

And from presentations to publications generally....

There are markup languages developed especially for, or primarily for books and articles. The best known is *LaTeX* (pronounced laytech), based on the TeX markup. It can work within a Windows environment though it is often used in a Linux environment. Its capacity to produce very complex typesetting makes it ideal for publishing complex things like mathematical formulae or anything requiring complexity you just cannot get with a word processor. LaTeX would only be used by someone who is regularly preparing long documents, complicated documents - so it is not for the general run of 'homely' document preparation.

DocBook is another example of this approach, based on XML as the way to achieve the same results. It has been best used for producing manuals, especially if they are eventually to be put on the web, but not only for that. It can produce slides too. *DocBook* can be produced by using OpenOffice Writer or with a specific XML editor. The learning curve is initially steep, but more because of a change in mentality than in technical difficulty.

And finally, there is *Scribus*, with which this brochure was produced. It is Open Source, works in Windows and Linux (native to the latter), exceptionally powerful, enables output to varying standards of print-ready documents including a PDF standard reputedly better than Acrobat which invented it! In fact with OpenOffice and Scribus you probably have the two best tools for doing almost anything you want at top quality.

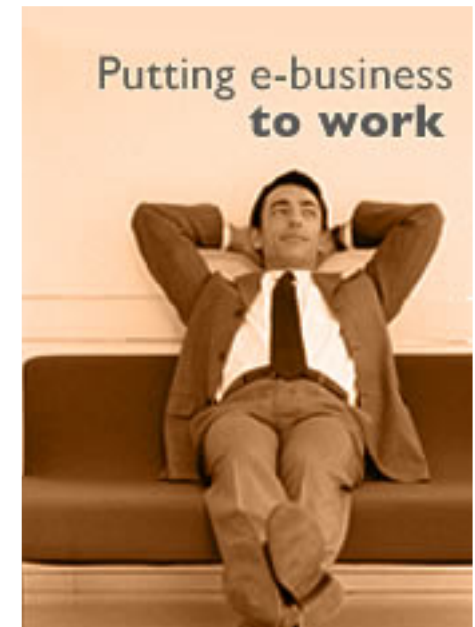


What can you do to make what you do a witness to everyone?.

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So what do I do in practice?

Sure, you agree with the principles offered in part I, but you haven't got time, and you haven't yet got a very clear idea of what those principles could look like in practice. So here are some ways forward (with some reasons for why you might choose one or other of them).

OpenOffice.org 2.x

If the thought of learning even a simple markup language is not for you, then OpenOffice.org is the way to go. In fact, OO.o is an office suite which stands by pretty much all the principles of Free Open Source Software.

OO.o costs nothing and is open source – this is not just repeating a mantra. The fact that it is open source means that you can, even if you don't want to do anything about it afterwards, actually 'get into' the program and look at how it ticks. You can get inside a file.

If you were to create a document in OO.o Writer, for example, and open it in your favourite Zip programme, you will see it is made up of several files and folders. One file will be called 'content.xml'. All xml files are only text files, so open it – some lines might seem like gobbledegook, but after that you will recognise the actual text you typed into the document.

Presentations?

Strangely enough, a presentation file produced in OO.o Impress is not so different. A presentation is mostly about structure – the content xml file will have kept the structure very clear (with the text you used at the time). The pictures won't look like pictures though, since they are in binary form!

Using OO.o Impress to make a presentation has great advantages over proprietary formats – here are two of special importance: you can immediately create it as PDF which means it can be opened in any program that opens pdf or any platform (Windows, Mac, Linus, BeOS.....). It will still be openable and readable in 50 years time. And because it is XML you can easily output it in many

Opera Show

With similar possibilities as for *Impress* above – notes, screen, slides - Opera Show uses a very clever capability of the Opera Browser. The Opera Browser is the smallest, fastest browser on the market. You can keep a version on a memory stick, totally self-contained. It has the capacity to turn a document written in XML with CSS stylesheets automatically into a slide projection version with the simple use of the F11 key. And if you don't want to write your content in XML, but you have internet access, you can use the automatic Opera Show Generator to do it for you. Opera is a free browser, so there is really no reason why you couldn't have it available for use.

Mind maps as a way to present

If we are only talking about presentation, not output to other devices and media, then there are a number of free mind mapping tools. *Freemind* and *Compendium* are two. They have quite different purposes, but they avoid the sometimes boring and overly simplistic hierarchical structure of slideware presentations. You have to remember to increase fonts and images for projection purposes though – they won't do that automatically for you

XML plus CSS or XSL(T)

At this point we enter the more complex arena of using learned skills. It is actually possible to learn and use simple XML and CSS (markup and stylesheet) and apply it for your own purposes. You can do it by hand, or you can find examples close to what you want and download them and change them – or there are some free and simple packages that you can download too. One is called *S5* and stands for *Simple Standards-based SlideShow System*. It is simple and it is standards-based, so it adheres to the kinds of principles we have been speaking of. The stylesheets are only 3 or 4 in number so there is not a lot of variety. There's just a little bit of fiddling, of getting your hands dirty with XML and javascript, but it's basically all done for you. If you wanted to begin to understand XML and CSS and Javascript, though, it could be a good practical way to begin.