



IDEAL: Design for Learning

The Newsletter of the STC's Instructional Design and Learning SIG

SIG MANAGER'S THOUGHTS

by *Jackie Damrau, IDL SIG Manager*



In North America, our season is changing from summer to fall. The change affects the trees and makes many of us want to resist the thoughts of the "cold weather" coming on. Yet, this is the most festive time of the year for us as we celebrate our historical significance from October through December.

Instructional design also has changes coming ahead. The way in which we designed instructional materials and courses many years ago is different than today. Back then we had only instructor-led courses, with a facilitator guide, a participant guide, overhead transparencies or PowerPoint slides, and no games at all. Now, we have the same two guides, PowerPoint or some form of animated imagery (such as Flash or Captivate), and games or interactivity to enhance our cognitive skills to retain the new information with which we are being presented. And all of this can be delivered online.

With that said, the IDL SIG is changing by offering its members more opportunities to learn. In September, we held our first State of the SIG discussion call. About 27 SIG members attended. They heard about the strategic plan that the IDL management team has set up, the upcoming Web seminar and discussion call schedule that the Programs committee has put together, and the upcoming conference planning for the 2009 STC 56th Annual Technical Summit (to be held in Atlanta, Georgia on May 3-6). We then opened the call and asked each person to introduce themselves. This was the most important part of the call as we

Continues on page 2

Upcoming Events

Don't miss the exciting, educational Web Seminars and Conference Calls scheduled over the next few months!

See page 15 for more information.



In This Issue...

SIG Manager's Thoughts	Page 1
About this Newsletter	Page 2
The Editor's Word	Page 3
Letters to the Editor	Page 4
Feature Article	Page 6
Book Review	Page 10
Tips and Hints	Page 12
SIG News	Page 12
Member News	Page 13
Learning Opportunities	Page 15
STC News	Page 16



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SIG Manager's Thoughts, from page 1

learned who had similar interests, who could help others on the call by providing information, and just a special feeling of camaraderie with being able to talk in person with our peers. We did record that call and will be making it available soon on the SIG's website.

Your SIG committee managers are working hard at providing you with services, yet we still need volunteers to help us out with small tasks. For those who will be attending the conference in Atlanta, it's not too soon to raise your hand to begin helping us provide you and other SIG members with a great time at conference. If you're not attending, our Programs committee can use help behind-the-scenes in putting on the Web seminars and discussion calls (monitoring registration, running the interface, and other tasks).

And, as your manager, I invite you to let me know how we can make your investment in the IDL SIG one of value. Without your feedback, we can only provide what we, the management team and the committee managers, "think" you want. Yet, our thoughts may not be yours, so share with me what you want.

So sit back and enjoy the change in the seasons. For our non-North American members, write a small article for our newsletter letting us know what changes you encounter at this time of year in your countries. I know some of you are going from your winter to summer, so instruct us on what happens in your countries. After all, this is how we learn about our global environment.

Jackie

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Advertising Policy

We encourage advertising as long as it follows the STC guidelines and promotes services to the Instructional Design & Learning SIG members. Ad sizes and rates are:

Half page (7.5x4.5): \$75 (1 issue); \$225 (4 issues)

Business Card (3.5x2): \$25 (1 issue); \$100 (4 issues)

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SIG Web Site: <http://www.stcidlsig.org>

SIG Newsletter Archives: <http://www.stcidlsig.org>

SIG E-mail List: Open to all members. Click [here](#).

SIG Mission Statement

To help STC members identify and develop knowledge and practical skills for designing, developing, and implementing technical instruction in electronic and traditional classroom settings. The SIG strives to promote sound design practices, provide information, and educate about instructional theory and research.

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Reach for the Stars!

The STC's "Reach for the Stars" Member-Get-a-Member campaign is in full swing. Check the [STC Web site](#) to find out how chapters, SIGs, and individuals can recruit new members and be eligible to win some great prizes!



by Robert Hershenow

Patrick Hoffman and the STC PR Task Force did a great job on the [new STC logo](#), which they released just as I set about putting this issue together. It inspired me to give *IDeal: Design for Learning* a long-overdue facelift; the result is the New Look you're reading right now. I hope you enjoy it. And while you're doing so, think about what you'd like to see more of in this newsletter and [let me know](#).

The IDL SIG Leaders and Managers meet each month to plan the future of our SIG. They often discuss topics which members bring to their attention, either directly or via the SIG's email discussion list.

If you have ideas about or wishes for the direction of our virtual community, make your voice heard! Contact the IDL SIG Managers (email addresses are on [page 2](#)) and let them know what's on your mind.

Another venue for advertising your opinions is our email Discussion List. One of the premium benefits of STC membership, the list is an invaluable source of information, assistance, and commiseration from fellow SIG members.

The IDL SIG belongs to all of us, and we each have a voice. But without your input we all get short-changed. So use the Discussion List, write to the SIG Managers, tune it to the Web seminars and conference calls. You'll get the most out of your membership, and you'll help your fellow members too.

In this issue: Jeanne McCarthy shares some favorite Discussion posts; Scott Abel and the Content Wrangler Community write about an exciting new online collaboration technology, Victoria Sadler reviews William Horton's book *E-Learning by Design*, and the IDL Managers dish up the news. Dig in!

CALENDAR of SIG Managers' Meetings

The IDL SIG Managers will meet on these dates

November 19 December 9
January 14 2009 February 18 2009
March 18 2009 April 15 2009

Write to your SIG Managers and tell them what to talk about next time! (It's your SIG.)



STC Mission

The Society for Technical Communication advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media.



To the Editor:

My letter contains a simple message for the IDL SIG: Keep Subscribing! Although periodically some SIG members could use email more effectively, I was very sorry to see professionals suddenly unsubscribing in such large numbers in April. These email threads of information provide us a great opportunity for instant discussions with other professionals—I landed an interview and consulting job and built a new skill from attending a targeted tool workshop, all based on my having read timely information in the SIG emails.

As a writer and researcher, I've confirmed with other professionals the value of SIGs as a trusted resource for building a "just-in-time"

pool of ideas for design and action—even over blogs and wikis. A huge win for the power of business networking, you can literally, within hours, get a response internationally from colleagues about detailed use of the latest tools, applied ID concepts, useful ideas about current projects and even perspectives about successful partnering with other disciplines.

As a vital STC SIG, let's keep open (and carefully use) this venue for sharing so this kind of success news can continue. The SIG can only make us excel more - effectively promoting our marketability and importance to colleagues, clients and bosses. My consulting success, and many stories like mine, have come from my paying attention to idea sharing from generous professionals like those in the IDL SIG!

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See some of Jeanne's favorite postings below —Ed.

Did You Miss These?

Find these postings—reprinted from the IDL SIG email Discussion List—in the List Archives.

On April 8, 2008, Elisabeth Baker wrote about how SMEs should develop courses:

...Perhaps you already ask each SME to create a mock-up of desired materials using whatever software they favor, whether MS Office products or anything more specialized. Perhaps you already encourage SMEs to be as free as they wish, and to apply only as much form and formatting as required to communicate their ideas to your team.

Give your team a conversion specialist, who may or may not have instructional development experience. This third teammate will be(come) skilled at converting the SMEs' drafts to the format(s) of your choice. If the conversion specialist also has the skills of a copy editor, all the better.

The conversion specialist can be your main point of contact with the SME world, also performing many of your more basic administrative tasks. You will continue to make the real decisions, but your specialist will save you loads of time and energy. (It is more important that your conversion specialist be enthusiastic and productive about learning new concepts and technologies, than that they already have experience with every option.)

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(continued from previous page)

With a conversion specialist in place, you and your teammate can be more free than you are now to apply your expertise to finish the products, because you won't have to generate or even deal with any rough draft.

I wish you all the best!



On June 6, 2008, Jane Smith addressed whether training is the same as consulting:

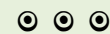
I do both, and they're not the same. As a Certified Performance Technologist, much of my consulting work consists of determining the most appropriate solutions to a performance issue. Sometimes that solution involves training, and sometimes it involves other things, such as setting standards, keeping people accountable, providing the right equipment, and so on. Those solutions aren't training but they do come from a consulting approach.

For one client, I was asked to come in and give a basic instructional design course. I taught 3 days, and then I've stayed on to mentor and coach the three teams. Each team has different skill and performance levels, so I gear my coaching and consulting to the specific needs.

Sometimes I do on-the-spot Word or other training; sometimes, I analyze data to set standards; and sometimes I'm available for consulting on other issues. I also taught an e-Learning development course. Now I'm coaching in that specific area and consulting with the department to establish an effective interface for all their courses.

I'm not training when I provide options and make recommendations. I'm consulting. I'm also not training when I meet with the Director to touch bases on the progress of the individuals and teams and to recommend next steps. I'm consulting. If a next step involves

training, then I do that. For example, I've recommended that they all get Visio, so that they can build course and interaction flows. Then I'll spend an hour or so acquainting (training) them with the program and building a flow. I'll also be available for questions. I've consulted on templates, processes, and other aspects that help to establish a good training department with good standards, appropriate timelines, processes, and expectations. When I consult, I usually provide options and make recommendations, but the department makes their own decisions. I then abide by and coach based on those decisions.



On September 10, '08 the question "What's more important—education or tools?" kicked off a lively discussion. This response is from Diane Martinez:

I think the answer lies in who you are asking what is more important. For an employer, maybe the software tools, but as an educator who works with IDs in designing online courses, I value their educational experience because I need feedback on the pedagogy, sequence, and soundness of my proposed course...

...and this from Keira Thrasher:

Employers/projects often look for people with tools experience without understanding the underlying need for solid ID skills.

Also, big-budget WBT projects often separate development from design, so they may be looking specifically for developers (Flash, etc.). However, if that is not your focus (if you don't want to strictly do the programming), it is best to have that ID foundation and then add on tools...

Read these threads and all the others, in the Discussion List Archives!

(instructions on page 16)

Feature Article

It's In The Mix:

The Next Generation of Open-Source Publishing

by Scott Abel and The Content Wrangler Community

The remix. It used to be a term used purely to describe different renditions of the same dance tune. Now, it's a term creeping into our daily lives in a variety of new ways made possible by recent advances in computer and Internet technologies.



Originally crafted by talented music producers like Tom Moulton and deejays like Larry Levin, remixes were designed for one purpose: To make the audience dance. Okay, that's not entirely true, there was also another motive: To increase profit by selling the same song to different audiences by creating customized versions attractive to various target groups. Remixes were created to be attractive to specific demographics (blacks, gays, Latinos) and to patrons of niche clubs that feature specific genres of music (reggae, trance, hip-hop, garage, disco) by repurposing existing components of music (the vocals, the bass-line, the guitar solo) and recombining them in new and innovative ways. One popular Top40 tune might be remixed into a dozen different "official" versions, each with a target audience in mind.

This early form of content reuse allowed record companies to do what nearly everyone is trying to do today—earn more revenue by personalizing content (i.e. delivering the right information to the right people, in the right language, in the right format, at the right time). But, the music companies aren't the only ones creating remixes anymore. Today, nearly anyone can be a music remixer.

User-Generated Remixes

The widespread availability of digital music (legals issues aside) and access to easy-to-use music remixing software has created an entire generation of digital disc jockeys. Armed with a laptop and an Internet connection, these new-school music mavens are at the heart of the user-generated content movement. While record companies can afford to hire some of the best deejays in the world to create officially sanctioned remixes, user-generated remixes, created by wanna-be music producers and bedroom deejays, often become more popular than the official renditions.

But the remixing phenomena isn't limited to dance music. Content mashups made possible by services like Microsoft Popfly and Yahoo Pipes are allowing organizations and individuals alike to create value-added content services. Even toy companies are in on the action. Hasbro recently launched a video mashup tool designed to promote its popular Transformers line of children's toys. Kids can combine video clips, sound effects, and music to make their own Transformers video remixes.

Continues, next page.

Remixing Documentation

The same principles behind music remixing are at the heart of a hugely important open-source software documentation experiment taking place on the web today. It's called [FLOSS Manuals](#), a content remixing project that provides its website visitors with the ability to read, write and remix documentation. (The FLOSS acronym stands for Free/Libre/Open-Source Software.)

Reading FLOSS Manuals

FLOSS Manuals provides access to a collection of user-generated documentation sets that explain how to install and use a range of free and open-source software including [Audacity](#) (an audio editing software for Linux, Mac OSX and Windows) and [WordPress](#) (a popular blogging platform). You can also find a manual for the One Laptop Per Child XO computer, the education project whose goal was to produce a \$100 laptop for children of the world using all open-source software.

FLOSS Manuals are designed to be user-friendly and simple to understand. They are intended to encourage people to explore the wide range of free, open-source alternatives to expensive and restrictively licensed software. FLOSS allows visitors to make a PDF of desired manuals—or read and print them in HTML—with a click of the mouse.

Writing FLOSS Manuals

FLOSS Manuals also provides site visitors with the tools needed to create a manual online, using wiki software that runs in a web browser. Would-be writers and editors can learn how to use the wiki by editing a test manual and by reading the [FLOSS Manuals documentation](#). A discussion listserv is also available to help editors find answers quickly from their peers.

REMIX

You can remix your own manuals. Select a manual (or manuals) in Step one with the drop down menu and drag chapters to the box on the right. Choose an output format (html/pdf) in step two and tweak the style. In step three you can export the remix and also use the (beta) ajax provided to put a live manual in your web page.

STEP 1. REMIX
STEP 2. STYLE
STEP 3. EXPORT

Make a manual remix

1. From this menu you can select one or more manuals to remix
2. Drag manual items to the remix box on the right in the order you want them
3. The output if the remix can be HTML or PDF (selected in step 2).
4. You can also use the AJAX code supplied in step 3 to include the manual in your website or blog.

Audacity

AUDACITY
INTRODUCTION
Audacity
WHAT IS DIGITAL AUDIO?
INSTALLING
Audacity
UBUNTU
Audacity
OSX
Audacity
WINDOWS
INTERFACE
Audacity
TRACK BAR
Audacity
MENU BAR
Audacity
TOOL BAR

Audacity

INTRODUCTION edit title

Remixing FLOSS Manuals

The really cool thing about FLOSS Manuals is the [remixing](#) capabilities. Users can remix chapters from any manuals in the FLOSS repository to create their own customized manuals. And doing so is quick and easy, through a user-friendly drag-and-drop interface that works from within a web browser. The resulting remix can be styled and exported to PDF or HTML.

Continues, next page.

AJAX MANUAL (BETA)

This live manual functionality will allow you to keep a manual on your blog / web page which is maintained by the community of authors at FLOSS Manuals. This is in development and we will improve the api, layout, and documentation over the next weeks.

1. Copy+paste this text if you want to embed it
2. This manual can be customised. We will publish the instruction (api) shortly

```
<div id="flosseembed" style="border:1px solid #ff7f00;width:834px"/>
<script>
var FLOSSConfig = {'style': {}, 'config': {}, 'pages': [{"Chat", "Introduction",
"INTRODUCTION", 1}], 'title': 'Using%20Chat'};
</script>
<script type="text/javascript" src="http://en.flossmanuals.net/pub/TWiki/jquery
/jquery.js">
</script>
<script type="text/javascript" src="http://en.flossmanuals.net/js/embed.js">
</script>
</div>
```

An even more useful feature, live manual functionality (above) allows users to generate code that will let them embed their “live” manual into a web page, just like [SlideShare](#) allows you to embed slide decks or [YouTube](#) allows you to embed videos. The big difference is that “live manuals” are indeed live versions of the document. Changes made to files on the FLOSS Manuals website are automatically reflected in the “live” version displayed on your website, giving your site visitors the most-up-to-date content possible and avoiding typical delays caused by traditional documentation creation processes.

Remixing enables users to create a manual that suits their needs. Perhaps they need just one section of one manual and three sections of another. In this case, remixing only the desired components from both manuals allows users to create a customized manual that meets their specific needs. Nothing more, nothing less.

Typical uses:

- Workshop leaders and trainers can create remixes that contain only the chapters relevant to students. This will minimize the amount of training materials produced, provide targeted learning materials, and decrease the impact on the environment.
- Students can create subsets of the documentation to help them perform specific tasks, share these miniature manuals with coworkers and customers, and publish the resulting “live manuals” to their website, intranet, or partner extranet.

Continues, next page.

Why Does This Matter?

Remixing is a hot topic in many a circle on the internet discussion boards. Technical communication bloggers Keith Soltys, [Janet Swisher](#), and [Charles Jeter](#) jumped on the FLOSS Manuals story shortly after it started making headlines. Each of them share the reasons they think FLOSS Manuals matters. Of course, the technology behind FLOSS Manuals is really what matters, not the content being produced.

Extending the FLOSS Manuals concept to other types of content:

- We could create a recipe website to allow professional and amateur cooks alike to share (read/write) recipes and remix individual recipes into custom cookbooks. Live cookbooks could be shared using the “live manuals” feature on websites, blogs, and wikis that cover specific food types. Churches, schools and other non-profit groups could use the service to create and publish cookbooks for fund-raisers. Makers of culinary products could also reuse the cookbook content in their online newsletters and product websites.
- A shopping/e-commerce website could provide FLOSS Manuals type interface to their websites to allow users to create custom product gift registries, holiday gift lists, and shopping guides and catalogs. Manufacturers could update their content when it changes and see those changes reflected in the “live manuals” (gift guides, registries, directories) created by users.

The technological concepts behind FLOSS Manuals are the same ones being employed by organizations around the globe that are moving to a component-based XML content management paradigm. Content reuse, repurposing, and remixing are all extremely valuable techniques that allow us to laser target the content we provide to our customers, but, as FLOSS Manuals clearly demonstrates, these same principles can be used to empower users to generate their own, unique content and remix it with content provided by others to meet their individual needs. Expect these types of solutions to become the way we work in the future, because although FLOSS Manuals is an open source, non-commercial application of component content management principles, it won't be long before a software vendor takes the same approach and creates a commercial product that can help any web user read, write and remix content in a web browser. In fact, I'm certain there are programmers working on this very challenge in a cubicle farm somewhere right this very moment.



Scott Abel (The Content Wrangler) is a content management strategist and structured XML content evangelist who helps organizations improve the way they author, maintain, and deliver their information.

Scott writes regularly for trade and industry publications, runs the Documentation and Training and Web Content conferences (<http://www.doctrain.com> and <http://www.webcontentconferences.com>) and is an oft-featured presenter at communication industry events.

Visit Scott's blog, The Content Wrangler, at <http://www.TheContentWrangler.com>
Visit The Content Wrangler Community at <http://thecontentwrangler.ning.com>

Book Review

E-Learning by Design by William Horton

reviewed by Victoria Sadler

A few years ago, after choosing a class textbook on the basis of a glowing review in STC's journal, *Technical Communication*, I realized that the book was ill-suited for my students—undergraduate communication majors—and I wondered if the reviewer had actually used the book in a classroom. Now that I am using William Horton's *E-Learning by Design* and finding it just right for my learners' needs, I want to share my experience with others trying to choose a primary textbook or trying to evaluate Horton's newest design book.

If you are wondering if this book would also be appropriate for writers who need to know about e-learning, for trainers moving from physical classrooms to electronic classrooms, or for anyone who wants to create effective e-learning, my answer is "Yes." What it isn't appropriate for is teaching someone the complexities of learning theories or instructional systems design (ISD) models and their related theories. But understand that Horton didn't intend to write a book about ISD, learning theory, or human performance improvement; his focus here is rapid instructional design: "simple, quick, informal, and pragmatic" (page 3). You won't find an Index listing for job or task analysis or for needs assessment; Horton's book assumes that you have already determined that e-learning is called for.

Horton has over 35 years of experience creating learning using electronic media, and

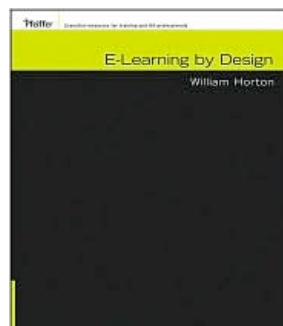
his pragmatic approach and voice are evident beginning with Chapter 1 ("Designing E-Learning"), in which he explains the skills needed for successful e-learning: instructional design, software engineering, media design, and economics. It isn't necessary to master all of these skills, but *E-Learning by Design* as a whole shows the important influences of all four areas.

Chapters 2-4 provide detailed explanations of three types of learning activities (Absorb, Do, and Connect), with examples of when to use them, how they relate to each other, and what types of media are most effective. (Horton's

experience in using multimedia in teaching is interwoven throughout these chapters and is very valuable for those transitioning from paper-based training.)

Chapter 5 explains testing: why to test, choosing the right type of question, writing effective questions, giving meaningful feedback, and alternatives to testing. Chapters 6 and 7 explain Topics and Lessons, helping us understand the interrelationships of learning objectives, learning activities, and learning objects.

This is a good time to comment on Horton's view of the Learning Object (LO) (explained in Chapter 1), which is more limiting but, I believe, more useful, than broad definitions of learning objects. Horton defines a learning object as "a chunk of electronic content that



can be accessed individually and completely accomplishes a single learning goal and can prove it” (page 32). He goes on to explain that an LO is “a micro-course designed to be combined with other micro-courses” (page 32) that is the building block of e-learning. This view clearly distinguishes an LO from an information object, and its insistence on verifying whether the learning objective was met enhances an LO’s value in an object-based development method. As it is becoming clear in the complex field of e-learning, reusable objects are the future, so Horton’s stricter approach to learning objects is one we all should follow.

Chapter 8 (“Strategic Decisions”) helps the designer to step back from lower-level decisions and see the bigger picture as she decides what type of e-learning delivery to use, how to plan for reusing content, and which standards to use to ensure quality and accessibility. Chapters 9-11 explain the Virtual Classroom: collaboration tools, online meetings, and discussion activities and how to manage a virtual course. In addition, Horton provides examples of how to choose appropriate visual displays, focusing on issues of legibility, layout, and unity. His chapter on Navigation (Chapter 11) explains navigation mechanisms, including paging, indexes, maps, search, and autoscan, that are valuable features to incorporate in order to enhance learning.

The final chapter, (Chapter 12 “Conclusion: The New Model of Learning”) is brief and leaves the reader with a few predictions: 1) the publishing (or broadcast) model of education that “gathers knowledge from the enlightened few and distributes it to the ignorant masses” (page 577) is dead. The new model of education is the Catalyst, in which “every student is a teacher; and every teacher, a student” (page 577). Horton encourages designers to embrace the challenges of the new, messy model, and his book contains

guidance for creating learning to accommodate the new model.

This book is a follow-on to Horton’s *Designing Web-Based Training* (2000), and for those who want to complement this design book with a book about tools and technologies, Horton and his wife Katherine have published *E-Learning Tools and Technologies: A consumer’s guide for trainers, teachers, educators, and instructional designers* (2003). Neither that book nor *E-Learning by Design* teach software applications, but *E-Learning by Design* embeds numerous examples of how to take PowerPoint slides and convert them for Web-based delivery, and Horton weaves in explanations of when and why to incorporate audio, simulations, etc. to enhance learning. The book also includes a website that provides examples from the book that readers may find useful.

Overall, I believe that *E-Learning by Design* provides the right mix of instructional design guidance for someone interested in learning how to design effective learning using technology, whether that person is new to the field of instructional design and learning or an experienced professional. As I said earlier, in this book you won’t find the history of instructional design, instructional design systems theory, or what Horton calls “the heavy-handed, Stalinesque distortion of theory required to accompany many ponderous instructional systems design (ISD) methodologies” (page 30). What you will find is an informational, clear, and sometimes light-hearted look at e-learning.

© © ©

E-Learning by Design by William Horton.

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Reviewed by Victoria Sadler, Ph. D.;

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*by Maralee Sautter,
Secretary, IDL SIG*

Ten Tenets of Effective Communication

On his [Solari](#) web site, Rich Maggiani offers a collection of excellent communication-related papers and articles. For example:

“Effective communication is simple and clear, focuses around a single idea, and ultimately achieves the results you desire. To be most effective, your communication must adhere to these ten tenets.

“Effective communication is:

- Honest,
- Clear,
- Accurate,
- Comprehensive,
- Accessible,
- Concise,
- Correct,
- Timely, and
- Well designed.
- It builds goodwill too.”

Read the full paper here:

<http://www.solari.net/position-papers.php>

Subscribe to free updates:

<http://www.solari.net/free-resources.php>

Learning Rocks!

Dan Roddy’s **Learning Rocks** blog offers [three tiny tools](#) to help your course development.

The Chicago Manual of Style Online

[The Manual](#) is accessible to subscribers (starting at \$30 per year); the site also offers free tools such as guides for manuscript preparation, sample forms and style sheets and the ever-popular [Chicago Style Q&A](#) .



Continues, next page.

The 2008 STC Conference in Philadelphia was a great place to make new friends, catch up with old friends, and recruit new volunteers for leadership positions. Thanks to Cynthia Silverside’s personable approach and relentless recruiting efforts at the STC Conference this year, all open positions in the IDL SIG were filled by the time everyone left the conference.

With the excitement of the conference behind us, the IDL SIG’s July meeting focused on getting to know one another, since many of the committee managers and volunteers were new to their roles. Dr. Jackie Damrau, IDL SIG Manager, got everyone off to a good start by asking each committee manager to prepare at least two goals for their year-long strategic plan.

The IDL SIG leadership also met in August and September to focus on strategic goals and objectives and to plan for events and activities between now and the 2009 STC Conference in Atlanta. Of particular interest is the lineup of Web seminars and discussion calls that will occur over the next six months.

Our first discussion call occurred on September 16, and was a big success. SIG leaders conducted a *State-of-the-SIG Address* for this call, and SIG members were able to share ideas, ask questions, and make suggestions on membership benefits they would like to have.

SIG News, continued from previous page...

The first Web seminar that Program Manager Lisa Murdock has planned took place on Friday, October 24. Lisa Pappas conducted a one-hour presentation on *International Communication*. Look for information on the IDL SIG discussion list, soon.

On November 13 at 11:30AM, Michael Hughes will lead a discussion call on *Assessment Metrics*; sign up on the [SIG web site](#) soon.

The scholarship committee is considering a larger monetary award for a graduate-level recipient at the academic level this year. Additionally, there have been discussions about a less traditional award (non-academic), but these discussions are still in the embryonic stage.

A committee was formed to analyze the information in the survey sent out earlier this year. Committee members have examined the results to look for common themes and ideas to improve the value added to our SIG members.

The 2009 STC Conference preparations are also underway. There is already a call for proposals out to the members for the SIG Progression.

Please contact Karen Baranich at kbaranich@scana.com if you are interested in participating as a presenter. Also, if you will be attending the conference in Atlanta, consider volunteering for the SIG welcome reception, luncheon, or leadership meeting. Volunteering is always a good way to network and meet other members with like interests.

As of September 29, the Treasurer's Report shows a balance of \$6,053.49. The treasury is healthy, and the money will be used for IDL SIG expenses such as Web seminar fees, monthly leadership conference calls, scholarships, STC Conference expenses, and other expenditures. If you have questions, you may contact our treasurer by email at treasurer@stcidlsig.org.

As always, our objective is to continue to provide our SIG members with great benefits. If you would like to share your ideas or become more involved, contact Dr. Jackie Damrau at manager@stcidlsig.org or Maralee Sautter at secretary@stcidlsig.org.



by Carol Widstrand, IDL SIG Membership Manager

Hello! I want you to know that this column is for you!

We want to hear what you have been up to, so send me news about your work, accomplishments, promotions, and other good things happening with you. Your information helps us get to know each other since we are a virtual SIG and rarely get the chance to meet face to face.

I'm including our list of members that have joined our SIG in since July 1 (next page). By the way, did you know that our members live in over 25 countries?



Welcome, New IDL SIG Members!

We hope to be reading about you in this column very soon!

Mr. Paul Anheier
 Ms. Stephanie Benusa
 Sindhu Bhanu
 Ms Ann Biswas
 Jill Bullock
 Erin Brisk
 Evelyn Burns
 Jason Carpenter
 Mrs. Neelima Chittora
 Ms. Wanda Chow
 Dr. Chih-feng Chuang
 Julia Crenshaw-Smith
 Ms. Beverley A. Curia
 Ms. Aileen Dear
 Erica J. Decker
 Jill L. Dickerson
 Adesuwa Evbuoma
 Abigail R. Ferrance-Wu
 Ms. Sarah Fenster-Goldfarb
 Dr. William Fields
 Mr. Joseph Freney, Jr.
 Janet Gregory
 Ms. Kate Godfrey
 Jorja Gunderson
 Ms. Danielle Gunter
 Aisha K. Holmes
 Mr. Joseph Homel
 Mr. Joe Ketzner
 Ms. Yvonne Kita
 Ms. Karen Kluge
 Mrs. Neelaveni Kothagattu
 Mr. Andrew Lister
 Mr. James Lonergan
 Judy Long

Susan Lowd
 Ms. Megan Marie
 Justin M. McDavid
 Miss Donna McKee
 Ruth Nash
 Marie Naughton
 B. Regina Owens
 Joyce Raftery
 Julie Raptis
 Mr. James Richeson
 Ms. Kathy Rehak
 Jamie Ruiz
 Ms. Judy Salm
 Ms. Stephanie Schwieterman
 Linda Sherwood
 Mr. Edmund Stevens
 Tracy Scott
 Michael Servatius
 Mrs. Frances Simmons
 Mrs. Karen Sweet
 Natalie Swensson
 Mr. Andrew Sumida
 Mrs. Cheryl Thoma
 Maura Thompson
 Keith Tracey
 Miss Jamie Transtrum
 Ms. Peggy Ward, Sr.
 Brandi Watts
 Mrs. Henni Webb
 Donald West
 Ms. Jennifer Wilkins
 Kim Williams
 Leonard Wright II
 Ms. Judith Young-Espeut
 Mrs. Joyce ZanFagna



IDL SIG Web Seminar and Conference Call Lineup

Program Manager Nina Murdock has been hard at work scheduling Web seminars and conference calls. The SIG intends to offer monthly programs, and make recorded archives available to members on the SIG website.

September's well-attended *State of the SIG* conference call covered the schedule of upcoming conference calls and Web seminars, the 2009 STC Summit (competitions, progression proposals, the SIG business meeting and luncheon, and Training Materials Evaluation program). Participants then introduced themselves and discussed a number of topics including IDL certification, standards, and best practices, how to make IDL a part of corporate strategy, and learning Flash programming for IDL. The meeting lasted just over an hour; those who attended felt it was a very positive experience and recommend it highly next time around.

October's call featured STC Associate Fellow [Lisa Pappas](#), an Accessibility Analyst with SAS Institute. Lisa addressed virtual team building and management, as well as methods of communication with colleagues working in other cultures.

On Thursday November 13, [Michael Hughes](#), a Fellow with the Society for Technical Communication and a Certified Performance Technologist, will discuss the importance of Task Support Clusters. This bottom-up approach to information design focuses on optimizing the user assistance experience, by minimizing the distraction involved in finding answers. Start time is 11:30 A.M. EST.

[Karl Kapp](#) will be the featured presenter in January 2009. Karl is Professor of Instructional Technology at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, PA, and is the author of *Gadgets, Games and Gizmos for Learning: Tools for Transferring Know-How from the Boomers to the Gamers*.

Watch your e-mail inbox and the [IDL SIG](#) web site for further information on these and other upcoming events.

STC Live Web Seminars

Information and the 2008 schedule of STC Web seminars are available here: <http://stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>

Accessing the IDL SIG Discussion List Archives

Almost eight years of postings are searchable in the discussion list archives. Here's how to get to this members-only resource:

Near the top of every discussion list email are several links. The first is the address to which you submit a post; the second is a link "to subscribe or unsubscribe via the World Wide Web:"

<http://mailman.stc.org/mailman/listinfo/stcidlsig-l>

This link takes you to a Web page called "Stcidlsig-l -- STC IDL SIG Discussion." Here you can access the archives, post a message to members, subscribe to or unsubscribe from the list, and set your account preferences.

Look in the first section ("About Stcidlsig-l") for a link to the Stcidlsig-l Archives. Click that, enter your email address and password and click the "Let me in..." button.

On the Archives Page you can Search by word or phrase, or view monthly postings by thread, subject, author, or date, or download an entire month's worth of shared knowledge.

Give it a try, but be warned—a person can get lost in there...



Free access to STC Salary Database

STC's 2007 Salary Database, which contains salary information for 2006 and 2007, is now available on the STC website.

STC's Salary Database enables members to conduct more powerful job searches, make a strong case for a raise, or prepare department payroll budgets. And this year, the entire Salary Database, as well as the archives of salary information (http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/boardNews_docs.asp), including the 2006 Salary Database, is free to all members.

The information in the Salary Database was compiled from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), which provided data collected at a much larger scope and greater level of detail than past STC salary surveys.

Here are some of the most significant benefits of the 2007 Salary Database:

- The accrued data is based on duties, responsibilities, and job functions, as opposed to just titles, thereby providing a more effective basis for comparison.
- The data includes information on both annual and hourly salaries and wages, and are thus useful for full-time employees as well as consultants and contracted employees.
- The BLS data are also conveniently broken down into percentiles that represent a realistic income for technical writers at varying stages of their careers.
- Because the BLS data come from company Human Resource departments, the data are considered more reliable than survey data collected from employees, specifically because employees often tend to inflate their income.

Check out STC's 2007 Salary Database (<http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/salaryDatabase01.asp>).

Intercom Online

November's issue is all about standards—ISO, IEC JTC1, SC7, WG2, DITA, LISA... Find out what's new, what's in store, and why you should care about them.

Also in November's Intercom: Scholarship news, pre-Conference info, and Michael Hughes' welcome from Atlanta Georgia, the location of STC's 2009 Technical Communication Summit.

Read Intercom online at www.stc.org
To discuss Intercom articles on the STC Forum, please visit: <http://stcforum.org/viewforum.php?id=51>

