DISCOVER YOUR OWN ONTOPIA

GETTING STARTED WITH TOPIC MAPS

You already know that you and your customers are victims of infoglut. Or perhaps you experience the problem differently – as a need to improve the way your organization manages its knowledge assets. The two problems are in any case closely related. So now you've heard of Topic Maps and think they may offer a solution. Where do you go from here?

1. The TAO of Topic Maps

First of all, you'll need to familiarize yourself with the basic concepts. The very best place to start is *The TAO of Topic Maps*.[1] The *TAO* is the most popular non-technical introduction around: If you haven't already read it, do so now! If anything is unclear, write to <pepper@ontopia.net>. *The XML Papers*[2], based on a case study, is a good follow-up. If you're the technical kind, you might want to go straight from the *TAO* to the *XML Topic Map specification (XTM)*[3].
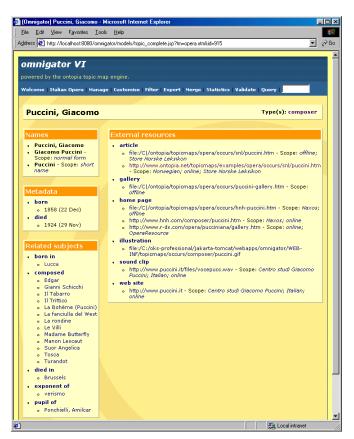
2. The *Omnigator™*

Once you've read the *TAO,* you'll be curious to see what topic maps look like in practice. Try giving the *Omnigator* a whirl using the online demo[4] at the Ontopia web site (and while you're at it, try *OperaMap*[5] as well). The *Omnigator* is a "spectacularly clever application" (not our words) for browsing topic maps. It's also free. If you download your own copy[6] you'll have access to more features and be able to debug and test-drive your own topic maps. The *Omnigator* runs out-of-the-box once you have Java installed, but if you encounter any problems <support@ontopia.net> will be there to help.

3. Writing Your First Topic Map

To really get to grips with the concepts and demonstrate their relevance to your colleagues, you should consider getting your hands dirty creating your own topic map. This is by no means as difficult as you might think: The *Omnigator User Guide* contains a simple, one-hour tutorial[7] in 8 easy steps that also serves as an introduction to XTM syntax. Then, once you've experienced the pain of typing angle brackets by hand, you might want to investigate LTM (the Linear Topic Map Notation),[8] a compact and readable alternative that is much more suitable for rapid prototyping and manual maintenance. If you have trouble with either syntax, just contact <expert@ontopia.net>.

The Omnigator: Ontopia's free topic map browser

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[1] *The TAO of Topic Maps,*
http://www.ontopia.net/topicmaps/materials/tao.html.
[2] *The XML Papers: Lessons on Applying Topic Maps,*
http://www.ontopia.net/topicmaps/materials/xmlconf.html
[3] *XML Topic Map Specification 1.0,*
http://www.topicmaps.org/xtm/1.0/
[4] *Omnigator* online demo, http://www.ontopia.net/omnigator.
[5] *OperaMap* online demo, http://www.ontopia.net/operamap.
[6] *Omnigator* free download,
http://www.ontopia.net/download/freedownload.html.

[7] *Building Your Own Topic Map,*
http://www.ontopia.net/omnigator/docs/navigator/userguide.html.
[8] *Linear Topic Map Notation (LTM),*
http://www.ontopia.net/download/ltm.html.

6. Initiating a Pilot Project

Time now to start getting really serious. Time to initiate a pilot project that will demonstrate conclusively that topic maps are the way to go! But think carefully before deciding to go it alone. Modelling and designing topic map applications is different from anything you have ever done before (although you can draw on experience from indexing, data analysis, knowledge organization and system design). Ontopia's *Topic Map Project Kick-Start*[11] package (3 days of workshops; 2 days of consulting; and a 90-day evaluation of the *Ontopia Knowledge Suite*[12]) allows you to get the most out of your subject matter expertise and our topic map experience.

4. Building Your First Topic Map Application

If you're a Java developer, why not go straight ahead and get a Developer License to the Personal Edition of the *Ontopia Knowledge Suite*, which contains a full-fledged topic map engine for you to play with. It costs a mere $500 and has excellent documentation and free support.

5. Convincing Management and Colleagues

By this point you'll have convinced yourself that topic maps really could be the answer you are looking for. You've created a small prototype and demoed it using the *Omnigator*. Management is impressed but still needs to be convinced. Your colleagues think it's cool, but the IT guys are sceptical and haven't yet seen anything they couldn't do with VB and SQLServer. What now?

Well, you could call in the Ontopians! We can help you refine your arguments, convince management, and win over sceptical colleagues. You won't find more experienced, enthusiastic and voluble topic map experts anywhere. Our half-day briefing, *Topic Maps in a Nutshell[9],* is guaranteed to create excitement and generate enthusiasm, and our one- and two-day seminars[10] give you the overview and the insights you need to confirm that you are on the right track.

7. Tackling a Full-Scale Application

No two topic map projects are alike, for the simple reason that different organizations have different requirements and different kinds of information, so you have to be prepared for some custom development. Ontopia can provide you (or your systems integrator) with the tools and training you will need if you decide to "go it alone". In that case, you might want to use our experienced consultants as sparring partners, to help keep you on the straight and narrow. Or you can have Ontopia do the customization and integration for you. The choice is yours, but whichever approach you choose, the *Ontopia Knowledge Suite* will provide you with a complete, robust, and well-documented toolkit.

Wherever you are on the road to topic mapping you will find that Ontopia has already been there and has expertise, experience and technology beyond what you will find elsewhere.

Let us help you discover your own Ontopia!

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[9] *Topic Maps in a Nutshell,*
http://www.ontopia.net/solutions/nutshell.html.
[10] *Survey of Topic Space, Hands-on Topic Maps,*
http://www.ontopia.net/solutions/workshops.html.

[11] *Topic Map Project Kick-Start,*
http://www.ontopia.net/solutions/kick-start.html.
[12] *Ontopia Knowledge Suite,*
http://www.ontopia.net/solutions/products.html.