IDeaL: Design for Learning

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

From the Manager

by Jeanette Rogers, IDL SIG Manager

Do you have difficulty speaking in front of a group? Do your palms get sweaty, your throat dry? Or is there still some sort of rush before you present, even as a seasoned speaker? How do you quiet that nervousness? What can take the focus off of your angst?

I used to be terrified of speaking in front of groups. I was the biggest introvert imaginable, but most people who meet me today have a hard time believing that. These days I don't have many qualms about jumping in front of a group to speak. This is primarily because I learned some techniques to still my heart when I first get in front of a group. Figure out my secret yet? I ask questions!

Asking questions at the start of a presentation immediately takes the focus off of me and

gets everyone in the audience thinking. I get the chance to divert my focus from thinking about standing in front of a group, while also learning about who I'm talking to and engaging the audience. I can relax and later integrate what I've learned into my presentation, reengaging the audience yet again.

Questions are a primary ingredient in our industry. Our learners will certainly be asking them, but as instructional designers we should be asking them early and often.

When you start a project, what questions do you ask? How about: What are the needs of the audience? What type of training do they need? What do the learners already know?

After you develop a training plan, what questions do you then ask? I use the design and development phase as an opportunity to track all the questions I'm asking as a new learner of a tool; these are the questions my learners will be asking later down the line. Anticipating a student's questions allows me to integrate appropriate information throughout my training materials.

In This Issue...

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From the Manager, *continued...*

No inquiry is too basic at this stage. It is also a fun opportunity to play with everything—what happens if I click this button? That was interesting... I wonder, if I do this will it do what I expect?—Perhaps I should be a quality assurance tester (plenty of developers know how I love to report bugs in software), but this interrogation helps me understand what to include in my content while also finding logic (for training structure) in my discoveries. This can also help me identify good test questions!

Finally, as I deliver my training, I again use questions—not only to calm my nerves, but to constantly get feedback from my audience. Can they extrapolate from a concept? Are they retaining information? Do they have any questions? Are there things I can improve if I'm going to teach this class again?

Being naturally curious helps; I do live by a continuous "analyze and improve" philosophy. The question-and-answer cycle continuously brings in knowledge while providing the opportunity for everyone to contribute. It is engaging and encourages people to think.

Are there ways you can integrate more questions into your work? What questions will you be asking this new year? As your SIG Manager, in addition to all of my typical questions, I'll continue to have our team asking what else we can for our SIG members. I hope you're asking lots of questions too!

Jeanette Rogers

Bearer of the IDL SIG Management Torch

STC Mission

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

The Editor's Word

by Robert Hershenow, Managing Editor

I entered the field of Instructional Design by accident, when I decided to close the gap between what my boss wanted and what was actually happening on the manufacturing floor. I discovered the gap was almost always because somebody didn't know something, usually because they had misunderstood somebody else. So I started training people, and writing training materials and job aids.

I liked it, and so I kept it up. The early text editors and dot-matrix printers gave way to word processors and laser printers and pretty soon, along came dedicated software.

Every step of the way has been exciting because all the tools keep getting better. Today's computers are faster, software is easier to use and does more things, interface devices are more precise and user-friendly.

But the other side of the coin is how easily our true mission as instructional designers can get lost in that technology.

So this issue of *IDeaL: Design for Learning* is the first in a series focusing on the software tools we use to create eLearning.

Jane MacKenzie-Smith examines our love of tools in "Which Came First...?" and suggests how we can avoid focusing on the tools at the expense of the job.

Then, Neil Perlin takes us through some of the (COOL) interactive features of Captivate 4.

And Erika Norton shares her adventures with an outside-the-box Captivate project in the UK and Ireland.

Finally, Jean Abrahamson examines integrating social media into higher education. Jean's article is a follow-on to our last issue, which you will find with all the rest of the back issues at our fantastic new website: www.stcidlsig.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Somebody write us a letter?

newsletter@stcidlsig.org

Are *you* LinkedIn?

Join the

IDL SIG LinkedIn Group

http://www.linkedin.com/groupRegistration?gid=2298157

Check it out and post something—the site is full of interactive features. You can have your say and contribute to our growing community.

And while you're there, please let me know how you like the newsletter.

Happy Reading,

Robert

Member Article

Which Came First – the Design or the Tool?

By Jane MacKenzie-Smith, STC Fellow and Past IDL SIG Manager

The world of instructional designers and technical communicators is filled with people who are enamored with the tools of the trade—and I have shared that love at various points in my career. I've held conversations about tools, researched tools, compared tools for clients as well as producers of tools, and designed for specific tools.

Ah, you say, "designed for tools." That means the tool comes first, right? Well, not so fast. That's too easy an answer, and it doesn't really do the topic justice.

My big, honkin' Webster's New Century Dictionary, Unabridged, Second Edition, has, as its first definition of the noun tool, "any implement, instrument, or utensil held in the hand and used for cutting, digging, rubbing, and hitting." My dictionary continues with typical examples of knives, shovels, and so on.

Farther down, in its fifth definition, the dictionary defines tool as "any instrument or device necessary to one's profession or trade." I guess that's the one for this discussion.

The operative words are not "instrument or device," however. The operative words are "necessary to one's profession or trade." Those words mean, then, that the job/profession/trade came first, right? First there was the need, and then there was the tool.

Following this logic along, consider the analogy of sewing (or some other hobby or task that involves using tools, for you men out there). I went into instructional design because of two loves and skills—teaching and clothes design. To make an article of clothing, I had an array of tools: sewing machine, needles, thread, scissors, patterns, pattern paper, marking chalk, pins, and so on. I did not necessarily use all of the tools I had for each garment. I used the tools I needed to design and create the garment.

This analogy would suggest that the design always comes first, and, in reality, I could never have used the tools to turn a lousy design into a gorgeous garment. As designer, I had to know a few things about designing clothes to design a garment that would end up looking the way it did in my mind before I could make effective use of the tools I had. And the same principle applies to instructional design. We must know a lot about designing courses before we can make effective use of the tools at hand, so that the resulting course looks and works like the one we envisioned.

Does that mean I can design a course and then use any tool to build it? Does it mean I should disregard the tool as I design? Absolutely not.

In sewing, I had to know what my tools could do for me as I designed, too. I had a very basic sewing machine, and I couldn't do fancy embroidery and other stitches that machines do today; therefore, I couldn't design a garment using those features unless I wanted to find another way to create them, such as doing the embroidery by hand.

In course design, I must also know something about the capabilities of the tool that I or programmers will use to develop the course, so that I don't design something that the tool can't do. I also must know a little about the skills of the developer using the tools. Can that developer easily use the tool to its fullest extent?

And then I need to know a little about the budget. What is the budget I have to spend on development? Does that budget dictate the use of one type of tool over another, based on time and skills involved? Or does the budget somehow restrict the features of the tool I can use?

And, let us not leave out whether the course needs to interface with an LMS when all is said and done. Which tool makes that interface easiest and most reliable?

All these factors, along with others, contribute to the way I design my course; however, if I don't have basic design skills to begin with, no tool will ever save the course from my design errors.

So, as you read about the tools in the IDL SIG Newsletter, be sure to think about the tools with the job in mind. The job, the need to create a course, came first; however, in order for that course to reflect the design, the design must include not only sound instructional design basics, but also a consideration of the capabilities of the tool.

Jane McKenzie-Smith is an instructional designer, e-learning developer, and certified performance technologist. As an independent consultant Jane provides course design, mentoring, project management, and workshops and seminars through her company, JEM Communications, LLC (www.jemcommunications.com). Jane is an STC Fellow and past manager of the Instructional Design SIG.

Feature Article

INTERACTIVITY FEATURES
in Adobe Captivate 4

*by **Neil Perlin***

Captivate is a powerful tool for creating visual help systems, web-based software demos for marketing purposes, role-playing simulations for HR-style training, graded tutorials, even sophisticated eLearning. But at its basic level, you simply use Captivate to capture screens while you perform a software-based task (such as logging onto a system), save the screen captures, add captions and other features, and play the result as a "movie."

Many developers have taught themselves how to use Captivate at this basic level to create "passive" movies—viewers don't interact with the movie, they just watch it. This may be all you need. But Captivate also has features for creating "active" movies that let viewers determine the path and flow, even simulations that let viewers interact with the (almost) real thing. In the rest of this article, I'll present Captivate 4's main interactivity features and suggest some ideas for using them.

The Interactivity Features

Click boxes let us designate a part of the screen as "hot" and define what happens when viewers click on that hot spot or mouse over it. Click boxes are often used to simulate menu or submenu clicks. For example, to simulate a click on the Edit menu item in an application, you create a click box, position it over the real Edit menu item, and specify that clicking on that box jumps the viewer to a new frame displaying the open Edit menu. From there,

another click box on one of the Edit submenu items continues the viewer's path through the movie.

Besides specifying what happens after clicking on a click box, we can specify the number of attempts the viewer gets, what happens if the viewer doesn't click on it within the designated number of attempts, and feedback captions for a successful click, an unsuccessful click, or just a hint that pops up if the viewer mouses over the click box but doesn't click, as if they're unsure what to do and just noodling around the screen hoping for inspiration.

Buttons let us designate a part of the screen as "hot," format that region like a button, and define what happens when viewers click on it. Buttons let us easily create "Click to continue" controls to let viewers re-start a paused movie. They're handy for creating jumps from a movie to external web pages. They also let us give the viewers prompts while in simulations, where it's easy to lose track of what to do. For example, we might add a little "Hint" button in the corner of every frame. Clicking on that button would then display a popup reminder of what to do.

Besides specifying what happens after clicking on the button, we can specify how many attempts the viewer gets, what happens if the viewer doesn't click within the designated number of attempts, and the same feedback captions as for a click box.

Text entry boxes let us designate a part of the screen as a box in which viewers must type a text entry. Text entry boxes are often used to simulate field entries, such as asking viewers to type a simulated search string in a simulated Find field. We have to specify the correct answer(s) when defining a text entry box. This is often a problem because of the risk of not specifying as correct an answer that is correct but that we've never heard of. For example, for the question "What do we call a sandwich made of cold cuts on a tubular loaf of bread?", we have to include Po'boy as one of the answers or else viewers from Louisiana will be told that the answer is wrong, even though it's right.

Besides specifying what happens after viewers type the text entry, we can specify how many attempts the viewer gets, what happens if the viewer doesn't make the entry within the designated number of tries, and the same feedback as for the click box.

Click boxes, buttons, and text entry boxes can add almost any interactivity imaginable, but Adobe added three features in Captivate 4 that extend those interactivity capabilities: variables, advanced actions, and widgets. Variables aren't interactive per se, but they're new enough that it's likely that someone will find a way to use them in interactive ways. They may also be conceptually familiar from other authoring tools. Advanced actions and widgets are more complex. In brief:

Variables are placeholders for text that may change, especially if it is used in multiple places in a movie.

For example, say you're creating a movie for a new product temporarily named "Longhorn." Rather than typing "Longhorn" dozens of times only to have to find and replace each one when the name changes to "Vista," you can create a variable named Product_Name, set its value to "Longhorn", and tell Captivate to insert that value whenever you want the product name to appear. If the name changes to "Vista," you simply change the value of the Product_Name variable to "Vista" and that change ripples through the entire project. It's a huge timesaver.

Advanced actions lets us create scripts for what Captivate refers to as "condition-based scenarios" (if condition A exists, then do action B). In other words, you can customize Captivate by creating your own scripts within Captivate.

Widgets are similar to advanced actions, except that you create widgets in Flash.

Advanced actions and widgets probably won't be used by most developers, but they do offer a dramatically higher level of customization power.

Summary

Many new Captivate developers, especially those who are self-taught, focus on using the basic features to create passive movies. But spending the effort to learn the interactivity features can add a lot of power, interest, and fidelity to your movies.

Neil Perlin is president of Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com) of Tewksbury, MA. He has 31 years experience in technical writing, with 25 in training, consulting, and developing for online formats including WinHelp, HTML Help, JavaHelp, CE Help, RoboHelp, Flare, Mimic, Captivate, and some now exhibited in museums. You can reach him at nperlin@nperlin.cnc.net.

Think 21! USING CAPTIVATE TO CREATE A SOFT SKILLS COURSE

By Erika Norton

Captivate is typically used to create software demos and tutorials, but we used it to create soft skills training in "Think 21" for employees in about 2000 betting shops in the UK and Ireland. Think 21 is a protocol used by many retail outlets where staff need to ask for ID to prove a customer's age. This is very important in betting shops: if we let anyone under 21 stay in the shop or gamble, the company can be fined, and the local council can take away the gambling licence. Prosecuted staff members could face fines or prison terms, and other shop employees would likely lose their jobs if the shop closes. Thus, effective training in the Think 21 process is critical.

The first big difference between creating a software demo and soft skills training was the need to create a storyboard for each of the training modules. When creating software demos, I usually run through the software to see how it works, think about how I will present it, and then capture the screens. I focus on the exact wording and put in extra screens to describe any manual parts of the process while I am actually working within Captivate. However, with this project, we started by thinking about all the different ways in which people like to learn and how we could make this subject interesting enough so that people would use the training. The trainer who wrote most of the content didn't want the training to be just lots of text, requiring little student involvement other than an occasional page-turn. Instead, we agreed to try and put less text on each page and to use case studies, graphics, and flow charts requiring decision-making on the part of the students. We also developed two quizzes: one to test the students' prior knowledge and one to establish certification. Based on performance on the first quiz, a student can either move directly to the certification quiz or follow prompts to get to the appropriate part of the training that he or she needs to focus on.

Next we worked on the three actual modules. The first of these is for people who know nothing about the Think 21 protocol. The second is for employees who have already worked for us for some time and who know something about Think 21 from earlier training sessions or from job experience. The third module asks "What's Stopping You?" and examines the common barriers to ID

continues, next page

CALENDAR OF SIG MEETINGS

The IDL SIG Managers will meet on:
Jan. 27, Feb. 24, and Mar. 24, 2010

What would you like them to do for you?
Let them know!

(Because it's your SIG.)

checks that staff have reported to us. It explains what the staff members can do about these barriers and how the company can help.

The three people on our design team worked together to create a layout/style sheet for the eLearning. This was a good learning experience for the trainer, who hadn't realised how complicated it is to turn her words into a course. Initially, she had assumed that, by giving us the words, she had done 90% of the work; by the time we had finished, she realised that the words represent only about 50% of the work.

We did the layout/style sheet in PowerPoint originally because I was the only one who had previous experience with Captivate. (I organised licences and training for the other two members of the team as part of this project.) Although Captivate does import PowerPoint slides to create a project, each occurrence of the same picture ends up with a separate file name; moreover, text is put in invisible text boxes instead of being part of a coloured text box (so you have to work with two items every time you want to change anything) and not all the text comes through cleanly. After several hours, I decided that it was easier for me to retype the words for each slide from a printed version of the text. On being told this, our trainer reverted to writing in Word, which was easier for her and actually helped speed the process of creating the modules.

So far I've said very little about using Captivate itself. What worked well and why? What was really hard or impossible and why?

What worked well:

- We created three rollover images to provide additional types of information: a light bulb gives the reader tips on how/where to get further information; a brain provides things to think about (case studies or quick facts); a running man provides activities related to the current topic. All of these contain information/activities that is supplemental to the main message, so students have the option of reading them or not.

- We created flowcharts. This was both good and bad. Using the advanced options, we were able to make the different parts of the flowchart appear when the student clicked on the answers. However, when we tried to create a new caption type, we discovered that you cannot create one with an arrow in the middle because of the way that Captivate resizes the captions.

- To make the knowledge quiz more of a challenge, we decided to use question pools, randomise the position of each answer, only allow one try at each question, and ensure that the answer was not blindingly obvious. Many of us have taken multiple choice questions where two of the four answers are obviously incorrect, reducing the problem to a 50/50 chance. As anyone who has written a course knows, it is actually quite difficult to write questions that relate well to what is being taught, make the student think about the answer without being ambiguous, and are designed so that the answer can be checked automatically by computer rather than manually. With approximately 8,000 staff located throughout the UK who take or retake this course every year, checking answers manually is not practical.

- We were able to keep an item visible throughout the project by using an oval to define where the text went. Not having to add the oval on every slide saved time and prevented the oval from moving slightly (and annoyingly) as the student runs through the training.

- It would have been good to use audio, but this was not possible because the computers that the staff use for the training do not have sound cards.

- We were able to set the background of graphics to a transparent colour. Since all graphics come in as boxes, being able to make the background transparent meant we could overlay them to provide interest to the students.

- On the Captivate web sites, I found training and readymade widgets that allowed me to: ask people for their name and then use that within the training; identify where the training had been stopped and ask the student if he or she wanted to restart at that point; print out a certificate to prove the student has passed the Think 21 training.

What did not work so well:

- Reviewing the quizzes. Because we used pools of questions, it was very difficult to see all the questions. Exporting them to Word was also an issue because the answer captions covered parts of the text.

- Trying to use graphics with text. This was how we started trying to create the flow charts, but any resizing made the flow chart almost unreadable.

- Sticking exactly to the layout provided, we soon discovered that trying to make the training look exactly the same as within the PowerPoint presentation story board did not work. We then had to explain to the business representative who had approved the PowerPoint slides that what he was getting would not look exactly the same. Usually the final product was an improvement. However, the business representative was unhappy to learn that it was not possible in Captivate to retain the feature whereby text captions flew in from

various directions. Luckily, we got to beta-test both versions on staff members who all agreed that the new Captivate version was better.

Overall, I think using Captivate for soft skills training worked well, and our company will be repeating the process. Hopefully next time, with the understanding our trainer has gained, we will get more than two weeks to work on the project!

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Erika Norton is a Technical Author and IDL SIG member working for Ladbroke's plc, a UK bookmaker. She has been working as an author for 18 years, since finishing a degree in Engineering and discovering that most engineers do not like writing but love biscuits and someone who will write the instructions for them.

Join us for our next

SIG Webinar

Evaluating Training: Core Components in Training Material

Thursday, Feb. 4
1:30 - 3:00 pm, Eastern Time
12:30 - 2:00 pm, Central Time
11:30 - 1:00 pm, Mountain Time
10:30 - 12:00 pm, Pacific Time

Register HERE

See Page 19 for details

Integrating Social Media and Higher Education

by Jean Abrahamson

Social media is changing how we communicate – including in our classrooms. "It is no longer the authority lecture but the conversation that is the emerging norm. The new textbook is student work … the work that students generate under your guidance and within your design … If you are a faculty member and you are still walking into the classroom with a lecture in mind and 'the points to cover,' as I did for many years, you are living in the past, a past that is now obsolete.

"Web 2.0, the social Web, is us finding ourselves once again. And it is finding how we naturally learn – not in timed segments in a regimented and pre-packaged way, but constantly, in conversation, in groups, serendipitously. … Web 2.0 is helping us rediscover our naturally cooperative, creative, and gregarious nature. Don't think … of Web 2.0 as something foreign or hyped-up or all about geeks; Web 2.0 is the rebirth of teaching and learning that fits what we are as a species."

> - *Trent Batson, Ph.D.,*
> *campustechnology.com, 15/April/2009*

The terms "Web 2.0" and "social media" are sometimes used interchangeably. Web 2.0 is second-generation Web development and design that facilitates information sharing and collaboration; it has led to development of applications including social networking sites, blogs, and wikis. (Wikipedia) Social media is new online media that share most or all of five characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. (Antony Mayfield) Mayfield offers a free, 36-page e-book, What Is Social Media?, at icrossing.co.uk/ebooks. The e-book is an easy read, provides definitions and descriptions of basic forms of social media, explains how social media work, and lists useful Web sites.

For a glimpse into real-world applications and experiences, three educators were asked about their use of social media.

George Hayhoe, professor, technical communication; director of MS in Technical Communication Management program, Mercer University (Georgia, USA)

Hayhoe's department introduced social media about twelve years ago, and new tools have been adopted gradually. Social media is used extensively in the distance-learning MS program and to a lesser amount in the primarily face-to-face BS program.

The 12-20 students in the master's program use a wiki-like bulletin board for asynchronous discussion. Text-based chat for 90-minute synchronous discussion was recently replaced by WebEx video and voice chat; in both systems, students have used personal message features during discussion. Hayhoe spends the first few minutes of synchronous chats catching up on personal news; this provides valuable social scaffolding for students typically located throughout North America and occasionally in Europe or Asia.

Mini-lectures are regularly presented via podcasts. Hearing faculty members' voices helps students feel they know faculty better. Podcasts are augmented by telephone calls (via Skype or land lines) at midterm to answer questions, check on progress, and advise about course offerings.

An undergraduate course also features weekly text-based chats between students and practicing technical communicators in about a dozen countries in North America, Europe, and Asia.

Technology proved its worth last spring for a student studying abroad in Denmark who needed to complete two of Hayhoe's courses to graduate on time. Because these face-to-face classes met in a classroom with video recording capability, Hayhoe could record the classes. The student was able to engage in peer reviews, discussions, and presentations using text chat and video recording capability at his end.

Anne-Florence Dujardin, senior lecturer, communication studies; course leader, MA Professional Communication Programme, Sheffield Hallam University (Sheffield, UK)

Dujardin is enthusiastic about using social media to construct knowledge in different ways but is still experimenting. Her university is reluctant to offer support, but she is introducing social media, where it is manageable independently, to certain course modules.

LinkedIn, for self-introduction, helps create an online community in the Portfolio for Reflective Practice module. WordPress will be used for reflective blogs, as Blackboard's tool does not show updates conveniently, and it has no RSS feed.

In Visual Communication, an icebreaker task using Flickr will familiarize students with this media. The main social media task will be using Diigo for discussions around various authors and for developing intermediary genres of note-taking. This will assist students in developing a literature review, the main assessment for the module.

Students will use LinkedIn profiles in Social Media Uses for Organizations and reflect on benefits and drawbacks of a public online identity. As Blackboard offers more security than WordPress or Facebook, it may be used as the main platform for discussion.

For tutorial support to dissertation students, Dujardin is considering Google Wave. She has already used Skype for this purpose and has dabbled with Twitter.

Dujardin expects some students to be reluctant to embrace social media, just as some have been reluctant to learn in virtual environments. However, with 15-25 students per module, she can offer personal support.

Christopher Thacker, lecturer, Writing for Business, Industry and Business Cornerstone (Business Communication & Research), College of Business and Economics, Towson University (Maryland, USA)

For two semesters, Thacker has used Ning, an online platform for creating social networks. He feels Blackboard provides little flexibility with only three points of interaction: messaging, discussion board, and chat. With Ning, he uses:

- Third party applications;
- Embedding (text, video, and chat);
- Blogs;
- Groups;
- Commenting;
- Chat;
- Tagging; and
- Analytics.

With 25-27 students per class, about 125 students use a single network per semester. Initially, some students were uncomfortable with the social network's reduced anonymity, and they felt Ning would be difficult to use. However, they quickly recognized its advantages. Students were familiar with Facebook, and when they realized Ning's features were similar, resistance moved to full adoption.

When asked what they enjoy most about using social media, Hayhoe says the tools make it easier for him and distance students to get to know each other. The tools have become a big part of his experience as a teacher. Through exposure to social media in coursework, Dujardin hopes students will see its potential for use in organizations and with stakeholders such as colleagues, partners, and customers. Thacker finds Web 2.0 allows content managers (instructors) to quickly customize their sites to adapt to a variety of needs by using a library of third party applications. He feels this provides much more flexibility than what is offered by static applications such as Blackboard, and says "You can finally foster meaningful interactions via the social network." Thacker adds that "Ning also has enormous potential for qualitative research," and that "Ning is human interaction at a distance."

As to the challenges of implementing social media, Hayhoe finds it takes time to use them, but the investment pays off. "I usually

feel that I know my distance master's students better at the end of the term than I know my face-to-face undergrad students."

Dujardin is still at the experimental stage and feels she must proceed cautiously. To limit the risk of losing students and to get a feel for the use of social media in an academic setting, she conducted three pilot projects this autumn: two with staff (Diigo and Flickr) and one with students (WordPress group blogging). "It is very important to trial things out – much in the same way as software goes through beta phase," she cautions. In addition, she feels educators must look very carefully into what media supports what type of learning.

In addition to additional time commitments on her part, Dujardin notes that implementing social media places additional demands on administrative staff assisting with social media registrations. She also emphasizes that protecting students' identities and privacy are paramount. No one other than students should be able to access their online contributions, and social media settings must be kept as private as possible.

Thacker advises that Ning has limitations and points to lack of variety of third party applications as an example. He feels Ning could do a better job of bringing in third party developers to service the immense scope of the network. He also warns that content managers need to be both creative and technically proficient to move beyond the limitations of the site.

For those considering implementing social media, Hayhoe recommends talking to a lot of people first and knowing why you want to use various tools before deciding to adopt them. With regard to Ning, Thacker advises taking great care to learn the underlying capabilities of the site. He adds, "It is also important to develop your own sitemap (on paper) in order to conceptualize how your students will interact with the site. You may want to develop a few use-cases and/or scenarios before adopting the site to your course."

In addition to the comments offered by these educators, those integrating social media into educational content may also be interested in following blogs such as those posted by Jil Wright (http://itjil.blogspot.com/), an instructional designer for the School of Nursing at the University of Southern Mississippi. In her 22 October 2009 posting, Learning Styles / Multiple Intelligences / Personality Types + Web Tools, Jil includes information on a Multiple Intelligence Inventory Test. She recommends completing the test to learn about your own strengths and weaknesses as well as using it for a learning style assessment for students. She suggests the test results will help identify which technologies will benefit students most and provide ideas for activities to incorporate into curriculum to help reach all students.

A notable pilot project is also under way at Purdue University (Indiana, USA). Eric Weddle (jconline.com, New tool encourages students to text in class, 05/November/2009) reports three classes are offering Hotseat technology that combines classroom interaction and social networking programs. During class, students can post comments using Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter. Everyone can view messages to further discussion, vote, or interact with one another instantly. Students are not required to use Hotseat, but 73 percent of 600+ students are participating.

Hotseat is also having an impact on educators. Sugato Chakravarty (professor; head of the Department of Consumer Sciences and Retailing) says it energizes his role. "You want to feel the passion every time you deliver (a lesson). … It feels fresh for me when I use technology."

Visit http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/hotseat/ for further information.

Jean Abrahamson is an educator and Senior Member of STC. She belongs to STC's Canada West Coast chapter and is a member of the IDL and Academic communities.

by **Mary Knepper**

IDL SIG Co-Secretary

"Baby, it's cold out there!" At least, it is where I am... so I'm warming up my fingers by typing the highlights of your IDL SIG managers' accomplishments this last quarter:

Web Site: The Web site team, led by Jackie Damrau, transferred the domain name and hosting service to a new hosting site; launched a redesign; established new mail boxes for all SIG managers for use in Outlook or the Web-based browser mail system; and are working on additional plug-ins and WIKI-based features for the IDL Tools and Business Services areas. Look for more features as work continues.

Programs: After a successful series of webinars in 2009, Jane Smith and team are reviewing proposals for a January webinar. Several topic are under consideration; survey results will help steer their choice.

Student Scholarships: Sylvia Miller is heading up an initiative to award one undergraduate and one graduate student a scholarship from the IDL-SIG. She is in the process of collecting applications, which will be judged in February. *See details, p. 16.*

Summit Scholarships: Jamye Sagan is coordinating the plan to award ten $200 scholarships to be used for admission to the STC Technical Summit, May 2–4, 2010. Applications are posted at www.stcidlsig,org; winners will be selected in late February.

Survey: Members received an invitation to complete survey questions on webinar topics of interest and features of the Web site. Results are pending.

Newsletter Competition: The IDL SIG newsletter *IDeaL: Design for Learning*, under Robert Hershenow's editorship, received not just an award of Distinction but also Best of Show in the STC's 2008-2009 Newsletter Competition.

That's it for a cold December day in Tennessee. Stay tuned; stay warm. Happy 2010!

2010 Summit Scholarships

Tech Comm Summit
2-5 May 2010

The STC Summit (our annual conference) gives technical communicators the opportunity to network and to learn more about their profession—whether it be new techniques or theories. Sometimes it is difficult to allocate funds to attend such an event, especially during this recession.

For the first time, we are offering ten scholarships of $200 each to ten IDL SIG members, to be used toward attendance at the STC Summit in Dallas, TX.

See the Summit Scholarships for Members page on the IDL SIG website for details.

- *Jamye Sagan*

The STC TC BoK Project Needs Volunteers

Dr. Jackie Damrau, STC Fellow
Immediate Past Manager, STC IDL SIG

The IDL SIG has been asked to participate in the STC Technical Communication Book of Knowledge (TC BoK) project. The TC BoK project is developing a pathway for people interested in technical communication to find and navigate the huge amounts of knowledge in the technical communication profession. This knowledge currently exists on many different websites and publications. There is no central point that directs people to it.

The TC BoK has several items in the IDL area that need content. Yet they are also open to suggestions and receiving content for any areas of instructional design and learning that may not be covered from the technical communication perspective. The areas that I've identified include:

About Technical Communication > Definition
 > Related Fields
  • Instructional Designer
  • Instructor

Managing Your Career > Academic Programs (all categories have some piece of IDL that could be added)

Producing Technical Communication > Deliverables > Types of Deliverables
  • Training
  • Multimedia
  • Visual Media

Advancing the Profession Through Research > Applying Theories to Improve Practice >
  • Theories of page and document design
  • Adult education and learning
  • Distance learning theory
  • Visual storytelling narrative techniques
  • Design theory

I'm looking for six volunteers to work on the IDL components. My role is to simply project-manage this effort and ensure that the deadlines are being met. If you're interested in joining in this groundbreaking work for STC, drop me an email.

jdamrau3@airmail.net

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by Robert Hershenow

If you work long hours at a computer and you don't take regular breaks, you are probably dealing with eyestrain and headaches... and that's only the tip of the iceberg.
WorkRave software prompts you to step away from the screen and keyboard, to assist in prevention of and recovery from Repetitive Strain Injury and other aches and pains. It's a free program that allows you to specify breaks, micro-breaks, and hours per day, and even recommends exercises to make productive work of those break times. The program runs on GNU/Linux and Microsoft Windows, and is available here:

http://workrave.org/welcome/

"Users hate change, so it's usually best to stay with a familiar design and evolve it gradually. In the long run, however, incrementalism eventually destroys cohesiveness, calling for a new UI architecture."

- Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox

read the full article:
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/familiar-design.html

Learn a new word every day at Wordnik, "a place for all the words and everything in them." It's a lot more than a dictionary:

http://www.wordnik.com/word-of-the-day

WritersUA's updated review of popular screen-capture tools:

http://www.writersua.com/articles/capturetools/index.html

IDL SIG Web Team Improving Your Viewing Pleasure

-by Dr. Jackie Damrau

The IDL Web team has been busy enhancing the IDL SIG's website.

What We've Done

- Cleaned up and made the Newsletter page more usable
- Added two plug-ins to the IDL Resources page that give you the ability to add your own IDL-related resources or add your own business information for those who are looking for instructional design consultants, contractors, organizations, and such. (Note: This item satisfies two of the requests from the 2009 IDL Winter Mini-Survey.)

Check out both these pages and send us your feedback.

What We're Working On

We are now working on the highest-ranking items you requested in the recent IDL Winter Mini-Survey:

- Adding a Members-only Wiki where you can hold open discussions and share templates, documents, and such
- Adding a Sitemap

Future Ideas and Volunteer Needs

You can send the IDL SIG Web team your suggestions or critiques on what you want to see or have improved on the site. Of course, if you suggest, we may recruit you to help the team accomplish your request or invite you to serve as the moderator for that page as needed.

We are always looking for volunteers to help us continue enhancing and improving the SIG website.

Send email to your SIG Web team members:

Jackie Damrau (webmanager@stcidlsig.org)

- and -

Chris Emanuelli (webmaster@stcidlsig.org)

Welcome
Gretchen Hambright!
(our new SIG Secretary)

Welcome
Linda Stinger!
(our new Programs Co-Manager)

Welcome
Kathleen McIlraith!
(our new Social Media Co-Manager)

Welcome
Eileen Foran!
(our other new Social Media Co-Manager)

Welcome
Barbara Trischler!
(our new Buzzwords Manager)

ATTENTION STUDENTS
Scholarship Opportunity from IDL SIG

The Instructional Design & Learning Special Interest Group (IDL SIG) is offering two academic scholarships for 2010: $500 for one undergraduate student and $1000 for one graduate student. Winners can use their scholarships for school registration, fees, or books, or for attendance at the 2010 STC annual conference in Dallas, Texas.

Who is eligible for the scholarships? Anyone enrolled in a graduate degree, undergraduate degree, or certificate program in the Instructional Design field.

To save postage costs (and a few trees as well), the application process will be 100% electronic. To view and download the scholarship application, visit the IDL SIG College Student Scholarships page at www.stcidlsig.org.

Application deadline is February 24, 2010 at 11:59PM EST. The Scholarship Committee will select and announce winners in early March.

If you have any questions about the scholarship application process, please email scholarship@stcidlsig.org.

- Sylvia Miller

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by **Carol Widstrand**,
IDL SIG Membership Manager

Hello Members,

I am happy to report that 2009 was an exciting year for membership. Our SIG welcomed over 314 new members to our community!

Remember, it's never too late to renew your membership or invite others to join our SIG. There are virtual events being planned for 2010 that will enhance your knowledge as well as help us stay in touch with one another.

Members Making News

Thank you to those who sent me your news. Your information helps us get to know each other since we are a virtual SIG and rarely get the chance to meet in person. If you did not receive my email requesting news of your recent recognition or accomplishment, please email me at membership@stcidlsig.org so we can recognize you in the next issue of *IDeaL: Design for Learning*.

David S. Fenton, after several decades as a technical communicator in many venues (military, government, higher education, private enterprise), is once again acquiring new skills in order to adapt and grow: David is becoming a web developer.

Jackie Damrau continues to be a busy lady. Professionally, Jackie has completed and received certification for two SAP online classes: Introduction to SAP and Introduction to SAP Configuration. Instructionally, Jackie has facilitated training for 1 ARIS System Administration class, 6 ARIS Basics classes, and 5 Advanced ARIS classes, and serves as one of three ARIS system administrators.

ARIS (ARchitecture of Integration Information Systems) is a business process modeling application that provides an architectural framework for describing business processes that uses modeling methods and meta structures comprised in information models that enable modeling a complete end-to-end business process.

For the STC, Jackie is:

- Chairing the Nominating Committee that will be presenting the 2010 Elections slate to the STC Board... so be looking to see all the candidates who will be running for positions of Secretary, Director-at-Large, and Nominating Committee.

- Leading a team on the Competitions Task Force in redesigning the structure of the International Competitions.

For IDL, Jackie:

- Continues to work with Chris Emanuelli, your Web Master, on the Web site redesign. (We're looking for volunteers; if interested please send email to jdamrau3@airmail.net or webmaster@stcidlsig.org.)

- Seeks volunteers to help with the STC TC BoK (Book of Knowledge) project in adding instructional design content and sections to several BoK areas. She is looking for six volunteers to help with this project; if you are interested send email to jdamrau3@airmail.net.)

For the STC Lone Star Community, Jackie gave a presentation on the "Benefits of Joining STC" at the chapter's November progression program.

Member News, *continued*

Yes, Jackie does have a personal life and has been enjoying spending time with her husband, grandson, and parents. These are the most important parts of of life. While it looks like she is too busy, she really does take time out for herself and her prized possession: family.

Saul Carliner PhD, CTDP, (Fellow) organized and hosted a Research-to-Practice pre-conference event for the recent International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO) - Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) World Conference. Carliner also chairs CSTD's Certification Steering Committee, which prepares policies and oversees revisions to CSTD's two certification programs, the Certified Training and Development Professional (CTDP) and Certified Training Professional (CTP).

Several STC members contributed chapters to the new anthology, Digital Literacy for Technical Communication: 21st Century Theory and Practice, which was published by Routledge and edited by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee professor Rachel Spilka. Contributors include members and senior members Ann Blakeslee, Dave Clark, Stanley Dicks, and Bernadette Longo, Fellows and past international presidents JoAnn Hackos and

Saul Carliner, as well as Bill Hart-Davidson, Steven Katz and Vicki Rhodes, and Barry Thatcher.

Sabra Ladd Gore, full time English and Technical Writing instructor at Amarillo College and Texas Tech technical communication grad student, is following her husband from Amarillo, Texas, to College Station, Texas, because of a change of job. Gore will continue to teach online, part time, for Amarillo College. While the town is new for her husband, Gore has graduated twice from Texas A&M University, so it's old stomping grounds for her. She is hoping her part time status will allow time to move and to focus more on her graduate studies. However, contract work is welcome.

Sherry Michaels of Michaels & Associates announced a new online course intended for budding story board writers: Blended Learning: Estimating Project Scope Successfully. For links to more Michaels and Associates' learning-related resources, see page 19 of this issue.

Wishing you the best!

Carol Widstrand
Membership Manager, IDL-SIG

Welcome, New SIG Members!

Annika Hallin
Betsy Samuel
Blake Haggerty
Carol S. Nelson
Cheryl A. Jimenez
Christine Robbins
Dawn Marie Hagen

Dr. Joan P. Dickerson
Dr. William Endres
Elizabeth Yang
Ellen K. Koontz
Emmanuel J. Sullivan
Jada Williams
Jason Isler
Jeffrey M. Salkeld
Jennie R. Moore
Jennifer W. Singer
Joelle M Berg
Johanna T. Schels
John Rigby Larsen
Kathy Gleasure
Kenneth Ronkowitz
Kevin Morrissey
Linda Lee Shaver

Linda S. King
Lori Lake
Marita Stevens Graube
Michele A. Haywood
Monica M. Allen
Monique R. Lundgren
Randall Laudrille
Richard Kelly Stifora
Roland Wedgwood
Ronda L. Wery
Sean Brierley
Shannon Eileen Lancaster
Sharon L. Hotchkiss
Susan M. Haire
Suzanne C. Zarycki
Vernon Atwood

Evaluating Training: Core Components in Training Materials

Attend this webinar and learn the core components that should be included in all training materials.

When: **Thursday, February 4**

Register at: https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/347933978

Time and Length: Allow for 1 to 1 ½ hours

      1:30 - 3:00 pm, Eastern Time
      12:30 - 2:00 pm, Central Time
      11:30 - 1:00 pm, Mountain Time
      10:30 - 12:00 pm, Pacific Time

Presenter

Jeanette Rogers has over 10 years of experience in Instructional Design and Training. She has extensive experience managing, designing, and delivering training projects for global audiences and has worked on numerous projects at large companies such as Microsoft and Safeco, as well as multiple start-up companies. Jeanette received her Master's degree in Education from Stanford and has been on the leadership team of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) Instructional Design and Learning (IDL) Special Interest Group (SIG) over the last five years.

Your Investment

- $20 IDL SIG member of the STC
- $30 STC Member
- $70 Non Member - Consider joining the STC today to receive member pricing for this Webinar as well as other STC benefits. http://www.stc.org/membership/

System Requirements

For system requirements, see FAQs, Attending a Webinar at https://www2.gotomeeting.com/en_US/island/webinar/support.tmpl.

Notes about Registration and Payment

- When registering, select "Show in My Time Zone"
- After registering, a payment page will display. Make sure the name used for registration and payment are the same.
- After payment is received, you'll receive a confirmation e-mail within 2 to 3 days.
- February 2 is the last day to register.

For More Information

Visit http://stcid.ehost.com/wp/?page_id=103

Or, contact Jane MacKenzie-Smith at jane@jemcommunications.com or LindaStinger at LindaStinger@comcast.net

STC Webinars

STC has released the full schedule of webinars for January and February 2010. To view the entire listing as well as the collection of archived webinars, available for viewing 24/7, check out the STC website. From there you can click on "View Description and Speaker Biography" to learn more details about each webinar and the presenter, and click on the name of the webinar to register.

Resources at No Charge

Michaels and Associates has a library of training, documentation, and business-related articles and tools available on their website at

http://www.michaelsandassoc.com/resources.php

These include information about new, hot topics as well as new looks at classic ideas, analytical tools, and a collection of learning-focused resources.

STC's Future Already Looking Brighter in 2010

STC President Cindy Currie wrote recently, "I am extremely pleased to be able to deliver some GOOD news: STC has weathered the first and most severe crisis—that of a fourth quarter cash deficit. I want to express my sincere thanks to the chapters and SIGs for their support and partnership (as painful as it has been), and to the tireless efforts of the committees, the Board, and the staff in making almost $1M USD in expense cuts and cost savings."

You can read Cindy's entire letter, complete with details on assistance and improvements from STC for 2010, in her recent post on STC's Notebook Blog.

December Intercom is Now Posted Online

Read It Here

Nonmembers May Now Subscribe to Intercom

STC's Board of Directors has authorized subscriptions to be sold to nonmembers beginning in 2010. The cost to subscribe is $195 for addresses within the United States. A postage differential fee is added to subscriptions to Canada ($205) and other countries ($230). Please complete the Intercom Subscription Form and email to Kevin Cuddihy.

MadCap Extends Offer for Free STC Membership

MadCap's offer to pay for Basic Membership in 2010 for any customer who purchases MadCap's Flare or MadPak is extended through 31 January. To take advantage of this and other MadCap offers for STC members, please email MadCap at sales@madcapsoftware.com or call +1 (858) 320-0327 and mention the "STC Partnership Promo."

Get Information Faster on STC's Notebook Blog

Don't forget to visit STC's Notebook blog to get information first. The blog is growing and has lots of new and interesting features. It is adding new readers every day, so please check it out.

Intercom, Technical Communication Now Online-Only

Starting with the January edition of *Intercom* and the February edition of *Technical Communication,* both publications will be primarily in an online format. Free online access in a variety of PDF versions will be available immediately, with a web-based version available for *Technical Communication* starting in February and *Intercom* in March. Members can elect to add on a print subscription when renewing their membership. The cost is $30 for *Intercom* and $75 for *Technical Communication.*

Visit STC Online: www.stc.org