

WriteUp

Volume 17, Number 5

<http://www.stc.org/region3/sun/www>

September / October 2000

Countdown to FTCC

By Bill Graham, Suncoast Chapter Treasurer

The Suncoast chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) invites technical communicators across the state to enter the 2000 Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC). This annual event provides an excellent opportunity for writers, artists, developers, and their employers to show off their most dynamic work.

You can enter several categories including online help, reference manuals, technical art, books, newsletters, and more. Each submission receives valuable and constructive comments from experienced judges, and many win awards. For a nominal extra fee, the Suncoast chapter will submit winners of the DTC (Distinguished Technical Communication) award to international competition. The deadline for entries is coming soon; submissions must be received by October 4, 2000.

FTCC 2000 also needs one-day volunteers for Judging Consensus Day and the Awards Banquet. Volunteers can take on responsibilities like being a runner on Consensus day or setting up award displays at the Awards Banquet. We may also need volunteers for less notable tasks like helping the Correspondence Committee mail out invitations or other needs that may arise. If you want to volunteer, call Bill Graham at 941-752-0380 or e-mail him at graham_wg@mindspring.com.



Important dates to remember for the FTCC are:

- October 14, 2000: Judges' Training Day
- November 11, 2000: Judging Consensus Day
- January 20, 2001: Awards Banquet

We are now closing in on securing facilities for Judging Consensus Day and the Awards Banquet. When we have completed negotiations, we will deliver an announcement to the FTCC website manager to be posted on the FTCC website. The deadline for signing up as a judge has elapsed but we are still in need of several judges as of this writing. Please visit the FTCC website listed in this article and click the Call for Judges link. Also, if you want to find out more about the Judges' Training Day and Judging Consensus Day, or about becoming an FTCC judge, contact Scott Havens. You can call Scott at 813-684-2611 or e-mail him at havpubs@ix.netcom.com.

For more detailed information about submitting entries and access to entry forms, log on to the Suncoast Chapter web site at <http://www.stc.org/region3/sun/www>. Click on the FTCC link, then on Call for Entries. We hope that technical communicators statewide submit entries and we look forward to another successful competition! Good Luck!

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Write Up

Editor

Diana Moran
morandiana@aol.com

Photographers

Mary Lauby
mary.lauby@gte.net

Lore Eargle

lore_e1@verifone.com

Write Up communicates 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

Meeting writeups, 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.

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Suncoast Chapter

President

Eileen McPartland
emcpartland@invensysibs.com

Vice President

Lore Eargle
lore_e1@verifone.com

Secretary

Lou Martindale
lmartin220@aol.com

Treasurer

Bill Graham
graham_wg@mindspring.com

Area Program Coordinator

Dina Stenz
dstenz1@tampabay.rr.com

Region 3 Director-Sponsor

Rob Houser
rob@userfirst.net

Membership Manager

Melissa Lamb
missi@lambsoftware.com

Database Manager

Dave Lewis



From the Editor

By Diana Moran

Well here it is, another online issue of the Write Up! Please share your comments about how you like the new format.

Letters to the Editor are welcome and encouraged!

Who would like to be the next Featured Face for any of the upcoming issues? We'd like to get to know you, so don't be shy! Tell us about yourself, your work, and your life!

Read a good book lately or learn a new software application that makes your work so much more efficient? Book reviews and/or technology reviews related to technical communication are a good way for us to share tools of the trade with one another. Please volunteer to share a review!

Entries for the STC newsletter conference are due Jan 10th! This means that I will be working on two issues simultaneously in order to meet the deadline. The deadlines for the next two issues are as follows:

November/December issue: November 10th

January/February issue: January 1st

I would like to personally thank everyone who submitted material and their time to this issue! I truly appreciate those who went above and beyond to give me a lending hand!

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Leader's Message

By Lore Eargle, Suncoast Chapter Vice-President

The Florida Technical Communication Competition is the big item on the Suncoast Chapter's agenda for the next several months. Bill Graham, Lou Martindale, Mary Greer, and Khairunnisa Veerjee have made a tremendous effort to pull the competition together since the leadership suddenly departed late in the summer. The project is now rolling and the committee is quickly collecting volunteers, judges, and entries. If you have the time and the interest to serve as a judge, please contact Scott Havens at SHavens@dmius.com or just go to the FTCC website http://www.stc.org/region3/sun/www/FTCC/FTCC_cfj.htm to get the application for judging and send it to Scott. If you would like a different or a time-limited task so you can lend a hand in this rewarding effort, contact Bill Graham at graham_wg@mindspring.com or Lou Martindale at lou@pdma.com.

The awards banquet will be at the end of Saturday, January 20, at the Feather Sound Country Club. Please put it on your calendar so that you can join us in congratulating the winners and in reviewing the best of the work from technical communicators in our area.

Also, in the works this month are two FrameMaker workshops, sponsored by our chapter and put on by Koster Associates of Melbourne. These workshops normally cover four days and cost much more. We'll have a one-day beginning workshop on Thursday, October 26, and an advanced workshop on Friday, October 27. Both take place at the TECO Energy Technology Center on the USF campus. If you would like to register, send an e-mail to lore_e1@verifone.com and I will send you a PDF of the registration form to send to Koster Associates. The cost is \$260 but STC members receive a \$30 discount and students a \$100 discount. (See page 5 for more details.)

The November chapter meeting will be a joint meeting with Webgrrls at the Tampa public library. For this reason, it will be on the second Thursday, November 9. Our own Karen Bachmann, former president of the Suncoast Chapter and SSTC, will be speaking on usability and online communication.

Our annual holiday social will occur on December 7. We'll be meeting at the Tampa Bay Brewing Company in Ybor City. In case you are hesitant because of the location, please note that the management is providing us with free valet parking. Come join your fellow communicators in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. I'm sure the FTCC Committee members will be ready to cut loose.

Please join your fellow STC members at one or more of these events. Get involved in your local chapter. You will find your communication horizons expanding and you will meet some great people.



Membership Update

By Melissa Lamb
Suncoast Chapter
Membership Manager

New Members

Heidi Kelchner
Tonya Zoutes
Richard Maxson
Linda Sarbo

Transferring Members

Carolyn Miller
Diane Baldwin

Membership Figures

Total STC Suncoast
Membership: 184

Don't Forget

Send change of address, phone number, and email address to Dave Lewis to update your membership information if it has changed!

dlewis@tvratings.com



Help on the Web

By Jim Sands, Chicago Chapter

In a previous column, I described two e-mail based discussion lists that might be of interest to Help authors. Since that column was written, both lists have been moved due to host server changes.

The biggest and most active list for Help authors has always been the WINHLP-L discussion list. By the time this column runs, WINHLP-L should be officially closed. In August, the college that was hosting WINHLP-L said that it could no longer host it in real time. After the list announced it was closing, a similar discussion list called HATT (Help Authoring Tools and Techniques) was formed at egroups.com. To subscribe to this new list, go to <http://www.egroups.com/group/HATT> and click on the Subscribe link. The only user profile information that you have to provide is your email address. It appears that most of the WINHLP-L list members have moved to HATT, so there are already over 300 members on the new HATT list.

The TECHWR-L list is a large discussion list for technical writers that also moved to a different host server several months ago. Contact <http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/index.php3> and enter your email address to subscribe to the list at the new server location.

As I mentioned in my previous article, when you subscribe to either list, you may want to select the digest option. Both HATT and TECHWR-L generate nearly 100 messages a day and receiving them one at a time fills up your inbox quickly.

Have a question about Help?

Jim Sands is an independent on-line Help consultant and welcomes your questions and comments. Send questions to ohlp@msn.com, 847-918-8761, or to Sands & Associates, 650 Whitney Court, Suite 404, Gurnee, IL 60031. All questions will be answered in *Help 101* rather than individually.

Help 101 offers practical tips and educational resources for online Help developers. This column is a regular feature of both WriteUp and Byline, the newsletter of the Chicago chapter.

Featured Website



<http://www.mvd.com/webguide>

Whether you are a beginner or a professional, anyone interested in web development should check out this site! Helpful information can help you make your website state-of-the art! Resources include:

- HTML Style Guide
- Image Creation Guide (photos/animated images)
- Essential HTML Links (tutorials, guides, and lots of free downloads)

Network

Webgrrls

Webgrrls International provides a forum for women in or interested in new media and technology to network, exchange job and business leads, form strategic alliances, mentor and teach, intern and learn the skills to help women succeed in an increasingly technical workplace and world.

They meet the second Thursday of the month from 6-8 at kforce.com training center, 5840 Cypress Street, Suite A, Tampa. Join the Suncoast chapter at:

<http://www.cyberelf.com/webgrrls>

(*Network*, continued on page 12)

STC Professional Development Opportunity: One-Day FrameMaker Training



By Lore Eargle, Suncoast Chapter Vice-President

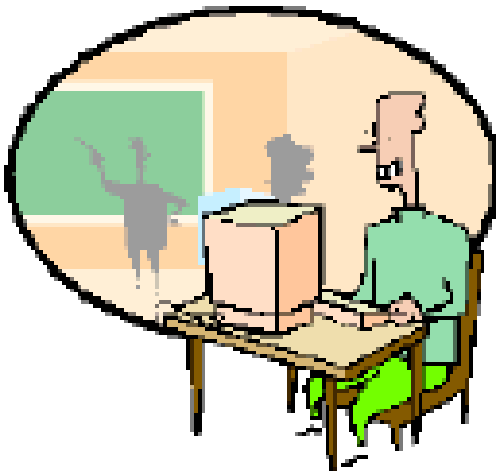
The Suncoast Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is pleased to announce two, one-day training sessions on Adobe FrameMaker. Patrick Koster of Koster Associates, an Adobe®-certified trainer, will conduct both sessions at the TECO Energy Technology Center on the USF campus in Tampa.

Session 1 is a hands-on introductory session, intended for those who have not used FrameMaker or who have just started using the program. After an overview of the Adobe FrameMaker document window, menus, and tools, topics covered may include creating FrameMaker documents; defining paragraph formats; defining character formats; defining page layouts; and auto-numbering.

Session 2 is a hands-on session for intermediate users of FrameMaker. Specific topics will be decided beforehand by the participants, and may cover items such as creating and formatting tables, anchored frames and graphics; creating cross-references and footnotes; creating a book file; generating a table of contents and index; conditional text; adding hypertext features to your document; saving as HTML or PDF; or online document review using Adobe Acrobat.

DATES AND TIMES

Session 1: Introduction to FrameMaker
Thursday, October 26
9 am - 4 pm (one-hour lunch break on your own)



Session 2: Advanced Features of FrameMaker
Friday, October 27
9 am - 4 pm (one-hour lunch break on your own)

SESSION COSTS

Member of STC	\$230
Non-STC member	\$260
Full-time student	\$160

Lunch is on your own. There are plenty of fast food and sit-down restaurants available on Fowler Avenue.

Each session is limited to 20 participants. Adobe®-developed training material included. There is a strong possibility that these sessions will sell-out. If sufficient people register, we will schedule another workshop for the people who end up on a waiting list.

RESERVATION AND PAYMENT DATES

Reservations with a credit card must be made by October 23. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, and Diner's Club are accepted.

You may also choose to pay by cash or check on the day of class, but your spot must be reserved first with a credit card. A session with fewer than 10 participants will be cancelled, and payment will be fully refunded. If you must cancel your reservation, all but \$25 will be refunded, to cover training materials and processing fees.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

To reserve your spot, e-mail Lore Eargle, Suncoast Chapter vice-president. She will e-mail you a PDF of the registration form, which you will send to Koster Associates by fax, e-mail, or snail-mail.

Phone: 727-953-4268

Email: lore_e1@verifone.com

Featured Face: Meet Laura McGrover



Laura McGrover is a graduate of USF and has a B.A. in English with an emphasis in technical writing. Laura has served as Charter Treasurer of the Student STC Chapter and is a senior member of STC. She lives in Clearwater with her husband Mark.

Where do you work and for how long?

I have worked at Raymond James & Associates since March 1993. When I started, I was one of two Documentation Specialists. I have been promoted a couple of times during my career, most recently to Assistant Vice President of Documentation (August 2000). Currently, the Documentation department consists of eight associates.

I enjoy working at Raymond James because it offers a creative, team-oriented work environment. We work hard, and we have fun. Throughout the year, the firm sponsors numerous parties, concerts, internal training, art contests, football pep rallies, and other events—just to reward associates for their hard work.

What are your main work responsibilities?

My department is responsible for developing a variety of information products, including user guides and online Help for internally developed software, Web pages for our corporate intranet, custom installation instructions for products used at the firm, and a company-wide technology newsletter. We earned several awards at the 1999 Florida Technical Communication Competition.

We deliver printed and online documentation to our clients. The media depends on our client and the project. We produce printed user manuals, quick reference cards, Web sites (intranet), and online Help—sometimes a combination of methods. Some of the tools we use are Adobe Acrobat, RoboHELP (HTML Edition), FrontPage, Paint Shop Pro, and Microsoft Word.

In my current role, I manage the Documentation department. I assign projects, assist writers in planning their projects, set goals for the department, track the status of projects, review drafts of documentation, write and administer performance appraisals, interview and hire staff, and manage the department's budget.

My colleague and I are collaborating to develop a procedures writing course for the associates at Raymond James. The course will be offered through our corporate training program. We will conduct the course for associates who are faced with the task of writing business and other job-related procedures.

What are your personal interests or hobbies?

Among my hobbies, I enjoy reading, writing, photography, exercising, and traveling (especially to places where seasons change). My husband, Mark, and I are not fans of flying, but we certainly enjoy road trips. I really like to see the landscape as we travel. We hope to make our way across the U.S. eventually.

What do you see is the biggest challenge in the field of technical communication?

The only thing constant is change. Technology is changing constantly and our clients' needs are ever-changing. The pace continues to increase, and something new always awaits. Determining whether or not the latest, greatest products will help us meet our clients' needs is important before investing the time and money to implement them. I have seen some companies implement technologies before doing any type of needs assessment or requirements analysis.

What is your previous work experience:

Before joining Raymond James, I worked in the Marketing department of Information Management Resources (now called IMRglobal). I started my career with an internship at Sykes Enterprises.

A Breath of Fresh Air at USF

By Pamela A. Tremé, Suncoast Chapter Student Liason

They applied the paddles to ENC 4931 and it's sputtering back to life. ENC 4931, Selected Topics in Professional and Technical Writing, has not appeared on a class schedule at USF for a number of years. This course offers students the opportunity to agree with their instructor on the topics to be covered in a semester long course. The course description includes the following suggested topics: legal writing, the conventions of business writing, and writing for the social sciences.

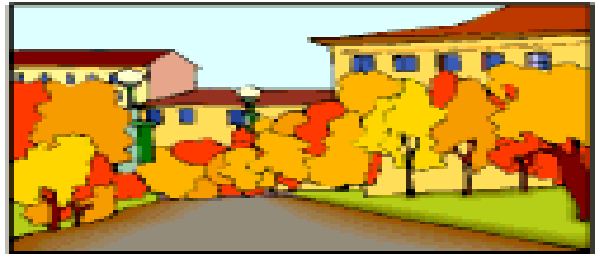
For the Fall 2000 semester, the course honors the traditional topic range in that the focus is on legal writing. A local attorney, Jim Brecher, is teaching the course in a computer lab.

However, for the Spring 2001 semester, Dr. Joseph Moxley has been plotting and planning. In his plan Dr. Moxley would assume the traditional position of the instructor who handles the academic portion of the course; however, Dr. Moxley is hoping to have STC mentors coaching students outside (and perhaps inside) the classroom setting. According to Dr. Moxley, "The idea behind the new class is to work with the STC and its mentoring program in a creative new way."

On the practical side, Dr. Moxley is planning to have students create a professional portfolio, launched on the Internet. To accomplish this task, the course work tentatively includes introducing students to advanced graphics, multimedia, perhaps hypertext, and other elements of advanced professional and technical writing. These plans are of course subject to change, since Dr. Moxley is still tinkering with the mix and polling technical writing majors to find out what topics they would like to cover.

And why you may ask is all of this happening now? The activity is due to the non-stop agitating of Mary K. Greer (Spring 2000 President of the Student STC) and Karen A. Alfano (Current President of the Student STC). Mary started a petition to have the course revived, and Karen has been shepherding the effort along and encouraging students to voice an opinion and register for the class.

If you've reached a point in your career where you'd like to give a little back, this course is opportunity knocking. Don't let it pass you by—volunteer to mentor.



New XML Mailing List

XML-DOC is a new online mailing list for documentation professionals and anyone else interested in discussing the application of XML tools and techniques to the creation of documentation. Topics that are highly encouraged on the list:

- * XML-based content/document management systems
- * Single-sourcing with XML
- * DocBook, the SGML/XML DTD for documentation
- * Transitioning to XML authoring from a Frame-Maker environment
- * Converting legacy documents to XML
- * Publishing (transforming and delivering XML content)
- * XML training and certification
- * Document analysis and data modeling
- * Profiling and customizing for multiple audiences and delivery formats

To subscribe to the list, send a blank e-mail message to:

xml-doc-subscribe@egroups.com

You can also subscribe at the XML-DOC web site:

<http://www.egroups.com/subscribe/xml-doc>

From Michael Smith, the list moderator: "My hope for XML-DOC is that it will not only help to raise the level of awareness about XML in the documentation community, but also give us, as technical communicators, a clear point of contact with the XML developers and product vendors who are now creating and refining the XML authoring tools, content management software, and XML publishing solutions that many of us will eventually end up using."



Book Review: The User Manual Manual

Michael Bremer. 1999. Concord, CA: UnTechnical Press. [ISBN: 0-9669949-1-4. 314 pages including index. \$29.95.]

By Debra Mixon, Suncoast Chapter

Sometimes I've read books for professional development that I have to admit are a little on the, shall we say, stuffy side. I discovered something a little different about Michael Bremer's book, *The User Manual Manual*. I made it through the entire book (honestly!) and enjoyed the experience. I found the conversational tone engaging and refreshing. I also found myself an avid witness to the evolution of Bremer's sample project, however simplified it is from real-world experience.

You don't have to read the entire work to benefit from the author's experience. Bremer breaks the book into two main parts for reading, plus appendices. I did read the first part all the way through. "Part One, The Software User Manual," covers general information about writing this type of manual. The author includes useful sections such as "Software Development Lifecycles" that give enough of a basic overview of the topic to get you started. "Part Two, The Sample Project," is presented in stages that correspond to Bremer's presentation of the manual writing process. When appropriate, he presents the actual manual in its corresponding stage (for example, first draft). I read the text for each stage and then skimmed the content of the sample manual, reading only the parts where I wanted to gain a little insight. For example, I've written a few user manuals but never produced a tutorial as a section in the manual. I made sure to focus on the text and the portions of the user manual covering this area.

The User Manual Manual does have a few problems. The author has a background in writing user manuals for games, and the book's content often reflects this. Because of his background, sections such as "Writing for Console Machines" are addressed equally with sections that deserve more weight. The author's background also causes him to slant the material toward writing user guides intended for mass, commercial audiences. He doesn't address writing user guides for narrow audiences on applications that are more technical. Because of his experience, the author also leans heavily on a graphic artist doing layout for the manual, which also fails to fit the experience of many writers in technical communications.

We are only the sum of our experiences, however, and Bremer generally puts his experience to good use to effectively portray, in a basic, straight-forward manner, the stages of creating a manual. And Bremer does focus on the "process" part of the evolution, not on writing. This process part is the real value of *The User's Manual Manual*. In his book, Bremer creates a valuable big picture reference for those new to writing software user guides. This book could actually work very well as a textbook for students who have never witnessed the full cycle in real life.

Experienced writers who have several user guides under their belts might find this book a little annoying in its attention to the most basic details and its description of the cycles in a straight-forward, perfect-world, linear manner. But Bremer's work does succeed as a foundation, a framework from which to start when you're new, confused, or out of ideas.

STC to Launch Financial Industry SIG

Would you like to become a member of a special interest group (SIG) devoted to the issues unique to technical writers and instructional designers connected to the financial industry? STC is currently in the process of forming such a SIG, and is seeking members to get it started.

Technical communicators should consider joining the SIG if they work for the following types of organizations:

- * Accountancy Firm
- * Business or Economic Analysis Company
- * Commercial Bank
- * Credit Union
- * Investment Firm
- * Loan Broker
- * Loan Servicer
- * Mortgage Broker/Banker
- * Private Mortgage Lender
- * Real Estate-related Company
- * REIT
- * Stock Brokerage Firm
- * Thrift

(SIG, continued on page 10)

Multi-Personality Documentation: A Generic Prescription



By Bill Graham, Suncoast Chapter Treasurer

During my college days, I often found myself with little cash on hand after paying for my room and board and everything else. What little I had left over had to suffice for a meager supply of groceries. I often saved money by visiting the Jewel-T Grocery Store and buying their generic products. For example, I bought a shampoo labeled **GENERIC SHAMPOO**, and soda labeled **GENERIC SODA**. Years later, a co-worker once sent me a post card from Texas. Permit me to quote the post card in its entirety: "**TEXAS GENERIC POST CARD**." The only graphic that interrupts the white background of the postcard is a barcode. What amazes me is that our society even makes a distinction between generic and designer drugs. By the way, I still have the post card.

Can you imagine picking up a white binder with the words **GENERIC DOCUMENTATION** on the cover? Would you want to read or even write such a document? I don't think I'd even want to open the cover. Yet, the generification of our documentation could help us overcome some of the difficulties of producing multiple variants for OEM distributors. Is generification really a word? In my workplace, generification has become an integral part of our vocabulary. In this article, I would like to introduce the concept of generification and some ways to accomplish it.

Generification is the stripping of any element from a document, which points to the OEM (original equipment manufacturer). The concept of generification may sound simple enough, but it requires the technical writer to replace unique model names with generic descriptions for a host of products. For example, when you plan a document for a device called the 2-ATE, you may want to call it the Automatic Termite Exterminator instead of its model name. If several companies distribute the 2-ATE, the model name may take on several variants.

Imagine that two distributors besides your company want to sell the 2-ATE. One distributor is a company called UP (Unlimited Products). Your marketing group agreed to end every model name UP distributes with their initials. Consequently, the 2-ATE becomes the 2-ATE-UP for Unlimited Products. Another company, called Bug Zappers also wants to distribute the 2-ATE, but they want marketing to add BZ to every model name. Now we are talking about the BZ2-ATE.

If you are writing a core document for the 2-ATE, you may want to consider naming the "2-ATE Automatic Termite Exterminator" one time at the beginning of a section or document. From then on, you may call the device the ATE (Automatic Termite Exterminator) or you may refer to it simply as the Termite Exterminator. The key is that your user has to know what you are talking about.

I want to warn you, however, that this kind of generification has its pitfalls. One danger is that your company might have another product called the 1-ATE, and yet another one called the ATE. I have actually seen instances like this, and the only this really shoots down the generification effort. At this point, you have to use 2-ATE because you might cause the user to think you are writing about the 1-ATE or the ATE.

Generic documentation also avoids company logos where possible. When you draw a product or include a picture of it, try to leave out the company logo. You may have to stand some ground on this one, because certain people will want the company logo everywhere. Yet, I assure you that most product drawings can sufficiently identify system components without the company logo. It's easy to leave the logo out of a new drawing. The hard thing is to find every instance of a logo in the old drawings. Sometimes, the logos are so small that you can't see them without zooming way in. Why include the logo in the first place if it's going to be that small?

I see that I am running out of room again. I will continue the discussion about generification in my next article. Next time I will talk about more ways to write generic documentation, but I am going to concentrate more on what I believe to be the shortcomings of this approach.

JOBS

Check out our website for the latest employment opportunities!

<http://www.stc.org/region3/sun/www/employment.htm>

August Chapter Meeting Recap

By Karlene Robinson, Suncoast Chapter

At the August meeting the Suncoast chapter showed a video and followed that up with an audioconference which represented a departure from the chapter's usual meeting format.

The use of video gave members the opportunity to watch Judy Glick-Smith, the First Vice-President for STC, present the paper she delivered at STC's 47th Annual Conference titled "The Technical Communicator's Role in the Implementation of Knowledge Management Systems". During her presentation, Ms Glick-Smith argued persuasively that technical writers are ideally suited to help implement Knowledge Management systems which she defined as systems for the gathering and dissemination of both explicit and tacit knowledge within an organization.

Members were given the opportunity to talk directly with Judy Glick-Smith via speakerphone after the video presentation. This thoughtful addition to the meeting format brought the presentation to life by giving members the chance to clarify points they had missed and ask questions of the presenter just as they would have been able to do had they attended the conference in person.

Those in attendance agreed that the use of video and audioconference was a workable format which had the potential to expose members to a number of high-level speakers they might not otherwise have the opportunity to see. However, it was agreed that this format would be enhanced by making copies of any slides used in the presentation available in hard-copy as these were sometimes difficult to make out on the video.

(SIG, continued from page 8)

- * Or any other company related to the financial industry.

If you're interested, and you're an active STC member, please e-mail your expressed interest (or questions) to Steven Marshall at steven_marshall@indymac.com. Please include your name and e-mail address.

The Society for Technical Communication is a professional organization for technical writers, editors, illustrators, managers, and educators. It is the largest professional organization in this field, with more than 23,000 members in 147 chapters worldwide. Information about STC and its programs can be found on the STC office website at:

<http://www.stc-va.org>.

Contact: Maurice Martin
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maurice@stc-va.org

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September Chapter Meeting Recap

By Lore Eargle, Suncoast Chapter Vice-President

Heidi Kelchner and Linda Sarbo presented the tentative plan for a new Technical Communication Certificate Program to be offered by USF Lifelong Learning Center. They outlined their program, which is described below, then asked for feedback from the audience.

Note: If you are interested in teaching one of the courses listed below or would like to serve on the advisory panel, contact Heidi Kelchner at kelcher@amdin.usf.edu or 813-074-8021.

Target Market

The Certificate in Technical Communications is designed to benefit:

- Individuals employed in technical fields who wish to enhance their writing skills or qualify as technical communication specialists.
- Professional writers employed in non-technical fields who wish to make the transition to technical communications.
- Individuals with technical training and good writing skills who wish to enter the technical communications field.
- Individuals with college degrees in writing-related majors (English or Journalism) and strong interest in a technical field who want to become technical communicators.



Scott Havens (FTCC Judges Coordinator), Heidi Kelchner (Presenter), Linda Sarbo (Presenter), Mark Hanigan (STC President), Eileen McPartland (Suncoast STC President)

Objectives

The objectives of the program are to improve or expand process, tools, application, and work management skills. Suggested tools and applications include Frame-Maker, RoboHelp, and Word. Each participant who completes the coursework will have a portfolio of at least three technical documents that satisfy specified criteria. An advisory committee will evaluate the portfolio and award a certificate if the portfolio is approved.

Credits and Courses

The certificate program is non-credit but participants

would earn CEUs. It is intended to complement the USF English Department's undergraduate minor in Technical Writing. The proposed classes would be a mixture of required and elective courses. The following were suggested as possibilities as required courses:

- Writing for Technical Fields (one session)
- Information Architecture (one session)
- Graphical Communication (one session)
- Technical Editing (two or more sessions)
- Writing Project Management (two or more sessions)
- Writing Technical Documentation (multiple sessions in computer lab)
- Writing Online Documentation (multiple sessions in computer lab)
- Introduction to Computer Programming and Networks (one session)
- Publishing (multiple sessions in computer lab)
- Advanced MS Word 2000 (one session in computer lab)

The following were suggested as electives:

- Effective Business Writing
- Writing for the Web
- HTML
- Publication Planning and Design
- Dreamweaver
- MS FrontPage
- MS Publisher

Length

The sessions would vary in length from a few hours to an entire day and will be offered

in the evening or on the week-end. The program could be completed in less than three months.

Prerequisites

- Demonstrated writing proficiency or satisfactory completion of Writing Effectively and Reviewing Basic Grammar. [Assessment tool(s) to be selected/developed.]
- Proficiency using MS Word or satisfactory completion of USF Lifelong Learning Center's "Intermediate MS Word."

(Meeting, continued on page 14)

Director-Sponsor Report

Why Did I Join STC?

By Rob Houser, Region 3 Director-Sponsor

I was just talking to one of the kids next door about what she wanted to be when she grows up. She said she couldn't decide between being an engineer, a doctor, or a salesperson at Baskin-Robbins (hey, she can learn about cost of living later). Thinking about how ill defined her ultimate career goals are at age nine, I realized that mine weren't much more defined when I was in college. I ended up as a technical writer and a member of STC almost by mistake.

I didn't go to college to study technical communication, but somehow I ended up in a technical writing class at the University of Tennessee (U.T.). I enjoyed the class, but still thought I was destined to teach literature. At the end of the term, Dr. Mike Keene suggested that I enter one of my reports from his class in a scholarship competition by some group called STC. I entered my report in the competition and was awarded the J. Paul Blakely Memorial Scholarship from the East Tennessee Chapter.

I went to one of the East Tennessee Chapter's monthly meetings to receive my award and this guy named Fred O'Hara greeted me like I was his long lost cousin. He introduced me to people around the room all of whom were friendly and eagerly talking about their work. Okay, one guy was talking about his home brewery, too. I met people like Ann Wilson Buttram, who encouraged me to get more involved in technical writing and STC. They invited me back to attend their chapter meetings like they really cared that I return.

I had an internship with the FBI that summer. The intern director saw that I was an English major, so he assigned me a project writing and indexing documents for some upcoming Senate hearings. I was still a literature major with only one technical writing class under my belt, so I struggled a little. Still, I enjoyed the experience so much that upon returning to U.T. I changed my focus from literature to writing and joined STC.

I took more classes about technical communication, and I continued to attend the STC meetings. I even attended a conference called PCOC and learned there was a lot more I still had to learn. I joined the Society

in 1988 because I felt that the profession was challenging and the members of STC were friendly and interesting. They invited me into their organization through the scholarship and the personal invitations to visit their chapter again. They won me over with their enthusiasm for their jobs (and I guess the money played a part, too). But it was their openness to consider a student as a colleague and their warm and friendly manner that made me dedicated to STC.

Every time I volunteer for some activity in STC, I meet someone new who makes me glad that I became a technical communicator. The meetings and periodicals are informative, but most of all I like getting to know the people because they are why STC was created in the first place. You make it happen, you make it valuable, and you make it FUN! Think about the influence you can have over others simply by inviting them to join STC, by supporting them when they need you with scholarships and networking, and by just being friendly when they show up to the monthly meeting.

I am excited to be your Director-Sponsor and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the next 3 years. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to go back outside and talk to that little girl about technical writing.

(Network, continued from page 4)

ASTD

The Suncoast Florida Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) is a non-profit professional association serving approximately 500 members in the Suncoast region of Florida. The ASTD Suncoast Florida Chapter is a local chapter affiliated with the National ASTD. The chapter's members are practitioners, managers, administrators, educators, students and researchers who work in the field of training and human resource development. Check out their website for more information on upcoming events!

http://www.astdtampa.org/home/virtual_community.htm



Letter to the Editor

KRS, Suncoast chapter member writes:

Congratulations on *WriteUp*'s new online format. I have been trying for more than a year to convince my company to take advantage of PDF documentation. Although I have initial agreement at the start of a project, I eventually find myself defending the approach of creating a basic getting started/setup guide in hard copy, and adding greater detail in online help and PDF formats. I guess people cannot get away from holding on to paper.

Did you encounter any problems when proposing the electronic delivery of *WriteUp*? Has this approach lead to more development time and less cost? Do you know if other writers have had similar problems?

Mary Lauby, former *WriteUp* editor responds:

KRS:

I didn't encounter any problems when proposing the electronic delivery to the STC Suncoast chapter administrative council. The administrative council approved the change on the condition that it would be for a trial period to last six months. At that point, we'd consider all the member feedback and re-evaluate our decision to go online.

Besides the cost of a printed newsletter (the online newsletter costs nothing to produce), we also had issues with the mailing list being out of date. For each issue I produced in my year as newsletter editor, an incredible number of newsletters were returned due to outdated addresses. This cost the chapter money, and many members never received their newsletters.

Another important factor in switching to an online newsletter was to make it easier on the future newsletter editors. In addition to the printing costs and postage (approximately \$300 per issue) the production was often frustrating and time-consuming. Getting rid of the printed newsletter eliminated those problems and made the job of editor a little easier.

In talking to Diana, I've discovered that the newsletter takes more development time now. However, it's not a direct result of the newsletter going online and is actually related to the STC Newsletter Competition. Diana creates the newsletter using Publisher, as I did, but the competition rules for online newsletters require many more sections than for the hard copy newsletters. When an issue is complete, she sends her PDF file to the chapter webmaster in an email instead of slaving away at Kinkos until all hours of the night. (I hope I don't sound bitter.)

Going online made sense with the way everything is oriented toward the Web. Having the newsletter on our chapter web site gives members the opportunity to read it online (and save paper) or print it and read at their leisure.

I'm sure other writers have had problems similar to yours, I know I have. From my experience, if your manager or employer insists on hard copy manuals, you don't have much of a choice. But I think companies are coming around. At one of my previous employers, they loved their hard copy manuals, but after about a year, they gave in and started releasing the manuals in PDF form on a CD-ROM.





The Funny Zone

Submitted by Mary Lauby, Suncoast Chapter

They Could Have Been Technical Writers...

by Lauren Murray, from *Connection*, the Silicon Valley newsletter

O that File menu and the Edit menu the Format menu sometimes like the shortcut buttons and the glorious Font menu and the Bold font in the Style menu yes and all the queer little drawing tools and the pink and blue and yellow fill colors and the clip art of rose gardens and jessamine and geraniums and cactuses yes when I drew the rose yes and first selected the Draw menu and drew down the paintbrush yes so I could draw yes and yes I said I will Yes.

—James Joyce

It was the best of operating systems, it was the worst of operating systems, it was easy to use, it was impossible to learn, it was beloved by all, it was hated by everyone, it was the future of computers, it was the industry's dark past, it could perform any task, it had no functionality, we had all found the answer, we were looking for something better—in short, the operating system was like the operating systems we are using today.

—Charles Dickens

Hearken! and observe how to change the sound settings on a Macintosh.

True! You must go to the Apple Menu and choose the Control Panels folder and open Sound control panel—oh, so gently!

You fancy me mad.

Select Muffled Ticking; you will hear a low, dull, quick sound—such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.

Use the mouse, to push the volume bar up—it will grow louder, louder, hark, louder!

Here, here! — it is the beating of the hideous heart!

Close! Close the blasted window!

—Edgar Allen Poe

It is truth universally acknowledged that a man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a software application to manage his funds.

However little known feelings or view of such a man may be on his first acquiring wealth, this truth is well fixed in the minds of companies that develop financial software. Gentle reader, it would be judicious for a man who has inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father and intends to purchase an estate, to buy Quicken to analyze his mortgage payments. With circumspection and good judgment, it would be possible for such a man to use this program to quickly figure his payments, allowing ample time for mixing in society and attending balls.

—Jane Austen

To create a new project:

Go to the Finder.

Launch the Project Manager.

Double-click its icon.

The File Open dialog box opens—it's the damndest thing.

Pour yourself a whiskey and soda.

Get cock-eyed.

Click New Project.

If you feel like hell, crawl to your room.

It feels good to be warm and in bed.

—Ernest Hemingway

(*Meeting*, continued from page 11)

Speakers' Backgrounds

Heidi Kelchner is program coordinator for USF Lifelong Learning Center, where she develops and administrates courses in Web design, professional writing, and creative writing. Linda Sarbo is a business writing expert with 15 year's experience writing, managing, and editing professional writing projects. She currently works as a content development specialist for Web sites. She has taught a variety of professional writing courses at USF for more than eight years.

STC Global

Upcoming Conferences

(from <http://www.stc.org>)

Region 1

Northern New England and Boston Chapters

InterChange 2000 Conference October 17 & 18
in Boxborough, MA.

<http://www.interchangeconference.com>

Region 5

Region 5 2000 Conference "Navigating the New
Century," Oct. 13 through Oct. 14, 2000, at the
Sheraton Old Town Hotel, in Albuquerque, NM.

http://www.stc.org/PDF/region5_conf.pdf

Region 7 & Region 8

Pan Pacific Conference in Hawaii, sponsored by
Regions 7 and 8, October 18 to October 21 2000.
The venue is the Ilikai Hotel in Waikiki. Mark it on
your calendar now, and think about how you can
help make it a success!

<http://www.ilikaihotel.com>

Non-STC Events

The 2000 FrameUsers Conference, sponsored by the
FrameMaker User Network, November 1 to 3 2000, pre-
conference, 30 and 31 October 2000, San Diego Mission
Valley Hilton Hotel, San Diego, CA.

<http://www.frameusers.com/conference/callforpapers.html>

The **American Medical Writers Association**, 8 thru 11
November 2000, Inter-Continental Hotel, Miami, Florida.
Contact: amwa@amwa.org.

<http://www.amwa.org>



The STC Atlanta Chapter is proud to announce its annual conference, **Currents**, on March 16 and 17, 2001, at the Atlanta campus of Mercer University.

Our theme for Currents 2001, "The Odyssey Continues," embraces the ongoing evolution of our profession and implies the need to keep abreast of changes. A feature of Currents 2001 is the inclusion of the Region 3 Student Conference.

Currents begins with a full-day workshop on Friday, March 16. At the conference on Saturday, March 17, you can choose sessions from our topic stems focusing on learning new skills and tools, contracting, expanding your roles, satisfying users, education/professional development, and management.

Currents 2001 is the premier way for technical communicators to interact with colleagues, and learn the theories, technologies and tools of the profession.

For conference information, contact conference manager Cheri Pullar at pullarcc@cs.com, or access our website, <http://www.pobox.com/~stc-atlanta>.

Gene Larson
Manager, Public Relations
STC Atlanta Chapter

International Centre for Distance Learning (iCDL)
conferences list 1999-2000.

<http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/info/conferences.htm>

WinWriter's Online Help Conference

Conference registration opens November 1!

<http://www.winwriters.com/ohc.htm#prelim>

WriteUp
P.O. Box 46517
Tampa, Florida 33647



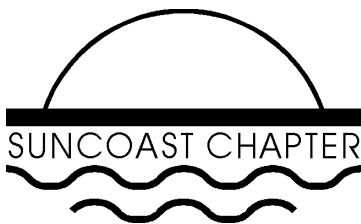
Mission Statement

Designing the future of technical communication.

WriteUp

<http://www.stc.org/region3/sun/www>

Address Correction Requested
First Class Mail



Calendar of Events

Subject to Change

**Copy Deadline for
Next Issue:
November 10**

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| October 5 | Suncoast Chapter Meeting
Membership Drive and FrameMaker Presentation
(Patrick Koster, Koster Associates)
Feather Sound Country Club
6:30 PM |
| November 9 | Suncoast Chapter Meeting
Joint Meeting with Webgrlls
(Karen Bachmann, Usability and Online Communication)
Tampa Public Library
6:30 PM |