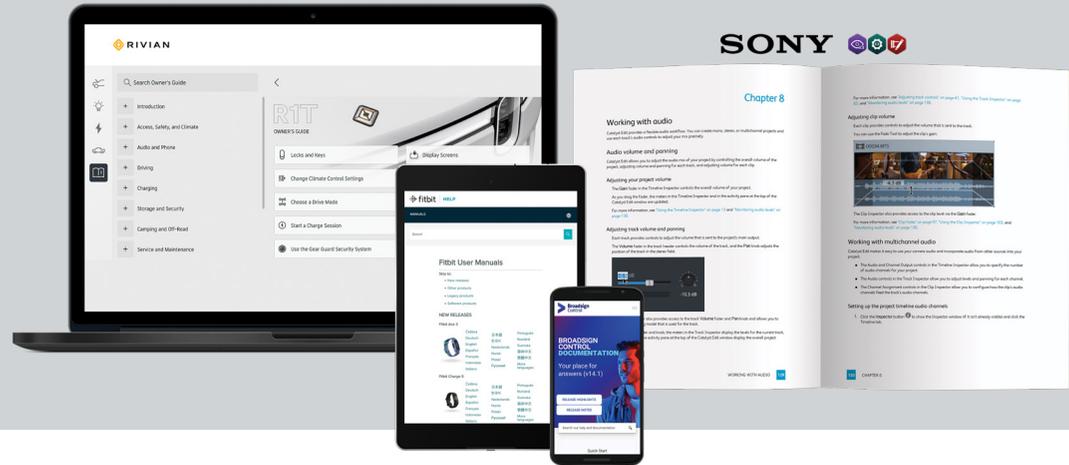


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InfoPlus

Monthly newsletter from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

May 2022

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The ISTC is the largest UK body representing scientific and technical communicators. If you are involved in technical writing, technical illustration, or communicating technical information in other ways, it's the professional association that can support your career. Interested in membership? Find out more [here](#).

This free newsletter is emailed to about 1500 people. As well as ISTC news, *InfoPlus* contains listings and articles of general interest to the profession. Subscribe [here](#).

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From the Editor

I hope you enjoy this edition of *InfoPlus* with the two articles from the ISTC



President, Linda Robins, and some news from the ISTC Business Affiliates. If you have news to let other technical communicators know, please do send it into me in time for the next month's *InfoPlus*.

Michaël.

ISTC News

TCUK news – a date for your diary

We can now confirm that the 2022 event will be held in the last week of September as is usual. The date is Tuesday 27 September. This will be an online event and will include the ISTC AGM and the UKTC Awards (as in the last two years). We will supply more details in the near future.

Looking ahead to 2023

Linda Robins, ISTC President

As I reported previously, the ISTC Council is planning to stage an in-person conference next year. TCUK 2023 will be an in-person event. We will seek support from members interested in helping to make this event happen. More information will be sent out separately; however, you can contact us now via istc@istc.org.uk if you would like to know more.

ISTC meets Jonatan Lundin

Wednesday 11 May 2022, 1–2 pm.

This is why users cannot understand your content

One problem faced by technical communicators today is that users often misunderstand or reject the information they find in user assistance and, consequently, may dismiss the usefulness of the information entirely.

This presentation explores research indicating that users shape a mental model of a product while using it. If the model does not match how a product works, the user will not be able to use the product or understand what they are reading in the manual. You will learn why this is happening and how technical communicators can design information in order to reduce misunderstandings and make it easier for users to shape a relevant mental model. The presentation draws upon sociocultural theory about how individuals learn and develop knowledge to accomplish tasks.



meets

About Jonatan

Jonatan is a senior information architect within the technical communication field, currently employed at ExcOSOFT in Sweden. He received his PhD, which deals with the design of manuals, in 2020 from Mälardalen University. He has more than 25 years of experience working as a technical communicator, mostly from a position as an information architect. As a frequent speaker at technical communication conferences such as SIGDOC, ISDOC, tcworld, NORDIC Techkomm, STVY, FTI, DITA Europe, STC India, etc., he thrives when discussing design challenges with fellow technical communicators.



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ISTC Social Media

ISTC on LinkedIn

There are ISTC groups on LinkedIn for ISTC members which include:

- Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
www.linkedin.com/groups/1858546

England

- Cambridge Technical Communicators
www.linkedin.com/groups/1805651
- ISTC Midlands Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/4835591
- Thames Valley Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/4805266
- ISTC Yorkshire Area Group for Communication Professionals
www.linkedin.com/groups/4662452

Scotland

- Technical Writers (East Scotland ISTC)
www.linkedin.com/groups/13536907

Ireland

- Irish Technical Writers – An ISTC Area Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/3369559



ISTC on Facebook

Our main Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/ISTC.org.uk

® You can join the ISTC group at www.facebook.com/groups/490570891153888 for discussion with fellow professionals.

The TCUK Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/techcommuk/

ISTC on Twitter

Follow us on Twitter at @ISTC_org (www.twitter.com/ISTC_org) for everything ISTC, and specifically, [@TCUK_conf](http://www.twitter.com/TCUK_conf) for everything to do with our annual conference TCUK.

ISTC on Instagram

If you use Instagram, you can follow us there too www.instagram.com/istc_org/.

ISTC on YouTube

You can subscribe to our videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/istctechcomm>.



ISTC Local Area Groups

The ISTC groups offer opportunities for technical communicators to network and share knowledge and expertise. They are open to everyone (you don't need to be an ISTC member) and are free to attend. The groups meet at intervals during the year and hold talks, peer discussions, demonstrations and social evenings. Joining a group is an excellent way to meet like-minded people in your area and get to know fellow specialists.

Current ISTC groups

Name	Leader	Email
Cambridge	Deb Stevens	cambridge_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Midlands	James Bartley	midlands_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Thames Valley	Darren Mitcham	thamesvalley_areagroup@istc.org.uk
East of Scotland	Holli Hamilton	eastscotland_areagroup@istc.org.uk
Yorkshire	Dee Vincent-Day	yorkshire_areagroup@istc.org.uk

If you'd like to attend one of the groups, please get in touch with the leader or email istc@istc.org.uk.

If you're interested in setting up either a new group, contact our Area Groups Manager, Tom Dumic, at areagroupsmanager@istc.org.uk.

Business Affiliate News

Morson Projects' Bristol team double in size as growth continues

As the UK engineering industry booms, there really has been no better time to work in engineering, and no better time to be part of the Morson Projects team.

With a plethora of exciting projects for top UK clients, and engagement as trusted partners on key national programmes, our team are busier than ever.

The last 12 months has seen our Bristol office double in size, with an additional 25 roles currently being recruited for across the South West of England.

Read the full article at https://morson-projects.co.uk/latest_news/morson-projects-bristol-team-double-in-size-as-growth-continues/.

The benefits that upskilling your workforce brings to your company

Lyndsay Mann, Armada Training

The regular feature updates in widely-used Autodesk apps like AutoCAD and Revit, and Adobe's creative software, bring many benefits.

You have access to the latest features, you can do more with your software and work more productively.

However, keeping up with the latest developments presents challenges. As technology advances, it creates skills gaps, and you'll find that once-useful knowledge soon becomes out-of-date and irrelevant.



morson
projects



The answer to these challenges is upskilling.

Read more at www.armada.co.uk/news/benefits-of-upskilling-your-workforce/.

Having made the good decision to invest in a technical author, keep on making good decisions.



John Hargreave, AST Team Member

Having commissioned a user manual written by a trained technical author, it's normal for a company to want to update their manual in-house.

The consideration unsurprisingly is usually cost driven. The hard work is done, you have the manual. Why continue to pay a technical author? Surely anyone can update a user manual? Sue in accounts is always bored, Bob in engineering likes writing!

Read the full article at <https://astauthors.co.uk/howtoupdateusermanual/>.

Blog And Podcasts Roundup

Michael McFarland Campbell

In the Cherryleaf podcast 123 they look at different ways to measure and check the quality of the content that is produced.

www.cherryleaf.com/2022/04/podcast-123-document-quality-checklists/.

The future of communication is visual: here are six ways your team can innovate www.techsmith.com/blog/visual-types-remote-communication/.

Tom Johnson explores 'Docs as Code' and some trends to follow or forget on his I'd rather be writing blog.

<https://idratherbewriting.com/trends/trends-to-follow-or-forget-docs-as-code.html>.

Mignon Fogarty, Grammar Girl answers some listeners' questioners on her podcast 'You know. Doppelganger. Trademarks. Funnily'. Listen at www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/you-know-doppelganger-trademarks-funnily.

Ann Rockley presents 'Sink and swim situation' on the Content Content podcast. <http://media.blubrry.com/contentcontent/edmarsh.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/content-content-podcast-ann-rockley.mp3>.

Have you heard a podcast or read an article of which other technical communicators should be aware? If so, do send them into me at michael@woggle.org.uk.

Changing the way we write scientific papers

Linda Robins, ISTC President

In a recent article in the weekend Guardian magazine 'The Big Idea' feature (2022-04-09), Stuart Ritchie put it more strongly: 'Should we change how we do science?'

He observes that scientific papers have been printed on paper since 1665 when the first scientific journal was published, but now most research is submitted, reviewed, and read online. During the pandemic, social media was often used to publicize research so accelerating a move towards communication online. But the way science is published is largely unchanged; it is usually in a journal – with the reviewers and

editors favouring positive and exciting results and even distorting the view of what happened in studies to attract readers through attention-grabbing headlines.

Scientists are keen to have papers published as professional status is enhanced by the number of papers listed in the CV. The desire to be published can lead to reining in the extremes and streamlining results to suit the publication. The science can be distorted; corrections are slow to be published. If publishing were to move online, data not accessible in traditional publishing could be made available publicly with just a few clicks from the user.

Stuart cites a colleague's means of storage in recycled cornflakes boxes as his traditional repository of scientific journals. Stuart's 'big idea' is to use the internet as a means of publication and storage. With the flexibility of adding 'papers' as mini-websites ('notebooks'), everything in the process could be included—'from data to analysis to write-up'. Details of the statistical code used in the analysis could be provided; corrections could be made readily with full logging for traceability.

The writer acknowledges there would be costs of time and paying for the expertise to design and implement such a solution but

advocates the adoption of the approach. He writes that some fields of science are already using online notebooks instead of journals—'living documents instead of fossils. It's time for the rest of us to follow suit.'

Readers can read Stuart's original article online at www.theguardian.com/books/2022/apr/11/the-big-idea-should-we-get-rid-of-the-scientific-paper.

ISTC Membership

If you are reading *InfoPlus* and aren't already an ISTC Member, why not? Membership of the ISTC demonstrates an interest in and commitment to professional development and the wider technical communication industry. We have opportunities to exchange views and information with other professional communicators.

Technical authors, technical content strategists, information designers, publication managers, documentation managers, information developers, technical illustrators, translators are among the many roles that our members have.

Find out more about joining the ISTC at <https://istc.org.uk/homepage/join-the-istc/how-to-join-the-istc/>.

Examples of writing—good and bad

Linda Robins, ISTC President

Bad

While reviewing some recent notes for an in-house 'Effective writing for developers' course, I was reminded of the power of 'bad' writing to demonstrate the importance of good writing. The Plain English Campaign uses this approach to good effect by inviting examples of jargon-ridden and imprecise published material in their annual 'Golden Bull' and 'Foot in Mouth' awards.

I revisited the website <https://plainenglish.co.uk/> for more examples of past winners. I found a useful feature for jargon on demand: the 'Gobbledygook generator'. The first three as a random selection were:

- ▶ Forward-looking companies invest in parallel digital hardware.
- ▶ This is no time to bite the bullet with our holistic third-generation innovation.
- ▶ At base level, this just comes down to 21st Century administrative matrix approaches.

Good

Of course, it is important to accentuate the positive too. There are useful tools on the website such as plain English guides <https://plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html> and the A-Z of alternative words as an online look-up.

Recognition

The Plain English Campaign runs awards for good writing as well as bad. It is not too soon to start collecting examples for selected awards for both types. Details for entry are given on their website: <https://plainenglish.co.uk/campaigning/awards>. The closing date is 1 November with the announcement of the winners at the end of the year.

Training Courses

Armada

Armada offer both online and in-person training courses:

May 2022

16-17 Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

Learn how to create and edit vector

graphics quickly and effectively, in the leading application for vector graphics. The comprehensive toolset and features available provide everything you need to produce extraordinary graphics for print, video, the web and mobile devices.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Cardiff training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ai.

19-20 Introduction to Adobe Photoshop

Learn how to create and edit images using the de facto standard in the graphics industry. Techniques covered include colour correction, working with layers, compositing images and preparing images for use on the Web.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Milton Keynes training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ps.

23-24 Introduction to Adobe InDesign

Provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful capabilities of InDesign, including setting up new documents, shapes, frames and using InDesign's most popular features.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Cardiff training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/id.

June 2022

6-7 Introduction to Adobe Photoshop

Learn how to create and edit images using the de facto standard in the graphics industry. Techniques covered include colour correction, working with layers, compositing images and preparing images for use on the Web.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Bristol training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ps.

27-28 Introduction to Adobe InDesign

Provides a comprehensive introduction to the powerful capabilities of InDesign, including setting up new documents, shapes, frames and using InDesign's most popular features.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Sheffield training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/id.

27-28 Introduction to Adobe Photoshop

Learn how to create and edit images using the de facto standard in the graphics industry. Techniques covered include colour correction, working with layers, compositing images and preparing images for use on the Web.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Bromsgrove training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ps.

29-30 Introduction to Adobe

Illustrator

Learn how to create and edit vector graphics quickly and effectively. The comprehensive toolset and features available provide everything you need to produce graphics for print, video, the web and mobile devices.

10% discount for ISTC members (coupon code ISTC10).

£245 + VAT. Live online participation
£345 + VAT. In-class at Bromsgrove training centre

www.armada.co.uk/course/ai.

MadCap software

The details of the latest MadCap software training schedule can be found at

www.madcapsoftware.com/services/paid-training/.

InfoPlus

Let other technical communicators know your news

InfoPlus is here to help technical communicators hear the news about our profession including – but not solely – news from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators. If you have news to broadcast to the technical communication community, please do send it into me so we can make sure as many people hear about it as possible. My email is newsletter.editor@istc.org.uk.

InfoPlus is published and distributed usually on the first working day of each month. Occasionally, there may be a delay until the first week of the month. Please bear this in mind when submitting time-sensitive information.

The deadlines for the each of the 2022 editions are:

Edition	Deadline
June 2022	Fri 20 May 2022 at 12 noon GMT
July 2022	Fri 17 June 2022 at 12 noon GMT
August 2022	Fri 22 July 2022 at 12 noon GMT
September 2022	Fri 19 August 2022 at 12 noon GMT
October 2022	Fri 16 September 2022 at 12 noon GMT
November 2022	Fri 21 October 2022 at 12 noon GMT
December 2022	Fri 18 November 2022 at 12 noon GMT