TECH comments

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

President's Message:
Recognizing STC/SM Volunteers
by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM

I'm very excited about the upcoming year and the opportunity I've been given to work with a group of talented and enthusiastic volunteers! A simple thanks cannot express my gratitude for the commitment everyone has shown already this year!! I take this occasion to recognize my volunteers publicly, for without you, we could not function as a chapter.

Outstanding Chapter Member
Each year, the STC/SM recognizes and honors a chapter leader whose contributions to the our chapter are truly noteworthy. As many of you are aware, the 1996-1997 Outstanding Chapter Member plaque was presented to C. Ruth Blough at the September 10, 1997 Networking Meeting held in Ann Arbor.

Ruth received this award due to her commitment to the STC/SM volunteer efforts. Ruth chaired the Nominations Committee, which is tasked with

contacting members to volunteer for open positions in our chapter. Every time we needed a volunteer during the 1996-1997 year, Ruth was able to locate and recruit a member to serve on a committee. Ruth and her committee did an outstanding job recruiting volunteers for the 1997-1998 term, I cannot thank you enough for this!

In the upcoming year, if you feel a member has done something that is truly noteworthy, please forward this member's name to Ruth Blough or to any member of the Nominations Committee so the member can be considered for the prestigious Outstanding Chapter Member award.

President's Bravo
The President's Bravo is my way of formally acknowledging those members who deserve a special thank you for a job well done. It's my way of letting all of our volunteers know that a person's or a committee's achievements are worth everyone's attention.

In this category, I first recognize Jill Bornemeier, Mary Kearney, and Barbara Longley MacGregor, the STC/SM Newsletter Committee. This committee was already hard at work developing the newsletter during the summer months. Due to their efforts, the September newsletter arrived at the end of August, well in advance of the upcoming events that were detailed in the newsletter. Thanks Jill, Mary, and Barbara for all your hard work in making this happen!

Again, I thank Ruth Blough and the Nominations Committee for recruiting the

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necessary volunteers for the 1997-1998 STC/SM term. Special thanks to Ruth for constantly following up with new volunteers to ensure that they made smooth transitions into their new positions.

Lastly, I acknowledge the continued efforts of Ginny Collins-Llope who accepted the nomination of vice president for this term. Additionally, Ginny has graciously allowed me to volunteer her to chair the Program Committee. I applaud Ginny for assembling and organizing an outstanding committee of volunteers. I took the opportunity to attend the first Program Committee meeting and my initial reaction was— WOW!! I want to formally thank everyone on this committee for your enthusiasm and dedication in creating an outstanding program schedule. I formally acknowledge and applaud all of you for your efforts!!

Great job and bravo to all who have volunteered this year!!

Outstanding Summer Intern
Another President's Bravo is extended to Sharon McDonnell, our STC/SM summer intern. I had the opportunity to interface with Sharon on many occasions. What impressed me most about Sharon was her project coordination skills in knowing how and when to follow up on project status. Likewise, Catherine Juon, our Web Committee chair, who directed Sharon through her internship went on to say, "Working with Sharon was nothing but a positive experience. I really appreciate the energy she brought to some projects that

Director-Sponsor Message:
Chapters, Members: Mind Your Money!
by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor
phone: 313.663.8118, fax: 313.663.8778

STC chapter money, budgets, checking and savings accounts, financial reports: who cares? Well, everyone should!

STC gives startup money to chapters when they first form. STC annually reimburses chapters a percentage of the dues that their members pay to the international organization. STC has money in the annual budget for grants and loans to chapters if they get into serious financial trouble. STC is available to give advice to chapters about how to get out of trouble. But chapters are expected to operate from year to year on their own financial resources.

Have a Budget

Every chapter should have an operating budget for each year whether it's for a couple of hundred dollars, a couple of thousand dollars, or tens of thousands of dollars. This just makes good business sense.

You probably have a budget for your family. If you run your own business, you have (or should have) a budget for it. If you work for someone else, you either have a budget that you control or your expenditures are included in the annual budget of your company. Make sure your chapter has a budget!

Pay Attention!

All chapter leaders are responsible for the finances of their chapter. This includes all Administrative Council members and committee managers, everyone who has a chapter budget, and everyone who regularly receives a financial report from the chapter treasurer.

If you're a person who receives financial reports from your chapter's treasurer, learn to read them! Look for individual income and expense items in the report that look suspicious; look for variances from budget numbers; look for bottom-line numbers that show a deficit in your chapter's finances. Question inconsistencies and things you don't understand. Pay attention!

Find Competent People to Manage Your Chapter's Money

Recruit a good money manager for your chapter. Finding a competent treasurer is a very important responsibility of the chapter's nominating committee or the chapter leaders who recruit future treasurers.

When recruiting candidates for chapter treasurer, don't just pick candidates who are popular in the chapter, friends of a chapter leader, a good program presenter, or anyone who volunteers. Find people who may have some kind of financial background; people who are honest and trustworthy; people who know how to produce financial reports on the chapter's automated system or can learn it easily. Pick people who understand budgets, balance sheets, and income statements; people who will use that knowledge to keep the chapter's finances on track with its budget.

Care About Your Chapter, About Your STC Membership

At this point, you may be thinking: "Well, this only applies to chapter leaders, not to me, a regular STC member." Think again! Your STC membership dues go to your STC chapter and to the international STC organization. Also, you may be a future leader of your STC chapter and you'll be partially responsible for how the chapter spends its money.

Make sure your local chapter as well as the international organization is providing the services that you expect from it. Also, make sure that your chapter and the international organization are staying financially solvent!

STC publishes a report of its finances every year in *Intercom*, our monthly magazine. Many chapters print reports of their finances in their newsletters. If they don't, that information is rightfully available to any member of STC; request it from your chapter's president or treasurer.

Finally, if you have financial skills that may be helpful to your STC chapter, volunteer to help as treasurer or as a member of its finance committee. Your chapter probably can use your help. ❑

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have been *floating along*—and she's been so conscientious about getting things right and following things through to the end."

While interning, Sharon designed and printed the online directory postcard; redesigned the membership bulletin board—in addition to negotiating with print vendors to have the board professionally printed and assembled; documented the process of updating Web files using file transfer protocol (FTP); and maintained the STC/SM Web site, including updating information for the fall. The STC/SM executive council and committee members thank you for a job well done.

Sharon is an undergraduate at Eastern Michigan University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in written communications with a concentration in technical writing. She plans to graduate in April 1998. Currently, Sharon is interning at the Society for Manufacturing Engineers, where she'll be responsible for writing hardcopy and online training manuals. In addition to interning 20 hours a week, Sharon attends night classes twice a week, and keeps busy with her sons and husband. We wish you the best in your studies and future endeavors. ❑

Input Needed for Building a Corporate Intranet

La-Z-Boy Incorporated would like to learn more about Web authoring tools, graphics tools, standards and policies for usage, as well as some do's and don'ts from those who have implemented a corporate intranet. They would like to visit a company with an intranet in place to increase their knowledge capital on the design, organization, and implementation phases of creating an intranet.

If your company has implemented a corporate intranet and you would like to provide an overview to La-Z-Boy, please contact:

Tammy Guth
Phone: 313.242.1444 ext. 6369
Email: document@la-z-boy.com

STC Press Releases 2nd Edition of Popular *Secrets* Book

Since it was first released in 1991, William Horton's book *Secrets of User-Seductive Documents* has become one of the most popular offerings of the STC Press and a widely read reference for those in the technical writing field. Now, STC Press is pleased to announce a second edition that expands and updates the material to include tips on developing electronic documents and Web sites.

Secrets explains how documents can be used to catch and hold users' interest, offering practical tips on everything from writing copy, to composing illustrations, and selecting typefaces. The use of humor and psychological tricks of the trade are also discussed.

Horton uses these same tools in the book itself, employing the metaphor of *seduction* in describing the relationship between text and reader. "What do I mean by seductive?" he writes. "In this context, seductive does not mean erotic or sexy or even beautiful . . . We

> **"We want to attract our readers' attention and win their sympathy. We want to entice the reader into a state of informed"**
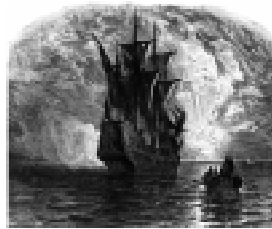
want to attract our readers' attention and win their sympathy. We want to entice the reader into a state of informed action." This is necessary, he writes, because many readers are too bored or busy to pay proper attention to technical documents.

The new edition of *Secrets* sells for $20 to STC members, $30 to nonmembers. For ordering information, please contact Merrick Bechini at 703.522.4114, extension 202 or merrick@stc-va.org. ❑

Did You Know . . .

➢ Cleopatra was more noted for her cunning than her looks, which were plain at best. Legend has it that she actually arranged for herself to meet Julius Caesar by being rolled up inside an oriental rug that she had presented to him as a gift.

➢ When the Mayflower, which took the pilgrims to America, had eventually outlived her usefulness, she was dismantled and then reconstructed as a barn.

➢

➢ The hardest word for any lexicographer to define briefly is the Fuegian word "mamihlapinatapai." It means "looking at each other hoping that either will offer to do something

which both parties desire but are unwilling to do."

➢ Never squash a yellow jacket wasp near the nest. A dying yellow jacket releases an alarm pheromone that alerts its comrades. In less than 15 seconds, yellow jackets within a 15-foot radius will rally to the victim's aid.

➢ 0.3% of all road accidents in Canada involve a moose.
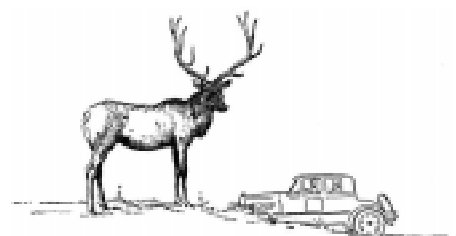
Current Job Postings

Permanent Positions

8/27/97

Steeplechase Software, a fast-growing, aggressive company, seeks motivated, fast-paced, energetic individual to be primary writer and developer of technical manuals and to assist in development of promotional literature. Must have 3 to 5 years technical writing experience, preferably in an industrial-controls environment, and excellent PC skills. Send résumé and salary requirements to:

Steve Burt
Human Resources
Steeplechase Software
P.O. Box 3049
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
Phone: 313.975.8100
Fax: 313.975.8123
Email: recruit@steeplechase.com
Web: http://www.steeplechase.com

9/2/97

Mechanical Dynamics, Inc. seeks two senior technical writers to develop reference manuals, user guides, tutorials, online help, training materials, and technical bulletins for a suite of computer-aided engineering (CAE) software products that are used to perform mechanical system simulation.

Responsibilities:

➢ Research, outline, and write documentation for software products, producing online and print documents.

➢ Assemble text, illustrations, and screen captures into appropriate form. Work with print vendors and reproduction staff to publish print documentation.

➢ Proofread for organization, flow, consistency in format, style, and grammar.

Requirements:

➢ 3+ years experience producing application software documentation.

➢ B.A./B.S. in technical writing, English, journalism, or related field.

➢ Proficiency with computer-based document authoring tools.

➢ Experience with FrameMaker, mechanical engineering concepts and/or CAE software highly desirable.

➢ Experience with Internet and creating documents for the Internet desirable.

➢ Experience developing computer-based training materials desirable.

Contact:
Kristi Heck
Mechanical Dynamics, Inc.
Human Resources
2301 Commonwealth Blvd., 1st floor
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
Phone: 313.913.2583
Fax: 313.994.6418

9/2/97

Brasch Tech Data has openings for six automotive technical writers.

Owner Literature Department – Research and develop owner literature and related publications to meet program timing requirements and quality standards. ASE or state certification and 5 years automotive experience. MS Word and Excel preferred. Arbortext and SGML a plus (willing to train).

Training and Instructional Design Department – Work directly with engineering activities to research, develop, or update training programs based on technician needs and product information to meet quality standards of timing requirements. ASE or state certification, and 3+ years automotive experience. MS Word and PageMaker a plus, as is instructional-design background.

Workshop Information Department – Research technical products and review technical content with product engineers. ASE, state certification, or strong automotive background. MS Word preferred. SGML a plus (willing to train).

Send résumé (indicate position of interest) with salary history/requirements to:

Human Resources
Brasch Tech Data
P.O. Box 585
Allen Park, MI 48101
Fax: 313.749.0020

9/18/97

Usertech helps companies implement new business systems and improve employee performance by providing customized reference materials and user training.

We need technical writers with 2+ years experience working with business information systems in one or more of the following areas:

➢ User procedures documentation.

➢ Online reference/performance support.

➢ Multimedia development.

➢ Instructional design and training development.

➢ Project management and consulting.

We need training specialists to develop people-focused training to assure more successful system launches and improve employee performance. Must have 2+ years experience with business information systems in one or more of the following:

➢ Instructional design.

➢ Needs assessment.

➢ Course development.

➢ Training evaluation.

➢ Training delivery.

➢ Project management and consulting.

Knowledge of traditional and current training methods, including CBT and multimedia, strongly preferred.

For both areas, financial, HR, and manufacturing systems (e.g., PeopleSoft, SAP) experience a plus.

Work at home, reporting to our Chicago office. Excellent salary and benefits including 401(k) and profit-sharing . Send résumé with salary history to:

Sue Darow
Usertech
150 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 3275
Chicago, IL 60606
Email: jobs@usertech.com
Web: http://www.usertech.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. ❑

Meet the Speaker

Adobe Acrobat and portable document format (PDF) have gained a rapid acceptance as the file format of choice for electronic distribution of compound and legacy documents. However, only a small percentage of the capabilities of Acrobat are realized. Most people build value into PDF files through manual creation of links and bookmarks. PDF documents are often circulated as attachments to email or organized as files on a network drive. While these are useful techniques, they are less than optimal as digital document solutions.

Using DigiDox's innovative approach in developing digital document solutions, you can leverage your existing investment in hardcopy publishing operations to the emerging distribution of CD-ROMs, intranets, and the World Wide Web.

One of Acrobat's greatest strengths is its powerful Application Programming Interface (API). At our October Program Meeting, John Wangler will present real-world examples that demonstrate how Acrobat plug-ins can accomplish:

➢ Enhanced navigation within and across PDF documents

➢ Context sensitive linking

➢ Database query and add-to-order capability

➢ Pop-up windows

➢ Sidebar comments

➢ Integration with external applications

John Wangler is National Accounts Manager for DigiDox, Inc., an Adobe Systems Company, that specializes in electronic document project integration and software plug-in development with Adobe Acrobat and FrameMaker software packages. Before joining DigiDox as regional manager in 1996, he was with *APPLIANCE Magazine* where he served as publisher, national sales manager, district manager, and editor.❑

OCTOBER 15

Program Meeting

Exploring Digital Document Solutions

John Wangler

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

Cash Bar 6:30
Dinner 7:00

Dinner and Meeting
Members: $20.00
Nonmembers: $30.00

Meeting Only:
Members: $5.00
Nonmembers: $10.00

Entree Choices:
Sage Stuffed Chicken
Vegetarian Lasagna

RSVP to Karen Gilbert
Phone: 313.995.6187
Fax: 313. 995.6151
Email: gilbert@ann-arbor.applicon.com

Publication and Reprint Policies

TECH comments is published monthly September through June for members and friends of the Southeast Michigan chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. We welcome feature articles; letters to the editor; and information about meetings, courses, and workshops. Manuscripts are accepted in both hardcopy and electronic format using MS Word or ASCII text. Submissions will be edited.

Reprints from *TECH Comments* are permitted if credit is given and a copy is sent to the managing editor.

Send submissions to:

Jill Bornemeier
Managing Editor
P.O. Box 1289
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
Email: jbornemeier@nei.com

Everyone Welcome at Networking Luncheon!

Every month technical communicators gather for lunch at an Ann Arbor hotspot to talk shop and pass business cards. This is a terrific opportunity to trade experiences, information, and tips. The luncheon is beneficial for job networking, but it's also a nice way to meet and greet STC members in a relaxed, social atmosphere. Your input is valuable, and this is a great reason to go out to lunch once a month. (You do not need to be looking for a job to join us at the Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon!)

Please contact Kathy Carter at 313.475.5865 or bluehoo@provide.net for more information, or to be added to the email reminder list.

Luncheon Schedule

Thursday, October 9 Chili's
Tuesday, November 11 Olive Garden
Wednesday, December 10 Weber's Restaurant
Thursday, January 8 downtown, location TBD
Tuesday, February 10 Evergreen Restaurant
Wednesday, March 11 Paesano's
Thursday, April 9 Mediterrano
Tuesday, May 12 La Pinata
Wednesday, June 10 Cooker
Thursday, July 9 Red Lobster

Calendar of Events

October 9 (Thursday)
Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon
Chili's
Begins between 11:30 and 12 noon.

October 13 (Monday)
STC/SM Board of Directors Meeting
Guy Hollerin's
Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor
6:30 p.m.

October 15 (Wednesday)
STC/SM Program Meeting
Holiday Inn - Livonia West
I-275 and 6 Mile Road
Speaker: John Wangler
Topic: Exploring Digital Document
        Solutions
Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.
Contact: Karen Gilbert
313.995.6187
Email: gilbert@ann-arbor.applicon.com

November 3 (Monday)
STC/SM Board of Directors Meeting
Location TBD
6:30 p.m.

November 12 (Wednesday)
STC/SM Program Meeting
Holiday Inn North Campus
Ann Arbor
Speaker: David Galvin
Topic: Multi-Media in Technical
        Communications/Training
Cash bar begins at 6:30 p.m.

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Welcome,
New Members!

Sandra L. Deline
Mary B. Kelley
W. Thomas Koch
Mary Claire Morris
Kathryn R. Pierro
Sonali Thatte

Welcome to STC/SM.

We look forward to seeing
all of you
at future STC/SM
functions!

TECH comments

STC/SM
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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

***TECH comments* Staff**
Jill Bornemeier, Managing Editor
Mary Kearney, Designer/Editor
Barbara MacGregor, Distribution