In This Special New Year Issue

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Presidential Remarks
by Natalie Roelant
STC/SM Chapter President

Happy New Year, STC Members!

Can we see a show of hands for all those happy to ring in a new year? I know that I am. You may be wondering why our chapter is publishing a special “New Year” edition of TECHcomments. Well, our 2003/2004 editor, Lanette Cornwell, had a dream of entering our newsletter as a competitive entry in the STC International competition. Mary Jo, our current editor, and her newsletter staff are now making that dream come true, thanks to the groundwork Lanette set out during her tenure. However, there is a minimum publication requirement of six editions per year in order for a newsletter to be considered for a competitive entry. Hence, our special “New Year” edition, which will hopefully become a tradition.

What a great way to start the new year. The year 2005 is predicted to be a phenomenal year for all of us. Do you believe in astrology? Me neither. Not really. But, if you can for a minute join me in the world of stars and planets, many experts are claiming 2005 is to be the year of prosperity for all astrological signs. If that is true, won’t that be nice for many of us? And, although the new year is only a couple days old, who can complain about these temperatures we have been experiencing since January 1?

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“Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.”

Managing Editor: Mary Jo David • Assistant Editor: Emily Eisbruch • Layout & Design: Doug Howell • Reporters: Cynthia Leet, Maureen Moyer, Elaine Wisniewski, and the above

TECHcomments is published bimonthly, six times a year. Publication targets are Sept./Oct., Nov./Dec., Jan., Feb./Mar., Apr./May, June-Aug. The deadline for submissions is the 20th of the month preceding publication.

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Deadline for submissions:
January 20, 2005
February–March issue of TECHcomments

Please e-mail submissions to maryjo@writeawayent.com

STC/SM Leadership 2004–2005

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Presidential Remarks
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I hope that you enjoy our first 2005 edition of TECHcomments. Just a reminder: we are not hosting a program in January, but we hope to be back in the swing of our program schedule in February. Stay tuned to your postal mail and the www.stc-sm.org website for updates about a February program.

If you haven’t visited our website or the International organization website in a while, take a moment to do so. Both sites are provided to help you in your professional career as a technical communicator.

Ciao!

— Natalie

TECHcomments Team Welcomes Your Contributions

The TECHcomments team welcomes you! Do you have an experience with a process, tool, or educational program you’d like to write about? Would you like to contribute a review of a recent book you’ve read that might be of special interest to others in our field? Are you willing to share the story of how you became a technical writer and the various paths your career has taken? Please contact editor Mary Jo David at (734) 392-0019 or e-mail her at: maryjo@writeawayent.com or newsletter@stc-sm.org. We look forward to your involvement with the TECHcomments newsletter.

STC Scholarships Available!

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of $1000 each will be granted for academic year 2005-2006.

The application deadline is February 15, 2005.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office. You can also look online at: http://www.stc.org/scholarshipInfo_national.asp

STC Office
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Phone: 703-522-4114
To celebrate the New Year, I asked the staff of TECHcomments to share their resolutions with me. Needless to say, the rest of the staff put mine to shame!

What professional New Year’s resolution did you make this year?

Emily Eisbruch, Assistant Editor: “To finish and publish the kids’ book about Michigan that I’ve been working on since Spring 2004.”

Moe Moyer, Reporter: “To remain positive and upbeat that I will very soon find work in 2005. I will also continue to promote my art and be more self-assured regarding it.”

Doug Howell, Layout Editor & Reporter: “I resolve not to let fear—of the unknown, of losing a comfortable arrangement, of getting in over my head—determine my horizons.”

Elaine Wisniewski, Reporter: “My professional resolution is to identify and share topics/tidbits/research from my workplace and graduate studies with others in the STC and STC/SM either by attending conferences, programs, or other networking functions.”

Mary Jo David, Managing Editor: “I resolve to make the most of using my Palm Pilot this year—for more than just the address book.”
As the idea for our special “New Year 2005 Edition” of TECH comments was hatched, members of the STC/SM’s chapter listserv were asked to submit samples of projects they were especially proud to have been a part of in 2004. With little more than two weeks notice before the Jan. 3, 2005 due date, members still managed to respond with submissions.

Participants were encouraged to submit either project samples they created on the job or those they created in a volunteer environment. Following are their submissions, grouped in either the “Labor Intense” section (on-the-job samples) or “Labors of Love” section (volunteer work).

Thank you to all who responded to our call for samples!

### Labor Intense

#### Wise for Windows Installer Reference

**Submitted by:** JoAnn Keosaian, Wise Solutions, Inc.

**Type of Project:** User guide/reference manual delivered as a PDF and online help

**Produced for:** Wise Solutions, Inc.

**Tools Used:**
- Written in Adobe FrameMaker
- Converted to PDF with Adobe Acrobat
- Converted to online help with WebWorks Publisher

**Purpose of Document:** To provide reference and instructional material to users of the Wise for Windows Installer product. The audience consists of Wise Solutions customers, who are developers of Windows-based software applications.

**Size of Team:** Three writers. The product is mature and robust, and its documentation is extensive. The documentation is a collaborative effort.

**Noteworthy Info:** JoAnn notes, “An earlier version of this manual won an STC Award of Excellence. We have since revised it heavily to increase usability and reduce word count.”

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### Compiling, Testing, and Running

To test an installation, you can:
- Compile the installation to an executable file.
- Test the installation, which appears on your system. See Testing An Installation.
- Debug the installation in an .MSI debug mode, which allows you to test the installation and lets you see errors in the Debugger on page 418. The Debugging Professional and Enterprise Editions have a built-in installation component that allows you to test the installation.
- Run the compiled installation, which appears on page 79.

**Note**

When working in a .MSI, you can set the environment to a target computer by adding the Release field to the Release Editions page. This allows you to test different versions of the program by adding releases to the Release Editions page.

### Compiling An Installation

Compiling an installation compresses it into a single .MSI file. Depending on the .EXE or .MSI compilation, an installation can also create an installation component that contains multiple releases. If the installation is compiled, you can select one or more releases, and click the Install button.

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Labor Intense...
« continued from page 5

BioMedware Website Revamp
Submitted by: Dunrie Greiling
Type of Project: Website
Produced for: BioMedware, Ann Arbor

Tools Used:
· Microsoft Frontpage
· Various Mac graphics programs used by the graphic artist

Purpose of Document: To update the content, look, and accessibility of our website. The website art and contents were out of date and did not emphasize our recent successes or projects. The artist was no longer available for updating graphics. The HTML was not up to current standards: there was inconsistent use of inline styles and CSS across the site, so the site was impossible to maintain. Too much of the site’s text was embedded in graphics; therefore, unavailable to screen readers and website crawlers. I moved the text out of graphics and into text that was resizable by the viewer. We added information about our projects, including some art that made it more visually interesting. We added a new section for employee pages. We also removed some historical content that greatly simplified the navigation structure.

Size of Team: The entire staff (approximately nine people) participated in the brainstorming about audience and content. Three people actually worked on the website development. Dunrie was in charge of the content and the HTML and CSS. One of BioMedware’s developers did the JavaScript menus. A graphic design consultant created the art and guided the CSS development.

Noteworthy info: Says Dunrie, “I used the two STC Telephone Seminars on CSS to remake the site without extensive use of tables.”

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Labor Intense...
« continued from page 6

Practice CS FlashHelp

Submitted by: Tom Beverly, Creative Solutions

Type of Project: Software help system

Produced for: Thomson Creative Solutions

Tools Used:
- Macromedia’s RoboHelp X5
- HomeSite
- TopStyle Lite

Purpose of Document: We needed to produce a flexible, HTML-based help system that had the potential to grow and adapt to changes in software development over the next several years. After exhaustive research on help tools and formats, we chose RoboHelp X5 and HomeSite for creating FlashHelp. We worked with our programmers to devise a scheme for calling context-sensitive help on a screen-by-screen basis, and we wrote task-based content related to each screen. Along the way, we learned much about cascading style sheets, JavaScript, and HTML itself, while battling rapidly approaching deadlines and the obstacles posed by Windows XP Service Pack 2.

Size of Team: Content by Andrea Frazier and Tom Beverly. Design and implementation by our FlashHelp Committee: Tom Beverly, Andrea Frazier, Craig Haiss, Barry Matthews, Sally Paul, and Linda Stafford.

Noteworthy Info: According to Tom, “This was our first venture into HTML-based help, and luckily some of our writers already had experience with JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets.”

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Business Writing Refresher Course

Submitted by: Mary Jo David

Type of Project: Writing curriculum

Produced for: Corporate clients

Tools Used:
- Microsoft Word
- Adobe PageMaker
- Adobe Acrobat

Purpose of Document: Provides an off-the-shelf, one-day course for presenting the basics of business writing to corporate audiences. The goal of this refresher is to improve each participant’s ability to recognize the qualities of effective written communication and improve his/her own business writing ability. It was designed for people who regularly communicate in the workplace using e-mails, memos, and letters. I developed this course and have delivered it to various corporate clients for more than five years. However, this year the course went through a major update, with the assistance of Dr. Brian Pedell at LTU.

Noteworthy Info: While the existing course can be taught across many different industries, I have created a “spin-off” of this course specifically targeted to refresh police report writing skills. (Now there’s a tough audience!)
Labors of Love

Newsletter: Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor

Submitted by: Emily Eisbruch

Type of Project: Private school newsletter. Printed copies distributed to parents of current students and placed in literature racks at the Jewish Community Center and Ann Arbor synagogues for public relations/publicity/recruitment purposes. An HTML version was posted on the school’s website.

Produced for: Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor

Tools Used: Microsoft Word

Purpose of Document: To communicate to parents and other interested people about the excellent things going on at the school.

Size of Team: One person. Emily produced this newsletter pretty much on her own, including doing most of the writing and all of the layout and photography.

Noteworthy info: Emily notes, “My kids attended the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor for 10 years, during which time I volunteered to do a lot of publicity work for the school. This was my last such project, since my kids have now both graduated and moved on to other schools.”

Sari's Corner
From HDS Office Manager Sari Shifrin

It's hard to believe that my first school year here as the Office Manager of the Hebrew Day School is nearing a close. It has been a very special year for me. I've genuinely enjoyed working with such a capable and committed staff and getting to know all the terrific HDS families. It is a joy to interact with the students day by day as they grow throughout the school year.

I want to thank everyone, staff members, students, parents and community members who have made this school year such a meaningful one.

I'll be busy in the HDS office over the summer to help get the school ready for the start of school in August. Although I expect to have a reduced work schedule this summer, you can always leave a phone message for me on the office answering machine, 971-4833. I look forward to seeing and talking to you over the summer when opportunities arise. I wish all the HDS families a wonderful summer and I will look forward to seeing all of you in August when we'll begin the new school year.

WE WELCOME YOU!

If you are reading this newsletter and are not a current HDS family, but would like to learn more about our school, we welcome you to contact us!
Please phone us at 734-971-4833

Also, be sure to check out our website at http://www.hdsaa.org

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Manchester Area Historical Society
2005 Calendar

Submitted by: Doug Howell

Type of Project: The annual calendar has proved to be the Society's main fundraising vehicle, enabling numerous community projects.

Produced for: Manchester Area Historical Society

Tools Used:
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe PageMaker
- Microsoft Word

Purpose of Document: The MAHS has produced historical calendars since 1984, each one presenting local history from a special viewpoint. This year’s theme was “What Used To Be,” showcasing businesses that once operated in the Manchester area.

Size of Team: Doug scanned and enhanced the photographs and served as layout and copy editor.

Noteworthy Info: The calendars are $7 each and are available only from Manchester area merchants.

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Belanger Family
Christmas Card

Submitted by: Kathleen
Belanger

Type of Project: Christmas
card printed on color inkjet.

Produced for: Distribution to
family and friends.

Tools Used:
- Microsoft Picture It!
- Adobe Photoshop

Purpose of Document: This year was particularly eventful for my family. I wanted to share the news and
pictures of the highlights of the year. I began designing the card in Microsoft Picture It! Meanwhile, I was able
to take some Adobe Photoshop classes and added a few touches using my new Photoshop skills. The card was
printed on card stock.

Noteworthy Info: I bought a digital camera when my first grandchild was born and have had great fun with it
ever since!
Labors of Love...
« continued from page 11

Pellar-Kosbar Family
Holiday Website

Submitted by: Christine Pellar-Kosbar
Type of Project: Bookmarks with the link to an online family website
Produced for: Family and friends

Tools Used:
- Dreamweaver
- Notepad
- ACDSee photo sorter
- Thumber thumbnail maker
- Microsoft Word

Purpose of Document:
To make people smile!
For the holidays, we made bookmarks that included a picture of our girls and a Website address. We also designed a Website to go with that address: www.thinksystem.net/happynewyear2005 (we knew we’d never finish by Christmas). The Website is a simple three frame design with a greeting in the top frame, links for favorite/funny sites in the larger right frame, and links for family pictures in the left frame.

Size of Team: One writer/editor/coder and one coder/fight-with-the-software-and-printer person

Noteworthy Info: We usually make calendars with family pictures, but wanted a change of pace this year. I’ve been collecting fun site links for a couple of months. All in all, calendars are easier, but this was a pretty fun project.

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Labors of Love...
« continued from page 12

Mayfair Village Homeowners’ Newsletter

Submitted by: Mary Jo David

Type of Project: Paper newsletter

Produced for: Distribution to every household in subdivision.

Tools Used:
- Adobe Pagemaker
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Word

Purpose of Document: An 8-10 page newsletter designed to keep neighbors informed of activities / concerns in the neighborhood and the township. Also intended to update neighbors about their dues and snowplow fee status (paid/not paid).

Size of Team: 1 writer, 1 proofreader, 1 membership coordinator, and 1 block-captain coordinator (for distribution).

Noteworthy Info: In the best of times, this is a quarterly publication; however, its availability is directly proportional to the amount of discretionary time the author has!

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A New Year’s Resolution for YOU!

Renew Your Membership to the Society for Technical Communication and remember to join our Southeastern Michigan chapter!

Renew/Join the International STC

Renew your STC membership today! Now is even a better time to renew (or join as a new member) as the International Society for Technical Communication (STC) has redesigned their membership structure to include several new categories of membership: classic, limited, e-membership and student. For more details on each, and for an online membership application, go to: http://www.stc.org/join.asp. For information about the STC overall, go to: http://www.stc.org.

Renew/Join Our Southeastern Michigan Chapter

Currently the Southeastern Michigan Chapter has approximately 300 members from Jackson to Lansing to Port Huron and points in between! A majority of our members are concentrated in the metro Detroit and Ann Arbor areas, but we also have members in Toledo, Ohio, and Windsor, Ontario!

Now with the redesign of the International STC membership structure, we have the opportunity to increase our membership to include technical communicators from other areas in Michigan, as well as throughout the United States and internationally. This is an excellent opportunity for our chapter—the Southeastern Michigan STC Chapter—to recruit new members and enhance our membership and networking opportunities.

Our chapter members currently include technical writers, instructional designers, technical editors, business writers, usability professionals, communication managers, instructors, Web developers, and more. The STC/SM is composed of technical communicators who are employed full time, part time, and on a consulting, contracting, or freelance basis. We also have student members and members who are new to the field of technical communication.

The STC/SM chapter provides many learning and networking opportunities for technical communicators and supports the international STC organization with its efforts. We sponsor chapter programs with topics ranging from project management to the application of software tools. Our chapter listserv facilitates the timely posting of job opportunities that become available in the Southeastern Michigan area. We also post many volunteer opportunities for our members.

For more information about membership opportunities and upcoming events, please visit: http://www.stc-sm.org.

STC/SM Ann Arbor Networking Lunch 2005 Schedule

STC/SM members meet informally for lunch each month to share news and information. Gatherings start at 11:30 a.m., but arrivals are welcome at any time. Members, as well as interested technical communicators, are welcome to attend. R.S.V.P.’s are appreciated in order to secure sufficient table space.

Contact Kathy Carter at (734) 475-5865 (bluehoo@comcast.net) or Doug Howell at (734) 477-2857 (dhowell@bordersgroupinc.com) for more information. Dates and locations are subject to last-minute change.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thu, 13 Jan</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Shehan-Shah Indian</td>
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<td>Tue, 8 Feb</td>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>Chili’s Grill</td>
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<td>Wed, 9 Mar</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>California Pizza Kitchen</td>
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<td>Tue, 12 Apr</td>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>Zingerman’s Roadhouse</td>
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<td>Thu, 26 May</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Northside Grill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, 26 Jul</td>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>Kabob Palace</td>
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Networking & Learning Opportunities

Many of the following events are posted at www.stc.org/related.asp or www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp

January 12, 2005

January 13
STC/SM Ann Arbor Networking Lunch at Shehan-Shah Indian. Hostess: Kathy Carter. Email Kathy to confirm: bluehoo@comcast.net.

January 15–16
The James River Chapter STC will hold its 2005 conference at the Four Points by Sheraton hotel in Williamsburg, Virginia. The conference theme is “Information Design and Management.” For more information, please contact: Don White IDM2005@stc-jamesriver.org or go to www.stc-jamesriver.org.

January 24–27, 2005
The 51st Annual Reliability and Maintainability Symposium will be held at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, Alexandria, Virginia. For more information, please visit: www.rams.org/

January 30–February 4, 2005
ASTD (the American Society for Training and Development) will hold the ASTD TechKnowledge 2005 Conference and Exposition at the Riviera Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information, please contact: ASTD (703) 683-8100, www.astd.org.

February 15–16
National Association of Science Writers Conference. Washington DC. Early registration until December 15. See www.nasw.org/mem-maint/workshops/. A limited number of registrations available for non-NASW members. Contact workshops@nasw.org.

February 17–21
The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting, Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC. Contact AAAS Meetings Department (202) 326-6450 or aasmeeting@aaas.org.

February 25–26
The Atlanta Chapter STC will hold Currents 2005, its annual technical communication conference, at the Atlanta campus of Mercer University. Includes a full-day workshop on February 25 and a full-day conference on February 26. Contact Rachel Grimes, Conference Manager at rhgrimes@checkfree.com or see www.stcatlanta.org.

March 16–19

March 19
The Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC will hold its annual conference on the Great Valley campus of Pennsylvania State University in Malvern, Pennsylvania. Includes a keynote address by Jean-luc Doumont and a presentation by Chris Kojm, the Deputy Executive Director of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, who will speak about the development of The 9/11 Commission Report. Contact Gary Samartino at (610) 701-0577 or garys@infoventions.com or see www.stcpmc.org.

March 20–23
WinWriters UA Annual Conference, Las Vegas, NV. Register by phone 9 a.m.–4 p.m. PST, Monday–Friday at (800) 838-8999 (US and Canada) or (206) 285-2605 or go to www.winwriters.com/ohc05/reginfo.htm.

RENEW YOUR STC MEMBERSHIP TODAY! (Renewals are due by Feb. 28)
My Thoughts about STC

Linda L. Oestreich
2005 Candidate,
STC 2nd Vice-President

I’m Linda Oestreich, one of your 2005 candidates for STC 2nd Vice-President. I have been an active, dedicated member of STC ever since I became a technical communicator in 1979. In fact, in 1996, I was honored by the Society with the title of Fellow. And, for the past three years, I have been Director-Sponsor of Region 5.

You will have my “official” write-up with your ballot materials and in Intercom. So, this article is my way of bringing to you some of my ideas about the Society and our profession that I hope will help you understand who I am.

You have three choices for this office this year. Each candidate brings with her a wealth of experience, wisdom, and dedication. Naturally, I hope you decide to vote for me, but no matter whom you choose, please do vote!

Relationships and Communities

Our profession and our Society are about relationships and communities. Merriam-Webster says relationship means [the state of] “having an aspect or quality (as resemblance) that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working together or as being of the same kind.” Sounds like a bunch of STCers, doesn’t it?

Many of you have heard about the move to call all of our chapters and SIGs communities. Merriam-Webster gives its first definition of community as “a unified body of individuals.” Even better, a second definition is “a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society.” Change the word living to working, and we have a perfect fit!

Relationships naturally exist within communities. And communities exist to help their members, to provide support, and to offer growth. Communities also have relationships with other communities. STC is, has been, and I hope, will always be, about the relationships within, among, and between communities and the individuals within those communities. It is this aspect of the Society that has kept me excited about being a member and leader for more than 20 years. If you have ever heard me speak, you know that I love what I do, but even more so, I love helping others be better at doing what they do!

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My Thoughts about STC
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The STC Community

The Society for Technical Communication is a vehicle to help all of us be better at what we do. In these days of change, turnover, outsourcing, and offshoring, the global community absolutely needs what we do. Technical communication is necessary. As long as we have technology and change, we will have people who need good technical communicators who can provide bridges to understanding.

I believe in the STC community. I believe that the Society provides and will continue to provide a path for our success. Just as the work we do provides the words and tools that act as bridges to better understanding, I believe that STC provides a way for us to excel in that work. STC communities even help us better understand technical communicators in other fields, in other cities, and in other parts of the world.

A Two-Way Love Affair

Our world is about relationships. Sometimes we forget that relationships need two-way energy. They need feedback and they need care. If you are one of the STC members who wants more value for your membership, perhaps you need to give more than your membership fee to STC.

I have loved STC for more than 20 years, and I have worked hard to be part of its success. STC has loved me back with opportunities. It has shown me the way to new employment, to new heights of my profession, to higher salary levels, and to lifelong friendships that I treasure. For me, it has been you, the people of the Society who have made those benefits possible. I want to be 2nd Vice-President and ultimately President of this Society because I believe in you. You are the people of the Society. I believe you are its heart, and I believe that the changes the Society is experiencing are for ultimate good.

Our organization must be known and respected by industry, by academe, by government, and by everyday people. I want STC to be a recognized acronym—even with people who have never written a users guide, a journal article, a research grant, a help file, or a hardware manual. I want our spouses, our children, and our parents to understand the value we bring to the world. We, as members of the Society, can make that happen through better marketing, varied and accessible educational programs, enthusiastic grass root activities, and strong communities.

Relationships are Our Strength

Communities of practice; communities of interest; communities of geography, communities of communities! It doesn’t matter what we call ourselves when we form relationships, what matters is the relationship.

Our STC relationships provide ongoing mentoring and form a substructure of strength that we can depend on. As the Society moves forward with new programs and new technologies, we find areas of the Society that are in need of repair, recycling, and retirement. However, we also find areas that are strong, viable, and valuable. As we live our professional lives, we choose the parts of the Society that work best for us. Yet, no matter what programs or technologies we embrace, the relationships and the communities of STC are at the core.

I will do all I can to make my belief in this Society contagious. But, you are the key. As a member of the Society, you have a relationship with other members, and you have a relationship with your SIGs, your chapters, your competitions, and your conferences. You can make those relationships strong and reciprocal. As a Society leader, my job is to help ensure that the Society returns your efforts with value.

I am passionate about STC. I believe that passion will help me lead the Society with wisdom and integrity. I hope you believe so, too. </end>
Member Profile: Shawn Humphrey
Interview by Maureen E.C. Moyer

As we say "so long" to 2004 and ring in the New Year, 2005, we thought it only fitting that in this Special Edition of TECHcomments we acknowledge our newest Southeastern Michigan Chapter member as of the end of 2004—Shawn Humphrey.

Welcome Shawn...and may the road rise to meet you!

Celtic Creativity: The Shawn Humphrey Profile

n recent issues of TECHcomments, we’ve enjoyed getting to know several members of STC/SM just a trifle better. This time we have the pleasure of meeting our newest chapter member, Shawn Humphrey, the “Irish Boy.”

Shawn is currently contracting as a technical writer for Creative Solutions, where several members of our chapter are also employed. He has previously held three other contracts with this company, which, no doubt, speaks well of his work. In his current assignment, Shawn is editing tax documentation for the state as well as generating PDFs and online help for the accompanying software. Creative Solutions is also the place where he discovered more of the benefits of being a member of STC/SM. Shawn says he has wanted to join for “some time now,” and found that he had the resources during this current assignment. (Welcome aboard, Shawn!)

Outside of working with Creative Solutions, Shawn also performs freelance copywriting for Princing and Ewend, an ad agency in Saginaw, and pens entertainment reviews for the Flint Journal. Two of the reviews of which he is most proud involved interviews with the Barenaked Ladies and Creed music groups.

After receiving his associate’s degree in web design in 2002 from Baker College in Flint, Shawn found that he was becoming more involved in technical writing. With that, he transferred to the University of Michigan-Flint to obtain his bachelor’s degree in English with a specialization in technical writing. However, part of that plan was shortlived. Shawn decided he wanted to graduate sooner, rather than later, so he dropped his minor and graduated on December 19, a semester early.

When asked if there was a particular program or class that had the most influence on his work, Shawn was quick to reply that while he enjoyed many of the university’s classes and professors, it was a training program that influenced him most. He explained that the tutor training program for U of M’s Marion Wright Writing Center gave him the opportunity to tutor a student this past fall and he found it "very rewarding." He also enjoyed the course itself as the members discussed “the philosophy, purpose, and goals related to maintaining a successful, student-friendly writing center." As writers all, we can certainly understand the importance of such centers in all universities, especially for those students who struggle with communication.

One area that always elicits intriguing replies when interviewing for these member profiles concerns the subject’s most unusual assignment. This time was no different. Shawn stated that in 2001 he volunteered to do freelance English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) editing for a Russian software firm. While the company wanted him full-time and living in Moscow (!), neither side could agree on an equitable pay rate, especially with the currency conversion rate. As Shawn continued his work for the company, his foreign adventures took a turn for the

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After receiving his associate’s degree in web design, Shawn found that he was becoming more involved in technical writing...

comical. After editing the grammar for the website text, he found that the software firm’s webmaster (with whom he had no contact) would “correct” Shawn’s English, making the text indecipherable.” Though quite humorous, sadly, this type of activity occurs in American workplaces as well.

Shawn has some good advice for people who may be interested in his field, and it certainly exudes common sense. He says he doesn’t turn down writing opportunities even if they are classified outside the scope of his immediate experience. Shawn has certainly proven his flexibility by working as a webmaster, an ESL editor, a technical writer, a journalist, a copywriter, a book editor, and a writing tutor. He believes it is important to “keep an open mind and avoid being pigeon-holed.” Shawn also noted that it can be difficult to find writing assignments without having earned a bachelor’s degree. However, he believes he has been “uniquely fortunate to see many doors open for me based upon my previous writing experiences.” Another bit of advice from Shawn for those just starting out is not to be afraid to check into unpaid or low-paying opportunities at school or even the local paper. He also stresses not to wait to go to school, “if you can help it.”

On a more personal level, Shawn’s life has taken a variety of twists. He is a rock musician and points out that “a band interview turned into a part-time music writing gig at the newspaper,” a gig which he has enjoyed for the past nine years. Opportunities certainly strike at odd times and in odd situations. He enjoys traveling and is currently looking into an assignment in California. Though he really enjoyed living in Europe for a summer, Shawn is a new dad and does not think he will do that again for a while. His son Jason, now 1-1/2 years old, introduces Dad to many new heroes, like Kermit the Frog and Gollum. Brace yourself Shawn, this is only the beginning!

If you care to see how Shawn has earned his moniker of “Irish Boy,” check out his website at http://www.celticisle.com. This is a fun, Irish-themed website that provides a good overview of some of the projects on which Shawn has worked...fun projects. He has explored poetry (“Sleeping in Class” is one that may touch the heart of many of our members), journalism, and even his own true-life ghost stories! The photos from Shawn’s trip to Ireland are delightful. There are also several links to interesting sites; for example, check out the link to University of Texas at Austin, Perry Casaneda Map Library where you will find current satellite images of tsunami-wrecked areas of Indonesia.

Welcome aboard, Shawn. It was fun getting to know a bit about our newest member and we look forward to meeting you at STC/SM functions. 

A special “thank you” to Moe Moyer for taking on this assignment willingly, even though she had to wait until the end of 2004 to find out who to interview and then turn the interview around by January 3, 2005!