
Volume 1 | Number 2 | Summer 2004

The Conference Issue

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Greetings to all of you,

Since this newsletter issue is devoted to conference activities, summaries and reactions, I want to share some of my thoughts with you.

First, as a SIG, we were very visible with our free business card holders, stickers, and prizes given at the business meeting. We drew many new faces to our luncheon and renewed interest from many familiar faces. We very clearly accomplished our goal of becoming more visible while making the statement that we are here for STC members. We hope you'll all take that statement to heart and let the entire membership know what your needs are by participating in the discussion group listserv and

helping to provide content to both our newsletter and our website. Since a SIG is a community of interest, we exist primarily to share that common interest and provide information to each other.

Second, I personally benefited greatly from attending the conference. I learned a lot from the sessions I attended. I enjoyed presenting my sessions and sharing my knowledge. And, I thoroughly enjoyed making new friends and renewing old friendships. I have typically avoided participation in organizations because I don't enjoy the politics that can come with committees, etc. However, I can truly say that being part of the SIG management team has been a great experience. I've made new and stronger connections both personally and professionally, and I've seen my profession and skills grow within the perspective of the total field and community rather than in isolation. Through my involvement and increased participation, I've begun to reap the rewards of membership in ways I had not expected. The conference cemented those benefits and encouraged me to maintain and increase my involvement.

Third, the SIG meeting gave all those who attended a chance to identify the benefits of the

SIG, as well as brainstorm additional ways of meeting member needs. The minutes of that meeting are in a separate article in this newsletter. We will be soliciting your opinions and ideas over the next year with the goal of making the SIG a true community of interest that does, indeed, meet the needs and interests of its members.

The next conference is May 8th - 10th in Seattle. I hope we'll see our old friends, as well as many new friends, and members in 2005.

Jane Smith
SIG Manager

**“Look. How lovely it is, this thing
we have done — together.”**

— *Toni Morrison, from the lecture upon
accepting the Nobel Prize in Literature*

Once again, we did it: We worked together to create this newsletter. Earlier this summer, we established the theme for this edition — the Conference Edition — and sent an appeal asking you to contribute. Many were more than willing to do this!

Conference Presentations & Progressions

In response, many of you summarized your conference presentations or shared your conference experiences with members who were unable to attend. Thank you. They provide the main ideas discussed in the presentations; they also include resources you can go to for more information and contact information of the presenter(s) should you wish to learn more about the topic. In some cases, we've even been able to provide you with a link to the Conference Proceedings."

Photo Album

Several of you also took the time to capture images of the conference while juggling the many presentations and meetings that you were trying to make. If you're interested in seeing the IDL SIG members in action at this year's conference, browse through our Photo Album.

But wait. There's more...

You also wrote full-length articles on various topics related to Instructional Design and Learning. What are some tips for writing instructions for the online environment? Check out Jackie Damrau's article to find out. Are you interested in ways of engaging online learners? Ann-Marie Grissino and Harman Singh have provided some great tips!

And if that wasn't enough!

Letters to the Editor

We also asked for your thoughts on the newsletter. We wanted to know:

Is the content useful?

How can we make it more useful?

How can we improve the newsletter?

We're happy to say that you responded to our questions, sharing your positive thoughts and great suggestions as to how we could make this a better newsletter. Thanks. And keep 'em coming!

Of course we also needed...

The Newsletter Team

I'm particularly grateful to the newsletter team. They spent many hours carefully proofreading and copyediting the articles, providing insightful suggestions, and catching my HTML conversion mistakes. Believe me, I made quite a few!

This newsletter is the result of many people working together. In fact, I'm reminded of a favorite line taken from a lecture by Toni Morrison:

Look. How lovely it is, this thing we have done — together.

So we hope you enjoy this newsletter! And if you'd like to contribute, check out our "contribute to newsletter" link found at the footer of each page to learn how you can contribute, from articles to book reviews, from tips to helping on our newsletter team.

Joy in the learning!

Dave Williams
Editor, *IDEAL: Design for Learning*

IDL Business Meeting Minutes
IDL SIG Business Directory
STC Transformation

IDL Business Meeting Minutes

Greetings!

The following text is a summary of the meeting discussion. If you have any questions, feel free to contact any one of the team members. We have an awesome team of individuals dedicated to making this SIG a source of information and support for our members. We would welcome additional team members as you prepare for adding services and features in the coming year.

Jane Smith

Accomplishments

Jane reviewed team accomplishments since the end of January:

- Member welcome letters caught up
- New announce listserv
- First newsletter out end of March
- Website updates out end of March
- Conference activities: give-aways, tools session, etc. We had more on the SIG table than any other SIG.

Needs

Jane requested help from members on obtaining web resource page contents as well as stimulating the listserv. She encouraged members to sign up and to post questions.

Jane also encouraged members to sign up for the listserv and, when their email address changes, to unsubscribe and re-subscribe. Members can contact Jane or Sylvia for help.

Transformation

Jane described the transformation to the best of her/our knowledge at this time, mentioning that it is an opportunity for SIGs to have a bigger presence, more guidance, and possibly a bigger budget for more activities. (Note – more to follow as we know more.) To check on updates on the transformation, go to <http://www.stc.org/transformation.asp>. This page has been updated on 5/26, so it's fairly current.

Discussion of Member Needs/Services

Members present acknowledged the current services that the SIG offers members.

- Discussion listserv
- Announcement listserv

- Newsletter
- Website
- IDL progression
- Tools progression

Members then contributed the benefits of these services to our members:

- Networking
- Sharing info
- Education
- Certification
- Business directory (advertising element for members)
- Marketing
- Education management
- Innovations in ID
- Bringing in new members (adding value to STC)
- Member directory

Members then contributed additional ideas for services that would enhance the listed benefits or add benefits for members:

- Maybe add a day of post-conference for ID concentrated sessions. Post conference attendance has been dropping. We would need to think about how that would affect the rest of the conference and workshops. Maybe our workshops at the conference would be teasers. Could use the conference for tools or sessions. In other organizations, the majority of the add-on days are before, not after, but at STC, the leadership sessions take up the preconference activities.
- Need a SIG reception - Jane will discuss at national level.
- SIG Business meeting needs to be called a Membership meeting to let folks know that more than the leadership team can/should attend.

Jane then asked for members present to sign up to help with one of these activities.

Jackie Damrau volunteered to work on the Business Directory and Member Directory in close connection with Chris Emanuelli who has the technical skills to facilitate these on the website.

Chris will also look into wikis as a means of SIG member discussion.

The team will look into providing a member survey to determine needs, interests, etc.

The meeting was adjourned due to another group needing the room. We will continue to call for help in various areas.

IDL SIG Business Directory: Advertise Your Services!

By Jackie Damrau, SIG Leadership Team

The IDL SIG is putting together its own Business Directory that its members can use to advertise their own instructional design and learning services. Many of our members are self-employed and offer tools, training, and other useful information from which we can all benefit.

The purpose of the IDL Business Directory is to list the services that you have to offer. Why would you want to do this? So that when our companies, colleagues, or non-STC friends ask us if we know of a reputable company or individual that can provide specific IDL services, we can promote our own members.

I have agreed to take on the task of putting together the IDL Business Directory. It will be posted in PDF format to the IDL SIG Web site for your use. The first issue will be released in October; then quarterly thereafter with any new or revised information.

To get your information listed in this directory, go to www.stc.org/idl/directory_new.shtml and fill out the online form. So that you can prepare your submissions beforehand, you'll be asked for the usual contact information like name, company name, street address, city, state, zip, phone/fax/email, and web site. Additionally, you will have ten separate lines (Service 1 through Service 10) in which to enter your key services, with a maximum of 255 characters per line. We have made the first three service lines required fields, while the remaining seven are optional.

This directory is for members only and should not be used as a mass mailing for employment opportunities or any other direct mailing purposes.

Send any questions you may have to jdamrau3@airmail.net.

I look forward to making this IDL Business Directory a valuable resource.

STC Transformation

Transformation Update...or Introduction?

by Andrea Ames, STC President

Are you a chapter or SIG leader? If so, chances are you've heard of the STC transformation. If not, there's a good chance you haven't heard of the transformation. The following few paragraphs will provide a very brief introduction to the transformation work, and the following resources will provide you with more details, updates, etc.:

- transform@stc.org – Get answers to questions or provide suggestions, comments, etc., and you will get an answer or a response within 2 business days
- Transformation News listserv (transform@lists.stc.org) – Opt in and receive updates and news about the transformation, status/progress updates, notifications of Web site updates, etc. (sign up via the transformation Web page, below, beginning Thursday, July 15)
- www.stc.org/transformation – Visit often to see the main repository of transformation information, and sign up for the Transformation News listserv (above) for update information

What started all this? And what's it really all about?

Frankly, the economy started all this. In short, STC income — both membership dues income and conference income that underwrites the cost of memberships (you might not realize that your dues don't cover the actual costs of your membership) — began to drop a few years ago, and the STC Board of Directors' efforts to cut costs did not solve our problem. When we dug into the cause of our drop in income, we found that many former members, for example, were unwilling to renew, because it meant paying for memberships that their companies had formerly covered. In short, although the economy moved the Board to act, what we found was that finances were merely a symptom of a greater problem — perceived member value. That's what the transformation is really about: Providing value that members want and need to develop professionally.

During our research, we confirmed something we already knew: Our industry and our members are incredibly diverse, with interests ranging from usability to editing, with skills and experience ranging from entry-level to senior, working in industries from financial to scientific, etc. We asked ourselves, "Can one Society really meet the needs and provide significant professional-development value in all of these areas and industries, to this entire range of people?" In answering this question, we confirmed something else we already knew: Our strength is in our "communities" -- what we currently call "chapters" and "SIGs." The Society does not provide direct value to

members in any or all of these areas; instead, the Society provides infrastructure, mentoring, financial and administrative support, policy, etc., for those communities exist and flourish, providing member value indirectly through those communities. Unfortunately, the Society support for and representation of communities today — and the members' experience across communities — is inconsistent.

The bottom line

Members want value, and value means something different to each of us. For the Society to rebuild — and increase — its membership ranks, we need to provide (among other things):

- Consistent, equitably supported and represented communities from which members will derive their personalized professional development value (through the Communities, Finance, and Governance initiatives)
- A flexible membership model (through the Membership initiative), enabling members to opt in and out of various services and community memberships to customize their professional development experience
- Rich content — education (through the Education initiative), knowledge base, research, intellectual property of all types — that provides depth of practice in member-identified practice areas (through the Communities initiative by supporting practice-based communities) and is readily accessed (through the Technology initiative)
- Richer opportunities to network, within and beyond geographies (through the Communities initiative by supporting geographic communities and brand new kinds of communities)

And we need to communicate information (through the Communication initiative) about the transformation, its initiatives, the changes and status of those, as well as solicit feedback from members and leaders around the Society, to ensure that we all understand our options, make informed choices and decisions, and implement the appropriate changes during the transformation process.

What we're doing about it: The transformation

Some of these needs are met through today's community success stories -- of which there are many! In our efforts to improve consistency and equality of support and experiences across communities, we're not losing sight of those that are working; instead, we're building on the foundation of their successes...and planning to go a step further to provide even more to those communities to enhance their successes. For communities that are struggling, the support we will provide is designed to help, not hinder, their progress toward providing as much member value as possible.

The work to meet all of these needs is complex...As we change our community support model to be more consistent, many changes are required -- in the financial, governance,

and technology (infrastructure) areas, as well as the expected community policy changes.

We have a high-level roadmap that we're following, outlining what we need to do at a very high level similar to the bulleted items, above. We don't have all the answers. We still need your input and your help. Contact us at transform@stc.org to contribute to the transformation.

Myths and misinformation abound!

If you have heard of the transformation, you might be concerned about some misinformation circulating. Here are a few of the most tenacious myths...debunked. For answers to frequently asked questions and more corrections to misinformation, sign up for the Transformation News listserv (via the Transformation Web page, starting Thursday, July 15) to get notification when we add the FAQs to the Web site!

- STC is not a chapter-based organization; it is a member-based organization, according to our Bylaws.
- The transformation is not about finances; it's about member value. Although the economic environment and STC's financial situation in that environment was a symptom that alerted us to the problem, the real issue was members' perception of the value of STC membership.
- The transformation is not about marginalizing, de-emphasizing, or eliminating chapters -- large or small. Chapters are communities, just as SIGs are. The goal of the transformation is to equally support and represent all communities — chapters, SIGs, and new, currently undefined communities.
- We are not taking away any chapters' money. At a Transformation Q&A session on Leadership Day at the STC conference in May, John Nardone, our Transformation Consultant, mentioned the well-known fact that STC's chapters have a greater net worth than the Society, and he suggested that chapters with large reserves might want to volunteer to donate some of those reserves to the transformation effort. (Interesting tidbit: Some chapters have contacted me to volunteer to support the transformation financially.)
- The transformation was not instigated by STC's Washington, D.C.-based organization. STC's decision-making, policy-setting body is the Board of Directors, your elected representatives, who are volunteers and live and work around the world. STC's implementation and operations body is the paid staff at the STC Office, located in northern Virginia. Your elected Board of Directors voted to engage the transformation consultant (in May 2003) and to adopt the the transformation roadmap (in January 2004) that the consultant and the initial transformation team proposed. The STC Office in northern VA does not determine how money is spent; they implement disbursements based on STC Board decisions.

- **The current dues rebates that fund chapters are not part of the transformed financial model. The new financial model has not yet been developed. Until it is, the Board of Directors will continue with the chapter dues rebate process: According to STC Bylaws, each year the Board analyzes the current financial situation — including the budget, membership renewals, conference income, etc. — and determines an amount to rebate to chapters.**

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Seven Tips for Writing Online Instruction **Ten Ways to Engage Online Learners**

Seven Tips for Writing Online Instruction

by Jackie Damrau

Summary: Writing online instructions requires a different approach from writing instructions on paper. Here are seven tips you can use to develop effective online instructions.



Writing for online instruction is different than writing for technical learner manuals. When writing for learner manuals, you want to give all the details that you can to ensure that the learners understand the concepts as well as the ramifications of making a bum stake.

Writing online instruction requires taking a different audience approach than the one taken when writing technical learner manuals. In online instructional writing, the writing style calls for a more concise, summative form that makes retention of the material easier for the learners. Online instructional writing can be provided for soft skills or software simulations. Soft skills instructional writing requires finding the right graphic or video to demonstrate that specific skill under discussion for learner retention. Software simulations, on the other hand, may use non-sequential screen captures or a sequential workflow process that directs the learner on the proper use of the software.

Saul Carliner in his "Designing E-Learning" (2002, ASTD Press, pp. 141-144) book lists seven tips for writing for the screen that all online instructional designers can follow:

1. Write good leads
2. Write for scanning and skimming
3. Write dialogue, not text
4. Maintain a positive tone
5. Emphasize precision and clarity
6. Avoid assumptions
7. Write tightly

Adapting Carliner's 7 Screenwriting Tips

I am one of three writers on a team that creates animated training help files for software applications for internal and external customers. These help files use a step-by-step

approach to teach the learners how to use the application in their business. File length (including audio) can range from 3 minutes up to 15 minutes.

Carliner's seven writing tips is one method that can help you in writing online instructional materials. Following each of Carliner's tips, I show you examples of how we write the text for our animated training files.

Tip #1: Write Good Leads

Writing good leads involves leading the learners into the lesson by telling them what they can expect to learn. An effective online lead should not exceed more than two screens.

Each of our animated training files starts with a lesson learning objective frame, an introduction frame, and ends with a conclusion frame.

Examples:

" Learning objective frame: "In this lesson, you will learn how to customize the ABC software using the Preferences menu."

" Introduction frame: "The development of ABC software is intended to automate the billing processes that you perform manually today."

" Conclusion frame: "In this lesson, you learned how to ... This concludes the _____ lesson."

Tip #2: Write for Scanning and Skimming

This tip refers to writing for scanning and skimming, which requires knowing your audience's online reading style. Those reading online content, like Web pages or any downloadable document, want to be able to read quickly and get the information so that they can move on to the next frame.

For animated training files, it is more difficult to write for a scanning/skimming reader or learner. The text that my group writes is much like a newspaper cartoon that requires as few words as possible be written to convey the concept for each frame. We provide downloadable information as supplementary material that the learners can have available at their fingertips. We use headings, bulleted lists, tables, and charts, as necessary, to convey this information so the learner can scan or skim the contents to get the information quickly.

Example:

"Now, let's click on Save."

Tip #3: Write Dialogue, not Text

Writing online content for animated training files is different than when writing for online user manuals. Online content for animated training files requires you to know how to write the content as if you are sitting next to the learners and individually instructing them on the proper use of the application.

In technical manuals, some companies are still enamored of the phrase "the user", while others prefer the second person (or in special cases, the third person) to bring more personalization to the documentation. In online instructional writing, the recommended style is to assume that you are addressing a single learner, where you should always use the second person.

Example:

"You will type in the patient's vital statistics in the appropriate text fields."

Tip #4: Maintain a Positive Tone

Your writing should be encouraging, upbeat, and lead the learners to a successful conclusion. With our animated training files, like any C/WBT you may have experienced, we have segments where we let the learner interact with the application. We strategically place messages like "Great! You got it!" or "Try again!"

In technical manuals, you often find items like cautions and warnings that tell the readers about any potential harm that can occur when improperly using the hardware or software. We write this way because often no one reads the manuals we so diligently write. We can train all we want, yet we know there will always be one person out there that will do what shouldn't be done. I believe that warnings can be written in a positive manner and not in the big, bold "DANGER, WILL ROBINSON, DANGER!" style.

Example:

"Clicking this button will terminate the session without saving the data. Are you sure you want to do this?" We will place a colored highlight box over the button so the learner knows what button not to click.

Tip #5: Emphasize Precision and Clarity

Writing with precision and clarity are definite requirements for any type of online instructional text or multimedia-based deliverable. Precision and clarity rely on short, succinct phrasing for the learner to understand the exact message. In technical user manuals, precision and clarity are required, but the textual content can be enhanced with a longer explanation of why it is so important.

Example:

"Select the test result, then click Preview."

Tip #6: Avoid Assumptions

Avoiding assumptions is probably one of the hardest things for an instructional writer or technical communicator to not do. Carliner says, "Don't make assumptions about the ease with As you are working through an application and writing the documentation, whether as an animated training file or printed user's guide, learn to question your subject matter expert (SME) thoroughly about the knowledge and experience level of the learners or users.

Examples:

Ask questions like:

"Is this a brand new application that the learners have never seen before?"

"Is this application replacing an existing one that has some of the same features or terminology that the learners will already be familiar with?"

Develop your own questions to fit your materials. Remember, the first three letters of the word, assumption, is not what you or your SME want to look like to your audience.

Tip #7: Write Tightly

Write tightly is probably the hardest of Carliner's seven points to apply. Tight writing requires using as few words as possible. This tip can be used with Tip #2 so the material is easier to scan or skim. Yet, following Carliner's suggestion of keeping "sentences to 50 words, paragraphs to seven lines, topics to one or two screens, and lesson (units) to 10-20 screens...[and] by cutting unnecessary words" gives the instructional writer good guidelines to follow.

The animated training files that I write cannot follow this suggestion. We try to keep our writing down to one or two sentences of less than 20 words. Of course, we do have exceptions to this. At times, our customers' write the text they want used in the animated training files. This text exceeds Carliner's suggestion and exceeds what we know to work well in an online training environment. We discuss our concerns with the customer, yet if they insist on having long (more than one) paragraphs per frame, we comply. Lessons, in our case, rarely meet Carliner's suggested 10 to 20 screens; we try to break our lessons by functionality, which may require more than 20 screens.

Technical manuals don't have this requirement, yet effective writing should always be tight. In the past when I wrote technical manuals, I always tried to put everything that I knew about an element in writing. We know now that a technical manual is only read when it is needed, thus writing tightly is better than providing unnecessary information. I may think it is necessary, but would my target audience think the same.

Examples:

Bad writing (81 words): "This screen shows all the information you will need to know about the patient. The first part of this screen shows the patient's demographic information followed by any medication allergies they may have. As you are entering in information for the patient, note any other allergies or adverse reactions they may have in the Comments field. You can also use the Comments field for any other patient-related information that you feel the provider should know before starting treatment on this patient."

Tight writing (20 words): "This screen shows patient's demographics and medical allergies taken during the admissions interview. Use Comments for other medical reaction

Conclusion

Online instructional writing is definitely different than writing technical user manuals. It requires you to "put yourself in the learner's shoes," but you can do it. Using Carliner's seven screenwriting tips is a start to enhancing your writing style when you are tasked with writing for media that will be presented in an online format, like a Web page, a C(W)BT, or an animated training file.

Of course, rules can be bent as necessary when you have a paying customer. Our goal is to provide the customer with the best looking product that meets the contractual needs; however, if they insist on having long, wordy captions in an animated training file, then you conform. After all, the mantra of the "Customer is always right!" still is evident today.

My goals for sharing these tips is to help others learn from the many mistakes that I started out with when I first began writing animated training files. It didn't take me too long to discover that I could change my writing style to be more compact, tighter, and less wordy. You, too, can improve your online writing skills.

I'd be interested in any comments you may have on how you write your e-learning instructional materials and what methods you use. We learn from our peers (that's you), so share your methods with our members.

Jackie Damrau has over 20 years of technical writing experience and over six years in creating training materials and delivering soft-skills training courses. She is a senior technical writer on the Dynamic Solutions Team at Perot Systems. Jackie is a senior member and 2004-2005 President, STC Lone Star Chapter. You can send e-mail to her at jdamrau3@airmail.net.

Ten Ways to Engage Online Learners (Part 1)

by Ann-Marie Grissino and Harmon Singh

Summary: This article looks at how online course authors can engage their audiences and reviews strategies for pulling learners into scenarios, encouraging experimentation, and using gaming techniques in e-learning. This article also glimpses into the world of e-learning on a handheld device.



Acquiring knowledge requires learner motivation. But, what motivates learners? To some, it's using new technology. To others, it's a certificate after course completion. These are just parts of the answer. Motivation for learning is based on learners' needs (what it is that they need to know), the strength of that need (how quickly it must be learned or how important it is to learn the material), and the students' knowledge of consequences after learning (for example, getting a certificate, a raise, a job, or recognition).

Strategies for Engaging Learners

Successful learning environments should also provide intrinsic motivation by promoting challenges, piquing curiosity, and enabling active participation. This is where current e-learning falls short and this is where we, as instructional designers and e-learning authors, can improve.

In short, engage the learner any way you can. Here are ten effective ways in which you engage the learner.

1. Use Gaming Techniques

One way of engaging the learner is to use gaming techniques. Why are kids hooked for hours on games? How can we use game strategies in online courseware? Let's look at some examples.

Game Applications in Learning

One airline uses gaming techniques to teach employees about business performance and financial strategies. Employees play with virtual chips, recording revenues and paying expenses. The goal is to make money. Players complete a year-end balance sheet and income statements, sometimes making costly mistakes. During the second round, they look to reduce costs, grow revenue, or stretch resources. They learn about the consequences of their choices.

Another example involves a course about real estate rules and regulations using a gameboard offered by LearningWare (www.learningware.com). The results showed significant success rates according to LearningWare, an e-learning services firm.

A third example shows how the University of Texas worked with Digital Media Collaboratory and produced a game-based solution to learning entry-level job skills. They also claim very positive results.

Games We Can Adapt for Online Delivery

Bringing games into your courses requires creativity. Think of these common games and how you can employ them online:

- Backgammon
- Card games, such as Poker, Hearts, Gin Rummy, Bridge, Solitaire
- Charades
- Checkers, Chinese Checkers, and Chess
- Dominoes
- Go
- Memory or Concentration
- Rock-Paper-Scissors
- Tic-Tac-Toe
- Twenty Questions

Also, include features that make games such as Trivial Pursuit®, Monopoly®, and Clue® so successful.

Use expertise from existing game development strategies. For example, the Academic Gaming Review (<http://www.gis.net/~pldr/>) provides free educational game scenarios, boards, and rules mostly about historical subjects. Although your course might not be history-related, you can adapt the concepts presented here for your own courses. Interestingly enough, one game called Ancient Near East requires that players control a Middle Eastern country and use its resources to develop it.

Look at these web sites for learning resources:

- www.TwitchSpeed.com (the portal of www.Games2Train.com)
- North American Simulation and Gaming Association (www.NASAGA.org) hosts an online conference about online games
- www.LifelongLearning.co.uk discusses the use of board games for topics such as workplace issues, communication skills, and performance building.
- www.e-learningcentre.co.uk/eclipse/Resources/games.htm. This site lists extensive game-related learning topics.

The concept of game technology in learning is surging forward in industry journals. But, if the suggestion of games in courseware still offends the boss, don't use the word "game." Instead, tell her you are employing a creative strategy to promote interactivity.

2. Incorporate Role Playing

The second suggestion for engaging learners involves role-playing in online environments. To help you get started along this line, try these role-playing ideas:

- Investigative role-playing: Players try to solve a problem or riddle by themselves or against others, similar to murder mystery games.
- Live action role-playing: Players interact with each other in a virtual environment. For example, in multi-user Dungeons (MUDs), many users play an online game at once. (See www.topmudsites.com for a list of MUDs.) Combine this with live chats in a course for an application with real-time features.
- Character role-playing: Players take on another's persona, for example, the CEO or IT Director.

3. Tell a Story

Storytelling is an art and a compelling one. Storytelling can capture the imagination, set a scene, and draw in learners. Try these ideas.

- Offer a mentor or expert in your courses who provides advice; include questions where there doesn't have to be one correct answer and let three experts justify the different answers. The expert or experts might provide concrete examples where the advice was extremely beneficial.
- Storytelling often includes danger around every corner. Include obstacles or challenges to overcome, for example, the possibility of bankruptcy in a financial planning course.
- Let each player choose cards that have parts of stories. The cards guide the plot. Place the cards in categories from which players choose, for example, Financial Decisions, Marketing Initiatives, and Organizational Issues for a business strategy course.

4. Build in Flexibility

Games can spark interest and make boring topics fun. However, to engage the user we must include flexibility. We learn by choices and seeing the effects of those choices. We also learn from mistakes.

So, include choices in your courses. A course-of-action decision requires that the learner predict outcomes. It's the act of predicting that engages the learner and promotes the learning. Allow students to make mistakes, follow different paths, and view consequences of errant choices. However, ensure that students can return to the juncture or replay the event so that they can correct mistakes.

5. Include Drag and Drops That Require Thinking

Drag-and-drop actions certainly enhance interactivity, but they make users think first. Here are some ideas:

- Management training courses could let learners read departmental proposals and drag them to either an in-or out- box for additional consideration.
- One course by KnowledgeNet lets users drag power cable plugs to the right power cable socket.

Example of drag and drop from KnowledgeNet.

Please Note: This is the first part of a two-part article. Look for the second part of this article in our next edition of *IDeaL: Design for Learning!*

Ann-Marie Grissino is President of Keypoint Consultants, Inc., a firm specializing in online communication design and delivery. Ann-Marie has won numerous awards including an Excellence and Best of Show for e-learning development. In October 2002 Ann-Marie participated in the Technical Communication Delegation to China. She can be reached at (919)-562-2464 or at amgrissino@keypointconsultants.com.

Harman Singh is the President and CEO of a North Carolina-based e-learning solutions company, Sikhya Solutions. Sikhya Solutions provides custom e-learning software and solutions, including authorGEN, a family of products that help content authors and instructional technologists develop and deliver knowledge to their audiences. You can contact him at hsingh@sikhya.com or visit his website at www.sikhya.com.

Presentations and Progressions
Members share their experiences
Conference Photo Album

Presentations and Progressions

I. Presentations

- How one Department Handles Online Writing
- Design & Delivery Principles of Synchronous Online Learning
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- Using Games in Technical Training
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- Training Impact Evaluation & ROI
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- Technical Writing & Instructional Design / ADDIE Model
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I. Presentations

How One Department Handles Online Education

Presented by Elizabeth A. Monske, Kristine L. Blair, Amie Caroline Wolf, Jude Edminster,

Our panel was inspired by the recent developments at our Bowling Green State University English Department within the last couple of years. Involved in a new instructional design initiative, our session dealt with how both faculty and doctoral candidates are becoming involved with online writing courses, ranging from first year writing courses to graduate level courses. Within the five presentations, we specifically addressed:

Instructional Design Initiatives and Resources

Kristine Blair discussed why and how she developed an educational technology assistance program called Digital Language and Literacy made up of rhetoric and technical communication graduate students created to assist faculty in developing fully online courses. The DLL houses multiple projects: the instructional design element, Computers and Composition Online editorial staff, computer literacy for senior citizens, and dissertations dealing with Rhetoric and Composition and distance education.

Creation of Online Courses

Amie Wolf detailed her experience of working within the DLL when she was paired with a faculty member to transform a traditional course into an online environment. She noted the importance of collaboration and having the faculty members to take ownership of, not only, their course, its look, and material but for the development of her technological literacy as well.

Implications of the Adult Learner in Online Courses

Cheryl Hoy explained different strategies for incorporating the adult learner more effectively based on her experience teaching an online writing course for returning non-traditional students. Having personally experienced being an adult learner, Hoy stresses the importance of understanding who the adult learner and what pedagogical approaches work best for them.

Encouragement of Collaboration

Jude Edminster discussed the results of her digital collaboration experiences in her introductory online technical writing course she taught over the summer of 2003. She examined and compared her most successful collaborators with an existing study dealing with Hasler-Walters and Napier's "Building and Supporting Student Team Collaboration in the Virtual Classroom."

Implementation of Assessment Measures

I discussed findings from my dissertation about the need to implement online-specific course evaluations and self-assessments for teachers and students into an online course in order to prepare and maintain student and teacher interest in the course.

Integrated within our five presentations, we understand the need to share our work in order to provide better opportunities not only for our students but also for our colleagues and plan to continue this community effort. Our English Department is currently in our second year of pairing graduate students who have taken ENG 780: Online Education for English Educators

with faculty members placing courses online. Another new element to our department is that the Scientific and Technical Communication Master's program is commencing an online certification degree this summer. Under the auspices of the DLL, we have been able to encourage explorations into distance education and its impact on our department

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Liz Monske (lizmonske@yahoo.com), Kristine L. Blair (kblair@bgnet.bgsu.edu), Amie Caroline Wolf (amiecba@bgnet.bgsu.edu), Jude Edminster (jedmins@bgnet.bgsu.edu), and Cheryl Hoy (choy@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

Design & Delivery Principles of Synchronous Online Learning

Presented by Hadiya Nuriddin

Synchronous online learning is maturing. A recent report published by the eLearning Guild indicates that while companies are using web conferencing services for informational web seminars (or "webinars") more than ever, many companies are now also using web conferencing to deliver interactive courses. Instructional designers who are just beginning to design courses for synchronous online delivery, however, may have difficulty finding guidance about how to design courses for the live, online environment. By combining research on adult learning, online learning, and instructional design, five instructional design principles emerge that can be used to inform decisions when designing for the live, online environment:

1. Master the tools of the synchronous classroom

Instructional designers can apply the same instructional design techniques used for designing classroom-based courses. In order to do this successfully, however, designers must understand the tools of the synchronous classroom as well as they understand the tools of the physical classroom. Failure to do so results in passive learning experiences.

2. Design for varying technical abilities

Do not assume that all participants will be comfortable using the tools of the synchronous classroom. While incorporating a variety of tools into the course design will make the class more interactive, participants who are uncomfortable with computers will be too distracted by the new technology to learn the content. Try to strike a balance between challenging participants and allowing them to remain in their comfort zones.

3. Blend the class with other methods

A live, online event should last no longer than 90 minutes because it is simply too difficult for participants to stay engaged in a synchronous session for a longer period of time. This means that only learning tasks that require collaboration among participants and instant feedback from the instruction should be taught synchronously. Information that can be learned by participants independently should be distributed using an asynchronous medium.

4. Make the class inherently motivating

The synchronous trainer is competing for a participant's attention with email, the Web, and the participant's coworkers. Certainly, students can be motivated by treats and gifts, but the most effective type of motivation is built into the design of the course.

5. Design authentic interactions

Meaningful, frequent, and varied participant-teacher, participant-content, and participant-participant interaction must be fully integrated into the course design. While a poll question at the end of each segment does help reinforce learning, interaction should be part of the entire lesson as a way to initially learn the material, not just to review it.

The synchronous online classroom and the physical classroom share many characteristics. Instructional designers should ask the same questions (i.e. What are the characteristics of your learners?) when designing for any delivery medium; however, once designers understand the synchronous classroom, it becomes obvious the answers to those questions will differ from medium to medium. Finding those answers is never easy, but applying the five design principles of synchronous online training is a good place to start.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Hadiya Nuriddin is an Assistant Vice President of training at LaSalle Bank Corporation in Chicago where she designs and delivers classroom-based and synchronous online training. She is currently completing a master's thesis that studies creating synchronous online interactions that promote learning. Contact her at hadiya@designinginformation.com.

Don't Make Me Do That! Making Learning Fun and Engaging

Presented by Lance Gelein

This presentation provided innovative training ideas to help you think outside the book. This included using gaming technology, online learning systems, Web casts, quick reference materials, video, and whatever it takes to engage the learner: doing the unexpected; reading the audience; and delivering learning that's applicable to their needs--even when they are resistant. The whole experience!

- Using other modes for training delivery
- Gauging training for a non-reading (not illiterate) audience
- Engaging people in the learning experience
- Using gaming technology for training

The presentation also included demonstrations of the various methods that can be used. Participants were engaged in this process and had some fun, too.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

You can contact Lance Gelein at gelein@ix.netcom.com

Analyzing Games for Use in Training

Presented by Karen Baranich and Cynthia Currie

Subtitled "Play Along! Using Games to Teach," this workshop examined the use and development of training games. Topics included:

- Attributes and characteristics of games
- Uses and non-uses of games
- Developing games: planning for deep and surface structure and adapting existing (frame) game

- Potential problems and pitfalls
- Debriefing after a game

Participants played and analyzed games, and had some fun. We discussed the differences and similarities between games for learning and activities such as icebreakers, energizers, exercises, and simulations, which are commonly called games, but often meet totally different learning objectives. The audience learned how existing game formats can be adapted for a variety of training objectives and used these principles to design their own game.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Karen Baranich is the Lead Technical Writer for SCANA. Karen holds degrees in Media Arts and Instructional Media and has completed course work for a PhD. in Educational Psychology. She is Vice President of the Midlands Chapter of STC and International Technical Art Competition Manager. You can contact Karen at kbaranich@scana.com or (803) 217-7299.

Cindy Currie is Senior Consultant for Hewlett-Packard's Technology Solutions Group (TSG) in Nashua, NH. Cindy is an STC Associate Fellow and frequent presenter at local and national STC conferences and meetings. She is also the STC's International Publications Competition Manager. You can contact Cindy at cynthia.currie@hp.com or (603) 884-1249 .

e-Learning Evaluation Session

Evaluators: Sylvia Miller, Jane Smith, and Frances Wirth

In this session, each of three evaluators provided review comments and suggestions to their e-Learning completed or in-progress e-Learning projects. The areas evaluated were:

- Overall Quality
- Interface
- Navigation
- Content/Course organization
- Instructional methods
- Interactions
- Practice
- Media use
- Writing

Participants all felt that they received positive feedback on their course's strengths along with constructive suggestions for their improvement or for change in future courses.

Although we didn't have a big turnout, we plan to provide this session again, perhaps even opening it up to evaluation of all training materials.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the e-learning evaluations, please contact:

Jane Smith, IDL SIG Manager at jemcomm@sedona.net.

Using Games in Technical Training

Presented by Paul Sinasohn

Games provide an enjoyable vehicle for learning and should be considered as an instructional method. If games are selected and used with a focus on the learning they can enhance, your training courses will be events that people talk about and want to attend. Games are of greatest value when they:

- Are fun and interesting.
- Relate to specific learning objectives.
- Have rules and a goal.
- Are introduced with a frame of reference.
- Make learning easier by disguising repetitive or mundane instructional techniques.
- Are debriefed.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Paul Sinasohn works for a leading Video Game company teaching Customer Service Reps how to stay happy. Paul has a degree in Economic Geography from UC Berkeley and an MBA in Finance from Golden Gate University. He's a member of STC, ASTD, and ISPI. You can contact Paul at sinasohn@yahoo.com.

You can find details about this presentation and other resources at:

www.geocities.com/sinasohn/ITYFA.html

Transitioning Print-Based Training into Web Delivery: Lessons Learned

Presented by Dr. Susan Codone & Lance Stuckey

This presentation explored a specific project conducted by the Mercer Engineering Research Center (MERC) in which an existing MERC-designed United States Air Force print-based training was rapidly converted to web-based training. MERC designers employed basic fundamentals of technical communication to successfully accomplish their task. This presenters gave a candid look at the good, the bad, and the ugly of the conversion process that documented MERC's first efforts toward eLearning.

Specific issues discussed in this presentation included:

- Differences in design strategies for print and web instruction
- Development and authoring approaches
- Rapid prototyping
- Usability testing
- Project management concerns
- Lessons learned

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Susan Codone is an Assistant Professor of Technical Communication at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Before coming to Mercer, Susan spent five years with the Raytheon Company, designing interactive multimedia instruction for the military and other government organizations. She and her husband, George, have three energetic children under the age of 9.

Lance Stuckey is an Instructional Systems Designer at Mercer Engineering Research Center in Warner Robins, GA. He is a 2002 Technical Communication graduate from the Mercer University School of Engineering and an STC member since 1999. You can contact Lance at lstuckey@merc.mercer.edu.

II. Instructional Design & Learning Progression

About the Progression: Karen Baranich organized this years' Instructional Design and Learning progression. It consisted of several mini-sessions (presentation-discussion) that lasted approximately 20 minutes; at the end of each mini-session, participants rotated to another topic of their interest. Here are some of the topics presented!

Training Impact Evaluation and ROI: Why Do It?

Presented by Cindy Currie

As corporate cost cutting continues, instructional design consultants must become true partners in an organization. They must be responsible and accountable for defining and measuring their contribution to business success. To do this, evaluation and measurement must become routine activities. The ability to forecast and then demonstrate the business impact of training programs is key to continuation of these programs, and perhaps even to the continuation of their employment and the longevity of the organization.

Below are several common misconceptions associated with training impact evaluation and ROI. Use the facts presented here to help you justify why these key activities must become routine in your organization.

You cannot measure the results of a training program quantitatively. (Or, you can't do it!)

Of course you can! If your program is well designed around clear and measurable objectives, then you certainly can measure its results where it should be fairly easy to figure out what data you need to look at to determine if your program is successful. It's very important to identify the measurements/ metrics associated with your program objectives. This is how you will define what "success" is within the context of your program. In addition, your program should be results based, that is focused on improving performance. Thus, you know what results you are striving for, so from that you will have quantifiable measures of performance.

Evaluation programs are very expensive. (Or, it costs too much to do it!)

Yes, there is a cost associated with designing and conducting an evaluation, particularly if you are interested in ROI. However, it's likely to be a small cost in comparison to the cost of the program when it's built in as an integral part of the program. You do need to size the evaluation to fit the program; spending 5-10% of the total cost of the program on evaluation is reasonable.

My organization does not require measurable results. (Or, why should I do it when I don't have to?)

In today's business climate, every function is accountable and must be able to demonstrate clearly its contribution to the organization. While many individuals may have a proven track record of excellent results (and no need to justify their existence), your organization as a whole may need to prove its effectiveness. With mergers and acquisitions now fairly commonplace, old or new management may suddenly require your organization to justify its existence ... prove your value or you're gone! You can't do this without clear-cut data! Be ready!

Evaluation may reflect on my organization negatively and make it vulnerable. (Or, yikes! This could make us look bad!)

Yes, it could. So, truthfully, if your organization is not receptive to feedback, some of it unfavorable, then you probably shouldn't conduct a serious evaluation. Also, if your organization is not in a position to make changes based on feedback, don't do it. However, you may get some surprising results, both positive and negative, that could lead to important changes in your program that bring greater success. If you don't conduct an impact evaluation, you'll never really know, now will you?

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Cindy Currie is Senior Consultant for Hewlett-Packard's Technology Solutions Group (TSG) in Nashua, NH. Cindy is an STC Associate Fellow and frequent presenter at local and national STC conferences and meetings. She is also the STC's International Publications Competition Manager. You can contact Cindy at cynthia.currie@hp.com or (603) 884-1249.

Should Learners Control the Sequence of e-Learning?

Presented by Mike Tillmans

The Conflict

What is your e-learning strategy as a developer of online learning materials? Do you "turn 'em loose" or do you try to "control all the choices"? or somewhere in between? If you are like most other instructional designers, this presents a conflict.

- Instructional design theories indicate that there are optimal learning sequences for concepts, principles, and other higher-order cognitive skills. A good example contributed by a participant at the ID Progression was the teaching of chemical safety skills.
- Observation and our own web experience shows that learners expect to be able to control their online time, whether spent surfing or learning. Learners or users want to be able to select the content, the sequence of the content, amount of time spent on each topic, and the use of additional resources. In the chemical safety skills example, we want the students to learn all the critical safety information, not just what they choose to browse.

In the ideal world, the learners are prepared to make these choices wisely. They may already know something about your topic—enough to help organize the new information so it can be related to their current knowledge. Part of this organizing strategy is to recognize what is known already, and what new material needs to be learned.

Feelings and Findings

However, most of us don't live in that ideal world. When the design conflict was presented at the ID Progression sessions, slightly more than half the participants felt it would be best for the author (or developer) to retain control in some way, because they did not believe learners could make the necessary decisions.

Research (found in Clarke and Mayer, 2003) indicates that most learners are not accurate when they are asked to judge how much they know about a topic, which is certainly a key skill in being able to make good decisions about what is needed for study. Equally important is a student's self-organizing skills (metacognition).

Possible Solutions

So the practical aspect of the discussion turns to helping learners make better decisions. There are several instructional strategies available to e-learning developers to assist learners in decision-making (these are described more fully in the references at the conclusion of the article):

- Construct site maps, course maps, or tours to help create the big picture.
- Provide hints and clues to help learners decide where to begin and which content to study next, such as a self-test item or survey results.
- Limit the amount of learner choices early in a lesson, guiding students along an optimal learning pathway.
- Permit more learner control later in the lesson.
- Provide more supplemental links later in the lesson.

Wonderful Resources

Ruth Clark. *Building Expertise: Cognitive Methods for Training and Performance Improvement*, 2nd ed. Silver Spring, MD: ISPI, 2003.

Clark, Ruth Colvin and Richard E. Mayer, *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction: Proven*

Gagne, Robert M. and Karen L. Medsker, *The Conditions of Learning: Training Applications*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996.

Morrison, Gary R., Steven M. Ross, and Jerrold E. Kemp, *Designing Effective Instruction*, 4th ed. John Wiley & Sons, 2004.

Smith, Patricia L. and Tillman J. Ragan, . *Instructional Design*, 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Mike Tillmans has extensive project management, training development, and process analysis experience in business and education. His areas of interest include curriculum planning, job/task analysis, group facilitation, process mapping, and training materials development and evaluation. You can contact Mike at EyeDee@aol.com.

Conducting the Job Task Analysis, or "Stickie Bingo" for Better Course Design

Presented by Jane Smith

Participants experienced the ease of conducting a job task analysis for forming the basis of good course design as we played "stickie bingo." This visual method makes quick work of a once tedious task.

In this short session in the IDL Progression, I presented a very visual way of conducting the job task analysis by using Post-it® Notes of different colors and sizes on flipcharts. These Post-It Notes represent aspects of a completed task analysis:

- Job
- Major job responsibilities
- Task within each responsibility area

- Knowledge needed to perform the task
- Related processes and knowledge needed to understand the process

Participants and I walked through an analysis, complete with the identification of an objective and exercise/assessment for a task. This is a very effective, visual method to use with a diverse group of SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) and IDs (Instructional Designers) to obtain agreement on course content and design.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Jane Smith is an independent consultant, providing course design, mentoring, project management, and classes through her company JEM Communications, LLC. She has over 18 years' experience developing training for classroom, audio, CBT, IMT, WBT, and e-Learning. Jane is the Manager of the Instructional Design and Learning SIG. You can contact Jane at jemcomm@sedona.net.

Technical Writing and Instructional Design Techniques

Presented by Jackie Damrau

The IDL Progression had several table topics that were well attended. I was honored this year to lead a table topic on "Technical Writing & Instructional Design Techniques." I had a total of 37 folks attend my table. It was interesting to see that people were pulling up chairs from other tables to listen to this topic. While 25 minutes is not enough time to share the vast knowledge that goes with this topic, it was a whirlwind speaking engagement for me. The comments from those attending my table were "That's a lot of information, but it gives me a place to start." "Wow, I never thought I could do instructional design."

The highlights from my presentation focused on the use of the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model and how technical writers do use this model perhaps without knowing it. The two-page handout provided during the topic listed the top five questions that need to be asked when preparing instructional materials. Time didn't allow me to cover the use of style guides or training engagement methodology. Brief time was spent covering copyright and alerting new instructional designers to becoming more aware of content when being asked to include it in training materials, presentations, and such.

Send email to jdamrau3@airmail.net if you would like a copy of the handout. It is similar to my proceedings paper that appears on the STC conference website.

I have presented this same topic as a 1-hour presentation at the Lone Star chapter's Newcomers SIG meeting for the past two years and also as a 3-hour workshop at its Fall Workshop Series. The workshop was the most fun I ever had in presenting for the same reasons as presenting at the IDL Progression. To see the eyes light up in technical communicators who didn't think they could write instructional material was well worth my time. One of the attendees at the Fall Workshop even used the techniques she used to help get her a project management job at BeautiControl. Think I'm bragging; of course, I am.

Here's to Seattle where I hope to meet more STC instructional designers and share our tools, techniques, and methodologies.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Jackie Damrau is a senior STC member and the incoming STC Lone Star Chapter President. She has over 20 years technical writing and 6 years instructional design experience. Jackie enjoys going to the movies and reading classic literature or Irish/Scottish/English historical and time-travel romance novels. You can contact Jackie at Jackie.Damrau@ps.net.

You can find details about this presentation and links to handouts at:

Send email to jdamrau3@airmail.net if you would like a copy of the handout. It is similar to my proceedings paper that appears on the STC conference website (www.stc.org/51stConf/sessionMaterial/dataShow.asp?ID=29)

A Look at Storyboards

Presented by Frances Wirth

Storyboards play a central role in the courseware development process. In this session we discussed how storyboards are used, what elements an effective storyboard should contain, and why they are so important. We also took a sneak preview of the whizID Storyboarder, a new storyboard development tool.

Some key points about storyboards:

1. When designing content for e-learning, the instructional designer must consider content on several different dimensions, including **content, layout, media, and interactions**. The challenge for the designer is how to document and communicate all of these elements. We need to provide clients a way to conceptualize and approve the course design. And we must convey media and programming specifications to the graphic artists and developers who are required to implement them.
2. The storyboard provides the "missing link" between course design and development.
3. The storyboard should clearly specify all of the following elements: **text; screen layout; graphics, audio and other media; interaction logic; content flow**.
4. The ideal storyboard provides both a visual picture of each screen, as well as detailed specifications and instructions.
5. Important adjuncts to the storyboard include: **a template of "core" frames and elements; global interface design; standards document; flowchart**.
6. You should also be able to extract from the storyboard such requisites as a complete graphics list, audio recording scripts, and video shot sheets.

A detailed, well-constructed storyboard benefits everyone on the project team, including the designer, SMEs (Subject Matter Experts), graphic artists and other media creators, developers and programmers, QA (Quality Assurance), management, and the client.

For more information about this presentation, please contact:

Frances Wirth is an independent instructional designer and principal of whizID Instructional Design, specializing in the design and development of e-learning courseware. She can be contacted at wirth@peoplepc.com, or 919-552-1669.

You can find details about this presentation and links to handouts at: www.whizid.com/resources

III. Tools Progression

Macromedia's CourseBuilder Extension to Dreamweaver Coursebuilder

Presented by Ann-Marie Grissino

This is an extension to Macromedia's Dreamweaver, so it must be used within Dreamweaver. It works in Dreamweaver 3.0, 4.0, and Dreamweaver MX. With it, you can create interactions or controls for use in Web pages. Using CourseBuilder is an excellent way to insert questions or items that require student interactions in Web-based courses. It is easy and requires no programming experience. CourseBuilder creates HTML and Javascript for you. It creates consistent code across multiple pages. You can create unique questions and responses to students' actions.

Interactions

- True/False
- Drag/Drop
- Standard Multiple choice
- Multiple Choice with Two Tables
- Explore (hot spots on a graphic or separate graphics that are hot spots)
- Text entry (for single or multi-line text answers)

Controls

- Button (For navigation or switches)
- Timer (For monitoring time and triggering events. Hourglass, Director's clapboard, rising bars, etc. Use to trigger an event, such as disabling a question or providing a response to user.)
- Slider (For navigation or responses based on a linear scale. For example, identify the number of seconds coffee beans should be ground, simulate light beams upon plants, or simulate the slider control on an airplane.)

Capabilities

- You can include If/Else or If conditions to each question.
- You can set the number of tries a student can have, and assign different responses to different student actions.
- You can capture student scores, number of tries, total number of questions, and a student's question response time in a database for further reporting.

To Obtain the Free CourseBuilder Extension

Download it from Macromedia's web site at:

www.macromedia.com/resources/elearning/extensions/dw_ud/coursebuilder/

After installing CourseBuilder, you access the interactions in the following ways:

- Insert menu>CourseBuilder Interaction
- Modify menu>CourseBuilder
- Learning tab>Insert CourseBuilder Interaction (Dreamweaver MX)
- Design palette>Behaviors>CourseBuilder

For more information about this tool, please contact:

Ann-Marie Grissino is President of Keypoint Consultants, Inc., a firm specializing in online communication design and delivery. Ann-Marie has won numerous awards including an Excellence and Best of Show for e-learning development. In October 2002 Ann-Marie participated in the Technical Communication Delegation to China. She can be reached at (919)-562-2464 or at amgrissino@keypointconsultants.com.

Authorware

Presented by Jane Smith

Authorware is a robust, full-service Authoring tool that is tried and true in the industry. With Authorware, you can develop training for any type of content and any delivery method. Authorware is used extensively in the education arena as well as in the training field. Authorware uses a timeline means of representing the course flow, allowing you to drag and drop elements into the timeline.

For more information about this tool, please contact:

Jane Smith is an independent consultant, providing course design, mentoring, project management, and classes through her company JEM Communications, LLC. She has over 18 years' experience developing training for classroom, audio, CBT, IMT, WBT, and e-Learning. Jane is the Manager of the Instructional Design and Learning SIG. You can contact Jane at jemcomm@sedona.net.

You can find more information about this tool at:

www.macromedia.com/software/authorware/?promoid=home_prod_aw_082403.

Members share their experiences!

What was it like attending this year's STC conference? Two of our members, Jackie Damrau and Jessica Reed, share their experience attending this year's conference!

- [IDL in Baltimore](#)
- [My Conference Experience](#)

IDL in Baltimore

Jackie Damrau, Red Oak, Texas

Baltimore is definitely an interesting city. One must be a seafood connoisseur to live there since seafood appears to be the main tourist staple. Sightseeing was minimal; shopping was great; and the inner harbor was within walking distance. Pretty sites, many party places to go, fun all around.

My conference preparation this year included so much more than in past years. This year I gave two presentations, plus had the honor of working with other IDL SIG members in advertising our purpose and attracting new members, as well as serving my local chapter as its president. One of my presentations, "Technical Writing & Instructional Design Techniques," was one of the IDL Progression session topics. I'll tell you more about that later.

IDL Conference Events

Pre-conference preparation for the SIG leadership involved putting together effective advertising in the form of giveaways (like the colored plastic business card holders and yellow stickers) with our new logo on it, a brochure listing all the IDL-related session taking place during the conference (courtesy of yours truly), and SIG information about the officers and our business meeting. As a whole, I feel we did exceptionally well in getting the message out that the IDL SIG is back in business and needs your support to keep it on track.

Jane, Sylvia, Dave, Chris, Gene, and others did an exceptional job in contributing their time in getting us the recognition that we needed. The business meeting was definitely worth attending, since we got to meet everyone (of the officers at least) in one place and to gather ideas from members and prospective members on how to provide value to them.

The SIG Networking Luncheon provided us with another excellent opportunity to advertise our SIG and learn what people are interested in. We had three tables that were quickly filled with avid folks wanting to share their interests in instructional design. At the table where I was sitting, the conversations focused on the tools that we use in creating instructional design. The tools of choice were RoboDemo and Camtasia Studio. We talked about how we use the tools, how we have worked around issues with each, and the design time it takes to create an effective e-learning solution.

Conclusion

Involvement is a requirement of joining any organization. For me, if I'm spending the money to join an organization, I want to be involved in areas where I feel that I can make a difference. It helps my professional development for my career and for myself. The world is our learning space; we need to take advantage of all that it has to offer. Learning from others is the greatest asset and exploring new avenues.

I'm looking forward to meeting the SIG leaders and more members again next year in Seattle.

My Conference Experience

Jessica Reed, New York City, New York

I had the opportunity to attend the Society for Technical Communication's annual conference held in Baltimore, Maryland May 10th – 12th 2004. Three years out of graduate school, I felt the need to soak in as much research as I could. The conference was the perfect opportunity to tap into the current technical communication field. I attended sessions in training, e-learning, information design, instructional design, and professional development. I returned feeling empowered and good about the work that I do.

I signed up for the Manual Evaluation, which provided half an hour with a professional to review a classroom training manual that I worked on. The evaluation provided me with valuable, objective feedback. I walked away feeling validated on my instructional design decisions, and came back to work with some ideas to further improve the manual. The evaluation was a big win in terms of proving the value of the conference to management.

I attended a number of sessions that I distilled for my team at work. Here is a brief summary of my experience at the sessions.

Applying Research & Practice: What's Relevant Today? (Janice C. Redish)

We covered:

- Considering how people work with documents
- Orienting users, breaking up text, using headings
- Writing clear sentences

Ginny has a wonderful way of distilling research into meaningful practice. I left with a number of best practices for applying the research findings to my work.

Effective Interactions for E-Learning (Jane L. Smith)

We learned how to create effective exercises in our e-learning and compared examples. We discussed the use of scenarios, or story problems, to engage learners. Jane has a lot of experience and offered many good pointers. I use scenarios in my job, and this was a good opportunity for me to evaluate my work.

Using Games in Technical Training by (Paul E. Sinasohn)

This session provided a good overview of how games allow you to relate information to what you already know. A key take-away was the importance of using different kinds of games depending on your objective.

Dissecting Dysfunctional Design in Desktop Publishing (Carol A. Hiding)

This session provided a reminder of the importance of design in our documents. Carol provided an overview and examples of:

- Elements of design: line, form, light and color, texture, and pattern
- Principles of design: balance, emphasis, scale, repetition
- Typography
- Composition and layout

Instructional Design Progression (Hosted by Instructional Design & Learning SIG)

Progression sessions are shorter and generate discussion around the table. I attended these three:

- *Learning or Browsing: Should Learner's Control the Sequence of E-Learning?* (Mike Tillmans)

After sharing our viewpoints on how much control learners should have over the sequence of e-learning, we discussed the use of default pathways to help learners make good learning decisions. The time went so fast that I think we all would have liked to spend more time talking with Mike about this topic.

- *Technical Writing and Instructional Design Techniques* (Jackie Damrau)

Jackie presented a high-level overview of learning types, the ADDIE model (Analysis, Engagement Methodology. I left this session considering my team's process for designing and developing courseware.

- *Preparing Your Toolbox* (Gene Holden)

We discussed various software tools for instructional design. This was a great opportunity to hear pros and cons of different software from first-hand users before you buy.

These were just some of the sessions that I attended at this year's conference. I encourage you to communicate with other attendees if you missed this great opportunity. If you did attend and would like more information on these sessions or any others, STC provided conference proceedings containing papers for some of the sessions.

Conference Photo Album

Check out a slideshow of the IDL SIG members in action as they attend and lead presentations, network with each other, attend our business meeting, and have fun in Baltimore!

Visit the IDL SIG website and the online newsletter to see this fantastic photo album.

Share your thoughts about the newsletter or give us your suggestions on how we can improve the newsletter. Simply send your suggestions to David.Williams.210@nd.edu.

Course Development Costs -- Pragmatic, Concise and Very Clean

Wow! I loved the newsletter, and what a wonderful article by Dave Smulders, *Course Development Costs*.

I have been in the documentation and training development business for 25 years. I can easily say that my projects have spanned every form of development in the marketplace. The biggest conundrum next to managing the developers, however, is estimating how long a project will take. And I must say, IMT is the biggest challenge of all, because of the variations of developer pace, tools, interactivity, testing depth (and so on).

However, Dave's advice so mirrored my own that I'll use it as one of my sources in the "Quality 101" progression at the conference. We need metrics! These will add to my arsenal.

Thanks for a very pragmatic, concise and very clean article on this topic.

Sherry Michaels, Phoenix, AZ

Print-Friendly Version?

Is there a print-friendly version of this newsletter? Let me know. Thanks!

Lucy G. Vitale

Editor's Note: Great question, Lucy! The layout of the newsletter is designed so any page will print within the margins of an 8.5 X 11 page and quickly. We've also provided a PDF version of the newsletter for those of you who wish to print the entire newsletter in one fell swoop.

Praise for Newsletter

What a wonderful newsletter. Very well developed as an online medium. The article titled, "Converting from ILT to WBT: The Process (and Challenges) of Developing a Blended Solution" was very interesting and well written, however, I don't believe I ever learned what ILT or WBT stands for.

I am not fully educated or trained in instructional design, although I am often asked to create materials that can be used within the client's facility for employee training.

The entire web site and newsletter is something that everyone should be very proud of.

Natalie A. Roelant, Warren, MI

Editor's note: Thanks so much for the complement! We've a great newsletter team and great article contributors. That makes a huge difference!

Kudos and a Suggestion

I was browsing through IDeal's first issue and found it pretty engaging and useful. I enjoyed the article "Are Your Virtual Classes as Successful as They Could Be?" and your editorial.

There is a minor suggestion to improve formatting. The left frame has a lot of white space in the bottom after the Events link. Possibly we can reduce its size to ensure that articles wrap up properly or you may have this frame's size increased to cover the entire length of the article and prevent any text wrap.

*Pawan Nayar
India*

We encourage you to submit for consideration content of interest to those who do instructional design or wish to learn more about this field.

Content should relate to Instructional Design and Learning.

This includes:

- Short tips or hints
- Book, software, or technology reviews
- Feature articles
- Member news
- Employment information
- Courses, conferences, workshops, or events

Articles can range from 25 words to more than 1,000 words. If your article is particularly lengthy, consider breaking it into smaller submissions (i.e., part 1, part 2, etc.) that we could publish in successive issues.

To assist in writing your article, here are just a few tips to keep in mind:

- Write in a clear, informal style.
- Use the active voice.
- Avoid gender-specific language.
- Use jargon or acronyms sparingly. (Include definitions if you do use jargon or acronyms.)
- Use headings and subheadings effectively to guide the reader.
- Include reference citations or a bibliography at the end of each article documenting the sources quoted or used.

Formatting and Graphics

- Avoid underlining unless text is a hyperlink.
- Use bold-face to set Headings and sub-headings apart.
- Submit graphics as a separate file. (Please include instructions as to where the graphic should appear.)

Legal and Other Considerations

- Include a reprint permission statement, if article was previously published .
- Include a brief bio of yourself of up to 50 words.
- Verify that item (book or software) is available for purchase when submitting a book or software review.
- Before submitting *Technical Communication* book reviews, indicate in which issue the review appeared e.g., published in the February 2003 issue of *Technical Communication*. (We cannot accept any reviews that have not yet been published in *Technical Communication*.)
- Verify that web site links and resources (eg., pdf files) referenced in your article exist at the time you submit the article.

Editorial License

The editorial staff reserves the right to edit a submission or break a submission into successive parts for publication where deemed necessary.

Where to Submit Article or Questions

Send your articles in electronic format to: David Williams, Editor, David.Williams.210@nd.edu.

Thanks for taking a moment to give us feedback!

- We want to ensure that the newsletter is serving your needs. If you have suggestions on how we can improve the newsletter, please send your suggestions to David.Williams.210@nd.edu.
 - We welcome letters to the editor, which we will share with readers in our newsletter. If you want to share your thoughts about the newsletter, please send your letter to the Editor to: David.Williams.210@nd.edu.
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The mission of the IDL SIG is 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.

The mission of the Society of Technical Communication is to create and support a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.