



TOC: 2003 has been the “year of content,” and 2004 promises even more excitement. By content I mean a “book-like collection of related information objects;” “book-like” because nearly all content carries some of the attributes of books.

# Content: New Respect, Mainstream Vendor Support

ROBERT J. BOERI

2003 has been the “year of content,” and 2004 promises even more excitement. By content I mean a “book-like collection of related information objects;” “book-like” because nearly all content carries some of the attributes of books. Content is meant for human consumption; you can often go from beginning to end or skip around to what interests you; and content objects combining information types (books, for example, usually contain text and pictures.). When you include sound, video, images, and text as additional information object types, however, “content” covers a multitude of information needing management and from which added value can be extracted. Increasingly, there is also a tie-in between content and XML, with over 150 XML standards in development or released by the World Wide Web Consort.

Except for Web content management systems, until 2003, there were not a great many products for the broader view of content management. In the past year, however, two interesting trends emerged: traditional document management vendors are developing (or acquiring) content management products. And text—long suffering for XML content management products—has all major vendors touting their content-centric XML products.

Let’s take a look at some industry leaders in content management, XML development, and XML content-centric authoring to illustrate what has happened in 12 months and what you can expect in 2004. First, consider Documentum, a decade-young document management company and bellwether for the industry. Until release 5 in late 2002, content management at Documentum meant only “Web content management.” Since then, the company has acquired, integrated, and is selling products for rich media management, enterprise publishing, records management, and collaboration). Of course, Documentum isn’t the only vendor in this space; Scientific-Technical-Medical (STM) and other complex publishing management has long been a forte of XyEnterprise, also with deep roots in SGML and XML.

On the XML development side, consider Altova. Its Windows-based xmlspy was a reliable product for creating XML document models several years ago, with a single-license cost of about \$50. Today, its high-end “xmlspy Enterprise Edition” retails for nearly

\$1,000 and is a richly functional, standards-based product. XML developers like its project-oriented approach for developing XML models, XSL transformations to HTML, and validation of XML content. xmlspy will even let you convert your present HTML-based Website into XML. xmlspy also comes bundled with stylevision for converting XML into HTML or PDF. This year, Altova also began distributing its authentic XML authoring tool for free (although you still need some version of xmlspy to create a framework for using authentic). Altova also introduced a brand new application called mapforce, a visual tool for converting XML content of one type to XML of another type, or for transforming content between databases and XML. Transformations are via either XSLT—the XML standard for converting XM—or Java.

Creating XML content, however, is where the excitement has really been in 2003. Standards-based XML tools have been available for several years for STM and high-end content publishing. Arbortext’s XML authoring solution now has fissioned into two products: the client-based Epic Editor and a Web-based tool called Arbortext Contributor. The former is more powerful; the latter is intended for simple or short documents. Corel’s XMetaL 4 is a platform extending XML content editing to virtually any Windows application, including email and Web browsers. Corel is also addressing the graphical side of XML content (SVG) in its Smart Graphics Studio. Corel’s Office 11 WordPerfect broadened its support for XML. Adobe has promised a new form design and delivery product based on XML, and Adobe has extended support for XML in Acrobat. This even as SVG (an XML graphic standard co-authored by Adobe) begins to encroach on Acrobat’s Web-delivered Portable Document Format.

The biggest XML content story, however, comes from Microsoft, whose fourth quarter delivery of Office 2003 delivers the holy grail of Microsoft Word with the ability to deliver native

Creating XML content, however, is where the **excitement** has really been in 2003.

XML for office documents. Not stopping there, Microsoft is extending XML capabilities to Excel and Access, and has itself introduced a new XML forms-based product, InfoPath. Look for many vendors, including Arbortext and Documentum, to integrate with or provide added value to Office 2003.

Is there a fly in all this ointment? Yes, and it’s called “lethargy.” Macromedia’s VP of HTML product development, Sho Kuwamoto, was quoted as saying that “Many developers don’t see any reason to abandon previous technologies.” I’m skeptical about that. Lethargy or not, 2003 was the year content gained new respect, and 2004 will mark the beginning of widespread content-centric XML adoption. **EE**

ROBERT J. BOERI (bboeri@ieee.org) is a knowledge management analyst for a Boston-area biopharmaceutical firm.  
Comments? Email letters to the editor to eclletters@infoday.com.