

Cool Tools for Technical Writers





Who Is Jeff Haas?

- Lead Technical Writer at ADP
- Associate Fellow at STC
- Past President of STC Atlanta
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Agenda

- Introduction
- 1st Generation Tools
- 2nd Generation Tools
- 3rd Generation Tools
- Q&A

No demos



What Is a Cool Tool?



A cool tool is an authoring tool that enables technical writers to create superior user assistance that improves the user experience.



What Is an Authoring Tool?

- Does not require programming
- Contains programming features
- Built on an authoring language
- Allows you to import content from other formats
- Allows you to generate content in multiple formats



A Cool Tool from the 20th Century





Who Is a Technical Writer?



Better User Interfaces



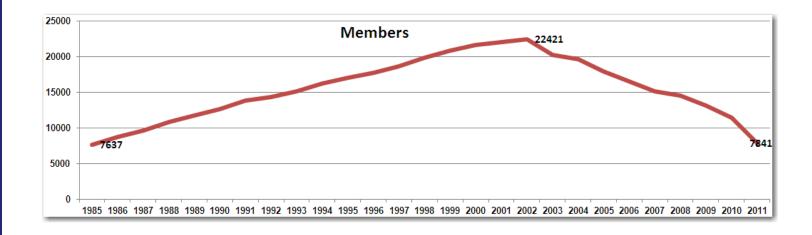
Facing the Facts

- 8-14% of tech writing jobs were eliminated in the past two years
- Salaries declined

Personal email from Kathryn Burton, Chief Executive Officer of STC



STC Membership



From a spreadsheet provided by Lloyd Tucker, Deputy Executive Director of STC



Employment Options

- Become more like a User Interface Designer by authoring embedded procedural user assistance
- Become more like an Instructional Designer by authoring external tutorial user assistance



The Status Quo Is Not an Option

- ☑ User Interface Designer
- ☑ Instructional Designer
- **☑** Both

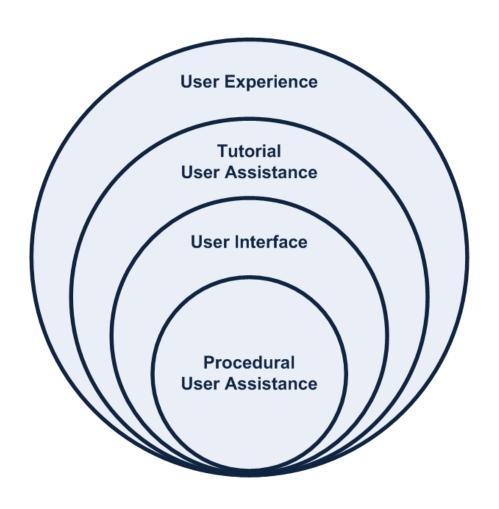


What Is User Assistance?

- Provides guidance to someone using a software application
- Includes all forms of help available to a user
- Not limited to a traditional help system
- Can include procedural and tutorial information



Tutorial versus Procedural





Tutorial User Assistance



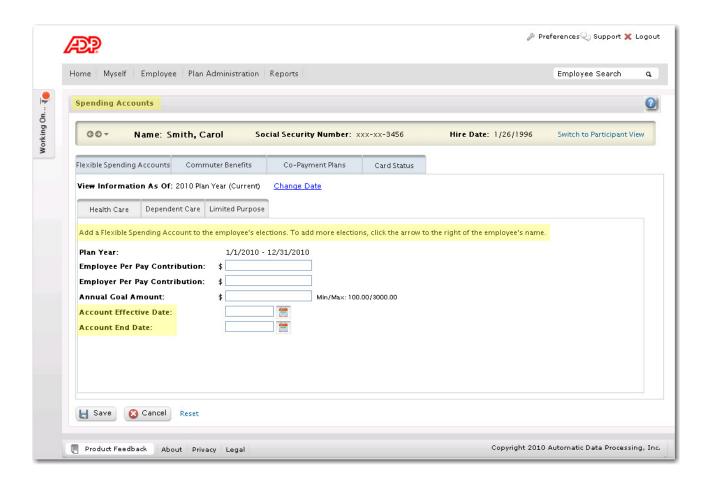


Course Authoring Tools

- Adobe Captivate
- Articulate Presenter
- Techsmith Camtasia



Procedural User Assistance



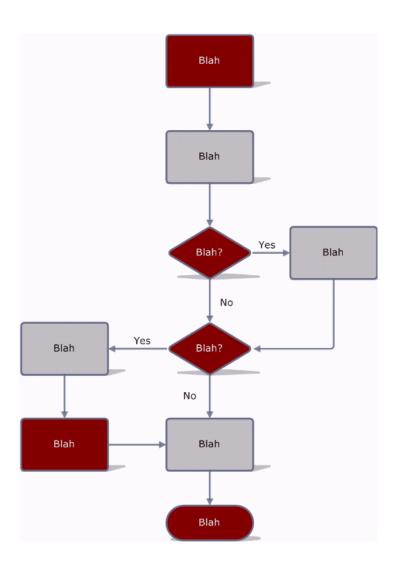


What Tools Do You Need?

- 17 Application Pages
- Embedded Text Topics 49
- Page-Level Help Topics 12
- Field-Level Help Topics 18
- System Messages 155

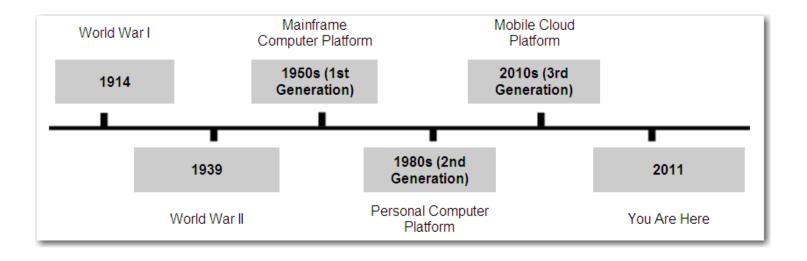


Start at the End





Tech Writing Timeline





1st Generation Platform: Mainframe Computers





2nd Generation Platform: Personal Computers











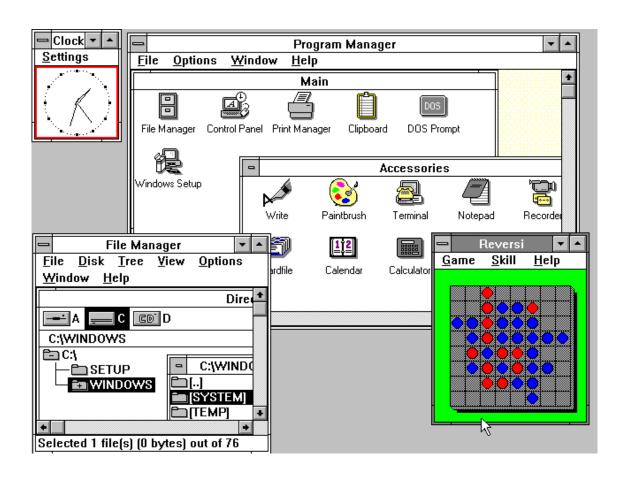


1981 — IBM PC



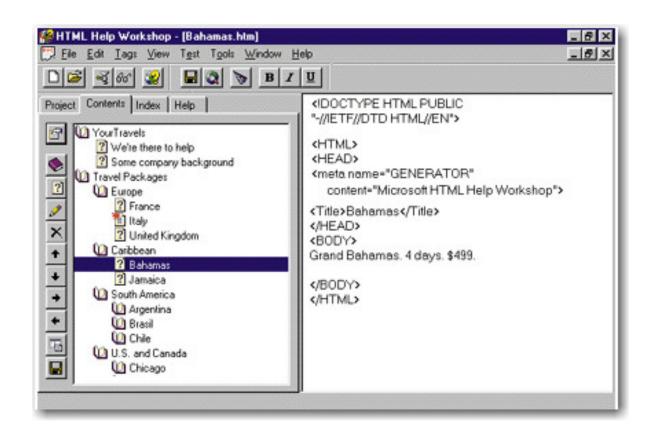


1990 — Windows 3.0



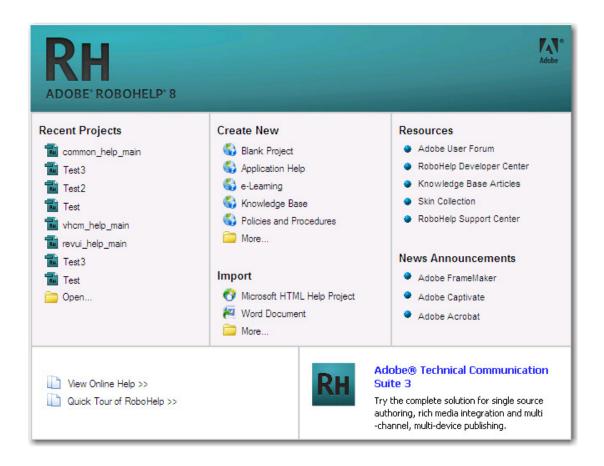


1990 — Windows Help





1991 — RoboHelp





Context-Sensitive Help





2nd Generation Cool Tools

- Adobe RoboHelp or Madcap Flare
- Adobe FrameMaker and/or MS Word
- Graphics Tools
 - Techsmith Snagit
 - Microsoft Visio
 - Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Acrobat



Help Authoring Tools: Overview

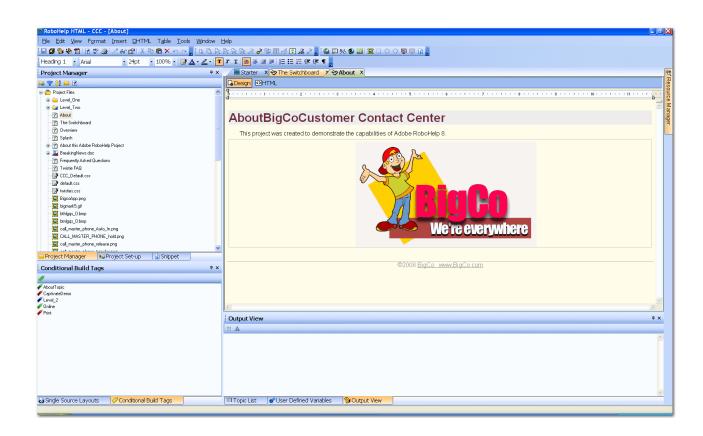
Either/or:

- Adobe RoboHelp
- Madcap Flare

Honorable Mention: Author-it



Help Authoring Tools: Adobe RoboHelp



For More Information

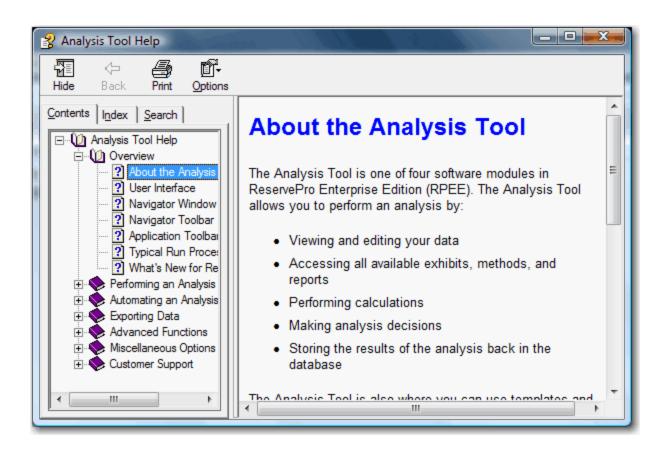


Help Authoring Tools: Adobe RoboHelp

- Content for help systems, policies and procedures, and professional knowledgebases
- Multichannel, multidevice publishing
- Collaborative reviews, reusable assets, and dynamic user-centric content
- User-generated content and moderated or stored commenting



Help Authoring Tools: Adobe RoboHelp





Authoring Tools: RoboHelp





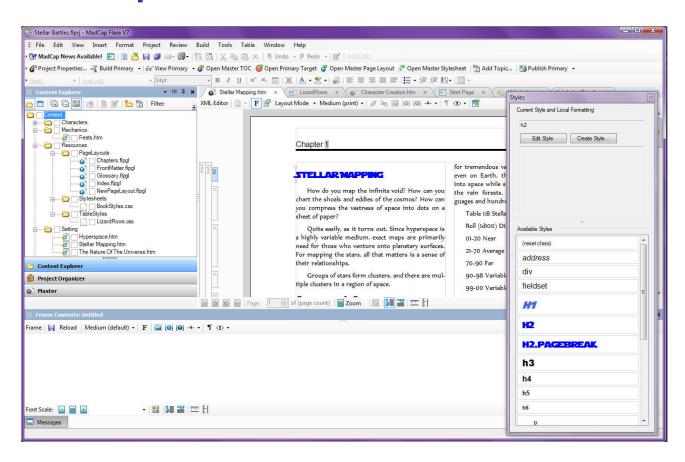
Help Authoring Tools: RoboHelp

Jeff's take:

- Industry standard
- Everyone has a horror story but still uses it
- Helped my career



Help Authoring Tools: Madcap Flare



For More Information

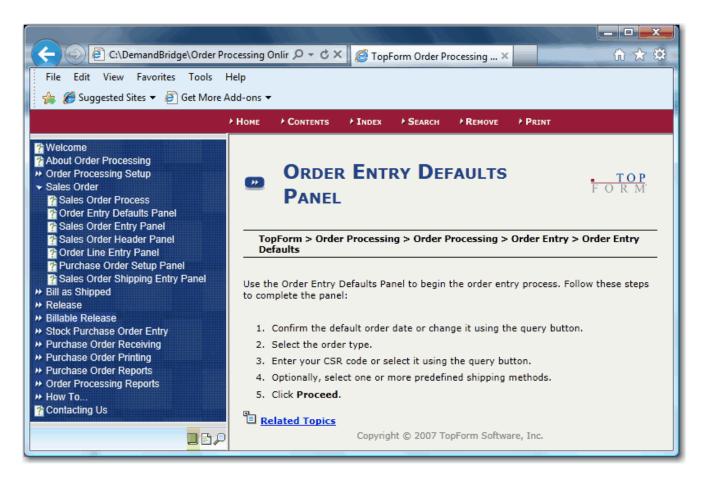


Help Authoring Tools: Madcap Flare

- Content authoring tool
- Print and online documentation
- Complex digital print publishing (PDF) or online Help systems (WebHelp and WebHelp Mobile)



Help Authoring Tools: Madcap Flare





Help Authoring Tools: Madcap Flare

Jeff's take:

- Good alternative from former RoboHelp developers
- Customizable, but requires some post-processing
- Use as XML Editor?



Help Authoring Tools: Comparison

Feature	RoboHelp 9	Flare 7
XMTML	Yes	Yes
Open Multiple Topics	Yes	Yes
Dot Net Help	No	Yes
Table Styles	Yes	Yes (better)
Snippets	Yes	Yes (better)
Variables	Yes	Yes (better)
508 Support	Yes	Yes (better)
Reports	Yes	Yes (better)
Feedback for Webhelp	Yes (Airhelp only)	Yes
Javahelp	Yes	No
Dynamic User-Centric Content	Yes	No
Airhelp	Yes (better)	Yes
Review Process	Yes (PDF)	Yes

Based on information provided in *MadCap Flare Certified Test Review* + *Developer's Guide* by Scott Deloach (available at www.amazon.com)



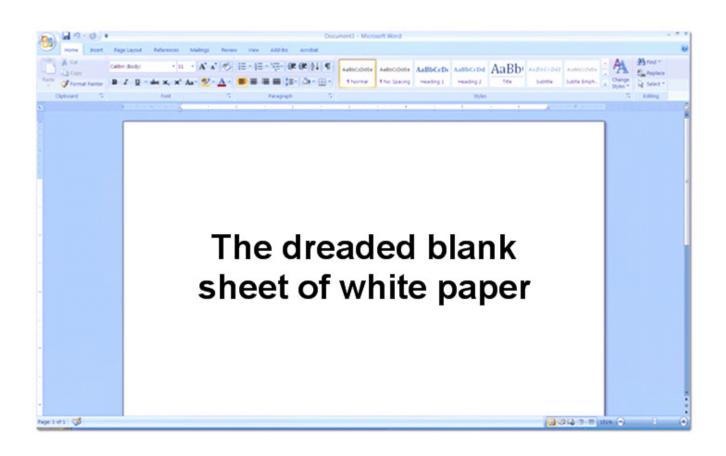
Word Processors: Overview

Both/and:

- Microsoft Word
- Adobe FrameMaker



Word Processors: Microsoft Word



For More Information



Word Processors: Microsoft Word

- Standalone or bundled with Office or Works
- First released in 1983 as Multi-Tool Word for Xenix systems
- Started on IBM PCs running DOS (1983) and Windows (1989)



Word Processors: Microsoft Word

Area	Issue	Details	
WAVES Import 061024-16853 - Event 252 - Retiree Personal Info Change - Functionality Update	Change – Functionality	EECENSUS dates fields should not be date referenced in WFSetup Tables Screen for EECENSUS, especially not the Date of Birth field. 'Recalculate' and 'Date Reference' need to be set in WFSetup →	
		Tables Screen for EECENSUS fields that allow updates on e-SS, which may cause a change in eligibility for the Retiree. The 'Date Reference' flag has to have a specified date field that allows the system to store the 252-event date. If the date reference is not set, the system uses the system process date for the system-generated event.	
WinFlex - Activate	061025-11040-1 Multiple Move-Rec Processes for the Same Event	A nextproc value of 44 - OE Activate was added to the system so the move rec process can be added twice to the Open Enrollment event. If desired, users can configure the Open Enrollment event to run the 44 - OE Activate prior to the 3 - Send to Voice to activate benefit defaults.	
Tools – Initial Implementation Import	070911-12515-1 Retirees Added to Initial Implementation Tool	The automatic loading of Retiree election and dependent data—along with enhanced IVR Error reporting for Retirees—was added to the Initial Implementation Import tool. For more information, refer to the Midyear Conversion Utility Configuration and Processing Guide or to the 070911-12515-1 Retirees Added to Initial Implementation Tool Product Development stories A, B, and C.	
Benefits – Benefit Plans	070626-21544-7 New Effective Date Adjustment Rule: "1st of Next Pay Period"	A new date rule, 1st of Next Pay Period, was added to the WFSRule system table and corresponding functionality was added to WinFlex. When this date rule is selected as the WFSetup → Benefit → Benefit Plans → Eligibility Groups Wait Rule, Coverage End Rule, or the Effective Date Adjustment Rule, the date returned is the first day of the next payroll period. This date is found by determining which pay period the event effective date falls within and selecting the first day of the following pay period.	
Calculate Eligible Calculation N	061025-11042-1 Ineligible to Eligible Calculation Not Using Correct Frozen Field	Two new Client Data references have been created as a result of this enhancement: Reset Frozen Values for Newly Eligible Events	
		When the Client Data reference RESETNWELG is set to True, a Newly Eligible employee's benefit calculation is based on the current demographic data instead of frozen values. This means that all demographic data sent prior to the Newly Eligible event is removed from EEDATA for benefit calculation purposes.	
		Default Newly Eligible Employee into New Hire Defaults When the Client Data reference RESETNWDFT is set to True, the Newly Eligible employee defaults to the New Hire default benefits. When the RESETNWDFT is not set to True, the existing functionality of defaulting the employee back into their previous benefits occurs.	



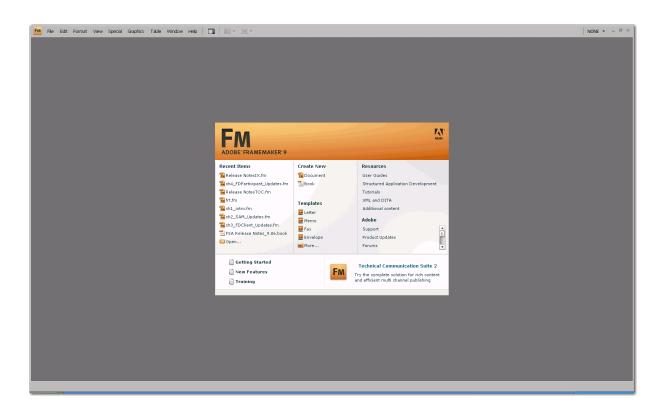
Word Processors: Microsoft Word

Jeff's take:

- Default word processor
- Business letter producer that got out of control
- Nightmarish for robust technical doc (sections, TOC, Index, master documents, callouts)



Word Processors: Adobe FrameMaker



For More Information

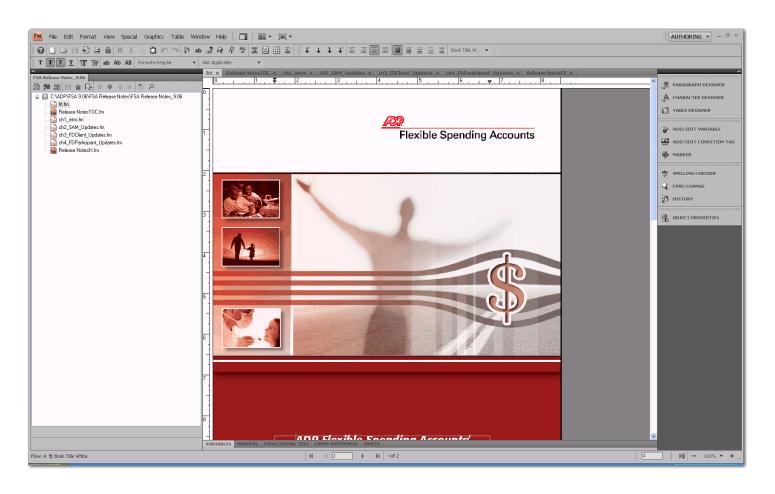


Word Processors: Adobe FrameMaker

- Authoring and publishing solution for unstructured, structured, and XML/DITA/S1000D content
- Document processor for the production and manipulation of large structured documents



Word Processors: Adobe FrameMaker





Word Processors: Adobe FrameMaker

Jeff's take:

- Still best option for robust doc
- Desktop publishing tool (PDF)
- Book metaphor
- Use as XML Editor?



Graphics Tools: Overview

- Screenshot Utilities
- Diagramming Software
- Image Editing Software



Screenshot Utilities: Overview

- Techsmith Snagit
- Inbit FullShot



Screenshot Utilities: Techsmith Snagit



For More Information

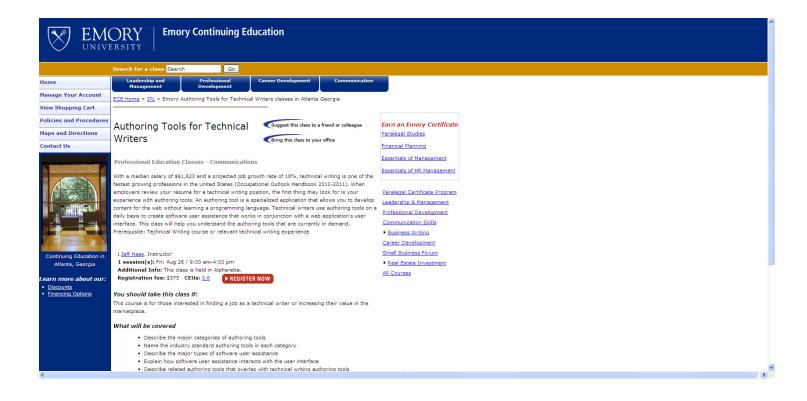


Screenshot Utilities: Techsmith Snagit

- Windows only
- Replaces the native Print Screen function with additional features
- Contains most features needed by technical writers



Screenshot Utilities: Techsmith Snagit





Screenshot Utilities: Techsmith Snagit

Jeff's take:

- Industry standard, good tool
- New features include capturing embedded objects like links, pictures, and multimedia
- Upload to Flickr, etc.

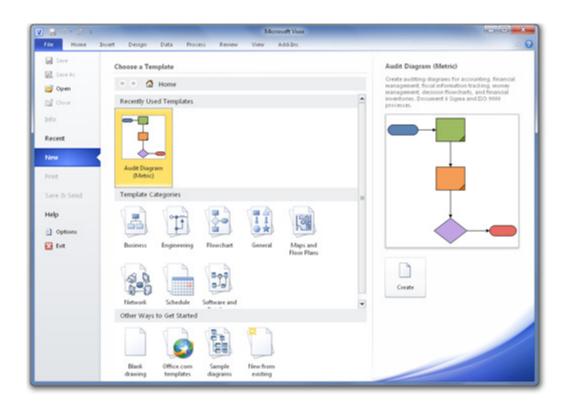


Diagramming Software: Overview

- Microsoft Visio
- CorelDRAW



Diagramming Software: Microsoft Visio



For More Information

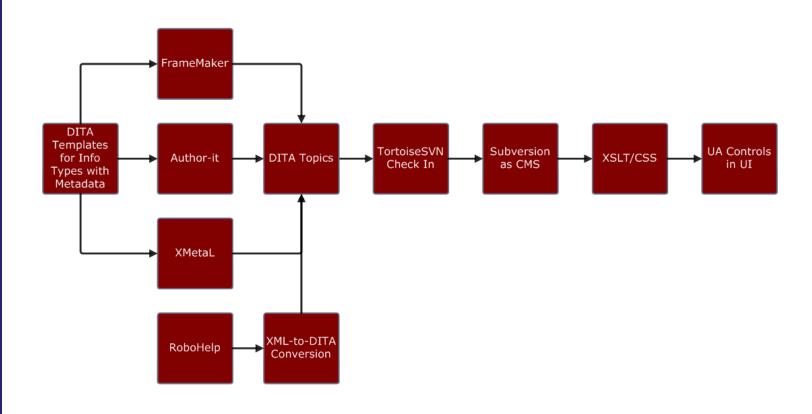


Diagramming Software: Microsoft Visio

- Commercial diagramming program for Windows
- Uses vector graphics to create diagrams



Diagramming Software: Microsoft Visio





Diagramming Software: Microsoft Visio

Jeff's take:

- A fun tool to use
- Great for creative brainstorming
- Used for processes, software architecture, and organization charts



Image Editing Software: Overview

- Adobe Photoshop
- Corel PaintShop Photo Pro (Cheaper)
- GIMP (Free)





For More Information



- Graphics editing program
- 2003 "Creative Suite" rebranding led to Photoshop 8 renamed as Photoshop CS
- 12th major release of Photoshop







Jeff's take:

- New version is nothing short of astonishing
- Content-aware feature
- Disappearing man and Sydney opera house

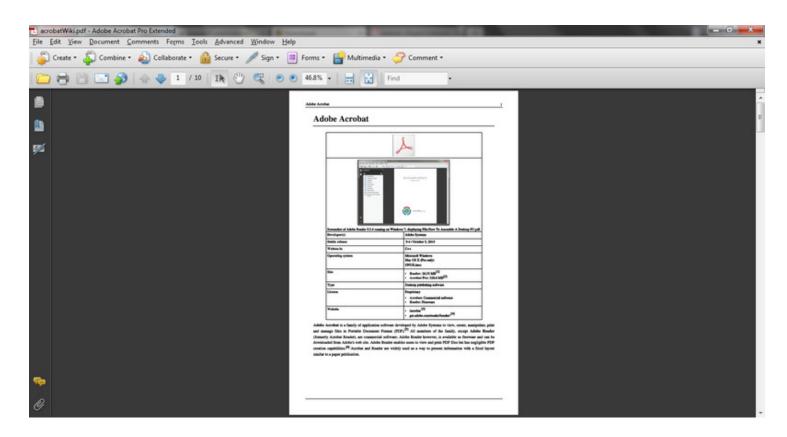


Conversion Utilities: Overview

- Adobe Acrobat Pro Extended
- Webworks ePublisher
- Calibre



Conversion Utilities: Acrobat Pro Extended



For More Information



Conversion Utilities: Acrobat Pro Extended

- Family of application software
- View, create, manipulate, print and manage files in Portable Document Format (PDF)
- Commercial software except Adobe Reader (formerly Acrobat Reader)



Conversion Utilities: **Pro** versus Reader

- SharePoint integration
- Office 2011-ready
- PDF Portfolios
- Panels interface
- Improved OCR
- Enterprise deployment
- Acrobat X suite



Conversion Utilities: Pro versus **Reader**

- Protected mode security
- Sticky notes and highlighter
- Improved browser integration
- Simplified panels interface
- Enterprise deployment
- Reader for Android



Conversion Utilities: Adobe Acrobat

Jeff's take:

- How could we live without it?
- Adobe continues to make significant upgrades
- Move from printing Postscript files to saving PDFs using PDFMaker?



Abraham Maslow Quote



"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."

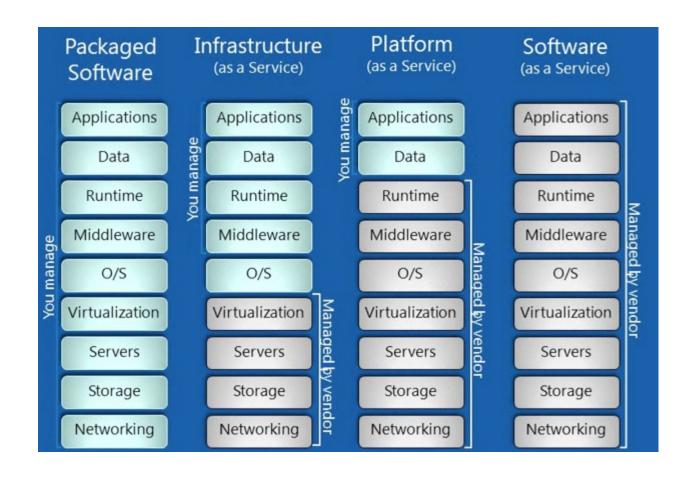


3rd Generation Platform: Mobile Cloud Computers





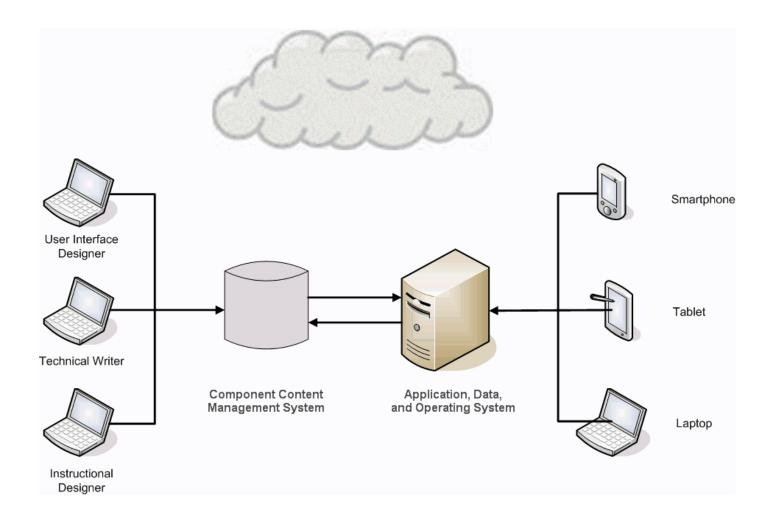
Cloud Architectures



From Windows Azure Platform: Cloud Development Jump Start"

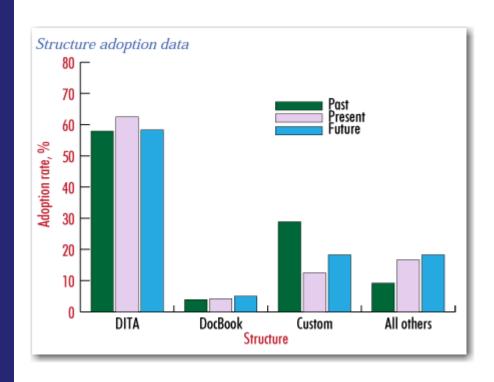


User Assistance Requirements





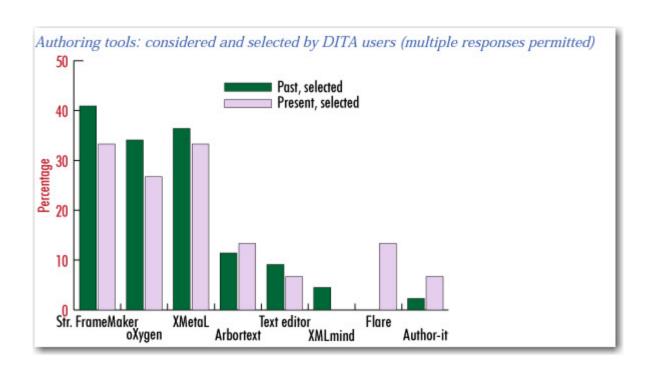
Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA)



From *The State of Structured Authoring by Pringle and O'Keefe* (available at www.amazon.com)



Authoring Tools for DITA



From *The State of Structured Authoring by Pringle and O'Keefe* (available at www.amazon.com)



Content Management System for DITA

The clear winner for past and present was "We do not use a CMS."

From *The State of Structured Authoring by Pringle and O'Keefe* (available at www.amazon.com)



3rd Generation Cool Tools: Procedural User Assistance

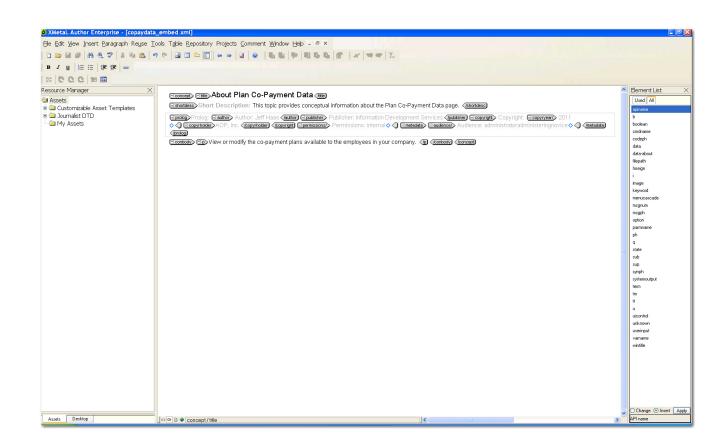
- XML Editor
- Content Management System
 - Document-Centered
 - Crowdsourcing Wiki
 - Low-End Component
 - -Proprietary Component
 - -Open Component
- Translation Management System



XML Editors: Overview

- JustSystems XMetaL Author
- SyncRO Soft
 <oXygen/> XML Editor

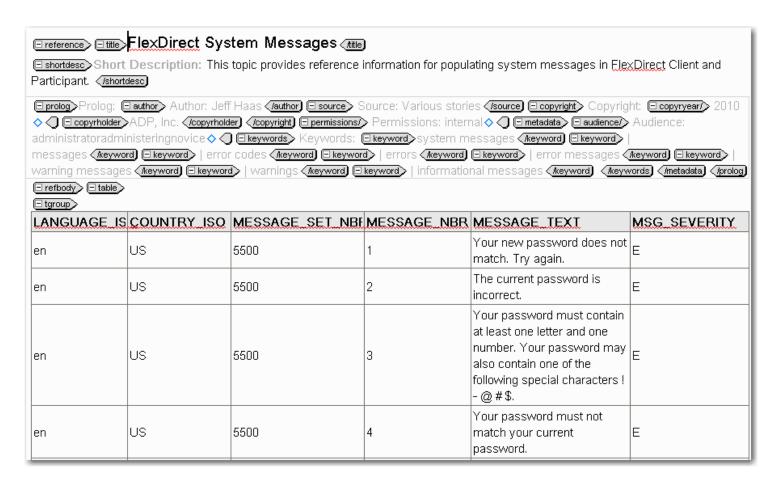






- Create and edit documents in XML and SGML
- Similar features to word processors but native XML editor
- Configure to work with standard and custom DTDs and XML Schema



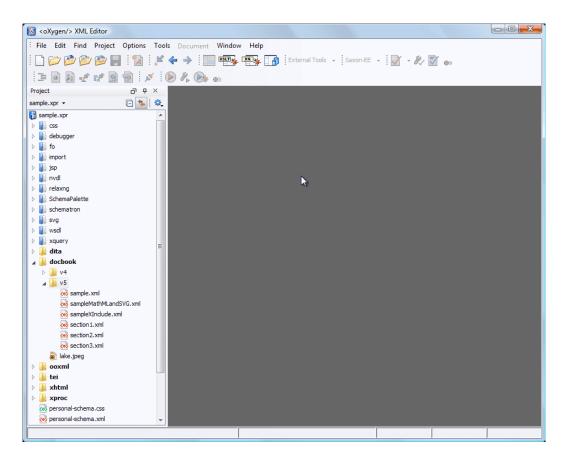




- Good for DITA
- Easy to update
- Automates workflow
- Easy to integrate with CCMS like Trisoft DITA?



XML Editors: <oXygen/> XML Editor

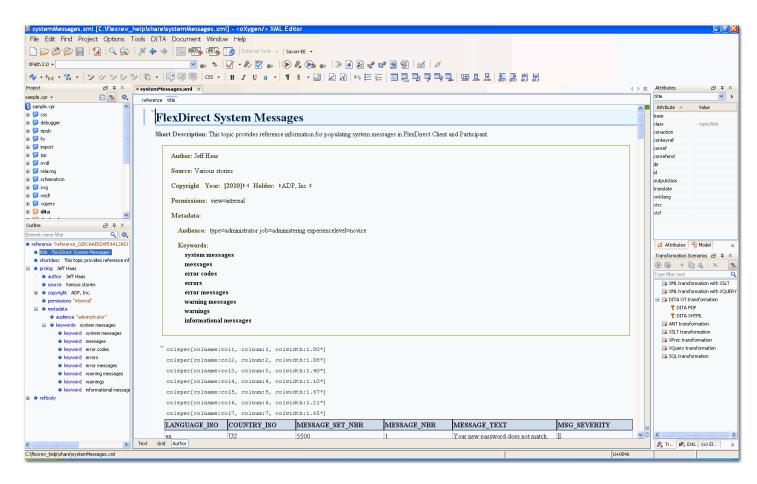




- Multi-platform XML editor, XSLT/XQuery debugger and profiler with Unicode support
- Java application that can run in Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux



XML Editors: <a>oXygen/> XML Editor





XML Editors: <oXygen/> XML Editor

- Cheaper than XMetaL
- UI not quite as intuitive
- Doesn't integrate as easily with CMS?
- Good alternative

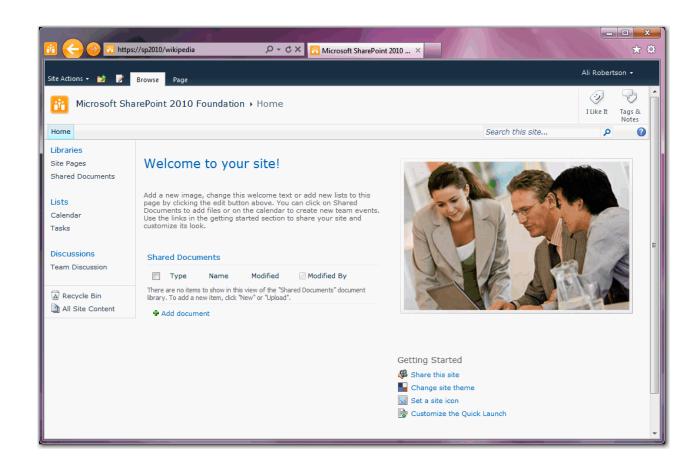


Content Management: Overview

- Document-Centered: SharePoint
- Crowdsourcing Wiki: Confluence
- Low-End Component: Subversion
- Proprietary Component: Author-it
- Open Component: SDL Trisoft DITA

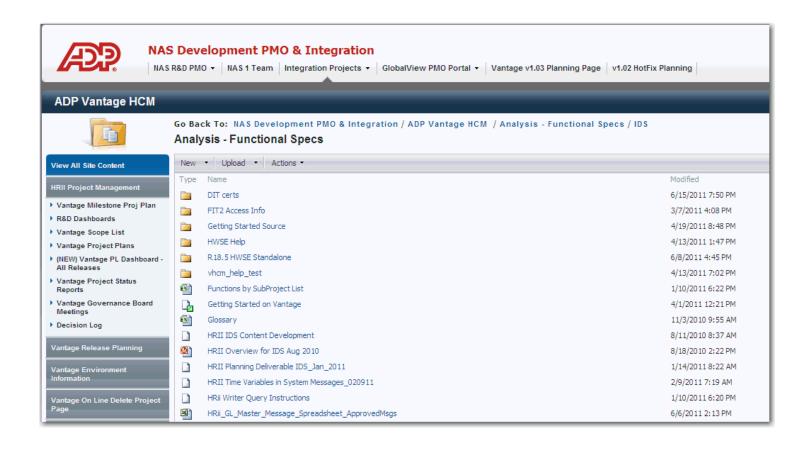


Content Management: Microsoft SharePoint





Content Management: Microsoft SharePoint



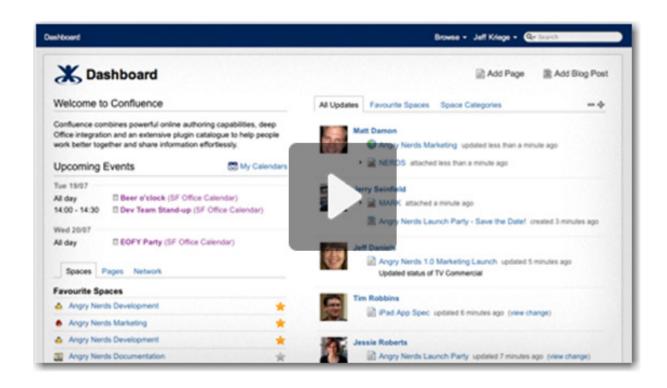


Content Management: Microsoft SharePoint

- Document-centric
- Only used internally
- Does not support components such as DITA objects

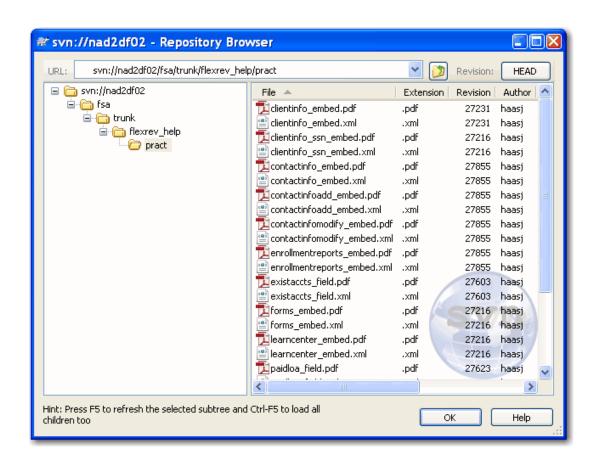


Content Management: Atlassian Confluence





Content Management: Apache Subversion



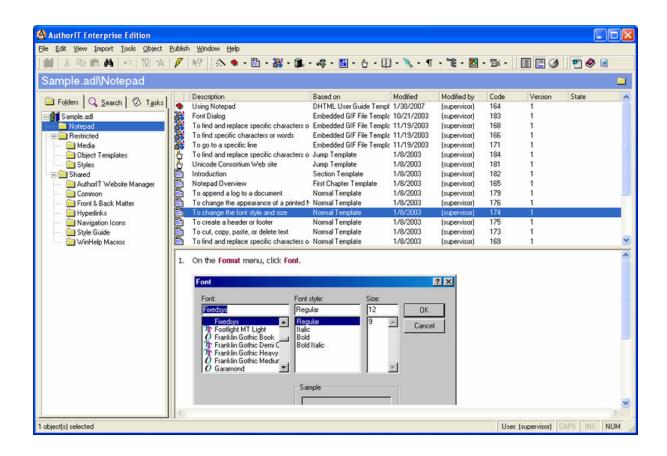


Content Management: Apache Subversion

- Poor man's CCMS
- Supports components such as DITA objects
- Version control and content management



Content Management: Author-it



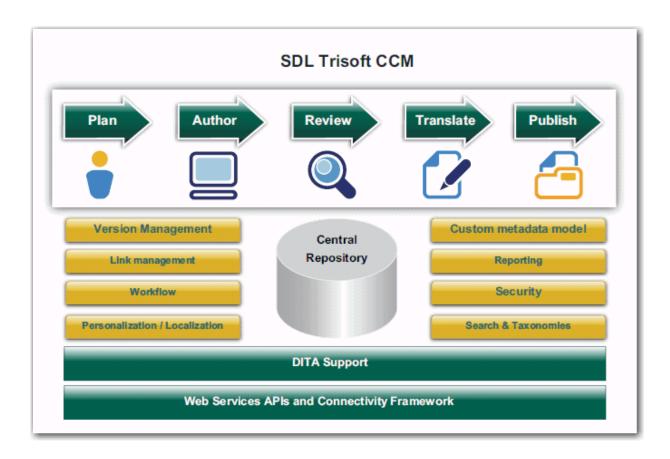


Content Management: Author-it

- True integration (XML Editor/CCMS/Translation)
- Proprietary
- Must "marry" the company
- Doesn't support true DITA output



Content Management: SDL Trisoft DITA





Content Management: SDL Trisoft DITA

- True DITA integration with XML editors like XMetaL
- Open source, non-proprietary
- Haven't seen it in use yet



Translation Management: SDL WorldServer





Q&A

"The key to success is helping others by doing what you love."

-Me