[Note taker’s note: This was taken from a recording. I apologize in advance if I misunderstood what you were saying or if I didn’t get your name or got your name wrong.]

[Lloyd] This is the second year of the III documentation forum. We are here to talk about the systems that III has for documenting their products. Hopefully people have feedback they can give to the documentation people we have here. We have Leah Eaton, Documentation Manager, and Emily Reisinger, Technical Writer. I’m Lloyd Chittenden from Marmot Library Network and we have Jean Peick with Washington County Cooperative Library Services. I am with a Sierra user and Jean is with a Polaris library.

I don’t claim to be any sort of expert on the documentation, but I am a user of the documentation and I want the documentation to be better. So I created this forum to help Innovative find out what we need from documentation. Leah has a presentation about what’s going on in documentation and then we will take questions and input from the group.

[Leah] Thank you, Lloyd. I want to commend all of you, because you are the diehards. You’re here at documentation to be here at the last session, last day. And you care enough about documentation to be here, and that speaks a lot to me.

I am the new kid in town and I’m very proud to say that I’m at day 52 at Innovative. I joined Innovative on March 5th. I have an extensive career in technical communications and managing technical documentation, about 28 years. So, I did start that career about five years before I was born. So you’ll just have to work with me on that and trust me. My focus has been on software development in different industries. I’m also a management professional. I’m excited, a little nervous, and a tiny bit scared. Everyone has been wonderful this week. I especially appreciate the help of my colleague Emily because she was here last year. She gathered all of the feedback that you gave and had it waiting for me when I started at Innovative. Honestly, I owe you all a great deal of thanks. Because you’ve made my job a lot easier. As I come in and I want to know what the problems are or what the good things are I can look to the feedback from last year and I get a really clear picture. I poured through every piece that you said. I found an underlying theme for every piece. I went through and I categorized every comment. I may not be a librarian, but I’m a nerd and I like data. I liked looking at it to see where are the pain points? Where can I focus my efforts? And so because I’m so new at Innovative, I don’t have any grand plans at this point. What I do have is your feedback and I’ve looked at it and I’ve analyzed it. I want to revisit it briefly and then get on to how it still applies and how it may have changed and evolved since last year, and take your feedback, and from that I’ll be able to develop a 90-day plan that I can bring to my boss, Chris Fields. Who you may have seen present this week. And be able to make some changes on documentation that you want and some of those changes are changes that we want. So, I thank you. You’ve made my coming to Innovative a lot easier, and that’s a big thing. Considering that we have the Sierra product line, we have the Polaris product line, we have VTLS. We have a lot of products and with the acquisitions that Innovative has made we have a lot of processes and so as I try to bring these together and make some sense of it and some commonality, I want your feedback in mind. So that I might make life easier for me and the other writers, but most importantly for you because you’re the ones who use it.

So let’s get going. I set up some team mission and goals when I came on board. I waited about a month, but it is my goal at Innovative to have my team create clear concise and accurate product information that exceeds your expectations and the expectations of the people at Innovative that use that documentation so they have a full understanding and you have a full understanding of our products. It’s also my goal to provide this information in an easy to use and easy to find structure that promotes knowledge across all departments and to our customers. So as I look at IUG feedback from last year, these are the seven buckets that all your feedback fell into.

So, 20 percent of your comments were based on content quality. Is it accurate? Does it have the things I want? Does it have enough screen shots? Does it have too many screen shots? Are the screen shots outdated?

Eighteen percent of your comments came back on monitoring boards and forums. Are the writers out there? Are they listening to us? Because we have solutions and we don’t see those solutions coming back to the documentation. Makes a lot of sense to me.

Then we have Supportal. We call them different things. Supportal Docs, Tech Docs. That was a whopping 16% of your comments. Where do I go find my stuff? I have to go to multiple places. What happened to CSDirect? Why am I having to go here? Is this going to keep going, I thought you were going to do something different? We listened. I read. I heard. When I came on board and I looked at these three companies that have three very different ways of accessing information. That’s a great opportunity and challenge.

Customer feedback process, 15%. You said, what happens when I send this? Should I get something back? How do I know? When do I see it? Those sorts of questions.

Our process with development seems like were giving products but we’re not getting documentation at the same time is what I read. You’re the last train on the caboose. That’s a big problem, because I want my team to be in sync with our product. That’s what you deserve.

Upgrade documentation, 10%. You want me to upgrade? How can I when there’s no documentation to tell me what to test. Valid points.

We have 6% though, I had to put this in there, on the things we did right. And there are things we do right. We want to leverage those.

These are some of the highlights that I pulled from last year’s transcript. I’ve already touched on some of these problems. I don’t want to dwell on them, but I do want to refresh your memory so we can consider has it gotten better, has it gotten worse?

So, content quality. Terminology is not clear. I would venture to guess that had you gone from one product to another you might find that terminology is even different. “Documentation tells me how to do the function, but won’t tell me where in the system to go.” That can also fall into our organization of documentation. “You click help and you go to the top of the cataloging help pages, it needs to be more granular.” I’ve heard people say, “It’s like I’m dropping in the middle of a movie and I don’t know what’s going on.”

The quality of known issues reporting. Boards, forums, again. “Do we monitor the groups?” “In Sierra you’ve lost some functionality, it will be out on the listserv.” You guys have already come up with solutions. Since you all met last year, and since I’ve come on board, I’ve asked all my writers to join the IUG forums. We’ll come up with a process to start monitoring that on a regular basis. Monitoring other ways that you give feedback or share information. Again, it’s just boards we can take that and develop and FAQ from it. You are doing some of our work for us, we would be ridiculous not to take advantage of that.

This is one that kind of hurts me a little. Maybe you all have just figured out where to go. So if we move it, what happens? We have Tech Docs in a different place. I don’t know how many of you are looking at the APIs? If you are in the documentation and you are using the API, do you really want to go to another place to find it?

Tickets, they are done differently for Polaris and Sierra customers, I think. If you have documentation issue you contact support. If you have a documentation issue you contact us. We should have a consistent experience no matter what product you are on. And we need to know that things don’t fall through the cracks.

Automated response. “I didn’t even get an automated response.” “It felt like it went into a black hole.” I don’t like to hear black hole with documentation.

Another thing near and dear to my heart is our process with development. What’s new should come out before or very close. It seems to be lagging. Features should not be released without documentation.

But what I love, not that you are having problems, I love the last one there. Innovative needs to recognize that documentation is critical for us to actually use a new feature. I believe that Innovative knows that, they’ve hired me. I’ve already hired a new writer. With the help of Emily and the others on my team we will be able to provide you with what you need.

Upgrade, I get that. Knowing what we can expect going into a release is critical to our decision to go ahead with a release or not. True. You like though that we have the permissions. We’ve improved search functionality through some of our tools.

So let’s get on down to why we’re here. I’m ready if you are. Questions, Comments?

When you get the mic please tell us which product you are using.

[Mike] I’m Mike from a Polaris Library. It’s been quite a while now. Once upon a time we would get complete documentation for every version. For several versions now we’ve only gotten a ‘what’s new’ document, and it is up to us to combine those things together to try to figure out what’s going on. We’ve gotten behind on our upgrade schedule. So we’ve got three or four versions to go though. Now we are several versions behind. We have to piece together these ‘what’s new’ documents to figure out which features might cause problems if we implement or not. That makes it pretty difficult for us to justify the upgrade.

[Sylvia] Hi, my name is Sylvia. I’m a Polaris customer. I’m also on the Polaris Advisory Committee. I have two points. We have been asking at our monthly meetings with III staff about getting comprehensive documentation for a release. I think the last one I have is release 4.2 and it hasn’t been coming. We have been told that they’re going to hire new staff, and this has been certainly longer than IUG last year. The second thing is that sometimes because releases come out more often than they used to, we went from like 5.1 to 5.6, and we tried to put together four ‘what’s new’ documents to try to figure out what we missed or got improved in 5.2, 5.3 etc. And it’s more difficult to do especially when you’re in a consortia.

We feel that documentation is not always clear whether it is about system level or library level or branch level of Polaris. Previous documentation would make it clear what level we had to have it. Now we have to test it and see if it works. It certainly doesn’t make anybody want to upgrade.

[Leah] Understandable. Let me ask. I want to be sure I’m clear. Are you referring to online documentation or PDF’s or what?

[Sylvia] You used to be able to print it out. It was a PDF. You could print it out and mark it up from release to release. So it was easier to track. We find the online documentation particularly scattered. How do we search for something, what is it tagged as? Sometimes links are broken. Should we call our site manager? We don’t think we should have to open a ticket on that.

Another thing, Sierra has a listserv, Polaris doesn’t. We’ve been told that we are probably not going to get it. So, it’s something that the advisory committee is still pursuing at this point.

[Leah] When you say listserv, do you mean through the User Group or through the Supportal?

[Sylvia] It would be through the user group and not necessarily the Supportal. Supportal there have been issues with navigation. Supportal keeps changing, but it’s not the easiest thing to use compared to what Polaris customers have had before. I understand there are multiple products, but it’s not like the companies merged yesterday.

[Emily] Can I ask a couple of follow up questions? First of all I was in a training presentation earlier today where I heard an Innovative staff person say that there’s a new Polaris forum on Supportal now. I don’t know if that’s brand new, or if you are on that. That’s another place that we can be listening.

The other question I had was going back to your example of how difficult it is when you are upgrading from 5.1 to 5.6. I know our Polaris writers will already know the answers to this. It sounds like you had a process that worked for you in the past. What would that have looked like?

[Sylvia] We would have had ‘what’s new’ for 5.6 but we would have looked at the full documentation for 5.6 and we probably would have gone back and looked at our notes to see where we made notes for the last one.

The other thing too, is that releases are coming out in a different pattern. Previously there would be one large release every year or 9 months. Not every 4 or 5 months and so that’s also an issue. We also had access to an online known issues. Now we can see the known issues that have gotten fixed, but we don’t know the known issues that R&D are still working on. We go through the process of collecting information about problems only to be told that it is already known.

[Emily] Thanks for that extra detail. I think when we go back and talk about this we want to make sure we understand.

[Lloyd] Are you saying that you get a ‘what’s new’ document and that’s where the new features are documented, but they don’t get integrated into the main documentation?

[Sylvia] That’s correct.

[Lloyd] That’s something we want to see. We want to see new features integrated into the main documentation so we don’t have to look in two places.

[Carol] It’s more than two because 4.2 was the last full document that was made on Polaris.

[Leah] Oh, I’m sorry!

[Carol] I’m Carol, I’m Polaris. The last full documentation set we got was 4.2 and it had both the administrator guides and the user guides. And it had each one of the modules. Each one of those had its own set of documents. After 4.2 we have just got a ‘what’s new’ document.

[Leah] There wasn’t any follow up.

[Mike] It is much harder to keep it all in context when it’s just here’s what is new this time. We’re trying to document it ourselves.

[Leah] And you shouldn’t have to. My ideal situation is you would have a ‘what’s new’ that gives a brief summary of new features, along with a link to where it’s fully documented in user documentation. That will be our goal. That’s a standard practice. Again, day 52.

[Susanna] I’m Susanna. I’m with a Sierra library. I want to say that in the olden days the documentation used to be better. That was before the mergers of the three companies. Before the release train. Even the Millennium manual and the earlier Sierra versions, the release notes would have a link to the manual pages. So you could see the new features, then to the manual pages. So I think this is related to the big changes that have been going on. Unfortunately, documentation is really impacted. The other thing is that they now have these current release notes in the front of the manual but I’d like to have the archive to find the old release notes. Because if you are behind a version or two it is almost impossible to find the old release notes. You need both release notes before you upgrade.

[Lloyd] That’s what I was thinking. If you are going to upgrade you want the new feature integrated into the primary documentation, but within that you also need to know which release that appeared in because if you aren’t on the newest release, you need to know if any given feature applies to you.

[Leah] I have heard that one as well.

[Yulia] I’m Yulia. I have one observation about easy to use. We’ve been watching demonstrations of this new context wheel associated with the next gen. I just flashed on a vision of documentation in a similar kind of wheel that will link you. You can see what the context of a particular concept is or maybe a release becomes an entity. It seems like navigating the documentation is difficult because you don’t know where it’s taking you from and to. You tend to click on these links and you land in a place where you don’t have the context of what has come before.

[Leah] you’re in the middle of a movie.

[Yulia] Just an observation that this whole context wheel applies to the documentation as well.

[Leah] That’s great. I love that. Emily is taking a huge role in the new documentation. I think that’s a great thing to brainstorm around with the rest of the writers.

[Yulia] It would tend to create a consistent experience as well.

[Leah] Now there’s a concept.

[Yulia] We’re a consortium we talk about that a lot.

[Leah] Okay.

[Audience Member 1] I am a Sierra customer, and I have a unique experience. This is my 4th IUG. I came in as a systems librarian after there was no systems librarian for almost 5 yours. So thank goodness for the listserv. What I experience coming in, now I know all these things, is that there’s documentation that goes back to Innopac and Millennium, that pertains to system librarianship, that is not in the Sierra documentation. Had it not been for the listserv, I would have never known where to look for it. It’s not the Sierra documentation, but it’s still very very relevant to my job. If it is still there, where did it come from? Now in the latest documentation it makes these admin corner type, which really means you’re going into the telnet portion of the system, the command line system. It was a very interesting first year trying to figure this out, and luckily the Sierra listserv is excellent. People were just like, “here’s what you do.” There were people from Innovative who said, “this shouldn’t be on the list” and said, “just email me directly.” I was like, I am lost. I was there a year before I came to conference. I had no one to train me, but the listserv. I’m sure you’re going to have other people who come in new and have never used Innovative. I’m a computer programmer and a librarian. It’s not that I can’t figure it out, but where on Earth is it? I would never have thought to look in that documentation for Sierra.

[Leah] Before we go further, I want to address the question on the listserv. I think that’s an IUG thing. Because we’re silent watchers on that list. Is that a fair statement Emily from your knowledge as well?

[Emily] My understanding is that there’s a Sierra listserv and that‘s separate from the IUG forum.

[Lloyd] There’s a Sierra listserv that Innovative maintains. Is it correct that that Innovative does not maintain a Polaris listserv?

[Sylvia] No, we asked for one five years ago when we learned there was one for Sierra, and we haven’t gotten a positive response.

[Lloyd] I would think that IUG would have one. I don’t use the IUG forum particularly. I’m flabbergasted.

[Leah] I may have miss understood your comment I thought you had said both, but you were also talking about the IUG site.

[Sylvia] No. I’m talking about the Polaris Advisory Committee has asked III to establish a Polaris listserv in parallel with the Sierra listserv maintained by the company. We’ve gotten some feedback that the software is old and it’s going to cost money. We’re not getting positive response.

[Suzanna] Yes, I think the problem is that many people like me don’t like the forums, they prefer the emails. And so IUG used to have a listserv, but they don’t have one any more. IUG has just has the forums. Innovative has maintained many listservs, and they have been product specific. The Sierra listserv is the only one that is active right now.

[Audience Member 2] Encore is still active.

[Lloyd] Innovative has several that are active. The load profile listserv is active. There are several. I don’t understand what the problem is. How much could it possibly cost?

[Audience Member 3] Thank you so much for saying that you were turning to old documentation. I’m a Sierra library. I’ve been systems librarian for 7 years. We’ve been Sierra for just 2 years, and Millennium before that. You brought back to me that when I started on Sierra I used to stumble on old Innopac explanations. I would grab screen shots and put them on my computer. Because when I did Millennium searching, there were things that were explained in great detail that I had no idea about. Now that you are confirming that there’s old Millennium documentation that applies to Sierra.

[Audience Member 4] This is perhaps well-trodden territory. I’m on Sierra. You can’t seem to get to the Sierra manual from the Supportal.

[Lloyd] You can get to old CSdirect from Supportal, but the only way to get to the Sierra manual is from within Sierra.

[Emily] I can say a couple things about that. I don’t work on Sierra right now, but I know for some of the products that I do work on we’ve had those conversations. Customers are in the Supportal and need to get into the Vital documentation. We need to across the board for all products to assess how we’re doing in Supportal and how easy is it for you guys to find our material from there. We need assistance from the support team to do that, but that’s something we we’ve been talking about in the last couple of days. I agree there’s so much that you can access from Supportal, but that it should be there too.

[Audience Member 4] It’s what I use most often, the Sierra manual, and I expect it to be in Supportal.

[Audience Member 5] I’m a Sierra customer also, and one thing I find when I open a help desk call, is an Innovative staff member will give me a link to the documentation, and when I go there, I’m prompted for a CSDirect password that no longer works. So then I have to go back and try to search the Supportal for that link, and often if you don’t have the name. Sometimes they give you an ID number and the ID number does not always work. Sometimes if they give you the name of the blurb they want you to go to that will work, but sometimes you have to go back and forth several times.

[Lloyd] Something I mentioned at last year’s forum is that really missed from the Millennium documentation is the page numbers. The one thing that was really good about the old Millennium documentation was the page numbers. It was really clear. You would get this number and you could always find the thing.

[Emily] I would like to get your contact information. If you’re having authentication issues. I can’t think of a reason why you shouldn’t be able to load a URL, get prompted for your Supportal information.

[Audience Member 5] I can be logged into Supportal, and they’ll all go to my call there will be a link for me to go to and it will take me to a CSDirect login page, and if you put in your old login it won’t login anymore, and if you put in your new login, it won’t login.

[Lloyd] I think I’ve had that happen. They changed the way it authenticates, and occasionally you end up at a place where it wants your old authentication.

[Audience Member 5] Exactly, and maybe that just staff putting in the wrong link. It’s happened several times.

[Emily] We did some work on authentication about a year ago, and it sounds like you may have uncovered a workflow that wasn’t covered in the way that we set it up. So I’m really curious if you can help us find examples.

[Audience Member 5] I actually I have a recent call open where that happened.

[Emily] That sounds like something we need to build into the authentication process. If you’re in Supportal you shouldn’t have to log in again.

[Leah] You shouldn’t have to go to multiple places. It’s confusing and frustrating.

[Audience Member 6] I’m with Sierra library. We were looking at implementing something which was part of our account plan, but there’s an implementation fee, but the documentation didn’t make that obvious. It was not turned on. I was going to test it in our test system to see if this was something we wanted to implement or if it would work. I opened up a ticket to have it turned on and was told there was an implementation fee. We’re not going to implement this if we have to pay to test it even. It would be helpful if the documentation said something about there may be an implementation fee.

[Emily] Do you happen to remember the feature?

[Audience Member 6] It was the mail, the home delivery.

[Emily] Okay thanks. That might be something we can take back to our team and just fix.

[Audience Member 6] It was not a big deal, but I wanted to see if it would work for us.

[Emily] If it’s sold separately you need to know that.

[Sylvia] Leah, I have a question for you. Do you see a relationship between documentation and the site managers?

[Leah] Yes I do, especially based on some of the comments I’ve heard today. Not just in this forum, but some one-on-ones with several customers. I’ve got some glowing comments on our site managers and how customers go to them when they may have documentation issues. The comments you’re making today just resonate and harmonize with that. We should have that relationship where site management can come to us and we can go to them. We have the open channel. Let me go one step further. I also see us building much stronger relationships with the support department and our training department. Because if we can’t use the documentation in some way to support what is trained what’s the point? If we’re not listening to support for the things you’re calling in for and were not gathering those and turning them into FAQs or if a support person says I get so many calls on this topic and nobody can ever find it. That should be a wakeup call to us to do something different. Is it titled correctly? Is it indexed correctly? Is it in the correct place? Is it referenced in the right place in the documentation? These are really the gems I appreciate. We need to all have a site manager buddy, that we know there’s a relationship. We know who they are. We know what kind of customers they deal with. They have that open channel to talk to us and us back to them.

[Lloyd] I think that the help desk staff would be a real resource for you. I remember one time I called for help with something and the help desk person could not find it either. I was kind of thunderstruck. I realized there isn’t secret documentation for the help desk people that actually works. They have to use the same stuff as us.

[Audience Member 7] I have a question. Is there a way to indicate in the documentation, and this is coming from being a new person. I’ve kind of figured it out in four and a half years, but when I came in it was difficult to know if I needed to submit a service request for something or was this a help desk ticket. There are certain things that are service requests. For example, we have Encore Duet, and getting my certificate upgraded on the website is a service request not a help desk request, but it does not say that anywhere. I asked the help desk where is it at, and they said good question. They got back to me in an email and they said this is a service request not a help desk ticket. It would be nice to know that in the documentation. Because a service request is different from a help desk ticket.

[Leah] That’s a great point. I had not heard it.

[Suzanne] I think this is a good example of the documentation that actually is in CSDirect. I recently looked at it and there are some documents that are still quite useful, but they are a little bit confused if they are outdated. I quite often go to the old documentation in CSDirect for things and I think this SSL thing is one of those.

[Audience Member 8] A little bit more about the service commitments. There are two things. I work at a help desk, so I’m a little embarrassed to ask because many of our calls say that Sierra doesn’t do this for us and it’s just that they don’t know that Sierra does it. So perhaps Supportal does this, but I had not realized it. I put in a particular service commitment regularly and as far as I can tell I have to type in to a field ‘service commitment,’ with the right word and it comes up to fulfill that, so that’s an issue in CSDirect for the first several years. I believe it was sort by various categories of service commitments. But to speak on the question that just came up, as a new systems person, I looked through all the service commitments and figured out if there was something I wasn’t doing. They were in context, there was webpac, and this or that, and again it was easy to do as a repeated task and it was clear.

[Leah] So if I understand you correctly, it might be nice when you go out to various sites, Supportal or CSDirect or whatever we end up with [it would ask] “are you new to this?,” to help you figure your way around and be able to determine some of these things because they are not second nature, you haven’t done them repeatedly, you’re new, you’re trying to figure it out. So a little more guidance. Am I understanding correctly?

[Audience Member 8] It’s more I’d like a linked list of service commitments, so if it didn’t find it in a service commitment, then I knew it was a help desk ticket. Number two, within various categories I could see if there were service commitments that I should be doing.

[Leah] I apologize I don’t know a lot about service commitments and the support end of things.

[Audience Member 9] We did have a very extensive list of service commitments in CSDirect. When the new Supportal came along that changed and the number of service commitments reduced dramatically and they weren’t in the same ordered list as they were before so they became harder to find. So that was a change from one venue to another. You could easily navigate through them before because they were by application areas. So if you wanted something in webpac, you could open that one up and see all of these cool service commitments and they had the time commitment and it’s not quite the same in Supportal.

[Casey] I’m Casey and I’m from a Polaris library. One of the things that I would love to have is access to a portfolio of all of the services and a description of the services that Innovative offers. I have learned about services at this conference that I had no idea that Innovative offered until today. That’s one thing.

I want to articulate a use case about documentation. I often use documentation to communicate with staff. So we will send answers to questions with documentation, or just quotes out of the documentation. Another way is when we are adopting upgrades having a brief summary of what is included in the upgrade so people will know what to look for is also helpful.

The third thing is to echo Sylvia’s point about known issues and bugs. Having those documented and having a complete list so we are not duplicating work to get detail to our site managers for a bug which is already known and being worked on.

Also, the other piece to that I would love to see is priority level, or impact level. Which is how many libraries does this bug impact. If it is high then I know that I need to start there and if it is really low we may not use that feature or it’s not as big of an impact on workflow.

[Lloyd] Do you mean how many of your member libraries? Is that what you’re saying?

[Casey] No, how many libraries that use Polaris or use Sierra would be impacted by this. If it’s a problem with check-in it’s going to be everybody if it’s a problem with patron associations in Polaris it might not be everybody.

[Leah] Okay. I’ll take that back. It’s definitely going to fall under development or product, but I believe I understand what you’re saying. Anyone, else?

[Lloyd] I do really like what was said about implementing the context engine ideas within documentation. It is strange that it’s so difficult to search for things within documentation when Innovative builds search engines. That is your business. You should be good at it. So we need to implement those ideas within this smaller searching realm.

[Leah] Right, within the help files themselves we are very much at the mercy of the tool that we use, and they have made some substantial improvements to search functionality, and I believe we are going to be able to make some as well in the next year or two. I have a fairly close relationship to the company that makes the tool that we use, and I know what kind of changes they are making too. Hopefully we’ll all come together, but within the Supportal or CSDirect that is on us. Maybe Emily knows more.

[Emily] I do have a comment. I’ve heard people say that it is easier to search all of our material that’s on CSDirect, but if it’s not on CSDirect then of course you won’t find it. This is a team wide issue for us to make it easier and better to search all of the material, so you don’t have to be in the right place to search all of the content.

[Suzanne] Yes, I actually like the table of contents solution like in CSDirect documentation part where you can select acquisition or circulation and you can see names of all the documentation available. So that kind of thing would be nice to be transferred to Supportal. Then you would know if it is still valuable, or if it is outdated.

[Lloyd] Something that occurs to me is this new thing they are talking about, the new product, essentially as a replacement for Sierra, it sounds like. I’m hoping you guys are going to be in on the ground floor of that to get integrated in a better way than you’ve ever been. What I’ve always wanted to see is real context sensitive help. Where when I’m in some weird little feature in the system, I can press a button and get help on the weird little feature I’m looking at. Not have to search at all. When I’m in Word and I’m doing mail merge, I can press a button and get help on mail merge.

[Leah] Right. Emily and I were discussing that over lunch. The Vitua products do have that.

[Lloyd] If III is developing a brand new thing, it would be really cool if you guys could build that in from day one. So it is there, rather than try to put it in after everything has already been built.

[Leah] Yes.

[Jean] I would like to piggyback on that, if I could. I’ve been to as many of the new next gen sessions as I could because I am furiously trying to wrap my head around these new changes. This is going to be a fundamental shift for all of our library staff to understand, or not, what’s eventually going to be happening underneath the product that they’re hoping our patrons use. So because this is so new, I’m hoping that maybe there isn’t the old embedded technical writer idea really is utilized through this process. Because I feel like, I come from the cataloging background and I feel like I need some best practices for going into this transition. Almost every session I’ve been to there’s been a question asked about how do we prepare for this. What do we need to do to our records? Do we need to continue doing authority control? So I see a huge opportunity for maybe a white paper. I know you’re asking for partners over the summer to start churning data through this context engine. There’s going to be new knowledge created through that process. So as we as customers are anticipating what we’re going to need to do to make that transition successful, we could really use the information that those partners and Innovative learn as they go through these initial processes using the Context Engine, what they learned. And it may not be permanent documentation. It might be somewhat ephemeral, but I don’t know.

[Leah] Maybe it’s a migration guide. I’m here and I want to get over here, how do I make that transition? Emily and I have already talked about that. Again I’m at day 52, so I don’t have a lot of historical knowledge. What I will tell you is, I’m from Texas. I’m not shy. We’re in meetings. We’re starting to be in meetings. I’m in a weekly meeting on the new product. Last week in the Blacksburg office for 3 hours or something. Understanding from that very part where, that’s fuzzy, and that’s fuzzy, and that’s kind of clear. We’re at that stage of meetings, which from what I’ve gathered has not been the norm.

[Jean] Well that’s encouraging.

[Leah] And it’s encouraging to me as well, because I don’t want to be the last train on the caboose. I’m not real shy. I like to be out there. I don’t have to be the first train, but I want to be in there. And we cannot deliver if we’re not in there.

[Jean] The beauty is that it’s already being organized as a modular or iterative process. Which is great for the technical writers because you can tackle it as they iterate one section at a time. Eventually it’s going to have to get all pulled together, but it’s eating the elephant one bite at a time.

[Leah] You’re correct. That’s an old tech writer phrase. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. We are starting planning for my team, we’ve put up a large planning document. We’ll have writers specifically dedicated to the new product, but it’s my hope that every writer on the team is able to participate in that. Number one, because it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity. It is a not common occurrence in technical writing. We typically are picking up someone else’s content, making modifications, adding a new chapter, and new section. Very seldom in an established software development company do you have the opportunity to start on a new product from the ground up, and I want every member of my team to be part of it. And to have their input. I have some brilliant minds on my team, why wouldn’t I want their knowledge, their background. Everything that they bring to the table to help us brainstorm what we could implement.

[Jean] Any other questions, comments?

[Sylvia] Leah, I think this is a great start. Will there be some communication with us before the next IUG as to what you think are the priorities and progress in improving documentation?

[Leah] What venue would that be? I ask that from the most sincere place because again, day 52. Are there other opportunities? Because if not, then I need to make some. But yes, anyone who would like to help us periodically get somethings that we say we’d like your feedback. I’d like to try and build a small team of people like yourselves that are clearly committed to documentation. You wouldn’t be here at 4:00 on the last day of the conference if you weren’t interested in documentation and seeing it improve.

So, I have business cards. I’d like yours if you have them. If you’re willing to be a sounding board from time to time. Just for us to have a pool of people to test some ideas out on, I would be thrilled. I apologize I do realize it is 4:00.

Going forward. I can’t thank you enough. You’ve made my job coming in much easier. You’ve probably saved me weeks of work having to dig through all the things to come up with your concerns and the quotes and the details that I’m going to need start making some plans to go forward.

Here’s my contact information [leah.eaton@iii.com]. Please don’t email me if you see a typo in the doc. That’s a different venue. I’d be happy to forward it along. It’s my commitment to you to provide better documentation that you can find and understand.

[Jean] We have one more comment.

[Audience Member 10] I had asked this like two years ago. Again Polaris, the last complete documentation we had was 4.2 and we’re now on 6.0. I have asked if the company is not going to update that, could we get the source file so we could update it ourselves at our own libraries to customize it for us?

[Leah] Bless your heart. You should not have to do that. I hear what you’re saying. I apologize to you on behalf of our history that you feel that that is what you’re left with. I’d like to get your information. We’re not going to do that. As God is my witness, I won’t go hungry again and you won’t have to do that again.

[Audience Member 10] Thank you.

[Leah] Anybody else? I can’t thank you all enough. And next year we’re going to have a 1 year plus 52 day conversation. And you’ll be seeing some plans, if not rolling out some prototypes. I’ll be back. I’m not going to leave you. I’m going to fix some of these things. I’m not going to be able to fix them all at once. I’m not going to be able to fix them all the first year. But I’m going to give it hell. Thank you.