

## Southern Hospitality Abundant at Atlanta Chapter's 2004 Currents Conference

By Dina Stenz, Suncoast chapter senior member



Dina Stenz, center, with Beth Tanner, Region 3 Director on the left, and Thea Teich, STC President on the right, at the 2004 Currents Conference.

Since 1987, STC's Atlanta Chapter has hosted a conference of sessions and workshops geared toward educating and introducing STC members to a variety of new communication tools, techniques, and processes. The 2004 Currents Conference was no exception.

This year's event, February 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, was held in the Stetson Business building on Mercer University's Atlanta campus. The high-tech location accommodated participants for the opening and closing programs, the day-long workshops on Friday, and hour-long sessions on Saturday. The sessions highlighted topics in career development, writing and editing, management, tools and technology, and usability. The workshops covered creating user personas and taking printed documentation online. Lunches were served in the dining room where presenters and participants mingled and relaxed.

Region 3 Sponsor Beth Tanner kicked off the opening session on Saturday. The keynote speaker, Thea Teich, encouraged conference participants to "add value to our business" by helping employers to recognize the technical communicator's potential to enhance the value of their products and services. She reminded everyone that "we work with business's most valued asset: knowledge."

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# WriteUp

## Editor

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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 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 or e-mail, 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 (approximately 800 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.

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# From the Editor

Lou Martindale

This is the first issue of the new year. This year will bring some changes to our chapter. We will have new officers. (See page 11 for a list of the nominees.) There will be two new newsletter editors; Kimberly Nolder and Gloria Shoats-Schramm have agreed to take on the task of producing the newsletter. They will take over beginning with the May/June issue of the newsletter. You will learn more about them in the March/April issue. The Secretary and Treasurer positions have been combined. There are two positions open. Please consider volunteering your time and expertise to help our chapter.

I'd like to say a few words about the pictures that are reproduced in the newsletter. First, I freely admit I am not a graphics artist; in fact, I'm not an artist at all. I can't draw a straight line with a ruler! Second, I do not own a digital camera and therefore must rely on others to take pictures and send them to me. By the time I receive them, size them, and place them in the newsletter, a lot of the quality is lost. One of the newsletter competition comments last year was that the quality of the photos was poor. For that reason, I shied away from including pictures. But sometimes it's nice to have a picture to put a name to a face or see an event happening so I decided to include pictures again. I apologize for the quality of pictures, but a bad one is sometimes better than none at all. I understand one of the new editors is a graphics person so look for improvements in that area.

I'd like to thank Mark Hanigan for his assistance in contributing both chapter review articles in this issue. Mark writes great articles, but does he get paid by the word?

A final thought. Spring is all around us. Take your nose off the grindstone long enough to smell the roses. ❖

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*(Currents continued from page 1)*

Ms. Teich shared her background in business and her history with STC. She spoke of the positive and negative public views of technical communicators, our own perceptions of our current value as communicators, ways we can improve ROIs (return on investments) with our skills, her thoughts on transforming STC's "vision model" to promote the talents of our members, and a new operating model that can begin to take shape at the chapter level with the help of chapter committees and council leadership.

The keynote address ended with president Teich's reiterating her "elevator message:

- Technical communication enables people—customers, employees, whomever—to get the most from the technology in their lives. And it doesn't matter if that technology is the latest version of something from Microsoft or a squeeze press in a chemical plant.
- You make it possible for people to get their jobs done.
- Technical communication therefore increases productivity, and as a result, revenues go up and costs go down." ❖

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## Sponsors

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

University of Tampa  
Tampa, FL  
<http://www.ut.edu> ❖



*Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication*

Society for Technical Communication  
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Society: <http://www.stc.org>

Region 3  
<http://www.stcregion.org/region3>

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**Student Chapter Liaisons**  
Joanna Castner, Dina Stenz, & Pam Tremé

## Society News

Information about the 51st Annual Conference, which will be held in Baltimore, MD, May 9–12, 2004, is available at <http://www.stc.org/51stConf/index.asp>. The site contains a dynamic online registration form. By entering your five-digit membership number, the name and address fields will be automatically populated with information from the STC membership database. To register at the member rate, you *must* enter your membership number. Your membership number is located on the address labels of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* or you may obtain it by contacting the STC office at (703) 522-4114.

Another value of your STC membership is the new health insurance program. Information on the program can be located at <http://www.stc.org/insuranceProgram.asp>. ❖

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## STC Membership

### As of February 27, 2004

Suncoast chapter members ..... 174  
(Includes 2 fellows, 4 associate fellows, 69 senior and 15 student members)  
Total Region 3 members ..... 1,753  
Total STC members ..... 21,259  
    Members residing in the U.S. .... 18,201  
    Members residing in Canada ..... 1,901  
    Members residing elsewhere ..... 1,157  
Total number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) ..... 21  
    SIG members ..... 25,098  
Total number of chapters ..... 147  
(Includes 33 student chapters)

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## Student Corner

### Information Design Course at University of Tampa

The University of Tampa is now offering an Information Design course. Joanna Castner also stated that work is underway for securing approval for two additional technical writing courses, Technical Editing and Usability Testing.

### \$1,000 Scholarship Available to USF Students

The Suncoast Chapter Scholarship application deadline is Friday, April 2. Go to <http://giving.udf.edu/scholarships/transfer.asp> and download the application. If you need help applying, contact Dina Stenz at (727) 403-6871.

### Student Society for Technical Communication (SSTC) Web Site

The SSTC-USF web site is being updated. Student volunteers are needed to assist with the site's future maintenance. For details, contact Dina Stenz at [dstenz1@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:dstenz1@tampabay.rr.com) or Kimberley Nolder at [knolder@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:knolder@tampabay.rr.com).

### 2004–2005 USF Student Society for Technical Communication

The 2004–2005 SSTC is ramping up. New faculty sponsors are working to grow this valuable student-led organization. Contact Professor Alma Bryant at [abryant@chumal.cas.usf.edu](mailto:abryant@chumal.cas.usf.edu) on the Tampa campus and Professor Joyce Walker at [jwalker2@stpt.usf.edu](mailto:jwalker2@stpt.usf.edu) on the St. Pete campus to find out more. ❖

# 2003–2004 Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC) Winners

By Barbara Diorio, FTCC Manager

Congratulations to the 2003–2004 FTCC winners. Two entries received Distinguished awards this year and have been entered in STC's International Online Communication Competition.



## **Best of Show**

GE-Security  
Jamie Lennon-Lefebure  
Facility Commander Administration Guide

## **Distinguished**

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control  
W. C. Wiese  
Medium Extended Air Defense System

## **Distinguished**

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control  
Brenda K. Smith  
Medium Extended Air Defense System

## **Distinguished**

GE-Security  
Jamie Lennon-Lefebure  
Facility Commander Administration Guide

## **Excellence**

Nielsen Media Research  
Julie Michalski  
Station Revenue Overview Online Tutorial

## **Excellence**

Nielsen Media Research  
Michelle Kocsis  
Station Revenue Overview Online Tutorial

## **Merit**

Fidelity Information Services, Inc.  
Cynthia Duewel  
All About MSP e-learning Course

## **Merit**

Ultimate Software  
Michael Salokar  
UltiPro Upgrade Checklist

## **Merit**

Ultimate Software  
Laine Quint  
UltiPro Upgrade Checklist

## **Merit**

Ultimate Software  
Claudia Castro  
UltiPro Upgrade Checklist

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control  
Doris Heard  
Comanche EOSS Optical Paths - EOTADS and NVPS

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control  
Laura Whitley  
Comanche EOSS Optical Paths - EOTADS and NVPS

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control  
Edwin Allen  
Comanche EOSS Optical Paths - EOTADS and NVPS

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missile and Fire Control  
Dan Voss  
Anti-Armor Product Key Message Cards (Baseball Cards)

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missile and Fire Control  
Dean Dorman  
Anti-Armor Product Key Message Cards (Baseball Cards)

## **Merit**

Lockheed Martin Missile and Fire Control  
Tamyah Elliott  
Anti-Armor Product Key Message Cards (Baseball Cards)

Special thanks go to 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: Joan Baptist, Karen Enthoven, Martha Collins, Dina Stenz, and Michelle Ratcliffe. ❖

# December Chapter Meeting Review

By Mark Hanigan, past president Suncoast chapter and Society

## What are you worth to your company?

Presented by Dr. Janice “Ginny” Redish, STC Fellow

As each of us moves through the years of our respective career paths, we tend to accumulate a “core” reference library. Certainly there are those volumes that almost all of us have—the *Chicago Manual of Style* or similar, an English-language dictionary, and a technical terminology style guide such as the one produced by Microsoft.

In addition, we accumulate the works of the experts of the various aspects of our umbrella of professions—names that range from Jay Gould to Bill Horton to Carol Barnum to Ann Rockley. Certainly one of the names that can be mentioned in the same breath as these is Dr. Janice “Ginny” Redish.

Ginny is one of the cultivators of one of the most important pillars of the bridge of respectability that the technical communication profession has gained over the past quarter-century. She is one of the primary authors of the concept that technical communicators *provide value to a project*. Before this important empirical research, the prevalent belief was that technical communication deliverables were part of a cost of doing business.

This, in conjunction with the evolution of the “technical” of technical communicators, has gone a long way towards lifting the respect for the profession, which has manifested itself in the overall perception that technical communication is part of a project’s critical path. Among the primary benefits of this has been elevation of technical communication salaries and protection of key technical communication-related jobs during economic downturns (such as the one that we are experiencing today.)

In December, the Suncoast Chapter was treated with a rare opportunity to meet Ginny and to hear what she had to share with us. An STC Fellow from the Washington DC chapter, Ginny shared with us the key concepts behind technical communicators providing value in her presentation *What are you worth to your company?*

In her presentation, Ginny built a case for the different ways in which technical communication provides a return on investment (ROI) in the following areas:

- How do we bring value?
- How can we measure the value that we bring?
- Why focus on return on investment?

In terms of bringing value, Ginny conducted an interactive exploration with the audience about ways that we do this, by reducing labor costs, by providing for reusable content, and by elevating a product’s perception (via better product understanding and usability).

Then, Ginny moved the discussion into the area of how we can measure the value that we bring. To build her case, Ginny introduced several case studies that provided cost-benefit analyses. In case after case, Ginny demonstrated how the ROI exceeded the actual investment. Further, Ginny pointed out that there are four areas in which a return on technical communication investment can be measured:

- Saving money through increased productivity or decreased costs *before* the product goes to users
- Saving money *after* the product goes to users
- Increased revenue or productivity *after* the product goes to users
- Less tangible benefits that may be very important to managers, such as customer satisfaction

Ginny wrapped up her presentation with four key points about ROI:

- ROI is relevant to all types of documents.
- We bring value to more than documents.
- Process is as important as product.
- Sometimes perception is as useful as actual calculations.

Those who attended the presentation found Ginny’s presentation to be enlightening and informative. Further, the members enjoyed a rare opportunity to spend time with one of the stalwarts of our profession. To learn more about Ginny, please refer to the sidebar article *A Conversation with Ginny!* on page 6.

Kind regards,

Mark Hanigan,  
Suncoast chapter (way, way...) past president

Editor’s note:

Ginny’s presentation is available on the Suncoast chapter Web site <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/meetings/>



Ginny Reddish

# A Conversation With Ginny!

By Mark Hanigan, past president Suncoast chapter and Society

In addition to providing us with her insightful presentation, Ginny agreed to share with us her thoughts about STC and the technical communication profession. In addition, to learn more about Ginny, check out <http://www.redish.net>. Here are the questions and her responses:

*Q: I have been in our umbrella of professions for 25 years now. I have seen a lot of changes, and I have seen a lot of things that, to me have not changed much. In your view, how is the technical communications profession different today from it was in the early years of your career? How is it the same?*

**Ginny:** I've been in "our umbrella of professions" for about the same amount of time that you have. What has changed has been the breadth of that umbrella. We've added new media, new technical domains, new techniques, and new tools. What has not changed is our fundamental role in helping technical specialists give users the information those users need in ways that allow users to do their work effectively and efficiently.

*Q: The Washington, DC chapter is one that I have never had the opportunity to visit. I know some of the more colorful individuals from this chapter but do not know much about the chapter itself or about its "personality." What is unique about the DC chapter? What is its character?*

**Ginny:** Washington, DC, is a very active and enthusiastic STC chapter. It has excellent programs; runs annual competitions in technical publications, technical art, and online communication; and has a very special scholarship program for high school students based on a writing competition. It has two local SIGs: *Consulting and Independent Contractors* and *Usability*. Mary Wise, a past president of STC, is a Washington, DC, chapter member. You can find out more about the chapter at our Web site: <http://www.stcwdc.org>. (To all Suncoast chapter members) Come visit. We're very close to Baltimore; in fact, we often have joint meetings with the Metro Baltimore chapter.

*Q: Okay, a heavy philosophical question with a twist of predication: What are the critical challenges facing our umbrella of professions today?*

## **Ginny:**

1. Not falling apart in times of economic turmoil. Technical communicators have to be flexible and eager to learn new skills, to see where the new opportunities are, and to learn what it takes to become part of them. I remember when computers first came in and some people who were experts on the typewriter retired early rather than learn a new way of working. We've had many generations of innovation in the last 25 years—and not just in tools. We can retire; we can lament; or we can ask, "What's the next way that I can help other specialists communicate clearly?"
2. Learning to think like business people. That's one of the key points in my presentation on showing the value that we bring to our companies and our clients. If we want to be seen as bringing value, we have to think in business terms. What do we bring to the team? What would happen to the company or to our clients if there were no clear communications? Of course, we have to produce our deliverables; but we also have to make ourselves visible, evangelize, get involved on teams early, work with our managers to get their managers to see how pervasive the need for clear communications is in products and in companies.
3. Sharing knowledge and skills within our virtual communities of practice. I am very excited by the work going on within STC right now to think about how the Society needs to transform itself over the next several years to match the reality of our "umbrella of professions." Our virtual communities of practice have expanded tremendously in the past decade. STC now has 21 special interest groups (SIGs) with memberships ranging from 250 to almost 2,500. Only 21 geographic chapters are larger than the smallest SIG and 10 SIGs are larger than the largest geographic chapter. Even though members have to pay extra for each SIG, many belong to more than one. The SIGs keep members in STC because they allow technical communicators to expand their skills and still stay within "our umbrella of professions."
4. Sharing knowledge and skills and respect among our communities of practice and other communities of practice. This is the point you ask about in your next question. As we expand our skills and widen the area under our "umbrella," we run into other "umbrellas." Dealing well at

(A Conversation continued on page 7)

(A Conversation continued from page 6)

the borders is one of the really critical challenges among professions as it is among nations.

*Q: What are your thoughts regarding the convergence of possibly related professions:*

- *business analysis and use-case development*
- *technical communication*
- *training*
- *instructional design*
- *project management*
- *business process reengineering*
- *methodologism (is there such a word?)*
- *others?*

**Ginny:** Convergence and overlap of people who do similar tasks but come from different backgrounds are natural outcomes of expanding ourselves individually and our "umbrella" as STC. We should take this as an opportunity to meet and engage in conversation with other professionals. The most critical element of our interaction with people from other communities is respect. We must respect their skills, background, and interests while expecting them to respect ours. We must assume that we can learn from them and that they can learn from us.

Some of the professions you mention have been partners with technical communication for a long time, especially training and instructional design. Writing for people who are in "learning mode" has some differences from writing for people who are in "doing mode," but there is lots of overlap in our attention to audience, purposes, and the entire model for developing documents. (See my papers on *Reading to Learn to Do* and on *Document and Information Design*.)

Other "professions" you mention are really skill sets that technical communicators must learn as they change the tasks they do. Project management is the primary example here; technical communicators must add project management skills as they move into management. They should become members of STC's Management SIG; they may also want to join other communities/other organizations that focus on project management. In STC's SIG, they will be sharing with other people who focus on managing technical communication. In other organizations, they are likely to meet project managers in other domains.

I do not want to paint this as an entirely rosy picture, however. As I said earlier, dealing well at boundaries can be problematic for professions and individuals as it is for nations. Business analysts think they cover the area of user and task analysis, but they don't do it in the same way that usability specialists do.

Many people coming from information architecture are taking on the big picture of making sure that the entire Web development process is user-centric—doing the same job that many technical communicators who have moved into

usability are doing. Yet, information architects have come from a specialty in organizing large databases of information, not from writing clear content.

Technical communicators who lead card-sorting exercises are moving into information architecture, sometimes without a thorough background in taxonomy -building that information architects bring. Accepting that we have much to learn from each other is the first step. Inviting people from these professions to STC to share panels with us (as we did in recent years with information architects, for example) is just one of many ways to bring these overlapping communities together.

*Q: What advice would you give someone getting started in technical communication or perhaps retooling his or her technical communication career?*

**Ginny: For someone starting out**

1. Learn and practice the core skills of clear communication that will apply to any medium in any field. These are:
  - knowing to get answers to the three basic questions from the people whom you are helping to communicate: What do you want to achieve by having this communication? Who are the users and what do you know about them that we should keep in mind while creating the communication? When, why, and how will they come to the communication? (These are the purposes, audiences, and "scenarios of use" of the communication.)
  - knowing how to think logically, to organize well, to write good headings, to write clear sentences (or lists or fragments), when to use graphics appropriately
  - having good editing skills
2. Learn and practice "people skills"—how to elicit clear information from subject matter specialists; how to negotiate with reviewers; how to work collegially with other writers, editors, and all those people whose professional lives overlap with ours.
3. Be excited about and willing to learn new tools, new techniques, new technical domains. (You could concentrate on one of each but then you would have to hope that you can work in that forever—and that is a very unlikely reality.)

**For someone retooling**

I would hope that person has a really good grasp of my points 1 and 2 above, so I think that someone retooling is in a quandary over my point 3. For that person, I would say, Look around and see what excites you. Hot fields today include writing for the Web, content management and single sourcing, usability, accessibility (making products work equally well for people with various types of disabilities), and probably many others. Think about what part of our "umbrella of professions" attracts you most.

(A Conversation continued on page 8)

(A Conversation continued from page 7)

Once you decide the direction you want to go in, develop a strategy for getting there. Here are three:

- Get a job in your old skills in a company that has people doing what you want to move into. Make it known what you want to move into; volunteer to help; find a mentor; and set goals for yourself to get to the new professional place.
- Go back to school if there is a program in what you want to move into.
- Take a more junior position in a group that does what you want to move into. With the experience you bring from your former life, you are likely to move back up and beyond quickly—assuming you are a quick study and show yourself to be a good contributor.

Thanks Ginny!

Mark Hanigan,  
Suncoast chapter (way, way...) past president

PS—I also asked Ginny to provide me her resume' so that I could extract some highlights from it for this sidebar. She sent me the following bio that provides for interesting reading as is.

## Janice (Ginny) Redish, Ph.D.

Janice (Ginny) Redish is president of Redish & Associates, Inc., a small, woman-owned business in Bethesda, Maryland. Ginny has been helping clients communicate clearly for more than 20 years. She helps private companies and government agencies by reviewing Web sites, paper documents, online help systems, and applications. She helps companies and agencies bring usability into their processes, doing user and task analysis, planning and conducting usability testing, and using the results to develop useful Web sites and other products.

Ginny is sought after as a speaker and workshop leader; she is a dynamic instructor. For example, Nokia has twice brought Ginny to Finland to give courses on clear writing, design, and usability for Web developers and technical communicators. In

2003, she was the featured speaker and workshop leader at a conference of technical communicators in Maribor, Slovenia, and keynoted conferences in London and in Norway.

From 1977 to 1992, Ginny worked full-time at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in Washington, DC. At AIR, Ginny directed the federally-funded Document Design Project, which brought plain language to government regulations, forms, and other documents. She then established AIR's Document Design Center where she and her colleagues studied the problems that people have with workplace documents and helped companies and government agencies develop model print and online documentation.

Ginny has worked with many companies in the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Europe. Her corporate clients have included AARP, American Airlines, Boeing, DuPont, Hermes Software (Slovenia), Hewlett-Packard, Hughes Network Systems, GTE, Marriott International, Nokia (Finland), SAP (Germany), Qwest Dex, and Xerox. She has also consulted for many federal and state agencies, including the National Cancer Institute, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Center for Education Statistics, NASA, and more than a dozen agencies in Washington state.

Ginny is co-author of several books and has published numerous papers and book chapters on various aspects of clear writing, document design, and usability. She serves on the editorial board of three journals and is a member of ACM SIGCHI, ACM SIGDOC, IEEE Professional Communication Society, the Society for Technical Communication (STC), and the Usability Professionals' Association (UPA).

In 1995, the professional society of computer documentation specialists (ACM SIGDOC) honored Ginny with its Rigo Award, given annually to an individual for significant contributions to the profession. In 2001, Ginny received the Alfred N. Goldsmith Award from the IEEE Professional Communication Society. Ginny is an STC Fellow and a past member of the boards of directors of both STC and UPA.

Ginny is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Harvard University.❖

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## For Fun

### Worst Manual Contest

Can you follow these instructions? "To apply the cold wind to the body for a longtime and so as to not exist about cooling too much."

Congratulations to Rhonda Bracey for submitting the winning entry in the fourth annual Technical Standards Worst Manual contest. Rhonda is an STC member and presents at the annual conference. When announcing the winners, Michelle Wier of Technical Standards stated, "Most of the entries received come from STC members, and we appreciate the continued participation." To check out the complete results go to <http://www.tecstandards.com>❖

### AWAD

Do you know what pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis is? How about aa or os? Are you interested in increasing your vocabulary, learning about word origins, or just words in general? You might be interested in A.Word.A.Day. AWAD is a daily email sent by [wordsmith.org](http://wordsmith.org). Wordsmith.org was born 10 years ago as a graduate school experiment sent to a few friends. Today it reaches 570,000 subscribers in 210 countries.

To subscribe go to <http://wordsmith.org/awad/subscribe.html>.

For definitions of the words see the bottom of page 10.❖

# January Chapter Meeting Review

By Mark Hanigan, past president Suncoast chapter and Society

## Avoiding 10 Common Mistakes of Beginning Indexers

Presented by Jean Gabriel, Associate Fellow of STC

Once upon a time, this author had the moniker of STC's "Most Efficient Secretary." This was given to me by then-president of STC Donna Sakson. While I did enjoy it, I also did not keep it very long.

My successor, Jean Gabriel, took what I had thought was a pretty good job "to the next level." After seeing Jean in action for four years (1998–2002), I was left with but one alternative, doing my best Wayne's World imitation, I bowed before Jean and chanted the mantra "I'm not worthy; I'm not worthy!" <grin>

As the Suncoast Chapter members had the privilege to learn last month, Jean applies these exceptional organizational skills to what most technical communicators would agree is

the most arduous task of our profession—indexing! For the January meeting, Jean explored with the chapter 10 of the most common mistakes and offered her solutions. The following table lists these 10 mistakes and identifies at a high level, Jean's recommendations.

For more details, review Jean's presentation at <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/meetings/meetinghandouts.htm>. Also, Jean has provided a list of recommended books, including the prices. That's the type of efficiency that let Jean steal away the Most Efficient Secretary title!

*(Avoiding continued on page 10)*

Mistake	Recommendation
Including document title keywords in the index	Instead, specific aspects of the topic should become main headings.
Having index entries with long strings of undifferentiated locators	Break up into subentries to enhance the usability of the index.
Using an adjective alone as a main heading	Don't do it; put the adjective with its noun as a single heading
Having a main heading with only one subentry	This is the same logic as applies to having only one bullet item in a list or only one instance of a subheading level under its higher heading level.
Writing subheadings that do not place the keyword first	Select the first word carefully so that it represents the main idea.
Having inconsistency within and among index entries	Make sure subheadings are grammatically parallel.
Using cross-references incorrectly or not at all	Make sure that double-posted entries are mirrors of each other.
Failing to include key ideas and concepts in the index.	Put yourself in the "shoes" of the user; don't leave the key points out!
Omitting an introductory note to explain multiple indexes of the use of special devices in an index	If you have any unusual formatting, you should have explanations or instructions for using them, placed in a way that the user can find them.

(Avoiding continued from page 9)

Before closing, a few highlights about Jean. She has been a technical communicator, writer, editor, and indexer for more than 20 years. Last year, she was elected Associate Fellow of STC. Jean is also a graduate of the *Basic Indexing* course offered by the United States Department of Agriculture. Really; this stirred a question from the audience about why the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jean explained that actually this agency is viewed as the experts in indexing insofar as the U.S. government is concerned. Further, it serves as the primary means by which freelance book indexers acquire their skills in the U.S.

Besides STC, Jean also belongs to the American Society of Indexers (ASI) and is an active member of the STC Special Interest Group (SIG) on Indexing. Jean graduated with honors from California State University–Sacramento with a BA in

Journalism and an English minor. She also has an MA in Education from Michigan State University. Jean remains an active member of the Orange County Chapter, south of Los Angeles.

The Suncoast chapter appreciates Jean coming all this way to share with us her expertise on indexing.

Kind regards,  
Mark Hanigan,  
Suncoast chapter (way, way...) past president ❖

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## Around STC

### Discount Distance Learning: How to Design and Deliver a Course Without Spending a Fortune

The Atlanta Chapter is pleased to host a workshop, "Discount Distance Learning: How to Design and Deliver a Course Without Spending a Fortune," 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., on Saturday, April 17 at Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta, Georgia.

George Hayhoe, Ph.D., will present this half-day workshop and will examine the following topics:

- Basic similarities and differences between distance and traditional courses
- Instructional methods for distance delivery
- Tips for reducing the "distance" between students and instructor
- No-cost and low-cost alternatives to expensive course-delivery software

George Hayhoe is a professor of technical communication and director of the MS program in technical communication management at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. He is a Fellow of STC and editor of STC's quarterly journal, *Technical Communication*.

Workshop details, fees, registration form, and directions are posted on Atlanta's web site, <http://www.stcatlanta.org>.

Contact Roberta Heinlein at [roberta\\_heinlein@homedepot.com](mailto:roberta_heinlein@homedepot.com) or Linda VanSickle at [linda.vansickle@usg.edu](mailto:linda.vansickle@usg.edu), for more information.❖

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## AWAD Definitions

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis is a kind of lung disease. Incidentally, this is the longest word ever featured on AWAD—45 letters.

Aa is a kind of lava.

Os is bone or mouth.❖

# Suncoast Chapter News

This is the official slate for 2004–2005—but it's not too late for someone to volunteer for the open position:

President: Joanna Castner  
Vice-President: Suzanne Norman  
Secretary/Treasurer: Cynthia Moyers  
Area Program Coordinator: None  
Membership: Kathy Robbins  
Newsletter: Kimberly Nolder, Gloria Shoats-Schramm  
Webmaster: Annette Staehle  
FTCC Coordinator: Nancy Rosenberg

Many thanks to the nominating team consisting of Bruce Kula, Amy Lisk, and Barbara Diorio for their hard work in searching high and low for volunteers to keep our chapter running for another year. The position of Area Program Coordinator remains unfilled. Please consider giving back to the chapter by filling this position. Contact any of the officers listed on page 3 if you are willing to help.

We are growing!!! Suncoast chapter has had a 24% increase in membership since June 30, 2003.❖

## Next Meeting:

**April 1, 2004** ..... Your STC Membership by Beth Tanner

## Upcoming Meetings:

**May 6, 2004** ..... Mark Hanigan

**June 3, 2004** ..... TBA

**July 1, 2004** ..... TBA

Note: Meetings are subject to change. Obtain meeting updates at our Web site: <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/>

## Location:

Holiday Inn Express, 3025 N. Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, 813-287-8585

## Time:

6:30 p.m. Network and light dinner

7:00—9:00 p.m. Meeting

## Cost:

\$10 for members and guests

\$5 for students

## Administrative Council Meetings

You can be a part of our chapter at work by attending the Administrative Council meetings, which are held via teleconference at 8:15 p.m. on the Tuesday preceding the regular chapter meetings. Phone (toll free) 1-888-650-9063, Room 6301.❖