



IDeal: Design for Learning

Newsletter of the Instructional Design & Learning SIG

<http://www.stcidlsig.org>



May 13-16 2007 • Minneapolis





by [Robert Hershenow](#)

This issue of IDEAL: Design for Learning focuses on the 54th

Annual STC Conference (Technical Communications Summit), which was held in Minneapolis in May. Whether or not you attended you'll want to read the reviews and see the photos of sessions and meetings from fellow IDL SIG members.

Jane Smith contributed the feature article, "The Standards Document for E-Learning Courses", and SIG Treasurer Jeanette Rogers' article explains what happens to your STC dues. Kiera Thrasher's roundup of recent topics on the Listserve (our online discussion forum) shows the depth and breadth of the work that technical communicators are doing these days (Warning: reading this article may prompt you to head straight for the Listserve Archives for more details!).

Our new SIG Manager, Jackie Damrau, gets it all started on the next page. And as always there are more tips and information inside, including SIG and Society news. Read on!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE EDITOR'S WORD	2
ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER	2
SIG MANAGER'S THOUGHTS	3
ARTICLES:	
- Standards Document for E-Learning	5
- Where Do My Membership Dues Go?	8
- IDL SIG Listserve Roundup	10
- 54th STC Conference News & Reviews	13
TIPS AND HINTS	20
MEMBER NEWS	20
SIG NEWS	22
SOCIETY NEWS	23
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	23
NEW MEMBERS	24



IDEAL: Design for Learning

Newsletter of the Instructional Design & Learning SIG

Published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

Manager: Jackie Damrau (manager@stcidslsig.org)
Managing Editor: Robert Hershenow (newsletter@stcidslsig.org)
Associate Editor: Andrea Kenner
Graphics: Cynthia Hauptner
Layout and Design: *Your name here?*
Copy Editors: William Collins, Sophia Siraki, Andrea Kenner, Susan McLain

Publication Policy
 We encourage letters, articles, book reviews, and other items for publication. Articles can include up to 1,000 words. Picture formats: JPGs, GIFs, PNGs; Text format: Word, RTF, or ASCII. Send items to Robert Hershenow at newsletter@stcidslsig.org

Advertising Policy
 We encourage advertising as long as it follows the STC guidelines and promotes services to the Instructional Design & Learning SIG members. Ad sizes and rates are:
 Half page (7.5x4.5): \$75 (1 issue); \$225 (4 issues)
 Business Card (3.5x2): \$25 (1 issue); \$100 (4 issues)

Electronic copy only in .TIF, .GIF, or .PNG format. Send ads to Robert Hershenow at newsletter@stcidslsig.org. Checks should be made payable to *Society for Technical Communication* and sent to Robert Hershenow, PO Box 133, Douglassville PA 19518.

Copyright Statement
 This newsletter invites technical communicators in the field of instructional design to submit articles for publication. The authors implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the submission and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the author. Let the editor know in your cover letter if the article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications. Design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2005-2007.

SIG Web Site: <http://www.stcidslsig.org>
SIG Newsletter Archives: <http://www.stcidslsig.org>
SIG E-mail List: Open to all members. For information click [here](#)

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

Reprints
 Newsletter article reprints are allowed if permission is obtained from the original author, credit is given to the author.

SIG MANAGER'S THOUGHTS

by [Jackie Damrau](#), SIG Manager



Hello everyone!

The time seems to have passed quickly since I met many of you at the STC Annual Conference in Minneapolis in May. It was nice getting to see some

of you at the IDL SIG Progression, the SIG Business Meeting (even if it was an early hour of the morning to have been moving about), or at the SIG Networking Luncheon.

For those that I haven't met yet, our paths will definitely cross even if it is in a virtual manner through the SIG's discussion list, programs, discussion calls, my columns in this quarterly newsletter, or whatever other media is in use at the time.

As SIG Manager, I want you to feel comfortable approaching me with your ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and so on. Your input is important to providing quality services and support to all our members. At the same time, I'll also ask that you realize that as a volunteer group, the things that you may suggest that you would like to see the SIG offer or provide may not be in scope at the current time. However, that does not

mean that we can't maintain an idea list for consideration for future SIG managers.

Strategically, the SIG leaders and committee managers are going through a brainstorming activity of determining what programs and other services we will be able to provide to you this year. I want to take this opportunity to introduce you to the SIG leaders and the various committee managers and co-managers; on the following page you'll find a listing of positions, names, and e-mail addresses.

I encourage you to contact the committee managers/co-managers if you have an interest in that particular committee's work. If you want to help the SIG in some way yet are not sure where you want to help, contact the Volunteers Manager. She will be able to help find you a place where your skills and talents can be used.

Thank you for your participation in the IDL SIG.

Until the next newsletter,

Jackie

IDL SIG Committee Managers and Co-Managers

Position	Manager	E-mail
Elected Leaders		
SIG Manager	Jackie Damrau	manager@stcidlsig.org jdamrau3@airmail.net
SIG Asst. Managers	Karen Baranich TBA	kbaranich@scana.com (contact Jackie if interested)
Secretary	Cynthia Silversides	secretary@stcidlsig.org
Treasurer	Jeanette Thomas	treasurer@stcidlsig.org
Committee Managers		
Communications	Beth Bailey	discussiongroups@stcidlsig.org
Community Outreach (COR)	Aparna Garg	communityoutreach@stcidlsig.org
Conference Activities	Karen Baranich	kbaranich@scana.com
Membership	Kim Rosenlof Katherine Baboulis	membership@stcidlsig.org
Newsletter	Robert Hershenow	newsletter@stcidlsig.org
Nominations	Gloria Reece	nominations@stcidlsig.org
Programs	Dawn Lofgren Maggie Haenel Patty Hendricks Suzanne Guess	programs@stcidlsig.org
Public Relations	William Huscher	publicrelations@stcidlsig.org
Scholarships	Sylvia Miller	scholarship@stcidlsig.org
Surveys	Ann Gordon	surveys@stcidlsig.org
Volunteers	Gene Holden	volunteers@stcidlsig.org
Website	Nina Murdock	webmanager@stcidlsig.org
Member at Large	TBD	

Thank You!!

A heartfelt thanks to the IDL SIG team and all you members for the lovely appreciation gift you gave me at the conference. The Cherokee Meditation Bowl is perfect (you know me well!) and has found a special place in my meditation room. I will also be using it with the spiritual growth groups that I'll be starting soon, both locally and virtually. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you, work closely with many of you, and meet many others.

Namaste,
Jane Smith

FEATURE ARTICLE:

The Standards Document for e-Learning Courses

By Jane Smith, IDL SIG Member

What goes into a standards document for e-Learning? What parts of that should come from the client?

Introduction

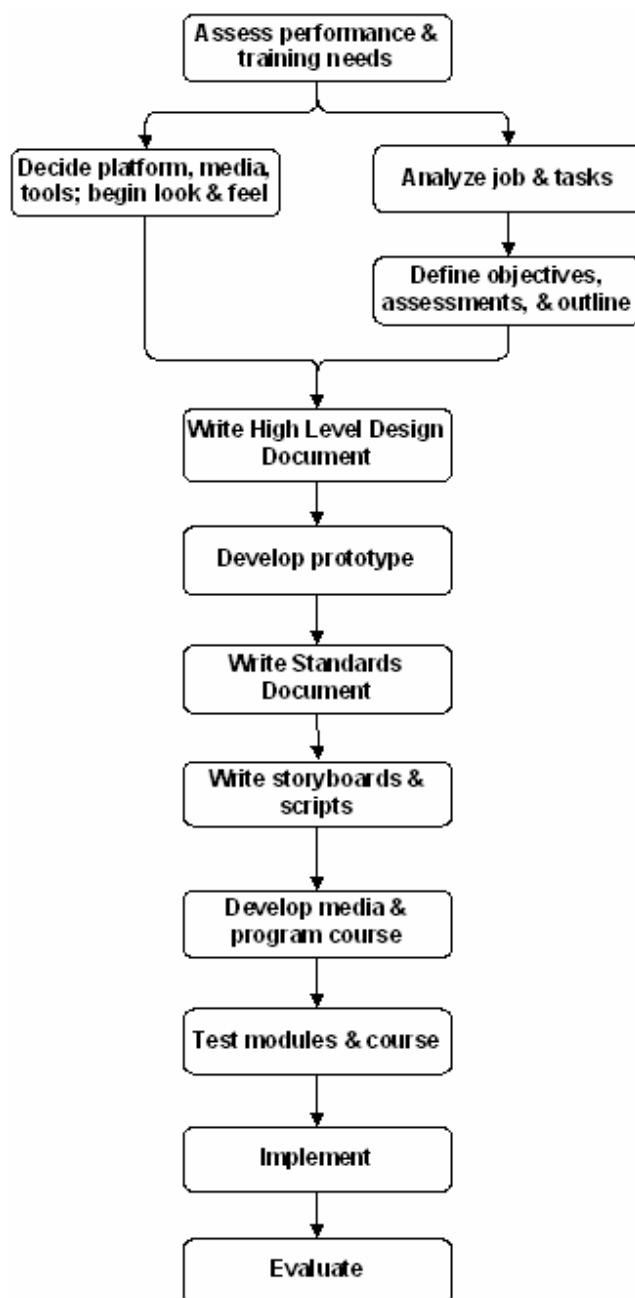
In e-Learning, the standards document is an output after several other stages of design and development. The following diagram shows where the development and writing of a standards document typically falls in the process.

As shown, the standards document summarizes all the efforts and decisions that have been made up to date. The document can be a separate document or sections appended to the design document.

The Design Document: A Precursor

Generally, the design document precedes and sets the stage for the details of the standards document. So let's talk a minute about what is contained in the design document.

The design document specifies agreements made during and as a result of the task analysis and includes all objectives and assessments as part of a full course outline. The design document also specifies information known about the infrastructure and platform for the course, media that can be used on that platform, and the tools that will be used to develop the course. Screen templates or layouts can also be included, but may be modified and will be more fully documented in the standards document.



Typical contents of the design document include (but are not limited to):

Purpose of the course

- Audience description
- Course learning objectives

Final course assessment decisions/needs

- System requirements
- Instructional architecture and media types that will be used\
- Estimated seat time of course
- High level outline including units and lessons
- Course structure diagram/flowchart
- Course structure description from the user standpoint
- Media
- Tools
- Talent needed (voice-over and actors)
- Navigation and course operations
- Detailed outlines by unit, including objectives, practice exercise types and content, and instructional methods
- Ownership and maintenance
- Estimated development time based on current knowledge
- Support requirements from SMEs and client
- Project sign-off

The Prototype

As you look at our process flow, typically we develop a prototype after the basic decisions have been made and prior to writing the standards document and beginning full course development. The prototype is a fully developed 10 – 15 minute piece of content that represents some of the more complex content pieces and interactions as well as all screen layout types and navigation. The internal or external client typically reviews the prototype thoroughly for:

- Does the course work on the intended end-user's platform? Does it load and play well with no delays or unintended breaks in delivery?
- Screen layouts – do they work?
- Colors – how are they when used with content (even though colors and layouts will have been shown and reviewed in the look and feel stage)?

- Navigation – do they work properly, are they intuitive, and are appropriate navigation elements used on each screen type?
- Interactions – do they work properly and support learning, are they instructionally sound?
- Media use – is it appropriate, does the use of any media get in the way?
- Are all elements used consistently, both in placement and in functionality? Is there anything that would be confusing to the user?
- Is the language used appropriate for the audience and in keeping with the client's corporate standards?
- If using audio, are the voices audible and appropriate for the audience and content? Do they have the right level of enthusiasm and emphasis?
- If using video, does it play on the infrastructure and end-user's workstation?

At the prototype stage, the complete accuracy of content is not as important as is the functionality of the course, its entire look and feel, and its usability. At this stage, we want all input from the client that we can get, so that we don't end up changing some aspect later that impacts several developed units or lessons. Here the client and team make final decisions about all areas of functionality and look and feel for the course as well as continuing to ensure that the course plays on the specified platform.

The Standards Document

The standards document, as shown by our diagram, comes after the prototype stage and documents all decisions made to that point. It can be a separate document or appended to the design document. The client signs off on the document, and it is then distributed to the development team so that each person who is writing storyboards or developing course elements will write or develop to the same standards. Generally, it includes these elements:

- An introduction
- Screen layouts: specific ones used. Content and elements included on each, and screen captures of each
- Navigation and operations for menus, navigation bar, each screen type, help, search, and other course-wide screens
- Course flowchart (probably the same one as in the design document)
- Guidelines for writing
- Guidelines for art
- Logo use
- Audio use and standards
- Video use and standards

- Interactions (questions and exercises): functionality, types, feedback, and evaluation standards
- Other standards
- Sign-off

The Basic Question

The question that was asked was: what should come from the client? Ultimately, all the decisions are made by and with the client, often with heavy input and guidance from the development and design team. Clients help answer all questions of standards that are documented in the Standards Document. A client that has developed several other e-Learning courses may, in fact, come to the project with a lot of their standards pre-determined and documented. Standards for the current course are then made with those other standards in mind. Sometimes the nature of the new course requires modification of existing standards, and other times not. When a client has not developed e-Learning courses before, the design and development team must provide guidance and assistance to the client in developing the standards. Regardless of the experience of the client, all standards and standard functionality must work with the course type, job and tasks to be trained, and the platform on which the course will play. It is in these latter areas that the design team provides input and advice to most clients.

So the answer is a definite ID – It Depends.

Templates

Templates for design and standards documents are available at www.jemcommunications.com/templates.htm.

Where do my membership dues go?

By Jeanette Rogers, IDL SIG Treasurer treasurer@stcidlsig.org

What does the SIG do with the money you pay to participate in the SIG? Who decides what happens with membership dues and other money the SIG earns?

This year the STC will provide each SIG with \$8 per SIG member. In addition to this STC per-member funding, the IDL SIG has also earned some funds through the Webinars we have conducted. While our objective with each Webinar has been to cover our costs, our Webinars have been far more successful than anticipated. As we continue to hold Webinars, extra funds will be channeled back into funding programs for our IDL SIG members.

Each SIG may use the funds to develop their SIG and membership knowledge. The IDL SIG leadership team (all volunteers) uses funds from the above sources to build the IDL community and meet our SIG goals. The leadership team meets each month via a conference call and decides (among other things) how this money will be spent. This last fiscal year our funds went to some of the following projects:

Scholarship: Each year the IDL SIG reviews scholarship applications and awards a \$500 scholarship for a student pursuing under-/post-graduate studies in the instructional design area

at an established institution. We are considering expanding this scholarship program.

Member Recognition: As we build our community, we like to recognize those who have contributed in various ways. This includes leadership members and other volunteers, as well as general members who make strong contributions to the communication list or help build our community in other ways. Last year we recognized significant efforts by handing out pens and this year we gave light bulb pins.

STC Conference grants: To ensure leadership team members are up-to-speed on society activities and leadership requirements, members of the leadership team who attend the leadership day and meet other key obligations are provided a reimbursement for part of their conference expenses.

Conference giveaways: In order to promote our SIG, we provide key IDL SIG information at the conference. This includes a list of IDL SIG sessions to attend and SIG information pamphlets. In addition, our giveaway of colorful business card holders has continuously been a big hit. Last year we even sent our business card holders and pamphlets to India for their conference.

Mailings: Each year we mail a brochure, or a hard copy of our newsletter, to our community members. In addition, a welcome letter is sent to new members to provide general information about how to participate in our community.

Operating expenses: For our SIG to function we have some general expenses such as leadership team conference calls, a PO Box fee, postage, and other miscellaneous expenses.

We are currently working on the plans and budget for the coming fiscal year of July 2007 through June 2008. If you have particular efforts you'd like to see your funds go to within the IDL SIG please send a message to the leadership team! If you have specific questions about our SIG accounting please send me a message, I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Jeanette Rogers, treasurer@stcidlsig.org

We'd Like Your Input!

Thought Leader Interviews

From time to time we publish interviews with leaders and innovators in the field of Instructional Design, and we invite these people based on input from our membership. Who would you like to hear from? Let us know, and we'll contact them.

Articles

Most of our articles are written by members... why not you? One of the best things about our SIG community is that we can all benefit from each other's experience.

Tips and Hints

There's more than one way to do just about anything, and maybe your way is the next big thing. Or maybe it's just better than my way. Got a favorite process that saves you time every day? Why not share it?

Letters to the Editor

How do you like the IDeaL newsletter? How could we make it better? Was there an article or feature you enjoyed (or didn't)? Tell us about it!

Send your comments, requests, or opinions to newsletter@stcidlsig.org

The IDL SIG ListServ: A Roundup of Recent Topics

By Kiera Thrasher

The listServ has been very active over the last few months and quite a few weighty topics have been discussed. Members have offered some very enlightening advice and invigorating debate on a variety of ID issues. Here are some quick excerpts and summaries from those discussions:

Audio in asynchronous CBT

Question: Could anyone recommend an authoritative source for best practices and guidelines for the use of audio in asynchronous CBT?

Responses:

- Recommended references:
 - Ruth Clark's *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*
 - William Horton's *E-Learning by Design*
- Should we enhance our lessons with some sort of audio? Generally yes, but it depends. Some considerations: cubicle environments, accessibility issues, and audio quality.

Voice-over / screen text standards

Question: What resources are there about the use of and difference between screen captions and voice over in a eLearning course?

Responses:

- Here's what Ruth Clark says based on the research.
 - When learners are given pairings or tripletings of media from graphic, text, audio, and animation, they learn best from animation and audio.
 - Giving learners multiple visual stimuli results in learners not knowing where to focus; therefore, one or more of the stimuli get missed and learning diminishes.
 - When learners are given matching text and audio, sometimes learners experience a cognitive disconnect because they want to focus on one or the other.

What do you do then?

- The preferred method is to do summarizing text synched with the audio.
- If you need to have the same text as the audio (for 508 or other reasons), you have some choices:
 - Play the audio first and then pop up the text.
 - Have an omnipresent "Script" button that enables the learner to access the entire script at will.
 - Give learners the option to turn off the audio or the text to meet their learning style.
- Closed captioning may be necessary where some of your learners may be hearing impaired, have English as their second language, or are not able to use the audio feature because it would disturb co-workers in their environment. However, give the learner the choice on closed captioning as well.
- You want the screen caption to reinforce—rather than repeat—what the audio is saying.
- If the audio channel is actually the voice of a speaker on-screen rather than a background narration, 508 states the captioning and the voice-over need to be synchronized. Overall for 508, the elearning should provide an "equivalent experience" of learning to those who need the assistive technologies as to those who do not.

Passing scores

Question: What really is the standard for adult learning to determine a passing score?

Responses:

- There is no general standard. An organization's own standard is driven by what is required by state, federal, or maybe even local regulations as well as corporate standards and culture. Flight training, for example, many have more rigorous passage requirements than a general new employee introduction to company department names.
- It seems the default in many LMS systems is 75%, but this can be changed. The actual score depends on your organization's requirements. We have some courses for which 75% is fine, but others that require 80% to 90% depending on the competency requirements for the learners.
- Several respondents listed their own organizations' policies: Most were 80%. Some were a little lower, others higher (as much as 90%) based on the criticality of the content.
- *Resource recommendations from list members:*

Questionmark has a few White Papers on the topic:

<http://www.questionmark.com/us/whitepapers/index.aspx>

LMS

Questions: Options for smaller companies? Basic & affordable LMS? How to choose an LMS?

Responses:

- No LMS is free or cheap (except Moodle). [Many other vendor names were discussed; they are not listed here.]
- There is a wide range in the features of each system and the degree of interoperability.
- Have an excellent requirements list before you shop!
- Some things for your organization to consider when developing requirements:
 - Number of learners and courses to be tracked?
 - Types of courses: Web-based, instructor-led, virtual instructor-led?
 - Offer continuing education credits?
 - Want to manage content and learner data or just learner data?
 - Hosted or in-house implementation preferred?
 - What kind of growth is anticipated?
- *Resources recommended by list members:*
 - eLearning Guild (recent LMS vendor report)
 - Brandon Hall (consulting and online research database)
 - Learning Content Management Council:
<http://www.lcmscouncil.org/index.html>
To distinguish between the two types of management systems:
<http://www.learningcircuits.org/NR/exeres/72E3F68C-4047-4379-8454-2B88C9D38FC5.htm>

Authoring Tools

Various questions about tools

Participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of specific tools, and gave advice about tools in general. Over the last couple of months, the listServ has debated the pros and cons of Articulate vs. Captivate, Captivate vs. Camtasia, and discussed other tools as well.

Screenshots & PowerPoint

Question: Where should you place screenshots in PowerPoint?

Responses:

- It depends on where you want the reader to focus attention. Graphics draw more attention than plain text, and animations draw the most attention of all. All things being equal, however, the learner typically focuses first on the upper-left, and least on the periphery. Seek to create balance so that the learner doesn't miss something.
- If you have any doubt regarding "focus," print out your slide and hold it upside down. Blur your vision and see where your eyes hit first. This is the first thing your learners will see.
- A top-left to bottom-right eye-movement direction for the West, and a top-right to bottom-left direction for the East.
- You need to balance your desire to add content around the screen shot with the need to display the screenshot at a reasonable size and resolution.
- If learners need to zoom in on a screen shot, consider placing close-ups at the end of the presentation so you can flip there if need be. Or toggle to the application itself. (A good deal of debate followed about legibility, appropriate levels of detail, and related practices.)
- *Resource recommendations from list members:*
 - Ruth Clark and Chopeta Lyons' *Graphics for Learning: Proven Guidelines for Planning, Designing, and Evaluating Visuals in Training Materials*
 - Ruth Clark's *E-Learning and the Science of Instruction*

Other topics discussed over the last few months:

- Virtual agents in elearning courses; Picking an online Master of Arts program
- Getting a quick education in instructional design for someone in a related field
- Bidding on a project; Various job openings
- Wall Street Journal article about the limits of online training
- Dr. Thiagi's Webinar on interactive techniques
- Creating a Table of Contents for PowerPoint-based ILT materials
- Laying out and binding a landscape-oriented manual
- Search capabilities of PDF files; Online conference registration software
- Course evaluation tools; Reports from the STC conference
- Developing an online corporate style guide; Handling AICC files

For more information about these topics, visit the listServ archive:

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

To view the archives you must be a listServ subscriber, but as an IDL Sig member, you can always sign up!

News & Reviews from the 54th Annual STC Conference

Reflections on the Conference

by Jane Smith

This year's conference was a good one from many perspectives: a few sessions I attended, a few sessions I participated in, the energy of the conference, and the self-revelations.

Effective Page Layout for the Non-artist with Jean Luc Dumont

One of the most enjoyable sessions I attended was Jean Luc's session on page layout. Jean Luc is not only entertaining but also very knowledgeable in his field, not to mention being a humorous presenter.

After discussing the purpose of page layout, to convey structure visually, he went on to discuss specific aspects of page layout that might keep some website home pages from looking like they were "designed by a committee." He talks about three primary areas that create spatial relationships on a page: proximity, similarity, and prominence.

The bulk of his presentation was on three principles. First, that the page has two dimensions and that we need to work with these dimensions, even if a word processor doesn't recognize them. He advocates a large left margin on the page with headings, callouts, and summaries in that margin. The next principle is that space is not the final frontier but the final luxury. Every shape exists only because of the space around it. He is against background images on web pages, since they detract from readability. He advocates generous margins between a boxed text border and the text itself, and he is against using lines in tables to separate items but plenty of white space instead. The third principle that he discussed was that too much freedom is bad for you. He advocates constraining text by employing simplicity and consistency in font, size, and color.

He also believes that the traditional document creation process is a fragmented, iterative process and recommends that we not design the layout without the text and vice versa. He suggests writing in the layout from the beginning to speed up final approval. For himself, he has spent many years optimizing a system of writing so that line lengths are uniform; however, he doesn't advocate this for everyone.

He concluded with three key concepts, saying that aesthetics do matter and that ugliness detracts:

- Elegance - appropriateness; serves the purpose and visual structure.
- Simplicity - less is more; remove ink and add space.
- Harmony - constrain options to coordinating options.

He suggests that we all create pages with a great attitude.

His presentation has many implications for those of us developing classroom training materials, such as instructor and student guides; however, many of the underlying principles are also key in developing screens for e-Learning courses.

Expert Evaluation of Training

This year's evaluation session had 16 participants and eight evaluators. We are gathering data from the participants, but most of the evaluators feel that the session went well for the participants. The room was a-buzz with focused conversations, constructive ideas, and good will all the way around.

The IDL SIG Progression

The progression also went well this year, with perhaps more attendees than we've had before. While I picked a topic at the last minute, "The e-Learning Process," and wondered if it were too mundane, my tables were full all the time, and we had a good time with good comments and

discussion. Again, the room was full, and people seemed to enjoy the topics. As a SIG, we're looking at ways to make many of these progression topics available to you in the future. Stay tuned . . .



Photo: Paul Sinasohn

Self-Revelation

While I went to the conference knowing that I was turning over the leadership of the SIG and expecting to wind down, I found out that, instead, I was energized and came away with many ideas of where else I might contribute.

I was also energized and excited to see where all communities can go. Whereas in the past, SIGs have been somewhat secondary communities, now they are not. Other communities are looking to SIGs to help them find ways to meet their members' needs through different types of programs, including web seminars, discussion calls, and podcasts. It's exciting to see where SIGs have come in the eyes of STC as a whole and know that our SIG has had a part in making that happen. And, of course, it was a pleasure to have the SIG recognized at the honors banquet once again and know that I had a real part in that.

Then I came home and realized, once again, that it's time to pace myself. For the immediate future, I see my role in STC as being one of more project work and less ongoing responsibilities. I have lots of ideas floating around my beady brain, but for a

while, I will lay low, working, playing, and enjoying the water and summer sun, staving off the need/desire to blaze trails just for a little while ☺.

Planning Brings Improvements

By Karen Baranich

Aside from Sunday Leadership Day, I attended only one session at the Annual Conference. We are planning on redesigning the STC Competition structure during the next two years, so I spent most of my time at the conference in meetings and networking. At first blush, this sounds like a waste of time, but I really got a lot done towards planning for next year. There will be more to come on the competitions later in the year.

Several people posed the question, "Was the design of this conference much different from previous STC Annual Conferences? And if so, was it better or worse?"

I didn't think there was a huge difference. The biggest change I noticed was more time to visit the vendor area. That was a good thing all around. It helped to raise revenue for the Society, and gave people the opportunity to visit the vendor booths without having to skip sessions. I usually attend the conference with an eye to exploring one or more products to improve things back home, and this format allowed me the time to talk to vendors without feeling so rushed. The selection of vendor booths was certainly much improved, and I really liked the central member area with seating and access to STC office staff.

I also appreciated the different way that competition entries were displayed this year. In the past, we put up everything that received an award, and

the display was a make-do affair. This year, we had a professional looking display that highlighted the accomplishments of the Best of Show and Distinguished winners.

All in all, I think things improved. I look forward to seeing the conference improve year by year and hope we never get stuck in the rut of "We've always done it this way, so why change?"

Technical Publications Awards at the 2007
STC Conference, Minneapolis

Photo: Karen Baranich



The Awards area at the 2007
STC Conference, Minneapolis

Photo: Karen Baranich

Conference 54, where are you??

By Paul Sinasohn; photos: Paul Sinasohn

My three strongest lasting impressions of the Minneapolis Technical Communication Summit are:

- Communication of a non-technical nature at an educational event can make or break the entire experience for a learner
- The IDL SIG is the group to be in inside STC. We ARE the ones to be reckoned with!
- It's not easy to use a wheelchair on carpeted surfaces

OK, the third point needs explaining: Two days before I traveled to the Conference, I sprained my ankle terribly, and had to use crutches to get around. When I got to Minneapolis, I decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and rented a wheelchair to use in the Convention Center. Wheelchairs are easy enough to use on nice smoothly-tiled linoleum surfaces, but when you add in the friction of a carpeted surface, it becomes much harder to move yourself around.

What can we learn from this as Instructional Designers or Writers? That our materials must flow smoothly, and that we should remove all bumps or gaps in them - unless they are placed there by design, in which case someone better be ready with a little extra push for our learners. Your facilitators/instructors should be prepared for any gotchas, trick questions or exercises, or potential problems that students will encounter, either in labs or in presentation materials.

As instructional designers, we often (eventually, in my case) learn the technology or processes we are presenting to others. Sometimes, we have this luxury before we begin to develop materials. There is a trap here, in that you can forget what the new learner *doesn't* know about your topics or technologies.

Enough lecturing. What about the conference?

As usual, Sunday night's opening reception was a nice affair - our table was quite popular, and I'm very grateful to the SIG managers who set it up and the volunteers who were our greeters to the attendees. Our SIG is one of the larger groups inside STC, and it was nice to put faces to names and especially to hand out new member signup forms!



On Monday morning, communications breakdown began. When one speaker cancelled and Saul Carliner stepped in to replace the missing person, no notification was posted anywhere that I saw. At least not visible to the general public. No daily newsletter with nice tidbits about the Twin Cities and how 3M makes Post-It notes and such. A shame, really. The problems continued throughout the 3 days of the conference - a session on games in training was apparently cancelled at the last minute on Wednesday, leaving a goodly number of ID folks scrambling to find something else to attend.

But there were some really excellent learning sessions that did take place. Among them was our own SIG's Progression, where 10 members led round-table talks to one of the largest crowds I've seen at an STC progression.



Nicky Bleiel's talk on Using ID Elements to supplement doc deliverables was exceptional - she had a crowd three deep around her. Jane Smith gave an adapted version of her talk on the e-learning development process, which only whetted her listeners' desire for more info (myself included).

Deborah Lockwood's table about moving from writing into ID was very popular,

and I'm pleased that she included a book that helped me get into this world, [Developing Training Courses: A Technical Writer's Guide to Instructional Design and Development](#) by Rives Hassell-Corbiell. Even those of us who think they know what we're doing can benefit from a periodic review of the basics, and this book is an excellent and concise way to re-invigorate your ID energy. All of the other presenters had fascinated listeners, whether in large or small groups, and we could have easily included several more rounds so that everyone could learn from every presenter.

Fortunately, some of the materials from our Progression have made it into the repository on the STC [website](#) (click Seminar Materials on the main page), and I'm certain that the rest of the presenters would be happy to share their notes or handouts with us if asked (nicely).

On Tuesday, I attended a very helpful session on Polishing Your Pictures by Patrick Hoffman. This session was intensely interesting, in that it talked about creating graphic materials (diagrams or screenshots) at the size and resolution they will be printed or presented. Too often, resized architecture diagrams or process flows are unreadable because they've been squished down from poster (or 19-inch-monitor) size to fit on one half of a 6 x 9 inch piece of paper. His handout (yes, it's on the website) is quite useful, with excellent examples.

Tuesday evening was the awards banquet and dinner, and this is where my second takeaway point was demonstrated. Of the 25 new Associate Fellows named in 2007, fully ONE THIRD - 8 of them - are current members of

our SIG! And a 9th had picked up a membership form on Sunday night so she could join. We Rock!!

On Wednesday, the cancelled session was a disappointment, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as our SIG's own Nicky Bleiel gave a standing-room-only presentation on Tools for Technical Communicators that cost less than \$100. I hope she will consent to publish her list in our newsletter sometime; it will be well worth it to burn up the wires in getting the products she has found. Just one example - Audacity (audacity.sourceforge.net) has made my life much simpler when creating and processing online sessions with Captivate.

As usual, the entire social calendar was full of reconnecting with folks that we've met before and haven't seen in a year (and don't see enough of) but also meeting new friends and colleagues. I'm pleased to have made a few new friends this year, and as we help each other in the future - as I fully expect we will - I will reap the real rewards of the annual STC get-together, which far outweigh the problems or inconveniences. Those rewards are giving and receiving assistance, learning how others have solved (or at least attacked) the same issues I face, and the smiles and well-wishes of my peers.

And for that, I'll wheel myself across tumbled rocks or the dark side of the moon, if I have to.

IDL SIG Wins SIG of Distinction!

For the third year in a row, the IDL SIG has won the SIG of Distinction award in our size category - an award given at the honors banquet at the annual conference. Thanks to all the team members and other volunteers who have contributed to our success. You are all awesome, and we thank you!

The citation on the award reads, "For building a strong community of practice through web seminars, online forums, an enhanced web site, informative newsletters, and the Community Outreach Representative Program."



Photo: Paul Sinasohn

Robert Hershenow Honored at IDL SIG Meeting - by Jane Smith



Robert Hershenow rocks the house at the STC Open Jam in Minneapolis

Photo: Anthony Davey

Every year, the IDL SIG Manager gives an award to one or more people who have provided what our SIG calls "Foundational Support." This year at our SIG Meeting at the conference, I recognized Robert Hershenow for his many efforts in helping the SIG.

Robert first stepped up to the plate when he emailed me in the middle of our email trauma last July and offered to help in any way. As a result, Robert was responsible for writing a document that provided guidelines and steps for other SIGs going through the same conversion of their discussion list from Lyris to Mailman. This document has already been used by another SIG in their conversion efforts.

In addition, in August, Robert volunteered for one other position on the team and got recruited to be our Newsletter Editor. Robert has stepped up to the plate very nicely in that category, with our newsletter winning an Award of Merit in this year's STC Newsletter competition. Robert has maintained a consistently high level of quality in both the look and the content of our newsletters.

To summarize, Robert very quickly became a valuable member of and source of support for our whole team. Both of his efforts and responsibilities contributed significantly to our [SIG of Distinction](#) award at this year's conference. Thank you, Robert, for all you've done and continue to do.

IDeaL: Design for Learning Wins Award of Merit

"IDL SIG earned an award of Merit in the 2006-2007 STC Newsletter Competition for its outstanding newsletter, *Ideal: Design for Learning*. You should be very proud of this honor because it recognizes your dedication to publishing an exceptional STC newsletter."

*- Elizabeth Bailey, Manager
STC Newsletter Competition*

Thanks again to everyone who contributed to our newsletter over the last year. We are shooting for another award-winning performance in the year to come, so please submit your articles (short or long), letters, tips, hints, and photos to newsletter@stcidlsig.org. See the sidebar on page 2 for details.



Whether or not you made it to Minneapolis for this year's Technical Communications Summit, you'll want to check out the **conference handouts and presentations** offered for download on the [STC website](#) (click "Seminar Materials" on the main page). Over 150 documents—including some from our IDL SIG Progression—are available, listed alphabetically by speaker name.

[File Hamster](#) is a free version-tracking software utility for writers, developers, graphic artists, and anyone else who frequently modifies existing files. From the website:

"FileHamster provides real-time backup and archiving of your files while you work. It enables you to monitor specific files on your hard drive and automatically create incremental backups whenever those files are modified. It also enables you to store notes about the changes that have been made, allowing you to quickly locate a specific revision or provide a detailed account of the work you've done on a project."

The interface is very simple and easy to use, and several plugins are available for expanded functionality.

File Hamster is made for Windows 2000, XP, and Vista. It requires .NET Framework 2.0.

What's in your toolbox? Write to newsletter@stcidlsig.com and tell us about your favorite tips, tricks, or tools for a future column.



By Kim Rosenloff, SIG Membership Co-Manager

STC IDL SIG members have been very busy this spring and summer. Several

members completed degrees or certificates since our last newsletter. **Jen Hall** from Greenville, S.C., graduated from Clemson with a Master of Arts degree in Professional Communication. She is hoping to find a job "that will allow me to utilize my interests in design, writing, and teaching." After 32 years of intermittent college attendance, **Leslie Antley** graduated from the University of Houston-Downtown with a Bachelor of Science in Professional Writing. She is

continuing her educational pursuits at the Keller Graduate School of Management, pursuing a Master's in Educational Technology.

Linda Chapman finished the Technical Communication Certificate at Bellevue Community College. A lone writer at a small company, she says she received a big raise due to completing the certificate. **Janet Lamar** began the online Training and Performance Improvement Ph.D. program at Minnesota's Capella University. She encourages any instructional designers or trainers looking to pursue a doctorate degree to look into Capella as it "follows the ASTD guidelines...with

challenging assignments and a good group with lots and lots of support."

Sarah Beth Larson, treasurer of the Mid-South Chapter of STC and VP of Education & Communication for the Memphis Professional Chapter of non-profit organization Net Impact, completed her first ASTD Certificate program in Training Delivery.

Two members are starting their own businesses. After 10 years of university lecturing, **Jane Nash**, a new SIG member from Cape Town, South Africa, started her own business writing training material, mostly in the IT field. Busy with her first job developing a technical writing course, Jane says she's "finding out that there's a lot more to instructional design than I had realized, so it's great knowing that I have a resource like IDL to call on."

Springville, Utah, resident **Susan McLain** registered her new business, The Writing Way, in June. She plans to go independent by September, just after marrying off her 20-year-old daughter on August 24.

Tristan MacAvery established her business, Intangible Plastics, after a recent move to Columbus, Ind. She's also celebrating the publication of *The Improvisation Playbook*, a how-to manual for using improvisation for personal and professional improvement. Tristan says the book has endorsements from René Auberjonois (Boston Legal), Adam West (Family Guy), Dean Haglund (X-Files, Lone Gunmen), Russell Johnson, and William Windom, to name a few.

Another member/author, **Jim Goldsmith** recently co-authored (with Richard Busby) the "Managing Scare

Resources in Training Projects" chapter for the *Trends and Issues in Instructional Design and Technology* textbook edited by Robert Reiser and John Dempsey. Jim is currently writing a book on project management (and looking for a publisher!). Formerly the Instructional Design Manager in Accenture's Content Development Center, Jim recently accepted the position of Capability Development Solution Planner at Accenture in St. Charles, Ill.

Teresa Trujillo has been chosen to present at the annual convention of the National Even Start Association. Even start is a notional literacy program that promotes family literacy in classrooms and preschools. The presentation "Coaching Creativity: Using Creative Writing to Create Learning Partnerships at Home and in the Community," urges teachers to adopt a team approach to writing communities that more closely mirrors a writers experience in the workplace or marketplace with an emphasis on extending the writing experience to parents at home. The conference will be held October 28-30, 2007 in San Diego, California.

Cynthia Silversides, a new STC and IDL SIG member as of last December, was elected Secretary of the Toronto Chapter for 2007-08. She and her husband just celebrated their son's second birthday on July 14!

Welcome to many new members who joined us over the past few months. The list of new members is provided on pages 24 and 25 of this newsletter. We hope to be reading about you in this column very soon!



From the Minutes...

IDL SIG Breakfast Meeting, Tuesday May 15, Minneapolis Convention Center

Despite the early hour (7:00 am) we enjoyed a good turnout. After introductions we were treated to a few words from outgoing SIG Manager Jane Smith, who remarked how far SIGs have come in the last few years: they have evolved to assume leadership roles within the STC, as evidenced by the fact that Chapters are now looking to SIGs for advice.

Jane thanked Karen Baranich for her long tenure of service, and then gave special mention to members Sylvia Miller, Jackie Damrau, Jeanette Rogers, Jan Watrous-McCabe, Nina Murdoch, Robert Hershenow, Paul Sinasohn, and Gene Holden for their work with the leadership team and with special projects.

Jane recognized each of our members who gave time and effort during the previous year by contributing to the newsletter and discussion list, and helping with discussion calls, webinars, and the conference. She gave special recognition to Chris Emanuelli, who received the Distinguished Service award for his three-year stint as IDL Webmaster; to Sylvia Miller, who was elected Associate Fellow; to Beth Bailey, who was awarded an STC Fellowship; and Robert Hershenow, recipient of the Foundational Support Award. Karen and Jackie then presented Jane with a gift in thanks for her two years of service as SIG Manager.

Then Jane “handed over the reins” as Jackie was installed as SIG Manager.

Under new leadership we discussed possible topics for future SIG activities and projects, including:

- Educational opportunities (what’s out there and how to get it)
- A book list
- Listserve help/tips
- An LMS seminar and/or Wiki
- Members resource list - skills matrix
- Captivate templates
- An IDL SIG conference (perhaps combined with other SIGs; possibly on-line?)

If you’d like to get involved—at any level—please contact our volunteer manager Gene Holden, or any member of the leadership team.



Survey Results

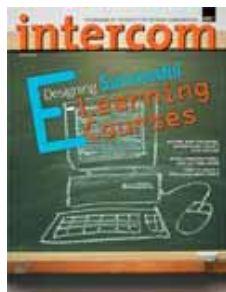
Doug Davis' survey, designed to identify the industries that hire the largest number of technical communicators, indicates "how the technical communication market is changing right before our eyes." STC members can read the results as well as Doug's past columns at <http://www.stc.org/pubs/onlinePubs01.asp>

More STC News:

<http://stcsig.org/idl/rss.php>

Intercom Online

The June 2007 Intercom features articles on developing e-learning courses, writing persuasive white papers, and much more. Get it here: www.stc.org/intercom.



STC Mission

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



STC offers opportunities to learn and improve your knowledge in technical communication and instructional design. Check out some of these opportunities to update your skill set, have fun, and increase your earning potential!

The STC Academic Database

To assist those interested in pursuing a career in technical communication, STC provides a database of academic programs worldwide:

<http://stc.org/edu/academicDatabase01.asp>

STC Web/Telephone Seminars

WHAT IS A WEB-TELEPHONE SEMINAR?

In a Web-and telephone seminar, participants listen to the presenter over the phone (much like a conference call) while viewing presentation materials over the Web. This format provides easier access to materials for reference during the presentation, as well as a more intimate, "classroom" setting than the typical telephone seminar.

Registrants are provided a toll-free number, a secure URL, and access to both the audio and online elements of the presentation.

BENEFITS

- No travel time
- Pay per site and not per person
- Train without leaving the office

UPCOMING SESSIONS

This year's telephone seminar program (August 2007 through May 2008) is being developed. Watch for news here:

<http://stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>

New STC IDL SIG Members – March, April, and May 2007

Bolanle	Adisa	Ashley	Carney	Paul	Gilman	Kristine	Jones-Pasley
Michael	Allen	Kendra	Carter	Rachel	Gould	Karina	Jousma
Kimberly	Andrews	Weiyang	Chen	Perry	Greene	Flick	Kelly
Muniza	Arifin	Andrew	Chiesa	Pam	Greenfield	Rose	Kelly
Susan	Bailey	Robert	Childs	Robin	Grosser	Nancy	Kennedy
Daniel	Baker	Kevin	Clyne	Jill	Grundberg	Laura	Kerr
Jordan	Ball	K.	Cohen	Jennifer	Hall	Pat	Ko
Jo Ann	Behnke	Kimberly	Coles	Deborah	Hampton	Gregory	Koch
Anna	Berta	Bassem	Costandi	Kenneth	Hardie	Jill	Koch
Vincent	Bertin	Astrid	Dahl	Laura	Harley	Oleksandr	Komarenko
Vic	Bhai	Shoji	Dambara	Allison	Harris	Ashly	Kotecki
Beatrice	Birchak	Doug	Danaher	Warren	Hatch	Diane	Kramer
Janine	Bland	Steven	Darian	Helen	Hawkins	Robert	Krull
Robin	Bly	Jennifer	Davis	Benjamin	Hechter	Michel	Lacroix
Mardo	Boa	Brian	Davis	Cathy	Helmlle	Saturia	Lake
Jerry	Born	Amy	Devey	Leslie	Helyes	Sridevi	Lakshmanan
Tracy	Boyd	Wendy	Dikmak	Melissa	Henderson	Kathleen	Lant
Michele	Brem	Eugene	Doberer	Carol	Henry-Crowell	Sammy	Lao
Rowdy	Bristol	Michael	Doyle	Mercy	Herstad	Stephanie	Lataille
Karen	Brothers	Matthew	Duda	Erika	Higgins	Sue	Latham
Douglas	Brown	Philip	Edkins	Brent	Hoard	Sandrine	Laurent
Blythe	Brown	Maureen	Edmond	Michael	Hu	Carloyn	Lee-Hatakeyama
Fran	Brown	Avraham	Eisenman	DeAnn	Hubberd	Ernest	Lessenger
Leslie	Brown	Kathryn	Englert	Walter	Hudson	Susan	Leveille
Janet	Brown	Ellen	Feerst	Gloria	Hughes	Linda	Locke
Linda	Bruton	William	Fekrat	Tom	Hughes	Max	Loges
Stephanie	Bryant	Kris	Fiedler	William	Huscher	Rachel	Long
Thomas	Bukowski	Thomas	Fountain	Carol	Huss	Irene	Ludwick
Kevin	Burnett	Chatham	Fralix	Heather	Iacobacci-Miller	Chopeta	Lyons
Martha	Burton	Leigh-Anne	Franklin	Bruce	Inglis	Ruth	MacDonald
Janice	Bushe	LaChanda	Gainus-Durio	Cynthia	Ingram	Andrea	MacMeccan
David	Calloway	Harish	Gandhe	Audrea	Jackson	Constance	Manzi
Bill	Campbell	Amabel	Garcia	Roberta	Jackson	Daniel	Marshall
Lucia	Carlia	Joseph	Gawel	Mary	James	K.	Maxfield
Jonathan	Carlson	Andrew	Gee	Rita	Johnson	Don	McKinney

New STC IDL SIG Members – March, April, and May 2007

Susan	McMurray	Joseph	Reynolds	Douglas	Sunlin
Erin	McNamee	Yvonne	Ricard	Jonathan	Swift
Michael	Melby	Theodore	Roberts	Rea	Talbott
Maria	Mertens	Shawn	Rockhold	Julie	Taylor
Gene	Mikulka	Richard	Ruane	La Tasha	Taylor
Carrie	Nash	Jamye	Sagan	Michael	Thompson
Jane	Nash	Lisa	Sageev	John	Tobin
James	Neaves	Zherina	Salamanca	Michael	Todaro
Tony	Nelson	Heba	Saleh	Janet	Underwood
Chris	Nelson	David	Scharn	Jacalyn	VanNice
Shelli	Newberry	Richard	Schellens	Frederic	Vinhage
Joanne	O'Brien	Laura	Schmidt	Lori	Volheim
Nicole	O'Reilly	Sue	Schram	Valerie	Wagar
Melissa	Ovard	Colleen	Seeley	Chanda	Walker
Lisa	Over	Natalie	Seifert-Chapa	Janeen	Weir
Brynn	Paine	Wendy	Sexsmith	Hilary	Wells
John	Paz	Candace	Shaw	Tammy	Werner
Aleta	Peacock	Vanitha	Shedden	Marcia	Whitmore
Dana	Peterson	Susan	Shutz	Kimberly	Wiggins
Joanna	Phillips	Teresa	Simmons	David	Wilks
Darren	Pierson	Theresa	Sites	Jeremy	Wilson
Jason	Plett	Marc	Smith	Andrew	Winner
Sean	Pollock	Bryna	Smith	Matthew	Wolf
Suzanne	Pyle	Tim	Sommer	Pauline	Wong
Patrick	Quinlan	Melissa	Sorensen	Leslie	Wright
Reshmi	Raghavachari	Carlene	Spaulding	Sophie	Wroblewski
Lisa	Rathjens	Gretchen	Stahmer DeMoss	Timothy	Yarris
Justin	Reich	Richard	Stallkamp	Steven	Youngblood
John	Reid	Sophie	St-Arneault	Yuejiao	Zhang
Joseph	Reynolds	Emmanuel	Sullivan		