





# Day 1 Programme

Monday 13 October

Dr Tony Self

## Choosing the Right Path

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

John Rusk

## Science and Skill of Workplace Conversations

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Dr Nat Janke-Gilman

## Fatal Hazards - Transitioning to Safer Workplaces

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#) | [Video 1](#) | [Video 2](#)

Rebecca Officer

## DITA Case Study

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Jan Schrader and Judith Wright

## The Census Story

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Dave Gash

## Practical HTML for Writers

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Teresa Schwellnus

## If Change is a Game, These are the Rules!

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Dr Daniel Moody

## The Art of Diagramming

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation not available](#)

Dave Holmes

## Driving Change Without Authority

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)



# Day 2 Programme

Tuesday 14 October

Dr Carol Barnum

## **Content Strategy - How to get it - How to test it**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Ian Anderson

## **Taking Technical Writing Services from Expendable Extra to Star of the Show**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Lorraine Bonisch and Angela Maslin

## **Blurring the Lines Between Technical Communicating and Marketing: Changing the Way we Communicate**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#) | [Paper](#)

Dave Gash

## **Embedded Help - Nuts and Bolts**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Cathy Gillespie

## **The Role of TC in the SCIRT Learning Project**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

Mike Dickison

## **Infographics that Don't Suck**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#) | [Paper](#)

Rhonda Bracey

## **Clear, Concise, Consistent, Reducing User Confusion**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

Grant Mackenzie

## **Loving the Alien**

[Abstract & Bio](#) | [Presentation](#)

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Tony Self

## Keynote: Choosing the Right Path

Presentation

Something quite transformative is happening under our noses. The things that people choose to read information from are developing at an astonishing speed. Science fiction from ten years ago seems to be going into production now. These changing reading preferences are going to have a huge impact on technical communication in general, and user assistance in particular.

Technical communicators shouldn't be attempting to offer fully-featured, laid out, traditional, paged manuals with complex formatting on a mobile form factor. We should be innovating, and finding better ways of communicating technical information through the mobile platform, through EPUB, through augmented reality, through HUD. And we should be using semantic authoring, metadata, facets, responsive Web design, mobile first and standards as tools.

The key may well be to abandon our preconceptions, completely revise our approaches, and actively innovate. This is as exciting as it is confronting. As Albert Einstein said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."



Based in Melbourne, Australia, Dr Tony Self is recognized as one of the pioneers of hypertext and online documents. For 25 years

Tony has worked in the areas of online Help systems, computer-based training, and electronic documents. He has managed large online documentation projects in Australia and New Zealand, and has undertaken roles in technology training design and delivery, and eLearning training development, in Australia and Ireland. In 1993 Tony founded HyperWrite, a business and technical documentation company specializing in hypertext.

Tony served as Chief Technology Officer for Asia-Inc.com in 2000, where he was responsible for an innovative Asian business information web and WAP service. He later returned to HyperWrite and now consults on online documentation, internet strategy, and DITA implementation. In addition to consulting, Tony is the Director of Training for TCTrainNet, which offers online training and certification for technical communicators. He is also an Adjunct Teaching Fellow at Swinburne University, and the author of The DITA Style Guide. Tony is a Fellow of the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communication UK (ISTC), and holds a PhD in semantic mark-up languages, a Graduate Diploma in Technical Communication, and a Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. His contribution to the technical communication profession internationally was recognised in 2011 when he won the ISTC Horace Hockley award.



John Rusk

## Science and Skill of Workplace Conversations

Presentation

Part science, part autobiography, and part hand-drawn stick figures, this talk is about how anyone can learn people skills—even the nerdiest of nerds. You can use these skills to communicate more successfully and persuasively with colleagues and customers.

The talk shatters some commonly-held myths about people skills, replacing them with a simple but effective mental picture of better communication. It introduces a selection of effective and learnable skills—all of which have sound scientific backing and have been successfully “road-tested” by the presenter in his own working life.

Attendees at previous versions of this talk have described it as:

“The first ‘people skills’ presentation that ever made sense to me”

“Very useful”

“Eye-opening, encouraging, inspiring, practical”

**Note:** The science is not my own. It comes from 3 different sources. All combine decades of research with extensive real-world practice, and all are consistent with the others (which provides some reassurance that they’re on the right track!). I have never met any of the researchers, and I have no affiliation with any of them. I just find their work profoundly

helpful! The anecdotes about real-world IT experiences are mine, as are the stick figures.



John has worked in the Wellington IT sector since 1995, primarily in senior technical roles. He is currently Software Development Manager/ Application Architect at OPSRI New Zealand, working on a project that’s helping to rid New Zealand of Bovine Tuberculosis (Tb). His writing on software development has been published by Project Management Institute (PMI), the US Department of Defense and the New Zealand Institute of IT Professionals. He has spoken at industry events in Australia, the US and NZ, with a focus in recent years on people skills for software engineers. He blogs at [www.agilekiwi.com](http://www.agilekiwi.com).



Nat Janke-Gilman

## Fatal Hazards - Transitioning to Safer Workplaces

[Presentation](#) | [Video 1](#) | [Video 2](#)

“Major Change Required And Fast” that’s the urgent recommendation of the Royal Commission Report into the Pike River Coal Mine tragedy. The Pike River tragedy contains lessons especially in high hazard industries where the frequency of major accidents is low, but accidents can have catastrophic results.

Wind turbine maintenance is a relatively new industry which falls in a gap between existing high voltage safety rules and regulations (which wouldn’t work well in this setting anyhow). When you are 70 metres off the ground and working amid mechanical, electrical, and hydraulic hazards, she’ll be right simply isn’t good enough. When a better best practice is needed now, for work in progress today, the system has to be built on the fly and implemented piece by piece safely! Nat will discuss the challenges of designing, writing, and transitioning into a better system of safe work instructions. In particular, he will draw on his experience of writing documentation for wind turbine maintenance at Meridian Energy, based on the Wind Turbine Safety Rules (WTSR) system created by RenewableUK.

Nat’s presentation will include lessons from the Pike River Report and other industrial disasters here and overseas, the psychology of effective safety checklists and human error, and managing stakeholder expectations and engagement during a period of change.

Dr Nat Janke-Gilman joined Meridian in 2012 as a technical writer in the Wind Asset Maintenance Performance Engineering Team (he is a WAM-PET). Originally trained as a physicist, Nat became certified as a professional engineer while working at a reliability engineering consultancy, where he learned the arts of non-destructive testing and failure analysis. Nat has been writing all through his career (experimental reports, a thesis, teaching materials, a few articles) but had never taken a course in writing or thought of himself as a writer until relatively recently. It was while writing engineering reports and a series of repair specification documents for critical gas turbine components that he discovered his passion for technical writing; now he reads books on the subject for fun. Nat loves working in the renewable energy industry, is a big fan of checklists, enjoys the better work stories which result from advanced turbine rescue training, and is generally living the dream.



## Rebecca Officer DITA Case Study

Presentation

My team at Allied Telesis is in the process of converting our docs set to DITA. We're on a low budget and it's been a steep learning curve. In this talk, I'll try to de-mystify it all.

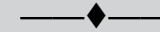
I'll cover:

- what XML is in general and DITA is in particular
- the advantages of DITA and disadvantages
- what's involved in converting
- tools for conversion, ongoing content creation, and production
- incorporating a cheap CMS

It'll be somewhat FrameMaker focused because that's the toolset we've got. That said, there are people out there who go Word > FM > DITA, just because there are conversion and publishing tools available with FM.

It'll also be somewhat focused around a large documentation set, again because that's what we've got. Also, the advantages of DITA are pretty shaky if you're a sole writer or have a small docs set.

I'll spend most of the time talking about converting, but one of my team will hopefully chip in for a few minutes about what it's like from a writing process.



Rebecca manages the Product Documentation group at Allied Telesis Labs in Christchurch. Her career has involved many aspects of communication, including technical writing, Customer support, management, business process, development and data analysis.

She has a Graduate Diploma in Technical Communication and belongs to TCANZ. In her spare time, Rebecca writes for her church and tries to find time to get into the outdoors.





# Jan Schrader and Judith Wright

## The Census Story

Presentation



We use the 2013 Census publications as examples of melding editors' desire for plain language with statistical experts' wish for technical precision. We look at the process, and the results.

- Why Statistics NZ wanted a plain language focus for the census publications in 2013/14, and how we communicated the change (a look at the wider context of having a Plain English Standard for the organisation, and its consequences).
- Details of the process that led towards our goal for the census publications, including challenges and resolutions (how we shifted our focus and slowly built-in plain language well before we started to publish census information).
- Illustrations of different ways we're meeting the needs of different audiences, primarily in the online environment (our move to include novice statistical users, and specialist audiences such as Māori, alongside our traditional focus of expert data users).

Jan and Judith are part of the 2013 WriteMark award-winning editorial team at Statistics New Zealand.

Jan's been juggling words and numbers there for 10 years and Judith's been overseeing the process as team leader for nearly as long. They've enjoyed watching the census data emerge into stories about the people who live in New Zealand.

Both women admit to being surprised at finding how fascinating statistics can be!



## Dave Gash

# Practical HTML for Writers

Presentation

These days you can't move your mouse without hitting a list of "must-use!" HTML5/CSS3 features. The problem is, many new features—and their descriptions—are highly technical, intended for audio engineers, video producers, graphics artists, game designers, and other code jockeys. Don't these new technologies have any features that benefit regular, everyday writers? Why, yes they do, and we have 'em! In this session, we'll explore a selected set of semantic HTML5 tags and related CSS3 features that are actually relevant to real-world technical writers, examine some practical uses for them, and see them in action as we migrate a page from HTML4/CSS2 to HTML5/CSS3.

Dave Gash is the owner of HyperTrain, a Southern California firm specialising in technology consulting and training for hypertext developers, with an all-new web site at [www.davegash.com](http://www.davegash.com). A veteran software professional with over thirty years of development, documentation, and training experience, Dave holds degrees in Business and Computer Science, and is well known in the tech pubs community as an interesting and engaging technical instructor. Dave is a frequent speaker at User Assistance conferences in the US and around the world.



Teresa Schwellnus

## If Change is a Game, These are the Rules!

Presentation

We often hear change is inevitable, desirable and adventurous but unfortunately very hard in both a personal and an organisational context. Change theory is often prescriptive and glib however can be quite helpful if applied with confidence and discernment. In this talk change theory is discussed within the context of real life examples to help us all to understand when and how to embrace planned and an unplanned change and how to be stronger for it afterwards.

Teresa Schwellnus has been a change enthusiast both in theory and in practice. She completed a PhD in law in 1994, and holds an MBA having also studied a diploma in clinical hypnosis. Her work experience is of an equally broad variety having been a law professor and solicitor in her native South Africa and in New Zealand the Business Development Manager for the Clutha District and Account Manager for Thomson Reuters. With education being a constant calling in her life, her academic career in New Zealand has included working for the Christchurch College of Education and the University of Canterbury. Since 2006 as the Academic Manager for CPITs Department of Business she designed, implemented and successfully grown the Bachelor of Applied Management and associated Graduate Diplomas. Her volunteer activities has included a regular Newspaper column, a Victim Support worker, volunteering for Rape Crisis, and appearing in speaking and guest lecture capacity both in person and on the radio. She is passionate about adult education, helping people to prepare themselves for the employment market and assisting people to make the most of their life.



## Daniel Moody

# The Art of Diagramming

Presentation not available — contact Daniel Moody at [Dr.daniel.moody@gmail.com](mailto:Dr.daniel.moody@gmail.com)

Diagrams are widely used in technical documentation to show processes (e.g. flowcharts), decision making (e.g. decision trees, fault trees), structure (e.g. organisational charts, menu structures), task dependencies (e.g. Gantt charts), causal structure (e.g. fishbone diagrams) and associations among concepts (e.g. mind maps). Despite this, technical communicators typically receive no training in how to produce good diagrams. In the absence of this, they are forced to rely on their intuition and experience (which is often wrong), and make layout decisions that undermine communication. This presentation describes a set of principles for producing cognitively effective diagrams: diagrams that are optimised for human understanding and problem solving.

Importantly, these are not based on common sense or experience (like those currently used in practice) but on scientific evidence drawn from a wide range of fields, including graphic design, diagrammatic reasoning, visual perception and cognitive psychology. The principles apply to all types of diagrams, from formal technical diagrams (e.g. UML) to informal business diagrams used in presentations and reports. The aim of this presentation is to turn diagramming from an art (as it currently exists) into a science. It will change the way you think about diagrams, and more importantly, how you produce diagrams in the future. You will never look at a diagram in quite the same way again...

Dr Daniel Moody is Director of Ozemantics Pty Ltd, a Sydney-based information management consultancy firm and Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Business at the University of Twente (The Netherlands). He is recognised as one of Australia's leading experts in data modelling and data management and has an international reputation in these fields. He holds a PhD in Information Systems from the University of Melbourne and has held senior positions in some of Australia's leading corporations and consultancy firms. He has conducted consulting assignments in 12 different countries, covering a broad range of industries. He has also published over 100 scientific papers, been a keynote speaker 9 times and chaired several national and international conferences. He was the inaugural President of the Australian Data Management Association (DAMA), a former Vice-President on the DAMA International Board and is listed in Who's Who in Science and Engineering. He has lived and worked in 8 different countries, speaks fluent English and can say hello, thank you and cheers in at least 10 different languages.



# Dave Holmes

## Change at Google

Presentation

Have you ever had a great idea, but weren't sure how to get your team on board?

Perhaps you'd like to change your tools, redesign your company's website, or you'd like to [insert cool idea].

Ideas are great, but driving change can seem like a losing battle in a big organization, especially if you aren't "the boss". In this session, Dave Holmes will give you practical tips on how to drive change from within an organization.

Dave Holmes has spent the last 15 years working as a professional communicator for universities, non-profits and top software companies around the globe. He currently works at Google as a Technical Writer for Google's developer products.

Originally from Canada, his work has allowed him to spend time in France, the USA and Australia. Dave currently lives in Sydney, Australia, with his wife and 3-year old son.



Carol Barnum

## Content Strategy - How to get it - How to test it

Presentation

Content strategy is a huge opportunity for technical communicators. It brings the work that you do to the forefront of strategic planning and decision-making. In this talk, I describe the rapid rise of this field, the methodology supporting effective content strategy, and the important place of usability testing in assessing the effectiveness of content. Two case studies highlight the results of not planning for content versus planning for content. The talk concludes with a call to action by technical communicators to focus on learning your users experience regarding the content you create, then exposing your findings to others in your organization.

Carol Barnum is Founding Partner and Director of Research at UX Firm, a consultancy focusing on unlocking user experience for clients in a broad range of industries and products.

Prior to founding UX Firm, Carol was Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Information Design and Communication at Southern Polytechnic State University in Atlanta, GA, USA. Carol is an STC Fellow, recipient of the Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication, and the Rainey Award for Excellence in Research. Carol is the author of numerous articles and six books. Her most recent book is the STC award-winning Usability Testing Essentials: Ready, Set Test!



Ian Anderson

## Taking Technical Writing Services from Expendable Extra to Start of the Show

Presentation

Too often the technical writer is the servant to a subject matter expert who believes their expertise (in routers, accounts payable processes, or intravenous therapy), extends to planning and writing good user documentation.

It can be difficult for a technical writer to get on an even footing with such experts. To get to that respected position with their SME, the technical writer needs competence, confidence, bravery, and a much bigger toolkit than a word processor or desktop publishing program.

Streamliners is in its 14th year of operation as a technical writing company. Its team of technical writers rapidly gain the respect of the SMEs by being able to offer user-centric document planning, writing, publishing, web-deployment, maintenance, and reporting services as seamless package. Budget holders gladly commit project and on-going maintenance budgets for the documentation service.

Ian will outline in his presentation the challenges experienced and overcome by Streamliners in evolving its technical writing services from playing a bit part in client projects to becoming the star of the show.

This presentation will be of interest to both in-house, and contractor, technical writing professionals.

Ian is a business consultant and director of SchoolDocs Ltd and Streamliners NZ Ltd. His background includes fifteen years in senior corporate planning roles in the health, housing, electricity, and banking sectors. He has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Canterbury University.

Recent highlights for Ian include working with the great team at Streamliners, contributing to the establishment of New Zealand's premier private cancer care centre at St George's Hospital, and working with New Zealand and Australian health sector leaders to implement and localise HealthPathways in their regions.



# Lorraine Bonisch and Angela Maslin

## Blurring the Lines Between Technical Communicators and Marketing: Changing the Way we Communicate

Presentation | Paper



Historically Marcomms and Technical Communications have had a distrustful, rather than collaborative relationship. While this may not be universal, it appears to be fairly generic in tech companies. We will share with you how we are beginning to overcome this in our company, and what more we believe we can accomplish.

By focusing on what we have in common, rather than our differences, we will describe how it is not only mutually beneficial, but a huge win for the company in the quality and quantity of our publications.

Lorraine and Angela have been writing together at Tait Communications for over 16 years. Producing technical communications for a niche engineering group, they had to turn their hands to an unusually wide range of document types. As well as documenting both hardware and software products, they were the group's main source of internal and external marketing material.

When Lorraine left the technical writing fold four years ago to become a Content Marketing Advisor, she found herself the most technically knowledgeable person within her team. She also found that engineering has a less respectful relationship with Marcomms than she was used to as a technical communicator.

Lorraine and Angela have fostered collaboration between their two disciplines, and nowadays find that the lines are definitely blurring. They have continued to create opportunities to work together that have been beneficial to both their own work experience and the Tait organisation. Prior to joining Tait Communications, Lorraine and Angela came to technical writing from quite different backgrounds. Lorraine was a journalist and marketing writer and Angela had completed a psychology degree, then studied towards her NZCE while working for an electronics manufacturer.





Dave Gash

## Embedded Help - Nuts and Bolts

Presentation

Embedded help is the Next Big Thing in User Assistance, and with good reason. It's accessible, unobtrusive, and serves both the "just enough" and "progressive disclosure" philosophies. Conceptual overviews and design analyses abound, but practical, how-to tutorials have been scarce—until now. This session explores two types of embedded help source content, in HTML and XML, and shows you exactly how to prepare the source text, locate and retrieve it from either format, insert it into the web application screen, and make it match the app's look and feel. Live, working (we hope!) demos illustrate the two techniques, and all code used is freely available from the presenter.

Dave Gash is the owner of HyperTrain, a Southern California firm specialising in technology consulting and training for hypertext developers, with an all-new web site at [www.davegash.com](http://www.davegash.com). A veteran software professional with over thirty years of development, documentation, and training experience, Dave holds degrees in Business and Computer Science, and is well known in the tech pubs community as an interesting and engaging technical instructor. Dave is a frequent speaker at User Assistance conferences in the US and around the world.



Cathy Gillespie

## The Role of TC in the SCIRT Learning Project

[Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

Cathy has spent much of her time this year as project manager, supporting a collaboration between SCIRT (Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team), the University of Canterbury, Resilient Organisations and UC Quake Studies (CEISMIC database) in the SCIRT Learning Legacy project. SCIRT (Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team) is responsible for rebuilding the city's earthquake damaged roads, fresh water, wastewater and stormwater networks following the February 2011 earthquake. With SCIRT having a finite life (until 2016), it is important to share the learnings with the wider community and not to lose this valuable information as the staff return to their original roles in other organisations. Access to this information in planning prior to, and following future high impact disasters will benefit both New Zealand and international communities.

The conference is an opportunity to share the highs and lows of working with such a varied mix of people and organisations, working through the financial and political challenges, towards a common purpose. Cathy will cover the process from the start to the current situation, and share the process of capturing and documenting the lessons learned. Of particular interest will be the opportunity she had, as a result of the TCANZ community networking, to include a student intern in the project, and she will share some of her personal driver

around investing in people, together with an overview of the detailed audience analysis that was undertaken and how it has shaped the development of the website.

This presentation aims to highlight an example of the recognition of technical writing as a specialist skill and the value of bringing this skill in early to a project to help direct the development of the information. It will also raise the sticking points to watch out for in such a big project and the solutions to keep the project moving. For further details, see the project flyer (PDF).



Cathy has a wealth of learning experience, and a particular passion for eLearning. She worked a Project Manager for learning project, and has experience and qualifications in the full spectrum of training, including learning vision, planning, administration, communication, delivery, evaluation and management. Earlier this year, she took up the opportunity to take on the role of Project Manager of the SCIRT Learning Legacy project.

[More...](#)



Cathy Gillespie

## The Role of TC in the SCIRT Learning Project (*continued*)

[Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

Cathy is used to managing a number of different projects at any one time, and still likes to be involved in the hands-on tasks developing in Moodle, Articulate Storyline and Camtasia. She is currently completing an eLearning post-graduate course in her spare (!) time. Although she has a particular focus on extending the use of online learning, she strongly believes in developing fit-for-purpose learning solutions and, more often than not, this is a blended learning approach.

In addition to taking on the SCIRT role, Cathy also launched her new business - Like-Minded Learning Ltd offering a wide variety of learning services and promotes Working together to create quality learning experiences.



## Mike Dickison

# Infographics that Don't Suck

Presentation | Paper

Infographics are one of the hottest new communication trends.

While they are potentially enormously useful, almost all infographics are terrible, following a particular stereotyped style (big numbers, silhouettes, pie charts) that looks trendy but communicates very little.

Being able to produce data graphics is becoming an essential part of a writers job. There are some basic design principles, specific techniques, and online tools that can make this easier. [Ill/Mike will] be walking through a makeover of some terrible infographics.

Mike is the Curator of Natural History at Whanganui Regional Museum, and had a background as both a graphic designer and a biologist. He specialises in the visual presentation of technical data, and has a forthcoming book of practical design tips for researchers, Pictures of Numbers.



Rhonda Bracey

## Clear, Concise, Consistent, Reducing user Confusion

Presentation

Even today, a lot of procedural/reference writing is filled with extraneous words, is missing vital information, or wanders off on tangents. As a result, users are confused and can't complete their tasks successfully. And that makes them frustrated, angry, and unproductive and can seriously damage your company's reputation.

In this practical session, Rhonda will identify common writing problems and offer practical strategies for fixing them. She will emphasise how achieving the three Cs: clarity, conciseness, and consistency can reduce user confusion and result in user success, and, as a bonus, reduce word count and thus reading time, translation costs, and the cost of consumables, if printed.

Rhonda Bracey started her technical communication business in Western Australia in 1999, providing contract technical writing and editing services to companies of all sizes from small start-ups to global multinationals and across many industries ranging from software to mining and oil and gas.

Since late 2008, she has worked for a global oil and gas company, mostly editing the writing of numerous environmental scientists. In this role, she has encountered all sorts of writing issues. She telecommutes full-time from her home in regional Western Australia.

Rhonda has spoken at numerous technical communication conferences in Australia and the US. She has also written thousands of articles for her professional blog, which is read by more than 4000 people each day and has been viewed by more than four million visitors since 2008.

In her spare time, Rhonda makes things with fabric and volunteers her time quilting quilts for distribution to charitable organisations.



## Grant Mackenzie Loving the Alien

Presentation

The conference theme is Communicating Change, but actually, what today's technical communicators really need, is to Change Communicating. We need to change the manner in which we are communicating with our audience.

Video is the preferred information delivery medium for the current generation, but consider this. In a recent survey of USA-based technical communicators, nearly half of respondents identified themselves as creators of multimedia such as videos. In the recent TCANZ survey, the equivalent response was just over 10%. NZ technical communicators are falling behind their international counterparts.

The use of video for user assistance is foreign to most NZ technical communicators - alien.

Loving the Alien is about confronting "the fear of the new" and conquering. It is a compelling demonstration of the power of moving images to direct and to inform. As well, there is advice on workflow, tools and delivery options.

Nobody likes change. It is challenging, difficult and a leap into the unknown. But NZ technical communicators need to embrace change

even though it is foreign to them. If they want to reach the audience of today and tomorrow, they need to start Loving the Alien.



Grant is the sole technical communicator for RAMM Software Ltd, a New Zealand owned and operated software house for which he formerly composed print, online and context-sensitive Help files. Now, the user assistance he creates is almost exclusively in the video format, much of which is produced on his iPad.

At the 2010 TCANZ conference Grant's presentation Video Killed the Redundant Writer offered a decision path for anyone considering creating their own library of video Help files. At the 2012 TCANZ conference, his presentation Quill to iPad was a case study of the creation of such a library.

Grant is married to Joan who is the book manager for NZ's largest chain of bookstores. They have four children. Life is good.