

NEW TRENDS IN USER ASSISTANCE - VILNIUS 2007

**2007's ONLINE HELP CONFERENCE, A REVIEW BY
MONIKA DUVINAGE**

SPEAKERS AT THE CONFERENCE

The Online Help Conference - Europe 2007 took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, a beautiful baroque town.

New trends in software user assistance together with practical case studies were presented, and discussed by the following speakers:

- Matthew Ellison
- Tony Self
- Scott Boggan
- Joe Welinske
- Donald Barwick
- Inese Auzina
- Monika Duvinage

PURPOSE OF THE PRESENTATION

This presentation is a quick review of new trends as emerging throughout the different conference presentations:

- Reducing the gap between authors and users
- Increasing content findability
- Moving the authoring environment from the client to the server
- Reducing the burden of localization through word reduction
- Moving from static to dynamic content
- Increasing the non-procedural content
- Using new technologies
- Setting up the ideal content production team

REDUCING THE GAP BETWEEN AUTHORS AND USERS

Role definitions tend to open up. We observe:

- a trend towards collaborative authoring
- users that move into content production
- authors that move out of content production
- authors that move increasingly into editing, monitoring, content management
- an increasing focus on feedback and feedback analysis
- the use of Feedback Engines / RSS / Blogs / Forums / Wikis / Remote testing

INCREASING CONTENT FINDABILITY - 1

- Make the content find the user (RSS feeds)
- The core of online search is the SEARCH feature
- Apply techniques to improve the SEARCH facility, such as Ajax-driven "auto-complete" searches
- Increase the link efficiency by providing live informations about the pages being pointed to (data about the topic, screen captures, etc).
- Bookmark content
- Annotate content
- Flag content

INCREASING CONTENT FINDABILITY - 2

- Use recommendation systems (eg.: Amazon)
- Filter content according to user needs
- Allow for a folksonomy (eg. : <http://del.icio.us>)
- Include heuristics
- Build information knowledge basis

MOVING THE AUTHORING ENVIRONMENT FROM THE CLIENT TO THE SERVER

- Authoring tools provide web-based versions
- Use of web-based technologies (WIKI, RSS, Forms, Forums, Blogs, ...)

REDUCING THE BURDEN OF LOCALIZATION THROUGH WORD REDUCTION

- Allow for more efficient authoring, and use authoring memories
- Use pictures instead of words

MOVING FROM STATIC TO DYNAMIC CONTENT

- Include tutorials, demos, etc. in help
- Move towards Guided Help
- Guided Help: leading the user through a real task using the real application, eg. : PCPal (free software tool that runs checks and fixes on the PC)
- Use of animated personas (eg.: "Anna" from Ikea)
- Find content delivery that comes close to human support

INCREASING THE NON-PROCEDURAL CONTENT

- Help users to choose the appropriate workflow
- Include best practices
- Include examples

USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

- Web.2
- Web.3
- AJAX
- Guided Help
- XML, DITA
- Topic oriented authoring
- Content Management Systems
- Hybrid systems that combine web-based mode, and offline mode
- Information mesh-ups
- Use of new standards
- Natural language and gesture interfaces

SETTING UP THE IDEAL CONTENT PRODUCTION TEAM

- Technical writer
- Computer specialist
- Graphical designer

CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank you for your attention!

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