In January, I had the privilege of being one of the chapter representatives for a panel discussion at Eastern Michigan University. Ginny Collins-Llope, Michael Dailey, and I spoke to Ann Blakeslee’s technical communication students. We helped students gain an understanding of our professional experiences by defining our roles as technical communicators in the software industry. Many students participated in the discussion by directing questions to the panel. Most students wanted to know what it takes to get started in the technical communication field, how essential it is to keep up with industry trends, and what are some of the benefits of belonging to a professional organization. Ann has since indicated that our efforts were well received. For me, it was a very rewarding experience to be given the opportunity to provide guidance to tomorrow’s technical communicators.

These students are very impressive. They are articulate, confident, and knowledgeable about all realms of technical communication. They are eager to learn and are also eager to share their knowledge with one another. Additionally, their level of enthusiasm and creativity is amazing. It is a great honor that our chapter was able to arrange for some of these high caliber professional students to present at our March meeting (please refer to page 6 for detailed descriptions of the various presentations). I encourage everyone to attend!

You may be asking yourself, How can I possibly benefit from a student presentation? Although our presenters are graduate students, some are already professionals in our field; regardless, they are our peers. I hate to admit it, but these students know way more than I did when I graduated from college in the not-so-distant past. For example, as a professional, I know many of my colleagues in the technical communication profession are struggling to determine the ramifications of moving from providing hardcopy documentation to online documentation. However, today’s students—tomorrow’s technical communicators—realize the real issue is how to single-source both delivery mechanisms! Likewise, of all the students I’ve interfaced with since our discussion, there isn’t one who hasn’t directed me to a Web page/site that they’ve designed!!

In reality, I think we are being challenged to keep pace with the skill sets of recent graduates. The communicators of tomorrow are less intimidated by technology and tend to have more familiarity with a variety of tools (multimedia, desktop publishing, authoring tools, rendering packages). After all, this is the generation that has grown up with computers, as opposed to previous generations that have had to learn new technologies as a necessity for their careers.

I think the March program meeting is an excellent opportunity for experienced professionals to network with graduate students to help them start building their careers. What better return can you get from your investment in our chapter than to serve as a mentor for tomorrow’s technical communicators?

Again, I encourage everyone to attend this meeting to inspire others or to be inspired!!
Director-Sponsor Message:

STC’s Winter Board of Directors Meeting

by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor

In January, the STC Board of Directors met in Vancouver, BC, and was hosted by the Canada West Coast chapter. Following are highlights from the board meeting.

Technical Editing SIG Created
The STC Board approved the new Technical Editing Special Interest Group and named Tom Hoyt of the Willamette Valley chapter as the SIG manager.

Board Reaches Out to Chapters
The Board approved several action items that facilitate chapter activities, including a travel budget established for visits to chapter and regional activities for the Society’s immediate past president, the Society’s secretary and the Society’s treasurer, starting in the STC Year 1998-99. In addition, the Board:

➢ Approved adding a “roadmap” and other information to the Chapter Handbook that will assist small, medium, student, and non-North American chapters in planning their activities.

➢ Plans to provide an area at the annual conference for organizations related to STC to display their materials.

➢ Approved a new financial reporting process for student chapters that coincides with a fiscal year of May 1 through April 30, making it more convenient for student chapters to file their financial reports during the school year.

➢ Encouraged chapters to enter their Web sites in the Public Relations Competition.

Grants and Loans to Chapters
STC supports and encourages special chapter events and activities that further the goals of the Society through the Grants and Loans to Chapters Program. At this meeting, the Board approved:

➢ A $3,000 merit grant for the Chicago chapter to launch a publicity campaign for their chapter members' professional development and visibility of the profession among Chicago area businesses, students, and educators through its publicity and education committees.

➢ A $2,000 merit grant for the East Tennessee chapter to make the J. Paul Blakely Scholarship, instituted in 1975, closer to being self-sufficient. This fund provides a $500 annual scholarship and a $100 Blakely Award of Excellence for undergraduate students of technical communication at the University of Tennessee.

➢ A $1,500 loan for the SpaceTech chapter for the administrative costs associated with the Region 3 Student Conference to be held on March 28, 1998.

Board Approves Screen Capture Research Grant
The Board approved a research grant of $10,000 for Hans van der Meij of the Department of Instructional Technology, the Netherlands, for a study of “The Design and Role of Screen Captures in Software Documentation.”

Committee Managers Named
The Board approved Austin Brown as the 1998-99 manager of the Nominating Committee and Annette Reilly as the 1998-99 manager of the Strategic Planning Committee.

New Category Added to ISETC Competition
The Board added a new award category to the International Science and Engineering Technical Communication Competition for team projects, with an award amount of $250 for each member of the winning team.

Continued on page 3
STC’s Winter Board of Directors Meeting

Student Chapter Dissolved

The Wright State University student chapter was dissolved.

STC Approves Changes to Bylaws

The STC Board approved changes to the bylaws in “Article VI - COMMITTEES, Section 4. Standing Committees” that tighten up the wording and change the bylaws to more closely reflect the current functions of the Conference Advisory Committee and the Recognitions Advisory Committee. The two paragraphs affected now read as follows:

The conference advisory committee provides guidance and continuity in the planning and management of annual conferences by making the expertise of its members available to current and future conferences. Its members are selected principally from past conference program managers and members who have expertise in managing elements of conferences at the international, regional, and chapter levels.

The recognitions advisory committee provides guidance and continuity in planning and managing all Society recognition programs at the international, regional, and chapter levels. The committee makes the expertise of its members available to conference planning committees to provide advice and guidance on standards and procedures for recognition activities at the annual conference.

Quote of the Month

“Quality is never an accident; it’s always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”

—John Ruskin
English artist and writer

STC’s 45th Annual Conference: Opportunities for Fun

by Jerri L. Houdayer, Orange County Chapter

If you are planning to attend STC’s 45th Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, you are probably making arrangements for hotel accommodations, determining what types of sessions you will want to attend, and deciding what kinds of fun you’ll have in your free time. Well, deciding what to do outside the conference may be the most difficult choice, because Southern California has literally hundreds of attractions, shopping options, and learning opportunities, enough to fill several summer vacations.

Here a few things to do and see in Southern California. Keep them in mind as you plan your trip. And remember: for more information about the conference in general, consult the Preliminary Program (Note: This year’s Preliminary Program will be the March issue of Intercom.)

Fast Rides

Hold on to your fanny packs, kids, and get set to roller coast, splash, scream, bounce, and whirl to a bevy of exciting rides for riders of all ages at Knott’s Berry Farm and Disneyland. Both of these famous theme parks have recently increased their “scream factor” by adding additional roller coasters, or increasing the size of existing ones. In fact, Knott’s Berry Farm has recently added two roller coaster rides (Jaguar and Windjammer) and is currently planning construction on the world’s largest all-wooden roller coaster. No word yet whether it will be ready by the time of the conference. If you’ve got smaller passengers, and are interested in smaller thrills, check out Adventure City, just down the street from Knott’s Berry Farm. Adventure City is a miniature theme park, set inside a collection of hobby shops, appropriately called Hobby City. There are tiny trains to ride, a small (but zippy) roller coaster, a beautiful 1920s era musical carousel, petting zoo, video games, acting theatre and much more to captivate the interest of small and big children alike.

Beachin’ It

Orange County’s beaches are arguably the most beautiful in the world, and best of all, there are lots of them! There is a beach setting to suit any taste, including Laguna Beach with its world-renowned art community; Newport Beach, where the rich and famous glide their yachts into private harbors; Huntington Beach, the surf capital; and Mother’s Beach, where alert lifeguards patrol a calm sandy inlet while toddlers splash in the warm sun.

Museums

Southern California has its fair share of the cultured and traditional historical museums. But what may be of greater interest are the eclectic collections that have helped define California. Such museums as Bower’s in Santa Ana, illustrating the vivid and often violent history of the old Southwest, Motts’ Miniatures Museum, the Queen Mary (now the worlds largest floating hotel), The Los Angeles Car Culture Museum, and even a Ripley’s Believe It Or Not Museum.

Recreational Activities

Skydiving, trampoline lessons, surfing, wine-tasting, murder-mystery dinner theatres, shopping, scuba-diving, whale watching, bird watching, hiking, world class golfing, baseball games, blimp rides—just about anything you can think of to do for fun is available in the Southern California area.

The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor and Convention Bureau can help with more information about fun activities in the area. You can contact them at:
Web site: http://www.anaheimoc.org
Email: mail@anaheimoc.org
Phone: 714.999.8999.
Current Job Postings

Permanent Positions

2/12/98

Back-to-back winner of the Microsoft Back Office Challenge and Best Technology Integration Award seeks technical writer to create and maintain online help for client/server accounting applications. Must be familiar with RoboHELP, Doc-To-Help, ForeHelp, or other help authoring tool. Ability to communicate and organize ideas, verbally and in writing. Previous experience in software-development environment a plus. Excellent salary and benefits.

State Of The Art, Inc.
Accounting Software
Human Resources
888 W. Big Beaver, Suite 1200
Troy, MI 48084
Fax: 248.269.2339
Web: www.sota.com

2/12/98

Usertech seeks training specialists and instructional designers with two or more years experience working with business information systems in one or more of the following areas:

➢ Needs assessment
➢ Instructional design
➢ Course development
➢ Training delivery
➢ Training evaluation
➢ Project management and consulting

Knowledge of traditional and current training methods, including CBT and multimedia, preferred. Financial, HR, and manufacturing systems experience a plus.

2/12/98

Usertech also seeks individuals with two or more years experience working with business information systems in one or more of the following areas:

➢ User procedures documentation
➢ Online reference/performance support
➢ Multimedia development
➢ Instructional design/training development
➢ Project management/consulting

Knowledge of financial, HR, or manufacturing systems applications (e.g., PeopleSoft, SAP) desirable.

Work in home-office environment. Travel required. Excellent salary and benefits, 401(k) and profit-sharing.

Mitzi Vavrick
Usertech
150 S. Wacker Drive
Suite 3275
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312.629.8675
Fax: 312.629.8680 fax
Email: jobs@usertech.com
Web: http://www.usertech.com

2/16/98

Applied Safety and Ergonomics, Ann Arbor consulting firm specializing in product safety/human factors engineering/ergonomics, seeks individual with technical writing and/or mechanical engineering background.

Responsibilities:

➢ Gather/review/summarize related technical literature
➢ Propose new language for product manuals/labeling
➢ Work closely with client to revise safety information related to servicing HVAC component product
➢ Interview industry service persons to discuss safety issues

Qualifications Required:

➢ Technical writing ability
➢ Engineering background/mechanical aptitude
➢ Communication skills
➢ Interest in product safety

Qualifications Desired:

➢ Technical writing or mechanical engineering degree
➢ HVAC knowledge
➢ Photography skills

Kelly Solak
Senior Research Associate
Applied Safety and Ergonomics, Inc.
2010 Hogback Road, Suite 2
Ann Arbor, MI 48382
Fax: 313.973.0808

2/17/98

Compuware Corporation seeks full-time technical writer to write user reference guides, installation guides, and other reference material for mainframe and client/server products. Must be experienced writing software manuals, for training or reference. Some programming experience a plus.

Skills Desired:

Framemaker, RoboHelp, HTML, Word, Acrobat, BookMaster (a real plus!).

John Robinson
Technical Communications Manager
Compuware Corporation
31440 Northwestern Highway
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2565
Phone: 248.737.7300, X-8242
Fax: 248.737.7564
Email: JohnRobinson@compuware.com
Web: www.compuware.com

Continued on page 5
Continued from page 4

Current Job Postings
2/18/98
Information engineer needed to produce written and visual user assistance for AutoCAD Mechanical and Mechanical Desktop products.

Responsibilities:

➢ Plan, schedule, prototype, produce, and test written and visual content for online and paper-based product information
➢ Understand market requirements, product specifications, and design prototypes
➢ Participate in user interface design, product specification review, and software development
➢ Participate in usability testing of products and user assistance

Qualifications:

➢ BA/BS in information systems, technical communication, or engineering
➢ Knowledge of CAD and mechanical drafting
➢ Excellent writing, editorial, and research skills
➢ Broad understanding of product information development process
➢ Experience with HTML/DHTML tools, Web graphics tools, files, standards, Web-page design
➢ Experience with Framemaker, RoboHelp, and Adobe Acrobat, graphics/multimedia editing tools (Photoshop, Deblizer, Director)
➢ Strong project management skills
➢ Java, Visual Basic, MS Active X Automation a strong plus

Work Experience:

➢ 5+ years creating technical documentation/training materials in software-development environment
➢ Experience in usability testing, user-centric information design, and information mapping

Karen Argonz
Phone: 415.507.4751
Work Location: Novi, Michigan

Contract Positions
2/6/98

High-level written/verbal communication skills. Ability to interact with all levels of management.

T. Pollock
Jawood Management Associates
Fax: 248.269.9644

2/18/98
Professional Resource Associates, Inc. offers the following contracts:


Welcome, New Members!

Kevin A. Kelch
Gail F. Oliver
John W. Robinson
Scott M. Worden

We also welcome the following member who has transferred into our chapter:

Nancy J. Gurney

Welcome to STC/SM; we look forward to seeing you at STC/SM functions!
Program Meeting

Eastern Michigan Graduate Student Presentations

Dan Laboe
Multilingual Web Sites

Mary Lind
Responding to and Editing Technical Texts: Lessons from the Classroom and the Workplace

Sonali Thatte
Integrating Training and Documentation for Software Users

- Responding to and Editing Technical Texts: Lessons from the Classroom and the Workplace

Both writing teachers responding to student texts and editors responding to professional writers’ texts are helping developing writers learn how to write. This presentation summarizes the results of a study in which the student examined teachers’ written comments on students’ texts and a professional editor’s comments on a professional writer’s text, comparing the focus of the readers’ comments, the roles the readers played, and the contexts in which the readers responded.

- Integrating Training and Documentation for Software Users

This presentation focuses on the advantages of integrating documentation and training. The student has been working on integrating training and documentation at Mechanical Dynamics, Inc. and has been involved in designing a system that technical writers and instructional designers can follow to integrate documentation and training. The presentation includes the lessons learned in this context.

- Multilingual Web Sites

This presentation includes a discussion about the advantages of multilingual web sites and the methods used to present messages to multilingual and multicultural audiences.

As the March program meeting format differs from past formats, so does the location. The meeting will be held on the EMU campus, in Guild Hall, which is on the second floor of McKenny Union.

Meeting News

The program meeting on Wednesday, March 18 showcases three graduate students enrolled in the Eastern Michigan University (EMU) Technical Communication program. These students will present papers on the following topics:

- Responding to and Editing Technical Texts: Lessons from the Classroom and the Workplace

- Integrating Training and Documentation for Software Users

- Multilingual Web Sites

Did You Know . . .

- A group of geese on the ground is a gaggle; a group of geese in the air is a skein.

- It takes 40 minutes to hard boil an ostrich egg.

- Liquid paper was invented by Mike Nesmith’s (of the Monkees) mother, Bette Nesmith Graham, in 1951.

- Kermit the Frog is left-handed.

- The fingerprints of koala bears are virtually indistinguishable from those of humans, so much that they could be confused at a crime scene.

Directions: US-23 to Washtenaw, exit 37 toward Ypsilanti. Take Washtenaw (east) 3-4 miles to just before the Ypsilanti water tower. Turn left (north) on Oakwood. Turn right into guest parking lot.
Meet the Candidates

Each year, when you receive your ballot for the STC election, you’re faced with a series of difficult decisions—and this year, I believe the Nominating Committee has made those decisions harder than ever by naming a slate of outstanding candidates.

Of all the choices on the ballot, perhaps the most significant is that for second vice president, since whoever you elect will be managing Chapter Affairs (the director-sponsors) this year and the administrative committees of the Society next year. The following year, 2000-2001, that person will manage the first entirely 21st-century STC board as the Society’s president. All that will depend on this year’s vote, since STC has an automatic succession through the presidential “chairs.”

In an attempt to help you make an informed decision about the candidates for second vice president, the STC Nominating Committee posed an open-ended question to the excellent candidates, Jamie Conklin and Mark Hanigan, who are running for that office this year.

Here is the question.

**What would you like to emphasize to the STC members as they consider you as a candidate this year?**

Here are their answers.

**Jamie Conklin:**

I believe the most important issue facing the society is change.

The economy is changing, and the everyday world of work is changing. Our tools and media are changing. And, to fill our new roles and responsibilities, we are changing our own values and behavior.

This spirit of change is evident in STC through our internationalization, our increasing focus on interactive electronic media, and our growing interest in understanding how we add value to our organizations. We have the opportunity to become one of the leading professions in the new information economy. Senior executives proclaim the need to gain a competitive advantage by harnessing the intellectual capital within organizations, and they are looking for skilled people to lead the way.

Their eyes are often coming to rest on us.

How can STC manage this change? By scanning the horizon for emerging trends, and adapting the Society’s governance and service accordingly. By promoting increased internationalization that gives us the global perspective that we need. And by offering services that help our members make the transition to new information technology and new organizational responsibilities.

Years ago, Marshall McLuhan wrote of the time when people would “learn a living.” The phrase resonates for me. Our profession proves that McLuhan was right. I know that I “learn” my living, and I am willing to bet that most of you do, too. These are exciting days, and I would be honored to work with all STCers to ensure that we contribute meaningfully to the creating of a new world of work.

**Mark Hanigan:**

I have spent the last year completing a term as the Society secretary. This, in combination with my other Society experience as director-sponsor, as manager of the International Technical Publications Competition, and as a member of various other committees, gives me the broad-based experience I need to manage STC at the Society level.

But more important, I feel that all of my life’s experiences prepare me for this position. I have had my share of victories, but I have also had my share of days that were not mine to win. I think I have learned the most from the latter. I learned to accept the outcome with grace and dignity, I developed an empathy for others, and I strengthened myself so that I would have a better chance to succeed the next time around!

Briefly, I think that I bring these qualities to the proverbial table:

- Experience—I have over 19 years in our profession; almost as many in STC.
- Dedication—I am committed to STC, to our profession, and to you, our membership.
- Warmth—I genuinely like people and am an approachable person.
- Leadership—I believe that we get the most out of involvement; my leadership style is a participatory one in all facets. I also enjoy learning from others and providing a platform for them to demonstrate their strong suits!
- Humor/Fun—I believe in the adage: “Take what you do seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously.” If I win, I promise to serve to the best of my ability.
Calendar of Events

March 11 (Wednesday)
STC/SM Program Meeting
Eastern Michigan University
Graduate Student Presentations
Guild Hall
(2nd floor of McKenny Union)
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti
Social Hour 6:30 p.m.
Dinner 7:00 p.m.
Presentation 8:00 p.m.
Contact Ellen Burgett
313.913.3074
Email: ellen_burgett@medstat.com

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

Web Site News

Any member who returned the postcard regarding our member directory, is now listed on the Web page at http://stc.org/region4/smc/smcdirectory.html.

Check it out. If you have any changes, would like to add a description of the technical communication services you offer, or would like to be included, please email David Dickason at david@arachnyd.com.

Thanks, David, for creating and maintaining the page.

Comments Please

I am having a lot of fun experimenting with the Web site. If anyone has any comments or suggestions, I’d love to hear them.

Renka Gesing
Chair, Web Committee
renka@windsor.igs.net

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. We accept manuscripts in both hardcopy and electronic format with 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.

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