

# STRUCTURING THOUGHTS



Our activities  
during 2009  
in a nutshell



**D**ESPITE an unfavorable economic climate worldwide, we have been as busy as ever in 2009—if not more. We believe that this uninterrupted high momentum is attributable to three factors: the nature of our business, our diversified services, and the success of our recent book.

Through our training, consulting, and publishing activities, we address essential skills (and our approach is well received). Few professionals can indeed hope for a successful career without being able to “get their message across” effectively or to engage in sound statistical reasoning. Thus, with word of mouth spreading, our services remained in high demand.

Thanks to our combination of competences, we are moreover very diversified in terms of areas of expertise (oral, written, and graphical communication, pedagogy, statistical thinking), languages (we both work in English, French, Dutch, Spanish), and clients (companies, universities, government labs, etc.). This diversity helps ensure business continuity in a downturn.

Finally, our first book, *Trees, maps, and theorems*, published in January 2009, is doing well and has thus kept us busy, too. After university bookstores raided our stock in the summer, we had to go for a second print run—excellent news, indeed.

Handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left reads 'Geneviève' and the signature on the right reads 'Jean-luc'.

Geneviève CASTERMAN  
Founding partner

Jean-luc DOUMONT  
Founding partner



## Training and consulting

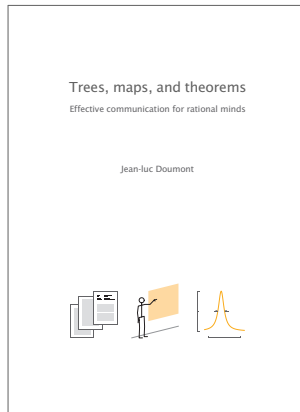
Our training and consulting activities in 2009 were in line with those of recent years. We gave lectures, ran workshops, and organized longer training programs in communication, pedagogy, and statistical thinking for our usual audiences of engineers, scientists, and business people, and we helped other clients with oral presentations or written documents, identifying messages, organizing content, creating proposals or slides, and coaching speakers. Among new clients in 2009 are the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Maryland, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) France in Paris, the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN<sup>3</sup>) in Barcelona, and, closer to home, Sibelga and Euroclear in Brussels, Belgium.

Jean-luc is a very popular speaker on campuses in North America. Those where he has been invited (below) include 16 of the top 25 graduate schools of engineering in the US, according to the 2009 US News & World Report ranking. Moreover, this same set includes 10 of the top 25 world universities, according to the study of 2008 by Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

In 2009, we also ran our highest number of invited sessions to date, mostly for graduate students, postdocs, and faculty on campuses in Europe and the Americas. To his usual tours of the East and West Coasts, Jean-luc thus added this year invited sessions at other universities in Alabama, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Québec, Texas, and Virginia. He also ran invited workshops in Germany, Italy, and Latvia, was a visiting lecturer for SPIE and a traveling lecturer for OSA, ran a series of talks in Chile (in Spanish, much to his delight), and gave a special lecture in Belgium for an audience ranging from 10 to 77 years old. Most talks were standing room only.



# Trees, maps, and theorems



To look at sample pages, download summaries and checklists, or order your copy, please visit [www.treesmapsandtheorems.com](http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com).

We are truly delighted with the warm welcome our first book has received. Out in January 2009, *Trees, maps, and theorems* immediately elicited praise about both content and format. Readers wrote to say they find it “a stunning piece of work: artfully written, beautifully designed, altogether respectful of the reader” or “terrific—filled with solid, practical, fundamental advice about communicating effectively. Easy to use, beautifully designed, an exemplification of the principles Jean-luc expounds.” A twitter post announced an “awesome new book from Jean-luc Doumont. Gorgeous and excellent!” A blog entry read “Fantastic, thorough and thoughtful advice.”

Official reviews, which did not appear until November 2009, came to confirm initial reactions. *Technical communication* calls it “a lovely book, fully exhibiting and using what it advises about design and content: easy to read, to use, to re-use.” The *Information Design Journal* considers that “its subtitle, namely effective communication for rational minds, sums up the book’s tone, which comes through clearly not only in text but also in its design. [It is] eminently readable and practical.” Finally, the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* proclaim that Jean-luc “has written a groundbreaking book” and further consider the book as “essential” and “awesome.”

The enthusiasm of readers for *Trees, maps, and theorems* also translated in prompt sales, sustained the whole year long. Through the book’s site [www.treesmapsandtheorems.com](http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com), we thus received orders from all continents except Antarctica, from all sorts of occupation and age profiles (from teenagers to retired professionals), and for all sorts of purposes, too: besides the many people who acquired it for personal use, we have had faculty buy it for their research assistants, a CEO for his board of directors, and others as Christmas presents.

We were particularly pleased to see our new book adopted almost instantly as textbook by universities in both Belgium and the US for classes of scientific or business communication, prompting us to go for a second print run in August already. We are hoping for more adoptions of it in the coming years, as the word spreads among the broad community of teachers. Of course, we use it as support for our own training programs on oral presentations, written documents, and graphs, too—next to client-specific examples for illustrations and exercises.

# Perspectives for 2010

As in previous years, our pipeline tends to fill long in advance, with a calendar almost fully booked for the first half of 2010 (and filling up fast for the second half). Besides our regular training or consulting activities for our many faithful clients, we will do even more for universities worldwide and continue to promote our successful book, *Trees, maps, and theorems*.

Over the years, we have seen a steady increase in the demand from universities and related research organizations to train their doctoral students, postdocs, and occasionally faculty in scientific communication, and 2010 will be no exception. We will give more talks at MIT, train faculty on more topics at the P. Universidad Católica de Chile, and run our program for more schools at Universiteit Gent. We will also resume our program on oral presentations at the Université de Liège and initiate one at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, besides our standing sessions at the Université catholique de Louvain and the Université de Mons, and will pursue or even broaden our collaboration with ICFO and IN3 in Barcelona, and with VIB.

As a way to provide a richer learning experience for readers of *Trees, maps, and theorems* (and for anyone else interested), we have just added support material to the book's Web site at [www.treesmapsandtheorems.com](http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com) and, by popular demand, we have started a related blog, which will serve to illustrate the book's guidelines with concrete, down-to-earth examples. Our blog is online at [www.treesmapsandtheorems.com/blog](http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com/blog) (or [tinyurl.com/TMThblog](http://tinyurl.com/TMThblog)), and we welcome your feedback.

Our "TM&Th blog" is now online (see it at [tinyurl.com/TMThblog](http://tinyurl.com/TMThblog)), and we welcome your feedback.



It is never too early to contact us with a project or just an idea. Our planning indeed fills up fast, and experience demonstrates that early involvement on our part leads to better deliverables. We are always happy to listen, to help you clarify your needs, and to search with you for meaningful ways to address them. Get in touch with us at +32 2 757 26 36 or [info@principiae.be](mailto:info@principiae.be).

