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The ISTC (Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators) is the United Kingdom's professional association for technical authors, technical illustrators, and information designers.

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This Newsletter is published monthly and is emailed to anyone who wishes to subscribe. As well as ISTC news, the Newsletter aims to cover anything of interest to the profession. Currently about 1500 people subscribe. To subscribe, contact the Office.

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If you're reading a printed copy of this newsletter, go to <http://www.istc.org.uk/site/newsletters.asp> and open it online to explore the links mentioned.

ISTC news

Oxford Reference Online service

Marian Newell writes: The Oxford Reference Online service for members (see [November](#) and [December](#) Newsletters for details) looks set to go ahead, subject to contractual arrangements.

The ISTC will be what the Oxford University Press (OUP) calls a syndicated organisation. There will be a page within the members' area on the ISTC website as explained before, using the existing password protection.

The ISTC will be only the second syndicated organisation, with the first going online this month. As it is such a new venture for them, there have been some delays and we now expect the service to launch in March.

Membership subs

If you put your membership renewal letter behind the clock on the mantelpiece, please do retrieve it and send it off before the end of the month.

Once membership subs are paid, Carol can spend her time on more productive activities than sending out reminders. It also allows the Council to budget with confidence for the rest of 2004.

Don Hinson steps down

Professor Don Hinson has had to step down from the ISTC Council because of continuing work in his family business and an increasing academic workload.

Don headed the Council's Education Steering Group and was the recipient of the [Horace Hockley Award](#) in 1997.

We thank Don for his efforts in the past and send him our best wishes.

Christmas book draw

We had a good response to last month's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* draw and hope to make draws a regular feature.

The three winners were picked out of the hat by **Kevin Thompson**. They are:

- **Kirsty Dunne** of Bristol
- **Geoff Fullick** of Chelmsford
- **Linda Jarvis** of Bouloc, France

Each will get a copy signed by Lynne Truss.

We will be holding another draw in the February *Newsletter* for three copies of *Presenting Numbers, Tables & Charts* by Sally Bigwood and Melissa Spore. Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-860722-9. To whet your appetite, see the [authors' site](#).

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London Area Group

January meeting

Adrian Toole writes: Our speaker was **Annie Drynan**, who gave a talk entitled *Applying Usability Tools to Technical Writing*.

The first challenge was to define usability! Annie offered these alternatives:

- "The effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction with which users can achieve tasks in a particular environment of a product. High usability means a system is easy to learn and remember, efficient, visually pleasing and fun to use; and quick to recover from errors."
- "Appropriate to the goals and tasks of the intended user."

It soon became apparent that usability was perceived as being an esoteric, academic, activity, practised by qualified professionals, working for large organisations able to supply both funds and guinea pigs for their tests.

Annie set out to present a different approach. Annie had prepared handouts as well as some practical exercises.

Her first exercise involved nothing more specialised than a pack of cards carrying hand-written notes.

The notes described a variety of operations that one might consider describing in a user manual for a software product.

The challenge was for us to order the notes into the chapters of the manual. This game was played out enthusiastically (and without any violent disagreements).

For the second exercise, Annie produced a clever, paper mock-up of a computer window featuring all the usual components of a software application. The window displayed prominent Help menus down the left-hand side.

She had constructed the menus from fan-folded Post-It Notes®. Initially, only the top-level items of the menus were visible.

Selecting me as likely to best caricature an ignorant first-time user, Annie posed a series of questions:

- Where, in the menus, would you look for an overview?
- Where for advice on configuring the application?
- And so on.

Needless to say, my answers were befuddled and irrational.

Unfolding the Post-It Notes, revealed the full menus and the answers to Annie's questions. The exercise showed, however, that putting several volunteers through the same exercise would soon build up data on the usability of the Help menu design. Annie's point was made.

Annie was keen for us to promote usability studies in the organisations with which we work.

She suggested that it would be possible to demonstrate to managers that an appropriate level of usability study on the documentation would enhance the value of the product.

This investment would not only result in better documentation but by feeding back up the development chain, actually improve the product as well!

In response to my suggestion that our profession needs to find ways of increase the attractiveness of the documentation, Annie cautioned that the only justification for documentation was to enable use of the product; enhancements to the documentation merely to render it more attractive to the user was not the ultimate target. That insight provoked discussion and, for me at least, some disquiet.

In conclusion, Annie's advice was as follows.

- Usability studies improve the usefulness of the product.
- Usability studies reduce support costs.
- Think 'Baby Steps'; usability is do-able for all of us!
- Remember that the product is for the user's benefit.
- Documentation is usually a necessary encumbrance.

You can contact Annie by emailing [adrynan AT harropgreen-demon-co-uk](mailto:adrynan@harropgreen-demon.co.uk).

For details of the group's next meetings, see page 5.

The Informability Manual

The Informability Manual: Making information more accessible in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act

Wendy Gregory pbk 130 pp
HMSO/TSO 2000
ISBN: 0 11 702038 9 £25

This book can be thought of as four sections:

- the reasons why information must be accessible
- an explanation of the limitations caused by various conditions and disabilities
- the importance of plain language
- the different types of media, and how they can be used.

The first chapter defines the problem of people who fail to receive or to seek information actively. Some have problems with print; others with television, radio, or the telephone.

It is important to remember that people who have these types of difficulties need (and are entitled to) the same amount and type of information as the rest of the population. There are about 15 million people in the UK with problems affecting communication. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it a legal requirement to consider their needs.

The next chapter discusses people with literacy problems. The printed word is obviously their greatest problem. Write simply and clearly; material not based on the printed word can make accessibility easier for them.

It points out that deafness affects somebody's life more than blindness. The printed word is not always the solution.

Blindness and partial sight covers a wide range of ability and consequently needs a range of solutions, varying from standard and large print through Braille to audiotape and computer technology.

For the deaf-blind, provided there is not total loss of sensory faculty, the techniques used for visual and hearing impairment can be used. Another aspect is that this can occur with mental handicap, which might mask the sensory impairment.

One problem with learning difficulties is definitions, with different people and organisations using different terms. Similar media can be used as for the visually impaired, those with literacy problems and the aged.

Ageing causes faculties to deteriorate, leading to any of the difficulties mentioned previously. One problem is that many aged people are not comfortable with 'technology'.

Plain language reminds us of what we should already know, and be doing. A useful set of guidelines is included.

Making all your information accessible provides a list of basic rules applicable in most situations. The benefits of consulting the audience are stated. There is guidance on prioritising your information and publicising alternative formats.

Print media covers standard and large print,

Braille, and Moon. There are accessibility checklists for the different types of media and guidelines for large print. There are useful warnings of the various potential problems.

Broadcast media includes audiotape, as well as television, video, subtitling, audio description, teletext, and radio. Once again, checklists show which groups will have accessibility problems. A checklist of production guidelines for audiotape is included.

Multimedia is the chapter that shows the age of the book. Nevertheless, provided you make the appropriate adjustments, the advice that is given is still largely applicable.

Telephones and help lines follows the standard format. Good basic advice, even allowing for changes in emphasis with the advance of technology.

The last chapter, on signs, covers the basics for visual, tactile, and audible signs. A brief section follows called "Where now?" This recaps why we should be interested in informability and how to incorporate it into our work. There are three appendices: statistics, addresses, and a glossary.

This book covered new territory for me. Should this be included in the C&G 5360 syllabus? The depressing thing, for someone working in education and health, is that I have seen little evidence of any of it being used. I would agree that commercially these are all consumers who should not be ignored. I will use it, and hope for an updated edition.

Review by Sid Beauchant.

Translation and localisation

Alchemy CATALYST 5.0

Irish firm [Alchemy Software Development](#) has upgraded its [CATALYST](#) visual localisation software. See their [news release](#) for more.

Multicorpora MultiTrans 3.5

Multicorpora has released version 3.5 of MultiTrans, its translation support and language management software. For details of the new version, see their [news release](#) and [product overview](#).

Passolo Visual XLIFF component

Germany's PASS Engineering has announced a limited-time offer of its Visual XLIFF Component for Passolo 4.0.

The Component is a macro-based parser that supports processing of [XLIFF](#) files based on the XLIFF 1.1 Specification. The parser also supports the XLIFF Profile for Windows Resources. This specification describes how standard Windows resources are mapped in XLIFF.

Registered users of PASSOLO 4.0 can download the Visual XLIFF Component for free and integrate it into any PASSOLO system. See the [Passolo](#) site for details.

Trados 6.5 upgrade

[Trados](#) have released [Trados TM 6.5](#), their translation memory tool. It now supports more formats (such as Office 2003) and new languages. For a full list of enhancements, download their [What's New? PDF](#). An upgrade from version 6.0 costs €39.

Localisation Research Centre

The [Localisation Research Centre](#) (LRC) has launched the first [Annual Localization Reader](#). There is a selection of 27 articles available in three PDF files that are free to download.

They are also running courses (page 9).

Free translation / fee translation

Maidenhead-based firm [SDL International](#) offers crude but free translation at its [FreeTranslation](#) site. You can also add the free tool to your website and browser. Naturally, they offer more sophisticated products and services as well, but they expect you to pay for those.

Bowne Global's success

ISTC affiliate Bowne Global Solutions has won work from [OMRON Europe](#), helping its Industrial Automation Business centralise and streamline the translation and localisation of its marketing communications materials from English in up to 15 European languages.

See the BGS [news release](#) for more.

London Area Group (ii)

March meeting

The next meeting is on 11 March. Matthew Ellison will be talking about the four main different workflows that Help authoring tools use, and discussing how each of them fits in with your existing documentation processes. Rather than concentrating solely on the online Help output, he'll be talking about the various strategies of single-sourcing paper output and a variety of online outputs

Matthew has 17 years' experience as a user assistance professional in the software industry, initially joining DEC to develop CBT. Matthew then spent 11 years managing a team of writers and trainers at a UK-based consultancy company, followed by a period in the US as Director of the WritersUA Conference. He now runs a UK-based training and consulting company that specialises in online Help design and technology.

This meeting is at **Stephen Helms'** house, 55 Chelverton Road, Putney, SW15 1RW. It's near Putney rail station (frequent trains from Waterloo) and East Putney Underground station. (Map links: [Multimap](#) and [Streetmap](#))

There will be a collection of £3 each for the food and drink. If you want to come, please email the Secretary, [Alan Fisk](#) with a copy to [Stephen](#). If you have no email, phone Alan on 020 8670 4290.

The Group will also meet on 13 May and visit the British Library on 6 July.

Events planner

This month's *Newsletter* takes a look some months ahead. Next month, we'll go back to looking ahead the usual two months but also list any new events that we come across.

As we're coming across many more events than can easily fit into the *Newsletter*, they'll be listed in full on the ISTC website. The <http://www.istc.org.uk/site/conferencetoc.asp> page will be the temporary home for a full list of events, pending the redesign of the ISTC website.

ISTC-related events are in bold.

January

22–24 [Document Design Conference 2004](#). [Tilburg University](#), Tilburg, The Netherlands.

29 [Mind teasing lecture: Are we born an artist or a scientist?](#) Discover what goes on in Carol Vorderman's brain. Bristol.

February

5–7 [In So Many Words: Language Transfer on Screen](#). Conference and workshops on audiovisual translation. Guildford / London.

18–19 [Single Sourcing and Enterprise Content Management](#). Ayia Napa, Cyprus. See article on the right of this page.

25–27 [IV Conference on Training and Career Development in Translation and Interpreting](#): Quality in Translation - Academic and Professional Perspectives. Madrid, Spain.

March

11 [ISTC London Area Group](#). See page 5 for details.

18 [Mind teasing lecture: Are we born an artist or a scientist?](#) More goings on in Carol Vorderman's brain. Glasgow.

24–26 [Usability Week – 'London'](#). Chesham, Bucks. ≈ £1690 (or more after 25 Feb). See article on right.

Single sourcing in Cyprus

February's [Single Sourcing and Enterprise Content Management](#) workshop in Cyprus looks like a bit of a bargain at around €399. It's led by Ann Rockley, who is not so well known on this side of the Atlantic, but something of a name in North America. She's President of [The Rockley Group](#) and author of [Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy](#).

Usability events

There's a lot of overlap between usability and technical communication, most obviously in the field of online documentation and web design. Some events this year should interest readers.

Nielsen Norman Group Usability weeks

Usability guru Dr Jakob Nielsen and his colleagues are in Europe during March. The British event runs for three days while the Danish runs for five. The tutorials on these extra two days are most directly relevant to technical communicators, such as web, intranet, and newsletter usability.

CHI2004

Run by [ACM SIGCHI](#), the ACM's Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction, offers five days of tutorials, workshops, demonstrations, presentation of papers, and more.

Of particular interest to technical communicators is a workshop entitled [Helping Users to Use Help: Improving Interaction with Help Systems](#). American authors Garrett Dworman and Stephanie Rosenbaum are running the session. The deadline for position papers has now been extended from the date given on the web page to 2 February. You can get a more detailed description of the workshop by emailing [HelpWorkshop AT teced.com](mailto:HelpWorkshop@teced.com).

Full details aren't yet available but the Conference itself would cost a non-ACM member booking early about \$685 USD + accommodation.

March (continued)

- 28–31 [WritersUA Conference](#). Hollywood, USA
- 29 [4th European Colloquium for User-Friendly Product Information](#). Brussels, Belgium
- 29–2 [Usability week- Copenhagen](#). ≈ €828 per day (or more after 15 Feb). See article on page 6.

April

- 2–3 [Translation and Interculturality: Africa and the West](#). Groningen, The Netherlands.
- 2–4 [Indexing – Marching Forwards](#). Society of Indexers Annual Conference. Chester. £210 SoI members. £235 non-members. Book before 31 January for these rates.
- 22–23 [tekomp Spring Conference](#). Aachen, Germany
- 24–29 [CHI2004](#). Vienna, Austria. See "CHI2004" on page 6.
- 26–27 [European Association for Machine Translation \(EAMT\) 2004 Workshop](#). Malta

May

- 6–7 [CiB Conference](#). Warwick.
- 6–8 [Translation Theory and Methodology](#). Saarbrücken, Germany
- 9–12 [Navigating the Future of Technical Communication](#). STC 51st Annual Conference. Baltimore. USA
- 10–12 [6th International Conference on Translation](#). Barcelona
- 13 [ISTC London Area Group](#). Speaker TBA.
- 24–30 [LREC 2004](#). Lisbon, Portugal.
- 31–4 [4th LRC International Localisation Summer School](#). Limerick

July

- 1–3 [ICICTE](#). Fifth International Conference on Information Communication Technologies in Education. Samos, Greece

- 6 [ISTC London Area Group](#). Visit to the British Library

September

- 26–30 [LavaCon 2004](#). New Orleans, USA

October

- 8–10 [ISTC Conference](#). Thame, Oxfordshire. Discounts for bookings before the end of June.

End gender confusion

A program using automated text categorisation techniques can infer the gender of the author with approximately 80% accuracy for an unseen formal written document.

The researchers say that women tend to use many more pronouns and men use many more noun specifiers (for example, *that*, *these*, *two*, *more*, and *some*).

Even in formal writing, women use more features identified by previous researchers as "involved" while male writing exhibits greater usage of features which have been identified as "informational".

For example, women use the prepositions *for* and *with* more often than men do, but men use the preposition *of* more often than women do.

The same techniques can determine if a document is fiction or non-fiction with approximately 98% accuracy. However, diary-based or biographical works, such as Maureen Lipman's *Thank You for Having Me* can be misclassified as fiction.

The papers are available on [Professor Moshe Koppel's page](#):

- [Automatically Categorizing Written Texts by Author Gender](#)
- [Gender, Genre, and Writing Style in Formal Written Texts](#).

You can do your own tests at [Koppel-Argamon Textual Gender Predictor](#) or [The Gender Genie](#), which says it uses a simplified version of the algorithm.

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Training courses

Listings are restricted to scheduled courses that are low cost or are in some way unusual. For training in, say, Adobe products, or for organisations that provide bespoke training, you'll be pointed to a new edition of the ISTC's guide, [Technical Communications: A Guide To Courses](#). **The new course guide is getting close to completion and should be available soon.** When it is published, the *Newsletter* will reduce its coverage of courses.

Course providers

BSI. Tel: 020 8996 9001 Email: [cservices AT bsi-global.com](mailto:cservices@bsi-global.com)

LRC (Localisation Research Centre) Tel: +353 (0)61-202 881
Email: [lrc AT ul.ie](mailto:lrc@ul.ie)

SfEP (Society for Editors and Proofreaders). Contact details vary from course to course. See the [programme](#) on their website.

Weekend and evening courses, when identified, are in bold. Listings are a service to members. A listing does not imply ISTC endorsement.

General courses

[Applying and implementing BS ISO 15489-1: 2001](#). BSI. 11/2

[Email and the Law](#). BSI. 29/1, 24/3

[Freedom of Information - how good Records Management practice can make compliance straightforward](#). BSI. 25/3

[Information Management Systems workshop](#). BSI. 9/3

[Introducing Records Management and BS ISO 15489-1:2001](#). BSI. 25/3

[Legal admissibility and evidential weight of documents stored electronically](#). BSI. 3/2

[Localization Project Management](#). LRC. 24-25/2. Dublin

[LRC Professional Development Courses 2004](#). LRC. 17-20/2.

Editing and proofreading courses

Introduction to proofreading. SfEP. 28/1, 25/2, 24/3

On-screen editing. SfEP. **24/1, 6/3, 3/4**

Proofreading problems. SfEP. 31/3

Web editing and proofreading. SfEP. 4/3

Working for a client. SfEP. 27/3

Course notes

Training provider [popcomm training](#) has now published its programme of 2004 courses. You can view its [calendar](#) and request a [brochure](#). They have also introduced four [distance learning courses](#).

[London College of Communications](#) is running several 5-day courses this Easter. Its site is unhelpful; ring 020 7514 6562 for a brochure.

[London Metropolitan University](#) is running an undergraduate course in Multimedia and a postgraduate course in [Digital Media](#). Courses can be part- or full-time and start in February. The University is running Open Events on the 28 January. Phone 020 7133 4200 or email [admissions AT londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@londonmet.ac.uk).

SHU's [MA in Technical Communication](#) has an intake in February.



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Science and the Creative Image

Alan Fisk writes: In November, I represented the ISTC at the symposium on *Science and the Creative Image*, an offshoot of the [Visions of Science Awards](#) (see the [October 2003 Newsletter](#)).

Jo Wilson should have come but suffered an accident the day before (she's mending now).

The central theme was: "Are the vivid visual images that many scientists now use to enliven their complex research the best way of communicating science to an untrained public? Or are the colour and intensity of their pictures starting to blur the border between fact and fiction?"

Three speakers each presented their own view of the question, illustrating their talk with striking images that they had created or found.

Scientist-turned-photographer Felice Frankel showed from her own experience how creativity can be both a boon and an obstacle.

She described how she used a combination of magnets and Post-It Notes to get the best image of magnetite crystals in a drop of oil, and sticky tape to create an image capable of demonstrating the adhesive qualities of cancer cells.

In contrast, she also showed how too much creativity can lead to an image being rejected.

Adding green and blue dyes to 4mm square drops of water produced a clear and striking 'chequerboard' effect for chemists intent on demonstrating the hydrophobic-etched lines between the squares.

However, a second image in which each square was dyed to produce a two-tone effect was rejected by editors at *Science* because it had taken the creative process a step too far. Art had taken over from science.

Cambridge art historian Professor Martin Kemp pointed out that no article on the brain or its diseases now appears in a newspaper or magazine without a picture of the brain derived from function magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

The technique itself is revolutionising medical understanding of the physiology of the brain and the diseases that affect it, but it is a highly specialist technique used only in leading centres.

"These colourful pictures are becoming iconic images that are used in articles that are nothing about functional MRI," said Professor Kemp. "New scientific techniques like these are capturing the public imagination even when they don't know what they show or how the images are made."

Professor Nancy Rothwell, MRC Research Professor at the University of Manchester, asked a selection of artists, Nobel prize-winning scientists, and those in the media about the creative processes in art and science.

Words like personal, reflective, unconstrained, subjective and unique were associated with artistic creativity, while terms such as collaborative, consistent, replicable, and objective were linked to the creative process in science.

She suggested that, while the creative processes in science, technology and art are clearly distinguishable, there is probably a continuum of creativity between the different specialties with some, such as photography and architecture, embracing all.

A technical illustrator would have had more insight into the lessons of the symposium, but any technical communicator would have been fascinated by the difficult but real problem of drawing the line beyond which visual creativity can impede understanding by overpowering the message.

—

The [2003/4 Visions of Science exhibition](#) is touring the country until July.

Thwarting spam

To try to thwart address harvester programs, the Newsletter slightly disguises explicit email addresses. Most embedded email addresses come with a **bonus amphibian**, which you should remove before sending the email.

Office holiday

Carol will be on holiday from Monday 8 March until Wednesday 24 March. Emails and phone calls will be forwarded during that time.

Trawlings from the net

English as she is spoke

Some sites focussing on spoken English and its dialects:

[Rusty Barrett's Resources on Dialectology and Accents](#) links many further sites, including those contrasting American and other varieties of English.

The [International Dialects of English Archive](#) is building a collection of MP3 samples of spoken English from across the world.

- A Russian woman was denied an entry visa into the UK because she wanted to study in Scotland.

The would-be student of English was refused on the grounds that she would find a Scottish brogue difficult to comprehend. See [The Guardian](#) for more.

Be foxed no more

If you're sometimes mystified by second-hand book catalogues, the [MillerSmiles](#) site has a useful [photographic glossary](#) to book parts, sizes, conditions, and defects.

Ideas that Matter

[Ideas that Matter](#) is a programme from paper firm [Sappi](#) to support design for the public good.

It invites graphic designers to create printed communication campaigns for causes they want to support. Sappi has made \$1 million USD available for successful applicants around the world to realise their creative concepts and campaigns.

2003 grant recipients included Paul Day for 'Eye Health' for The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, now near completion.

The deadline for 2004 appears to be 31 May but the call for action hasn't gone out yet.

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TCeurope projects

A presentation, *Quality Goals in Technical Documentation*, given at the [TecDoc-Net](#) information day in Bilbao is now available on the [TCeurope news](#) page.

The [SecureDoc](#) project has now produced the final draft of its guidelines, ready for the official launch in March.

Irish prizes

Irish science students, both North and South, may be interested in the [Royal Irish Academy](#) prizes for writing in [biochemistry](#) and [chemistry](#).

Symbols

Metamath's [GIF and PNG Images for Math Symbols](#) page has a set of mathematical and other characters that are copyright free. If maths is your subject, you'll also want to look at the other links from the [home page](#).

Hebrew fonts

Israeli typographer Oded Ezer has designed eight Hebrew fonts, available for purchase for the PC and Mac. You can navigate to them from his [home page](#).

Abbey's new habit

British bank Abbey is a convert to plain English. It's currently rewriting all its customer letters in plain English, and has promised to get rid of financial jargon.

Research commissioned by the bank suggests that public think that lawyers and IT professionals are the worst for using confusing industry jargon.

See Abbey's [news release](#) for details.

Gender gap

Women are more likely than men to refer to instruction manuals, according to research by [Dixons](#).



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Software news

Mellel 1.7 released

[RedleX](#) has released [Mellel 1.7](#), an update to its multi-lingual word processor for Mac OS X "designed especially for scholars, and creative and technical writers".

Mellel supports many scripts including Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Farsi, Greek, Japanese, Korean, and some obscure ones such as Etruscan and Thaana.

For details, see its [news release](#). Mellel costs \$29 USD including three years of free updates.

Mellel's interface can be localised into 15 languages. They're planning a Welsh version.

Reviews of Mellel can be found on the web and seem generally favourable. [MacUpdate](#) gives some users' reviews.

AuthorIT Localization Manager

AuthorIT has launched its Localization Manager. The company says the new module brings localisation within the financial reach of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Localization Manager manages source content as it is translated into any single- or double-byte language.

For more information, see the AuthorIT [news release](#) and its [Localization Manager](#) pages.

You can also download a [brochure](#) from PDA.

Macromedia releases

Macromedia has announced the immediate availability of RoboHelp X5. See its [news release](#) and guide to [new features](#).

Similarly, see its [news release](#) and guide to the [new features](#) of RoboInfo 5.0.

PDF to Word Converter

[ScanSoft PDF Converter for Microsoft Word](#) is an easy-to-use but fairly versatile PDF-to-Word conversion tool. You can read a review at [ZDNet UK](#). The UK list price is £39.99 GBP from [ScanSoft UK](#) but a search from ZDNet UK shows you might be able to buy it in the UK for slightly less.

PDFs on the cheap

If Adobe Acrobat is beyond your budget, [Software995](#) offers the [pdf995 suite](#). The three programs in the suite can be downloaded for free. However, the free versions display a sponsor page in your web browser each time you run them. Having tried them out, you can upgrade to an advert-free version for \$9.95 USD for one program or \$19.95 for all three.

Mac users can try [PrintToPDF](#) for \$20 USD. At the bottom of that page, some further software is suggested for Windows users.

Adobe itself offers a [Create Adobe](#) service: the trial allows you to create five PDF files for free. North Americans can subscribe to the full service.

New finalRender service pack

German firm [cebas Computer GmbH](#) has announced its free Service Pack 2 upgrade for [finalRender Stage-1](#). finalRender Stage-1 is a certified raytracing plug-in to [discreet's 3ds max 6](#) modelling, animation, and rendering software.

The service pack offers many enhancements. For details, see their [news release](#) and [SP2 page](#).

ACDSee plug-in

Konica Minolta Photo Imaging has developed a [DiIMAGE Messenger 2.0](#) Plug-in for ACDSee digital imaging software. It serves as a multimedia communications tool to link images, audio, and text. For details of the plug-in, see [ACDSee's site](#).

- ACD Systems is going through a rough financial patch, according to their [news release](#) and [canada.com](#).

Adobe Creative Suite

Adobe has launched its Creative Suite for graphics professionals.

The Standard edition includes Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, and Version Cue, a file management tool.

The Premium Edition has Acrobat Professional and GoLive in addition.

See their [Adobe Creative Suite](#) page for details.

The Moving Finger

Neologisms

The BBC's [E-cyclopedia's glossary of 2003](#) includes two relevant to our field:

- data smog – too much information
- webinar – a web seminar

Banished words

[Lake Superior State University](#) has issued its [2004 list](#) of words banished for misuse, overuse, and general uselessness.

This year's list has no words particularly related to our profession but is nonetheless worth a look. You can also visit their [archives](#) and [posters](#) pages and [submit a word](#) for next year.

Pulp traction

Two-and-a half million Mills and Boon romantic novels were used to construct the recently opened [M6 Toll road](#).

The pulp helps to bind the asphalt and the Tarmac, preventing the surface from splitting after heavy use.

It takes about 46,000 bodice-rippers to help create a mile of three-lane motorway. Mills and Boon sells 13 million books annually in Britain and 175 million worldwide, so expect even more roads to romance. See [BBC News](#) for more.

Gettysburg

Following last month's article on PowerPoint, we've come across [Peter Norvig's](#) rendition of the Gettysburg Address as a [PowerPoint Presentation](#). Norvig produced the presentation in frustration after one too many meetings where he felt PowerPoint obscured rather than enhanced the point.

Lincoln's 267-word speech was a model of brevity compared to the official speech that preceded it. Edward Everett, then considered his nation's greatest orator, delivered his [Gettysburg Oration](#) comprising 13,500 words, complete with obscure classical allusions. In Everett's [letter to Lincoln](#), he wrote, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

Rally to Rummy's rhetoric

You will recall that another master of political prose, Donald H Rumsfeld, won the [Foot in Mouth award](#) following his 'Unknown Unknowns' speech.

The award has provoked a pro-Rumsfeld backlash, variously in [The Guardian](#), [The Washington Times](#), and [World Wide Words](#).

Are you being stereotyped?

When it comes to manuals, Germans don't like humour and the Italians and French like naked women, according to an article in [Wired](#).

Paper mountain

A telling argument in the online *versus* paper debate comes from New York.

Patrice Moore was buried standing up when his collection of magazines, books, and newspapers collapsed on top of him.

After two days, neighbours heard his cries, and he was freed after a three-hour rescue operation. See the [BBC News](#) story for more.

Keep off the grass

Zachary Tutin, aged 14, faces five years in custody if he uses the word "grass" in any context. The ban lasts until he reaches 20.

Tutin, from Manchester, was given the ban as part of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order.

The Order applies only in England and Wales so if he wants to discuss the favourite food of a graminivorous quadruped, he can still do so north of the border. For more, see [The Sun](#).

I saw the potato*

The Localisation Research Centre (LRC) has dedicated part of its site to [Localisation Faux Pas](#), mistakes allegedly made by companies who didn't research their foreign markets properly.

There's a year's supply of blunders so far, and the LRC promises to add a new one each month.

*See the May 2003 *faux pas*.