A note from Joe

Welcome to Seattle.

We at WinWriters have been working steadily since the end of last year's conference to provide you with the best possible learning and networking experience. The only conferences we produce are related to Help development and hopefully that will be evident this week in what we believe is an outstanding conference program.

I've been involved with Technical Communication for seventeen years and it is more exciting than ever. The opportunities in software user assistance continue to grow as evidenced by the 1,100 professionals in attendance. Your fellow participants represent 42 U.S. states and eighteen countries. The large number of exhibitors (36!) also reflects the strength of the Help community.

So enjoy the week and please let us know of anything that will help make your stay with us more enjoyable.

Joe Welinske
WinWriters

Biggest Help Conference ever opens today

by Chuck Martin

Welcome to Seattle!

And welcome to the 7th Annuals WinWriters Online Help Conference, the largest ever. The conference is once again sold out: 1100 attendees will learn about all aspects of online Help development from dozens of experts in the field.

In addition to more attendees and more speakers, the conference uses more rooms here at the Sheraton than ever. To help you get the fullest experience here, this newsletter will daily provide you with the latest information about conference events, itinerary changes, and Help-community news.

You received in your conference package a final program. The centerfold contains the entire conference schedule at a glance. Check the back page of the Daily Sheet each morning for last-minute changes to that schedule.

You'll see a lot of people in medium-dark blue button-down shirts with the conference logo. All these people are working hard to make your conference experience the best that it can be. Still, problems can arise, and the conference staff will do their best to solve any problems quickly. Many are also volunteers; please be sure to thank them before you leave.

Watching one of Sunday's vendor-sponsored events.

Of course, a conference such as this one is about more than attending sessions all day and learning lots and lots of new things. That's why there are a number of conference-related events (some of which are sponsored by Help vendors) that you can also attend. Plus, there's simply the opportunity to meet your fellow Help authors.

Seattle offers much more than the premier Help Conference. When you have the time, you can take in great food (including fresh seafood, great entertainment, and great weather (that is, if you enjoy clouds and rain). For example, Pike Place Market is just a 6-block walk from the hotel's front door (toward the water), where you can either dine on fresh seafood or buy some to ship home.

Don't forget to stop by the vendor exhibition today. You can talk with the folks that develop all sorts of tools for online Help development. Several vendors are also sponsoring special events during the conference (check the newsletter calendar for details).

So, from all of us at the WinWriters Online Help Conference, may your stay here be both enjoyable and productive. And we hope to see you next year as well.

Credits

Newsletter editor .... Chuck Martin
Contributors .... Joe Welinske

New information management company

Comtech Services and The Rockley Group are pleased to announce their new partnership: SingleSource Associates, dedicated to improving the way you create and manage your information products.

Using a combined total of 30 years of experience in designing documentation solutions, JoAnn Hackos and Ann Rockley have developed The SingleSource Solution?, a 10-step methodology for writing information once and using it many times-on multiple platforms, in multiple media, for similar products, in multiple

Companies show new technology at work

Visio Corporation, Corel, and WexTech Systems combined on Sunday to show off Help solutions featuring WexTech's AnswerWorks and HelpXtender. The free afternoon session demostrated WexTech's latest version or these useful products.

WexTech also produces Doc-To-Help, one of the most popular Help authoring tools.

AnswerWorks is a technology that allows developers and Help authors to add a natural-language interface the their Help systems. With a natural-language interface, users can find information using everyday language. The result is faster, easier, and more efficient access to the information that users need.

HelpXtender adds new ways to extend the idea of context-sensitive Help. Among the product's offerings: Dynamic Help, Tear off Help, and Reminder Note Help.

Presenters from Visio and Corel demonstrated how their companies integrate AnswerWorks into their Help development process. They also showed how AnswerWorks can made the Help systems easier to use and learn.

One topic that could have made this seminar popular for just about anyone: the notion that natural-language capability can offer different UI implementations--it doesn't have to be a paper clip.

Tools and companies, a capsule view

Briefs about a few of the Help tool companies.

Allaire

Allaire Corporation's recently released HomeSite 4.0, the latest version of their award winning HTML editing tool, contains many new upgraded features and benefits. In addition to making it faster for developers to build and manage complex Web sites, HomeSite 4.0 also makes it easier for developers to automate frequently recurring tasks with new user-defined macros and programmable hot keys.

The product also provides a new customizable interface that includes dockable tool bars and support for tag snippets that can either be kept private or shared with a team. To make it easier to edit Web pages that incorporate many Internet technologies, new code editing features have been added including a tag inspector property sheet and customizable color coding for JavaScript, ASP, Perl, SQL and DHTML. A new style editor is also included for editing Cascading Style Sheets.

HomeSite's extensible HTML-based Help system is also a key feature that may be of special interest to WinWriters attendees.

Visit Allaire in booth number 25 at the WinWriters Online Help Conference or contact Allaire at (617) 761-2000, by email at info@allaire.com, or via the web at www.allaire.com.

The Write Stuff

The Write Stuff (TWS) provides full-service technical communications, staffing, and translations. TWS was founded in 1982 and has been providing technical publication and translation services to Seattle businesses; it grew quickly and began supplying businesses with technical publications staff.

We provide talented writers, editors, proofreaders, desk top publishers, translators, and programmer writers. TWS was incorporated in 1988 and purchased in 1993 by company president Barbara McGinn.

TWS focuses on delivering high-quality work and superior service. We build partnerships and work with clients to understand their business processes, products, and markets and thereby provide the best service possible.

Clarity

Clarity Authoring Services Inc. is a team of award-winning writers, graphic designers, instructional designers, multimedia artists, and professional recruiters.

We can help you create printed and online documentation, training materials, and marketing collateral, such as user manuals, WinHelp and HTML-based help systems, multimedia demo disks, CBT, and web-based training systems.

Our professional recruiters can help you find both contract and full-time staff in the technical writing, instructional design, and IT (information technology) fields.

Whether you want to outsource a project or find a temporary or permanent employee, Clarity can provide the right people, at the right time, for the right price!

Stop by our booth on Monday, the conference Help Clinic on Tuesday, or visit our web site after the conference at www.ClarityAuthoring.com.

languages, for different audiences, and so on.

"Until recently, single sourcing has been limited to publishing identical information in multiple media. People wonder how useful this really is, and rightly so in such a context. However," explains Dr. JoAnn Hackos, President of Comtech Services, "the power of single sourcing goes well beyond web publishing. It is an extremely cost-effective technique that lowers the costs of information by eliminating redundancy, increasing consistency, and improving reliability. The mission of SingleSource Associates is to set the standard for single sourcing strategies and raise awareness of its benefits and power in the information-development industry."

SingleSource Associates offers a variety of services to companies interested in single sourcing, from determining if single sourcing is a viable option for their specific situation, to designing the required information architecture, to implementing an entire single-sourced solution. For more information about these services, contact SingleSource Associates at (905) 415-7752 or (303) 232-7586 or through email at ann.rockley@singlesourcing.com or joann.hackos@singlesourcing.com.

JoAnn Hackos will be announcing this new venture today, from noon to 1:15pm in the Aspen room.

Help world-wide

As evidenced by the roster of people here, the WinWriters Online Help Conference is truly an international affair.

In addition to the United States and Canada, this year's conference includes representatives from the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Republic of China, the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Israel, Ireland, Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, Austria, Australia, and New Zealand.

Online Help development has become a world-wide effort.

Welcome!

There are plenty of opportunities to socialize with fellow Help authors.

Sunday pre-conference session summaries

Web Design Workshop, Dave Farkas, Jean Farkas

About 30 people heard Dave and Jean explain that while there are 19 techniques of web design, they boil down to a simple model with 4 components, including orientation, navigation, and global view.

They noted the difference between slow loading web pages (consequence of inadvertent design) and slow starting web pages (consequence of deliberate design)

Navigational techniques include making links visible, links needing to reveal destination, linking to where users want to go, grouping and organizing links by functionality, employing preview devices, not disabling color changes for visited links, and being careful about timed links or times displays (user should always have control).

Interface Design from Requirements to Prototype, Whitney Quesenbery

Nearly 50 people got a real hands-on session from Whitney as she led them through early development of the interface of an intranet.

She stressed that these early development efforts include understanding the roles of the eventual users and how the information contained in the intranet will be used.

Early stages are less rigid; it makes them easier to change--and more comfortable. Yet they convey important functionality.

To understand user needs and to develop user scenarios, you have to go out and talk to end users!

Documentation Databases: Developing a Single-Source Strategy, JoAnn Hackos, Ann Rockley

More than 50 people turned out in the afternoon to hear about strategies for single-sourcing information, an increasingly important topic as information is developed for more and more platforms, products, and audiences.

JoAnn Hackos talks on a single-sourcing strategy.

JoAnn stressed the importance of not worrying about WYSIWYG working: the need to use the same tool for information input and output. In an information architecture that separate input from output, one issue is how to label the pieces of information so that they can be found again.

Using a database approach, you can write information just once, set conditions and variables, and produce unique information for many different products.

Design a Wizard (And Help Users Make Magic, Saul Carliner

About 50 people listened and practiced strategies for wizard design. Wizards, those step-by-step user tools, are commonly used in application training, service & customer support, and manufacturing training.

Among the things to consider when designing a wizard: do one step at a time, use plain language (not necessarily plain English [or whatever other language], because you might have to teach application-specific terminology as part of the task), cover up as little of the software as needed, and use a terse, direct writing style.

Saul noted that "intuitive" is not from the designers' perspective, but from the users' perspective.

Updated schedule (changes are shaded gray)

	Grand A/B	Grand C	East	Metropolitan	West	Aspen	Cedar
9:00-10:15	The Evolution of Software User Assistance...	Graphics That Describe Procedures and Principles	TOC Composer & Index Designer in RoboHELP Classic	Help from Hell	Exhibition	Programming for Help	Adding Natural Language Capabilities to Help
10:30-11:45	HTML Help Update	(continued)	Making Online Help that Sizzles	Building Documentation into the Interface	Exhibition	Converting Print Documentation into RTF and HTML-based Help	Custom DHTML Help Using Macromedia Dreamweaver
12:00-1:15	Online Information Models Past & Future	Introduction to Screen Design	Mediacl Manual Design: From WinHelp to HTML	Tips on Help Localization	Exhibition	SingleSource Associates announcement	
1:30-2:45	Creating Modular Help Files with RoboHELP	Alternatives to Stepped Presentations...	Introduction to Onine Indexing	Dynamic Linking in WinHelp and HTML Help	Exhibition	JavaHelp Software Update	Programmers Roundtable
3:00-4:15	HTMLHelp vs. WinHelp...	(continued)	Debugginf & Testing Help	25 Tips for Communicating Online	Exhibition	Compiled Help Systems...	Stomping Out Bugs!

Monday listing of events

Winners! Winners! Winners!

The first two winners of the Online Help Conference raffle have been chosen:

Andrea Rosenberg, of Autodesk, Inc., in San Rafael, CA, wins an original-edition copy of Developing Online Help for Windows, by Boggan, Farkas, and Welinske.

Dan Everman, of UUNet Technologies, in Fairfax, VA, wins a one-year subscription to the Online Help Journal.

Winners can pick up their prizes at the Registration and Information table.

More prizewinners will be drawn every day of the conference. You can win two ways: by filling out the session evaluation forms (in your conference package) and by visiting vendors at today's vendor exhibition. Many vendors, including E.S.M.M.I., HyperAct, and SOLUTIONS, will be holding raffles of their own. For example, Sageline Publishing will be raffling a ticket to Tuesday night's award banquet.

Check each day's Daily Hot Sheet for winners.

ForeFront's Dart Gallery

Have some fun and test your skill at ForeFront's Dart Gallery to win a prize. Hit a bullseye and win a free copy of ForeFront's product – ForeHelp 3 ($395 value). Look for your free 'dart-toss' coupon in your WinWriter's attendee bag.

Stay on time

Visit TCPlus at booth 30 and enter our drawing for a desk clock. Just drop your business card into our fishbowl. We'll let you know if you are the big winner!

Vendor Exhibition is Monday only!

If you don't check it out today, you'll miss out.

The Online Help Conference's Vendor Exhibition, featureing nearly three dozen Help development technology vendors, runs through the day Monday only. One of the conference's most popular events, the Vendor Exhibition provides a valuable opportunity to learn about new tool technology, give feedback to the vendors, and find ways to resolve some

of Help development's most tricky issues.

You can also win prizes.

But this event, with vendor booths in the 2nd floor registration area and in the West Ballroom, runs today only, from 8:00am to 7:00pm.

Bookstore open

The conference bookstore, sponsored by Magnolia Books, is open every day of the conference in the Douglas Room. With a wide selection of books on Help-related topics, it's a great place to find some of the information that will help you do your job better.

See page 4 of your Final Program for the entire conference bookstore schedule.

Steve Wexler makes a point.