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# Message Broker - Introduction to DFDL

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## Agenda

- Introduction
- DFDL – a new standard for modeling text and binary data
- DFDL support in Message Broker
- Other enhancements
- Message Sets and MRM

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## Introductions

- About me
  - Tim Kimber
  - Over 10 years working on parsers for WebSphere Message Broker
  - Worked on all aspects of MRM and XMLNSC parsers
  - Now lead developer for the new DFDL parser
- About the audience...
  - Experience with message broker
  - Experience with data formats

## Agenda

- Introduction

- DFDL – a new standard for modeling text and binary data

- DFDL support in Message Broker

- Other enhancements

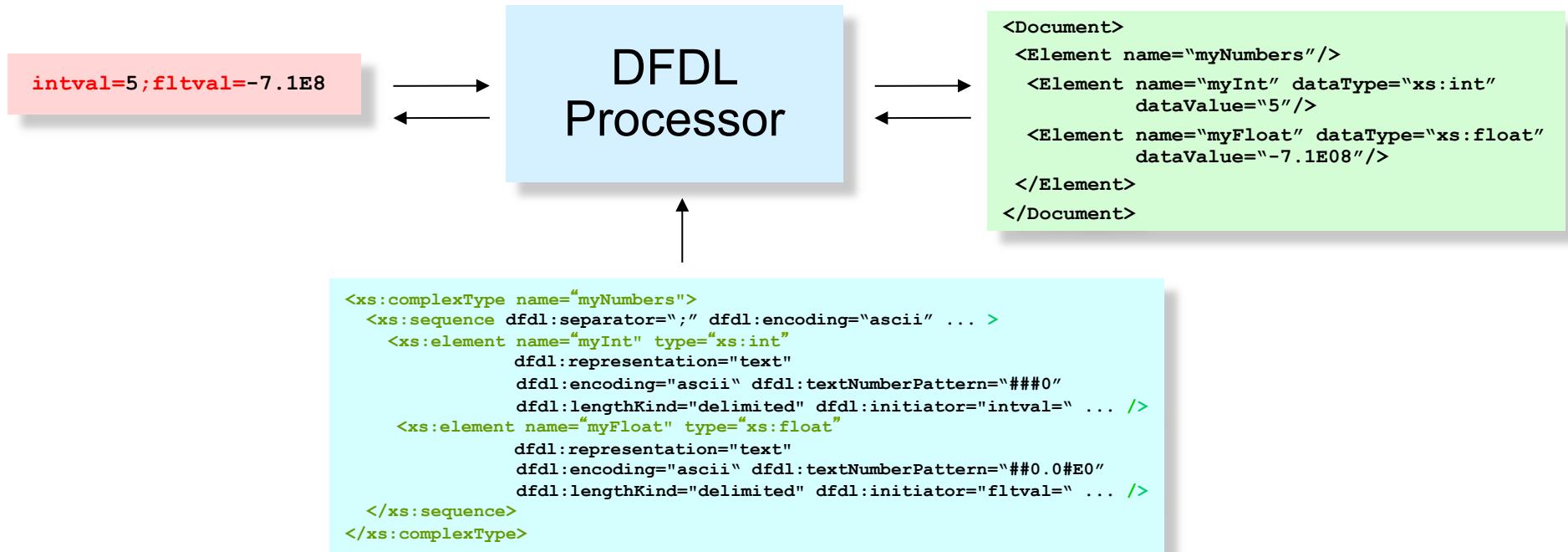
- Message Sets and MRM

## Why DFDL?

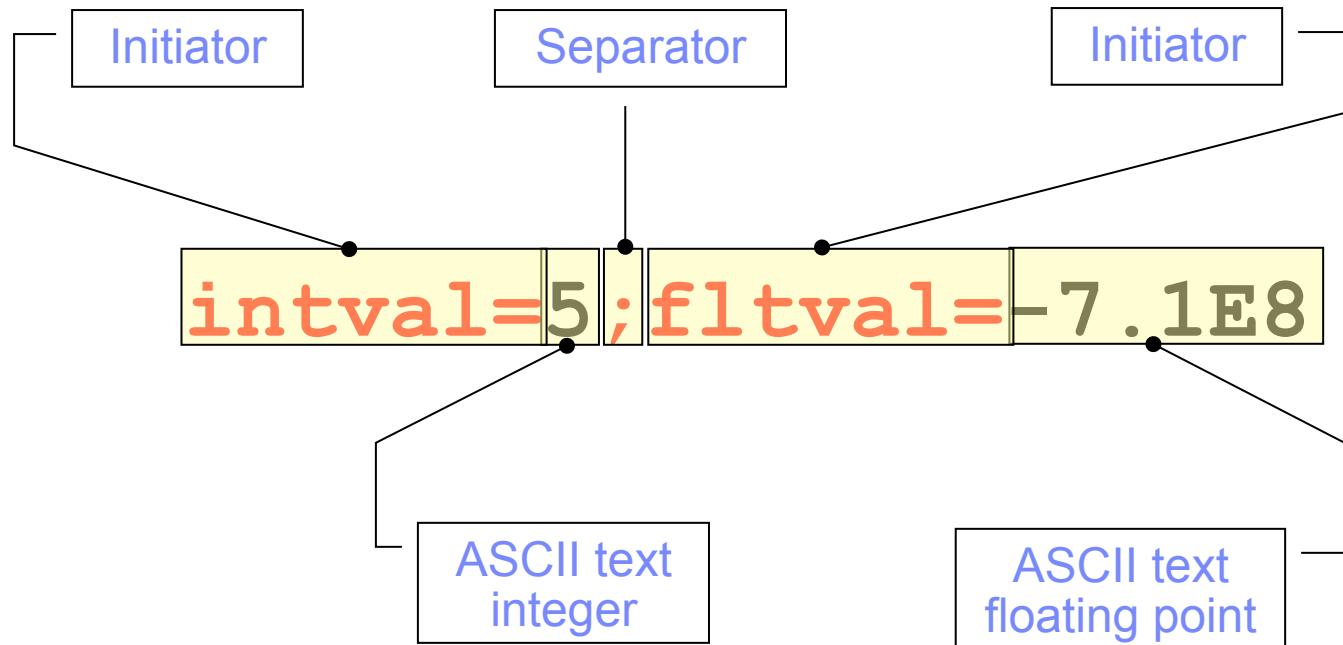
- Across organisations, the ability to exchange data is of vital importance
- But there has been no universal standard for modeling general text and binary data
  - XML -> use XML Schema
  - RDBMS -> use database schema
  - Text/binary -> ??
- Existing standards are too prescriptive: “*Put your data in this format!*”
- IBM products evolved their own way of modeling text and binary data based on customer need. Examples...
  - WebSphere Message Broker: [MRM message set](#)
  - WebSphere ESB, IBM Process Server: [Data Handlers](#)
  - Transformation Extender: [Type Trees](#)
  - DataPower: [FFD](#)
  - Cast Iron: [Flat File Schema](#)
  - Sterling Integrator: [DDF and IDF files](#)
- ✓ ***DFDL: a universal, shareable, non-prescriptive description for general text & binary data formats***

## DFDL processor – Do something useful with a DFDL schema

- A DFDL processor uses a DFDL schema to understand a data stream
- It consists of a DFDL parser and (optionally) a DFDL unparser
- The DFDL parser reads a data stream and creates a DFDL ‘info set’
- The DFDL unparser takes a DFDL ‘info set’ and writes a data stream



## Example – Sequence group containing two fields



Separators, initiators (aka tags), & terminators  
are all examples in DFDL of *delimiters*

## Example DFDL xsd with annotations

```
intval=5;fltval=-7.1E8
```

```
<xs:complexType name="myNumbers">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:annotation>
      <xs:appinfo source="http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/v1.0">
        <dfdl:sequence separator=";" encoding="ascii"/>
      </xs:appinfo>
    </xs:annotation>
    <xs:element name="myInt" type="xs:int">
      <xs:annotation>
        <xs:appinfo source="http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/v1.0">
          <dfdl:element representation="text"
            encoding="ascii" textNumberPattern="###0"
            lengthKind="delimited" initiator="intval=" .../>
        </xs:appinfo>
      </xs:annotation>
    </xs:element>
    <xs:element name="myFloat" type="xs:float">
      <xs:annotation>
        <xs:appinfo source="http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/v1.0">
          <dfdl:element representation="text"
            encoding="ascii" textNumberPattern="##0.0#E0"
            lengthKind="delimited" initiator="fltval=" .../>
        </xs:appinfo>
      </xs:annotation>
    </xs:element>
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```

## DFDL is...Powerful and Flexible

- DFDL is not a data format
  - it is a language for describing data formats
- DFDL can describe almost any data format
  - Textual and binary
  - Commercial record-oriented
  - Scientific and numeric
  - Modern and legacy
  - Industry standards
- DFDL is a powerful language, supporting
  - Text, binary and bit data.
  - Fixed-length, delimited, pattern and prefixed lengths
  - Nil values for out-of-range values
  - Default values
  - Validation to XML Schema 1.0 rules
  - ...and a lot more as well
    - See reference slides for more details

## DFDL is...Open

- A DFDL data format
  - Is portable
    - Can be processed by any DFDL processor that implements the DFDL specification.
  - Is editable using any text editor
    - although IBM has developed a good graphical editor/debugger.
  - Can be generated by a script
    - the DFDL annotation language is published, and is not a trade secret
    - useful when modeling large data industry standard formats
- DFDL is an open standard
  - Hosted by the Open Grid Forum (OGF)
    - <http://www.ogf.org/>
  - Currently at version 1.0
    - ‘Proposed Recommendation’ status

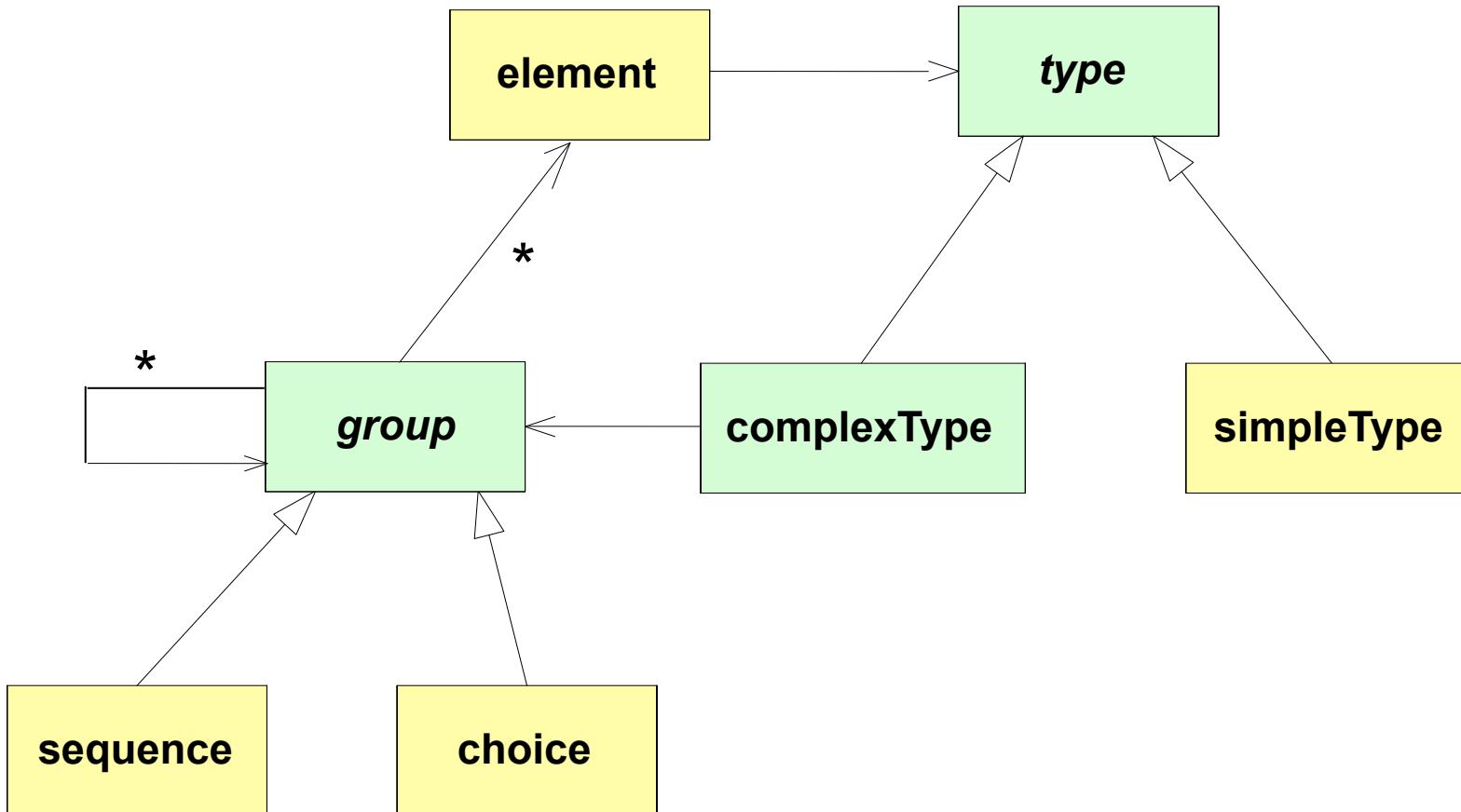
## DFDL is...Based on XML Schema

- XML Schema is the most common way to describe tree-structured data
  - So DFDL uses it to describe the logical structures and types in a document
- ... but XML Schema can only describe one data format ( XML )
  - So DFDL adds XML Schema annotations that describe the physical data format
- XML Schema describes a lot of XML-specific things
  - So DFDL uses a tight subset of XML Schema
    - Element names and namespaces
    - Complex type and groups
    - Simple types and their facets ( constraints )
  - Enough to do what DFDL requires, and no more.
- Note : Annotations are defined in the XML Schema specification
  - So a DFDL xsd is a standard xsd.
  - DFDL annotations do not interfere with the normal usage of an xsd
  - They are ignored by all except DFDL processors

## DFDL is...Smart

- DFDL will automatically resolve choices and optional elements
  - By attempting each available path through the model
  - If a path fails, DFDL will backtrack and try another path
    - Unless the model tells it not to do that
- DFDL has an expression language for
  - Specifying property values
    - `../repeatCount` is the number of occurrences of this element
    - `/delim` is the delimiter for this structure
  - Controlling the parser
    - “This is the correct path if the current field is the same as `../header/id`”
    - “Report an error if this field value is less than `/header/maxValue`”
- DFDL works in both directions
  - It can parse a document to produce a tree of information ( info set )
  - It can serialize an info set to produce a document
  - The same DFDL schema can be used for both operations

## DFDL language - objects



DFDL properties are placed on yellow objects only

# Getting started with DFDL

WIKIPEDIA  
The Free Encyclopedia

Main page  
Contents  
Featured content  
Current events  
Random article  
Donate to Wikipedia

Interaction  
Help  
About Wikipedia  
Community portal  
Recent changes  
Contact Wikipedia

Toolbox  
What links here  
Related changes  
Upload file  
Special pages  
Permanent link  
Cite this page

Print/export

Article Discussion Read Edit View history Search

## Data Format Description Language

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Data Format Description Language** (DFDL, often pronounced *daff-o-dil*) is a modeling language from the [Open Grid Forum](#) for describing general text and binary data. A DFDL model or schema allows any text or binary data to be read (or "parsed") from its native format and to be presented as an instance of an information set. The same DFDL schema also allows data to be taken from an instance of an information set and written out (or "serialized") to its native format.

DFDL achieves this by building upon the facilities of [W3C XML Schema 1.0](#). A subset of XML Schema is used, enough to enable the modeling of non-XML data. One of the results of this is that it is very easy to use DFDL to convert general text and binary data, via a DFDL information set, into a corresponding XML document.

It is important to note that DFDL is *descriptive* and not *prescriptive*. DFDL is not a data format, nor does it impose the use of any particular data format. DFDL allows an application to design an appropriate data representation according to its requirements, and for that format to be described in a standard way so that multiple programs can directly interchange the data.

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- [1 History](#)
- [2 Example](#)
- [3 Features](#)
- [4 See also](#)
- [5 References](#)
- [6 External links](#)

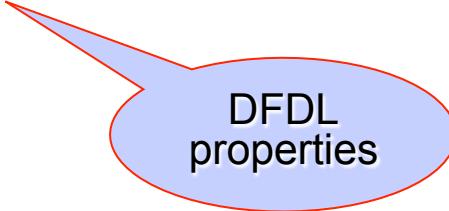
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## DFDL features

- Text data types such as strings, numbers, zoned decimals, calendars, booleans
- Binary data types such as integers, floats, BCD, packed decimals, calendars, booleans
- Fixed length data and data delimited by text or binary markup
- Language data structures found in COBOL, C and PL/1
- Industry standards such as SWIFT, HL7, FIX, HIPAA, X12, EDIFACT, ISO8583
- Bi-directional text
- Bit data of arbitrary length
- Pattern languages for text numbers and calendars
- Ordered, unordered and floating content
- Default values on parsing and serializing
- Nil values for handling out-of-band data
- Fixed and variable arrays
- XPath 2.0 expression language including variables to model dynamic data
- Speculative parsing to resolve choices and optional content
- Validation to XML Schema 1.0 rules
- Scoping mechanism to allow common property values to be applied at multiple points
- Hide elements in the data
- Calculate element values

## Example – DFDL schema (short form)

```
<xs:complexType name="myNumbers">
  <xs:sequence dfdl:separator=";" dfdl:encoding="ascii" >
    <xs:element name="myInt" type="xs:int"
      dfdl:representation="text"
      dfdl:encoding="ascii" dfdl:textNumberPattern="###0"
      dfdl:lengthKind="delimited" dfdl:initiator="intval=" ... />
    <xs:element name="myFloat" type="xs:float"
      dfdl:representation="text"
      dfdl:encoding="ascii" dfdl:textNumberPattern="#0.0#E0"
      dfdl:lengthKind="delimited" dfdl:initiator="fltval=" ... />
  </xs:sequence>
</xs:complexType>
```



DFDL  
properties

## DFDL language – basic annotations

<b>Annotation</b>	<b>Used on Component</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
dfdl:element	xs:element xs:element reference	Contains the DFDL properties of an xs:element and xs:element reference
dfdl:choice	xs:choice	Contains the DFDL properties of an xs:choice.
dfdl:sequence	xs:sequence	Contains the DFDL properties of an xs:sequence.
dfdl:group	xs:group reference	Contains the DFDL properties of an xs:group reference to a group definition containing an xs:sequence or xs:choice.
dfdl:simpleType	xs:simpleType	Contains the DFDL properties of an xs:simpleType
dfdl:format	xs:schema dfdl:defineFormat	Contains a set of DFDL properties that can be used by multiple DFDL schema components. When used directly on xs:schema, the property values act as defaults for all components in the DFDL schema.
dfdl:defineFormat	xs:schema	Defines a reusable data format by associating a name with a set of DFDL properties contained within a child dfdl:format annotation. The name can be referenced from DFDL annotations on multiple DFDL schema components, using dfdl:ref.

## DFDL language – more advanced annotations

<b><i>Annotation</i></b>	<b><i>Used on Component</i></b>	<b><i>Purpose</i></b>
dfdl:assert	xs:element, xs:choice xs:sequence, xs:group	Defines a test to be used to ensure the data are well formed. Used only when parsing data.
dfdl:discriminator	xs:element, xs:choice xs:sequence, xs:group	Defines a test to be used when resolving a point of uncertainty such as choice branches or optional elements. Used only when parsing.
dfdl:escapeScheme	dfdl:defineEscapeScheme	Defines a scheme by which quotation marks and escape characters can be specified. This is for use with delimited text formats.
dfdl:defineEscapeScheme	xs:schema	Defines a named, reusable escape scheme. The name can be referenced from DFDL annotations on multiple DFDL schema components.
dfdl:hidden	xs:sequence	Defines a hidden element that appears in the schema for use by the DFDL processor, but is not part of the infoset.
dfdl:defineVariable	xs:schema	Defines a variable that can be referenced elsewhere. This can be used to communicate a parameter from one part of processing to another part.
dfdl:newVariableInstance	xs:element, xs:choice xs:sequence, xs:group	Creates a new instance of a variable
dfdl:setVariable	xs:element, xs:choice xs:sequence, xs:group	Sets the value of a variable whose declaration is in scope

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## Links

- OGF DFDL home page: <http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/>
- DFDL 1.0 specification (pdf): <http://www.ogf.org/documents/GFD.174.pdf>
- DFDL 1.0 specification (html): <http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/spec.php>
- DFDL tutorial:  
[http://forge.gridforum.org/sf/docman/do/listDocuments/projects.dfdl-wg/docman.root.current\\_0.documents](http://forge.gridforum.org/sf/docman/do/listDocuments/projects.dfdl-wg/docman.root.current_0.documents)
- DFDL-WG GridForge project: <https://forge.ogf.org/sf/projects/dfdl-wg>
- DFDL Wikipedia page: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DFDL>

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## DFDL support in runtime and toolkit

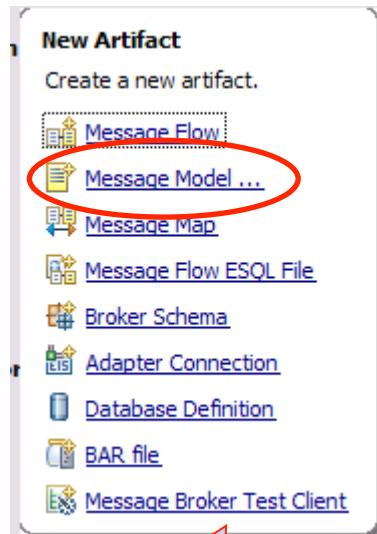
- MB uses IBM DFDL 1.0.2 component
- DFDL models
  - Schema files reside in MB libraries
  - Not in Message Sets
- DFDL domain and high-performance parser
  - Available in nodes, ESQL, Java, ...
  - On-demand, streaming parser
  - Use instead of MRM CWF/TDS
- Tooling for creating DFDL models in MBTK
  - Guided authoring wizards
  - COBOL importer
  - DFDL graphical editor
- DFDL model debugger
  - Debug parsing & writing of data in MBTK
  - No deploy necessary!
- DFDL schema deployed to broker in BAR file
  - No dictionary file!

The screenshot illustrates the IBM MB Toolkit's DFDL support. At the top, a table is shown with columns A through E, representing a CSV structure. Below the table, a yellow sticky note displays the DFDL schema definition:

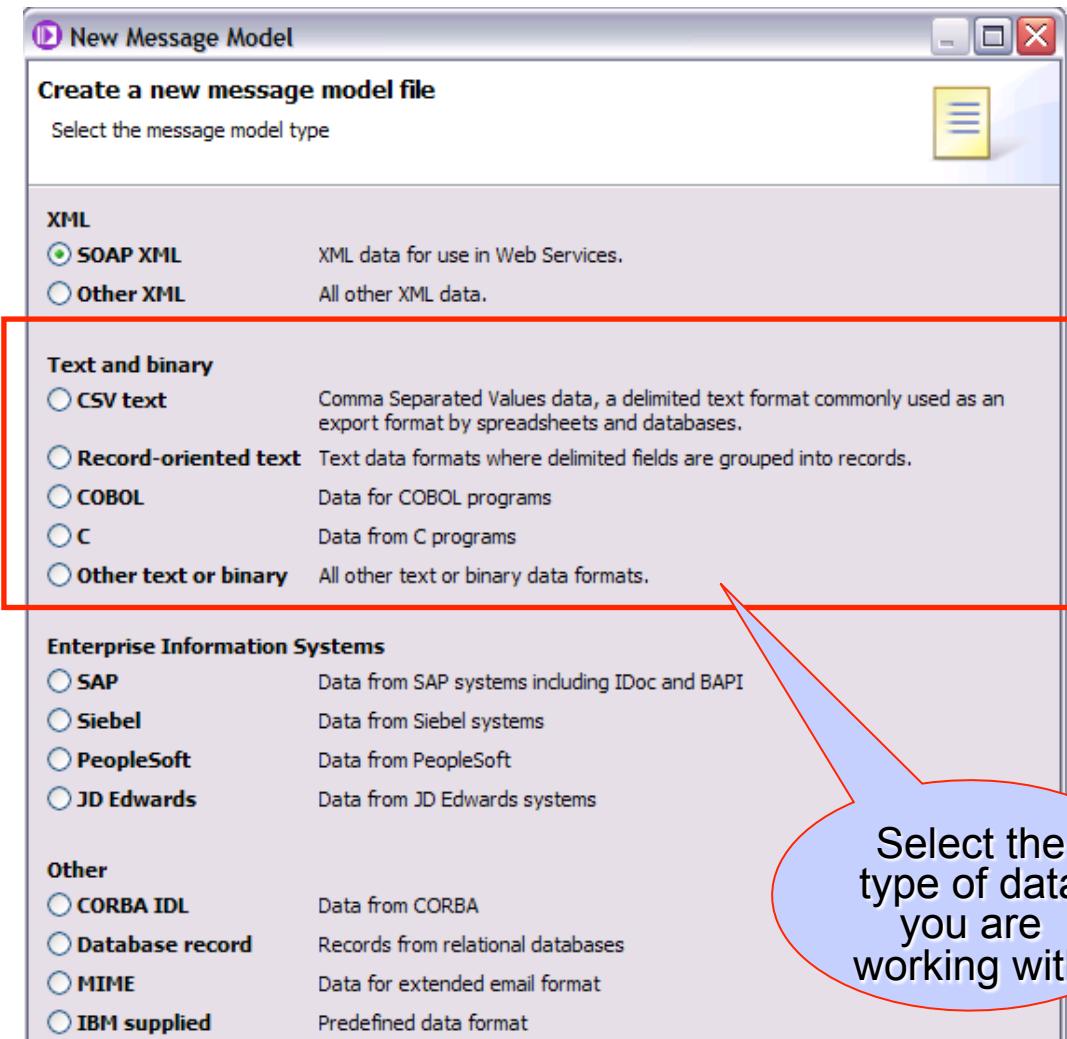
```
Year,Make,Model,Description,Price
2009,SK Inc,MBTk7,"4293cc, V8",53880.00
2010,Hans On,DFDL,"3000cc straight 6",31395.00
2010,AOD corp,MB8,"4163cc, V8",51435.00
```

The main window is titled "New Message Model" and is used to "Configure schema for CSV data". It includes sections for "Record settings" (specifying the end of record character as "Carriage Return & Line Feed - %CR;%LF;" and handling blank records) and "Field settings" (specifying 3 fields). At the bottom, the "DFDL Test - Parse" section shows the input file path "/ST\_DFDL\_CSV/TestData.txt" and the parsed input characters, which are identical to the ones shown on the sticky note.

## Creating a DFDL model



New launcher  
for creating  
Message  
Models



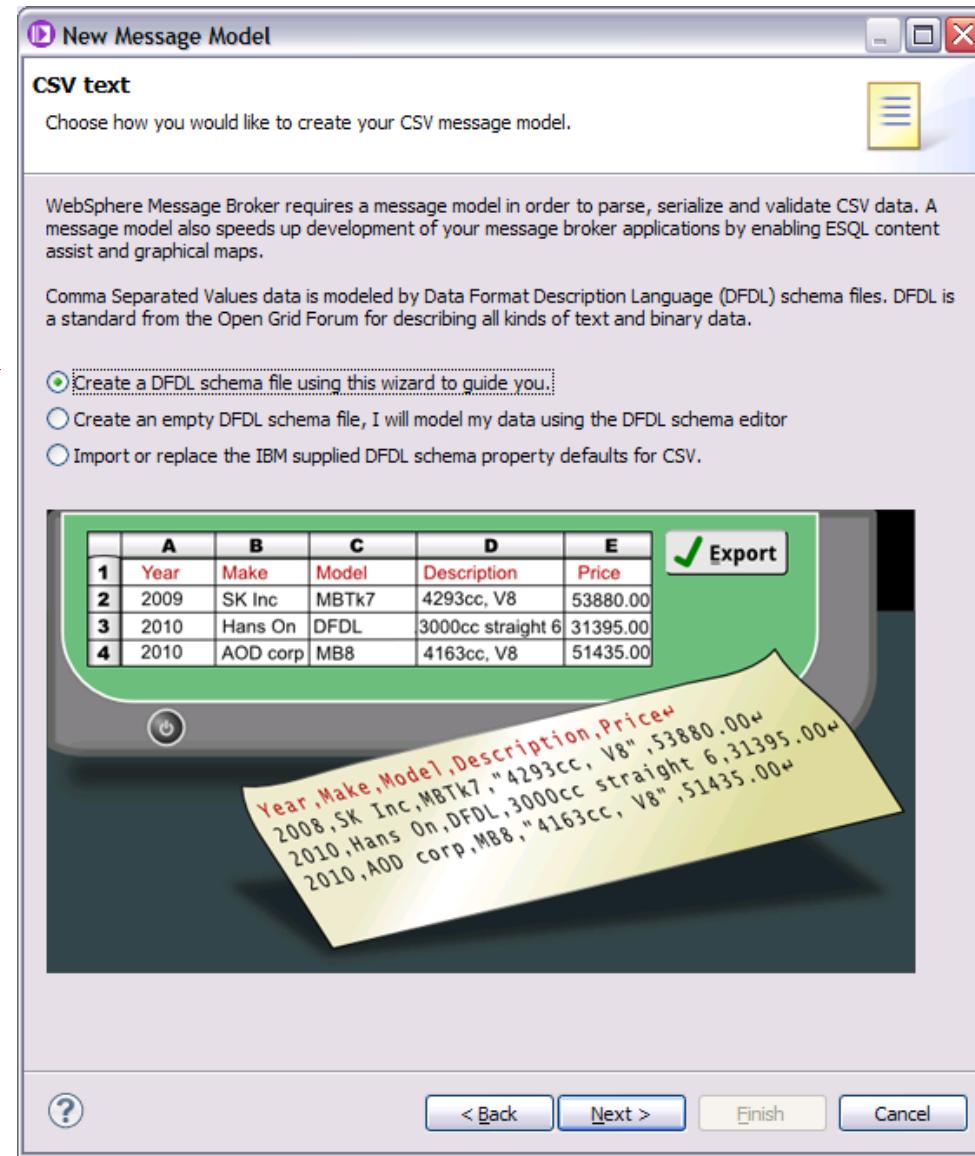
Select the  
type of data  
you are  
working with

- Or you can drop an existing DFDL schema into a Message Broker library

## Wizard options for creating a DFDL model

- Guided authoring
- Using the DFDL editor
- Importing from other metadata
- Already have DFDL schema

Select how you want to create the DFDL model



## Creating a DFDL model using guided authoring

The screenshot shows the Rational Application Developer interface for creating a DFDL message model. On the left, the 'New Message Model' dialog is open, titled 'Configure schema for CSV data'. It contains sections for 'Record settings' (End of record character: Carriage Return & Line Feed - %CR;%LF;), 'Field settings' (Number of fields: 5), and 'Encoding code page options' (Dynamic selected). A speech bubble labeled 'Make selection' points to the 'Record settings' section. On the right, the generated DFDL model is displayed in a table:

Name	Type	Min Occurs	Max Occurs	Default Value	Sample Test Data
company_message		1	1		
sequence		1	1		
header		1	1		
record		1	unbounded		
sequence		1	1		
field1	string	1	1	value1	value1
field2	string	1	1	value2	value2

A speech bubble labeled 'Generated model' points to the table.

## Creating a DFDL model using the editor

The screenshot shows the IBM DFDL Model Editor interface with several key components highlighted:

- Logical structure view (left):** A tree view of the message root structure, showing elements like CompanyTaggedDelimited, Company, Employee, and Address.
- Outline view (right):** A hierarchical tree view of the schema structure, including Schema, Imports, Message Roots, Elements, Types, Groups, and DFDL sections.
- DFDL properties view (bottom right):** A detailed view of the properties for a selected element (EmpName), including General, Content, Text Content, Occurrences, and Delimiters.
- Problem view (bottom left):** A view showing one error: CTDV1101E : Element declaration :Employee: with occursCountKind="fixed" does not have matching occurs and maxOccurs values.

UI elements at the top include:

- Test Parse Model, Test Serialize Model, Hide properties, Show advanced (circled in red)
- Show all sections, Focus on selected, Show quick outline (circled in red)

# Testing a DFDL model within the editor

The screenshot shows the IBM Message Modeling Editor interface. On the left, the 'DFDL Test - Parse' view displays a DFDL schema for a 'Company' message root. A red oval highlights the 'Run parser' button in the toolbar. The main area shows the parsed input data from a file named 'Company.txt'. A red speech bubble labeled 'Parsed data' points to the parsed XML output.

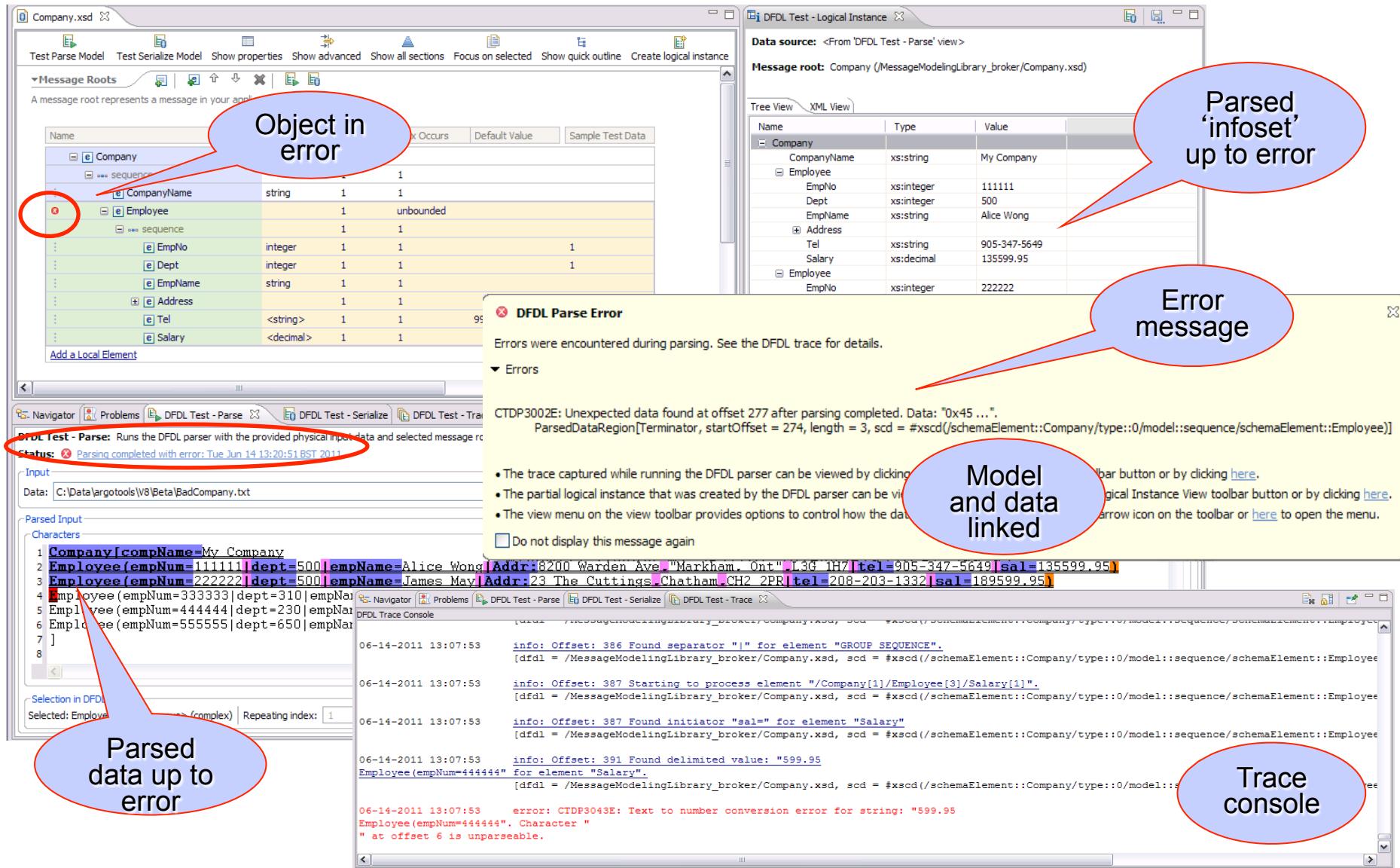
**DFDL Test - Parse View:**

- Status:** Parsing completed: Tue Jun 14 13:49:37 BST 2011
- Data:** C:\Data\argotools\V8\Beta\Company.txt
- Parsed Input:**
  - Characters: Shows the raw input data with delimiters highlighted in purple.
  - Hex View: Shows the hex representation of the input data.

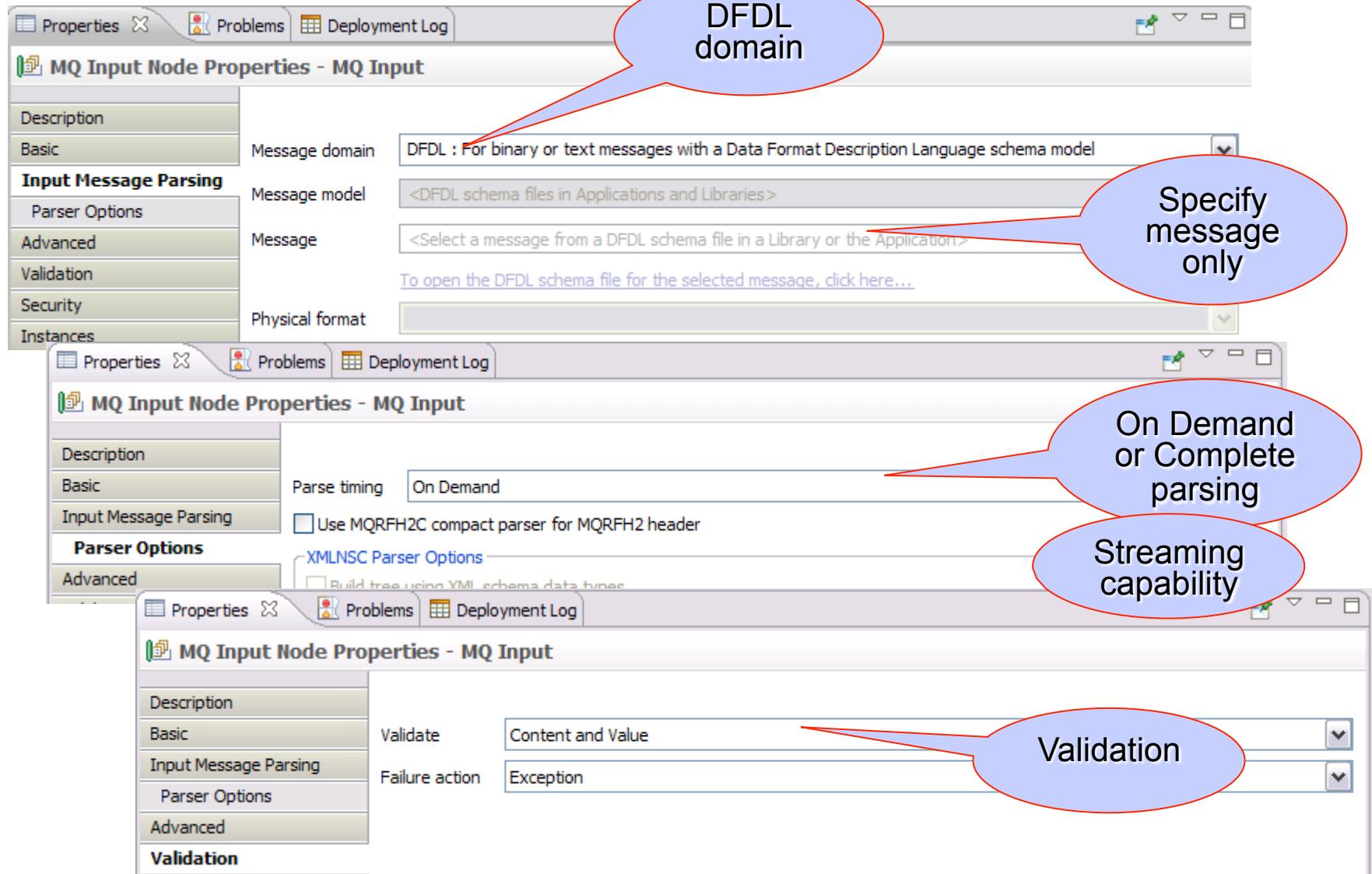
**DFDL Test - Logical Instance View:**

- Data source:** <From 'DFDL Test - Parse' view>
- Message root:** Company (/MessageModelingLibrary/Company/Company.xsd)
- Tree View:** Displays the parsed data structure in a hierarchical tree format.
- XML View:** Displays the parsed data in a tabular format with columns: Name, Type, and Value.
- A red speech bubble labeled 'Parsed infoset' points to the XML View.

# Debugging a DFDL model test failure



## DFDL domain and parser



# DFDL domain message tree

## Setting defaults for DFDL properties

- In the DFDL language, DFDL properties do ***not*** have built-in defaults
- This is a deliberate design decision to avoid behavioural differences when switching platforms and locales
- If an object needs a property, a value must be explicitly supplied for the property
  1. You can set the property locally on the object itself
  2. You can set the property on a dfdl:format annotation within a named, shareable dfdl:defineFormat annotation, and reference the dfdl:defineFormat using the special dfdl:ref property
  3. You can set the property in the schema's special dfdl:format annotation, where it acts as a default for all objects in the schema
- The dfdl:ref property can also be used on dfdl:format, enabling inheritance chaining
- In DFDL, using dfdl:format to set property defaults in this way is called ***scoping***

## An example of DFDL scoping

```
a:xxx,b:yyy,c:zzz
<xs:schema>
  <xs:annotation>
    <xs:appinfo source="http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/">
      <dfdl:format initiator="c:" ... />
    </xs:appinfo>
  </xs:annotation>

  <xs:annotation>
    <xs:appinfo source="http://www.ogf.org/dfdl/">
      <dfdl:defineFormat name="myFormat" />
      <dfdl:format initiator="b:" ... />
    </dfdl:defineFormat>
  </xs:appinfo>
  </xs:annotation>

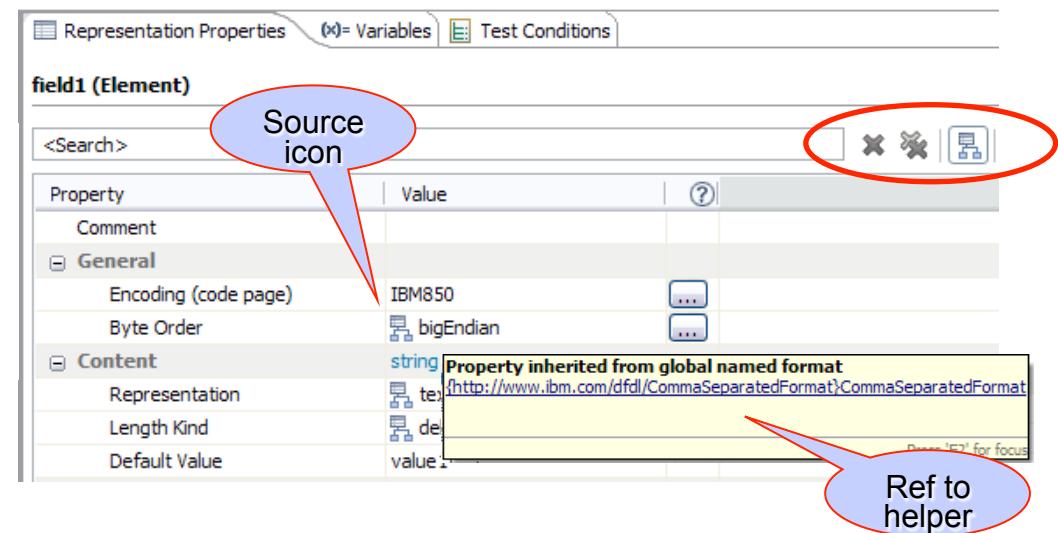
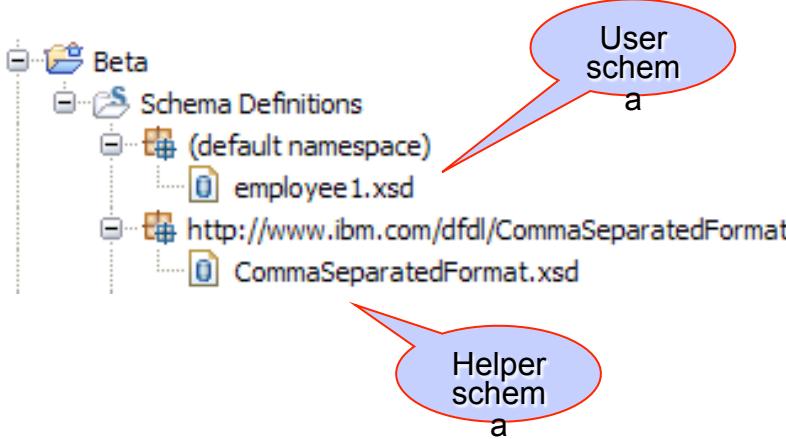
  <xs:complexType>
    <xs:sequence dfdl:separator="," dfdl:initiator="">
      <xs:element name="a" type="xs:string" dfdl:initiator="a:" />
      <xs:element name="b" type="xs:string" dfdl:ref="myFormat" />
      <xs:element name="c" type="xs:string" />
    </xs:sequence>
  </xs:complexType>
</xs:schema>
```

Property set locally

Property from schema's dfdl:format

Property via dfdl:ref

## Wizards help with scoping



- As we have learned, DFDL properties do ***not*** have built-in defaults, if an object needs a property, a value must be supplied
- To ease this task, the wizard automatically creates a helper DFDL schema that contains a named dfdl:defineFormat with values set for most DFDL properties, and adds it as an import into the user DFDL schema
- The user DFDL schema has a dfdl:format that references the dfdl:defineFormat in the helper schema using dfdl:ref, thereby setting up defaults for all objects in the user schema
- There is a different helper DFDL schema for each kind of data (eg, COBOL, CSV, ...)
- Helper DFDL schemas are created only once per Message Broker library
- Helper DFDL schemas are created read-only (although they can be edited using the DFDL editor in the usual way if you need to)

## DFDL features supported

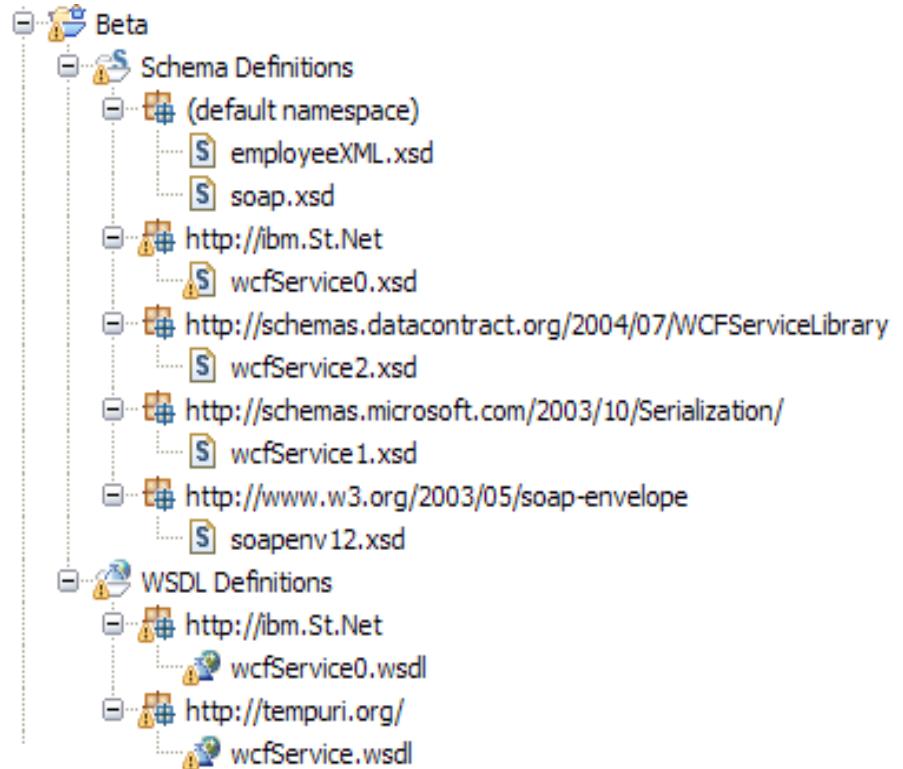
- DFDL support in MB implements the OGF DFDL 1.0 specification
- The vast majority of DFDL features are supported at MB V8 FP1
- Some more advanced features of DFDL are not yet available and will be added in future MB deliverables
- Currently unsupported:
  - Bi-directional text
  - Unordered groups & floating elements
  - Occurs Count Kind ‘parsed’ and ‘stopValue’
  - Length Kind ‘pattern’ and ‘endOfParent’
  - Asserts & Discriminators with testKind ‘pattern’
  - Separator Policy ‘suppressedAtEndStrict’
  - Certain XPath functions
  - Delimited binary data
  - Arrays with stop values
  - Default values (parser)
  - User-defined variables
  - Hidden groups
  - Calculated values

## Agenda

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## Other message modeling enhancements

- XML Schema and WSDL files can reside in a Message Broker library
  - For XMLNSC, SOAP, DataObject domains this is recommended instead of using a Message Set project
  - Can drop XSD and WSDL files straight into a Message Broker library
  - Any additional SOAP schemas are automatically added
  - Use built-in XML Schema and WSDL editors for editing files
- New Message Model wizard also used for creating models for all kinds of data
  - XML
  - Enterprise Information Systems
  - SCA
  - CORBA
  - MIME
  - Database



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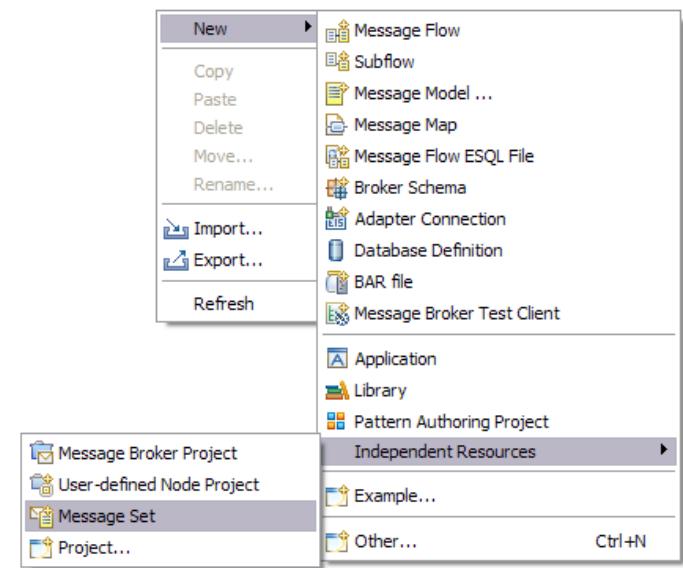
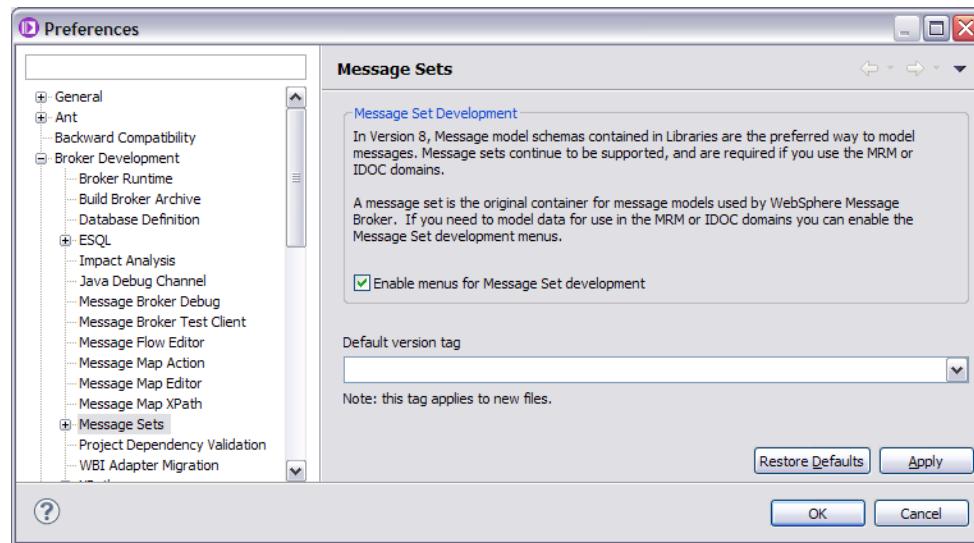
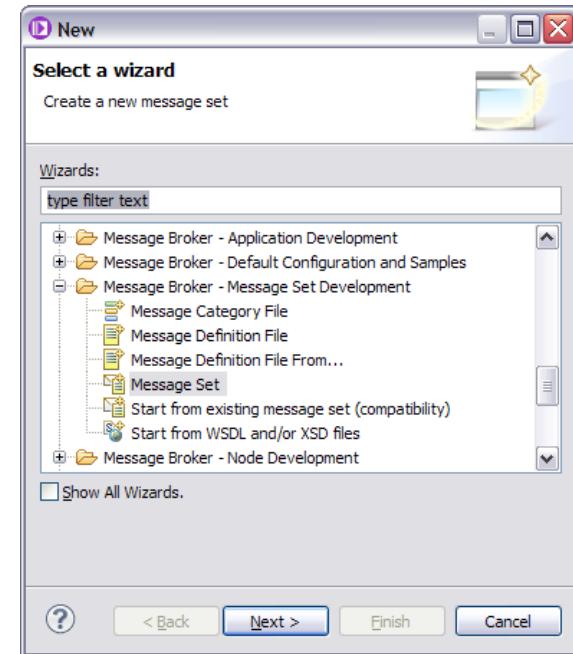
- Message Sets and MRM

## Message Sets and MRM

- Message Set projects continue to be supported
  - For all existing domains
  - Required for MRM & IDOC domains
- Message Set projects must be first created as an Independent Resource
  - Can then be included in an Application or a Library
  - Or can remain independent
- MXSD files can not reside directly in a Message Broker project or Library
- DFDL schema files can not reside in a Message Set project
- MRM domain continues to be supported
  - Can be used with new Graphical Data Mapper
- Currently no auto-migration of MRM physical formats to DFDL

## Message Set wizards

- New message set wizard entry points de-emphasized
  - Available by default via New->Other
- Message Set Preference to increase visibility
  - ✓ Enable menus for Message Set development
- Adds message set entry points to context menus
  - New->Independent Resources->Message Set
  - New->Message Definition File from a message set



धन्यवाद

Hindi



Спасибо

Russian

Gracias

Spanish

多謝

Simplified Chinese

நன்றி

Tamil

多謝

Traditional Chinese

Grazie

Italian

ຫວັນດູນ

Thai



Obrigado

Brazilian Portuguese

Merci

French

شُكْرًا

Arabic

Danke

German

ありがとうございました

Japanese

감사합니다