

# Smart Ways to Re-use Content



Matthew Ellison  
UA Europe?

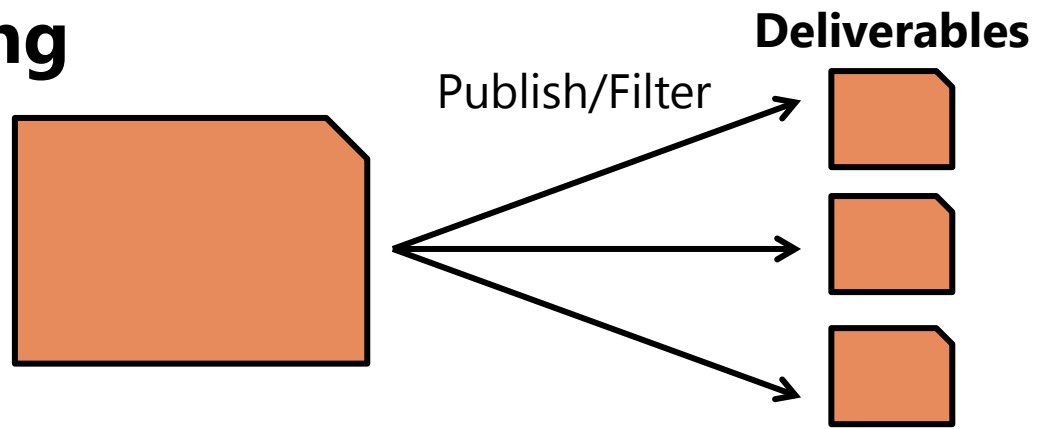
# Matthew Ellison

- Consultant and trainer for User Assistance tools and technologies
- Technical Director of annual UA Europe conference

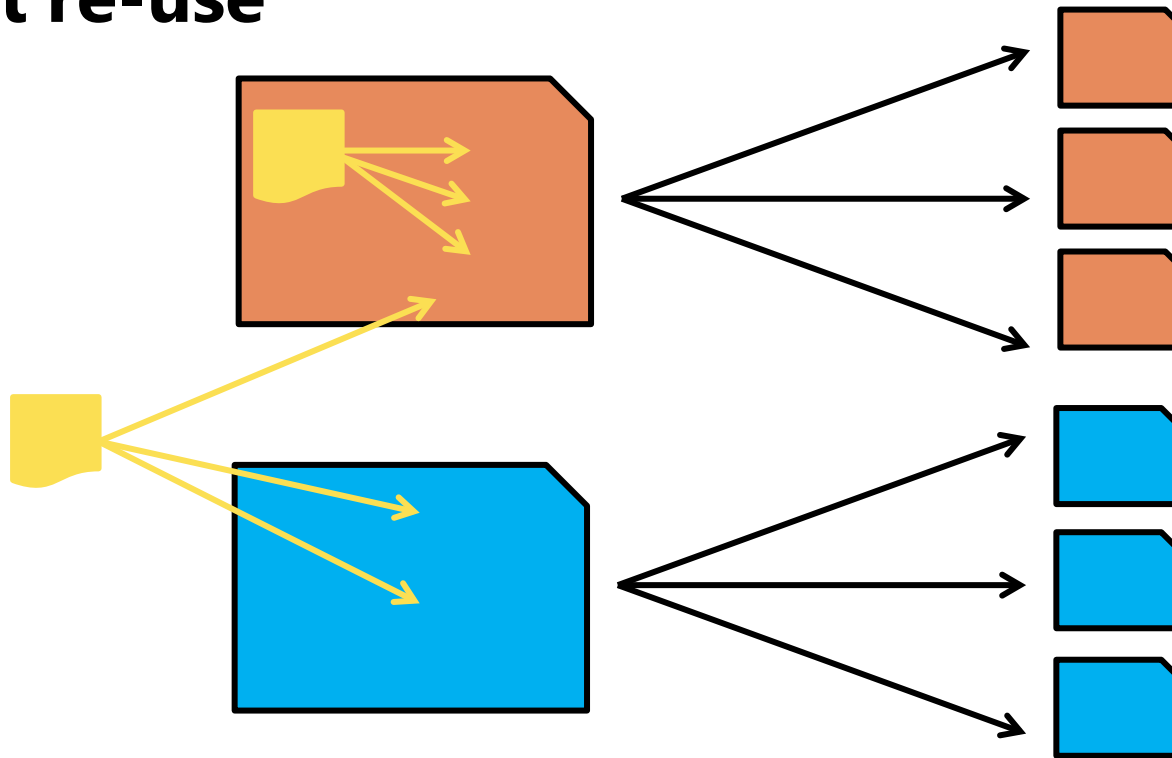
**UA Europe?**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**4-5 June 2015, Southampton, UK**



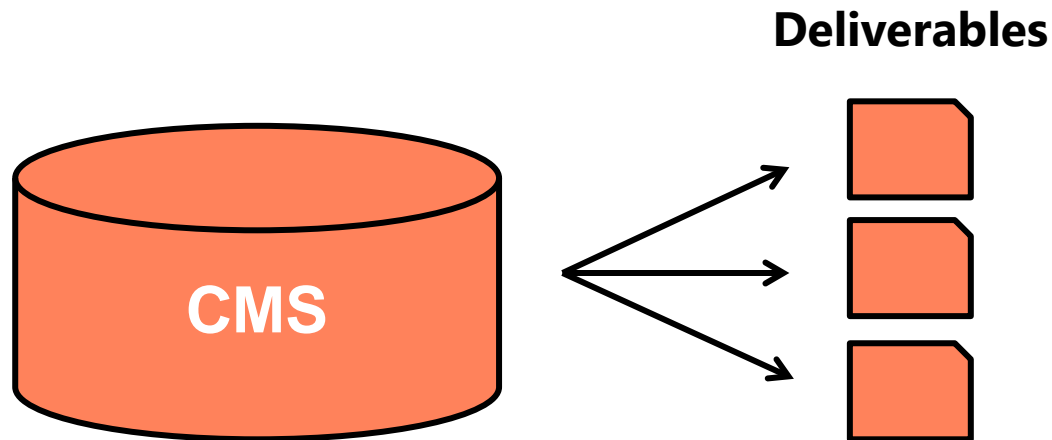
# Single-sourcing



# Content re-use



# Single-sourcing / Content Re-use



# Scenarios for successful single-sourcing

- Variations on a product (Lite, Pro, Plus)
- Different target audience types
- Different countries or locations
- Platform variations

# Same content to multiple media

- Is it enough to re-organise and re-style content chunks for different media?
- Do we, in fact, need a fundamentally different approach for each medium?

# Tips for successful information re-use

- Don't measure success by the amount of re-use
- Focus on your primary output type
- Use context-agnostic writing techniques
- Only re-use self-contained chunks of information
- Using conditions: keep it simple!

# Features that enable information re-use

- Database (CMS, Author-it, and others)
- Snippets and Variables  
(RoboHelp, Flare, Help & Manual, and others)
- **conref** attribute (DITA)
- **keydef** element (DITA)



# Snippets vs. Variables

Snippet	Variable
Chunk of formatted content (text, image, table)	Text string
Long or short	Short
Saved as a separate self-contained file	Stored within a variables file with other variables
Typically fixed	Can be redefined for specific outputs

# Single-sourcing vs. information re-use

## Goal:

Multiple deliverables with common content

- Option 1: Single project
  - Use conditions for variations
- Option 2: Multiple projects
  - Use Snippets (stored in external repository) for common content

# Linking vs. including

- How essential is the information?
- Are you targeting novices or experts?
- Guard against overloading the user
- Consider using DHTML to make Snippet content optional

# Example

You are here: [Features](#) > [Thumbnail Images](#) > [Showing Images as Thumbnails in Output](#)

## Showing Images As Thumbnails In Output

When you insert images into Flare content, you can specify that the images should be displayed as thumbnails (i.e., much smaller versions of the image) in the output. This is a way to condense topics so that images are not taking up as much real estate. When you use this feature, you can specify ways that the user can enlarge the image to see its full size (e.g., by hovering over the thumbnail, by clicking the thumbnail).

### + Example

This can be done through styles or by using local formatting. Using styles is usually recommended because the setting is automatically applied to any content using that style throughout the project, whereas local formatting affects only the particular content that you are working on.

### + [How to show images as thumbnails by using styles](#)

### + [How to show images as thumbnails locally by using properties](#)

**Note:** In addition to showing images as thumbnails in output, you can also show images as thumbnails while you are editing. See [Showing Images as Thumbnails While Editing](#).

**Note:** If you experience problems in the output with thumbnail images not opening to the full size, this might be caused by "Mark of the Web" being enabled on the Advanced tab of the Target Editor. You can try disabling Mark of the Web from your target to fix the issue. See [Adding Mark of the Web](#).

### [See Also](#)

# Example

You are here: Features > Targets > Adding Targets

## Adding Targets


You can add as many targets as you want to a project.

### How to add targets

1. Do one of the following, depending on the part of the user interface you are using.
  - **Ribbon** Select the **Project** ribbon. In the **Content** section select **New>Target**.
    - + [Switching between ribbons and menus/toolbars...](#)
    - + [More about ribbon options...](#)
  - **Menu** Select **Project>Add Target**.
  - **Right-click** In the Project Organizer, right-click on the **Targets** folder and from the context menu select **Add Target**.

The Add File dialog opens.

2. In the **File Type** field at the top, make sure **Target** is selected.
3. In the **Source** area select one of the following.
  - **New from template** This lets you choose either a factory template file or one of your own customized template files as a starting point. The new file will take on all of the settings contained in the template. If you want to use a factory template provided by Flare, expand the **Factory Templates** folder and click on a template file. If you want to use your own customized template file, expand the appropriate folder and click on a file. See [About Templates](#).

**Note:** In some dialogs and wizards you can click the **Manage Templates** button  if you want to open the Template Manager. This lets you manage any of your template files (e.g., add new templates, enter descriptions for templates). See [Managing Templates](#).

- **New from existing** This lets you choose an existing file of the same type—that you've already created and stored somewhere—as a starting point for your new file. As with template files.

# The issue of narrative flow

“For whatever minimum amount of content that reader needs in order to get back to their task, they will get to their task faster if there is good narrative flow within that content.”

[Mark Baker]

# Content re-use and granularity

- “Technical documentation is something else that’s far more structured than other kinds of writing. There are sections and subsections and tables and lists of tasks, etc. Each of these things brings with it some kinds of content boundaries that encapsulate it, and allow it to stand on its own, and thus be managed somewhere else and then reused.”

[Deane Barker]

# Localization perspective

- Not an issue for:
  - Paragraph-level snippets
  - Variables containing names and numbers
- To be avoided:
  - Snippets and variables comprising verbs, phrases, and parts of sentences



# Summary

- Advantages of information re-use:
  - Reduced maintenance time and effort
  - Consistency
- Excessive re-use can be self-defeating
- Select your re-use strategy based on degree of commonality between deliverables
- Take account of the impact (positive and/or negative) on localization

# Gift for TCUK 2014 attendees

- Free download of all slides from UA Europe 2014 in Kraków

Go to:

[uaconference.eu/TCUK](http://uaconference.eu/TCUK)

...and enter your contact details to receive username and password

# Questions?

matthew@uaeurope.com



**Matthew Ellison**  

---

**UA Europe?**  

---