

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910967430103321
Autore	Weber Jean Hollis
Titolo	Is the help helpful? : how to create online help that meets your users' needs // Jean Hollis Weber
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Whitefish Bay, WI, : Hentzenwerke Publishing, c2004
ISBN	1-280-56819-4 9786610568192 1-930919-61-1
Descrizione fisica	xxiv, 224 p
Disciplina	005.1/5
Soggetti	Online information services Information services
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Nota di contenuto	<p>Intro -- Our Contract with You, the Reader -- List of Chapters -- Table of Contents -- Dedication -- Acknowledgments -- About the Authors -- How to Download the Files -- Introduction -- Chapter 1: Planning an Online Help Project -- Why plan an online help project? -- What process is used in an ideal help project? -- Step 1. Analyze the audience, plan the project, and write the plan -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 2. Develop high-level specifications -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 3. Develop detailed specifications -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 4. Perform a detailed task analysis -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 5. Build and evaluate a prototype help system -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 6. Develop an outline and map of the help project -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 7. Write, index, and edit the help topics -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 8. Review the help topics -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 9. Test the help -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 10. Release the help with the product -- Benefits of this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- Step 11. Evaluate the help and plan for improvements -- Benefits of</p>

this step -- Problems if this step is not done -- What are the roles in an online help project? -- Project manager/planner/producer's role -- Writer's role -- Editor's role -- Graphic artist's or illustrator's role -- Instructional designer's role -- Programmer's role -- Multimedia producer's role -- Indexer's role -- Localization and translation coordinator's role -- Usability tester's role.

Quality assurance (QA) person's role -- How much time is required for producing online help? -- Overall time required -- Time required for different activities -- Number of help topics required -- Who does what, when? -- Organizing the flow of writing, editing, reviewing, and testing -- Stages of help and software development -- How many reviews are needed, and when? -- What types of testing are required? -- Test of internal links, also called reliability testing -- Test of external links -- Is the help helpful? -- Methods for editing and reviewing -- Compiled help with annotations -- Compiled help with separate comments file -- Compiled help printed and annotated by hand -- RTF, Microsoft Word, or other editable files -- PDF files -- Changes typed directly into help source file -- Choosing help-development tools -- Conclusion -- Chapter 2: Analyzing Audiences and Tasks -- Who are the audiences? -- Example 1. Audience analysis for TreeLine -- Example 2. Audience analysis for a multi-user database program -- Working with user profiles and personas -- Example 3. Personas for TreeLine -- What are the audiences' tasks? -- Example 4. User task analysis for TreeLine -- Example 5. User/task matrix for a multi-user database program -- Example 6. Task map for TreeLine -- Flow diagram -- Working with use cases and user scenarios -- Example 7. Use case and user scenario for an e-mail program -- Use case example -- User scenario example -- What questions will the audience ask? -- Build lists of users' questions and help topic types -- Example 8. Part of a task-topic list for TreeLine -- Conclusion -- Chapter 3: Developing Specifications -- High-level specifications -- How will the online help coordinate with other user documents? -- Do you plan to single-source your documentation? -- What type of help will best fit the application?.

How will the help be connected to the application? -- What media types are required? -- Your audience -- The writing team -- What tools are needed? -- Hardware -- Software -- What information types and levels are required? -- What topic types are required? -- Overviews and conceptual topics -- Window- or dialog-level topics -- Procedural (task) topics -- Field-level topics -- Reference topics -- Lookup topics -- Example topics -- Problem-solving topics -- Frequently Asked Question topics -- Glossary and other pop-up topics -- Error message help topics -- Tip-of-the-day topics -- Wizards, coaches, and other performance support topics -- Show-me, demonstration, and tutorial topics -- How will the help windows (or pages) be presented? -- What navigation aids will be used? -- How will the help meet localization criteria? -- How will the help meet accessibility criteria? -- Detailed specifications -- Related documents (primary sources) -- Writing conventions -- Terminology -- Design and layout -- Help navigation scheme -- Content of topic types -- Overview topics -- Conceptual topics -- Dialog-level topics -- Procedural ("how to") topics -- Field-level topics -- Problem-solving topics -- Glossary topics -- Reference topics -- Lookup topics -- Frequently Asked Question topics -- Error message help topics -- Project-specific style guide -- Conclusion -- Chapter 4: Prototyping the Help System -- Why build a prototype of a help system? -- Building a high-level concept and design prototype -- Advantages of paper prototypes -- Advantages of electronic prototypes -- What to include in a high-level prototype -- Design and navigation

-- Sample topics -- Create a working high-level prototype -- Building a detailed contents prototype -- Outline and map the help project -- Use the outline and roadmap to build a detailed prototype -- Fill in the details -- Conclusion.

Chapter 5: Avoiding Common Problems -- 1. I can't find what I'm looking for. -- Causes -- Information not in the help -- Help not context-sensitive -- Poor table of contents -- Poor indexing -- Poor linking between topics -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 2. I can't figure out what's going on. -- Causes -- Help topic says only what to do -- Writers assume users understand the bigger task -- Users access help topic from contents or index -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 3. I can't figure out what will happen when I do something. -- Causes -- User interface is unclear -- Not enough information is given in the help -- Writers did not have the information or the time to work it out for themselves -- Help specifications were not adequate -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 4. There's too much detail. -- Causes -- Writers assume all users need this level of detail -- Writers don't know how to subdivide information -- Help tries to cover every alternative -- One help topic must cover several dialogs -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 5. There's not enough detail. -- Causes -- Writers lack information, or are too familiar with the product -- One window or dialog contains several tabbed pages -- One help topic covers several dialogs -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 6. I can't get to the help when I want it. -- Causes -- Help button or F1 gives an error message or nothing at all happens -- No Help button or menu-bar item -- A wizard or other startup window prevents access to the main program -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 7. The program isn't working the way the help says it should. -- Causes -- Late changes to user interface -- Inadequate reviews or testing, and writers' lack of knowledge -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 8. Help says what the system does, but not how to use it. -- Causes -- Inappropriate user expectations.

Help focuses on low-level tasks -- Help focuses on what various controls do -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 9. I want a bigger picture of what this program can do. -- Causes -- Some information is only in printed or PDF form -- Information is in the help but can't be found easily -- Information is not available to users in any form -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- 10. The help is inconsistent and badly written and formatted. -- Causes -- Inexperienced writers -- Converting from another format -- Single-sourcing -- Inadequate testing -- Inadequate specifications and project style guide -- Browser problems -- Diagnosing the problem -- Cures -- Categorizing problem severity -- Conclusion -- Chapter 6: Producing the Table of Contents and Index -- Terminology -- Table of contents -- Index -- Search -- Designing a useful table of contents -- Structure -- Presentation -- Expanding tree structure -- A page of ordinary links -- Reviewing a table of contents -- Example 1. Table of contents with subtle problems -- Example 2. A more user-friendly table of contents -- Example 3. Another user-friendly table of contents -- Example 4. A different approach: table of contents for a Web site -- Designing a useful index -- Reviewing an index -- Example 5. An index with problems -- Example 6. A better index for an e-mail program -- Example 7. An index with clearly differentiated entries -- Example 8. An automatically generated index for a Web site -- Example 9. A bad example: combining index and search -- Conclusion -- Chapter 7: Providing Navigation and Context -- Avoiding problems -- Using cross-references and other links -- Links to other topics, files, or locations -- Links to pop-up topics, including glossary topics --

Related topic references -- Example of a link list without descriptions

-- Example of a link list with brief descriptions.

Example of links with longer descriptions presented as a definition list.

Sommario/riassunto

Is the Help Helpful? presents the full cycle of help content development, regardless of the operating system running the application, the type of help being produced, or the tools used to produce it. In this book, you'll discover the 10 most common complaints that users have with online help, the causes of the underlying problems, and ways to avoid those problems, the 11 steps in the ideal help development process, their benefits, and the problems that arise when a step is left out, techniques for planning, writing, editing, reviewing, and testing online help and sample plans and specifications for your help project. Other books teach how to use a particular online help authoring tool, but they don't teach how to plan, write, edit, and test the help system being developed. Is the Help Helpful? supplements tool-specific instructions by presenting the basics of help content development, regardless of the operating system running the application, the type of help being produced, or the tools used to produce it. It is intended for technical writing students, project managers, writers, editors, and others involved in the production of online help.