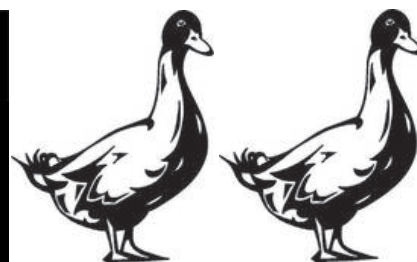# Busy, Packed Conference Ends Today

by Chuck Martin

The WritersUA conference here in Memphis wrapped up its longest day yesterday with six concurrent sessions, followed by the final set of vendor demonstrations, all getting out of the gate at 8:30am.

Attendees had one last chance to mingle with more than a dozen tool and service vendor representatives throughout the day and get their questions answered.

The day's subjects ranged from code-heavy DITA talks, to iterative user experience development for website features, to user assistance tips for mobile content.

Today's final day features the Peer Showcase during the lunch break, where you can see what some of your fellow user assistance professionals have accomplished. You can also vote for the most innovative, and the winner of that vote will receive a prestigious award at the day's closing session.

The closing session, hosted by WritersUA president Joe Welinske and

featuring a panel of UA experts, will discuss the future of user assistance and this interactive session is not to be missed.

Please remember to fill out your conference evaluation forms before you leave.

The conference staff would like to thank all those who attended and contributed. See you next year!

Chatting over lunch.

Peer Showcase Today

The annual Peer Showcase takes over the Grand Ballroom today from 10:50am to 1:05pm. More than a dozen of your fellow user assistance development professionals are here to show off the interesting, innovative, and cutting-edge work that they've been doing.

The conference sponsors an award for the most innovative Peer Showcase project, voted on by all of you. So please take some time during the 2 hour, 15 minute lunch break today to take a look at your peers' work and register your vote for most innovative project.

Vendor Prizes

Several vendors that were part of the Vendor Exhibition gave away prizes as part of their participation.

Adobe

Adobe gave away a copy of Adobe Technical Communication Suite 3.5 (worth $1899) to Laura Peacock of Central1. The suite includes the latest versions of RoboHelp, FrameMaker, Captivate, Acrobat and Photoshop.

ComponentOne

ComponentOne's Doc-To-Help team gave away two Kindle Fires. One went to Jack Stutz of Exuma Technologies, and the second went to Michelle Despres.

ITR

ITR gave away a Kindle Fire to Laurie Johnson of Xata.

MadCap

MadCap Software gave away a MadPak Suite to JoAnn Ellis of NexTraq.

At-a-glance Agenda

8:00am-8:30am: Breakfast, Grand Ballroom

8:30am-9:30am: Conference Sessions, Grand Ballrooms

9:30m-9:50am: Break

9:50am-10:50am: Conference Sessions, Grand Ballrooms

10:50am-1:05pm: Peer Showcase, Grand Ballroom

1:05pm-2:05pm: Conference Sessions, Grand Ballrooms

2:05pm-2:25pm: Break

2:25pm-3:25pm: Conference Sessions, Grand Ballrooms

3:25pm-3:45pm: Break

3:45pm-4:45pm: Closing Session, Grand Ballroom B

Today's Events

Peer Showcase

The Peer Showcase in the Grand Ballroom from 10:50am to 1:05pm offers a unique opportunity to see some of the most innovative user assistance solutions and to meet the project developers.

Descriptions of all the showcase presentations are in your conference program.
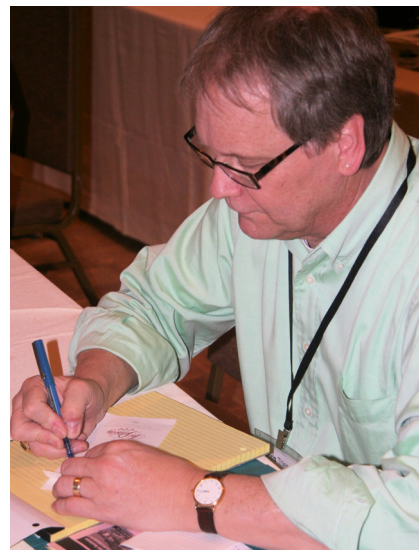
Filling out a session evaluation form.

Session Summaries: Tuesday

Notes from selected Tuesday sessions.

DITA Relationship Tables: The Basics and Beyond

Dave Gash presented one of his two Tuesday talks on DITA relationships tables, describing strategies to add a fourth column to three-column relationship tables and suggesting the notion of creating a two-column relationship table. He said that if the idea of having concept, task, and reference in separate columns isn't important to you, it's OK to "mush 'em together."

Influencing Product Direction

Rob Houser began this session by helping us to understand management's perspective. They take pragmatic, marketing-centric training, so they think they are CEOs of projects. But CEOs don't make all the decisions and have all the authority. Rather, they set vision.

PMs do customer analysis, not user analysis, and that distinction is important to understanding how to work with them. It's the difference between buying behavior and user behavior. To get involved with and more integrated in project management, you should learn more about marketing.

Introduction to DITA Conditional Processing

Dave Gash was showing off more code, this time explaining how to use it for DITA conditional processing. To do conditional processing, you need to know about metadata, which is "data about data," descriptive characteristics that explain, clarify, classify, and identify information.

Just having metadata attributes doesn't actually do anything. The magic occurs when you control the build process by telling the build what attributes to use. There's one big key here, and you should brand it on your memory: if it's not specifically excluded, it's included.

Using Iterative Design and Usability to Create Intuitive Applications

Leanne Logan of FedEx explained how a good iterative process starts with engaging stakeholders. One strategy is to hold weekly meetings and invite stakeholders to discuss their user experience challenges.

In demonstrating examples of iterative design for a new web-based feature to customer, it was found that a simple single help access point was not enough. So they designed multiple help access points, for example, to display conceptual or glossary content.

UA Tips and Tricks for iPhone/iPad

Myles Pflum of FileMaker explained that when providing user assistance for mobile devices, it's not a good user experience to close the app and open a browser. For iOS (Apple devices), there's a programming construct called UIWebView, which allows you to get content from a server and display it without leaving your app.

FileMaker is using HTML5 for its mobile user assistance. When thinking about cloud vs. in-app user assistance, the most important consideration is how the customers uses the app and the UA. If you're hosting your content in the cloud and you use Google Site Search to index your content, the searches by your users will also boost the findability of your content in general Google searches.

Notes

Above, Adobe folks give a demo, below right, Shannon becomes Duck Master, and in-between, everyone is all smiles.

Wednesday Lunch

Wednesday's lunch is on your own. The area around the Peabody Hotel has many fine eating establishments, so there's no need to do the familiar.

Many raves have come in for Kooky Canuck across the street. Beale Street, two blocks away, features southern comfort food. And the Capriccio Grill in the hotel is a star.

Just don't forget to come back in time for the Peer Showcase.

Short Breaks

Breaks between sessions are 20 minutes.

Tweet! Tweet!

Feel free to post to Twitter, Facebook and other social sites about your conference experience. The conference hashtag is #writersua.

ProBooster

Turn in your ProBooster sheets by the end of the day today to get your certificate mailed to you.

Conference Parking Rate

If you have a car self-parked in the hotel garage, show your conference badge for a special rate of $13/day.

Evaluations

Please remember to fill out evaluation sheets for the sessions you attend as well as for the conference as a whole. Your comments and suggestions are used to improve future events.

Today's Forecast

80

Mix of clouds & sunshine, afternoon thunderstorms possible, winds SSW 5-10 MPH