



The View from my Chair: Action Plan for 2013

Greetings STVYians! As I step down from 3 years as chairperson of STVY, I'd like to welcome **Nick Hill** who will take over the reins starting in January 2013. To give you an idea of some of the things planned for the year, check out the action plan which was approved by the members in the Fall General Meeting.

Focuses for year 2013

Web site and social media

Though we have a good technical base for our website, the content itself is in need of renewal. We will put together a work group to decide on the overall strategy for the site and changes that should be made. We hope to be able to use a student of technical communications help implement the changes, maybe as part of their course work or as a kind of internship. In order to be able to have such a student involved from the start, we should start the work in the spring of 2013.

The same work group could outline a STVY strategy for social media which could cover:

- How and in what groups and media STVY is present in social media,
- What kind of roles (for example, connector, moderator) we would have and how the roles would be divided between STVY board members or members

Visibility of field

We would like to make the technical communication field better known outside the society: in schools and other educational institutions, companies, and in other professional societies.

We will work out a strategy on how to go about this and start activities in 2013. An initial idea is that we

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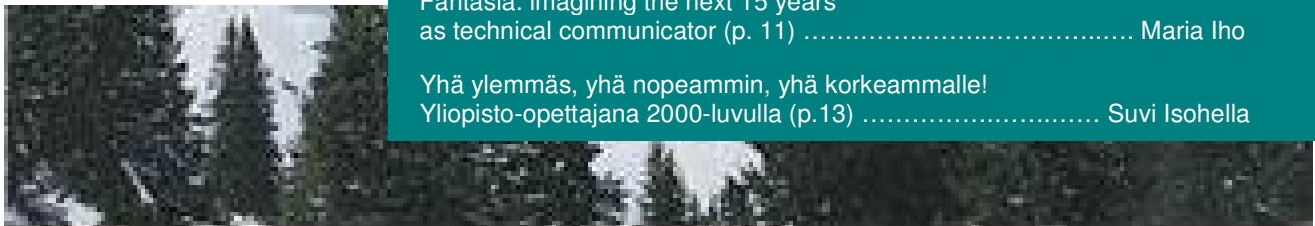
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Yhä ylemmäs, yhä nopeammin, yhä korkeammalle!
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could prepare an information set to be placed in our web site and also include links to other sites such as the **TCeurope Infopool** work group (<http://www.tceurope.org/index.php/projects/15-infopool.html>). It might be possible to cooperate with the various university programs on technical communication to help prepare that set.

Based on that info set we could prepare a short presentation, and board members or volunteered society members could offer to give short presentations in different organizations and events.

Member events

Seminar

Our seminars continue to be successful in that we provide a place for Finnish professionals to gather, gain knowledge on our industry and competence in our field. We continue to receive feedback that the seminar is well-planned and carried out, and answers the needs of our members.

Plans are already underway for a STVY seminar to take place at the University of Tampere in mid-October, 2013.

Local events

In 2012 we held local events in both Tampere and Helsinki. In 2013 we aim to hold 3-4 local events, in at least Tampere, Helsinki and Oulu. It is likely that we will combine some of these with the fall and spring society general meetings. We have already started discussions with the University of Oulu to hold a joint event in the spring of 2013.

Näkymä

Our member newsletter **Näkymä** was published in 2012 twice. In 2013 we will publish 2 or 3 editions of the newsletter.

International Cooperation

STVY board member **Terhi Sipilä**'s tenure as president of TCeurope will end in April of 2013. STVY will continue to have a delegate in TCeurope, with the selection of that delegate taking place during the spring of 2013.

In 2013 the society will again offer sponsorship for 1 member to attend an industry conference in Europe. Since no one applied for this sponsorship in 2012, STVY may decide to accept sponsorship for 2 members.

STVY will encourage members to be active in international and cross-European technical communication bodies. We would like to see our members continue to contribute in European-level working groups (TCeurope and others), and in the seminars of other European societies. STVY will continue to encourage these members to share their experiences by giving talks in events or writing articles for the Näkymä newsletter.

Regular society operations

Membership

In 2012 our membership remained at a level of ~140 which it has been since 2010. In 2013 we will try to maintain this level or grow it a bit.

Governance - STVY board

STVY will be led by a board elected in the Fall General Meeting of 2012. The board will meet approximately once a month, either in person or by phone conference.

Official Meetings

STVY will hold 2 general meetings for members, in the spring and fall.

Mary Nurminen, Chair

How ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English can help you save time and cost

ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English (STE) is a controlled language standard that helps to improve readability and translatability of technical documentation. STE originates from the aerospace and defence industry and is a requirement for many aerospace and defence projects. Increasingly, companies in other technical industries, such as automotive, machinery, electronics, telecommunications and medical equipment, adopt STE to reduce translation cost and improve translation quality.

Applicability

ASD-STE100 was originally developed to make maintenance documentation for aircraft and their components easier to understand for a global audience. Over time, use of the specification was increasingly required for other types of manuals and also became mandatory for many defence projects, including land and sea vehicles as well as weapon systems. The S1000D specification (similar to DITA with further functionality for the aerospace and defence industry) calls for any documentation in English to be written in STE.

Although many types of documents can benefit from at least part of STE, it is not intended for oral communications, neither is it very suitable for marketing or legal documents.

How is STE different from company style guides?

Company style guides often include:

- Writing rules
- Company-specific terminology
- Rules on formatting

STE includes:

- 66 writing rules
- Guidelines on company-specific terminology (nouns and adjectives known as “Technical Names”)
- General vocabulary (approx. 900 approved words as well as a large number of commonly used words that are not approved in STE)

The main difference between STE and the average corporate style guide thus is the addition of general vocabulary, while providing for flexibility regarding company- and industry-specific terminology – a very powerful concept that greatly facilitates adaptation to a company’s specific requirements.

As STE was developed by people from different companies (including for example **Boeing** and **Airbus**), countries (USA, Canada, various European countries) and professional backgrounds (writers, linguists and engineers), the rule set and vocabulary are rather well-balanced rather than to reflect the views of a single person or company. Moreover, the rules and vocabulary were validated against actual content from relevant manuals.

Since development of the specification started some 30 years ago, it has seen regular updates, in part

based on change requests from users in the field. The current release is Issue 5, released in April 2010. A new release is expected in 2013. The specification is maintained by **ASD** (formerly AECMA), the Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe.

Writing rules

Rules regulate the choice and use of words, building phrases and sentences, the use of articles, the verb tenses that can be used and (to some extent) the punctuation. Some of the rules are specific to procedural or to descriptive text. Part of the rules is generally known to professional communicators, but the overall set is in general rather nicely balanced while going beyond most corporate and general style guides.

Some examples of rules are:

- Keep procedural sentences as short as possible (20 words maximum).
- In an instruction, write the verb in the imperative (“command”) form.
- Keep sentences in descriptive writing as short as possible (25 words maximum).
- Start a warning or a caution with a simple and clear command.

Each rule comes with an often lengthy explanation.

If I could only pick one rule that has a lot of positive impact on readability and re-use, it would be rule 1.1, which basically tells us that we can only use approved words (yes, that’s right –every single word we use has to be approved), and that these words can come from three sources: the general approved

vocabulary listed in the specification, Technical Names and Technical Verbs. The latter two are determined by the user, based on industry, company and product.

Vocabulary & terminology

In the above, we distinguish between vocabulary and terminology. Vocabulary basically is comprised of the words that are common to technical documentation, regardless of industry. Terminology comprises the words that may be different depending on the industry, company, product and customer.


For both categories of words, it is important that there should be only one word for every concept, and ideally, all words should have only one meaning, or at least only one approved meaning. This basically means, we aim for consistency while minimising ambiguity.


One of rather few industry-specific words in the ASD-STE100 general vocabulary is the word “*aircraft*”. Like all words in the general vocabulary, it comes with a definition – in this case “*A vehicle for movement through the air*”. This may seem obvious, but it thus actually clarifies that a helicopter (a.k.a. rotary-wing aircraft), or for that matter a hot-air balloon, also is an aircraft.

On the other hand, the word “*engine*” is not part of the general vocabulary. That seems strange, as most aircraft need one or more of them. However, depending on the type of engine, the type of document and the audience, we may want to use different terms (e.g. turbine, jet engine, power plant), or the word could have different translations (think of


different translations for a car engine vs. an aircraft

engine, such as German “*Motor*”  vs.

“*Triebwerk*” ). For other industries, the English word “*battery*” poses similar challenges, depending on whether or not it is rechargeable, and whether it is in a car or a phone. In Finnish, this is

reflected in the words “*akku*”  vs. “*paristo*”



A good example of a word with multiple meanings is the word “*terminal*”, which already only as a noun includes such different meanings as “*connector*” .

“*computer workstation*”  and “*airport building*”



. If you ever used **Google Translate** or similar, you probably found that these totally different meanings can cause confusion, this certainly is the case when you deal with an audience that may have limited English skills. To make matters worse, “*terminal*” could also be an adjective with a completely different meaning.

Largely because of the above reasons, plus the fact that different companies (or even divisions within a company) have their own terminology, **ASD** (at the time: AECMA) decided not to adopt the suggestion by **McDonnell Douglas** some 25 years ago to include thousands of supposedly “common” aeronautical terms into the general vocabulary.

Instead, it was decided to provide guidelines on acceptable terminology.

A detailed discussion of all criteria for a suitable term (“*Technical Name*” or “*TN*”) is beyond the scope of this article, so let’s consider the main criteria:

- A TN is a noun or an adjective.
- The TN should be unique, i.e., there is no other approved word with the same meaning.
- The TN should be non-ambiguous, i.e. it should have only one (approved) meaning.

In addition, we will want to steer clear of artificial and empty words, i.e. we should only use words that have a concrete technical or scientific meaning, or are otherwise indispensable for technical documentation. Marketing words are a good example of words that we will want to avoid.









STE will not tell us if “*indicator light*” is a better term than “*annunciator light*”, “*pilot light*”, “*status indicator*” or “*indication light*”. However, consistency is one of the main pillars of STE, so once we choose a word for a specific part or concept, we should use the same word time and time over again.

There is another category of industry-specific terms, Technical Verbs, but their number will normally be very limited, and discussing them in-depth is beyond the scope of this article.

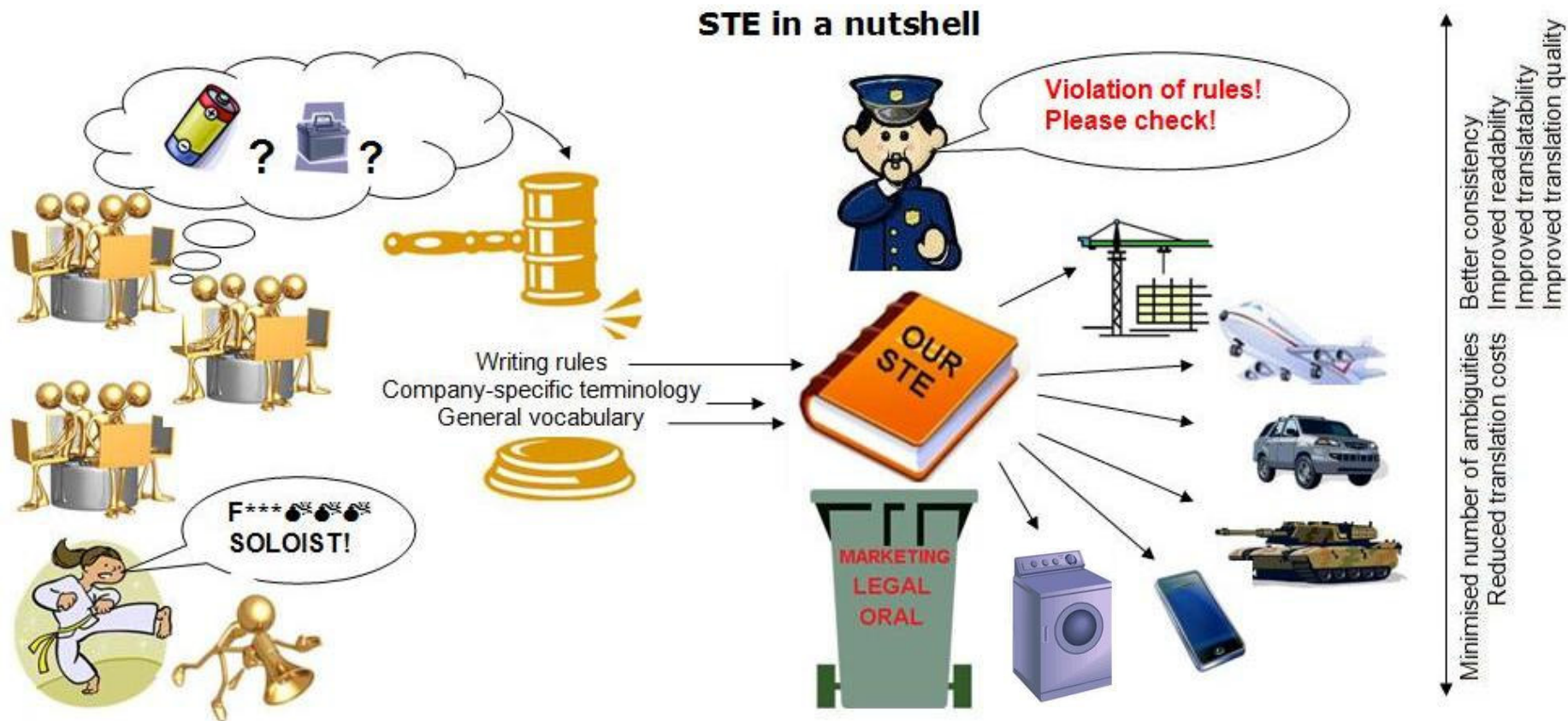
Benefits

The use of STE not only improves readability, but also significantly reduces translation costs, as the word count typically decreases by 20% or more, and

Examples

Original text	STE
 <p>The patient must be able to be moved.</p>	 <p>Make sure that it is safe to move the patient.</p>
 <p>Control panel</p> <p>Both the C-arm stand and the monitor cart have a control panel. The two control panels always show the same screen, enabling you to use them for system operation.</p> <p>Depending on the selected function, other controls (buttons, input boxes, displays, etc.) will appear on the control panel screen.</p> <p>The Vision Center control panel is designed as a touch screen. For system operation, just press the desired button or option directly on the touch screen.</p>	 <p>Control panel</p> <p>The C-arm stand and the monitor cart each have a control panel screen. These screens show the same control panel. Each panel lets you operate the system. The panels have different controls for different functions.</p> <p>The control panel is a touch screen. To operate the system, touch the correct button or option.</p>
 <p>Rigging the elevator trim control system</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Loosen travel stop blocks on trim tab cables and disconnect actuator screw from link to trim tab. Check cable tension and readjust turnbuckle if necessary. Resafety turnbuckle. If chains and/or cables are being installed, permit actuator screw to rotate freely as chains and cables are connected, set cable tension with turnbuckle, and safety the turnbuckle. Rotate trim control wheel full forward (nose down), making sure pointer does not restrict trim wheel movement. If necessary to re-position pointer where it will not restrict trim wheel movement, proceed as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Remove control pedestal cover. Refer to paragraph 11-5. Loosen nut at trim wheel pivot shaft. Loosen screws securing chain guard (see figure 9-4) far enough that trim wheel can be removed. 	 <p>How to adjust the elevator trim control system</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Loosen the travel stop block on the trim tab cables. Disconnect the actuator screw that connects the link to the trim tab. While you install chains or cables, let the actuator screw turn freely. Adjust the turnbuckle to set the correct cable tension. Safety the turnbuckle. Turn the trim control wheel fully forward (nose down). If you must move the pointer to let the trim wheel move freely: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the control pedestal cover. See paragraph 11-5. Loosen the nut on the pivot shaft of the trim wheel. Loosen the screws that hold the chain guard (see figure 9-4).
 <p>Connecting to a Network</p> <p>The NP3250/NP2250/NP1250/NP3250W comes standard with a LAN port (RJ-45) which provides a LAN connection using a LAN cable. The USB Wireless LAN Unit also provides a wireless LAN connection. To use a LAN connection, you are required to assign an IP address to the projector. For setting the NETWORK, see page 110.</p> <p>NOTE: Some projectors may not have the USB Wireless LAN Unit. If you own a projector without the Wireless LAN Unit installed, and need to present to the projector via a wireless connection, the optional USB Wireless LAN Unit must be installed.</p> <p>With the LAN connection, two features are available: Projector Control and Picture transmission.</p>	 <p>How to connect a network</p> <p>The projector includes a LAN port (RJ-45) which provides a wired LAN connection. For a wireless LAN connection, there is a USB wireless LAN unit. To configure the network, see page 110.</p> <p>Note: Some projectors do not include the USB wireless LAN unit. You must install a USB wireless LAN unit to use a wireless connection.</p> <p>The LAN connection includes two features: Projector Control and Picture Transmission.</p>

STE in a nutshell



the remaining text becomes more repetitive, thus improving yield from translation memory. The lead time for translation is also reduced accordingly.

If your documents are translated from English into several languages, it makes sense to polish up the English before translation, as you can reap the benefits for each target language. The translations

will also (to some extent) be more controlled compared to a translation from standard English.

Implementation

A practical implementation of STE may involve the following:

- Training of writers, editors, translators

- Building a Technical Name dictionary
- Using checker software designed to support the user in finding the right words and detecting apparent violations of the rules.

Out of these elements, qualified training is the most essential, as only trained personnel can write

STE accurately, effectively and efficiently. Without proper training and a customised (Technical Name) dictionary, software will do more harm than good. However, given adequate training and a complete dictionary, software can save the user time and detect apparent violations of the rules that otherwise might partially go unnoticed. The software cannot and should not replace the writer; the writer always has the final say.

At the end of the day, the aim is to efficiently produce clean, crispy text, that is accurate and at the same time easy to read. If this takes bending or breaking a rule every now and then – so be it.

Upcoming ASD-STE100 training classes

Shufra offers two basic types of ASD-STE100 training classes:

- *Shared classes*, where several companies can send participants to attend the class in a central location; these classes are offered worldwide, based on market demand.
- *Custom, on-site classes*, where the class is normally held at the company's premises; we offer this anywhere in the world. This allows for the highest level of customisation and flexibility.

For both types of classes, the curriculum typically includes a discussion of the background and structure of the specification, a practical introduction to the rules and key vocabulary, standard and remedial exercises, and a workshop, where we review, rewrite and discuss text samples from the participants' own documentation. The class size is limited to approx. 10 people.

Shufra offers its next shared training class in Finland early December 2012, and then again in February 2013. Custom classes can always be scheduled in consultation.

About Shufra

Shufra specialises in international technical documentation standards, most notably ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English, providing training, implementation services and relevant software.

Text by **Frans Wijma**, PhD (Hons)

Dr. Frans Wijma has a background in electrical engineering and linguistics, and over 20 years of industry experience. He has been working as a consultant with customers in various industries worldwide and is widely regarded as a leading expert in ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English and multilingual documentation. He trained people from over 135 companies worldwide in the effective and correct use of ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English.

Customers in Finland include **Finn-Power**, **Patria** and **ABB**. Other companies trained include **Boeing**, **EADS**, **Embraer**, **Eurocopter**, **Huawei**, **Omron**, **Philips**, **Samsung**, **Tetra Pak** and **Volkswagen**.

In addition, Frans is a regular speaker at language and industry events, fluent in 10 languages and a commercially-licensed private pilot.

For more information, please visit www.shufra-consultancy.com or contact Frans at frans@shufra-consultancy.com. You are also welcome to connect on LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/franswijma>.

Motivating your contributors

In this blog, I will touch upon the challenges of getting the people onboard and changing their mindset to embrace social media.

Most companies today want a way to tap into the swarm intelligence = silent knowhow in people's heads. They come up with more and more fancy words for it, collective intelligence, knowledge reuse / contribution / base to name a few.

In my corner of the world, in Technical Support, the strive for effectiveness is ever present – how to serve an increasing customer base and increasing number of problems with fewer and fewer people and document the solutions to common problems, make them available for all the internal people and customers. One obvious and much used solution is to use social business software to open up the wealth of information previously hidden in either personal email or people's heads and use open communication, such as discussion forums, to get people cooperating out in the open.

Changing the mindset

Whenever introducing new tools, you also have to introduce new way of thinking. None of us are ever prepared to let go of The Good Old E-mail. And as long as you always handle your traffic via e-mail, there's little space left for collaboration on discussion forums. These two are not interchangeable as such, but they do eat each other's bandwidth. One of the so called low-hanging fruits (easy to harvest) is to think of e-mail distribution lists you are using for a certain purpose. Our early wins in forum use came from "attaching" an e-mail distribution list to a discussion

forum, so every time someone posted or replied to the e-mail sent to the distribution list, the post appeared on the forum.

Nice ways of getting people to contribute

We have pretty much done it all: had content creation campaigns in which internal contributors have been able to win mobile phones. In customer activation campaigns (usually “advent calendar” type of things) we have rewarded active customers with nifty gadgets and collected participation data in surveys and polls. The system we use deals out status level points for contributors based on how many posts, blogs and docs each user has, and whether that user’s answers have been marked as helpful/correct. Each community has a Top Participants widget. Status level points gathered give a user the possibility to rise in expertise ranking: go from novice to Grand Master (eventually). Sometimes we have even pushed for certain type of content to be created, such as video instructions, and given lots of status level points when a user uploads a video.

Overall, I’d say that people are motivated to participate and contribute not only because they stand to gain a mobile phone, but if there is, firstly, a fun factor involved, and secondly, if they can perceivably help others. Also respect from peers, getting to be a Top Contributor in a community or raising your status from Novice to Expert to Master will motivate contributors.

Why helping others is important: A recent study showed that people are motivated not by increase in their salary but because they want to find meaning in their work, for example, feel useful, or help each other, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrkrvAUbU9Y>.

Some very good ideas how to showcase people’s knowhow can we found at supportforums.cisco.com:

- Ask the Experts-events:
<https://supportforums.cisco.com/community/netpro/expert-corner/ask-the-experts>
- Top contributors:
<https://supportforums.cisco.com/community/netpro/top-contributors>
- Hall of Fame:
<https://supportforums.cisco.com/community/netpro/top-contributors/hall-of-fame>

Finally, the fun factor – what I mean by that is that not all work needs to be that serious. When you’re operating in a platform that by nature promotes collaboration and gets people to cooperate with each other, why not have fun competitions to give it some salt and pepper? We are posting holiday snapshots on our forums, and one team in Berlin, they have a contest every Christmas to find tree-structures in one case handling tool. The idea of the contest is to find the biggest “Christmas tree”, as the tree-structures look like Christmas trees.

Slightly more forceful ways of getting people to participate

You can also limit access to your experts: say that the only way to get support in issues related to XYZ is to post in certain discussion forum. E-mails are not supported, the experts only follow the forum. In other words, you’re giving access to a limited group of individuals, but only by using a certain method.

Changing people’s set ways of communicating and getting them to view the offered solution as

something else than “yet another tool” takes some doing and brainwashing.

Usually the best motivator of all is showing how the new way of doing things would help them: The what-in-it-for-me factor. If you can show that discussion forums reduce the case resolution time, or reduces e-mail, or makes work overall more efficient - people are willing to try it out. Very often in

my corner of the world, the old joke applies. You’re running so fast, there’s no time to jump on the bicycle. So showing how smooth the ride would be on that bicycle, that may be just the thing needed to convince the users.

Text by **Anne Karppinen**
Manager
Nokia Siemens Networks

A tech comms person turned social media evangelist. 13 years in tech comms, after that 3 years of working with a social media

platform deployment project in the domain of technical support and customer care. Will now write a series of blogs on social media impact, implementation, usage, adoption and whatnot.



Conceptual Models: What Are They and Why Should You Care?

It was a Monday morning and Bryan was excited. Ann, the head of the documentation team, had announced over the morning coffee that they would finally get their hands on the closed beta of the new application. It had already been a while since the last product launch at the company they were working in, and Bryan thought it was about time he got something fresh to work on. Several manuals, online helps, and tutorials would need to be written in time for the product launch.

Unfortunately Bryan was working in a software house not best known for its agility or iterative approach; the documentation was written at the downstream of the product development waterfall. Bryan wouldn't let this put him down: he was determined to tackle all the problems resulting from a group of software engineers put into the same room to write code.

A couple of days later and Bryan's initial excitement had turned into disappointment and dismay. The long-awaited application turned out to be a nightmare; once again Bryan found himself trying to patch up a messy product with the documentation. It was full of incongruities, bad terminology, and really difficult to figure out. The *conceptual model* of the application hadn't been thought out.

For many product design teams, the first steps of the design process involve sketching the outlook of the product; the controls and the layout (if it's a digital product) or form (physical product) it has. All this is about how the product *presents* itself to users. If this is your first step, changes are that your product will end up experiencing problems such as mentioned above. My suggestion is to

start by designing what the product *is* to the users. The difference can seem subtle, but can make all the difference.

Is the comment section of a blog a set of individual posts or a threaded discussion board? Is an online photo storage service a filing cabinet, a personal photo album, or a social network for sharing important moments in your life? These decisions are important and, once made, should guide the rest of the design process. A product that is crafted based on a clear conceptual model will help the users to form more coherent mental models of it.

Conceptual models gone wrong

To log my weekly working hours, I sign in to a web service provided by a large B2B software house. You could expect a well-thought-out, user-centric conceptual model for a service of this kind to include concepts and metaphors such as *hour, day, week, calendar, task, project, and customer*, among many others. (Note that here we are discussing the *concepts* and *metaphors*, not the *terms*. The concepts and metaphors can, and should be realized in the information architecture, visual design, icons, terminology, and so on.) Once in the service, the first thing I need to do is to click a button labelled *Navigator*. Huh? I thought that I was logging my hours, not steering an airplane or an ocean liner. Sure, almost every website today has some sort of a navigation bar, but as a concept that is something that the developers and designers need to worry about, not something that the user even needs to be aware of.

To log hours to tasks and projects that I've worked on, I select the project from a list and from the context menu the option *Add as a new row to time sheet*. Why the term *row*? My educated guess is that it comes from the concepts

associated with the database for the time entries. A database has rows and columns, but the user is interested in projects and tasks. Again, concepts that the user shouldn't need to figure out.

Finally, to send my hours for approval, I click a button with a flag icon and the tooltip *Mark the current transaction for approval*. Now it's already to flags and transactions. My condolences go to the users of this application, who once had to learn to use it (including myself), and to the poor technical writer who had to explain everything to the bewildered users.

As we've already seen, a product or service that is based on a messy conceptual model or on no model at all is much more likely to result in a complex system characterised by muddled information architecture, bad terminology, indesciptive controls and icons, and unhelpful visual design. The users will have hard time learning to use it and can't generalize what they've managed to learn in one situation to new contexts.

A *conceptual model* is a description of a system, product, or service on a high level of abstraction. It includes the major concepts, metaphors, and analogies in the system, and describes the mappings and relationships between these. With the help of a good conceptual model, the designers aim to communicate a coherent system image to the users, who will then base their internal representations (i.e. mental models) on it.

A conceptual model should be task-based and as simple as possible, yet powerful enough to provide the users with everything they need to comfortably achieve their goals. As you will learn in every Design 101 course around the world, the principle

of simplicity was eloquently worded by **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**: “You know you’ve achieved perfection in design, not when you have nothing more to add, but when you have nothing more to take away.”

Do the users of a spreadsheet program need to know what a *string argument* is? Does the concept of an *occluded front* help a bicycle commuter who is checking the weather forecast? As you notice from these examples, there is often a trade-off between simplicity and power, so every decision about the conceptual model should be an informed one.

Once the conceptual model has been crafted, it functions as a tool to help with everything that follows: the user interface, lexicon, technical implementation, documentation, and so on. In addition to the documentation part, the lexicon is surely something that could benefit from the expertise of a technical writer.

If Bryan was trusted with being in charge of the lexicon, he could always be on the lookout for inconsistencies in the user interface: “Hey Ann, come over here. The term *occluded front* is not in our lexicon or in the conceptual model. Could you contact the developers and get it removed from the user interface, or if it’s something that our users really need to know, we need to get the whole group together to have it added to the conceptual model.”

Right now I can hear the murmur from the back row: “Sure, all that humanism might be useful if you’re making consumer products, but not in our hardcore industrial engineering biz.” To that my answer is a polite “bollocks.” Sure, up to until today more effort has been put into the experiences that consumer

products offer, but all that is changing fast. People are no longer willing to put up with crappy applications and products at work, in the same way that they won’t in their leisure. Companies that realize this will be able to offer more value to their business customers in the future and will be the winners of tomorrow. (Don’t take my word for it: FIMECC, the **Finnish Metals and Engineering Competence Cluster**, has an on-going multi-million euro research program titled UXUS – **User Experience and Usability in Complex Systems**. Can you get any more hardcore than that?)

So the next time you face the task of writing and designing documentation for a messy and unnecessarily complex product, stop for a moment to think if there is something wrong with its conceptual model. Doing so will help you to be more analytical about where the real problems are and, if you happen to be in the writing business, perhaps presents an avenue for the technical writer to swim upstream in the product development waterfall.



People are no longer willing to put up with crappy applications and products at work, in the same way that they won’t in their leisure. Companies that realize this will be able to offer more value to their business customers in the future and will be the winners of tomorrow.

stressed, Panic?
Problems with your boss?

Click the button below.

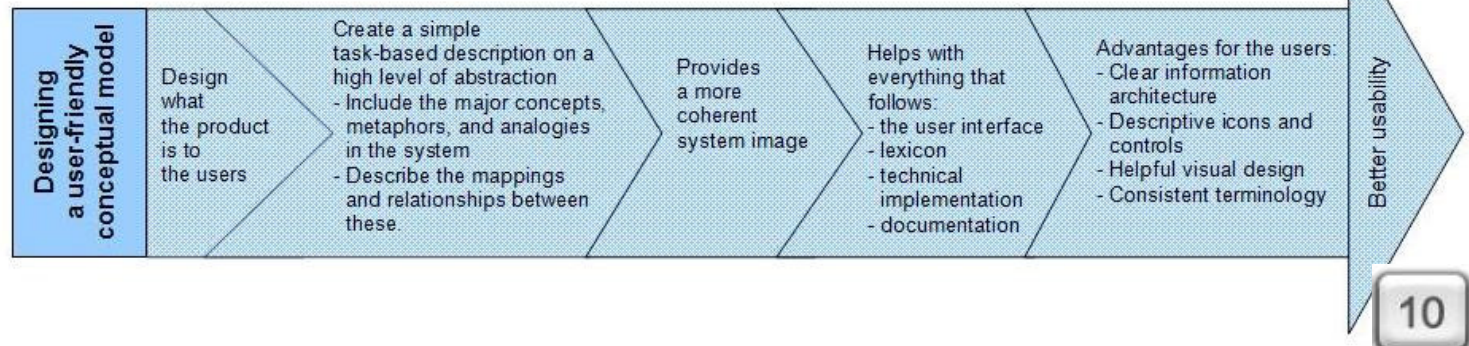
A perfect day

Did you have any problems in clicking the button?
If you did, note the following:

Who said that life was going to be easy?

Text by **Jussi Ahola**

Jussi is a postgrad student in Human-Technology Interaction, crossfitter, proponent of the Maker movement, and mad scientist currently based in Tampere. Follow him on Twitter [@jussiahola](#).



Fantasia: imagining the next 15 years as technical communicator

I've been in this fantastic field for 15 years. When the next 15 years are gone I'll be 60 years old. Gosh. All the political and trade union turmoil over making sure young people enter working life as early as possible and old people stay at work as long as possible has most had its impact already. When I'm 60, how do I think that I work as a tech comm pro?

The dream team

A pun intended: I started my career at Nokia Telecommunications in 1997 and learned my profession there. They were crazy years filled with new mobile technology, truckloads of money for training and development, enthusiastic people and active customers. We all laughed at the in-house slogan "Connecting People – Disconnecting families" because of the mad workload, but it was very different, even positive madness compared to the recent years of slicing, cutting, deleting, packaging people. This is happening of course to companies all over the world, but has it been worth it? In 15 years from now, are we streamlined and focused and as effective as we can be?

Yes we are! The global operations of companies allow organizations to build the ideal teams for the job at hands. Tech comm professionals get hired to do jobs in multinational teams in any part of the world thanks to the streamlined tools and standardization of documentation.

What we are going to miss are the constant organizational changes and office politics. The ongoing musical chair games of management boards and desperate optimizing is totally invisible to the new way of working. We are not treated as resources or competences but people who have a life outside office hours.

Clouds

Hands up, who has heard the words "paper free office" already in the 20th century? I don't know about y'all but my office desk is and has always been filled with paper. But, in 15 years from now, there will be no more paper documents, all is online and we save trees by storing content in the clouds. Authoring, reviewing, publishing, all happen online. If documentation is needed on paper it is automated and is as green as possible meaning optimizing the printing as close to the customer as possible.

Did I mention that this online work involves actively also the online and mobile users, help users, interactive users who author content themselves, too? The mysterious user is part of the cloud! Yay!

This development to take place requires more than IT arrangements on security and whatnot, but also the terminals we work with need to be seriously upgraded. I'm looking forward to seeing the kind of working stations like the air traffic controllers had in the Matrix movies.

You'd be comfortably seated (or standing if you prefer) and have all the information in front of you on a big touch screen. For writing you'd have a keyboard or you could dictate and the machine would type it out. Funky and no need to worry about ergonomics!

Unions without borders

All trade unions must renew themselves to serve their members better in the changing work environment. Employee rights are global as the companies are; currently the companies gain too much benefit from moving work from "expensiv" countries to "cheap" countries. That must stop and it will!

As our work becomes borderless so do the unions that protect our rights as worker bees in the global huge beehive. There is a clear balance between the employer and employee unions and they truly work together towards common goals of work wellbeing, efficiency and development. I am a true believer it could happen if there is real desire to make it happen. At the moment I have my doubts but hey, this is Fantasia!

Work is flexible from both sides and rules are agreed on big scale to make sure everyone plays the game fairly. Should you as an employee need flexibility to work shorter days to take care of your child or elderly parent, you can do so without paper work hassle with KELA, tax office, or union fund; all the paper work is handled automatically by employer HR. Your pay is adjusted according to the hours you put in and the information on your benefits and pays is available online. If you agree to work overtime, you can be sure that you get paid for every minute and are not required to work more than the law permits. Never there is a need to call payroll and check if they have done their part of the deal – they have.

Just a quick thought: when everything is so comfy and reliable, do we need union lawyers anymore? Yes we do, because even in 15 years from now there are wild employers who ignore laws and rules. Even in Fantasia there is a bit of reality. Think of the recent events with the MTV3 av-translators, for example.

Mobility and Office hubs

Mobile work happens for real. Instead of being monitored and supervised by managers who want us to sit in tiny open office cubicles and punch in and out every day we are trusted that the documentation is done no matter where we are. We have the tools either at home or at office hubs close to our home.

At the office hub I can enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner with worker bees from other companies. The office hub canteen offers healthy seasonal food made from ingredients by local farmers and producers. Fair Trade coffee and tea are offered with healthy snacks. The office hub has green walls that are covered with plants to provide fresh air and “green for the eyes” as it has been studied office plants are good for you.

When we visit the corporate office it is to enjoy the company of colleagues and customers face to face. We don't go sit and work in cubicles there but sincerely meet and interact with the people we see. That's when we enjoy long lunches and inspirational meetings with our managers. No matter how independent and mobile we are it is good to have a manager who shields you from the global corporate bulls**t and supports you when the going gets tough. Once a week this manager says thank you for a job well done.

Fantastic people to work with

What stays the same for the next 15 years are the charming people I work with. People who know me inside out and still call me their good colleague, even a friend. Our tech comm profession is recognized as a career where people actually aim at, not something they stumble upon while looking for a “real” job. We collaborate easily with our colleagues globally and learn from each other.

That is the best part of our work: the people. The most satisfying work days are when I have had review meetings or development meetings with colleagues across org chart borders. My experience has been that people meet at tech comm meetings to discuss the big picture. Sometimes I'm amazed how little time we have for real discussions where people are heard and ideas start to blossom. But when that happens, it lights up my work week and I can feel that our profession truly is on the TOP20 list of the best jobs in the world.

Another day in the field

As I was thinking about the future possibilities I came by an interesting sci-fi movie, called Sleep dealer. In this movie the city of Tijuana in Mexico is the home of is the home of

sweatshop virtual labor factories where workers have nodes (= data ports, like in Matrix but in arms and neck) in their bodies. The workers are hooked up in wires to operate remote-controlled robots and this is the new form of cheap labor: child care, construction work, assembly lines, farm work and so forth can be accessed via robots anytime and anywhere. The workers have contact lenses in their eyes to see what the robot sees and there's simultaneous interpretation available so you understand each other no matter where you are.

Ignorant me I thought home office work was only for, as they say in Finnish, tietotyöläiset (knowledge workers?). I mean the Matrix-world is smoothly a bit too much, but this Tijuana-thing could happen, folks.

What? Who? Where? When? Why? How?

The six questions above that we tech authors answer in our work every day are rolling in my mind as the famous year 2012 closes to its end. I know for sure that I will be working more from home office which in turn enables me to enjoy the services of the new local yoga room on a daily basis. What about you? Let your mind unwind for a moment and dream on, friends, dream on! What do **You** want for your future?

Wishing y'all relaxing holidays and fantastic New Year!

Text by **Maria Iho**, technical writer
Marioff Corporation

Yhä ylemmäs, Yliopisto-opettajana 2000-luvulla

Yliopistot ovat 2000-luvulla jatkuvassa muutoksessa. Ensin korkeakoulutusta yhdenmuokaistettiin Euroopan laajuisesti ns. Bolognan prosessissa. Sen jälkeen alkoi rakenteelliseksi kehittämiseksi kutsuttu prosessi, joka jatkuu edelleen. Edellisen uudistuksen pölyt eivät ehdi kunnolla laskeutua, kun muutoksen huiska viuhuu jo uudelleen.

Vuoden 2010 alussa astui voimaan uusi yliopistolaki, jonka myötä yliopistot saivat aiempaa enemmän omaa päätösvaltaa ja liikkumavaraa taloudenpitoonsa. Henkilöstön näkökulmasta kenties merkittävin muutos oli se, että virkasuhteet muuttuivat työsuhteiksi. Valtion pitkästä ja kapeasta leivästä on tullut viipaleleipää, jonka pituus ja viipaleiden koko vaihtelevat.

Korkeakoulujen rakenteellisen kehittämisen ja uuden yliopistolain seurauksista on säännöllisesti kirjoitettu lehdissä. Tuorein esi-

yhä korkeammalle!

yhä nopeammin,

merkki on Suomen Kuvalehdestä, jonka kansilehdellä 26.10.2012 on repäisevä otsikko: "Myttyyn meni. Kuinka yliopistouudistuksesta tuli kaikkien aikojen fiasko."

Yleisellä tasolla muutoksista ja uudistuksista on kirjoitettu, mutta ruohonjuuritason keskustelua on käyty enimmäkseen kahvipöytäkeskusteluina. Yleisen tarkastelun lisäksi muutoksia ja niiden seurauksia voidaan pohdita myös yliopisto-opettajan arjen näkökulmasta.

Hynttyyt yhteen – kohti suurempia yksiköitä

Korkeakoulujen rakenteellisen kehittämisen seurauksena korkeakouluja ja yliopistoja on yhdistetty entistä suuremmiksi yksiköiksi: Aalto-yliopisto, Itä-Suomen yliopisto, Turun uusi yliopisto ja vuodesta 2013 alkaen Taideyliopisto. Suuremmat yksiköt -ajattelu näkyy myös pienemmässä mittakaavassa esimer-

kiksi tiedekuntien, oppiaineiden/yksiköiden ja koulutusohjelmien yhdistämisinä. Esimerkiksi Vaasan yliopiston humanistisella alalla käynnistyivät syksyllä 2012 uudet kandidaatti- ja maisterikoulutusohjelmat.

Oma oppiaineeni viestintätieteet on mukana viestinnän, nykysuomen ja englannin yhteisessä kandidaattiohjelmassa, jossa opiskelijat valitsevat pääaineensa ensimmäisen vuoden yhteisten opintojen jälkeen. Yhteensovittamista edelsi lähes kaksi vuotta kestänyt suunnittelutyö, jossa myös opettajat olivat mukana. Päivät täyttyivät lukuisista kokouksista, sähköpostiviesteistä, dokumenteista ja niiden eri versioita – toisinaan tuntui siltä, että varsinainen työ, opettaminen, oli jäädä taka-alalle.

Kilvoittelua ja kilpajuoksua

Tulosvastuullisuus pitää huolen siitä, että kokoustaminen ja raportointi ovat tulleet jäädäkseen. Liike-elämästä tutut käytännöt, kuten strategiat, toiminnan arviointi, palkitseminen ja kilpailuun kannustaminen ovat

rantautuneet yliopistoihin. Koulutuksessa on pyrittävä tehokkuuteen ja laatuun: yliopistojen uuden rahoitusmallin kriteereitä ovat esimerkiksi suoritettujen opintopisteiden määrä ja opiskelijapalaute.

Tehokas ja laadukas opetus ei yksistään vielä riitä, vaan opettajan on ehdittävä myös tutkia. Julkaisujen määrä on myös yksi rahoitusmallin kriteereistä. Julkaisujen laadulla on myös merkitystä: ns. Julkaisufoorumi-luokituksessa tieteelliset julkaisut on arvioitu ja sijoitettu yhdelle kolmesta tasosta: perustaso (1), johtava taso (2) tai korkein taso (3). Luokituksessa on mukana kaksi teknisen viestinnän alan julkaisua: Journal of Business and Technical Communication ja Technical Communication, kumpikin tasolla 1.

Yliopisto-opettajan työ onkin 2000-luvulla muuttunut entistä enemmän kilvoitteluksi ja kilpajuoksuksi. Kilvoitellaan pisteistä ja palkinnoista, juostaan kilpaa ajan kanssa: on saavutettava entistä enemmän entistä lyhyemmässä ajassa entistä pienemmin resurssein. Tämä on tuttu tunne myös monille

teknisen viestinnän alalla työskenteleville.

Arvioinnin, mittaamisen ja laskemisen avuksi on kehitetty erilaisia järjestelmiä, joihin on säännöllisesti muistettava kirjata milloin mitäänkin. Osa opettajan ajasta kuluu järjestelmien käyttöön liittyvissä koulutuksissa, suurin osa järjestelmien varsinaisessa käytössä. Tekninen viestintä on koko ajan läsnä. Monet oman työyhteisön sisältä tulleet kokemukset päätyvätkin elävöittämään teknisen viestinnän luentoja.

”Muistiinpanoja ei tarvita – kaikki löytyy verkosta”

Kanssakäyminen opiskelijoiden kanssa on yliopisto-opettajan työn suola. Opetus on vuorovaikutusta, jossa itsekkin opettajana oppii joka päivä jotain uutta. Havaintojeni mukaan 2000-luvun puolivälin jälkeen opiskelukulttuurissa on tapahtunut muutos, jossa tieto- ja viestintäteknikalla on merkittävä osa. Myös ajattelutavassa on tapahtunut jonkinlainen muutos: opiskelijat ovat asiakkaita, joille yliopisto tarjoaa palvelujaan.

Omana opiskeluaikanani 1990-luvulla WWW alkoi vasta yleistyä ja luentomuistiinpanot kirjoitettiin käsin. Jos luennolle ei päässyt, varmistettiin, että luentomuistiinpanot sai kopioitavaksi joltakulta luennolle osallistuneelta. Nyt enää harva opiskelija tekee luennoilla muistiinpanoja, suurimmalla osalla ei ole mitään muistiinpanovälineitä esillä. Opetuksessa hyödynnetään verkko-oppimisympäristöjä, kuten Moodlea, jossa on kursseja koskevaa materiaalia. Luentomuistiinpanojen tekeminen koetaan turhaksi, opiskelijat luottavat siihen, että luentomateriaali on jossain saatavilla. Opettajan näkökulmasta se, että jotain on jossain saatavilla, ei vielä tarkoita sitä, että opiskelija olisi sisäistänyt asian. Moodlen voimasta kertonee jotain University of Vaasa Memes -Facebookissa oleva meemi, jossa joukko pukumiehiä seisoo kumartuneina toistensa puoleen ja nauraa yhden kertomalle vitsille: "And then I said the slides would be in Moodle before the exam."

Opiskelu on työtä – vai onko sittenkään

Yhä suurempi osa opiskelijoista käy töissä, minkä vuoksi luento- ja työaikataulujen yhteensovittaminen on monelle opiskelijalle haastavaa. Yliopisto-opetuksen suunnittelun lähtökohtana on kokopäiväinen opiskelija: luennot aikataulutetaan kello 8 ja 16 välille ja muut työtehtävät ajoitetaan sen mukaan. Kokopäiväisten opiskelijoiden joukko tuntuu harvenevan vuosi vuodelta, etenkin, mitä ylemmäs vuosikursseilla edetään. Kursseille päästään mukaan yhä myöhemmin syksyllä. Tänä syksynä havahduin siihen, että osa opiskelijoista aloitti opiskelun vasta loka-kuussa, vaikka lukukausi alkoi syyskuun alussa. Vastaavasti keväällä kesätyöt aloitetaan yhä aikaisemmin, viimeistään toukokuun alussa.

Opiskelija on asiakas -ajattelu näkyy mielestäni tavassa, jolla poissaoloihin suhtaudutaan ja jolla niistä kerrotaan: ne ovat ilmoitus-

luontoisia asioita. Siinä missä aiemmin kysyttiin varovasti opettajalta, saako vielä tulla mukaan kurssille, vaikka ei pääse aloitusluennolle, on poissaolo nykyään ilmoitusasia: "tulen mukaan kurssille parin viikon kuluttua". Poissaolojen syytkin kerrotaan avoimesti: poissaolot johtuvat hyvin usein joko olosuhteista: "olen ulkomailla", "olen töissä", "asun niin kaukana" tai persoonasta: "en viitsi", "en saa aikaiseksi", "ei ole motivaatiota".

Olen keskustellut havainnoistani Suomen eri yliopistoissa opettavien kollegoideni kanssa, ja he ovat kiinnittäneet huomioita samoihin asioihin. Kyse lienee jostakin laajemmasta ilmiöstä. Mahtaako se kertoa jotain tästä ajasta yleensä? "Muutoksen, kehityksen ja toimintaedellytysten parantamisen nimissä" asiasta olisi kiinnostavaa jatkaa keskustelua esimerkiksi STVY:n foorumilla verkossa.

Teksti: Suvi Isohella

Yliopisto-opettaja, Vaasan yliopisto



Kappeli by night, Helsinki
Photo: **Tiina Lähteenmäki**

Suomen teknisen viestinnän yhdistys (STVY) ry:n tarkoituksena on ammatillisen yhteistyön edistäminen viestinnän alalla, alan tunnetuksi tekeminen, ammattitaidon kehittäminen, koulutuksen järjestäminen jäsenkunnalle ja alan kansainvälinen yhteistyö.

Yhdistyksemme on tarkoitettu kaikille, jotka harjoittavat työkseen teknistä viestintää: kirjoittajille, kääntäjille, kuvittajille, lokalisoijille, toimittajille, johtajille, opettajille, opiskelijoille ja muille vastaaville.

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Anyone who works in technical communication – writers, designers, translators, coordinators, illustrators, editors, managers, teachers, students and various others working in the area – can join the Society.

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