



THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE: USING EXTERNAL DATA IN YOUR DOCUMENTATION

Most companies in the world need the ability to include or reference data from line-of-business applications (LOBs) in for example their product documentation. Examples are SKU numbers, spare part numbers, price information, bill-of-materials, statistic tables, references, etc.

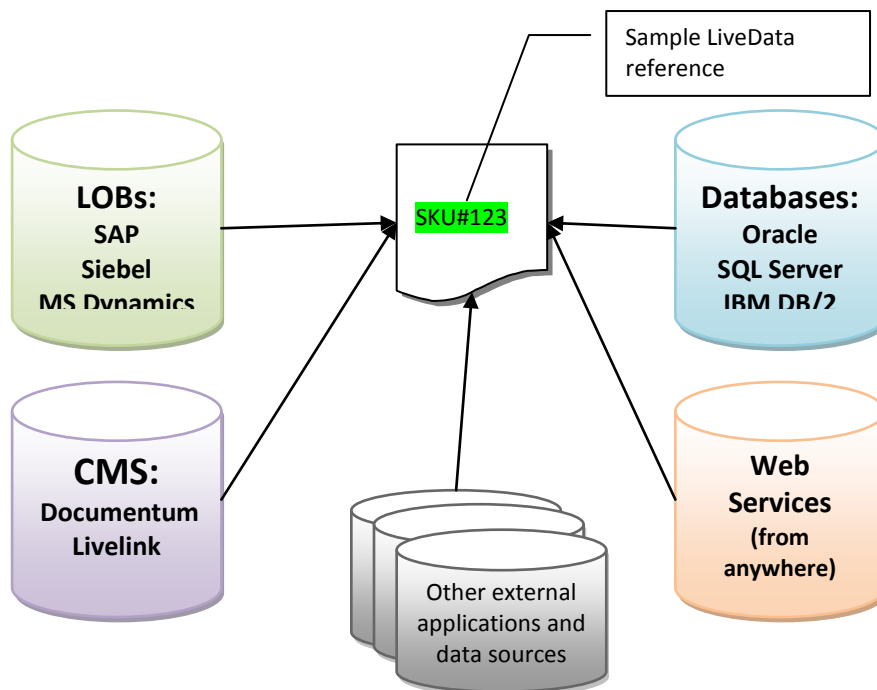
In the vast majority of cases, this is now a completely *manual process* where data from the LOB is cut-n-pasted into the relevant documents. Even companies using the modular DITA standard normally have to resort to a manual solution – unless they are ready to spend a small fortune customizing the DITA Open Toolkit. DITA includes a “conref” (content reference) mechanism that allows you to reference data from other DITA XML topics – but not from any external systems or databases.

This manual data reuse process creates a documentation nightmare: Updates of data in the LOB will *not* be reflected in the documentation unless you go through the manual process once again – that is: If you actually *know* that relevant data have changed!

THE VISION

What if you could, right from inside your DITA topics, easily include a *live* reference to data from almost any LOB or external data source?

Every time you publish the topic or view the content online, the reference would be *automatically updated* with live, current data from your LOB, database, or other external data source:



This would provide:

- Automatic maintenance of the external data referenced in documents
- Saved time and money
- Information consistency and accuracy

THE SOLUTION: DITA EXCHANGE LIVE DATA™

The DITA Exchange LiveData™ feature can be developed, configured and implemented for DITA Exchange customers. With LiveData, the customer can include a standard DITA “conref” to live data into any topic, from any number of different data sources.

When publishing (or when viewing content online), the conref reference will be resolved instantly, using *live* data from:

- SAP
- Siebel
- Microsoft Dynamics
- SQL Server
- Oracle databases
- IBM DB/2
- Documentum
- Open Text LiveLink
- Any web service, from anywhere
- ...and from many other external data sources

The conref (DITA content reference) is quite simple:

- Standard DITA conref (in this example for a phrase element):
<ph conref="[dita-topic-filename]#[topic-id]/[element-id]"></ph>
- Using DITA Exchange LiveData, you can use this syntax:
<ph conref="[any-sharepoint-list-url]#[row-unique-id]/[field-name]"></ph>

The important thing is that a SharePoint list, through the [SharePoint Business Connectivity Services](#) feature, can be configured to show *live* data from any of the sources listed above! So if you can conref a field in a SharePoint list, you can “conref the world”.

An example:

1. A SharePoint list (example “<https://secure98.dita-exchange.com/sites/demo/repository/Lists/LiveData>”) is configured to show *live* data from SAP:

UID	SKU#	ProductName
1234-123A	11-2234-555 ! NEW	MyBestProduct
222-4456C	11-44-777 ! NEW	SomeOtherProduct

2. A DITA topic in your publication includes this conref attribute on a phrase element:
...to order this product, please use the following SKU#: <ph conref=<https://secure98.dita-exchange.com/sites/demo/repository/Lists/LiveData#222-4456C/SKU#> /> when contacting our sales department.
3. When published, the conref will be resolved using *live* SAP data and be rendered as:
...to order this product, please use the following SKU#: 11-44-777 when contacting our sales department.
4. And the best is: If the SKU# is updated in SAP before the next publishing, the correct new SKU will be inserted when you publish again.