Managing the DCMI technical documentation: a new approach

Paul Walk
Head of Technology Strategy and Planning, EDINA
p.walk@ed.ac.uk
@paulwalk
• DCMI publishes important technical documentation (vocabularies, specifications, models) on the Web

• managed in sophisticated bespoke system:
  • sources edited as XML files
  • maintained in a Subversion repository
  • assembled & converted with shell scripts and 'Ant'
  • FTP to a 'staging server'
  • deployed to the live server by the server admin, on request

• essentially a "closed" system
the challenge:

how to manage & publish the Dublin Core technical documentation in a more efficient & sustainable way
two and a half technologies which make the difference

1. **Git**
   - stable, sophisticated, free version control technology which is ubiquitously supported
   - *github*: global scale infrastructure providing git as a service
   - invite contribution by 'pull request'

2. **Static website generators**
   - a new class of content management system where sources are managed locally and compiled into webpages which are then uploaded to a server (like we used to do it in the early 90s!)
   - supports distributed content-management via git
   - supports long-term preservation by requiring only simple text-based formats
   - supports use of desktop authoring tools - e.g. text-editors

3. **Markdown**
   - simple, parseable but easily readable plain text format
affording permanence

• version control and redundancy
  • synchronised repositories & distributed version control via Git

• active curation
  • ease of access and contribution to sources via Git
  • simple & readable plain text formats (Markdown)
  • "one click" deployment

• minimal deployment infrastructure
  • standard web-server
  • text files, open formats, no database or server-side 'logic', static site generators
  • reduces broken websites