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WRIT 4662W

**Process Documentation**

Before this class, I didn’t know anything about XML. I was fairly certain my mom worked with it because she works as a technical writer at Cray and while reading Sarah O’Keefe’s article, “Structured Authoring and XML,” the hierarchical trees she displays looked familiar. My mom later confirmed that she uses XML every day and would be able to help me if and when I had any questions. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to meet up with her before the draft of the XML assignment was due, so I was left to find resources to teach myself the basics of XML.

I started reading O’Keefe’s article and felt overwhelmed by all the information coming at me. Even her definition of XML, “a standard for storing structured content in text files,” confused me. My printed copy of “Structured Authoring and XML” is covered in highlighter markings and questions in the margins. For example, I spent most of the article questioning what XML is actually for, what it does, and what is a DTD? To find the answers to my questions I turned to Lynda.com tutorials and W3 Schools. Both helped me understand the basic tagging structures of XML and how to structure documents. Mostly I used the Lynda.com “Essential XML Guide” to guide me through the steps of creating XML and what the essential pieces of it are. For the most part this tutorial was helpful, but I ended up having to watch each individual video a few times because the language the author used was still confusing. The way I used the W3Schools tutorial was to help me understand the proper formatting for XML and how each piece fits together. For example, their graphic showing the structure of the root, child, and sub-child tags served as a formatting guide.

To better understand the importance of XML I turned to “Rhetorical Work in the Age of Content Management” by Rebekka Andersen. Part of her article focuses on how the technical communication field has moved away from a document-based approach to developing content to a topic-based approach that “focuses on the processes, methodologies, and technologies that enable content to be manipulated at a granular or topic level.” (116). XML is one of these technologies because of the way it lets the user create tags to better organize their content and make it standardized across platforms. By standardizing content across platforms, creators can easily collaborate with each other on projects and continue to use certain pieces of content over again if needed (after modifications).

I still don’t feel like I have a full grasp of the function and purpose of XML or why it’s necessary, but I do have a basic, working understanding of it.