

Daily *hot* sheet

Openers

Who would have thought that RoboHelp would return (see prediction in main story on this page)? The 600-pound gorilla of help development tools has a new owner and apparently a new attitude. Can it regain mindshare? Only time will tell.

Sun splashed attendees every time they wandered outdoors, but no one complained, of course. The weather is just supposed to get warmer and warmer over the next couple of days.

Thank you for filling out session evaluations, and please keep doing it. Your feedback is very important.

The information/registration table outside of the Madera/Pasadena room is always staffed with conference personnel to answer your questions and meet your needs.

Don't forget, Friday starts as early as today: 8:30am (with breakfast open at 8:00am).

Today's Forecast



Partly cloudy
82 degrees



Sarah O'Keefe, Dave Gash, Michael Hughes, Saul Carliner, and Joe Welinske make bold predictions at the conference's opening panel.

WinHelp is Dead, RoboHelp Returns, Opening Panel Predicts Internet Crash

by Chuck Martin

Tuesday is "hump day" at the annual WritersUA Conference on Software User Assistance, the middle day that is the day with the most sessions, the day with the most (and latest) events, and the last day to meet with and get information from product vendors.

But Monday began with a bang and continued with big news.

Reversing field from a prediction he made a year ago at the same future trends opening panel, Joe Welinske touted what amounts to the resurrection of RoboHelp.

Adobe, which bought Macromedia last year (which bought eHelp the year before) has a "different view" of RoboHelp, Welinske said.

The evidence is right outside the ballroom where Adobe has a prominent presence with eight staff members at the vendor exhibition and is talking about RoboHelp (along with several other

products).

Michael Hu, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Adobe and responsible for RoboHelp later confirmed the news, saying that actual developers are working on the RoboHelp code. They are here at the conference to learn what users (that's you and me) need from them in the future.

Other provocative predictions from the panel included a move from vendor-generated to user-generated assistance, a move from paid software to "good enough" and free open source software, and "the Internet will crash."

Meanwhile, Microsoft made it official in its afternoon session: WinHelp will not be supported, in Windows Vista, due out now in early 2007.

Session Summaries

User Assistance Trends Panel

The panel of pundits predicted the future of user assistance, including the return of RoboHelp, the move to AJAX (asynchronous Java and XML) and open source software, and the crashing of the Internet.

Migrating from HTML and XHTML to XML Char James-Tanny

It is easiest to make a two-step migration, from HTML to XHTML, then XHTML to XML. It will make you more familiar with the structure of your content and will make further maintenance easier.

Creating Self-Aware Navigation Devices Dave Gash

This code-heavy presentation showed ways of creating automatic related topics and browse sequence links that are written into content pages and that are easy to manipulate and maintain.

User-centered Design for Help Systems Scott DeLoach

Scott presented a lot of research results, research that studied user behavior and preferences when using online help. The finding included what size font to use (not less than 10 point), sentence length, and linking guidelines (place links at the top of topics and on the right, closer to the scroll bar).



Chatting outdoors at the evening social.



Getting ready for the first Monday session.

Bits & Pieces

Session Evaluation Raffle Winners

Raffle winners and prizes from session evaluations filled out during Monday's sessions:

- Rob McDiarmid: Adobe backpack
- Rebecca Altman: Doc-To-Help 2006 Enterprise from Component One
- JoAnn Keosaian: Help Studio or Document! X from Innovasys
- Colleen Brown: WebWorks ePublisher Pro (for Word or FrameMaker) from Quadralay
- Linda Phillips: One year subscription of HelpServer from 4.ST
- Raymond Ringhiser: MadCap Flare from MadCap Software
- Linda Stafford: MacCap Mimic from MadCap Software

Tuesday Lunch

Pick up lunch tickets either on the way into the lunch rooms or at the conference registration table at any time during the morning.

Job Board

A bulletin board has been set up to the right of the conference information table outside the Madera/Pasadena room. Attendees are welcome to post resumes and job postings on the job board.

Tuesday Evening Social

In addition to sponsoring tonight's social on the Calabrese Terrace, MadCap software is also raffling off a copy of MadCap Flare.

LavaCon Discount

LavaCon is offering a \$100 discount on LavaCon '06, October 1-4 in Hawaii. Stop by the LavaCon booth today to get a registration form.

Doc-To-Help iPod Nano

Visit Do-To-Help's demo today at 4:15pm and register for a chance to win an iPod Nano.

Star Hunt Prize

If you found all the stars in last night's Star Hunt, redeem your sheet at the information/registration desk and receive your prize, a Palm Springs cactus pen.

Vendor Exhibits End Today

Today is the last chance to meet with and talk to vendors as the exhibit ends today at 5:15pm.



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