

The 2008 WritersUA Skills and Technologies Survey

Survey Introduction

WritersUA is pleased to announce the launch of our seventh annual Skills and Technologies Survey. This popular survey is designed to provide our community with a snapshot of the skills and technologies we most value in our software development work.

The survey only works with input from you. If you specialize in the area of software user assistance, please take a few moments to contribute. No identifying information is required. You can answer as much or as little of the survey as you choose. There are three survey pages.

As always, the results will be publicly posted on this very same web site for your free reference. (Our 2007 survey results are still available.)

Thank you for participating in the 2008 WritersUA Skills and Technologies survey!

Delivery Technologies

Delivery technologies play a large role in software user assistance. They provide us with ways of presenting our content and contribute to our unique identity among technical communication professionals.

For each of the following technologies, rank its importance to your current development efforts.

Microsoft Help Systems

	No value	Minimal value	Moderate value	Very valuable	Invaluable	N/A
HTML Help 1.x	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Help 2.x for Visual Studio	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
WinHelp	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Sandcastle	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

Other Help Systems

	No value	Minimal value	Moderate value	Very valuable	Invaluable	N/A
Apple Help	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Eclipse Help	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
JavaHelp	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Oracle Help for Java	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Oracle Help for the Web	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Browser-based Help (WebHelp, WebWorks Help, or any HTML/XML-based Help content displayed in a browser)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Other (please specify)						

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Other Delivery Technologies

	No value	Minimal value	Moderate value	Very valuable	Invaluable	N/A
WIKIs	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Discussion Forums	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
RSS Feeds	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
World Wide Web or intranet content	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Embedded user assistance (Help information coded directly into the application user interface)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Interactive helpers/Tutorials (wizards, eLearning, troubleshooters)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Knowledge bases (web-based repositories for reference information)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Product demonstrations (CD/DVD, kiosk demos, or web-based demos)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Digital manuals (PDF/XPS) (user, installation, or reference guides)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Printed manuals (paper) (user, installation, or reference guides)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Quick reference (Reference cards, Getting Started guides, release notes, job aids)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

Other (please specify)

Skills

We employ a variety of skills to create and deliver effective user assistance. Some of these skills are learned through formal educational programs while many others are developed on the job.

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For each of the following skills, rank its importance in your daily work.

	No value	Minimal value	Moderate value	Very valuable	Invaluable	N/A
Information architecture (structured authoring, design, content management, taxonomies)	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Usability testing	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Task analysis	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Writing procedures	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Writing reference information	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Copy editing	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Developmental editing	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Management and supervision	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Project planning (without management or supervisory responsibilities)	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Indexing/Search	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Interviewing (subject-matter experts/customers/users)	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Quality assurance and testing	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Graphics development	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Instructional design	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Translation / Localization	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
User interface design (embedded UA, field labels, UI Help text)	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq
Expertise with authoring tools	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq	jq

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In your daily work, how important is code-level expertise in the following technologies?

	No value	Minimal value	Moderate value	Very valuable	Invaluable	N/A
HTML or XHTML	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Extensible Markup Language (XML, XSLT, Query, Schema)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Cascading Style Sheets (CSS, XSLT)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
DITA	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
JavaScript (or other client-side scripts)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Server-side scripts (ASP, JSP, PHP, Perl, etc.)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Programming (C++, C#, Java, J#, VB, etc.)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

Other (please specify)

Operating Systems and Platforms

On which operating systems and platforms do the products that you support run? (Select all that apply.)

- Windows (Vista, XP, Server, including .NET framework)
- Windows 2000 (NT 5) and earlier
- World Wide Web/Internet
- intranet/extranet
- UNIX (Solaris, HP-UX, AIX)
- Mac OS X
- Linux
- Java
- Mobile (Windows, iPhone, RIM, Symbian, others)
- IBM mainframe
- OpenVMS
- Other operating systems and platforms:

Send Us the Survey

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We appreciate receiving any comments that you have about this survey—please use the text box below.

The 2008 Skills and Technology Survey does not include questions about specific tools. A special Tools survey will be conducted later this year.

Click the Submit the Survey button below to conclude the survey and deliver your choices. Thank you for participating!