

E PUB and Techcomm: Are we ready?



Scott Prentice, Leximation, Inc.

Introduction

— [Scott Prentice, President of Leximation, Inc.

— [Specializing in FrameMaker plugin development as well as structured FrameMaker conversions, consulting, and development. FrameMaker user/developer since 1991.

— [Developed DITA-FMx, a FrameMaker plugin for efficient DITA authoring and publishing.

— [Consulting for custom Help systems, creative/functional web applications, and EPUB solutions.

What is EPUB?

- [EPUB is an ebook file format that can be read on almost every device and platform
- [Requires a “reader” application or dedicated reader device
- [A collection of XHTML, XML, CSS, and media files wrapped up in a “zip” archive
- [Defines the content and formatting of the ebook

Brief history of EPUB

EPUB specification is maintained by IDPF

Initial EPUB format approved in 2007,
superseding Open eBook standard

EPUB 2.0.1 approved 2010

EPUB 3 approved October 2011

EPUB 3 Fixed Layout format approved May 2012

EPUB 3 Dictionaries/Indexes Working Groups, in progress



EPUB and techcomm?

— [Probably not for everyone .. yet

— [Best for “linear” content

— [Table-heavy docs may not be a good candidate

— [Likely not the “primary” deliverable, but nice to offer

— [If you’re single sourcing already, why not add one more deliverable?

— [No better way to make your docs available everywhere

Reader support

- [Dedicated ereader devices

- Kobo, Kindle, Nook, Sony, ...

- [Mobile devices (phones/tablets) with reader apps

- iBooks (iOS), Aldiko (Android), Kindle, Kobo, Nook apps, ...

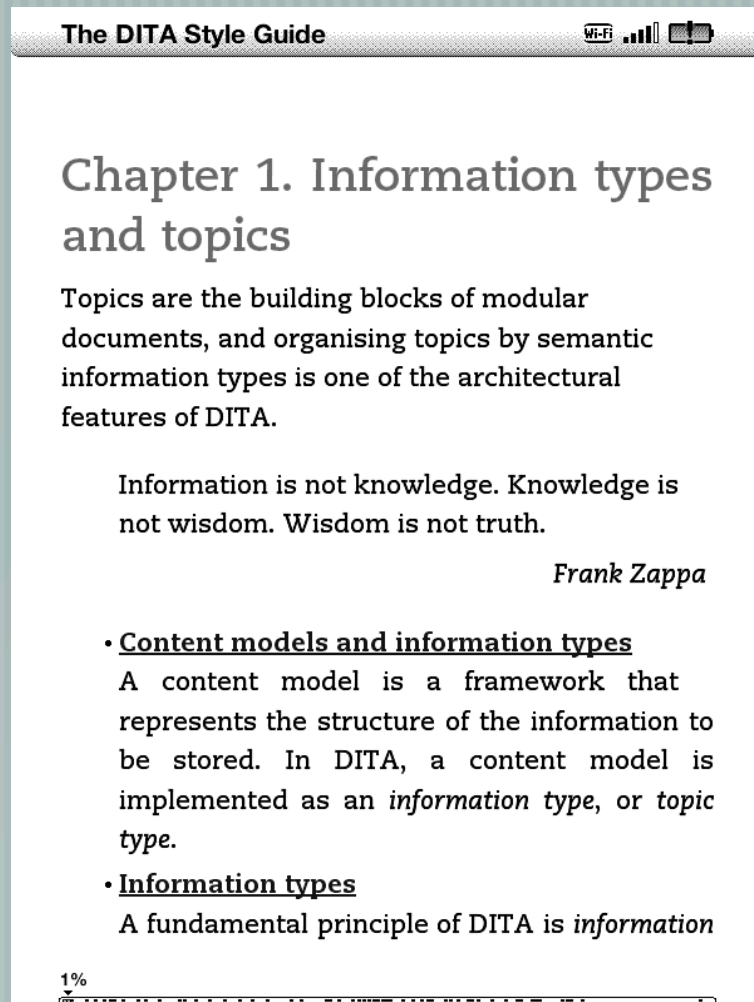
- [Desktop reader apps

- Firefox EPUBReader, Chrome Readium, Nook, ADE, Calibre, ...

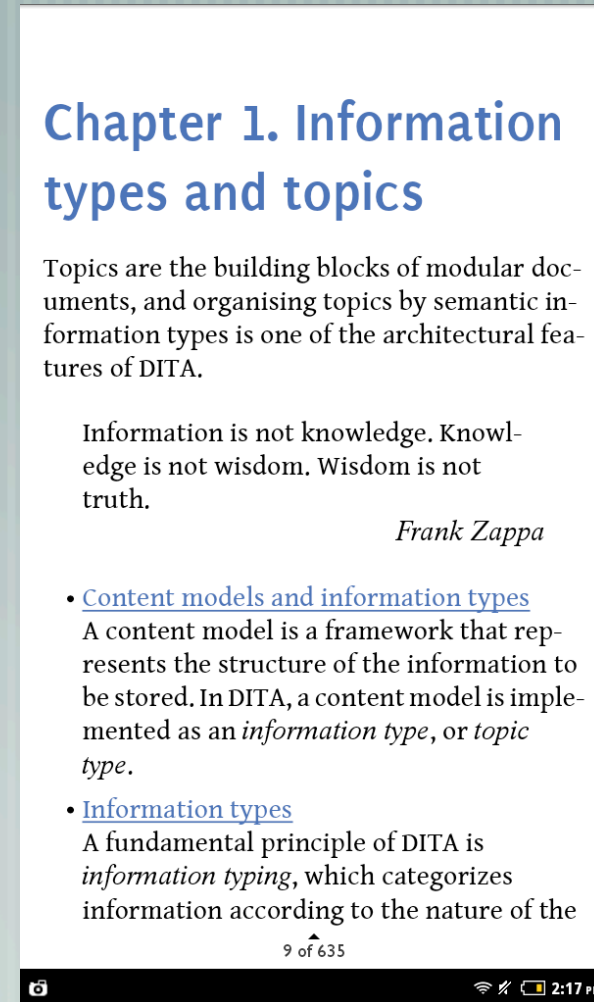
- [EPUB is likely to look different in each reader

The following images use the "DITA Style Guide" by Tony Self, published by Scriptorium Press (used with permission)

Dedicated ereaders

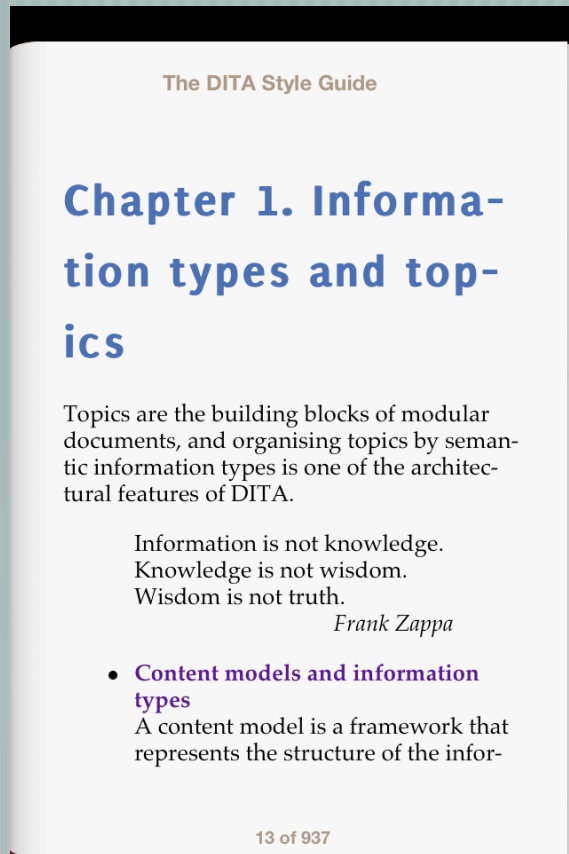


Kindle 4 basic

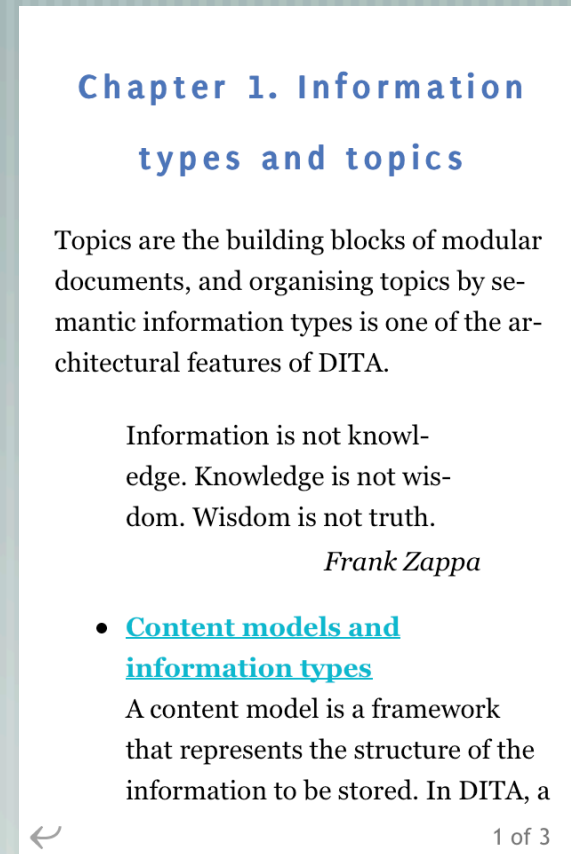


Nook Color

Mobile device + reader app



iPhone + iBooks app



iPhone + Kobo app

Mobile device + reader app

Chapter 1. Information types and topics

Topics are the building blocks of modular documents, and organising topics by semantic information types is one of the architectural features of DITA.

Information is not knowledge. Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is not truth.

Frank Zappa

- **Content models and information types**

A content model is a framework that represents the structure of the information to be stored. In DITA, a content model is implemented as an **information type**, or **topic type**.

- **Information types**

A fundamental principle of DITA is **information typing**, which

Galaxy S3 + Kindle app

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iPhone + Kindle app

Desktop reader apps

The DITA Style Guide

- About The DITA Style Guide
 - The role of a style guide
 - Conventions used in this book
 - Acknowledgements
- Chapter 1. Information types and topics
 - Content models and information types
 - Information types
 - What is a topic?
 - Working with topics
 - Specialized information types
 - Topic exemplars
- Chapter 2. DITA map files
 - Purpose of ditamap files
 - Topic manifest
 - Topic hierarchy
 - Relationship tables
 - Linking relationships
 - Inheritance and cascades in ditamaps
 - Embedded (or nested)

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A fundamental principle of DITA is *information typing*, which categorizes information according to the nature of the content. The three base DITA information types are concept, task and reference.

Chrome + Radium

The DITA Style Guide - Tony Self

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 - Embedded (or nested) ditamaps
 - DITA map vocabulary
 - The bookmark feature
- Chapter 3. Syntax and mark-up
 - Organization of DITA elements
 - Working with mark-up

Chapter 1. Information types and topics

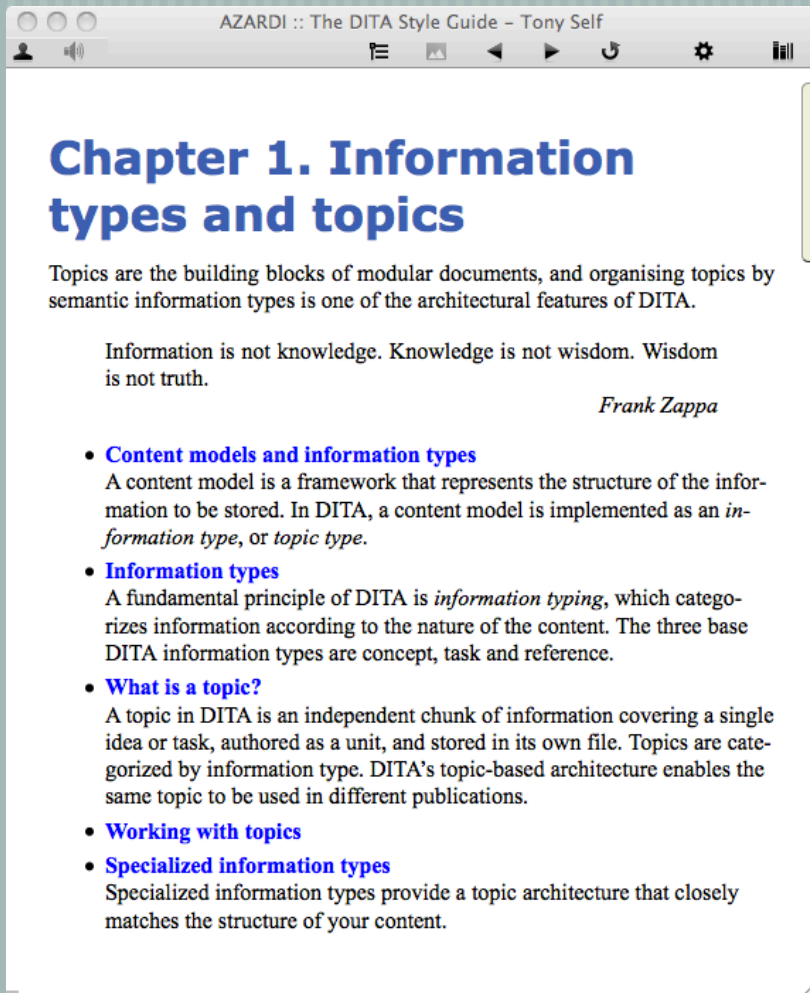
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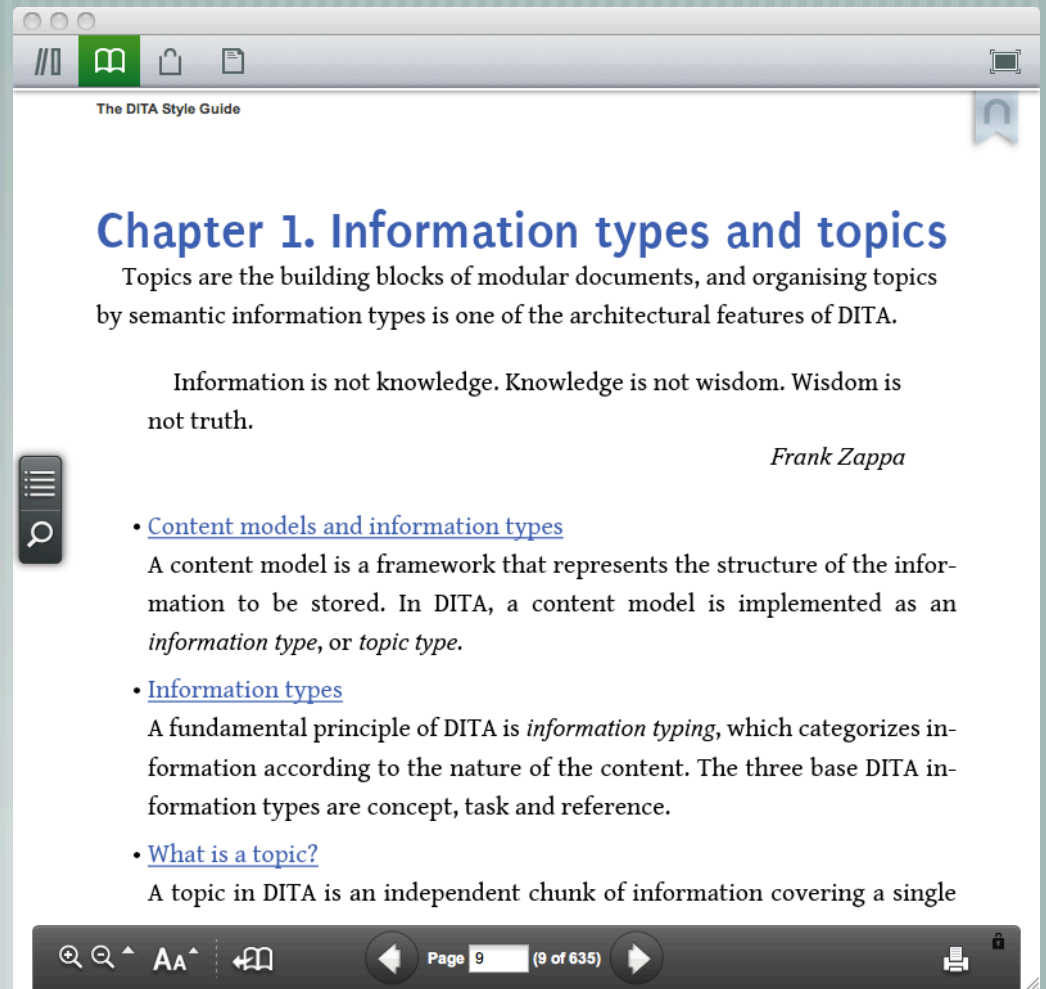
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- **Information types**
A fundamental principle of DITA is *information typing*, which categorizes information according to the nature of the content. The three base DITA information types are concept, task and reference.
- **What is a topic?**
A topic in DITA is an independent chunk of information covering a single idea or task, authored as a unit, and stored in its own file. Topics are categorized by information type. DITA's topic-based architecture enables the same topic to be used in different publications.

Firefox + EPUBReader

Desktop reader apps

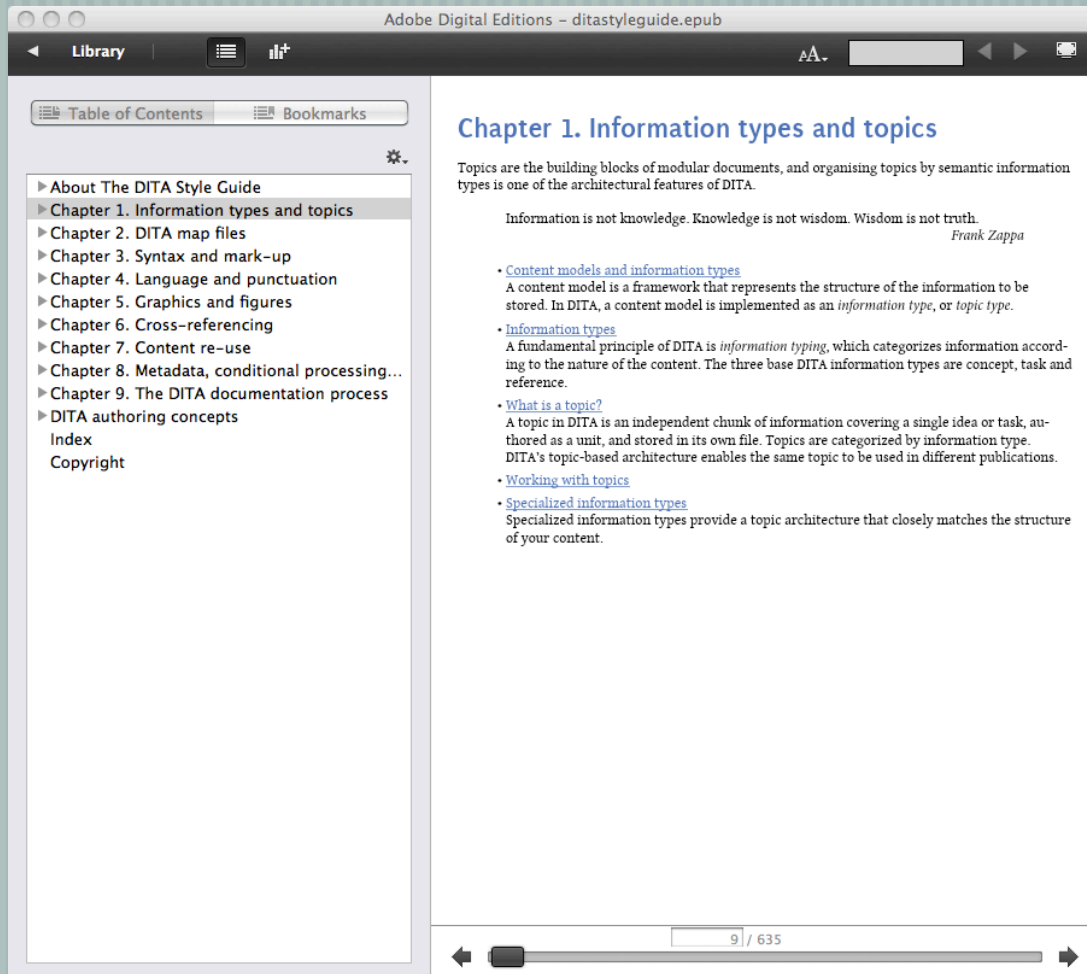


AZARDI

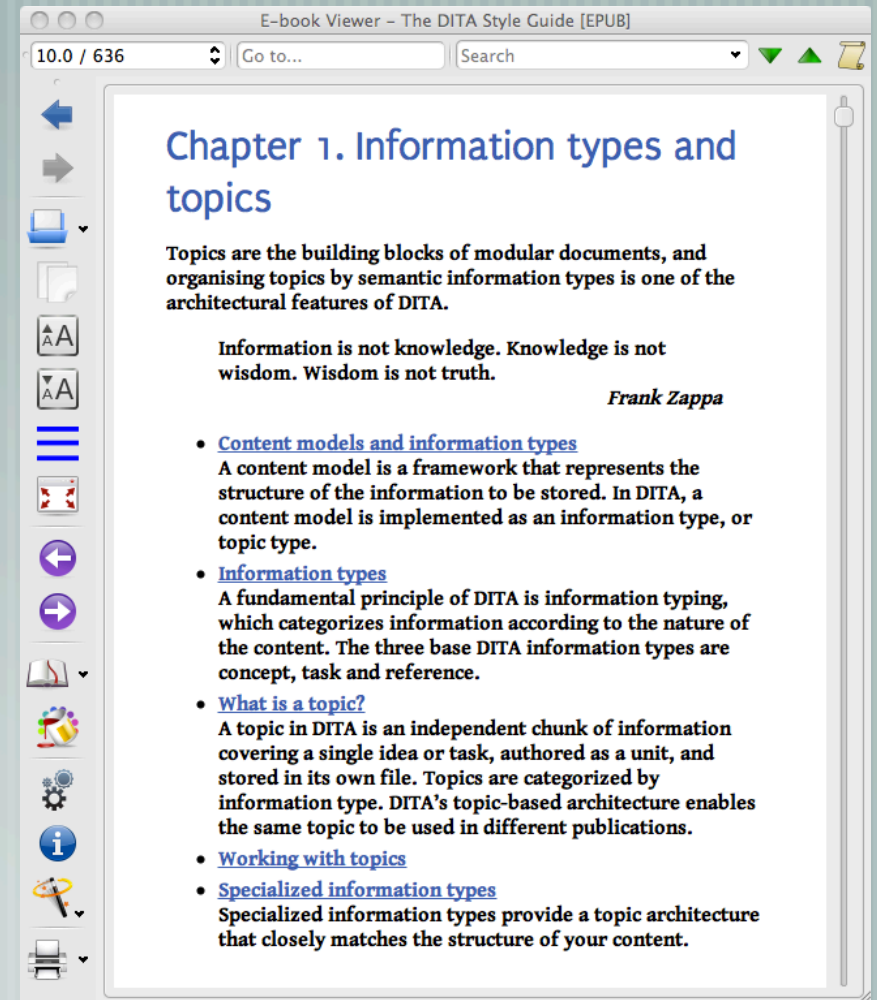


Nook desktop

Desktop reader apps



Adobe Digital Editions



Calibre

Technologies and tools

— [Just a collection of XHTML, CSS, XML and media files

— [Techcomm developers will want to single-source from existing content (assumption)

— [Could hand-code .. but don't

— [Use a tool (HAT or script) to create the basic files

— [Fine tune (manually) as needed

EPUB 2 or EPUB 3?

— [EPUB 3 is current spec, but full support still weak

— [Use simple EPUB 3 or EPUB 2

— [EPUB 3 adds interactivity, multimedia, more (via HTML 5)

— [To take full advantage of EPUB 3 you'll have to hand code, no tools provide interactive features (yet)

— [If you do include EPUB 3 features, it will limit the readers

Formatting

— [Rule #1 .. Keep It Simple!

— [The least formatting produces the best looking EPUB on the widest array of readers

— [Embedded fonts? Don't bother.

— [Your goal is to make the content "available" not to make a finely crafted work of art .. right?

— [Use CSS selectors not @style attributes

What about Kindle?

- [Kindlegen (from Amazon) converts EPUB to MOBI/KF8
- [May require modifications to EPUB for decent Kindle output
- [Simple EPUB coding produces the best Kindle output
- [KF8 supports some of the EPUB 3 features
- [Always test after conversion!

Epub publishing tools

— [Adobe TCS (RoboHelp, FrameMaker)

— [ComponentOne Doc-To-Help

— [EC Software Help & Manual

— [MadCap Flare

— [Webworks ePublisher

— [Other options .. DITA-OT, Docbook, FrameMaker/Word plugins

Publishing tool issues

— [Internal EPUB file structure - simpler makes it easy to make manual modifications

— [Use of “fake” lists vs. real HTML lists

— [Use of @style attributes on elements vs. CSS classes

— [Limited metadata

— [Control of “chapter” breaks

— [“EPUB 3” tools really don’t offer more than EPUB 2

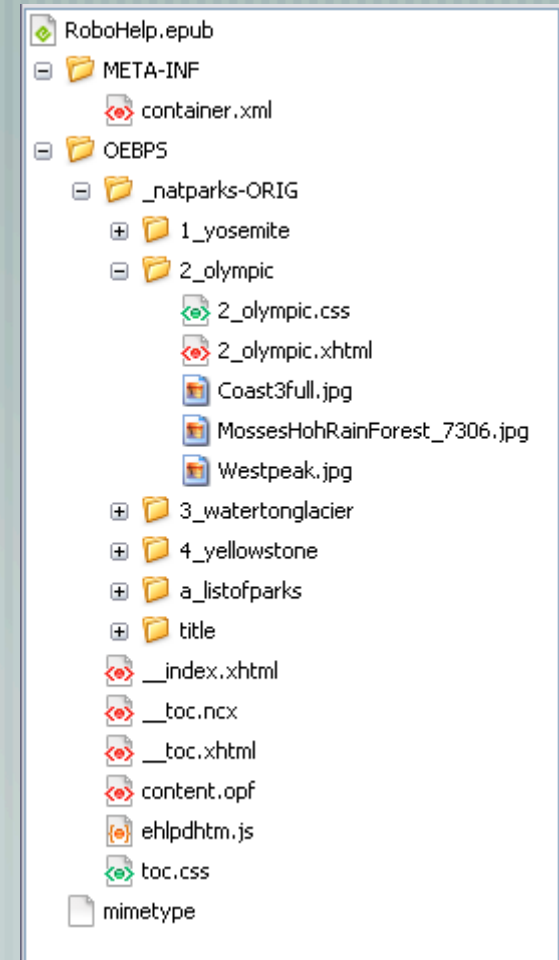
Adobe TCS

EPUB 3 (pretty good)

Import from FrameMaker, Word, DITA, and Help sources

+ TOC, Index, Glossary, reasonable metadata, cover page

- Awkward file structure, "fake" lists, hard-coded @style attributes



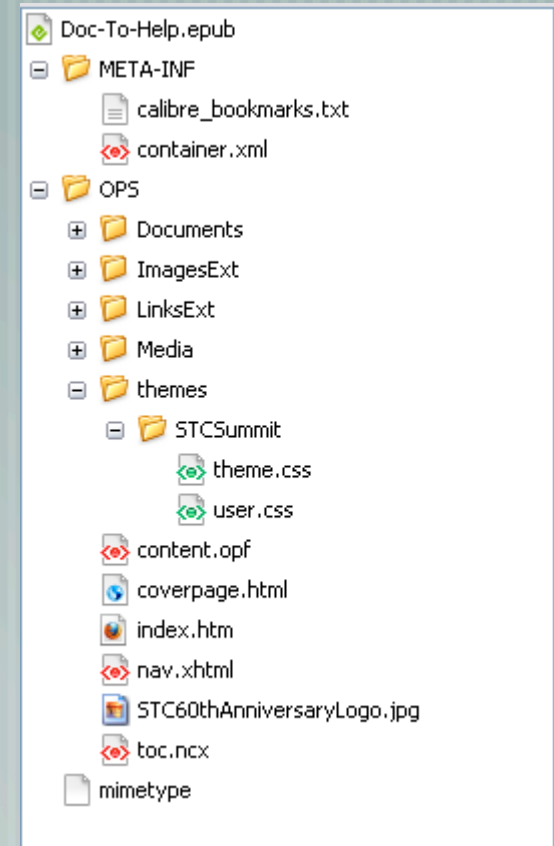
ComponentOne Doc-To-Help

— [EPUB 3 (almost)

— [Import from Word and Help sources

+ TOC, Index, Glossary, cover page

- Complex file structure, “fake” lists,
limited metadata, hard-coded @style
attributes, stylesheet problems

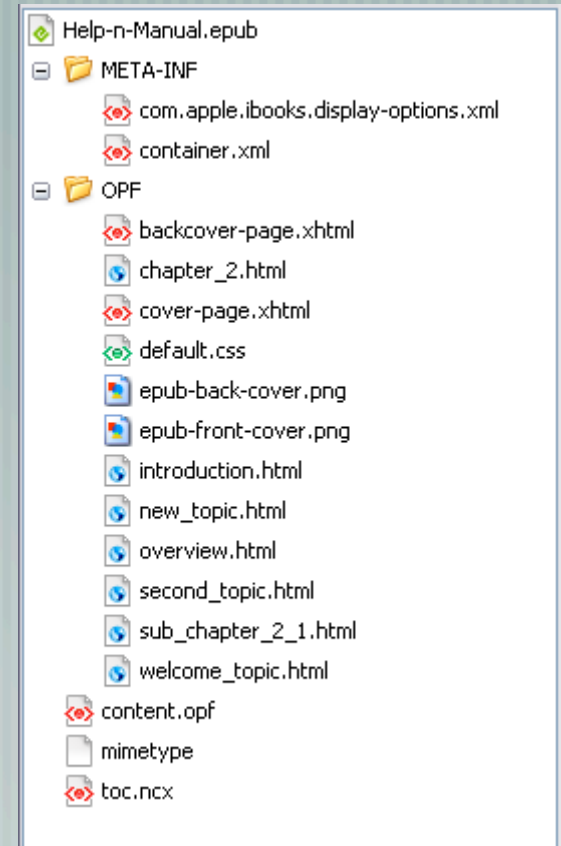


EC Software Help & Manual

EPUB 2

Import from Word and Help sources

- + TOC, good metadata, simple file structure, front (and back!) cover
- No Index support, “fake” lists (option for real lists), no chapter-break control



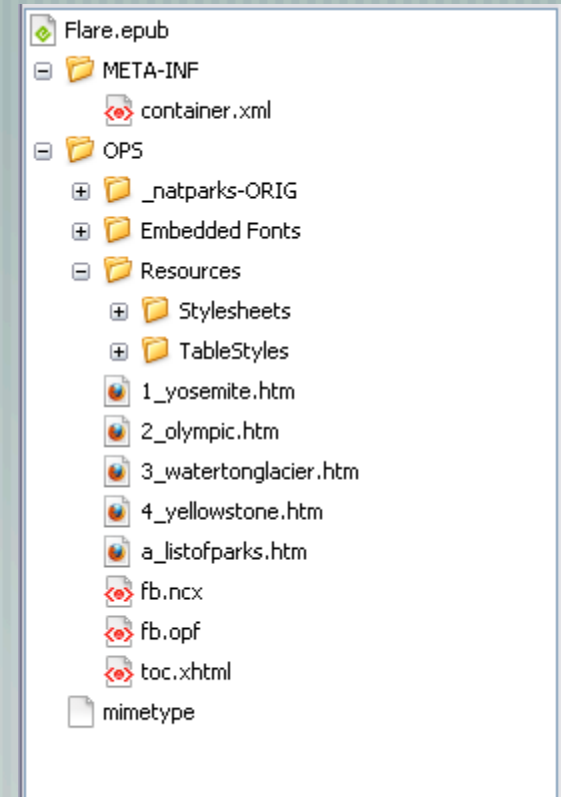
MadCap Flare

EPUB 3 (mostly)

Import from FrameMaker, Word, DITA, and Help sources

+ TOC, Index, Glossary, cover page

- Complex file structure, "fake" lists, limited metadata, hard-coded @style attributes



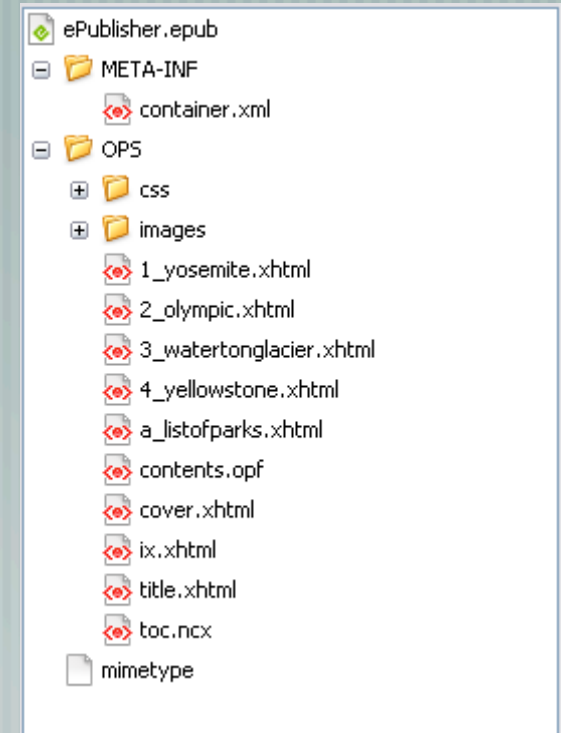
Webworks ePublisher

— [EPUB 2

— [Import from FrameMaker, Word, DITA

+ TOC, Index, Glossary, nice file structure, cover page

- Very limited metadata, “fake” lists, hard-coded @style attributes, requires considerable setup



Other publishing tools

- [DITA Open Toolkit + DITA for Publishers plugin

- EPUB 2, very clean output

- [Docbook

- EPUB 2 and 3, various options

- [FrameMaker + ElmSoft EPubFm2 (FM 6-10)

- EPUB 2, nice job, low cost

- [Word plugins? (YMMV)

EPUB tools and utilities

- [EPUB editor

- Oxygen XML editor

- BlueGriffon EPUB Edition

- Sigil

- [Calibre - multi-purpose tool

- [epubcheck - validator

- [kindlegen - converts EPUB to MOBI/KF8

DEMO!

- [Open EPUB in Oxygen XML editor

- Review general file structure and features

- Show validation features

- [Open EPUB in Sigil or BlueGriffon

- [Show desktop readers

Resources

— [EPUB 3 specification - idpf.org/epub/30

— [EPUB 3 Fixed Layout Format specification - idpf.org/epub/fxl

— [CSS 3 Module Info - www.css3.info/modules

— [Liz Castro - www.pigsgourdsandwikis.com

— [Ebook Ninjas Podcasts - ebookninjas.com

— [Resources - www.epubtest.com/resources.php

— [Follow #eprdctn on Twitter

— [Scott Prentice <[scott AT leximation.com](mailto:scott@leximation.com)> - www.leximation.com