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New Tools for a New Web

XML-enabled tools will be the next big wave. More than 150 SGML software packages will be fitted with an XML output filter within months of the final adoption of XML 1.0. There will also be some XML support for non-SGML word processors -- which makes sense as long as they are capable of producing some kind of structured text. On the receiving end, expect XML plug-ins for standard HTML-based Web browsers, XML support via Java apps, as well as full-fledged native XML browsers.

Adobe FrameMaker

Adobe is implementing support for XML in both FrameMaker and FrameMaker+SGML, expecting to ship the XML-enabled versions in the second quarter of this year.

In addition to creating structured XML documents, both FrameMaker and FrameMaker+SGML can convert unstructured documents to XML. In this case, they map paragraph and character tags to element names. Adobe's current implementation creates a cascading style sheet with each XML instance. XSL support, Adobe says, will be implemented "as the XSL specification becomes more stable."

ArborText Adept & Cedar

ArborText is a leading supplier of SGML software. The company's Adept Series lets users create and maintain textual and document information as reusable elements. It includes an interface for document management as well as Document Architect for handling DTDs and style sheets. It was recently upgraded with XML capability.

In December 1997 ArborText previewed its Cedar project at the SGML/XML conference in Washington, D.C. A downloadable beta version should be available by the time you read this. Cedar "is focused on the creation of style sheets based on XSL for XML documents." ArborText was (with Microsoft and Inso) one of the three companies that originally submitted the XSL proposal to the W3C in September 1997.

Grif doc+

Grif's Symposia started out as an HTML browser and editor, which Grif codeveloped with INRIA, France's national computer science research institute. At the time of this writing, Grif was beta-testing Symposia doc+, an intranet publishing solution that includes a WYSIWYG authoring tool, a database publishing mode, and a graphical site manager. A free evaluation version is available for downloading.

Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0

Microsoft has been instrumental in the proliferation of XML so far, has codeveloped some of the related standards, and has developed the first public implementation of an XML engine, which is part of Internet Explorer 4. Currently Microsoft is giving away a number of tools, including MSXML, a validating XML parser written in Java. It checks for well-formed documents and optionally permits checking for validity. Once parsed, the document is exposed as a tree through a set of Java methods, which Microsoft is working with the World Wide Web Consortium to standardize. These methods support reading and writing XML structures, such as the Channel Definition Format (CDF), enabling developers to build XML-based applications.

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