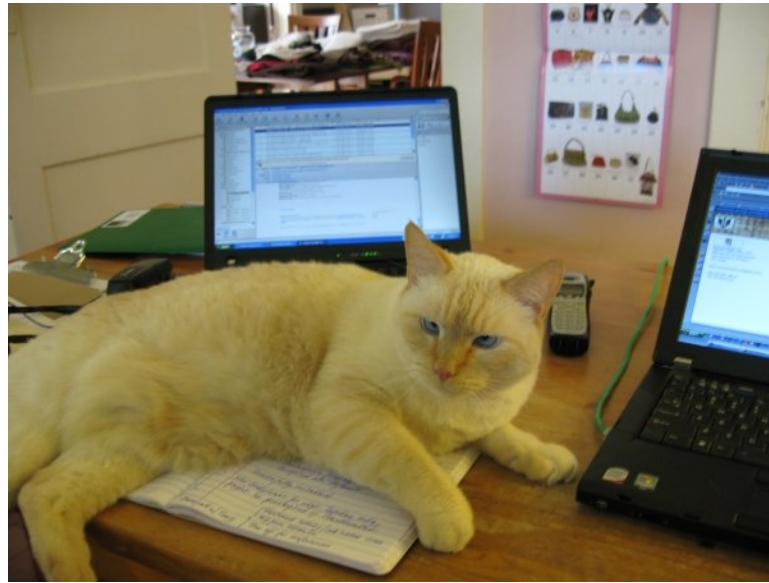# Long-term plans for the DITA-OT project

How do we ensure the long-term health of the project?

Kristen James Eberlein
Eberlein Consulting LLC

About me

- DITA geek with an open source and standards habit

- Four four-legged companions

Agenda

1. Who uses the DITA-OT?

2. Who supports the DITA-OT?

3. Is this sustainable?

4. The DITA-OT as vital digital infrastructure

5. Thoughts about ways to move forward

Who uses the DITA-OT?

- Companies that produce and deliver DITA-based content

- Companies that use the DITA-OT in their products:
  - Authoring tools
  - DITA-enabled component content management systems
  - Delivery applications
  - Translation management systems that render content for review
  - DITA-OT plug-ins

- Consultants and consulting firms

More than 630+ companies use DITA

Image created by Keith Schengili-Roberts @IXIASOFT

Authoring tools

- Adobe FrameMaker

- oXygen XML Editor

- Xmetal Author Enterprise

CCM systems

- Astoria CMS

- Componize

- DitaExchange Dx4

- DITAToo DITA CMS

- DITAworks

- DocZone DITA CMS

- easyDITA

- IXIASOFT DITA CMS

- RSI Content Solutions Rsuite

- SDL LiveContent Architect

- Smart Content (Empolis)

- Vasont DITA CMS

- Xdocs CCMS

- XML Documentation Add-on for Adobe Experience Manager

- XPLM Publisher

Delivery

- DITAweb

- FluidTopics

- Oxygen XML WebHelp

- WebWorks ePublisher

- Zoomin' products

- SuiteHelp

Consultants

- Eberlein Consulting

- Tagsmiths

- Parsons

- Scriptorium

- infotexture

- Contrext

- Suite Solutions

- SDL Professional Services

- IXIASOFT Professional Services

- Mekon

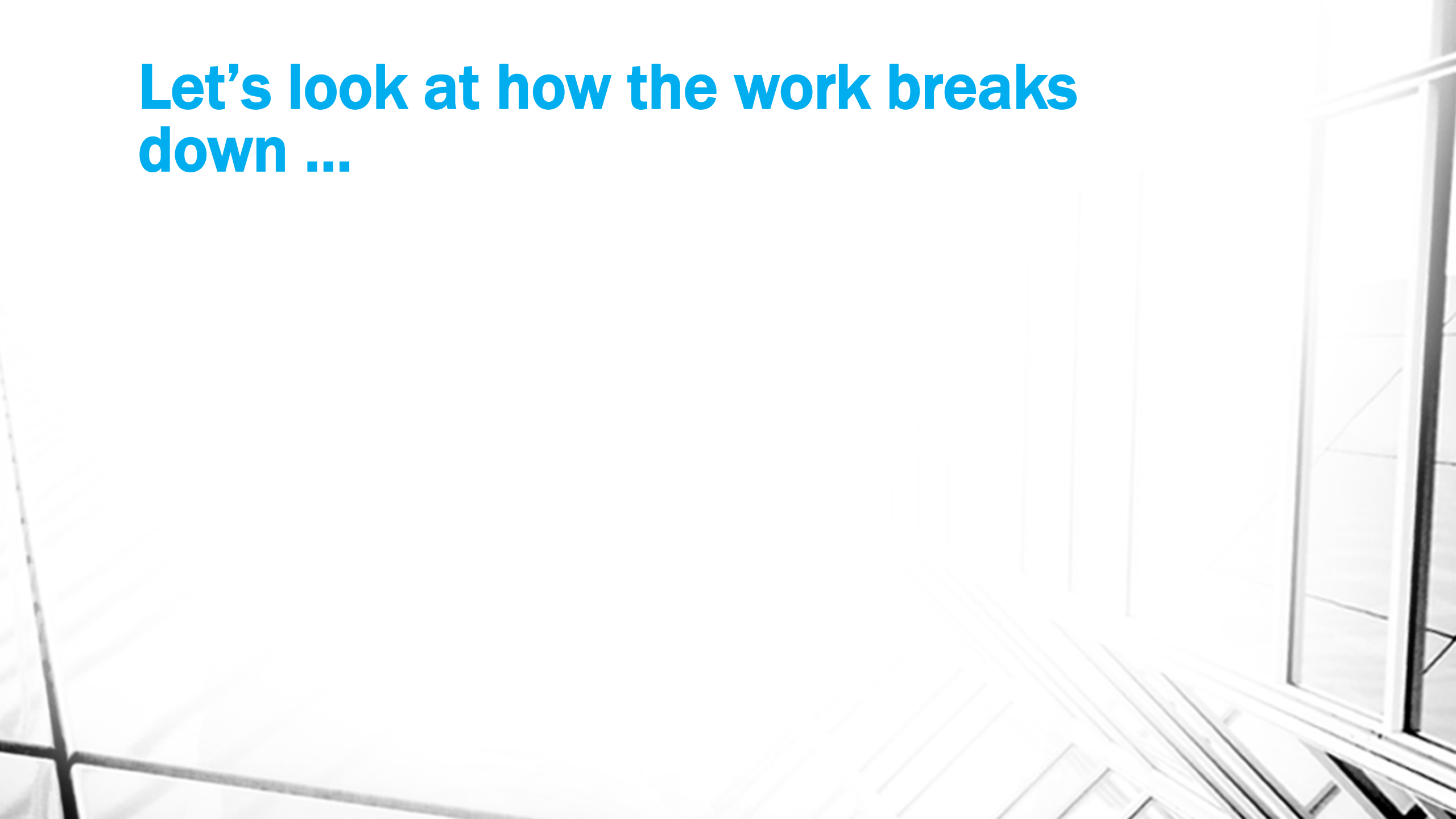- Mark Giffin Consulting

- And many, many more ...

Who supported the DITA-OT in the old days?

- IBM

- Originally two developers in IBM China, plus time from Robert Anderson and Don Day

- Support dwindled ...

- Since 2012 or so, minimal development resources from IBM (no specific time allocation)

Who supports the DITA-OT now?

- Very, very few people

- Fewer than you think …

Let's look at how the work breaks down ...

GitHub commits to dita-ot: 2005-present

Name	Company	Number of commits
1. Jarno Elovirta		2,171
2. Robert D. Anderson	IBM	241
3. Roger Fienhold Sheen		45
4. Kristen James Eberlein		32
5. Radu Coravu	Syncro Soft	20
6. Eric Sirois	IBM	13
7. Eliot Kimber		12
8. Eero Helenius		7
9. Shane Taylor		4
10. George Bina	Syncro Soft	4

As of 12 November 2016, 13:00 PM in Munich

GitHub commits to docs: 2013-present

Name	Company	Number of commits
1. Roger Fienhold Sheen		702
2. Jarno Elovirta		129
3. Kristen James Eberlein		33
4. Shane Taylor		16
5. Robert Anderson	IBM	5
6. Mark Giffin		2
7. bbg3		2
8. George Bina	Syncro Soft	2
9. Eliot Kimber		1
10. Erlend Leganger		1

As of 12 November 2016, 18:40 PM in Munich

Issue tracking

- Read and understand the issue

- Create test files to reproduce the issue

- Check whether a fix has shipped in more recent version

- Respond to issue; explain resolution

- For backlog: Regularly check whether fixes have shipped

- Kudos to Eero and Radu Coravu!

Attendance at project calls in 2016

- Representatives from the following companies
  - IBM
  - IXIASOFT
  - SyncroSoft
  - Vasont
  - Astoria

- Individuals
  - Jarno Elovirta
  - Kristen James Eberlein
  - Roger Fienhold Sheen, infotexture
  - Shane Taylor, WebAssign
  - Lief Erikson, Viavi Solutions
  - Bob Johnson, EBSCO
  - Eliot Kimber, Contrext

Support from companies

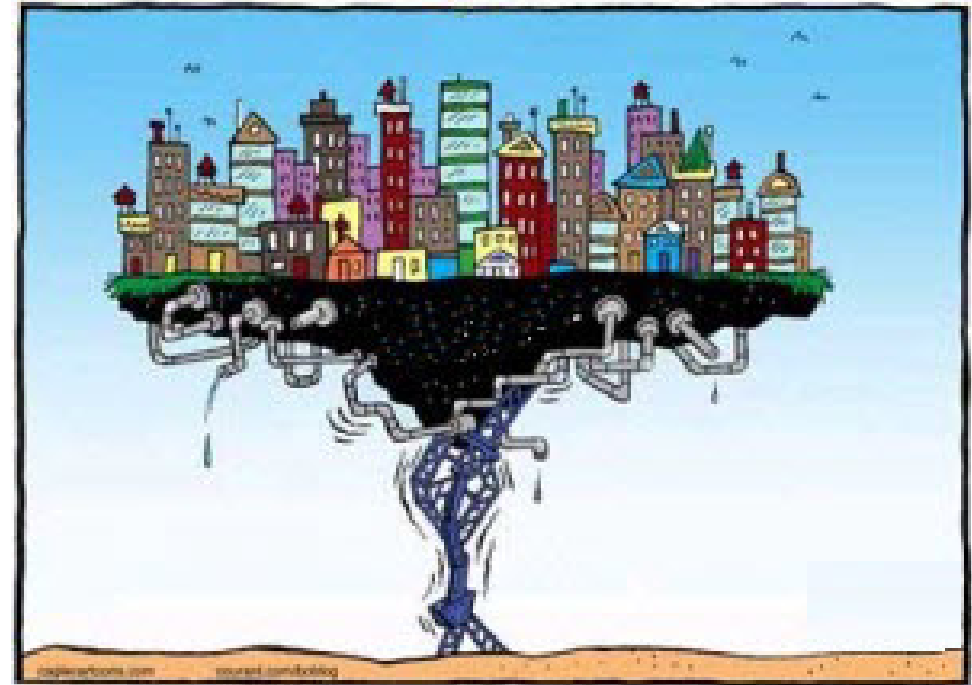- Syncro Soft (oXygen XML editor)
  - Sponsors Web conferencing for the monthly calls
  - Provides oXygen XML Web Author
  - Organizes DITA-OT Day (2014 - present)

- IBM
  - Time from Robert Anderson to chair monthly project calls.

- Eberlein Consulting LLC
  - Sponsors Web conferencing for the monthly documentation calls

Unofficial contributions

- **People respond to e-mails on dita-users ...**

Is this sustainable?

- It's precarious …

- What happens if Jarno is hit by a double-decker bus?

- What happens if Robert becomes a full-time daddy? And steps on a Lego and falls down the stairs

- What happens if Roger devotes himself to aikido full-time?

- What happens if Kris burns out and starts a new career as a caterer?

DITA-OT as vital digital infrastructure

Problem statement

"Our modern society runs on software. But the tools that we use to build software are buckling under increased demand. ...

Nearly all software today relies on free, public code, written and maintained by communities of developers and other talent. ...

Just like physical infrastructure, digital infrastructure needs regular upkeep and maintenance. But financial support for digital infrastructure is much harder to come by. ...

No individual company or organization is incentivized to address the public good problem alone. In order to support our digital infrastructure, we must find ways to work together."

Roads and Bridges: The Unseen Labor Behind Our Digital Infrastructure

Financing for infrastructure projects

- Roads, sewer systems, and power
  - Operated by government and utility companies
  - Funded by taxes
  - People are penalized if they do not pay taxes

- Civic and cultural institutions
  - Operated by the civic and cultural organizations
  - Funded by grants and donations, usually tax-deductible
  - People and organizations give voluntarily

- Churches and religious institutions
  - Funded by tithing/contributions by member base

Financing for instrastructure (cont.)

- All these examples have something in common; they are entities that can deal with money.

- The DITA-OT project ...

  - Has no bank account

  - No legal structure or associated foundation

  - No way for people to contribute other than in-kind

If we had a legal entity ...

- We'd have a mechanism for accepting financial contributions :
  - Contributions from companies that rely on the DITA-OT
  - Foundation support

- We could consider funding some work items ...

Thoughts about moving forward ...

Consider ways of adding institutional support

- Investigate the foundations and groups that currently support open source projects

- Investigate forming a legal entity for the DITA-OT project

- Perhaps a legal entity that could support both DITA and the DITA-OT

Other long-term issues

- Raise awareness of the role the DITA-OT plays as infrastructure

- Develop metrics about DITA-OT usage and its economic impact

- Expand the pool of contributors

- Continue to value non-code contributions (community, documentation, evangelism)

Information about DITA-OT usage

- How many companies use DITA-OT?

- Are they satisfied?

- What are pain points?

- How have they extended the toolkit?

Economic impact of DITA-OT

- What is the financial value of the DITA-OT?

- How much money do companies make from the DITA-OT?

- If the DITA-OT did not exist – or stopped development – how much would it cost companies?

- Is there a way to compute this?

What does the project need from vendors and consulting firms?

- **More participation.** Much more.

- Attend contributor meetings

- Try out the development code and provide feedback.
  - Please don't wait until after the code is released …
  - If we can do anything to make this easier, let us know.

- Consider making a donation or sponsoring
  - Fund Slack for the project
  - Sponsor an employee's time for formal work on the project
  - Organize a DITA-OT day in North America, maybe Canada ☺

What does the project need from individuals?

- If you customize the DITA-OT [tools smiths, consultants]
  - Participate!

- If you don't:
  - Ask your vendors and consultants to participate, contribute fixes, etc.
  - If your vendor or consultant says "This is a bug in the DITA-OT; here's how to fix it" – ask if they have reported the issue.
  - If you have technical writing skills, help with the documentation
  - If you have project management or business analyst skills …

We also need help to ...

NEW!

- Develop some statistics about DITA-OT usage and its economic impact

- Investigate ways of adding institutional support

- Consider setting up a legal entity

Resources

- [Roads and Bridges: The Unseen Labor Behind Our Digital Infrastructure](#) 14 July 2016.

So, who supported the DITA-OT?

- IBM
  - 2004-~2008: Two developers in IBM China, plus time from Robert Anderson and Don Day.
  - 2008-~2010: One-one and half developers in China, plus small (and inefficient) test team.
  - 2012/2013: Developer in China leaves IBM; he is not replaced. Without an IBM developer, the test team has nothing to do and ceases work.
  - 2013-2016: Robert Anderson organizes and chairs the monthly project calls.