

Scott Prentice “Using DITA with FrameMaker”

By Jessica Arguilez Baris

At October’s STC San Diego chapter meeting, half of the attendees raised their hands when Scott Prentice asked if they were familiar with the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA). Almost everyone raised their hands to show they were familiar with FrameMaker.

“Things have moved quickly with DITA,” said Prentice. “It’s been around for 4 years and it is really taking publishing communities by storm.”

Scott Prentice has been a FrameMaker user since 1991 and a FrameMaker developer since 1997. With an extensive background in technical publications, he founded Leximation, which offers solutions for print and online publishing. Prentice began his presentation with an overview of some of the basic features of FrameMaker, including *Topics* and *Maps*.

“*Topic* is just a term for a collection of information in FrameMaker,” he said. “I typically tell people to start with generic topic types. A topic is very unstructured. You can use the elements in virtually any order, and you decide how you want your topics to look.”

“Think of a map as a table of contents,” advised Prentice. “You can rearrange topics within a map and you can make multiple maps that point to different types of content. You can even build a book from a map.”

In the second half of his presentation, Prentice covered DITA. When an audience member asked how DITA users can organize topics, books, maps, and graphic files so that they are all accessible, Prentice offered a solution.

“Use maps as an organization method. Have a map for each chapter and each book. It is to your advantage to use maps as a folder mechanism, and in the end you’ll see that by putting all of your files into one folder, you will eliminate linking problems in the future.”

Prentice closed by offering some tips regarding relationship tables in DITA.

“Relationship tables provide links between topics. I prefer the 2-column approach. One of the most important things to remember is that in-line cross references are bad. They make a topic less reusable. Rely less on in-line cross references and more on relationship tables when working in DITA.”

To learn more about Scott Prentice, visit his web site <http://www.leximation.com>.