OCTOBER 28, 2021

Compass Guide to Component Content Management Systems Q4 2021

Evaluation of RWS Tridion Docs

By: Tony White

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RWS Tridion Docs
Product Evaluation

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Date: October 28, 2021

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ARS LOGICA POSITION

Tridion Docs from RWS is the CCMS market's top-performing platform, leading the industry in component lifecycle management, workflow, collaboration and information governance, localization and translation management, process efficiency and cost containment, scalability, development tools, and strength of technical ecosystem (ranked first in each category). Within the larger RWS Intelligent Content Platform framework, the product proves singularly compelling for global enterprises that orchestrating people and processes with structured and unstructured content into efficient, controllable, and relevant workplace and customer experiences.

NOTES & RESOURCES

Sources of Information
Some company and product information contained in this report was collected via Ars Logica's vendor questionnaires. Vendor responses were independently verified through customer interviews, implementation monitoring, product documentation, Ars Logica's knowledge base, and/or hands-on product testing.

Platforms Included
The Compass Guides include the platforms that Ars Logica considers to be the most significant in the CCMS market. While scores on our business and technology scorecards vary widely, each platform evaluated will be a best-fit given the right use case, and may therefore prove worthy of shortlisting.

Customer Interviews
Ars Logica has interviewed users of every product covered in the Compass Guides, including RWS Tridion Docs.

Implementation Monitoring
Since the 1990s, Ars Logica founder Tony White has kept close tabs on ongoing content management implementations. Some of this knowledge is represented in the Compass Guide reports.

No Vendor Influence
Ars Logica retains complete editorial control over the Compass Guides and receives no funding in their production.

RWS Vendor Overview (specific to RWS Tridion Docs)

RWS secured a leadership position in the component content management market with its November 2020 acquisition of longtime frontrunner SDL. Prior to that, SDL had become a key player in this market with its 2007 acquisition of Trisoft – the same year it acquired the Dutch CMS vendor Tridion – a move that announced the company's strategic entry into the DITA technology market, a complementary area not within Tridion's core competency. SDL's further acquisition of XyEnterprise in 2009 netted the vendor moderate expansion of its content delivery capabilities, but more significantly, expanded SDL's mind- and market-share in the DITA tools market. In 2011, Xopus, producer of a market-leading XML editor, also became part of the SDL family. These three acquisitions collectively signified attainment of the leadership position in the management, delivery, and creation of component-based content, respectively.

Company Profile

Year Founded: 1958

Headquarters: Chalfont Saint Peter, Buckinghamshire, UK

Employees (or FTE equivalents): 7,400

Geographies: Global

Revenue: $994 million (£731 million)

Product Types Offered: Translation management (including AI-based), project management, electronic discovery, digital experience platform, component content management, integration platform

Commercial or Open Source: Commercial

Strategic CCMS Implementation Partners: Citec, Content Rules, Enterprise Knowledge, Infosys, Mekon, Oberon Technologies, Precision Content, Semantic Web Company

Top Competitors: Adobe, Astoria, Documentum, IXIASOFT

Key Vertical Industries: Automotive, high tech, financial services, legal, life sciences, manufacturing

Product Profile

Product Name: Tridion Docs

Version: 14 SP4

Next version release date: Q4 2022

Market segment: Enterprise

Average Sales Price (License Only): $250,000 (base price of $100,000)

Technology Platforms: Java and .NET

Key Strengths: Best available localization and translation management, excellent management of full component lifecycle, robust workflow, market-leading information governance, extreme scalability, strong technical ecosystem

Key Limitations: Complexity of implementation and ongoing administration in on-premise offerings; price justifiable to some customers only with usage of other RWS products; leveraging tight integration with rest of Tridion stack entails vendor lock-in

Highest-Value Use Case: Global deployment of digital experience and workplace initiatives in which a single source of truth and strong information governance figure prominently in the integration of structured and unstructured content

Vendor History & Product Evolution

Understanding Tridion Docs in its current state requires knowledge of the history of four separate companies and product lines originating from different technology spaces: RWS, SDL, Tridion, and Trisoft. Before its acquisition of SDL, RWS offered a range of translation-based technology products and services in the areas of patents, life sciences, and turnkey localization for global companies. From its founding in 1992, SDL had similarly specialized in translation and machine learning, beginning with the localization of software and supporting documentation and applying its expertise over time to an expanding set of use cases. By contrast, Tridion had focused since its founding in 1999 on web content-and-experience management. After several years of developing applications for clients on professional services engagements, Tridion launched its first commercially-available WCM product, R3. The product's success in the Netherlands and surrounding countries was immediate, as it was in North America and Asia following debuts in 2006 and 2009. After acquiring Tridion in 2007, SDL continued the development of Tridion's namesake platform unabated (now Tridion Sites), as RWS does with both Tridion Sites and Tridion Docs.

Starting in 2001 with its flagship product, InfoShare (since rebranded as LiveContent Architect, Knowledge Center Content Manager, and Tridion Docs), Trisoft always focused narrowly on DITA-based XML component content management – not necessarily an intuitive match as a technology space with SDL's translation management until one considers the need among the largest of companies (especially in regulated industries) to deliver product-, process-, policy-, and compliance-related information globally.

The four product lines now fit together as follows: Tridion Docs and Tridion Sites as parts of what became the Tridion platform through the sharing of taxonomies and the full dynamic content delivery architecture; the Tridion platform itself as part of the whole RWS stack through tight connections with the vendor's language and integration offerings (software and services); and the combination of offerings from pre-acquisition SDL and RWS through nascent, but rapidly-evolving and comprehensive integration initiatives.

Key Recent Developments

Tridion Docs versions 14, SP1, SP2, and SP3 logically reorganized Tridion Docs to simplify authoring and approval processes for both technical and non-technical users. The new browser-based "Draft Space" and "Review Space" modules greatly reduced the complexity of collaboratively authoring and managing numerous structured-information types, enhanced large-scale audit capabilities, and improved the UI. While the noteworthy improvement in 14 SP3 was the enablement of OASIS DITA relationship tables, version 14 SP4 introduces powerful "semantic AI" functionality that extracts considerably more value from content and content-centric processes by effectively automating (1) the linkage of related information, and (2) the application of enterprise knowledge maps. The discoverability and usability of potentially unused but highly relevant content thus greatly improves, as does the contextual omnichannel delivery of that – and all other – content.

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Profiling the Ideal Buyer

The ideal buyer of Tridion Docs is the large organization seeking to reduce the cost and improve the accuracy of delivering localized product-, process-, policy-, and compliance-related information across geographies; strengthen information governance and compliance with regulatory processes; improve collaboration between subject matter experts (SMEs) and documentation teams; and establish links between related but previously unconnected structured and unstructured content. Key differentiators for Tridion Docs is the scale at which these can be accomplished, as well as unmatched experience in the life sciences industries and fields relating to intellectual property.

- **Enterprise-Scale Deployment**
  Customers extracting the most value from Tridion Docs are large companies with siloed or geographically dispersed SMEs and documentation teams who must increasingly collaborate to make possible the modular, taxonomic, cognitive-services-enabled content creation processes required to dynamically and accurately deliver both structured and unstructured content, regardless of channel.

- **Global Digital Presence**
  A particular forte of RWS, global information management is a requirement namely for companies with high volumes of content that span multiple geographies, languages, brands, and online channels. Tridion Docs is the link between structured content and, (1) the rest of the former SDL's global information management stack, and (2) the broader range of RWS's translation-centric products and services targeted at large global enterprises.

- **Requirements beyond Tridion Docs**
  While Tridion Docs is the market's most capable CCMS, the ideal customer will leverage much of the rest of RWS's product range, including its full Tridion offering, translation software and services, compliance solutions, and integrations with third-party e-commerce, collaboration, DAM, and CRM platforms.

Tridion Docs Will Not Be a Good Fit, If...

As technology that has existed for more than 20 years but which only recently crossed into the mainstream as a stand-alone market, CCMS offerings differ greatly in terms of core capabilities, sophistication of installed bases, and overall product maturity. There are only a few top-tier CCMS platforms that will prove generally suitable for large or global enterprises. For the most part, Tridion Docs will not appeal to small or midsized companies, except those in vertical industries with highly regulated operating processes or those whose livelihoods depend on accurate machine-to-human communication.

Key Product Strengths

Tridion Docs excels in a number of evaluative categories in our scorecards for both business users and technologists, with first-place rankings in all five of the business categories and four of the six technical categories (one co-first). First, the platform boasts superb localization and translation management capabilities (ranked first among all platforms evaluated by a considerable margin). Related taxonomy and semantic functionality also lead the CCMS industry. Benefitting from expertise acquired in the development of the Tridion Sites platform, Tridion Docs also includes workflow and approval features whose maturity and integration with collaboration and information-governance tools are unmatched. To a large extent, leadership in all five business categories comes as by-product of RWS's unique presence among CCMS vendors in the most complex of content-management and content globalization/localization implementations.

Next, the Tridion platform provides for the sharing of taxonomies between Tridion Docs and Tridion Sites, as well as for the assimilation of both within the framework of the larger platform's Dynamic Experience Delivery, Integration, and Language Services layers. This renders the platform's support for the use of marketing content, technical information, components, layout, code, and profile data as discrete-but-relatable elements particularly useful for global digital initiatives that must orchestrate structured and unstructured content into highly controllable and compelling employee, partner, or user experiences.

FIGURE 1   Tridion Docs, Key Product Strengths and Limitations

Below are several key product strengths and limitations that potential buyers should keep in mind when assembling vendor shortlists.

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY LIMITATIONS
Localization/translation management that far surpass all other offerings in the CCMS market	Leveraging the tight integration between layers of the RWS stack comes with a fair amount of vendor lock-in.
Industry-leading management of the complete component lifecycle (ranked first among all platforms evaluated)	Complexity of implementation and ongoing administration in on-premise offerings – mitigated when opting for cloud offerings
Robust workflow/approval and collaboration/information governance functionality (ranked first in both categories among all platforms evaluated)	Price justifiable to some customers only with usage of other RWS products
"Semantic AI" capabilities on the leading edge of the CCMS industry	
Strength of technical ecosystem (ranked first among all platforms evaluated)	

Source: Ars Logica, Inc.

Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

Finally, RWS has added a layer of "semantic AI" – perhaps more readily understood as "referential intelligence" – that iteratively establishes not only the correlations between and among existing and new enterprise content, but also the requisite parameters for its future contextual delivery. Thus, information becomes more discoverable and usable over time.

Key Product Limitations

As with any product under continuous development for 20 years – especially those expanded via acquisition – the code base of Tridion Docs is heterogeneous. That is, the product has evolved over the years in ways not originally envisioned, and the system architecture has become mildly cumbersome. Large portions of the platform, however, have been re-architected, and now rest on a microservices-based delivery architecture. "All legacy technology has been removed" from the product. Ars Logica believes that the spirit of the claim is true, but cannot confirm the totality inherent in "all." Complexity always becomes evident during implementations and upgrades, and this holds true for Tridion Docs. We should add to the last paragraph that the truly enterprise-oriented vendors (i.e. the three or four top-tier of CCMS vendors, along with the infrastructure/middleware vendors) have either such a wide range of products or such highly-scalable stand-alone products that their code bases have usually come from myriad sources – they are complex in functionality, technical underpinnings, and implementation. Once up and running, however, collaborating non-technical SMEs need not know about Tridion Doc's technical complexity.

Perhaps of most concern to some organizations will be what at least a few customers have described as "lax adherence to DITA standards." To summarize these claims as succinctly as possible, areas of concern include: (1) key spaces and keyref attributes; (2) working with metadata; (3) subjectScheme maps; and (4) mandatory reliance on SQL records rather than DITAVAL files.

For customers who need RWS's uniquely robust translation capabilities integrated with one of the few available top-tier CCMS platforms, these trade-offs may well be worth making – while others may reason that Docs is not DITA-compliant "enough." Ars Logica's own position is that some DITA-related compromises were justifiable in order to (1) fully leverage synergies between Tridion Docs and the range of RWS's translation offerings; and (2) offer productivity, accuracy, and user-experience enhancements when compared to file-system based authoring. In order to make the full RWS stack available to Tridion Docs and the Tridion Digital Experience Hub, decisions to follow RWS standards rather than DITA standards had to be made in certain cases – a calculation that results in real business value for some customers.

Next, the price of the product – justifiable for organizations with global information management requirements beyond CCMS – will put it out of reach of many technically-focused medium-sized companies who would still benefit from synergies between Tridion Docs, Tridion Sites, and RWS's other offerings.

Vendor/Product Report Cards

The features, functions, and technical underpinnings of CCMS products vary considerably, as do the customer requirements they are intended to satisfy. For this reason, the only reliable way to assure the best product fit for a particular client is to spend anywhere from several weeks to several months assessing the client's specific needs and analyzing product capabilities line by line. Still, Ars Logica is frequently asked to rate products in categories such as those in Figures 2 and 3. While the average scores across these categories might be the same for two products, proper weighting will often cause the overall scores to diverge significantly.

**FIGURE 2**   Tridion Docs Report Card for the Business User

Figure 2 shows Ars Logica's rating of Tridion Docs in five CCMS categories of critical importance to business users. Refer to Page 11 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.
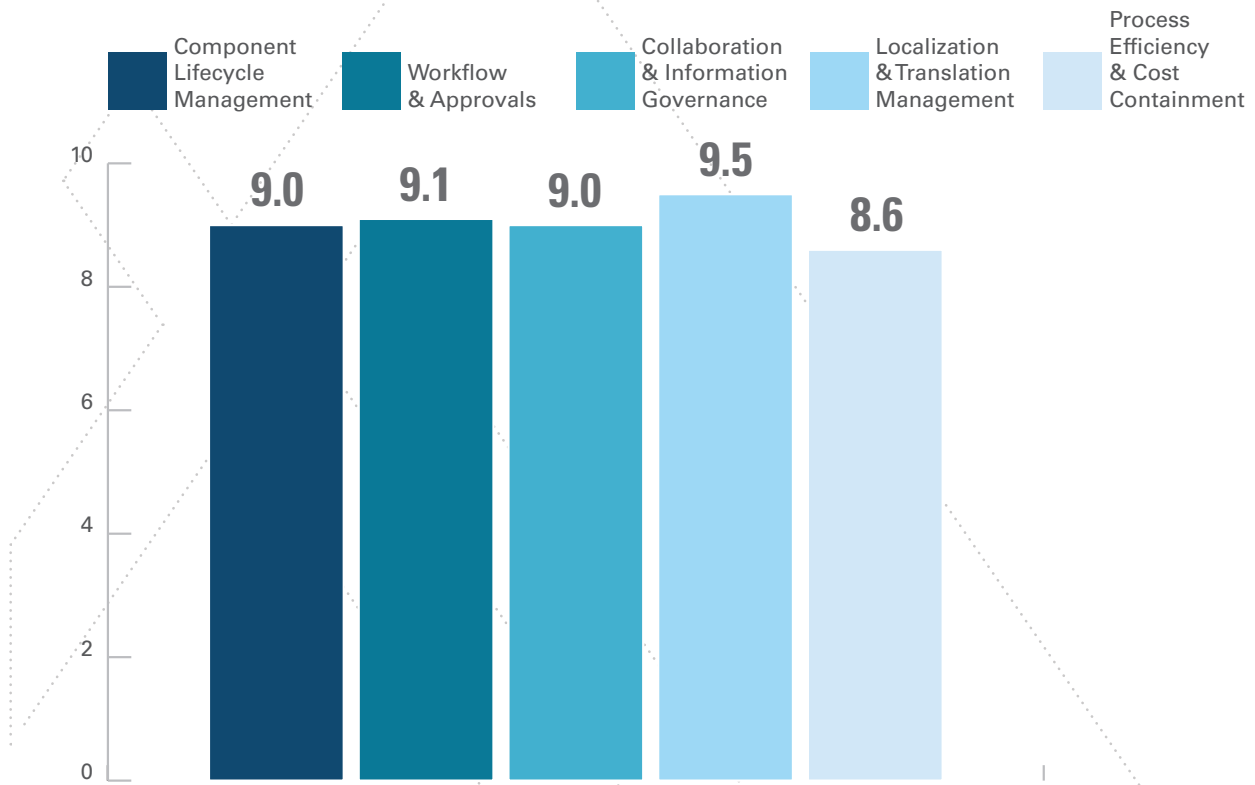
Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

FIGURE 3 Tridion Docs Report Card for Technologists

Figure 3 shows Ars Logica's rating of Tridion Docs in six CCMS categories of critical importance to technologists. Refer to Page 12 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.
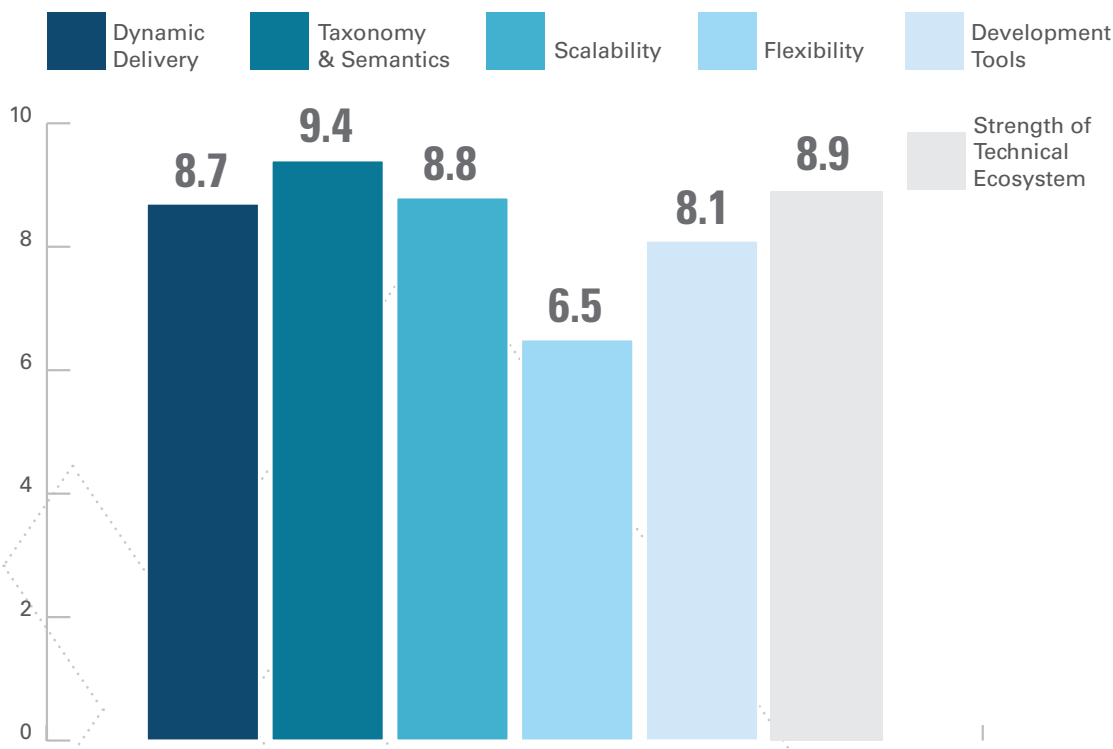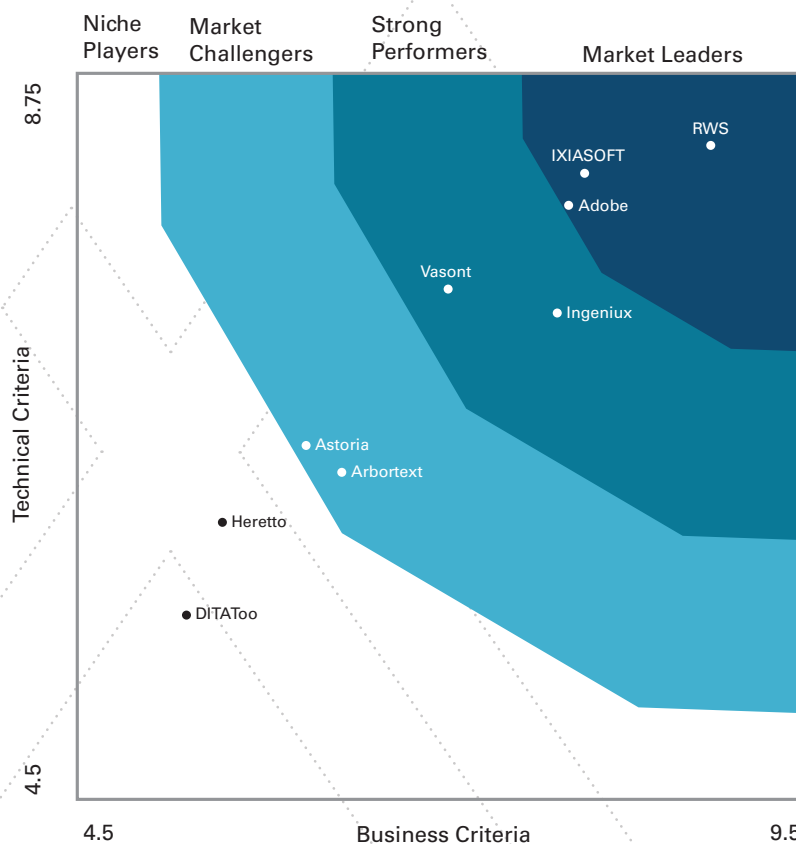

Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

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A Graphic That Matters: How's the Technology? And How is it Exposed?

In the visual representation below of technology platforms in the current CCMS market, Ars Logica attempts to provide the most meaningful relative positioning possible of its competitors. On the vertical axis, we answer the question, "How's the technology?" On the horizontal axis, we answer the question, "How -- and how well -- is technology exposed to both business users and other technology platforms?" To see how scores were derived, please refer to Figure 2.

FIGURE 1   Compass Guide to CCMS -- Business vs. Technology Considerations

Figure 1 plots the strength of technology platforms in categories of critical importance to business users against the robustness of technical underpinnings.

Source: Ars Logica, Inc.

Scores used to generate this graph are based on a scale of 0 to 10 (see Figure 2). For comparative purposes, the axes have been scaled to represent actual score ranges. Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings, Ars Logica's knowledge base, and/or implementation monitoring

The Scores

Two overall scores for each platform -- one for the business categories and one for the technical categories (headings in red) -- were generated by weighting and summing scores for individual evaluative criteria (each area consisting of subscores at a level of detail beyond the scope of this Scorecard).

FIGURE 2   Compass Guide to CCMS -- Scoring

Figure 2 provides a comparative assessment of performance for the technology platforms included in the Compass Guides to CCMS.

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM	Component Lifecycle Management	Workflow & Approvals	Collaboration & Information Governance	Localization & Translation Management	Process Efficiency & Cost Containment	Overall Business Category Score	Dynamic Delivery	Taxonomy & Semantics	Scalability	Flexibility	Development Tools	Strength of Technical Ecosystem	Overall Technical Category Score
	35%	20%	10%	20%	15%		10%	10%	20%	20%	15%	25%	
RWS Tridion Docs	9.0	9.1	9.0	9.5	8.6	9.06	8.7	9.4	8.8	6.5	8.1	8.9	8.31
IXIASOFT CCMS	8.2	8.2	8.4	7.9	8.4	8.19	9.1	8.7	9.1	8.9	7.6	6.3	8.10
Adobe XML Documentation AEM	8.5	7.8	8.6	7.7	7.7	8.09	8.2	7.7	8.0	7.6	7.8	8.0	7.88
Ingeniux CMS	8.0	8.1	8.0	8.3	7.6	8.02	8.5	7.6	7.1	7.3	6.9	7.0	7.28
Vasont DITA CCMS	7.4	7.3	7.4	7.2	6.9	7.27	7.5	7.5	7.3	8.1	7.2	7.0	7.41
Astoria CCMS	6.1	6.0	6.5	6.8	6.2	6.28	7.0	5.9	6.5	6.7	6.1	6.6	6.50
Arbortext / PTC Windchill	6.5	6.1	7.4	6.9	6.1	6.53	7.0	5.4	5.5	6.0	5.9	7.7	6.35
Heretto	5.8	6.3	5.7	5.1	6.0	5.78	5.2	5.9	5.3	8.8	5.0	5.3	6.01
DITAToo	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.3	5.1	5.44	5.7	6.0	4.6	7.3	5.3	4.7	5.52

All scores based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 10 (strong).   Source: Ars Logica, Inc.

Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings, Ars Logica's knowledge base, and/or implementation monitoring

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Report Card Evaluation Criteria

Criteria for Business Users

- **Component Lifecycle Management**
  Managing the full lifecycle of content components harnesses a wide range of tools and feature-functionality (along with entire evaluative subcategories such as DITA compliance), including: content authoring/editing for SMEs; content discovery and reuse; content annotation and collaboration; dynamic content assembly; component versioning; component auditing and reporting; content/component retention and archiving; library services; repository capabilities; and output options.

- **Workflow & Approvals**
  Authors need intuitive tools to move and control content through complex production processes -- to individuals, groups, and agencies inside and outside the enterprise. Feature-functionality represented here includes linear modeling and approvals; workflow branching and merging; conditional approvals; auto-escalation; graphical workflow builders; and regulatory compliance capabilities.

- **Collaboration & Information Governance**
  As the role of SMEs as technical content authors grows, content creation processes are transcending departmental boundaries – spreading out both organizationally and geographically to distributed documentation teams. This category assesses the agility and security of location-independent, structured, collaborative authoring processes.

- **Localization & Translation Management**
  For enterprises doing business in multiple languages, delivering consistently compelling user experiences requires a strategic approach to content translation. Not only must translated content remain free of obvious linguistic inaccuracies, it must also be contextually relevant – to businesses, consumers, and machines – based on geography, country, dialect, industry, role, department, application, device, touchpoint, time, and logic. This category assesses a platform's ability to deliver specific, error-free, contextually correct content in such highly variable situations.

- **Process Efficiency & Cost Containment**
  The highly structured nature of component content implies that platforms in this category manage only format-free, purely modular, reusable content. When this is the case, the organic pieces of unified business processes such as "go to market initiatives" can be made to scale very efficiently. When this is not the case, the same processes tend to stall or fail, with costs that spiral out of control. This category assesses a platform's demonstrated ability to streamline – at scale – the content-and-context aspects of such business processes while simultaneously containing costs.

Criteria for Technologists

- **Dynamic Delivery**

  This category refers to a product's ability to deliver content to any information channel, regardless of format or destination point. This includes traditional delivery to PDF, Web, help, and e-learning modules, as well as integration with chatbot software, IoT devices, and AI platforms.

- **Taxonomy & Semantics**

  This category refers to the hierarchical structure of content authoring environments, which drives site organization and URL structures, as well as to the metadata functions required for metatagging content, essential for effective content discovery and personalized customer experiences.

- **Scalability**

  Scalability refers to the ability of a product to function well as system demands increase. Factors contributing to scalability are database size, query efficiency, bandwidth consumption, ease of system management, caching efficiency, load balancing, and mass content deployment capabilities.

- **Flexibility**

  Flexibility denotes the ability to integrate with existing infrastructure, including operating systems, Web servers, databases, directories, development tools, and other enterprise applications. In the component content space, better adherence to DITA standards usually results in higher flexibility scores because of improved interoperability with other DITA-compliant systems.

- **Development Tools**

  This category describes the quality of a product's development environment, the technologies it incorporates, and overall ease of customized application development. This category refers primarily to development frameworks, but other supporting applications are also included, such as XML editors, content conversion applications, specialized output engines, content optimization tools, and any other functionality that enables or eases the installation, development, and customization of CCMS implementations.

- **Strength of Technical Ecosystem**

  Though component content management products have existed for more than 20 years, users of these applications have worked primarily in technical documentation departments, whose requirements vary greatly from company to company due to size, budget, geography, language, vertical industry, communication channels, and other individual differences. As a result, no two CCMS implementations are the same. With such a divergent implementation landscape, strength of the technical ecosystem – which determines options for outside expertise – becomes hugely important. This category estimates the strength of the third-party technical ecosystem available for customers to leverage.

SERVICES

Advisory Services

Ars Logica is a vendor-neutral analyst firm helping companies evaluate their digital experience requirements and select appropriate software. To address clients' questions and concerns that arise throughout the year, Ars Logica offers unlimited direct analyst access through its Analyst Anytime advisory services. These annual, subscription-based services provide guidance by phone or email within 24 hours on a wide range of issues. The number of inquiries submitted throughout the year is not limited.

Software and Technology Selection

In our technology selection engagements, Ars Logica maps clients' functional, technological, and strategic requirements to potential software platforms and identifies the vendors whose products best satisfy these requirements. We maintain a continuously updated comprehensive matrix of the feature-functionality of most digital experience vendors' products and solutions. We receive frequent briefings from these vendors and have in-depth conversations and consulting engagements with their customers, ensuring that we always understand the actual state of vendors' offerings as well as their forward-looking strategic directions.

Custom Engagements

Ars Logica's expertise in technologies such as web content management, digital experience management, digital asset management, marketing campaign management, enterprise search, and portals, gives us the open-ended ability to help clients on a wide range of projects, including: building internal business cases, assessing technology requirements, analyzing software products and vendors, selecting and assembling software solutions, crafting digital strategies, and running corporate educational seminars. We also assist vendors in developing strategic roadmaps, and we present our view of the digital experience market at industry conferences and end-user events.

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