us to understand the difficulties technical writing groups face in the adoption of new technologies and to recognise that there was an opportunity here for a more practical "real-world" approach to structured authoring. We believe Author-it 5.2 will be of particular value to those organisations seeking a flexible and scalable structured authoring solution.'

Author-it 5.2 runs on Windows servers, Windows-based PCs and web browsers. Current Author-it clients who have maintenance agreements will get an automatic upgrade to Author-it 5.2. Author-it 5.2 can be obtained directly through the Author-it web site www.author-it.com or by calling them on (800) 754-0377. It is also available through authorised resellers listed on the Author-it web site.
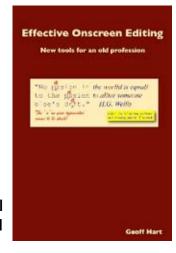
Book review

Effective onscreen editing: New tools for an old profession
by Geoff Hart

Reviewed by Kevin Chilton

Weighing in at 743 pages, with only a handful of illustrations, this book seems a little intimidating at first; another door-stop manual to add to your technical library. However, as a professional Technical Communicator I could not resist a title such as '*Effective onscreen editing: New tools for an old profession*', even if still surprised that someone could find so much to write about the subject.

A quick scan of the table of contents provided one explanation for the size of the book. The author has done more than fulfil his stated goal of teaching 'how to apply the skills you've learned as an on-paper editor in an onscreen editing environment'. The book contains chapters with advice on the organisational and administrative issues involved, as well as sections that provide useful tips on dealing with unusual editing or reviewing situations, and using the new web technologies to simplify and add value to your work. There are also four appendices containing very useful reference information, plus a 22-page index.

Details

Book copyright © 2007–2008 Geoffrey J.S. Hart (January 2008 update of the May 2007 edition). ISBN 978-0-9783227-0-0. Diaskeuasis Publishing, 112 Chestnut Ave., Pointe-Claire, Quebec, H9R 3B1, Canada.

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In the first chapter of the book, the author clearly states that his book 'is not a course in editing or grammar' and he assumes you are comfortable with using your operating system, Windows or Mac. He then explains his reasons for focusing on Word as he reviewing and editing tool, adding that most of the procedures he describes are tool-independent.

The Heart of the Matter

The heart of this book is contained in the eight chapters that follow the introductory material:

- Personalizing how your software works
- Moving around the document and selecting text
- Using revision tracking
- Inserting and deleting text
- Using the search tools (find and replace) to improve consistency
- Developing style sheets: a tool for consistency
- Using spelling and grammar checkers
- Automating your edits.

The subsequent chapters deal with issues that may arise outside the core tasks of onscreen editing:

- Editing in special situations
- Coping when revision tracking isn't available
- Using the Internet to improve your editing
- Developing safeguards
- Solving the proofreading problem
- Overcoming resistance to onscreen editing: coping with the human factor.

The appendices, providing essential reference information, cover:

- Developing a sound backup strategy
- Protecting yourself from injury while using the computer
- A summary of key changes since Word 2000
- Word keyboard shortcuts (plus selected shortcuts at the level of the operating system).

And last, but definitely not least, the book contains:

- Glossary
- Bibliography
- Helpful Internet resources
- Index.

All the sections include extensive explanations and background information. They contain useful reminders such as 'the author–editor relationship should be a dialogue, not a one-way transfer of information' and hidden gems describing how 'Word offers a powerful but dangerous keyboard shortcut for Customize.'

The bottom line

I must be honest here and admit I constantly had to struggle with my technical writer prejudices while reading this book. I found the text too verbose at times, especially in the more task-oriented, tutorial sections. However, the book is really a mine of useful detailed information, for both beginners and experienced editors.

Is it worth a place on your electronic shelf? Well, since the fact that it is available as an electronic document, not just in print, means the size of the book becomes irrelevant and hyperlinks negate my criticism of volubility, maybe you should consider it.

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