

Manager's Report: Keeping Up the Momentum

By Lois Marsh, SIG Co-Manager



As Dawnell announced in the last issue, I am serving as Co-Manager of our SIG this year. We have big boots to fill – Raymond's! – and we're working to keep up the momentum he built. Besides helping Dawnell to plan and execute our strategy for the SIG, I have some personal objectives this year:

- Support our volunteer team in developing and achieving their goals
- Build more participation in our SIG's listserv (only about 20% of our members

are subscribed to this valuable resource)

- Develop a SIG brochure (with help from Diana Ost)

So what have we been up to so far? Dawnell kicked off 2007 with a successful P&P SIG conference call – especially successful because we gained two new volunteers from it. She has worked hard to make sure our STC conference sessions are all set up. Our panel discussion on P&P in financial services wasn't accepted, but we have some terrific topics in the Progression. For details, see Dawnell's article on page 2.

We both participated in SIG leadership conference call sessions and heard some great ideas from other SIG managers. Of special note were the varied experiences of SIGs that elect their executive members.

I've been focused on getting new volunteers on board. I'm happy to announce that we have a new membership coordinator,

Kathy Stanford Jones of Toluca Lake, California. Kathy is busy working on a new member welcome letter. We also have a new newsletter volunteer, **Leigh Cordiner**, who will help with proofreading and editing. And for a one-time project, Diana Ost volunteered to put together our new SIG brochure to be available for the upcoming conference. Thanks to all three for stepping forward!

Our SIG continues to grow – at last count, we had 1,101 members in 28 countries. We are an amazingly diverse group – your combined knowledge and experience are invaluable to your peers. Now we need to figure out how to leverage that knowledge for each other in even more meaningful ways.

I look forward to hearing your ideas in the coming months. Please drop me or Dawnell a line at any time! You can find our email addresses on the Volunteers page of our website.

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Got a hot product or service you'd like our 1,000+ members to hear about?

Contact the Editor to inquire about rates:

Abena Edugyan
[aedugyan@yahoo.com]

Upcoming Learning Opportunities

Check out these learning opportunities led by Raymond Urgo:

Shared Wisdom from Senior-Level Policies & Procedures Professionals (panel moderator)

May 8, Santa Ana, CA

Society for Technical Communication, Orange County chapter www.ocstc.org

Fundamentals of Policies & Procedures Communication (guest speaker)

May 12, Pasadena, CA

American Society for Training & Development, Los Angeles chapter's San Gabriel Valley Division www.astdla.org

The 54th Annual STC Conference - Minneapolis, MN

By Dawnell Claessen, SIG Manager and Conference Proposal Coordinator

The Policies and Procedures SIG is gearing up for a great Conference in Minneapolis, MN May 13-16, 2007. Below is a quick preview of P&P SIG related or SIG sponsored events.

Check your Conference Program for times and locations.

Check the P&P SIG table in the exhibition hall for news flyers and updates!

Sunday:

Speaker Orientation Session.

New Speakers or those who would like a refresher course heard can hear a brief presentation with some “Dos and Don’ts” to insure a good experience for speakers and attendees alike.

I’d like to meet all our SIG speakers right after this meeting for introductions and any last minute announcements. This session is usually held mid-afternoon on Sunday. Check your Conference Program for times and location.

Welcome Reception.

The SIG will have a Welcome table – so please stop by and introduce yourself! You can pick up some literature on about the SIG and interact in person with your peers.

The reception has appetizers and drinks and is very well attended. This session is usually held on Sunday evening. Check your Conference Program for times and locations

Monday:

SIG Annual Business Meeting.

This is our only “face to face” meeting of the year. Every SIG member is invited (and encouraged) to attend and participate.

I will provide attending SIG leaders, members and volunteers a report and we will hear SIG news, stats and make our plans for the coming SIG year.

SIG Networking Luncheon.

Every year SIG leaders, members and volunteers sit down and enjoy a nice lunch (with dessert) and good conversation. This year, our SIG will have this luncheon on **Monday**. Be sure to buy your luncheon tickets when you register!

Tuesday:

Topics in Policies and Procedures.

We have a great lineup of speakers planned. Please join us for this progression session to hear presentations on various topics in P&P.

Planned presentations include topics such as Accessibility Policy, Metrics, Procedure –vs- Process, Strategic Approaches, MAP, Recruiting for P&P, a New Value Proposition for P&P Practitioners, Content Management and Microsoft SharePoint, and more.

We expect this session to be on Tuesday, but check your Conference Program for the time and location of this not to be missed session at Conference.

Honors Reception and Awards Banquet.

STC throws a party and gives out awards and honors. Be sure to buy your luncheon tickets when you register!

Content and Convergence: Another move away from content silos

By Rahel Bailie

When technical communicators think of content management, our minds naturally go to the world of structured authoring and XML content management. If someone were to map out the direction of structured authoring over the last couple of decades, it would be a relatively simple path, from DocBook SGML to DocBook XML to DITA XML, with a few detours along the way for specialized DTDs (such as S1000D, used for aircraft maintenance).

It's probably surprising, then, to realize that in the content management world, this type of content management is considered a niche market so specialized that industry pundits haven't even bestowed on it a sexy acronym, and are just now starting to look for a common vocabulary to talk about it. There's a current attempt to call this "component content management" but whether the term will stick - well, as the term is being coined from outside the industry, that remains to be seen. So far, single-sourcing has been the most persistent terminology used, but even that only addresses a relatively small aspect of this type of content management which is known by terms such as structured authoring and XML content management (SAXCM is a bit of a racy acronym, but after all, SAX sells!).

Where the action is, both in terms of market size and in movement, is on the Web side. Web content management systems (WCMS) are used not only for Web sites but intranets, extranets, and portals - a fancy name for a site where some content is password protected, and sometimes different content is served up, depending on the role of the person coming to the site or logging in. Variants of these Web systems are also used for e-learning, knowledge management, collaboration, e-commerce, and a host of related applications - but let me not get distracted from my premise.

The systems used for marketing purposes have their own entourages to support their functions. There are Digital Asset Management (DAM) apps to handle all the still and moving images in low- and high-resolution, thumbnails, and print-quality downloads. To go with that, Digital Rights Management (DRM) apps are needed to control access and usage of the digital assets. Also part of the entourage is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) software that helps drive traffic to the site, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) software that syndicates content from the site.

Where this all becomes interesting is in the convergence of these two worlds, in the intersection of the worlds structured authoring and WCMS. We came from a world of content silos, and progressed to a world of content management silos: SAXCM and

WCM. But, many would say, what about Enterprise Content Management Systems (ECMS)? Doesn't that remove silos, and let an organization share and re-use content across the entire enterprise? Well - and you probably won't be surprised at the answer, yes and no.

If you consider an organization a closed system, you very well might look at ECM as a solution to getting content out of CMS silos. However, as the saying goes, "the devil is in the details" and the actual execution to get everyone's content across the enterprise readied for ultimate shareability does take a concerted, corporate-wide, executively-sponsored project to guarantee success. And yet, aren't we rapidly bypassing the ECM stage? Now, we are entering a new phase where collaboration tools, social networking tools, and tools barely entering the market are ready to change the landscape yet again.

The technical communication world is preparing for this world of convergence and integration with DITA, where topic-based content can be re-used within a document or a department, or shared with the rest of the organization or with partner organizations. The DITA standard allows content to travel, even boomerang, and be as usable when it arrives as when it left its author. In the Web world, similar standards have emerged and continue to emerge in the forms of everything from [microformats](#) to entire mark-up languages as a way of making content transportable.

The next few years will hold some interesting developments for technical communicators. The convergence of content types will have far-reaching implications, and any predictions would need to change as user reactions to new technologies affect user expectations, the way that [del.icio.us](#) and [digg](#) has affected searching for information. It's certainly a time when we need to keep ourselves aware of industry trends and align ourselves more closely with other content developers that touch our work.

Rahel Bailie is principal of Intentional Design Inc., focusing on performance improvement for communication products, and content management consultant in Strategy A Consulting Group, a multidisciplinary consultancy helping organizations find effective ways to manage content as valuable corporate assets.

Note: *Strategy A is holding a conference in Vancouver, Canada on November 8-10, 2007 on the theme of "Convergence and Integration: Changing the Content Management Landscape". With representation from the various CM industry segments, practitioners will be able to explore the various ways that content management will affect them, both short-term and long-term.*

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Volunteer News

Newsletter Volunteer - Leigh Cottrell Cordiner



Leigh Cottrell Cordiner holds a Bachelor of English degree with a Concentration in Technical Writing from the University of Central Florida.

In late 2005, after eight years of experience in technical writing and instructional design for the military industry, she moved to St. Thomas, USVI and began freelancing.

Leigh is currently running a natural stone fabrication business with her husband, and exploring many writing interests including editing and proofreading, policies and procedures, copywriting, and feature articles.

You can reach Leigh at: LarLei@hotmail.com

Membership Coordinator - Kathy Sanford Jones



Kathy Stanford-Jones has developed Policies and Procedures since 1975. She has worked on major global ERP implementations, providing the Policies, Processes, and Procedures to a global audience.

She has been a consultant since 1980, and has experience on numerous systems that include Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Purchasing, Bill of Materials, Financial Systems, General Ledger.

Kathy is President of KCG Consultant Group, which provides services and expertise for the research and development of Policies, Processes, and Procedures.

You can reach Kathy at: klstanfordjones@kcgroup.com

Want to get more involved in our SIG? There are always opportunities for new volunteers.

Contact Lois at lois.marsh@bmo.com.