Education in Technical Communication – A Cause for Concern!

The ISTC has a formal interest in the education and training of its members. Our Memorandum of Association spells out two key responsibilities. The first is to lay down standards of education, training, knowledge, and experience appropriate for membership. The second is to promote, establish, and assist in the provision of those education and training programmes considered essential if 'students' are to attain the standards laid down. In addition the ISTC's support for those members embarking on continual-professional-development programmes can only be sustained by a flourishing education resource.

A recent study has shown that the range and number of courses currently available to obtain qualifications in technical communication have declined over the last ten years. Even worse, some of the courses now available are under threat of closure.

It is felt that without strenuous efforts by the ISTC and its members to improve matters, we could be left without any formal technical communication qualification courses below postgraduate level within two years. Consequently, your council is embarking on an emergency programme to revitalise the provision of education in the field of technical communication (which includes information design and technical illustration/graphics).

Don Hinson has been co-opted onto the council to head a small team with two objectives. The first is to support, promote and sustain current technical communication courses, and the second is to initiate and assist in the establishment of new education programmes appropriate to our membership standards.

If you have ideas, skills or experiences that can help with these tasks then email Don at DONCOMMS@aol.com

ISTC Council
- Departures and New Members

Alan Fisk, John Crossley and Paul Bakker have elected to take a break from their very onerous Council activities. All have worked tirelessly for the ISTC, and their efforts are very much appreciated by their fellow Council Members.

Professor Don Hinson (see main article) is one of three new members of the ISTC Council, where he is joined by John Nicholson and Eddie Harrod. John is the Customer Information Manager at Rolls Royce Naval Marine, and will be lending his support to Membership issues. Eddie is a divisional Technical Publications Manager at Marconi, and he will be joining the Education and International Steering Groups.

More ISTC Representation
- A View from the Regions?

Notwithstanding the admirable work undertaken by some members through the Regional groups, it has been suggested at various times that the ISTC would or should welcome more input from our members residing outside the "home counties". Perhaps you have a view on this subject, or would wish to see greater regional representation. The ISTC Council is always open to suggestions from our members, and would appreciate your feedback on this (or any other) subject. If you feel particularly strongly, we could always open a discussion forum through the Newsletter – *why not take the time to express your views on the issues that affect or interest you?*

Content Management
- Strategies for Single Sourcing Conference

How do you deal with:

*   an increased workload with fewer resources

*   an increasing number of deliverables: paper, Web, online help, and other media

*   a need for personalization

*   an increased need for localisation in more languages

*   a shorter and shorter time to market

Attend the conference to learn how industry experts and practitioners have dealt with and solved these problems.

Speakers and presentations you can attend at the one-day conference include:

Dr. JoAnn Hackos, President of Comtech Services and author of the book Content Management for Dynamic Web Delivery, will present the talk "Information Architecture: Maximising the Return on your Content-Management Investment"
and will discuss examples and case studies from her twenty years of experience in this industry.

Lars Johnsen, University of Southern Denmark, will define rhetorical mark-up in text-theoretical terms and exemplify how rhetorical structures may be modelled and represented in XML using different information models (for instance XHTML, DocBook, Information Mapping, DITA and Topic Maps).

Peter Wilms van Kersbergen and **Greg Johnson**, Medtronic will present a case study explaining how Medtronic implemented an SGML-based authoring and translation solution to answer quality, cycle-time and cost issues in Medtronic's specific technical documentation cycle.

The conference is Presented by the Centre for Information-Development Management, and will take place October 14 and 15 in Brussels. For further information, visit www.cm-strategies.com.

JoAnn Hackos invites European colleagues and counterparts to join your peers at this key industry event. If you're trying to manage corporate data, reuse your content, and deliver information through many media, you don't want to miss this!

Law for the Professional Technical Communicator
- part of the ISTC PDP

Readers will be aware that in the Feb 2002 Newsletter, we introduced the ISTC Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) and listed the courses available. We would like to remind readers that the Law for the Professional Technical Communicator seminar is to be run on 19 September 2002, and that places are still available. The seminar will be presented by Paul Bakker BA MBA MCIM, and will in particular address practical rules for communicators preparing instructions where there may be liability for injury, damage, pollution or financial loss.

All proceeds from these excellent courses go directly towards supporting the ISTC PDP program, and therefore ultimately benefit all members. For further information contact Carol Hewitt at the ISTC office.

Authors wanted at CKL Technical Services

We are a Technical Publications Company and have been in business 21 years. We are currently looking for freelance authors as we have a number of jobs coming in the near future. We currently produce our work on paper as well as HTML files for web sites. The authors we require need knowledge of automobiles, aircraft systems, comms systems.

Please send CVs by email to ckltech@globalnet.co.uk

Technical author vacancies

Technical authors are required by vehicle manufacturers in the Midlands. These are contract positions, initially for 6 months but will probably be ongoing. Automotive background and FrameMaker+SGML are an advantage, author experience is essential. Salary negotiable and is competitive for the Midlands.
Contact
brian@highaward.fsnet.co.uk
or
Highaward Limited
149 Albany Road
Coventry
CV5 6ND
Tel: 024 7667 0899

Lifecycle Management Support and Collaboration 2002
- Conference and Exhibition

Perhaps primarily of interest to our members working within larger organisations, the Lifecycle MSC 2002 Conference and Exhibition is the largest event in Europe on product lifecycle management and through lifecycle support. It is the latest event in the e-business for Industry series that began in the UK 10 years ago as APLS (Advanced Procurement and Logistics Systems). Since its merger in 1999 with CALS Europe it extended its focus to cover the complete product lifecycle including development and its scope beyond the initial Aerospace and Defence sectors.

The event is aimed at senior managers, project leaders and executives in charge of planning, evaluating, acquiring, deploying, operating and supporting products, equipment and systems throughout their lifecycles. It is of particular of interest to those in the Aerospace, Defence, Automotive, Oil and Gas, Process Plant, Electronics, Telecomms, Rail, Marine Engineering, Utilities and similar industries. The Conference is combined with an exhibition which is open to all interested visitors as well as delegates. Entry to the exhibition is free to those who pre-register. Further details at www.datamation.co.uk/lifecycle/index.htm.

This year's conference, **Tools of the Trade**, will take place on the weekend of 20, 21 & 22 September at Bosworth Hall Hotel (situated mid-way between Leicester and Coventry).

This really is a conference not to be missed. Numbers will be limited and places are going fast, so contact Ann Little (on little-ann@talk21.com or +44 (0)20 8422 4689) to book your place now. Amongst other speakers, will be:

Dave Griffiths (Kudos) - History of technical communication tools.

Alan Fisk – AuthorIT (the presentation will be from a user's point of view, so that both the attractions and the irritations of AuthorIT will be displayed).

Steve Cartmell - Single Source Publishing with Doc-To-Help 6.0 (this presentation will look at some of the features in Doc-To-Help 6.0 that make it an ideal single source authoring tool).

Rick Webster - A Migration Marathon (with the aim of starting off a discussion rather than being a straight talk)

Ron Blicq - Writing proposals (the emphasis will be on writing short and medium-length proposals, rather than comprehensive proposals)

Florence Dujardin - Research as tool of the trade (identifying useful sources, highlight benefits, and giving pointers on how to approach research in technical communication).

Carol Johnston: Digitext Paper 1 - Designing and writing for the screen (this session explores paper-based and online documentation, their relative strengths and weaknesses and their impact on both the reader and the technical author).

Carol Johnston: Digitext Paper 2 - Single Sourcing: An Introduction (this session provides an introduction to the benefits of single sourcing and the obstacles to successfully completing a single source project).

Jill Fifoot - Creating documents with translation in mind (this paper briefly reviews the impact of documentation format on the effectiveness of such tools as translation memory, and hence on the savings which can be made with such tools).

Michelle Medhat - Online training (this presentation will introduce a unique portfolio of 3 integrated Products - LearnTrack, ViewletBuilder and iCreate - that come together to provide any-sized organisation with a rapid, affordable solution to simply create and deliver on line training).

Nathan Birtle - Arbortext (using XML to get the most from your content of this session will also learn how an XML-based system provides a robust, modular, reusable and easily maintainable information collection that can expand current publishing processes and provide new opportunities such as personalised publishing and just-in-time integration of business data).

Ian Boulton - Bowne (Global Solutions) - Total Product Support, the Value Chain concept (many organisations are reaping the benefits from adopting structured documentation, single source publishing or translation memory, but what happens if we place all of these concepts and more under the same umbrella?)

Rik Page (Mekon) - Mekon have been pioneering Single Source Publishing Solutions for many years and will give a product independent guide to the benefits and pitfalls based on real experience.

The conference will end after lunch on the Sunday, and this will just give you time to visit "The Battlefield Line" - one of the countries famous preserved railways where they are having a 'Diesel Special' Weekend.

Salary and Benefits Survey 2002
Coming soon

The ISTC 2002 Salary and Benefits Survey will be commencing next month, when questionnaires will be sent out to all members. This survey provides the only authoritative guide by which we as technical communicators can judge our own relative remuneration and benefits packages – thought by many to be an invaluable guide to those wishing to maintain, and perhaps improve, conditions within the marketplace.

The Salary and Benefits Survey is headed up by Peter Fountain FISTC, LCGI and is just one of the tasks by which the ISTC Council attempts to communicate useful information back to our members – but remember that this survey can only be as good as the information supplied by you. The 2000 Salary and Benefits Survey was returned by 19.4% of the addressed membership, and it is vital that we improve upon this figure. *So please, take the time to complete and return the questionnaire!*

Forum 2003 – The 7th International Conference for Technical Communicators (Submission of Papers)

Did you hesitate to send in a proposal to present at Forum 2003, and now find you missed the deadline? Not necessarily so!   A number of very strong set of proposals have been received, but there is room for a few more. Here's what you can do:

1. Send a short e-mail (to forum@rgilearning.com) to indicate that you plan to send in a proposal. Then very briefly describe your topic (there is a particular requirement for proposals for Idea Market presentations.)

2. Access the INTECOM web site (www.intecom.org) and click on "Forum 2003 Call for Presenters". Copy the proposal application form on pages 6 and 7. When you have filled it in, send it to forum@rgilearning.com.

Forum 2003

Is sponsored by the member societies of

INTECOM

If your proposal is received after 20th August--- but by 30 September---and it is accepted for the conference, it will be listed in the supplementary program. See you in Milan?

Society of Indexers
"The Process of Indexing"

The Society of Indexers is holding a workshop, "The process of indexing", on Wednesday 11 September 2002 in Ipswich.

This workshop will give beginners a taste of indexing, and is aimed at people who are considering taking up a career in indexing. The cost is £75 for non-members of the society.

Tel: 0114 2813060 for further details, or visit www.indexers.org.uk

Join the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

If this newsletter has appealed to you, then you may like to consider joining **the ISTC**.

Both individual and business affiliate memberships are available.
ISTC is the professional association for technical and scientific communicators in the UK. Benefits include a quarterly journal, monthly newsletter, annual conference and several active member-only discussion lists. Interested? Please call the ISTC office on +44 (0) 1733 390141 or e-mail membership@istc.org.uk
. . . or just sign up for further editions of this e-newsletter.
We'll be happy to keep sending you the free PDF version of our newsletter each month. Please send an e-mail to newsletter@istc.org.uk or sign up on the homepage of our website at
www.istc.org.uk.

ISTC - the natural home for all Technical Communicators

Publications. The ISTC's journal, *Communicator*, is published quarterly and the newsletter is distributed by email to both ISTC members and interested non-members. Newsletters will be available on our web site.

Advertising. Reach a clearly defined target audience of professional technical communicators through *Communicator*.

Call the Office on 01733 390141 for rates, dates and other details.

The Institute of Scientific & Technical Communicators

PO Box 522,
PETERBOROUGH,
PE2 5WX
England

Tel:
+44 (0)1733 390141

Fax:
+44 (0)1733 390126

email
istc@istc.org.uk

Web site:
www.istc.org.uk

the newsletter