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## EContent Decision-Maker Review: Arbortext Epic Editor 4.2



Robert Boeri

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<b>Company:</b> Arbortext	<b>Reviewer's View:</b> Epic Editor is a robust, reliable native XML authoring tool. Arbortext has a track record of participating in the development of SGML and XML standards, then supporting them in its products. Arbortext's complementary tools and integration with leading content management systems make Epic Editor a definite candidate for your XML authoring short list.
<b>Purpose:</b> XML Authoring Tool	
<b>Starting Price:</b> \$695	

June 2002 | Jim Sterken, Paul Grosso, and David Rogers founded Arbortext, a privately-held company, in 1982 with the vision to create standards-based publishing solutions running on open platforms. When SGML (the structured document standard on which HTML and XML are both based) became a standard in 1986, Arbortext began developing a series of publishing tools to support SGML. Epic Editor is the most recent in this product line, and is currently at version 4.2.

Native XML authoring systems like Epic Editor provide a way to create valid XML content directly. XML provides virtually unlimited opportunities to derive specialized versions of that content, including Web and wireless delivery, print, and CD. Native XML tools work with any XML model, expressed as a "Document Type Definition" (DTD) or—increasingly— as richer XML schemas. Using an XML authoring system is a more constrained process than using word processors or desktop publishing systems. The main difference from an author's perspective is the focus on content—what the author writes—rather than fonts, page layout, and what the content looks like. This is because a virtually unlimited number of formatting, even rearrangement of content elements, can be applied to the same XML file. Systems like Epic Editor that also support companion XML formatting and transformation standards like XSL and XSLT provide previews showing how the content can appear when printed or delivered to a variety of devices. Still, the single-minded focus on predictably structured content is a new experience for many authors and is a feature that businesses typically welcome.

Epic Editor is Arbortext's central authoring application, part of a set of XML software for single-source, multichannel publishing. These applications run directly on Windows systems and on other operating systems, such as Sun Solaris. Arbortext's Extend product lets you install Epic Editor on a server so that users access it via a browser, extending the client platforms to include Macintosh, DOS, UNIX, and others. Arbortext's Extend eliminates desktop deployment and permits the purchase and sharing by many of fewer concurrent licenses.



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Epic Editor is designed for organizations employing teams of authors who work with large amounts of material, to produce multiple outputs—Web, CD-ROM, print, and wireless devices from an efficient single-source. Epic Editor supports content that is:

- Collaboratively written and maintained by teams of authors who may be working in multiple languages
- Created in reusable components, stored in content management repositories, and dynamically assembled on demand
- Customized for specific audiences and formatted for delivery on multiple media

## Features and Infrastructure Integration

Since Epic Editor is a native XML system, out-of-the-box it recognizes the structural requirements of a document based on any XML document model (Document Type Definition). This differs from proprietary systems with XML capabilities that usually require extensive customization for each DTD and then additional work whenever the DTD is changed to meet new document requirements. Epic Editor is the central part of a well thought-out system providing features across the content management lifecycle. Arbortext provides a variety of other solutions working with Epic Editor to provide a full set of lifecycle solutions. Among these are:

- Print and wireless-Web composer
- Content management repository adapters

If you already use Documentum or Oracle iFS, you do not have to purchase Repository Adapters; they are included in the E3 product. Arbortext also has integrations with Interwoven and FileNET.

## Epic Editor Advantages

As one of two major native commercial XML authoring systems, Epic Editor and Arbortext offer these advantages in addition to the general benefits of XML:

- XML (and SGML) authoring as part of a comprehensive suite of lifecycle solutions
- Strong commitment to standards; founding member and active participant in the XML Activity of the World Wide Web Consortium
- Very large installed base
- Built-in support to produce variations of a single document, customized for specific target audiences, automatically
- Direct support for change tracking in text and markup, promoting author collaboration and internal review/ approval
- Global appeal via foreign language support, with character sets and spelling dictionaries for over 25 languages, including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and localized user interfaces in English, French, German, and Spanish
- Customization either directly or through COM using C/C++, Java, JavaScript, Visual Basic, TCL, and Perl

A quantity one Epic Editor license costs \$695; a single-shared, concurrent Epic Editor license is \$2700. Multipacks of each are available with volume discounts. Annual maintenance fees for quantity one standalone and concurrent versions are \$165 and \$460, respectively. There is no charge for the Documentum repository adapter. For complete pricing details, contact Arbortext.

## Success Story

Arbortext boasts a large roster of customer references, including recognized names in



major industries like finance, telecommunications, manufacturing, hardware and software, publishing, and healthcare. One reference Arbortext cites is BellSouth, using Arbortext for its technical documentation. Prior to using Arbortext software, BellSouth estimated it was spending \$13 million/year due to inefficiencies inherent in paper-based document production systems. Forty thousand employees and contractors used the original system, and it was both cumbersome and labor-intensive. Not surprisingly, it was also difficult to find information in paper archives, and repurposing content was a slow process. To cut costs and promote single-source efficiencies, BellSouth implemented a new electronic document system that included Arbortext's solutions. In essence, BellSouth transformed words and documents to data, and ended up with flexibility, reusable content, and automated hyperlinks to documents from BellSouth's intranet and external Web sites. By transforming its proprietary documents to XML document bases, BellSouth also provided better searching to its content, reduced author rework, and achieved faster throughput in its publishing processes. BellSouth estimates it achieved \$12.5 million in annual cost savings and benefits.

**Caveats and Competition**

The closest competitor to Epic Editor is SoftQuad's XMetaL. Corel Corporation has acquired SoftQuad as a cornerstone of its recently announced DEEPWHITE initiative.

As of this writing, Epic Editor can work only with DTDs, not with richer XML models based on schemas. Converting non-XML (legacy) content to XML can be an expensive and time-consuming proposition no matter which XML publishing solution you use. Epic Editor's E3 server can—among other services—transform several proprietary formats to XML. "Round tripping" that content back to native formats is likely also possible, but some of XML's rich structure may be difficult to maintain. This difficulty is due to the nature of XML vis-à-vis proprietary document formats. Also, be sure to assess the cost of any customizations you may want to make to Epic Editor; ask Arbortext for third-party solution providers in estimating customization costs.

**Key Features at a Glance**

Lifecycle Stage	Epic Editor and Other Arbortext Solutions
<b>Analysis and Design</b>	Epic Editor itself provides no tools for creating XML models. However, Epic Editor does include a tool called Turbo Styler for creating XML stylesheets. These help create word processor-like views of XML documents with associated fonts and layout.  Arbortext's Architect, a separate development application, includes a third-party product, Tibco's XML Authority, for creating or modifying XML DTDs.
<b>Convert or Import</b>	Epic Editor itself does not provide import or conversion facilities.
<b>Author and Edit</b>	Epic Interchange and Epic E-Content Engine (E3) Server provide conversions for MS Word, FrameMaker, and Interleaf formats.
<b>Assemble Content, Deliver Styled Products</b>	Creating and modifying valid XML content, via a familiar word processor interface, is the primary service provided by Epic Editor.  Assembly and delivery of products from single-source XML requires a content management system and/or the E3 Server.

**Business Profile**

Arbortext says that it has sold over 40,000 Epic Editor licenses worldwide with over 300

Global 2000 customers. Since Arbortext is privately-held, financial information is not generally available. However, Arbortext continues to expand its business, having signed 64 new customers in the quarter ending December 31, 2001, bringing the total customer count to more than 3,600. Representative companies newly choosing Arbortext solutions include Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan, GE Power Systems, and Oracle.

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