DR 15-0023 — SML: Comments

Status: Open

Subject: SML: Comments

Qualifier: Request for clarification

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Submitter’s Defect Number: None

Supporting Document(s): None

Date Circulated by Secretariat: 2015-11-24

Deadline for Response from Editor: 2016-01-24

IS 29500 Reference(s): 29500:2012, Part 1, §

Related DR(s): None

Nature of the Defect:

I've been looking at the way comments are wired up in Excel files and I'm slightly confused.

The specification says:

"A comment is a rich text note that is attached to and associated with a cell, separate from other cell content. Comment content is stored separate from the cell, and is displayed in a drawing object (like a text box) that is separate from, but associated with, a cell."

This seems to be set up through a worksheets relationships:

<Relationship Id="rId2"

Type="<http://schemas.openxmlformats.org/officeDocument/2006/relationships/comment>"

Target="../comments1.xml"/>

NB. In strict mode Excel 2016 uses a different type: "comments" instead of "comment"

<Relationship Id="rId2"

Type="<http://purl.oclc.org/ooxml/officeDocument/relationships/comments>"

Target="../comments1.xml"/>

But this relationship itself does not figure in the worksheet's source and Excel does not associate any comments stored like this.

Is it essential to use a VML file in order to do this? If so shouldn't this be explained in the specification?

sheet -> legacyDrawing -> rId2 -> vmlDrawing.vml

This looks unnecessary because commentPr contains an anchor but this seems to have no effect.

The narrative specification also contains some inaccuracies or inconsistencies.

The comment element has an attribute "guid" which the narrative says is "Unique identifier for this comment. The attribute is required and shall be unique across all comments in shared workbooks."

However, according to the schema this attribute is not required.

The narrative specification also mentions the "uiObject" attribute:

"Specifies whether the object is a UI Object."

This attribute is missing entirely from the schema.

<xsd:complexType name="CT\_CommentPr">

 <xsd:sequence>

 <xsd:element name="anchor" type="CT\_ObjectAnchor" minOccurs="1"
 maxOccurs="1"/>

 </xsd:sequence>

 ?<xsd:attribute name="locked" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="defaultSize" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="print" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="disabled" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="false"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="autoFill" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="autoLine" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="altText" type="s:ST\_Xstring" use="optional"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="textHAlign" type="ST\_TextHAlign" use="optional"
 default="left"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="textVAlign" type="ST\_TextVAlign" use="optional"
 default="top"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="lockText" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="true"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="justLastX" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="false"/>

 <xsd:attribute name="autoScale" type="xsd:boolean" use="optional"
 default="false"/>

</xsd:complexType>

Looking at files created by Excel 2016 and saved using the strict mode then it looks like belt, braces and string:

* There is a comments object
* There is a VML drawing
* There is a spreadsheet drawing

This is slightly worrying for the following reasons:

* The commentPr element is marked as backwards compatible even though this element is part of the specification. Such files are not readable by earlier versions of Excel anyway
* The contents of the comment are effectively duplicated by the text box in the spreadsheet drawing

In the UI the text note defined in the spreadsheet drawing has primacy and can have different content to that defined in the comments file. Earlier versions of Excel will display the text box but not associate it with the comment.

Can you shed any light on this?

Solution Proposed by the Submitter:

None

Schema Change(s) Needed:

No

**Editor’s Response:**

**2016-09-20 Rex Jaeschke:**

MS’s experts report the following:

**Question 1:** Is it essential to use a VML file in order to do this? If so, shouldn't this be explained in the specification?

**Response 1:**  Excel only supports this through VML. We leave it to the standards body to decide if it wants to allow other supported ways of doing this.

**Question 2:** The comment element has an attribute "guid" which the narrative says is "Unique identifier for this comment. The attribute is required and shall be unique across all comments in shared workbooks."

**Response 2:** The commenter correctly interprets the spec and our behavior. In non-shared workbooks the value is not required.

**Question 3:** “The narrative specification also mentions the "uiObject" attribute:  "Specifies whether the object is a UI Object."

**Response 3:** The commenter has correctly identified a gap in the standard. The schema is missing it. The uiObject attribute is a valid property as mentioned in other parts of the documentation. It is Boolean, optional and by default is false.

Changes to Part 1: Y Part 2: N Part 3: N Part 4: N