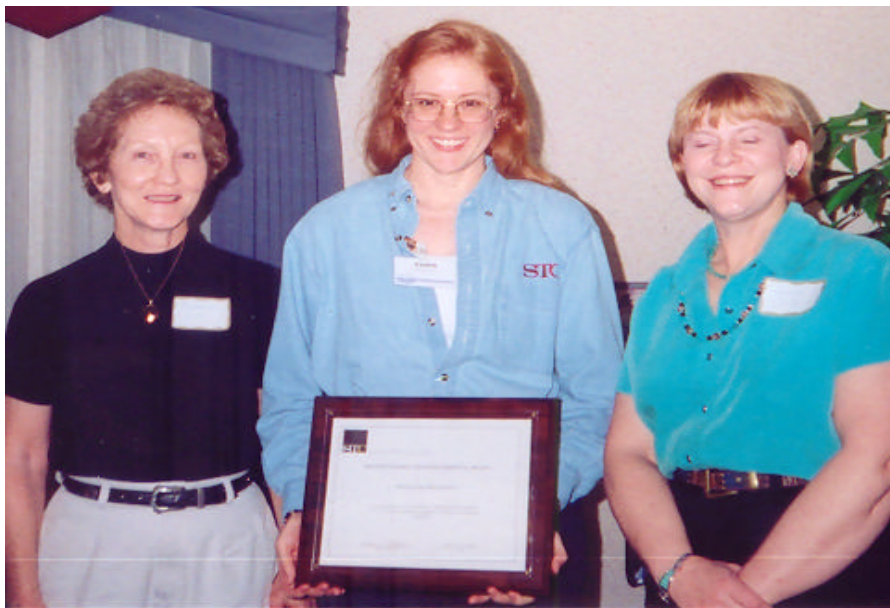


## Karen Bachmann Wins Distinguished Chapter Service Award

By Martha Collins, Suncoast Chapter President



Judy Glick-Smith (right), immediate past STC president and Martha Collins (left), Suncoast chapter president present Karen Bachmann with the Distinguished Chapter Service Award at the February meeting.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) has long recognized the importance of the hard work and commitment of members of its chapters. The Society acknowledges the work of those chapter members who repeatedly provide exemplary service to the Society through their chapter activities by awarding the Distinguished Chapter Service Award (DCSA).

I am pleased to announce that Karen Bachmann has won the DCSA. Karen has been a member of the Suncoast chapter for ten years.

As a student in the professional/technical writing program at the University of South Florida (USF), Karen became an advocate for STC. She served as president of the student chapter, which is sponsored by the Suncoast chapter. During this time, Karen attended Suncoast chapter meetings and participated in chapter projects. Upon graduation, she became a member of the Suncoast chapter and has faithfully supported the chapter by regularly attending meetings and by regularly volunteering for leadership positions and supporting various chapter projects. The following is representative of Karen's commitment to STC and the Suncoast chapter. Karen

- Was a Suncoast Standout (1994).
- Served as chapter vice president (1995 – 1997).

*(Karen Bachmann continued on page 2)*

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# WriteUp

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WriteUp communicates Suncoast chapter and Society news six times per year for the benefit of members and friends of the Suncoast chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

## Submissions

WriteUp invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Meeting write-ups, feature articles, and software/book reviews are encouraged (100–700 words).

Preferred formats include MS Word e-mail attachment or text in the body of your e-mail message. All submissions are subject to editing. Deadline for submission is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

## Reprints

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## Advertising Rates

WriteUp accepts advertising. The rates per issue are \$25 for business card size, \$40 for 1/4 page, \$65 for 1/2 page, and \$80 for a full page. For details on submission, contact the editor at [LMartin220@aol.com](mailto:LMartin220@aol.com).

(Karen Bachmann continued from page 1)

- Served as chapter president (1997 – 1999).
- Lead the Florida student competition.
- Is an annual member of the Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC) Committee.
- Was instrumental in establishing the USF scholarship program.
- Was an International Online Communication Competition (IOCC) judge.
- Was an International Technical Publications Competition (ITPC) judge.
- Was a member of the Orlando Conference host chapter committee.
- Has presented at various chapters, regional conferences, and STC Annual Conferences.
- Is manager of the International Student Writing Competition.
- Is manager of the Usability Special Interest Group.
- Offers valuable advice and ideas to the chapter's administrative council.

Congratulations, Karen, on being awarded the DCSA—a well-deserved honor. ❖

## From the Editor

This issue of the WriteUp begins a new era for our chapter. It is being presented only online in PDF format. As you might remember, for several issues I have been telling you we were going to make this move. It is a cost-cutting effort so that our chapter funds can be better used to provide more and improved benefits to our members.

You will note some changes in the format. In an effort for easier online readability, most articles now continue on consecutive pages and the chapter meeting reviews are now listed one following the other, instead of side by side. There are some white (blank) spaces. Rather than fill the spaces with graphics that would increase download time, I opted to leave them blank.

Included in this issue are three articles sent to me by candidates for the position of second vice president of STC. They requested publication in our newsletter. Including this information increased the number of pages. With the cost restriction eliminated, I was able to accommodate their request. In the future, the length of the newsletter may vary depending on submissions.

If you haven't been attending the chapter meetings, you have been missing a lot. We have had quality presentations, on a wide variety of subjects, by leaders (several past Society presidents) in the STC community. I encourage you to take advantage of these meetings. They are a valuable part of your STC membership.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions. This is a new format for me too, and I'm still feeling my way. ❖

## Sponsors

The following have sponsored the chapter during the current fiscal year:

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## Society News

Need information to negotiate a salary? The 2002 Salary Survey is now available at the Society Web site. The salary survey is in the Members Only section. Go to <http://www.stc.org> and sign in to view the survey.

The next STC telephone seminar is March 12. Phyllis Banner presents "Making the Complex Clear and Pretty." On March 19, Seth Maislin presents "Evaluating an Index (Even If You Only Have Five Minutes)." You can get more information about these seminars at <http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp>.

Thinking about attending the Annual Conference in Dallas on May 18–21, 2003? A link to the official STC@50 Web site is now available on the Society main page. The Web site is a comprehensive listing of everything you need to know about the conference, plus information on where to stay, what to see, how to get there, and how to make reservations. ❖

## Chapter News

Due to the amount of chapter news in this issue, the Chapter News column has been moved to page 9. ❖

## STC Membership

Congratulations to the following Suncoast members who have achieved senior-member status: Patricia J. Allard, Carl D. Blake, GeriLou Ciotoli, William G. Graham, Lou A. Martindale, and Andrew A. Sutton.

Haven't paid your annual dues yet? You can pay your dues online at <http://www.stc.org>. Only members whose dues are paid will be eligible to vote in the STC election. And remember your dues are tax deductible.

Still undecided about renewing your STC membership? See Mike Murray's article on page 4 about the benefits of an STC membership. ❖

### As of January 31, 2003

Suncoast chapter members .....	179
(Includes 69 senior and 12 student members)	
Total Region 3 members .....	1,780
Total STC members .....	22,222
Members residing in the U.S. ....	19,197
Members residing in Canada.....	1,970
Members residing elsewhere.....	1,970
Total number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) .....	21
Total number of chapters.....	154
(Includes 35 student chapters)	

# These are my reasons, what are yours?

By Mike Murray, Orlando Chapter President

When I spoke recently about why it's so important to renew your STC membership, and especially important during tough economic times, little did I know that the next day the Society office would distribute e-mail invitations to begin renewing online right away!

Renewing was easy for my co-worker and me. Throughout the year, we mention STC and how it benefits what we do at our jobs. When it came time to renew, it was just a matter of confirming the obvious.

A brief e-mail to our supervisor resulted in an immediate "Yes!" It really doesn't take much thought to realize why, regardless of how good or bad the economic conditions, severing your ties with STC is a bad move.

If, for some reason, my employer had been unwilling to pay my \$125 renewal, I would have done whatever it took to renew it myself—whatever it took! Why?

## Lifeline

I think of STC as my lifeline to the technical communications profession. If not for the connections that come from mailing lists, meetings, and publications, I would feel like I'm on a desert island wondering what wonderful new things were developing in the world around me. I couldn't stand that! I pride myself in delivering the best possible products and services to my customers, and if I'm not keeping in touch, I can never be sure if I'm doing that. I owe myself and my customers a lot more!

## Networking

I don't know that I ever really valued networking quite as much as I do since joining STC. I've found out again and again just how small this world is as I've met people with

similar interests who have energized me and changed my life in so many ways.

I've seen time and time again members who have persistently networked and found technical communications jobs that make them excited to get up in the morning and start their work day. You can see it in their eyes in the chapter meetings. It's extremely fulfilling, and I want more!

## Friendships

While I certainly expected to develop new friendships in STC, I never expected that the friendships I would make in STC would become the best and richest I would have anywhere. The next time you see me, I invite you to look into my eyes and ask me about the friendships I've made in STC, and you'll know that I'm not exaggerating in the slightest. I want to hang around these people for a long time so you can be sure I'll always renew my membership.

## Your Reasons

Well, those are my reasons, what are yours? Is it the high-quality publications? I literally read *Intercom* cover-to-cover every month. What a great magazine! Is it the Annual Conference? I think I've been to seven or eight, but who's counting! Is it our chapter meetings with the quality content that you've asked for? Is it the chapter members themselves who are so energetic and who seemingly would do anything in the world they could to help you? Whatever the reason, it doesn't take much thought to know that renewing your STC membership as soon as possible is a "no-brainer." Whatever it takes... ❖

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## Coming Soon: STC Member 100,000

In the next few months, STC will achieve a milestone of sorts. Some lucky new member will be assigned member number 100,000! That's a measure of how many technical communicators over the years have recognized the personal and professional value of STC membership. (Note: The Society did not start assigning membership numbers until 1985 when it computerized its membership records. Since the founding of STC in 1953, more than 115,000 individuals have been members of the Society.) ❖

# Monthly Chapter Meeting Reviews



## January Review

By Joseph Clay Wisterman

### Usability Requirements: Making User Satisfaction a Measure of Product Success

Presented by Karen Bachmann,, Manager, Usability SIG

Former Suncoast Chapter President Karen Bachmann of Seascope Consulting gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Usability Requirements: Making User Satisfaction a Measure of Product Success" on January 9, 2003. Usability requirements provide a common language to focus on user needs throughout the development life cycle.

Karen began by defining general usability requirements. They define expectations for the end product and be focused, measurable, and testable. Usability requirements also provide knowledge to the entire project team throughout the project cycle. Specifically, usability requirements define user satisfaction goals.

Some general usability criteria are learnability, efficiency, memorability, error tolerance, relevance, attitude, and accessibility. Learnability refers to how quickly users are able to learn the product. Efficiency refers to how easy the product is to use. Memorability refers to how well users remember to use the product between uses. Error tolerance refers to frequency of user errors. Attitude refers to how well users enjoy using the product. Finally, accessibility refers to how well the product meets the requirements of users with special needs.

Usability requirements are constructed by determining which usability criteria to measure and the priority for each. It is also

important to set a realistic percentage (not 100 percent) of users that must achieve the goals.

Next, Karen set forth the components of a usability requirement. What task should a user accomplish? Who will accomplish the task? What conditions will the task be performed under? How well should the task be performed? These are the questions that must be answered when developing a usability requirement.

When writing usability requirements it is necessary to convert qualitative desires into quantifiable goals. The following hypothetical statement can be translated into usability criteria: "The company Web site and online store must be easy to use, help users find the right information quickly, and help them purchase products efficiently." The phrases "easy to use," "find the right information quickly," and "purchase products efficiently" can be translated. For example, "easy to use" can be translated into "Users never have to click more than three levels to find complete information for 99 percent of all categories covered."

Finally, requirements should be written in terms of user tasks, be prioritized according to the needs of different user groups, and be testable. ❖

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THANK YOU to Joe Wisterman for submitting the January meeting review and to Nancy Armitage for the February review. Joe, whose picture is below, has submitted several chapter meeting reviews. If you have missed him at the meetings, he is currently unable to attend, but plans on returning soon. If you would like to write a meeting review please contact the WriteUp editor at [LMartin220@aol.com](mailto:LMartin220@aol.com). ❖





## February Review

By Nancy Armitage, Suncoast Chapter Member

# Knowledge Management: The Technical Communicator's Competitive Advantage

Presented by Judy Glick-Smith, STC Immediate Past President and President/CEO, Integrated Documentation, Inc.

In today's business world, more and more job roles are being treated as commodities (mass-produced, unspecialized products). Driving down the price of commodity job roles—to enable a lower overall price for the end product—is a favorite way for business to increase competitive advantage. Product development is being shipped offshore. Manufacturing is being shipped offshore. And now, technical communication is being shipped offshore too—to places like India where workers earn as little as \$7 an hour. The service we have typically called “technical communication” has become another mass-produced product that some perceive can be provided by anyone, anywhere.

If we disagree with this perception, we need to do something to change it. But how? One way, suggested by Judy Glick-Smith at the February 6 STC Suncoast chapter meeting, is to create a value proposition for ourselves that promotes to employers the contributions we can make to knowledge management.

### What is knowledge management, anyway?

Knowledge management is a field of management science that has been around for many years but that has joined the business management buzz word list only within the last few years. For at least ten years, knowledge management has been a topic of focus for the American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC). APQC is a Houston-based organization that researches process and performance improvement to help businesses adapt to change, discover better ways to work, and succeed in a competitive marketplace. Dr. Carla O'Dell is one of APQC's chief investigators of knowledge management and helps a company identify and profit from the hidden intellectual assets of its entire operation.

In a 2002 APQC presentation Dr. O'Dell, defined knowledge management as “systematic approaches to find, understand, share and use knowledge to create value. Identifying, collecting, organizing, sharing, adapting, transferring, and implementing explicit and tacit knowledge and best practices in order to get the right knowledge to the right person at the right time and to create new knowledge.”

At our February 6 chapter meeting, Judy Glick-Smith expanded that definition to include the concept that “knowledge management *enables the connections* among people, technology, and processes thereby *facilitating* the

sharing of best practices.” Judy believes that it is our ability to facilitate the sharing of information that can give us a competitive advantage in today's workplace.

### How do we fit in?

What is the connection between knowledge management and technical communication? According to Rene Tissen, an author of *The Knowledge Dividend: Creating High-Performance Companies Through Value-Based Knowledge Management*, “There are three ways in which a company can use knowledge management to add value - by making its knowledge more efficient, better connected, and tremendously innovative.” Judy Glick-Smith suggests that we can contribute value by facilitating the “connection” part of this business strategy.

We agree that what we do adds value to our companies, but we need a new way to talk about it to employers. To help us start thinking about how we can contribute, Judy used a “focused conversation” exercise. She solicited our responses to specific questions to encourage us to think about ourselves in new ways.

The following paragraphs summarize some of the questions Judy asked and some of the responses from the audience. These questions and answers are not exhaustive but should serve as a stimulus for further thinking.

### What terms come to mind when we say knowledge management?

- Best practices
- Data
- Information transfer and reuse
- Processes
- Tribal knowledge

### What are we usually called in our jobs?

- Content developer
- Coordinator of education
- Graphic designer
- Librarian
- Professor
- Technical communicator
- Technical writer

(Knowledge Management continued on page 7)

(Knowledge Management continued from page 6)

### **What are some of the roles we play at work?**

- Business analyst
- Design engineer
- Human engineer
- Quality engineer
- Tester

### **What do we actually do in our jobs?**

- Analyze business
- Design information
- Determine needs
- Distill, streamline, and categorize information
- Edit
- Identify gaps
- Research
- Transfer knowledge
- Translate and organize information

### **How do we describe to Aunt Nellie what we do?**

- Design training
- Write “help”
- Write manuals

### **What description of ourselves do we find attractive?**

- Information designer
- Learning product engineer

### **What are some newer terms for some of the things we do?**

- Content management
- Single sourcing

### **How does what we do contribute to the health of our organization?**

- Provides books that some people still want and expect
- Reduces help calls
- Serves as a marketing tool when we produce good “help” files

### **How do other roles communicate their value to employers?**

Often we contribute—or are capable of contributing—the same or similar value as other technical folks who typically get paid more than we do. Often employers and coworkers don’t think of us as contributing to the development process. But we can. Product developers cannot always envision the users’ problems and needs. But we frequently can. We need to learn how to communicate these values to employers.

### **What needs to change to improve our competitive advantage?**

We need to:

- Get out of our pigeon holes
- Learn how to package (or repackage) ourselves
- Overcome others’ perception that we are just “tool monkeys”
- Pursue continual professional development
- Show that we are critical thinkers
- Sell the experience of having good technical communication

We need to let employers know that we:

- Are a strategic piece of the business mechanism
- Can contribute to customer satisfaction
- Can contribute to the bottom line
- Can serve as knowledge handlers
- Provide value

### **How do we approach data/information/knowledge management differently than others?**

- As information manipulators
- From the point of view of users
- We can see the forest—often they see only the trees

### **How do we support cooperation between people, processes, and technology?**

To truly manage knowledge, people and processes and technology need to work together. What can we do to support this “human performance” management? One STC member suggested that we are often in a position of gathering bits of information from many stakeholders on a project. This puts us in a good position to help connect and communicate with others to spread the usefulness of the information we gather. The term *knowledge management* is really a misnomer because we really can’t manage what’s in people’s heads. But we can help collect knowledge in a way that helps people find it easily and use it again!

### **How does our affiliation with STC contribute to knowledge management?**

One knowledge management concept suggests that communities of practice help to share knowledge. The APQC believes that communities of practice can contribute the following knowledge management benefits. They help us:

- Avoid repeating mistakes
- Collaborate across units to stimulate innovation
- Learn at the time of need
- Eliminate redundant efforts
- Leverage expertise and experience
- Locate information quickly and easily
- Reduce cycle time
- Reuse materials, expertise, and problem solving experience to benefit partners and customers

STC is an excellent example of a community of practice. We are a community of practitioners who regularly share and learn from each other. Knowledge management requires trust; it can’t happen without trust. It is a “people thing” involving trust and communication. In our STC community of practice, we know how to develop relationships. We are good at it. We need to sell this to our employers. We need to show them how this skill facilitates knowledge sharing among the stakeholders at a company or on a project.

### **How can we describe our value to management in new terms?**

- Fewer errors
- Greater productivity
- More customer satisfaction

(Knowledge Management continued on page 8)

(Knowledge Management continued from page 7)

We need to ask: What experience does our employer want for our customer, and what experience does our customer need? We must present ourselves as valuable *experience* embodied in a role. What is important is not so much the *products* we can produce, but the *experience we can help create for the customer*.

As Carla O'Dell puts it in her APQC knowledge management presentation, "We need to distinguish between data, information, and knowledge. Data [are] the ingredients in the cake. Information is [the] order [in which] to mix the ingredients. Knowledge is how the cake will feel when it's done."

In a 1999 interview with *Training* magazine, Carla O'Dell stated, "One powerful, but still untapped, opportunity [to cement knowledge management as more than a passing fad] lies in the ability to identify and transfer tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge—the stuff between people's ears—is the know-how, the little tricks, the institution, the judgement, the stuff that makes things work. Experts estimate that tacit knowledge represents roughly 80 percent of the most important knowledge. Yet, because of the difficulty in identifying and transferring tacit knowledge, organizations settle for managing the 20 percent of explicit knowledge,

leaving it to chance that the tacit knowledge gets used." As technical communicators (or whatever we call ourselves), we have a lot of tacit knowledge, and we must learn to sell this to employers!

## REFERENCES

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<http://www.apqc.org>

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Martha Collins (right), Suncoast chapter president, is presented with her president's pin by Judy Glick-Smith (left). Judy is the immediate past president of STC and presented an informative discussion on knowledge management at the February meeting.

## Chapter News

Congratulations to three Suncoast members, Martha Collins, Mark Hanigan, and Michelle Ratcliffe, who were elected Associate Fellows by the Society's Board of Directors, at their winter board meeting.

The *Tieline*, an electronic newsletter that is sent to chapter officers, has identified our chapter as one of the membership drive achievers. Our membership is up 16.23 percent since June 30, 2002.

You can be a part of our chapter at work by attending the Administrative Council meetings, which are held via teleconference at 8:00 p.m. on the Monday preceding the regular chapter meetings. Phone (toll free) 1-888-650-9063, room 6301. ❖

# Usability Workshop a Success

*By Martha Collins, Suncoast Chapter President*

Forty-eight technical communicators met Saturday, February 15, at the University of Tampa's John Sykes School of Business to gain a clearer understanding of usability engineering and to become familiar with common usability activities. Ed See, managing director at BearingPoint and STC President, and Susan Jensen, principal of Effective Design and Assistant to the STC President for Leadership, led the group through the product-development life cycle. They demonstrated how to build usability into a design and how to carry it through development and testing.

Ed and Susan pointed out that technical communicators have skills that are transferable to user-centered design practices. The group identified the following transferable skills:

- Interview
- Analytical
- Writing/  
documenting
- Relationship
- Conceptual  
(idea creation)
- Observation/  
listening
- Verbal
- Task Structure
- Objective  
evaluation

In addition, Ed and Susan pointed out the new skills we need to acquire. We will need to

- Abstract data.
- Be an intellectual property creator.
- Manipulate data.
- Have a broad focus.
- Learn new methodologies and techniques.

Ed and Susan set up a portable usability lab in which we performed a usability test on an electronic Scrabble game. We gathered in groups and carried out the usability activities that applied to our "product." In this interactive exercise, we were able to apply what we had learned.

The Suncoast chapter thanks Ed and Susan for a most successful workshop and the University of Tampa for donating wonderful facilities. ❖

# FTCC 2002-2003

By Barbara Diorio, FTCC Manager

The 2002-2003 Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC) committee is wrapping up the final details of the competition. We judged 28 entries this year, including online help, reference manuals, books, newsletters, and more. Each entry was evaluated by a team of three judges using guidelines provided by STC's international competitions. Entries were judged on their own merits, not against each other, and were eligible to win an award in one of three categories: Merit, Excellence, or Distinguished Technical Communication. In addition, entrants receive copies of the judges' evaluations, which provide valuable feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the entry.

## Excellence Awards:

**Contributors:** Steven S. Otte, Cindy L. Holloway, and Greg T. Woods  
Company: Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control  
Entry Title: Vision 2020

**Contributor:** Nicole Davis  
Company: Nielsen Media Research  
Entry Title: eNames Product Preview

**Contributors:** Jane Medved, David Dishman, Howard Saxion, Allen Shorter, and the Environmental Management Directorate  
Company: CH2M HILL  
Entry Title: Tinker Air Force Base Environmental Mission

**Contributors:** Richard T. Giulio and William H. Benson  
Company: Society of Environmental Toxicology & Chemistry (SETAC)  
Entry Title: Interconnections between Human Health and Ecological Integrity

**Company:** Bovie Aaron Medical  
Entry Title: Aaron 950 Electrosurgical Generator User's Guide

**Contributor:** Elaine Malfas  
Company: Lawrenceville Press  
Entry Title: A Guide to Microsoft Office XP Professional

**Contributor:** Ralph Hornbeck  
Company: Sensormatic Electronics  
Entry Title: Before You Call About...UltraMax Deactivators

**Contributor:** Motorola ITC Team  
Company: Motorola, Inc.  
Entry Title: Motorola V70 Manual in Motion (MIM)

## Merit Awards:

**Contributors:** LaVonne M. Fishell, Greg Armento, and Cheryl Amerine  
Company: Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control  
Entry Title: Medium Extended Air Defense System

**Contributor:** Karin Carlan  
Company: Nielsen Media Research  
Entry Title: eSpecials Help

**Contributor:** Karin Carlan  
Company: Nielsen Media Research  
Entry Title: Getting Started with eVip ProFile - DMA

**Contributor:** Karin Carlan  
Company: Nielsen Media Research  
Entry Title: eNames Preview Brochure

**Contributor:** Ralph Hornbeck  
Company: Sensormatic Electronics  
Entry Title: AMS-1070 Antenna Flush-Mount Brackets Quick Install Guide

**Contributors:** Anders W. Andren and Thomas W. Bober  
Company: Society of Environmental Toxicology & Chemistry (SETAC)  
Entry Title: Silver in the Environment, Transport, Fate, and Effects

**Company:** Society of Environmental Toxicology & Chemistry (SETAC)  
Entry Title: Silver in the Environment, Transport, Fate, and Effects

**Company:** Wax and Company  
Entry Title: AvMed Accent

**Contributors:** DataCore Software Technical Documentation Department, Janise Putney, and Matt McDonough  
Company: DataCore Software Corporation  
Entry Title: SANsymphony 5.0 QuickStart

**Contributors:** William Brown, Patty Apostolakes, and Bo Figliolia  
Company: Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control  
Entry Title: Marketing Brochure

**Contributors:** Don McClain, Patty Apostolakes, and Stephen Otte  
Company: Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control  
Entry Title: Marketing Brochure

(FTCC continued on page 11)

(FTCC continued from page 10)

## Honorable Mention:

**Contributor:** Deborah Sanchez, Tess Moore, Fred Lee  
Company: Lockheed Martin  
Entry Title: JASSM External Website

**Contributors:** DataCore Software Technical Documentation  
Department. Janise Putney, Laura Whalen, and  
Jen Ambrose  
Company: DataCore Software Corporation  
Entry Title: SANsymphony 5.0 Administration Guide

Want to see what your peers are doing? You can view some of the entries at an upcoming Suncoast chapter meeting. Watch the listserv for an announcement about when the entries will be displayed.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of the volunteers who helped judge, train, coordinate, and communicate with the entrants and each other. The judges' names are confidential, but I can recognize the following committee members who offered their wisdom, time, and support: Jodee Earnest, Martha Collins, Michelle Ratcliffe, and Eric Ratcliffe. Thank you all for your hard work and commitment. ❖

## Around STC

### Taking the 'Dis' out of 'Disabilities': Special Needs SIG Seeks Support

Just a reminder as the STC membership renewal process creeps up on its February 28 deadline ... the Society's newest SIG, the Special Needs SIG, is still looking for new members to support them in their twin mission to assist technical communicators with disabilities in the practice of our profession and to provide all technical communicators with information that will help them make our communication products more accessible to users with disabilities. A detailed mission statement is available at the Web site.

The SNSIG has already made significant progress: a comprehensive Web site (see <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml>); an online newsletter (first edition is posted at <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/newsletter.shtml>); and extensive support to the 49<sup>th</sup> STC Conference, including publication of *Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs* and an *Addendum* thereto, a successful progression, and several articles in the *Proceedings* (conference materials available at <http://www.stc-orlando.org/prodev/49notes/SNC.asp>).

But there is much yet to do, and to accomplish it, the SNSIG needs more people. It is looking both for Active members, to join their initiatives; and Patrons, whose affiliation will help the SIG secure the budget it needs to fulfill its objectives.

If you wish to support the Special Needs SIG, you have two options: (1) If you have not yet submitted your STC membership renewal, simply check the SNSIG box when you do. (2) If you have already submitted your STC membership renewal, download the SIG sign-up form from [http://www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/sigform.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/sigform.pdf) and submit it directly to the Society office. In either case, in order to be added to the SNSIG's newsletter and/or listserv without delay, contact [daniel.w.voss@lmco.com](mailto:daniel.w.voss@lmco.com) or [jvinegar@myranch.com](mailto:jvinegar@myranch.com). ❖

### International Communications SIG Call for Articles

Global Talk, the newsletter of the International Communication Special Interest Group of the Society for Technical Communication, is looking for feature articles on intercultural communication for its upcoming issues.

Features should be short (250-500 word) essays, commentaries, or articles on issues dealing with:

- Culture and communication
- Culture and design practices
- Technology and intercultural communication
- Translation and localization concepts and practices
- Interactions involving clients and co-workers from other cultures

Individuals interested in either submitting feature articles or proposing/discussing ideas for feature articles should contact Kirk St.Amant at [stamankr@jmu.edu](mailto:stamankr@jmu.edu). ❖

## Competition Call for Entries

### IABC Tampa Bay Bronze Quill Awards

Whether you work in a corporate environment, do internal or external communications, or are responsible for graphic design duties, you are invited to enter the International Association of Business Communicators' annual Bronze Quill awards for the Tampa Bay region.

Categories include Writing, Design, Web Sites, Illustrations, Publications, Audio/Visual, and Public Relations.

Deadline for entries is March 21. For complete information, instructions, and an entry form go to <http://www.iabctampabay.com>. Click on the Bronze Quill logo. ❖

# Suncoast Chapter Elections

## Participating in STC Can Enrich Your Professional Life

*By Martha Collins, Suncoast Chapter President*

It is March and time to elect a new slate of chapter officers. Give some serious thought to volunteering for one of the officer positions or one of the many other positions that support the smooth operation of a chapter—it can enrich your professional life as well as your personal life.

There are many benefits from being actively involved in the Suncoast chapter.

### Leadership Skills

We all began our careers with few leadership skills. Many of the technical communication jobs do not provide an opportunity for the development of these skills, but technical communication managerial positions require them. STC can fill that void. I have seen many young leaders begin their term of office feeling very apprehensive. By the end of their terms in office, they were well on the way to displaying good leadership skills.

### Friendship

The work we do together as chapter leaders makes us a close-knit group. Talk with any STC member who has served in a leadership capacity, and without fail, each will tell you of the strong friendships they have acquired in the process. These friendships go beyond our professional lives—these friendships are a part of our personal lives.

### Peer Network

As a result of actively participating in STC, you form a network of peers who can help you solve work-related issues. There is usually someone who has had the same issue you have encountered and is glad to tell you how he or she handled the problem.

### Continuing Education

Everything you learn from working and talking with your peers and from participating in the chapter programs, enhances your skills. Every new experience you have is an educational adventure.

Your professional life will suffer if you don't give yourself the opportunity to experience professional growth in the form of developing leadership skills, friendships, peer networks, and to enhancing your technical communication skills. Participating in chapter leadership affords you this opportunity.

If you are interested in helping your chapter this coming year, let Pam Tremé ([ptreme@aol.com](mailto:ptreme@aol.com)), Karen Bachmann ([karen@seaconinc.com](mailto:karen@seaconinc.com)), or Martha Collins ([mcollin8@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mcollin8@tampabay.rr.com)) know. ❖

# STC Society Elections

Editor's note: The following articles have been submitted by candidates for the position of second vice president of STC. They are included for your information, have not been edited, and are listed alphabetically.



## Support Sandi Harner for Second Vice President

By Sandi Harner

The position of second vice president of STC is a very important one because the person elected will automatically become first vice president and then

president. I would appreciate your vote for second vice president of STC.

My experience with STC began in 1984 when I became a member. In 1985, I developed the technical and professional communication major for Cedarville University where I have now taught for more than twenty years. In 1988, I chartered the Cedarville University Student chapter, which I have advised since its beginning. The value that I have received from my membership in STC is immeasurable. Through chapter meetings, publications, and conferences—both regional and annual—I have learned so much while developing a professional network as well as a network of friends.

I began my involvement on the international level in 1992 as manager of Sigma Tau Chi. That quickly led to manager of the Jay R. Gould Award, judging for the Ken Caird Student Article Competition, reviewer of proposals for the STC Annual Conference, and onsite judge for the International Technical Publications Competition. I am currently serving on the STC Board in my fourth year as Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs. In that capacity, I am responsible for eight committees.

I was named Fellow in 2001, received the Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication, and named Associate Fellow in 1996.

As full Professor at Cedarville University, I have directed the technical and professional communication program since its beginning. My responsibilities, in addition to teaching a full course load, include developing curriculum, securing and supervising fulltime and adjunct faculty, advising students, supervising independent studies, placing and supervising

student internships, and advising the STC student chapter. In addition, I have served as an independent consultant, contract writer, and trainer since 1976. In 1997, I received the STC Faculty Internship Grant and worked as a Communications Manager in a technical marketing communication firm. In 2002, I co-authored *Technical Marketing Communication*, part of the Technical Communication Series published by Allyn & Bacon/Longman.

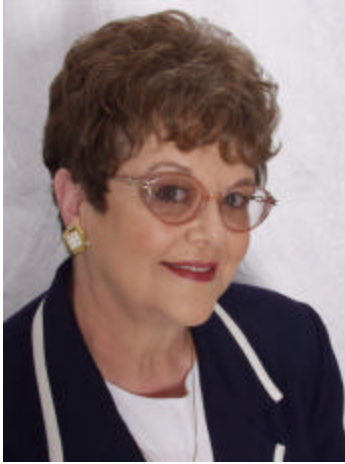
For almost twenty years, my passion has been to prepare young people to make a significant contribution to the profession of technical communication. That role has kept me focused on core competencies, emerging technologies, and communities of practice. My current position on the STC board for the past four years has provided many opportunities to work at the Society level with initiatives such as research grants and special opportunities grants, as well as chapter-level activities in helping to develop mentoring guidelines and education committees.

In the last few years, the growth of communities of practice has broadened our traditional definition of technical communication. This is evidenced by the significant growth in the STC SIGs—which now number more than 20 with a total membership of 26,441. If we are to be effective as the leading professional organization for technical communication, we must actively embrace those non-traditional groups such as technical marketing communicators, usability experts, instructional designers, Web designers, and others who make up the workforce of today's technical communicators. The challenge is to help the employers and employees alike to perceive them as the technical communicators they are.

I believe that all these experiences prepare me to fulfill the responsibilities of the second vice president of STC, as well as first vice president, and finally the president. The Academic Vice President, my Dean and Department Chair have pledged their full support should I be elected second vice president. This support will be evidenced by a decreased teaching load as well as financial support for the travel involved in the position.

When it is time to vote in the STC election, please take the time to go online or mark your ballot and vote for Sandi Harner—STC Second Vice President.

For more information, see <http://www.sandiharner.com>. ❖



## Laurent Shares Her Vision for STC

*By Suzanna Laurent, Associate Fellow, Oklahoma Chapter, Candidate for Second VP*

While visiting Detroit's Henry Ford Museum, I learned about Ford and the automobile he made so successful. Many people have the mistaken idea that Henry Ford was an inventor, but Ford did not invent the automobile. He didn't even "invent" the assembly line.

So what did Henry Ford do? He learned from other people's experiences as well as his own. He took risks. He saw failure as a lesson, and he applied everything he learned to improve the product, the process, and the policies that shaped the American automobile industry. In short, he was a great *innovator*. And because he was so willing to share the lessons he learned, he became an inspiration to many others.

I am running for second vice president because in my own way, I want to do as Henry Ford did. He wanted to "learn from other people's experiences as well as his own." I want to use the lessons that I have learned in 25 years of management and leadership positions to create solutions that will ensure STC becomes an organization that is vital to the diverse careers of technical communicators.

One innovative thing I did as a director-sponsor (1999–2002) was to attend conferences and give chapter programs in *every* region to meet our members and listen to their ideas. As a result, I have presented 103 conference sessions, leadership workshops, and chapter programs in locations from Toronto to Hawaii. In addition, I have written 30 articles that have been published over 500 times in STC newsletters. This "listening tour" instilled a greater understanding of the unique challenges facing us, some of which are addressed in my articles.

While serving as director-sponsor, I gained a thorough understanding of the issues and concerns about STC at many levels. Working individually with leaders and other members is an invaluable experience that is crucial to being the most effective leader in the "presidential chain of offices."

Ford also "took risks." Failing to be innovative and leaving things at the "status quo" is a risky business for STC and technical communicators. We must make it part of our role as technical communicators to show the value we add. We must continue to learn more, do more, and be more. It is important that STC become the "premier" organization for technical communicators. One way we can do that is by listening to what our members want, because the organization that best meets the needs of its members is the one that retains its members and attracts new ones.

Ford "saw failure as a lesson, and applied everything he learned to improve..." During the process of defining STC's brand, we discovered where we were making our mistakes and that we were not being perceived as we wanted to be, so we've made changes to correct some of those misconceptions. As we seek new ways to prosper, we must improve our processes and the quality of our member services.

STC members work in more diversified environments than ever before, with experience, skills, and talents that vary widely. Nevertheless, we share the desire to be recognized for our contributions to the workplace. By more proactively promoting technical communication, I believe that STC can make a difference in the careers of our members.

There are other important strategies to consider as we seek to progress. To learn more about my experience and what I have contributed pertaining to these strategies, read the expanded version of this article at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or contact me at [slaurent@prodigy.net](mailto:slaurent@prodigy.net).

With experienced leadership and guidance, STC can become the catalyst that enables technical communicators to achieve the professional status they have earned. When that is accomplished, we will have fulfilled my vision for STC to become an organization to which technical communicators feel membership is essential to their careers. ❖



## Deborah Sauer

*By Deborah Sauer*

I started in this profession 20 years ago and I still write user manuals. However, now I also develop Help systems, design user interfaces, and perform usability tests. I also provide training in skills (such as technical writing and editing) and tools (such as FrameMaker and RoboHelp) in public workshops, customized

courses, and at universities. In addition, as an independent consultant, I make business decisions on a daily basis.

I have been an independent consultant for five years. I decided that, to be successful, I needed to diversify in terms of clients, the technologies that they represented, and the tools that I used in my work. As a result, my work is far more interesting and rewarding than it was five years ago.

To research potential clients, I worked on the local STC chapter competitions and perused the winning entries at the awards banquet. I focused on companies taking new approaches to delivering content and developing innovative products. I actively pursued those companies as clients, many of whom I could connect with through STC relationships.

Now, my clients represent a variety of industries from computer chips manufacturers to consumer electronics companies. They range in size from 20 to 200,000 employees. Working with such varied clients has given me the opportunity to learn a broad range of business practices.

I can also directly attribute my business skills to my work for the STC. As president of the Boston chapter, I managed teams and budgets, made cold calls, and initiated the development of a chapter strategic plan. I then became involved in the STC annual conference, first as a stem manager, later as a program manager, and now as the assistant to the president for

conferences. These roles have given me experience in managing projects and teams, and working with large budgets.

To expand my business, I decided to pursue user interface design. I provided interface design feedback while documenting products. My contributions were seen as valuable in making products more usable and, therefore, less likely to be returned. Managers included me in design discussions, user interface design went on my resume, and, before long, became part of the scope of the project when a client hired me.

Attending STC program meetings and sessions at the annual conference and brainstorming with colleagues has given me ideas as I look for innovative ways to deliver information. For example, I worked on a web site that customers can tailor to their needs. I also developed a voice guidance system that talks the customer through procedures as they perform them

It was this new approach to delivering information that brought home for me the global nature of my work. I received a cell phone call from my California-based product manager, who was in Singapore, telling me that he had played my voice guidance recordings at a board of directors meeting with representatives from Europe, India, Hong Kong, and the United States. That gave me perspective on just how far-reaching my work had become.

Over the years, I have worked in many capacities, both in the profession and in my STC roles. All this enables me to view the challenges and opportunities that face the profession and the STC from a broad base of experience. I can provide the leadership needed to make sound business decisions as the STC creates programs to address the needs of our growing and diverse membership. Also, I can offer a voice on the Board to multiple interests. The office of STC second vice-president is an important one because the elected individual automatically becomes first vice-president and then president of the Society. I hope you will consider giving me your vote. ❖

# WriteUp

**Suncoast Newsletter**  
816 Blackberry Lane  
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**Mission statement:**  
To promote and advance the technical communication profession in the Suncoast area and support the professional development of technical communicators, current and future.

## Upcoming Meetings

*Subject to Change*

**Obtain meeting updates at our Web site:**

<http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/>

<b>Next Meeting:</b> <b>April 3, 2003</b>	Globalization presented by Nancy Hoft
<b>Upcoming Meetings:</b> <b>May 1, 2003</b> <b>June 5, 2003</b>	Presentation by SunTech 3, Inc. To be announced