

TECH comments

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

February 1997

Volume 26, Issue 9

President's Message

by Jim Anastasiow, President STC/SM

I invite you to raise your participation in STC to a higher level. Involvement with chapter activities is fun, challenging, and gives you an opportunity to apply your professional skills, like project management, delegation, and budgeting. It requires commitment and follow-through. If you have an inclination to help, now is the time to let us know. We need to know the level of support we can count on to plan for next year. No kidding, we can use the help.

On a personal note, I firmly believe in volunteering one's professional skills and that doing so makes a difference, not only to individuals but to society as a whole. Volunteering can improve the quality of life for many; it can help people cope and help young people obtain the education they deserve. In my past, I have worked with other organizations to accomplish these types of goals. When my term is up this year, I will *ramp up* my involvement with an inner-city church and with a young persons' training camp. I want to stay active. I want to help people.

Last month I mentioned how technical communicators were the best-equipped professionals to design and develop Web pages. We are also well prepared to teach reading and writing to illiterate young people and adults. My point is this—we have a civic responsibility to help, and the task is finding a way to channel our talents. I'd like to see STC involved in more civic-minded activities. For example, we could teach computer skills to young people or perhaps help a local church establish a Web page. I welcome your ideas on this topic. It's a growing trend;

chapters around the country are serving their communities in various ways.

So please consider volunteering, whether it's with STC or another worthwhile organization. You may be surprised with the results, what you learn and the benefits to you and to others. We all have talents and gifts to share. It can be work finding out just where our individual expertise lies; but once identified, volunteering for the right types of jobs can be quite interesting and personally rewarding. □

STC Election Approaches

The STC national election is conducted in two phases. Those who pay their dues by mid-February are mailed ballots around February 20. Those who pay their dues by February 28 are mailed ballots around March 10. This allows the office to process all renewals received by February 28.

Only those who have paid their dues by February 28 are eligible to vote. The election closes March 31, so renew early to vote early.

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Twin Cities Workshop

STC Twin Cities chapter is sponsoring *Multimedia Play*, a one-day workshop in presenting media online. Saul Carliner, an executive vice-president of Fredrickson Communications, widely published author on technical communication, and past international president of STC, facilitates the workshop.

The workshop will be held Friday, February 21, 1997, at the Student Center on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus.

Registration fees are:

- > \$100 for members
- > \$125 for non-members
- > \$50 for students

A workshop description and registration form was mailed to members in our chapter in January. For more information, contact Sheila Machacek at 612.339.7970. □

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Director-Sponsor Message:**Supporting Future Technical Communicators**

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

A portion of each STC member's annual dues supports the future of the technical communication profession. It supports the profession through any services that STC sponsors, including: important research in the field, technical publications, conferences and seminars, professional development programs, support of professional interest committees, and international competitions.

In addition, STC supports the future of individual technical communicators through its scholarship programs, support of STC student chapters, the Sigma Tau Chi student honorary fraternity, and some of its competitions.

But, do you know what? There are ways that you can support the future of technical communication that go beyond what your STC membership dues accomplish through STC.

An Anonymous Donor

There is a person in our midst (and I hope he or she is reading this article right now) who supports the future of technical communication in a very direct, personal way. That person makes an anonymous contribution each month to pay for two STC student chapter members to attend the STC meeting at a nearby regular (non-student) chapter!

Evidently, the donor realizes the importance of interaction between technical communication students and local professionals who are out there practicing in the field.

The donor wants to make sure that technical communication students at the university are exposed to experienced professionals out there in the *real* business world: finding out what experienced communicators do in their jobs, which tools they use, how much money they make, and where intern/contract/full-time positions are currently available.

Each month, the advisor of the STC student chapter chooses two students through a random drawing who will reap

the benefits of this donor's generous contribution to the future of our profession.

Personal Self-Satisfaction Comes in Many Forms

So, what can *you* do? You can do something similar in your community! There are universities that offer programs from a handful of technical communication courses to complete bachelor's, master's, and doctorate programs in technical communication. Or, perhaps you could sponsor one or more local high school students who are interested in technical communication or

don't even know what it is yet. It's highly likely that these sponsored students will become members of STC in the future (or even future leaders of our society), once they are introduced to STC and realize the opportunities that STC has to offer them.

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So, think about making a direct, personal contribution to the future of our profession. Find a way to support a future technical communicator or a technical communication educational program in *your* area. □

AMWA Conference



Did you miss the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) core courses you wanted to attend at the AMWA Annual Conference in Chicago? Here's another chance!

1997 Spring Regional Conference
Friday April 11, 1997
Ulrich Conference Center
Domino's Pizza World Headquarters

The Michigan chapter of AMWA will present four core courses (CC) and two alternative programs (AP) during its 1997 Spring Regional Conference.

The morning curriculum will include: *Sentence Structure and Patterns*^{CC} by Florence Witte; *Launching a Freelance Career*^{CC} by Marilyn Citron; and *Coping with Corporate Change*^{AP} by Kathryn Miller.

The luncheon will offer welcoming remarks by Michigan chapter president, Thomas J. Purcell of Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Research, Division of Warner-Lambert.

The afternoon curriculum will include: *Punctuation for Clarity and Style*^{CC} by Florence Witte; *Project Management*^{CC} by Maira Rieger; and *Internet Applications for Medical Writers*^{AP} by Keith Stanger.

Ann Arbor, the site of the Spring Regional Conference, is a mere 20 minutes drive from Detroit Metro airport and offers a broad selection of entertainment possibilities. Ann Arbor information can be found on the Ann Arbor Convention and Visitor's Bureau Web site at www.annarbor.org.

The courses offered at the conference are popular and will fill quickly, so plan to register early!

Brochures providing information about courses, presenters, accommodations, and directions to the Ulrich Conference Center are available from Dennie Grabow, conference coordinator.

Phone: 313.996.7558

Fax: 313.998.5412

Email: grabowd@aa.wl.com □

Lending a Helping Hand: EMU Students Offer Skills to Solve Corporate Communication Problems

by Kristen L. Collins

Homework isn't meant just for home anymore. At least, that's what students involved in Eastern Michigan University's (EMU) Communication Outreach Program are finding out.

The program, developed by Professor Ann Blakeslee, is an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in technical and professional writing courses to bring their classwork into the *real* world. Students are paired with local businesses and non-profit organizations to help solve communication problems and provide quality outcomes and solutions. Students majoring in public relations are also given the chance to lend their expertise.

"This program is an excellent way for students to gain meaningful experience that will help them become effective communicators," said Blakeslee. She added, "The benefits to the client, however, are just as important if not more so."

By becoming involved in the Communication Outreach Program, clients can ask students to solve communication problems requiring objective input. Students can act as consultants and can assist with various activities and/or projects. For example, when Washtenaw Literacy, Michigan's second largest literacy program for adults, lost its \$35,000 federal grant due to budget cuts in the fall of 1996, it needed help to diversify its funding resources. Marketing and Development Manager Barbara Steve-Nowak sought help from students in Blakeslee's technical writing classes. Students offered their time and effort to help write letters of inquiry to various foundations in order to obtain grant-awarding guidelines and annual reports.

"Perhaps the best part of the program is that it offers a way for clients to acquire help on projects that their organizations do not currently have time to undertake," said Blakeslee. "Often, businesses and organizations are in need of someone who can devote their time to a certain project, and this is a way for them to do so."

The Communication Outreach Program also offers a chance for the client to work with the students in a classroom environment and share their knowledge and expertise with the students. Essentially, the client becomes the teacher and professional mentor to the students.

Blakeslee says that the program is very flexible. Projects can be undertaken in a variety of ways, depending on the amount of time the client wants or is able to spend with students. Students can work independently or in teams, at the client site or through technology found at the university. She also assures that clients will have the help of the course instructor so as to guarantee that the projects are worthwhile and appropriate for both the clients and students.

Besides Washtenaw Literacy, Blakeslee has also helped students work with several local businesses and organizations with great success. Last semester, for example, students in technical writing classes were able to help Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley by writing grant proposals to obtain funding and also help develop media plans for promoting upcoming events for the organization. Some students worked with Kelly/Tinker Architects to develop brochures and seminar materials for a seminar addressing a computer-assisted design and drafting program for architects. These students also developed a Web site and prepared a portfolio displaying projects undertaken by the firm.

Anyone wanting to learn more about the program, its benefits, how to become involved, or how to obtain a student intern can contact Professor Ann Blakeslee at the Department of English at EMU. Please call 313.487.3174 to reach the office, 313.975.9174 to leave a message, or for faxing, 313.483.9744. Professor Blakeslee can also be reached by email at blakeslee@online.emich.edu. □

Kristen L. Collins is a senior at EMU, majoring in journalism with an English language and literature minor.

Current Job Postings

Permanent Positions

1/15/97

Numeric control machine manufacturer is seeking experienced technical writer for a full-time position. Qualifications include: FrameMaker and MS Word experience, and experience documenting numeric control machine software.

Contact:
Jim Monk
MDSI
2901 Hubbard Rd.
P.O. Box 130980
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0980
Phone: 313.769.8029
Fax: 313.769.1168
Email: jimmonk@mdsi2.com

1/16/97

Ann Arbor based CAD/CAM software company experiencing rapid growth has an immediate opening for an entry-level technical writer. Responsibilities include communicating with a development group about upcoming changes and creating/updating the appropriate product documents accordingly. Qualifications include: college degree in technical writing or related field, solid editing and layout skills. Experience with FrameMaker or similar word processing package and online documentation tools helpful.

Contact:
ImageWare
Attn: HR Manager
121 W. Washington
Suite 400
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Fax: 313.994.7307
Email: msnyder@iware.com

1/24/97

Baseview Products, the leader in Macintosh-based software for the publishing industry, is seeking a technical writer to write high-quality documentation. The qualified candidate

will be responsible for defining audience needs, testing their own material, copy-editing, updating and/or rewriting existing manuals. Qualifications include: minimum of 2 - 4 years technical writing experience, superior communication skills, flexible and creative problem-solving skills, and excellent interpersonal skills.

Salary commensurate with knowledge and experience. We offer an excellent benefits package and a great work environment.

Contact:
Patty Gillum
Baseview Products
333 Jackson Plaza
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Email: patty_gillum@baseview.com
Fax: 313.662.5204

Contract Positions

1/15/97

Numeric control machine manufacturer is seeking experienced technical writers for a 2 1/2 month contract. Qualifications include: FrameMaker and MS Word experience, and experience documenting numeric control machine software.

Contact:
Jim Monk
MDSI
2901 Hubbard Rd.
P.O. Box 130980
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0980
Phone: 313.769.8029
Fax: 313.769.1168
Email: jimmonk@mdsi2.com

1/24/97

Two contract technical writers needed to develop automotive service manuals for electrical and body/chassis systems. Positions are located in Lansing or Warren. Assignments are for 3+ months. Qualifications include: a minimum of 6 months technical writing experience, preferably automotive, and a working

knowledge of Excel 5.0. Pay rate is \$16-20/hour.

Contact:
Dianne Ellison
Volt Technical Services, Inc.
3000 Town Center
Suite 1440
Southfield, MI 48075
Phone: 810.358.3180
Fax: 810.358.2368
Email: dbrandau@ix.netcom.com

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. □

February 12
Program Meeting

A Communications Strategy That Enhances Productivity

Lori Kulie

Holiday Inn Livonia West
17123 N. Laurel Park Drive
Livonia, Michigan

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

Cost: \$19.00
Presentation only: \$5.00

Entree choices:
Sage-Stuffed Chicken Breast
Vegetable Lasagna

Meet the Speaker

Lori Kulie, the speaker for our February Program Meeting, is a corporate account manager for Adobe Acrobat and Frame products at Adobe Systems, Inc., based in Southfield, Michigan. Prior to joining Adobe Systems in 1995, Lori spent five years with Frame Technology and Interleaf as an applications engineer. Before working in the software industry, Lori was a technical writer for application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC) products at Texas Instruments.

Lori will be speaking on "A Communications Strategy That Enhances Productivity." She will focus on strategies that take advantage of tools many of you are already familiar with. The core of this strategy is Adobe Acrobat software, which provides a solution that:

- > Preserves your unique corporate identity and enables you to create and interact with information.
- > Is as efficient and prevalent as the phone or email.

Adobe Acrobat includes a complete tool set for converting electronic files or paper documents into the Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) and publishing them online. Whether you're using Microsoft Office products, CAD programs, or desktop publishing software, you can quickly deliver business documents to a colleague or to the entire company. PDF files can be sent around the world, on CD-ROM, or attached to an email, as well as on your intranet and external Web sites. With PDF files, you can publish documents once then distribute them universally.

Refer to the newsletter's February 12 Program Meeting notice on page 6 for program details. Come join us for what promises to be an enjoyable and enlightening evening. □

Atlanta Chapter Presents Currents '97

Currents '97, the Atlanta chapter's annual conference, will take place April 4-5 at the Gwinnet Civic and Cultural Center in Duluth, Georgia. The theme for the conference is "Taking You Online."

On Friday, April 4, JoAnn Hackos will present a one-day workshop, "Downsizing Your Online and Paper Documentation." On Saturday, April 5, attendees can choose from a variety of sessions focusing on designing and developing online communications.

Registration fees for Currents '97 are:

	Friday	Saturday	
STC member	\$175	\$99	\$240
Non-member	\$225	\$139	\$300
Full-time student	\$150	\$69	\$200

For more information, please contact Jeff Haas at 770.623.6803. □

Congratulations, Senior Members!

- To qualify as a senior member, you must be a member of STC for five years.
- Each of our senior members brings valuable experience to our chapter. We are proud to present our newest senior members:

Linda J. Ashley

Claude Brown, Jr.

Anne L. Jackson

James D. Barber

Rosemary E. Hampton

Did You Know . . .

The word *queueing* is the only English word with five consecutive vowels.

The name Jeep came from the abbreviation used in the army for the *General Purpose* vehicle, *G.P.*

The longest one-syllable words in the English language are *screeched* and *strengths*.

The longest word in the Oxford English Dictionary is *floccinaucinihilipilication* which means "the act of estimating as worthless."

The abbreviation for pound, *lb.*, comes from the astrological sign Libra, meaning balance, and symbolized by scales.

The word *byte* is a contraction of *by eight*.

The famous split-fingered Vulcan salute is actually intended to represent the first letter (*shin*, pronounced *sheen*) of the word *shalom*. As a small boy, Leonard Nimoy observed his rabbi using it in a benediction and never forgot it; eventually he was able to add it to Star Trek lore. □

Advertising Opportunity

This year, for the first time, the STC annual conference Preliminary Program will include advertising. The Final Program will also include advertising; this is the second year in which this is the case.

Those interested in reserving space in the Final Program should contact Allison Hall at the Society office at 703.522.4114 ext. 203 or allison@stc-va.org.

Calendar of Events

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 (H)

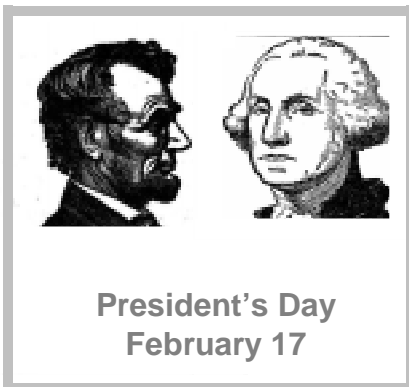
February 12 (Wednesday) Program Meeting

Holiday Inn - Livonia West
I-275 and 6 Mile Road
Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact: Martha Swidersky
313.995.79944
marthas@ncms.org

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

Submitting 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.



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

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Address Correction Requested

