Spring 2005 Newsletter

SIG Manager Thoughts
Word from the Editor

Articles:
1) eLearningCMS
2) Implementing Online Learning, pt 2

Tips and Hints
Member News
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Your Letters
About the Newsletter / Feedback
SIG Manager’s Thoughts
by Jane L. Smith

Ahhh! The integrated brain of the technical instructional designer! Some of you may be asking right now, “And what does she mean by that?” Let me illustrate with a bit of personal information.

When I was a kid, I loved to teach in my garage, but I mostly taught Math, rarely English or Spelling or Reading. All the way through school and into high school, I excelled in Math. As a child, I was also very logical and organized, most frequently coming out of my left brain and functioning quite well in the world of analysis and rationality.

When I was 16, however, I was an exchange student to the Netherlands. I came back a different person after learning about another history, another language, another culture, another family, and another very different way of living. My senior year, I barely tolerated the first semester of math and quickly dropped it the second semester to take Cultural Anthropology. I had begun to make decisions and operate more by feel and by what I now know as intuition. I was starting to use the right side of my brain.

Over the course of my life, I’ve alternately worked out of one or the other sides of my brain. Today I recognize, however, that I regularly work out of both sides of my brain as a matter of course. Sometimes I question whether a conclusion I’ve come to is based on logic or on a feeling or knowing I have. Mostly, I know it doesn’t matter. All that matters is that I’m open to information that comes to me from all directions.

Regardless of how we get there, if we are to be truly effective instructional designers in the technical fields, we must utilize our left-brain to analyze and make sense of the technical content while simultaneously accessing our right brain to tap into our audience and how to effectively and creatively teach that same information. In reality, the bridge between our audience and the technical information is their jobs and the businesses in which they work. If we engage our curiosity about how someone will use the information on their job, we can then integrate our feelings about the people and their jobs with the technical aspects.

As we learn about more businesses and more jobs, we can more readily blend our intuition and our technical knowledge to write more appropriately for our audience, creating more accurate, effective, and engaging business scenarios that truly reach our learners. As we become more comfortable with the integration of our creative and our logical technical sides, we also have more fun as we design and write. That fun and that whole-brained approach come through in our training to help our learners also become more effective on the job and perhaps more whole-brained, too.

How lucky we are when we utilize an integrated brain. It serves us so well!
A Word from the Editor
by Dave Williams, Newsletter Editor

First of all, I want to thank the Newsletter staff for making my job extremely easy. Whenever it came time to publish the newsletter, copy edit, proofread, offer ideas to improve, they were THE BEST!

As you may be guessing, it is with great sadness that I must leave my position with the IDL SIG as the Newsletter Editor. Honestly, it was my first time as an Editor, so you can imagine I learned quite a bit from all of you. Thanks for sharing your expertise and making my job so easy.

I know that whomever Jane finds to replace me will do an excellent job in providing a quality newsletter that meets the needs of the SIG membership. I’ll still be lurking in the background as a SIG member and will offer my support in smaller volunteer efforts as time permits.

You’ve all been extremely professional, skilled, and dedicated, and I want to thank you for that. And if any of you are interested in taking over the reigns, please contact Jane Smith at jemcomm@sedona.net.

Joy in the learning!
Dave
eLearning & Content Management: One Can Help the Other
by Bret Freeman

If your organization is thinking about implementing eLearning initiatives and you already have a content management system, you might be surprised by how well the two can complement each other.

eLearning programs are designed to deliver quality learning materials to employees, customers, suppliers, and partners, with the goal of reducing training time while increasing learner engagement and comprehension.

A key component of eLearning is the learning object. A learning object is a "chunk" of instructional material that is made up of three components:

- A content component
- A structural component
- A presentation component

The learning management system (LMS) is responsible for the presentation component, while the content management system (CMS) handles the content and structural components.

One of the major challenges of eLearning is figuring out how to organize large amounts of content (usually in the form of learning objects), how to deliver it, and how to do it in multiple ways. For example, you may have a new policy to communicate to your organization. You probably need to communicate that information through a presentation, an online reference manual, and maybe an employee memo. How do you share that information across multiple content management systems?

For the presentation component, you could use a learning management system (LMS) to store content as a series of objects, and then deliver it to any media as needed, including PowerPoint, training documents, websites, etc. If you would also like to use the content in a CMS, you can create and deliver it using the presentation component of eLearning.

The content management system stores information in "chunks" and is ideal for working with learning objects. Granularity is particularly important for eLearning. Developers need to be able to reuse and organize learning objects in new ways.

Third, content management systems typically have robust automated workflow capabilities. This workflow can be set up so that when manufacturing develops the technical information and releases the product, the system automatically assigns the product to the eLearning development department. An eLearning department can then create new packages of information that can be used to train new employees or to update existing training packages.

Finally, the most compelling way that a single-source content management system can help with eLearning is through enterprise-wide content reuse. Because the systems store all content at the same time in a centralized repository, an eLearning developer can access content that is created by any part of the organization. This makes it possible to share knowledge across the organization as needed.

Whether or not a content management system will meet all of your eLearning needs depends on the overall needs of the organization. There are other eLearning solutions on the market that may or may not be applicable to your situation. The first is a learning management system (LMS). Learning management systems are what you need for planning, delivering, and managing all the learning events within an organization -- including online, virtual classroom, and instructor-led classrooms.

The second is a content management system. These systems focus on learning content, giving content developers the tools to create new content more efficiently. A content management system allows companies to keep the content reusable by creating smaller chunks of content and makes them available for the creation of new learning experiences. This is much more useful than developing entire courses of very similar material and adapting to various audiences. Not all learning content management systems are created equal. However, the most useful are structured XML systems because they enjoy the flexibility and compatibility of XML.

It is very possible for a content management system to work in conjunction with both learning management and learning content management systems. Some organizations have found it useful to store and organize their content in the repository of a content management system, but use a learning management system to handle an eLearning initiative. It is important to note that learning content management systems are designed to be used in conjunction with a department, they do not have access to any information from any other areas of the organization and they cannot share content throughout the enterprise. Content management systems are designed to be enterprise-wide and allow for reuse content enterprise-wide. If your instructional designers are constantly re-creating content from scratch, then you might consider a learning management system alone or a content management system in conjunction with a learning management and/or learning content management system. This will allow you to create content that can be used in multiple courses.
Implementing Online Learning: One Company's Experience (Part 2)
by Kim Lambdin

Online learning is not really learning.
How do you overcome the perception that online learning is not really a learning and development activity? That's a difficult question involving more than just evaluating whether or not an e-learning module is well designed, engaging, and appropriately interactive. To try and answer that question, I needed to think about the culture of the company as well as identify the end user better.

Company Culture and Audience
What I over-looked in my haste to implement e-learning, is that my company is a conservative financial services company that will never be leading-edge for anything. It is a stable and very successful company that is also a Government Sponsored Enterprise (GSE). We don't readily embrace change or the latest trends; it is not in our nature or our long history. Combine that culture with an end-user group whose median age is about 43, and I begin to see why they thought e-learning was not a valid learning endeavor.

The users associated online learning with "surfing the Web" and a frivolous use of time. Several of the users confided in me that they were afraid others would see them working through the lessons and be concerned that "real work" wasn't getting done. After all, my company prides itself on being a high-performance, results-driven organization, so who has time to do online learning at their desks? Managing to complete a few online modules everyday seemed like too much trouble and besides, it wasn't really training. As I discovered, the end-user was more comfortable in a traditional classroom environment, away from work.

Lessons learned
Looking back, I can clearly see why my e-learning implementation results were so abysmal. How do you change perceptions and a company's culture? V-E-R-Y slowly. What I discovered is that you need to start more slowly and do more "PR" work about online learning.
• Start at the grass roots level.
• Work with the employees who embrace e-learning (many have taken online college classes) and make them become advocates for e-learning. Get them talking about the convenience of online learning; it can be done on company time in short 30 minute intervals or it can be done from home.
• Talk to managers about the cost savings e-learning offers.
• Assure employees and their managers that solid principles of adult learning are embedded in the online learning and that many online modules have post-tests to measure an individual's success.
• Start small or start with something simpler. For me that meant introducing WebEx as a self-serve, web-based presentation/conference tool. WebEx has been well received at all levels of the company, providing employees a softer and less intimidating introduction into using web-based tools.

Armed with new insights and a different plan of attack, I hope to have more success with online learning when we upgrade to Windows XP later this year.

Part 3 will look at participants who do not do well in an online learning environment.
Tips & Hints
by Jackie Damrau

Do you have a short tip or quick reference guide that you use when designing instruction or when teaching? Send your tips or hints to jdamrau3@airmail.net.
Member News

by Sylvia Miller, SIG Membership Manager

Our SIG is growing rapidly, and our members are busy giving presentations and preparing for their annual conference presentations. Read on to find out more...

New Members

The SIG is pleased to announce that 79 new members joined since the last newsletter. You are part of a SIG that's growing by leaps and bounds. In fact, we've seen the fastest growing SIG in the last year of over 70%. June 30, 2005. Please note this is due to the addition of new members and we welcome them to the SIG.

Member Accomplishments

Here are a few notable recent articles or SIG member's recent issues of interest:

- While you're waiting for the next DD SIG newsletter, remember to send in any articles that may be of interest to the SIG members. We'd love to have your contributions.
- Visit the Site at sylvia.miller@gmail.com (be sure your email address doesn't contain "new" to "who")

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SIG NEWS

Wanna find out what's happening in STC and in the Instructional Design and Learning SIG? Well here are just a few things that you might find interesting.

Newsletter Mailing
We hope by now you all have received your hard copy of our fact sheet and the November newsletter. Thanks to Sylvia Miller, our Membership Manager, for organizing the mailing and making it happen. If you have questions on membership, feel free to contact Sylvia at sylviamiller@wcoh.rr.com (remember not to let your spellchecker correct who to whom). And thanks to David Williams for the great newsletter.

Re-chartering
Our re-chartering team has worked hard and received some good input from you. I feel energized by the ideas coming from you and the team. Although we don't have specifics yet, you can look forward to more educational and sharing opportunities for all of us in the coming year. If this SIG can't conduct online learning and sharing opportunities, then who can?

Conference Activities
Our conference team is hard at work planning our standard conference activities of the luncheon, the business meeting, and various handouts. In addition, this year's welcome on Sunday will feature all communities, and we will have a table and display at this event. Please stop by to introduce yourself to us. We'd love to meet you!

Our webmaster, Chris Emanuelli (chrisemanuelli@hotmail.com), is putting the conference information on the site. Check out the information [get url from Chris] on:

- IDL Information and Business meeting, Sunday, May 6th, 3:30, where you can meet the leadership team, learn about upcoming events and plans, and provide more input to help us give you what you need.
- IDL SIG tables at the Welcome Reception, Sunday, May 6th, 7:30 – 9:00, again where you can meet members of the leadership team and learn more about the SIG.
- IDL-related sessions (a pdf for your download and use)
- IDL Progression. organized by Karen Baranchik (KBEARANICH@scane.com) – 4:00, Tuesday, May 10th (also a pdf for your use)
- IDL Tools Panel, organized by Gene Holden (gene@blsc.stanford.edu) – 10:30, Wednesday, May 11th
- IDL tables at the SIG luncheon – Tuesday, May 10th, noon

Listserv Manager
We've also just acquired a new listserv manager, Debra Lynne Edwards (dedwards@crbentin.org) who lives in Benin in West Africa. Over the next few weeks, Debra will be developing listserv policies with an eye towards making the listserv dialogues easier to read, especially for those who get the digest. Welcome, Debra!

Program Managers
As a result of the input you gave us during re-chartering, we will be placing more emphasis on programs. Jennie Achtenmich (JennieA@att.net) and Conni bile (Cmibll@aol.com) have volunteered to work on programs. Thanks Jennie and Conni!

Lessons from the Dessert: Resilience, Survival, Success.

TechComm2005
The Instructional Design and Learning SIG is teaming up with the Phoenix Chapter to co-sponsor the conference traditionally known as the Region 5 conference to be held November 11th and 12th in Mesa, Arizona. This conference will have a significant amount of ID-related sessions. We encourage you to submit proposals and make plans to come to Arizona in one of the most enjoyable times of the year. For more information, check out:

http://www.region5conf.com/framesets/region5_Frameset.htm

This joint cooperation between a SIG and a Chapter is a first in STC. Help us make it a success through your support and participation. If you're interested in volunteering to help in any way, please let Jane Smith (jemcomm@sedona.net) know.

Newsletter Changes
I'd like to publicly thank David Williams for his great work in publishing several great newsletters during his time as editor. At this time, David has decided to pursue other interests and we will be re-organizing the staff. If you're interested in being part of the newsletter team, please contact Jane Smith, jemcomm@sedona.net. Thanks again, David, for getting us off to such a good start!

Scholarship
One result of the re-chartering effort is the recommendation to establish a scholarship for someone in instructional design. Gene Holden has volunteered to organize this effort. Thanks, Gene.
Society News

Intercom Online The new Intercom Online is now available on the STC Web site! See STC’s Web site at www.stc.org/intercom.

STC: 2004 Technical Communicator Salary Survey
STC’s 2004 Technical Communicator Salary Survey is now available at the STC Web site.
Learning Opportunities

STC offers several 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! Reprinted with permission. Society news originally appeared in STC Newsletter, Tieline, July – October 2004 issues. All rights reserved.

Experiencing Technical Communication — This Year’s Conference

NOTE. The IDL SIG once again has prepared its own conference roadmap outlining all the sessions that are related instructional design and learning for our members. You can find the roadmap at the end of this issue or on the home page of the IDL Web site at www.stcilig.org/idl

It's an exciting time for technical communicators! We're at the convergence of two important trends for our profession.

The first looks inward at transforming STC to respond effectively to changes in technology, business, and professional roles. Each of these changes brings a challenge to learn new skills, to communicate our value, and to understand the role of communications in the ever-changing business environment.

The second springs from an increasing focus on user experience as part of the design and development process. Communication is a critical element of this work, whether the focus is on technical documentation, Web sites, software interfaces, or wireless applications, to name just a few. As we look outward, STC members have much to share with—and to learn from—those whose skills overlap with ours. Whatever our titles, our goals are often similar: a usable, useful, and effective information-based product.

Be part of STC's transformation and help make the 52nd Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, an event that can't be missed. For more details, visit www.stc.org/conference.asp.

STC Telephone Seminars

A telephone seminar is much like a large conference call in which the speaker makes a presentation over the phone. As a participant, you simply dial the 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! You then sit back and listen to the presentations and join in the lively Q&A discussion that follows.

Time

All seminars are held from 1:00 - 2:30 pm US Eastern Time

Upcoming Sessions

- June 8, 2005 Presenter: William Horton
  Adding Interactivity to Online Documents

- June 22, 2005 Presenter: Michael Plattner
  One World Publishing: Single-source Editing and Translation

- July 13, 2005 Presenter: Ann Jennings
  Upgrading Your PowerPoint Presentations: Basics of Organization and Illustration

- August 10, 2005 Presenter: William Horton
  Visual Fluency Cost

With a telephone seminar, the cost is per site, not per person. Train as many people as your conference room can hold — for one flat rate!

Members: $99
Non-members: $149

Sign Up

Email your name, phone number, and the name of the seminar you would like to attend at least 7 days before the event to stctphoneseminars@wing-group.com.

Need More Information...

Visit www.stc.org/seminars.asp
Book Reviews: Instructional Design
Reviewed by Michael Tillmans, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Technical Communications, Illinois Institute of Technology


How do you balance both sides of your professional life when choosing a new instructional design text? I needed a new text book for the instructional design class I teach to technical communicators, yet as a project manager I also wanted a reference that can be used as a workday guide for the big questions on training projects.

I chose the new edition of Smith and Ragan’s Instructional Design to satisfy both needs as it supports a coherent version of cognitive psychology that can be applied to the design of business and school training materials. The twenty-chapter book is organized around the concepts of instructional design: 1) Analysis and Assessment, 2) Instructional Strategies, and 3) Implementation and Evaluation.

Analysis and Assessment focuses on analysis techniques for:
- The learning context (chapter 3)
- The learner (chapter 4)
- The learning task (chapter 5)
- The assessment of learning (chapter 6)

Woven throughout these analyses is an introduction to the information processing approach to problem analysis. Beginning with the cognitive model and an initial tour of the types of learning as initially introduced by Robert Gagne and more recently adapted by Ruth Clark. Of particular value are illustrations of the information processing analysis for each type of learning, and an explicit demonstration of the pre-requisite analysis.

Ten chapters on Instructional Strategies are the heart of the book building an ‘events of instruction’ model for each type of learning, applicable to most any training topic from role memory needs to intricate problem solving. Separate chapters address:

- Declarative Knowledge
- Problem Solving
- Psychomotor Skills
- Conceptual Knowledge

Many short and extended examples are used to illustrate how the necessary conditions for learning any skill are assembled, sequenced and integrated into an effective lesson or module.

Implementation, Management and Evaluation are addressed in three chapters, and this can be considered the weakest part. This text is NOT:

- A how-to book: This is not a collection of paint-by-numbers implementation techniques that become outdated tomorrow as new software tools come on the market.
- A paean to the development of instructor led or print training materials. The principles discussed are equally applicable to all forms of training and instruction, including web based training in a pure or blended format.
- A workplan for project managers. The contents will help you and staff make intelligent design decisions, thus avoiding rework.
- A handbook for evaluators. The chapter on formative and summative evaluation is very good, but it could easily be extended to make more concrete connections with usability studies, especially for corporate ID practitioners.

Users of prior editions will note important changes to the third edition. New chapters on implementation and on management provide usable advice without trying to accomplish too much. Instructors and students will appreciate the online resources which include solutions to exercises and graphics files of all the illustrations in the text.
Letters to the Editor

Hi! I just read a book review, Rapid Instructional Design: Learning ID fast and Right." I liked the review and looked for a link to an online purchase – none. I'll bet Amazon.com would pay you to add the link!

Sincerely,
Cheryl Bennett

I just joined the IDL SIG and wanted to let you know that the newsletter is great! It has lots of useful information in easy-to-understand small chunks. Keep up the good work!

Denise Nislee
Project Manager
West Norriton, PA

I was thrilled with this month’s newsletter – every topic hit on something I wanted to know. I’ve just scanned it so far, but I intend to read every word during the upcoming week. Congratulations!

Karen Conlin
Toronto, Ontario.

Thank you for sending me this wonderful newsletter. It is the first one I have seen. I didn’t know that there was a lengthy newsletter as part of my SIG membership.

Wendy Suminski

I thought it had a very clean look to it and I was impressed with the amount of content you had. How wonderful that you have such an active community in your SIG. I know that not all SIGs are terribly active.

I really liked the photos, which were convenient and interesting for the casual skimmer such as myself. I also thought your About the Newsletter page was very good. I’m still trying to figure out how best to present that type of information on Interface.

Amanda Cross, Amanda Cross
Managing Editor, Interface
Hoosier Chapter STC

I just got the STC IDL SIG Fall newsletter announcement. The newsletter itself looks great and I look forward to reading it. You guys have done a great job! Wow!

Frances Wirth
About The Newsletter

How do I contribute to the newsletter? How often is the newsletter published? What's the mission of the Instructional Design & Learning SIG? Find out this and more in this section!

Ideal Design for Learning is published for members of the Instructional Design and Learning (IDL) SIG of the Society for Technical Communication.

It is published four times a year in December, March, July, and November. Article submission deadlines are on the 15th of the month (November 15, February 15, June 15, and September 15).


Visit www.stcsg.org/idlnewsletter.shtml to access the newsletter archives.

Article & Contributing Guidelines

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

Content

Content should relate to instructional design and learning. This includes:
- Short tips or hints
- Book, software, or technology reviews
- Feature articles
- Member news
- IDL SIG & STC News
- Employment information
- Learning opportunities such as courses, conferences, workshops, or events

Length

Articles can range from 25 words to approximately 1000 words. If your article is particularly lengthy, consider breaking it into smaller submissions (i.e., part 1, part 2, etc.) that we could publish in successive issues.

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

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

Formatting and Graphics
- Avoid underlining unless text is a hyperlink.
- Use boldface to set headings and subheadings apart.
- Submit graphics as a separate file. (Please include instructions as to where the graphic should appear.)

Legal and Other Considerations
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