

Conference at-a-glance: Monday

- 7:30-9:00am: Breakfast, Grand Foyer
- 9:00-10:00am: Opening session, Grand Two
- 10:00-10:30am: Break
- 10:30-11:30am: Conference sessions
- 11:30am-12:45pm: Networking lunch, Grand Three
- 12:45-1:45pm: Conference sessions
- 1:45-2:05pm: Break
- 2:05-3:05pm: Conference sessions
- 3:05-3:25pm: Break
- 3:25-4:25pm: Conference sessions
- 4:25-6:00pm: Networking mixer, Grand Foyer
- 7:30am-6:00pm: Vendor exhibition, Grand Foyer

Short breaks

Note that the afternoon breaks today are short, just 20 minutes.

Hour-long sessions

Unlike previous years, when sessions varied in length, all of this year's sessions are one-hour long. However, note that start times are not always on the hour, half hour, or quarter hour. Keep your Conference at a Glance card handy to make sure you're on time to the sessions you want to attend.

Badges? I don't need no stinkin' badges!

Yes, yes you do. You must have your conference badge to enter conference sessions.

Return your response card after opening session

Today's opening session will be self-directed based on questions and answers from you, which you enter with the ResponseWare card keypad provided by WritersUA as you enter the session.

Please remember to return the keypad when you exit the session. If you forget and find it later, please return it to the conference check-in desk.

Today's Forecast



54 degrees, showers, light breezes from SSW, 30% chance of rain.

Writer, editor, photographer, layout, production: Chuck Martin
Editor: Sue Heim

Attendance up for 2010 version of WritersUA conference

by Chuck Martin

Still deep in the throes of the worst economic crisis in decades, 360 user assistance professionals descended on the Seattle Westin to attend the 2010 WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance, a 20 percent increase over 2009.

That companies (and contractors) see the value of information offered here at the conference—and are willing to pay for it—is perhaps a better economic indicator than those popularized by economists and the media. And make no mistake: There is a lot of information here.

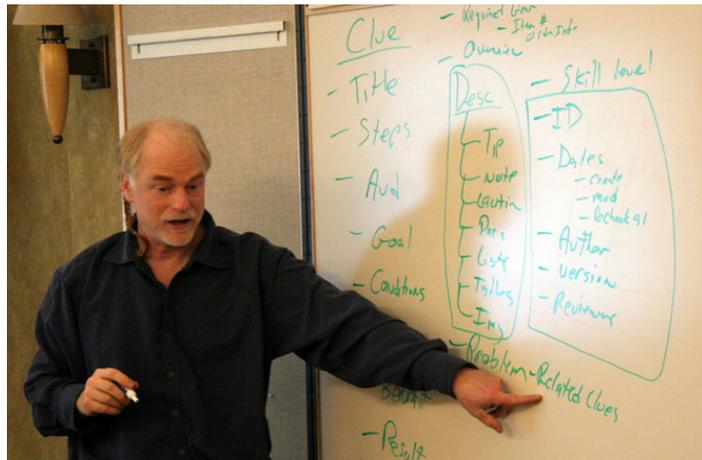
Attendees have come from as far away as South Korea, India, Russia, Germany, Finland, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), and a contingent of 6 from the People's Republic of China. 31 of the 50 U.S. states are represented as well.

In addition to being quite global, the conference has increased



Joe Welinske explains the LaunchPad program Sunday evening.

its social and mobile presence. A carry-over from last year is the large monitor displaying mentions on Twitter (the #writersua hashtag). The conference website has a community page (<http://community.writersua.com/>), available only to registered at-



Bob Boiko runs a brainstorming session as a part of his Sunday supplemental seminar on Information Modeling in XML.

tendees, where you can see who is attending, have conversations with other attendees, organize your schedule, and even access the community from your web-enabled smartphone (with the On The Go feature).

The conference opens today with a community-based panel where everyone present will provide feedback via wireless keypads. Tuesday afternoon, a session block consists of topics you suggest and (some of) you will lead.

You'll have multiple opportunities to network, from the networking lunches today and tomorrow to the networking mixer this evening to the Geek Trivia Quiz Show tomorrow evening.

The pre-conference program began yesterday. In addition to the well-attended supplemental sessions (see summaries on the back), conference organizer and WritersUA president Joe Welinske explained the conference LaunchPad program, a special conference curriculum that provides a solid foundation of user assistance

training, and then welcomed conference newcomers in a half-hour orientation session.

The evening closed with a meet-and-greet at the hotel bar where many old friends renewed relationships and many other new relationships planted seeds for future flowering.

The vendor exhibition is open in the Grand Foyer all day today and tomorrow, including during lunch.

The Jobs board is by the elevators in the Grand Foyer. You can use this also to plan activities and post messages.

We hope you will take advantage of all the opportunities available to you at this year's conference.

Silence!

Despite the increasingly interactive nature of the conference, it's still important for speakers to present without interruption. Please turn off or otherwise silence your cell phone during conference sessions.



At the Sunday evening orientation session.

Brief notes from some of yesterday's sessions, compiled by Chuck Martin.

Writing Help Procedures That Work, Leah Guren

A good two dozen people came to this Sunday session to hear Leah talk about keys to writing useful help. "Procedures are the most useful type of documentation we write," she started out by saying. It requires "retuning" what you know about documentation.

Biggest doc mistakes, why help procedures fail, fall into categories. Procedures that miss information (authors making assumptions about what users know or don't know). Users can't find information: it's there but buried, or it's not indexed well (no entry point). Users can find information, but they can't do anything with it.

Leah advocated the creation and use of personas for developing documentation. It allows you to make directed decisions for editorial decisions, rather than faceless aggregate statistics.

The gap between SMEs (subject matter experts) and users is phenomenal, and our role is to act as translators.

Using Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro and Adobe Presenter, Joe Ganci

Joe spent some time demonstrating how to make Acrobat files interactive. For example, inseting buttons and setting their properties, not only their text, but their destination. Buttons can have text only, icons only, icons plus text, and more. Buttons can not only start an action, such as linking to other locations, but can run multimedia, such as sounds or video.

"Destinations" allow you to create names for pages, rather than just numbers. If page numbers change, such as when you add pages, the page numbers change, but the named destinations stay the same. Also, numbers aren't as easy to follow and manage as names.

The interactivity that can be added to Acrobat documents makes training useful. You can have users make choices and give feedback based on those choices.

Information Modeling in XML, Bob Boiko

In XML, you'll see tags like in HTML, but the tag names will be based on their use. You can create tags based on clues, which come from business concepts. You can replace HTML tags with semantic tags, tags that have meaning.

Bob also explained how you create output, how to take XML and, using commands and mixing HTML and XML, get the effects that you want.

Conference Notes

RoboHelp/FrameMaker software installation

If you're attending this afternoon's hands-on RoboHelp/FrameMaker session and need to install the trial software, please plan to arrive in the Vashon room early. We will have CDs with the Technical Communication Suite 2 and a flash disk with sample files to pass around.

Plan for Tuesday afternoon

Five consultants will be available to answer your questions during Tuesday's 2:45-3:45 time period. They will be working in several different rooms to meet with you and your colleagues, and they have varying interests and specialties. Feel free to drop in on one or more of them. Depending on the number of people visiting a consultant at any one time, the Q&A might be broadened to a general group discussion regarding the planned topic. Rooms will be assigned and announced on Tuesday.

During the same time period, you are invited to make your own 20 minute presentation on any topic. These are not formal presentations. You do not have to demo anything from a laptop or provide handouts. If you would like to suggest a topic, please contact Joe Welinske anytime on Monday. 206-304-1687 or joewe@writer sua . com. Or grab him when you see him.

The following attendees and their topics are already scheduled to present. Rooms will be assigned and announced on Tuesday.

- Using Low-cost Shareware / Freeware Tools to Increase Your Productivity and Accuracy, Ed Marshall
- Putting a Single-Source Project on the Cloud, Charles Miller
- Non-Writer Contributions and the Battle to Achieve Content Quality, Derrick Warren
- Voice of the Customer, Chris Sullivan
- Use Cases, Developer Design Specs, and Personas, Kevin Otnes
- Strategies for Success in Your Organization, Fred Jacobson



Joe Ganci explains Adobe Acrobat intricacies during a Sunday supplemental session.



A couple of attendees plan for the three days ahead.

Evaluation winners

Each day, we draw several session evaluations at random, and those attendees win prizes. Two were selected from yesterday's supplemental sessions:

- **Alissa Grinenko**, Beckman & Coulter: Book, *Managing Writers - A Real World Guide to Managing Technical Documentation*
- **Vasanth Vaidyanathan**, Consona Software: Book, *Conversation and Community - The Social Web for Documentation*

Prize winners can pick up their prizes at the conference registration desk in the Grand Foyer.

Don't forget to fill out your session evaluation forms for every session to attend and drop them in the white boxes marked "Evaluation Forms" to have your chance at more prizes.