

TOP O' THE MORNING

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

- 7:30–8:00am: Continental breakfast, Grand Ballroom
- 8:00–11:30am: 5 tracks of breakout sessions (Note: many in new rooms)
- 11:45am–12:45pm: Ann Rockley closing keynote, Grand Ballroom

SESSION LOCATIONS

With the exception of the sessions in the Grand Ballroom, the locations of breakout sessions this morning have changed.

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

- Project Metrics and Development Team Management: Forum Suite
- Content Strategy and Content Management: Parlor ABC
- Case Studies and Roundtable Discussions: Directors Suite
- User Experience and Multichannel Publishing: Council Suite
- eBooks, New Media, and Mobile Devices: Grand Ballroom

The Grand Ballroom and Parlor ABC are on the Ballroom level, two floors below the lobby. The Suites are on the 3rd floor.



LavaCon 2012
The LavaCon Conference on Digital Media and Content Strategies

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LavaCon Wraps with Rockley Keynote Today

by Chuck Martin

The 10th LavaCon Conference on Digital Media and Content Strategies ends two and a half days stuffed full of information today with a keynote by Ann Rockley that brings all we've been learning to a close with a presentation on content strategy in a mobile world.

The second full day began with a keynote panel that included Tom Aldous, David Ashton, and Nolwenn Kerzreho talking about the content revolution and finished with SDL hosting its Globalization Challenge.

Among the panel members' assertions:

- Smartphones making it possible to access information everywhere, with the ability to deliver dynamic content, is the world's most innovative change.
- XML is still needed today.
- Translation, cultural differences, and the uniqueness of audiences are the challenges to creating content today.
- Opportunity hides in minimalism and terminology management.

- Value comes from eliminating waste and saving time, and reuse is the biggest time saver.

At the end of the day, Char James-Tanny and Sarah O'Keefe successfully defended their Globalization Title in front of an audience high on donuts from the donut trees.

Today is "just" a half day, but that half day is just as full as the past two full days. All five conference tracks offer three breakout sessions each, followed by Rockley's keynote.

Note, however, that the rooms for most of the breakout sessions have moved today. Your conference program and other sections of this newsletter detail the new digs.

As the conference comes to a close, LavaCon would like to thank the Hilton for hosting, all its sponsors for their support, the speakers for offering their time and knowledge, and all of you for attending. We hope you have a safe trip home and we look forward to seeing you next year.



Conference Notes

Session locations have moved. Several breakout sessions are now on the third floor in the Forum, Directors, and Council Suites. Parlor ABC is next to the Grand Ballroom.

If you've been using the EventBoard app, it's been updated with the correct Tuesday rooms. Tap Refresh to see the updates.

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

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 closes at the end of the conference today. 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. 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!

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.

SDL

Share a tip, factoid, ROI data point or best practice about DITA, product content, or customer experience and drop the card at the SDL booth before the conference closes. You could win a mobile hi-fidelity speaker.

Doc-To-Help

The Doc-To-Help team is giving away a free license of Doc-To-Help Enterprise 2012. Stop by the booth and drop off your business card (or give us your name and e-mail address) and you will be entered to win. The software will be delivered electronically, with licensing and download information included in the e-mail confirmation.



LavaCon in the Twitterverse

A random sampling of tweets with the #LavaCon hashtag:

@cherimullins @mbakeranalecta : Every page is page 1. People arrive there from search and links. Does content work as page 1? #LavaCon
@sk_pierce "I guarantee if you write an eBook, someone in Africa will download it" @DmitriRagano on global emergence of eBooks #lavacon #PDX

@digistrategist Most of us practice "FrAgile" where we throw requirements out the door and everyone just hurries. #lavacon

@dfarb I'm trying to get to sleep over here (UK) but I can't because of all these interesting tweets from #Lavacon...

@Kristil To sell execs on exposing technical content: get Sales on your side, & consider conditional content for various audiences. @roebot #LavaCon

@CharJTF It's the #lavacon doughnut tree! <http://yfrog.com/oc4a-9rwj>

@tmmJill Good concept, findability is more important than searchability. Don't write 4 search, write 4 people and allow them to find it! #LavaCon

LavaCon Promotional Video

The Doc-To-Help team is filming a promotional video for LavaCon 2013. It is intended to show future attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors what a great conference LavaCon is to attend. It's not affiliated with Doc-To-Help, we're just helping Jack out. If you've enjoyed your time at the show, stop by and tell us all about it!

Please Silence
Your Cell Phone



Session Summaries

A recap of selected sessions from yesterday's LavaCon.

Day Two of LavaCon featured an opening panel discussion, a closing keynote, and five tracks of four sessions each. Highlights and random notes from the keynotes and selected sessions are presented below.

Keynote Panel Discussion: The Content Revolution

Monday's LavaCon opened with a panel discussion with Tom Aldous, Adobe Systems; David Ashton, SDL; and Nolwenn Kerzreho, Componize, moderated by Scott Abel, The Content Wrangler.

Scott suggested today is a "time of recognition." Customers are in control. Everyone is a publisher.

Four out of five "traditional" publishers produce eBooks. And the majority publish more than half their catalog as eBooks.

But they still think they sell books. They don't. They sell content and a content experience, because they still employ a print-based editorial, publishing, and marketing workflow. It's not scalable. They need to learn from us, to learn how to do things better, faster, quicker.

The first question that the panel tackled was the most important innovative change is and why. Tom said that smartphones have made it possible for many people to access information. It's an opportunity for us to communicate with them. David agreed, adding that it gives us the ability to deliver dynamic content.

Next, Scott asked if structured XML content is still needed today. David said yes, reiterating his dynamic content theme, noting that technology hasn't been able to meet the need. Nolwenn noted that structured XML content can increase modularity and decrease time to market.

Next, panelists were asked for advice on how to face the challenges of creating content in a new global economy. David noted that everyone who you want to deliver content to is unique. And that's what DITA and structured content is for. Nolwenn asserted that translation of content brings you new customers. Tom recognized that it's not about just translation, but about cultural differences, and that rich media can bridge that gap. Nolwenn piped in that you have to be very careful when using images.

Turning to content production, where is opportunity hiding? Nolwenn talked about the concept of minimalism, where you can save money in translation. Tom agreed: it's low-hanging fruit. Terminology management is also critical.

Value comes from eliminating waste and saving time. What are important time savers? Reuse was the theme in answers here.

Rethinking Content From Paper to Tablets, Mobile Screens and eBooks

Adobe's Maxwell Hoffmann began by going through a bit of writing and content history, noting that early writing forms were on tablets. And in a way, we've come full circle. But the question is, will the information on modern-day tablets last 3000 years like the engravings on cuneiform tablets now in museums.

We don't always catch on to how things have changed. Mobile phones have surpassed landlines. Yet, for example, political phone polls call only landlines. What are they missing? Who are they missing?

Any time you can get something cheaper, quicker, faster, they will ditch quality in a heartbeat.

A re-imagining of computing devices. "Then," we had desktops and notebooks. "Now," we have tablets and smartphones. Tablets are terrific devices for delivery, but don't think they will take over for content creation, at least for now.

There's a concept of "leapfrogging." Areas of the world that have no electricity, no cable or Internet connectivity, yet they have cell phones and smart phones. They will order from Amazon on their smartphone and then go home to their kerosene-lit room.

The landscape has changed for content creators. Readers have less time and have shorter attention spans. They expect the latest and greatest version of your content, and they want it ASAP. There are fewer writers and artists. We have less time from shorter delivery schedules--and the workload is 2-3 times more than just a few years ago. There's an increased pressure to serve a global audience. We have "fat" legacy content and less space for it.

How did we as technical communicators become a "page-based" lens for content? Page size or laptop/computer screens have long been the "lens" through which we visualized delivered content. And we write words to fill up those spaces.

How do you write content that's small enough for small screens? Use alternate templates that simulate screen and font sizes.

Managing Content Development Projects in Agile-Like Environments

Bonni Graham Gonzalez began noting that agile is all about letting

people be good at what they do.

There's a definition of "agile" and there's how everyone does "agile." It's a group of software development methods based on iterative and incremental methods where requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing and cross-functional teams.

Extreme programming and rapid application development are variations on agile. Then there's "FrAgile," where we've thrown requirements out the window and everyone just hurries a lot. Also known as "kill the developers."

Where does content fit in? Ideally, in from the beginning. Should be in stand-ups and scrums.

The advantages of agile is that it's inherently iterative. Things change so quickly so we know the content we create first won't be what we end up with. It can be easier to create embedded documentation (if you're in the early user story creation stages).

So many error messages admonish the user instead of trying to help the user.

There are challenges. You MUST practice minimalism. You must start layering and prioritizing of information.

When people go to any type of content, they have questions. But they don't wake up in the morning thinking that they want to read documentation. Those questions boil down to four key elements. What is it? How do I do it? Why do I care? What just happened? These questions give the opportunity to prioritize content creation based on what you know about your users. You can add more layers later. They don't have to be all in place all at once.

If users understand why they are invested with a feature, they will muddle through.

Buyers are dumber than we think they are, but users are smarter.

Other challenges include not often being able to "touch" working software before we get started, at least for the first few sprints. And team burnout. If you're working in an environment that you need downtime between releases, it's exhausting.

It's not necessarily bad for docs to not start until the second sprint.

We're all making agile up as we go along. Even the teams who do it really, really well.

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/>.

Why Can't We Just Use Word?

Most of the sessions at LavaCon tend to be fairly vendor-agnostic, but "Why Can't We Just Use Word?" bucked the trend. Donald Smith of Cromwell Solutions demonstrated his company's RocketSled plug-in for Microsoft Word. This product allows and enforces XML structures, a use that frankly one doesn't usually associate with Word, and yet allows more of a WYSIWYG editing experience for users.

It's not exactly the same as editing in Word - for example, users must select from allowed elements when they press the Enter key. But using RocketSled Designer, one can associate already-defined MS Word styles with XML elements. Because these styles are kept with Word, you can save as .docx or print documents through the usual Word interfaces.

Participants asked about how it handles various features of MS Word, such as change tracking, copy & paste, and inserting images. Change tracking works on the content only, not the attributes or elements. Copy and paste works, but does not maintain styles and formatting - these are stripped for a text-only paste. (Which isn't always a bad thing!) And images may not be cut & pasted, but inserted. Images inserted may have a relative or absolute path.

Donald also gave a nice demo and explanation (especially for those of us who are a bit newer to XML) of CALS tables vs. semantic tables, and how their product supports both.

Although it would mean some training for those users in organizations that do not want to give up the comfort and familiarity of MS Word, this could be a really good solution to explore for content strategists who need to implement a less overtly technical solution for creating documents in XML. - contributed by Julianne Pohl

Effective Tablet Strategies for the Mobile User Experience

Kenneth Davila took on this subject, substituting for the scheduled speaker who was feeling a bit under the weather.

To start, you have to decide if you want to do native development or responsive design. Native development leverages device and OS specific features. Responsive design leverages current architecture.

User experience during development can be broken into three layers. These layers correspond to the components of web development: HTML, CSS, and JavaScript.

Rich content is a key term when talking about the web. You want to have a "rich share." So a UI design is driven by the goals of the site, is

influenced by the content strategy, is defined by the system architecture, and is developed in context of the target audience and device.

Your site's content acts as a road map for users. Keep language, styles consistent. Don't break the Back button.

Influence Without Authority: Applying the Art of Motivation

Andrea Ames subtitled this presentation "mind tricks of the Jedi masters." It's about how to affect cultural change at your company. This should be a half day workshop, but have to cram it all into 60 minutes.

You can be introverted and be influential.

This (influence) is the piece that makes progressive design work.

Andrea creates beautiful architectures with stubs. If the writers don't think it's a great idea, well, there are a lot of passive-aggressive writers out there.

Lots of people perceive that influence is about personality, but don't think influence has anything to do with that. Influence is almost entirely about credibility and trust. A little bit of follow up and follow through and commitment and responsibility makes a huge influence on people.

But it's really, really, really hard.

Figuring out how to deliver what you say you will or to negotiate very early is critical. It's not something that we're used to. It's not something you're born with, but it is something you can improve.

It is part of your attitude, how you interact with people, how you present yourself.

Influencing is not a zero-sum game. You don't have to influence everyone, but you do have to influence the important people.

We have a leg up: we are good communicators.

Manage up is an important skill. Being able to manage and lead in all directions is important.

It's the 75-25 rule. Andrea likes to be the one who brings the 75 to the relationship.

There are critical components of respect. You have to treat people with respect (even if you think they are crazy). If you want people to believe that you are a trustworthy person, you have to show that to them. You may have to make some assumptions. But in some way or another, others are worthy of respect. One of the best ways to get the respect of others is to be the first to admit a mistake.

One of the most important factors to be successful is to get a mentor. Someone you can trust, someone you can bounce stuff off of, someone

who can give you good advice is really, really important.

Always overcredit other people. Err on the side of being transparent. When you are trustworthy, people will share with you. And take a little risk: share with others. Then evaluate. Be conscious about how you build that rapport with others.

Understand the escalation path for all of your relationships.

If you do not have a good relationship with your manager, you have to figure out how. Otherwise, you might have to start polishing your resume.

The most important thing is to figure out how to lead yourself. Figure out what makes you tick, how to control your behavior. Focus on you, and it will positively impact the relationships you have with others.

Galileo's Dilemma: Satisfying Information Consumers in the Post-PC Era

SDL's Andrew Thomas gave Tuesday's closing keynote. The idea of living in a post-PC world is driving change. What does "post-PC world" mean?

It means channel explosion. Your customers get information not just from you, but from social media sites and more, and you have very little control over that. The idea is to not fight that, but to embrace that.

As soon as you add language and locale to that explosion, you've multiplied the challenge.

Your customer is the center of their own universe, not your company or your product.

Good content makes a really good impression. Good content is media rich, it's contextual, and it's meaningful.

Good content provides better support than people. Self-service is growing. A growing number of people want to do it themselves. They don't want to interact with a real person. They expect that the information they are looking for will be available.

Content reuse enables efficiency, consistency, and quality. If you find a chunk of content that's of poor quality, you have to fix it only once.

If your content sharing model involves copy and paste, you have failed.

If your customer can't find the content they need from you, they will go somewhere else.

Content has to be compelling, useful, and easy to create. The latter is where XML has fallen down: it may make sense to a tech writer, but not to anyone else.

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Credits

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

