

Daily Hot Sheet

Vol XI, No 2

WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance

Stories, ideas, about language open WritersUA conference

by *Chuck Martin*

Language was the theme that opened the 16th annual WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance. Keynote speaker Christine Kenneally was introduced by conference organizer Joe Welinske at 9:15am, and she promptly launched into a story about the origin of language. "Human beings have remarkable ability to acquire



Preparing for and deciding which session to attend.



Christine Kenneally

language," she said, "but you have to be spoken to in order to acquire it."

She also talked about research looking for overlaps between

animals and humans in regard to language. Definitely an interesting topic for a roomful of people who make a living by their writing, and it was just the first of many informative and interesting topics in this first of three session-filled days.

Today is the longest day, with sessions starting early, and ending with vendor demonstrations and then the MadCap social.

In addition to session rooms on the Ballroom level, the Broadway III room on the Plaza level is also being used for

conference sessions.

Don't forget that today is the last day of the Vendor Exhibition in the Plaza Foyer. Many vendors have swag, are holding raffles, and all are willing to answer your questions about their products. Be sure to stop by their booths, including vendors in Broadway I & II.

Several vendors are also demonstrating their latest products from 4:15 to 5:15 this afternoon. Check your conference schedule for room locations. Snacks will be offered at the demos.

Events, reminders, and other useful stuff

Product demonstrations

The blue sheet in your conference bag states that the vendor product demonstrations are "today." They are, in fact, Tuesday—today!!

Early start tomorrow

Wednesday's sessions begin early at 8:30am. Breakfast begins at 7:30am. Don't forget to set your alarm!

Hands-on sessions

All double-length hands-on sessions are in the Galleria North room. Arrive early to install software or sample files.

Vendor Exhibition

The exhibition in the Plaza Foyer ends today. Many vendors offer giveaways or raffles.

Internet access

A row of Internet access stations is on the Ballroom level.

Free for all conference attendees; please be mindful if folks are waiting.

Cell phones

Please turn them off or put them on mute when you are in a conference session.

Evaluations

Remember to fill out session evaluations and drop them in the green boxes.

Today's Highlights

- Vendor exhibition, Plaza Foyer, all day
- Networking lunch, provided by WritersUA, Plaza Pavilion, noon-1:15pm
- Networking Mixer, sponsored by MadCap, Plaza Pavilion, 5:15-6:30pm
- Exhibitor demonstrations, various rooms, 4:15-5:15pm

At-a-Glance Schedule

- 7:30am-5:00pm, vendor exhibition, Plaza Foyer
- 7:30-8:30am, breakfast, Plaza Pavilion
- 8:30-9:45, conference sessions
- 9:45-10:15am, break sponsored by welocalize
- 10:15-11:30am, conference sessions
- 11:30am-1:00pm, networking lunch, Plaza Pavilion
- 1:00-2:15pm, conference sessions
- 2:15-2:45pm, break
- 2:45-4:00pm, conference sessions
- 4:15-5:15pm, exhibitor demonstrations
- 5:15-6:30pm, Networking Mixer sponsored by MadCap, Plaza Pavilion

Today's Forecast



Showers, tapering off late, chance of rain, 50%
High: 53°, Low: 40°
Winds W 5-10 MPH



MadCap Software CTO Bjorn Backlund returns a killer shot in their Monday night ping pong challenge social.

Reminders

ProBooster

You can choose to follow “tracks” at the conference. Check the ProBooster sheet in your conference bag and check off the sessions that you attend. Turn your form into the registration desk before you leave if you’ve completed a track and you will be sent a certificate.

Networking Lunch

Lunch today is free, provided by the conference, in the Plaza Pavilion.

Most tables have topics, so come and join your fellow attendees to feast and to chat about subjects you’ll be hearing about at the conference.

Daily Hot Sheet

Production, writing, photography, layout:
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Session summaries

Notes from Monday’s sessions.

Beyond Step by Step: The Architecture of Procedural Content

Cheri Lockett-Zubak

Where is content development headed? Models, such as information types, are becoming outmoded. Current research concerns include reuse and generation gap. The latter are those who are gamers and who use Facebook and text messaging with a high degree of fluency.

The language of the web is not repressed; it’s looser and it’s more fun.

A trend for troubleshooting: multimedia, not just text. It’s the great problem of the next five years: we have tools to create textual technical information, but users want information in different non-textual ways.

Creating Table “Styles”

Matthew Ellison

The goal is to create clean table code. The method is to put all styling attributes in CSS, not inline. Apply formatting properties to the highest possible elements. Those properties will cascade down to their children.

Well, actually, font properties, color, and alignment are inherited, but box model properties—margin, border, padding—are not.

CSS: Image Maps Using Backgrounds

Dave Gash

We’ve gone from SHG to image maps to DHTML roll-overs, now CSS objects, declarative processing without scripting. Start with creating a list of links and give each a unique ID. Then create a multiple image, one section faded,

one section colorful. Then write CSS code in the hover pseudo-class to copy the image and then move it to the desired location.

Analyzing Your Audience, Constructing Personas, and Conducting Internal Dialogs

Dave Farkas & Jean Farkas

Dave first introduced personas, then said that communication is inherently social. Early communication theory suggested that creating and sending a message gives no idea of the context. Now we are more aware of that social context. Current theory is that communication, even written communication, is social. Negotiate with your audience to create meaning. Also collaborate with stakeholders.

Personas are imaginary people based on real data. They are a descriptive model of your audience. It’s easy to create a persona, but can be GIGO. Personas need to be based on empirical data or they are guesswork personas.

Session evaluation prizes

The following attendees have won prizes, drawn at random from completed session evaluations. You can pick up your prize at the registration desk on the Ballroom level.

Please continue to fill out evaluation forms. Each evaluation slip is also an entry in our daily raffle for valuable prizes.

- Michael Seidel: Kodak EasyShare Digital Camera
- Christopher Findaly: Bose Headphones
- Michael Massaro: AirLink Wireless G USB Adapter
- Jessica Weissman: AirLink Wireless G USB Adapter
- Carl Parker: Starbucks \$25 Gift Card
- Leslie Lawson: iTunes \$25 Gift Card
- Jeanne Willoughby: Tao Digital Keychains
- David Hodgson: Tao Digital Keychains
- Burtin Hart” Doc-to-Help @008 Enterprise
- Bradley Currier: WebWorks – ePublisher Platform

These prizes will be drawn today and given away tomorrow:

- 2009 conference registration
- iPod 8 GB Nano
- Maxtor 750 GB Storage Drive
- SmartParts Digital Picture Frame
- Tao Digital Keychains
- AirLink Wireless G USB Adapter (2)
- Borders Books \$25 Gift Card
- Author-it 5.0 (single user)



Wearing o’ the green on Monday, St. Patrick’s Day.