Our Southeastern Michigan chapter has been fortunate to have every Council position filled for the past couple of years. That includes elected Executive Council positions as well as volunteer Administrative Council positions (i.e., team managers).

Elected Executive Council Positions

Our chapter elections are right around the corner, but before we can proceed, we need to prepare a full ballot. Our chapter bylaws list the following as elected positions in STC/SM:

- President (Current-year VP is advanced to President on the ballot)
- VP
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Nominations team members (2)

Our Most Pressing Need for Next Year

All STC/SM members are encouraged to consider running for any position on the Executive Council. However, to complete the ballot...
“Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.”

TECHcomments

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

Managing Editor: Mary Jo David, newsletter@stc-sm.org • Assistant Editor: Emily Eisbruch • Layout & Design: Doug Howell • Reporters: Cynthia Leet, Maureen Moyer, Elaine Wisniewski, and the above.

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Deadline for submissions: May 18, 2005

April-May issue of TECHcomments

Please e-mail submissions to maryjo@writeawayent.com

STC/SM Leadership 2004–2005

Executive Council

President Natalie Roelant
president@stc-sm.org

Vice-President Lanette Cornwell
vicepresident@stc-sm.org

Treasurer Leslie Hipp
treasurer@stc-sm.org

Secretary Kendra Moe
secretary@stc-sm.org

Immediate Past President Mary Jo David
pastpresident@stc-sm.org

Administrative Council

Job Board/Listserv Chris Pellar-Kosbar
jobboard@stc-sm.org
listserv@stc-sm.org

Membership Barry Matthews
membership@stc-sm.org

Newsletter Mary Jo David
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Professional Liaison Laura Allen
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Programs Dunrie Greiling
programs@stc-sm.org

Webmaster Kathy Belanger
webmaster@stc-sm.org

Educational Liaison Andrea Frazier
educliaison@stc-sm.org

Nominations nominations@stc-sm.org
and ensure that we have at least one person running for each position, we are especially appealing to members who would be interested in running for one of the following positions:

- Treasurer
- Nominations team members (2)

See p. 15 for a job description that explains the duties and responsibilities of the Treasurer.

**Volunteer Administrative Council Positions**

Obviously, the more volunteers we have for sharing the responsibilities of the chapter, the lighter the load for everyone. Looking ahead to team manager positions that will be available for next year, the following list presents opportunities for you to get involved (and gain valuable management experience) in key functions of your STC/SM chapter.

- Programs Mgr.
- Membership Mgr.
- PR Manager
- Listserv / JobBoard Mgr.

**Team Volunteers**

Are you considering volunteering with the chapter, but you’re not ready to take on a Council position?

Why not consider joining one of our chapter teams. Every Council manager has room for help on his/her team. So if you’re interested in helping out with programs, membership, newsletter, public relations, education liaison, professional liaison, job board/listserv, or the website, please let us know.

To nominate yourself for any of the elected positions, to volunteer for any of the non-elected positions, or to simply get more information on what each job involves, please send an e-mail to nominations@stc-sm.org or call me at 734-392-0019. Don’t wait. We’re anxious to hear from you.

**STC/SM elections are held in the spring for the next Council year (July 2005 through June 2006).**

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Welcome to STC/SM
New Members

The Southeastern Michigan Chapter of STC (STC/SM) would like to welcome the following people who have joined our chapter since Fall 2004:

- Teresa Mertuzzi
- Gerry Butterwick
- Elona Charney
- Penny Dilloway
- Shawn Humphrey
- Mark Kakkuri
- Melanie Koci
- John Lewis
- Shari Lindskov
- Stephanie Matthews
- Erica Pilon

We’d also like to commend all of you who renewed your STC/SM membership for another year before the February 28, 2005 renewal deadline!
Networking Over Lunch

January, February, and March networking lunches gathered a total of nine people between them. But what a variety—a current student seeking job-related info, a visit from a former writer checking back into the field, those on temporary contracts, long-time independent consultants, and a company employee whose job has somewhat strayed from actual writing.

Many questions were raised, resulting in great discussion—but no definitive answers. Is low attendance at these networking lunches an indication of a lack of need for them or an indication of the difficult job market? Would certification of technical writers add to our ability to both market ourselves and show our worth? What is the best real estate firm out there? And just how confusing can we make it for our waiter as we come and go at different times!

Anyone interested in providing answers to these questions—or just adding to the list of questions—is encouraged to attend one of our upcoming lunches.

- Thursday, May 26 at Northside Grill (on Plymouth Rd. just north of Broadway Bridge)
- Tuesday, July 26 at Kabob Palace (516 East William St.)

Contact Kathy Carter (734 475-5865, bluehoo2@comcast.net) or Doug Howell (734 477-2857, DHOWELL@bordersgroupinc.com) for more information.

Special Thanks to Our Programs Team

One of the few ways we have of meeting one another in person is by attending one of our (almost) monthly chapter programs. As we attempt to pack as much useful information as possible into one to two hours on a weekday evening, we don’t always have time to introduce everyone who’s working behind the scenes to schedule and roll out the programs.

So, next time you have the opportunity to attend one of our STC/SM programs, don’t hesitate to walk up and introduce yourself to the following members of the Programs Team:

From top: Dunrie Greiling, Programs Manager; Sharon McDonnell, Program Greeter/Door Registration; Erin Snoddy, Venue Coordinator; Jenn Burchill, Pre-Registration Coordinator; Margie Monforton, Flyer Coordinator (not pictured)
Question(s): **In the innocence of your youth, what did you think you would be when you grew up? When did you first learn about the profession of technical communication?**

**Dana Cadman:** Dana, like so many of us, can parcel out several years of his youth via career goals. Dana’s reply:

Age 5-8: Astronaut  
Age 9-13: Aerospace Engineer  
Age 14-19: Computer Programmer  
Age 20-30: Technical Writer  
Age 40-??: Self-Employed Technical Writer

"In 1992, I heard about the STC in an issue of Aldus Magazine. When I began writing full-time for my employer, I joined the STC in 1993."

**Barbara Nightingale:** "I started out as an elementary schoolteacher and really loved it. I truly thought I would remain a teacher until I retired. I went back to college to learn about computers...I started teaching computer classes part-time through my instructor.

"I was fortunate enough to find a wonderful manager in technical communications who was herself an ex-teacher...she helped me develop [my skills] as a technical communicator. After 20 years as a technical communicator...I teach Technical and Professional Communication. I also own and operate my own technical communication business...and I love it."

**Paul Zimmerman:** "I offer these dubious gems of my wisdom: During my misspent youth, I aspired to be either:

a. Astronomer  
b. Optical Engineer, or  
c. Accountant

"I arrived at tech writing backwards and after-the-fact. While at Albion College, I had dual majors in English and economics. My last course my final year was called Designing Technical Reports.

"The instructor encouraged me to pursue the field, and she sponsored my original student membership in STC. As it turned out, my TW work has not involved tech reports at all—rather, I have produced mostly user guides, technical references, product briefs, tutorials, etc."
Project management, whether for teams or solo efforts, is often portrayed as a complex endeavor with obscure vocabulary, reports, and metrics. Project management can also be seen as mindless bureaucracy that interferes with the “real work.”

At our STC/SM April program on Wednesday, April 20, James Goebel, co-founder of Menlo Innovations in Ann Arbor, will present some specific, low-tech, and effective tips for managing projects in a people-friendly manner. He will also describe some common process traps.

This presentation will lead attendees through several hands-on exercises designed to help explore key project management concepts and techniques. Participants will leave with practical steps they can implement the next day!

James Goebel is co-founder of Menlo Innovations in Ann Arbor. He has 20 years experience in software development and has spent the last six years as a coach and change agent for organizations. Goebel is also a certified Project Management Professional (PMP).
Making the Most of an Opportunity to Attend the STC Conference

By JoAnn Z. Keosaian

If you are fortunate enough to work for a company that supports your attendance at the annual STC conference, you will want to make sure that you get the most value out of the conference and that you are able to communicate that value to your manager. Here is the process I’ve used to do just that.

Set objectives

Decide what you want to learn. Do you need to research new tools or techniques? Has a corporate merger introduced some management challenges? If you set department objectives as part of your corporate evaluation process, as we do, use them as a starting point. Once you have set one or two department objectives, have each attendee set personal objectives. (You might do this exercise before you even ask your manager about the conference; use this information up front to show the value that you expect to get from your attendance.)

Select your sessions

When the conference schedule becomes available, attendees should select sessions that will meet their personal and department objectives. At this point, they can (and should) select multiple sessions per time period.

The week before the conference, meet with all attendees. Have each person select first- and second-choice sessions for each time period. This provides flexibility in case the first-choice session is cancelled or is full. For maximum coverage, do not schedule two people for the same session. If someone has no sessions selected for a time period, have him/her attend someone else’s third-choice session for that time. (This is why you selected multiple sessions earlier.)

At the conference

At the end of each day, briefly review the next day’s sessions and make changes if necessary. You might change your focus based on what you learned at another session or a vendor showcase that day.

After the conference

Have the attendees write a brief summary of each session they attended. Schedule meetings for the attendees to present their reports to the rest of the team. That way, everyone benefits from what the others have learned. These presentations usually spark discussion about how we can improve our writing or processes.

Develop a list of team and individual action items to implement what you learned. We often incorporate these into our quarterly objectives. Send the conference reports to your manager, and report on the progress of your action items.

JoAnn Z. Keosaian is Technical Publications Manager at Wise Solutions Inc. in Plymouth, Michigan.
STC Associate Fellowship Conferred on STC/SM Member John Brus

by Cynthia Leet

John Brus has recently been awarded the rank of Associate Fellow by the STC. Both his lengthy technical writing career at General Motors (GM) and the many roles he has volunteered for within the Southeastern Michigan chapter contributed to his receiving this honor.

Brus’s Work at GM

Brus has worked at the General Motors Research and Development Center (GM R&D Center) since 1977. Hired as the staff science writer for two newsletters published by the GM R&D Center, he eventually became their managing editor. The internal monthly newsletter, Projects, was circulated to engineering management and reported on developments within the 12 technical departments of R&D. The bimonthly external newsletter was circulated to university engineering departments and helped recruit employees to GM.

Brus also wrote news releases, brochures, speeches and presentations on engineering topics. Over the years, Brus’s responsibilities and interests expanded beyond publications to include photography and the Internet. From the mid-1980s he served as chief photography editor, and in the early-1990s he developed internal web sites for R&D’s publications program and became co-editor of its first Internet site.

In the mid-1990s Brus joined GM’s newly formed Technology Intelligence (TI) group. TI detects, evaluates, and reports on technological development programs. It focuses on transportation-related technological change and competitive business strategies based on that change.

On a broader playing field, TI also tracks technological development outside of transportation. TI reports these changes to GM’s highest-ranking managers world-wide through formal reports and commentaries published in an internal weekly newsletter. Brus writes these weekly commentaries about all aspects of automotive technology—fuels, auto parts design, hybrid powertrain designs, electronic control methods, safety systems, and so on.

In 2004 he became managing editor of Global Intelligence Report, which discusses developments in technology, business strategies, specific competitors’ vehicles, and finance.

Brus says, “As a technology analyst, it is interesting, and at times fun, to keep track of the evolution of these technologies.”

Brus’s Work in STC

Parallel to his career at GM, Brus has devoted many hours to volunteering for the Southeastern Michigan chapter of STC.

“From 1978-1995 I held most offices except for Treasurer,” Brus comments. During that time, Brus truly contributed to the activities and running of the local chapter. A list of all his activities, publications, and offices is exhaustive. Briefly and broadly, Brus has judged publications competitions, managed public relations for the chapter and for the 33rd national ITCC conference held in Detroit, managed local conferences, edited chapter publications and continues on page 9 »
John Brus...
« continued from page 8

its newsletter, taken photographs for the chapter, and spoken at and attended many STC national conferences.

Nancy Hoffman, STC Fellow and long-time STC/SM chapter member, describes Brus as, “Usually outgoing and very friendly with everyone. He has a very dry sense of humor, enjoys puns, and isn’t very serious about much of anything. He always sees good in situations...he makes lemonade from lemons.”

Hoffman continues, “John has always been willing to ‘pitch in’ and fill roles for the chapter in whatever way the chapter needed him. We can always count on him to help us out in a pinch. Now, we’re proud to recognize him for all of those years of time and effort and tireless energy he poured into our profession and STC—especially into our chapter.”

John Brus is pleased to have been awarded the rank of Associate Fellow in the STC. According to Brus, “I think it provides needed recognition for the value of volunteering at the local chapter level.” He adds, “Volunteering at the local chapter level helped complete my education regarding career possibilities and skills, plus volunteering also proved to be a great way to make many new friendships.”

He has certainly earned the honor. <end/>

February 2005 Program Recap

Interaction Design for Complex Problem Solving: Designing Useful and Usable Software

On February 23, 2005, Barbara Mirel, Associate Professor at the University of Michigan and author of Interaction Design for Complex Problem Solving: Designing Useful and Usable Software, presented to an audience of 70+ attendees at Compuware Corporation. The program was co-sponsored by STC/SM, UPA (Usability Professionals Association of Michigan), and MOCHI (Southern Michigan Northern Ohio Chapter of the ACM SIG CHI).

Beginning with a straightforward topic, Mirel presented her perspective on the tools for problem solving by focusing on the challenges of performing complex analysis to determine the effects of the Atkins Diet on global trade. Attendees quickly realized that there is nothing simple about this analysis. The topic provided Mirel the opportunity to present the limitations of the applications used to run problem-solving models, including that the main focus is usually on the application running the model rather than on the analyst’s mindset. This, says Mirel, has resulted in a very contrained approach to problem solving.

Mirel took the audience through what she considered a very linear wizard approach to problem solving. She then presented design strategies and discussed core analysis tasks and the need for useful transparency. Mirel is a proponent of design strategies that enable more user control and she contends the way to implement these strategies is to have a better understanding of complex work dynamics, to recognize the potential of interactive visualization, to have team and company buy-in, and to conduct open debate about open questions.

continued on page 21 »
The CoolTools! Column was introduced in TECHcomments this past fall. Here, we hope to present one or two useful mini tools each issue. In some cases, these are proven tools and in other cases, they’re just tools we’ve heard about. Either way, they’re tools that, potentially, can save our members time or aggravation—or both!

Novatix™ ExplorerPlus™

A friend of mine knows I write this column, so she sent me an email about ExplorerPlus by Novatix. According to her, “This is the best $39.95 you could possibly spend...It makes ftp so user friendly and the double pane viewing option (horizontal or vertical) is great. It also has a great “previewer” that recognizes an amazing number of formats.”

I haven’t purchased this product, but while investigating it for this column, I did download the free evaluation copy, and I think I’ll be purchasing it soon. I haven’t had a chance to play with all of the product features, but I can tell you the ones I was most smitten with right away:

- Setting up your ExplorerPlus window for multi-pane folder viewing (like the good old days of early Windows!); view different locations/files in each window and easily copy/move across windows.
- Printing lists of files from Explorer...or rather, from ExplorerPlus
- Using a viewer pane to look at a file during the File > Open or File > Save activity

In addition to the features I’ve listed above, ExplorerPlus also enables you to easily accomplish the following:

- Copy a file name or file path as text
- Rename groups of files, and, of course, individual files
- Run a Fast Find and print or save the results or use the viewer pane to preview a file

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From the Editor

by Mary Jo David

I don’t feel much older than I was when I first joined STC almost 20 years ago. Yet, I must be “maturing” because I receive a lot of e-mails and/or phone calls from people who are either launching their first careers or considering changing careers to become technical writers and they want to know more about it from a “seasoned professional.”

I always worry that, when they speak with me, they’re only getting one perspective, and I try to be forthcoming with suggestions for others they can speak with and other sources they can go to for more information.

I’m sure I’m not the only chapter member who receives these requests. This inquisitiveness on the part of people who want to find out more about our field is a big reason why, since this newsletter team formed last September, we’ve been focusing more attention on people and profiles. Writing about current members...students...an associate fellow...and comments from the chapter at large is our way of sharing the vast knowledge and experience we have as a community. It’s also one of the reasons I don’t worry about TECHcomments being too long. Since we’re only distributed online, we don’t have to worry about postage costs...just staff burnout as everyone works hard to produce another packed issue!

So, next time people inquire about how they can learn more about our field, I hope you’ll be generous about sharing your own experiences and convince them to talk to others as well. I also encourage you to point them to TECHcomments as a valuable resource for learning more about our profession. And, if you can think of ways we can add value to this publication, please let me know (e-mail: newsletter@stc-sm.org).  

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Major STC Grant Program Announced

STC is excited to announce the launch of a major research grant program in which the Society publishes a Request for Proposals (RFP) on topics approved by the board. This year, three topics are announced: Making Content Usable, Communicating with Many Audiences, and Achieving Return on Investment (ROI). (See the full RFP for more details about topics.)

For more details about the research grants program and the full RFP, go to http://www.stc.org/grantsResearch_about.asp

The deadline for letters of intent is May 30, 2005.
Making Freelancing Work

(Reprinted with permission from You’re Technically Write… a newsletter of the technical editing community at Saginaw Valley State University; Vicki Fulkerson, Editor, Fall 2004)

For years, some technical editors have been opting to stay home. Stay home and work, that is. The Society for Technical Communication (STC) reports in its 2003 Independent Contractor/Temp Agency Employee Survey that “24 percent of all STC members identify themselves as consultants or contractors.”

Among those who have chosen to forgo the nine-to-five rat race is technical editor Kathy Carter of Chelsea, Michigan. Kathy left her job at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory (NVFEL) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for the flexibility afforded by freelancing.

In a recent interview, Kathy spoke about how she got her start in the profession, why she chose to freelance, and what she does in a typical workday.

When and how did you become interested in technical writing? Have you had formal training in the field?

I have a very mixed background, with degrees in speech pathology/audiology and English education. But after working for a school system for four years, I took a break. During that time I had several jobs, and in all of them I ended up doing significant writing projects.

Then someone I knew suggested technical writing. There was a program at the university where we lived at the time, so I went over to interview for information and find out more about the field. I ended up applying to the MSTC [Master’s in Scientific

and Technical Communication] program at the University of Minnesota. My thesis and area of interest was patient and public education.

Were you hired as a technical writer for the EPA?

Yes and no. NVFEL doesn’t have a job classification specific to technical writing. However, what they produce is writing, so they are always looking for people with writing skills. Even when they hire an engineer, one criterion is writing ability.

When I applied, the person reviewing the applications thought I would be a good addition to the skill mix. I was the first person hired specifically as a writer (without a technical background). They essentially asked me to work as a freelancer for their staff. It was a very unusual situation. I was able to do a wide variety of work and got tremendous experience.

How did you initially find work as a freelance technical writer?

I had worked and lived in this geographic area for 10 years when I quit my office-based job. Among my key contacts was a department chair at the University of Michigan medical school. He was interested in having me work with his department. I’ve also done work for the EPA. These two places form the main sources for my work.

What factors went into your decision to return to freelance work?

I wanted more control over my hours, which days I worked and how often.
Member Profile: Kathy Carter

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What is a typical work day like for you?

It really doesn’t exist. I work when I have a project and then it depends on the size of the project and how long I have. If it’s a 20-hour project and I have four weeks to get it done, I follow a very different schedule from when I have a 20-hour project to do in one week.

Basically, my goal is no more than 10 hours of work a week (I’m very part-time right now), so I accept projects that work into this goal. I’ll work 20 to 30 hours a week to help a client meet a deadline—but then I won’t take on another project that would require me to work the next week.

On days I have a project, I get the family off to their respective places, get my exercise, and then sit down at the computer. Virtually all of my work is done on computer these days—almost nothing in print. I’ll take breaks but will spend two to six hours in my home office, until it’s time for the kids to start arriving home.

What do you like most about your work? Least?

I definitely like the flexibility. And I like knowing I’ve made a difference in the product, whether that means the grant will get funded more easily or the user will have an easier time reading and understanding.

I really don’t like dealing with the gobbledy-gook and forcing my way through tortured text.

Tell me about your experience balancing the work and family components of your life.

Obviously, I made a major concession to family in the last seven years. During the eight years I worked in an office, I used the maximum scheduling flexibility that was allowed. In that office, it was a flexweek: working an 80-hour pay period in 9 days instead of 10, with a 3-day weekend every other week. Next I tried going to part-time (26 hours per week) plus telecommuting (1 to 2 days per week).

When these still didn’t allow the flexibility I needed, I turned to freelance work. I haven’t pursued major contracts, but have kept my client list simple. I rarely have long-term projects (nothing more than a month), but I do multiple projects for the same people. Basically, I’ve been very fortunate. First, I worked in an office that did its best to accommodate everyone’s working needs. Then, as a freelancer, I’ve been able to find the type and number of projects I needed.

I’ll take breaks but will spend two to six hours in my home office, until it’s time for the kids to start arriving home.

Note that benefits are a major issue and concern for freelancers. I really didn’t give up much, since my husband’s spousal health benefits were better than the ones in my office job, so we’ve always used his program. And the life/disability weren’t great in my office job. I think that’s why they were so great about other things—they knew the benefits didn’t compare to other companies in our geographic area.

Has the amount of work available to you varied season-to-season or year-to-year? Why?

The type of work I do doesn’t have much in the way of seasons. The biggest factor is probably the two-to-three times each year that federal grants are due. Journal articles are on variable schedules. The nature of medical writing for researchers is that they are always working on something. They have to be publishing and applying for grants annually.

What is the compensation range for freelance technical writers and editors? How do you determine an hourly rate?

I would refer you to the salary surveys done by STC and AMWA (American Medical Writers Association) to get the ranges. I really don’t discuss pricing much with other freelancers since it varies so much by experience and type of writing. Freelancing seminars will offer a variety of formulas for determining your rate, and I recommend searching out one of the workshops offered by various professional groups. They’ll almost all say to include the net you want to end with, the amount to cover vacation and sick time, the amount to cover administration (you can’t work 40 hours writing because some of your time is spent marketing, billing, etc.), the amount to cover insurance, and the amount to cover overhead (computer equipment, paper and other supplies, software, etc.)

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Member Profile: Kathy Carter

« continued from page 13

I had read that employers spend about the equivalent of your salary on all those other things, so when I started, I just took the base hourly rate my employer had been paying and doubled it. I’ve made modest two-to-four-percent increases over the years, as I felt the need. That’s worked for me.

Is there a demand for freelance technical writers and editors in the environmental field?

The demand varies greatly geographically and by field. Michigan is not a hotbed of environmental writing, and the technical writing field here has had its ups and downs (it’s just coming out of a deep down).

How have professional groups like STC been helpful to you?

Regarding contacts—my jobs, both office and freelance, have been working as the lone writer. Having other people who do the same thing to check in with really helps. Regarding training—the programs, conferences, workshops, and publications help me keep informed about trends and what’s happening.

What types of networking have proven valuable to you?

What’s been helpful is talking with people who work in fields I’m interested in and finding out what they do—then, figuring out how a writer can help them and telling them the benefits they will get.

What is your advice to someone who is trying to get started as a freelance technical editor?

Personally, I think it would be difficult to begin your career as a freelancer. Most employers want to know you’ve got some experience doing what you say you can do. All the really successful freelancers I know started with a company, developed a niche or expertise, made lots of contacts, and then went out on their own. I did some freelance work during graduate school, but those were with people who contacted the grad department knowing they’d find a student.

If you are already working for someone else and have that experience, then I’d say start looking for and taking projects before you leave your job. Try it out first. Freelancing sounds great but has its drawbacks. You always work alone: no quick conversations at the water fountain. You have to determine your own schedule. No one is making you punch a clock or do what needs to be done, so it’s definitely not for the un-self-motivated. <end/>

Vicki Fulkerson is a student in the Professional and Technical Writing program at Saginaw Valley State University.

Changes to the STC Bylaws: How They Affect You

Ann L. Wiley Ph.D., Associate Fellow, Rochester Chapter (Reprinted from Technically Write, March 2005, The newsletter of the Lone Star Community of STC.)

It is important to realize what the vote on the changes to the STC bylaws is about. The facts follow. At this time the STC bylaws provide for eight regions. Members within each region elect a director. According to the bylaws, that director represents the region, but in fact all STC directors represent all members. The laws of incorporation supersede bylaws when there is a conflict, which explains the situation.

If the changes to the bylaws are NOT passed, representation will not change. All directors will continue to represent all members. However, all members will be able to vote only for a director “for their region.” It is to the advantage of members to vote for all directors, since we are represented by all the directors. Belonging to a chapter is not required to be part of a region. We are all in a region, because of our postal code.

If the changes to the bylaws DO pass, STC will no longer be divided into eight regions under the bylaws. Regionalization will still be the basis for many activities and networking. We will have greater flexibility in regional configurations.

At this time the Second Vice President of STC is responsible, under the bylaws, for “coordinating” continued on page 15 »
Changes to STC Bylaws...
« continued from page 14

chapters by assigning “sponsors.” Traditionally the directors elected by each region have served as sponsors for chapters in that region, but the bylaws DO NOT REQUIRE that directors act as sponsors, nor that all sponsors be directors.

The SIGs need sponsors, and the large number of communities is making it more and more difficult for directors to personally serve as sponsors for all communities. The incoming President and First Vice President have committed to having directors serve as sponsors for the next two years. A Leadership Community is forming and it is expected the members will provide sponsorship in future years. This will give STC much more robust sponsorship than Board members alone can provide. Sponsors will be accountable to the Board, by means of the appointment procedures.

A vigorous debate on sponsorship and the role of regions is good for us all, and several STC lists have had these debates this month. It is important to remember that the changes to the bylaws do not affect representation or sponsorship, but do allow us to vote for all of the directors, who represent us all.

Ann L. Wiley Ph.D.
Ann L. Wiley Consultants Inc.
ann@annlwiley.com
Associate Fellow, Rochester Chapter

Job Brief: Treasurer
Highlights of Treasurer Responsibilities for the STC/SM Chapter

Beginning-of-Year Responsibilities

The beginning of the council year is the busiest time of the year for the treasurer. S/He must:

- Prepare a spreadsheet of budgeted and actual expenses from the prior year
- Work with the chapter’s Council to prepare a budget for the fiscal year

- Roll the Quicken registry to the new fiscal year
- Update bank account signature cards to reflect new executive council members.

On-Going Responsibilities

After the budget is approved, the treasurer performs the following tasks on a regular basis.

- Ensure that mail is picked up from the PO box on Stadium Avenue in Ann Arbor (monthly) by the Treasurer or by an executive council member so that any mailed bills will be paid in time.
- Deposit all income (monthly): Usually from twice-a-year Society dues rebates and any income from mail-in registration and door receipts for chapter programs.
- Pay all invoices / expenses (as needed): Checks require two executive council signatures, so allow time for signature routing.
- Attend council and program meetings whenever possible.
- Maintain and balance the Quicken registry for two accounts (monthly).
- Prepare treasurer’s report (monthly): Except for a general summary, all reports are automatically generated by Quicken.
- Maintain chapter laptop and printer (as necessary)
- Work with the President as necessary (on-going)

End-of-Year Responsibilities

Prepare and submit to STC International a year-end report of all financial transactions, grouped by income and expenses. This very brief report must cover 7/1 through 6/30, and must be submitted on a form provided by STC International.

Time Estimates

The time commitments for the beginning-of-year and end-of-year responsibilities listed above are:

Beginning-of-Year Tasks (i.e., preparing the budget, rolling the Quick registries, and updating the signature cards): This process takes about 15-20

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Student Spotlight: Lynne Szulczewski
Interview by Elaine Wisniewski

Lynne Szulczewski is a part-time student in Madonna University's post-graduate certificate program for Professional and Technical Writing. She expects to receive her certificate in Winter 2005. Lynne received a B.A. in Psychology from Keene State University in Keene, New Hampshire.

Why did you decide to pursue a certificate in Technical Communication?

I chose Technical Communication because the business world needs individuals who can communicate difficult concepts so others can easily understand. Since I love to write, this was a logical choice.

Why Madonna University?

Madonna is the only school in the area that offers a post-graduate program that caters to working adults who do not want to pursue an advanced degree. The program is strong and Madonna University is an excellent educational institution.

What are some example projects from your coursework that you are particularly proud of?

I am most proud of my Robot Training Reference Manual project for Advanced Technical Writing. I had worked on this project in 1992 at the company I worked for. I completely redid the manual and developed a new edition. I located the Electrical Technician I worked with in 1992 to answer questions and review my material for accuracy. I am also proud of it because I really understood the subject matter, sharpened my technical interviewing skills, and presented the documentation in a professional manner. I was able to use my research and writing skills that I had learned through Madonna since the first edition of the manual.

Which classes have influenced your thinking as a Technical Communicator?

All of my classes have influenced my thinking as a Technical Communicator, but one stands out the most: Advanced Composition and Research Strategies. In this class Professor Bell taught us an organizational method for gathering research material and writing it in our own words. This class showed me that research can be fun. I really enjoyed the thrill of hunting down the facts and gaining knowledge.


Advice for research: Be careful of what web sources you use for research. Investigate them to be sure they are reputable and not opinion-based. Look at research as an adventure for finding facts that will support your ideas/educated assumptions. Once you have gathered your facts, put the pieces together like a puzzle to show how it all makes a larger picture.

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Student Profile: Lynne Szulczewski
« continued from page 16

How will a certificate help you in your career?

My certificate should lead to a new career in Technical Communication. I plan on obtaining a technical writing position, perhaps writing processes and procedures. However, I am not limiting myself to any one field at this point.

What additional advice do you have for those considering Technical Communication?

Find the program that is right for you. Do your research on the educational institution you are considering to ensure you are getting the best education available.

Any other comments?

Madonna University offers a superb education in Technical Communication. <end/>

CoolTools!
« continued from page 10

As usual, I was under the gun to get this column written—lots to do and not enough time to do it! Even so, I found myself spending a lot more time playing with this tool than I originally had time for. It was worth it. I can see how it would fast become your exploring tool of choice.

Read more about ExplorerPlus at http://www.novatix.com. It’s available for a free, 30-day evaluation. The price to register the software is $39.99. Did I mention that the user guide is viewable from the website? The parts I referenced seemed quite complete. <end/>

Novatix and ExplorerPlus are trademarks of Novatix Corporation.

If you have a tool you’ve found useful, e-mail me at newsletter@stc-sm.org and tell me about it. If you’ve used one of the tools featured in the column, write and share your experiences—good and bad. Remember, the views and opinions in this column are the views and opinions of the writer only, and should not be considered a product endorsement by the STC/SM chapter.

Job Brief: Treasurer...
« continued from page 15

hours total, depending on how responsive the council is to your request for budget estimates.

End-of-Year Tasks (i.e., preparing year-end report for STC International): This task takes about 4 hours.

The time commitments for the monthly and on-going tasks are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Estimate (per month) Task</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending council meetings (Online meetings now account for about half of our approx. 9-10 meetings)</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending chapter programs (when possible)</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking up mail at the PO box on Stadium Avenue in Ann Arbor</td>
<td>☔ hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depositing income from monthly program meetings</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying all invoices / expenses. (Time commitment depends on how easy it is for you to get the required signature from another administrative council member.)</td>
<td>1-2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining and balancing the Quicken registry for each of our two accounts</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing monthly treasurer’s report</td>
<td>1-2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining chapter laptop and printer. (Time commitment depends on whether any issues arise and, if so, how significant they are.)</td>
<td>☔-?? hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More
Meet the Council

STC/SM Administrative Council
1 Jul 2004–30 Jun 2005

Last fall, we introduced you to our Executive Council members for this year. Now it’s time for you to meet members of our Administrative Council. They’ve been hard at work this year on their individual responsibilities for the chapter, so it’s time you know who they are!

Programs Manager:
Dunrie Greiling
(1st year as Programs Manager, Asst. Mgr. last year)
Scientific Ink & Consulting, LLC
Bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and doctorate in biology
Years in Technical Communication: 17
Years in STC: 5

Membership Manager:
Barry Matthews
(2nd year as Membership Mgr.)
Senior Technical Writer, Creative Solutions
Bachelors Degree in English Lit. from University of Waterloo (Ontario)
Years in Technical Communication: 5
Years in STC: 4

Public Relations Manager:
Nick Petroff
(1st year as PR Manager)
Technical Writer, Creative Solutions
BA in Written Communication from EMU
Years in Technical Communication: 4
Years in STC: 4

Job Board / ListServ Manager:
Christine Pellar-Kosbar
(3rd year as Job Board / Listserv Manager)
Senior Technical Writer, Gyricon
Master of Science, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, Michigan Technological University
Years in Technical Communication: 14
Years in STC: 14

Education Liaison:
Andrea Frazier
(1st year as Education Liaison, also helping with STC/SM website this year)
Senior Writer/Lead Writer, Practice Management, Creative Solutions
BS in Biological Science, MSU
BS in Written Communications - Technical Communication, EMU
Years in Technical Communication: 6
Years in STC: 5

Professional Liaison:
Laura Allen
(1st year as Professional Liaison, also helping with STC/SM website this year)
BS in Technical Communication
Years in Technical Communication: 5
Years in STC: 3

Web Manager:
Kathleen Belanger
(2nd year as Web Manager)
Documentation Specialist, Service Centers Corporation
B.A. in English; Oakland University
Years in Technical Communication: 6
Years in STC: 2
A Matter of Degrees

by Elaine Wisniewski

Madonna University
Bachelor’s Degree and Certificate in Professional and Technical Writing

Recognizing students’ needs for career preparation, the English and Communication Arts department designed the Professional and Technical Writing major to respond to the growing demand for professional writers in corporations, institutions, and service agencies of all types.

Plan of Study

Madonna University offers two options for students interested in pursuing Professional and Technical Writing: a bachelor’s degree or a post-baccalaureate certificate of completion. A minor is also available.

Congrats to STC/SM Senior Members

The following STC/SM members have attained Senior Member status since September 30 2004. Congratulations! It’s great having you on the team!

(Senior member status is conferred upon those who have been members of STC for five years.)

Elizabeth Donoghue Colvin
(member since 10/22/99)

Sarah L. Youngman
(member since 12/13/99)
A Matter of Degrees

At Madonna University, students will receive the following opportunities and experiences:

- Co-operative education experiences in corporate, education, and service settings
- Opportunities to tailor the program to attain specific career objectives through elective courses in marketing, journalism, and media production
- Experiences with a broad range of writing demands with the opportunity to focus on the type of writing students prefer
- Credit for work-related writing experience
- Extensive use of technology

With a degree or certificate in Professional and Technical Writing from Madonna University, students will be prepared for the growing demand for professional writers in corporations, institutions, and service institutions and service agencies of all types.

Professional and Technical Writing (Major)

Bachelor degree students majoring in Professional and Technical Writing are required to complete 40 semester hours. A sampling of required courses include: Technical Writing, Language and Culture, Newspaper Reporting, Public Relations Writing, Speech Communication, Portfolio I: Foundation and Development, and Portfolio II: Showcase and Career Goals. Students will also select elective courses tailored to their specific career objectives in marketing, journalism, and media production.

Professional and Technical Writing (Minor)

Bachelor degree students minoring in Professional and Technical Writing are required to complete 24 semester hours in courses related to professional and technical writing. Required courses include: Technical Writing, Business and Professional Writing, Newspaper Reporting, Public Relations Writing, Foundations of Mass Communication, and Speech Communication. In addition, students will select elective courses tailored to their specific career objectives in marketing, journalism, and media production.

Certificate in Technical Communication (CTC)

The Certificate in Professional and Technical Writing offers individuals with undergraduate degrees an opportunity to enhance their careers and increase their marketability. This 21-semester-hour program stresses state-of-the-art, professional writing skills.

Required courses include: Technical Writing, Business and Professional Writing, Advanced Composition and Research Strategies, Public Relations Writing, and Web Design for Business Applications.

Graduates of the Madonna University Professional and Technical Writing Program

Graduates of Madonna University’s program are:

- Pursuing advanced degrees
- Working as writers, editors, public relations representatives, program specialists, and trainers in major corporations, small businesses, and non-profit institutions
- Writing for newspapers, magazines, and specialty publications on both the national and local levels
- Working in broadcast journalism including video production, commercial and cable television, and corporate training
- Teaching at all levels, including elementary, secondary, college, university and continuing education and in public, private, and corporate settings
- Directing successful businesses

For more information on Madonna University’s programs, check out the web site at http://www.madonna.edu/pages/ptw.cfm.
Networking & Learning Opportunities

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

April 15
STC Ballots are due for the international society election.

April 20
STC/SM Chapter Program: "Does Effective Project Management Have to be Complicated?" Presenter: James Goebel, Menlo Innovations. Held at Menlo Innovations, 212 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor, 48104. Early registration for discount by noon April 18. (See story on p. 6 for more details.)

April 20
STC Remote Seminar: Magical Numbers Jean-luc Doumont, presenter. All Levels, Web-Telephone. For more info: http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp

May 5
ASTD Ann Arbor Chapter, Team Building. Registration 5:30 pm, dinner/networking 6:30 pm, meeting/program 7:00 pm. More info: www.astdannarbor.org/maymeeting.html

May 8-11

May 11

May 12-14
The American Society of Indexers (ASI) 2005 Annual Conference “I is for Indexing,” Westin Hotel, Pasadena, California. For more information, please contact: ASI (303) 463-2887, (303) 422-8894 (fax) info@asindexing.org www.asindexing.org

May 19

May 20-24
The Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, please contact: CSE (703) 437-4377, (703) 435-4390 CSE@CouncilScienceEditors.org www.councilscienceeditors.org

May 26-30

June 1-3
The Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) 27th Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts. For more information, please contact: SSP (303) 422-3914, (303) 422-8894 (fax) info@sspnet.org www.sspnet.org

June 8

June 8
ASTD Greater Detroit, “Organizational Culture and Performance,” presented by Dan Dennison, Dennison Consulting, Inc. For info: www.detroitastd.org/events.htm

June 15-18, 2005
The Association of Language Companies (ALC) 3rd Annual Conference, Westin Pasadena in Pasadena, California. For more information, please contact: ALC (800) 338-4155 (in North America), (703) 812-0883, (703) 875-0301 (fax) info@alcus.org www.alcus.org

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Networking Opportunities...
« continued from page 21

June 22, 2005

June 26-29, 2005
The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) International Conference, Hilton Washington in Washington, D.C. For more information, please contact: IABC (800) 776-4222, (415) 544-4747 (fax) www.iabc.com

June 27-July 1, 2005
The Usability Professionals Association (UPA), "UPA 2005: Bridging Cultures," The Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. For more information, please contact: UPA (630) 980-4997, (630) 351-8490 (fax) office@upassoc.org www.usabilityprofessionals.org

February Program Recap...
« continued from page 9

Ample time was available at the end of her presentation to allow for questions and answers. Sample questions included "How do users deal with anomalies?,” “Do the tools out there offer an adequate number of choices?,” and “How do you go about localizing your baseline?” Afterwards, there was plenty of time for more socializing, networking, and for getting books signed by Mirel.

For this writer, the most complex problem to be solved that evening was how to get through the locked glass doors if you arrived a few minutes after the start of the program. Special thanks to Chris Juillet, who solved the problem for me!

Thanks also to Prof. Mirel for making room in her schedule for this presentation and to Compuware Corporation for giving us all an opportunity to admire its new “digs” in downtown Detroit. <end/>

Prof. Barbara Mirel presenting to a combined STC/SM, UPA/MI, and MOCHI audience