

Technical Communication UK 2011

Read about this year's three-day event



Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
Winter 2011

Why internationalisation
is an opportunity

Using FrameMaker for
a complex book

Interacting with
theatre scripts

Creating video for
user assistance





Presidential address

A year of good progress for the ISTC

As a small, members-led, professional institute, there is always the risk of relying too heavily on volunteers and goodwill to get anything done.

This time last year, we made some changes to the way Council was organised and agreed on some clear strategies, objectives, resources and budgets for each team. Many thanks to my fellow Council members, the wider network of member volunteers, and our paid specialists for making so much progress. What follows is my perspective on what we have achieved on our members' behalf in the last year.

Communicator journal

Communicator continues to attract high-quality submissions and the first year of the new editorial and publishing team led by Katherine has settled down well. Advertising revenues have grown well and the pipeline of future contributors looks healthy. We found out at the beginning of July 2011 that *Communicator* had won an APEX Award of Excellence (our second such award in recent years). Current initiatives include widening the *Communicator* subscriber base outside the ISTC membership, and trialling an online delivery option.

Community

This has always been at the heart of what the ISTC is for and about, but has taken on a much more coherent form with some clear goals and

objectives in the last year or so, under Rachel's leadership. Good progress has continued to be made in the last year, particularly with new local area groups setting up, engagement with business affiliates, the ISTC's increasing contribution to online communities, and the reputation of the ISTC's community credentials through the ongoing success of Technical Communication UK.

The ISTC benefits the most when ISTC members themselves get involved and make things happen; so if you are not already, why not do just that. There is so much to gain, both personally and professionally.

In January 2011, the first ISTC survey since 2004 was carried out. This attracted considerable interest and the aim is to conduct regular ISTC surveys in order to monitor skills, experience, remuneration and other important aspects of technical communication. A poll was also conducted in the summer to establish the main challenges facing technical communicators today.

Technical Communication UK conference

This was the third year of the new conference and we attracted a record 200 attendees. The reputation of the event has developed to the extent that we were heavily oversubscribed for speaker proposals and exhibitors with the accommodation sold out more than a month ahead of the event. We have invested in ensuring that the event is professionally run and delivered, and even though it is still by far the best value (and best fun) technical communication conference in the world, we have still managed to make a small profit for the ISTC each year.

Professional development and recognition

The key development this year has been the decision to replace the ISTC's own course with an accreditation scheme that recognises excellent courses for technical communicators provided by specialist organisations. David and Alison now have a scheme ready to be launched, and it will be form a key part of what we hope will become a thriving CPD (continuing professional development) programme from the ISTC.

The new mentoring scheme is now firmly up and running, with over 20 junior members benefitting.

Resources

The documentary 'Appuyez sur le bouton : au pays des modes d'emploi'

was produced and broadcast across France in 2008.

'Push the Button' is an excellent little film: entertaining, informative and telling the story of how our lives have become so dependent on and entwined with the technical instructions that support so much of life's stuff.

The ISTC and the IDA (Information Design Association) shared the sponsorship for creating a version with English subtitles and it is now available for our members and the wider public to rent the DVD through the ISTC office. STOP PRESS: Don't miss the London Premier of 'Push the Button' on 18th January 2012!

In other news...

The marketing capability and output of the ISTC has seen significant improvements in the last year led by Rachel, with a growing team of paid specialists and volunteers:

- Gordon McLean has taken on the new website project and Phase 1 of the live, new site is already a significant improvement.
- A new specialist marketing design and PR company is providing new materials that properly reflect the ISTC's benefits and value.
- A new volunteer member now represents the ISTC on Twitter.
- A dedicated specialist is now liaising with Business Affiliates, encouraging them to get more from their support of the ISTC.
- Several of us on Council have been contributing to the ISTC's growing reputation, including contributing to the *Nature* journal feature about technical communicator careers. **C**



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