

Writing Technical Documentation with DocBook and Publican

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Outline

- What is DocBook?
- Documentation toolkits
- Toolchains
- Publican
- Best Practices
- Examples
- Live Demos

What is DocBook?

- DocBook is a specification for technical documentation
- It defines a markup language for creating books, articles, websites
- Uses XML and XML tags
- Presentation-neutral form
- Publish in HTML, XHTML, PDF, ePub, man page

<http://www.docbook.org/>



DocBook

```
<book>
  <title>How to write a book</title>
  <bookinfo>
    <author>
      <firstname>Johnny</firstname>
      <surname>Author</surname>
    </author>
  </bookinfo>
  <chapter>
    <title>Chapter the First</title>
    <para>Let's begin with a story!  Once
upon a time in Pune, there was a great
conference...</para>
  </chapter>
</book>
```

DocBook

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What tags do I use?

- DocBook: The Definitive Guide
<http://www.docbook.org/tdg/>
(or buy the O'Reilly book)
- There are plenty of complete books, articles online on DocBook that you can use as a reference
- Use the full potential of your editor
 - Some editors will show you valid tags

Best Practices: XIncludes

- By using XIncludes, you can break your book up into smaller files
 - One file per chapter or section
- Also allows you to create different spins of your book
 - Simply include difference sections
- Can include non-XML files

XInclude

```
<book>
  <title>
    <xi:include href="Preface.xml"
xmlns:xi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XInclude" />
    <xi:include href="Chapter1.xml"
xmlns:xi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XInclude" />
    <xi:include href="Chapter2.xml"
xmlns:xi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XInclude" />
    <xi:include href="Chapter3.xml"
xmlns:xi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XInclude" />
  </book>
```


Best Practice: Entities

- An entity lets you define a section of text once, and use it multiple times
- Often used for product names, or boilerplate text
- Make it easy to re-brand your documentation

Entity

```
<!ENTITY PRODUCTNAME "Project Awesome">
```

```
<book>
```

```
  <title>All about &PRODUCTNAME;</title>
```

```
  <bookinfo>
```

```
    <author>
```

```
      <firstname>Johnny</firstname>
```

```
      <surname>Author</surname>
```

```
    </author>
```

```
  </bookinfo>
```

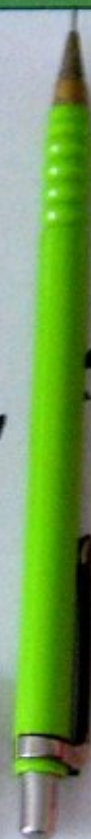
```
  <chapter>
```

```
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```

```
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```
  </chapter>
```

```
</book>
```

I Learned DocBook. Now What?

- Once you've written some DocBook, you can use some other XML tools to help you
- **xmllint** to verify that your XML is both:
 - Well-formed
 - Valid
- **xsltproc** to transform the XML from one format to another, using a stylesheets
 - Convert from DocBook to HTML, for example
- **xmlltidy** for cleaning up the formatting

Toolchains

- Toolchains are simple a collection of scripts that simplify the task of working on your book
 - Validate your DocBook code
 - Convert to various other formats
 - Help with translation
 - Customize presentation rules
 - Ease of maintenance

Publican

- Publican is an tool chain for creating and working with DocBook
- Another Red Hat contribution to the community
- Makes it very simple to create HTML and PDF output from your DocBook text
- Fedora Docs Project is using Publican

Installation

On Fedora:

```
# yum install publican publican-doc
```

```
# yum install publican-brand
```

Brands available:

- publican-fedora
- publican-redhat

Using Publican

```
$ publican create --name Test_Book
```

```
$ publican build --formats html, pdf \  
    --langs en-US --config publican.cfg
```

```
$ publican --help
```


Best Practice: Revision Control

- You can't afford not to learn to use revision control
 - Emailing around copies of word processor documents doesn't count
 - Commit emails are wonderful if working on a group project
 - Commits can also be used as a productivity gauge
 - Undo/redo changes with history is useful

Advanced Topics

■ Output formats

- HTML (single)
- HTML (chunked)
- PDF
- ePub
- Manual pages

■ Translation

■ Conditional text

Questions? Doubts? Queries?



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shakthimaan@fedoraproject.org



Lab

User Guide

file:///usr/share/doc/publican-doc-<version>/en-US/index.html

Create

```
$ publican create --name Test_Book
```


Build

```
$ publican build --formats html, pdf \  
--langs en-US
```


Images

```
<mediaobject>  
<imageobject>  
<imagedata fileref="./images/picture.png" />  
</imageobject>  
<textobject><phrase>alternate text</phrase></textobject>  
</mediaobject>
```


Language

```
$ publican update_pot
```

```
$ publican update_po --langs=ta-IN
```

```
$ publican build --formats=html,pdf \  
--langs=en-US,ta-IN
```