

TECH comments

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

January 1997

Volume 26, Issue 8

President's Message:

You better wake up and smell the coffee, folks. The information age is in overdrive and companies are scrambling to the net. Developers/designers/writers of *net stuff* are coming out of the woodwork, from all walks of life, as new software tools like Netscape Gold allow novices to become *net experts*. The result may be quantity, but certainly not quality. Just take a close look at the information on the World Wide Web. Much of it is ill-conceived, laid out without rhyme nor reason, and certainly poorly written.

My point is this, we technical communicators are probably the best-equipped professionals to design and develop applications for the Web. All too often we are not consulted and we are not involved in the process. I think STC has two obligations in this regard. One I've mentioned in previous messages is that our STC/SM chapter has an obligation to its membership to inform, instruct, and convey information about the emerging technologies. We, as professionals, need to have a complete skill set to deal with design and development of materials for the Web and other forms of electronic documentation.

The second obligation, in my opinion, is for STC as an international organization to get

Wake-Up Call

by Jim Anastasiow, President STC/SM

the word out about the expertise of its membership in areas like SGML, hypertext, Web page design, electronic documents, online database publishing, and so on. Just how do we do this is strategic to the future of our profession. In earlier years (I'm dating myself now) technical writers found a niche because companies found that in many cases, the engineers didn't have sufficient training to adequately document a product or process. Slowly, we found a place in the cycle of product/process development and marketing.

Now, everyone, from cooks to former MIS managers, is developing materials for the Web. You've seen the results. Let's work together to put our best foot forward. Don't be shy about sharing our accomplishments and drawing comparisons between *good stuff* and *bad stuff*. Network with other professionals and let them know the kind of effort it takes to be a professional communicator. When you see a particularly bad piece give that company or author your feedback constructively.

Otherwise, our language will evolve into a language of *netspeak*, replete with verbs that never existed, phrases instead of sentences, and a society of politically

correct but grammatically ignorant people with no concept of what good communication really is all about.

Our programs through the end of the year will reinforce our obligation to you, our membership. Our calendar includes:

- > Legal aspects of Web publishing in January.
- > Use of Adobe Acrobat and FrameMaker in February.
- > Career flexibility in March.

Your participation is encouraged, your support is appreciated. Your decisions in this regard will impact your future in the profession and the collective future of our profession.

PS: Stay tuned for a spring workshop, sponsored by the West Michigan Shores chapter, featuring our friends from Adobe Systems taking a deeper dive into SGML, database publishing, and the use of FrameMaker and Acrobat products. More on this later. □

In this issue . . .

President's Message	1
Can You Spare 10 Minutes.....	1
Director/Sponsor Message	2
More Than Just a Yahoo.....	3
Current Job Postings	4
Management Skills Needed.....	4
Welcome, New Members.....	5
Meet the Speaker.....	5
Enhance Your Career.....	5
Calendar of Events.....	6
Request for Articles	6

Can You Spare 10 Minutes?

The Membership Committee needs volunteers to place membership materials at the chapter program meetings. All you need to do is take the materials to a program meeting, place them on a table, and pick up any remaining materials at the end of the program. We are seeking members in both the Ann Arbor and Livonia areas (the two most frequent meeting sites) to help with this task. Ideally, we would like to have one member in each area assume responsibility for either placing the materials at the programs or arranging for someone to place the materials at particular meetings. Even if you can commit to only one program, we would like your help.

We also need persons who can carry the STC display board to program meetings. This can be the same person who handles the membership materials, but it doesn't have to be. If you can spare a few minutes to help, please call Eileen Wilkinson, membership manager, at 313.663.9494 (w) or 313.668.0403 (h). □

**STC/SM 1996-1997
Board of Directors**

Executive Council

President

Jim Anastasiow
810.443.1540
m2morgan@mail.oeonline.com

Vice President

Martha Swidersky
313.995.7994
marthas@ncms.org

Treasurer

Karen Gilbert
313.995.6187
gilbert@ann-arbor.applicon.com

Secretary

(position open)

Committee Managers

Directory

Jim Anastasiow (interim)
(see President above)

Employment Referral Service

Frances Mueller Roach
313.764.5211
fmroach@umich.edu

Membership

Eileen Wilkinson
313.663.9494
ewtw@aol.com

Newsletter

Jill Bornemeier
313.332.5571
jbornemeier@nei.com

Nominations

Ruth Blough
810.305.9362
73472.627@compuserve.com

Program Director

Martha Swidersky
(see Vice President above)

Publicity

Shirley Willard
810.737.7300 X-8039
shirley_willard@compuserve.com

Professional Liaison

Ginny Collins
810.546.0754
74452.255@compuserve.com

Web Master

Catherine M. Juon
313.944.0358
cjuon@pobox.com

STC/SM Information

313.332.9371

STC/SM World Wide Web Page

<http://stc.org/region4/smc>

Director-Sponsor Message:

**Chapter Achievement Awards:
They Benefit Everyone**

*by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor
313.663.8118, 313.663.8778 (fax), CreeksCom@aol.com*

What is a Chapter Achievement Award?

The award is, literally, a beautiful plaque with a chapter's name, a citation, a date, and the words "Chapter Achievement" on it. It is presented each year to chapters in four size categories for regular chapters and to one student chapter (the categories will probably change to five for regular chapters and two for student chapters this year).

The award represents a lot of hard work done for STC by individual volunteers in the chapter, by project teams in the chapter, by committee managers in the chapter, by the Administrative Council or Board of Directors in the chapter, by the complete chapter "team." It recognizes outstanding service to your chapter's members and your chapter's business community.

How Does a Chapter Receive One?

There's an application process. STC is currently revising its award application "checklist." It will be mailed to all chapter presidents and student chapter advisors as soon as possible (probably during January or February, 1997).

A chapter's president (or another assigned individual in the chapter) completes the form and submits it to the region's director-sponsor by April 1. The director-sponsor reviews the application and recommends the chapter to STC's Board of Directors—if the contents of the application indicate that the chapter is a viable award candidate. The board votes on the candidates during a closed session of the spring board meeting. Award winners are kept secret until the awards are presented at a special ceremony during the Annual Conference.

What Does it Do for Me?

If you're one of the chapter's leaders, it gives you lots of prestige to be among a very select group of STC's 144 chapters to receive one. It's something you can mention on your résumé as an achievement to which you contributed.

If you're the chapter president, you're probably the person who will hold the

award plaque on behalf of the chapter (unless you have an STC chapter office in which to display the plaque).

If you're an occasional volunteer in the chapter or a member who attends an occasional chapter meeting or reads the chapter's newsletter or wins an award in a chapter publication, online, or art competition, you've *already* received the benefits of the award—just by the fact that the chapter did so many things on your behalf in order to win it!

If you apply and you don't win the award, it is an honor to be recommended for it by your director-sponsor and to be considered for it by STC's Board of Directors.

What Do I Do Now?

When you receive the application, look at the kinds of activities that are measured by the award criteria. Go through the checklist and mark which activities your chapter currently does. Ask your director-sponsor if your chapter might qualify, based on the preliminary assessment you've made.

If you apply and you don't win the award, it is an honor to be recommended for it by your director-sponsor and to be considered for it by STC's Board of Directors. And, even if you don't apply for the award, just going through the application process will give you lots of ideas for activities that your chapter could start sponsoring. □

More Than Just a Yahoo

by Will Kelly, a free-lance technical writer

The World Wide Web can be a wonderful research tool for the free-lance writer. You can find information on job contracts, prospective clients, and up-to-date facts to add to your latest project. The hard part can be running the information down. You may come across some URLs (Web page addresses) from magazines, business cards, and word of mouth, but it takes a search engine to dig for the good information.

You may have tried Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), Lycos (www.lycos.com), and Web Crawler (www.webcrawler.com). These online databases of Web and Internet resources are indexed for database queries. These sites aren't the only sheriffs in town. Search engines are a hot market just like everything else related to the Internet.

Some of the newest additions to search engines are Hot Bot, Search.com, and Savvy Search. Hot Bot is an entirely new database of Web sites for searching. Search.com and Savvy Search are more like interfaces allowing you to search through multiple search engines from a single interface. Using Savvy Search and Search.com saves you from having to switch from search engine to search engine during a search. Each offers a new method of searching. Each is worth a spot on the bookmark list.

But always remember, the World Wide Web is a big place. You can find a Web site through a search engine only if the site developers have registered the page in one or more of the search engines. For sites developed by major institutions like government, large corporations, and most sites developed by Web development houses, registering on search engines is standard operating procedure.

Hot Bot (www.hotbot.com)

Hot Bot bills itself as the largest database of Internet resources. Hot Bot is from the same company as Hot Wired (www.hotwired.com), an online magazine of Internet and pop culture. Like most online databases, Hot Bot is growing incrementally every week.

Search.com (www.search.com)

Want to harness the searching power of multiple search engines? Search.com is the tool for you. The interface allows searching through multiple search engines and returning all of the results to you in one listing.

The minds behind the C|NET Online (www.cnet.com) and Shareware.com (www.shareware.com) have erected this site to draw on the power of search engines like Yahoo, Lycos, and Web Crawler.

For example, let's say you are searching for information about the Republican National Convention. Entering the "Republican National Convention" as the query will bring back results from the search engine you specified in the same search. Besides searching for Web pages through Search.com, you can also search for the latest freeware and shareware on its sister site, Shareware.com. This site is one of the largest indexes of shareware available on the Web.

Savvy Search

(www.colostate.edu/~dreiling/smartform.html)

Savvy Search is along the same lines as Search.com, but it allows the simultaneous searching of multiple search engines like Yahoo, Lycos, Web Crawler, and Alta Vista. You can specify the depth of the results in either brief, normal, or verbose.

Verifying the Information

Anybody with an Internet connection can publish on the World Wide Web. This means that some of the information you dig up could be slanted, biased, and just plain incorrect.

How can you check the validity of the information? One option is to look for multiple resources that corroborate the information. If this

Question the Web page authors about their resources and their technical background. Most Web page authors will be more than happy to help you.

option does not work, take advantage of mailto: links. These are links included on most home pages that you click to execute an email form. This kind of link allows direct communication with the Web page author. Try

communicating with the Web page authors. Question the Web page authors about their resources and their technical background. Most Web page authors will be more than happy to help you.

For example, I was researching the post-polio syndrome because my father is suffering from it. I found a post-polio resource on the Web, and ended up sending the page author email to find out about groups local to my father's area that offer support to post-polio survivors.

Future of Searching the Web

With the influx of Web sites being built, the Web is due to grow into an even larger information resource. This demand is being followed by the growing number of Web search engines. The engines mentioned in this article are some of the newest on the Web, and offer the intrepid Web searcher even more options to track down needed information. □

Will Kelly's homepage is at <http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/willkell>.

Current Job Postings

The following job-posting information is provided as a service to chapter members who are seeking employment. As this is one of the benefits of our chapter membership, please do not share this information with non-members. Thank you for your cooperation.

Permanent Positions

Technical writer. Applied Intelligent Systems, Inc., is a leading supplier of machine vision solutions for the semiconductor and electronics manufacturing industry. AISI's vision hardware and software products are sold throughout the world and are recognized for their performance and vision capabilities. We are continuing to build a world class team of professionals and currently seek a technical writer. The successful candidate will be responsible for creating and updating documentation for our computer hardware and software. This includes printed and electronic documentation, as well as training materials.

Qualifications include a bachelor's degree in English, technical writing, or journalism or equivalent in addition to one to two years experience writing technical materials, preferably hardware and/or software documentation. Some familiarity with the Windows operating system, Microsoft Word for Windows, and FrameMaker preferred. Experience with editing graphics and creating Windows help systems a plus.

In addition to an exciting and challenging environment, we offer a competitive compensation and benefits package. Please email your résumé including salary history to Careers@aisinc.com, or write us at:

Applied Intelligent Systems, Inc.
Attn: Human Resources
110 Parkland Plaza
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103

Contract Positions

Technical writer needed to write and develop QS9000 documentation for a Sterling Heights (14 Mile and Van Dyke) manufacturer. Must work on site.

Required skills: Technical writing and MS Office experience.

Desired skills: Previous experience developing quality certification documents, such as work instructions, flow charts, etc.

Length of contract: 4-5 months, beginning mid-January.

Approximate rate: \$18-21/hour.

Contact: Dianne Ellson
Volt Technical Services
810.358.3180
810.358.2368 (fax)
dbrandau@ix.netcom.com

Technical writer. Length of contract: 2½ months (January - March).

The Environmental Research Institute of Michigan (ERIM) in Ann Arbor needs an experienced technical writer to develop, update, edit, and index printed software manuals. Must have Frame-Maker experience. Work-site negotiable.

Contact: Joe Christy
christy@erim.org
313.994.1200 x3638
or
Mike Shoppmann
shoppmann@erim.org
313.994.1200 x3356
313.994.5455 (fax)

Note: If you know of employers seeking technical writers or editors for contract, free-lance, or permanent positions, please have them contact our ERS manager. This service is free to employers and benefits our fellow STC members who are seeking new job opportunities. □

January 15

Program Meeting

Copyright and Trademark Law
and Their
Application to the Internet

Carol Ruth Shepherd

Holiday Inn North Campus
3600 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Cash bar 6:30
Dinner 7:00
Presentation 8:00

Cost: \$19.00
Presentation only: \$5.00

Management Skills Needed

The Program Committee plays an essential role in meeting our members' needs. Choosing program topics, arranging for speakers, and securing meeting locations are the primary tasks of this group. We currently have four members on this committee to share the duties, but we need someone with strong management skills to coordinate their efforts. This duty normally requires only one to two hours per month, and usually can be handled by phone and fax. If you can lead or help lead this group to provide appealing, informative programs, please call either:

Martha Swidersky
Vice President
313.995.7994 (w)
313.996.0477 (h)

or

Ruth Blough
Nominations Committee Manager
810.305.9362

□

Welcome, New Members!

We welcome the following new members who have joined our chapter:

Karyn B. Berger
Clare D. Cross
Carol A. Lundy
Jennifer L. Sheehan
Ronald N. Watkins

We also welcome the following member who has transferred into our chapter:

Charlotte J. Hosking

Meet the Speaker

The topic for January's Program Meeting is Copyright and Trademark Law and Their Application to the Internet.

The role of the Internet in today's business environment is becoming more and more prevalent. Along with the Internet's benefits comes many new issues that must be considered. For example,

- > How do copyright and trademark law apply in the international realm and new medium of the Internet?
- > Do I need permission to link a client's web site to another site on the Web?
- > How should consulting agreements be revised to handle the additional legal concerns created by adding HTML authoring, Java scripting, and digital artwork to documentation and other traditional forms of communications?

The featured speaker, Carol Ruth Shepherd, will address these issues during her presentation at the STC/SM January program meeting. Ms. Shepherd is a local attorney with a practice specializing in business, technology, entertainment, and new media law. She is a frequent speaker and writer on contracting, copyright, trademark, licensing, and Internet legal issues. She jointly hosts the ArborLaw Web site, an information resource on business and technology legal issues. <<http://www.arborlaw.com/~arborlaw/>>

Enhance Your Career: Participate, Nominate

Are you looking for ways to expand your professional network? Learn new skills to add to your résumé? Make new friends? Then consider serving your STC chapter by running for office or volunteering to chair a committee.

Those who become involved in the chapter are rewarded with numerous friendships and professional contacts. The people you get to know may just help you find that next job, land a new client, or serve as knowledge resources. The leadership and management skills you gain may give you the edge for a future promotion. All who serve have the satisfaction of knowing their small efforts have contributed to helping fellow members meet professional goals.

The chapter's Nominations Committee is developing a slate of officers to lead the next chapter year. The duties of the elected positions are summarized below:

President

- > Lead the chapter board of directors in establishing/meeting identified chapter goals.
- > Preside at monthly chapter board and program meetings.
- > Appoint chapter committee managers and oversee their activities.
- > Help committee managers plan, organize, and conduct chapter activities.

Vice President

- > Serve in place of the chapter president when required.
- > Attend monthly chapter board and program meetings.
- > Plan and conduct the chapter planning workshop.
- > Perform other tasks requested by the chapter president.

Treasurer

- > Prepare and track the chapter operating budget.
- > Control and disburse chapter funds.

- > Attend monthly chapter board and program meetings.
- > Report monthly to the chapter board of directors on the chapter's financial status.

Secretary

- > Record/distribute chapter board meeting minutes.
- > Attend monthly chapter board and program meetings.
- > Maintain a record of chapter activities.
- > Maintain an inventory of chapter property.

Nominations Committee Member

- > Attend scheduled nominations committee meetings.
- > Recruit members to run for chapter offices and prepare a slate of candidates.
- > Conduct chapter elections and report election results.
- > Recommend nominations for associate fellow.

If you have any questions about these positions, or if you would like to run for office or nominate another member, contact Ruth Blough, nominations committee manager, at 810.305.9362. If you cannot run for an office, consider volunteering your talents on one of the various committees. Small commitments make big differences! □

Calendar of Events

January 15 (Wednesday)
STC/SM Program Meeting
 Ann Arbor Holiday Inn
 Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.
 Contact: Martha Swidersky
 313.995.4004
 marthas@ncms.org

February 3 (Monday)
STC/SM Board of Directors Meeting
 Kerby's Coney Island
 Haggerty just north of Eight Mile Road
 6:30 p.m.

February 11 (Tuesday)
Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon
 Bennigan's, S. State (Briarwood)
 Begin between 11:30 and 12 noon.
 Contact: Kathy Carter
 313.668-4529(w), 313.475.5865

February 12 (Wednesday)
Program Meeting
 Holiday Inn - Livonia West
 I-275 and 6 Mile Road
 Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.
 Contact: Martha Swidersky
 313.995.4004

A Request for Articles

Do you have valuable information to share with other technical communicators? Write it down in article format! The STC/SM *TECH Comments* staff welcomes article submissions. Any topic relevant to our field would be appreciated. Send your articles to Jill Bornemeier, *TECH Comments* Managing Editor, jbornemeier@nei.com.

TECH comments is printed by Print Tech, Inc. of Madison Heights, MI - 810.585.6600

Unclassifieds

WANTED: ERS Postings

Is your company trying to fill a technical communication position? If so, why not post the position with our Employment Referral Service? The service is free of charge and benefits chapter members who are seeking employment. For information, contact our ERS manager, Frances Mueller Roach.

313.764.5211
 fmroach@umich.edu.

WANTED: Tantalizing Topics

Is there an area of technical communications that you'd like to learn more about? If so, contact Catherine Titta. She's gathering topic ideas for future Program Meetings and would appreciate your input.

313.996.9006

TECH comments

STC/SM
 P.O. Box 1289
 Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Address Correction Requested

