

Which Help Authoring Tool(s) Do You Choose?

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This presentation is provided as a supplement to the Tools Matrix,
available from JTF Associates at

<http://www.helpstuff.com/downloads/toolsv5.pdf>.



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The Deciding Factors

- Your users' environment
- Your development environment
- Output
- Output Features
- Cost
- Support
- Learning curve
- Training
- Extras



The Tools

- AuthorIT
- Doc-To-Help
- Dreamweaver + Deva Tools
- FAR
- HCW
- HHW
- Mif2Go
- The HyperText Studio
- RoboHelp Office
- Sevensteps
- WebWorks Publisher
- WordHelp



Your Users' Environment

- Determines output
 - Windows
 - Macintosh
 - UNIX
- If your users request that nothing additional is downloaded with a browser-based output (such as Java applets or ActiveX controls), look for a pure HTML solution.



Your Development Environment

- Word
 - Doc-To-Help, HCW, RoboHelp for WinHelp, WordHelp
- Frame
 - Mif2Go
 - WebWorks Publisher
 - Import: AuthorIT, RoboHelp HTML
- HTML
 - Dreamweaver + Deva Tools, FAR, HHW, The HyperText Studio, RoboHelp for HTML Help
- Word Processor (database)
 - AuthorIT, Sevensteps



Output

- WinHelp 4
- HTML Help 1.3x/HTML Help 2
- HTML/XHTML/XML
- HTML-based Help
- JavaHelp
- Oracle Help
- Print



*Some information in this section provided by
MJ Plaster of World Wide Winnovations, Inc.*

WinHelp Characteristics

- Runs locally on 32-bit Windows
- Compressed and compiled (.hlp), plus CNT for Table of Contents
- Navigation includes Table of Contents, two-level index, full-text search, browse buttons
- Extra functionality provided by WinHelp macros and .dlls



WinHelp Characteristics

- Windows include Main with menus and buttons, secondary with buttons, and fully-formatted popups
- Context-sensitivity provided with map numbers
- Modular Help created through contents files
- Dynamic linking



WinHelp Limitations

- Non-synching Table of Contents without third party .dll (for example, WinHelp 2000)
- Modal navigation
- No table borders or shading, limited font formatting
- No further development. Bug list maintained by Don Lammers at www.smountain.com/m_ref.htm



WinHelp Tools

- AuthorIT
- Doc-to-Help
- ForeHelp
- HCW
- HyperText Studio
- RoboHelp for WinHelp
- Sevensteps
- True Help
- WebWorks Publisher
- WordHelp



HTML Help Characteristics

- Runs locally on 32-bit Windows
- Requires Internet Explorer
- Compressed and compiled (.chm)
- Navigation includes TOC, multi-level index, full-text search or advanced full-text search, Favorites tab
- Extra functionality provided by HTML Help controls, ActiveX, JavaScript, VBScript



HTML Help Characteristics

- Windows include tri-pane with menus and buttons, secondary, text-only popups. Fully-formatted popups available with a tool.
- Context-sensitivity provided with map numbers and aliases
- Modular Help created through contents and project files
- Dynamic linking



HTML Help Limitations

- Requires the latest version of Internet Explorer or hhupd.exe
- Harder to implement secondary windows, as HTML doesn't provide a mechanism for specifying them in hyperlinks



HTML Help Tools

- AuthorIT
- Doc-To-Help
- Dreamweaver + Deva
- ForeHelp
- HHW
- HyperText Studio
- RoboHelp Office
- True Help
- WebWorks Publisher
- WordHelp



HTML/XHTML/XML Characteristics

- Runs on any platform through a browser
- Not compiled or compressed
- Navigation includes browser buttons. Possible to use frames to add other navigation.
- Extra functionality provided by JavaScript



HTML/XHTML/XML Characteristics

- Windows include browser, scripted secondaries, and popups
- Context-sensitivity provided by linking to the HTML file
- No modularity or dynamic linking



HTML/XHTML/XML Limitations

- Can't use all online Help features that you might be accustomed to:
 - Dynamic Linking
 - WinHelp Macros
 - Secondary windows
 - Table of Contents, Index, full-text search (except for Dreamweaver + Deva Tools)
 - And more...



HTML/XHTML/XML Tools

- AuthorIT
- Doc-To-Help
- Dreamweaver + Deva Tools
- HyperText Studio
- Sevensteps
- True Help
- WebWorks Publisher



HTML-based Help Characteristics

- Runs on any platform through a browser
- Not compiled or compressed, but can be generated
- Navigation includes TOC, multi-level index, and full-text search, using frames
- Browse buttons available through tool or by hand-coding



HTML-based Help Characteristics

- Extra functionality provided by JavaScript and Java
- Windows include browser, scripted secondaries, and popups (automated by a HAT)
- Context-sensitivity provided by linking to the HTML file
- No modularity or dynamic linking, unless provided and converted by your HAT



HTML-based Help Limitations

- Can't use all online Help features that you might be accustomed to:
 - Dynamic Linking
 - WinHelp Macros
 - Secondary windows
 - And more...
- Uses Java, ActiveX, or Dynamic HTML for the TOC



HTML-based Help Tools

- Doc-To-Help
- Dreamweaver + Deva Tools
- ForeHelp
- RoboHelp for WinHelp
- RoboHelp for HTML Help
- WebWorks Publisher
- WordHelp



JavaHelp & Oracle Help Characteristics

- Runs locally on any system with the Java Runtime Environment (JRE). The only formats designed specifically for Java applications.
- Browser-based operation violates 100% Java compliance.
- Compressed and compiled (.jar) or uncompressed and uncompiled.
- Navigation includes TOC, multi-level index, and full-text search.



JavaHelp & Oracle Help Characteristics

- Browse buttons available through tool or by hand-coding
- Extra functionality provided through lightweight Java controls.
- Windows include three-pane with menus and buttons, secondaries, and popups. Oracle Help uses dockable windows.



JavaHelp & Oracle Help Characteristics

- Context-sensitivity provided through topic IDs and URLs.
- Modular Help available in compiled format (.jar) through the project file.
- Dynamic linking allowed in development and converted during development, when using a HAT



JavaHelp & Oracle Help Limitations

- Neither output supported by all tools
- JavaHelp uses HTML 3.2-/
HTML 4.0+. Oracle Help uses
HTML 4.0.
- No JavaScript
- Limited Cascading Style Sheet
implementation
- No browser-based linking



JavaHelp & Oracle Help Tools

- AuthorIT (both)
- Doc-To-Help (JavaHelp)
- ForeHelp (JavaHelp)
- RoboHelp Classic (JavaHelp)
- RoboHelp HTML (both)
- WebWorks Publisher (both)
- WordHelp (JavaHelp)



Output Features

- Pure HTML
- Valid HTML
- Table of Contents/Index (navigation panes)
- Full-text Search
 - JavaScript
 - CGI
- Natural language query



Cost

- Spend as much or as little as you like:
 - Free (HCW and HHW)
 - Inexpensive (AuthorIT single-user, Deva Tools, FAR, HyperText Studio, Mif2Go, Sevensteps Light)
 - Mid-range (AuthorIT Workgroup and Fixed Enterprise, Sevensteps Standard, WordHelp)
 - High-end (AuthorIT Floating Enterprise, Doc-To-Help, RoboHelp Office, RoboHelp Enterprise, RoboInfo Enterprise, Sevensteps Professional, WebWorks Publisher)
- Prices change!



Support

- Typically, the more expensive the tool, the more expensive the support costs.
- Be aware that tool vendors change their support policies!
 - None
 - Free (e-mail only or e-mail and phone)
 - Pay Per Call
 - Annual
 - Subscription plans that include upgrades



Support (continued)

- User groups
 - HATT, Parametrica
 - AuthorIT, Deva (helpweavers), HyperText Studio, WWP, WordHelp
 - Sevensteps (invitation only)
- News servers
 - ComponentOne
- Forums
 - eHelp's Help Community, Dreamweaver, WebWorks



Learning Curve

- “Learning Curve” is a relative term. However:
 - Some tools are easy to learn without any background knowledge.
 - Some tools are easy to learn, but only with background knowledge.
 - Some tools are harder to learn, even with background knowledge.



Training

- Tools that are easy to learn typically require very little training.
- Once you learn one tool, you can usually transition your skills and knowledge to another tool.
 - If you switch from a Word-based tool to a non-Word tool, be sure to focus! Otherwise, you'll try to use Word functionality where it doesn't exist.



Extras

- Multi-authoring support
 - AuthorIT, The HyperText Studio, Frame
- Conditional text
 - AuthorIT, Doc-to-Help, Frame, The HyperText Studio, WordHelp
- Translation
 - AuthorIT, RoboHelp, Frame, Sevensteps



Extras (continued)

- Work force proficiency and experience
 - RoboHelp Office, Frame
- Web site development
 - AuthorIT, Dreamweaver + Deva, FAR, Mif2Go, RoboHelp (WebHelp), Sevensteps, WebWorks
- Management
 - AuthorIT, Sevensteps



Combining Tools

- Play to strengths. Use each tool to do what it does best.
- For example:
 - AuthorIT for multi-authoring development with RoboInfo or RoboHelp Enterprise for feature-rich server-based output
 - Any tool with HHW for latest features from Microsoft
 - Any tool with FAR for added development functionality



For More Information...

- AuthorIT
 - www.author-it.com
- Deva Tools
 - www.devahelp.com
- Doc-To-Help
 - www.componentone.com
- Dreamweaver
 - <http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/>



For More Information...

- FAR
 - www.helpware.net
- HCW
 - www.microsoft.com/downloads/release.asp?ReleaseID=23216
- HHW
 - msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/htmlhelp/html/hwMicrosoftHTMLHelpDownloads.asp



For More Information...

- The HyperText Studio
 - www.olsonsoft.com
- Mif2Go
 - www.omsys.com
- RoboHelp Office
 - www.ehelp.com
- Sevensteps
 - www.sevensteps.com
- WebWorks Publisher/WordHelp
 - <http://www.webworks.com/products/>

