TECH comments

STC

The newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

President's Message:

Welcome to a New Year

by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM

I hope everyone had a happy holiday and was able to enjoy time with family and friends. I would like to welcome all new members to our chapter and thank all the dedicated volunteers for their efforts in 1997.

Year in Review

It's no secret, but another year has come and gone. I'm sure we all remember special events that took place during 1997—perhaps an engagement, a marriage, a birth of a child, or maybe an anniversary. How many of you are aware that our chapter celebrated its 40th anniversary last year? This speaks volumes of the unity and commitment from our chapter members. Thanks to everyone who has played some role in our chapter during the past 40 years. It's because of your efforts that we're still a strong and growing chapter.

Unfortunately, with all the positive events that occur in our lives, we are sometimes faced with adversities that we must overcome. I extend my warmest wishes to Barb Beeler, who had hip-replacement

surgery early last fall. Barb, I wish you the best and look forward to having you join us again at the program meetings. I thank Catherine Juon for all her efforts in managing and coordinating the activities of the Web Committee. Thank you for your service to our chapter. If there's anything you need, don't hesitate to call. And, Renka Gesing, thank you for stepping forward so quickly to take on the responsibilities of the Web Committee.

Quotable Quotes

For some of us, the year ending often means that, we, as professionals, get our annual performance review. (I haven't decided if this is a fortunate or an unfortunate event!! But, it's always an interesting experience.) For example, I learned that in managing the technical documentation function for my company, that I lay out information and make it look pretty. I think most of us would be millionaires if we received a dollar each time someone made that comment to us.

In speaking with other technical communicators, review time is at best bittersweet. I know of a writer who was being reviewed, and was asked to take on additional responsibilities outside of technical documentation. The writer was told, "This may be an opportunity for you to advance into a professional position within the organization." If this isn't screaming Dilbert comic strip, I don't know what is!! Additionally, another writer was praised for her ability to organize parts into bins with the appropriate label. Yet, her ability to translate technical jargon into user-friendly documentation was not rated as high as her

skill to organize parts!!

Whatever the case, we, as technical communicators, do know the value we provide to our companies and to our chapter. If you didn't attend any of last year's program meetings, perhaps one of your New Year's resolutions should be to attend a meeting or to volunteer to serve in some capacity. Our Nominations Committee is currently contacting members to determine their interest in volunteering. If you are interested, please contact Ruth Blough (see page 2 for contact information). Additionally, if there's a topic you'd like presented at an upcoming meeting, or if you know of an excellent speaker, please pass this information to any Board member.

I hope your new year will be filled with joy and happiness! ❑

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

STC/SM Senior Members

We proudly present our newest senior members:

Cynthia Abel
Linda Anderson
Joanne Ladio
John K. Schroder
Lisa A. Varnier

To qualify as a senior member, you must belong to STC for five years. Each of our senior members brings valuable experience to our chapter.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Director-Sponsor Message:
Region 4 Conference: Hope You Didn't Miss It!

by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor
phone: 313.663.8118, fax: 313.663.8778

Where: Fairborn, Ohio.

When: Saturday, November 8, 1997.

Why: Do you want a job? Will you ever need a job?

How: It's simple: Show up at the conference, network, and learn.

How Many: 165 technical communicators.

Sessions, Sessions, Sessions

The conference featured sessions on STC employment resources, independent contracting, interviewing, internships, building a portfolio, stress management, building self-esteem, résumés, searching for jobs on the Internet, management in the technical communication field, preparing electronic résumés and portfolios, and building career security. Whew! There were four choices of sessions during each time slot!

Food

"Food all day" sums it up! Breakfast, lunch, . . . cookies and brownies! Perhaps the most interesting compliment that conference planners heard was from an attending college student. During lunch, the student was overheard saying it was the best meal that he'd had since school started!

A Conference and a Whole Lot More

A conference and a job fair? You bet! Approximately 20 employers of technical communication professionals had booths set up in a special room at the conference. Throughout the day, prospective employers and conference attendees exchanged printed materials about each other, interviewed each other, and exchanged contact information in hopes of working with each other some day.

Prospective employers were very impressed with the high caliber of technical communicators who spoke with them during the conference. I received several compliments of STC; STC's involvement in offering conferences of outstanding quality to its members, outstanding attendance at STC events, and the outstanding technical communication qualifications and experience of STC members.

The Southwestern Ohio chapter did an outstanding job of planning and conducting the conference! They had four sponsors, from both the corporate and academic communities, who financially supported the conference. The day was a huge success for both attendees and STC volunteers. Thank you, Southwestern Ohio chapter, for your outstanding efforts on behalf of your chapter, our region, and all STC members!❑

JANUARY 21

Program Meeting

Comparing Usability in WinHelp and HTML Help

Laurie Kantner

Holiday Inn Livonia West
17123 N. Laurel Park Drive
Livonia, Michigan

Cash Bar 6:30
Dinner 7:00
Presentation 8:00

Dinner and Meeting
Members: $20.00
Nonmembers: $30.00

Meeting Only
Members: $5.00
Nonmembers: $10.00

Entree Choices:
Chicken Normandy *or* Pasta Primavera

RSVP: Ellen Burgett
313.913.3074
Email: ellen_burgett@medstat.com

Meet Director-Sponsor Candidates

Nancy Hoffman is finishing her three-year job as Region 4 director-sponsor this May. Nancy has done a wonderful job, and replacing her will be no small task. The STC Nominating Committee has chosen the following two candidates to run for director-sponsor of our region: Lori Stertzbach Zunich of the Central Illinois chapter and Thea Teich of the Southwestern Ohio chapter. To introduce our candidates, we provide you with a short biography of each.

Lori Stertzbach Zunich
Central Illinois Chapter

As a technical communicator, I serve as an advocate for the consumers of the information that I produce. It's second nature for me to think in terms of what a given audience needs to accomplish its goals. I believe the same type of thinking is required to assist chapters in their efforts to accomplish chapter and Society objectives. In my opinion, a director-sponsor should serve as an advocate for the chapters in the region.

As a founding member of the Central Illinois chapter, I learned firsthand how important it is to have the support and guidance of a director-sponsor. During my terms as vice president, secretary, and president I realized what a valuable asset a motivated director-sponsor is for a chapter. I found that when the director-sponsor is motivated, accessible, and approachable it's much easier to maintain a healthy chapter. My primary goal as the Region 4 director-sponsor would be to provide the support and communication required to help every chapter thrive.

I began my affiliation with STC as a member of the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) student chapter where I served as employment manager. During my tenure with the Central Illinois chapter I've served in the following capacities:

➢ Vice president (1992-93)
➢ Secretary (1993-94)
➢ President (1994-96)
➢ Membership Committee manager (1996-97)
➢ Program Committee manager (1997-98)

In addition, I championed the presentation of a Chapter Leadership Workshop for the Central Illinois chapter during the Spring of 1996. I've attended the Annual Conference Chapter Leadership Workshops since 1990. I have presented sessions on various topics at the Annual Conferences in 1990-93 and 1995-97.

As a technical communicator for Motorola, I've been recognized as a Fellow Author by the Silver Quill program for presentations and publications outside of work-required situations. In 1996 I earned a Gold Quill in recognition of my cumulative number of presentations and publications.

I have been in the technical communication field for over 10 years. Currently, I work for Motorola Cellular Subscriber Sector as a software process coordinator. This position requires me to have a global understanding of process requirements while assisting engineering groups in their process definition efforts. In addition, I am a part-time instructor for Composition and Documented Report Writing courses at Parkland Community College in Champaign, Illinois.

I hold a master of arts in technical communication and training from BGSU. My bachelor's degree is in communications from BGSU.

Thea Teich
Southwest Ohio Chapter

I have been actively involved with STC and the Southwest Ohio chapter for more than ten years. I was competitions manager for three years, and and I have also served as chapter vice president and president. As chapter president, I instituted a system for organizing monthly chapter meetings to spread the work burden and to ensure that all details were handled. I am currently on the SWO Job Services Committee which recently ran a successful regional conference. I am also the local liaison for the upcoming International STC Conference taking place in May, 1999, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I am also a member of the STC Academe-Industry Advisory Committee and organized a focus group for the 1997 STC Conference on ways to increase industry and academic cooperation to improve technical communication. I have also given presentations at a number of STC conferences on project management and marketing communications and have won several STC chapter publications awards.

My major areas of expertise are marketing communications for industrial, scientific, financial, and technical products, and communicating scientific, financial, and technical issues to non-technical audiences. My educational background includes degrees in the physical and biological sciences, communications, and business. About two years ago, I was downsized from my communications position of 11 years with a major plastics and chemical manufacturing company. At that time, I decided to start my own business, Teich Technical and Marketing Communications, which provides marketing and technical communications services to marketing research firms, financial services, software manufacturers, and technical book publishers, among other clients.

Prior to my position in communications for the chemical company, I handled publication development and media relations for a government regulatory agency and developed and ran outreach and environmental education programs for a major natural history museum and research center.

Based upon my background in the field, I hope to assist Region 4 chapters in dealing with their current needs and in planning for the future, including succession issues, increasing and retaining membership, identifying new leadership, and increasing organizational efficiency, besides handling the main objective of the director-sponsor to provide liaison to the overall STC organization. ❑

Current Job Postings

Permanent Part-Time

12/1/97

Unisys Corporation needs experienced part-time technical writer. Responsibilities include developing print documentation, online help, videoscripts, and Web pages. MS Word, RoboHelp, Web design and HTML experience desired. Exempt position with benefits.

Mark Meinhardt
Group Manager
Plymouth Product Information
Unisys Corporation
Phone: 313.451.4613
Email: Mark.Meinhardt2@unisys.com

Permanent Full-Time

12/1/97

Brasch Tech Data seeks automotive technical writers for following positions:

Owner Literature Department: Research and develop owner literature and related publications to meet program timing requirements and quality standards. ASE or state certification and 5 years automotive experience. Knowledge of MS Word and Excel preferred. Arbortext and SGML a plus (willing to train).

Training/Instructional Design Department: Work directly with engineering activities to research, develop, or update training programs based on technician needs and current product information to meet quality standards of timing requirements. ASE or state certification and 3 years automotive experience. Knowledge of MS Word and PageMaker a plus, as is instructional design background.

Workshop Information Department: Research technical products and review technical content with product engineers. ASE, state certification, or strong automotive background. Knowledge of MS Word preferred. SGML a plus (willing to train).

Send résumé indicating position of interest with salary history/requirements to:

Human Resources
Brasch Tech Data
P.O. Box 585
Allen Park, MI 48101
Fax: 313.749.0020

12/21/97

Florida company seeks technical writer to work in Miami (relocation assistance available). Responsibilities include creating print and online documentation for new and existing products and writing reference guides for software customization tools.

Bachelor's with two to three years software experience. Must be customer-oriented with usability-focused skills. Financial background preferred.

Salary: 40-50K

Kellie Delaney
SofText, Inc. (agency)
P.O. Box 2157
Ventura, CA 93002
Phone: 805.643.4056
Fax: 805.643.0563
Email: kdelaney@softextinc.com

Prefer contact by email.

Contract

12/4/97

Senior technical writer and technical editor/proofreader needed to create user documentation in both printed and PDF formats, online help systems, and Web pages as customer develops software and updates existing products. Ann Arbor location. Contract length undetermined.

Experience with Word, Acrobat, FrameMaker, RoboHelp or other help tool, and Hijaak. HTML helpful.

Writer: $45/hour mid-range
Editor: $35/hour mid-range

Please respond via fax or email only.

Michael Fischler
Principal Marketing Architect
The Pubs Group
Fax :310.842.7315
http://www.pubsgroup.com
mrf@pubsgroup.com

12/12/97

Multimedia author/performance technologist needed. Bachelor's (master's preferred) in applicable discipline. Two-plus years experience. Strong writing skills in developing proposals, designing documents, and storyboards. Experience authoring interactive courseware using Authorware, IconAuthor, or Toolbox.

Experience programming interactive

multimedia projects with C, C++, Visual Basic, Perl, and other high-level scripting tools, such as Director "Lingo". Ability to create art and animation.

Consult with clients to research, design, and develop interactive technology-based human performance interventions.

Send résumé and salary requirements to:

Human Resources Department
Triad Performance Technologies, Inc.
30101 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 330
Farmington Hills, MI 48324
Phone: 248.737.3300
Fax: 248.737.0333

12/23/97

Project manager needed for contract-to-hire position in Dearborn. Manage multiple projects for recognized leader in development and production of automotive and service training publications (service manuals, diagnostic manuals, training materials [print and video], and owners' publications).

Must be enthusiastic, energetic, and work best in fast-paced team environment. Bachelor's in business administration, business management, journalism, or related field. One to three years experience in project management or as lead/senior writer with management responsibilities; knowledge of management principles; good computer skills. Knowledge of project management software such as Microsoft Project a plus.

Pay range: $18-22/hr

Doreen Kephart
Professional Resource Associates
201 Broadway
Marine City, MI 48039
Phone: 810-765-1181
Fax: 810-765-1182
Email: kephart@pra-usa.com
www.pra-usa.com

Note: If you know of employers seeking technical writers or editors for contract, free-lance, or permanent positions, please have them contact our ERS manager. This service is free to employers and benefits our fellow STC members who are seeking new job opportunities. ❑

STC Student Conference

by Helen Black, Suncoast Member
Region 3 Student Conference Committee

Are you looking for an affordable conference that will launch your career in technical communication? Would you like to:

➢ Learn more about the skills needed in today's workplace?

➢ Explore the many career avenues available in technical communication?

➢ Exchange ideas with technical communication professionals?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, plan to attend the STC Region 3 Student Conference (R3SC) on March 28! Hosted by the SpaceTech chapter, the conference will be held on the Florida Tech campus in Melbourne, Florida.

Conference Highlights

The theme for the 1998 conference is Into the Future: Building Your Career in Technical Communication. Along with career-oriented sessions, the conference features an insightful keynote address by Mary Wise, STC's second vice president—plus a résumé/portfolio review session and coffeehouse. For more information about our program, contact Julie Bommarito, Program Chair (julieann@usit.net), or check for program updates on the R3SC Web page at stc.org/region3/pbc/Student_Conference/student_conf.html.

Registration Information

Early registration fees are $25 for students, $40 for STC members and educators, and $60 for all others (after March 7, add $10). Registration fees include all conference sessions, lunch, and the coffeehouse.

Conference brochures with registration forms will be available in mid-January. To request a brochure, please contact me at hblack@gate.net or 813.894.2272.

Hotel Rooms and Shuttle Service

If you plan to stay overnight, Melbourne's Airport Hilton offers a special rate of $59 (plus room tax). Minutes from the beach, this full-service hotel provides guests with free shuttle service to/from the Melbourne airport, Florida Tech campus, and beach. To ensure this rate, call 800.437.8010 or 407.768.0200 before March 7, and mention you're attending the STC Student Conference at Florida Tech.❑

JoAnn Hackos Presents

Dr. JoAnn Hackos will present *Managing Documentation Projects* on February 5 and 6, 1998 at the University of Waterloo in a workshop sponsored by the Southwestern Ontario chapter of STC. A renowned speaker and publisher in the area of project management, Dr. Hackos can help you develop the skills you need to handle all aspects of project management.

Dr. Hackos is a leader in developing comprehensive methodologies and practical strategies for anyone requiring quality documentation on time and within budget, including technical writers, editors, graphic designers, or consultants. One of her many publications, *Managing Your Documentation Projects* (John Wiley & Sons, 1994), has become a standard text for information development worldwide. From establishing a publication life cycle, to staffing and cost projections, to monitoring and evaluating progress, this workshop stands out as an excellent opportunity for professional development.

The fees for this workshop (at about half the regular rates) are as follows:

STC members:

Individual rate	$350*
Group rate	$300* each (3 or more members from same company)

Non-members:　　$475*

*Canadian currency

For more information and applications for the presentation, visit the STC Southwestern Ontario Web site at www.stc.waterloo.on.ca, or contact Sherry McMenemy or Lynda Baxter.

Sherry McMenemy	Lynda Baxter
519.747.5222, ext. 277	519.836.0834
slm@campana.com	bbaxter@istar.ca

Publication and Reprint Policies

TECH comments is published monthly September through June for members and friends of the Southeast Michigan chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. We welcome feature articles; letters to the editor; and information about meetings, courses, and workshops. Manuscripts are accepted in both hardcopy and electronic format using MS Word or ASCII text. Submissions will be edited.

Reprints from *TECH Comments* are permitted if credit is given and a copy is sent to the managing editor.

Send submissions to:

Jill Bornemeier
Managing Editor
P.O. Box 1289
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Welcome, New Members!

Frelon Bartley, Jr.

Susan E. Gallagher

Iklin Z. Goksel

Leslie K. Kucinskas

Laurie A. Mitchell

Rita S. Momin

Robert R. Ottke

Ernest D. Willoughby

Arthur D. Wojtowicz

We look forward to seeing you at future STC/SM functions!

Calendar of Events

January 12 (Monday)
STC/SM Board of Directors Meeting
Kerby's Coney Island
Farmington Hills
6:30 p.m.

January 15 (Thursday)
Deadline for the following:
STC 1997/98 Ken Caird Student
　　Article Competition
STC International Technical Video
　　Competition

January 21 (Wednesday)
STC/SM Program Meeting
Speaker: Laurie Kantner
Topic: Comparing Usability in WinHelp
　　and HTML Help
Holiday Inn Livonia West
Cash Bar 6:30 p.m.

Dinner 7:00 p.m.
Program 8:00 p.m.
Contact Ellen Burgett
313.913.3074

Did You Know . . .

➢ The Les Nessman character on the TV series WKRP in Cincinnati wore a band-aid in every episode. Either on himself, his glasses, or his clothing.

➢ Shirley Temple always had 56 curls in her hair.

➢ Easter is the first Sunday after the first Saturday after the first full moon after the equinox. (The equinox is quite often March 21, but can also occur on March 20 or 22.)

➢ Emus have double-plumed feathers, and they lay emerald/ forest green eggs, and they can't walk backwards.

➢ In Disney's Fantasia, the Sorcerer's name is Yensid (Disney backwards.)

Meet the Speaker

Questions of usability and platform maturity make the cautious WinHelp developer reluctant to move WinHelp projects into an HTML-based format. Many of us are waiting for reports from pioneers and researchers, so we can stay productive as we take the plunge.

On January 21, Laurie Kantner of Tec-Ed will present a case study of converting a WinHelp project to HTML-based help, providing a usability comparison of the results. Laurie's walkthrough will include references to current usability axioms for online help, compiled from technical communication and usability forums. The presentation will be geared to new and experienced help writers who see HTML-based help in their future.

Laurie Kantner has 20 years experience in technical communication and seven years in usability evaluation. Her usability work for the past two years has focused heavily on Web pages for clients such as Sun Microsystems and Netscape. Laurie is on the editorial board of the Usability Professionals' Association newsletter, *Common Ground.* ❑

TECH comments