

An OASIS DITA Adoption Technical Committee Publication

DITA 1.2 Specification: Status Update

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Table of Contents

DITA 1.2 Specification--Status Update5

 DITA 1.2 Readiness for Use5

 Starting on the next DITA release6

DITA 1.2 Specification--Status Update

The DITA Specification, version 1.2, is now a Committee Draft that is in review by the OASIS DITA community.

The DITA 1.2 Specification has been formally approved as a Committee Draft by the members of the DITA Technical Committee. The DITA 1.1 Specification was published in May 2007. Since that time committee members have worked on the 1.2 Specification, first by reviewing proposals for additions to the Specification and then by updating the Specification to account for the changes and additions. As part of the revision process, committee members elected to revise the text of the Specification extensively.

In May 2010, the 1.2 Specification was considered complete and in conformance with all OASIS requirements. The Technical Committee voted to approve the Specification as a Committee Draft.

According to OASIS policies, a Committee Draft is an official document that is ready for the mandatory review by the OASIS public, especially all members of the DITA community. This review began on 7 July 2010 and will run for 60 days. Any OASIS member may submit comments on the 1.2 Specification until 5 September 2010. For information about how to submit comments, see

After 60 days, the DITA Technical Committee revises the Specification in response to the comments and questions, approves the document as a revised Committee Draft, and submits the document to a 15-day review. The reviews continue until all comments are resolved. At that point, the Technical Committee votes to approve the document as a Committee Specification. This Specification then goes to a formal ballot of the OASIS membership. The ballot process takes about a month to put into place, at which time the official OASIS members vote. Approval requires 15 percent of the members to vote in the affirmative, with no negative votes.

As a result of all these process requirements, we expect the 1.2 Specification to become an official OASIS standard near the end of 2010.

DITA 1.2 Readiness for Use

Despite this complex process, DITA 1.2 has been ready for use for at least two years. The DTDs and Schemas have long been available for download and many early adopters have already been successful using the new features of the 1.2 release, such as keyref and conkeyref, the general task model, the learning and training specialization, the machine-industry specialization, and more. Except for bug fixes, the DTDs and Schemas have been quite stable. In fact, few substantive changes have been made since the last of the proposals were implemented two years ago.

The vendor community has also been active in augmenting their products to support the DITA 1.2 specification. We have seen DITA 1.2 versions released by XML editor developers PTC/Arbortext, JustSystems/XMetaL, SyncRO Soft/Oxygen, and DITA2Go. Content Management System (CMS) vendors SDL/Xysoft and Ixiasoft have announced that they will provide DITA 1.2 support within the next few months. The DITA Open Toolkit, which is developed independently of the OASIS DITA Technical Committee, has included the DITA 1.2 features and changes since version 1.5 of the Toolkit (version 1.5.2 is currently available for download from SourceForge). As a result, many organizations have begun authoring in DITA 1.2 and taking advantage of the new features.

We urge all members of the DITA community to download the 1.2 DTDs or Schemas and begin actively working with the new and improved features. For your benefit, the DITA Adoption Technical Committee has been publishing a series of articles on the DITA 1.2 features. These feature articles are available at dita.xml.org today at

DITA 1.2 is completely backward compatible with DITA 1.1. As long as any customizations you may have done to DITA 1.1 were done using appropriate customization methods, you should be able to process your DITA 1.1 content using a DITA 1.2 installation with no changes to your content.

If you are already using DITA 1.2, we would like to know about it. You can add your implementation to the testimonials that are part of the OASIS DITA website and will help us to establish the community's use of 1.2 for the OASIS approval process. The URL is for DITA Technical Committee members and for those of you who are not members of the DITA Technical Committee.

We also urge vendors of content management systems to move quickly to implement support for DITA 1.2. Customers are ready to use the valuable new features today. If vendors have questions about DITA 1.2 features, we invite them to submit questions to the DITA Adoption Technical Committee with emails to the committee at (for members of the DITA Adoption TC) or via the DITA Adoption TC public homepage at (use the Send A Comment button).

Starting on the next DITA release

The DITA Technical Committee is already beginning its work on the next DITA release. We look forward to requests from all members of the larger DITA community to ensure that we continue to meet your needs.