

Suncoast Chapter Announces Corporate Sponsorship Program

By Laura McGrover, Webmaster and Immediate Past President



Is your employer looking for a way to support or get involved with the STC Suncoast chapter? The chapter welcomes corporate sponsorships to help defray costs for our educational programs, publications, and annual Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC). Our new corporate sponsorship program makes contributing easy and gives companies a way to increase awareness of their businesses among Tampa Bay technical communicators.

Sponsor Benefits

The chapter promotes corporate sponsors throughout the chapter's fiscal year (July through June). On the Sponsors page of our chapter Web site, the company will have its name and Web site link. In our bimonthly newsletter, the company will have its name and Web site address included in the Sponsors panel of each issue. In addition, the company will be promoted based on the type of donation:

Meeting space, food, and door prizes

The company's name, location, and Web site address will be included on announcements (mailers, e-mails, and the Meetings page on the chapter Web site) pertaining to the event(s) sponsored.

Printing costs

The company's name and Web site address will be included on the printed materials sponsored (mailers, newsletter, etc.).

Web host costs

The company's name and Web site link will be included on the Sponsors Web page and the Sponsors panel in the newsletter throughout the chapter's fiscal year.

For more information, see the Sponsorship Process page at <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/sponsors/sponsorprocess.htm>. If you have any questions about corporate sponsorships or want to make a contribution, contact Pam Treme at ptreme@aol.com ❖

Happy Holidays



Inside

Corporate Sponsorship Program	1
From the Editor	2
Pay with PayPal	2
Sponsors	2
STC Contacts	3
Society News	3
Chapter News	3
STC Membership	3
November Meeting Review	4
December Meeting Review	4
September Board Meeting	6
Around STC	7
For Fun	7

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.

From the Editor

Another year has passed and a new year is about to begin. It is customary at this time of the year to review the past year and to look forward to the new year.

In the past year, the chapter leadership has placed an emphasis on adding value to your STC membership through quality presentations and workshops conducted by well-known STC members. Beginning this past summer we began to educate and encourage you to use electronic methods to receive chapter information and to communicate via the listserv, the Web site, and the Internet. Several articles have appeared in the previous two newsletters for this purpose. The chapter Web site was redesigned.

More changes are planned in the new year. This will be the last hardcopy issue of the WriteUp mailed to you. The WriteUp will move to an online document, available on our chapter Web site and announced through our listserv. Arrangements have been made to enable you to prepay your meeting and workshop fees online using PayPal. (See the article below for instructions on how to do this.) Details are being worked out to add a Members Only section to our chapter Web site similar to the Society Web site. A Corporate Sponsorship program has been implemented. (See page 1.) Our chapter leaders continue to work hard to provide you with useful, informative meetings and workshops in 2003. (See Chapter News on page 3.)

I want to wish everyone a happy, prosperous, and employed new year. ❖

Pay with the Option

By Karin Carlan, Suncoast Chapter Member

The Suncoast chapter now has an account set up with PayPal so that members can pay for functions through the Internet. PayPal is a Web site that allows businesses and individuals to securely send and receive payments online. You can pay using a credit card (VISA, MasterCard, Discover, and noncorporate American Express) or a bank account. There are no fees for personal account holders to send and receive money.

To use PayPal:

1. Go to the Web site (www.PayPal.com).
2. If you do not have an account, click the **Sign Up** button and create an account. Once you receive a confirmation e-mail, you can begin using PayPal.
3. Log in to your account and select the **Send Money** tab.
4. Complete the Send Money page. For the recipient's e-mail enter irbeach@concentric.net.
5. Click **Continue** when complete.
6. Review the information on the confirmation page and click **Send Money** to complete your transaction.

If you have questions while using PayPal, there is a Help link in the top right corner of each page. ❖

Sponsors

The following company has sponsored the chapter during the current fiscal year:

Raymond James Financial
St. Petersburg, FL
www.raymondjames.com



Designing the future of technical communication

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Society News

Scholarship Applications Available

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication. Four awards of \$1,000 each will be granted for academic year 2003-2004. Application deadline is February 15, 2003. Instructions and application forms are available at www.stc.org/grants_loans.asp.

Members Only

In the new members only section of the Society Web site you can view the 2002 Salary Survey, jobs database, and renew your membership. To visit the members only section, you will need your member ID and password, which were sent to you in an e-mail the end of September.

Society Sponsored Events

STC@50, the annual conference on May 18-21, 2003, in Dallas. For more information www.stc.org/conferences.asp.

Telephone workshops. More information at www.stc.org/seminars.asp.

Regional conferences. More information at www.stc.org/related.asp

Chapter News

The Suncoast chapter is sponsoring a usability workshop February 15 from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the University of Tampa's John Sykes College of Business.

Ed See, STC President, and Susan Jensen, Assistant to the STC President for Leadership, will introduce the basic and practical aspects of usability. From building usability into a design to ensuring it through development and testing, technical communicators can make a valuable and significant contribution to the product development life cycle. This workshop will give you the tools and concepts to promote and participate in user-centered design practices with your clients or in your company.

(Chapter News continued on page 6)

STC Membership

A printed dues renewal invoice was mailed in November to those who did not renew online by November 11; however, you may still renew your membership online at www.stc.org. Only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2003, will be eligible to vote in next year's STC elections.

As of November 27, 2002

Table with 2 columns: Membership Category and Count. Includes Suncoast chapter members (173), Total Region 3 members (1,741), Total STC members (21,454), Members residing in the U.S. (18,565), Members residing in Canada (1,901), Members residing elsewhere (988), Total number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) (21), Total number of chapters (153).

Monthly Chapter Meeting Reviews



November

By Joseph Clay Wisterman

Résumés and Portfolios

Presented by Joan Baptist, Laura McGrover, Nancy Reach, and Mark Colvenbach

Proof, proof, proof, edit, edit, edit was the overlaying theme for the November chapter meeting that was divided into two components: résumés and portfolios.

Résumés

Joan Baptist, Laura McGrover, and Nancy Reach presented the résumé component. All three are hiring managers at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Raymond James, and Nielsen Media Research, respectively. The three presenters used a PowerPoint presentation to show how to prepare an excellent résumé for technical communicators.

The presenters began by discussing the two most common types of résumés: chronological and functional. Functional résumés make it easier to find information more quickly, while chronological resumes give an employer a better idea of what you have been doing recently. All three of the presenters agreed that you should not send both types of résumés. It is better to choose the one type that best suits your background and the position for which you are applying.

The discussion moved to résumé length. A résumé should be no more than one page in length for up to five years of experience and two pages for more than five years. Senior-level management positions may use a three-page résumé. Baptist and Reach spoke about some of the worst résumés they had seen. One résumé was four pages long with only four jobs listed. Another was eight pages long—all bullet points.

Style, font, grammar, and punctuation were the next points of the presentation. Baptist stressed the importance of using a consistent voice and verb tense throughout the résumé. She also pointed out the importance of not using trendy fonts. Reach discussed the importance of using consistent date formats (11-28-02 vs. 11/28/02 and 1998 vs. '98). Reach also recommended the Chicago Manual of Style as one of four style manuals she uses.

The presenters next discussed cover letters and separate elements of the résumé. When asked about cover letters, Reach responded, "I can't remember the last time I received a cover letter." All three agreed that when a résumé is e-mailed, the e-mail message usually acts as a cover letter.

The major elements covered were objective, education,

(Resumes continued on page 5)

December

By Jim Hooper, Suncoast Chapter Member

The "Plug and Play" Technical Communicator

Or

Even if I am not employed, I still have a job!!!

Presented by Mark Hanigan, Suncoast chapter member and past STC President

Remember what your grandmother said, "You have to endure the bad times to enjoy the good?" That's just part of the wisdom Mark Hanigan shared with an energetic group of Suncoast chapter members at the December 5 meeting in Tampa. The past president of STC tackled issues faced by today's challenging economy in his interactive presentation that spanned four acts.

In Act I, Mark discussed the economic downturn that began about two years ago and revealed that there are cycles to the technical writing business. He said the "Plug and Play Technical Communicator" or PPTC needs to recognize those cycles and "ride them to his or her advantage."

During the interactive Q and A period, a member shared her thoughts on the economic slowdown where her "401K account is now a 201K!"

Act II dealt with the history of technical communication and was one of the most informative parts of Mark's talk. He reviewed a handful of quotes from the twentieth century that may have seemed relevant at the time but are now outdated by the advancing wave of technological advances.

The group brainstormed items that became obsolete in our lifetime (daisy-wheel printers and eight-track tape players) and speculated about which items may not be around in the next decade. However, the one item that's missing from both lists, according to Mark, is the job opportunities for technical communicators. Those are NOT going away anytime soon.

As proof, Mark led a historical discussion of our profession that included five different time periods:

- World War II to 1980
- "Golden 1980s" (Reagan-Bush years)
- "Upsize, Downsize, Rightsize" (Early to mid-1990s)
- "90s Boom Times"
- 2001-02 Economic Downturn

During each time period, Mark provided examples of demographics for the PPTC, the communicator's audience and deliverable types, and the types of professional

(Plug and Play continued on page 5)

(Resumes continued from page 4)

experience, achievements, and affiliations. Baptist noted that it is necessary to be specific when writing your objective. Reach mentioned that students should feel free to list accomplishments that pertain to the job for which they are applying. For example, if your overall grade point average is a 3.0 but you received a 4.0 in all your technical writing courses, then you should put that on your résumé. All three presenters agreed that you should leave out any controversial affiliations, such as political groups.

References, which are listed separate from the résumé, were the next item to be discussed. “Don’t just list names and phone numbers,” Baptist informed the audience. “The person who is checking the reference needs to know how each reference relates to you.” McGrover added that it is important to indicate whether each reference is personal or professional.

Finally, the presenters stressed the importance of being prepared to consent to testing. However, Reach noted that you should not get nervous about testing. “If a person has writing skills—that’s more important than software knowledge,” said Reach. “Software can be quickly learned.” McGrover also mentioned that you should be prepared to answer questions about anything you have put on your résumé.

In conclusion, all three presenters said that most résumés have mistakes that could have been corrected by more proofing and editing. Noted Reach, “It’s rare to see a perfect résumé. And if yours is perfect, then you’re going to get a call.”

Portfolios

Mark Colvenbach, Assistant Director of Career Services at the University of Tampa, presented the portfolios component on PowerPoint.

Colvenbach began by defining a portfolio as a collection of and record of your best skills and achievements. He noted that a portfolio could market your skills during an interview.

As with résumés, a portfolio can be either functional or chronological. If you wish to include an item that was created several years ago, then a functional portfolio would remove the emphasis from when the item was created. Also, Colvenbach said that you should not use page numbers as this would cause less flexibility in making changes.

The major physical requirement of a portfolio is that it be transportable. Colvenbach suggested Office Depot, AOE, and Pearl as good places to find portfolio materials.

Next Colvenbach discussed the elements of a portfolio. The following technical communication portfolio elements were discussed:

- A Table of Contents
- Published Work
- Documentation of Computer Skills
- References
- Awards or Certificates

At this point, Reach interjected by suggesting that if you need more material for your portfolio, then you may want to write a “how to” manual for a computer program with which you are familiar, such as PowerPoint or Word. This will show your writing ability to an employer.

Finally, Colvenbach discussed how to use your portfolio in an interview. He said that you should be ready to discuss any item in the portfolio but to be careful not to be too pushy with showing the portfolio. Always let the interviewer maintain control of the flow of an interview. You should also never bring your only copy to an interview. Arrange to hand out copies and keep your master copy in a safe place.

Mark Colvenbach can be reached at mcolvenbach@ut.edu. ❖

(Plug and Play continued from page 4)
organizations in our industry.

The PPTC’s adaptability is the key to Act III. Mark stressed that each historical time period affected what he calls the five “Ts” of technical communications: techniques, tools, technologies, trends, and temperaments.

He implied continuing education is essential in this plan since only a student skilled in the latest technologies can stay ahead of the job market curve. Those students/communicators are truly “plug and play.”

Mark shared his “war plan,” which lists his personal business objectives and other goals for the next year. This plan (entitled “2002–2003 Long Term Strategy” as part of his overall presentation at <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/meetings/meetinghandouts.htm>) also includes two tables, which are valuable to anyone looking for employment in the online Web board community.

Perhaps the most beneficial part of his presentation was the interactive exercise in Act IV, “Where to Now? Where are the jobs?” Mark invited us to fill in a worksheet (also on the STC web site) and list the types of hats the technical communicator wears, the deliverables he or she produces, and the industries in which he or she works. By focusing on what you like to do, the Hanigan worksheet can help you focus your career search.

About Mark Hanigan

Mark was the Society President in 2000–2001, Director-Sponsor of Region 3, and a past president of the Suncoast STC chapter, among other jobs in previous years. A practicing technical communicator for more than 20 years, Mark is now an independent contractor and president of On the Write Track located in Palm Harbor, a suburb of the Tampa Bay area. He can be reached at onwritetrk@aol.com. ❖



September Board Meeting

by Rob Houser, Region 3 Director-Sponsor

October 14, 2002

Membership, budget, and member services were the focus of the STC board of directors meeting in Boston on September 26–28, 2002. As with many organizations, STC is feeling the effects of a weak economy — membership, the value of our investments, and conference attendance are lower this year. Despite the challenges from the economy, the board spent a significant amount of time addressing ways to increase membership and improve the quality of members services.

The following actions were taken at the September board meeting:

- Approved the new strategic plan. You can see the plan at www.stc.org (under About STC).
- Approved the budget for fiscal year 2003.
- Revised the way that the Society prorates dues. Dues will now be prorated by month rather than only at the end of the year. The effect on new members is that they can join at any time during the year and receive at least 12 months of membership. During the transition, members joining through the end of this year will receive membership through December 31, 2003.
- Changed the way that chapter rebates will be paid for 2004 onwards. In the future, half of the rebate will be paid upon receipt and approval of the chapters' financial report and 990EZ (if applicable) and the remaining half will be paid the following January. This action was taken to reduce the drain on the cash flow for the Society during the year. Chapters should plan ahead since they will receive two smaller rebates during the year rather than one large amount.
- Approved previously committed support for INTECOM

(The International Council for Technical Communication), an organization of 15 international societies focusing on technical communication.

- Increased support for Society representation at the standards organizations related to our profession: National Information Standards Organization (NISO), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
- The Chapter Achievement Award was updated to increase the profile of membership activities in chapters of all sizes. The revisions apply to chapters submitting this year (2002-2003), so make sure you get a copy of the revised guidelines from the Society Web site.

The following items were discussed at the board meeting:

- The Society Web site initiated the “members only” area starting October 1, 2002. The purpose of this move is to increase the value of membership in STC. We will be monitoring the success of this effort closely over the next six months.
- The board discussed ways to increase the role of the SIGs in the Society. The SIGs represent the diversity of our membership and are important communities for technical communicators.
- Membership was discussed throughout the board meeting. You will see more of a focus on recruiting new members in the months to come. We also discussed retaining existing members, which is important; however, the biggest drop off is in new members. In preparation, start thinking about ways that you can help STC reach the many technical communicators who have not yet joined our community.

If you have questions or comments about the STC board of directors or any of the items mentioned in this article, please contact your director-sponsor, Rob Houser, at rob@userfirst.net. ❖

(Chapter News continued from page 3)

The session will meet the following goals:

- Have participants walk away with a clear definition of usability engineering and common usability activities.
- Introduce the basic methodologies for usability testing using a talk-out-loud protocol.
- Identify the transferable skills and paths for pursuing user-centered design practices.
- Encourage participants to identify practical means of promoting usability in their business environment.

Ed See is a managing director at BearingPoint (formerly PKMG Consulting, Inc.). With a strong background in software product development, enterprise application integration, Internet marketing, and user-centered design, he is able to drive software development and organization to create products and systems that are rich in function and, at the same

time, are simple to use. Ed's ability to make technology a competitive edge and to drive organizations to high efficiency and high performance has created value for his clients.

Susan Jensen is principal of Effective Design, working with clients to develop usable software applications. She speaks from experience gained over 20 years in technical fields and through a variety of design projects that blend electronic and paper media, high and low tech, and the needs of skilled and unskilled users. For the past 10 years, her focus has been on the development of usable decision support, financial, and medical applications.

Ed and Susan have served in many roles in STC.

Watch for more details on the Suncoast chapter Web site <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/events.htm> ❖

Around STC

WriteUp makes Boise newsletter

The following article appeared in the November issue of The Sidebar, the newsletter of the Snake River Chapter in Boise, Idaho.

This month's featured newsletter, *WriteUp*, is from the Suncoast Chapter, serving Tampa, Florida, and the surrounding region. At first I was attracted to this newsletter because it is from a warmer climate. I miss our beautiful summer as the colder nights take over our climate. Moving past my selfishness, I noticed that Lou Martindale, the editor, does a great job balancing a variety of topics, and even includes a report on chapter finances. You can view the *WriteUp* at www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/newsletter/SeptOct2002.pdf.

The Suncoast Chapter has also recently updated their Web site, www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/, and it is worth a visit.

Orlando IPCC Conference

This announcement was sent by a member of the Orlando chapter. Mark your calendars for IPCC 2003.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

You are invited to submit a proposal for the International Professional Communication Conference 2003 (IPCC 2003) in Orlando from September 21–24, 2003. The conference, held by the IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS), brings together technical and professional communicators and engineering documenters from around the world.

The theme is The Shape of Knowledge. Stems will explore sources of knowledge, users and applications of knowledge, and the process of shaping knowledge itself into texts. Proposals are invited on these and other topics of practical and theoretical interest to the technical and professional communication field.

Keynote speaker is J. Peter Kincaid, Principal Scientist at the Institute for Simulation and Training in the UCF Research Park (as in Flesch-Kincaid readability), speaking on the latest research on controlled language and distributed learning. Other speakers include Dr. Dan Jones of UCF's Technical Writing program and Bill Horton, noted authority on Web design for practical communication.

For details, visit our Web site: <http://www.ieeepcs.org/2003>

Send proposals by March 15, 2003 to:
Paul Dombrowski, IPCC Program Chair
University of Central Florida
P.O. Box 161346
Orlando, FL 32816-1346
E-mail: pdombrow@mail.ucf.edu ❖

For Fun

3rd Annual Worst Manual Contest

Submitted by Jim Desmond, STC Sr. Member, jimd@techstandards.com

Just a reminder for the holiday season, when all else fails, read the manual.

Have you ever been so frustrated with a manual or set of instructions that you cursed the author and wished you had never bought the product in the first place?

Does this sound familiar? How about \$100 for your frustration? Technical Standards, Inc. (TSI), a Southern California documentation services company, is offering \$100 for the winning entry in their third annual 'Worst Manual Contest.'

Send a manual or set of instructions that is hard to understand, poorly written, or just plain wrong. Send it if it has bad grammar, too much legalese, is poorly translated, or has missing steps. If it is the worst entry, you will win \$100.

"We thought we would have fun with this contest. Everyone has had trouble with a manual," says Michelle Wier, Director of Operations of Technical Standards, Inc. "That's why we started our company. People like products they understand how to use, and good technical documentation reduces the need for technical support. That's why good manuals are so important."

You don't have to send the whole manual; excerpts of the worst parts are okay. The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2003, so check those holiday gifts for potential entries. Entries must be in English. For complete contest rules, see the TSI Web site at www.tecstandards.com. The winner will be announced on the Technical Standards Web site, www.tecstandards.com, on February 28, 2003. ❖



Mark Colvenbach discusses portfolios at the November meeting.

Photo by Joe Wisterman.

WriteUp

Suncoast Newsletter
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Address Correction Requested
First Class Mail



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/>

Next Meeting (moved to 2nd Thursday):

January 9, 2003 Usability with Karen Bachmann

Upcoming Meetings:

February 6 Knowledge Management with Judy Glick-Smith

March 6 Single Sourcing with Lynn Perry

April 3 Globalization with Nancy Hoft

Workshop:

February 15, 2003 Usability Workshop with Ed See and Susan Jensen