
XML Authoring for Those Who Don't Like Markup

Jon Parsons

Abstract

This vendor presentation offers a technology demonstration of two XML authoring interfaces that make authoring in XML radically simpler than it has historically been. Both show the value of capturing content in XML and introducing it immediately into a managed content environment in which workflow can be automated and content can be reused to meet business goals.

Advances in word processing technology now enable people to author simple documents in an interface they are familiar with. They no longer need to know a lot about markup, the schema in use, or be distracted by other concerns than writing what they want to write. This simpler interface, built upon a Microsoft "Smart Doc" solution provides support for authors who are focused on the content they are writing rather than the markup that describes it. At the same time, the author is producing valid XML that can be routed for review and approval, used for multi-channel delivery, or reused by other authors in the enterprise.

Several scenarios of how such an authoring/management system could be used to solve business challenges are described.

A second innovative interface based on a forms-oriented approach will also be demonstrated. Such a forms-based environment can become a hybrid between fielded data supplied from or sent to a database and free-form narrative that is written to describe a product or symptom or supply some other content that requires prose. As with the first interface, the user is unaware of the XML in the background, and here simply fills in the form that is presented. Again, once saved, the information is captured in a valid XML instance and able to be processed in a number of ways both to make use of the information supplied and to deliver it in multiple forms.

This demonstration shows how the lessons learned regarding the management of XML in high-end solutions can be applied to new classes of content, extending the range of XML deployment within an organization or enterprise. The return on investment in automation, reliability, and reuse found in "classic" XML environments can now be realized as well for a wider set of content classes that until now were considered "unstructured". Similarly, it is now possible to extend the benefits of XML into areas where cultural suspicions prevented the introduction of markup or where authors resisted the move to XML because they felt it intrusive, distracting, or unproductive.

The presentation highlights the benefits of standardizing on XML by enabling the integration of tools for authoring, management, and delivery of content. This in turn opens up new opportunities for greater productivity, automation, and improved business processes.

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The author did not prepare a summary of this product presentation for the proceedings.

Biography

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Jon Parsons has over 20 years experience automating the creation, management, and delivery of content in multiple forms. Currently he directs product marketing for the Content@ content management system and XML Professional Publisher at XyEnterprise. Prior to XyEnterprise, he was a writer, editor, tools developer, and publishing consultant for Digital Equipment Corporation. Long an advocate of generic mark-up and an enthusiast for XML, he has served on the Board of Directors of OASIS, the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards and is a frequent speaker at trade shows and industry gatherings.