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The ISTC is the United Kingdom's professional association for technical authors, technical illustrators, and information designers.

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For all e-mail addresses given in the *Newsletter*, don't forget to remove the **bonus amphibian** before e-mailing.

ISTC news

ISTC Office closure

Owing to personal circumstances, the ISTC Office will be closed for *at least* two weeks commencing **Friday 14 April 2006**. There will then be a reduced service for some time.

If at all possible please send your enquiries to the correct people by e-mail.

President: president@istc.org.uk

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Treasurer: treasurer@istc.org.uk

Conference enquiries:
ann@alittlecreation.co.uk

Courses and education: education@istc.org.uk

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membership@istc.org.uk

Web enquiries: webmaster@istc.org.uk

Advertising: felicity@tou-can.co.uk

Marketing: marketing@istc.org.uk

Newsletter: see box on left-hand side of this page.

We would like to thank you for your patience during this time.

Latest ISTC Conference 2006 news

A specialist in the use of visual symbols in technical communication, **Patrick Hofmann**, will be the keynote speaker at ISTC Conference 2006 to be held from 3–5 October.

Half the slots for presentations have now been filled, so if you have an idea for a presentation please send it to conference@istc.org.uk as we still have space available. Alternatively, you may find yourself having to present it as an unofficial fringe event in the bar after the Gala Dinner.

The Conference web page has now been updated. See <http://tinyurl.co.uk/2805>.

The page continues to be updated as more details are finalised, so keep checking it from time to time, and don't forget to send in your booking form. You can download the form from the web page.

Remember that there is a 10% discount for bookings paid for by 30 June.

There's more ISTC news on pages 2 and 3, including a report of the TCeurope board meeting and an article by the President on linking the ISTC with other bodies.

Letters to the Editor

Frame on Mac OS X campaign

Apple introduced its first Intel-based Macs in January and intends to transition the entire range from PowerPC to Intel by the end of the year. This is significant for Mac FrameMaker users because the new Intel Macs don't support the Classic environment and cannot run FrameMaker. To mark this critical phase in our campaign, I've set up a new domain for the FrameMaker for Mac OS X website, totally redesigned the site, and added PDF form letters to make writing to Adobe and Apple really easy. Please take a look at the new site at www.fm4osx.org/ and write to Adobe and Apple today.

Apparently, after putting all of its efforts into Acrobat and Creative Suite for the last few years, Adobe has re-evaluated its portfolio and is reinvesting in FrameMaker. The first evidence of this was the September release of FrameMaker 7.2 for Windows and Solaris. Adobe has also said that if the market for Mac FrameMaker changes and there's an opportunity, it will respond. In other words, if enough people let Adobe know that they want FrameMaker for Mac OS X, they'll make it.

If you haven't already written to Adobe, I urge you to do so now. Even if you have already written, please write again. The new PDF form letters on the website mean that it will only take a few minutes of your time. I've also provided address labels.

Apple is still using Classic (Mac OS 9) and FrameMaker 6.0 to produce its own user guides and I know that its technical writers want

FrameMaker for Mac OS X just as much as we do. Even Adobe is still using it.

If you've not yet signed the petition, please do so now at www.petitiononline.com/fmforosx/petition.html. If you've already signed, please don't sign again, as it diminishes the petition and I have to manually remove duplicates. I understand your frustration, but writing to Adobe would be more constructive.

If you're not already a member, please join the FrameMaker for Mac OS X mailing list to keep up to date with the campaign's progress and discuss Mac FrameMaker-related issues – <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fmforosx/>.

The current petition count is 3,245 signatures.

Thank you for your support!

Paul Findon

FrameMaker for Mac OS X Petition Organiser

Editor's note: Paul Findon also feels that in the March Newsletter the piece entitled "Framemaker versus Word", which was a round-up of a discussion on the ISTC discussion group, contained two sentences in the second-to-last paragraph that closely resembled his own. He feels he was not given direct credit for these sentences and the ISTC apologises for any misunderstanding that this may have caused.

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More ISTC news

ISTC linking with other bodies

By ISTC President **Gavin Ireland**

There has been quite a discussion on the e-mail group about whether the ISTC should link with related organisations or not, and if so, which ones? We already have both formal and informal links with other bodies. For example, we have links with other Technical Communication societies via TCeurope such as CRT (France), STD (Finland), STIC (Netherlands), TECOM Schweiz (Switzerland), tekem (Germany), COM&TEC (Italy) and FTI (Sweden). Through our membership of INTECOM, we have similar relationships with organisations in USA, Canada, Russia and Norway. Informally, we also have links with the Society of Indexers and the Society for Editors and Proofreaders.

From time to time the ISTC council does investigate possible partnerships with other organisations, to share benefits and/or resources between our members, and we give as much consideration as we can to serve all of our members, not just a group of them.

Please keep your suggestions coming, but please also bear in mind that we are only a small team of busy volunteers and if you have the time to look into how these links with other organisations could work, that would be very helpful indeed.

Freely available standards

If you are looking for information on standards, the ISTC's website now has a link to freely available standards from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) – www.iso.org. The link on the ISTC's Standards page takes you directly to ISO's freely available standards. You'll find the link at www.istc.org.uk/pages/standardstoc.php under the "Obtaining information about standards" section.

TCeurope 2006 board meeting

Report by **Alan Fisk FISTC**

The Board of TCeurope, the European umbrella organisation for technical communication, held its annual meeting in Sophia Antipolis, in southern France near Nice, on 19 March. **Alan Fisk** represented the ISTC at the event.

TCeurope's finances continue to be healthy. **Leo Adank** of the Dutch society Studiekkring voor Technische Informatie en Communicatie (STIC) has produced some impressive posters that each national society can display at appropriate events. TCeurope has been contacted by a group of 17 technical communicators in Portugal, who want to set up a Portuguese technical communications society, and have asked for the assistance of TCeurope in doing so. We will offer what help and encouragement we can, in the hope of seeing a successful society being set up there.

TCeurope is continuing to seek ideas from its member societies for possible new collaborative projects to propose to the EU, following on from the success of the TecDoc-Net and SecureDoc projects. The ISTC participated in both of them.

No TCeurope Board members took part in the riots in Nice the previous afternoon.

Industry news

Rockley Report now free

The Rockley Report – previously a subscription-only publication – is now free. Written and edited by practitioners, *The Rockley Report* features content management case studies, best practices, and lessons-learned designed to help technical communication professionals demystify some confusing concepts and avoid making the costly mistakes made by others.

"Now everyone can benefit from the insight of the many content professionals that have contributed their knowledge and experience to *The Report*", said **Ann Rockley**, founder and president of The Rockley Group, a Toronto-based content management consultancy. "Our guest authors, our customers, and our peers are all represented in *The Report*. It's a treasure trove of useful information."

The index to the reports is at www.rockley.com/TheRockleyReport/TRR_index.html. The reports are available in HTML and PDF formats.

By registering at www.rockley.com/TheRockleyReport/, subscribers are alerted when a new issue is published.

You can also subscribe to the *The Rockley Bulletin*, a monthly web-based newsletter that delivers summaries of content management strategies, technological issues, useful resources, book reviews, information about forthcoming educational events, and more.

New DITA guide

Comtech Services, founded by content management expert **Dr JoAnn Hackos**, is about to release *Introduction to DITA: A Basic User Guide to the Darwin Information Typing Architecture*.

According to the content management and information design firm, the book aims to be a user guide for the OASIS DITA standard. It presents the basic method of DITA and its benefits for creating an information set and explains step-by-step how to produce DITA XML topics, create maps for deliverables, and work through the production processing tasks.

The book includes an explanation of the DITA model and the major elements used to create topics using the task, concept, and reference information types.

The book ships around mid-April. For details, go to the bottom of www.comtech-serv.com/dita.shtml.

AGCO signs million euro SDL contract

SDL International, one of the leaders in the emerging market for global information management (GIM) solutions, has announced a €1m agreement with AGCO Corporation, a worldwide designer, manufacturer and distributor of agricultural equipment. SDL will provide an integrated end-to-end solution for the authoring, management and publishing of technical service documentation to AGCO's global customers.

Having completed a number of acquisitions in recent years, AGCO was faced with a mix of isolated authoring, content management and publishing processes across its core brands of Challenger, Fendt, Massey Ferguson, SISU

Diesel and Valtra. SDL will deliver an integrated GIM solution that spans the entire content lifecycle, enabling AGCO to consolidate technical publications, terminology, content management, translation, web and marketing publications, onto one unified platform.

The GIM solution includes authoring of structured content in XML using Blast Radius XMetaL integrated with SDL AuthorAssistant to ensure consistency of language and terminology. SDL PhraseFinder will be used for terminology mining and SDL MultiTerm for enterprise-wide web-based terminology management. Trisoft InfoShare integrated with SDL Translation Management System will support all XML content management, translation and publication processes, with SDL providing the language translation services.

factors in helping differentiate one vendor from another. These surveys reveal that our commitment to these high standards is paying off with clients across many industries.”

Affiliate news

Cherryleaf offers web toolbar

Cherryleaf has been developing a web toolbar for technical communicators. The toolbar allows users to:

- Gain instant access to the Cherryleaf site from any site on the web
- Search from anywhere on the web
- Check e-mail – Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail and POP3
- Check job vacancies with one click
- Chat via instant messaging shortcuts to technical authoring forums
- Have notifications of new blog postings sent straight to the toolbar

The toolbar is self-updating – new features add themselves and there is no need to re-install. It works in Firefox (for Macs too) and Internet Explorer on PCs.

You can download and install the toolbar from <http://cherryleaf.ourtoolbar.com/>

New suggestions and feedback are welcomed, so if you spot any bugs then do let Cherryleaf know.

Documentation lost in translation?

3di can help you provide effective information to your international customers by managing the translation of the information supporting your products, processes and services.

Typical translation projects undertaken by 3di include:

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- EU regulatory information
- Compliance documentation
- Marketing, white papers & sales information
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Thumbs up for Conversis in survey

Conversis, a leading provider of globalisation, internationalisation, localisation and translation services, reports that it has received an “excellent” rating in a tally based on satisfaction surveys distributed each month in 2005.

“As we continue to grow the company and our profile in the industry, it becomes increasingly important not only to bring in new business, but also to cultivate relationships with our existing clients,” said **Gary Muddyman**, CEO and managing director. “In an industry that remains highly competitive and often price-based, service and quality become critical

Book review

New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors

Adapted by **R M Ritter**

Hardcover, Oxford University Press, 2005

ISBN 0-19-861041-6

Reviewed by **Marian Newell FISTC**

The original version of *Hart's Rules* was first published in 1893 as a 24-page booklet. The final 192-page edition was published in 1983. Nineteen years later, the totally rewritten 634-page *Oxford Guide to Style* was released as a replacement but had a mixed reception. In *Communicator*, Spring 2003, **Sid Beauchant** lamented its length and noted mistakes in the practical information given about printing.

New Hart's Rules marks a return to a smaller, more practical guide to preparing work for publication. Adapted from the *Oxford Guide to Style* by **R M Ritter**, and despite the word "rules" in its title, it has retained the more descriptive rather than prescriptive style that I understand was introduced in that book. The tone is down-to-earth and easy to read, with well-chosen examples explored in a balanced way. Variations between places and sectors are noted, with differences between the UK and US, and between mainstream and technical publishing, especially useful to me.

Divided into 20 parts, the book covers topics from punctuation, capitalisation and type treatments through to bibliographies, indexing

and copyright. As well as guidance on all sorts of thorny issues, it explains the reasoning behind choices in things like hyphenation. For example, how do you decide where to split words? Why *atmos-phere* but *hydro-sphere*? I thought I had apostrophes down pat but how about double possessives? Is it *a speech of Churchill* or *a speech of Churchill's*?

About half of the content is fully relevant to technical authors. The remainder includes treatment of personal names, words in other languages and terms specific to subject areas. While these may not often arise in technical documents, having an authoritative reference for checking occasional doubts must be good.

I find **Michael Swan's** *Practical English Usage*, also from Oxford, very helpful for grammar but *New Hart's Rules* covers different ground with its emphasis on presenting text. For example, how do you italicise plurals of titles? Is the "s" italic or roman? How about italics within italics? Quotes within quotes within quotes? Brackets within brackets?

Not least of the book's virtues is an excellent index. So far, I've managed to find again everything that I've looked for.

At 12 x 18 cm and 432 pages, with a list price of £12.99 (and available for less), I expect this handy book to earn its place on my shelf many times over. It answers questions that arise all the time in *Communicator* production.

Recommended by the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP), it has to be a worthy addition to a technical author's library.



Based in Aberdeen and with offices in Canada, USA and the Middle East, ODL is a market leader in the development and management of technical documentation and information for the oil and gas industry.

Our **Operations** division has an immediate requirement for experienced technical authors to join our busy team in Aberdeen working on the development of a variety of oil and gas production operations technical documentation.

Applicants should be experienced in using the Microsoft Office software suite to an advanced level including extensive use of document tracking, templates and standards to produce complex operations manuals and information systems.

We should also like to hear from experienced oil and gas process operations personnel who have had some experience of producing technical documentation and now wish to move into this challenging area. Training will be provided by our existing team members who have themselves made a successful transition from offshore operations to technical authorship.

Our **Maintenance** division urgently requires Maintenance Engineers with a background in Mechanical, Electrical and Instrument disciplines to join our existing teams working on long-term maintenance documentation and CMMS development projects.

Engineers qualified to HNC level or equivalent should have practical 'hands-on' maintenance engineering experience and be able to quickly assimilate new maintenance techniques and methodologies.

Computer literacy in Microsoft applications is essential whilst a working knowledge of computerised maintenance management systems will prove a great asset.

Candidates for these positions should apply with full CV to Steve Bull, HR Manager, ODL, Buchanan House, 63 Summer Street, Aberdeen AB10 1SJ Tel: 01224 628000 Email: steve.bull@odl.co.uk <http://www.odl.co.uk>

Tools

Online technical illustration resources

Itedo, makers of IsoDraw, IsoDraw CADprocess, IsoCompose and IsoView, have an interesting online resource site. Including basic information, a gallery, tips and tricks and a discussion of creating electronic catalogues, the site can be accessed at www.itedo.com/E/home_e.php. The list of relevant literature includes an article in the current *Communicator*.

Free fonts

Manchester-based K-type independent type foundry offers 28 free fonts and also 30 pay fonts for £6 each.

One free font, Lexia Readable, is a copyright-free font designed for maximum legibility that attempts to capture the strengths of Comic Sans but that also works in serious messages and for adult readers.

K-type proprietor **Keith Bates** incorporated typographical concerns from educational publications and the British Dyslexia Association into the design of Lexia Readable. The font was designed to have good screen clarity with simple, handwritten forms of a and g; letters such as b and d are asymmetrical and there are good sized descenders and ascenders.

Keith has recently been commissioned by publisher Macmillan Education New Zealand to customise his Lexia Readable family to include Italic and Italic Bold.

For more information, see Keith's site at www.k-type.com/.

Brazilian typographer **Eduardo Recife** offers 19 free fonts and 5 pay fonts, mainly suitable for graphic artists.

Eduardo's Misprinted Types site is at www.misprintedtype.com/v3/fonts.php.

AuthorIT now imports RoboHelp

AuthorIT Software Corporation Limited has recently released a much anticipated import format, RoboHelp. With the introduction of the AuthorIT RoboHelp Importer, AuthorIT version 4 users can now import their legacy RoboHelp content.

The latest release of the AuthorIT's importing technology supports the migration of Macromedia RoboHelp content created using the latest version of RoboHelp as well as a number of earlier versions.

"Moving from a desktop system to a database system can be a difficult time. Whilst the advantages of moving to an enterprise grade system are substantial, the path to go live is often daunting. With the rapid increase in the number of organisations realising the huge benefits associated with moving to a database driven, true single source system, we are

squarely focused on making their migration headaches disappear. Importing RoboHelp is another huge step in maintaining this goal," said **Paul Trotter** at a recent industry round table.

With your newly imported RoboHelp content you will have the full feature set of AuthorIT available, from localisation management to a range of output formats including XML and DITA.

The AuthorIT RoboHelp Importer will migrate:

- Content stored inside RoboHelp projects
- Paragraph and character level class names
- RoboHelp DHTML effects, including:
 - Pop-ups
 - Drop-downs
 - Expanding text
- Help context IDs
- Contents and index
- Glossaries

For more information, visit www.author-it.com/.

BBC's Script Smart

The March 2006 *Newsletter* reported that ISTC Fellow **Ron Blicq** had had a radio play broadcast. If you are thinking of following in his footsteps, you might be interested in the BBC's Script Smart tool. It is a set of Microsoft Word templates to help writers format their scripts into industry-recognised layouts. You can download it from www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scriptsmart/.

XML, DITA and DITA customisation

By **Bernard Aschwanden**

Recognised publishing technologies expert and author of numerous publications on publishing and single sourcing, Bernard Aschwanden, explains subsetting and customising DITA, starting with the basic building blocks, XML.

What is XML?

XML is a very basic text format. Originally designed to meet the challenges of electronic publishing, XML is playing an important role in the exchange of data.

The appearance of an XML document is very similar to that of an HTML webpage when viewed as source code. A simple XML document may appear as:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1" ?> <memo author="Bernard" date="20060123"> <to>You</to> <re>Reminder</re> <body>Do some searches on google to find more XML information.</body> </memo>
```

Elements (such as `memo`, `to`, `re` and `body`) are basically objects in the XML file. Any element has a start tag (for example `<to>`) and a close tag (for example `</to>`). Elements may also have attributes (such as the “author” and the “date” attributes in the element `memo`).

These elements can be defined using a set of rules stored in a schema or Document Type

Definition (DTD). The schema or DTD is a document that contains rules about the order and frequency of elements. This allows control over which elements are inserted, where they are inserted and how often they are inserted.

By using XML, the structure of a document can be defined and compared against. If the content adheres to the rules, then the XML is valid. Since XML and rules can be shared, there is a common way to exchange files with the knowledge that the same rules are followed. Once the same rules are followed, a set of application-specific rules can be implemented to open the XML file in almost any XML-enabled software tool.

Benefits of XML

Since XML files can share a common set of rules, and XML is composed of nothing more than plain text, data exchange is simpler. This data can be exchanged between software tools, between vendors, between service providers, between authors and more. It can be shared, repurposed, modified, distributed, and edited. This now allows you to be independent of software tools and use the best tool for any specific job.

Why should you care?

Consider this example: A publishing and XML-enabled tool is used by authors to write and edit content. Content is then passed to a layout and XML-enabled tool for marketing. Web and XML-enabled tools are used to create output for a website. Files are passed to a vendor that has a

translation and XML-enabled tool that manages the conversion to 12 languages. All the translated content is returned and opened using a help development and XML-enabled tool and online help files are delivered with an application. At no point does one person have to do all the work, but even a lone writer can now use the files with the best tool, or provide content to service providers without fear that the message is lost.

Best of all, the files are archived and, through uniquely identified elements, a “delta” is created for release 2.0 and only the modified content is sent through the writing, marketing, translation, and help workflow.

If content is shared with ease and a common set of rules is followed, then writing content becomes faster, reuse is easier, translation is



DITA Development using Adobe FrameMaker 7.2

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less costly and the overall workflow of a writing project can be streamlined. Reductions in cost and time to market result in improved profits and less stress for all people involved in the project.

What is DITA?

The Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) is an XML-based, end-to-end architecture for authoring, producing, and delivering technical information. This architecture consists of a set of design principles for creating “information-typed” modules at a topic level and for using that content in delivery modes such as online help and product support portals on the web.

At the heart of DITA, representing the generic building block of a topic-oriented information architecture, is an XML document type definition (DTD) called “the topic DTD”. The extensible architecture, however, is the defining part of this design for technical information; the topic DTD, or any schema based on it, is just an instantiation of the design principles of the architecture.

More information can be found at www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/xml/library/x-dita1/.

Why subset and modify DITA?

Subsetting means to remove or reorganise elements, attributes and attribute values to customise the way that options are presented, while ensuring all the DITA specifications are followed.

The three main reasons to subset include changing default tags, modifying the order or elements and adjusting the frequency of element use.

The default tags in the DITA specification include close to 200 elements. In many cases, tags provide features that are not required in your documentation or provide undesired redundancy.

Modifications to the default element order allow restrictions to the organisation of information. If this still adheres to the principles of the DITA specification, your content remains compliant and your authors have a guided workflow.

Many of the elements in the DITA specification allow child elements to appear with no restrictions. This means that, basically, authors can insert a wide variety of elements as often as desired.

Subsetting tags and attributes

There are approximately 200 tags in the DITA specification. One of the easiest things you can do to make a DITA implementation simpler is to reduce the number of tags.

It is important first to plan your document set and then begin to subset as the removal of high-level elements and all associated child elements is difficult to undo later.

Remember that many of the attributes are reused throughout the DITA specification and it may be better to remove them on an element by element basis rather than removing them from the DITA specification completely.

Drawbacks to subsetting

There are two key drawbacks to consider before subsetting: tag limitation and stricter rule requirements. If a DITA implementation is well planned, neither should be a major problem in managing the way DITA is used.

While subsetting helps to implement a stricter implementation of the DITA standard, it also deviates from it. By only supporting a key set of tags, you restrict the ability to import other content that complies with the DITA specification.

By redefining the order of elements and their frequency, you effectively rule out some combinations of elements that others may use. In doing so, you may be limiting the usefulness of content that others provide that match the DITA specification.

Conclusion

Subsetting the DITA specification and modifying the default rules can provide many benefits to an organisation. A restricted set of elements reduces the need to develop formatting and transformation rules for all possible combinations of elements. It also allows organisations to further control the types of content used and the way that they are used. This results in far more consistent documentation.

For detailed information on subsetting and customising DITA, go to www.publishing-smarter.com/pages/teach/books_articles.html.

Training news

XML Summer School

An XML Summer School, hosted by CSW Group, will bring together delegates from across the world to learn and gain practical experience of XML and related technologies from some of the world's leading industry experts at the University of Oxford. This five-day residential course, which the organisers describe as being far more than an XML training course, is the seventh annual event held by CSW. The course will be held from 23–28 July.

The curriculum is devised for maximum learning; CSW understands that many delegates come to the XML Summer School with business questions that need answering. The curriculum runs with three tracks, each of which is broken into seminars that cover topics in-depth. This year, these include:

- Building XML applications
- Content and knowledge with XML
- Hands-on introduction to XML
- Hands-on XML lab
- Trends and transients in XML
- Web services and service architectures
- XML for drug information
- XML in healthcare
- XML primer
- XSLT, XSL-FO and XQuery

Teaching at Oxford is based on the tutorial system, where students can combine formal lectures with time spent in small groups, with tutors who are experts in their chosen subjects. The XML Summer School follows this model and aims to provide delegates with a unique opportunity to sample the life of an undergraduate at Oxford University.

Accommodation in student rooms at Wadham College is included in the course fee for those attending the full XML Summer School or the two-day courses.

The XML Summer School registration is now open. Any delegates who sign up before **30 April** will qualify for a 15% discount of the total delegate fee. For further information visit www.xmlsummerschool.co.uk.

Training courses

Listings are restricted to scheduled courses that are low cost or are in some way unusual. Listings are a service to members. A listing does not imply ISTC endorsement.

If you hear of any training courses that you think might be of interest to *Newsletter* readers, please contact the *Newsletter* Copy Editor (newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk).

April

10–11 *Framemaker basics – structured*. Twelve-hour online course teaching the skills necessary to create structured

documents using Framemaker. Publishing Smarter. www.pubsnet.com/courses/fm_basics_structured.htm

11 *Developing and managing e-book collections*. This course explores a range of different e-books and the new opportunities e-books offer. Newcastle UK eInformation Group. www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2005_04_11_ebook.html

29 *Introduction to proofreading*. Bristol, Society for Editors and Proofreaders www.sfep.org.uk/pages/current_schedule.asp

May

24 *Making websites accessible*. This practical course aims to teach you how to create websites that are accessible to people with disabilities. Sheffield UK eInformation Group. www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2006_05_24_accessible.html

June

1 *Reaching beyond bibliographic referencing*. This hands-on course aims to explore the latest software for managing different reference types beyond bibliographic sources. London UK eInformation Group. www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2005_05_25_biblref.html

Events

These pages introduce new listings and include reminders of the most relevant events in the next two months. You can view previous events listings on the ISTC website's *Newsletter* archive at www.istc.org.uk/pages/newsletters.php. To include an event in the listings, please e-mail events@istc.org.uk.

April

- 9 *Fourteenth Annual WritersUA Conference*. This year's Conference features seven interest areas with information on emerging skills, technology updates, design strategies, tool techniques, content development, open standards, special interest and hands-on computer tutorials. The conference topics cover a broad range of key tools and techniques including RoboHelp and WebWorks Publisher, structured authoring, Windows Help, single source, case studies, XML/XSLT and usability. Palm Springs, California, USA. www.writersua.com/ohco6/index.html
- 26–28 *Client Side News (CSN) Expo 2006: "The Business of Localisation"*. Presentations, panel discussions and classes delivered by vendors and clients cover strategic and tactical elements of the globalisation, internationalisation and localisation business. Keynote speakers include Lionbridge CEO **Rory Cowan**. Miami, Florida, USA. www.csnevents.com/
- 26–27 *Library and information show*. The popular free seminar programme covers issues facing librarians from the public, academic, workplace and schools sectors. Don't miss sessions from Google, The Reading Agency, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), The BBC, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, The Man Booker Prize, The National Reading Campaign and many more. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. www.lishow.co.uk/li2006/index.html

May

- 3–5 *AODC 2006: The ninth annual Australasian Online Documentation and Content Conference*. AODC 2006 features 20 sessions covering techniques, technologies, tools and case studies, presented by international and local expert speakers. Session topics include DITA, structured authoring, XML, usability, editing, migration to Microsoft Vista, user assistance, dynamic HTML and case studies. Cairns, Australia. www.aodc.com.au/
- 18–20 *Encompassing the instructive text*. Deadline for registration is **1 April**. Speakers include **Dr. Markus Nickl**, co-founder and CEO of DOCTIMA GmbH and **Dr. William Hart-Davidson**, Co-Director of The WIDE Research Center (Writing in Digital Environments), Michigan State University. Aarhus, Denmark. <http://tinyurl.com/m2do3>
(this link takes you to the Danish site – click Union flag for English text)
- 21–26 *Nielsen Norman Group's Usability Week*. Usability Week 2006 takes you beyond the typical conference experience, offering a three-day usability camp, a three-day intensive session on interaction design, and several specialised, day-long tutorials that get both broad and deep on core usability topics. Come for as few or as many days as you want. Victoria Park Plaza, London. www.nngroup.com/events/london/agenda.html

June

- 12–16 *UPA 2006: Usability Through Storytelling*. As usability professionals, we weave stories that have been harvested from user communities. Stories can teach us how to communicate with and educate our peers. Omni Interlocken in Broomfield, Colorado, USA. <http://tinyurl.com/o7dj5>
- 15–18 *The Culture of Science Editing: European Association of Science Editors Ninth General Assembly and Conference*. Krakow, Poland. www.ease.org.uk

The back page

Plight of the Unwitting Dead

The Bookseller's prestigious Diagram Prize – for the Oddest Title of the Year – has now been awarded. In a close contest, the winner is *People Who Don't Know They're Dead: How They Attach Themselves to Unsuspecting Bystanders and What To Do About It*. Part memoir, part technical manual, **Gary Leon Hill's** book tells a family story of how his Uncle Wally and Aunt Ruth came to counsel dead spirits who took up residence in bodies that didn't belong to them.

The runner-up, just two votes behind, is *Rhino Horn Stockpile Management: Minimum Standards and Best Practices from East and Southern Africa* by **Simon Milledge**.

For full details of the contest, see www.thebookseller.com/?pid=8&did=18851.

When aviation gets hard to understand

By **John Taylor**

While a technician in the RAF, I came across these from after-flight reports:

In an after-flight report: Pressed trigger and bomb carriers fell off.

In the technical response: Pilots shouldn't change ground crew switch settings.

In an after-flight report: Found ventral tank damaged on landing.

In the technical response: Don't fly through thunderstorms.

In an after-flight report: Brake parachute jettisoned on landing.

In the technical response: Don't pull the jettison lever until speed under control.

In an after-flight report: Gyro compass stuck.

In the technical response: Percussion adjustment carried out. (For the non-technical: the very sensitive compass was hit with a hammer.)

In an after-flight report: Guns not working.

In the technical response: Short-circuit between stick and seat. (For the non-technical: the pilot.)

In an after-flight report: Starboard gun not firing.

In the technical response: Trainer aircraft don't have starboard guns.

Pilot: Brakes seized after heavy landing.

Technical response: Brakes released after cooling off, pilot cautioned for landing too heavy.

Pilot: Undercarriage found retracted after landing.

Technical response: Undercarriage lever found in the 'UP' position.

Pilot: Outriggers stuck up.

Technical response: Outriggers now stuck down.

Lightning pilot: Unplanned engagement with the approach-end landing-barrier (caused major damage to the barrier, but little to the aircraft).

Technical response: Don't land with the arrestor hook down unless you planned it that way.

More wacky warning labels

M-LAW, Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch, has announced the winners of its seventh annual wackiest warning label contest.

1st: A heat gun and paint remover that produces temperatures of 1,000 degrees and warns users: "Do not use the heat gun as a hair dryer".

2nd: A kitchen knife that warns: "Never try to catch a falling knife".

3rd: A cocktail napkin printed with a map of the waterways around Hilton Head, South Carolina, which says: "Caution: Not to be used for navigation".

4th: A bottle of dried bobcat urine that says: "Not for human consumption".

5th: A warning label on a baking pan that says: "Ovenware will get hot when used in oven".

For more information and to see the photos, go to www.mlaw.org/www/index.html.