

IDeaL: DESIGN FOR LEARNING

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

Q3 2013



Jackie Damrau - *photo by Cindy Pao*



Jamy Sagan, Mellissa Ruryk, and the IDL Light Bulb -
photo by Robert Hershenow



Society for
Technical
Communication

Post-Conference Issue

From the Editor

The Post-Conference issue is always a lot of fun to put together, but it's not an easy job. There are usually too many great photos to choose from, too many reviews of sessions and meetings and other activities to fit in a single issue. And this time around was no exception.

But besides photography from Rachel Houghton, Rick Lippincott, and several IDL SIG members, and besides session reviews from Jackie Damrau, Mellissa Ruryk, and Jamye Sagan, we also have some excellent articles this quarter.

Our feature article, by SIG member and STC Fellow T.R. Girill, describes how changes in documentation rules are providing more work for technical communicators. And our two Graduate Scholarship winners, Roberta Proulx and Anna Stolpe, have written engaging accounts of their very interesting projects.

I hope you enjoy this issue!

Robert Hershenow
Managing Editor

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From the Managers

SIG Initiatives

At the Summit the SIG held its annual business meeting, where one of the topics of discussion was the SIG's annual initiatives. This year we changed up the initiatives a bit, so we wanted to hear from SIG members about how the SIG can accomplish these initiatives and bring more value to our members.

Here are the initiatives and suggestions we recorded during our meeting:

Initiative #1:

Increase the level of participation and involvement of our members.

- Presence at the Communities Reception
- Post summary of business meeting on the SIG's website
- Increase the amount of content on our website
- Provide a summary of each page on our website
- Send out an email blast prior to the Summit
- Talk to non-members to find out why they haven't joined
- Hold more official meetings than just the one at the Summit
- Offer webinars at different times; stagger the times presented such as mornings or evenings or at 10a, 1p, and 7p; many potential participants are not allowed to attend while they are at work; having the webinars at different times would allow them to attend
- Add personal testimonials to the website
- Use Mail Chimp for analytics
- Send notice of newsletter to all STC membership

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Cindy Pao



Preeti Mathur



SIG Initiatives, continued

Initiative #2:

Build and improve our communication channels to encourage the free exchange of ID-related knowledge, ideas, and skills.

- Facebook
- Mailman list
- Facebook widget on our website
- Pinterest
- Mobile app
- Open up LinkedIn group with business rules
- Intercom special issue on ID

Initiative #3:

Re-energize instructional design activities and offerings within STC to promote the ID career path.

- Technical Communication journal: article from the ID perspective; send a request to Menno de Jong from Dr. Damrau and Dr. Jennings
- Webinars at the Society level
- Internships

For the rest of this year, and probably into next year, you're going to see work on these initiatives driving activity within our SIG. The activities that were suggested during the business meeting are an excellent way for the SIG to serve its members and, in the process, earn Community Achievement Awards.

If you have ideas for any of the initiatives, we would love to hear from you!

Send an email to Preeti and Cindy at manager@stcidlsig.org.

Please like our new page on Facebook:

Society For Technical Communication - Instructional Design & Learning SIG



Look for the yellow lightbulb!!

Change in Hazard Communication brings Tech-Comm Opportunity

A major change in long-dormant standards sometimes quickly creates new instructional design opportunities. That is what happened in March, 2012, when new U.S. standards spawned new training needs for chemical hazard communication.

T. R. Girill
STC Fellow

The Change

Many technology workers are familiar with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), which are summaries of chemical hazards loosely standardized in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations in 1994 (29 CFR 1910.1200). On March 26, 2012, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration revised this influential standard. While these changes are gradual (rolling out over the next three years), they are also major:

- **Coverage.**

The new rules apply to about 945,000 chemicals, handled by employees in about 7 million workplaces. Diverse people will therefore encounter the new “Safety Data Sheets” (SDSs) and their associated chemical labels.

- **Consistency.**

Different chemical suppliers interpreted the old rules differently, so many MSDSs were incomplete, confusing, or inconsistently organized. Now, the same 16 topical rows (e.g., “Section 6. Accidental Release Measures”) must always appear in the same numbered order on every SDS.

- **Labels and Classification.**

For the first time, hazard communication in the U.S. has embraced the grandly titled “Globally Harmonized System” (GHS) already used in the European Union and Japan. Prime GHS features include three that greatly increase SDS data density:

1. **Descriptions.**

These must now cover responsible chemical sources (company name, address, and even emergency contact number) as well as specific biological hazards (e.g., “May cause liver and kidney damage”).

2. **Instructions.**

These must now enable safe interactions (e.g., “Wear protective gloves” or “Use only nonsparking tools”).

3. **Text/graphics integration.**

To focus attention and improve label usefulness across different language communities, GHS labels supplement words with standardized pictograms (e.g., a stylized flame if the labeled chemical burns).

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The Opportunity

These changes in the “hazard communication standard” (or HCS, as the safety professionals say) pose two interesting challenges for instructional designers.

The first is the high-stakes nature of HCS training goals. Helping people learn the GHS terminology for warnings, the pictograms for chemical dangers, or the required 16 SDS fields seems bureaucratic. The real goal here is more urgent: helping people find and deploy appropriate hazard-control information quickly so that they can protect themselves and others, and avoid “chemical source illness and injuries.”

The second instructional design challenge stems from audience diversity. Many different people need to cope with the new HCS in very different ways:

- **Authors.** Industrial chemists (and other subject-matter experts) need to apply the new HCS actively, to generate new labels and expand or revise inadequate Safety Data Sheets on which others will depend for those high-stakes goals.
- **Employees.** Whether they work at chemical vendors or at customer sites, employees need to become familiar with how the new HCS helps them better manage workplace risks.
- **Maintenance staff.** Those who work on loading docks, in stock rooms, or on cleaning crews need to reliably use the new chemical hazard labels and guides, but without having any deep professional knowledge of the underlying chemistry or physics.
- **Emergency responders.** Those who first arrive at an accidental spill or a burning structure need to be able to rapidly access and apply just the relevant slice of hazard information (for example, about “personal protective equipment” or PPE) without being distracted by low-relevance background details. (Note that this “first response” duty is not discharged simply by calling the local fire department. On-site workers need enough hazard training to correctly assess a spill’s risk, on-site safety staff need to know what “defensive action” to start [such as protecting storm drains], and

on-site engineers need to know how to assist HazMat responders with relevant valves or switches.)

- **Senior managers.** Policy-makers need to extract from current HCS material the best practices to implement safety mandates effectively yet economically (e.g., through astute content reuse).
- **Teachers and students.** From elementary through college, students need to learn about the new HCS not just to keep themselves and classmates safe in labs and on field trips, but ultimately to improve future hazard communication techniques.

Section 13

Safety Data Sheet Section 13 is a microcosm of all these instructional design demands and opportunities. Until now, Section 13 (disposal information) was often left empty or omitted by lazy chemical vendors, who just cryptically referred to “local rules and regulations.” This made environmental engineers turn gray. Under the new HCS, no one can ignore such disposal details, because Section 13 can no longer remain empty. Furthermore, its content must include practical instructions, since how-to information is just what the audience for Section 13 needs. Finally, standardizing Section 13’s number, format, and row location (within an SDS) enables rapid retrieval of these disposal instructions during the stress of a chemical crisis.

Safety consultant Jason Massey predicts “an authoring avalanche” as a result of these HCS changes. Instructional designers are well prepared to help move the snow.



e-Book Computer Training: Evaluating a Small Training Program

by *Roberta Proulx*, 2013 IDL SIG Graduate Scholarship Co-Recipient

As part of my master's Evaluation Methodology class at Boise State University, I took on an interesting project: evaluating the e-Books Training Program at my local library in Chandler, Arizona. During this project I worked with a fellow graduate student, Tiffany Smith. Tiffany and I are both master's candidates in BSU's Organizational Performance and Workplace Learning program.

Before I start, here's a quick question: How many personal devices do you have on your desk right now? At a minimum, I'm guessing you're using a PC or laptop along with a Smartphone, right? It's worth noting that libraries are stepping into the future along with the rest of us, dealing with technology and asking questions that will reshape the future of the public library system. As the number of books that line the shelves of libraries shrink, it's important for everyone in the community to have equal access to the new medium, the e-book.

Increasing Digital Inclusion

During our project, Tiffany and I studied how the library has attempted to bridge the digital divide and increase awareness of the library's electronic resources by offering training. The Chandler

Public Library's e-Books Training Program, conceived by library management team members Ms. Brenda Brown and Ms. Kris Sherman, provides step-by-step technical assistance for patrons when downloading digital resources using personal devices, such as iPads® or Kindles®. The primary evaluation question that management asked was "Is the e-Books Training Program increasing digital inclusion in the community?"

Defining Dimensions and Ranking

Since the library's training program was already in place, Tiffany and I performed a summative evaluation designed to find ways to improve on the mature evaluand: the e-Books Training Program. We focused on outcomes of the Training Program Logic Model more than processes. To begin, we donned our Sherlock Holmes "detective" hats and talked to both library management and employees to research and create a draft Training Impact Model (next page). This shorthand model, based on Brinkerhoff's guidelines, helped us boil down the library's training program into its basic components: program capabilities, critical actions, key results and business goals. This was a valuable – and critical – step in our evaluation.

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E-Book Training Program Logic Model:

Resources /Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Funds Patrons Volunteers Library computers Library classes (e-book) Broadband availability E-reader applications Library resources on the internet, including e-books Personal devices (optional)	Attend library classes Reserve a computer available in the library Access a session through the library's broadband using a library computer Access library resources via a library computer Access a session through the library's broadband using a personal device Install an e-reader application Download e-books to any personal device Access library resources via a personal device Train library personnel to keep ahead of trends	Access and use files on the device Access a library session and go to the internet Download e-books using the library website without help	<i>Short-term:</i> Library staff receive fewer questions from patrons about e-book downloads, internet searches, and internet sessions Increased use of library's digital resources and programs <i>Long-term:</i> Fewer problems with hard-copy books, since more patrons are downloading	Increased digital inclusion More library services are available to all patrons Increased communication conduit (from the library to potential users) Increased digital resources Reduced hard-copy books

At this point, we began identifying the aspects of the training program most important to the library and its patrons. In evaluation lingo, these aspects are termed dimensions. Since we wanted to keep the evaluation manageable for our short timeframe, we limited the study to three primary dimensions. Each dimension was associated with a specific question related to the training program:

- Availability of library resources: Are enough resources available for trainees to use at the library, including

drop-in sessions that fit patrons' schedules, available and fast WIFI connections, and e-books and resources that satisfy patrons' interests?

- Need for assistance: How much assistance is needed after trainees complete the classes?
- Usage of library resources: Is there increased use of library resources and programs?

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After defining the dimensions, we queried management to determine the importance of each dimension through ranking. The management team chose these rankings:

- usage of library resources - extremely important
- availability of library resources - very important
- need for assistance - important

With our evaluation framework in place, we moved to the next step.

Our Methodology: Dealing with Data

Defining and structuring our data instruments was the next issue at hand. After discussing the best ways to gather the data we required, we settled on three main data inquiry techniques: open-ended, semi-structured interviews, web- and paper-based surveys, and library usage records. During any evaluation, it's important to use triangulation (with different types of data) and critical multiplism (using multiple sources of information) to increase credibility. For example, if library employees stated that patrons were performing more downloads in 2013 than they did in 2012, we examined library records related to downloads for validation.

Our next step was challenging: determining the key questions to ask during our surveys and interviews. After tossing out several of our first drafts, we finally zeroed in on suitable questions to tie our interviews and surveys to each of the three dimensions. Our next step, entering the web-based survey data into Qualtrics®, was easy.

Deciphering Our Data and Drawing Conclusions

With our initial detective work behind us, reviewing our compiled data and seeing how the results supported the three dimensions was relatively easy. While we can't discuss the details here, our initial hard work paid off! With our conclusions in hand, we were able to provide the library with targeted information related to the strengths and weaknesses of the e-Books Training Program as well as offer suggestions for improvement. One of the best parts of the evaluation was being able to "sit at the table" with library management and discuss our findings with confidence. We were also pleasantly surprised how much data our relatively small project revealed about the library's training program. The interviews with selected library employees, in particular, were invaluable.

Would I take on another evaluation? In a heartbeat! I believe that a sound evaluation is well worth the reward regardless of the size or focus of your training.

Reference:

Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2006). *Telling training's story: Evaluation made simple, credible, and effective*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Roberta Proulx, one of two recipients of the IDL SIG's 2013 Graduate Scholarship, is pursuing her Master's in Instructional and Performance Technology at Boise State University. She lives in Arizona, where she is involved in a project at the Chandler Public Library aimed at increasing digital literacy of adults in the community who have no access to digital resources.

Technology-Supported Language Learning

By *Anna Stolpe*, 2013 IDL SIG Graduate Scholarship Co-Recipient

The Russian Basic course, the project I will present here, is comprised of a well-balanced combination of traditional classroom activities and use of technology for language learning.

The training lasts 44 weeks, with 20 contact hours in class and 15 hours of independent studies weekly. In order to tailor this intensive training to meet the demanding language requirements, a unique method of curriculum design was developed.

The course consists of three components: computer-assisted pronunciation and grammar exercises; classroom activities; and grammar resources for independent studies. Materials are presented so that students are able to use contact time with the instructor in the most effective way utilizing a “flipped classroom” model. The use of computer assisted activities outside of class to drill pronunciation and certain grammar models changes the relationship of the learner to the material, and gives the classroom a different function. In this teaching model, classroom time is used for learner-centered activities such as answering students’ questions, honing fluency in discussion, and clarifying complex grammar points. Grammar resources can be read at any time before the class, anywhere, and at a custom-tailored pace.

When I joined the small team of 4 developers to begin shaping the Russian Basic course in 2011 I faced a challenge of supplying the text-heavy course with instructional graphics. The increasing use of highly visual media combined with easy access to visuals available online often leads to sporadic choice of instructional graphics. Often graphics in instructional materials serve an exclusively decorative purpose. While illustrations that add visual interest to the page or screen are easy to find they do not always promote learning; on the contrary, they may interfere with learning as it is stated in the research done by Pass, Chun, Mayer and Leutner (2003). The path of designing and developing custom-tailored graphics was chosen by the design team as we wanted to move away from decorative graphic elements.

Also, while images are often used in instructional materials for beginners, the value of graphics for intermediate language learners is underestimated. The traditional topic introduction through text has several disadvantages over organizational graphics. First, as opposed to the organizational graphics, it is hard to see relations between the ideas in a text. Second, text goes against constructivist principles

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Tech-Supported Language Learning, continued

by putting words and ideas into learners' heads, while graphics prompt learners to generate their own thoughts about the given topic. Third, using text alone violates the multimedia principle that states that people learn better from words and pictures than from words alone.

While adding graphical elements to the course content, the contiguity principle of instructional design was given special attention. Placing corresponding words and pictures near each other is crucial in foreign language learning, as it forms strong associations between the idea and its expression in the target language.

One of the weaknesses revealed through evaluation was the need for additional support for learners to process self-study materials. This problem was addressed by integrating the curriculum into technologies students naturally use. A platform within Facebook allowed students access points to language experts and peer-to-peer support. While the educational value of the learning community on a social media platform is still being assessed, level one evaluation (learner's reaction) shows positive results.

Anna Stolpe of Fairfax, Virginia, one of two recipients of the IDL SIG's 2013 Graduate Scholarship, is working on her Master's in Instructional Design and Development at George Mason University. Anna developed a fascination with foreign cultures and languages as a child in Russia. The project she submitted stems from her current work at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute, where she works with language development thought leaders to design technology-driven learning platforms.

Happy News is the Best News!



Please email membership@stcidlsig.org
to share news of your

Accomplishments

Awards

Certifications

Graduations

Other Kudos

for the next issue of
IDEAL: Design for Learning

Summit 2013



Clockwise from top left:

Preeti Mathur, Mellissa Ruryk, Jamye Sagan and Maralee Sautter (on-a-stick) enjoying the Honors Banquet;

Viqui Dill demonstrates her company's online help system;

Cindy Pao speaks at Leadership Day;

Mellissa, Cindy, and Preeti at the IDL SIG Business Meeting

photo of Cindy Pao by Rick Lippincott

Reviews of Selected Conference Sessions

Using Semantic Technology to Create Process-Driven Documentation

Kees van Mansom, Be Informed

Reviewed by [Jackie Damrau](#)

This session was interesting to see how you can take documentation and make it more wizard-driven to provide the right amount of content for the users. The writer still writes the content in a help file format; the user can then respond to specific questions based on the content in the help file to reach the right answer to solve the problem. The use of semantic technology does not require any programming or coding. Anyone can maintain the information with simple updates and good structural focus on words and technology.

The benefits to using semantic technology are that you have a smarter documentation solution, you provide support through context assessment of the documentation, and your decisions to the wizard provide personalized routes to a goal (solution).

Addicted to Meaning: Mental Models for Technical Communicators

Kai Weber, SimCorp GmbH

Reviewed by [Jackie Damrau](#)

What is meaning and why should I care? Meaning follows the DIKW principle (data, information, knowledge, and wisdom). Meaning helps to connect the dots for the audience and why they should care and

what they should do to be informed about the “thing” they are reading or researching.

Meaning relates back to knowing how the information we are putting out there will be received by the audience reading it. The use of media can allow or restrict feedback; think of the many websites or blogs that you may read that do not let you provide feedback. Are you more likely to return to those or to find ones where you can provide feedback? Reading comments from others on a particular blog or website helps us see different viewpoints and make our own informed decisions. In many cases, this information can be used in updating your documentation in the future and even help you in building specific personas for relating into your documentation.

Kai shared that the mental models technical communicators use should help to:

1. Clarify through the use of definitions and a glossary
2. Ensure comprehensibility
3. Invite feedback and collaboration

Heinz von Foerster stated, “There is no meaning but the one created by the reader.” With that said, is this one reason that technical communication fails to be meaningful, that is what we write is not meaningful because we do not know our audience well enough? You answer that for yourself! For me, when I consider that statement, I think to FAQs (frequently asked questions) pages I’ve visited and confirmed by Kai.

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When I visit these pages, the FAQs are written from whose perspective: the developer, the customer representative, or someone else thinking this is what “they” will want to know? What if I don’t know what I want to know, but the information is on your website somewhere? If you take the documentation wizard approach that I learned about in Kees van Mansom’s presentation (previous page), then you have a solution that works.

Kai did provide tips on how to create meaning. We need to compare the information by building on what we know and then match that with the mental models of how readers will want to find information or what questions they might ask. A good focus group usability exercise might help build this information. Creating meaning also requires being flexible and adaptable, supporting meaningful knowledge, not being inert and uncontrollable, and looking at it from a user versus designer perspective.

Meaningful user assistance must be relevant to the user and applicable to the situation; it must be a way ahead or a workaround; have an explanation; and even be understanding or sympathetic. Meaning requires having understanding (being cognitive and empathetic) to specific situations. It follows the guidelines of knowing your audience, understanding semantics, and learning about mental models.

Planning and Creating Engaging Infographics

Michael Opsteegh, Eyefinity

Reviewed by [Jackie Damrau](#)

Infographics help you see the data points and lets you write a story around the data. The focus in an infographic is mostly on the presentation of the data. They can be persuasive, yet can be overused or misused. I remember when taking a statistics class during my MBA pursuit that

the professor said, “Statistics will say what ‘you’ want them to say.” They may not say the truth; they can be bent to say anything you want. As the consumer of the infographic, it falls on me to do my own research to determine if the information presented is accurate within my viewpoint. If so, then I can endorse it; otherwise, it gives me a good point of reference for discussion with friends or others.

Michael shared several interesting links to begin building your own infographics. Take a look at [Mint.com](#) (helps you create a graphic to know where your money is going and discover your spending habits) and [Visual.ly](#) (helps you create infographics and data visualizations to tell your story, drive traffic, and amplify your social media presence).

What skills do you need to create an infographic? A good understanding of liberal arts, social sciences, and mathematics. Graphic design is not skilled because you can hire that or you can use Excel to create a basic chart. Otherwise, hire someone to do the fancy graphic design using your data and thoughts. Michael recommended Infogram as a service to use in creating infographics. His one caveat is to not use a “templated” service. Each infographic should be unique and never dropped into a standard template (think “boring” if you see the same style with different data).

Tools you need might include:

1. **Evernote** to record your thoughts, stories, and questions you want to use. This software lets you synchronize your thoughts from your phone to your laptop to the cloud.
2. **Excel** or any other statistical package to create the data you want. With Excel, you can create pivot tables to pull the right information out to produce the graphic.

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3. **Illustrator or Photoshop** for graphics or photos used in your infographic. Illustrator keeps you honest by letting you eyeball your graphics and lets you represent your data graphically.

The data itself can be represented in a bar chart, pie chart or doughnut chart, scatter plots, line graphs and area charts, Venn diagrams, flow charts or pedigree charts, and pictograms or iconographs. Michael recommended reading several sources to determine when best to use these data representation elements to represent your information. Each one represents certain information better than others.

Creating an infographic requires four steps: 1) Identify the information; 2) Edit the information; 3) Plot the information; and 4) Review the information. Finally, publish the information once you are certain the message you wish to convey is complete and ethical. Remember, never misrepresent the data!

Writing for Everyone: SEO, ESL, Translation, and Accessibility

Char James-Tanny, JTF Associates, Inc.

Reviewed by [Jackie Damrau](#)

Char started by asking how texting is becoming the wave of the future and the “only” way in which to communicate with the Gen Z (millennials) youth. Face-to-face meetings are not popular with this group, yet are required to conduct business. I’m sure we’ve all encountered a group of people around a table in a restaurant or a local pub, all texting each other instead of openly conversing. I have, and it’s amazing that an electronic device is the preferred mechanism for voicing opinions.

For many years, businesses have put their products or services into separate divisions or silos. Char related that without knowing it, we have put our audiences into silos as well based on the type of content that we provide. We don’t think about the other elements like SEO or translation for English as a Second Language (ESL) purposes or different languages. This all requires a different editing and writing approach to take into these items before we can say we have a final document. These are definitely thoughts to consider when writing any content on whether it meets with SEO, ESL, and translation requirements.

Char then began talking about accessibility and how it scares people. For documentation, she related that at least 11% of our audience has some sort of challenge or disability. We should not write so that it is possible for the reader to understand us, but so that it is impossible for the reader to misunderstand it.

Char shared her tips for making writing better:

1. **Use headings.** These are important for cognitive people and screen readers.
2. **Use active voice and second person.** (A tip she shared is to put the phrase “in zombies” into your material after the verb. Then read it aloud to determine if you have passive voice that can be changed. It’s amazing what zombies can do in a text document besides liven the text. Just remember to remove the phrase, otherwise you might have a zombie visiting you.)

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3. **Be consistent with your terminology.** Know the difference between “select,” “click,” and “press”. Choose the best one and use it throughout. Scour your document to make sure you did not slip and insert one of the others that are *not* interchangeable within the context of your document.
4. **Be clear.** Serial commas are the number one problem. With translation tools, the serial comma is preferred so that the meaning is not distorted for the audience.
5. **Monitor sentence length.** Sentences should be fewer than 25 words, but varied in length.
6. **Readability.** In the United States, the readability factor is for 5th or 6th grade. Know your audience for translation purposes to make sure the readability is appropriate.
7. **Use the best word and big words only when needed.** If the profession for which you are writing lives on big words, then no problem. Otherwise, err on the side of caution and use smaller words. This helps in the translation costs as well, as you pay for each word.
8. **Watch acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms.** Not always understood or translatable outside of the general context.

Empowering the Introvert Within: Becoming an Outstanding Leader

Ben Woelk & Hannah Morgan

Reviewed by [Jamy Sagan](#)

This was probably my favorite session of the Summit. The content really hit home, since deep down inside I am probably one of the biggest introverts out there. It was so reassuring to hear that introverts can – and do – make great leaders due to key personality traits such as being better listeners and leading by enabling others. As far as networking goes, I again was blown away by the simple truths Ben and Hannah presented – it’s perfectly OK to just network one-on-one. Another great tip for introverts is leveraging social media outlets; they allow one to communicate in writing, which is generally more comfortable to the introvert. Another good tip is joining Toastmasters to develop verbal communication skills in a safe environment.

Throughout the presentation, Ben and Hannah dispelled several myths about introverts vs. extroverts – introverts aren’t necessarily shy folks, and they don’t necessarily hate people – they simply derive their energy via solitude whereas extroverts thrive on human contact.

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Personality & Change Management

Andrea J. Wenger

Reviewed by [Jamye Sagan](#)

As instructional designers and trainers, change is the name of the game. Therefore, it's vital to understand key components about how to deal with change. In her presentation, Andrea shared several tips for introducing changes in general – including: Involve employees in the change process. Make sure the change addresses the needs of others, not just your own. Let people voice their concerns and acknowledge these concerns, even if you cannot take further action. Finally, Andrea explained how people with various personality types (according to the Myers-Brigg scale) handle change. It's always valuable to know how to approach change from different angles, and Andrea's handouts did that just perfectly.

Screen Video – Best Practices

Matt Pierce

Reviewed by [Jamye Sagan](#)

I also attended some training-specific sessions, of course – I gleaned several useful ideas for improving the interactivity and presentation of the deliverables I produce.

In this session, Matt offered a wealth of common-sense advice and expert tips for creating high-quality screen videos. One tip that stood out to me was the clap test for determining a good place to record audio – if you clap and hear an echo, it's not a good place to record audio.

In addition to offering advice about creating screen videos, Matt addressed two important questions about the general use of video. First, although videos can be a powerful tool to show something in action, not everything needs to be a video; a job aid or infographic may be more beneficial. Second, when determining how long the video should be, one should show only what is necessary – no more, no less.

Creating Learning that Lasts with Interactive Documents

Jamie Gillenwater

Reviewed by [Jamye Sagan](#)

This was another valuable and educational session for me in that I became familiar with two more learning theories - Kolb's Lewinian Experiential Learning Model and Fleming's VARK learning theory. Plus, I got to see how interactive elements can enhance documentation. For example, when one clicks on a certain part of a diagram, they can view a wealth of info – from a video tutorial on how the part is used, from a list of order numbers.

Although the content presented in Jamie's session focused on the Abode InDesign tool, the key concepts she introduced can be performed by other tools. In fact, about mid-session, I was already sketching out ideas for my own interactive documents for work.

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Purposes, Personas, Conversations

Ginny Redish

Reviewed by [Mellissa Ruryk](#)

Being a consummate professional, Ginny Redish puts her money where her mouth is. She started with audience analysis to discover that while many attendees wrote for the web space, the majority were involved in the creation of user guides and Help systems, with a sprinkling of proposal writing and technical report editing types.

Ginny is a linguist and practitioner of plain language. Recently she published a primer on web writing called “Letting Go of the Words.” But the last page Ginny wanted to write: all of this applies to all good writing, no matter if it is for the web or on a mobile device or printed on paper.

Everything you write serves a purpose. You want someone to act based on what you write: a proposal for funding, instructions for installing an app; online help for a task, an email asking the company to pay you to attend the STC Summit. Each has criteria for success.

Everything we write is part of a conversation: if we think of it that way, we realize that everything we write is for other people. Therefore, we need to think about those other people. Every time we write, it's to a person who has their own filters, issues, vocabulary strengths or weaknesses, and purpose for reading.

In Ginny's words, “Asynchronous conversation is the contribution of professional technical communicators.”

Good writers have empathy for their readers and want to help them

solve a problem. There are always specifics that can help us be better writers, if we will take the time to think about the readers and plan for them. Understand that for most of what we write, the other person starts the conversation.

Ginny pointed out that 80% of the adults in the US currently own internet-ready smart phones and for many of them, that's the only way they access the web. As writers, we must take into account the fact that mobile is here to stay; so content strategy and management is rising in importance. Ginny covered the main tenets of content strategy as it moves through the content life cycle: how it must be planned, coordinated, reviewed, managed and maintained and ultimately removed – all with cross-group collaboration. Decisions must be made at a strategic level: who will write, edit, illustrate and produce? What skills do those people need? What about technology – what systems and templates will you use, how will people be trained? Content Strategy is about messages and voice; what media, tone and styles do we need to use to reach our audience? We are trying to arrive at the right amount of content delivered to the right person at the right time in the right medium. That's all you need to worry about – get those down and you're done! Ha-ha, not quite.

This is where Purpose, Personas and Conversations come into play. Everything that we write is for a purpose, a purpose that should align with the business goals and strategy of the company or organization you are working for. Ginny gave an example of a great website with a well-read blog that didn't relate itself to the products it was designed to market. This disconnect cost the company money; maybe not in direct costs but most definitely in lost opportunities.

Measureable purpose

Be specific: what effect do you want your writing to have on the reader? Focus on what you want people to do because you wrote this content. Instead of saying the purpose is to “sell a lot of shoes”, focus on the conversational outcome. A better purpose is “have people buy the shoes we sell.” Instead of telling someone “how to get their driver’s license”, re-frame it as “having someone get their driver’s license successfully, without frustration and without calling the support line.”

Personas – who they are

Write down adjectives and phrases to describe the abilities, aptitudes, and attitudes of your personas. Even assumptive personas can help you focus on the people your copy is for. Listen to your user talking to you in your head. Think through the conversation as you are writing to your customers.

Ginny showed a couple of great A-B tests that really emphasized her points. Her contention is that choices that allow the customer to feel as if they can talk to the site have a higher impact on sales. One example had two choices: “For a skin consultation, register here” versus “I want an expert opinion, sign me up!” and “Start your free 30 day trial” versus “Start my free 30 day trial”. In both cases the latter wordings proved more effective, because they gave the customer a voice. By writing instructions in such a way that the customer was conversing with the website (i.e., in an apparent two-way conversation), responses rates shot up and readers turned into customers.

Note that Ginny will be presenting at the PLAIN2013 Conference being held in Vancouver, BC in October in 2013. Timed to coincide with International Plain Language Day on October 13, the conference also celebrates the 20th anniversary of the founding of Plain Language Association International. Clear writing in plain language saves time, money, and lives. Check out PLAIN2013.ORG and attend if you can: PLAIN 2013 is attracting speakers from all over the world. I hope to see you there!



Ginny Redish

Awards Banquet

by Preeti Mathur

The Awards Banquet at the Summit is a night where everyone dresses up a la red-carpet style, ready to receive awards and cheer others. Many of us don tuxedos, long, shimmering gowns and this year was no different. We even had Makarand Pandit, who was made an Associate Fellow, come dressed in his ancestral Indian ethnic garb—cap and all!



After a reception outside the ballroom, we were seated to enjoy the delicious banquet food, libations and good conversations. At the IDL SIG table the festivities were remotely jump-started by Maralee Sautter, who – though not in attendance – had remembered her previous year’s promise to buy a bottle of wine for our table, and sent it along with Mellissa Ruryk!

Honors Banquet, continued

After the meal, President Alan Hauser and incoming President Nicky Bleiel began the awards ceremony. This year's two new Fellows are both IDL SIG members. Congratulations again to Karen Baranich and Kit Brown-Hoekstra on this great achievement!



photos: Rick Lippincott



It was a proud moment for us when the IDL SIG was announced as a Community of Excellence. With much cheering and fanfare, all IDL SIG members present at the banquet marched up on the stage... including the absent Maralee, who appeared on a stick!



STC's 60th Anniversary Party!



Jackie Damrau and Nathaniel Lim cuttin' the rug with The Rough Drafts
- photo by Rachel Houghton

STC's 60th Anniversary Party!



Check out the story behind this year's Rough Drafts band – Viqui Dill, Rich Maggiani, Steve Adler and Robert Hershenow – on [Viqui's blog](#).

Rockin' Photos by Rachel Houghton!

STC's 60th Anniversary Party!



The Devil Went Down to Georgia
– air-fiddle by Jamye Sagan
photo by Robert Hershnow



This is Me! Robert Hershenow

Over the years, IDEaL: Design for Learning has featured profiles of various IDL SIG members. Now let's shine the spotlight on the man who works hard behind the scenes to produce our award-winning newsletter – Robert Hershenow.

by Jamye Sagan

A member of the IDL SIG for the past 10 years, Robert Hershenow has been the Managing Editor of our newsletter since 2005.

“I joined the IDL SIG to learn more about Instructional Design,” Robert says. “I’d been a trainer and training manager in the past and wanted to stay in touch with what was going on in the field.”

Robert is an independent technical communications contractor. “My work has always involved user assistance and/or training,” Robert explains. “As so much training has moved out of the classroom and into the virtual realm, I’ve shifted my focus – like many of the rest of us – toward online delivery. Over the last few years I’ve been developing ways to help people make better presentations and voice recordings.”

In fact, at the last two STC Summits, Robert has presented three sessions on voice recordings: a progression series topic in 2012, and a full-length session and lightning talk in 2013.

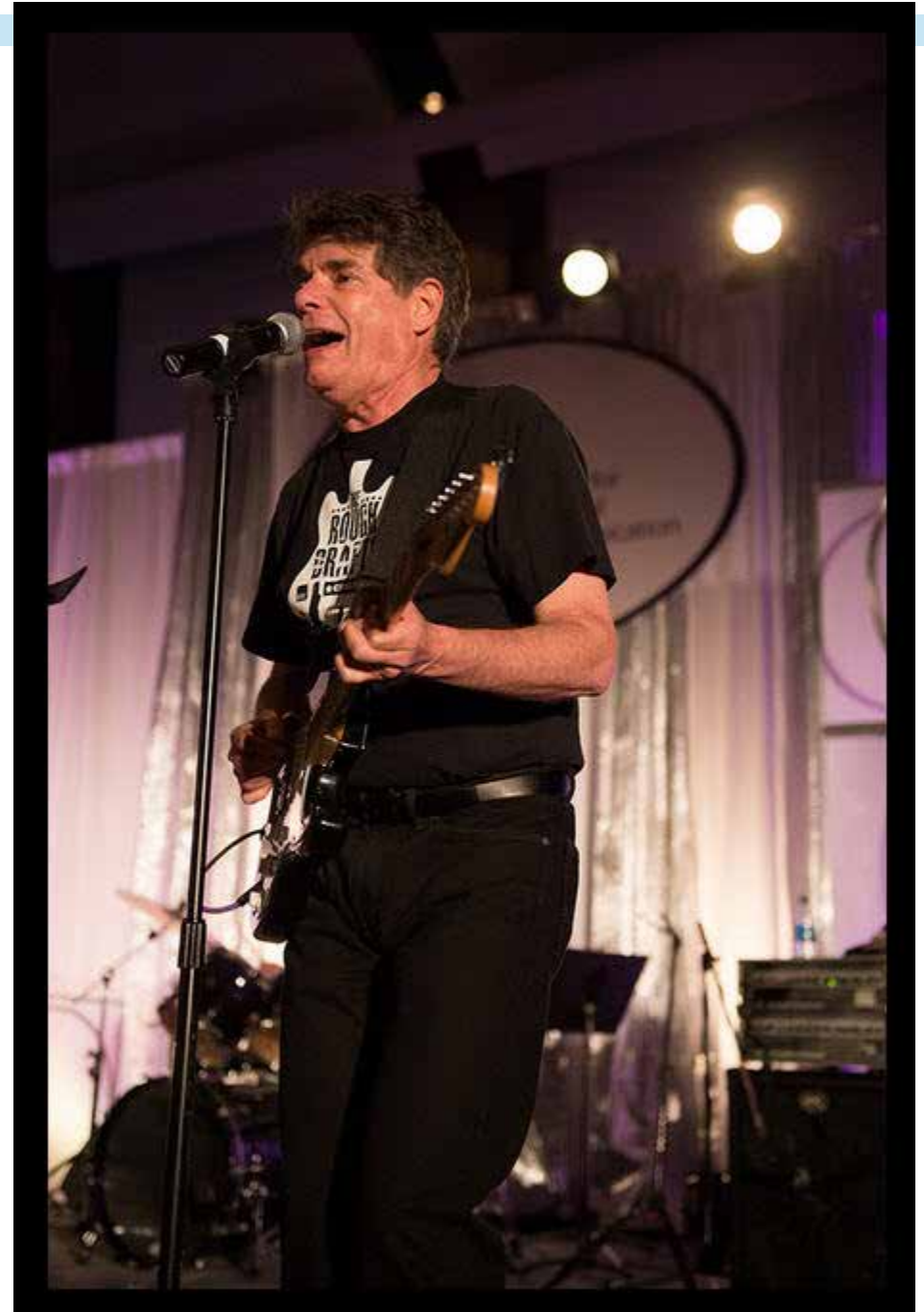
In addition to teaching people, Robert is a college student himself. “After earning two associate degrees in Communications and Electronics Technology I went to work to support my young family,” Robert explains. “Now, I have returned to finish a BA in Communications.” He has spent the past two years attending online classes at Sierra College, and plans to transfer to San Francisco State University next year. “I wish I’d completed that degree when it was almost free to go to school,” Robert reflects. “On the other hand, it’s been very exciting to come back and learn about things that were undiscovered just a few years ago.”

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This Is Robert Hershenow - continued

In his spare time, Robert pursues his lifelong interest in music. If you've been to either of the last two STC Summits in Chicago (2012) and Atlanta (2013), you may have seen Robert perform as a member of STC's rock-n-roll band, the Rough Drafts!

Robert lives in Berkeley, California, with his partner Judith and a large cat named Willis. He has two sons, both in college in the Sacramento area.





Secretary's Roundup

SIG News By Mellissa Ruryk

What's going on around here? After the excitement of the Summit, it seems the answer might be “not much.” But just under the surface, your SIG's leadership team is paddling like crazy.

I think the job of treasurer is a demanding one, but it must be even more so when you aren't the one who writes the cheques or gets the bank statements. Instead, all of this activity is handled by the Society and our Treasurer, [Lynda Shindley](#), does a great job of keeping track based on the information she receives from the Society's main office. Our bank balance is holding steady but needs to increase to cover the anticipated expenses of the coming year. Webinars are the major source of income for our SIG, so make sure you make the effort to attend, and promote the webinars to your network both inside and outside the SIG. Every signup helps!

Past-co-manager [Jamye Sagan](#) wears several hats for the SIG. She looks after Membership, Public Relations, Social Media (along with [Maralee Sautter](#)), and Surveys, and is a major contributor to the newsletter. Oh yes, she holds down a day job and has a husband to look after, too! if one person can juggle all those plates, surely any one of them wouldn't be too much for a single person to handle in a given month. If you can contribute some time to your SIG the benefits are amazing, but you'll have to step up to find out what they are and enjoy them.

As Survey Manager, Jamye is preparing a survey on mentorship, a hot topic in the Society right now. There are two reasons we survey our members: one, we are a virtual community: only at the Summit do we ever get a chance to get to know one another in person, and then only as a small subset of members. Surveys help the leadership team and everyone else to understand who we are and what a range of skills, interests and demographics we represent. The other reason is a bit less altruistic: it's a category on the STC's Community Achievement Award application! But part of being a (great) community is the sense of belonging and that only comes from knowing each other.

AS PR/Social Media manager, Jamye set up a new Facebook page: Society for Technical Communication – Instructional Design & Learning SIG. Have you joined yet? This is another way we spread the news about our SIG, events, achievements, and interesting discussions. Check it out and “like” us!

[Katie Wilson](#) is setting up three more webinars for the fall of 2013, featuring Mike Enders from Articulate, [Robert Hershenow](#) on voice recording, and [Cheryl Zubeck](#) on gamification. Each webinar is another opportunity to volunteer, by being an audience member for the practice run, looking after the letters of Agreement with presenters, assisting with questions during the presentation, etc. Just email Katie if you can help. programs@stcidlsig.org

Of course, [Robert Hershenow](#) puts a ton of effort into this newsletter and it shows, doesn't it? He's recently introduced this new layout and it looks great—feedback has been 100% favourable.

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Sylvia Miller looks after the IDL SIG's College scholarships application process (and is looking for an assistant!). She has just finished the first draft of a guide that explains everything anyone would like to know about the IDL Scholarship: how entries are solicited, who is eligible, how entries are judged, and the award process. (I think she's trying to make the position more attractive to make sure that when it's time for her to move on, someone else can easily step up to the job and take over. Smart woman!) Make sure you tell anyone pursuing their education in instructional design about the scholarship and encourage them to apply when the time comes. If you'd like to help as a volunteer, email Sylvia at scholarship@stcidl-sig.org.

As I've made clear by now, our SIG is run by volunteers. We share the jobs that need to be done among willing participants: many hands make light work! In this vein, even the "top dog" jobs are shared: instead of having one leader taxed to the hilt with all the responsibility of running the SIG, the jobs of manager and assistant manager are each split into two. There are two Co-Managers, and two Co-Assistant Managers. Cindy Pao and Preeti Mathur are the current Co-Managers, and they are looking for two Co-Assistant Managers. This would be an "assistant manager-in-training" role, beginning next January; you'd spend a year as co-assistant manager before becoming co-manager. If you're interested, please consider putting your name forward. The wheels have lots of grease in this SIG and things run very smoothly. But only with good leaders! If you know someone within the SIG who would be excellent at leading, please talk to them and ask them to contact Cindy or Preeti at manager@stcidlsig.org. Come join us, have fun and enjoy the rewards of a good job well done.

New Members

The IDL SIG welcomes new members who joined between April 1 and July 15, 2013.

Nathan Samuel Atkins	Carrie A. Moulder
Sabreena Braich	Jessica Rineer
Paola Maria Brunello	Brichaya Shah
Brian Byllesby	Dr. Joseph Sigalas
Laura Cooper	Gregory Paul Sims
Subie Cox	Dr. Maggy Smith
Jason Dorris	Derrick Sterling
Michael D. Eckenfels	Charles Stewart, III
Jeff Edman	Crystal Jayne Thillemann
Nan J. Fritz	Dave Turnley
Rebecca Huehls	Barbara Veneri
Mark Jones	Betty Walker
Zhigang Li	Jonathan M. H. Wiebe
Steven J. Luimes	Robert B. Workman
Traci Mayo	Terri L. Yeago
Travis Melton	Marc D. Young
Kathy Morgan	



Upcoming IDL SIG Webinars

Keep an eye on your e-mail and the [IDL SIG website](#) for info about three informative webinars this fall, featuring Mike Enders from Articulate, Robert Hershenow on narrative voice recording, and Cheryl Zubeck on gamification.

Technical Editing Fundamentals Two-Day Course

Presented by Michelle Corbin and Linda Oestreich

Designed for all technical editing practitioners, this course is a solid introduction for beginning technical editors and a great refresher for advanced technical editors. The course is interactive and includes exercises within the sessions and homework between sessions.

Normally a multi-week course, this special edition is compressed into just two days in August. [Details on the STC website.](#)

Live STC Web Seminars

The STC offers reasonably priced (just \$59 for members!) professionally-presented web seminars on a wide variety of technical communication topics. [See the STC website for details.](#)



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2013 Summit Proceedings

The [Proceedings of the 2013 Summit](#) is available for download in PDF form. Proceedings is a collection of papers from presenters at the Summit who provided them for the publication.

Doc-To-Help, who compiled the papers for Proceedings, is also providing a flash drive with the publication at the Summit; pick one up at the Registration Desk. You can also see the conference program for a QR code to access Proceedings on your mobile device.



2013 Salary Database is Available

All 2013 STC members receive a free copy of the 2012-2013 Salary Database. The Salary Database is now available! All members can download the publication from the [STC website](#).

Summit @ A Click is ON SALE thru July 31

[Summit@aClick](#) is an online collection of the conference's content, with audio and PowerPoint synched together. It's like being able to bring the entire content of the conference back to share with the rest of your company. The 2013 Summit included over 80 sessions in 7 tracks (see the program here) and Summit@aClick includes almost all of them.

The 2013 edition of [Summit@aClick is available for purchase!](#) Regular price is \$249 for members and \$499 for nonmembers, but you can take advantage of our special sale through 31 July and get it for just \$149 for members, \$299 for nonmembers!

About this Newsletter



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Make checks payable to Society for Technical Communication and send to:
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