

Conference at-a-glance: Tuesday

7:30-8:30am: Breakfast, Grand Three
 8:30-9:30am: Conference sessions
 9:30-9:50am: Break
 9:50-10:50am: Conference sessions
 10:50-11:10am: Break
 11:10am-12:10pm: Conference sessions
 12:10pm-1:25pm: Networking lunch, Grand Three
 1:25-2:25pm: Conference sessions
 2:25-2:45pm: Break
 2:45-3:45pm: Conference sessions, topics suggested, chosen, and presented by you. Also consultant sessions.
 3:45-4:15pm: Break
 4:15-5:15pm: Exhibitor demonstrations, all meeting rooms
 6:00-7:30pm: Geek Trivia Quiz Show, Sixth Avenue Bar (at the Sixth Avenue Inn, across from the Westin and next to McDonalds)
 8:00am-5:15pm: Vendor exhibition, Grand Foyer

Early start today and tomorrow

Today's and Wednesday's first session begins early, at 8:30am.

Short breaks

Note that most 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.

Pro Booster

If you want to receive the Pro Booster certificate before you leave, turn in your completed sheet to the conference information desk by the end of the day today, you'll have your certificate ready to pick up tomorrow. Otherwise it will be mailed to you.

Today's Forecast



61 degrees, partly to mostly cloudy, light breezes from NE.

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

Community infuses opening of 2010 WritersUA conference

by *Chuck Martin*

The opening session of the 2010 WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance set the tone for the three-day conference here at the Seattle Westin by getting everyone involved in the presentation.

All attendees were handed a small wireless keypad upon entry, and the presentation was a series of survey questions, relating mostly to user assistance topics, where everyone keyed in their answer and the aggregate results were then displayed for all to see and the panel to discuss.

Some surprises definitely emerged. For example, when asked what type of smartphone people had, 57% said they didn't have a

smartphone. Of the folks who did, 22% have an iPhone and 10% have a BlackBerry.

DITA is a popular topic for conference sessions, especially as hiring managers perceive it as an important skill. But only 14% of folks thought that DITA will be "widely adopted" in the next 5 years, while another 41% thought it will be used widely only in large corporations. 39% thought it will be used only by DITA "fanboys," and 6% believe it will be obsolete.

A very interesting question asked what the audience does first when it needs help when using

its help authoring tool. A slim plurality, 39%, go to the help, and another 30% use Google. The remainder ask or email a colleague or peer.

All this was just the start of a very busy day. In addition to the all-day concurrent sessions (after the opening), the vendor exhibition took up residence in the Grand Foyer. More than a dozen vendors, large and small, are displaying products and services.

The exhibition runs through today as well, and culminates with exhibitor demonstrations in the various session rooms.

Session evaluations

Please remember to fill out individual session evaluations and drop them in the Evaluation Forms boxes at the room exits and in other places around the Grand Foyer.

Not only do your evaluations earn chances to win valuable prizes, the feedback you give is very helpful to all the conference speakers.



Taking notes.

Geek Trivia Quiz Show

Join Dave Gash and your conference colleagues for the Geek Trivia Quick Show. You'll gather in informal groups and try to answer a variety of humorous and technical questions.

The show is not at the Westin, but across the street at the Sixth Avenue Bar in the Sixth Avenue Inn, next to McDonalds.

It's pay-as-you-go for appetizers and drinks.



Matthew Ellison and Tony Self host the Monday morning opening session.

Tuesday afternoon lineup: expert consultants and topics suggested and presented by you

The Tuesday afternoon 2:45-3:45pm session has a unique format, divided into two styles. First is a series of 20-minute sessions suggested and hosted by your peers. Second is one-on-one consultations by several user assistance experts.

Your topics

Vashon Two

- Using Low-cost Shareware/Freeware Tools to Increase Your productivity and Accuracy, Ed Marshall
- Putting a Single-Source Project on the Cloud, Charles Miller
- Strange Bedfellows? Combining perl and Dreamweaver to Create Integrated and Flexible Docs, Rick Elliott

Fifth Avenue

- Voice of the Customer, Chris Sullivan
- Non-Writer Contributions and the Battle to Achieve Content Quality, Derrick Warren
- Strategies for Success in Your Organization, Fred Jacobson

Expert consultations

Information about each person's area of expertise is detailed on the yellow sheet handed out at lunch yesterday and available at the conference information desk.

- Susan C. Becker, Orcas
- Paul Neshamkin, Vashon One
- Sarah O'Keefe, Blakely
- Scott Boggan, Grand Two
- Rhonda Bracey, Grand Two
- Char James-Tanny, Grand One
- Linda Urban, Grand One

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

The Mobile User Experience - Trends and Best Practices

Anders Rosenquist, ZAAZ

What does it mean to have a mobile site? A mobile app? For a mobile site, screen size is the main factor. A mobile app taps in to a richer user experience.

The core UX idea for a mobile app is that the content is the interface. Controls are at a minimum and desktop design doesn't work in mobile.

The problem with mobile apps is that you have to target a platform (or two). It tends to be a more expensive way to go.

An Update on DITA Features, Tools, and Best Practices

Tony Self

Three types of tools include authoring (Arbortext, FrameMaker, xMetal, oXygen, and others), content management (Bluestream XDocs, SDL Trisoft, Vasant, and others), and publishing (MadCap Flare, Adobe RoboHelp, DITA Open Toolkit, and others).

DITA is an authoring and storage format, not a delivery format. In theory, you can do anything with DITA content. The DITA Open Toolkit can turn DITA into HTML, HTML Help, Eclipse Help and more (sometimes with additions).

Structures, Semantics, Controls, and More: HTML 5 is Here!

Char James-Tanny, JTF Associates

For layout, we've gone from tables to DIVs with IDs to, with HTML 5, structured areas. More specifically, semantically structured areas.

A new doctype declaration: <DOCTYPE HTML>. That's it. Easy to use, easy to remember.

HTML 5 offers validation on forms with input field typing. Types include date, email, file, number, range, text, and url.

There are no longer rules for tag syntax, which makes conversion from older code easier, but it's important to be consistent.

Strategies for Web-based User Assistance

Scott DeLoach

This was a code-heavy session demonstrating techniques for enhancing user assistance, such as sliding, fading, and expanding/collapsing text.

Many of the techniques were shown in both AJAX and ASP. One of the demos showed rating topics, common on MSDN. As you hover over stars, they light up. It can be useful to have text to explain what they are and how to interact with them.

Vendor Exhibition ends today

The Vendor Exhibition in the Grand Foyer ends today at 5:15pm. More than a dozen vendors are available all day to demonstrate their products and services and answer your questions.

This year's vendors:

- Adobe Systems, Inc.
- Author-it Software Corp.
- ComponentOne Doc-To-Help
- EC Software
- GALA 2010
- Help Server
- IRREVO!
- ITR (International Translation Resources)
- MadCap Software
- Scriptorium
- Volt Technical & Creative Communication
- Tedopres
- TiutorPro
- XML Press

In addition, the conference has four media sponsors: HAT-Matrix.com, OASIS, Axure Software Solutions, and Dr. Explain.

Several of the vendors are offering raffles, including XML Press (which also donated prizes to session evaluations), HelpServer (1 license), ComponentOne (Kindle), ITR (teddy bear), Author-it (noise-canceling headphones), and MadCap (MadPak).

In vendor news, Adobe announced support for the EPUB eBook publishing format. And Author-it is launching Aspect.

Even if you don't have any questions for the vendors, please stop by and thank them for supporting the conference.



Ed Marshall and Neil Perlin chat during a break.



A MadCap representative demonstrates one of his products.

Evaluation winners

Each day, we draw several session evaluations at random, and those attendees win prizes. The following winners were selected from yesterday's submitted session evaluations:

- **Zou Qiong**, Huawei: Help + Manual (EC Software)
- **Gary McCue**, PayPal, Inc.: Help + Manual (EC Software)
- **Laurie Edelman**, Altera: 12 mo. access to Irrevo Content Quality System and \$50 Amazon gift card
- **Sharon Carroll**, Microsoft: 2 lb. of Godiva Truffles, ITR
- **Greg Urban**, Life Technologies: Compact Optical Mouse, WritersUA
- **Jennifer Abbingsole**, Global 360: Book, *Kindle Formatting*
- **Michelle Sander**, Spillman Technologies: Book, *Kindle Formatting*
- **Brittney Link**, Medtronic: Book, *Kindle Formatting*

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.