



Australian Cultural Evening

by *Tony Self*

For the third consecutive year, an Australian Cultural Evening is to be held to add an international flavour to the Conference.

That evening is tonight.

Those familiar with Australians will understand that "culture" has an entirely different meaning. In fact, the evening consists of visits to as many different bars as possible.

Being Australian is not a prerequisite, but a high embarrassment threshold and a lack of self-respect is considered favorably.

If you wish to participate and are not the type of person that would attend an Awards Dinner, then join us at 6:30pm for our first stop at the Schooners bar in the Sheraton.

Microsoft announces HTML Help schedule

by *Chuck Martin*

At a jam-packed session Monday morning, Microsoft announced its schedule for the next releases of HTML Help. Version 1.21 will ship March 17 with Internet Explorer 5.0 and version 1.3 will be incorporated into Windows 2000.

But Shane McRoberts, Lead Program Manager of the HTML Help development team, hedged his bets when it came to version 2.0, saying only that it won't happen this year and that "it's gonna be good."

Surrounding the schedule announcement was the latest and greatest information about HTML Help, delivered to one of the largest audiences of the day: a near SRO crowd in the Grand A/B Ballrooms.

HTML Help has finally caught up with WinHelp, adding Help-author-sought technologies such as pop-ups, secondary windows, associative links, and related topics. Plus, it's gone on to add embedded windows and Dynamic

HTML capabilities, as well as a limited-functionality Java applet that enables HTML Help to be viewed across platforms.

Microsoft has committed to HTML Help as a new standard for Windows and Windows applications, including major Microsoft software such as

Windows 98, Visual Studio and MSDN, Office 2000, and Windows 2000. The latest released version, version 1.2, is used in PhotoDraw 2000.

Compared to WinHelp, HTML Help offers standard HTML, direct integration of web content, better compression, better large document set support, and both navigation and content

panes available simultaneously.

For more information about HTML Help, and to download the latest version free, visit Microsoft on the web at <http://www.microsoft.com/workshop/author/htmlhelp>.



Members of the HTML Help development team answer audience questions.

ForeFront Releases ForeHTML Pro 3

ForeFront Incorporated, a leading supplier of visual authoring tools for online Help development, announces the release of ForeHTML Pro 3. In response to the industry transition from WinHelp to HTML-based Help, ForeFront presents an authoring environment that provides timesaving tools to author, edit and build to the

four key HTML-based Help formats and the two WinHelp formats (Windows 3.1 and 95/NT) — all from one ForeHTML Pro project.

ForeFront's ForeHTML Pro 3 Help authoring software supports all the latest

and evolving HTML-based Help formats: Sun Microsystems' new JavaHelp™; ForeFront's cross-browser/cross-platform InterHelp™; Microsoft® Windows 98 HTML Help™ and Windows CE Help™. Enhancing ForeHTML Pro 3's support for these Help standards are the HTML-specific authoring features for inserting Java Applets, ActiveX™ controls, JavaScript™, VB Script™ and Cascading Style Sheets all within a complete WYSIWYG editing environment.

ForeHTML Pro 3 fully supports JavaHelp by automatically creating a 3-pane window layout, navigation toolbar and navigation pane with collapsible table of contents, keyword index, custom tabs and full-text search. Sun Microsystems' JavaHelp provides software

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Credits

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ForeFront's 4th Annual Preview and Prizes Party

ForeFront cordially invites you to attend an informal reception featuring refreshments, prizes and a special demonstration of the latest ForeHTML Pro 3. Join ForeFront for an afternoon of beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres, prizes and a personalized introduction to ForeHTML pro 3.

ForeHTML Pro 3 offers an authoring environment providing timesaving tools to author, edit and build to the four key HTML-based Help formats and the two WinHelp formats – all from one ForeHTML Pro 3 project.

Come meet the team at ForeFront, have some fun, and let us know how we can better serve you in the Help authoring industry. The reception will be on Tuesday, February 23, on the 4th floor (room #418) of the Seattle Sheraton Hotel from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.



Microsoft HTML Help Lead Program Manager Shane McReynolds prepares to tell us about HTML Help.



Work Write's Cheryl Lockett Zubak explains a concept as KeyWorks Software's Ralph Walden looks on.

ForeFront from page 1

developers a highly facilitating, cross-platform, full-featured Help system for Java applications.

ForeFront's technologically advanced InterHelp is a JavaScript and JAVA-based online Help solution that operates on any major browser for Windows, Macintosh or Unix platforms. ForeHTML Pro 3's InterHelp provides predefined window layout templates (frameset) supporting the following navigation features: collapsible table of contents, keyword index, full-text search, popups, related topics and secondary windows. InterHelp allows the Help author to choose and customize predefined window layout templates including the number of panes, tools for the toolbar and background colors.

Complementing traditional Help features, ForeHTML Pro 3 elegantly supports HTML Help's customizable and collapsible tri-pane window, splash screens and information types in a compiled format. For compact devices, ForeHTML Pro 3 supports Windows CE Help with automatic conversion for contents, keywords and graphics.

ForeHTML Pro 3 has several outstanding features including: 1) Post Project to Web which allows the author to gather, publish and manage HTML projects on

Internet or intranet sites. It lists files that have changed since the last post, adds and deletes files to post and cleans up a site where delinquent HTML files may reside; 2) Dynamic HTML which quickly and simply enhances your project(s) with special effects applied to topics, text or graphics. Choose from the following list of dynamic, user-action effects: apply filters, change text format, change the cursor shape, change the image, play a transition and hide or show the selected text; 3) HTML Editor allows the author to display and change the HTML code directly. The Editor automatically color codes HTML elements for easy access and saves the changes when you return to ForeHTML Pro's WYSIWYG authoring mode.

ForeHTML Pro 3 is priced at \$299 for current ForeHelp users and is available immediately. ForeHTML Pro 3 is part of the ForeHelp Premier 99 suite including ForeHelp and other accessory tools from ForeFront. Premier 99 sells for \$699; however, a special competitive upgrade price of \$399 is available for users of competing Help authoring tools.

Contact: ForeFront, Inc. 4710 Table Mesa Drive, Suite B, Boulder, CO 80303, Tel: (303) 499 – 9181 or 1-800-357-8507, Fax: (303) 494-5446, Email: info@ff.com Web: <http://www.ff.com>.

Before and after



The contrast between two days: Sunday evening, the registration table is deserted as volunteers wait for a few early check-ins. Monday morning, that same space is packed with attendees waiting to register.

Session summaries

Notes from just a few of Monday's sessions.

Help from Hell, Tony Self

If a highly-regarded book on web design can be called "Web Sites That Suck," then "Help from Hell" drew more than 100 people to see Tony show examples of hellish Help systems, if not to boost our own self-esteem, then to learn from the miscues of others.

Tony showed mainly 3.1-style Help systems (with product names changed to protect the innocent) with problems ranging from over-designed graphics to too-small (or too-large) text, to wonky formatting and bodgy colors.

The lesson here: for best understanding, keep it simple and stay within appropriate standards.

Introduction to Screen Design, Tom Williams

More than 100 people came to this session of the UW Academic Track to hear Tom detail some well-honed design principles.

Screen typography and design may not be the "hot" topic of the Help world, but ignoring it may cost your users easy accessibility to your information. The design of your information screens can hide or reveal your information.

A better understanding of how these principles apply to people requires some knowledge of physiology, and Tom tied the two together neat as a new bow.

JavaHelp Software Update, Roger Brinkley, Larry Hoffman

An overflow crowd of more than 100 people jammed the Aspen room to hear the latest news from the JavaHelp team:

RC1 (Release Candidate 1) is now available with the official release due any time now.

Noted were several changes between the last beta and the RC1 version, including naming and file formats. All engineering is now complete and all that remains is bug fixing and certification.

JavaHelp's features include: HTML pop-ups, secondary windows, improved merging, and a GUI HelpSet viewer. JavaHelp is cross-platform, cross-browser, extensible, network-centric, and part of the Java platform.

HTML Help vs. WinHelp: A Comparative Usability Test, JoAnn Hackos

The gunfight at the OK Corral. Foreman vs. Ali. The Enterprise vs. the Borg. And now, finally, WinHelp vs. HTML Help.

About 100 people took in JoAnn's results of a usability test that pitted like HTML Help and WinHelp systems against each other. Several WinHelp systems were de-compiled and regenerated as HTML Help systems to make them as similar as possible.

The study showed that there were not statistically significant differences in information retrieval times between the two technologies.

Also, everyone hates Clippy (aka, the Office Assistant).

More importantly, it reaffirmed that content is what matters the most.



Just a few of the volunteers helping to check people in on Monday.

Tuesday schedule

	Grand A/B	Grand C	East	Metropolitan	West	Aspen	Cedar
9:00-10:15	Introduction to Cascading Style Sheets	Layering as a "Safety Net" for Minimalist Documentation	Focusing Information for You Users...	Java Primer for Help Authors	Making Information Easy to Find with Related Topics	User Assistance in Money 99	ForeHelp Tips and Tricks
10:30-11:45	XML: An Introduction	(continued)	Evolution of Documentation Set Strategies at Intuit	Essential Graphics Techniques	Managing Multi-author Help Systems	Microsoft Graphics Studio Home Publishing 99...	Single Source Strategies with Doc-To-Help
12:00-1:15	Preparing .doc files for Conversion to HTML...	Collaboration Between Product and Documentation Teams	Lessons Learned Designing and Implementing...	JavaHelp software Update	Visio 6.0 HTML Help Authoring Environment		
1:30-2:45	RoboHELP HTML Edition Tips and Tricks	Developing Onscreen User Assistance Components	WinHelp Development at WRQ...	The HTML Help API	Platform Problems? Single-Source Authoring...	Incorporating Research Results into Online Help	Developing Help for Windows CE
3:00-4:15			Using FrameMaker as a HAT	Beyond Software Manuals and Online Help...	Using RoboHELP HTML Edition to Create and Internet...	(continued)	Oracle Help for Java Update

Tuesday events and news bits

2nd JavaHelp session

For those who couldn't squeeze into yesterday's JavaHelp Update session, it's being repeated today at noon. You can see the exact same material in the Metropolitan Room.

The Vendor Exhibition may be over, but...

Blue Sky Software, ForeFront, Quadralay, SOLUTIONS, and WexTech Systems will have representatives on hand all day in the conference lobby on the 2nd floor.

A Capital Idea

Capital One Financial Corporation invites you to stop by their Hospitality Suite, room 416, to check out their newest job openings. Refreshments and prizes will be provided..

Times will be posted at the Registration Desk.

More winners!

This list of winners at this year's Online Help Conference continues to grow:

Debbie Phillips, Landata Systems, Houston, TX, won a ticket to tonight's Awards Banquet from Sageline Publishing.

Grant Hogarth, Onyx Graphics Corporation, Midvale, UT, won a copy of HTML Indexer from Brown, Inc.

Rene Stelzer, Southwest Airlines, Dallas, TX, won a copy of eAuthor from HyperAct.

Sarah Senders, DIRECTTV, El Segundo, CA, won a copy of WebWorks Publisher from Quadralay Corporation.

Ellen Thournir, Quickpen Intl., Englewood, CO, won a copy of ForeHelp Premier from ForeFront.

Claus Lundstroem, Navision Software, Denmark, won a copy of RoboHELP 7 from Blue Sky Software.

Button #633 was drawn by SOLUTIONS, INC., for the free registration to TECH/COMM 99 in Washington, D.C., this July.

Got Tim?

If you missed the Conference's opening video, a greeting by World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, it will be replying continuously from 12:15pm to 1:15pm in the Aspen Room.



The overflow crowd at the JavaHelp Update session.