

A position paper submitted by Quentin Valmori, co-founder and CTO, Gutenberg Technology

Company history

Combining our imprint's expertise (Lelivrescolaire.fr) of print & digital publishing, and our software development skills, Gutenberg Technology has a unique approach of digital publishing : both editorial & technological.

Gutenberg Technology has created a SaaS publishing software that works as a real Ebook factory. We are specialists of textbook publishing and non linear book on an industrial scale: massive and fast production. We work with some of the 10 biggest world publishers.

We offer:

- XMLisation for backlog
- Creation from scratch of a book via MyEbookFactory 5.0
- Native applications
- Complex and graphically rich layout, based on CSS3, HTML5 and JavaScript
- Enrichment (audio, video, HTML5 animations, etc)
- Interactive exercises
- Notes, bookmarks, quiz results synchronization
- License Management System
- Printed version with XML and InDesign

Gutenberg Technology is a current member of the IDPF.

History & Statement

It has been two years now that we hear about "XML first" in the publishing world. However very rare are the publishers who finally stepped ahead to really do XML first in order to publish both print & digital from a common basis.

Technological companies have tried to impose XML as a standard and to force publishers to structure their content using XML. However the job of a publisher is to produce and edit content. Its know-how lies in content-related skills. Introducing inside publishing houses a technical culture and technical skills (because XML remains a technical subject) is a challenge. Some publishers have tried to re-structure their houses to adapt to the new technical requirements but very few actually succeeded. Furthermore, software editors have globally failed to democratize their publishing tools, and consequently very few are now reliable technical partners of publishing houses.

Reasons for such a pitfall are many, but the main argument that we identified is that publishers struggle to see the added value XML can bring in their everyday practice; they only tend to see the inconveniences. Maybe the balance is too unequal to impose this type of process (no printed book, no indexation and no reusability of the content,...)

A New Approach

With this in mind, we have analyzed these issues, we appreciated these limits everyday with our publishing house, and we now offer a new approach.

Not a simple “XML first” approach anymore, rather a “database first” approach. The difference might seem negligible but with this concept we mean placing the structuration of content first and separate completely content from rendering. We can demonstrate that we can easily reuse content from any book, that every year we can reuse content already published without starting all over again the creation of the book, and that thanks to the original content structuration we can guarantee a substantial gain in both production schedules and costs, as well as exiting new perspectives for learning, teaching, sharing and reading.

We also try to create printed version of ebooks from HTML & CSS, we create algorithm to transform an ebook to a printed version of a book but CSS 3 doesn't have the capability of InDesign like easily manage the spacing between characters in order to deal with the paper constraints, manage exclusion and region which is very important in the non-linear publishing. We've to go back to a process with XML and InDesign to produce paper version of books. But we've confident with the direction of CSS 4.

Our interest

We believe that to allow a merge between print & digital publishing we need to keep on standardizing technological standards such as EPUB 3, HTML 5 & CSS 3 (and CSS4 for printed book) and go further with tools like READIUM or PhantomJS. We need to add more value in the EPUB 3 Format like note's and annotation's standardization but also quiz standard. We believe that this is the expertise of companies like ours with the help of IDPF and W3C, and that editors should not struggle to make them theirs, we need to supply them with convenient and user-friendly tools, solutions based on standards, dedicated to book publishing that would allow publishers to cut themselves off from technical concerns, while favoring a meaningful convergence between publishing workflows.