

"The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide."

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STC Web site:
www.stc.org and www.stc-va.org

LASTC Web site:
www.stc.org/region8/lac/www/lahome.htm

The Technograph

FrameMaker—the Tool for Technical Communicators

by Scott J. Wilson

FrameMaker is a feature-rich publishing tool that is especially well suited for long, structured documents—such as installation, user, administrator, and reference guides.

Compared with desktop publishing programs like Adobe PageMaker and QuarkXPress, FrameMaker is less flexible, more dependent on templates, and harder to learn. But it pays you back many times over by automating index, cross reference, and table of contents generation, numbering of pages, chapters, tables, and footers, updating all these items, importing of text and graphics, and other tedious tasks like these.

FrameMaker has all the capabilities you would expect of a high-end long-document publishing tool, but the features that are most useful to me are:

- Paragraph and character formats
- Template based
- Binary compatible files between Macintosh, Windows, and UNIX
- Integrated graphics environment
- Conditional text
- Multiple distribution formats
- Powerful table editor

FrameMaker is published by Adobe Systems, Inc. If you would like Adobe's spin on the FrameMaker product, you can download the official product brochure and other information at

<http://www.adobe.com/products/frameMaker/main.html>.

Paragraph and character formats

I have spent many a tedious hour formatting my documents by hand, only to find out that my boss is allergic to Adobe Garamond, or that the "corporate standard" is the flashy Times New Roman, or that the requirements document specifically called for all paragraphs to be indented one inch, not one and a half, and so on.

With FrameMaker, this kind of work is mind-numbingly routine. All the information about a paragraph is stored in its format. All the information for specific character formats—the keys a user has to press, for example, or keyboard shortcuts—is stored in well-named character formats.

To apply them I just put the insertion point in the paragraph (for paragraph formats) or select the text (for character formats) and then click the appropriate paragraph or character format name or select it from a list.

And if it turns out that my boss is allergic to Adobe Garamond, all I have to do is change the settings for the body text and FrameMaker makes the changes throughout the document for me. It could hardly be easier.

Template based

It takes time and knowledge to set up

See FrameMaker on page 7

The Technograph

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Third page	\$50	Eighth page	\$20

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Attn: Technograph Editor

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Help me, Grammar Lady!

Well, I asked for interesting Web sites, and finally someone came through.

Sara Stohl, a senior technical writer at Parsons and an instructor at UCLA Extension, let me in on the Grammar Lady Web site:

<http://www.grammarlady.com/>

And boy, it's a good one! There's a FAQ, there's an email newsletter you can subscribe to, there are columns you can read, there is a list of grammar tips, and there's even a phone number to call—toll free, no less.

While all of these are quite useful, especially if, like me, you are grammar-challenged, none of them quite lives up

to what I found on the main page near the bottom: Jargon Bingo.

In short, there's a list of jargon words that you might hear at your next meeting. You simply listen for the jargon terms, and when you've heard five of them, you shout out "Bingo!"

Depending on who else is in the meeting, you may want to skip that last part and just say it to yourself.

(Now I don't want to hear everyone shouting "Bingo!" while Jack talks at the next chapter meeting. Shame on you for even thinking like that!)

In any case, the Grammar Lady is an excellent resource. Thanks, Sara!

OCTOBER MEETING RECAP

John Sands is Wired Up

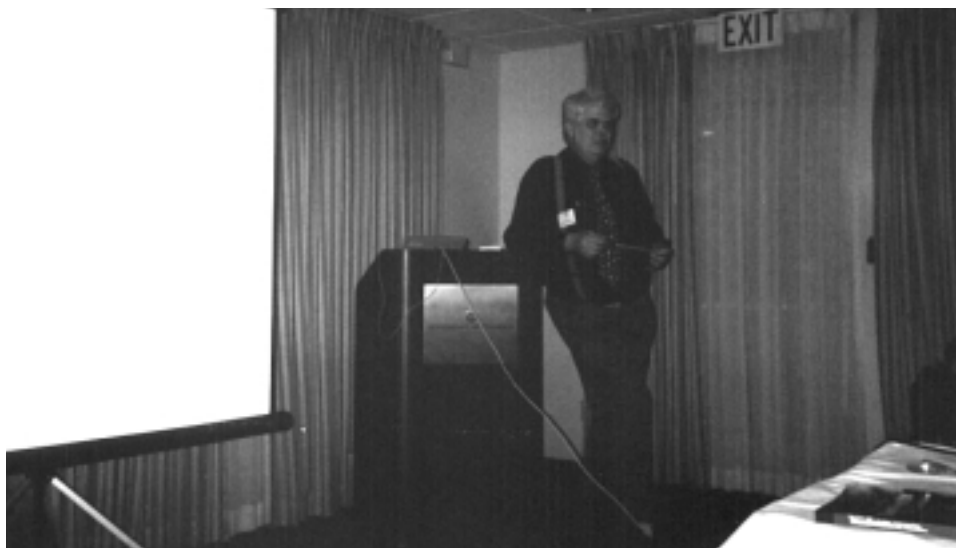
If you missed the October LASTC chapter meeting, you missed a good one. Speaker John Sands (pictured below) spoke about how the future is going to change when everything is wired up and we have virtually unlimited storage space and network capability. And how this affects

technical communicators, of course.

His presentation, unfortunately without his buoyant good humor, is available on the Web at:

<http://project.ipcwest.net/>

See October meeting on page 5



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Y2K in Waikiki

Wow, what a conference!

If you didn't attend the STC Region 8 conference in Long Beach, you missed a fantastic opportunity. From problem solving to career planning, top speakers in our industry offered valuable information you could take back to work and *apply*. I just can't stress enough how valuable I found the sessions, let alone the networking and social opportunities.

Based on the other comments I heard, I can say that most of the attendees left with a renewed sense of excitement about their jobs and their careers.

If you did attend the conference, be sure to drop an email to conference chair Christine Stevens <cnl@iname.com> and the programs chair Sarah Hauslinger <sarahlee@contentmanage.com> and let them know how much you enjoyed it.

And speaking of conferences, I'd like to take this opportunity to announce next year's regional conference.

On October 19th-21st of 2000, STC regions 7 and 8 are holding a Pan-Pacific conference in Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, Hawaii. (The location was chosen to enable members in Pacific Rim chapters to attend their regional conference.)

Newsflash: If you reserve your hotel room by January 25th, you will get an ocean view room at a city view rate, so watch your mail for a registration form (or download the form from the conference Web site at <http://www.pan-pacific.org>) and reserve your hotel room early!

Also, the conference will subsidize speakers' travel costs, so be sure to complete the Call for Papers when you reserve your hotel room.

See you in Waikiki!

I am always happy to hear from my readers. Feel free to contact me at jm@claritytechnical.com or via my Web site (www.claritytechnical.com) with your thoughts, questions or offers to volunteer!



SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Fourteen awards of \$2,500 each will be granted for academic year 2000-2001.

Application deadline is February 12, 2000.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office:

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
(703) 522-4114

Events and Information

Visit the Technical Book
Company
2056 Westwood Blvd.
LA 90025
(800) 233-5150

View the Tech Standards
Web site at
www.tecstandards.com
(800) 889-7116

Conferences

- The STC's 47th Annual Conference will be held in Orlando, Florida May 21 – 24, 2000. Put it down on your calendar now, and start checking the Web site for information (<http://www.stc.org/47th/>). You can download a PDF file of the call for proposals at http://www.stc-va.org/PDF_Files/Call20.pdf.
- STC Regions 7 and 8 are sponsoring the Pan-Pacific conference Oct. 19–21, 2000 in Waikiki Beach, Hawaii. More information is available on the conference Web site (<http://www.pan-pacific.org/>). Rooms reserved by Jan. 25 get ocean views at the city view rate; also, the conference is going to subsidize the travel costs of speakers, so watch for the Call for Papers!

Special Interest Groups

- If you would like to meet other STC members who have interests in special areas of technical communication, you might want to see if there's a society-wide special interest group (SIG) that's right for you. They're all on the Web at <http://www.stc-va.org/fsig.htm>.
- The Fall 1999 issue of the Management SIG newsletter, *Management*, is available online at <http://www.stc.org/pics/mgmt/news/Q399NEWS.PDF>.

UCLA Extension Courses

- **Technical Writing: Process and Products** — Reg#D9260B runs Thursdays, 7 to 10 p.m. Jan. 13 – March 16 at UCLA, A152 Bunche Hall, taught by Kent Pearson, quality control editor, America Honda Motor Company, Inc. Credit: 3.3 units. Fee: \$345.
- **Strategic Communications Planning (Online)** — Reg#D9299B runs Jan. 25 – March 21, taught by Judy Shane, MA, communications consultant, Shane Communications. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.
- **Information Design (Online)** — Reg#D9295B runs Jan. 11 – March 7; instructor TBA. Reg#D9332B runs Feb. 3 – March 30; taught by Sara Stohl, MA, Senior Technical Writer, Parsons Corporation. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.
- **Technical Writing (Online)** — Reg#D9289B runs Jan. 11 – March 7, taught by Bonnie Lund, MA, Owner and founder of The Writing Company; Reg#D9285B runs Feb. 3 – March 30, taught by Patricia Kalman, MA, Technical Writer. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.
- **Technical Editing (Online)** — Reg#D9294B runs Jan. 19 – March 15, taught by Larry Palkovic, PhD, Technical Writer, Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.
- **Creating Readable Documents (Online)** — Reg#D9297B runs Jan. 11 – March 7, taught by Adrienne Escoe, PhD, president/consultant, Escoe/Bliss Communication. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.
- **Introduction to Policies and Procedures Communications (Online)** — Reg#D9298B runs Jan. 25 – March 21, taught by Raymond Urgo, MA, principal, Urgo & Associates. Credit: 4 units. Fee: \$550.

For more information, call (310) 825-4192 or visit the UCLA Extension Web site: <http://www.uclaextension.edu>.

It's a Holiday Party with the SF Valley Chapter

The December chapter meeting is going to be a joint holiday party with the San Fernando Valley chapter on Tuesday, Dec. 14.

Our special guest for the evening will be Penny Post, a professional storyteller who is going to amaze us with her stories and let us know how storytelling techniques can be useful in technical communication.

Meeting Schedule

- 6:00 — Networking, check-in, cash bar
- 7:00 — Dinner
- 7:45 — Festivities

Location

Holiday Inn, Brentwood (see the map for directions). The phone number of the hotel is (310) 476-6411.

Cost and Reservations

- Members with reservations, \$21
- Nonmembers with reservations, \$23
- Without reservations, \$25
- Program only, \$10
- Students or retirees, \$5 (program only)

To make or cancel a reservation, call LASTC's voice mail at (213) 896-2982 no later than Friday, Dec. 10.

405 to San Fernando Valley

N

Sequoyia Blvd.

Sunset Blvd.

Church Lane

Holiday Inn Brentwood
170 Church Lane
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 476-6411

To get there: From the South, go North on the 405; exit at Sunset; make a left, go over the freeway, make a right on Church, turn right into the parking lot.
From the North, go South on the 405, exit at Sunset, make a right on Church, turn right into the parking lot.

To leave: To go South, make a left on Church and then an immediate left onto the freeway. To go North, make a left on Church, make a left on Sunset, then make a right just over the freeway.

405 to LAX

October meeting

continued from page 2

Major Johnson (pictured with LASTC President Jack Molisani) won *The Race for Bandwidth: Understanding Data Transmission*.

Important note: The December chapter meeting is not at the normal place and is earlier in the month than usual. It's Tuesday, Dec. 14 at the Holiday Inn in Brentwood (just off the San Diego freeway). Please read the article above for complete information.



The World's Best FrameMaker Resources

No doubt you have been looking for these; I know I've looking for them for years. And here they are, in *The Technograph*.

Adobe

Adobe's FrameMaker site:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/frame-maker/>

The "horse's mouth" for information about FrameMaker. Also has links to all the other places on the Adobe Web site that are helpful to FrameMaker users.

Adobe's FrameMaker Support site:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/frame-maker/support.html>

The place to go for authoritative FrameMaker technical support. Provides access to the download site and to the FrameMaker top issues page. Lets you search the FrameMaker support database.

Also provides access to the Adobe user-to-user forums and describes the ways you can get technical support.

User to User

FrameUsers:

<http://www.frameusers.com/>

Bills itself as the best FrameMaker reference on the Internet; I am not inclined to disagree. Has lots of FrameMaker resources, including FrameMaker FAQs; also hosts the famous framers mailing list. *Highly recommended.*

Adobe's User Forums:

<http://www.adobe.com/support/forums/main.html>

Where FrameMaker users can share information about FrameMaker with other FrameMaker users. You have to sign up before you can start participating in the discussions.

comp.text.frame Usenet newsgroup

A Usenet newsgroup for FrameMaker.

Low volume. Not worth your time if you subscribe to the framers mailing list.

Tips

Adobe's FrameMaker Tips:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/frame-maker.html>

Two (count 'em, two) tips from the FrameMaker people.

Adobe Magazine FrameMaker Q&A Archives:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/adobemag/archive/qafram.html>

Not as many as I would have hoped, but a lot more than on the Tips page.

FrameMaker toolbar:

<http://members.tripod.com/~microtype/>

Two Application Notes that tell you how to modify the existing FrameMaker toolbar and how to create your own toolbar.

Books and Magazines

Adobe FrameMaker 5.5 (Classroom in a Book)

From Adobe, this book is set up as a series of lessons that teach you how to use the program. Allegedly for beginners, it includes information for all FrameMaker users.

Unfortunately, if you are *not* a beginner, you have to wade through the beginner material to get to the good stuff. Order at Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

FrameMaker 5.5.6 for Dummies

The title tells you that it is part of the Dummies series, but it is one of the few FrameMaker books that is up to date. Order at Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

Adobe FrameMaker 5.5 User Guide

Yes, it is the documentation that comes with the product, but it is clearly laid

out, well organized, and exhaustive. It may take some time to find the information that you are looking for, but it is in there. So go find this book and keep it at hand.

InFrame online magazine:

<http://www.inframe-mag.com/>

An online magazine dedicated to FrameMaker. Volume 1, Issue 1 has some interesting material.

Recommended.

Commercial sites

Scriptorium:

<http://www.scriptorium.com/>

A company that provides technical publishing services. They have several good White Papers that relate to FrameMaker. You can also order *FrameMaker 5.5.6 for Dummies* through them.

Frank Stearns Associates:

<http://home.pacifier.com/~franks/>

IXgen is a utility that makes it easier to create and modify FrameMaker indexes. The company also sells FM2A, which lets you create ASCII dumps of FrameMaker files.

Sandybrook Software:

<http://www.sandybrook.com/>

Enhance is a plug-in that allows you to structure, edit, and navigate FrameMaker documents more easily than ever before. It provides you with an outline view of a FrameMaker file. A demo of the software is available.

Advanced Firmware's Visual Capture:

http://www.advfirmware.com/vcap_home.htm

Visual Capture is a screen capture utility with several nice features: it removes moire patterns, captures multiple versions of a screen grab (each with its own color depth, scaling, and file format), and it integrates right into FrameMaker. A demo version of the software is available.

FrameMaker

continued from page 1

FrameMaker templates (if you don't use the ones they supply), but once you do, everything flows easily from them.

Everything is there, you just need to apply it correctly. And like paragraph and character formats, if something needs to be changed you just change the template and FrameMaker does the rest.

Here's an important tip: Spend time up front making your templates right; it makes everything else easier, and it's a lot of work to change the template during the middle of a release cycle.

FrameMaker files are binary compatible

FrameMaker files, with the exception of graphics formats and fonts, can be used as on Macintosh, Windows, and UNIX computers. And there are fixes for the graphics and font problems; just be sure to figure them out before you start moving files from one platform to another.

I don't know what else other people use FrameMaker file compatibility for, but I remember being behind on a project where I used FrameMaker on Windows; I did the majority of the work at home on my Macintosh—and nobody knew the difference.

Integrated vector graphics environment

FrameMaker has a built-in, vector graphics environment. It isn't as good as Illustrator or Freehand, and yet it's not that bad either. You can create high-resolution graphics right in FrameMaker.

I used this extensively on one project where I needed to call out the parts of a hardware product. I created the entire set of high-resolution graphics right in FrameMaker.

Conditional text

Do you have a Macintosh and a Windows version of your product? Do you have an administrator version and a regular user version? Do you have a version for print and a version for online help?

“As long as I'm associated with Adobe, FrameMaker is never going away.”

Dr. John Warnock,
Adobe CEO

If you do need to create multiple versions of a document where the documents share much of the same text, conditional text is the way to go.

You simply mark the text that's only for one version or the other using tag names that you create—Windows and Macintosh, for example—and then you can display and print only the version you want.

Using conditional text means that you update new information in only one place, thereby maintaining consistency and avoiding multiple documents when the majority of the information is the same.

Multiple distribution formats

In my office, we create printed documentation, online help, and PDF files. FrameMaker easily exports to all of these, plus HTML and XML, to name just a few. This lets us concentrate on getting the information correct and well written in the FrameMaker files: the output to different formats is just an exercise in exporting to the right format.

With a well-thought-out template, we've created single-source documentation in FrameMaker.

Powerful table editor

It might not be important to you, but I've spent hours cutting and pasting badly organized tables in other applications. FrameMaker's table editor is powerful yet easy to use. And you can export the tables if you need to.

In conclusion

The CEO of Adobe, Dr. John Warnock, delivered the keynote address at the 1999 FrameUsers conference. There has been speculation in the FrameMaker community about the commitment to FrameMaker on Adobe's part since the company also makes PageMaker and a new page layout program called InDesign.

In his speech, Warnock made a strong pledge of support for FrameMaker, saying “As long as I'm associated with Adobe, FrameMaker is never going away.” He also mentioned that a new version of FrameMaker is slated for the end of the second quarter of 2000.

By the way, for those of you who are being forced to use Microsoft Word and would switch to FrameMaker but for the fact that your boss doesn't allow it, I have good news for you: a White Paper that describes why Word is wrong and FrameMaker is right for long-document publishing.

It's available from a company called DigiPub Solutions Corp. and is available on their Web site:

<http://www.digipubcorp.com/about.html>

FrameMaker is, in my opinion, a great product for technical communicators. And it appears that it's going to be supported for a while. If you're not using it for your long documents, get on board.

UCLA Extension ad (Sharpen Your Skills) goes in this box

The Technograph

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Address Correction Requested