

The Monday LavaConnect10n

TOP O' THE MORNING

Here's what you can look forward to at LavaCon today:

- 7:30–8:00am: Continental breakfast, Grand Ballroom
- 8:00–9:00am: Keynote Panel Discussion, Grand Ballroom
- 9:15–11:30am: 5 tracks of breakout sessions
- 11:30am–12:45pm: Lunch, Stephen Ryden-Lloyd talk
- 12:45–1:45pm: Vendor Demos/Exhibition, Exhibit Hall
- 1:45–4:00pm: 5 tracks of breakout sessions
- 4:15–5:15pm: Andrew Thomas keynote
- 5:30–6:30pm: Network reception
- 6:30–7:30pm: PDX Content Strategy Meetup, hosted by Ann Rockley

SESSION LOCATIONS

Each of the five tracks are held in the following rooms:

- Project Metrics and Development Team Management: Galleria North
- Content Strategy and Content Management: Galleria South
- Case Studies and Roundtable Discussions: Pavilion West
- User Experience and Multichannel Publishing: Pavilion East
- eBooks, New Media, and Mobile Devices: Grand Ballroom

The Galleria and Grand Ballroom rooms are on the Ballroom level, two floors below the lobby. The Pavilion rooms are on the Plaza/Mezzanine level, up the staircase from the main lobby.



LavaCon 2012
The LavaCon Conference on Digital Media and Content Strategies

this issue

LavaCon Opens **P.1**

Sponsors' Corner **P.2**

Session Summaries **P.3**

Change is In the Air as LavaCon Opens

by Chuck Martin

The 10th LavaCon Conference on Digital Media and Content Strategies opened in Portland, OR, on Monday with conference organizer Jack Molisani introducing The Content Wrangler Scott Abel for the opening keynote on the state of the industry.

In his introduction, Jack noted that the conference had its roots in technical communication and has expanded over the years. Many content strategists don't consider themselves technical communicators, and the titles of this year's attendees include CEO,



CTO, content strategist, director of content development, and more.

The 250 people who registered for and traveled to the conference from as far away as Africa and Asia got to hear Scott open a very busy conference day by telling us that we're not in Kansas any more.

Yeah, we're in Portland. A Portland coming off an Occupy Portland march, surrounded by marathoners, and not at all cold or rainy. No, we're not in Kansas, but things aren't always what we always thought they were.

Scott took over and got into the groove by claiming first that social media has created a content revolution. People are connected all over the world, and they can not only connect, they have a template to publish. And us, we're both the scientists in this experiment and the subjects.



The theme of change ran through the whole day. Noz Urbina took us through a lunchtime talk looking at how we've progressed through the ages and how we've perceived information over that time. And Tom Aldous took a similar trip, focusing on information access and control over the centuries in the day's closing keynote.

Conference sponsor Adobe ended the day by throwing a huge party in the Grand Ballroom, highlighted by a huge cake congratulating LavaCon on its 10th anniversary.

LAVACon MOBILE APP

The LavaCon conference has a mobile app where you can view the conference schedule, rate speakers, fill out speaker evaluations, and more! It's available on multiple platforms.

To access the new Conference App on your smartphone:

1. From your app store, download EventBoard.
2. Look for "LavaCon" under the "Current" button.
3. View session details by date, location, speaker, track, etc.
4. Tap the heart icon to add/drop sessions on your agenda.
5. After attending each session, please rate each speaker using the online evaluation.

Sponsors' Corner

LavaCon could not happen without the support of its sponsors. This section highlights their conference-related news and events.

The conference sponsor exhibition hall opens today and runs through the end of LavaCon on Tuesday. Exhibitors will be spread through the lobby outside the Grand Ballroom and in one section of the Grand Ballroom.

Many of the sponsors will be demonstrating their products. And the hour from 12:45pm to 1:45pm today has been set aside, with no speaker sessions, just so you can visit sponsor booths. Some sponsors are offering something beyond demos for attendees:

MadCap Software

MadCap software is having a prize draw for a free copy of the

MadPak, the full suite of tools produced by MadCap Software. The MadPak retails for \$1499 and includes Flare for authoring and publishing, Capture for screen shots and images, Mimic for tutorials and demos, Analyzer for documentation troubleshooting and clean up, and more.

The prize draw will be done at the close of exhibits on Tuesday. To enter, visit the MadCap Software booth and leave a business card or fill out one of our cards. You need not be present to win. If the winner is present they will be handed the software. If the winner is not present then they will receive download links and product keys via email. Good luck to all who enter!



LavaCon in the Twitterverse

A random sampling of tweets with the #LavaCon hashtag:

@sarahokeefe #lavacon has jumped the shark <http://pic.twitter.com/ygKnJWsi>

@NealKaplan First day at #lavacon and I already have ideas for six months of work on process changes. Or a year if I'm being more realistic.

@Pubsgal My brain is full...and if I hadn't already eaten, I'd be at South Park, eating a chocolate crostada (most perfect food item ever!) #lavacon

@loisrp So many helpful and high-quality presenters sharing information both in presentations and 1-1 at #lavacon #pdx really appreciate it

@Lifelimitates And scalability is rarely simple RT @Esotericabjg: #LavaCon Simple is not necessarily scalable.

@joebachana 1st day of sessions at #lavacon done-terrific conference! Really well-thought out program, great sponsors. Kudos to Jack Molisani and his team.

@landesc Regarding content tools, we should question everything. Just because everyone's doing it doesn't mean it works for us @tmaldous #lavacon

Componize Software

Get a chance to win *DITA for Practitioners Vol. 1, Architecture and Technology*, a hands-on book for DITA authors by Eliot Kimber (XML Press). Swing by our booth, say hi and simply drop your card to enter the draw!

The draw will take place at the end of the closing session.



Conference Notes

Every attendee got thank you cards for hotel staff. If any hotel staffer showed you above-and-beyond service, put their name on the card and drop it in the barrel at the registration desk. Three cards will be drawn at the end of the conference and those people will win prizes.

LavaCon keeps its sessions moving; there are only 15 minutes between sessions. Speakers should strive to finish on time.



Session Summaries

A recap of selected sessions from yesterday's LavaCon.

LavaCon's opening day featured three keynotes and five tracks of five sessions each. Highlights and randoms notes from the keynotes and selected sessions are presented below.

We're Not in Kansas Anymore

According to Scott Abel, the people who are not paying attention to what's going on in the greater world are stuck in their niches. And there are people who don't care about what we do. And sometimes they succeed and get to the finish line before we do.

Social media has created a content revolution. People are enabled with a template to connect to the Internet and publish worldwide. People are connected to the world like we've never seen before. We're both the scientist in this experiment and the subjects.

Wireless changes everything. South Korea is the most wired country in the world, with 80 percent of its households connected. The U.S. is not in the top five.

Mobile is the primary access to the Internet for many. 75% of the world population has access to a mobile phone. There are now more than 7 billion people on the planet, which means more than 5 billion have access to mobile phones (and the Internet). In 5 days, the world adds more than a million people. Averaging 150,000 deaths per day, the world population grows by 84,000 people per day.

Netflix video-on-demand supports 837 different mobile device configurations. The technical communication industry's mantra of write once, use everywhere is how they did it.

107.4 million tablets will be sold in 2012.

As devices get smaller, we see fewer page views on the web. The smaller the content on the screen, the more frequent tap errors and accidental activations. Users are more successful when using sites optimized for mobile. Repurposed designs for larger screen sizes work terribly on smaller screens.

20% of all books sold this year are eBooks. Readers prefer to buy eBooks instead of borrow them. Corporate publishing is the new black; eBooks, apps, and the mobile web are the new products.

HTML5 is a specification, not a standard, but it's not supposed to be complete until 2022. We're not waiting; we have to adopt it now.

Exploring the World of Content Reuse

Mark Lewis talked about "Supporting the Business Plan."

It starts with reasons to move to

XML. Translation is really the number one reason. When content is in proprietary software, it's more difficult for translators because they have to have that software. There's no formatting in XML. And you can take advantage of translation memory systems.

The savings on translation alone can be enough reason for a company to move its content to XML. It can eliminate duplicate content and enables content reuse. As reuse increases, the cost of documentation decreases.

These metrics help define the business case for adopting an XML-based methodology.

For example, you might find that the desktop publishing cost of page layout is 0.1 hours per page. If you can eliminate that, that could account for a significant percentage of your time, which means savings.

On the flip side of the coin, if you're able to reuse content, the time to produce your documentation can decrease, which will reduce costs and can also reduce time to market. The latter is a goal that management cares about. You can also reduce time to market for translated products.

Traditional metrics look at measurements such as cost per page and looking at how long it takes to create different types of topics, such as procedural topics, definition topics, and window and field description topics.

XML-based metrics are different. A DITA task topic comprises several chunks, each its own information type. So you can look at how many times each element occurs. For example, you might find you average 6 steps per procedure. Then estimate how long it takes to develop each element and add them up.

Topic elements can be reused! Sometimes an element might need to be tweaked a little bit, perhaps made a bit more generic, to be reused. And when you reuse elements, you don't have to spend the time developing them, which reduces the cost per topic.

Then again, writing for reuse typically takes additional time. Yet that time is often more than made up for by overall efficiency. And if you can produce more "pages" by reusing elements, what many consider to be a mark of productivity increases.

So you define two types of costs: the cost of reusable content and the cost of unique content. Compare

that to the cost of writing everything from scratch and you find the cost savings.

KPIs and Metrics for Managing Content Development

Bernard Aschwanden opened by noting that metrics are calculated measurements, and have to be planned and devised. They can have value as it pertains to particular projects. You have to consider all parts of a project, even if the parts do apply specifically to the metrics you track.

What to measure: time, cost, resources, productivity, quality, efficiency, customer satisfaction, and and other items you may value.

Some of the benefits from understanding and using metrics include: you can create more accurate project estimates, you can speak clearly, numerically and with authority why a project took longer, you can say "no" to increased project scope, you can present information that is easily consumed by management, and you can estimate the benefits of moving content to a CMS. (For the latter, you can show the business reasons for making your decisions.)

Are your FAQs the same from release to release? If your customers are having the same problems, fix the problems! Fix the software!

To start, you have to review your existing state. You need a baseline. What are your known costs? As you move forward, your metrics become more and more established.

Asset reorganization includes content, processes, people, and tools. If you have people who have specific skillsets, take advantage of that.

Moving to an XML-based content system can drastically reduce your content storage space, and can reduce content production costs as well.

If you need 10 percent of your time to publish to the web and another 10 percent for publishing to PDF, how much can you save by automating the publishing process?

Once you've gotten your estimates, don't touch them. Track the actuals elsewhere, and then you can compare when you are done.

Tomorrow Was Yesterday: Mastering the Future of content Creation

Noz Urbina looked at how we think about time, about progress. The Cray 1 supercomputer in 1976 ran at 80Mhz. They sold 80 at \$5-8 million each. Now, our smartphones

GOING SOCIAL AT LAVA CON

Not only does LavaCon have its own Twitter hashtag, each of the five tracks has its own hashtag as well. Other hashtags will help you track your activities as well.

General conference hashtag: #lavacon

Other relevant hashtags: #contentstrategy #PDX #Portland

Hotel: #HiltonPortland

TRACK SESSION HASHTAGS

Project Metrics and Development Team Management - #lavaMetrics

Content Strategy and Content Management - #lavaContent

User Experience and Multichannel Publishing - #lavaUX

eBooks, New Media and Mobile - #lavaMedia

Case Studies and Roundtable Discussions - #lavaStudies

WHERE ARE THE SLIDES?

Session slides will be online at SlideShare (www.slideshare.net) once sessions are completed. Include the tag "LavaCon" in your search to find this conference's slides.

SPEAKER FEEDBACK

Speaker feedback is online at LavaCon. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/lavacon2012>, select the session you attended and want to evaluate—they are ordered by speaker name—enter your rating and add your comments, and click Done.

FOLLOW LAVACon

TechWhirl is reporting from this year's LavaCon. Read their updates at <http://techwhirl.com/focus/lavacon/>.

And I'll be live blogging from many sessions on <http://lavacon2012.blogspot.com/>.



Credits

Writer, photographer, production: Chuck Martin
Editor: Char James-Tanny

work at 1Ghz. The cutting edge never happens! it's an ongoing thing.

Maps are only as good as their data overlays.

We're now using multiple screens to get stuff done. Most is still sequential: start on one screen (phone), finish on another (desktop). Moving toward being able to work on different screen simultaneously.

The way we're perceiving information is changing from two-dimensional to three-dimensional, so we must now think of creating content like a database. If we change how we fundamentally see information, search, reuse, and more looks different.

Giving Customers What They Want: Integrating Content in the Customer Lifecycle

Noz Urbina found himself with a back-to-back talk, this one with more of a tech comm focus.

Tech comm isn't about manuals, single sourcing, or even content. It's about transferring contextually relevant product knowledge to staff and customers. This increases customer satisfaction and increases business.

The notion is customer lifecycle. A lifecycle is both cyclical and evolutionary, not linear.

Rather than have one large system, you can have a web content management system, component content management system, and document management system, as long as they all communicate with each other. All provide metadata, search, etc. If you call things consistently within all 3 systems, they can integrate.

The benefits of embedded user assistance: It doesn't break user context; it's within the experience. It's fast. It's a learning tool. That learning is both for the user and for you. Analytics can tell you what content users use.

How do you get where you want to go? Map the customer journey. Map the content model and assets to that journey. Do a gap analysis. Build a modular model to bridge the gaps. And then build a cross-silo strategy to fill the information architecture and taxonomy standards and process.

Content strategy has to be driven by user and task analysis.

You can't assume that the content being dynamically delivered is good. You still have to check, to make sure the content is accurate at the point of use.

When Worlds Collide: Improving the User Experience by Applying Progressive Information Disclosure

Andrea Ames points out that Jakob Nielsen has been talking about

this notion for years: "Progressive disclosure is the best tool so far: show people the basics first, and once they understand that, allow them to get the expert features. But don't show everything all at once or you will only confuse people and they will waste endless time messing with features they don't need yet."

For information, provide just what they need where they need it.

It assumes a "competent" to "proficient" performer, not novice, not expert. If you put text in the UI aimed at novices, that text will be there "forever."

You reduce complexity by revealing only the essentials for a current task in the UI, and then offer more as users advance through tasks.

Layers build on each other. Progressive disclosure reveals information in an ordered manner. It provides only the necessary details for the context. It provides information that's necessary, not to simply create information to cover everything. We are fixated as an industry to writing information for everything. Don't repeat information. For example, don't repeat labels in hover text.

Doing this right means a fundamental understanding of user goals. That's hard work.

The process of helping users reach their goals is "a guided journey, not a scavenger hunt."

Design for the absolute best experience. Then when you have to negotiate what you can do, you'll know what the most important things are.

Job #1 is the user task. So we should be writing user task-oriented content.

At IBM, progressive disclosure doesn't begin with writing. It's first about making the UI clear. And if it's going to take a lot of words to describe it, it's probably wrong.

Customers never read documentation. Reading documentation is never a business goal.

Goal: think more, write less.

DUH! x 3: Maintaining Accessibility While Multichannel Publishing

Char James-Tanny opened by giving some statistics about disability, different types, how they can affect people of different ages.

It's important to understand that there are many types of disabilities, which include vision, hearing, speech, physical/motor, learning, psychiatric, cognitive, and intellectual.

But it isn't always possible to accommodate 100 percent of the people 100 percent of the time.

Many disabilities aren't visible. Many people with disabilities are online, for example in gaming. And

no one knows they are disabled.

More benefits than just making documents and web pages accessible. It makes your content more searchable,

30 percent of mobile searches are for restaurants. And what do I want when I'm searching? Your location, your hours, and your menu.

Everything that is good for localization and translation is good for accessibility.

Interestingly, Char talked about things such as formatting of content. But typographic consistency and alignment is important because dyslexics can have trouble reading otherwise.

Contrast is important. But the best contrast, black on white, can cause some people trouble when reading online. One solution is to make the background off-white. For example, instead of #FFF, try #FFD or #FFC.

If you want to test for colors, print in grayscale and see how much contrast you have. If you can't see the fine details, you need to change the color contrast.

Why are headings important? Screen readers can pull out headings. (Also why you don't want to use more than one h1 per page.)

And Then Everything Changed

Adobe Evangelist Tom Aldous began by going through a long history of content development, from drawings on cave walls to more "mobile" methods of stone tablets. There then came a time where people began to understand that if you control the information, you control the population.

Once we began to use paper, more people could communicate. This was dangerous because it was harder to control communication. The printing press added speed, reduced costs, and made information very easy to disseminate and difficult to control.

As we progress, people will want to hold you back. Don't let them do it. Question everything. Where we're moving, HTML5, DITA, content management, it's all good for the enterprise.

