



TECH comments

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

November 1997

Volume 27, Issue 3



President's Message: Recognizing the STC/SM Program Committee

by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM

As many of you may recall, last year we asked for volunteers to assist with the many facets of running the STC/SM program committee. The response we received was outstanding! I take this opportunity to formally thank all who stepped forward to volunteer their time and efforts to plan, schedule, and coordinate programs to meet the professional needs of our chapter.

I hope you'll find value in attending our presentations, as the committee has worked very hard to identify speakers and topics that relate to the latest trends in the field of technical communication. Most of the presentation topics this year were requested by our members. If you have any topics you'd like to see presented by the STC/SM, please feel free to contact Ginny Collins-Llope or any other board member listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Overview of the Program Schedule

We started the year with our informal networking meeting that drew more than 30 attendees (members and nonmembers). It was great to see such an interest in our chapter for our first gathering. Last month, we explored digital documentation

solutions with John Wangler, from DigiDox (see "Speaking of PDF Files" on page 5). Again, I thank everyone (nearly 50 attendees) who took the time to attend this presentation!

I look forward to meeting you at the upcoming presentations:

- > November 12, 1997
Multi-Media in Technical Communications
David Galvin
Ann Arbor Holiday Inn
- > December 10, 1997
Holiday Gathering
Longacre House
Farmington Hills
- > January 21, 1998
HTML vs. WinHelp
Jack DeLand
Livonia Holiday Inn

Additionally, the Program Committee is finalizing details for the remainder of 1998. We hope to do a panel discussion about different aspects (legal, financial) of independent contracting. Likewise, we're preparing a consultant's toolkit seminar in April.

We're also trying something new. During the summer, Bonnie Fink, student advisor for the STC student chapter at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, and Ann Blakeslee, associate professor at Eastern Michigan University (EMU), approached

me to do a student meeting. Unfortunately, due to spring break schedules, we were unable to conduct a joint meeting. However, Ann's students have volunteered to conduct a panel discussion in March on the campus of EMU. We're still working with the students, but the students are prepared to present in any or all of these areas—responding to and editing technical texts; lessons from the classroom and workplace; creating usable training and documentation systems; document design: theory and practice for writers; and using the Web for cross-cultural exchange. I'm excited about the opportunity to work

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**Reserve December 10
for an evening of
good food and fellowship
at STC/SM's**

**Holiday
Gathering**

**7:00 p.m.
Longacre House
Farmington Road
Farmington Hills**

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Director-Sponsor Message: An Ounce of Diversity is Worth a Pound of . . .

by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor
phone: 313.663.8118, fax: 313.663.8778



I had to get up at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday to get to an appointment by 7:30. Me up early? (Anyone who knows me understands that I don't do that unless required to.)

While driving to the appointment, I saw people jogging, walking, driving with their families and their dogs. On the way home, I stopped at my local grocery store and saw a few people shopping. Do people actually grocery shop early in the morning?

Needless to say, I had some new and different experiences on an early Sunday morning hours before many church services begin, hours before shopping malls open, hours before professional football coverage starts on TV. The diversity I experienced on an early Sunday morning is related to the diversity we find in our profession.

Our Jobs are Different

For quite some time, we've been pondering the question: *What do technical communicators do?* Sometimes people in our field are expected to answer this question in five seconds or less, in three sentences or less (and those statements had better be clear, concise, and to the point!). And the answer is: *It depends!* It depends on variables such as what industry we're employed in, what the product or service is that we provide, how the business is structured and departments are organized, what the company's goals are and how they want us to meet them.

We offer our services to computer, engineering, medical, environmental, legal, and manufacturing companies just to name a few. We work on documentation teams, product development teams, product marketing teams; in large documentation departments or completely alone; toward carefully structured and clearly defined goals or to meet loosely defined (and many times totally irrational) deadlines.

Circumstances are Different

And what we do as technical communicators depends on our background and experiences—experiences in both the working world and in our personal lives.

When I entered the technical communication field, programs in our field did not exist at colleges and universities. Technical communicators came from a great variety of fields: journalism, English, computer science,

engineering, business, math, or science programs, for example. Some of the best technical communicators I know studied entomology, physics, and sociology in college! Most new people entering our field now have completed a certificate or degree program in technical communication at an accredited university.

And the way we do things depends on our personal approaches to problem solving and reaching goals. There are as many different work styles as there are people.

So, How Does this Relate to STC?

Well, STC serves many different fields, it is organized quite differently in its different chapters, and it has a large diversity of

people with individual working styles. In STC, we need to not only be tolerant of the diversity around us, but to capitalize on that diversity! We need to clearly define goals and offer strategies for attaining those goals, then sit

back and let our volunteers accomplish those goals, offering help when needed. We need to work with STC volunteers in the most effective ways possible and unleash their creativity in order to reap the benefits of their positive, productive efforts. Understand diversity and work with it! After all, some people rise early on Sundays and do lots of things that the rest of us sleep through. □

In STC, we need to not only be tolerant of the diversity around us, but to capitalize on that diversity!

President's Message: Recognizing the STC/SM Program Committee

Continued from page 1

with these students. I encourage everyone to attend this program session to support the technical communicators of tomorrow.

Finally, we plan on closing out the year with a volunteer celebration. We'll take the opportunity to thank all the volunteers with a recognition ceremony and then induct the new officers into their roles for the 1998-1999 year. I hope to see everyone there!!

Supporting Our Membership

Every year, there's an increase in the amount the hotel charges for dinners, equipment, etc. This year, the chapter has decided to keep prices at \$20 for members attending the dinner and presentation and \$5 for attending only the presentation. Prices have increased slightly for nonmembers. Also this year at every program meeting, we are raffling off certificates that will allow you to attend the dinner and presentation free (in some instances, this is a \$30 value)!! This is one way our chapter can give something back to our members, as we value your involvement within our chapter.

Acknowledging Those Who Make a Difference

I applaud Ginny Collins-Llope for heading up an outstanding committee of volunteers; everyone is doing a terrific job. Also, I thank the following individuals who stepped forward to volunteer for a position on the committee: Ann Blakeslee, Ellen Burgett, Arlene Dietz, Scott Esbrook, Kathy Kleckner, Mike Long, Sarah Ann Margulies, Laurie Mitchell, Michelle Monroe, Parker Moon, Nancy Sock, Martha Swidersky, and Mike VanVoorhis. I applaud everyone for your efforts!!

Additionally, I would like to mention that last year Martha Swidersky was the Program Committee!! I commend Martha for her valiant efforts. Also, thanks Martha for continuing to serve on this committee by printing fliers and providing guidance and assistance for the new committee. Your efforts are appreciated and I can't thank you enough.

I'm excited about the opportunity to work with these students. I encourage everyone to attend this program session to support the technical communicators of tomorrow.

opportunity professionally and socially. Your attendance does make a difference. □

Lastly, if you're a new member or a member who has never attended a program meeting, I encourage you to attend at least one meeting to discover what our chapter is about and to meet all the volunteers. This is a great networking

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
jbornemeier@nei.com

STC Announces 1997/98 Ken Caird Student Competition

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) invites eligible students to participate in the 1997/98 Ken Caird Student Competition. This competition recognizes excellence in technical communication articles written by college students.

Awards will be presented as follows:

- > Undergraduate
 - Distinguished (\$1000)
 - Excellence (\$500)
- > Graduate
 - Distinguished (\$1000)
 - Excellence (\$500)

In addition, winning entries will be honored and displayed at STC's Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, May 17 to 20, 1998.

Students can enter any article that has been published in a serial publication since October 1, 1995. The article must contain sufficient technical content to qualify as technical communication.

Eligible publications include:

- > STC publications
- > Other professional society journals and newsletters
- > Trade publications and newspapers

Authors must have been enrolled full-time (as defined by the school's criteria) in a post-secondary technical communication program as a major, minor, or field of concentration at the time the article was submitted or accepted for publication. Submitters need not be STC members to enter.

Entries must be received by January 15, 1998.

For more information, contact:

Ellen Fenwick
208.853.0335
fenwick@cyberhighway.net □

Current Job Postings

Permanent Positions

10/7/97

Recruiter seeks a degreed engineer, preferably with a B.S. in mechanical engineering, to work as an associate editor of a technical publication in the Detroit metropolitan area. Salary depends on experience, but will be no less than \$40K.

Contact:
Robbie Schultz
Recruiter
Human Factors
17697 W. 10 Mile Rd.
Southfield, MI 48075
Phone: 248.557.0554
Fax: 248.557.8725

10/8/97

WPI Micro Processor Systems seeks a marketing/technical materials coordinator to coordinate and develop all MPSI technical publications. Candidate will develop and validate technical publications, such as product manuals, sales and marketing literature, and training materials. Position also involves coordinating marketing efforts, including promotional materials, marketing surveys, press releases, and media contacts.

Requirements:

- > Self-starting, motivated individual with a minimum of 2-4 years experience developing automotive or heavy-duty technical publications and/or training.
- > Strong technical knowledge and technical writing skills.
- > Experience with Macintosh systems using Quark 3.3 and/or IBM-compatible computer systems using MS Office software is highly desirable.
- > Knowledge of printers and electronic print technology is beneficial.

Contact:
Kay DiBartolomeo
Human Resources Manager
6405 19 Mile Rd.
Sterling Heights, MI 48314

Phone: 810.731.6410
Fax: 810.731.3348
Email: dibartolomeo@mpsilink.com

Contract Positions

10/8/97

Short-term contract in Troy. Technical writers needed with knowledge of electrical engineering who can work from electrical schematics and ladder diagrams. Client seeks a polished professional who will represent the company well.

Contact:
Toni Pollock
Jawood
Phone: 248.269.9988
Fax: 248.269.9644
Email: tpoll1490@aol.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. □



Program Meeting

Multimedia and Technical Communication/Training

David Galvin

Holiday Inn North Campus
3600 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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

Dinner and Meeting
Members: \$20.00
Nonmembers: \$30.00

Meeting Only
Members: \$5.00
Nonmembers: \$10.00

Entree Choices:
Boneless Breast of Chicken with
Mushrooms, Artichokes, and Wild Rice

Vegetable Stir Fry

RSVP: Ellen Burgett
313.913.3074
ellen_burgett@medstat.com

STC International Technical Video Competition

STC invites you to participate in its annual International Technical Video Competition (ITVC). This competition recognizes excellence in video communication related to technology, training, science, medicine, or government.

The accepted format for video entries is a single 1/2-inch VHS tape in one of the following categories:

- > Marketing
- > Information
- > Instruction
- > Public relations

Entries must be received by January 15, 1998. The Best of Show Award will be

presented at the STC 45th Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, May 17-20, 1998. Other award winners are honored at the competition exhibit, where extracts from the winning entries are shown.

For more information, contact:

Gary Heba
Phone 419.372.6835
Email: gheba@bgnnet.bgsu.edu



Meet the Speaker

What is multimedia?

What are its advantages and disadvantages as an instruction tool?

When and how is it best applied?

These are a few of the questions that David Galvin of National Educational Training Group (NETg) will address at our November 12th Program Meeting.

David will acquaint you with the pros and cons of multimedia instruction from both business and instructional perspectives. He'll also survey design and evaluation strategies.

This comprehensive look at instructional multimedia design and use is for you if you're curious about instructional multimedia, interested in developing multimedia instructional material, or already working with it and want to keep your awareness up-to-date.

David is an account manager at NETg. His background includes providing and servicing multimedia training for corporations and schools, as well as knowledge of instructor-led training techniques. NETg develops interactive multimedia products used to train information technology professionals and end users. NETg was one of the pioneers in instructional multimedia during the 1980s and is Microsoft's "Number One Training Solution." □

Did You Know . . .

- Upper and lower case letters are named "upper" and "lower" because in the time when all original print had to be set in individual letters, the "upper case" letters were stored in the case on top of the case that stored the smaller "lower case" letters.



- The only real person to be a Pez head was Betsy Ross.

- Roses cut in the afternoon last longer than ones cut in the morning.

- A 10-gallon hat barely holds 6 pints.



- When ants find food, they lay down a chemical trail, called a pheromone, so that other ants can find their way from the nest to the food source.



Speaking of PDF Files

by Mike Van Voorhis, STC/SM Member

Do you ever work with portable document files (PDFs)? After viewing them do you ask, "Other than scroll and read, can I do anything else with them?" At the October Program Meeting, attendees learned there is more power available from PDFs read by Adobe's Acrobat Reader.

John Wangler, National Sales Accounts Manager for DigiDox, Inc. (an Adobe Systems Corporation), demonstrated how DigiDox software services' Acrobat plug-ins can provide enhancements for PDF files. John demonstrated major retail and supplier companies' Web-site catalog pages that have integrated Acrobat plug-ins. These plug-ins provide Acrobat enhancements such as:

- Database query to online add-to-order software
- Context-sensitive linking
- Pop-up windows
- Sidebar comments

Especially impressive were the DigiDox software applications that link illustrated parts lists (IPLs) to a database, which then links to electronic commerce transaction software. This innovation allows online catalog users a truly electronic reference-and-order system.

DigiDox, Inc. does not sell out-of-the-box applications. DigiDox and Adobe representatives clearly stated that their software applications require a services-related purchase agreement. Additional programming is needed to provide links for large databases to the varied PDF files. Other links requiring high-level-language programming may also be required.

STC/SM thanks John Wangler and Adobe Systems for providing a thorough and clear presentation of the DigiDox software package. □

**Welcome,
New Member!**

Jacqueline M. DiGiovanni

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

Calendar of Events

**November 3 (Monday)
Board of Directors
Meeting**

Kerby's Coney Island
Haggerty just north of
Eight Mile Road
6:30 p.m.

**November 11 (Tuesday)
Ann Arbor Networking
Luncheon**

Olive Garden
Begins between 11:30
and 12 noon.

**November 12 (Wednesday)
Program Meeting**

Holiday Inn North Campus
Ann Arbor
Cash Bar 6:30 p.m.
Dinner 7:00 p.m.
Program 8:00 p.m.
Contact Ellen Burgett
313.913.3074
ellen_burgett@medstat.com

**December 10 (Wednesday)
Holiday Gathering**

Longacre House
Farmington Road
Farmington Hills
7:00 p.m.

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TECH comments

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