



Virtual Summit on Advanced Practices in Technical Communication

10 MILLION DITA TOPICS CAN'T BE WRONG

DECEMBER 6, 2016 – 1PM PT / 4PM ET
WITH KEITH SCHENGILI-ROBERTS | IXIASOFT

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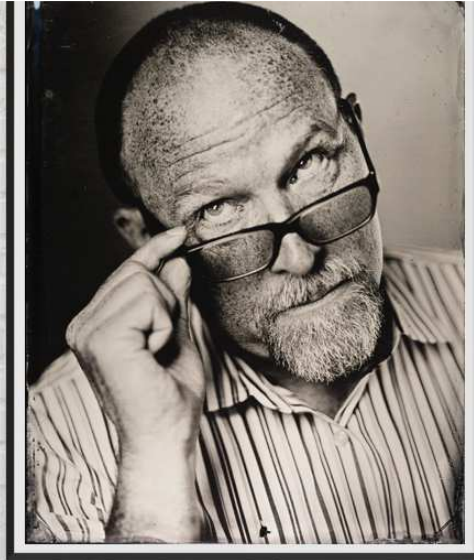
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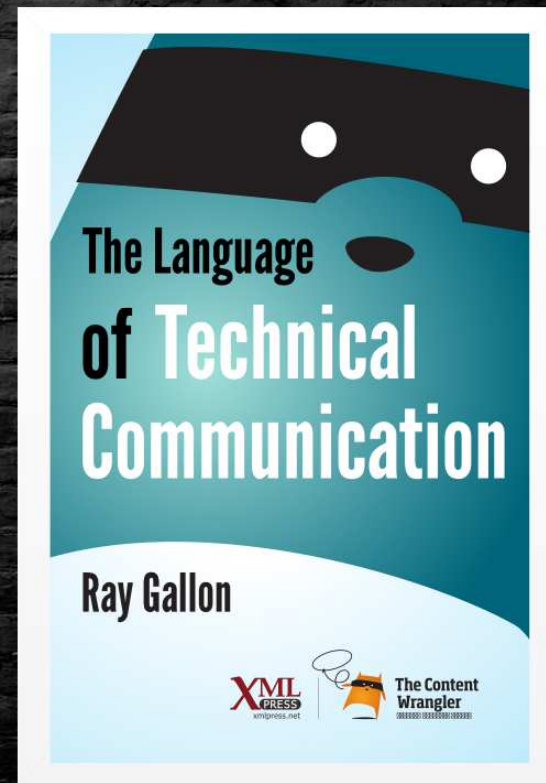
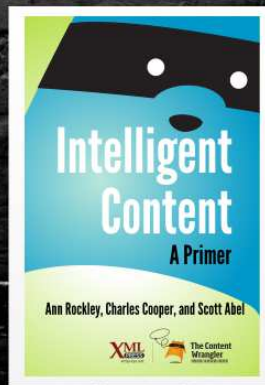
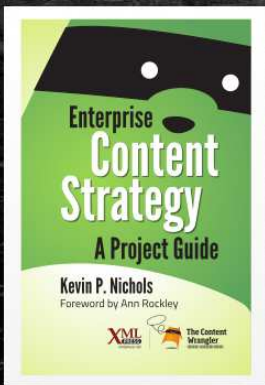
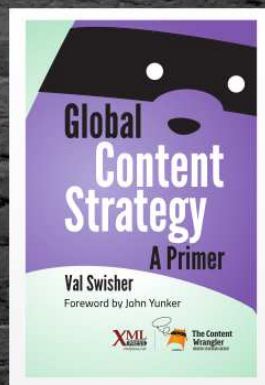
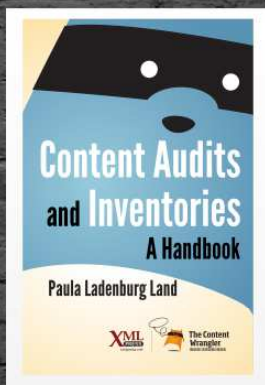
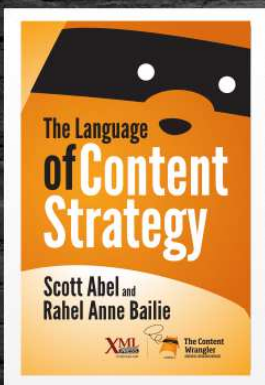
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HOUSEKEEPING

ASKING QUESTIONS

RATING THE PRESENTER

DOWNLOADING ATTACHMENTS

WATCHING THE RECORDING



DITA INFORMATION ARCHITECT
MARKET RESEARCHER & DITA EVANGELIST
OASIS DITA ADOPTION & TECHNICAL COMMITTEES



KEITH SCHENGILI-ROBERTS

IXIASOFT



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10,000,000 DITA TOPICS CAN'T BE WRONG

FEATURING THE SMASH HITS:

- <concept>
- <task>
- <reference>
- <troubleshooting>
- <glossentry>



MAGIC MILLIONS

<di^{ta}>



10 Million DITA Topics Can't Be Wrong

Keith Schengili-Roberts
Market Researcher and
DITA Evangelist, IXIASOFT

Who's This Guy?



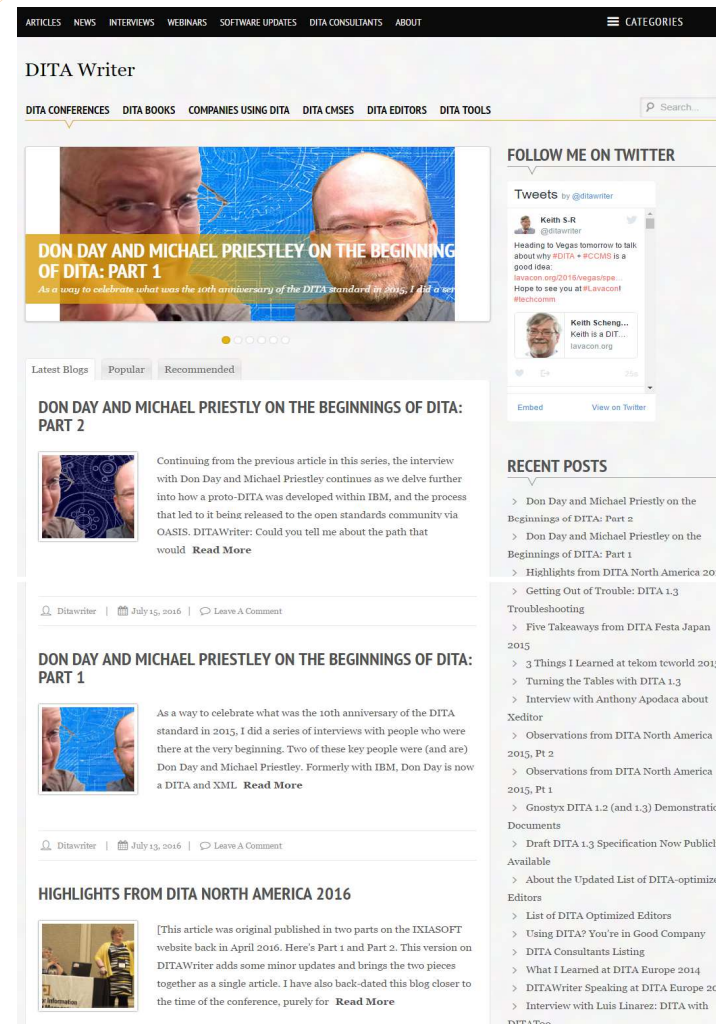
Keith Schengili-Roberts
IXIASOFT DITA Evangelist
and Market Researcher

What I do:

- DITA evangelist
- Liaison with OASIS; on DITA Adoption, Lightweight DITA and the DITA Technical Committees
- Industry researcher
- Lecturer on Information Architecture, University of Toronto
- 10+ Years of DITA XML experience

Also Known As “DITAWriter”

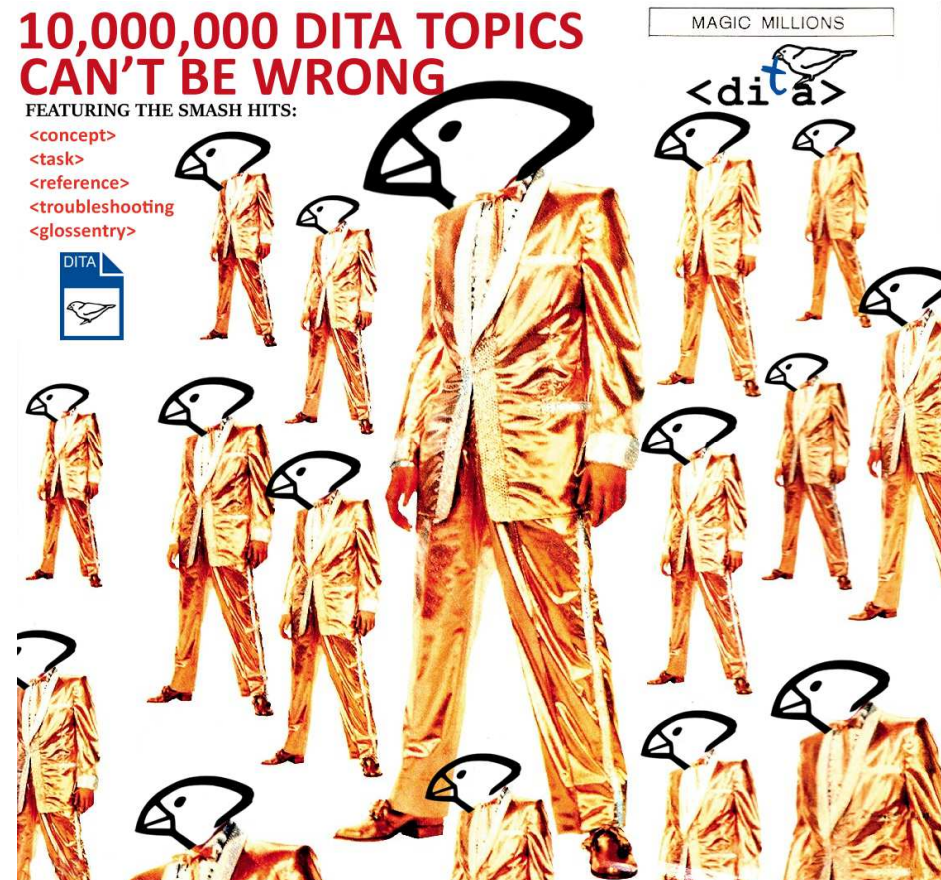
- Industry blog started +5 years ago
- Just over 250,000 hits
- Regularly updated info on:
 - DITA Conferences
 - DITA Books
 - Companies Using DITA
 - DITA CMSes
 - DITA Editors
 - Other DITA Tools
 - DITA Consulting Firms
- News/views on DITA use
- Features interviews with those making a difference in the world of DITA



The screenshot shows the DITA Writer website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for ARTICLES, NEWS, INTERVIEWS, WEBINARS, SOFTWARE UPDATES, DITA CONSULTANTS, and ABOUT. Below this is a search bar and a secondary menu with links for DITA CONFERENCES, DITA BOOKS, COMPANIES USING DITA, DITA CMSes, DITA EDITORS, and DITA TOOLS. The main content area features a large image of Don Day and Michael Priestley with the headline "DON DAY AND MICHAEL PRIESTLEY ON THE BEGINNINGS OF DITA: PART 1". Below the image is a "Latest Blogs" section with a "Popular" tab selected, showing a list of related articles. To the right, there is a "FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER" section with a tweet from Keith S.R. (@ditawriter) and a "RECENT POSTS" section with a list of recent articles. The footer of the page includes the website name "Ditawriter", the date "July 15, 2016", and a "Leave A Comment" link.

Where Did the Title for This Talk Come From?

- At a recent IXIASOFT Users Conference one of our clients talked about this number in terms of how many *versioned* DITA topics they already had
- Got me to thinking about where DITA came from, its key advantages, and how it scales; “Big Data DITA” is already a reality at many firms



Starting Small...

- Focus of this talk is how something that started out small (DITA) has become a big deal
- Will do a quick survey of main features of DITA
- Will also look at DITA's impact on technical documentation careers
- The specific pain points that DITA addresses at firms
- A closer look at "Big Data DITA"

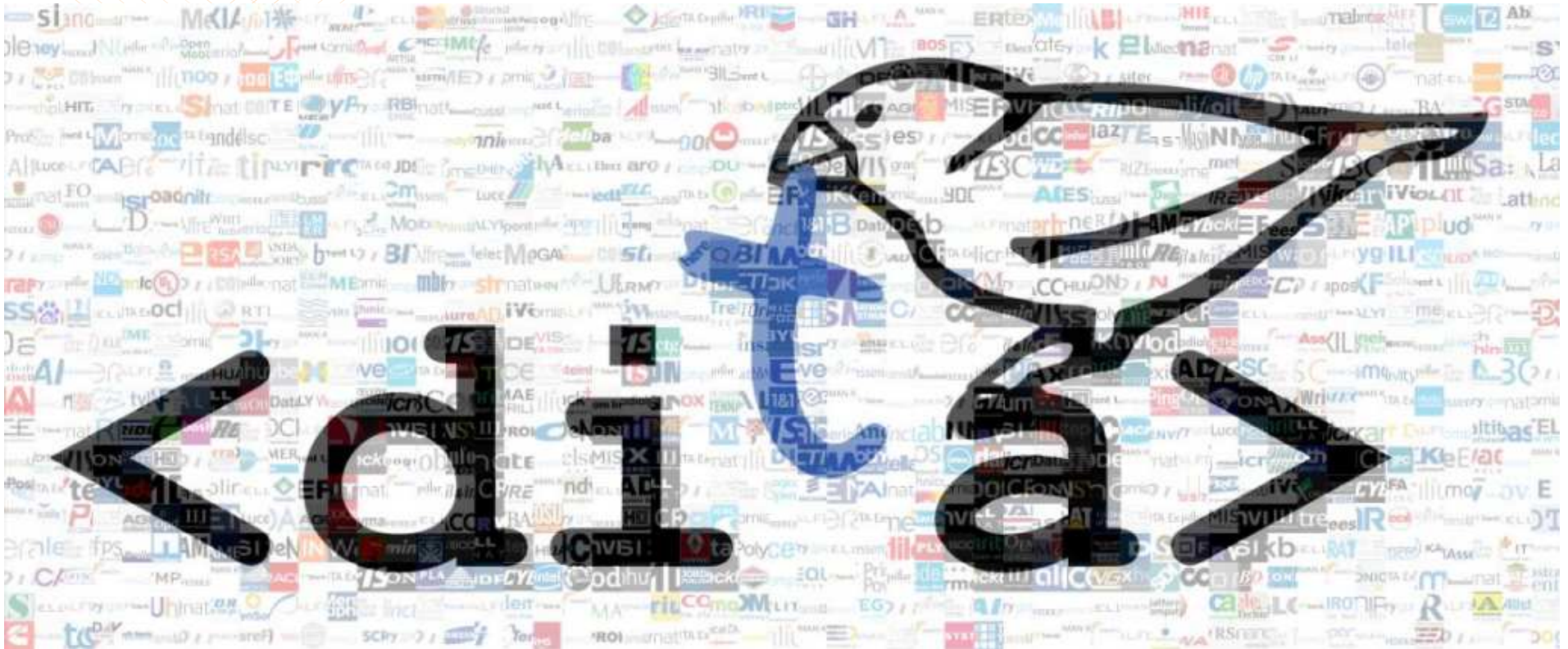


What is this DITA Stuff?

- It's an open XML standard for creating structured content built primarily around the idea of content reuse
- Has been around for just over 10 years, has gained significant traction in technical authoring community



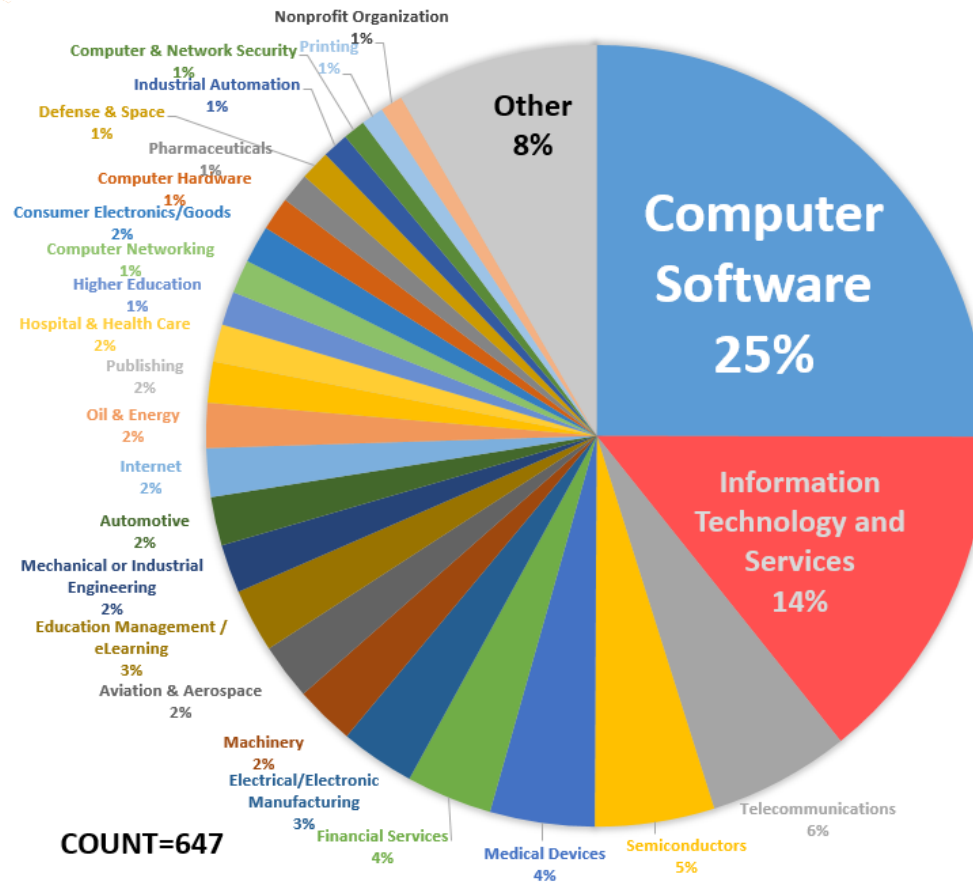
Who is Using DITA?



- Most recent count: 667 firms worldwide

What Sectors are Using DITA?

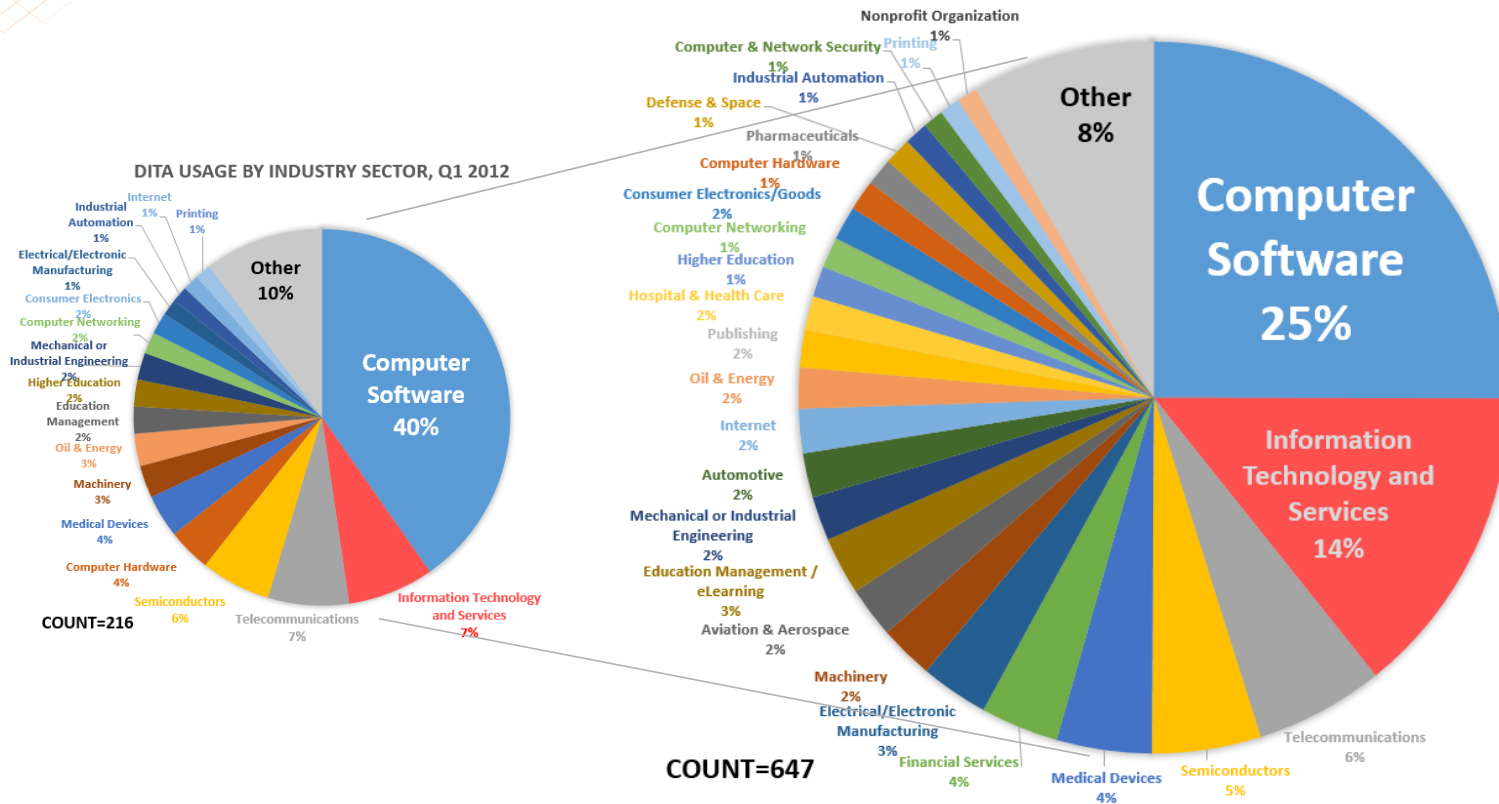
DITA USAGE BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, Q3 2016



- Overall trend is that DITA adoption is firmly entrenched in tech-related sectors and is moving gradually into other sectors

Sector Growth Over Time

DITA USAGE BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, Q3 2016



Sectors with Significant DITA Adoption

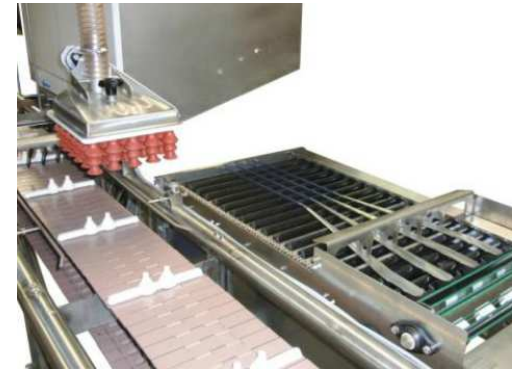
- While DITA first came to prominence 11 years ago in software/IT sectors, DITA adoption has firmly taken hold in a number of other sectors, including significant numbers of firms in:

- Telecommunications
- Semiconductors
- Medical Devices
- Electronics Manufacturing
- Financial Services
- Automotive

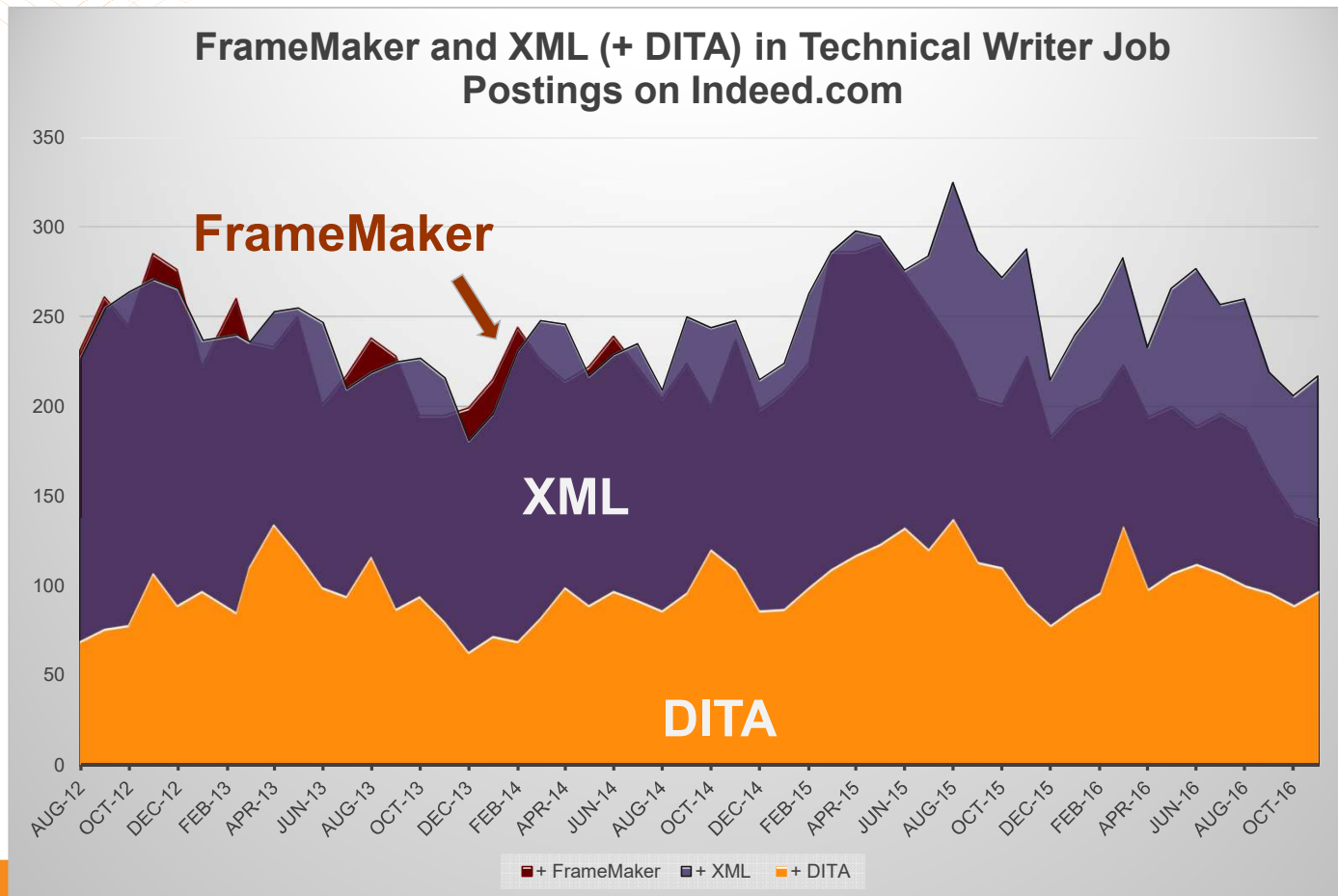


DITA Adoption Crosses All Sectors

- 60+ industry sectors using DITA
- Wide range of firms
- DITA is being used to document:
 - Industrial egg-beating machines
 - Underwater exploration equipment
 - Radiology scalpels and much more!
- DITA is clearly no longer just for software/info tech!

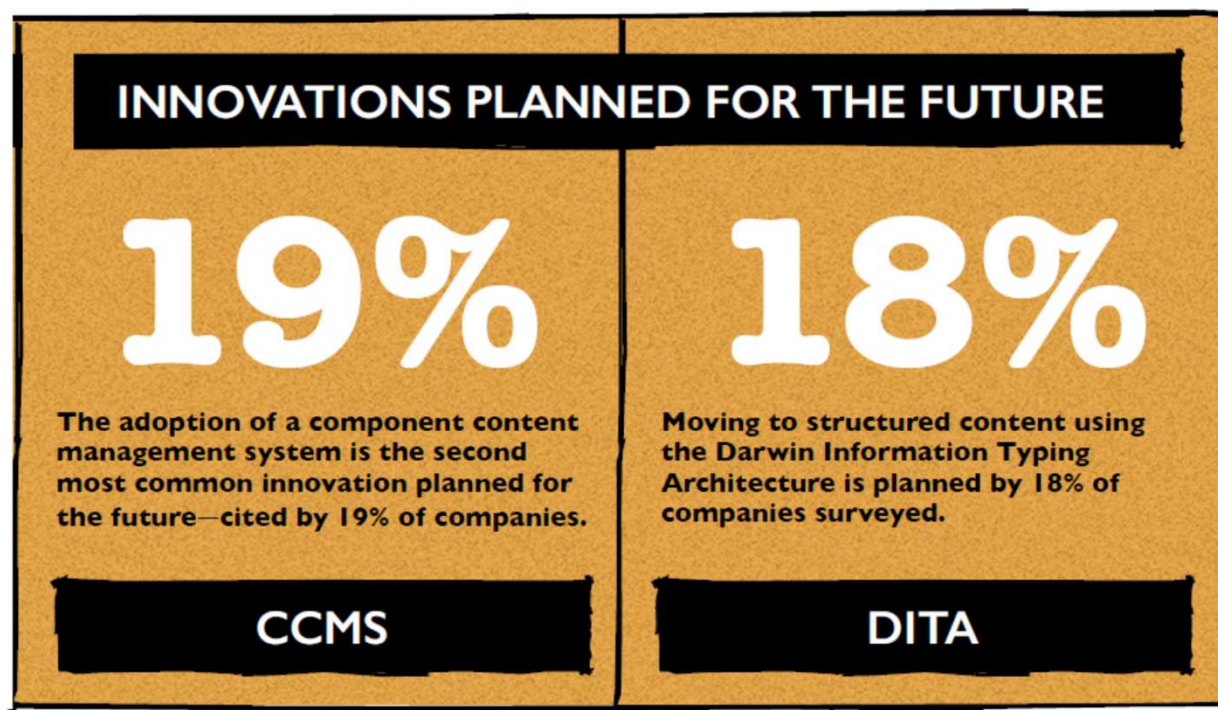


XML Knowledge Has Eclipsed FrameMaker Knowledge for Tech Writing Hires in U.S.



DITA Usage is Definitely Growing

- From a survey of 700 technical writing professionals:

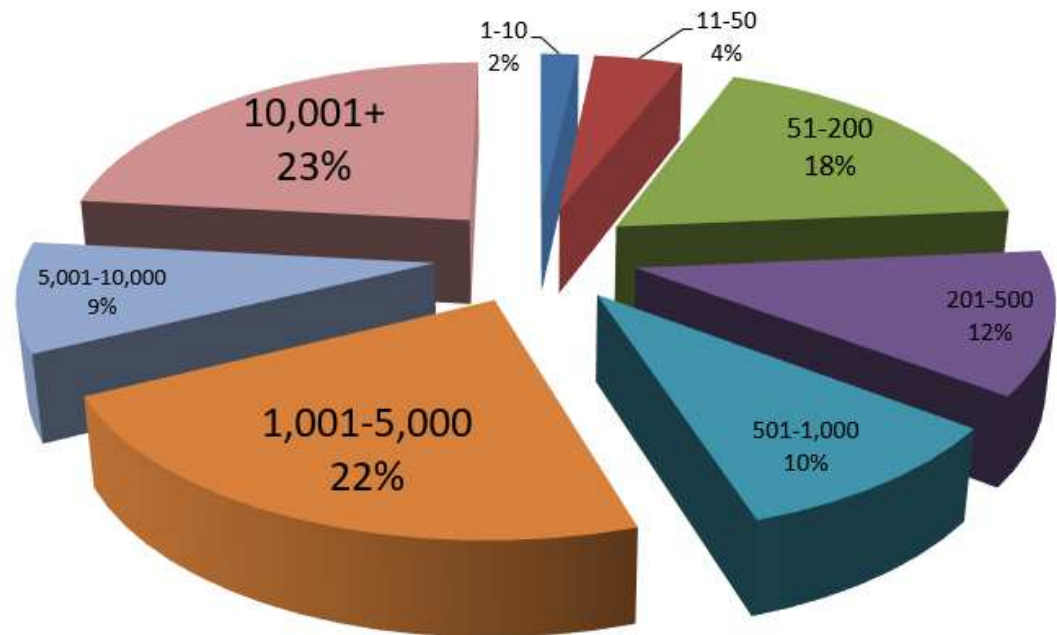


The Content Wrangler 2016 Technical Communication Industry Benchmarking Survey Summary

My Main Point: DITA is Scalable!

- Not only can DITA be used in small- to medium-sized tech doc department, but as you will see it scales *very well*
- As proof, the majority of DITA-using firms are large- to very-large (many of which have correspondingly large technical writing teams)

Size of Companies Using DITA
(By Number of Employees) as of Q3 2016



Count: 631 Firms

The features that make DITA, DITA!

THE MAIN FEATURES OF DITA

Reuse is Built-in to DITA

- DITA was built around the idea of content reuse
 - This has helped make DITA the fastest growing XML-based technical communications standard



DITA XML: A Reuse by Reference Architecture for Technical Documentation

Michael Priestley
IBM Canada
mpriestl@ca.ibm.com

ABSTRACT

The Darwin Information Typing Architecture is an XML architecture for producing and reusing technical information. DITA promises the following:

- Scalable reuse, so you can reuse content in any number of delivery contexts simultaneously without complicating the source
- Descriptive markup, so you can use markup that describes your information in terms your customers need
- Interchangeability, so you can treat specialized markup as if it were general, getting reuse of tools and processes defined at more general levels of descriptiveness
- Process inheritance, so you can reuse existing process logic in your specialized processes.

It accomplishes these goals by applying the principle of reuse by reference to the dimensions of content, design, and process within a technical communications workflow.

1. BACKGROUND

For the past two years, a workgroup inside IBM's User Technology community has been working on creating XML architecture for the next generation of technical documentation. It was released for public review and testing in March of 2001, and is continuing to evolve with the input of a growing community of writers and developers.

The Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) is an XML-based architecture for authoring, producing, and delivering technical information. DITA is an end-to-end architecture. It consists of a set of design principles for creating information-typed topic modules and for using that content in various ways, such as online help and product-support portals on the Web. At its heart, DITA is an XML document type definition (DTD) that expresses many of these design principles. The architecture, however, is the defining part of this proposal for technical information; the DTD, or any schema based on it, is just an instantiation of the design principles of the architecture.

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SIGDOC'01, October 21-24, 2001, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.
Copyright 2001 ACM 1-58113-295-6/01/0010...\$5.00.

2. DITA PRINCIPLES

DITA simplifies the creation of audience-specific content, DTDs, and processes. It is based on principles of modularity and reuse that allow not only the fast deployment of customer solutions but also the painless evolution of those solutions as customer needs, and our understanding of them, evolves.

2.1 Four principles

DITA's basic principles are as follows:

2.1.1 Topic orientation

DITA focuses on the topic as the smallest independently maintainable unit of reuse. This allows authors to focus on writing topics that efficiently and completely cover a particular subject, or answer a particular question, without dwelling on the various places the topic might end up being read.

2.1.2 Information typing

DITA focuses on information types as a way to describe content independent of how that content is delivered. Instead of creating chapters and appendixes, authors can focus on writing concepts, tasks, and reference topics using structures and semantics that remain valid regardless of how the information reaches the reader.

2.1.3 Specialization

DITA allows authors to create more specialized information types, so that the structures and semantics of the information are as specific as they need to be for a particular audience

2.1.4 Inheritable processes

DITA-aware processes, such as publishing and translation, work automatically on more specialized types, and can also be specialized themselves.

2.2 Embodied in architectures

Those principles are embodied in two architectures:

2.2.1 Information architecture:

The information architecture describes what a topic is and what the three core information types are. This provides a basic level of consistency across all DITA content, which allows for reuse of infrastructure and interchange of content across the entire range of possible information types.


2.2.2 Specialization architecture:

The specialization architecture describes how a specialized type of topic is derived from a more general type of topic, and it describes how specialization-aware processes can access topics at whatever level of specialization they require. For example, a

DITA Content Reuse = Consistent Messaging

- Benefit of consistent content and messaging
- Consistent content means consistent user experience
 - Along with being seamless, available and context-specific



CONSISTENCY
IS 

Reduced Localization Costs with DITA

- Content reuse in English = localization savings
- If many target languages, ROI argument for moving to DITA (+ CCMS) is easier



Separation of Form from Content

- In a study I did prior to moving to DITA at AMD, found that fully half of the time spent using DTP software was on formatting content
- Suggests considerable time savings, making content creators more nimble and able to concentrate on making additional content
 - From a localization perspective, also removed DTP charges from Localization Service Providers

Less
Time
Spent
Formatting

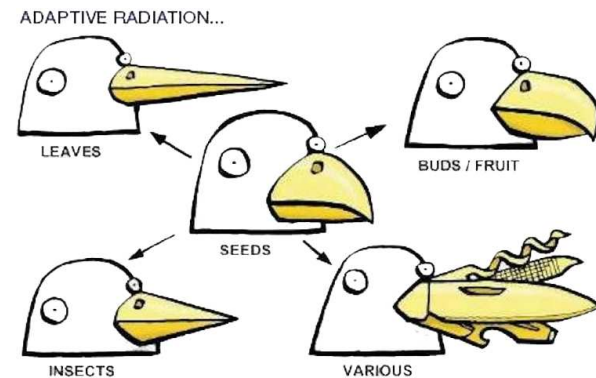
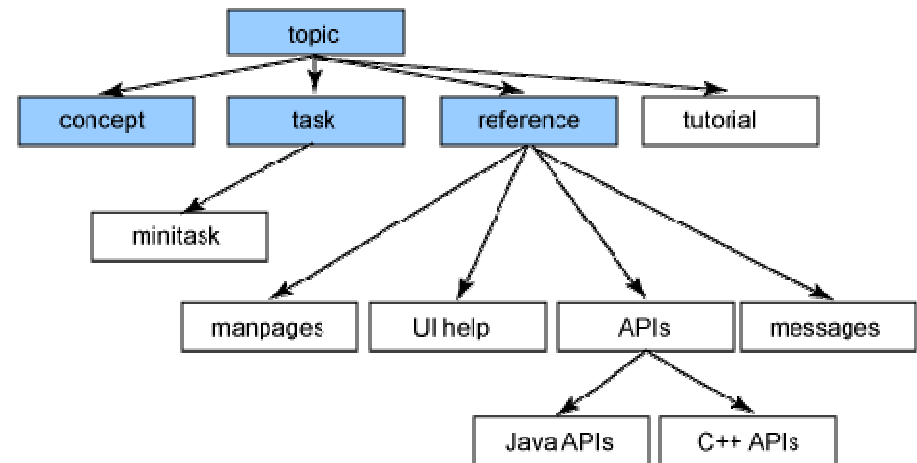
DITA Was Built with Multi-channel Publishing in Mind

- This was a key design feature when DITA was still being devised at IBM; intent was to tame a multitude of output processes then in place with a single
- DITA-OT by default supports 11 output types, including PDF, RTF, HTML5/XHTML
- Other output types possible



Specialization

- The “D” from DITA stands for “Darwin”, alluding to the specialization mechanism which enables users to create new topic types/elements to suit their specific needs
- It is also possible to “generalize” specialized content back for use in other contexts



Flexible and Adaptive

DITA and Other Tech Doc XML Formats

- DocBook focuses on book rather than individual topics; most recent version (v5.1) now includes “assemblies” which allows some level of reuse
- S1000D focuses primarily on needs of aerospace industry; reuse is limited to data module level (and only one use per document)



- Focus is at book/article level
- No reuse model until very recently



- Aerospace focused
- Reuse only at data modules level, and only one per doc

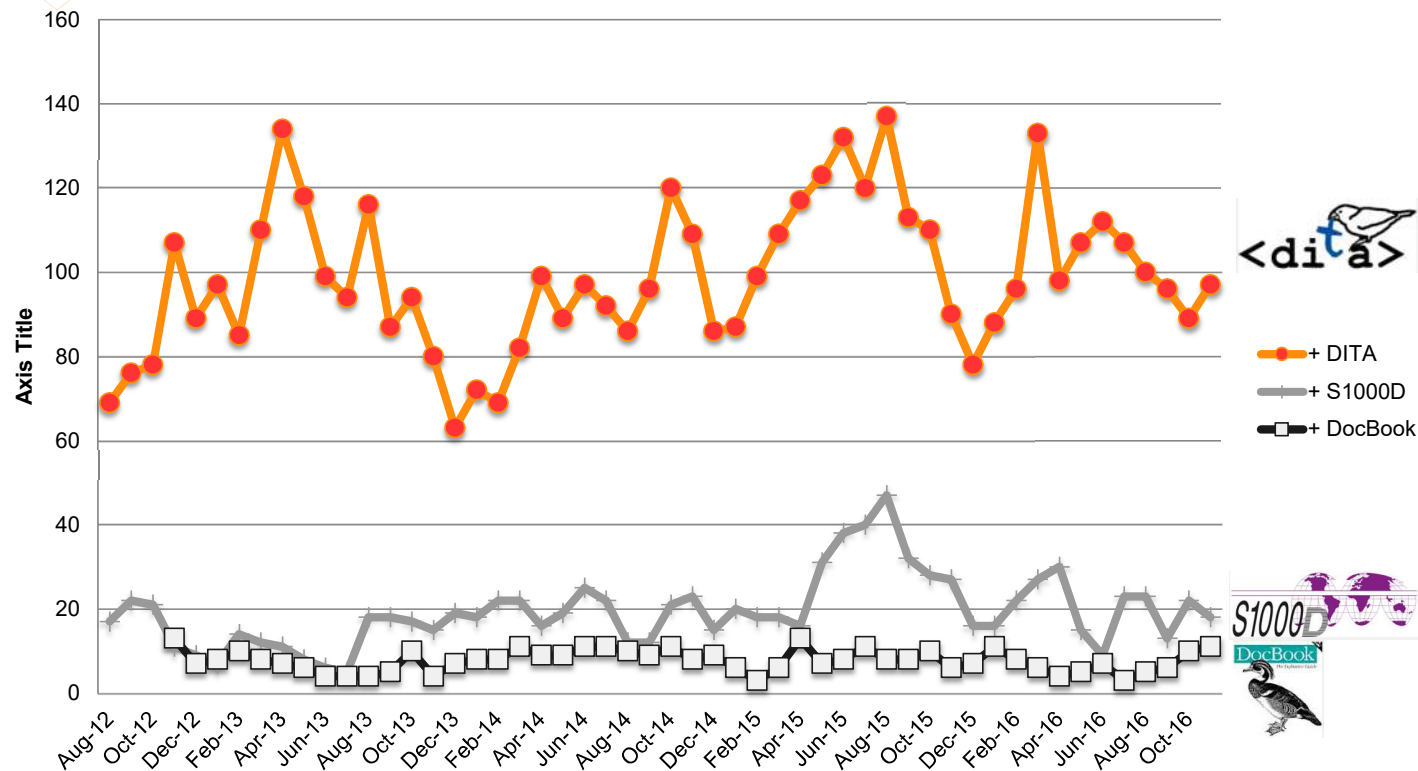
DITA Reuse is More Granular in Nature

- Reuse in DITA is akin to that of a Russian Doll, as it is possible to reuse content at various levels
- So a reused map might (for example) contain a topic from another map, which in turn uses a conref, conditional processing and keys

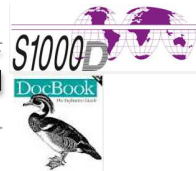


DITA and XML Tech Writing Standards in the U.S. Job Market

"Technical Writer" Jobs and Specific XML (and Related) Standards on Indeed.com

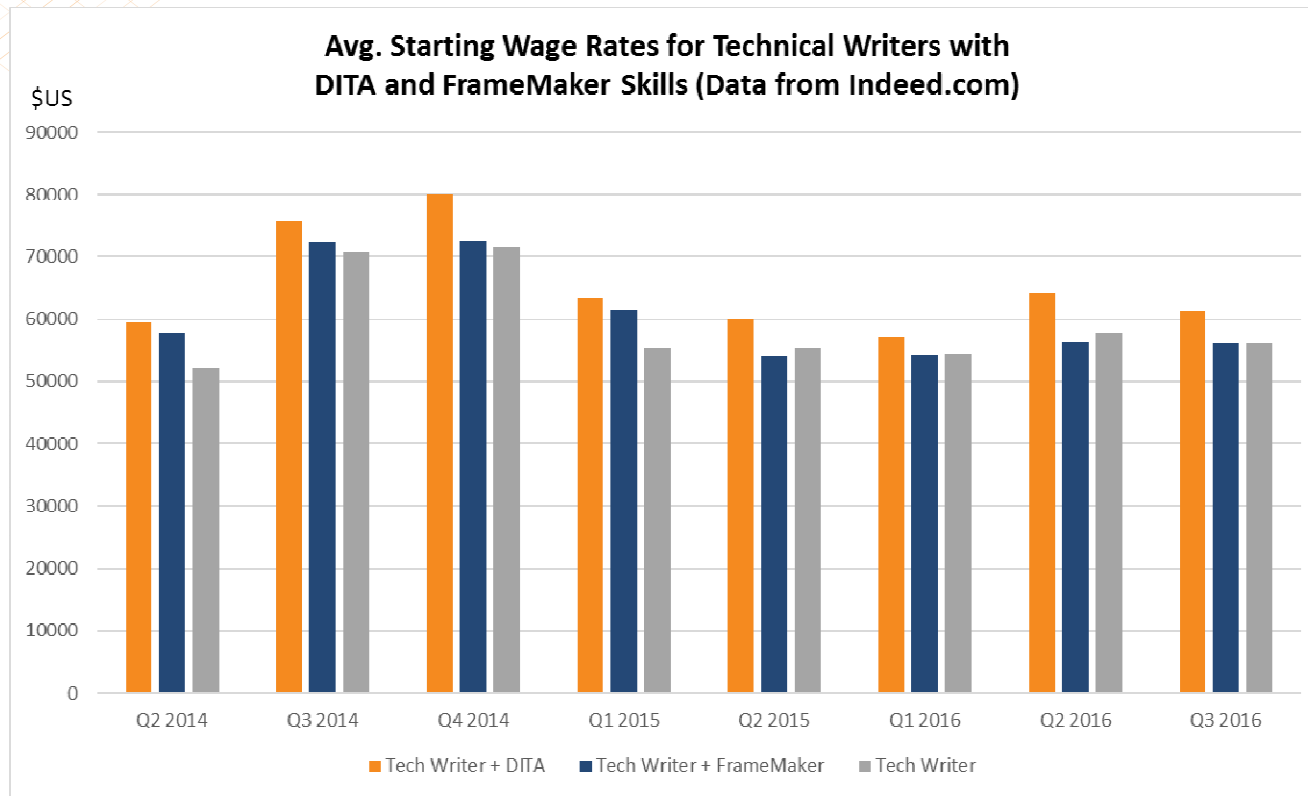


—●— + DITA
—▲— + S1000D
—■— + DocBook



- As you can see, DITA is the most popular XML-based tech writing standard

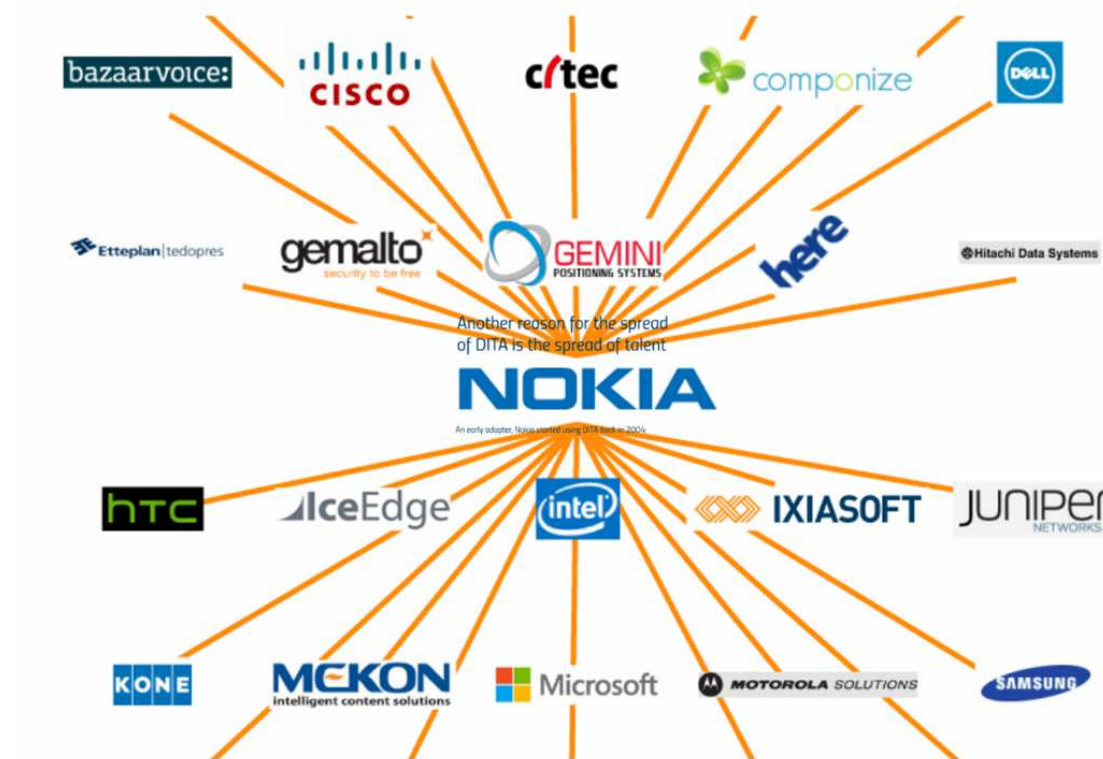
Firms Are Willing to Pay More for DITA Experience



- Avg. starting wages vary over time, but for now, technical writers with DITA experience consistently command a higher starting wage than those with FrameMaker experience

One of the Ways DITA Has Spread: Writer Migration

DITA-using Technical Writers from Nokia have gone on to use DITA at all of these firms:



This is one of the ways in which DITA usage spreads from firm to firm

Typical pain points documentation teams encounter and how
DITA + CCMS can help lessen them

THE CHIEF REASONS WHY FIRMS MOVE TO DITA + CCMS

Pain Points that DITA + CCMS Can Solve

- Need to be more efficient/do more with less
- Have outgrown current toolset
- Escalating localization costs
- Requirement to verify content before it goes out the door



Need to Be More Efficient / Do More with Less

- For many documentation teams it is not possible to get more headcount
- Need to reduce localization costs
- DITA + CCMS has a proven track record for improving overall costs + efficiency:
 - An anecdote: a team that has converted to DITA had a member retire; did not feel need to replace him as system was more efficient
 - Process savings from improved workflow
 - Localization savings



Have Outgrown Current Toolset

- Traditional Desktop Publishing tools cannot cope with growing need to produce content
- Hard for writers to find existing material for reuse in file folders or existing repositories
- Pressing need to automate existing processes
- Seeking a more mature process; may include need for versioned content



Escalating Localization Costs

- Ongoing need to produce localized content, but costs (especially with desktop publishing-based processes) have become prohibitive
- Additional costs are incurred for:
 - Formatting content
 - Fixing code-page errors (a glyph is transformed into a different character)
 - Sending more content than necessary for localization



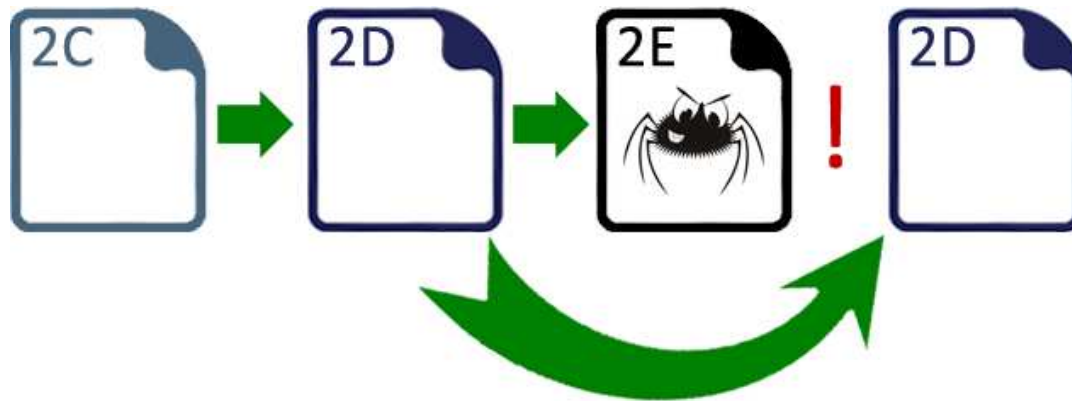
Requirement to Verify Content Before it Goes Out the Door

- In regulated environments such as in the medical device sector, content must first be vetted by medical professionals
- Similar requirements in other sectors, such as legal publishing, heavy manufacturing, etc.



Advantages of DITA and a CCMS: Versioning of Content

- A typical CCMS will have versioning capabilities that ensures that only a single technical writer can work on a given topic at any one time, and will also register who made which edit and allow for a quick comparison between versions
- Any documentation “bugs” that are discovered in a later version of a topic can be reverted to an earlier version without the problem



Advantages of DITA and a CCMS: Automation

- A capable DITA CCMS will enable a firm to automate localization processes
- Some of IXIASOFT's customers send individual topics out for localization while rest of document being worked on
 - New and changed content can be merged, enabling much faster turnaround times

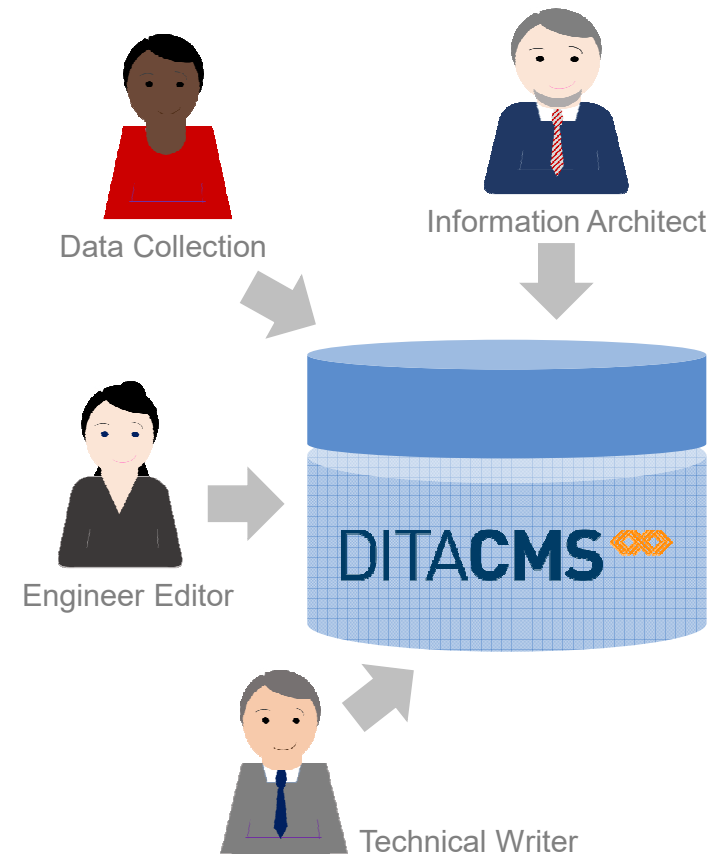
Writing: Complete



Localization: Complete

Advantages of DITA and a CCMS: Workflow

- Once a writer has completed writing a topic, can then be routed automatically
- Useful for when you need to have content edited/verified before it goes out the door
- Introduces ways to improve content quality



Typical Workflow Examples

- An example: a Subject Matter Expert (SME) may be assigned within the system to write content which is then “polished” by a technical writer, and then sent to another SME for approval
- Or: technical writer creates content, is routed to another writer/editor who verifies quality



Engineer
(SME)



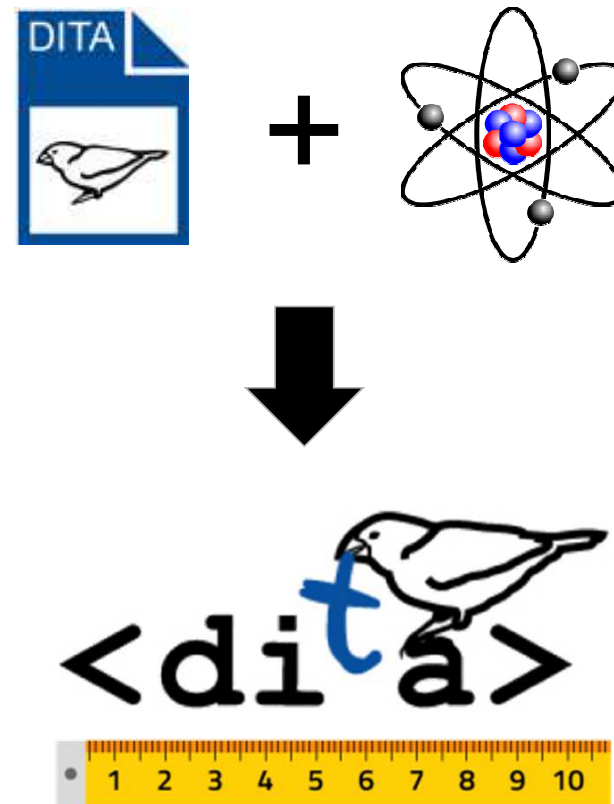
Technical
Writer



Engineer
Who Approves
Content
Accuracy

Advantages of DITA and a CCMS: Measurement

- Having modular content opens up the possibility of measuring content production more accurately
- Not every topic will be the same size, but there will be an average value



The surprising scalability of DITA and what it can do

A CLOSER LOOK AT “BIG DATA DITA”

DITA Can Help Doc Teams Become Scalable

- What I have learned in the past few years meeting with clients are some very cool things that DITA has enabled tech doc teams to do, including:
 - Working with Agile
 - Measurement used for quality control purposes
 - Expand reach of localization budget
 - Not only deal with very large volumes of content, but do so efficiently
 - Provide new services to users

An Example of How DITA Can *Enable* Agile

Lean methodology employed at AMD; early on localization was a focus:

- Under old toolchain could only localize software (with 1 month cadence) once every *6 months*
- Using DTP-based processes, it was costly, slow and process did not allow for feedback

DITA + CMS made localizing on a monthly cadence possible

- Demonstrated considerable costs savings
- Localization staff could focus on quality and provide developers with feedback

Localization Process Pre-Lean:



Localization Process After-Lean + DITA + CMS:

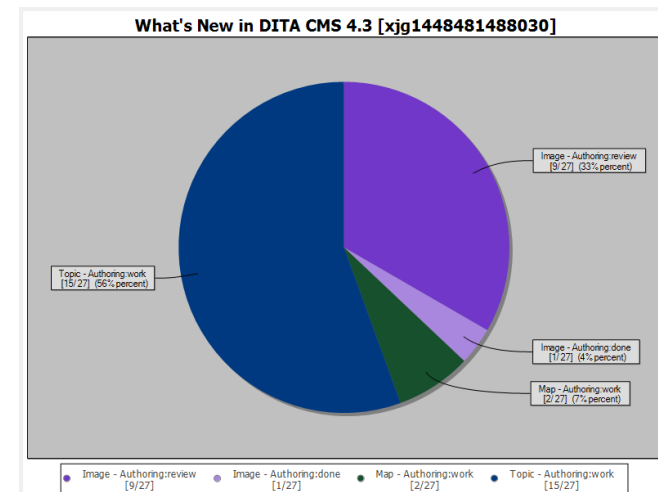


Agile and DITA Metrics

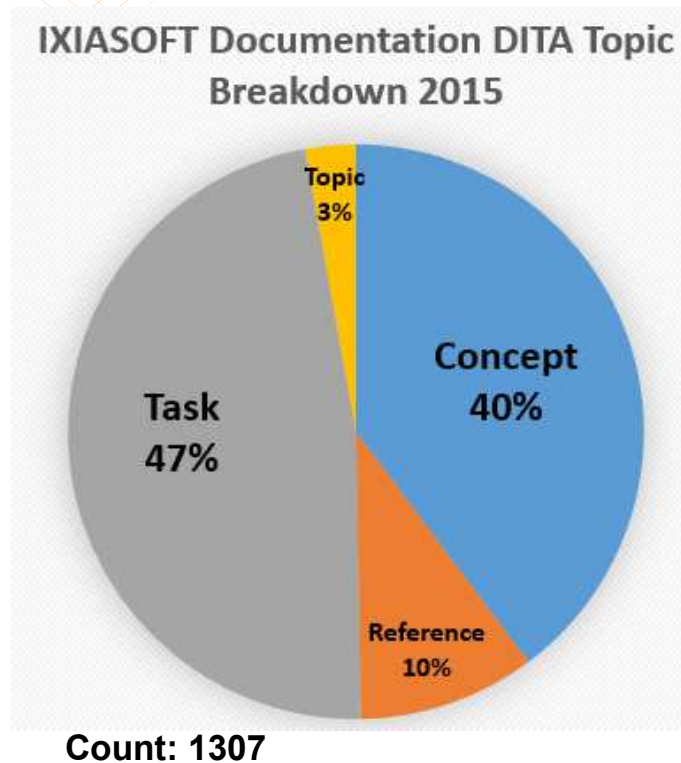
- At Scrum meetings doc manager can report on topics assigned to their group and report on how “done” they are
- This is typically only feasible within a CCMS containing workflow metadata

“Our project managers could track progress of documentation deliverables within our DITA-based CMS on a daily basis.”

- Jason Owen



DITA Metrics: Content Types within All IXIASOFT Topics Over a Year



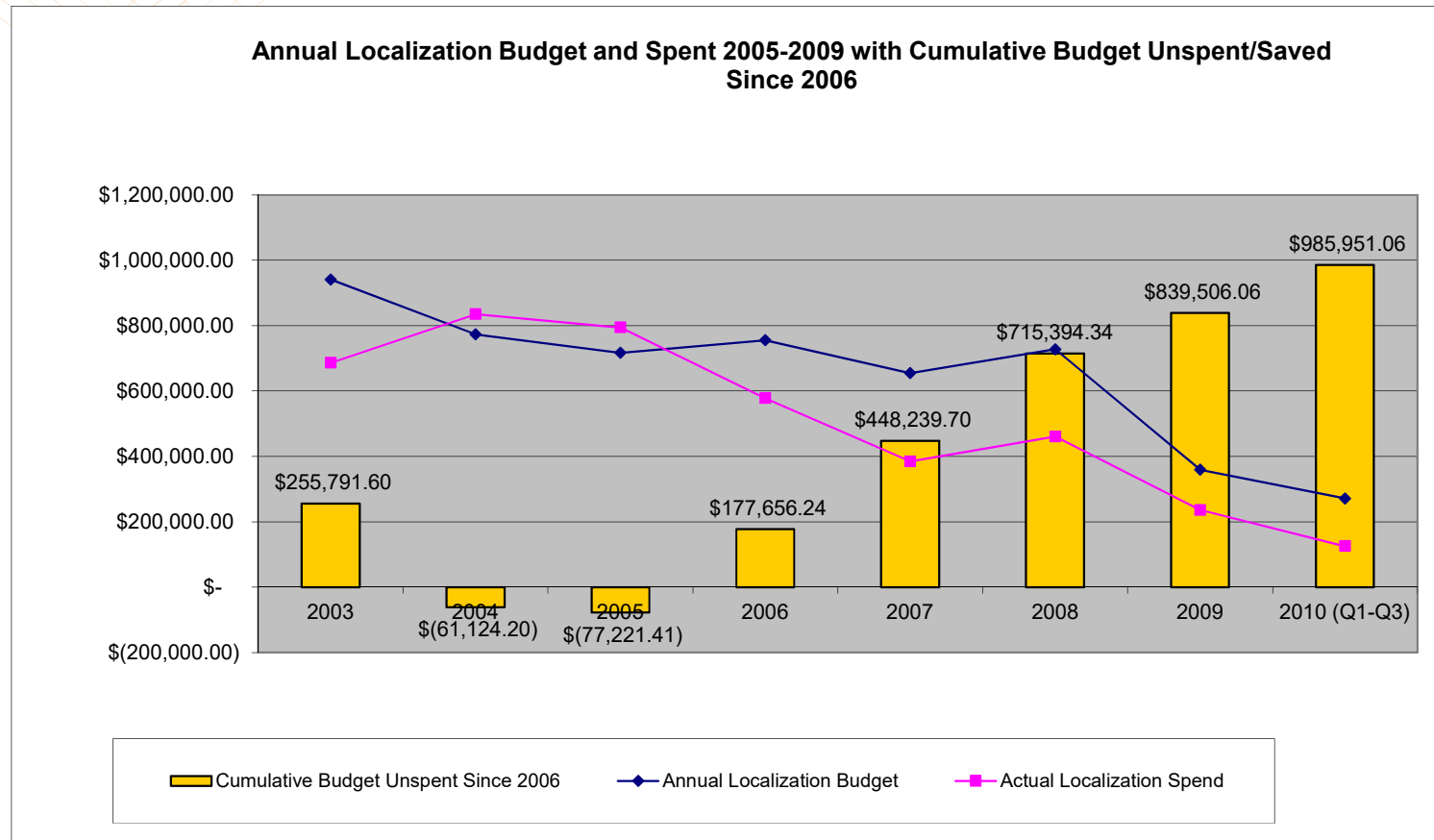
- I took *all of the topics* created by IXIASOFT's doc team (with permission) and ran some analyses on them
- This chart looks at the DITA topic breakdown for all documentation produced by IXIASOFT in 2015
- Documentation consists of User/Admin Guides for our DITA CMS and TEXTML software
- Good ratio of concept to task topics
- When I showed this to our Lead Tech Doc person, she immediately wanted to investigate the 3% of generic topic types

Scalability + Automating Content Processes

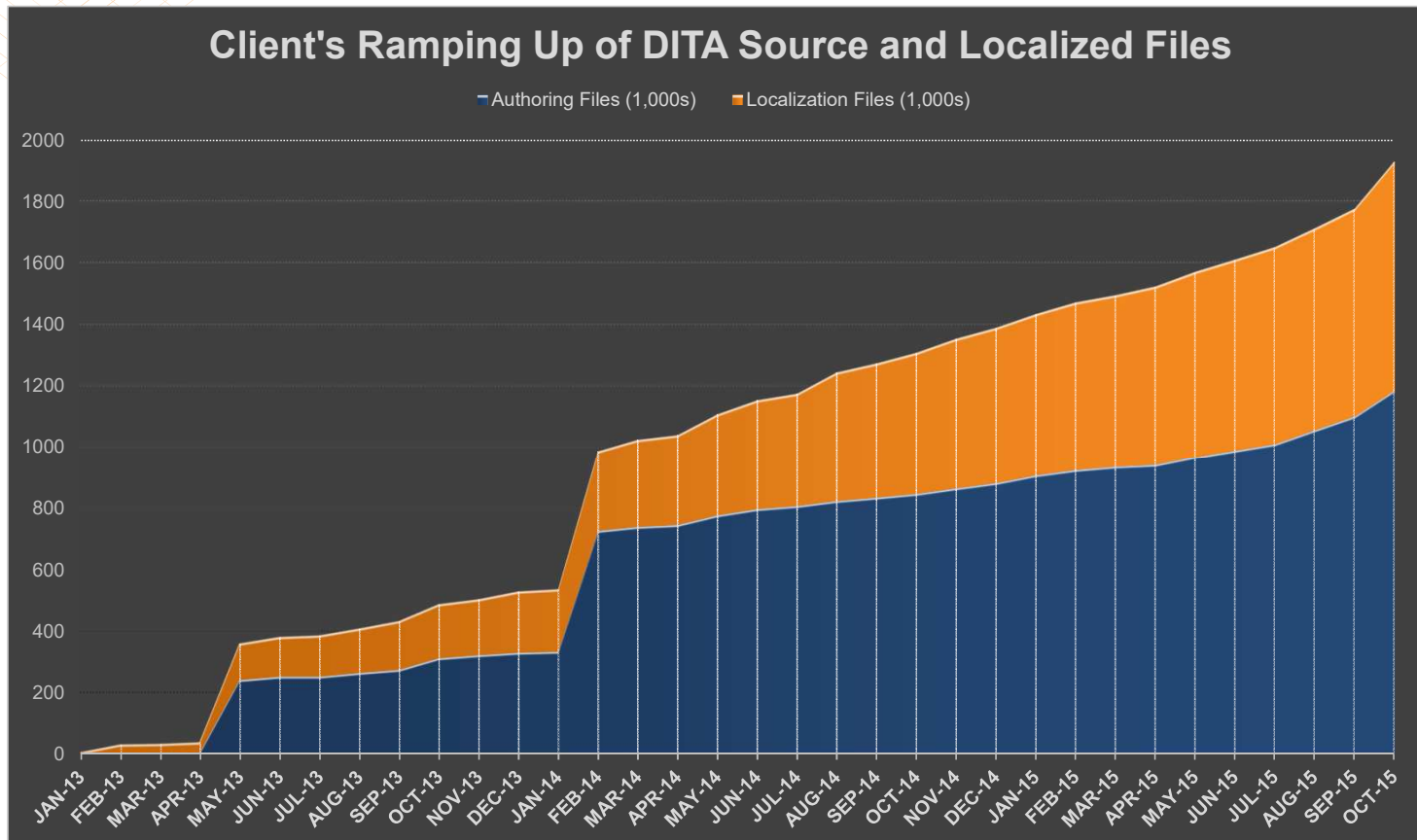
- With IXIASOFT DITA CMS a client started making nightly content builds of their documentation
 - Select customers now able to obtain early release content
- Firm localizes content in 30+ languages
 - Were able to plug IXIASOFT DITA CMS into existing process; translation firms can now get *hourly* drops of content to work on



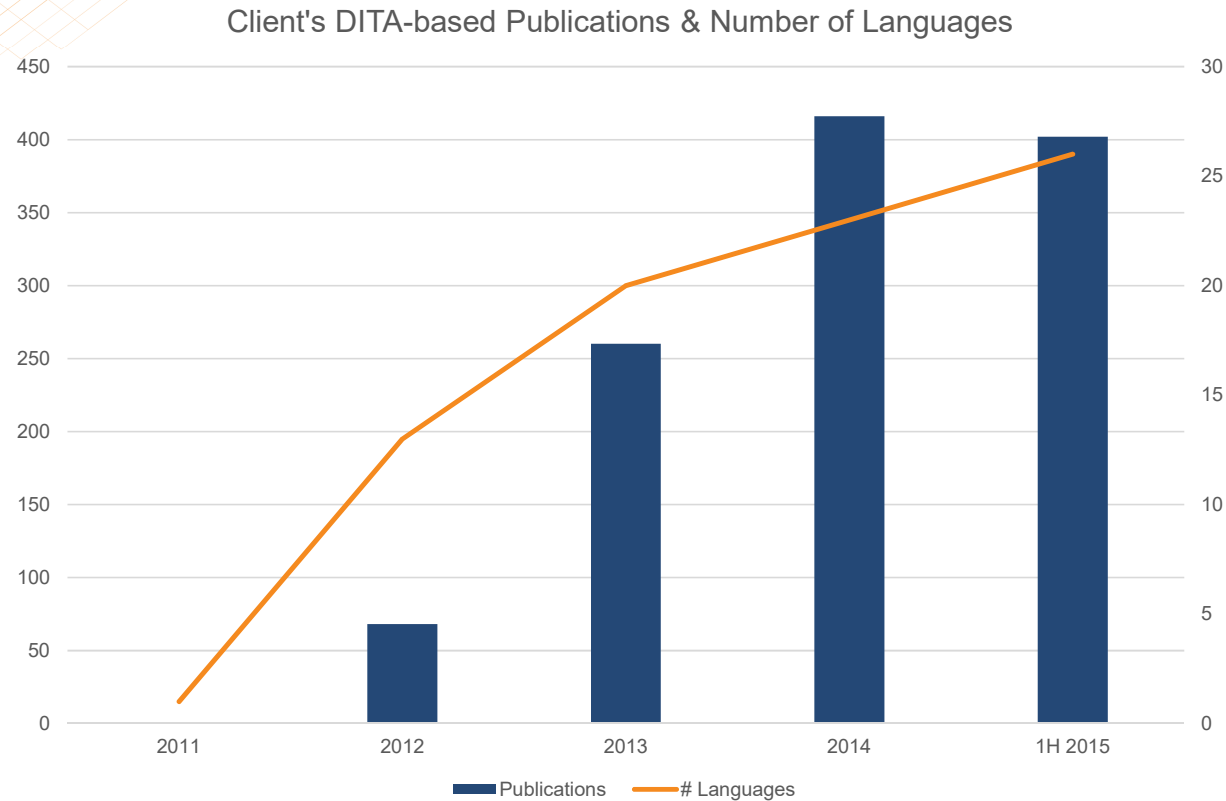
An Example of Cumulative Localization Cost Savings



DITA Enables a Client to Localize More Content



DITA Enables Another Client to Localize More Content



- A different client, showing their ramp-up of DITA-based publications and the number of languages they were able to do

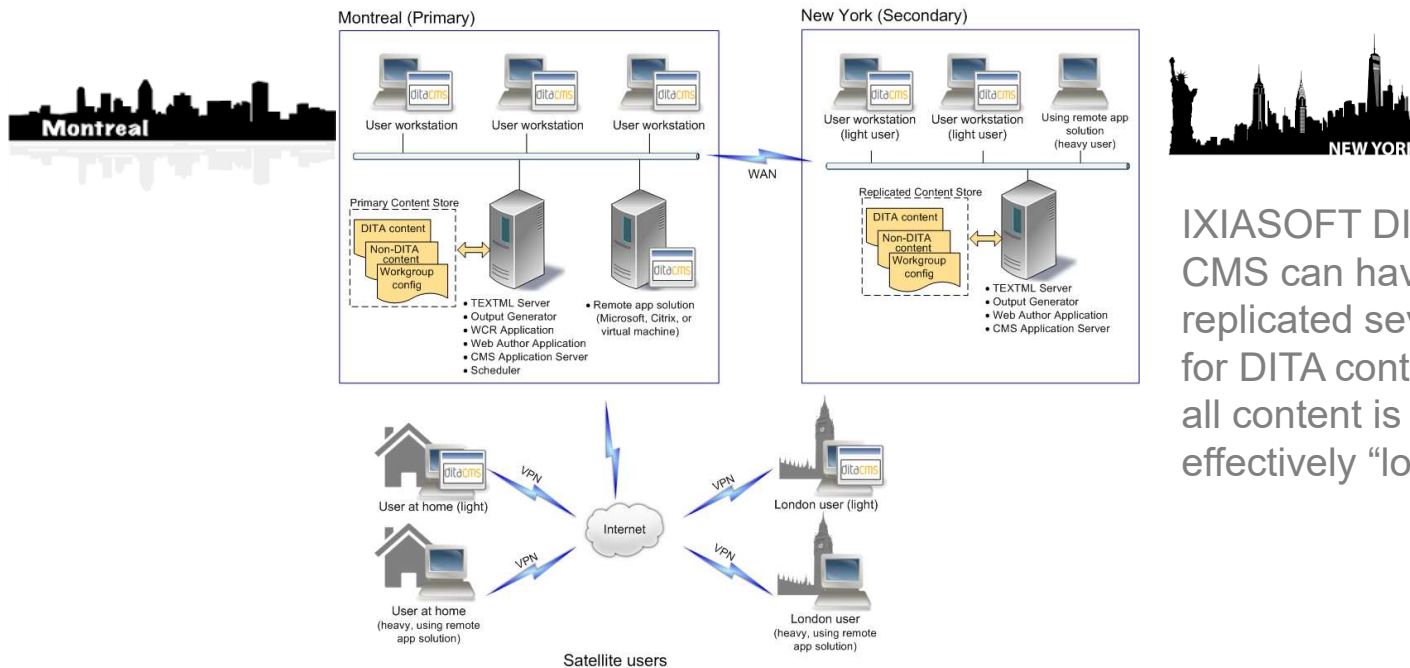
Greater Content Consistency

- One pharma client's ROI for DITA + IXIASOFT was based on localization savings; translated Operations Manuals, Training materials and Interface Manuals into 14 languages
- Content consistency is greatly improved; PDF and HTML use same formatting template as English, so formatting consistency is ensured
- Localization process with their Localization Service Providers are much shorter and cheaper than with the DTP software they previously used

CONSISTENCY
IS 

Large Data = Large Latency? Not Necessarily...

- Geographically-spread users might ordinarily have to wait for content to download, lock/unlock content
- Because of the component nature of DITA, it is possible to replicate content seamlessly between different locations to speed up access to content



IXIASOFT DITA CMS can have replicated servers for DITA content; all content is effectively “local”

Working with Millions of Topic Seamlessly

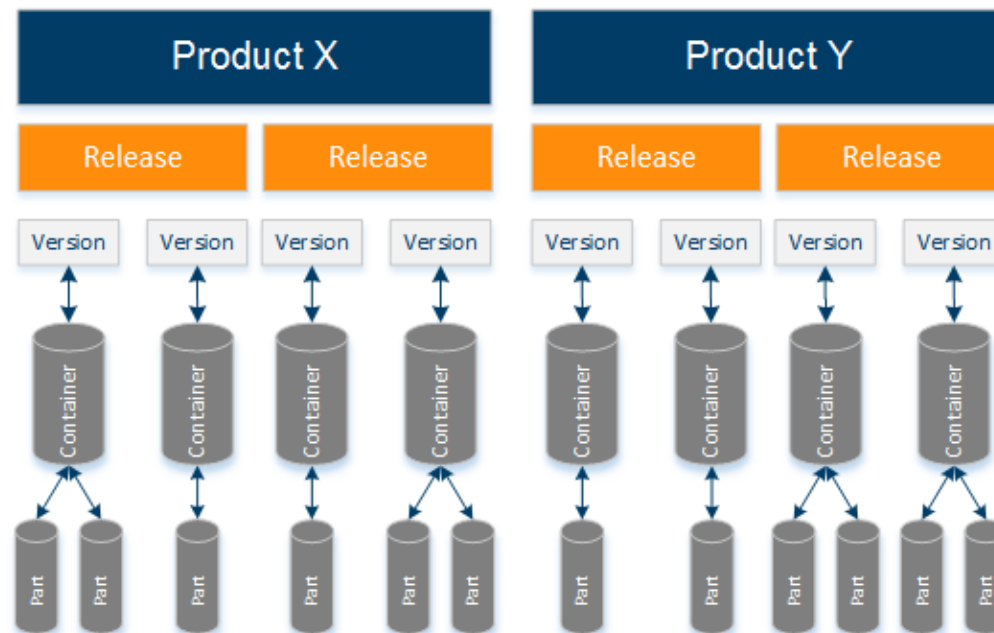
One of our clients has literally millions of topics.
Currently:

- Over 3 million DITA files in their repository
- This covers documentation for 2,800 projects
- Have over 500 users on their system simultaneously from 28 countries (with over a 1,000 registered users who may use the DITA CMS)
- ***And they are half way through their migration!***



How Do They Keep Track of it All? DRM!

- IXIASOFT DITA CMS uses a key-based mechanism called Dynamic Release Management which can divvy up content efficiently so that writers can search/access the content they need to work with



More Content = Better Customer Service

- A client produces over 60,000 outputs daily
- What are these outputs? Mainly updates (including localized content) to software their customers use every day
- Some customers are given special, early access to content as it is created



QA

- Blog: www.ixiasoft.com/en/news-and-events/blog
- Twitter: @IXIASOFT (and @KeithIXIASOFT)
- IXIASOFT DITA CMS Users LinkedIn group: www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3820030
- OASIS DITA Adoption Committee articles
- Member of OASIS DITA Technical Committee

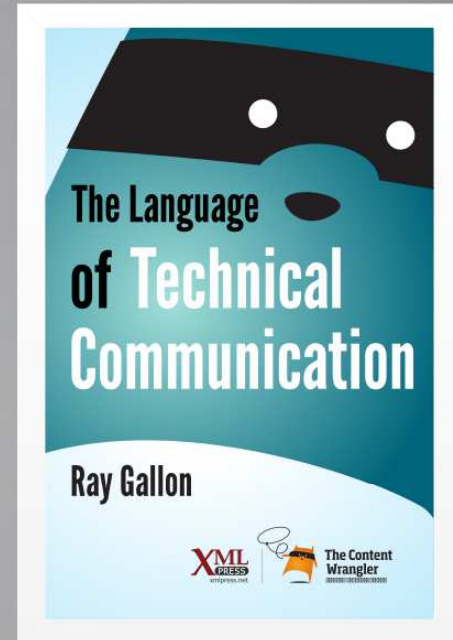
- My recently-published article on DITA and Agile: “Ten reasons why DITA and Agile are made for each other”: <http://ow.ly/Vhfo306L2ES>
- Also, look for my chapter on the DITA marketplace in the upcoming book *Current Practices and Trends in Technical and Professional Communication*, due out sometime in 2017

A person wearing a blue suit jacket and a white shirt is holding a white rectangular sign with both hands. The sign has the word "QUESTIONS?" written on it in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The person's hands are visible at the bottom of the sign, and their fingers are slightly curled. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

QUESTIONS?

WINNERS

Sam Matthews, Jack Henry & Associates
Alden Clark, ACI Worldwide
Terry Hall-Johnson, ADP



THANK YOU



KEITH
SCHENGILI-ROBERTS

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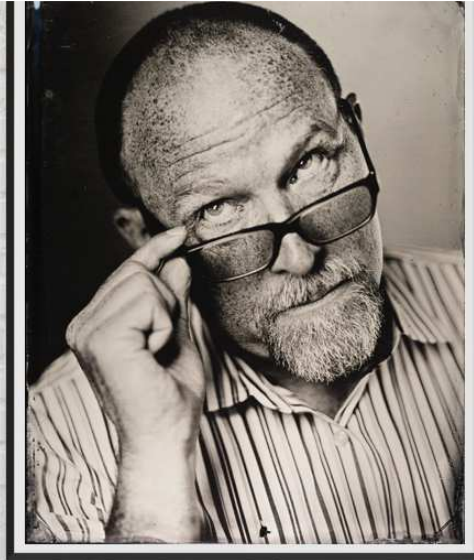
DECEMBER 6, 2016 – 3PM PT / 6PM ET

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10 MILLION DITA TOPICS CAN'T BE WRONG

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