



# Configuring Oxygen Editor

Stanley Doherty, Ph.D.

## Guidepost

Syncro Soft Oxygen Editor is the leading XML editor in the world. It is usable, powerful, feature-rich, and scalable. In this context, "scalable" means that Oxygen offers features that support beginners, professionals, and experts. As your familiarity with XML, DITA, JSON, or Markdown increases, you'll find that Oxygen offers increasingly advanced features to support your learning and writing.

So - how do we configure Oxygen to make its beginner-oriented features more visible than its intermediate or advanced features?

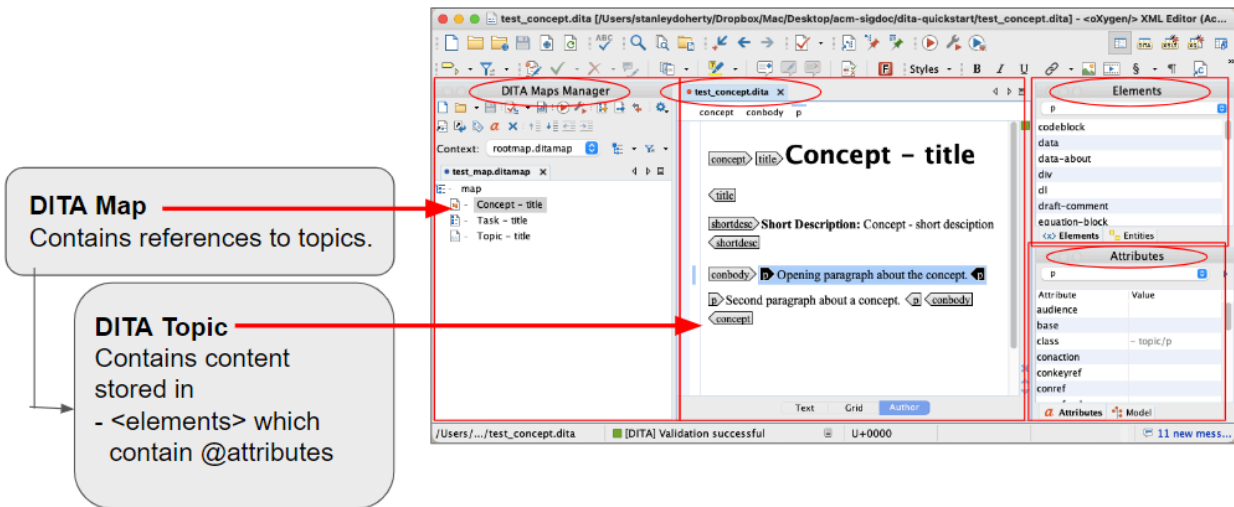
Simple - we focus on the absolute DITA basics – maps, topics, elements, and attributes as visible in the Author Editor.

NOTE: In many ways, Text mode in Oxygen Editor is more powerful than Author Mode. We'll look at setting basic preferences for Text mode in a separate resource.

## DITA basics

When you first open Oxygen, it is not entirely clear what you should view or do first. That's OK because we can set a few configuration options that will make creating and editing DITA content easy.

DITA content consists of a hierarchy of maps, topics, elements, and attributes.



## Set up a local folder

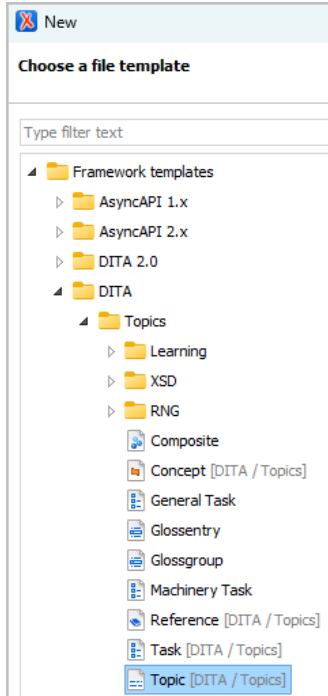
1. Create a folder on your local system to store Oxygen configuration files.  
For example:

C:\oxygen-config (Windows)

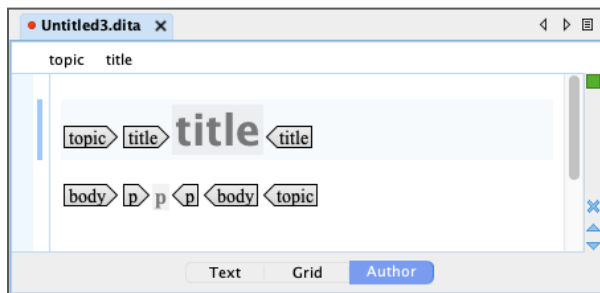
/Users/*your-name*/Desktop/oxygen-config (macOS)

## Configure a default display mode for content

1. In Oxygen, choose **File - New** to open the **New** dialog.

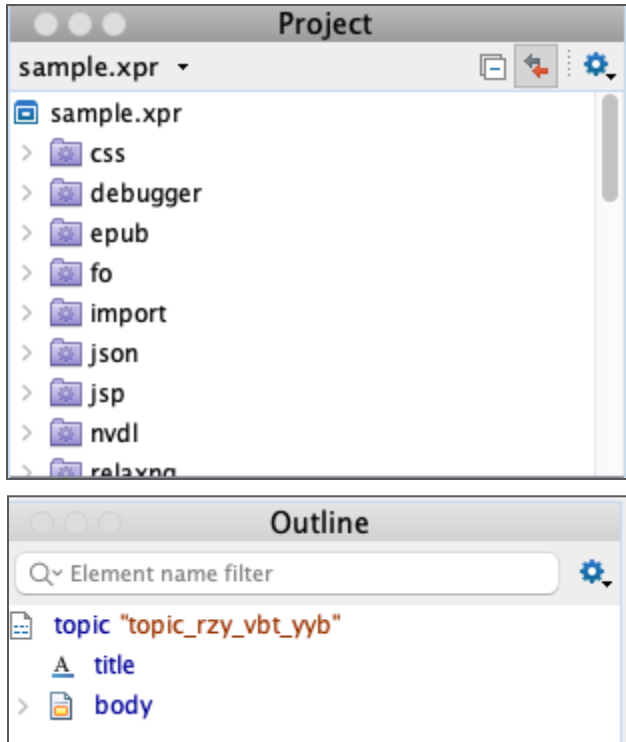


2. Double-click the **Topic [DITA / Topics]** template under **Framework templates / DITA / Topics**.  
Oxygen creates the topic and displays it in the right-hand **Editor** pane.
3. In the **Editor** pane, click the **Author** button to display DITA topic content in the graphical Author Editor.

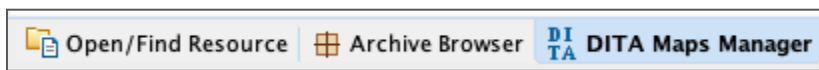


## Configure a default layout for panes

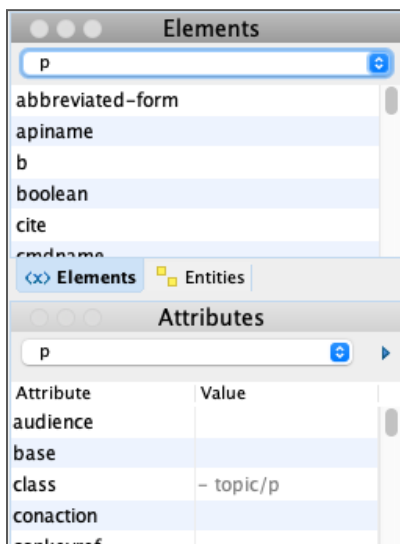
1. Choose **Window - Load Layout - Author** to arrange Oxygen panes to a preset layout named "Author".
2. On the left side of the Oxygen window, delete the panes **Project**, **Outline**, and anything other than **DITA Maps Manager**.



3. Click the **DITA Maps Manager** tab on the left side of the window to make that pane active.

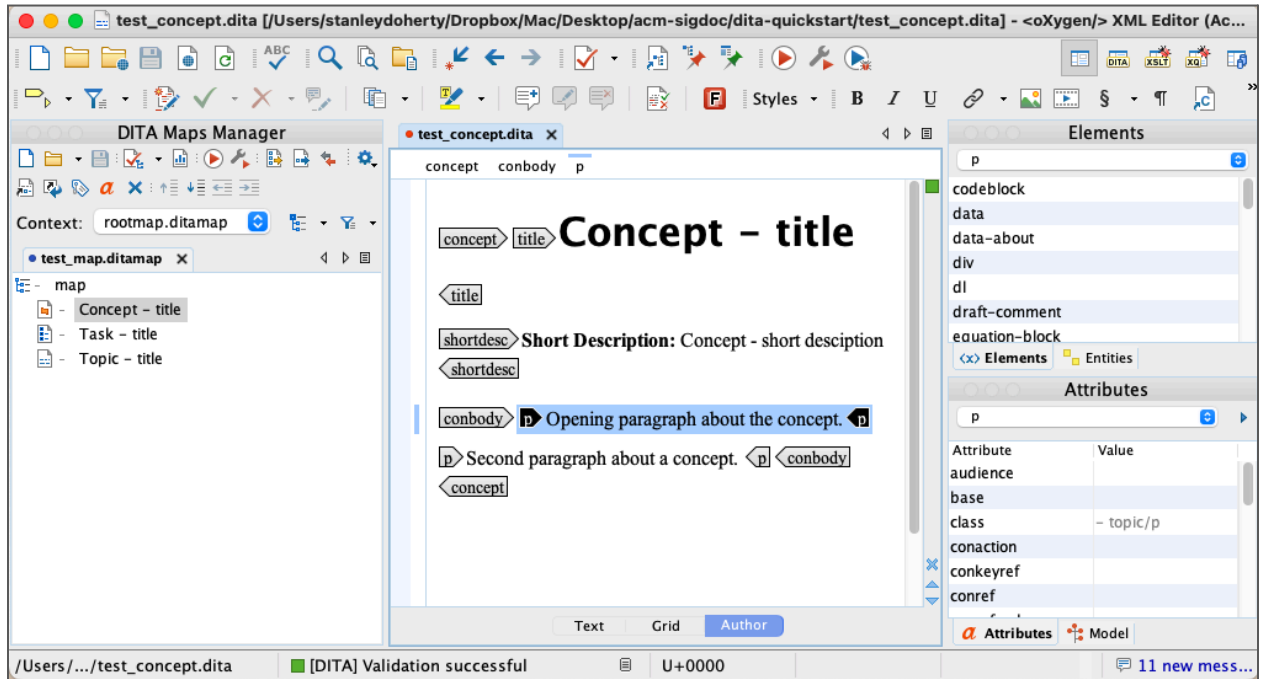


4. On the right side of the Oxygen window, arrange the **Elements** and **Attributes** panes so they are next to one another (your preference).

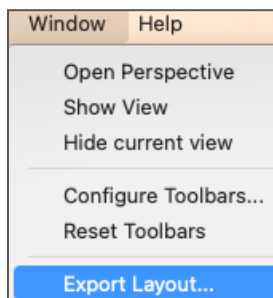


When you edit DITA content, you place your insertion pointer inside or between DITA elements. Oxygen then lists in the **Elements** or **Attributes** panes only those elements or attributes that can be inserted without invalidating the topic.

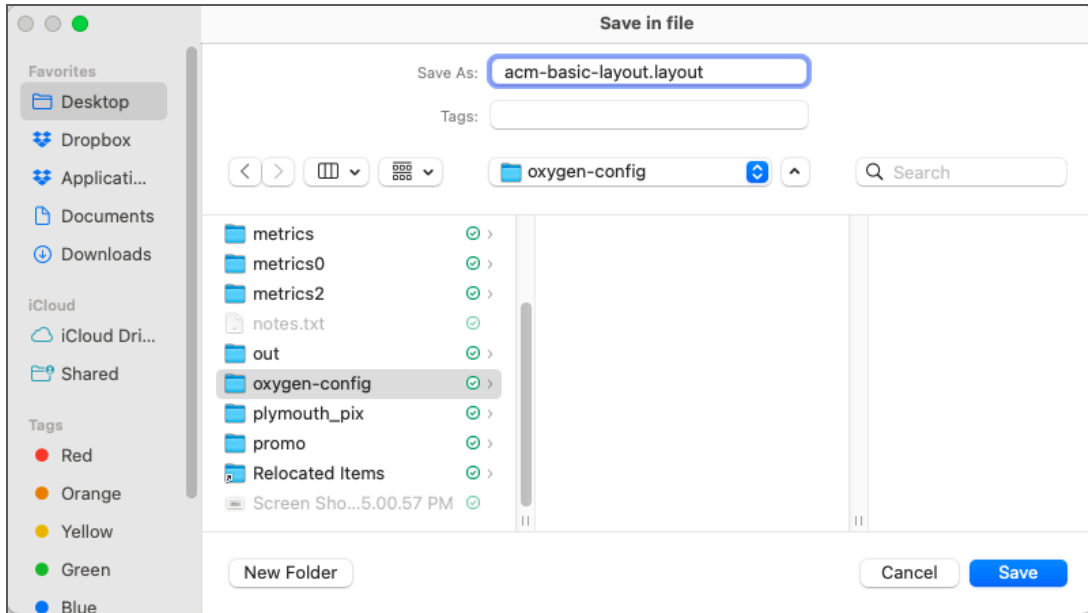
5. Verify that Oxygen displays the **DITA Maps Manager** pane on the left, the Author editing pane in the center, and the **Elements** and **Attributes** panes on the right.



6. Choose **Window - Export Layout**. to display the **Save in file** dialog.



7. Save the layout configuration file to the local folder you created earlier in this session.

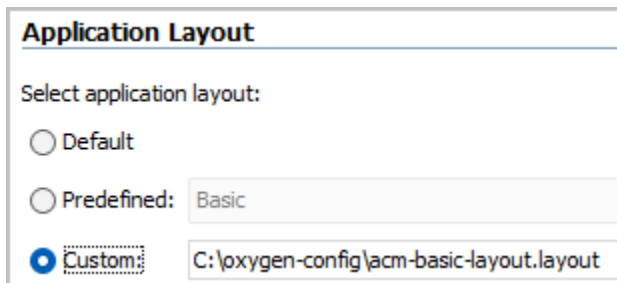


**Note:** You can load this layout configuration file at any time by choosing **Window - Load Layout - Custom**.

## Configure some global preferences

Oxygen offers dozens of configuration preferences - from the basic to the esoteric. The good news for new writers to Oxygen is that there are only a few that you need to set to become productive.

1. Choose **Options - Preferences - Application Layout** to display the **Preferences - Application Layout** settings page.
2. In that settings page, select the **Custom** button and provide the full path to the layout configuration file that you created in the previous session.

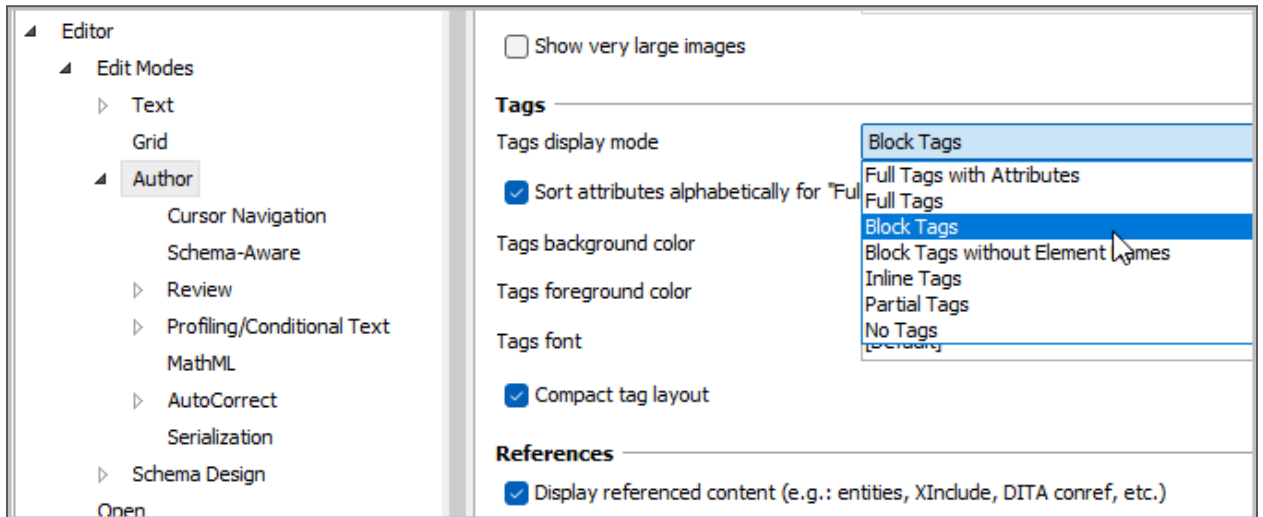


3. Click **OK** to save the change.

Every time you open Oxygen, it will set your layout to the configuration

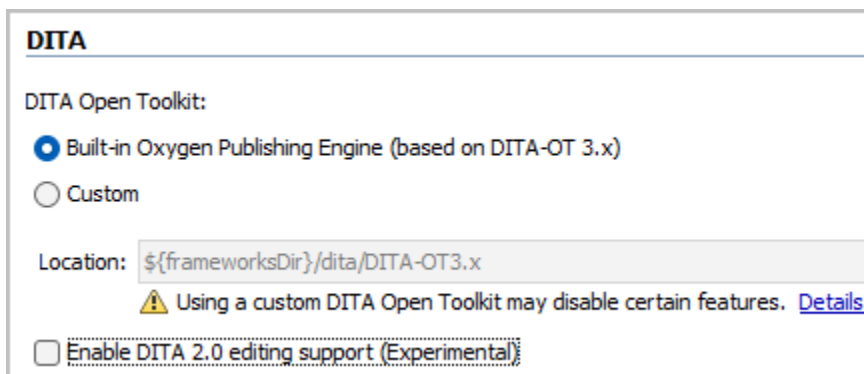
acm-basic-layout.layout (for this example).

4. In the **Preferences** dialog, choose **Editor - Edit Modes - Author** to display the settings page for the graphical editor.
5. In that settings page:
  - a. Set the **Tags display mode** to "Block Tags".
  - b. Verify that the **Display referenced content** box is checked.

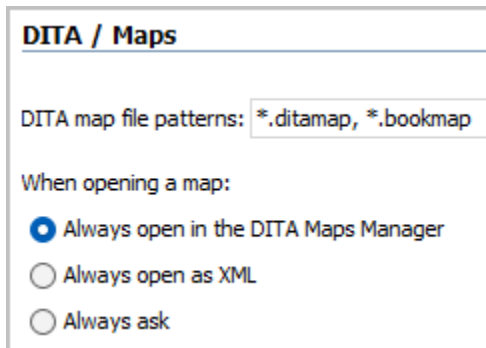


Block tags in the Author editor provide just the element names. Displaying referenced content is important once you begin working with conrefs.

6. Click **Apply** to commit the change.
7. Choose **DITA** to display the DITA settings sheet.
8. In that settings sheet, de-select the **Enable DITA 2.0 editing support** box.



9. Choose **DITA - Maps** and select the "Always open in the DITA Maps Manager" button.



The image shows a dialog box titled "DITA / Maps". It contains a text field for "DITA map file patterns:" with the value "\*.ditamap, \*.bookmap". Below this, under the heading "When opening a map:", there are three radio button options: "Always open in the DITA Maps Manager" (which is selected), "Always open as XML", and "Always ask".

Any DITA maps that you create or open will now be displayed in the **DITA Maps Manager** pane and not in the **Author Editor** pane.

10. Click **Apply** to commit the configuration changes.

## Thank You!

See the [Committee on Structured Authoring and Content Management](#) page of the ACM SIGDOC website to learn more about committee activities, available resources, and volunteer opportunities.

See <https://acm-sigdoc-structured.org> to learn more about committee activities, available resources, and volunteer opportunities.