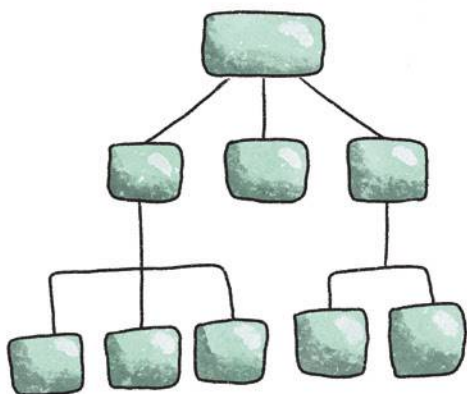
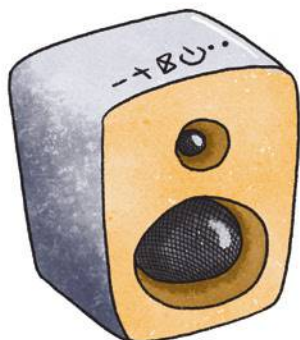
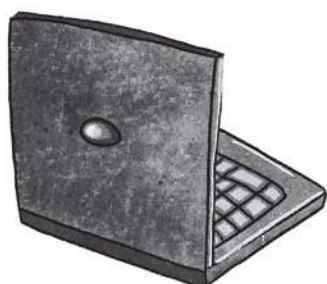
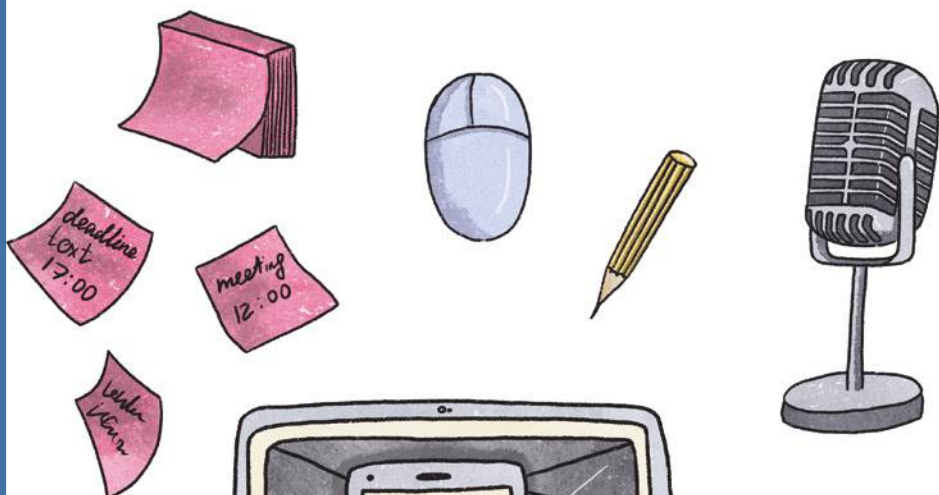


Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

Spring 2023

- Content Design
- Are you a perfectionist?
- Information Architecture



The `<codeph> init </codeph>`

President's View

Linda Robins shares the latest ISTC news.



I am pleased to be contacting you all early in another ISTC year. Special for this year will be an in-person conference; there will be presentations and workshops; also delegates will meet at relative leisure between sessions and at the gala dinner.

Working life

Changes post-pandemic have not turned out quite as predicted. Working life continued to evolve but not always to the employee's advantage. There is a tension between staff and management in some establishments, particularly where staff are keen to continue working from home while management favour a return to the office. This will probably settle to a compromise in a year or so. We will be left with increased opportunities for remote working; those who have evolved a more favourable work life balance during the pandemic will be able to maintain this. Commuting five days a week will be less prevalent, giving opportunities for a more productive working day.

Improvements in working method

For improvements in working methods, I have been focusing on Sarah Winters' book 'Content Design' (Ref 1). Sarah was our Horace Hockley Award Winner in 2022. Sarah's team at the Government Digital Service transformed the site's content with user-centred design techniques. The book explains content design and provides tips for putting it

into practice. There are good real-life examples as well as sample case studies to show the theory being put into practice. There are sound underlying statements, such as:



"A good content designer understands a bit about the involuntary mechanics that govern how humans take in information. The better you know how that happens, the more likely you will be able to write content that's easy to read."

I am revisiting the concepts and following through the examples. There is guidance for activity at the very start of the process. One eye-catching point is: "Run a workshop and get all the right people together".

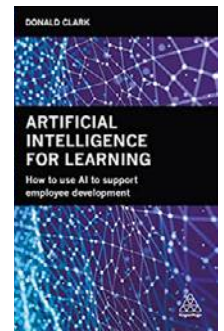
This may seem self-evident but in my experience, it may not happen or even be aspired to. The thinking here is to get together all who 'might influence, stop or change your content' together. It can be tagged as a 'decision-making session' to add weight to its purpose. Sarah advises that this session must be attractive with a clear agenda and assurances that decisions **will** be made. There are good tips on how to make this happen. I am trying these now and working to ensure that all key participants are involved in any 'decision-making sessions'.

Looking ahead

Use of Artificial Intelligence is grabbing headlines in the mainstream media as well as with the technical communications community. The scene is changing rapidly not least with the recent appearance of the ChatGPT language processing model and the

claim that a machine can carry out a written commission competently. Other AI-assisted writing tools appeared last year; offering to write the content instead of merely checking for grammar and so on. You choose your subject, style and audience; your article will result and may even include search engine optimisation.

There are many experts speaking on, writing about and tracking developments. I am following Donald Clark, who has many years' experience in online learning and has made a study of use of AI in content creation. My latest reading is Donald Clark's 'Artificial Intelligence for Learning (How to use AI to support employee development)' (Ref: 2). The AI journey is moving on all the time. I am trying to keep up.



ISTC News

TCUK23 - Save the date!

TCUK23 will take place, live and in person, on 26-27 September 2023, at voco® St. John's Hotel, Solihull.

More information is given elsewhere in this issue and all TCUK news can be found at www.istc.org.uk/tcuk.

The latest from the TCUK team:

TCUK23 will be two full days of educational workshops, inspiring talks, networking opportunities with tech comms professionals and vendors, a celebration dinner, fabulous entertainment, the UKTC awards show, and overnight accommodation. Previous delegates agree that it's a full programme, but they leave refreshed and inspired, with new ideas to take back to the office.

UK Technical Communication Awards

We are taking entries for UK Technical Communication Awards 2023. The established guidelines apply again this year. They are open to any individual or team, whether employed, self-

UKTC Awards winners
TCUK Metro Online 2022, Tuesday 27 September.

The winners were announced at TCUK Metro Online 2022, a virtual conference hosted by the ISTC. The entries were to a high standard with contributions from several countries and organisations large and small. Awards were presented as follows:

- One Overall Winner
- One Merit Award with Judges' Commendation
- Seven Merit Awards

Overall Winner (Trophy Winner)
MAISEN Product Programme Training Documents (Maison Energi)
Dariusz Anuszczyk, Marcin Krawiec, Tomasz Krawiec, Jerzy Juchacz, Chantal Boudonnyevic, Lars Christensen, Purvis White

Merit Award Winner (Judges' Commendation)
3B Internal Style Guide (3B Information Solutions)

What do the winners have to say?
A good style guide is available to an organisation producing technical documentation. Often style guides are incomplete and inconsistent, thus they often fail to deliver a consistent source of information. 3B considered their former style guide and decided to create a new one that was consistent, comprehensive and the information was not always readily accessible. They had technical style guide that they designed with the brief to be usable across all projects, to make best use of available technology and to be readily updated.

What does the ISTC have to say?
The judges were very impressed with the 3B internal style guide. Its completeness, and consistent with explanation and good examples of usage. It also allows for product updates. There are no 'grey' areas and the supporting brief gives the user a clear brief for implementation. Usage of the style guide is seen to promote efficiency and high-quality documentation. You can read more about their experience on page 18.

Merit Award Winner
IBM 2 and Cloud Modernisation Center (IBM)
Nick Steer, Florian Spitzer, Edda Hummelshausen

What do the winners have to say?
IBM has launched the IBM 2 and Cloud Modernisation Center which serves as the digital front door to information for enterprise application, data, and process modernisation. The brief for the documentation was to guide clients through the modernisation process with relevant and timely information relating to their enterprise solution. The background assessment was for making the entry relevant existing issues with access to the relevant information, including good navigation, consistent messaging, and for need to resolve usual client request.

What does the ISTC have to say?
The team opted for a central digital platform that is dynamic, flexible, and provides a rich and interactive experience for clients, achieving this within 90 days to design and launch the enterprise solution. The background assessment was for making the entry relevant existing issues with access to the relevant information, including good navigation, consistent messaging, and for need to resolve usual client request.

Merit Award Winner
GDVUK Legal Technical Documentation (Digital Service Cabinet Office)
Nigel O'Connell

What do the winners have to say?
The brief for the GDVUK technical documents team was to provide the documentation for the integrated legal system, the GDVUK website with sub-sections and identity components. This project was also the first government use of Document Design Development (DD). The method entails starting with the documentation, then generating the code from the documentation. This proved to be a low-cost way of producing the code, and resulted in a new standard.

What does the ISTC have to say?
The author has fulfilled the brief very effectively. The result is an impressive and consistent piece of work. The entry has

Communicator Winter 2022 ■

employed, contracting, volunteering, permanent, temporary, full-time or part-time. We continue to encourage entries of all types, from traditional documentation to those demonstrating technical innovation.

The UKTC Awards website has been migrated to the ISTC website; details can be found here: <https://istc.org.uk/homepage/professional-development-and-recognition/uk-technical-communication-awards/>.

This year the Awards presentation ceremony will be held at the TCUK gala dinner as we used to do pre-pandemic.

The winners for 2022 were announced at TCUK Metro Online 2022 on Tuesday 27 September, a virtual conference hosted by the ISTC. The entries were to a high standard with contributors from several countries and organisations large and small. Awards were presented as follows: seven received Merit Awards, one received a Merit Award with Judges' Commendation and one was presented with the trophy as Overall Winner.

See the Winter 2022 issue of *Communicator* for articles by last year's winners (Ref. 3).

Closing date for submissions is **30 June**. Please contact the office (at istc@istc.org.uk) for details.

Community

Local Area Groups continued to meet in various forms: in-person, online and as hybrid sessions. We plan to expand these groups, and to establish Special Interest Groups. Also, we are making

more use of social media to publicise activities and raise our profile.

Professional Development

We are reviewing our CPD framework and our mentoring scheme to ensure that all members can benefit and contribute effectively in recognition of the value of 'lifelong learning'. Also, we continue to assess courses for ISTC accreditation.

Each year, we invite all Members and Fellows to submit their CPD records on a voluntary basis, for review. Please send your CPD record by email to istc@istc.org.uk using the subject line "ISTC CPD record 2022". You may send a Microsoft Word or PDF document as an attachment, or send a link to a web address.

For guidance on our CPD framework, check the website <https://istc.org.uk/homepage/professional-development-and-recognition/cpd-information-for-members/>. The deadline was 31 January; but we welcome any you would like to submit.

ISTC Meets monthly online meetings

Details of previous ISTC Meets sessions are available on the ISTC website at istc.org.uk/events

The presentations are short (half hour, plus questions), provided free of charge. It's a good opportunity for members to stay in touch, share knowledge, and practise presentation skills, as well as something to include in your CPD.

Please follow ISTC Meets on our Eventbrite page for ease of registration and to be notified of upcoming events.

ISTC Podcasts

The ISTC series of podcasts continues. Ideas for 2023 are welcomed. Please contact the office (at istc@istc.org.uk) for details.

Each podcast is about half an hour of chat with technical communicators covering their experiences working as communications professionals. Here is a sample episode:

<https://istctechcomm.podbean.com/e/10-things-and-maybe-more-we-love-about-tech-writing/> (August 2022)

Simon Butler, ISTC Past President

We have received the sad news of the sudden death of Past President Simon Butler on 5 February aged 64. Simon

first worked in technical communication as an author in 1987, joining the ISTC as member in 1995. He became webmaster, then ISTC Council member from 2004, a Fellow in 2006, and was ISTC President from autumn 2007 to autumn 2010.

On Council, Simon was responsible for a significant redesign of the ISTC website. Then as President, Simon introduced and oversaw a number of important initiatives. These included the new style conference, TCUK; a CPD programme; junior membership and associated mentoring scheme; and engaging the services of ASL to manage our administration. Simon was committed to raising the profile of the ISTC, emphasising the importance of professional standards. Simon was very approachable and generous with his expertise. He always found time to engage with members positively and with understanding. Simon has left the ISTC a lasting legacy. Our thoughts and good wishes are with his family.



Finally

Would you like to get more from your membership? Please tell us your ideas for improvements. And maybe you could offer your time and expertise to help us make things happen. Please contact me (president@istc.org.uk) or the ISTC office (istc@istc.org.uk). ■

References

- Reference 1: 'Content Design': Sarah Winters: ISBN 9781916323315 (Amazon: 2017)
- Reference 2: 'Artificial Intelligence for Learning': Donald Clark: ISBN 9781789660814: (Kogan Page: 2020)
- Reference 3: Winter *Communicator* Award winners 2022

Linda Robins FISTC

president@istc.org.uk