TWIA Conference 2015

Content is King

23-24 October 2015

**Rendezvous Hotel
328 Flinders Street
Melbourne 3000**

To book: Register online and pay by PayPal or use the form on the conference flyer if paying by bank transfer, direct debit, cheque or money order. Post, email or fax the conference flyer to confirm your booking.

Early bird discount applies up to October 16.

Friday

Content as a driver of change

Lana Brindley, Senior manager of the Rackspace Private Cloud documentation team, and technical lead for OpenStack documentation

Content has driven humanity for as long as humanity has existed. Since the earliest people wandered the Earth, we have shared stories and fables designed to teach, entertain, and inform those who came after us. The only difference between technical communicators and the Brothers Grimm, is the sophistication of the tools we use.

Technical communication used to be about determining what content people needed, researching, and writing it. As the world has changed, and as content has become free, democratised and much more readily available (Google, anyone?) the problem space has moved from "*what do we document?*" to "*how do we organise all this?*".

The content generation model has been turned on its head.

In this presentation, Lana will explore how content has changed through history, explain some of the newest content curation models, how they are applied to modern technical writing teams, and go through some of the challenges in changing your documentation curation model.

About Lana

Lana Brindley has several university degrees, a few of which are even relevant to her field. Eventually, she worked out a way to get paid for her two passions – writing and playing with gadgetry – and has been a technical writer ever since.

Choosing the right path

Dr Tony Self, Managing Director, HyperWrite Pty Ltd

Something quite transformative is happening under our noses. The things that people choose to read information from are developing at an astonishing speed. These changing reading preferences are going to have a huge impact on technical communication in general, and user assistance in particular.

Technical communicators should be innovating, and finding better ways of communicating technical information through the mobile platform, through EPUB, through augmented reality, through HUD.

The key may well be to abandon our preconceptions and completely revise our approaches. This is as exciting as it is confronting. As Albert Einstein said, *"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."*

About Tony

With over 30 years of experience as a technical communicator, Tony has seen many documentation magic bullets come and go. For over 20 years, he has specialised in online help systems, computer-based training and electronic documents.

His presentations at conferences around the world have also made him a familiar name.

Tony completed his PhD in semantic mark-up languages in 2011, and his book *The DITA Style Guide* was published in the same year. Also in 2011, Tony's contribution to technical communication was recognised when he was presented with the prestigious ISTC Horace Hockley Award.

Don't miss the conference dinner!

7.00pm at the conference venue on Friday October 23, 2015

Check out the menu and book your place via the web site: www.astc.org.au by October 16. Partners welcome.

Technical Writers Industry Association Inc.

Generate content from source code

Grant Noble, Supervisor, Technical Publications RSA, the Security Division of EMC

Doxygen is a tool for generating documentation from a set of documented source code files. Documentation is extracted directly from the source code making it easier to keep it consistent with the actual functionality of the code. Documentation output formats include HTML, LaText, XML, RTF, DocBook and UNIX-Man. Doxygen will create documentation from many popular programming languages including C, C++, C#, Java or Python. Grant will show us how it works.

About Grant…

Grant Noble arrived in Australia from Canada in 1984 for a one-year working holiday, and never left. He worked as a Support Representative with various computer companies, including MAI, Burroughs, and Unisys. In 1995, his career took off in a completely different direction of technical writing, training development, and training, working with organisations like Suncorp, Metway, Queensland Rail, Mallesons Stephens Jacques, ADC/Intec, and Tucana Technologies. Grant joined RSA as a Senior Technical Writer in 2006.

Save time and your sanity: increase your efficiency with Microsoft Word

Rhonda Bracey, Managing Director, CyberText Consulting, Perth

Many of us use Microsoft Word regularly, either personally or for our clients. But are we using it efficiently? Rhonda will give us lots of practical tips to help us become more efficient with Word. Some of the areas she will cover include:

- Show everything – formatting marks, fields, bookmarks, track changes and, styles
- Automate tasks – autocorrect, keyboard shortcuts, TOCs, preformatted tables/text etc.
- Use the power of find and replace (including wildcards) to zip through changes.

About Rhonda…

Rhonda started her technical communication business in 1999, providing contract technical writing and editing services to companies of all sizes – from small start-ups to global multinationals. Since 2008, she has been the technical editor for the health, environment, and safety team on a $52b project for a global oil and gas company telecommuting from her home in Western Australia.

Rhonda has written thousands of articles for her professional blog, which is read by 7000+ people each day.

A Painless introduction to Information Typing

Dave Gash, HyperTrain, California USA

Information Typing is a powerful and important content structuring technique for user assistance authors, but one that is commonly misunderstood and certainly under-applied. Well-typed content benefits both readers and writers, and produces help topics that are easier to understand and use, focused within the domain, and reusable across output formats. In this tool-agnostic, non-DITA (really!) session, we'll look at the primary information types, examine some simple tests for determining what content goes where, and discover ways to reduce or eliminate redundant and unnecessary content.

About Dave...

Dave Gash is the owner of HyperTrain, a Southern California firm specialising in technology consulting and training for hypertext developers. A veteran software professional with over thirty years of development, documentation, and training experience, Dave holds degrees in Business and Computer Science, and is well known in the technical publications community as an interesting and engaging technical instructor. Dave is a frequent speaker at User Assistance conferences in the US and around the world.

Video as content: developing screencast tutorials for WorkflowMax

Steve Moss
Education content creator at WorkflowMax

WorkflowMax is cloud-based job management software aimed at small to medium businesses in the service sector, such as architects, builders, consultants and engineers. As a Xero product, WorkflowMax integrates closely with Xero accounting software. This presentation looks at the video-based training material for WorkflowMax and covers:

- the overall development process used for the screencast tutorials and courses
- what's involved in creating screencasts – to give you some understanding of how suitable they might be for use in your work situation.

About Steve…

Steve is based in Auckland and has been a self-employed technical communicator since 1988. He trained as a mechanical engineer in the UK and has extensive experience in the computer industry in software support, development and training. Steve is an Information Mapping certified instructor and is particularly interested in editing and the developing online learning material. In late 2014, he started developing the online help and video-based tutorials for WorkflowMax.

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Deliberate Content

Kylie Weaver, Technical communicator and project manager Melbourne
and Alon Hadass, Senior Business Analyst, ANZ

Is content really king? Content must serve – not rule – both its readers and its purpose. As technical communicators we should focus on *context:* reader and purpose, as the true monarch that governs content development. If we define 'content' as our 'measurable output' and understand that these deliverables are the culmination of a series of activities, we can then explore how *context* informs every one of those activities. Kylie will show us a simple way to keep focussed on context when developing content and will specifically explore the earlier stages of content development – before the real writing even begins.

About Kylie…

Kylie Weaver emerged from an Arts Degree in the mid-1990s wondering how she was going to make a living at the tail end of 'the recession we had to have' with nothing but a degree in Gothic fiction and some experience as a waitress and shop assistant.

She tripped and fell into part time work in a small computer based training company and decided to put her natural aversion to technology to good use – helping others avoid the pain she felt learning how to use it. Since then Kylie has worked as a technical communicator, business analyst, change manager, and most recently, project manager.

About Alon…

In the early nineties, Alon combined his passion for communication and love for all things technical in a career as a technical communicator. He wrote documentation, improved user experiences and managed teams for over ten years. Alon now has a career as a business analyst.

Saturday

Customer feedback from zero to maximum

John Wilson, Technical Communications Manager, MYOB Australia Pty Ltd

In the past, MYOB delivered most of their product help as PDF user guides and locally installed HTML help systems. There was no customer feedback.

The MYOB development team morphed into a fully-fledged agile powerhouse, complete with 3-12 week delivery cycles. Not only was the help to be delivered more often but it was for features that were often a bit nebulous until the last minute. Smashing!

This has led to the adoption of a minimalist approach to content, delivering only what can be produced in the time available.

MYOB relies on its users for feedback on what's not clear, or what they might want added or amended. That reduces waste and speeds up the time to market.

Is it possible for all of us to achieve the results John describes? Attend John's presentation and find out.

About John…

John appreciates nothing more than a good turn of phrase. Not just a greenie and devout Bulldogs supporter, he's also manager of MYOB's awesome TechComms team. This gives him plenty of opportunity to use words to help businesses work smarter. The right information at the right time and in a way that's easy to understand, that's the essence of great technical writing. The team are not about to waste people's time or make them feel stupid.

Web safe fonts: Here at Last!

Dave Gash, HyperTrain, California USA

Much like 'web safe colors' in the past, 'web safe fonts' have long been a thorn in the side of web developers. Historically, authors who wanted to use specific typefaces on their pages had to resort to images and other less-than-desirable workarounds – but no more! With the advent of the CSS Fonts Module Level 3 specification, web fonts have become more accessible, less browser-dependent, and even (dare we say it?) easy! In this session Dave will explore with us the new CSS3 @font-face rule and how to apply it, discuss some practical font usage and conversion issues, and see how to simplify it all with a little help from our friends at Google.

About Dave…

See previous page.

Customising Word's interface to increase authoring efficiency

Andrew Lockton, Director, Chrysalis Design

Microsoft Word's user interface was designed for a user base with low levels of skills and no 'corporate standards'. This is very different to the environment where most professional technical communicators work. Luckily, Word's environment is highly customisable and large time-savings can be made by customising your interface.

Andrew's presentation will demonstrate that it is possible to create your own shortcuts, Status Bar, Quick Access Toolbar and even customise the Ribbon itself. Making these changes will reduce the time taken for document preparation.

About Andrew...

Since 1991, Andrew has been helping companies create Microsoft Word documents. He has had extensive experience creating Word templates to free authors to concentrate on content creation.

Andrew creates templates with customised ribbons for Word 2007-2013. These templates contain buttons and controls which enable users to apply consistent formatting and to run macros to perform a wide range of documentation tasks. These templates greatly simplify authoring by including styles, building blocks, content controls, macros, user forms, and shortcut/ribbon customisations.

Get active with Plain English

Kylie Weaver, Technical communicator and project manager

Business and technical writing should be concise and easy to read – it should allow the reader to concentrate on the information being delivered, not on the writing itself. Plain English is a set of guiding principles and grammatical rules designed to help with this objective. This presentation will focus on those principles that guide plain English writing and the grammatical rules that underpin active voice.

About Kylie…

See previous page.

Single sourcing from a practitioner

Neil Woolley, Service Delivery Manager, *Knowledgedoc*

Writing content once, then reusing it, provides many benefits: organising your content better, reducing its overall cost and publishing it on the favourite devices of your users.

But what challenges does that bring to the technical communicator? To adopt the 'write once, use many times electronically' paradigm, do we need to re-learn what we've always known?

Neil will work through some practical examples, focusing on the content and concepts but not the tools.

About Neil…

Neil is a senior writer and service delivery manager at Knowledgedoc in Melbourne. Knowledgedoc has been delivering documentation services to organisations since 1997.

Neil has a background in science and in IT as an analyst programmer, IT project manager and business change manager for an oil company.

Neil considers himself a technical writing practitioner, producing user guides, policies and procedures and standard operating procedures over the years. For over 12 years Neil has been using single sourcing tools

to deliver printable and online versions but has seen an increase in delivering mobile content in recent years.

Finding meaningful stats to support your content strategy

Georgina Laidlaw, Author, SitePoint

Putting your documentation online means you can track its usage. But often, the statistics that are meaningful in an advert-supported publishing or ecommerce environment (bounce rate, time on page, form completion and so on) don't tell you if your documentation actually helps people *get a task done*.

How can you find out?

Georgina will outline the approach Aconex took to go beyond Google analytics to get a clearer picture of whether their online product documentation worked to support the people using their software.

About Georgina…

Georgina has more than 18 years' experience writing for web, print, voice and video. She started her career as a copywriter for print and digital. She worked as an editor on sitepoint.com and SitePoint Books for seven years, where she gained an appreciation for, and some might say obsession with, linguistic accuracy.

She's written interfaces, error messages, support content, release notes and other communications for services like 99designs and products like Aconex, the ANZ Bank, Problogger, HESTA Super Fund, City of Melbourne, Toll Group and, back in the day, Sausage Software.

SAQs

Dr Tony Self, Managing Director, HyperWrite Pty Ltd

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have become so common in Help systems and support Websites that the initialism has entered the vernacular. But are FAQs more a convenience for authors than a useful tool for readers? Do FAQs encourage information to be dumped into an unstructured bucket? Are FAQs really frequently asked, or are they more often SAQs – Seldomly Asked Questions?

In this presentation, Tony Self takes a light-hearted approach to the topic, but will show us that there are serious questions that we need to ask ourselves.

About Tony…

See previous page.