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Inspiring others with clear illustrations



Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
Summer 2011

Can e-learning replace user guides?

Software that could improve your writing

The future of machine translation

Reviewing web-based content management





Presidential address

An event for you to be proud of

In April 2011, the team running the Technical Communication UK conference started to announce the speakers and their topics. It has been very satisfying to see how far the ISTC has come in reviving an event so that it attracts the best and encourages them to think hard about what to present.

For the first time in many years, we were oversubscribed with good quality proposals by our first submission deadline of mid-April.

Let's Google or Skype

Working for a big company is no guarantee of the presenter's flair or their topic's relevance. But when we are building the programme, it's not a bad place to start and it certainly helps to grab the attention of potential delegates. You know your company has hit the big-time if the name doubles up as a verb. Hoovering has been used for years but we all seem to Google without thinking. And how did we ever manage before we could Skype our boss in Germany, granny in Australia or even our colleague sitting next door? We are not offering hoovering at the conference but Patrick Hofmann of Google and Larissa Flynn of Skype will be there, along with speakers from other big names including Zsuzsa Nagy of ARM, Ultan O'Broin of Oracle, Cerys Willoughby of IBM, Anna Haberkov of Agfa, and Tom Aldous of Adobe.

People with insights worth sharing

The event is not only about big

company names though, and the team has been pleased to see such a strong set of proposals from individual practitioners or academics with compelling and potentially useful topics. We have tried not to repeat too many speakers and have been particularly encouraged that more than half the proposals came from people who will be speaking at this event for the first time. In every case where someone is speaking again, it is with a different topic, matched with excellent feedback from previous presentations or workshops. Here are a few of the confirmed speakers:

- Chris Atherton
- David Farbey
- Ellis Pratt
- Linda and Greg Urban
- Kai Weber
- Torsten Machert
- Ron Blicq
- Jang Graat
- Andrew Lighthart
- Roger Hart

Something's missing

As pleased as the team is with the quality of both the speakers, and in some cases the companies they represent, I am worried that the content on offer from the conference programme, at the time of writing, is not quite living up to the goal we set when we re-launched the ISTC conference in 2009. *"Technical Communication UK is the annual conference that aims to meet the needs of technical communicators, their managers and clients, from every corner of the industry."* What's missing for me is the 'every corner of the industry' bit. Where is aerospace represented? After all, it is one of the biggest employers of technical authors in the UK. Where are heavy engineering or the process industries? Where is retail, government, and scientific equipment? Where are the technical illustrators, the indexers, or the XSLT developers? Where are you?

If you look through the conference programme and then ask yourself *"Where is the content that reflects what I do, that will help me with the challenges I face?"*, I invite you to tell me. Despite being oversubscribed, we have kept one or two gaps available. **C**

Paul Ballard MISTC

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The Institute

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators is the largest UK body for people engaged in technical communication. The ISTC encourages professional development and standards, provides research resources and networking opportunities, and promotes technical communication as a profession.

To join the ISTC, change your grade, or get involved in what we do, contact the ISTC office on +44 (0) 20 8253 4506 or istc@istc.org.uk

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