"FOSI is for service information. APP is for magazines."

The FOSI formatting language was designed for the express purpose of formatting technical documents, including service information. FOSI is Arbortext Editor's native formatting language, and it is tightly integrated with the software. FOSI has been used in many industries, including automotive, aerospace, defense, and heavy equipment, to format owner's manuals, operator's manuals, maintenance manuals, service bulletins, recall bulletins, parts manuals, technical manuals, and more for better than 20 years.

Advanced Print Publisher™ (APP) was designed for complex text and graphic layouts, with "best–in–class typographic capabilities." If you intend to publish a consumer magazine with Arbortext Editor, APP would be the right choice. For service information, however, APP is serious overkill, akin to acquiring a Stealth bomber when what you really need is a crop duster.

The following comparison of APP and FOSI discusses their strengths and weaknesses.

Formatting Support

APP specializes in elaborate page layouts and fine typography features that service information documents rarely if ever require. FOSI does not handle complex page layouts or provide for specifying letter spacing and other fine typographic capabilities. However, FOSI has built-in support for change marks, blank page backs, security classification, and more. Some formatting features not directly supported by FOSI, such as hanging quotes, can be accomplished with supplementation by a scripting language — an example is shown above.

Prerequisites

The prerequisites for learning APP are daunting. Arbortext documentation lists the following knowledge and experience as required just to learn APP:

- Basic knowledge of concepts such as object based coding and scripting.
- Proficiency in JavaScript.
- An understanding of the APP Formatting Object Model and its constants, properties and methods.
- Familiarity with the basic components and processes that make up APP and the experience necessary to use this knowledge to program the application to correspond with individual business requirements.

Presumably, knowledge of fine typography is also necessary. In any case, few if any organizations have someone on staff with this skill set, and the number of outside APP experts is limited.

FOSI prerequisites are dramatically different: "The FOSI developer should have a background in desktop publishing, document preparation, and layout." Note the prerequisites for FOSI do not include programming training or experience because knowledge of software languages, data structures, algorithms, etc., does not apply to FOSI.

The right tool for the job

Most organizations already have publishing staff who are well equipped to learn FOSI. And there are numerous outside consultants with FOSI experience.

Learning Curve

Many FOSI stylesheets are completed in 10 to 16 weeks, even by newbies. APP, however, has a steep learning curve and takes years to master. How difficult is APP? Consider Arbortext's documentation for APP, which consists of the six indexed manuals listed below.

1. *Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher — Enterprise Administrator's Guide*, a 73–page manual that describes "the components, system requirements, configuration files, and commands you need to create to complete an installation."

2. *Installing Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher*, a 40–page manual with "installation, configuration, and licensing information for the Desktop and Enterprise products."

3. *Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher User's Guide*, an 84–page "beginner's guide" that "is intended as an introduction to the Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher (APP) product, with some tips and instructions on how to create a basic template." Its chapters and appendices are:

    - What Is APP?
    - The APP User Interface
    - APP Objects
    - How APP Applies Style to Text
    - A Quick Look at Automating APP
    - Additional Information
    - Examples and References

4. *Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher Formatting Object Model Reference*, a 616–page manual that contains "descriptions of all the objects included in the APP Formatting Object Model (FOM), and any constants, properties, and methods that make up an object's definition." It consists of the following chapters:

    - Creating a Development Environment with Eclipse
    - Application
    - Formatting

5. *Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher Macro Language Reference*, a 1,400–page manual that describes more than 1,000 macros and processing instructions provided with APP.

6. *Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher PDF Configuration Settings*, a 47–page manual with "information on how to configure some common PDF settings with APP."

It appears that an APP-based publishing solution will take considerable time and effort to staff, develop, configure, install, and maintain.

This is not the case with FOSI. Arbortext's FOSI documentation consists of one 437–page indexed *Arbortext FOSI Reference* manual* that describes FOSI stylesheet development for publishing SGML and XML documents. It contains the following chapters:

- FOSI Concepts
- FOSI Methodology
- FOSI Components
- FOSI Testing
- Formatting Support
- Coding a FOSI stylesheet
- Using the FOSI Editor
- Basic FOSI Coding Techniques
- Advanced FOSI Coding Techniques

The **FOSI QuickStart Tutorials** cover virtually everything related to FOSI formatting in Arbortext Editor. More information can be found at FOSIexpert.com/tutorials.html.

Practical FOSI for Arbortext Editor, with complete reference information and more than 400 examples, is expected to be available for purchase in 2014. The Table of Contents and some excerpts are available at FOSIexpert.com/Practical-fosi.html.

Note that manuals for FOSI installation and configuration are not needed. FOSI is automatically installed when Print Composer or Publishing Engine is installed. FOSI configuration is limited to possibly setting one or more environment variables.

Interface

In past years Arbortext has announced plans to improve the APP interface, which is considered less than ideal. However, nothing has been forthcoming.

Arbortext Editor has two complementary FOSI interfaces with many useful features to aid development and maintenance. One of the interfaces is geared toward helping newbies get started. Both interfaces are free with an Arbortext Editor license because FOSI is used to format the Edit window.

Formatting Speed

APP's formatting speed depends on the skill of the developer. Only a highly skilled APP developer can maximize APP's speed. And only a highly paid expert can determine if APP is running at top speed or at a needlessly slow pace that wastes server time and delays distribution.

Unlike APP, FOSI formatting speed does not depend on the skill of the developer. FOSI formatting always runs at top speed, which is faster than APP's top speed. In

*The same FOSI information is available as Help topics.

addition, a FOSI stylesheet can be coded to utilize a feature that formats documents two to four times faster than usual.

Bottom Line

Unless elaborate page layouts and fine typographic capabilities are required, FOSI is the right tool for the job of publishing service information because FOSI was designed for the purpose, and consequently is easier and faster than APP.

	APP	FOSI
Designed for Service Information	👎	👍
Prerequisites	👎	👍
Learning Curve	👎	👍
Interface	👎	👍
Formatting Speed	👎	👍