Communicating with Users:
Moving Online and to the Web

The New Zealand conference for information developers

Thursday 8 and Friday 9 September, 2005

Rydges Hotel, Christchurch, New Zealand

Communication in today's online world

This is a MUST ATTEND conference for all information developers—whether you create documentation or help systems, work on intranets or Web pages, design software or act as a trainer.

With a growing need for easily understood information on complex topics, our work is being channelled into new areas of technology. Increasingly we are required to manage content, localize, employ single-sourcing techniques and XML, and engage in usability testing. To ensure we meet our users evolving needs, we must adapt to these developments, and adopt the new technologies. This conference will give you the edge you need to keep ahead of these fast moving trends and innovations at the global and national level.

To challenge and inspire you, we have assembled an impressive list of renowned speakers from the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Enjoy the numerous networking opportunities the conference has on offer at the Idea Markets, the dinner, and the pre-conference cocktail party.

This is the best two-day conference investment you will make in 2005.

Margery Watson
President
Technical Communicators Association of New Zealand

Sponsored by

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Pre-conference cocktail party

Come and meet the speakers, your fellow delegates and the TCANZ committee on Wednesday 7 September. You can also register for the conference to miss the rush on Thursday morning. This party is hosted by TCANZ and there is no additional charge for conference delegates.

Conference dinner

Extend your networking and relax over dinner on Thursday evening.

Venue

The conference will be held at the Rydges Hotel in the centre of Christchurch overlooking the beautiful Avon river.

Registration—Be an earlybird—Book before 1 August and save!

Register online at www.tcanz.org.nz

For conference programme details and registration visit the TCANZ Website http://www.tcanz.org.nz/

Communicating with Users: Moving Online and to the Web

Keynote Speaker: JoAnn Hackos

From books to topics

Books, no doubt, will always be with us. In her keynote speech, Dr Hackos will argue that technical information supporting the proper use and maintenance of products appears in book form simply for ease of packaging. Customers rarely read them from beginning to end, instead selecting small sections to address immediate questions.

Content management solutions facilitate topic-oriented writing and present new opportunities for conveying our information to customers. Topics lend themselves to the flexibility required of multiple media and present opportunities for reuse that increases efficiency and decreases cost.

Dr Hackos will discuss the benefits of a topic-oriented approach and present a programme by which information-development organisations can plan and organise their topics for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Dr JoAnn Hackos is President of Comtech Services, a content-management and information-design firm, which she founded in 1978. She directs the Center for Information-Development Management (CIDM), an organisation focused on content management and information development best practices. Dr Hackos consults worldwide. She is a Fellow and Past President of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). Her books and publications are widely used in the content management, interaction design, and technical communication industries.

Dave Gash

The ultimate rollovers tutorial

Ah, pity the lowly rollover: frequently maligned, generally abused, usually miscoded—and used in virtually every Website and help system on earth! This session takes you on a tour through several elegant techniques. You'll see rollovers that are preloaded and non-preloaded, text-based and graphics-based, JavaScript-driven and CSS-driven, single-image and multiple-image, and more.

Minimum code, maximum benefit

Don't you just love long, involved, complex scripts that are hard to understand, tricky to set up, and impossible to maintain? This session presents compact JavaScripts, HTML tags and attributes, CSS rules, and other coding constructs that are small but mighty. You'll see how to improve your pages' appearance and behaviour without taxing your browser, your bandwidth, or your brain!

Dave Gash owns HyperTrain dot Com, a California-based firm specialising in training and consulting for hypertext developers. Dave is a frequent speaker at help-related seminars and conferences in the US and around the world.

Carol Barnum

Communicating with users around the world

To communicate with users, wherever they are, we need to know the impact of our culture on the message. In this presentation Carol Barnum looks at how the work of cultural anthropologists can serve as a starting point for understanding how our culture shapes our communication. Culture clashes and misunderstanding naturally occur when cultures collide, but awareness of fundamental differences can lead to bridge-building across the cultures.

Carol Barnum is a Professor at Southern Polytechnic State University, in Atlanta, Georgia, where she teaches a graduate course in International Technical Communication. She is a Fellow of STC, recipient of STC's Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication award, a Fulbright Senior Specialist, and, co-author (with her former students) of this year's STC Outstanding Journal article award.

Patrick Hofmann

Communicating with users graphically: Picking the right pictures for the right audiences

The audiences for digital consumer products have expanded considerably—in both language and in age. Now that a six-year-old child or a ninety-six-year-old adult both use a mobile telephone, we need to internationalise or localise such products for multiple ages, not just languages.

Let's study (and laugh, and cringe) at the different graphic, symbolic, and visual cues and look at how different age groups interpret visual information and symbols.

Polishing your pictures: How to bring consistency and meaning to our visual information

Our pictures always seem to play second fiddle to our words and we can never seem to make them attractive enough and meaningful enough.

In this seminar, we will get very graphic (oops, bad pun) with these challenges. We will spend a fun-filled session identifying common problems and visualising information, from navigational cues and conceptual pictograms, to technical illustrations, flowcharts, and even screenshots. We will also study ways of making visuals consistent and professional.

Patrick Hofmann, as a Visual Interaction Designer, is "a man of few words". Working for global clients such as Hewlett Packard, FedEx, Nokia, Philips, BASF, and Sprint, he has spent more than a decade teaching and building award-winning visual design strategies to improve online, hardcopy, and interface information.

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Marie-Louise Flacke

Localising for Europe: Talking to the users

Localising in Europe means dealing with the 20 official EU-languages. How easy is it? Should you translate or localise? How much does it cost? How expensive can it be? How to prevent pitfalls? What's so different in the Old Continent?

Marie-Louise Flacke is the Vice President of the International Council for Technical Communication. She is a graduate of the American University of Paris (Technical Writing Program). She works internationally as a technical communication in the fields of IT, telecoms, network security, aeronautics and finance. Her expertise is in localisation, QA, writing content and usability testing e-documentation.

Idea markets

The Idea Market is an intellectual marketplace where presenters, called "Activators" simultaneously present ideas, ask questions and stimulate discussion, each using a set of two flip charts for display and note taking. Participants move freely among the chart stations, discussing the material presented with the Activators and with fellow participants. These topics confirmed so far:
Communicating with SMEs
Card Sorting: Could You Use it for Your Next Project
Away with Words: Dismay with Pictures?
Overusing procedures in user assistance
How process methodologies affect the technical communicator's work

More are planned—watch the TCANZ Website for details.

Bogo Vatovec

Transition from a technical writer to a usability engineer

The transition from technical writing to usability is not always easy. This interactive session will try to make the road easier by examining the differences between the professions, the key steps in the transition, the pitfalls and which skills are needed.

Trends in technical communication

What are the current and future trends in Technical Communication? Which skills should you learn to be better marketable in the future? Which buzzwords do you need to know? Find out in this session.

Bogo Vatovec is the principal of Bogo Vatovec Consulting, focusing on program and project management, change management, software development process, usability and knowledge management. He is a regular presenter at professional conferences and events in Europe and the USA.

Emily Cotlier

The road to localisation: A software and documentation case study

Beginning a language localisation project can be overwhelming. This case study reviews how one technical communicator worked with translators, programmers, and localisation tools to implement software and documentation localisation for an international company.

Emily Cotlier has a Master's Degree in Scientific and Technical Communication from Drexel University, Philadelphia. She is currently Senior Technical Writer at Compac Sorting Equipment, documenting machinery, electronics, and software, and managing software and document localisation.

Ruth Hamilton

Information design: Woe to WOW!!!

Do you have a good understanding of what information design means? Have you developed a checklist or even a methodology to ensure that your online design is really effective? This session explores information design and gives you practical tips on online design to help you move from woe to WOW!!!

Ruth Hamilton is director of WritersInc Ltd and works as a technical communicator. She lectures part time in UNITEC's Bachelor of International Communication degree programme and is Auckland's Information Mapping® trainer.

Jenny Spence

Animating help

What better way to create an attractive, dynamic and attention-grabbing help system than to add animation? We look at the tools and techniques for creating animated gifs, simple Flash movies, online demos, and animated skin for your help; but we also examine when it is appropriate and useful to add bells and whistles.

Online help that's really online

We used to refer to Windows help as online help, but it wasn't really—it was static software installed on the user's machine. But where do we put our information now, when in some cases nothing at all is installed on the client machine? This session looks at delivering our help dynamically using Web technologies.

Jenny Spence has been a technical communicator for 20 years and specialises in user-focused online documentation. She has spoken at conferences in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, and likes to talk about practical approaches to technology. Jenny is now working in Australia for Xylogy, a small company which is developing XML-based software for implementing process methodologies.

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Tony Self

XML for technical communicators

How does XML affect us as authors of user assistance content? Can we use XML to fully separate authoring from delivery? How will MAML (Microsoft Assistance Markup Language) affect the way we write? Can we use XML to integrate user assistance with Web applications? How can we use XML documents with XSL-T to deliver professional and innovative user assistance solutions? This session looks at XML's current role in help authoring, and how XML could change the way we approach user assistance.

Tony Self is a founding partner in HyperWrite Pty Ltd, Australia's first hypertext document development company. Tony has spoken at conferences in Australia, the United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. He is the co-author of *Swimming with the Tide, a Business Guide to the Internet*.

Luke Hoban

How to eat an elephant one bite at a time

For a content management system to be a success ALL of the components need to be integrated while still meeting day-to-day deadlines. This case study shows the use of structured FrameMaker as a stepping-stone to single sourcing using XML-based content and a content management system to publish to print and Web.

Luke Hoban from Australia is a technical content consultant and a founding member of the emorphus consultancy.

Paul Trotter

Single source content management meets localisation

A critical success factor for businesses expanding into international markets is high quality, cost-effective, and timely translation of written content. This presentation is about building smart relationships between source content and translations.

Paul Trotter is the founder and CEO of AuthorIT Software Corporation, and architect of AuthorIT, a single source tool for authoring, managing and publishing of printed and online documentation. Paul is based in Auckland, New Zealand.

Pre-conference workshops

Pre-conference workshops on Wednesday 7 September are a great opportunity to develop your knowledge and expertise in a workshop environment.

Structured writing for single sourcing

What will it be like to write in a content-management environment? If you need to implement structured documentation and want to understand how you job is changing, join this workshop.
Presenter: Dr JoAnn Hackos

How to gather requirements for a content management system

Have you considered the non-technical aspects of implementing a content management system? This workshop looks at the strategy required to gain organisational support and gather the real requirements for a content management system.
Presenter: Luke Hoban

Change management for technical communicators

Change management is one of the most important disciplines in the ever-changing business world.

The first part of the workshop will explore the essentials of change management, such as change goals, methods, soft and hard aspects of reorganisation. The second part focuses on the role technical communicators can and should play in a change process.
Presenter: BogoVatovec

Jaco Swart

Untangling the spider: How to survive writing content for the Web

A look at information overload and its implications, followed by an overview of presentation and content layers, steps in Web design, and types of Web content. This presentation focuses on the value of content design principles and Web content management systems when you write or design Web content.

Jaco Swart started his career as an electronic designer in the aviation industry, changed over to technical authoring in 2001, and joined Tait Electronics in 2002. He became their Website Manager in 2005, with a special focus on content design.

Panel discussion

Are you ready for content management? Managing the change

More structured authoring and content management projects fail because of change-management issues than technology issues. Structured authoring looks forbidding and writers are reluctant to change practices that are comfortable and time-tested. This discussion focuses on two important issues: readiness for content management and implementing a change-management process.

JoAnn Hackos, Bill Hackos, Bogo Vatovec, Paul Trotter, Tony Self, Carol Barnum

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