + element-reference topics
 - Table elements and attributes
 - Introduction chapter
- We use donated tools to conduct our review:
 - Congility Content Server
 - Oxygen ContentFusion
- You can view our Wiki pages:
 - [Content reviewed and to be reviewed](#)
 - [Open work items from reviews](#)

High-level editorial changes for DITA 2.0

- Implementing a new template for our element-reference topics
- Standardized sections
- Not all topics have all sections



High-level editorial changes for DITA 2.0

004 (417)

If the root element of a map or a top-level topic has no value for the `@xml:lang` attribute, a processor **SHOULD** assume a default value. The default value of the processor can be either fixed, configurable, or derived from the content itself, such as the `@xml:lang` attribute on the root map.

- Careful attention to our normative statements
- Visually highlighted
- Aggregated in an appendix

B Aggregated RFC-2119 statements

This appendix contains all the normative statements from the DITA 2.0 specification. They are aggregated here for convenience in this non-normative appendix.

Item	Conformance statement
001 (17)	A DITA document MUST have as its root element one of the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <code><map></code> or a specialization of the <code><map></code> element• <code><topic></code> or a specialization of the <code><topic></code> element

Careful reuse between DITA and LwDITA

1.1 <alt>

[LwDITA] [DITA] Alternate text is a textual description of an image. Systems often render the alternate text when the reader is using assistive technology or the image cannot be rendered.

Attributes

[DITA] The following attributes are available on this element: [universal attributes](#) (67).

[LwDITA]

The available attributes vary based on the authoring format:

XDITA

The following attributes are available on this element: [localization attributes](#) (52), [universal attributes](#) (54), and [@keyref](#).

HDITA

The following attributes are available on this element: [localization attributes](#) (52), [universal attributes](#) (54), and [@keyref](#).

MDITA

For the MDITA core profile, the equivalent of the XDITA [@keyref](#) attribute is supported. For the MDITA extended profile, attributes can be specified by using the HDITA representation.

Our reviews are painstaking ...

- You can view sample DITA 2.0 reviews that we conducted using Content Fusion:
 - [Accessibility and translation](#)
 - [Configuration and specialization](#)
- Intense back-and-forth discussion

Note: These are very transitory links.

While the OASIS-provided document-type shells can be used without any modification, creating custom document-type shells is a best practice. If the document-type shells need to be modified in the future, for example, to include a specialization or integrate an element-configuration module (constraint or expansion), the existing DITA documents will not need to be modified to reference a new document-type shell.

Comment by Gershon Joseph on 2022-08-24

I don't think this paragraph belongs in the spec. It should be moved out into a CN or appendix that discusses best practices for implementing DITA.

Kris Eberlein, 24 August 2022

Maybe, maybe not. In general, I agree that "best practices" content does not belong in the spec. But:


- This is such a critical point.
- The "overview" topics in this spec chapter are explicitly intended to be high-level overviews that should be accessible to as many people as possible (while still being technically accurate). If we ever manage to create the part 0 "Primer" document that we've had on our wish list, we'd use this content there.

Robert D Andrewson 29 August 2022 – agree with Kris (and Eliot below) that this is a really critical point and should not be removed. This is too easily missed, and really reflects how DITA grammar files are meant to be used (even more than a simple "best practice").

Eliot Kimber, 29 August 2022

But at our current speed ...

- DITA 2.0 won't be released until 2024 or 2025



So where do we go
from here?

Long-term health of DITA TC

- We need more corporate involvement.
- We need more active members and volunteers.
- We need younger members.
- We need to explore funding options, to hire a spec editor ...
- Maybe you have an idea that we haven't thought of ...

What we are currently doing is not sustainable.

How to get involved

- Get your company to join OASIS (~\$1300 a year for an associate membership)
- Join as an individual member (~\$400 a year)
- Contribute to the DITA TC stylesheets through our OASIS Open GitHub repo (no charge)
- Got skills as a graphic artist? We need help. (no charge)
- Interested in participating in spec reviews? (no charge)
- Background with setting up a foundation? Crowd-sourced funding? Expertise in figuring out the \$ value of DITA to a company or vendor? **(CONTACT ME!!!)**
- Got other ideas? **(CONTACT ME!!!)**

Color palette

