# ISTC Newsletter

*In this issue:*

## ISTC news

### ISTC Conference update

We now have a full programme of presentations for the 2006 Conference in October. The Conference website has been updated again with the latest information. See www.istc.org.uk/pages/conference2006.php.

You can still suggest a topic if you are willing to be a backup presenter in case someone has to drop out.

If you're planning to come only for the AGM, which will be held from 1210 to 1310 on Thursday 5 October, why not register as a day delegate? For £55 plus VAT, you can also attend the presentations of your choice, and the price includes lunch.

### ISTC website update

After extensive testing, the new ISTC website is ready to go live. We will have to take down the existing site to make the transition. The ISTC website will therefore be unavailable from 1800 hrs on Friday 7 July and the new site will be online by 0900 hrs on Monday 10 July. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause you. Please bear with us during this transition.

I would like to thank **Pete Ward** for his efforts in gathering information from the old site to the new one, particularly in the area of the Members' Resources. I omitted to mention him in the update in the recent edition of *Communicator*.

**Simon Butler FISTC** *(Webmaster)*

### ISTC London Area Group meeting

*Report by **Alan Fisk FISTC***

There was a good turnout for the June meeting, where **Ellis Pratt** of Cherryleaf gave us an instructive and entertaining talk on "How to find a job through networking".

As we have always done, we enjoyed the excellent hospitality of **Stephen Helms** at his house, with food and wine brought from his other life in France. Unfortunately, Stephen will no longer be able to host these meetings. We are, therefore, looking for ideas for other venues as well as ideas for future meetings.

### ISTC history project – information on Horace Hockley

We are keen to find out more about one of the most notable members and chairmen of the ISTC, **Major Horace Hockley**. Despite his contributions to the organisation, there is still a relative shortage of information regarding Major Hockley.

- Do you know anyone who is in any way related to Major Hockley or his wife, **Mrs Audrey Hockley**?
- Do you have any photographs of Major Hockley or Mrs Hockley?

It would be ideal if we were able to extend our knowledge of Major Hockley, as well as his wife, both of whom devoted much of their time to the ISTC.

Please send any information to:

- E-mail: emma.bayne@comhem.se
- Tel: +46 (0)8 553 85459 or +46 (0)73 7584949

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# Codifying responsibilities

*By **Marian Newell FISTC***

## Responsibilities to whom?

Tasked with reviewing and revising the ISTC's existing Code of Conduct, available at www.istc.org.uk/pages/codecoitoc.php, I am considering an approach that expresses members' duties to the Institute, employers or clients, colleagues, and readers or users.

This idea comes from my reading of research into professional ethics by the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN). An interesting aspect of PARN's findings is that many codes of conduct do not specify the beneficiaries of their clauses, although it is possible to organise a code in a way that makes this clear by listing duties to specific parties. Such an approach seems sensible for the ISTC, where members have duties to several parties rather than an overriding duty to a client or patient as may be the case in some traditional professions.

I'd be interested to know if this is how you as members see your responsibilities. If so, it would be helpful to hear what you feel belongs in each category. We need to cover some wider aspects of good business conduct, in both employer–employee and client–provider relationships, but also to codify specifics of how we practise our key skill of professional communication.

## Professionalism or market forces?

According to PARN, there is a growing belief in government that market forces are a better safeguard of professional practice than traditional associations and standards. The opposing view is that the ability to compare rates and change providers is not adequate protection for parties seeking specialised services that they may not have the expertise to assess. As technical communicators, we already operate in a free market, and that seems unlikely to change, but it need not stop us trying to raise standards in our business.

**Andy Friedman**, Director of PARN, writes in an article on ethical competence:

*Four elements are instilled as part of professional training and membership of a professional community of practice:*

*1. Knowledge*

*2. Capacity to apply specific knowledge elements in practice circumstances*

*3. Competence: The ability to know when and how to draw on parts of one's knowledge repertoire and when to forbear from application technically (what will 'work' and what will not 'work')*

*4. Ethical Competence: The ability to apply knowledge in an ethical manner as defined by codes of conduct promulgated through professional associations.*

The first three of these seem beyond dispute but the last implies a degree of maturity and selflessness that is not always evident. It is the stage at which we refuse a piece of work because, for example, circumstances prevent us from achieving an acceptable standard or we have moral concerns about the product.

A contractor recently told me in another context that one of the characteristics of professionalism is that the service provider educates clients, rather than taking their requests at face value, because they often don't know what they need.

If we regard our business as one of the new professions, or even as a highly skilled trade, what do we see as its key characteristics? It is these that we should build into our code.

## Conduct or practice?

I noted in my last article that the names of codes vary. I've read about various concerns with specifying conduct, particularly when the phrase "at any time" is used. For example, if members are required to do nothing at any time that might bring the Institute into disrepute, that can be interpreted very widely. Some members may extend it to include other members' personal lives, perhaps applying personal judgements to activities that are legal and not work-related.

I wonder if a Code of Practice may be more appropriate. I believe it is more realistic and enforceable to confine ourselves to members' professional activities, perhaps with specific extensions to cover points like the declaration of criminal offences. But what do you think the ISTC should and shouldn't mandate?

To have your opinions on any aspect of the code taken into account, contact me at journal.editor@istc.org.uk.

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# Affiliate news

## IBM Systems Journal takes in-depth look at XML

The latest issue of the *IBM Systems Journal* (available online) is dedicated to celebrating the 10th birthday of Extensible Markup Language ( XML), which is arguably the *lingua franca* of the internet.

The journal's keynote paper, "Technical context and cultural consequences of XML", traces the evolution of XML and puts the XML phenomenon in its technical context. The authors posit that the development of XML, which they refer to as a "code of integration", is a significant milestone in computer science that will have substantial economic, political, and cultural impact.

Noting that XML "gained notoriety in the heyday of the 'dot-com' frenzy", the authors say the language "continues because it worked and created vast new opportunities. It enabled information reuse by integrating text and data

from different sources and by searching and linking across these sources, thereby breaking down traditional silos, which were barriers to information sharing. The Web became a vortex for this confluence of forces and allowed people to get a glimpse of the tremendous potential of universal access to information".

Twelve other papers in the issue examine issues in core XML technologies, connecting to business data, connecting data to applications, mapping technologies, and connecting business to business with web services.

To read the latest issue of the *IBM Systems Journal* go to www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj45-2.html.

## Lionbridge sponsors university localisation programme

Provider of globalisation and testing services Lionbridge Technologies is sponsoring the new Localization Certification Program from California State University (CSU), Chico, in the US. The Localization Certification Program began in April and culminates with a three-day Summer Workshop in June. Participants in the programme will receive a "triple" certification from CSU, Chico, the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA), and The Localization Institute.

Lionbridge is working closely with CSU Chico to provide education and training in advanced localisation and international ebusiness to help students and businesses compete in the new global networked economy.

"As companies rapidly expand their global operations and the notion of a multi-national organisation is radically transformed, businesses require professionals well versed in global operating strategies. As the largest localisation services provider, Lionbridge brings tremendous global expertise to our curriculum and we welcome its support and collaboration," commented **Nitish Singh**, CSU, Chico associate professor, director of the College of Business Localization Program, and author of *The Culturally Customized Web Site*.

To learn more about the Localization Program at CSU Chico, visit www.csuchico.edu/localize.

## Cherryleaf reports surge in vacancies

Cherryleaf reports having recently seen a big increase in the number of vacancies for technical communicators on its books. There's still a strong demand for authors in Cambridgeshire, particularly those with specialist industry knowledge. Cherryleaf has also seen vacancies for home-based authors by clients based in the Netherlands. Cherryleaf has 19 vacancies on its books at the moment.

Cherryleaf's vacancies can be seen at www.cherryleaf.com/recruitment_services.htm.

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# Industry news

## Revision to a major BSI IT equipment safety standard

The standard, BS EN 60950-1:2006 *Requirements for ensuring safety of IT equipment*, applies to mains-powered or battery-powered IT equipment, including electrical business equipment and associated equipment, with a rated voltage not exceeding 600 V.

It applies to IT equipment:

- designed for use as telecommunication terminal equipment and telecommunication network infrastructure equipment, regardless of the source of power
- designed and intended to be connected directly to, or used as infrastructure equipment in, a cable distribution system, regardless of the source of power
- designed to use the AC mains supply as a communication transmission medium

It also applies to components and subassemblies incorporated in IT equipment.

BS EN 60950-1:2006 specifies requirements intended to reduce risks of fire, electric shock or injury for operators, service people, and laymen who may come into contact with the equipment.

The changes made in this revision include:

- Requirements added for audio amplifiers
- Requirements for batteries enhanced
- Voltage texts for cable distribution systems clarified
- Alternative procedure for motor test added
- Starting pulses added to requirements for insulation
- Tests clarified for limited power sources
- Tests clarified for mechanical strength
- Rules clarified for single-pole isolators

ISTC members can buy the standard with a 25% discount off BSI's full public rates (non-members receive a 15% discount) by contacting journal.editor@istc.org.uk. To find out more about BSI, visit www.bsi-global.com.

## B2B sites have relatively low usability

Recent user testing by internet usability guru **Jakob Nielsen** shows that business-to-business (B2B) websites have substantially lower usability than mainstream consumer sites. Nielsen user testing reports that B2B sites only achieved a 58% success rate (the percentage of

time users accomplished a task on a site), which is low compared with the success rate of 66% on mainstream websites.

The problem with most B2B sites, according to Nielsen, is that they "emphasise internally focused design, fail to answer customers' main questions or concerns, and block prospects' paths as they search for companies to place on their shortlists".

Nielsen says, "If they want to convert more prospects into leads, B2B sites should follow more guidelines and make it easier for prospects to research their offerings".

To read more about Nielsen's research or to sign up for his newsletter, visit www.useit.com/alertbox/b2b.html.

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# Are indexes for Ebooks dead? No!

*By **Richard Raper**, Managing Director Indexing Specialists*

It can be argued that the index at the back of an Ebook is no longer necessary, as many Ebooks contain a "list of contents" that are frequently renamed "Index". While this is a popular approach that departs from current traditional paper book publishing, it is a misleading form of logic. A good index is a great selling point for an Ebook and some Ebooks do carry a real index, especially for supporting details of software. There are some general criticisms of Ebooks, but there are also solutions.

## General observations on Ebook indexes

- **Producing an index in a similar format to that for published paper books has the benefit of familiarity**. Just because it is an Ebook, there is every reason to match the index to text books. This is what users can understand and actually use. The internet is so very sophisticated now that there is no longer any need to supply a rough and ready index that has a clumsy appearance and is not accurate. If voice is used as an aid to the text, that is fine, yet inclusion of text detail in the index makes the information easily available for reference when or if the book is printed.

- **Many Ebook indexes tend to be simplistic and avoid the facility for ease of use offered by professional indexes**. Some Ebooks tend to limit the index by presenting little more than the list of contents in alphabetical order. This line of approach is better than nothing, yet the terms used do not necessarily supply full access to the text in a useable form.

- **Indexes supply information in such a way that access to the text is a reasonable match to several topics indicated by each concept and principle**. A concept can be interpreted by two or more alternative keywords. Consequently, the index should contain relevant keywords – not necessarily listed in a "help" list. The practice of supplying one index entry for each concept is unsatisfactory, because searchers might not think of the same exact word stored. Incidentally, this is the main reason why search engines are difficult to use.

- **Omission of cross-references can be a fault**. Cross-references serve as a link to unravel often confusing terminology provided by authors, especially from different centres of learning. Cross-references avoid confusion and help users find what they are looking for quickly and with little effort. Different terms or keywords, such as "hardware", "PC", "laptops", "mainframes", "desktops" and "a network", may be used for the same item or variations of it, such as "computer". If accessibility is required, cross-references are necessary to clarify the meaning.

- **The way in which the index is presented can make it difficult to read**. A common fault is inconsistent entries or locators. By consistency, I mean mixed capital and lower case first letters to headings; or occasional lower-case first letters except acronyms and proper names; use or not of a comma before the first page number, and so on.

- **Pagination is not always consistent**. Full pagination and abbreviated pagination are two ways to present page numbers. Full pagination includes every number, for example, 12–15, 25–28, and 125–126. The most frequently used abbreviated version is 12-5, 25-8, 125-6 etc. Common practice for books is to use an en dash instead of a hyphen to indicate page ranges.

- **Automatic indexing does not always produce a good index**. This is appealing to some compilers as it can be generated in only a few minutes. In practice, automatic indexes only work well for simple lists of items or names where detail is not required. On the whole, they are flawed for indexing subjects, because language is not consistent enough in meaning for automatic subject capture. Large-scale collection of documents is another form of automatic indexing, applied for libraries and huge collections of documents with complex search instruments and not available for detailed indexing of smaller Ebooks.

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## Solutions

A computer–human interface is a good solution. Although preparation of an index might take longer than automatic indexes, the product is more effective as an information resource.

If the Ebook is going to be supplied with page numbers, then an effective index can be prepared using traditional methods with software such as Cindex, Macrex and Skye, or for occasional use, a word processor such as Microsoft Word.

Production of an Ebook without page numbers is quite common. In this situation, index tags can be inserted in the text so that the index entries are hyperlinked to the text. This is not so simple if the text is converted into PDF format. Producing an Ebook in a word processor, such as Microsoft Word, is limited because of the security risk of copyright.
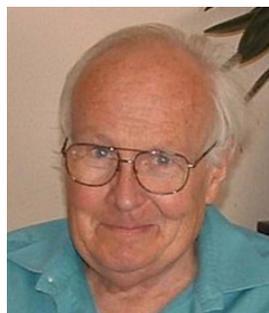
Wherever authors are located in the world, you can find professional indexers through various Indexing Societies, from the UK, Canada, USA, to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and China.

It may take a week to prepare an index for a book of about 200 pages. If speed is important, it may be completed in two or three days. With a team of several indexers, my company has produced an index in 24 hours or less at a higher cost.

## The cost of a professional index

This varies according to the country and level of skill required. A cheap index is all very well, but you must then ask how well the index works? A good professional product may cost more and it pays to have an effective index as a good reference source. Moreover, compared to the revenue gained through sales of an Ebook, the cost of a good index is very small.

The national indexing societies in the UK and elsewhere offer guidelines on fees.

## Indexing Specialists (UK)

**Richard Raper** is the Managing Director of Indexing Specialists (UK) Ltd.

For more information visit www.indexing.co.uk or e-mail Richard at richardr@indexing.co.uk.

Indexing Specialists (UK) uses advanced methods of indexing and prepares its products at top level to international standards such as ISO 999 or, if for the US, a recognised standard of good practice. Indexing Specialists is also certified with ISO 9001, the international standard for quality.

Richard's own Ebook – scheduled to be launched soon – is complete with a list of contents and a one-page index.

## Tools

### Technical writers' website

**Lyndsey Amott**'s website www.docsymmetry.com is a useful site for technical writers. In particular, Amott's article, "Are you making these writing mistakes?", details a multitude of common errors and provides tips on how to avoid them.

You can read the article at www.docsymmetry.com/mistakes-technical-writers-make.html.

## Software news

### SDL Knowledge-based Translation System receives recognition

Provider of global information management (GIM), SDL International, reports that a host of new customers are using its patented SDL Knowledge-based Translation System (SDL KbT System) to produce and maintain large volumes of multi-lingual content. CA, HP, Microsoft and RS Components have all recently selected SDL KbT System.

Global organisations have mounting volumes of content which must be provided in the local languages of their customers, coupled with a rising frequency of website updates and product launches. To remain competitive, organisations must look at innovative ways of

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shortening the time and cost of providing high-quality multi-lingual content. SDL KbT System, part of SDL's GIM solution portfolio, brings together the power of automated translation with the skills of human translators, shortening the time to create global content by over 40% and reducing costs by 30% or more. This allows customers to enter global markets faster and more efficiently than has previously been possible.

You can see the full press release at http://tinyurl.co.uk/2r2x.

## Inmedius launches new application

Provider of technical documentation production software, Inmedius, has launched its newest application, Advisor. The easy-to-use program automates Quality Assurance, ensuring that SGML and XML data content conforms to business rules and standards, so that publication authors no longer have to manually check each and every document.

"Advisor goes beyond the simple, structural validation that a Document Type Definition (DTD) or Schema parser does, delivering the SGML and XML content clients want and expect," explained Inmedius president and CEO **Gary Schaffer**. "Completely configurable to your Quality Assurance rules, Advisor features a broad library of validation templates that will guarantee authored SGML and XML content has the data your business needs defined. Advisor allows non-technical users to create business rules, enabling rapid validation of documents to an organisation's standards.

From simple to complex rule checking, with Advisor you can implement a Quality Assurance standard without any coding, yet allow yourself the security that SGML and XML documents maintain and pass the quality standard you want enforced."

Advisor is available in both desktop and server versions. The desktop version can integrate with Arbortext Editor, Adobe FrameMaker, Altova XMLSpy and other SGML and XML editors. The server version is an enterprise-wide solution that fully integrates the Quality Assurance cycle into existing production processes and workflows.

You can validate up to 50 documents free, with the Inmedius Advisor Demo. The CD contains a fully functional desktop version of the software and a training demonstration.

For more information, visit www.inmedius.com/advisor.

## TCToolbox Workgroup Edition available

With TCToolbox Workgroup Edition, Berlin-based Ovidius offers an XML Technical Publication Content Management System especially designed for small and medium-sized documentation departments with up to five members of staff. The Workgroup Edition runs on the Microsoft SQL and MSDE database servers and comes with a powerful preconfigured Document Type Definition (DTD).

The starter package with TCToolbox server and one TCToolbox client licence is available for €9,900. Each additional client licence can be purchased for €3,000. With TCToolbox Workgroup Edition, Ovidius targets companies working in the field of mechanical engineering, tool building and software development.
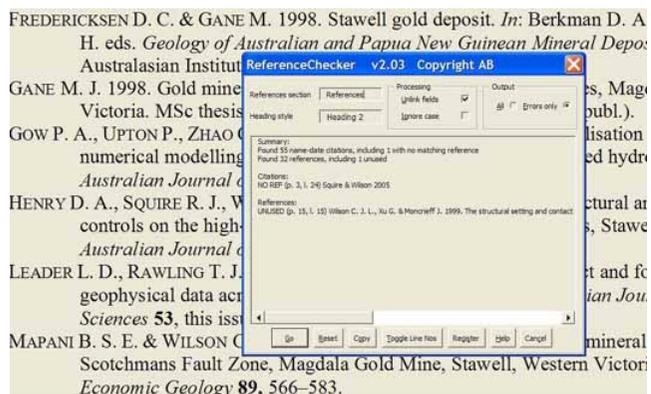
TCToolbox Workgroup Edition was especially designed to enhance the efficiency of publishing processes in small and medium-sized documentation departments. Completely based upon XML, documents are fragmented into smaller information modules, which can be processed and managed separately and are reused in different publications. This enables technical writers, graphic designers and translators to work simultaneously on complex technical documentation. Using a native data format instead of proprietary formats such as Word or FrameMaker also improves the life span of the valuable information and guarantees long-term document security. In addition, TCToolbox Workgroup Edition offers a plug-in integration with XMetaL, which is the preferred editor for creating and modifying information modules.

The system is delivered with a preconfigured DTD developed by XML experts at Ovidius. It was designed specifically for technical documentation but can also be customised according to customer-specific requirements.

For more information consult www.ovidius.com.

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# New version of ReferenceChecker released

The new version of ReferenceChecker v. 2.05, a macro that checks if references in a Word document are cited correctly, was released in June. The software now checks both name-date (Harvard and APA) and numerical (Vancouver) references in a document and checks them against the references. It then displays a list of matches and mismatches, saving you valuable working time in checking references.



*ReferenceChecker screenshot
(source: the creators of ReferenceChecker)*

You can download a free, fully functional trial version of ReferenceChecker from www.goodcitations.com. After the trial period, you may purchase a single-user licence for unlocked, unlimited use and free updates for life. All customers receive 12 months support with the licence. A 20% discount is also offered on five or more licences bought at the same time.

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# Training news

## ESTON Training's courses co-ordinator retires

**Peter Perkin**, who has been associated with ESTON Training since the company was formed in 1982, has decided to hang up his pen and retire. Peter has provided tutorial support to a multitude of ESTON's students over the years, and **Stan McKerron** from ESTON says, "I am sure that his current and former students will want to join us in wishing Peter, and his wife Kathleen, a long and happy retirement".

ESTON's new contact details can be viewed at www.estontrg.com/contactus.php.



## New Master's course in user support

The University of Twente in The Netherlands is offering a Distance Master Course on User Support. Providing an overview of recent and influential theories behind instructions, manuals, help desks and user groups, the course aims to help you understand how users make sense of instructions and to help you design and test more effective and efficient user support.

Members of INTECOM organisations, which includes ISTC members, will receive a 30% discount on the course.

For more details about the course, see http://cs.graduate.utwente.nl/cs/flyerv3.pdf.

## 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).

### July

5   *Introduction to proofreading*. London. Society for Editors and Proofreaders. www.sfep.org.uk/

7   *Process of indexing*. Suitable for those considering a career in indexing and those in the early stages of the training course, this workshop provides an overview of the process of indexing from receiving proofs to submitting the completed index. Durham. The Society of Indexers. www.indexers.org.uk/trquals/workshop.htm

17   *Acrobat basics*. This six-hour course teaches the skills necessary to create and maintain PDF files created with Adobe Acrobat. It also aims to teach the features of Adobe Acrobat that are most commonly used in business. Online. PUBSNET. www.pubsnet.com/courses/acrobat_basics.htm

18   *Acrobat intermediate*. This six-hour course teaches you how to create basic forms and links, use security settings, scan and use optical character recognition (OCR) to convert paper copies to PDF. Online. PUBSNET. www.pubsnet.com/courses/acrobat_intermediate.htm

18   *Going freelance and staying there*. London. Society for Editors and Proofreaders. www.sfep.org.uk/pages/current_schedule.asp

19   *Brush up your grammar*. London. Society for Editors and Proofreaders. www.sfep.org.uk/

20   *Efficient copy-editing*. London. Society for Editors and Proofreaders. www.sfep.org.uk/

# Events

This page introduces new listings and includes reminders of the most relevant events in the next two months. ISTC events are listed in bold.

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.

## July

**3, 6, 12**    *BeCreative*. A three-city tour for three creative sectors; design/print, photography and video. The day has presentations on design and print (9am – 12pm), photo (1pm – 4pm) and video (5pm – 8pm). Attendance is free so register now as places will be limited. Bournemouth (3rd), Leeds (6th) and London (12th). www.becreative.tv/

**5–7**    *IV06 – 10th International Conference Information Visualisation*. Conference organized by GraphicsLink and the British HCI Group. London. www.graphicslink.co.uk/IV06/

**6–8**    *ICICTE 2006*. ICICTE 2006 will seek to address the many challenges and new directions presented by technological innovations in educational settings. Thematic streams will include alternative processes, procedures, techniques and tools for creating learning environments appropriate for the twenty-first century. Rhodes, Greece. www.icicte.com/isite/general/about.asp

**7–9**    *Society of Indexers Annual Conference. Aidan, Bede, Cuthbert: the ABC of indexing*. The conference will focus on the users of indexes and how we can effectively provide for their needs, and on the problems indexers come up against whether technical or business related. St Aidan's College, University of Durham. www.indexers.org.uk/conferences/conf2006.htm

**11**    *FrameMaker and DITA*. Part of the Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 live eSeminar Series. In this eSeminar, you will learn the pros and cons of adopting DITA as an end-to-end solution for authoring, producing and delivering technical information at a topic level. You will also learn about the misconceptions of DITA, how to plan the move to DITA, and how Adobe Systems is using DITA internally. Online. http://tinyurl.co.uk/g4y5

**13**    *Business process management: ownership and documentation*. The workshop will cover business process documentation standards, storage and tools. Organised by the corporate IT forum (tif). Maidenhead, UK. www.tif.co.uk/

**23–28**    *XML Summer School: From theory to application – using XML to provide real business benefits*. This event is relevant for everyone involved in using, designing or implementing XML-based and related technology solutions. Wadham College, University of Oxford, UK. www.xmlsummerschool.com/

**15–19**    *Euroscience Open Forum 2006*. Highlighting new research, new technology, new thinking! ESOF brings together all groups involved in the scientific endeavour. This includes researchers from different disciplines, policy-makers, representatives of industrial R&D, science journalists and the general public. Munich. www.esof2006.org/

**26–28**    *Open Publish 2006*. Open Publish 2006 has evolved to become the leading conference for practitioners in the fields of content management and electronic publishing. Avillion Hotel, Sydney, Australia. www.openpublish.com.au/index.html

**27–30**    *Tri-XML 2006 Conference and Expo*. Annual gathering of individuals from around the globe interested in using the Extensible Markup Language (XML) to solve complex publishing challenges. Three days of presentations, workshops, tutorials and a vendor exhibition round off the popular event held at McKimmon Center, North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC. www.trixml.org/confindex.shtml

## Advance notice: September

**7–8**    *Online Help Conference – Europe 2006*. The user assistance community is undergoing a period of rapid and significant change – so this year's European Help Conference has a special focus on user assistance tools and technologies for the future. Manchester, UK. www.uaconference.eu/index.html

## Advance notice: October

**3–5**    **ISTC Conference 2006 – There is a better way.** For the first time, Conference will be held during the week rather than over a weekend. The Europa Gatwick hotel, West Sussex, UK. http://istc.org.uk/pages/conference2006.php

## STOP PRESS

INTECOM has postponed the Forum 2007 conference that was to have been held in Amsterdam in June 2007. The next Forum conference has been moved to 2008. Planning is under way, and the dates and the venue will be announced early in 2007. http://tinyurl.com/hxgnp

# The back page

## Even translation companies make mistakes

CBC News reports that the City of Ottawa in Canada is frantically trying to correct thousands of badly translated posters. The posters, which warn people in five languages not to drive after smoking marijuana, were translated by a "professional" translation company.

The text in English, French, Somali and Chinese was correct, but the Arabic version was incomprehensible to native speakers. After some embarrassment, the city corrected the translation on its website and has been trying to replace the incorrectly translated posters.

To read the full CBC News article, visit www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2006/05/30/arabic-poster.html.

## Learning a language can be fun(ny)

*ISTC members share the amusing errors they have made when learning a foreign language.*

**Catherine Sharp** says, "I studied Italian at university, amongst other things, and vividly remember our class translating the following (with no previous knowledge of what the words might mean): 'valige pesanti' as 'peasant villages' – the correct translation is 'heavy suitcases' – and 'bugie' as 'budgies' instead of 'lies'. Imagine the strange combinations: 'Please take my peasant villages up to my hotel room' or 'Why are you telling budgies?'"

Catherine adds that a Danish friend of hers in Italy also announced one day that he was going to cook himself instead of saying he'd be the cook.

**Kathryn Valdal Fourie** says that using the wrong word for wall-to-wall carpets got her both wall-to-wall carpets and new rugs in France. "I ordered new wall-to-wall carpets and the company took the measurements but didn't come to install them. I called to complain, but instead of using the word 'moquette' for wall-to-wall carpet, I used 'tapis', which means rug/mat. After my complaint, the company thought they must have made a terrible mistake and delivered me two new rugs (tapis) for my lounge and dining room and then a week later installed the wall-to-wall carpets (moquette) in the rest of the apartment. I felt very silly but was pleased with my new purchases."

Kathryn also tells us, "One day at the fresh food market, I meant to ask for some carrots, potatoes and herbs, but instead said, 'Please may I have some carrots, potatoes and marijuana?' Instead of using 'des herbes' meaning some herbs, I mixed up the article and asked for 'les herbs', which translated into some grass. The vegetable seller was quite amused…"

Finally, a friend of Kathryn's committed a *faux pas* in a French class for beginners. His teacher, who was quite a tyrant, was trying to teach him the verbs "to be" (être) and "to have" (avoir). He tried to impress the teacher by making some conversation and asking her if she had a dog, but unfortunately he mixed up the verb "to be" and "to have" and actually asked her if she was a dog. The teacher was not amused.

## Veles Phantom Voters

Former ISTC president **Anke Harris** in Macedonia encountered the following piece reported on 18 May in the print media:

"The Veles committee of VMRO-DPMNE announced yesterday that they found 2,000 phantom voters on the Veles election list in this municipality and warned about possible election abuse.

"'We stated that names of people who have passed away and of others who do not exist are put on the election lists, whereas other persons who have reached adultery are not on the lists at all. This creates a ground for election irregularities,' Goran Petrov, president of the Veles committee of VMRO-DPMNE stated.

"The Justice Ministry Spokesperson Ubavka Matevska said that the aim of the public access of the election list which started on May 5th and will end on May 19th is to check whether there are any mistakes on the lists in order to correct them."

*Sources: Dnevnik; Vreme*

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