



## Background information

This document gives extended information about the types of jobs I have been working on.

### Technical writer

A technical writer is an author of texts more intended for practicality than leisure. In my case it usually entails converting technical information to a language that is suitable for the target group using the documentation.

#### Types of documents

I have worked on a number of document types.

##### User manual

A publication aimed at the person that will use a product. Usually containing a product description, procedure description and error procedures. The setup should preferably coincide with the work the user needs the manual for.

##### Procedural description

(Part of) a publication that gives the user instructions on how to proceed in order to complete a certain task.

For example:

1. Find the customer's Financial file.
2. Find Form A from Drawer 3 in Section 1 and complete it together with the customer.
3. Photocopy the financial resumé (p.5).
4. Send Form A plus the copied resumé to Payments department.

##### Reference work

A publication giving the user access to definitions and explanations for unknown / difficult terms.

##### Help texts

A publication that is invoked by pressing F1 in Windows applications. The pages in the publication are individually linked to specific screens, giving the user support for the task he is intended to perform on that screen. Help texts may contain both procedural and screen descriptions.

##### Tutorials

A publication teaching the user about the various functions and options of the application.

##### Web texts

A publication that is especially adapted to the user's online reading habits. Online reader don't usually read the content, they rather scan headings to see if the page provides the required information. The text should be brief, hyperlinks to related information should be clear, and the

illustrations should support the information given in the text.

##### Installation instructions

A publication specifically adapted to help the user on his way to start using the application or product. Each step is clearly described, with warnings and remarks where special attention is required.

##### Release document

A publication describing the software changes in an application segment. These changes often include error fixes, and the documentation will inform about the original error, possible side effects of the new version, how to install the software update and any required update of other software segments.

##### Aviation instructions

A publication specifically configured for the hard copy manuals used by the air traffic controllers. Because of the limited size (A5 sheets in portrait mode), compact writing style is required. Often a certain change in a procedure needs to be rendered in different ways for different target groups, since the various air traffic controller stations are operated by controllers with varying responsibility and operational areas.

For example:

- Inbound control
- Platform control
- High level control



### Style guide

A publication for the webmaster / author who will take over site management, describing how the layout of the various style elements has been designed. It may also contain terminology to be avoided or to be preferred. The list is by no means exhaustive.

### Source

The information to be used when writing texts.

### System design document

A document describing the various functions to be included into the application. It is created by system designers, based on the demands set by the party that initiated the application build.

### Application programmer

That very same document may also be used as a basis for the documentation. But then a constant interaction between the programmer and the writer is necessary, because the development environment may cause implementing a different solution for a specific function than the system designer originally had proposed. Cooperation with the programmer is also required to obtain screen dumps of the application during development.

### Change document

A document describing what has been done in a software update. Cooperation with the programmer is still required, to ensure correct description of error, solution and other information related to the actual software release.

### Publication form

#### Paper

The best known publication form. Publishing on paper requires attention for the following:

- Chapter  
Usually a chapter starts on a right hand side odd numbered page. This means that a white page needs to be inserted when the last page of the previous chapter also ends on a right hand side page.
- Headers and footers  
Headers and footers are synchronised with the chapter title, and are often different on odd and even pages.

In modern products the paper documentation may be supplied as a PDF file, which is an electronic version of the same paper publication.

#### Electronic

This publication form can only be shown on a screen, and has various sub forms:

#### Help texts

Help texts are related to the application software, and are shown when the user presses F1 within the application. The content can be either Procedural help or Screen help.

#### Static web sites

This publication form is composed of various site pages, in which both content and appearance of all pages has been designed and agreed upon beforehand.

### Dynamic web sites

This publication form is often characterised by the use of a content management system which contains the following:

- Page template  
Often various templates are developed for various types of pages (introduction, description, article, background, extended information, etc), each describing which content elements from the content database are to be inserted.
- Layout description css  
This type of file describes the appearance. This means that all Type A text will be rendered using Font X in Size Y and colour Z, Type B text will have Property D, Type C images have size D and placed on the right, Type E images have property F. If desired, the positioning and properties of certain text blocks may also be defined.
- Contents  
The database contains the texts that are to be published. It needs to be universally written, meaning it should be reusable in for example an introduction, article, background information or any other place the information architect has seen fit.

A dynamic web site is not published, but composed from the different elements whenever a web user requests certain information.