Oxygen XML Editor 16

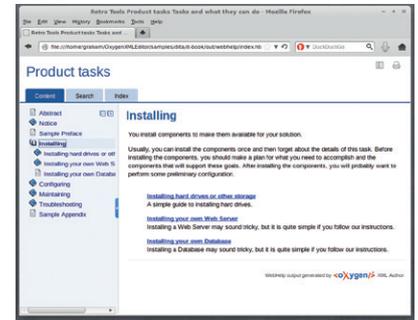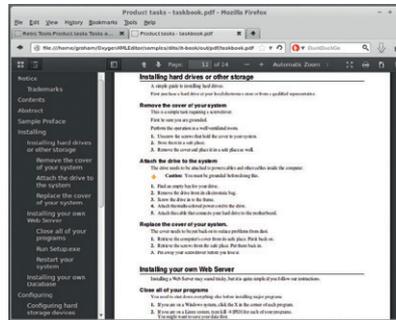**Graham Morrison** always forgets to close his elements. Fortunately, there's an editor for that.

XML is great. It makes content easier to work with. It gives content a structure while keeping it as plain text that you always have complete control over. Unfortunately though, it can be painful to edit in Vim or Emacs. So if you want to get going on that user documentation you've been meaning to tackle for a while, Oxygen XML Editor 16 might just give you the push you need.

Depending on your needs, you can buy Oxygen XML Developer, Author or Editor. Editor = Developer + Author, so we're focusing on the all-encompassing Oxygen XML Editor in this review. It's expensive. But it's not meant for mere mortals like us. It's meant for technical writers fighting the good fight on the documentation front, and should be considered their equivalent to a decent development environment and its associated licences and support.

Editor provides all the regular functionality you'd expect from a good XML editor: support for all the schema languages, XML validation, XPath support and user-defined search scopes. But one of the big strengths of Oxygen is its ability to output content to the main delivery formats, including XHTML, PDF, EPUB and Eclipse, all at the flick of a switch through its configurable transformation scenarios. It also outputs DITA and DocBook content to its very own strain of WebHelp, which saves you cobbling together your own set of search and indexing tools to accompany XHTML output. If, however, you want to automate your WebHelp builds for large projects, you need to pay for an additional hefty licence to be able to use WebHelp from the command line.

As a content author, you can choose to see the text version of your content, with XML tags highlighted for easy reading and automatic element completion, or view it in visual authoring mode, which renders the content into a form more akin to its output state. In

And here's single-sourcing in action – PDF and interactive HTML output side-by-side from the same XML source.

this latest release of Oxygen, you can define colour and style to help highlight conditional text when working in the visual mode.

Say, for example, you have a topic that feeds into two guides: a developer guide and a user guide. Some of the content in that topic is for one audience, the system developers; some of the content is for the other audience, the end users, and some of the content is for both audiences. Oxygen has always handled conditional text well, thanks to its solid build capabilities, but you can now visualise which bits of content are aimed at which users, making it much easier to hone that content for specific reader types.
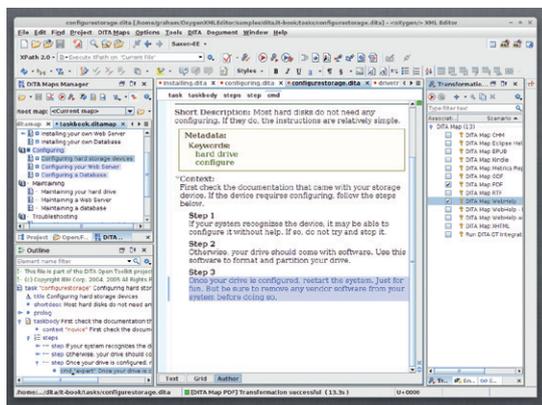
Writing like a windowpane

Other cool features that have been added with the latest release are Quick Fix, to help solve common XSLT errors, cross-file XPath querying and an Ant build file editor. And, if you're not CSS savvy, there's now a visual interface for creating them, which Oxygen calls its WebHelp Skin Builder. The Skin Builder helps you visually customise the style of your WebHelp interface and then export the skin as a CSS file to use in your WebHelp transformation scenario. But remember, your content needs to be stored in either the DITA or DocBook framework to use Oxygen's WebHelp.

From what we've seen and heard, while these additions could be rather handy to XML content developers, it looks like they simply enhance an already very powerful XML development environment that's backed up by a super responsive tech support team. If you're thinking of investing in a good XML editor, and you've got the financial support to fund the purchase, this has to be the one to go for! LV

Conditional text highlighting helps you target content at specific users. The blue text here is for expert users, for example.

DATA

Web
www.oxygenxml.com
Developer
SyncRO Soft Ltd
Price
From US $488
Licence
Proprietary

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

One of the best XML editing tools available. It's expensive. But maybe your IT department will be paying?

★★★★☆