Authorship

A. Definition:

- The traditional definition of an “author” would be someone who invents or writes a relatively unchangeable document, rather than someone who “translates” information that someone else has created. Culture tends to give ownership to the creator/author (see Applen, 301).

B. How core technologies raise questions:

- Authorship is divided up into people who create the CSS or XML structure as well as those who insert the text; there is no single author.
- Authorship can be further divided up because with XML can make data more easily shareable.
- Text that can be authored is limited by the structure of the XML. The way knowledge is “modeled” has to fit into the XML/DTD’s allowable structure (see Applen, 307-8).

C. Questions raised (with possible investigation methods):

1. Who is an author? Do writers, CSS designers, and XML creators have the same status and/or credit as authors?

   - Investigate whether these processes are done separately; see how much interaction between different types of authors happens.
   - Begin changing definition of authorship to fit its relationship with electronic documents. Texts are becoming collaborative productions, so we can’t continue with the idea of an author being a single creator of a document (Geisler et al., 289).

2. Does authorship still exist if text is limited by a core technology? What is an author’s role in light of these technologies?
• Think about whether documents are being authored knowingly or unknowingly (such as a record of online purchases).
• Think about whether meaning is being “selected”—this could be used as an indication of whether authorship is happening (see Applen, 301)

3. Conversely (as discussed in class), if everyone becomes authors of electronic documents in daily life (such as information recorded about their shopping choices online or in the checkout lane), who has rights to the text? Should these authors get the same rights as authors would generally receive (access, copyright, ability to edit)?

• Find what’s addressed legally—privacy laws, freedom of information rights.

4. Who has ownership of the document if those who contribute CSS/XHTML/XML structure and text, and even those who are users, can all be considered authors?

• See user agreements or possible contractual agreements between company and writers/designers.
• Rethink ideas of intellectual property (see Geisler et al., 289).

Document

A. Definition:

• Traditionally would be thought of as a written paper with information on it; in technical communication, perhaps something with “how-to” information. It’s also something that’s somewhat final—it can be edited, but there might be an expectation that it generally remains the same.

B. How core technologies raise questions:

• CSS and XML could be documents onto themselves—they give a information regarding the structure/content, but not the content itself.
• Being able to read/interpret a CSS or XML document takes a different set of knowledge than being able to read/interpret a traditional document.
• Documents can be constantly changed and updated and reformatted with single-source systems; they can also be changed by the user with hyperlinks, etc.
• Core technologies like XML (and DITA) break a document into little pieces and address all the types of content separately.

C. Questions raised (with possible investigation methods):

1. How is a document controlled if it can be changed so easily and by so many people (authors of text, authors of CSS/XML, etc.)?
• Investigate methods of control (e.g., track changes-like procedures) and processes (reviewers, who signs off, etc.)

2. If printed documents are generally considered final or authoritative, how do we know if/when we can consider an electronic document that uses a core technology final (see Geisler et al., 291), especially when the document can be constantly changed?

• Investigate methods that could be used—date stamp, version number, etc.—or whether someone has final approval