



IDeaL: Design for Learning

From the Editor

By Crista Mohammed



Hello, Readers! Super happy to be delivering our Q2 2017 newsletter. As you know, this is post-Summit. As with all successful conferences, attendees leave re-charged and rearing to go. This positive energy radiates in most of what you will read in this issue, as our contributors are eager to share their summit lessons and experiences.

But, before we get there I must share our good news: We are continuing to reap the rewards of our student outreach competition. In this issue, we share two student essays earning the judges' nod.

- **Whitney Lewis**, reading for a Master's in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences, explores the value of rapid prototyping in the instructional design process. Read [Rapid Prototyping](#).
- **Jessica Lynn Campbell, Alex Gurtis** and **Gabriel Latorre** discuss the value that Technical Communicators can bring to Instructional System Design. Read [Technical Communicators' Empowered with the User-centered Approach to ISD](#)
- **Viqui Dill**, in her co-manager's column, reflects on Summit 2017. She records the achievements of the IDL SIG over the past year and, waxing warm and grateful like only Viqui could, she thanks those who volunteer for the SIG. [Read more](#).
- **Marcia Shannon** uses her Secretary's Column to share her Summit 2017 experience. She focusses on how the Summit is helping in her re-visioning of her career. [Read More](#).
- **Jamye Sagan** reviews eight summit sessions for us, touching on sessions ranging from how to complement written work with video to tips for professional success. Presenting cliff notes of topical sessions, Jamye gives us many great take aways: Useful to those who want to recall the session and particularly useful to those who could not be there. [Read more](#).

- **Sylvia Miller** presents a very careful account of a summit session on Responsive Design. Reviewing Dr. Lanier's presentation, entitled "'How to Fix the Credibility Problem When Using Responsive Design'", Sylvia has extracted for us the characteristics of a credible website: Characteristics worth remembering as increasingly more content gets accessed from devices with vastly differing screen sizes. [Read More.](#)

- **Viqui Dill** puts us in touch with what is happening by recounting her experiences at two recent STC events.

She reviews some sessions at the STC Philadelphia Metro Chapter Annual Regional Conference. Clearly, they had a blast while learning and sharing! [Read more.](#)

And, Viqui, shares media from Spectrum 2017, The STC Rochester Chapter's Annual Regional Conference. Want to find out about "Ninja Talks"? [Read More.](#)

Finally, we salute and send out heartiest congratulations to:

- IDL SIG colleagues who now serve on the STC Board. [Read more.](#)
- The Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase. It's their 10th Anniversary. [Read more.](#)

Co-manager's report: Thank You Notes

By Viqui Dill



Hey everybody! We had a great quarter and fantastic Summit 2017. I want to take a minute to say woo hoo and thank you (rhyme intended!).

We climbed the #STC17 Summit!

We attended the STC Summit (<https://summit.stc.org/>) at the National Harbor near Washington, DC. There are lots of great photos online. I shared a few of our highlight moments in a post on our website: "We had a blast at #STC17" <http://www.stcidlsig.org/we-had-a-blast-at-stc17/> . There are hundreds of photos on the STC Office Flickr site https://www.flickr.com/photos/stc_office/ . And, you can read more Summit highlights and reflections in the STC Notebook blog <https://www.stc.org/notebook/> .

At the Summit, we had our annual business meeting. You can download our presentation from our website: <http://www.stcidlsig.org/slides-from-our-stc17-idl-sig-meeting/> .

We earned two awards at the Summit. We received a 2017 Platinum Community Award. Read the official citation on our website <http://www.stcidlsig.org/2017-platinum-community-award/> . We also received a 2017 Pacesetter Community Award for our innovative student article competition. Read the official citation and see a photo of us accepting the award at <http://www.stcidlsig.org/2017-pacesetter-award/> .

Another award to celebrate is the Distinguished SIG Service Award earned by our own Crista Mohammed. Read the official citation and a few glowing words about Crista on our website <http://www.stcidlsig.org/crista-mohammed-receives-stc-distinguished-sig-service-award/> .

Thank You

I want to thank a few special members personally for their continued support and contributions to the SIG. The 2017 awards show just how strong we are and we couldn't have done it without you.

Dear Mellissa Ruryk and Robert Hershenow,

Thank you so much for your leadership in 2015 and 2016. During your time, we earned the Platinum <http://www.stcidlsig.org/2017-platinum-community-award/> and Gold

<http://www.stcidlsig.org/idl-sig-earns-gold-community-award-2015/> SIG awards! You energized and challenged us into becoming the biggest and most active SIG in STC.

Robert, your webinars about audio and PowerPoint are among our most watched and best loved. We look forward to more great sessions from you in the future.

Mellissa, your webinar about Word™ and your hilarious Speak Easy lightning talk were informative and engaging. And we are so happy that you'll be continuing to travel along this road with us as our new treasurer!

You both showed us how it's done and led the SIG to great success.

Dear Jim Bousquet,

Thank you so much for your service as our SIG treasurer. You kept us straight and afloat, and were often the voice of reason in our community decisions. We are so proud of you, as you take up your new role as STC Treasurer <https://www.stc.org/about-stc/board-of-directors/>. Please do stick around to continue to advise and guide us in the coming year.

Dear Maralee Sautter,

Thank you so much for stepping up as our new webmaster. We are so glad you're back on the SIG leadership team. Your combination of technical savvy and institutional knowledge are such a gift to us.

Dear Phil Havlik,

Thank you so much for stepping up as our new content curator. This is a new position for us and one that is very valuable to the Society and to the profession of technical communication. We admire your initiative in joining our group and coming forward to volunteer. We look forward to working together to strengthen the Technical Communication Body of Knowledge <http://www.tcbok.org/> This is a test pilot role and you've got the right stuff!

Dear Sylvia Miller,

Thank you so much for supporting our student outreach program. You helped develop and organize the program, then went way over the top to star in not just one <http://www.stcidlsig.org/october-20-2016-student-outreach-article-competition-qa-sylvia-miller/> but two <http://www.cac-stc.org/helping-students-get-published-november-11-2016/> live Q&A webinars. Way to get the word out to our SIG, to the academic community, and to all of STC!

Dear Crista Mohammed,

Thank you so much for shepherding our newsletter <http://www.stcidlsig.org/newsletter/> for another year. We are proud of the work you've done and delighted that you earned the Distinguished SIG Service Award <http://www.stcidlsig.org/crista-mohammed-receives-stc-distinguished-sig-service-award/> . Having you on the leadership team gives us an international perspective and we appreciate your willingness to put up with the technical challenge of having to speak by text.

Dear Jamye Sagan,

Thank you so much for wearing many hats as you support our SIG. Your continued faithful managing of our social media channels keeps us all connected online by

- Twitter https://twitter.com/STC_IDL_SIG ;
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/STCIDLSIG> , and
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2298157> .

Your demographic and other surveys <http://www.stcidlsig.org/discussion-lists/surveys/> help us stay in touch with the needs of our members. And your webinars <http://www.stcidlsig.org/membership/webinars/free-recordings-of-idl-sig-webinars-for-members/> , virtual open houses, and lightning talks are the bomb.

Dear Sara Buchanan,

Thank you so much for your faithful service as our membership manager. Your superpowers of attention to detail and warm heart for greeting and welcoming new members are such a blessing to our SIG. And thank you for connecting us to the NEO STC chapter and bringing the "Spotlight" series to our newsletter <http://www.stcidlsig.org/member-spotlight-meet-kim-lindsey/> .

Dear Marcia Shannon,

Thank you so much for being our secretary and keeping this crazy group organized. You do so much more than just take our meeting minutes. I really appreciate how you take initiative to document and archive the random comings and goings of our SIG.

Dear Beth Bailey,

Thank you so much for working behind the scenes to keep our discussion lists <http://www.stcidlsig.org/discussion-lists/list-policies-etiquette/> alive. We don't say thank you often enough for managing this valuable service and helping us all to stay connected.

Dear Scott McCoy,

Thank you so much for another year of leading our mentoring program <https://www.stc.org/mentor-board/> . Your support helps us ensure the future of technical communication.

Dear Preeti Mathur,

Thank you so much for championing our training material evaluations program <http://www.stcidlsig.org/news-and-events/training-evaluation/> . We appreciate this free benefit to members and we appreciate you for managing the program.

Dear Summit meeting attendees,

Thank you so much for supporting the SIG by coming to our meeting at the Summit <http://www.stcidlsig.org/we-had-a-blast-at-stc17/> . We were thrilled to see face to face Maralee Sautter, Jessica Surdin, Kelly Schrank, Patty Viajar, Phil Havlik, Chuck Campbell, Mandy Wright, Mary Ollinger, Cindy Pao, Jamye Sagan, Jim Bousquet, Lori Meyer, Marcia Shannon, Melissa Ruryk, Sylvia Miller, and Li-At Rathbun. We look forward to sharing this journey so that we can all grow and support each other in the field of instructional design and learning.

And finally,

Dearest Lori Meyer,

Thank you so much for being our co-manager. I am thrilled to be connected with you and learning from you about nurturing and growing our community. Your strong leadership, patient mentoring, and organization amaze and inspire me. Thank you for taking up the mantle by chairing and running our annual meeting at the Summit <http://www.stcidlsig.org/slides-from-our-stc17-idl-sig-meeting/> so that I could rush off to sound check the Rough Drafts. I look forward to our journey together and to learning from your superpowers for many years to come. Love you!

More great stuff to come

More great stuff is coming up. Stick with us in 2017 as we live out our SIG mission <http://www.stcidlsig.org/about-idl-sig/> .

Summit 2017 Reflections and Review

by Marcia Shannon, Secretary



THE (emphasis intended) event of the year, of course, was the Summit, with the theme *Gain the Edge to Get Results*. Our IDL Sig was well represented by attendees and speakers at a conference packed with education, information, networking, and fun.

I am very glad that I participated in this year's Summit. I am in the process of taking my career in a new direction and this was an opportunity for exposure to a wide and deep pool of technical communication expertise and experience.

I had several goals for my Summit adventure: to put faces to the voices of the people I have met through online SIG meetings, webinars, and online classes; to freshen my perspective on my career in technical communication; to socialize with fellow tech commers; and to learn about techniques, trends, and theories in technical communication.

Did I gain the edge to generate improvements in my career and in my writing? Yes. I was engaged, energized, and found at least one take away idea in each session. I attended the opening and closing talks and ten education sessions. Two of my favorites were *Leveraging Cognitive Science to Improve Structured Authoring*, presented by Rob Hanna and *A Tech Writer, a Map, and an App*, presented by Sarah Maddox.

In *Leveraging...*, Rob described how to increase the effectiveness of documents by structuring them the same way people think and learn. *A Tech Writer...* was something of an adventure: Sarah decided that she wanted to write an app that would display a map of technical communication-related events. She described stepping way out of her writer's comfort zone to learn how to develop the app, how she engaged developers to participate in a group revision of the app, and how we can participate in keeping the app up to date.

Use these links to see and use what Sarah built:

- Web app: <http://sarahmaddox.github.io/techcomm-map/>
- Android app: <https://goo.gl/twfOKO> (This takes you to the Google Play Store; the app is free.)

Another engaging (and interactive) session, *Gamification of Instructional Design* by Phylise Banner, was an introduction to *Learning Battle Cards*, an instructional design technique new to me. I am still chewing on what I learned and am researching for additional information about this topic. I will have more with details about this in the next newsletter.

Did I meet, interact with, and engage with other people, both known and unknown? Yes, I definitely did all of those. There were plenty of opportunities to network or just chat between sessions, at receptions, breakfast, and lunch. I enjoyed conversing with other techn comm professionals because we shared common experiences and language. Learning one-to-one from someone else and sharing my own expertise made every minute interesting. All of my Summit goals were well met.

If you did not attend the Summit, look for regional conferences, online meetings, and webinars where you can dust off your ideas, learning and teaching with other tech commers. Our SIG will keep bringing opportunities to you, so check the web site regularly.

Rapid Prototyping

By: Whitney Lewis



Rapid prototyping is way to save money and time by getting feedback on your design and ideas immediately. Trust me, it's the way to go and by the end of this article, you'll be able to incorporate rapid prototyping into your design process.

Rapid Prototyping and Testing

There are a lot of different ways for testing our instruction. We have one-to-one evaluations; formative evaluation; focus groups; user testing; participatory design; and many more. Including the user is at the heart of these testing strategies, which is no different for rapid prototyping.

Rapid prototyping is testing the design or the instruction as soon as possible at the beginning and then throughout the entire production process. To imagine what this looks like, here is a scenario: I'm creating instruction for a software company. The instruction is on how to use a certain program, so I do some initial steps to get an idea of how this instruction will look. At this point, I could begin rapid prototyping with inexpensive tools like pen and paper. I would sketch out the flow and include as much information as I can, so the interaction is as authentic as possible (for a paper prototype). Now, all I need is to gather 4-5 users from my target population and hold a user test.

This might seem a little weird because we are using paper to test an interaction that may be electronic, but the fantastic thing about rapid prototyping is that it doesn't matter. You will still learn so much from your users before investing a lot of time and money creating the learning product.

At this point, you have gathered some good insights from your first user test with your first paper prototype. Now, you can create an even more informed second prototype. This process can repeat with a version of the final learning product that is bit by bit more completed and effective than the last. Before you know it, you have a final draft and are ready to do a more formal evaluation for a final deliverable.

Challenges

Rapid prototyping is testing with your target population at multiple stages throughout the design process. Because the testing is so frequent, the biggest challenge is finding people in your target population for your tests. Depending on your company and the scope of the project, this can be difficult. Even if the resources or people are not available to test a paper prototype or an initial digital prototype, it can and still should be done with either SMEs, the client (whether internal or external), other instructional designers, or anyone. You will still learn much about your design that can be incorporated into your next prototype.

Benefits

You may have heard the saying, “fail early and fail often”. This seems discouraging, but can be quite liberating when looked at it the right way. So, let’s examine how this aphorism applies to rapid prototyping.

Failing early just means learning that something doesn’t work before a lot of money or time has been invested in it, which is a very good thing. Learning a certain aspect of the instruction won’t work after spending countless hours developing it, can feel like a true failure. But, learning that it won’t work after a low-cost prototype? Well that saves you time, money and effort. The lessons learnt pay rich dividends as they inform the next iteration of the design.

On the flip side, maybe you have an out-of-the-box idea you need to get your manager or client on board with. Testing it early in the process, using low cost materials and without spending a lot of time, could result in finding it is a great way to move forward and now everyone is on board. This is where “fail often” comes into play. Because we are rapidly prototyping without spending a lot of time or money on a prototype, we can try new, creative ideas without the pressure of “I’ve invested so much into this now, it’s got to work!” We can truly participate in the creative process to find ideas that shine.

Overall, rapid prototyping is how we can try out big ideas and, if we are lucky, get the backing for them. Or they can fail: So what? We are still lucky because only a little time and a little money was lost.

How to Start Rapid Prototyping

To start rapid prototyping, you’ll need to know two things: the process and the tools to use.

<i>The Process</i>	<i>Tools</i> <i>(from low cost/little time to higher cost/more time)</i>
1. Select the tool for this iteration	• Paper and pen
2. Build the prototype as authentic as possible	• PowerPoint
3. Test with users	• Wireframing tool (InVision, Axure, Adobe Suite, etc.)
4. Debrief – understand what was learned and what changes should be made	• Tool used for final product
5. Repeat the process	

Videos and Websites on Rapid Prototyping

Here is a list of links to websites and videos with more information on rapid prototyping:

Websites

- “Design Better And Faster With Rapid Prototyping,” Smashing Magazine, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/06/design-better-faster-with-rapid-prototyping/>
- “6 Ways to Save Time in Rapid Prototyping,” InVision, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://blog.invisionapp.com/6-ways-to-save-time-in-rapid-prototyping/>
- “Rapid Prototyping Tools & Best Practices,” Hack Design, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://hackdesign.org/lessons/10>

Videos

- “Design Thinking 2: Rapid Prototypes,” Harrison Metal, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/78645037>
- “Rapid prototyping Google Glass – Tom Chi,” TedEd, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/rapid-prototyping-google-glass-tom-chi>

Whitney Lewis is committed to problem solving through design thinking strategies such as empathy, co-design, diverging on problems, and rapid prototyping. She strives to bring these strategies into her educational and professional work by including her audience every step of the way, to gain valuable insights and by starting with low fidelity products before beginning development. During her time at Intuit, Whitney has learned the importance of these strategies as she connects with her customers, to help improve training. She intends to complete her Master's in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences in May 2018. She aspires to transform online corporate training into seamless and enjoyable experiences.

Technical Communicators' Empowered with the User-centered Approach to ISD

By Jessica Lynn Campbell, Alex Gurtis, Gabriel Latorre



Jessica Campbell



Alex Gurtis



Gabriel Latorre

The evolution of web-based tools, applications, and digital communication today has changed the role of a technical communicator. It is necessary to bring technical communicators into the usability testing process earlier in the design and development of instructional applications. This optimizes both the effectiveness of the product and the end-user experience. Instructional System Design (ISD) is the process of creating instructional aids that help learners gain proficiency in a subject matter. Usability testing for ISD is often done procedurally, which is to say, as a standard practice; however, technical communicators are not effectively used during development. When focusing only on whether software worked rather than if the user experience was optimal, ISD teams miss the mark on the value of usability testing. A product is not successful if the end-user is not able to effectively employ it.

Even today, when developmental teams include a variety of experts and deploy various quality assurance testing, a prevalent problem is the lack of simultaneous discourse production and user testing. Thus, the need for technical communicators to be involved in the process is made evident. Researcher Robert R. Johnson agrees, "Bringing users to the table with writers and developers is necessary if we are to do more than just represent the fictional user in technologies or texts."

With the proliferation of many online instructional technologies, usability testing must play a central role in the design, development, deployment, and discourse of instructional systems. According to scholar Elizabeth Fanning, the understanding of students' computer-based education, "may evolve into a more personalized, expressive dynamic." Technical communicators are at the forefront of integrating user testing into the design and developmental process, which affords ongoing feedback on the functions and features desired by the audience. When a technical communicator brings user testing into this process, both the user and the design and developmental process benefit from the enhanced knowledge of end-product use and context.

Technical communicators' user-centered approach to instructional system design and development is critical to the success and usability of both the end-product or application and the corresponding technical communications. The user-centered approach to ISD guarantees the purpose of instructional systems will be achieved, as developers are able to make incremental changes to the system that are informed by

the results of simultaneous user testing. Dianne Cyr and team found that even the slightest details of an online environment can improve and enhance a user's experience. Their research shows how the mere placement and position of images and text focuses users' attention on certain paragraphs and phrases. Understanding these minute aspects of a system design enables designers and developers to emphasize important content in instructional systems, which enhances the effectiveness of the system. Technical communicators are uniquely positioned to understand these minute details, which makes it vital to involve technical communicators in the ISD process.

A similar conclusion is echoed in Shahron Williams van Rooji's study of a collaborative team of students. After working together to build an instructional website, the design team concluded that to create an effective instructional interface, an ISD team should focus on a user-centered design. This approach includes identifying elements such as users' interaction with the data display and how they comprehend the information.

In today's technological landscape, consumers demand not only innovative, functional technology, but user-friendly products. The practice of a user-centered approach to ISD ensures developers' focus on functionality. As online interfaces, games, and instructional platforms evolve, users expect more stimulating learning environments. It is key for ISD teams to identify their target audience and their needs to accurately build in the instructional system elements that will facilitate learning. Technical communicators' user-centered approach enables the design and development of effective instructional systems and optimizes the end-user experience.

References

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Jessica Lynn Campbell received her Master's in English-Technical Communication, from the University of Central Florida. She has a Bachelor's in Psychology, from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Jessica is an expert and experienced technical communicator, author, and multi-media manager having been published on multiple media platforms including print

and online. Jessica has been an active member of the Society for Technical Communication, since 2010, and has been a mentor in the group's Mentorship Program, since 2014. She is skilled in APA, MLA, Chicago, and Bluebook citation styles. Her scholarly interests include digital spaces and online connectivity, online sociality, the consumerization of the consumption of animals and deconstructing social norms, and digital marketing. Jessica can be reached at jessica.campbell@embarqmail.com or 407-810-7542.

Alex Gurtis is Technical Communications major at the University of Central Florida and will receive his degree in August 2017. In addition to being a talented technical writer, he has published creative works in the Santa Fe College literary journal "Zephyr." Alex has been a member of the Society of Technical Communicators since 2016.

Gabriel Latorre graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Technical Communication from the University of Central Florida in 2017. Gabriel is a skilled technical communicator in the areas of web design and web communications. Having studied markup and programming languages, Gabriel is proficient in creating, communicating, and designing websites that effectively deliver a user-friendly experience. Gabriel's academic hobbies include learning programming languages, creating user-friendly designs in websites, and implementing a concise and effective language in user manuals. Gabriel can be reached at atlatorreg@outlook.com and at 407-916-9978.

Session Review: Credibility in Responsive Design

By Sylvia Miller



Have you ever looked at a webpage, perhaps of your own content, on a desktop computer and wondered, “What would this look like on a mobile device? What will become tiny, and what will not be visible at all?” Dr. Clinton R. Lanier presented an excellent session at the Summit on responsive web design (RWD) titled “How to Fix the Credibility Problem When Using Responsive Design.” I’d like to share some key points here in case you, like many technical communicators, are now having to develop for both desktop and mobile device viewing.

First, a few basic facts to remember when developing content that will be viewed on both a desktop computer and a much smaller mobile device:

- Online content has to be optimized to the viewing window in which it is being displayed.
- Online content can immediately (“on the fly”) arrange or rearrange to fit the screen’s width.
- You might need to exclude some content or resize items.
- Designers decide how the above is accomplished.

Dr. Lanier began by establishing that (a) content must be indexed to be found online, (b) content competes against other content created by random people or organizations, and (c) the content must be responsive to multiple viewing platforms for viewing preferences and search engine optimization (SEO). “Therefore, content from legitimate organizations must appear credible as a requirement to be used,” he asserted. He noted that little attention is paid to the credibility of responsive/mobile sites with much more attention being paid to usability.

So what makes a website credible, you ask? Quoting from 2007, 2009, and 2011 studies, Dr. Lanier gave many characteristics of credible websites, including these:

- Visual design (graphics and structure)
- Social cue design (human-like features, assistive interface)
- Informative-ness and informational quality
- Brand alliances
- E-Assurances
- Usefulness and ease of use
- Third-party recognition
- Consumer feedback mechanism
- Sponsor credibility (information source, advertisements on the page)

A 2014 study done at Dr. Lanier's university—New Mexico State—made some interesting findings about RWD. Researchers randomly separated 53 participants, median age of 36 years who were native English speaking, into two groups. One group read an article on a desktop (Mac with wide screen), while the other group read the same article on a smart phone. Both groups completed a questionnaire afterwards. Participants were asked to judge the credibility of the website, article, and author on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being lowest and 5 being highest. They were asked the following:

- How likely are you to agree with the author's point?
- How credible did you find the website that published this article?
- How credible did you find the author of this study?
- How important is the argument made by the author?
- How accurate did you find the information in the article?
- Please write the name of the website this article was published on.
- Please write the name of the author who wrote this article.
- Your age
- Do you use a smart phone to view websites?
- Do you use a desktop computer to view websites?
- Have you ever read this article?
- Have you ever heard of the author of this article?
- Have you ever visited this website?

The participants judged the desktop version to be MORE credible for ALL questions except two: (a) how credible did you find the author; and (b) how important is the argument made by the author. The sponsor (in this case, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*,) did not appear in the smart phone's window: The credibility that would have been earned by the article from its association with the renowned publication was lost. Plus, the lack of any peripheral information did not allow readers to judge associations. Also, graphics in the smart phone's window took up way too much real estate, as did the font size of the article's title.

Dr. Lanier advised, as a result of the study, that to maintain credibility in web content we ensure a site is usable and functional, and information is grammatically and technically accurate. We should also ensure that the logo is prominent and at the top and *remains* prominent and in view. He also urged us to ensure that some authority is mentioned before the content and provide peripheral information immediately to establish associations. And, of course, we should ensure that the author is attributed immediately and prominently. These are all great points to remember when developing content for responsive web design.

2017 Summit Session Reviews

By Jamye Sagan



During the 2017 STC Summit at National Harbor, MD, I attended several interesting, insightful presentations. Here are highlights of some of them.

Picture Perfect! How to Turn Words and Data into Powerful Graphics **Mike Parkinson (@Mike_Parkinson)**

Graphics creation has always been of interest to me, as graphics can complement the written narratives I must prepare as part of my IDL work. So, I thought this presentation would suit my needs perfectly – and it did.

Parkinson explained how pictures are easier to understand than words, by demonstrating how more effective a diagram of how to tie a tie was vs. a paragraph on how to do so.

He also explained the “concept and render” method for transforming data into graphics. “Concept” pertains to defining one’s audience and determining what message to convey to them, while “render” refers to the physical assembly of the message into something visual. Parkinson provided a handy poster illustrating which chart/graphic element works best for visualizing data.

What I found most intriguing is that the designer need not have the fanciest software to create graphics. Parkinson demonstrated how he used PowerPoint to create an image of a padlock, which he incorporated into a graphic showing bullet points about keeping data secure. Here the graphic—a padlock—resonates with the message of data security.

Very useful presentation!

On track! Running Effective Meetings **Viqui Dill (@viqui_dill)**

Oftentimes, meetings can be a waste of time because they go all over the place without a clear purpose. In her spotlight talk, Dill shared useful advice for conducting meetings, including:

- Establishing a parking lot for ideas not relevant to the meeting topic. Doing so not only helps keep the meeting on track, but also communicates respect for the teammate bringing up the idea.
- Collecting feedback, especially **CONSTRUCTIVE** feedback about how the meeting could have gone better

Dill kept her presentation fun yet educational with her aerodynamic icebreakers (I won my flying pig by knowing the Wright brothers' names!) – another tip for conducting effective meetings: Dill swears by icebreakers because they get people talking, interacting and thinking.

I was most surprised to hear that meeting attendees should not generate any deliverables at meetings, especially if the purpose of the meeting is to discuss a specific subject. I had to ponder that statement for a bit, because sometimes we do have meetings where we actually do create or edit deliverables. However, if that is not the meeting's purpose, then of course deliverables should not be created.

Fun and effective talk!

Six Super Success Hacks **Leah Guren (@Leah4CowTC)**

In her spotlight talk, Guren shared six actions people can take to become more professionally successful. These tips include:

- **Work your calendar** – review your calendar at the start and at the end of the day. Also review your calendar at the beginning of the week. The most valuable piece of advice Guren gives is “check first, commit later” because if you miss a deadline, you risk being perceived as unreliable and unprofessional.
- **Stop lying to yourself.** Work with your nature, not against. Ask yourself: How long did this take last time? What works best for me?
- **Lobby for the user.** According to Guren, if you focus on the users' needs, everyone wins! Ask yourself: How does this help the user? Am I providing my client with the right options?
- **Communicate like a pro.** Guren recommends that you treat all text with respect, AND
- **Find the spotlight.** Sometimes, this is hard since many of us have been conditioned to not brag about ourselves. However, modesty wins no awards. Ask yourself: What did I initiate? How did I contribute to the user experience or the bottom line?
- **Fake it 'til you make it.** Guren demonstrated how taking a power stance with one's body can help build feelings of confidence: Body language can greatly

help in building confidence Wonder Woman and Superman immediately came to mind. It really does work!

Guren also shared one final piece of incredibly SAGE advice, which I try to follow: Spend at least one hour a week to read articles and publications pertaining to your profession.

Video Provides the Edge

Mark Kleinsmith (@kleiny7352)

In his presentation, Kleinsmith explains how technical communicators should start embracing the “YouTube world”, which is to provide more video in support of autonomous work, since many people (especially millennials), tend to try 3-5 different strategies for troubleshooting the problem themselves before calling for help. In my work, I always google how to perform certain actions in the software applications I use – with much success.

Kleinsmith also argues that videos create bonds with customers, in that they readily provide information in a captivating, easy to digest way. He also explains how to incorporate videos into content—from editing software (Adobe Audition) to robust hosting platforms (Vimeo) that enable private viewing and user stats.

This presentation gave me much food for thought, about how to better incorporate video in my work – from embedding software tutorials in email communications, to using our in-house communication channels to promote these videos.

Know Your Client’s Language

Chrystal Mincey (@Annika_2822)

Knowing what your client expects and what they want to accomplish are crucial to the project’s success. In her presentation, Mincey shared some tips for how to understand your client’s needs. Main takeaways include:

- Understand your role in helping your client reach the end goal. This includes knowing:
 - What the client expects
 - What their end goal is
 - Who is responsible for what
 - What the deadlines, schedules, and milestones are
- Begin projects with the end in mind.
- Always use style guides. If none exists, create one.
- The client is always right – but may be open to change.

It all boils down to effective communication and never losing sight of the finish line.

So You Think You Know What Your Readers Want?

Yoel Strimling (@reb_yoel)

You know the saying “don’t make assumptions because they make an...”? Making wrong assumptions about the audience, dear readers, can result in our work not being as effective as it should. In his presentation, Strimling explains the research that is needed to determine what readers really are looking for, vs. what writers think readers need. **In essence, readers want accurate, clear, and relevant documentation that provides VALUE. Readers want to feel it was their worthwhile to use the documentation that it made their tasks easier to perform.**

Strimling effectively used a pen analogy in describing intrinsic quality of documentation.

When writing a letter, would one rather have a beautiful pen with no ink, or a cheap-looking pen with ink? Since the purpose is writing a letter, and not just gazing at the pen, the obvious choice here is the pen that works. In other words, if the documentation looks attractive but does not serve the intended purpose, it is useless.

Overall, Strimling challenged us writers to put ourselves in the readers’ shoes and ask ourselves: “If I were the reader, would this deliverable help me do my job better?” Now, whenever I design any materials, whether it be job aids or department memos, I always ask myself this question. It’s helped me focus on the purpose at hand, and what my readers need.

The Gamification of Instructional Design

Phylise Banner (@phylisebanner)

In her session, Banner took an interesting approach to showing how to incorporate play in the overall instructional design process. She demonstrated how to use the Learning Battle Cards (<https://www.learningbattlecards.com/>) in exploring different aspects of instructional design.

Learning Battle Cards, which consist of a deck of 100+ cards, describe various forms of learning. Each card contains a wealth of information on:

- Where in the instructional design process the concept occurs, from beginning to end
- Type of learning (e.g. self-learning, formal, asynchronous)

- Ranking of various characteristics pertaining to: production effort and time required by the educator, process effectiveness, and engagement and difficulty of use by the student.

Banner split us into smaller group and guided us in an exercise where we devised a basic training plan based on the cards we drew. These cards really helped us to look at instructional situations from different perspectives. Even if some of the concepts were unknown, our group still had fun devising a training plan for the project at hand. Although the cards right now are a bit pricey for my budget, I would like to eventually purchase a deck for my own enrichment.

How May I Help You?

Todd DeLuca (@TechCommTodd)

In his spotlight talk, DeLuca uses an analogy, likening technical communicators to restaurant workers. Are we the cooks, who toil behind the scenes? Or are we the waiters, who serve upfront? Of course, the customers are the diners enjoying the meal.

DeLuca proposes that technical communicators be more like waiters, since waiters interact with the customer and are therefore closest to the customers' needs and expectations. There is nothing wrong with being behind the scenes like the cook, but one runs the risk of being too far removed from the customer.

I played around with DeLuca's analogy in my mind: Technical communicators can also be chefs who emerge from the kitchen doors to showcase their dishes to the customers. After all, look at Wolfgang Puck or any other famous chef! How best to serve your customers? Well, getting to know them of course!

IDL SIG Represents at the STC PMC Conduit 2017 Conference

By Viqui Dill

On April 1, 2017, the [STC Philadelphia Metro Chapter hosted their annual regional conference, Conduit 2017](#). Many members of the Instructional Design and Learning special interest group attended the conference, and several made presentations.

Members in attendance

- Donn DeBoard
- Alan Houser
- Ben Woelk, workshop presenter <http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2017/conduit-2017-workshops/>
- Elizabeth Fraley, speaker <http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2017/conduit-2017-speakers/>
- Viqui Dill, speaker <http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2017/conduit-2017-speakers/>

Revive and Thrive: Strategies for the Introvert in Today's Workplace by Ben Woelk

Today's workplace presents challenges for introverted team members. Business schools focus on producing extraverted leaders, although as much as 50% of the workforce are introverts and there's no evidence that extraverts make better leaders than introverts. Many workplaces are adopting open space layouts that foster teamwork, but provide little opportunities for introverts to contribute as individuals. Because of Western society's emphasis on extraversion, many introverts feel unsuited or ill-equipped to thrive in today's workplace and are not sure how to take that next step to increase influence and improve visibility.

In this workshop, I learned about myself and the others in the session. One of the attendees was Donn DeBoard, with whom I had worked on the STC Nominating Committee. Donn and I are both "idealists" who focus on possibilities and want to empower others. Our similar personalities made us a great team during the STC elections nominating process. We worked together to see the strengths and potential in each of the candidates we interviewed and as a result, brought a very strong ballot to the 2016-2017 STC board elections.



Ben Woelk's Revive and Thrive workshop: Introverts in the back, extraverts up front.

The Art of Personal Branding: How to Tell the “You” Story and Gain New Customers

by Liz Fraley

If you want someone to hire you or your company, you need to be able to tell your story: who you are, what your plan is, and what defines you. There are key points to address at each point in the story in order to gain customers. Whether you're the boss or on your own, you are constantly telling your story.

This session was particularly useful to those working for equity, or starting a business. Liz focused on:

- How to gain customers by telling your story;
- How to identify who your customer is (and is not); and
- How to identify the keys to telling your story well.

Liz's presentation energized me to focus on my own strengths, leveraging the strengths of business partners where I am weak. She also gave us permission to let our work-selves and our home-selves be the same person. We don't have to have two different worlds with two different personalities. My take-away from her session was to know who I am, and to know who I serve.



Liz Fraley's Art of Personal Branding Session

On track! Running an effective meeting is more than the agenda.
by Viqui Dill

Every techcomm project includes a series of meetings. Requirements gathering and status updates are necessary parts of every project. But attending a meeting means that team members are not making progress on tasks or deliverables. How can we ensure that we make the most of this necessary evil?

This presentation offered proven solutions for meeting management. Starting up front with an engaging icebreaker, gathering expectations about what should be accomplished during the meeting, and then collecting feedback at the end will make your meeting more effective and your team more productive.

During the session, I divided the group into two teams to play a communications history trivia game. The winning team received a flying animal toy as the prize. Since the score was so close, I gave prizes to both teams. That's when I lost control of the meeting. The prizes were so engaging with the flying and the screaming, attendees began to focus on the toys and not the presentation. In addition, the icebreaker had done such a good job of breaking the ice and getting the group talking and interacting, that they continued to engage and interact, even after I wanted them to settle down and listen to the material. So even though I came to teach, I was the one who learned a valuable lesson about meeting management.

Thanks everyone! Seriously, thank you.



Viqui Dill's On Track Presentation



Tim Esposito shows off his flying sock monkey at the On Track presentation on twitter @tmesposito

Want to go next year?

The 2018 Conduit conference is already in the planning stages. Save the Dates: Friday, April 6 – Saturday, April 7, 2018 for another engaging conference by the STC Philadelphia Metro chapter <http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2018/>

TechComm Ninjas! IDL SIG Members Represent with Laughs at 2017 Spectrum Conference

On March 27, 2017, IDL SIG members Ben Woelk and Chuck Campbell presented a couple of hilarious ninja talks at Spectrum, the STC Rochester Chapter's annual regional conference.

A Ninja Talk is a lightning talk presentation delivered by a speaker who has never seen the slides. Ben Woelk prepared slides for Chuck Campbell, while Chuck prepared slides for Ben. The slides use PowerPoint automation to advance every 15 seconds, giving the presenter a few seconds to see the slide, then come up with something clever to say on the fly.

You can download Chuck's slides here and check out how he did the clever animation: [TechComm Ninja](#)

You can view Ben's presentation here: <https://vimeo.com/222693668>

Also presenting at Spectrum was IDL member Liz Fraley, who gave a workshop about "How to Attract Opportunities to You" and a presentation about "The Art of Personal Branding: How to Tell the 'You' Story and Gain New Customers".



Liz Fraley at Spectrum 2017

Photos of the conference are posted on [Flickr](#) and the complete schedule is posted on [Sched](#).

Want to attend next year? Spectrum 2018, the 59th conference, will be held March 25-27, 2018 at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Find out more on their website <http://stc-rochester.org/spectrum>

IDL SIG Members Elected to STC Board

Congratulations to our members who were elected to society level office in the 2017-2018 elections. We are proud of each and every member and very happy to announce these three elected members. You can read more about them in the associated links on the STC website <https://www.stc.org/about-stc/board-of-directors/> .

Jane Wilson - Vice President



<https://www.stc.org/jane-wilson/>

James Bousquet - Treasurer



<https://www.stc.org/james-bousquet/>

Robert Perry - Director



<https://www.stc.org/robert-perry/>

Read more about the election results in the STC Notebook blog:

<https://www.stc.org/notebook/2017/03/15/stc-2017-election-results/>

Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase: It's Our 10th Anniversary!

Help us celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase at the Naperville campus of Northern Illinois University (NIU) on August 15, 2017.

We've got a great selection of sessions for this year's conference. You'll be able to choose from 22 breakout [sessions](#) presented by 38 [speakers](#) in 4 time slots. We'll announce the schedule closer to the event date.

This year our keynote is Connie Malamed (a.k.a. The eLearning Coach). Connie is a consultant, author, and professional speaker in the fields of online learning and visual communication and the author of two books: *Visual Design Solutions* and *Visual Language for Designers*. Visit The eLearning Coach [website](#). Connie's podcast, available on iTunes, is available [here](#).

Join us on August 15 for another great gathering of eLearning, training, and instructional design professionals. At the end of the day, stay for our after-party. Prize giveaways and live, interactive entertainment will be featured. Don't miss the opportunity to network with 100s of colleagues at NIU in Naperville. Registration is scheduled to open in mid-June. Hope you can attend and help us celebrate Chicago as a leader in innovative eLearning and training. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.chicagoelearningshowcase.com>.

This article was first published in the June 2017 issue [Byline](#), STC Chicago's bi-monthly newsletter.

About IDeal: Design for Learning

Publication policy

We invite letters, articles, book reviews, and other items for publication. Articles may contain up to 1,000 words. Picture formats: JPG, GIF, PNG; Text format: Word, RTF, or ASCII. Send items to Crista Mohammed at newsletter@stcidlsig.org.

Advertising policy and rates

We encourage advertising as long as it follows STC guidelines and promotes services of interest to IDL SIG members.

Ad sizes and rates

- **Half page** (7.5x4.5): \$75 (1 issue); \$225 (4 issues)
- **Business Card** (3.5x2): \$25 (1 issue); \$100 (4 issues)

Please submit electronic copy only in .TIF, .GIF, or .PNG format. Send ads to Crista Mohammed at newsletter@stcidlsig.org. Make checks payable to *Society for Technical Communication* and send to: Robert Hershenow, STC IDL SIG, 616

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IDL SIG website

<http://stcidlsig.org>

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