

# TECH comments

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

September 1997

Volume 27, Issue 1

## President's Message: An Investment in Your Future

by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM



Welcome to the STC/SM! I'm Karen Gilbert, your new chapter president. For the next year, the STC/SM Board of Directors and I will be working very hard to provide the membership with seminars, programs, and newsletter articles to keep everyone informed on new technologies and concepts.

I would like to begin the year by formally thanking all members who have graciously volunteered their time and energy to serve in some capacity. Your commitment demonstrates your dedication and your motivation to grow within the technical communications field. Personally, I consider my volunteer involvement within the STC/SM an investment in my future. Based on the benefit that I've received from more than seven years of association participation, I can't imagine not belonging!

To gain the full benefits of membership, I believe members get out what they put in. I notice a few people who attend every program meeting. For example, summer or winter, Barb, a member I met while managing the Employment Referral Service (ERS), commutes from Port Huron to attend the monthly, program meetings. To me, this shows a level of commitment. Volunteering to write an article for the newsletter, or greet people as they sign in at a program meeting shows even more commitment. The highest level of commitment is demonstrated by volunteering to serve on a committee or to be an officer. Again, thanks to everyone who has demonstrated their commitment this year!

I encourage everyone to become involved with our organization. Attend a program

meeting, or join us September 10th at the Holiday Inn North Campus for our annual networking meeting (see inside for details). Becoming involved means you'll hear of advancements taking place in our profession sooner than others do. If you're looking for employment, you'll have a network of professionals that may know of open positions, and you'll have access to the ERS.

To further assist our members, the Board has agreed to develop a chapter mission statement of our direction and purpose.

This spring, the STC/SM hosted a Personal Development/Chapter Leadership Workshop presented by Lance Gelein, First Vice President of the STC, with Nancy Hoffman, our Region 4 Director-Sponsor. This workshop received excellent reviews and we are working with Lance to bring him back for a future presentation. Lance conducted many exercises, some involved self-evaluation, other exercises required us to evaluate our chapter and our involvement with the STC. We focused on some of the following questions:

- What is our chapter (STC/SM) about?
- What are our chapter goals?
- What is important to us?
- Why do we exist?
- What would we like our chapter to do in the future?

Through brainstorming, we derived a list of answers to these questions. These answers will help us develop a mission that gives a clear picture of what the STC/SM stands for and what we plan to do to serve our members more effectively. It empowers the Board to reach for higher goals because we'll know what to focus on, we'll believe in the outcome, and we'll work together to achieve it! Additionally, we'll develop chapter goals of the specific results we plan to achieve in the upcoming year. (Perhaps we can bring the annual competitions back to Southeastern Michigan.) If you have any goals you'd like to see the STC/SM accomplish in the upcoming year(s), please feel free to share them with any Board member! We value all input that we receive. Once we have developed our mission statement, we'll publish it in an upcoming newsletter so that our entire membership can see what the STC/SM is hoping to accomplish this year!

If you want to recommend ways STC/SM can better serve your professional needs or you would like to invest in your future by volunteering, please feel free to contact me or any of the Board members. You'll find our telephone numbers and email addresses posted in this newsletter.

I look forward to meeting and working with all of you! Let's make this a fun year!! □

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**Director-Sponsor Message:****Ready, Set, Go!**

by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor

phone: 313.663.8118, fax: 313.663.8778



While the chapters in our region are busy getting started for the year—holding planning meetings, planning program meetings, and starting other activities like competitions and seminars—the region's director-sponsor is busy getting the year started also! She's collecting contact information about all of the leaders in the region's 19 chapters, starting to update the region's database in order to produce the new *Region 4 Leadership Directory*, and gathering information from the chapters for the fall meeting of the Board of Directors.

The fall board meeting will be in Des Moines, Iowa on September 25-27. And, speaking of board meetings . . .

**Highlights: Spring '97 Board Meeting**

The STC Board of Directors took the following actions at its May 10, 1997 meeting, held at the Annual Conference in Toronto.

**Grants and Loans:**

- > Forgave the \$2,290 loan given to Mercer University student and the Space Tech chapters for seed money for the 1996 Region 3 Student Conference.
- > Forgave a \$2,000 loan, approved a \$2,000 recovery grant, and approved a \$2,000 loan for the Northeast Ohio chapter to help them recover from financial losses on the Region 4 conference, November 15-16, 1996.
- > Forgave a \$3,000 loan and approved a \$1,500 financial recovery grant for the Intermountain chapter toward expenses for the 1996 Region 7 Conference, held October 31-November 2, 1996 in Salt Lake City; approved a \$2,000 loan to seed funding of the 1997 Region 7 Conference.
- > Approved \$2,000 for non-salaried costs as a faculty internship grant to Professor Sandi Harner of Cedarville College to work at MYCOM Enterprises in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- > Approved a \$10,000 research grant for Margaret Martinez of Brigham Young University for a study of "A Theoretical Model Supporting Intentional Learning Strategies in a Web-Based Environment."
- > Approved a \$9,696 research grant for Gail W. Lippincott of the University of Minnesota for a study of "Ellen Swallow Richards: Rhetorical Strategies of a 19th-Century Technical Communicator."

> Approved a \$10,000 research grant for Kim Sydow Campbell of the Air Force Institute of Technology for conducting research on teaching "Methods for Qualitative Research in Technical Communication."

**Chapter and Regional Conferences:**

- > Approved a procedure that requires a chapter's request for financial assistance for a regional conference be approved only if the conference budget has been approved by the Financial Manager of the Chapter and Regional Conference Committee. The STC budget checklist with the attachments must be submitted.
- > Approved a procedure that requires a chapter's request for financial assistance for a regional conference be approved only if the facility's contract will or has been reviewed by the STC Office.
- > Approved a procedure that requires a chapter's request for financial assistance for a regional conference be approved only if the management structure includes a mechanism to provide periodic status reports of conference activities, including budget status, to its Director-Sponsor.

**STC Quarterly Journal, *Technical Communication***

- > Approved funding for a series editor to begin a series in the journal on "Topics in Teaching and Training Technical Communicators."

*Continued on page 3*

**Ready, Set, Go!***Continued from page 2*

- > Approved a travel budget for the series editor to attend the annual conference to recruit potential authors.
- > Approved a budget item to defray travel costs for the book review editor.
- > Approved an increase in the stipend of the editor, effective with the third quarter 1997 issue.

**Other**

- > Repealed the policy, from the 1992 winter board meeting minutes, that reads, "English remains the language of the Society's international competitions" and replaced it with: "Until the Society establishes that there is sufficient demand for and the feasibility of conducting international competitions in languages other than English, English continues as the language of the Society's international competitions. The Society supports local chapters developing competitions in any language."
- > Approved the revised "Guidelines for Official STC Use of the World Wide Web."
- > Approved \$12,700 to fund a survey and focus group to determine if there is sufficient demand and value to justify a full feasibility study of developing and implementing a professional certification program for technical communicators.
- > Approved an Indexing SIG with Peg Mauer, senior member from New York, as manager for the first year and a \$900 startup budget. □

**Submitting Articles**

Do you have information to share with other technical communicators? Put it in article format! *TECH comments* welcomes articles. Any topic relevant to our field is appreciated.

Send your articles to:

Jill Bornemeier  
Managing Editor  
jbornemeier@nei.com.

**East Tennessee Fall Conference  
Is Practically Perfect***by Susan Barnes, East Tennessee Chapter*

If hot summer weather has you thinking fall, think the brilliant colors of East Tennessee and PCOC as well.

The Great Smoky Mountains come alive with fall foliage each year, and the October 23-25 dates of the East Tennessee

Chapter's Practical Conference on

Communication (PCOC) are perfect for viewing the spectacular autumn show. The conference, pronounced peacock, is pretty spectacular itself.

Now entering its 21<sup>st</sup> year, PCOC brings together technical communicators from across the country to share experiences, insights, methods and research in the field. PCOC is STC's longest-running multiple-day regional conference, which last year drew more than 125 participants and presenters.

Just listen to what past participants have to say about PCOC.

*Everyone associated with PCOC – organizers, speakers, participants, moderators – learns. The practical information and ideas, combined with the personal interactions, have always been the strength of this conference, now entering its third decade. —David Armbruster, Fellow and past STC president, Memphis, Tennessee*

*PCOC is my favorite STC conference. I'll never forget the first PCOC I attended. When I arrived, I found myself thinking, "I don't know a soul here." However, in less than an hour, I had made new friends . . . and those friendships have now lasted for several years. —Lori Lathrop, Idaho Springs, Colorado*

*Conferences generally provide terrific learning opportunities and a chance to revitalize your energy, focus, and enthusiasm. But PCOC offers an added edge to the attendee through its focus on practical, bottom-line solutions and ideas for improving your processes, practices, and day-to-day efforts. You can take back*

*what you learn at PCOC and apply your new knowledge right away. Conference attendees have a terrific time, and the events are highly entertaining. —Michelle Ratcliffe, Region 3 Director-Sponsor, Tampa, Florida*

**The practical information and ideas, combined with the personal interactions, have always been the strength of this conference . . .**

Held at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Knoxville, PCOC features presentations and workshops by editors, writers, designers, managers, and educators directed toward practical applications. Last year's speakers covered such topics as author-editor relationships, use of

graphics to enhance document performance, the new challenge of information integration, indexing 101, and visual interpretation of complex data, among many others.

Of particular interest to participants is the Saturday workshop for independent consultants. Speakers will cover all aspects of consulting, including marketing, estimating, telecommuting, getting started, and finding your niche.

The full conference costs are \$160 for STC members and \$175 for non-members; two-day registrations are \$125 and \$140, respectively. One-day registrations are available for \$90 and \$105. All registrations cover one full meal per day and two refreshment breaks. Guest tickets are available for meals at \$25 for dinner, \$20 for Friday's lunch, and \$15 for Saturday's lunch.

Room rates at the Hilton are \$82 per day for both single and double rooms. Reservations can be made in the STC block by calling the Hilton directly, 800.445.8667 or 423.523.2300.

For more information about the conference, call Karla McMaster, conference chair, at 423.966.0072, extension 541, email to mcmaster@cti-pet.com, or access the following web site and follow the "conference" link [<http://stc.org/region3/etc/www/campusa.htm>]. □

## Current Job Postings

### Permanent Positions

**8/6/97**

Compuware Corporation (Farmington Hills) has an immediate need for a technical writer to develop print and online documentation for two client/server products that debug Oracle, Sybase and Microsoft SQL Server stored procedures and triggers. This is a challenging position that requires a lot of coordination and organization.

Required experience:

- > Client/server environment.
- > Windows operating systems (3.11, NT and Win95).
- > Adobe Acrobat, FrameMaker, RoboHelp or similar tools.

Forward your inquiry and/or résumé to:

John\_Peppes@compuware.com

**8/15/97**

The Institute for Advanced Technology, a designer of traditional and multi-media training programs, is seeking an experienced instructional designer/project manager to join Detroit office.

Responsibilities:

- > Instructional design and development.
- > Interactive multi-media.
- > Classroom curriculum.
- > Project management.
- > Sales support.

To apply, please forward your resume to:

Human Resources Dept. J  
IAT  
5775 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 800  
Minneapolis, MN 55416-1234  
Phone: 612.546.5808, ext. 102  
Fax: 612.546.6698

**8/15/97**

United American Healthcare Corporation (a Detroit-based managed-care company) is looking for a senior technical writer for its Planning and Development Department. Responsibilities include completing government and commercial proposal

documents, state HMO licensure applications, corporate and departmental procedures, and product manuals.

Requirements:

- > B.S./B.A. in English, journalism, or marketing.
- > At least three years experience in commercial or government proposal writing.
- > Five years experience as a technical writer and/or editor.
- > Ability to work under pressure.
- > Experience in project planning and management.
- > Proficient use of word-processing software.
- > Experience using Excel, PowerPoint, and/or Mapping software.
- > Health care background preferred.

Contact:

Serita Lockard  
Manager, Technical Writing  
Planning and Development Dept.  
1155 Brewery Park Blvd., Suite 200  
Detroit, MI 48207  
Fax: 313.393.7940  
Email: Plan\_Develp\_2@compuserve.com

### Contract Positions

**8/14/97**

Short-term contracts (Allen Park). Two technical writers/editors needed to research and develop automotive owners manuals and related publications for an automotive publications supplier. May be considered for full-time employment. These are two-month contracts.

Contact:

Eric Janson  
TAC Automotive Group  
Phone: 313.271.3600  
Fax: 313.271.3928

**8/14/97**

Long-term contract (Dearborn). Technical writer needed to develop maintenance and user manuals for Ford.

Requirements:

- > Electronics or electrical engineering knowledge.
- > Good PC, desktop publishing, Word 6.0/7.0 skills.
- > Previous experience developing maintenance/user manuals, test systems and modules preferred but not mandatory.
- > Experience using PageMaker, HiJack Pro software preferred but not mandatory.

Contact:

Eric Janson  
TAC Automotive Group  
Phone: 313.271.3600  
Fax: 313.271.3928

**8/14/97**

Short-term contract (Sterling Heights) \$15 to \$21 per hour. Technical writer needed to develop QS9000 quality assurance documentation for an automotive manufacturer. Writer will work closely with teams of manufacturing and maintenance technicians to develop preventive maintenance checks/tasks. These tasks are required for both manufacturing operators and maintenance personnel to comply with QS9000 requirements.

Other requirements include:

- > Interacting with maintenance, manufacturing, and outside resources to develop PM program.
- > Developing job aids for both machine operators and skilled-trades employees.
- > Entering data into a new preventive-maintenance software program.
- > Reviewing data and documentation monthly, tracking performance, and making recommendations for improvement.

Qualifications:

- > Good PC skills, including Word, Excel.
- > Good verbal and written communication skills.

*Continued on Page 5*

**Current Job Postings**

*Continued from page 4*

- > Must be willing to work flexible hours to conduct research on all shifts (primary shift is the day shift).
- > Maintenance background or experience operating manufacturing equipment is preferred.
- > Ideal candidate would be an entry-level tech writer with 1-2 years experience.

Contact:

Diane Ellson  
 Volt Technical Services  
 Phone: 248.358.3180  
 Fax: 248.358.2368

**8/15/97**

The Institute for Advanced Technology requires writers for 5- to 6-month contracts in the Troy and Southfield areas.

Qualifications:

- > Technical writing in electronics hardware and applications software.
- > Familiarity with automobile industry.
- > Experience with Word, Excel, Win95, WinNT, and Interleaf.

Job Description:

Work with subject-matter experts to develop training materials, procedure manuals, and interactive training courseware.

Contact:

John Van Dreser  
 Institute for Advanced Technology  
 5775 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 800  
 Minneapolis, MN 55416  
 Phone: 612.546.5808, ext. 102  
 Fax: 612.546.6698

**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.* □

**Welcome, New Members!**

We welcome the following new members to our chapter:

- Michele S. Alderton*
- Kate F. Benington*
- Cheryl M. Garner*
- Bob Ronig-Fox*
- Barbara A. Spencer*
- Kimberly Stobby*
- Michael A. Swanson*
- Kimberly M. Walker*

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

*Renka Gesing*



Holiday Inn North Campus  
 3600 Plymouth Road  
 Ann Arbor, Michigan

Cash Bar 6:30  
 Refreshments provided

RSVP  
 Ellen Burgett  
 313.913.3074

**Associations Win Protection for Volunteers**

President Clinton signed into law legislation protecting volunteers for nonprofit organizations. The law, which goes into effect September 16, 1997, removes volunteers from liability if they commit negligent acts or omissions while acting within the scope of their responsibilities. The law's definition of nonprofit organization includes STC.

"STC joins the American Society of Association Executives and other nonprofit organizations in celebrating this victory," said Bill Stolgitis, STC executive director. "This law makes it easier for nonprofits and their volunteers to effectively serve their members and the public at large."

The law defines a volunteer as an individual performing services for a qualified nonprofit organization who does not receive compensation (other than reasonable reimbursement or allowance for expenses incurred) or anything of value in lieu of compensation, in excess of \$500 per year. This includes society-level and chapter-level directors, officers, managers, and other volunteers.

The law does not protect volunteers if an act or omission is caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed. □

**Networking Meeting**

Most people agree that networking is an essential factor in their professional development. For that reason, you shouldn't miss the STC/SM September program meeting.

Come help us kick off the 1997/98 program year. STC/SM members and nonmembers are invited to attend this informal gathering. This is a great opportunity to:

- > Meet the 1997/98 STC/SM chapter officers and committee members.
- > Learn about employment opportunities in our area.
- > Develop a professional network with other technical communicators.

Additionally, you can speak one-on-one with Board members to let them know what you would like to see STC/SM accomplish this year and next. Would you like to see the return of the Annual Competition? Why not attend this meeting to voice your opinion. Do you have specific topics you'd like to hear presented at a monthly meeting? Let us know so we can continue to schedule programs that have been requested by our members.

Refreshments will be provided and a cash bar will be available. Come and network with the STC/SM September 10<sup>th</sup> at the Ann Arbor North Campus Holiday Inn starting at 6:30 p.m. □

## Calendar of Events

**September 10 (Wednesday)**  
**Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon**  
 Cooker on Plymouth Road  
 Begins between 11:30 and 12 noon.

**September 10 (Wednesday)**  
**STC/SM Networking Meeting**  
 Holiday Inn North Campus  
 Ann Arbor  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Contact Ellen Burgett  
 313.913.3074  
 ellen\_burgett@medstat.com

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

**October 15 (Wednesday)**  
**STC/SM Program Meeting**  
 Holiday Inn - Livonia West  
 I-275 and 6 Mile Road  
 Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.

## New STC/SM 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 proudly present our newest senior members:

*Barbara A. Beeler*

*David B. Bignotti*

*Dana L. Cadman*

*Kimberley Fair*

*Jennifer K. Moyes*

*Susan Silagi*

*Lanette S. Torres*

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

## Did You Know . . .

- > Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history. Spades - King David, Clubs - Alexander the Great, Hearts - Charlemagne, Diamonds - Julius Caesar.
- > Stewardesses and reverberated are the two longest words that can be typed using only the left hand. Lollipop is the longest word that can be typed using only the right hand. Skepticisms is the longest word that alternates hands.
- > If you put a raisin in a glass of champagne, it will keep floating to the top and sinking to the bottom.
- > "Mr. Mojo Risin" is an anagram for Jim Morrison.
- > The combination "ough" can be pronounced nine different ways. The following sentence contains them all: "A rough-coated, dough-faced, thoughtful ploughman strode through the streets of Scarborough; after falling into a slough, he coughed and hiccoughed."

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# TECH comments

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