ISSUE NO. 3

LavaConnection

The Daily Newsletter of the LavaCon Content Strategy Conference



The llamas have arrived at LavaCon, bringing smiles to all.

(Content) Trust Emerges as Major LavaCon Theme

By Chuck Martin

Two years ago, AI exploded onto the content development scene and was a major theme at the 2024 LavaCon. Last year, AI was no less present, but a related them arose that weaved its way into conference presentations and discussions: governance. This year, a new theme, related to governance, is emerging as prevalent: trust.

For many years, the content that technical writers and related content developers published was the trusted source of truth about products and services. But in this AI world, the documentation we write is just one source that AI uses to generate answers to queries. So how do people who use AI to get answers trust the answers they get?

Right out of the gate on Tuesday, in the third of the opening TED-style talks, Jason Kaufman told us that curating truth is now part of our responsibility. Because when truth lags, trust dies.

Trey Smith started the day by saying the seismic shift in the content industry today isn't the technology shift, but how people are handling the technology shifts. And then Keith Boyd said that content is still king, that agents draft, check, localize, and monitor at scale, but humans, judge, decide, and own the outcome, the parts that matter most, why the content should exist, whether it's kind and empathetic, and what happens when it's wrong.

And then folks were off to the morning breakout sessions, some of which touched on the theme of trust, and were interesting and informative but also just ultimately an interlude to llamas. Because at lunchtime on Tuesdays, LavaCon becomes LlamaCon, this year, sponsored by Promptless.

The afternoon sessions touched on subjects as varied as leveraging challenging employees, using agentic AI to reduce costs, and a content quality model. The closing session touched on responsible AI, AI culture, and guessing AI engines.

The day ended with another annual social event, the annual karaoke night, held in the hotel's CJ's lounge and sponsored by Heretto and Markup AI. This is never not a great opportunity to just hang out with your peers and you old and new friends.

Today wraps up LavaCon 2026. It's just a half day of breakout sessions, but you won't want to miss the closing panel. While some will stay for the post-conference workshops, folks will start making their way home, and hopefully applying what they learned the past few days. And making plans to meet again next year in Denver.



The long line for llamas.

Schedule Changes: Wednesday

The following change occurred to today's schedule:

- 10:30, Mecklenburg 1: The standing-room session **Getting Content Right at the Source Saves Time and Localization Costs** by Michael Mannhardt, President, Congree Language Technologies will be repeated today.

Hello Denver!

After a wonderful week in Charlotte, the next LavaCon will be in Denver, CO, on October 3–6, 2027, celebrating its 25th anniversary. See you there!

Notes & Tips

We're on Slack!
LavaCon has it's own workspace on Slack. The URL is lavacon.slack.com. It will remain active after the conference ends so you can continue discussions and keep connected.

Chocolate Exchange
The chocolate exchange table—y'all brought some to share, right?—is table #30, along the back wall of the Symphony Ballroom.

Conference Feedback
LavaCon evolves and improves based on your feedback. Scan the QR code in the front of your program to send conference feedback to Jack and the staff.

Conference Materials
Shortly after LavaCon ends, you will receive a link where you access all of the conference presentation slides and recordings. Look for it arriving in your Inbox soon.

BOGO 2027
On the back cover of your program is a QR code where you can not only sign up for the 2027 LavaCon in Denver, you can get buy one, get one registration and bring a colleague for free.

Wednesday At-a-Glance

A view of today's breakout schedule, with late changes in **bold.**

Room	Mecklenburg 1	Meckenburg 2	Carolina Ballroom	Mecklenburg 3	Governors 1, 2, 3, 4
Track	**Strategy and Ops**	**Content Authoring**	**Main Stage**	**Case Studies**	**Tools and Technology**
8:30	Your CMS Isn't Broken, Your Content Model Is. AI Makes It Worse	An Alchemist's Guide to Modern Tech Comms	The Human-In-The-Loop Playbook: Cuing Costs Without Cutting People	Findable, Readable, Unstoppable: Small Edits for Big Gains (No AI Required!)	The Real Reason AI Fails in Operations (and the Systems That Fix It)
9:30	Structure Starts with Trust: Building Cultures That Support Content Systems	Data Design is Content Design: Building a Scalable Taxonomy	Zero to Hero—Flipping the Script on Content	How to Resign from the "Cleanup Crew" and Become an Upstream Design Force	DITA 201: How to Optimize Conditional Text and Reuse
10:30	**Getting Content Right at the Source Saves Time and Localization Costs**		From Shadow to Servant: How Visa/ Pismo Tamed the AI Beast		Show Me the Agents! Decision Framework for Content Operations AI (Speaking Remotely)

Session Summaries

Brief summaries from some of yesterday's sessions.

From Long Topics to Microcontent: The Strategic Shift that Makes Your DITA AI-Ready

Rob Hanna says that canon is what we use to establish trust. Everything has to trace back to canon, and canon is our documents. The role of the document is more important than ever.

Every claim needs to be traced back to evidence. Without this, our content is not verifiable. The verification surface needs to be reproducible, human-readable, and version-specific.

How ServiceNow Used Agentic AI to Reduce Costs and Improve Customer Experience

Theresa Daudier says that AI is not optional at ServiceNow, and they are learning how it works by using it themselves.

What we were doing felt like a hamster wheel that we could not get off of. Our publishing and review cycle was expensive, slow, and demoralizing. We asked: How can AI ease the pain?

Approached as a way to attach to existing workflows. We knew AI does not replace people. We want it for what it's intended, like a control tower to do tedious work.

Delightful Documentation? Improving Documentation Quality with the Kano Model

Yoel Strimling says that quality is hard to define. Many definitions of documentation quality are vague and hard to measure.

A proper definition of documentation quality must be for the reader's point of view, must have solid empirical backing, must be clear and unequivocal, and must cover all possible aspects of "quality," both objective and subjective.

Information quality has 4 categories: intrinsic, representational, contextual, and accessible. Each has multiple dimensions. Kano model of customer satisfaction: has two axes: customer satisfaction, from frustrated to delighted, and functionality, from none to best.



Poetry Corner

THE FIRST THING I DID AT LAVACON WAS WRITE A POEM

Not a `<keyref>`.
Not a DITA subtype.
Not even a taxonomy of
Dum Dum lollipops.

No one here knows that I'm
better at sorting legos than
building,
but only when I remember that
I'm color blind.

If I don't see the colors,
then every piece of candy
is a surprise, even if the
lights flicker when I'm think-
ing.

Writing a poem is like riding
a bike.
Shifting gears only works
if you're moving.

So this LavaCon is
not for parsing words like
lettuce
or feeding stacks of documen-
tation
into a rumbling wood chipper.

It's leaving the mystery pop
unwrapped in my pocket,
knowing that some day
I'll never know what's inside.

REFLECTION

The heavens, pure gold.
Still, yet so alive.
Know not that they are old,
Nor that those beneath it
thrive.

Often forgotten until seen.
Dawn and dusk, we do
awaken.
Reflective, vast, serene.
Not realized until it's taken.

I beg you, pause from time
to time,
And fill your soul with calm
and still.
For our hearts are fickle and
do not last,
When they're too fixed on
their own past.

Sponsor Spotlight

Gold Sponsors

Localize is an AI-powered, no-code localization management platform.

ProSpring Technical Staffing is where you go if you have a job opening or need a job.

RWS builds AI solutions.

Ryffine helps helps technical communicators build modern infrastructures.

Xemma offers tools and services for knowledge management practitioners.

Silver Sponsors

C-Rex works on Information Engineering problems.

Zenious helps you build product education.

DCL transforms legacy content into structured data.

Metapercept is the industry's first AI-native documentation consultancy.

Kinetic Information Association is a professional home and a credential for the people who structure knowledge.

Partners

Nutton is a conference for content designers.

Multilingual is an magazine for cross-cultural communication

TechSmith empowers people to create remarkable videos and images.

TechWhir-L is an online resource for technical communicators.

Write the Docs is a global community of people who care about documentation.