

The 20+ DITA Project Decisions

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Here is a list of choices that a DITA project needs to consider:

Conversion Choices

- Convert existing information to specific topic types or to generic topics?
- If generic topics: Nest the topics themselves (like the original), or make separate topics and nest topicrefs in a map?

Structuring Choices

- File naming and directory structures
- Allow sections in topics, or not
- Put index terms in the body of the document or in the prolog
- Use conditionals or composition? (see related article)
- Use word-level phrases for variables or sentence-level phrases?

Metadata Choices

- Metadata Define all expected metadata at the outset, make a minimal set and plan to evolve it, or define the metadata you see yourself needing in the next couple of years and ignore everything else.
- Make "hierarchical" metadata (Product A_1...B_2) or use separate dimensions (Product=A, B. Version=1,2).
- Are metadata specializations needed?
 - If so, does it make more sense to do domain attribute specialization, or use the <otherprops> element?

Linking Choices

- Keep links inline, in topics or restrict links to retables?
- Include links to external documents or not?
- If including links to external documents, use absolute links with a version# entity ref in the link (http://location/product_&version;/file) or use a "doc root" entity ref in the link (&docroot;/path/to/file)?

Differencing Choices

- Use status elements, manually marking items as new and changed.
- Use diffs maintained by the CMS or version-control system (VCS).
- Use processing instructions to identify changes.

Processing Choices

- Formatting Strategy: Break formatting-template into sections and encode in XSLT for use as DITA OT arguments; or extract content from generated pages and insert into copy of template.

- Processing Mechanism: Use the Open Toolkit, use CMS production tools (if available), or use editor production tools
- Process Control: Always generate all docs, implement dependency-driven builds, or deliver documents dynamically, upon request.

Branding and Styling Choices

- Use CMS templating mechanisms, if available
- Otherwise:
 - Add XSLT transforms to Open Toolkit processing
 - Feed Open Toolkit output into downstream processes
 - Find or build a template system, where you can modify a WYSIWYG template (for example) and auto-convert the template into XSLT transforms.

Specialization Choices

- Create specialized topics or use generic topics?