



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

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This monthly Newsletter is emailed to about 1500 people. As well as ISTC news, *InfoPlus⁺* aims to cover anything of interest to the profession. To subscribe, contact the office.

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ISTC news

TCUK10

We are proud to celebrate the success of Technical Communication UK 2010. Our annual conference delivered more than 30 sessions over three days, with presentations, workshops, case studies, and hands-on product demonstrations from experts in their field.

There'll be more news about the conference in future editions of *InfoPlus⁺* and don't forget to keep an eye on www.technicalcommunicationuk.com for news of TCUK11 dates. There'll also be links to speaker content and photos from the event.

Out thanks go to all the delegates, speakers, sponsors and hotel staff who supported the event and well done to the TCUK10 team who helped create such a well-received event in the first place.

UK Technical Communication Award winners

By Galyna Key

The ISTC has announced the UK Technical Communication Award winners at its annual TCUK10 Conference. The overall winner was John Dingli from Sage, collecting awards in two classes for *Sage Bookkeeping Stage 1 e-Learning (Descriptive Class)* and *Sage Bookkeeping Stage 2 e-Learning (Instructional Class)*.

John Chisholm from Publications 2000 won the merit award for *Vortex Pro Oil Boiler Installation, Servicing, and User Instructions (Instructional Class)*, and Sandra Priestley from Camera dynamics Ltd took the merit award for *OConnor Follow Focus User Guide (Instructional Class)*.

The UK Technical Communication Awards were sponsored by Triview, with the presentation taking place at the Gala Dinner on 22 of September 2010.

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Horace Hockley award winner

Ian Kemble of Portsmouth University won the Horace Hockley award this year. We'll have more on this in the next edition of *InfoPlus⁺*.

Technical Communication UK 2010 – a huge success

By Paul Ballard MISTC,
Technical Communication UK 10 Team Leader

There is a moment, during any event you have planned, when the paranoia subsides and you realise it's all going to be OK. With TCUK this year, that moment for me was early on. The Tuesday workshops had been

well-attended, Galyna Key had taught me and about 20 others how to salsa, and David Black of Nokia had just raised the stakes for us all with a gripping and Darwinian tale of the changing nature of technical communication. As I left the packed room, I bumped into Edward King near the conference reception desk. Edward had taken on the task of recruiting delegates to volunteer as facilitators. He had the look of a man on a mission.

Last year, I had tried to co-ordinate the facilitators myself and had spent the entire 3 days scurrying around with a list of sessions, trying to remember who I'd already asked. I then lost the list for the entire Thursday and spent the day convinced I'd missed someone – which I had.

Edward showed me his huge printed spreadsheet – he had a volunteer facilitator already allocated for virtually every presentation. He was determined to get those last slots filled. "Not bad" I thought. "It's only Wednesday morning". I could begin to relax: TCUK10 was going to be OK.

'You have 3 minutes...Go!' The first ever TCUK soapbox session

By Rachel Potts, MISTC

This year at TCUK we introduced a new, highly experimental session – 'Questions and rants'. The format was as follows:

- Each speaker had the floor to themselves for 3 minutes.
- They could speak, ask questions, show us something ... whatever they wanted to do, as long as it had something to do with technical communication.
- I ran the session and timed each slot, and was very prepared to be strict about finishing sessions when the 3 minutes was up. As it turned out, very few used more than a couple of minutes...

So, just what did 11 people want to rant about? Here's a brief summary...

Colum McAndrew – bad manuals

Colum told us about the instructions for his new flat-pack greenhouse: how he gave up on counting out the 150 parts before he started waded through pages of close-print instructions, and found amusement in a carefully-place warning not be under the influence when undertaking assembly

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(sounds like he might have needed a stiff drink by that point). The most important part of the guide, he pointed out, was the 'contact us' number!

Westrow Cooper – recruitment consultants

Westrow asked the audience what type of person was most likely not to get back to you when they say they will. Recruitment consultants! He pointed out that they rarely focus on the core business of technical communications – communicating with an organisation – instead they just want to talk about tools and software. Then again, he did acknowledge that a recruitment consultant had found him in his current job – and surmised: 'A recruitment consultant got me into this, it'll be up to me to get me out of it!'

Chris Atherton – correlations



Prompted in part by conversations in the workshop about using web analytics, Chris took us on a brief tour of an aspect of statistics – correlations. She provided a timely reminder that a

correlation is a relationship between two data points; not just when the two numbers go up at the same time, though one number increasing while another decreases can also be a correlation. She continued to highlight the need for technical communicators to call on scientists or other number wranglers to help make sense of numerical data such as web analytics.

Mike Unwalla – controlled language

Mike set out to do a survey on controlled language.

Question one 'who uses a controlled language?' got one 'yes' response; Question two 'who wants to use a controlled language?' got zero 'yes' responses.

Mike acknowledged that he'd got an answer to his survey – if not the one he wanted – and gracefully stepped down 'Well, that kind of stops it, doesn't it!'



Tom Holliday – spend time planning for e-learning

Tom quoted Abraham Lincoln 'If I had eight hours to cut down a tree, I would spend six hours sharpening my axe', but added 'personally, would use my Black & Decker chainsaw instead.' He suggested that for rapid e-learning the key was to put most effort into planning rather than focusing mainly on delivery.

Brian Harris – User experience specialists are great

TCUK opened with David Black of Nokia telling us that improved user interfaces meant that technical authors will become extinct unless they become more technical. Brian countered this by pointing out that good interfaces don't write themselves. UIs also have words on them, which is not a bad thing for technical authors to get involved in.



Developers aren't always good at working on UIs, so get user experience specialists involved. And then work with them.

Graham Wignall – commoncraft videos

Marketing departments assume that everyone knows everything about the business... but Graham disagreed. He came across commoncraft.com – 3.5 minute hand-drawn, stop-frame animation videos that explain something complex, and had a go himself. He told us to watch some of these videos, and then next time we need to write user documentation try to write a 3.5 minute script for it first. If we can't do

that, the documentation isn't going to work!
'The benefit I got out of doing that exercise? Clarity of thinking!'

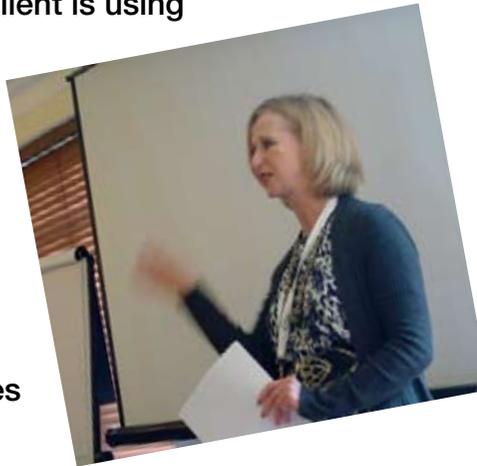


John Kearney – a marketing department determined not to listen

John told us about trying to work with marketing on a selecting an enterprise content management tool. Marketing are in denial about that being what they need – they're threatened by the word 'enterprise' (they think it means it will be out of their control). They wouldn't get involved with scoring responses to an RFP (which clearly identified the fact that they needed this type of tool). John's experience is that they're determined to find ways of not listening, to the point of obstructing his ability to make progress...

Amanda Caley – e-learning is great!

Amanda was planning a rant about e-learning, but instead decided to rave. Her current client is using e-learning that has changed her mind about the medium. What's so good about it? It takes learning styles



into account and gives people options about how they learn. She drew on a TCUK talk earlier in the day to explain: 'The reasons that e-learning is great are the 3Ss from Ellis Pratt: Storytelling! Simulation! Scenarios! In particular, Storytelling! Brilliant!'

Peter Li – how can PTC (one of our exhibitors) improve their profile?

Peter ranted that PTC own a very well known tool in technical communication – ArborText – but no-one knows they do. He asked what he could do to draw attention to this. Suggestions were: Better information on the exhibition stand and write-up or present a case study. An audience member pointed out that this has to be done well on the stand or information material 'If I can't tell what you make in 20 seconds, I don't care anymore!'



Galyna Key – what do you think about users writing the help

Galyna gave us a not-so-hypothetical (I suspect) situation to comment on: 'Imagine one day you wake up and go to work and your manager says that it would be better if your users write the help. What do you think?' Responses were varied – some didn't want to yield control of their documentation to someone else or were concerned about propagation or cross-infection of users' misunderstandings about usage; some suggested interviewing users as a better way of getting user input; others liked the idea of becoming content curators...



And finally... a rant from the audience!

Our ranters were so efficient with their time that we had extra time to spare at the end of the session. One audience member, Zoe Rose, used this for a brief rant of her own: why do the learning management systems used to deliver e-learning still rely on proprietary, restricted environments (they deliver help in small windows, via software that has to be specially installed). She asked how long it would be before e-learning moved on from this format.

How did it go?

Finally, I asked the audience how they thought the session had gone: should we run it again? The answer was a resounding 'Yes!'... so I think we'll be seeing it on the programme for Technical Communication UK 2011.

Thanks to Alice Jane Emmanuel for taking the notes that I used to put this review together.

Technical Communication UK 2010 – a different perspective

By Kai Weber

A complex world urges its technical communicators to diversify and collaborate. This emerged as a common theme in several presentations at the TCUK10 conference near Oxford between September 21 and 23.

About 180 technical communicators, mainly from the UK, but also from the US, Denmark and Germany, gathered for two days of presentations and an extra day of half-day pre-conference workshops. The ISTC's programming favored case studies and practical, applicable topics, so the presentations were engaging and often led to lively, constructive discussions.

Two topics resonated with many participants: E-learning was the focus of a dedicated stream of presentations which covered strategies, case studies and tools. And several presentations touched on emerging content strategies which offer both challenges and opportunities.

Less formal highlights included a late-evening salsa lesson and a too-early morning run. Special mention for coolest ad-hoc idea goes to the spontaneously scheduled 'raves & rants' session just before the closing keynote.

Affiliate news

Local students gain experience with global translation company

Lloyd International Translations (LIT) has this summer hosted its largest ever student work placement scheme at its headquarters. The scheme offers talented local language students an opportunity to gain commercial experience to help with their language studies.



The technical translation company, which has so far translated over 28 million words this year, is keen to give local talented students the opportunity to work for a global company.

Natasha Exton from Cheshire is one of four students to have been offered a place on the scheme. She has just completed her first year at Sheffield University and is studying for a BA (Hons) in Modern Languages. Natasha has just completed her placement, having spent 6 weeks working at LIT. Natasha said: 'It's been a great experience working at LIT. I've had the chance to experience every department within the company and gain important commercial skills. It is very difficult in the current climate to find a student work placement. LIT has treated me as an inclusive member of the team, enabling me to make the most of my time here. The experience has definitely broadened my horizons and opened up possibilities for me.'

About Lloyd International Translations (LIT)

Lloyd International Translations (LIT) helps companies to achieve global success by providing first-class translation and localisation services.

This includes translating all types of technical materials requiring a high degree of specialist knowledge, ranging from manuals, training courses, software applications and websites, to commercial catalogues, brochures and journals where marketing interpretation is essential.

Founded in 1989 and headquartered in Tarporley, Cheshire, LIT's translation expertise spans an extensive portfolio of projects, languages, technology and media across major vertical markets, including automation, automotive, electronics, electrical and mechanical engineering, financial services, healthcare and life sciences, information technology, process manufacturing and telecommunications.

LIT uses an extensive and proven network of highly experienced mother-tongue technical translators, all with vast knowledge of their industry and an appreciation of the cultural conventions and linguistic trends of the target country, audience and market.

Great emphasis is placed by LIT's team on the value of terminology management and the application of the latest language technology tools to streamline translation workflows, drive translation costs down and keep quality and consistency up.

LIT focuses on achieving levels of excellence in process management, resource management and performance tracking through the use of the latest linguistic tools and technology. Furthermore, LIT is ISO 9001:2008 certified and has been registered to ISO 9001 since 2001.

For more information contact: louise.law@lloyd.co.uk.

Tel: +44(0)1829 730050 or visit: www.lloyd.co.uk.

Newly-appointed Operations Director, Liz Athey said: 'It's tough out there for all students entering the job market and having commercial experience puts you ahead of the competition. There are a lot of really talented and enthusiastic young people right on our doorstep here in West Cheshire and we're pleased to give their careers a kick-start. LIT is growing fast and we really appreciate the valuable contribution our placement students make to our business.'

High Fliers Research published The UK Graduates Careers Survey 2010 this May and some of the results were featured by BBC News and The Times. The study surveyed over 16,000 final year students and found that nearly half of graduates polled viewed their career prospects as very limited. For more information visit www.highfliers.co.uk.

Adamson House officially opened by Sir Alex Ferguson and Harold Riley

Morson are celebrating again as their new office building, Adamson House, was officially opened by Sir Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United Manager and Salford Artist, Harold Riley.

Over 200 Morson clients, Staff and Dignitaries attended the event in the building on Centenary Way, which has panoramic views of Eccles, Manchester and Trafford Park.

All guests attending received special gifts included a signed and numbered Harold Riley print and a laser engraved glass block to commemorate the day.

Morson acquired the site from Peel Holdings and the building is named after Daniel Adamson, the founder of the Manchester Ship Canal. The main contractor on the project was Pochin with the project architects, AFL.



Adamson House Opening

Sir Alex Ferguson said: 'One thing that has impressed me with Morson is that they take on apprentices, especially in engineering, it's such an important aspect of modern Britain. This move today could just be the start. Morson has that energy, it really does. You never know where you could go from here.'

Chief Executive Ged Mason said: 'The event was a fantastic success and was organised superbly by Aztec Events and Morson staff. Thanks also must go to Sir Alex and Harold for giving up their valuable time to open our magnificent building.'

My father founded the business in Eccles, Salford in 1969 and I am proud that we are still in Salford. We are proud to be the eighth biggest recruitment company in the UK employing over 500 people and engaging over 10,000 contractors worldwide. We are fast approaching £500m turnover for 2011 and I believe we have a really bright future ahead.'

For more information, visit: www.morson-projects.co.uk.

Industry news

21 top tips to make the most of your project manager or managing editor

The Society for Editors and Proofreaders presents a new set of tips, this time from the perspective of a project manager or managing editor. You can see them at: www.sfep.org.uk/pub/faqs/toptips/21tipsmanagers.asp.

The tips detail the most important things that, from the manager's point of view, are required to produce the best publication possible, and give an insight into what a manager appreciates, expects and desires. They are aimed to help anyone brought into an editorial project for a specific task to work better with their team manager.

The new set makes a matching pair of tips for all editorial professionals. Visit Top tips for every editorial professional at: www.sfep.org.uk/pub/faqs/toptips/toptips_default.asp. Choose the set that's most appropriate to your role. Or read both to get a better understanding of everyone's roles in editorial projects and how best they can work together.

SDL release Trisoft 2011

SDL has announced the release of SDL Trisoft™ 2011 for DITA, the XML standard for technical writing. The adoption of SDL Trisoft by large global companies has accelerated significantly this past year, as more companies recognise the business benefits of DITA adoption and seek a solution with advanced capabilities to address their needs.

SDL Trisoft is able to manage large volumes and variations of DITA topics that comprise a company's technical product information set. The new release of SDL Trisoft offers support for the important new DITA 1.2 standard, currently in beta release, and on track for release by the OASIS technical committee in 2010.

'This is one of the most significant releases of SDL Trisoft in the lifetime of the product,' said Frank Closset, CTO of SDL's Structured Content Technologies division. 'Through a combination of agile development and feedback from our customer community, we identified key new capabilities in the Component Content Management system that enable more efficient reuse

and development of content, and that lay the groundwork for interactive dynamic publishing.'

'We are long-time users of SDL Trisoft,' said Catherine Lyman, Director, Information Engineering, NetApp. 'The upcoming

SDL Trisoft release (2011) includes many enhancements and capabilities that will allow our writing community to work more efficiently and therefore have more time to focus on our user requirements.'

With DITA 1.2 support, SDL Trisoft can now be used

out-of-the-box with the DITA Learning and Training specialisation, the new task model and the machine-industry specialisation. Users can also take advantage of new ways of managing content variations and achieving reuse with DITA 1.2's new capabilities of 'keyref', 'conkeyref', 'conref push' and 'conref ranges'.

SDL Trisoft Web client has an entirely new look and feel, making writers' online experience more enjoyable and efficient. Authors will also benefit from a new search architecture that gives them the ability to



search for information faster and with more granular precision. The new search includes the ability to search and find content inside XML elements and attributes, variables and conditions and to identify precisely the context in which content resides.

Enhanced capabilities included in the SDL Trisoft Publication Manager are designed to save lead authors' time developing content and releasing product publications. These include the ability to:

- save a new version of an open publication
- check in or out from the Browse Repository dialog
- find most recently used items
- save output formats in the next version of a publication
- see an InContext Preview of Content
- add additional fields to the Baseline tab
- autocomplete items that are added when building a publication.

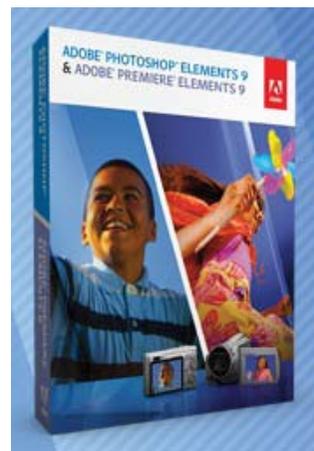
For more information about SDL Trisoft 2011, visit the product section of the website at: www.sdl.com/en/xml/products/sdl-trisoft-dita.

Adobe unveils Photoshop Elements 9 and Adobe Premiere Elements 9 Bundle for Windows and Mac

Adobe Systems Incorporated announced Adobe® Photoshop® Elements 9 and Adobe Premiere® Elements 9 for Windows® and Mac, the newest release of the number-one selling consumer photo- and video- editing software.

Available as standalone products or as a single retail package, the Photoshop Elements 9 and Adobe Premiere Elements 9 bundle offers the most complete photo and video editing solution delivering two powerful yet easy-to-use products at a very compelling price point. This release also brings Premiere Elements to the Mac platform for the first time.

'For the first time, both Windows and Mac users can do more with their photos and



video with Photoshop Elements 9 and Premiere Elements 9 bundle – a unified solution for all photo and video needs,' said Kevin Connor, vice president of product management for Digital Imaging, Adobe. 'With industry-leading products like Photoshop and Premiere Pro in the family, Photoshop Elements and Premiere Elements are uniquely positioned to leverage the technology the pros use. Our goal is to deliver our customers intelligent and accessible features that do all the heavy lifting, empowering them to easily share high-impact memories with friends and family.'

The advertisement for Ovidius software features a green background with a blue and white geometric pattern of interconnected lines and spheres on the right side. The text on the left side reads: 'Ovidius – Systematic Success' in a white box, followed by 'TCToolbox – The trusted solution for technical content management' in white text. At the bottom, the website 'www.ovidius.com' is listed. The Ovidius logo, which includes the word 'OVIDIUS' and a blue arrow icon, is in the top right corner.

Create Compelling Photos and Videos with Groundbreaking Features

Photoshop Elements 9 and Premiere Elements 9 feature all the tools users need to make the most of their photos and videos. Adapted from Photoshop CS5's celebrated Content Aware Fill feature, the content intelligence in the Spot Healing Brush analyses what's in the image and quickly de-clutters or repairs photos (like removing tourists from a crowded scene) with a swipe of a brush, magically filling in the background. Several new Guided Edit options walk users step-by-step through the process of achieving cool editing effects such as Out of Bounds, making an element of a photo appear to leap off the page in 3D, creating pop art masterpieces, or retouching made easy via the perfect portraits feature.

With Premiere Elements 9, users can create movies in just minutes with the help of intelligent tools that automatically fix audio problems, trim away bad footage, stabilise shaky shots and correct bad colour and lighting problems. Any video can simply be turned into an animated film with Cartoon Effects, and optimised performance makes editing and viewing smooth, even in HD.

Improved Organisation and Sharing

With Premiere Elements, it is easier than ever to upload and import from popular Flip Video camcorders and DSLR cameras. The Organiser allows users to tag and view photos and videos in one central place. The Auto-Analyser helps users tag the best photos and videos and also identifies specific faces in photos. Users can quickly post photos and videos directly to Facebook, combine media together into dynamic interactive Online Albums, and create an online DVD-like viewing experience to share with friends and family.



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Users can customise flexible scrapbook and photo book layout designs, with drag-and-drop simplicity, for automatic placement of photos within a template or easy access to any Photoshop Elements editing feature from directly within the software. Creations can then be printed at home or through an online print service provider.

Pricing and Availability

Adobe Photoshop Elements 9 and Adobe Premiere Elements 9 software for Windows and Mac is available now at www.adobe.com/uk. The bundle is available for a suggested retail price of £117. Photoshop Elements 9 and Premiere Elements 9 software for Windows and Mac are available as stand-alone products for a suggested retail price of £77.

Information about other language versions, as well as pricing, upgrade and support policies for other countries is available at www.adobe.com/go/psepre_bundle.

For free training videos on Photoshop Elements and Premiere Elements, visit Adobe TV at <http://tv.adobe.com>.

MindTouch announces availability of Technical Communications Suite



MindTouch has announced the availability of the MindTouch Technical Communications Suite – a toolset of easy to deploy, easy to use, and highly engaging tools for successfully launching a turnkey documentation community in minutes.

The MindTouch Technical Communications Suite (TCS) is an integrated authoring, publishing and community engagement environment, which includes a highly specialised set of technologies such as the MindTouch Intelligent Documentation Framework, Curation Analytics, Adaptive Search and Community Content Moderation.

MindTouch TCS has already been remarkably successful for MindTouch customers, including CompleteGuides.net, ExactTarget, RightScale, and Intuit.

The recently launched Complete Android Guide (eBook, iPad app, and community)

was an instant success that was authored, published, and launched entirely with the MindTouch Technical Communication Suite. Success metrics included:

- Over 800 copies of the eBook and iPad app sold, growing to over twice this number in the first week alone.
- Supported over 20,000 unique daily visitors to the MindTouch powered site.
- Received and managed hundreds of post launch community contributions, to be used in future versions of the CompleteGuide for Android.
- An impressive wave of social mentions: Over 500 Twitter mentions, 70 blog posts.

MindTouch TCS is an effective community engagement platform that creates social documentation communities with intuitive editing and publishing. It's scalable to millions of visitors, and encourages community contributions with varying layers of moderation or workflow.

'We're excited to continue building upon our earlier breakthroughs in the technical communications space,' said Aaron Fulkerson, CEO and co-founder of MindTouch. 'The documentation market

has been starved for innovation for over a decade, forced to choose from pre-internet desktop tools which provide little or no online presence. MindTouch is making this market relevant again, providing a toolset for the modern technical communicator that layers community and social features atop collaborative authoring, which can also be used alongside traditional desktop authoring products.'

The majority of businesses are increasingly relying on the Web as their primary sales channel. Online documentation has proven to be an effective way to increase new customer acquisition, shorten sales cycles and even lower support costs. Technical documentation has become a strategic tool for marketing teams, community managers, user assistance teams, and product evangelists. MindTouch TCS is an elegant toolset for these users. It is the foundation with which MindTouch launches turnkey solutions that can include branding, forums, question and answer, blogging, social profiles and badges.

Availability

The MindTouch Technical Communications Suite is available today. It is sold on a per author basis and is priced aggressively in comparison to existing desktop tools. The purchase price also includes unlimited community commenting. To purchase your license for the MindTouch Technical Communication Suite today please contact MindTouch. For more information about MindTouch, visit: www.mindtouch.com.

Hyperlinks disclaimer

The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the ISTC of the linked websites, or the information, products or services contained on those sites. All external hyperlinks were accurate and working at the time of writing. However, the ISTC does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations, so the ISTC cannot be responsible for changes to content found at these locations or any material on those sites that may be inaccurate, misleading or offensive to you. All links are provided with the intent of meeting the mission of the ISTC and its Newsletter, and the ISTC disclaims any responsibility for the accuracy, completeness and availability of any linked site. Please let us know about existing external links which you believe are inappropriate or inaccurate and about specific additional external links which you believe ought to be included.

Blog news

Conference buzz

By Gordon McLean, MISTC

I'm not long back from the Technical Communications UK conference and, as ever, my head is a-buzz with ideas, plans, and aspirations. In my time in the industry I've attended a few different conferences focussed around technical communications and for the breadth of topics, number of interesting, engaging, intelligent and friendly people, I'll stand by my claim that 'Technical Communication UK is the best professional conference I have ever attended.'

If you didn't make it along, never fear. A few of the speakers have shared their own slides, and their thoughts on other presentations. Ellis Pratt comments on the opening keynote presentation in his post [Why Nokia's David Black is probably wrong about the manual-less cellphone](#) and the closing keynote [What every business can learn from a Haynes manual](#), Kai Weber has shared his presentation slides from his session titled [Getting ahead as a lone author](#), as has David Farbey from his session [Content Strategy for Everyone](#), Roger Hart has shared his [Spork/Platypus average](#) slides (on Content Strategy) as well, and

Chris Atherton shared her fascinating presentation titled [Everything you always wanted to know about psychology and technical communication ... but were afraid to ask](#).

Colum McAndrew has written up his thoughts from each day of the conference, well worth a read, starting with his thoughts on day 1 of the conference (the other two days are linked from that blog post), [TCUK Day 1: Celebrities, Adobe Captivate but no baked beans!](#) Many people were on Twitter throughout the conference, posting their thoughts and you can [view the full timeline on the Twitter website](#). Be warned, it includes some spectacularly awful puns.

Elsewhere, Tom Johnson has been publishing a series of collaborative posts the most poignant of which, in the current day

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Quick links to the bloggers and their blogs

Ellis Pratt:

www.cherryleaf.com/blog/2010/09/why-nokias-david-black-is-probably-wrong-about-the-manual-less-cellphone.

www.cherryleaf.com/blog/2010/09/what-every-business-can-learn-from-a-haynes-manual.

Kai Weber:

<http://kaiweber.wordpress.com/2010/09/24/getting-ahead-as-a-lone-author-my-tcuk-presentation>.

David Farbey:

www.farbey.co.uk/index.php/2010/09/content-strategy-for-everyone.

Roger Hart:

www.slideshare.net/RogerHart/the-spork-platypus-average-content-strategy-at-red-gate-software.

Chris Atherton:

www.slideshare.net/CJAtherton/tcuk10-annotated-forSlideshare.

Colum McAndrew:

<http://notcolin.wordpress.com/2010/09/21/tcuk-day-1-celebrities-adobe-captivate-but-no-baked-beans>.

Twitter #TCUK10:

<http://twitter.com/#%21/search/TCUK10>.

Tom Johnson:

<http://idratherbewriting.com/2010/09/17/why-no-one-will-hire-you-40-professionals-give-advice-on-improving-a-technical-writers-resume-collaborative-post>.

Craig Haiss:

www.helpscribe.com/2010/09/which-kind-of-technical-writer-are-you.html.

Seth Godin:

http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2010/09/questions-or-answers.html.

Andrew Hinton:

www.inkblurt.com/2010/09/09/a-few-thoughts-on-the-ia-institute.

Mary Connor:

www.cleverhamster.com/clever-hamster/2010/09/documentation-as-a-sales-tool.html.

Carl Pyrdum:

<http://gotmedieval.blogspot.com/2010/08/why-are-books-so-big-google-penance.html>.

and age, is titled [Why No One Will Hire You: 40 Professionals Give Advice on Improving a Technical Writer's Resume](#). Whether you are looking for work or not, it's always good to make sure you have a top notch C.V. and there is some excellent advice on offer.

For those of you who work in a team of technical writers, Craig Haiss has taken a shot at profiling the types of people you may work with. Does his post [Which kind of technical writer are you?](#) ring any bells? I think I'm a mixture of Socialite and Techie, what about you?

A few quick links to finish off. Seth Godin's post [Questions or Answers](#) will take seconds to read, but hours to contemplate. Andrew Hinton offers [A few thoughts on the IA Institute](#) (Information Architects). Mary Connor discusses [Documentation as a Sales Tool](#). And Carl Pyrdum informs us [Why books are so big](#), a fascinating look at the history of the printed word.

Contact Gordon at: blogs@istc.org.uk.

A technical writer for almost 16 years, Gordon has been blogging for almost 10 of those. He monitors a large breadth of blogs covering most aspects of technical communications. You can download the full list of RSS feeds from his blog at www.onemanwrites.co.uk.

Tips for Technical Communicators

Documentation budget contingencies

By Andrew Marlow, FISTC

This new section for *InfoPlus+* offers tips and practical advice to technical communicators. Do you have some advice you want to share? If so, please send your contributions to newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk. Entries should be approximately 300-500 words. Make sure you are sending your own material (no breaches of copyright please!).

Budgeting is an important part of documentation project management. Accurate estimating and reliable budget control both depend on a foundation of accurate costing, but apart from the tangible costs involved relating to resources, there are some cost areas that are difficult to forecast.

Most projects have uncertainties. These are variables that cannot be determined

accurately in advance, such as changes in requirements, schedules and resource availability during the project's life cycle.

Estimating is a process of approximating values, so there has to be a margin of error and a contingency for deviation from the plan. This is particularly important for independent documentation suppliers who charge for their services.

The process of evaluating the workload can be difficult, because there is always potential for variance. This is especially so when technical documentation is designed to accompany a new product; the development of which can be unpredictable. Software projects are notoriously vague in concept. Rapid application development projects involve numerous iterations and prototypes and technical authors and illustrators are sometimes let struggling to keep up.

A contingency allowance is clearly important and the more innovative or unusual the project, the greater the contingency required.

If you introduce new and untried documentation standards, procedures or technologies, the level of uncertainty is increased.

Experience plays a major role in determining an appropriate allowance. You can express contingency as a percentage of all or part of the project costs. Typical benchmarks for contingency start at 10% of the estimated costs of the project.

Long-term projects are likely to need greater contingency allowances. Inflation can increase baseline costs over time and some contractors have escalation clauses in their contracts to protect them in such instances.

Suppliers may be reluctant to show contingencies in their estimates in case they are perceived by the client as an attempt to inflate the profit margins. Trust is a key element here, but any reasonable client should expect to accommodate contingency costs whenever their project requirements are loosely defined.

Using metrics from previous documentation projects will provide a useful guideline to determine future contingency costs. Actual costs mapped against budgets or estimates will help identify the potential margins for error. However, it is important to know why variances occur in a given project before assuming they represent a viable level of contingency in the next one.

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 *InfoPlus+* readers, please contact the Newsletter copyeditor at newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

If you would like to promote your course or event to ISTC members, why not consider giving ISTC members a discount for courses and events listed in our newsletter. For more information, please email istc@istc.org.uk.

October

4 Introduction to technical authoring

Short course for new technical authors and people in other roles who need to carry out technical authoring work. Covers audience analysis, structuring and designing documents, writing in plain English, punctuation and grammar, designing an effective layout, reviewing and proofreading.

10% discount for ISTC members.

Armada, Bromsgrove, Midlands.

www.armadaonline.co.uk/techauthortraining.

5-6 Intermediate technical authoring
Building on basic course, teaching key issues that define high quality technical authoring. Learn to use a detailed end-to-end writing process to design, draft, and improve technical documents, developing critical skills, create more effective technical documents, and present a consistent and homogenous document set to the users.

10% discount for ISTC members.

Armada, Bromsgrove, Midlands.

www.armadaonline.co.uk/techauthortraining.

7-8 Advanced technical authoring
Intensive course for career technical authors who want to improve their skill set and the quality and effectiveness of the documentation they produce.

10% discount for ISTC members.

Armada, Bromsgrove, Midlands.

www.armadaonline.co.uk/techauthortraining.

Event news

What does that sign say?

A talk by Roger Whitton

You are trying to get to somewhere and can't find the sign that displays a road name. Imagine then, you have an impairment and cannot get any road name information at all. How would you know where you are and where you are going? Fortunately, new wayfinding technologies can be incorporated into existing and new signs.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology allows information to be delivered to a user in a variety of formats. The two components of an RFID system are the 'Tag' and the 'Interrogator'. A Tag transmits a signal and when an Interrogator encounters this signal the Tag is identified and unique information is delivered to the user. They can also be linked into personal electronic devices such as PDA's and mobile phones. It would be possible to 'flood' an entire environment at a very modest cost.

Roger Whitton is a Senior Assistive Technology Consultant. Joining Guide Dogs twelve years ago he has specialised in Accessibility and Assistive technology for the last ten years. The current focus of his

work is in the development of Wayfinding systems primarily for the blind and partially sighted but these systems will also be beneficial to other assistive technology users.

Where?

The Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London EC1M 6EL.

When?

Thursday 7 October 2010 at 6:30pm.

For more information, visit: www.signdesignsociety.co.uk or www.guidedogs.org.uk.

Events listings

October

6-8

Localization World Seattle

The international conference for global business know-how. Full conference programmes available online.

Bell Harbor Conference Center, Seattle, Washington, USA.

www.localizationworld.com.

7

Sign Design Society: What does a sign say?

A talk by Roger Whitton about Radio Frequency Identification (RFID). See information opposite.

London, UK 6.30pm

www.signdesignsociety.co.uk.

14

Journalism in a Social Media World

A dedicated social media conference for the UK journalist community. The day will address the opportunities and challenges presented by this powerful new medium. The programme is packed with the latest gamechanging thinking, up-to-the-minute case studies. Attendance on the day costs £395.

BSG House London, UK.

www.thesocialmediaacademy.co.uk/product/journalism-in-a-social-media-world/193.

This section introduces new events and reminders of the most relevant events in the coming months. ISTC events are highlighted. You can view previous events listings on the ISTC website's Newsletter archive at <http://istc.org.uk/Publications & Downloads/Newsletter/About the Newsletter.html>. To include an event in the listings, please email events@istc.org.uk

Back page

Caption competition

Thanks to Bob Hewitt for sending in this picture – it was snapped by a friend while cruising up the river. All you have to do is come up with a witty caption. The editor will choose a favourite for publication in next month's *InfoPlus+*, so please get your entries in by 20 October 2010. The editor will provide the winner with the prize of a 4Gb USB Flash Drive (not forgetting the kudos of having your winning caption in *InfoPlus+*!



Please send your captions to newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk. We'd also like your submissions for photos that can be used for the caption competition too. Please ensure that any images you send in for publication will not infringe any copyrights.



Almonds in an almond cake? Whatever next!

This contribution from William Waddilove suggests that perhaps there is a target audience out there who need the obvious to be spelled out. Apparently, an almond slice contained almonds as well as cherries and it was pleasing to know that there were chocolate chips in the chocolate chip cake!

If you have any material suitable for the back page, please submit it to: newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.