

The WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance

March 21-March 24, 2010 Seattle, WA

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(Full conference details: www.writersua.com)

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Emerging Skills

Video Basics: Getting Started with Flash and MPEG4 Video

Nick Floro, Sealworks Interactive Studios

Session participants will get a comprehensive introduction to video and compression technologies, and learn which format to pick for your project. You'll also see how you can create and edit videos for under \$1,000 demonstrated with the latest camera, hardware, and software solutions.

You will learn:

- How to compress video and audio for the best delivery on the web
- What you need to have to produce high quality Web videos
- Which CODEC is best for your project
- What tools to use for compressing your content, and the settings for best results
- About the latest in digital recorders and cameras
- What you need to implement video successfully in your project

Monday, March 22nd • 10:30 – 11:30am

Making Metadata Work

Michael Crandall, University of Washington Information School

Metadata is expensive and time-consuming to build and maintain, yet remains one of the best strategies for managing critical information assets in many situations. A number of recent approaches have been attempting to blend techniques used in design activities and development processes with more structured approaches to thinking about metadata. From user prototyping to agile development techniques, to models such as the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative's Singapore Framework, new ideas for focusing and improving metadata development methods are becoming more widely available. Using these tools effectively can systematize metadata development for your taxonomy project and provide a road map to successful design and implementation.

You will learn:

- How recent innovations in using design and development tools can create more effective metadata
- How the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative's Singapore Framework can help systematize metadata development
- What's next for metadata as the Semantic Web matures

Monday, March 22nd • 12:45 – 1:45 pm

The Benefit and Drawbacks of Using XML for Book Publication

Richard Hamilton, XML Press

This session will detail how XML Press is using XML for book publishing.

XML Press has five books either published or scheduled for publication using DocBook, and another two using DITA, with plans for more to come.

The talk will look at the benefits and drawbacks of using XML for book publication. The case study will focus on DocBook, but the talk will also compare the strengths and weaknesses of DocBook and DITA in this domain. Although DITA is "hot," DocBook still has some significant advantages in the publishing world.

The session will cover our process from authoring to production, and will concentrate on how our authors work with DocBook, how we use the DocBook stylesheets to create a characteristic style for the imprint, and how we create publications in multiple formats from a single-source.

You will learn:

- How XML Press uses DocBook to create multiple output formats
- How XML, both DocBook and DITA, has created opportunities for XML Press
- How DocBook and DITA compare when used for publishing

Monday, March 22nd • 2:05 – 3:05pm

On the Job Twittering: Making It Work for You

Michelle Lentz, Write Technology

You already tweet; now how can you apply it to your work? We'll do a cursory overview of Twitter itself, but spend more time talking about how companies are using Twitter for everything from outreach to communication. We'll review different applications that are available for the enterprise level, as well as different ways to apply Twitter and its third-party applications to help you do your job. We'll show examples of using Twitter for tech support and discuss the challenges. Discussion and sharing are encouraged, so bring your own examples of how you are using Twitter in your field.

You will learn:

- How other companies are successfully using Twitter for outreach and customer support
- To understand how your peers are using Twitter via a facilitated discussion
- Learn about third-party and enterprise-level applications that will help integrate Twitter into your job

Tuesday, March 23rd • 8:30 – 9:30am

UA Design and Implementation for iPhone Apps

Joe Welinske, WritersUA

The iPhone application development market has exploded since Apple opened the App store. Apple recently celebrated the one millionth application developed for their mobile platform. For UA developers this represents a new market for our services. It is also an area with numerous challenges in uncharted waters.

All mobile apps can benefit from improved UI text. Word choices are extremely important with minimal screen real estate. While many, if not most, mobile apps are fairly simplistic, there is a rapidly growing list of application with relatively robust capabilities. Many of the more robust apps work in concert with web-based applications and knowledgebases.

Joe Welinske is currently working on the design of Help for a range of iPhone applications, where his focus is on features that are not easily discovered. He'll share his experiences in this session. You will also be exposed to the iPhone user interface elements and the development environment. This session is technical in nature but does not require any experience with programming.

You will learn:

- What words and phrases are best for optimal communication
- How micro-concise instructions regarding difficult concepts can significantly improve a users initial experience with the mobile app
- How much text to use within the minimal available screen estate
- How to best integrate content displayed on a desktop or laptop with that of the mobile app
- The vocabulary used by iPhone developers
- How to prototype with the iPhone SDK and simulator

Tuesday, March 23rd • 9:50 – 10:50am

Understanding Gestures in User Interfaces

Jacob O. Wobbrock, University of Washington

Gestures, especially multi-touch gestures, are enjoying a lot of hype these days, as new user interface technologies such as Apple's multi-touch mouse, Microsoft Surface, and even Windows 7 provide for direct-touch user interfaces. This talk will review the state-of-the-art in gesture, show "under the hood" how simple stroke gestures can be recognized, and show some research projects on gesture conducted at the University of Washington, one for mobile touch-screen use by the blind, and another developing a cross-application "gesture language" for Microsoft Surface. Gestures will be a mystery no longer!

You will learn:

- The state-of-the-art in gestures as they are being used in user interfaces
- The pros and cons of incorporating gestures into user interfaces
- How a simple gesture recognition algorithm works, and how to employ it in user interfaces (including the detailed pseudocode that even a non-expert developer can implement straight off the page)
- Two current gesture-related projects at the University of Washington, one which makes touch screens accessible to blind people, and another which employs a user-centered methodology to elicit the best cross-application gestures for use on a surface computer, like Microsoft Surface.

Tuesday, March 23rd • 11:10am – 12:10pm

eBook Conversions: A Tutorial for UA Professionals

Joshua Tallent, eBook Architects

This session will cover the technical details related to eBook creation. Because there are so many formats available, the majority of the session will cover how to convert and format eBooks into the most popular formats, Kindle/Mobipocket and ePub. However, we will also touch on ideas for PDF, eReader and .LIT files, and questions on any eBook format will be welcomed. The session will be interactive. Each attendee will be given sample eBook files that will be opened and used in the course of the session. We will take apart an ePub file and a Mobipocket file and talk about what formatting works and what does not. This session will include a lot of HTML formatting tips, so some familiarity with HTML is recommended. It is also recommended that all attendees attend the first eBook session, "An Introduction to eBooks", to become acquainted with the basics of eBooks.

You will learn:

- Converting files from various formats (PDF, InDesign, Word, etc.) into HTML
- Cleaning up HTML to be usable and easy to format
- Formatting Kindle/Mobipocket eBooks, including the differences between regular HTML and Kindle HTML
- Formatting ePub eBooks
- Pros and cons of converting between different formats using automated software
- A brief overview of other formats (PDF, eReader, LIT, etc.)
- When to convert it yourself and when to hand it off to a conversion company

Wednesday, March 24th • 8:30 – 9:30am

The Psychology of User Interface Responsiveness

Steven C. Seow, Microsoft

Every interaction with the computer - from performing a search for information on the web lasting a few seconds to installing an operating system that can last for hours - requires users to expend time. As such, time is a commodity and when users are using Microsoft products or consuming Microsoft services, they are, in essence, trading it for productivity, entertainment, information, or something else of value.

Using concepts presented in his book, *Designing and Engineering Time*, Steve Seow presents a simple framework to look at how to diagnose time and timing issues - such as performance, downloads, perception, and waiting times - from the user's perspective, specifically in terms of temporal dimensions and temporal perspectives. Following the delineation of the framework is a discussion of the treatment of various techniques (as well as violations) culled from psychology, consumer research, and business practices.

You will learn:

- What has 40 years of HCI research has taught us about software time perception
- Why understanding perceived time is important
- Why understanding perceived time alone is not enough
- How Disney theme parks' wait management strategy works

Wednesday, March 24th • 9:50 – 10:50am

Wireframing Tools and Techniques

Michael Hughes, IBM Internet Security Systems

By the time a user interface gets coded, most of the design work is done, and UA professionals have lost a valuable window in shaping the user experience or embedded user assistance. Wireframes are common design tools used by UI developers and those who define requirements, and these tools can be useful communication channels for UA developers who want to be part of front-end design. By adding wireframing tools and techniques to their skill sets, technical communicators can have a more proactive impact on the user experience.

You will learn:

- How to classify wireframes by their level of fidelity
- How to choose the appropriate class of wireframe based on the needs of the design team
- How to select appropriate wireframing tools

Wednesday, March 24th • 9:50 – 10:50am

Interaction Design meets Expertise: Representation, Understanding, and Problem-solving

Axel Roesler, University of Washington

A cross section of Interaction Design methods and research techniques as these apply to the development of representational artifacts at the intersection of people, technology, and work.

You will learn:

- About the state-of-the-art in Interaction Design
- How to develop representational artifacts in a participatory design approach that converges the perspectives of users/practitioners, technologists, and innovators
- How to integrate design practice into technology development for expert domains
- How design practice in expert domains can inform best practices for design work in everyday use / non-expert contexts

Wednesday, March 24th • 1:05 – 2:05pm

An Introduction to Quality Audio Production

Omaha Sternberg, MacRadio

Audio and video tutorials, wizards, and other online training methods are increasingly popular methods of communicating with software users. Podcasts are being used to communicate everything from conceptual information to business processes, and the user can listen to that information on their time. While the latest tools have made creating and distributing A/V much easier than in the past, there is a lot of craft involved in producing quality audio output. This session is designed to help you understand the nuances of quality sound and how to bring that into your own development process.

You will learn:

- What factors affect the quality of recorded sound
- How to select an appropriate microphone
- How to set-up a recording environment
- What tools to use for recording and editing

Wednesday, March 24th • 1:05 – 2:05pm

Technology Update

The Mobile User Experience - Trends and Best Practices

Anders Rosenquist, ZAAZ

This session will focus on the mobile ecosystem, from mobile apps and sites, to UX requirements, mobile operating systems, industry trends, and mobile objectives and strategy.

You will learn:

- About industry trends regarding handset use, OS, and mobile traffic
- Best practices regarding mobile UX
- Basic strategy for approaching mobile as a digital channel

Monday, March 22nd • 10:30 – 11:30am

An Update on DITA Features, Tools, and Best Practices

Tony Self, HyperWrite Pty Ltd

While DITA adoption is slowly gaining momentum, the DITA standard itself is undergoing a renovation, with DITA 1.2 recently released by the OASIS DITA Technical Committee. DITA tools are becoming more sophisticated, new DITA tools are appearing on the market in abundance, and familiar tools are adding more and more DITA support. As the improvements that the new 1.2 standard allow filter down into authoring and publishing tools, the capability and efficiency of a DITA workflow will become even more attractive. The rise of new document delivery platforms, such as elnk devices, eBooks and iPhones, is also relevant to DITA adoption. Perhaps because DITA is an open standard, and many tools are open source, finding best practices for DITA implementation from the range of approaches is a challenge, and some guidelines can smooth the road. In this session, we will take stock of where the DITA methodology has been, and is going.

You will learn:

- The new major architectural features in the DITA 1.2 standard
- How specialization and a constrained authoring environment can improve efficiency
- About the range of DITA authoring, content management and publishing tools
- How Help Authoring Tools are implementing DITA support
- The delivery options for DITA content
- The status of DITA as a practical platform for user assistance
- How the DITA OT can be used in a project
- How DITA best practices can streamline a documentation project

Monday, March 22nd • 12:45 – 1:45pm

Introduction to eBook Devices and Formats

Joshua Tallent, eBook Architects

eBooks are an effective way to get your information out to customers, both present and future. As the eBook market explodes, the amount of information to process about the various formats and distribution options that are available can be somewhat daunting. This session will provide an overview of eBooks and the eBook world, with explanations of the major eBook formats, devices, and retailers. It will also cover other eBook-related topics like DRM.

You will learn:

- What the different eBook formats are and how they are used
- More about the devices used for reading eBooks (sample units will be available)
- eBook Retail outlets and how to sell eBooks on your own
- An overview of Digital Rights Management (DRM) and how it impacts the eBook market
- How to get the most out of your eBook

Tuesday, March 23rd • 8:30 – 9:30am

Developing Documentation for Open Source Environments Like Linux and FOSS

Joe Brockmeier, Novell

Open source developers write software to "scratch their own itch," but where does open source documentation come from? Open Source communities are evolving interesting strategies to ensure that documentation is part of the software lifecycle. Find out how documentation for Linux and FOSS has evolved, community strategies for developing documentation, common tools for creating open source docs, and where the gaps are.

You will learn:

- The different forms of documentation for popular Linux and open source platforms like GNOME and Drupal
- Common tools for creating documentation, and how they're evolving
- Strategies for community driven documentation
- How unstructured tools like wikis can be part of a thriving documentation lifecycle

Tuesday, March 23rd • 9:50 – 10:50am

Microsoft Help Preview

Paul O'Rear, Microsoft

In this session, Paul O'Rear will discuss the current and future status of Microsoft Help System, a new client help system. Initially shipping as the product help system for the next wave of Visual Studio products, this system is being positioned to potentially become available to all Windows developers in the near future. This would be the first wide release of a help system from Microsoft since HTML Help 1. The upcoming release with Visual Studio 10 will be offering a system for delivering context sensitive Help that represents a major upgrade from the current HTML Help standards.

You will learn:

- Why it is browser neutral and cross-browser capable
- How to build it using XHTML/XML-based markup
- How to use it for offline and/or online content storage
- About the possibility of using it on non-Windows platforms

Tuesday, March 23rd • 11:10am – 12:10 pm

A Look at DocBook 5.0 and Comparisons with DITA

Richard Hamilton, XML Press

This session will look at the latest developments in the DocBook standard. DocBook 5.0 was just approved by the members of OASIS in October and contains important new features that make DocBook easier to use, easier to customize, and easier to combine with other standards. This session will look into those new features and will see how DocBook 5.0 stacks up against DITA. The session will also look at two post-5.0 initiatives. The first is a publisher's schema designed by and for the publishing industry to provide a schema better suited to its needs. The second is an assembly mechanism designed to make it easier for DocBook to support modular writing methodologies.

You will learn:

- What is new in DocBook 5.0
- When DocBook is the best choice
- How DocBook 5.0 compares with DITA
- What is coming up post-DocBook 5.0
- What is new from the DocBook Publisher's sub-committee

Tuesday, March 23rd • 1:25 – 2:25pm

Writing for Mobile Devices: An End User Approach

Teresa Goertz, Microsoft

Working with small screens is here to stay, running the gamut from writing user interface text and on-device help to online content optimized for both PC and mobile screens. The methodology used for traditional tech comm deliverables doesn't apply the same way in the mobile device space. So, if faced with a small screen, what do you do differently? Join Teresa Goertz from the Windows Mobile team at Microsoft and learn how her team tackles this challenge every day. Come hear how the team approaches writing content for their consumer audience with a focus toward a friendly language, template design, localization issues, and single-sourcing with web content.

You will learn:

- Why we approach writing for mobile devices differently than the traditional methods
- What processes we developed to assist us to better target our audience
- What skills and experience our writers need
- Examples of our UI design, localization issues, etc.

Wednesday, March 24th • 1:05 – 2:05pm

Google Wave and User Assistance

Adam Lasnik, Google

Google Wave is an online tool for real-time communication and collaboration. A wave can be both a conversation and a document where people can discuss and work together using richly formatted text, photos, videos, maps, and more. In this session you'll receive an introduction to and demonstration of Google Wave. Adam will also describe how Wave might be employed for internal collaboration as well as for contribution from and information for the users of your applications. Collaboratively work in real time to draft content, discuss and solicit feedback all in one place rather than sending email attachments and creating multiple copies that get out of sync.

You will learn:

- How Wave can contribute to collective visioning and brainstorming
- How to create collaborative documents and reports
- Ways to engage your team members and software users in special interest conversations
- How to create and access public waves
- About the extensible features of Wave
- How to create custom clients to interact with Wave

Wednesday, March 24th • 1:05 – 2:05pm

eLearning Smackdown: Adobe Captivate 4 vs. Camtasia Studio 6

Kevin Siegel, IconLogic, Inc.

Captivate and Camtasia Studio are arguably the two heavyweights when it comes to supremacy in the eLearning development tools war. Both applications allow you to rapidly create eLearning lessons and courses. But how are they different? How are they similar? Are there particular strengths and weaknesses between the two? Which tool should you own and use? Captivate? Camtasia? Both? Given a particular workflow, this unique side-by-side comparison between the two programs will help you determine which tool will work best for you.

You will learn:

- How Captivate and Camtasia differ in their approach to recording screen actions
- Which of the two tools produces the best demonstrations
- Which of the two tools produces the best simulations
- Which tool allows you to more rapidly produce eLearning lessons
- Which tool brings more "bells and whistles" to the fight

Wednesday, March 24th • 2:25 – 3:25pm

Design Strategies

Using Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro and Adobe Presenter to Create Superior Documents and Training

Joe Ganci, Dazzle Technologies Corp.

During this hands-on class, you will learn and practice how to use the latest version of Adobe Acrobat to its full potential, allowing you to deliver media-rich and interactive documents. You will see how to use Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Presenter to enhance your technical documents and even allow for training applications within your documents, letting users try tasks themselves.

You will learn how to use Adobe Acrobat to:

- Incorporate video and audio directly in PDF documents
- Create Adobe PDF Portfolios for more navigable and attractive documents.
- Include interactive elements and tasks to engage users.
- Create a true immersive experience and deliver it through a standard PDF document.

You will also learn how to use Adobe Presenter to deliver even more immersive content. You will learn how to:

- Start with PowerPoint slides and add audio narration
- Further add Flash content and videos
- Create quiz questions quickly and easily, grouping and randomizing questions
- Track learner progress and send to a Learning Management System
- Communicate and collaborate, delivering information, documentation, media elements and interactivity securely and effectively to almost anyone, anywhere.
- Protect sensitive information and deliver information and training easily anywhere in the world.

Bring your laptop for the best experience possible so that you too can practice what will be taught. You will learn while having fun!

Sunday, March 21st • 1:00 – 4:30pm

Embedded User Assistance: Where Does It Belong?

Rob Houser, Sage

When users are busy trying to get something done with an application, they often resent being interrupted to go search through the help to find the answer to their question. Information designers have been moving user assistance into the user interface, so users don't have to go far or exert much effort to get the answers they need and keep working. But where does that user assistance belong in the user interface? This presentation looks at the latest trends and research in the placement of embedded user assistance and provides guidance about who needs what content and where they need it.

You will learn:

- Where to put field descriptions, screen introductions, conceptual explanations, procedures, and tips and tricks
- How to layer user assistance
- How to know when there is too much embedded user assistance
- Strategies for getting development on-board for implementing embedded user assistance

Monday, March 22nd • 10:30 – 11:30am

Double Scoop Case Studies - "User Feedback"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

Getting User Feedback Quickly, Effectively, and on the Cheap • Joann Harvey, Dexter + Chaney

This class is a case study of how our company's small Documentation team developed a means of gathering direct user feedback on our Help system from 20-30 users for under \$300. In fact, our usability test was so popular in its first year that we now conduct one on an annual basis at our Users' Conference, and the information we receive from our clients provides us with insight to the end-user experience that would otherwise be impossible to predict. We then take this information and put it to work for us as we strive to offer the best user experience possible. We are not afraid to ask the question: "Just how helpful is our Help?" The case study includes an overview of our usability test process: how we create it, how we conduct it, how we follow up with users, and how we implement the results.

No Excuses: Getting User Input on Documentation • Marcy Telles, Autodesk

Working with a user-interface designer, I spent several months using design principles to investigate ideas for integrated user assistance. We used surveys and in-depth, real-time, online customer interviews to find out how customers use our current help resources and to test our ideas for new methods. While the surveys gave us some good information, the real value was in watching people try to solve problems using our documentation. We are now implementing changes to Help for several products, based on our findings. Find out how you can get feedback from your users to ensure that you are providing the best help for your customer base.

Monday, March 22nd • 12:45 – 1:45pm

Strategies for Web-based User Assistance

Scott DeLoach, ClickStart

In this session, I will demonstrate multiple techniques for creating web-based user assistance. We will discuss how to display user assistance using tooltips, popups, and UA panels, how to display content that is stored in databases, help topics, and other files, and how to allow users to annotate, edit, and rank UA content. Attendees will be able to download working examples that they can adapt for their own projects.

You will learn:

- How to create sliding, expanding, fading, and collapsing UA
- How to pull content from databases or other pages
- How to automatically add UA topic previews
- How to allow users to annotate, edit, and rank content

Monday, March 22nd • 3:25 – 4:25pm

Think Simple - A Minimalist Approach to User Assistance

Scott Nesbitt, DMN Communications

For many technical communicators, online user assistance is a dump of a user manual (with a few tweaks) into a different format. It should be more than that, and in some ways less than that. Today's web-enabled world has changed the expectations around user assistance. Applications require a help model that's not mired with complicated navigation or unnecessary information, and an inflexible delivery platform. Help should be simple, flexible, and to the point.

By looking at what user assistance currently is and what it could be, Scott Nesbitt will look at a number of ways in which you can deliver streamlined, minimal documentation that focuses not on the what, but on the how.

You will learn:

- Some of the shortcomings of the universally-accepted model of user assistance
- Why simple doesn't mean incomplete
- Ways in which to give users the information they want, in the way they need it
- How technologies like RSS, wikis, and blogs can enrich the overall user experience

Tuesday, March 23rd • 8:30 – 9:30am

From Info Strategy to Info Types

Bob Boiko, Metatorial Services Inc.

In this talk, drawn from work done with the Harvard Business School, I will present a method for deriving a set of information (or content) types that are founded on solid business value. Items of the types are obtainable from the current IT systems. The types can form the basis of an overall information management framework by being tied to users, systems, web sites and other publications, and workflow practices.

Tuesday, March 23rd • 9:50 – 10:50am

Lessons Learned from Building Google Webmaster Central

Vanessa Fox, Nine By Blue

When we set out to improve the conversation between Google and site owners, we faced quite a few challenges, not the least of which was the wide range of audiences (developers, marketers, and a host of others) and their varying skill levels (from "I can pwn your site" to "I think the blink tag is awesome"), multiplied by the 70 million active sites on the web. We had to build scalability in from the start and over time built a portal that combined foundational educational content, a toolset that provided customized diagnostic detail, a discussion forum that enabled site owners to help each other, for us to be alerted of issues, and for our responses to be more scalably useful than one-on-one responses, and a blog to dive into specific issues. A key component not immediately obvious from the portal was outreach to media and key audience groups through conference appearances. Our success was at least partially due to our multi-pronged approach and use of Google Webmaster Central and the Sitemaps protocol are now standard practice for many commercial web sites.

You will learn:

- How we gathered audience and business needs and built requirements that addressed both as well as how to approach this task for your own organization
- About our phased approach that enabled us to launch quickly and iterate over time
- How we used a combination of people and automation to provide support at scale
- How we got buy in from key internal groups and we able to leverage their help by ultimately reducing their overhead

Tuesday, March 23rd • 1:25 – 2:25pm

Where User Experience and Software Engineering Meet

Andrew Ko, University of Washington

Most academic research about software focuses on either the lives of developers or the lives of users. In my research, I try to focus on where users' and developers' lives intersect, studying the challenges that users have in communicating problems to software companies, and the challenges that developers have in making sense of users' experiences. In this talk, I will survey my research on these topics, describing some of the problems and trends I have discovered and some of the technologies I have invented to address these problems. These include a variety of studies of corporate software development, and several new tools that make it easier to debug and diagnose problems with software.

You will learn:

- About ongoing academic research on bug reporting, quality assurance, and automatic help tools
- Insights about the challenges of user-centered software development work

Tuesday, March 23rd • 1:25 – 2:25pm

Double Scoop Case Studies - "eLearning"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

An Authoring Strategy for XML-based eLearning using Flash or Silverlight • David Castillo, Buena Vista Learning LLC

David will discuss the pros and cons of Declarative authoring of eLearning using XML. He will introduce you to the essential schema elements required to author in XML and share his insights for how to markup those elements. Additionally, David will walk through the basic requirements of an eLearning engine developed in Flash or Silverlight including parsing, rendering, sequencing and interacting. David will further discuss strategies for XML production which include forms editors as well as custom desktop editors. Finally, David will discuss his lessons learned implementing this approach within large companies. David will share numerous examples and demonstrate sample tools that he has created throughout his presentation.

Creating an e-Learning Application using RoboHelp and Captivate • Laurie Edelman, Altera Corporation

This presentation demonstrates how to integrate Adobe's RoboHelp and Captivate tools to create an e-learning application using the Show Me, Guide Me, and Test Me teaching methodology. A structured base for learning material, combined with a global navigation system, enables users to learn at their own pace and allows them to select modules in an appropriate order for their job training. Maintenance of your application is critical and should be built into your design, in order to keep current with the latest version of your software.

Tuesday, March 23rd • 1:25 – 2:25pm

A Semantic Approach to Embedding UA in "Active" Documents

Michael Kohlhase, Jacobs University Bremen

We present a novel, semantic approach to embedding User Assistance facilities into "Active Documents" - i.e. documents like programs that can be executed or have interactive features like spreadsheets, specifications, or PowerPoint presentations. Instead of enhancing web resources into semi-formal ontologies by annotating them with formal objects that allow reasoning as in the "Semantic Web" paradigm, the "Semantic Illustration" architecture illustrates a software artifact with a semi-formal background ontology by complementing it with enough information to render new semantic services in a "Semantic Ally System". We illustrate the Semantic Illustration approach with spreadsheets as they are heavily employed in administration, financial forecasting, education, and science, but have severe problems with usability and software engineering. We show how a theory-structured background ontology can be used to provide user assistance at various levels by employing methods. We identify the property of "semantic transparency" as a user interface prerequisite of Semantic Illustration and discuss it in the context of office applications.

You will learn:

- About an exciting new approach to user assistance
- How UA can be given for a spreadsheet not just for Excel
- How a user's task experience can be modeled

Wednesday, March 24th • 9:50 – 10:50am

Turning Search into Find

Matthew Ellison, Matthew Ellison Consulting

If you offer users of Help the choice of using the table of contents, index, or search to locate the information they need, most will opt for Search. And yet very often Search yields disappointingly poor results, ranging from an unhelpfully long list of hits to nothing at all. This leads to negative attitudes towards Help and a tendency for users to look for answers in alternative sources.

This session explores a range of emerging techniques for improving the quality a Help system's search feature, making it more focused and less likely to return "Not found" results. Techniques include auto-suggest, faceted search, and support for targeting keyword metadata. The benefits of these techniques include a better chance of users finding the information they need in Help, reports of more positive experiences with Help, an increased uptake of Help, and more productive users as a result.

You will learn:

- The key criteria for assessing the quality of a search system
- The critical role of metadata in improving search results
- Other emerging techniques for making search more usable, relevant and accurate
- How the search features of various Help formats including HTML Help, WebHelp, AIR Help, NetHelp, and the new Microsoft Help 3 format measure up with each other
- What to look for in a third party search engine, and what's currently available

Wednesday, March 24th • 2:25 – 3:25pm

Tool Techniques

High-end Captivate Tips and Tricks

Joe Ganci, Dazzle Technologies Corp.

Adobe Captivate is a feature-rich application for creating e-learning and many of its more powerful features are not well-known. It is very popular for a good reason. With Captivate, you can create software and soft skills simulations quickly, but you can also create e-learning from scratch that is interactive, interesting and that allows for branching and customization! Learn some of the best advanced features of the latest version of Captivate from an Adobe Certified Captivate Expert, Joe Ganci, who has used Captivate for many years. Be prepared to learn quickly and a lot!

You will learn:

- To extend Captivate's capabilities further than they think possible
- To create robust decision branching and personalization
- To work with variables and actions in a way that truly increases the power of Captivate e-learning applications

Monday, March 22nd • 10:30 – 11:30am

RoboHelp Authoring - Consistency Made Simple

Neil Perlin, Hyper/Word Services

If you're part of a multi-developer doc group that uses RoboHelp, or even as a sole writer, you know how hard it is to create and follow standards for consistency. But RoboHelp has features that make that process surprisingly simple; this session explains how - how to create the smallest number of project control files in the least amount of time before you start your projects. In other words, it's easy enough to create standards that there's no excuse not to. This session discusses the concepts behind and creation of three primary standards control files - topic templates, a style sheet, and a table style sheet.

You will learn:

- What constitutes a basic set of project control files in RoboHelp
- How to create three major control files - topic templates, style sheets, and table style sheets
- How to share those control files across multiple projects and developers

Monday, March 22nd • 12:45 – 1:45pm

Integrating RoboHelp and FrameMaker Using Adobe's Technical Communication Suite 2

Kevin Siegel, IconLogic, Inc.

Technical Communicators have long been in search of a single sourcing strategy that will save time, increase efficiency and eliminate redundancy. Adobe's Technical Communication Suite 2 is the answer! Attend this hands-on, highly interactive session and learn how to author your content in Adobe FrameMaker to create effective print documentation and PDFs; and then how to single source your content into RoboHelp to create engaging help systems and knowledge bases.

You will learn:

- How to Format a Word Document for Import into FrameMaker
- How to Create FrameMaker Books and Indexes
- How to Create and Manage CSS files in RoboHelp
- How to Link a FrameMaker Book Into a RoboHelp Project
- How to Edit the FrameMaker Document Settings
- How to Map Styles
- How to Control Topic Pagination
- How to Edit FrameMaker Content
- How to Add an Associated FrameMaker TOC and Index in RoboHelp
- How to Create FrameMaker Cross-References That Lead to RoboHelp Hyperlinks

Monday, March 22nd • 2:05 – 4:25pm

Single Sourcing with Flare

Neil Perlin, Hyper/Word Services

Flare has powerful single sourcing features that sometimes overwhelm new authors. This hands-on session will help put those features into context in order to help new authors decide which to use. The session first lists and describes the features that directly or indirectly support single sourcing - obvious ones like variables and conditions and less obvious or less familiar ones like style sheet mediums. Attendees will then experiment with three of the features - style sheet mediums that let authors easily apply one CSS to different outputs, the target editor that lets authors cull different settings from one project in order to create tailored outputs, and the relationship and potential synergy between variables, snippets, and conditionality. (We'll also look briefly at how that relationship can let authors create simulated content management systems.)

Time permitting, we'll also discuss master projects, skins, and different ways to create single source-customized tables of contents. You'll have to bring a laptop equipped with the latest version of Flare, and a few other requirements for which you'll get instructions before the conference.

You will learn:

- Review what "single sourcing" is, and look at a fairly new, potentially confusing definition of the term
- Get an overview of all Flare's single sourcing features to help you decide which ones to use in your projects
- Try three of these features hands-on to see their effects
- Review several other single sourcing features in more depth, time permitting
- Look at how the single sourcing features let you use Flare beyond standard online help or documentation, specifically to create simulated content management systems for practice before buying the real thing

Tuesday, March 23rd • 8:30 – 9:30am

Double Scoop Case Studies - "DITA"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

WinANT Echidna - The DITA Open Toolkit Made Easy • Tony Self, HyperWrite Pty Ltd

Most DITA implementations start with the DITA Open Toolkit (OT) being used for publishing of DITA content. The Open Toolkit is almost famous for its arcane "interface", and its impenetrability to beginners. There are good reasons for this situation; the OT is designed to be "platform-agnostic", is intended to be integrated with other applications, and takes advantage of other arcane open source tools with weird names such as Ant, FOP, Xalan and Saxon.

WinANT Echidna, albeit with a weird name itself, was designed to provide a simple Windows interface to the DITA OT publishing functionality. Over time, more and more features have been added to WinANT Echidna, such that it now supports pre-defined "skins" for HTML-based outputs and "layouts" for PDF output, provides some simple project management functions, allows control of conditional processing (ditaval), and comprehensive OT diagnostics. It even allows you to install the Open Toolkit and plug-ins from within the WinANT Echidna interface. In this session, the creator of WinANT Echidna (now open source) will explain the application and its features.

DITA and Complimentary Open Source Tools Perspective • Thomas Towle, The Oxford Bean Publishing Company LLC

DITA's Open Source Friends presentation looks at the free tools and environments used to build dynamic and interactive user assistance. Using DITA, Eclipse, IBM Task Modeler, Flexbuilder and PHP MySQL to add a feedback loop where users can add comments, make suggestions, and interact - all in an enhanced rich internet experience environment. This is a technical writer focused approach with a hands-on strategy. The demo provides basis for your own experiments based on the easily obtained tools and methodology that Web 2.0 uses. At the core of course is XML with some nice Ant scripts for the build.

Tuesday, March 23rd • 11:10am – 12:10pm

Building Your Own AIR Help Application

Scott Prentice, Leximation, Inc.

Adobe's new AIR technology is ideally suited for the delivery of online user assistance. An AIR application is cross platform (Mac, Windows, and Linux) and provides an embedded web browser component which means that your CSS and JavaScript coding is designed for a single browser. These features alone provide a huge benefit for development and testing. Sure, you can use RoboHelp or Flare to export an AIR-based help system, but neither of these options offer much in the way of customization. If you want to create that Help system of your dreams, you'll have to build it yourself! The great thing about AIR development is that you can do a lot with very little; start with the basics, then add more as needed. In this workshop you will build your own custom AIR Help system using your own content, and return to work with a fully functional prototype.

You will learn:

- How to install and configure the open source tools for developing and building AIR applications
- How to create a self-signed digital certificate to allow installation of your AIR application on other computers
- How to plan and design an AIR application interface
- About the fundamentals of ActionScript and MXML coding and development
- How to read XML and HTML content from a local or remote file system

Tuesday, March 23rd • 11:10am – 2:25pm

Software Simulations with Adobe Captivate

Alan Houser, Group Wellesley, Inc.

Most people use Adobe Captivate to create demonstrations and assessments. An overlooked and powerful feature of Captivate is its ability to create software simulations, in which the user interacts with a realistic simulation of the software interface. Software simulations can be valuable for training, for testing, or even for rapid-prototyping of user interaction.

This hands-on workshop will focus on Adobe Captivate features for creating simulations. After a brief introduction to Adobe Captivate, including user interface and concepts, we will create and modify software simulations. We will create both training and assessment simulations. Finally, we will discuss how to set up Adobe Captivate projects so that you can easily publish demonstrations, training simulations, or assessment simulations from the same project.

You will learn:

- The types of Adobe Captivate projects and how they differ
- How to automatically record software simulations, and later modify those simulations
- How to create software simulations "from scratch" with still screen shots by adding Adobe Captivate objects
- How to modify your Adobe Captivate project to create a more realistic and pleasing simulation

Wednesday, March 24th • 8:30 – 10:50am

Double Scoop Case Studies - "Single Source"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

Converting from Multiple Formats to DITA-compliant XML • John M. Kinsky, Intel Corporation

This session details strategies and principles for converting from multiple formats (RoboHTML, FrameMaker, and Word) to DITA-compliant XML sources. The session highlights some strategies for success, describes pitfalls, and provides a real-world success story.

Developing Product Documentation in a Confluence Wiki • Bruce Mechelsen, Corda Technologies, Inc.

Learn how one company transitioned the authoring of product documentation from FrameMaker and FlashHelp to a Confluence wiki. Hear about our goals and reasons for moving to a wiki, our conversion to wiki process, the solutions we've implemented for managing and developing wiki documentation, our experimentation with open, collaborative authoring and editing. Take a look at our product documentation in a wiki. See how we structure our documentation, how we manage images, context-sensitive links, workflows for authoring, reviewing, and approving, permissions, outputs, etc. See techniques we use to track changes and manage the development of product documentation in a wiki. And more.

Wednesday, March 24th • 8:30 – 9:30am

Flare Tips and Tricks

Scott DeLoach, ClickStart

This session will show you how to get the most out of MadCap Flare. We will discuss best practices for designing stylesheets, using condition tags, developing page layouts, and reusing content. I will also share new, never-before-seen tips and with examples that you can reuse in your own projects.

You will learn:

- How to create character styles
- How to use advanced printed documentation features, including headers and footers, chapter breaks, and auto numbering
- How to create nonscrolling regions and nonscrolling table headers
- How to efficiently use condition tags, variables, and snippets
- How to use the "hidden" features in Flare

Wednesday, March 24th • 8:30 – 9:30am

Techniques for Using Acrobat More Effectively

Alan Houser, Group Wellesley, Inc.

PDF has become a de facto file format for publishing, with more than 275 million PDF documents on the Web. The free Adobe Reader is the most popular installed software. While Adobe Reader is free, Adobe makes money by selling software for creating PDF documents - Adobe Acrobat Standard, Acrobat Pro, and Acrobat Pro Extended. Many people create PDF documents with little attention to the capabilities of these tools for supporting the review, approval, and publishing phases of the documentation lifecycle. For those who have never explored the capabilities of Adobe Acrobat, or for those looking for a refresher overview, this session will provide new insights into how you can use Adobe Acrobat more effectively.

You will learn:

- How Adobe Acrobat can support the document review and approval process, including shared reviews
- Basics of PDF editing, including Acrobat editing tools, page-level editing, adding headers and footers, and combining PDF documents
- How to add navigation aids to documents, including hyperlinks and navigation buttons
- How to optimize PDF documents for publishing, and how to create PDF portfolios

Wednesday, March 24th • 9:50 – 10:50am

Content Development

Writing Help Procedures That Work

Leah Guren, Cow TC

Users have come to expect task-based Help topics rather than mere descriptions of product features. They want to know how to accomplish tasks, not just understand interface isolated from the realities of their workflow.

Writing procedures deserves time, thought, and careful analysis. Help authors can follow these best practices throughout the process to create procedures that are more useful, more appealing, easier to follow, and supporting of the needs of the audience.

This workshop includes plenty of hands-on exercises and class participation.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Determine which key tasks need to be documented in the Help system.
- Decide how to link between task-based and feature-based topics to meet user expectations.
- Explore strategies for supporting the needs of different user groups.
- Master best practices for procedures, from top to bottom.
- Gain ideas for simple usability testing of these procedures.

Session Outline

- Intro: The Need for Procedures
 - Task-based vs. Feature-Based
 - Procedures in Help vs. Other Docs
- Best Practices
 - Performing Audience Analysis
 - Identifying Tasks
 - Intros
 - Prerequisites
 - Hazards
 - Steps
 - Layered Info
 - Graphics
 - Navigational Clues
 - Testing
- Conclusion

Sunday, March 21st • 1:00 – 4:30pm

Enabling Feedback and Collaboration Within Help

Matthew Ellison, Matthew Ellison Consulting

Help for software applications has traditionally provided a one-way flow of information to the user. However, many major software vendors now include mechanisms in their Help that enable users to provide feedback on the value of the information they have just read. It has also become possible for users of some Help systems to add their own comments and annotations, and to share these with other users. In this way, Help is beginning to emulate the collaborative nature of wikis and forums.

But just how useful and effective are these feedback and collaboration features, and how many users actually take advantage of them? And how can you build these features into your own Help systems? This session addresses these questions by using a case study to illustrate the extent to which users take advantage of feedback and collaboration within software Help. It also surveys the range of methods and technologies that are currently available for enabling this kind of two-way communication.

You will learn:

- How users of software are becoming increasingly collaborative
- About a range of real-life examples of feedback and collaboration systems
- The advantages of a Help system over other collaborative resources such as wikis and forums
- How collaboration can benefit both users and developers of Help
- What tools and technologies are available for implementing feedback and collaboration

Monday, March 22nd • 10:30 – 11:30am

The Power of Controlled Language in UA

Dave Gash, HyperTrain dot Com

Controlled languages use basic writing rules and tightly-controlled vocabularies to make sentences simpler and more consistent. Already widely used in aerospace, defense, and other precision-critical industries, controlled language is finding its way into other technical arenas such as medicine, finance, and of course user assistance. This session introduces you to controlled language and its many benefits, explains how to approach the adoption of controlled language in your UA documents, and looks at some available controlled language software and services. You'll find that controlled language is a logical, accessible technology that can truly make your Help better, faster, and cheaper!

You will learn:

- Background and concepts of controlled language
- Benefits of using a controlled language
- How dictionaries can be adapted and developed
- What products and services are available

Monday, March 22nd • 12:45 – 1:45pm

Documentation for Software Engineers - More than Just Code Comments

Ulrike Parson, parson communication

How to document source code and application programming interfaces for software engineers? "Read the code and you will understand" - but it is not that simple. Code comments may help, but they cannot provide the procedural or background information that engineers need to efficiently work with a programming interface or existing source code. How can technical writers deliver useful documentation to software engineers?

You will learn:

- How to combine code comments and programmer's guides (cookbooks) to cover different approaches to API documentation
- How to structure information for programmer's guides (use case approach)
- How to integrate software engineers in the documentation development process by working with Wikis
- How to integrate technical writers in the development process

Monday, March 22nd • 2:05 – 3:05pm

Building Support for Content Strategy from the Grassroots Up

Lisa Dyer, Lombardi Software, Inc.

Identify tools and tactics to help you find business opportunities. Solve them, and you establish yourself as the organizational expert in information development processes. Use the momentum to build an information agenda and implement a content strategy for your enterprise.

You will learn:

- Tactics and strategies to discover problems related to information development processes (discover business opportunities)
- Tactics and strategies to deliver solutions for those problems
- Tactics and strategies to build momentum that will ultimately deliver a content strategy and an "information agenda" for your enterprise

Monday, March 22nd • 3:25 – 4:25pm

The Programming Writer: UA for Hardware and Software Engineers

Jim Causey, Microsoft

UA roles provide the best of both creative and technical roles, and nowhere is this more evident than in the work of a programming writer. Programming writers work on the documentation, specifications, and sample code that make engineers successful, and get to work with the best minds and coolest technology in the industry. In this session, Jim Causey from Microsoft will describe the programming writer role, the tasks and work that programming writers undertake, and the skills and experiences you'll need to succeed in this challenging, exciting job.

You will learn:

- How programming writers work at Microsoft
- Why being a programming writer is one of the best jobs in the world
- The skills you'll need to succeed as a programming writer

Tuesday, March 23rd • 9:50 – 10:50am

Cultural Dimensions of Software Help Usage

Leah Guren, Cow TC

You put a lot of thought and effort into your online Help solutions. But do you take into consideration the way different groups of users actually use Help? For example, do you know if older users can navigate your Help successfully? When localized, does your Help provide what users in other countries want or expect? Are these differences significant, and, if so, how can you best address them? This session provides empirical data, including clips of usability tests and anecdotal evidence.

You will learn:

- How high- and low-context cultures differ (and how that affects Help usage)
- How to factor in age as a culture
- How to avoid the five red flags of cultural roadblocks
- How to design with linguistics in mind

Tuesday, March 23rd • 11:10am – 12:10pm

Dealing with Subject Matter Experts in the Design Process

Kevin Moore, TiER1 Performance Solutions

Admit it, dealing with subject matter experts is often a very time consuming and difficult process that sometimes ends up being a waste of time for you and for the subject matter expert. However, gathering data from people who know about your topic and are considered "experts" is a crucial activity and if done correctly can pay big dividends for your project. In this session we will discuss a "research" approach to gathering data leveraging subject matter experts in the process. In this presentation a discussion of the overall data gathering process, methods for gathering specific data, validity / reliability of data, and the application of neuroscience in dealing with SMEs. If you've ever sat in one of these SME meetings and felt highly frustrated then come to this session! Learn how to use an efficient and effective approach with Subject Matter Experts.

You will learn:

- Why SMEs are so difficult to deal with and how to adapt!
- How to gather information from a SME in an efficient and effective manner
- Using a research methodology to get the most out of your time with a SME

Wednesday, March 24th • 8:30 – 9:30am

Double Scoop Case Studies - "Agile"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

Cartwheels and Back-flips: Documentation in Agile Development • Jennifer Abbingsole, Global 360, Inc.

You may be hearing "Agile Development" more frequently now, and we technical writers should celebrate! It's a methodology designed to include feature testing and documentation within very short iterations (2-3 weeks), which means documentation is not left until the last minute. Although it is quite a culture shift, we get in on the ground floor. This session is based on my previous experience on a pre-agile team and my current experience on a formal Agile team, which includes:

- Ensuring tech writers are included on Agile teams and assigned tasks for every user story
- Participating in the process and transition by defining acceptance criteria and writing internal reference documentation
- Exploring flexible alternative documentation delivery mechanisms to deliver for each iteration, while authoring for final help or PDF.

Agile Development: Problems and Process • Denise Kadilak, Blackbaud

Blackbaud implemented an Agile-based development process just over a year ago and gradually over a several-month period brought each of the company's product lines on board. We now have sprint teams covering six overlapping product lines that also often include overlapping releases. The new process brought with it a number of new challenges for the documentation team, but with each new sprint we streamlined our workflow to complement the Agile expectations, and as a result we're witnessing an improvement in our user assistance.

Wednesday, March 24th • 9:50 – 10:50am

Double Scoop Case Studies - "Project Planning"

This time slot features two separate case studies by two different speakers with a common theme.

"Speed Sketching" A Software Documentation Project • Nicky Bleiel, ComponentOne

When planning a software documentation project, good project analysis and writing guidelines will substantially reduce your project "prep time," as well as the time spent writing. That means your project will be completed faster, because you start writing content sooner and spend less time on rework. And because the content has a defined structure, your deliverables will be logical and the topics suitable for single-sourcing.

In this session, you'll learn how to quickly appraise a software application and develop your overall project architecture, then use a pre-defined topic architecture to create content. We'll discuss writing methodologies and how to plan for writing in a book paradigm vs. a topic paradigm. These methods can be used by small and large teams, as well as "teams of one."

Example project architecture and writing guidelines will be provided.

The Storyboard Advantage • Charlene Kingston, Crow Information Design

Storyboarding is a popular development strategy for elearning, video, and other visual information presentation platforms that can offer many advantages for user assistance projects. Storyboards allow you to map out the content before writing, provide a consistent content analysis structure for all writers, and collect development notes in a central location. Your client can conduct a technical review from the storyboards, giving you feedback and corrections before any writing takes place, while changes are less expensive to make. Using storyboards also can provide a higher quality product because it guides consistent analysis across all software features. Learn the basics of storyboarding, and you can modify the storyboarding forms and process to fit your specific project and staff requirements for each project.

Wednesday, March 24th • 1:05 – 2:05pm

Gathering User Data Through Diary Studies

Rob Houser, Sage

In this session, you will learn about how to plan and manage diary studies. A diary study is a usability research method that has users record their own actions and reactions to particular activities through frequent "diary" entries. Through diary studies, you can gain more insight into the on-going activities of users without having to be located at their site for extended periods of time.

You can use diary studies for everyday user experience research - to create personas, uncover system requirements, to evaluate an existing system (even a competitor's system), and to capture a list of common problems experienced by a particular group of users. Even if you're not responsible for gathering usability research as regular part of your job, you can use diary studies to better understand how and when users refer to the user assistance that you develop and you can use that data to make improvements to how you design and deliver user assistance.

You will learn:

- When to use a diary study
- What kinds of data you can expect to capture from a diary study
- How to plan for a diary study
- How to capture data from users
- What special considerations you might have when conducting diary studies of user assistance

Wednesday, March 24th • 2:25 – 3:25pm

Open Standards

Information Modeling in XML

Bob Boiko, Metatorial Services, Inc.

In this workshop we will practice modeling information in XML. You will begin with your own or an imagined business context. From the context you will define one or more info types that bring value to that context. You will model your types in XML to flesh out their structure. We will then discuss the issues of reuse using XSL Transforms as a method for creating templates that the same information in different views. At the end of the session you should have a solid understanding of information type modeling, rendering and reuse and have a starting place for applying your knowledge.

Hour 1: Defining a business context that can define info types

- From goals to audiences
- From audiences to types
- From types to their structure

At the end of the hour, you will have a paper model of one or more types that are worth going further with.

Hour 2: Modeling types in XML

- XML modeling and syntax
- XML techniques
- Modeling exercises

At the end of the hour you will have a basic XML model of one or more info types

Hour 3: Rendering and reuse

- XSL Transforms syntax and methods
- Rendering full views
- Rendering short views
- Rendering lists

At the end of the hour you will have at least three renderings of at least one info type

Conclusion: Where to from here

- Info modeling skills
- XML skills
- Modeling at a larger scale

Sunday, March 21st • 1:00 – 4:30pm

Structures, Semantics, Controls, and More: HTML 5 is Here!

Char James-Tanny, JTF Associates, Inc.

OK, so the estimated timeline says it will be 2012 before HTML 5 is a W3C Candidate Recommendation and 2022 before browsers fully recognize HTML 5. But that doesn't mean that we can't start using it now!

The Web Hypertext Application Technology Working Group (WHATWG) has proposed HTML 5 as the next standard. HTML 5 includes new elements for structure and external content (like audio, video, and graphics), and it adds new attributes to some existing elements. Backward compatibility is maintained so that HTML 5 documents and applications work (or degrade nicely) in existing browsers. The resulting code is very clean and, in some ways, could be considered minimal (especially when compared to HTML 4 or XHTML 1).

Come learn about the future of HTML! See demos and explanations, learn which browsers already support it, and get resources and references to more information.

You will learn:

- What HTML 5's new elements and new attributes are
- How HTML 4 and HTML 5 differ
- About browser compatibility and support
- How to use the new structures
- About conversion issues

Monday, March 22nd • 2:05 – 3:05pm

Enhancing DITA Web Help with TOCJS and Zoom Search Engine

Pam Noreault, Sophos, Inc.

DITA web help out-of-the box does not generate a web help system that most companies would consider production ready. The web help lacks a frameset, fully functional table of contents, and a search feature. With some customization and the help of two third-party tools, you can create a professional web help system for your company from DITA.

You will learn:

- How to get DITA web help into a frameset and branding it appropriately
- How to implement and use the TOCJS for the table of contents
- How to use the Zoom Search Engine to create full-text search

Monday, March 22nd • 3:25 – 4:25pm

XSL Techniques for Processing XML

Simon Bate, Scriptorium Publishing Services

Cleaning up XML markup and resolving conversion errors in 2000-year-old Greek documents presents some XSL interesting challenges. The clean-up work included correcting errors in the Greek numbering system (which were directly affected by the surrounding XML markup), converting missing markup (or not well-formed markup) to XML markup, and ensuring the accuracy of our work in a large (50,000 file) document set. In the presentation we'll introduce some XSL techniques we created for processing XML files in which there is a close relationship between the content and the markup.

This presentation will be useful to anyone developing XSL to repair errors in XML files, performing conditionalized transforms, or working with files in which the content and markup are closely connected. It will also help managers and team leads to recognize the types of jobs that constitute trivial XSL transforms, in contrast with those tasks that require complex XSL transforms.

You will learn:

- Techniques for XML-to-XML conversions
- Techniques for converting missing markup
- How to work with files where content and markup are closely related
- How to ensure accuracy of conversion in large document sets

Monday, March 22nd • 3:25 – 4:25pm

Using DITA as a Content Delivery System for Mobile Devices

Kris Rockwell, Hybrid Learning Systems

Participants in this session will explore one possible delivery option using the Darwin Information Typed Architecture (DITA) XML specification as a content delivery platform for mobile devices, and how it can be extended to other platforms including printed material. Additionally, participants will explore use of a task analysis as a viable job aid to use on mobile devices in order to provide users with multiple levels of instruction, including direct relationships to existing electronic technical documentation. You'll see a demonstration of content delivery to the iPhone platform as an example of this solution in use.

You will learn:

- What Darwin Information Typed Architecture (DITA) is
- Why DITA lends itself to mobile content delivery
- The idea behind the five-minute lesson
- How you can use DITA to leverage other learning and reference content
- How to use task-analysis-based content to provide users with multi-tiered access to critical information

Tuesday, March 23rd • 8:30 – 9:30am

Introduction to DITA Conditional Processing

Dave Gash, HyperTrain dot Com

One of DITA's primary strengths is in combining discrete data chunks into cohesive documents, but it also excels at the other end of the spectrum -- separating data chunks when necessary. This feature, called conditional processing, allows you to produce separate documents for different products, platforms, audiences, and so on, all from the same input. Conditional processing's control mechanism is metadata, "data about data", that you specify in your topics and maps to direct DITA's decision making process. This session introduces you to conditional processing and metadata. With appropriately designed and placed metadata, you can achieve dramatic single-source results with minimal effort!

You will learn:

- What metadata is used for
- How to include metadata with other elements
- Where to put metadata in your DITA projects
- How to create and use build conditions

Wednesday, March 24th • 2:25 – 3:25pm

Special Interest

Welcome to the World of Software User Assistance

Joe Welinske, WritersUA

The application of technical communication skills to the development of software user assistance has grown immensely in the past twenty years. This specialization is very fulfilling and challenging and technical communicators are finding their role in the software development process to be increasingly valued. User assistance is much more than "Help." It encompasses a wide range of skills and technologies that are combined to improve the software user's experience. We contribute through wizards, tutorials, and web-based training. We develop and populate knowledge bases and content management systems. Printed manuals and their PDF equivalents are still an important element of our documentation sets.

Many of us are now embedding helpful content directly into the user interface. We are involved with usability testing, localization, testing, quality assurance, and branding. This presentation provides a cutting-edge overview of the latest trends in software user assistance, defines the key terminology, highlights the most important technologies, and offers predictions on future directions of our field.

You will learn:

- About the key skills for UA
- About a variety of Help formats
- About emerging paradigms in IT relevant to UA
- About emerging paradigms in UA

Sunday, March 21st • 5:00 – 6:30pm

Let's Look in the Mirror and See What We See

Hosts Matthew Ellison, Tony Self, and Joe Welinske

This interactive session is all about you - with questions from you and answers from you. Using wireless response keypads, you and all your fellow attendees will get real-time feedback about yourselves as a community.

Attendees will vote on topics and get immediate feedback. All attendees are encouraged to post questions through the conference Community page for this session. As the conference approaches you will have a chance to vote on the questions you want to see get asked. And then at the event you'll find out how the community answers.

The results from your keypads will be displayed automatically on stage in real time. We will save the results and post them with the other conference materials. The questions can run the gamut from serious to silly and cover anything that you think might be of interest to user assistance professionals.

Monday, March 22nd • 9:00 – 10:00am

Why Join a Professional Association Like STC?

Michael Hughes, IBM Internet Security Systems

With so many channels to support professional awareness and development, is there a role for a professional association such as the Society for Technical Communication? And in particular, does it make sense for user assistance writers to belong to an association that serves a broad professional base? This presentation examines the costs and benefits of association membership and points out what unique perspective user assistance writers bring to the table and what they can expect to take away.

You will learn:

- What is the base profile of a technical communicator
- Why User Assistance is the dominant genre in Technical Communication
- The wide array of hats (not HATs) a UA writer wears
- How STC supports the diverse skill sets and theoretical underpinnings of the user assistance developer

Monday, March 22nd • 2:05 – 3:05pm

Your Choice - Topics Suggested, Chosen, and Presented by You!

This time period is dedicated to a series of short discussions on topics you propose, you select, and you present. Attendees are invited to propose a discussion topic that they would like to host. This could be an interesting facet of one of your projects, or a technology that you think is particularly useful, or just an idea for a new way of doing things.

Attendees will vote on the topics they are most interested in. The top fifteen topics will be divided into five separate discussion sessions that will cover three topics each.

To propose a topic, click on the Start a Conversation button in the conference Community page for this session and type a short pitch. We will present all the proposals in a poll as we get closer to the conference. If you are selected you are not required to use slides or make handouts.

Tuesday, March 23rd • 2:45 – 3:45pm

User Assistance Trends Panel: Key Future Directions

Panel of Pundits: Host Rhonda Bracey plus Nicky Bleiel, Teresa Goertz, and Leah Guren

This panel discussion closes the conference with a cutting-edge eye to the future. We'll have predictions about trends in software user assistance, tools and technologies, and directions for information technology in general. The panel of experts represents a wide range of thought and opinion in the world of user assistance.

Wednesday, March 24th • 3:45 – 4:45pm