



Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of Out On Our Own (OOOO) for 2014. OOOO is packed with something for everyone! For the tech-savvy, Jane Tricker ends her excellent series on social media for freelancers, with a look at its potential role

in training and ongoing educational and professional development. With social media and other online networks providing platforms for sourcing and recruitment of contractors, Martina Reiter explores the concept of freelancing networks in selected northern European countries. Meanwhile, Alistair Reeves and Susanne Geercken begin a new series that will explore language resources, starting with the basic language resources for medical writers that they consider their personal 'best friends'!

We are always interested to hear what our freelance colleagues get up to in their spare time. Gina Dungworth, a qualified veterinarian, provides an insight into the diverse range of blogs and articles

she produces when not authoring healthcare documents.

Freelancing can be a solitary occupation, so it is heartening to hear of initiatives and organisations that make us feel part of a group – to know that we are not alone in the challenges we face. This issue we welcome John Brazier, who many of you will have heard speak at the Freelance Business Forum (FBF) in Manchester in May 2013. John is actively involved in promoting the 'voice of the freelancer' through his involvement in organisations across Europe such as PCG and EFIP in the UK. In this, his first article of a new series, he describes the 'power of the collective voice'.

May is nearly upon us, and we look forward to seeing you at the FBF in Budapest on Thursday 15 May 2014 from 17.15 to 18.45. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to meet up with friends and colleagues, to share ideas and ask questions within a supportive environment.

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A writer's 'best friends' – Recommended language resources for (medical) writers – The basics

Medical writers, like everybody else, carefully choose their 'best friends'. Best friends are tried and tested, reliable and trustworthy companions who are there to help when we need them most.

In this article, Susanne Geercken and Alistair Reeves will introduce you to their 'best friends' – their favourite writing resources. The recommendations in this article provide resources that help with the basics of writing texts in English. Forthcoming contributions will include other aspects and other types of resource. Ideally, this series will develop into a platform for exchanging culture and language-related resources. You are encouraged to send in contributions, sharing your 'writer's best friends' with the audience.

So here is Susanne's personal 'writer's best friend' toolkit:

1. A Grammar of Present-Day English¹

For some of you, grammar books spark unpleasant memories of boring grammar lessons back at school. So for you, they may feel like enemies rather than friends. But where do you turn for help if you are unsure about how to put 'I used to' into the negative (is there a negative form at all and if so, is it 'I did not use to' or 'I did not used to'), how to shift the emphasis in your sentence, where to put the adverb, or whether to choose the simple or progressive past?

'A Grammar of Present-Day English' will help you in these situations. While there are other, more sophisticated and comprehensive grammar books on my bookshelf, for my day-to-day writing problems, I prefer to consult this unassuming book written for advanced students of English. Readers who struggle with grammatical terms will particularly appreciate

this book thanks to its clear structure and many examples. It is probably best suited to non-native speakers of English, and I should mention that some examples are given in English and German, since the book was originally written for a German audience. While Germans may benefit most, to my mind, it is also very well suited to non-Germans.

2. The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations²

This book is an invaluable resource providing information on the correct use of collocations in everyday English. The dictionary not only covers typical combinations of noun + verb, noun + adjective, adjective + adverb, and verb + adverb but also gives phrasal verbs and lists verbs with their corresponding prepositions, with examples given for everything. In addition, it contains a number of idioms.

(Alistair: This is also one of my 'best friends'!)

3. Practical English Usage³

This book is a compilation of typical problem areas for non-native speakers who need to write (and speak) in English. The book is organised as a reference book, listing entries in alphabetical order across a wide range of subject areas. Hence, you will find rather brief entries on single words like 'control' (with the text pointing to the risk of misusing the word as a 'false friend') or 'presently' (explaining the different meaning of the word in British vs. American English) alongside longer entries dedicated to a more detailed analysis of subjects like 'articles', 'adverbs', or 'countable and uncountable nouns'. While the structure takes some getting used to, I recommend this book because it offers valuable, easy to find answers to typical problems for authors writing in English.

The next two suggestions are in a way 'collectibles' because they have, very regrettably, gone out of print. Like any valuable vintage item, they are, however, available second hand and are included here for your benefit:

4. Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary⁴

While reference books like Merriam-Webster's are nowadays easily accessible on the Internet (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>), non-native speakers of English, in particular, may appreciate an English dictionary that offers enhanced information on usage. 'Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary' is a (monolingual) dictionary deliberately focusing on real usage of ordinary everyday English. The book is the result of a language research project conducted at the

University of Birmingham. Every entry features an array of well-chosen examples, catering to the particular needs for context information of non-native speakers of English. Special feature boxes give structured, more in-depth information: Have you ever wondered whether it is correct to write '12 a.m.' for 'noon' in English even though a.m. = ante meridiem' means 'before noon'? Collins Cobuild has the answer. Under the TIME special entry, you will find all the varieties of expressing time in English, including '12 a.m.' The dictionary also explains basic grammatical concepts in simple language so that it can be used as a basic all-in-one dictionary-cum-grammar book. To fully appreciate the wealth of linguistic information covered in this book, users are advised to carefully read the introduction which gives background information on the history, intent, and set-up of the dictionary.

5. The Synonym Finder⁵

I recommend this thesaurus for the sheer abundance of synonyms it offers – it claims to offer one million synonyms! I love this thesaurus as a rich source of inspiration for more varied and creative writing. The book is best suited to users who have a good command of English vocabulary and style, and native speakers, because the synonyms listed for the most part do not come with comments or explanations.

And now some of Alistair's best friends:

6. Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation⁶

This little book is €7.50 (or so) well spent. It is not a tome and will easily fit into a jacket pocket or handbag. It has a short, simple, but comprehensive introduction to English grammar and the structure of the language. The rest of the book is alphabetically arranged according to keywords with descriptions and lots of examples, including incorrect examples where appropriate. It has explanatory figures where helpful – for example, to illustrate different levels of grammar (sentence, clause, phrase, and word) or types, forms, and sentence position of adjectives. The entries are copiously cross-referenced so there is no repetition. In fact, the amount of information packed into these 192 pages is astonishing. My copy is well thumbed, as I often check definitions, concepts, and finer points, and it accompanies me on my travels. This is the ideal pocket grammar book for the non-linguist who needs clear advice unclouded by grammar *gobbledygook*.

7. Oxford Guide to Plain English (formerly the Plain English Guide)⁷

Another €7.50 or so well spent, 'The Plain English Guide' has been giving excellent advice for decades

and should be on every writer's bookshelf. It has an excellent section on 'Writing tight' with lots of examples of striking out useless words (one of the most rewarding activities when editing texts). It explodes some myths about English, including 'Never end a sentence with a preposition'. It includes a reference list of 'Plain English words' in its section on 'Use words your readers are likely to understand'. Unlike many books on good writing and style guides, the author, Martin Cutts, even has the courage to defend the use of the passive voice! Mr Cutts has also fortunately ditched the general recommendation in earlier editions that bullet points should end with a semi-colon (a messy business as far as I am concerned) and now provides much broader advice on putting together cogent bulleted lists (semicolons are now restricted to bulleted lists in legal documents). The latest edition also includes a short section on 'Clarity for the Web'.

The Plain English Campaign offers great resources on its website, but more of that in future editions.

8. Troublesome Words⁸

Bill Bryson's 'Troublesome Words' is every bit as good a read as his other books. And even though it is put together as an alphabetised reference work, it is perfectly possible to read it through like a novel and learn while you do so. He manages to point out a huge number of common errors in modern English, ranging from spelling to usage, without descending into nit-picking, and spends considerable time discussing difficult areas, such as the use of who and whom, subject and number of verb agreement ('The police is ...', 'The police are ...') and puts us straight on useless devices (e.g. fragmentary quotes), rampant wordiness, and words that are often confused. This book is more of a complement to more basic works, but is certainly worth getting to know.

9. The Careful Writer⁹

Issued more than 50 years ago and on my shelf for more than 30 years, this 'best friend' has given me sound advice on language in many situations and has often given me the confidence to defend my own opinion when it didn't seem to comply with a 'rule'. It is a scholarly work, but a 'fun read'. Would you like to read a balanced argument for and against 'different than'? Or how about how to decide whether words ending in 'ics' are singular or plural? And what about the placement of 'only' and 'not' in sentences? And much, much more. Google Books says it all: (http://books.google.de/books/about/The_Careful_Writer.html?id=qYd35

MUI5m4C&redir_esc=y): 'The Careful Writer is a concise yet thorough handbook, covering in more than 2,000 alphabetized entries the problems that give (or should give) writers pause before they set words to paper. It is perhaps the liveliest and most entertaining reference work for writers of our time – delighting while it instructs and amusing even as it scolds and cajoles the reader into skilful, persuasive, and vivid writing. The Careful Writer, Mr. Bernstein's major work on usage, is an indispensable desk reference, and a perennial source of continuing reading pleasure.'

10. Collins 'Cobuild English Guides'¹⁰

Any of the Collins 'Cobuild English Guides' by this assiduous language publisher. Look them up on the Internet. Just enter 'Collins Cobuild English Guides' into your search engine; one is displayed in Amazon, and the others are listed below under other books people bought. Unfortunately, a couple of them are out of print (notably 'Linking words', a very useful one, but a few second hand versions are out there), and some are not cheap. They offer comprehensive, pragmatic advice on all aspects of using English for all writers, whether native speakers of English or not.

Finally, a word of warning about one 'false friend' for medical writers

You may hear medical writers praise 'The Elements of Style' (often referred to as 'Strunk and White'¹⁰), a style guide with 'grammar' advice published in the USA more than 50 years ago that is widely regarded as a standard work in the USA. Geoffrey Pullum, Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh and one of the world's leading grammarians, heavily criticised this work when its 50th Anniversary Edition was published a few years ago.¹¹ This prompted Alistair to support his opinion in an article in 'The Write Stuff'.¹² Let it suffice to say at this point that, as well as poor advice and a couple of glaring errors, it contains much basic advice that is not appropriate to scientific, technical, and medical writers, but rather to those involved in creative writing.

Some of the printed works given above are included in a boxed list of language and style resources for writers (without comments) that appeared in 'The Write Stuff'.¹³ This is also worth consulting.

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Online freelance networks in the DACH region – Real job opportunities or just waste of time?

Online freelance networks in the DACH region

Nowadays, membership of an online social or business network (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn) is part of daily business life. These networks can help to find new business relationships and generate business opportunities. Online networks are also a good platform to promote services and skills and keep in touch with existing contacts. Members can join groups with different topics to share information or find contacts and job offers.¹

In addition, specific online freelance networks exist (e.g. freelance.de, freelancermap.de) which are similar to job boards but with a clear focus on freelance job positions. Companies post their job offers and freelancers register their profile and skills.^{2–7} Online freelance networks exist for international and regional projects, focusing on popular freelance business areas such as IT, web management, consulting, sales, media, and communication.

First impressions may suggest that these networks don't contain serious job offers. Ghostwriting and low-budget content writing requests are abundant, while there is serious competition from medical writers based in India, Asia or Arabic countries who can work for a lower hourly rate compared with European counterparts, especially in international networks. Regional and country-specific networks may provide better offers with the possibility to contact the client directly. So, this raises the question of whether these networks offer real job opportunities or are they just waste of time when searching for serious business prospects?

In this article I present information about existing, regional online freelancer networks in Germany,

Austria, and Switzerland (DACH), with the aim of giving an overview about the structure, membership options, job opportunities and related costs of online freelancer networks (Table 1).

Conclusion

The majority of freelancer networks within the DACH region exist in Germany and are mainly focussed on IT and web-related projects. Competition for medical writing positions is limited, but only because there a low number of medical writers found in the databases. Job offers are often for web content writing within all kind of categories, e.g. IT, automotive, finance, and many more. However, occasionally, interesting offers for medical writers can be found although few are for permanent positions or with good payments.

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Table 1: Overview of existing online freelance networks in the DACH region

Network (users)	Location	Category focus	Categories for MW	Memberships	Costs €	How it works
Freelancer map (50 000)	Nuernberg, Germany ²	12 categories: focus on software development, web, telecommunication, IT consulting, SAP	'Graphic, content and media'	Basic, premium	14.99 (monthly)–6.49 (2 years)	Within the basic membership, freelancers register their profile and can view available projects free-of-charge. Only the premium package enables members to apply for jobs or read messages from clients, and is available for a monthly fee with various discounts on offer, for example, for insurance or software.
Freelance (65 400)	Munich, Germany ³	11 categories: focus on IT, engineers, management, marketing, sales	'Languages, education, training, social', 'medicine, health care, health', 'research, development, science'	Basic, expert	9.90 (monthly)	A basic membership enables freelancers to register, generate a profile and make 10 job submissions per day. In addition, an automatic search can be generated which sends one report per day, containing jobs fitting their profile. Expert membership gives unlimited access to projects and information about any visitors to a freelancer's profile.
Projektwerk	Hamburg, Germany ⁴	6 categories: medical, consulting, creative, engineering, fashion, IT	Medical	Basic, starter, premium	8.00 (starter monthly) 25.00 (premium monthly)	As a basic and starter member, you can register your profile for free but you are limited to a single profile, although projects of potential interest are accessible. Companies can only contact you if you are a starter or a premium member, for which a monthly fee is charged. Offered positions are mainly permanent.
Textbroker	Mainz, Germany ⁵	Ca. 80 different categories	Product descriptions, translation, science	Basic	0.7 to 4 cent/word	Clients can post their requests for texts, while freelance 'authors' register and apply for the posted jobs. A ranking system based on a scale of 2 to 5 stars exists for authors. New members can only apply for jobs in the 3-star category. When an author has finalised a text for the client, the client and textbroker team give their feedback, which may enable the author to gain more stars and therefore apply for more jobs. The majority of job offers are from IT companies looking for authors to write short online pieces (200 to 400 words) which is why payment is low (2 to 4€ per article). Direct client requests generate higher income.
Freiberufler-oesterreich	Vienna, Austria ⁶	21 categories	Language, text, trainer	Basic	2 hours of author's fee	Registration and project searches are free of charge but there is no possibility to see job offers. For a fee, the network will contact freelancers when profiles match a project.
Servish	Altdorf, Switzerland ⁷	5 categories: focus on science and technology	Science and technology, communication and media	Basic	5% of 'author's' salary	Service for people who need an answer to a specific problem or question. The only network providing visible salaries. Membership is free, fees are only charged following a successful job completion by the freelance applicant.

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The power of the collective voice

A poignant reminder of the challenges of freelancing – Claudia Frumento’s winning idea for EMWA’s Out On Our Own logo is a figure juggling four Os.

‘I think that is the way I feel quite often as a freelance medical writer,’ she said. ‘Having to do everything simultaneously: writing, accounting, acquiring new clients, IT support, travel, etc. But honestly, I would never want to go back to work for a company... I enjoy being my own boss and the more I practise the better I juggle’.

She’s not alone – freelancers are the fastest growing group in the EU labour market. In fact, a quarter of the European workforce engaged in professional, scientific, and technical fields is made up of freelancers, also known as independent professionals, or iPros.

The figures come from an in-depth study concluded in 2013 by Professor Patricia Leighton under the directive of the European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP).¹ The study reveals that the ‘growth in iPros in the EU since 2004 has been remarkable. Numbers have increased by 45% from just under 6.2 million to 8.9 million in 2013, making them the fastest growing group in the EU labour market’.

Recognised by clients, but not by government

The importance of iPro working is increasingly being recognised across Europe as more and more businesses understand that freelancers help them to remain flexible, agile, and innovative in a competitive market.

However, Professor Leighton also noted a common thread running through the interviews she conducted with 40 freelancers across nine EU states: ‘the iPros interviewed did express a sense of being treated with suspicion or being marginalised, especially by fiscal and other authorities’.

The report concludes: ‘Despite their growing economic significance, not much is known about iPros, the way they work and the barriers they face. They are virtually invisible in academic literature as they are generally subsumed in employer, entrepreneurship or SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) data’.

The research found that ‘iPros want autonomy and freedom, and yet to be effective they need more support from governmental and regulatory bodies’. Often what they get is exactly the opposite: unnecessary bureaucracy and policies that actually

thwart the dynamism of the sector. One example is the tax legislation, IR35,² in the UK, which has seen an unacceptable number of freelancers hauled up before a judge to prove they were genuinely self-employed.

Stepping out of the shadows

A powerful way for freelancers to solve the ‘invisibility’ problem is to act in unison.

When IR35 was introduced by Tony Blair’s Government in 1999, a group of UK-based freelancers joined forces to form their own trade association, the Professional Contractors Group. The purpose was to provide the missing link between the freelance community and policy makers, so that harmful policies could be prevented from becoming law in future. The idea captured people’s imagination and spread rapidly – several thousand freelancers joined in the first few months.

Today the association is known as PCG, the voice of freelancing. With around 21 000 members from diverse freelance disciplines, PCG has become an active and influential voice in government and industry, creating the stimulus needed for freelancers, and their clients, to thrive and prosper.

PCG is also co-founder of EFIP (European Forum of Independent Professionals), a pan-European group working closely with the European Parliament to ensure that independent working is respected as a legitimate alternative to employment. Since its inception, EFIP has called for recognition of independent professionals as a vital force for the EU economy and for independents to be specifically considered by policy makers.

EFIP’s membership is composed of a number of national associations representing the needs of freelancers, including FediPro in Belgium, Aprotrad and FedAe in France, VGSD in Germany, ACTA and ANITI in Italy, PZO in the Netherlands, and PCG in the UK.

By joining any one of these associations, freelancers help to define their sector, highlight their economic value, and pave the way for more sophisticated regulation and government support.

A more systematic approach to freelancing

Another key role that professional associations play is in pooling the collective intelligence of the community to help members develop their businesses in a more active and coherent way.

Professor Leighton's research found that many iPros do not have a systematic approach to many work related issues. For example, they typically gain work in informal ways and few have marketing plans or a strategy for accessing work.

A freelance business has to be managed just like any other business. An effective freelance medical writer needs to be fluent not just in science, but also in marketing, tax, finance, project management, and business administration.

The associations acting under the EFIP umbrella offer a wide range of support services to help their members develop better systems. For example PCG provides members with free tax and legal advice, tax investigation support, compensation for loss of earnings, contract paperwork, and guidance on growing the business.

They also provide opportunities for collaborative networking, which emerged as a key recommendation from the Leighton report. Freelancers stand to gain a great deal from interacting with others, rather than working in complete isolation – hence the importance of EMWA's Freelance Business Forum and the regional events organised by the EFIP associations. Sharing best practice, whether with colleagues from the medical sector or with freelancers from completely different fields, is a valuable way to take your business to the next level.

In future articles we will be exploring best practice in areas such as accounting, drawing up contracts with clients, key tax policies, and legal issues to be aware of.

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European associations representing freelancers		
Association	Country	Website
FediPro: representing iPros from every discipline	Belgium	http://www.ipros.be
Aprotrad: representing translators and interpreters	France	http://www.aprotrad.org
FedAe: representing auto-entrepreneurs from every discipline	France	http://www.federation-auto-entrepreneur.fr
VGSD: representing self-employed persons, freelancers and small businesses with typically less than ten employees	Germany	http://www.vgsd.de
ACTA: representing autonomous workers from every discipline	Italy	http://www.actainrete.it
ANITI: representing translators and interpreters	Italy	http://www.aniti.it
PZO: a representative body for freelancers, organised as a collective of networks focusing on specific professions	Netherlands	http://www.pzo-zzp.nl
PCG: representing independent professionals from every discipline	UK	http://www.pcg.org.uk

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The social web is your oyster

Networking and business development – the subjects of my first two articles for *Out On Our Own* – are perhaps obvious uses of social media for freelancers. In this article I want to focus on what was initially an added bonus for me, but which has since become an essential part of my business – namely the opportunities afforded for training and education.

The risk of losing touch with developments in our industry – and the industries that it serves – is a very real one for freelancers.

Just in terms of regulation, in the last 6 months of 2013 we saw the enactment of the Sunshine Act in the USA,¹ an update to the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) *Code on the Promotion of Prescription-Only Medicines to, and Interactions with, Healthcare Professionals*,² and

revisions to the Declaration of Helsinki³ and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' (ICMJE's) *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts* (now rather less snappily called *Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*).⁴

The increasing trend to digital communications with healthcare professionals and patients (either alongside or instead of print), and the ability to use different media and channels for delivering them, should challenge our perceptions about writing and presenting information for these groups. This is not restricted to marketing communications – online journals are commonplace; sales of ebooks are outstripping hard copy; and online crowdsourcing strategies are being trialled

for clinical study recruitment and for solutions to tricky clinical research questions.

More broadly, the ability of wearable devices to collect data on an individual's activity and vital signs and to transmit these data to a collection point (part of a phenomenon called the Internet of Things [IoT]) has the potential to transform how doctors interact with their patients.

How did I acquire the information in the paragraphs above? Mostly through Twitter®, LinkedIn®, and Google+®.

I follow organisations that are instrumental in drawing up regulatory guidelines; organisations whose members are directly affected by them (such as EMWA, the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals [ISMPP], Network Pharma and individual medical communications and PR agencies, and the UK National Health Service); news organisations (both general and pharma, and science- and technology-specific), leading journals (*Nature*, the *British Medical Journal* [BMJ], the *Lancet*, *New England Journal of Medicine* [NEJM], *Biomed Central*, and the *Public Library of Science* [PLOS]); and individuals whose knowledge and opinions I have come to appreciate and trust.

Of course, organisations publish relevant information on their websites for you to find, and individuals may have websites and/or blogs. Although some of these sites have rss (rich site summary) feeds that deliver information in regular emails, for me using social media simplifies this process by bringing all of the information to me and much, much faster. Moreover, in Twitter, information on specific topics or events can be aggregated through the use of hashtags, or I can create lists of people that I know comment on particular topics, which essentially allows me to file information on that topic in one place.

In addition to keeping up to date with events and changes in the medical writing world (and beyond) social media outlets have also helped me to use this information in my day-to-day work.

Discussions in some of the LinkedIn groups to which I belong have been invaluable in helping me to see all sides of the debate on transparency between the pharmaceutical industry, medical writing professionals, and healthcare professionals and have played a key role in my decision to take the CMPP™ qualification.

The PM Society (of which I became aware through Twitter) and the International Society for Medical Publications Professionals (ISMPP) run regular interactive webinars on topics of interest and importance to medical writers. It is possible to return to

the webinar later if the timing of the event is inconvenient (although you lose the opportunity to participate, of course).

My understanding of writing for digital publications and interacting with healthcare professionals and the general public through social media have been enhanced by attending physical workshops and lectures organised by the leaders of other LinkedIn groups that I belong to and in #hscsm-led 'Tweet-ups'. (A 'Tweet-up' is a meeting held on Twitter. The subject, time, duration, and hashtag for the meeting are agreed beforehand. Participants Tweet their viewpoints and pose/answer questions to/from other participants. By including the hashtag in the Tweet, participants ensure that everyone can see the entire conversation.).

Up to now I have concentrated on how others posting on social media benefits me. By definition, though, social media channels are interactive: I can respond to what I am reading by sharing it (rapidly) with my contacts/followers or by commenting on it and sharing my comments – to share my knowledge and to demonstrate to potential clients that I am making an effort to keep up to date with changes and issues affecting our industry.

Afterword

In my series of articles about how I use social media in my business I hope to have encouraged a few more of you to try it for yourselves. I do sincerely believe that freelancers have much to gain from fully engaging with social media and much to lose by ignoring it. You can find links to my social media accounts on my website – come join me!

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Tool Box

What was 'app' in Barcelona?

At the 1995 World Conference on Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia in Graz, Austria, the following paper abstract was submitted by a fresh graduate computer scientist who later became my spouse:

'This paper presents the idea of a [system] which supports scientific conferences in novel ways. In accordance with the usual course of organizing a conference, we show how a modern distributed wide-scale system ... can improve, accelerate and advance conference issues like ... invitation, submission of contributions and registration ..., and the undertaking of the actual event, as well as post-event matters. Critical problems are discussed, technical solutions are proposed and an outlook over further developments is given.'

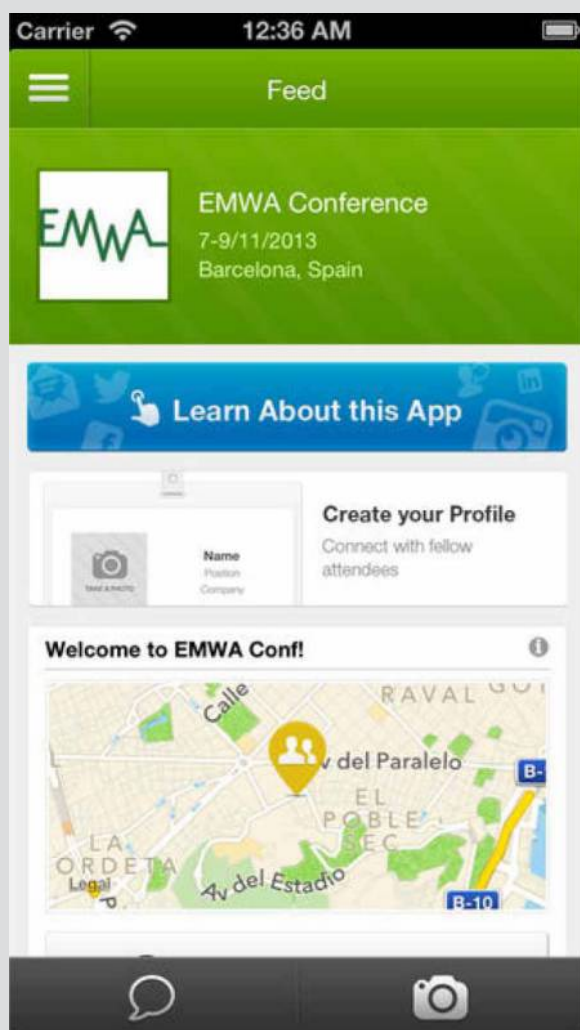


Figure 1

The idea of organising a conference over the world-wide web was so novel at the time that the orally presented paper based on this abstract won the Best Paper Award at the said conference.

Let's fast forward to 2013 in Barcelona, Spain. The idea presented in that paper has long become a taken-for-granted reality. I am pretty sure everyone registered for the 37th EMWA conference online.

But we had something new in Barcelona - the EMWA conference app (see Figure 1)! As part of the 'know before you go' initiative, the app was announced 27 days before the start of the conference. A total of 120 people downloaded the app and it was accessed 1688 times from launch time till the end of the conference.

In addition to providing all necessary conference information (schedule, workshop leaders, exhibitors, etc.), the app's cool features included a virtual badge, news feeds, and chatting (see Figure 2).

I checked with a few delegates and the feedback I got ranged from 'wow' to 'it's about time', indicating the users were generally 'appy' with this resource.



Figure 2

The initiative was fully supported by the EMWA Executive Committee and the app development was implemented at a reasonable price at www.attendify.com.

A big thanks to EMWA PR Officer and social media expert Laura Collada Ali, who, between translation assignments and tweets, kept the social component of the app going with photos and news feeds.

But even though the Barcelona meeting is over, the EMWA app is here to stay. The app contents will be updated well in time for the next conference(s) but you can use it anytime. I am still using it and so can you. Try sending me a message right now by clicking on the speech bubble.

Don't have it yet? You can access the application in the App Store™ and Google Play™ using the keyword EMWA or by clicking on these links:

iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/emwa-conference/id722893143?l=ru&ls=1&mt=8>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kitapps.android.builder.emwaconference>

From any internet browser: <http://conference.emwa.org>

Back to the 1995 paper, it moved on to propose activities even outside the conference itself, including 'scientific exchange and communication' (networking!) and 'social and non-scientific matters' (social programme!), and concluded that the system was intended to facilitate only and not replace face-to-face meeting. 'We still consider conferences in their current form as essential and do not try to replace the personal contact as well as the verbal, direct communication between researchers.'¹

We completely agree. The EMWA app is a great resource to use before, during, and after the EMWA conferences. But nothing beats being at the conference itself! See you/app you in Budapest!

Reference

1. Maurer H, Schneider A. 1995. Conferencing: doing it the hypermedia way. Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia -Annual-; 436-441 Ed Media '95. Available from: <https://getinfo.de/app/Conferencing-Doing-it-the-hypermedia-way/id/BLCP%3ACN013519738>.

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Freelance foraging

Maybe we should all adopt the Aussie approach to non-imminent deadlines! This flight departures

information board in Cairns International Airport photographed in August 2013 shows us the way.

airline	Flight	Destination	Schd	Brdg	Gate	Status / Remarks
Qantas	JQ 57	Darwin	1100	10:30	04	Relax
Qantas	NC 610	Tabubil	1145	11:25	01C	Relax
Qantas	UA 6786	Auckland	1150	11:10	03	Relax
Qantas	JQ 15	Kansai-Osaka	1230	11:40	02	Relax
Qantas	FX 31	Rabaul	1230	12:00	06	
Qantas	CX 146	Hong Kong	1230	12:20	04	
Qantas	JQ 25	Tokyo-Narita	1320	12:40	05	Relax
Qantas	FX 400	Moree	1330	13:00	01	
Qantas	QF 197	Port Moresby	1405	13:35	06	
Qantas	FX 91	Port Moresby	0600	05:30		
Qantas	QF 191	Port Moresby	0615	05:45		
Qantas	IU 950	Mount Hagen	0630			Relax

It is an offence to leave baggage unattended

SAMSUNG