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Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
Summer 2015

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Mad about MadWorld

A review of MadWorld 2015 | Catamaran Beach Resort | San Diego, CA | April 12–14.
Pam Coca shares her experience.

The MadWorld 2015 Technical Communication and Content Strategy Conference was held at the Polynesian-themed Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa, where conference goers were surrounded by palm trees, lush vegetation, tiki torches, koi ponds, waterfalls, and exotic birds. MadWorld is sponsored and hosted by MadCap Software Inc., whose signature product is MadCap Flare, a technical authoring and publishing solution for web, desktop, mobile and printed documentation.

Awesome takeaways

With any conference, technical or otherwise, the big question is “Was my time and money well spent?” What better way to find out than to ask the attendees themselves.

“I’m mad about MadWorld,” says Andrya Feinberg, Documentation Manager and Content Strategist at Emotient, Inc., as she raved about her time in the Hospitality Lounge with Laura, Kelsey, and Bobby! “I learned that creating an HTML5 CSS is easy and that using the HTML5 Skin Editor is the key to customising the look and feel of your online help. MadWorld is where you meet industry experts and learn new processes, tips, and tricks to improve and streamline your content.”

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”

According to Paula Carlson, IT Sr. Tech Writer at Exeter Finance, her best takeaway was from the *Show Me the Money* session by Allison Ellington and Lori Guillory. “Technical writers must create business cases to show our companies our value. Our bosses need to see how investing in training results in cross-training opportunities for the team.”

Patricia A. D’Ambrosio, Documentation Lead at BA Insight, summed it all up with, “No matter how much you think that you know, or how terrific your project seems, there is always so much to be learned at MadWorld. Coming together with experts who have varied experiences gives rise to new ideas, new approaches, and the tricks to improving content.”

Naturals at networking

In this perfect environment for information exchange, Jessica Nealon, Technical Writer Business Analyst at TBC Corporation taught a lunchtime group how to easily keep

numbered lists in sequence after inserting an image or a sub-bullet. “Simply right-click on the tag of the item following the break and select **ContinueSequence**. This streamlines the authoring process, increasing the accuracy and consistency of content.”

Catherine Horsfall, owner of Warwick Technical Writing Services, presented *Developing Topic-Based Thinking* and reminded us, “The key to developing topic-based thinking is to be 100% clear on what topic-based thinking is: a mind-set where the topic author can disconnect from the totality of the project / document and write discrete pieces of content, about a specific subject, with an identifiable purpose that can stand alone.”



Local beer, exquisite snacks, and networking on the beach were de rigueur the first night of MadWorld



The Polynesian-themed Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa welcomed MadCap fans to a tropical paradise



The ever-so-popular Hospitality Lounge is always a big draw at MadWorld!

Lightning rounds

A much-relished annual event at MadWorld is the *Lightning Talk* where half a dozen speakers present a topic in seven minutes or less. This year, MadCap Evangelist Mike Hamilton highlighted some of the areas where we might want to stretch a little in managing our own careers, “In dealing with corporate realities in addition to our vocation, we must remember to show [the powers-that-be] that we add more value than we cost.”

Diverse sessions

MadCap Software is committed to creating a conference experience like no other. The Hospitality Lounge remains one of the conference’s greatest and most unique offerings, while the effort to bring in the most talented and experienced speakers remains a top priority. “Due to the large volume of sessions submitted last year during our call for papers,

it was no easy task narrowing the selection down to our final list of speakers and sessions,” said David Ferriot, Marketing Director for MadCap Software. “We try to provide sessions that appeal to a broad range of users, incorporate case studies and cover a variety of topics including advanced tips, CSS, content strategy and translation management.”

Additionally, for the first time this year, MadCap offered a half-day Advanced Training Workshop following the conference that included longer sessions, enabling instructors to take a deeper dive into important topics.

An incomparable event

“MadWorld was packed with great sessions and tons of useful, actionable information. I picked up tips, skills, and tricks that will have an immediate impact on my daily work. The staff were phenomenal,

the venue perfect, and the content excellent. This is my favourite conference to attend each year, and this year did not disappoint in any way,” said Paul Pehrson, owner of DocGuy Training. 



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- Approved as an adjective
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* *Fluid* is approved as a noun only, unlike *liquid*, which is approved as a noun and as an adjective.





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The ISTC provides a mentoring scheme for its junior members, matching them with a technical communicator who has experience in either a similar or complementary area.

Our mentors are all Fellows or Members of the ISTC who are keen to share their knowledge and experience with new entrants to the profession. We’re always looking for any offers of help – even if you can only spare some time to offer occasional guidance, say for a specific task or skill or intensive coaching before an interview.

If you are a member of the ISTC and want to find out more about the mentoring scheme, contact the ISTC office.

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The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators is the largest UK body representing information development professionals, serving both our members and the wider technical communication community.

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Communicator



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Communicator is the ISTC's award-winning quarterly professional journal, covering the breadth of technical communications, offering in-depth articles, case studies, book and product reviews.

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