**DITA Listening Session – San Jose, CA**

February 24, 2017

Attendees

Attendees (DITA Users):

* Applied Materials (Sanjay Tandon / Erik)
* Brocade (Phylis Buchner / Eva Knodt / Lelia Wright)
* Cisco (Lynn / Jane)
* FICO (Grace Murao)
* Guidewire (Miles Gilster)
* HPE (Trish Billard)
* Imagination Technologies (Leticia / Sam)
* Intel/Altera (Mark Whisler)
* Intuitive Surgical (Joe Russo)
* KLA-Tencor (Jane Chow, and Vidya Kameswaran)
* NetApp (Megan)
* Netgear (James)
* RingCentral (Louise Leck)
* Sigma Tech / Ericsson (Stefan Millett)
* Tesla (Ana / Brian)
* TIBCO (Joe Padre)
* VMware (Steve Liang)
* Wind River (Yas Etesam / Ed)

Attendees (OASIS)

* + - Dawn Stevens

Attending remotely:

* + - Kathy Madison (Comtech)
    - Scott Hudson (Jeppesen)
    - Joe Storbeck (JANA)

Poll Questions:

* DITA 1.1 = 0
* DITA 1.2 = 9
* DITA 1.3 = 0
* Non-DITA - 3
* Specializations = 3
* Constraints = 4
* Filtering = 7
* Branch filtering = 0
* Conref/keyref libraries = 7
* Keys = 6
* Troubleshooting = 0 (1 did their own specialization based on DITA 1.2)
* Release management = 0
* MathML = 1
* Translation = 6
* Linking videos = 3
* Learning and Training = 0
* Machinery task = 0
* Hazard statement = 1 planning to
* Highlight element constraints = 5
* Separate DITA vocabulary release schedule? = 2
* DITA 4 Publishers = 2
* Dynamic Publishing = 2
* Lightweight DITA = Everyone had heard of it, a few are thinking about it.
* New Hires: Mostly are fresh out of college, so little to no experience with DITA.
* How did you get your ROI for moving to DITA? Most of those attending who translate their content have already realized their business case.

Applied Materials (Sanjay Tandon: Director Applied Global Services, Technical Publication; Erik)

* Have 8,200 writers who are federated into different business units and different companies.
* Don’t have a single CMS and structure to their docs (each biz unit has different structures and needs)
* 5 years unsuccessful of migrating from FrameMaker to Structures FrameMaker with DITA
* The CCMS they were using in his division was SharePoint; a painful experience.
* Have 1,200-page manuals, with many graphics and links.
* Now working with SDL on a pilot program for one of product 1.2
* DITA is very overwhelming for first-time users. Tech pubs and training will use DITA, but when people see the structure, it is too hard. Ideally, they want the writing experience to be more like PowerPoint and Word.
* Challenge: the authors are so focus on the output looking pretty, so transforms have been difficult. Feels there isn’t a lot of talent out there to help.
* *Wants?* Make it simpler.
* *Pain Points?* Conversion: have used Stilo but it still takes a long time to “clean up”, typically 1-2 weeks.
* Are looking at ways to get their 3,500 service engineers to contribute more content, especially for harnessing their expertise for troubleshooting and other technical content.
* Wants more opportunities to network with DITA users.

Brocade (Phylis Buchner: Senior Technical Writer; Eva Knodt: Senior Technical Writer; Lelia Wright: Senior Technical Writer/Information Architect)

* Have 60 people on their writing team
* Work with 800-1,000 publications
* Currently use DITA 1.2
* Using SDL Knowledge (Live Content) and XMetaL 9; would love to be able to upgrade. Versioning in SDL works really well.
* Are also using FontoXML. It is being used as a simple interface for contributors, but it is limited.
* Adobe Experience Manager is a challenge (metadata entry is manual).
* Using Stilo for some migration.
* SuiteHelp and Oberon are help them with their stylesheets; this is expensive.
* *What Has Been the Biggest Challenge?* Can’t get money to do what we want to do.
* *What Has Worked Well?* Having an Information Architect; have 75% reuse across 3 platforms; using conditions / variables; *definitely a success story.*
* Do not understand why people have trouble with DITA, since people write HTML all the time!
* Are not using constraints, but are using a very limited set of DITA tags.
* *What Has Been Expensive?* Stylesheets development. They produce content in PDF / HTML formats.
* Would like to do Dynamic Publishing.
* Would like to see more use cases and examples, especially on how to use subjectScheme and key scopes

Cisco (Lynn / Jane)

FICO (Grace Murao: Lead Technical Writer)

* Adopted DITA almost 10 years ago.
* Currently using DITA 1.2.
* Toolset: XMetaL 9, SDL, use Suite Solution’s Help
* Publish to PDF, are looking into ePub using dita4publishers.
* Translate to seven languages. DITA has been very helpful in this area.
* Created a massive DITA writers guide, which has been very helpful for her team.
* FrameMaker was their baseline for look and feel and structure, and they have not deviated a lot from that.
* Output constantly has issues, sometimes due to writers not structuring their content properly.
* You have to ask yourself "what do our users really need" before migrate or converting content. Need to clean up legacy content ahead of time.
* How to reuse documentation in the new world of social media?
* They use some embedded media, but they need to make it available on different channels.
* *What Has Been Challenging?* SDL upgrade process.
* *What Has Worked Well?* They created their own DITA Writing Guide. Have also used some constraints. Translations savings.
* *What Has Been Difficult / Expensive?* Output, writers aren’t using elements the way they should. Conversion, even though they are minimalist haven’t migrated everything. Learning XSL and XSL:FO is really a challenge. Would be nice if output configuration was much easier.
* *What are Your Pain Points?* Getting new writers up to speed quickly. How do we integrate with new realm of Social Media? How do we make documentation available in different channels?

Guidewire (Miles Gilster: Senior Documentation Tools Developer)

* Guidewire creates insurance software
* They have 17 writers
* Currenting using DITA 1.2 and DITA-OT 1.8.5.
* Tools: XDocs CMS, oXygen 15 (for Authors), oXygen 18 (for IAs), Antenna House. Still have content in unstructured FrameMaker.
* Produce PDF and WebHelp.
* *What Has Worked Well?* Localization: 30% cost savings with DITA compared to old process.
* *What Has Been Difficult / Expensive?* Doing conversion in-house; wish tools would help with what to convert to. Buy-in from writers
* *What Do You Want to See More of?* More holistic examples; for example: what does the whole task of legacy content conversion look like?
* Exchanging their content with training would save a lot, but getting them to consider DITA has been a tough sell.

Hewlett Packard Enterprise (Trish Billard: Information Developer; Laura)

* Transitioning from DocBook to DITA
* Have 100 writers
* Write SW/HW content
* Thousands of publications, and thousands of pages
* Localization is part of their process
* Currently using DITA 1.2, and they have developed their own Troubleshooting specialization based on 1.2
* Are using SDL Knowledge Management, Arbortext editor
* Currently publish to HTML, PDF, WebHelp, and are planning to go with something more dynamic
* *What Has Worked Well?* Topic Based writing, which they have just started with.
* Wants – phrase tag to be used for variable (i.e. a tag inside a UI control) – Add some guidance to the DITA Spec, especially some pros and cons. To make adoption easier.
* Challenge – migration (used DocBooks)

Imagination Technologies (Leticia / Sam)

Intel/Altera (Mark / Joe)

* Have 40 writers, a full-time Information Architect
* Have created their own toolkit
* Using Oxygen and IXIASOFT as their CCMS
* Output to PDF, online help
* Converted from RoboHelp / FrameMaker – FrameMaker to DITA used STILO, wrote own for RoboHelp conversion routine
* *What Has Been Stupid / Expensive?* The RoboHelp conversion: but this was difficult because of the way the original docs were written, not because of DITA.
* *What Do You Want to See More of?* Make the specification more assessable. More good examples. Would like more documentation on how to create a specialization.

Intuitive Surgical (Joe Russo: Senior Technical Writer)

* Previously, had spent 5 years at Hitachi Data Systems, where he converted dozens of docs related to storage that were 1,000s of pages in length. Worked with SDL, and XMetaL. There they used DITA 1.2, and published to PDF and online help formats.
* A real challenge at Intuitive has been bringing in the writers in Japan who do things differently: the 50 writers in the US convert the content as they go, whereas the 100 or so writers in Japan determine all of the combinations first, then convert everything.
* Are just getting started with PTC ArborText / Windchill and DITA 1.2
* *What Information Would He Like to See?* Knowing what tools support the latest version of DITA and how can we get them to respond more quickly. Is there a PTC user group? Would also like to see more searchable / readable content on DITA with more “good” examples.
* Current challenge: Conversion; would like to know more about how to get legacy content into a new environment. Would also like to know who’s worked with which tools and the pros / cons of them are.

KLA-Tencor (Jane Chow: Technical Publications Manager; Vidhya Kameswaran: Technical Writer)

* Not in DITA yet, just starting the journey. Currently looking at IXASOFT, SDL, Quark (SmartContent).
* Currently use Documentum.
* 33 writers, 13 in US, plus others located in India and Israel.
* Their hardware docs are mostly done using Word at the moment.
* Thinks they’ll have a lot of re-use potential – but feel DITA may be too hard, at least that’s the mindset of most of their writers.
* Most writers are not trained in DITA, so there is pushback on whether to adopt it. Many are not comfortable with tagging.
* Current challenge: How to find writers with DITA experience?

NetApp (Megan)

Netgear (James)

RingCentral (Louise Leck: Contract Technical Writer)

* 3 writers, more off-shore
* Use DITA as an interface to send to third-party for translation.
* Tools: Use oXygen.
* *Pain points?* How to get into DITA and relieve the stress.
* Wants – anything that would help get people into DITA… i.e. building a business case, implementation strategy/recommendations, output configuration needs to support graphic-intensive layout, embedded media recommendations. Would also like to see more graphic oriented and video-based information.
* Wanted to mostly listen to what everyone else had to say.

Sigma Tech /Ericsson (Stefan Millett: Project Manager)

* Has done one DITA migration already and is starting another migration effort for a different business unit.
* Migration progress is in its infancy, so he looking for more information on best practices.

Tesla (Ana / Brian)

TIBCO (Joe Padre: Architect, Technical Communications)

* Have 30-40 writers in US, India and the UK.
* Using DITA 1.2.
* Output to PDF and WebHelp
* They translate to 5-6 languages.
* Tools: SDL and XmetaL.
* *Challenges?* Finds integration process is way too reliant on CMS vendors. Would also like to see more info on workflow.

VMware (Steve Liang: Solutions Architect)

* They have about 100 writers, have thousands of publications.
* Currently translate to 13 languages, moving to 20.
* Using DITA 1.2, no plans as yet to move to DITA 1.3. Also DITA-OT 1.5, 2.x.
* Tools: XMetaL, SDL
* *What Has Worked Well?* They have lots of content reuse.
* *What Has Been Expensive?* Conversions.
* *What Has Been Difficult?* SDL tools.

Wind River (Yas Etesam: XML Consultant; Ed)

* Have 32 writers
* Create content using DITA in InfoDev + Customer Experience groups, more recently in corporate marketing.
* Using DITA 1.2.
* Tools: IXIASOFT DITA CMS and oXygen editor.
* Do not translate their content.
* Fought pressure to adopt a tool until information model was complete!
* Training content is also produced in DITA, but they are not using the L&T specialization.
* *What Has Worked Well?* They have an Information Architect, this has been critical to their success. With their tool teams they’ve had both good/bad experiences.
* *What Has Not Worked?* Trying to get engineers to write content. Or have folks in China – so now… we go back to get technical writers to do it then use SMEs to edit. Implemented a lot of constraints. Easier to add things back in then have everyone using everything.
* Would like to know from DITA TC: How many years will it be before DITA 2.0 is out?
* *Pain Points?* Updating the transforms in toolkits. Wind River makes real time operating systems, so they have had to add a lot of elements for the software domain. Example: JAVA class and methods, macro names, and library names.
* Wind River makes real time operating systems. Many elements that they had to add to software and programming domains. Want more for Java (class, method, function, macros, libraries)

**General Round-table Discussion**

* Breaking up DITA migration into smaller pieces seems to be a good idea. Having a strong (aka Style Guide) is useful.
* *Where do you go to get help?* Spec online (Oxygen and Suite Solutions), also Yahoo DITA user’s group. SDL / IXIASOFT user’s group. Consultants. Webinars.
* Would like more help with key scopes.
* Best Practices – come up with a strategy for re-use – avoid conref spaghetti.
* Suggestion – Specialized Topic, referenceable content object
* Would like the committee:
  + to push conref
  + provide more help with how to deal with graphics
  + promote the entire ecosystem
  + many people copy instead of reuse. How to get around the lack of trust?
  + educate on the paradigm shift away from the book model to the multi-channel knowledge base.
  + how best to address metadata and enhance search.