



# TECH comments

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

February 1998

Volume 27, Issue 6



## President's Message:

### Why Join the STC/SM?

by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM

What is the Society for Technical Communication (STC)?  
Why should I join?

These are two questions I hear almost every week when fielding calls from the STC/SM hotline or when networking at program meetings and other functions relating to the technical communication profession.

As many of you are aware, STC is the largest professional organization dedicated to serving the technical communication profession. The Society has more than 20,000 members worldwide—including writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, educators, students, engineers, and scientists—employed in a variety of technological fields. Our chapter has more than 300 members.

Joining this group of talented individuals will help you grow as a professional communicator by providing you with the opportunity to network and to expand your knowledge. You can expand your knowledge of technical communications by attending annual conferences, regional events, and chapter events. Likewise, you

can network with members with common experiences and interests by joining one of the many Special Interest Groups (SIGs) supported by the Society. Last, as an STC member, you receive many publications including a quarterly journal, a Society magazine, and chapter newsletters.

#### Getting the Most from Your Membership

When you join any group or organization, you should expect to contribute at some level. In my opinion and experience, the best way to get the most from your STC membership dues is to become actively involved in chapter activities. Chapter involvement offers you the opportunity to gain valuable management skills and to increase your visibility in the local technical-communication community.

Once again, I must applaud my volunteer staff for their efforts and commitment to our chapter. As you may have noticed, our Program Committee has been doing an exceptional job organizing meetings that keep pace with the technology important to our job functions. This is evidenced in attendance. I thank everyone who has taken the time to attend these meetings. It shows us that our hard work and efforts are paying off. If for some reason, however, you feel our program meetings don't meet your professional needs, I encourage you to get involved. Involvement does not mean a huge time

commitment, it can be as simple as recommending a subject matter expert for us to contact for a future meeting. Or, it could mean joining the program committee to brainstorm on relevant topics. We welcome and appreciate any suggestions you have for future program meetings!

As you may have noticed, our chapter has a fantastic newsletter, *TECH comments*, to inform you of upcoming events, current job postings, and other information to keep you up to date with our chapter. If you need a writing sample for your portfolio, I recommend contributing an article to be published in *TECH comments*. Often, these articles are reprinted in other chapter newsletters, and can even appear in the Society newsletter. This type of recognition may be the differentiator in your portfolio!

Our chapter offers an employment referral service that connects members with employers seeking technical communicators for permanent and contract positions. It's an excellent resource for both members and prospective employers, and best of all, it's free!

We also provide mentoring programs for those members who are new to the profession, who are students, or to anyone who can benefit from the knowledge of our seasoned communicators who are aware of the latest trends and technology.

#### In this issue . . .

President's Message .....	1
Director-Sponsor Message .....	2
Write on Target.....	3
Current Job Postings .....	4
Quote of the Month.....	6
Program Meeting .....	6
Certification Survey on the Way.....	7
Did You Know . . . ..	7
Calendar of Events.....	8
Publication and Reprint Policies .....	8

Continued on page 5

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**Director-Sponsor Message:****Communication: It's Not a Cliché!**

by Nancy Hoffman, Region 4 Director-Sponsor

phone: 313.663.8118, fax: 313.663.8778

email: creekscom@aol.com



Society for Technical Communication; yeah, we're communicators. So, get over it!

But, do we always remember to communicate effectively? Do we communicate as often as we need to and with the appropriate people? Are we like the shoemaker's kids who have no shoes?

### Communicate with Others in Our Profession and in STC

Think of other communicators as a source of valuable information for performing our jobs. They're not our "competition," even if we're consultants and we're vying for some of the same jobs or if we work in the same department and there's competition for raises or promotions! If that's the case, we can make sure that we don't give valuable information about job leads; we can try to get credit for good work that we've done ourselves. We still can learn a lot from other communicators. In many cases, we can work collaboratively on jobs with other communicators and end up with a much better result than we can achieve by ourselves.

Communicate with other STC members on a regular basis. Develop an email mailing list or an informal phone chain for sharing information with members around the world. Contact people through STC publication sources – if they've written an article in *Technical Communication* or *Intercom* that's of particular interest to you, if their presentation summary from the Annual Conference is printed in the

proceedings and you really enjoyed it (or you have a point you'd like to dispute), if an STC publication announces that they've recently received a special honor from STC. Look up their contact information in the STC membership directory and say "thanks," "congratulations," or "nice job"!

### Communicate with STC Leaders and the STC Office

Tell your chapter's leaders about your recent professional accomplishments. They may want to announce them in the chapter newsletter or by some other means.

Let chapter leaders and the STC office know if you've changed your name or any type of contact information. That way, they can update their records for you and you'll minimize the possibility of delaying the receipt of publications and other mailings that STC regularly distributes.

For the same reasons, if you're a leader in your chapter (perhaps on the chapter's Administrative Council), let your chapter president and the STC office know when there are changes to the contact information they have for you.

*Continued on page 3*

*Continued from page 2*

## Communication:

### It's Not a Cliché!

Four times a year, the STC office distributes an *Administrative Directory* to all chapter leaders who are listed in it. This is an important document for chapter leaders to have in order to contact other leaders of STC. Also, throughout the year, STC sends mailings about upcoming STC competitions, recognition programs, and events that you'll want to either act on or distribute to your chapter's members. They can't find you without your current contact information!

### Communicate with Friends and Family

Last, but not least, let's not forget our friends and family! Without them, we probably wouldn't be where we are today (whether credit or blame is appropriate!).

Yes, after writing and reading for long days at work, we're often too tired to even think about writing letters and sending thoughtful cards to our friends and family. We've had enough of that at work!

But they don't see it that way; their perspective is different. They think our letters are the best ones they receive (because they probably are!)—so full of news and easy to read. (I'm sure we've all received compliments from our families and friends on our letter-writing abilities.) Well, make an effort to write to them more often. It's very important to keep in touch. If you like, you can even tell them that your STC Director-Sponsor suggested it!

**Smile!** □

## Write on Target

*by Virginia Collins-Llope, Senior STC/SM Member*

The program meeting on Wednesday, February 18 is a joint meeting with the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). This meeting, entitled "Write on Target," is a panel discussion that takes aim at the marketing, publicity, and networking needs of the technical and medical writing consultant. We hope you will join us to hear from these experienced presenters.

### "Getting Free Press—How to Become a Publicity Expert"

Sheryl Norman owns Concepts 'n Copy, a freelance writing and marketing service in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She manages press relations and publicity for a number of her clients, in addition to specializing in advertising and sales promotion materials. Norman has a BA in journalism with a focus on advertising and marketing. She'll show you the tools and system you need to easily structure, write, and send press releases for maximum effectiveness.

### "Networking for Fun and Profit"

Pat Cornett is a medical writer, editor, publications consultant, and technical communication teacher with 20 years experience in the medical and technical communication fields. She has a Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan and owns MedWrite Associates, a 13-year-old medical publications firm in Birmingham, Michigan. Her clients include hospitals, physicians, pharmaceutical companies, and health-care communications firms. She also teaches and directs the technical

communication program at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield, Michigan.

A member of the American Medical Writers Association since 1978, she is a Fellow and Past President of AMWA (1988-89). Currently, she gives medical writing workshops and serves on several national AMWA committees. She is also the conference coordinator for the West Point regional AMWA conference this coming May.

"You, Inc." A brief look at "packaging" yourself in today's competitive marketplace.

Whether you are presently self-employed or merely contemplating it, David Dykhouse has a few tips on standing out in the crowd.

David Dykhouse is the owner and president of ACME Marketing, a full-service advertising and marketing firm in Ann Arbor. Recent clients include Oxford University Press, CText Software of Ann Arbor, Thomas Nelson, Inc. of Nashville and Virtual Systems of Farmington Hills. □

## Current Job Postings

### Permanent Positions

1/8/98

Permanent part-time contributing editor or correspondent needed for *Cutting Tool Engineering*, a monthly business magazine based in Chicago. The publication has a nationwide circulation, with a heavy concentration in the Great Lakes region. Responsibilities include writing articles about the metalworking/manufacturing industry (e.g. current business conditions, individual/company profiles, technology trends, management issues). The ideal candidate would have a working knowledge of machine shop operations (e.g. drilling, turning, sawing, grinding).

Austin Weber, Editor  
Cutting Tool Engineering Magazine  
Northbrook, IL  
Phone: 847.714.0173  
Email: aweber@jwr.com

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan seeks writer/analyst to develop documentation (both online and hardcopy) for use by operational areas.

Responsibilities:

- > Plan, coordinate, develop, and implement approved divisional or corporate projects
- > Work closely with subject matter experts
- > Conduct front-end analysis and develop general specifications for training and documentation
- > Evaluate documentation to ensure cost effectiveness

Requirements:

- > Bachelor's in instructional technology, technical communication, or related discipline
- > Demonstrated verbal and written communication skills, with emphasis on syntax, grammar, and presentation of materials
- > Demonstrated PC skills: word processing (DOS or Windows), desktop publishing, spreadsheets, and project management software

Excellent salary, benefits, and advancement opportunities.

Submit letter of interest and résumé to:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan  
600 Lafayette East  
Mail code 0109-RLJ  
Detroit, MI 48226  
Fax: 313.225.5629

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan seeks experienced individual to develop wide variety of high quality, technically accurate and visually impressive sales aids, including newsletters, directories, brochures/flyers, proposals, slide/video presentations, benefit books, etc. Must be able to translate technical information into language easily understood by customers.

Requirements:

- > Five years experience designing, developing, and producing sales promotion, customer communication, or employee benefit literature
- > Knowledge of database management/reporting, printing, and distribution processes
- > Highly developed written and verbal communication skills
- > Bachelor's degree in English, journalism, advertising, marketing, or closely related field

If you are self-motivated, possess high ethical business standards, and would like to be part of an organization committed to business excellence, forward your resume to:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan  
600 Lafayette East  
Dept. 0109WLTPS  
Detroit, MI 48226  
Web site: www.bcbsm.com  
Fax: 313.225.5629

1/12/98

Usertech seeks training specialists and instructional designers with two or more years experience working with business information systems in one or more of the following areas:

- > Needs assessment
  - > Instructional design
  - > Course development
  - > Training delivery
  - > Training evaluation
  - > Project management and consulting
- Knowledge of traditional and current training methods, including CBT and multimedia, strongly preferred. Financial, HR, and manufacturing systems experience a plus. Work would be in a home-office environment. Travel required. Excellent salary and benefits including 401(k) and profit sharing.

Mitzi Vavrick  
Usertech  
150 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 3275  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Phone: 312.629.8675  
Fax: 312.629.8680  
Email: jobs@usertech.com  
Web site: www.usertech.com

1/12/98

Usertech seeks technical writers with two or more years experience working with business information systems in one or more of the following areas:

- > User procedures documentation
- > Online reference and performance support
- > Multimedia development
- > Instructional design and training development
- > Project management and consulting

Knowledge of financial, HR, or manufacturing systems applications (e.g., PeopleSoft, SAP) desirable, but not required.

Work would be in a home-office environment. Travel required. Excellent salary and benefits, including 401(k) and profit sharing plans.

Mitzi Vavrick  
Usertech  
150 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 3275  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Phone: 312.629.8675  
Fax: 312.629.8680  
Email: jobs@usertech.com

1/13/98

Marketing coordinator needed to analyze and maintain marketing information and database by managing cost inquiries and systems (IQS). Also develop presentations, prepare quotations, and have involvement in quotation development.

## Qualifications:

- > Marketing degree, two years related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience
- > Knowledge of the automotive industry, Ford in particular
- > Knowledge of plastics and, if possible, mirror product
- > An understanding of costing and quotation development
- > Familiarity with engineering and development process
- > Determination to follow through with inquiries in a systematic and orderly fashion
- > Capability to meet with and manage medium-scale customer issues
- > Excellent computing and communication/presentation skills
- > Ability to create and give customer presentations

Direct contract in the Bluewater area. Salary range is \$35-45K with excellent benefits. Job number 246.

Doreen Kephart  
Professional Resource Associates, Inc.  
201 Broadway  
Marine City, MI 48039  
Phone: 810.765.1181  
Fax: 810.765.1182  
Web site: www.pra-usa.com  
Email:kephart@pra-usa.com

1/15/98

Technical writer/editor needed for the Office of Information Technologies, University of Notre Dame. The technical writer/editor is responsible for the development and implementation of both print and online (Web distribution) computer manuals and training materials. Additionally responsible for designing and maintaining a style guide for use by documentation and publication authors,

and for editing and contributing articles for technical publications.

## Requirements:

- > Strong technical communication background, with a degree in technical communication or journalism
- > Familiarity with the Web and multiple computer platforms, particularly Macintosh and Windows
- > Ability to initiate documentation development teams and meet project deadlines
- > Work well with people, effectively communicate proper use of technology to audiences that may not be familiar with technical terms.
- > Experience using PageMaker, FrameMaker, Web tools, HTML, Adobe Acrobat (PDF), Word, WordPerfect, (UNIX helpful), Macintosh & Windows (3.1, 95 and NT).

Competitive salary and benefits, and a team-oriented work environment.

Shiree Moreland  
University of Notre Dame  
G001A, CCMB  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
Email: Shiree.S.Moreland.3@nd.edu.

1/25/98

The University of Michigan M-Pathways Project seeks a technical writer for a one-year assignment (possibility of extending beyond one year). Writing samples or portfolio required.

## Responsibilities:

- > Work with subject matter experts to research and understand content needed by users
- > Design and develop required print and online documentation
- > Schedule and coordinate documentation projects from planning through distribution stages
- > Work closely with change management team to implement overall project documentation and training strategy

## Minimum qualifications:

- > Bachelor's degree in technical communication or instructional design, or

- > Equivalent combination of education and experience
- > Experience designing and developing print and online documentation
- > Proficiency with MS Office, desktop publishing, graphics, and Windows-based online help authoring tools
- > Excellent written and interpersonal communication skills

## Desired qualifications:

- > Knowledge of client/server computing environments or PeopleSoft applications
- > Proficient use of RoboHelp
- > Ability to work independently and as a project team member
- > Ability to work on multiple projects, prioritize tasks, and meet deadlines
- > Good organizational skills.

Apply for position (#T-98-0426-DB) at:

Ann Arbor Campus  
Employment Services Office  
Room G250 Wolverine Tower  
3003 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday  
Phone: 734.764.6580  
Email: fmroach@umich.edu or  
employment.services@umich.edu

**Contract Positions**

1/4/98

Multimedia specialist needed to develop graphics and presentation of CBT for company specializing in auto service manuals, diagnostic manuals, training materials (print and video), and owners publications. Work with project managers, account managers, external suppliers, and customer.

Degree or equivalent experience; 1-3 years experience programming presentations in ToolBook II. Experience in a training environment and/or automotive setting preferred. Perfect match candidate is enthusiastic, energetic individual who works best in a fast-paced team environment. Type of employment: contract, temp-to-permanent, benefits available.

**Current Job Postings***Continued from page 5*

Location: Wayne county

Pay range: \$14 to \$20/hr

Doreen Kephart  
 Professional Resource Associates  
 201 Broadway  
 Marine City, MI 48039  
 Phone: 810 765 1181  
 Fax: 810 765 1182  
 Email: kephart@pra-usa.com  
 Web site: www.pra-usa.com

1/13/98

Temporary-to-permanent technical writer needed in Wayne County to develop automotive service/parts manuals in a team setting, working with diagnostic engineers, editors, and subject matter experts. The writing is process-oriented, such as step-by-step procedures for repair.

Automotive writing experience and/or hands-on experience with cars (dealership, mechanic, home car repair). Associate's degree, ASE certification, or other education helpful. Nissan, Ford or GM experience a bonus. Must be able to operate a PC with basic knowledge of Microsoft applications. Candidates must pass automotive knowledge test and writing test before interviewing.

Salary range: \$13 to \$15 per hour with benefits

Job number 3

Doreen Kephart  
 Professional Resource Associates, Inc.  
 201 Broadway  
 Marine City, MI 48039  
 Phone: 810.765.1181  
 Fax: 810.765.1182  
 Web site: www.pra-usa.com  
 Email: kephart@pra-usa.com

1/13/98

Project manager needed in Wayne County to manage the scope, time and budget of multiple projects for a recognized leader in the development and production of automotive and service training publications such as auto service manuals, diagnostic manuals training materials (print and video), owners publications. Work with and may act as an account manager, and carry out project(s) from cradle to grave.

Ideal candidate is enthusiastic, energetic individual who works best in a fast-paced team environment. BS/BA in business administration, business management, or related field; 2-3 years experience in project management; and knowledge of management principles. Knowledge of project management software, such as Microsoft Project a plus.

Six-month temporary-to-permanent contract

Salary range: \$18 to \$22 per hour  
Job number 97

Doreen Kephart  
 Professional Resource Associates, Inc.  
 201 Broadway  
 Marine City, MI 48039  
 Phone: 810.765.1181  
 Fax: 810.765.1182  
 Web Site: www.pra-usa.com  
 Email: kephart@pra-usa.com

1/15/98

Program Planning Professionals seeks technical/business writer to develop and maintain business plans for an organization at Ford Motor Company. The ideal candidate will have skills in the following areas: project management, process design and management, control systems design, strong written and verbal communication skills, and group facilitation skills.

Assignment runs until March, but have other contracts are lined up after this ends. In addition to the Michigan contract, they have projects in New York, California, Australia, Japan, UK, and Germany. Most current contracts are local with Ford, however, you may be asked to relocate. Send résumés to:

Marilyn Donham  
 Program Planning Professionals  
 209 S. Ashley  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
 313.741.7770  
 Email: mdonham@pcubed.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.* □

**Quote of the Month**

*Each of us has the right and responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead, and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous or unpromising, and the roads back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction. If the new choice is also unpalatable, without embarrassment, we must be ready to change that as well.*

— Maya Angelou

**February 18, 1998**  
**Program Meeting**  
**Joint Panel Discussion**  
**with AMWA**

Holiday Inn North Campus  
 3600 Plymouth Road  
 Ann Arbor, Michigan

Cash Bar 6:30

Dinner 7:00

Presentation 8:00

For Dinner and Meeting

Members: \$20.00

Nonmembers: \$30.00

For Meeting Only

Members: \$5.00

Nonmembers: \$10.00

Entree Choices

Poached Salmon with Lemon  
 Wedges and Rice Pilaf  
 Baked Vegetarian Lasagna

RSVP to Ellen Burgett

Phone: 313.913.3074

Email: ellen\_burgett@medstat.com

*Continued from page 1*

### Why Join the STC/SM?

Additionally, there are many other functions you can perform at the chapter level. If you're interested in budget preparation and maintenance you may want to run for treasurer. Do you have excellent organizational skills? You may want to run for secretary. Do you have a desire to gain public relations experience and write press releases? Publicity manager may be the role for you. Do you want to learn HTML, develop web pages, and maintain a web site? I recommend joining the web committee. Do you enjoy recruiting people to help with tasks? You may want to offer your skills to the nominations committee. Want to get involved, but don't know where you're needed, contact Ruth Blough, nominations committee chair, at 248.305.9362.

We have an excellent chapter and excellent volunteers. I encourage everyone to get involved, it's the best way to get the most from your membership dollars. □

## Certification Survey on the Way

*by Timothy H. Altom, Senior Member, Hoosier Chapter Manager, Certification Issues Committee*

Should STC certify technical communicators? No other question is as likely to provoke long and spirited discussions among the members. Although it's a simple question to pose, it's not an easy one to answer.

Many other professional organizations have investigated the question. Some have implemented certification plans, while others have not. There are arguments for both decisions.

To determine whether STC should implement a certification program, two questions must be answered:

- > Does the membership support such a program?
- > Does the program have any value to employers?

In 1996, the STC Board of Directors agreed to fund a study that would answer these questions. The request for proposals was issued in October 1996. Professional Testing Incorporated of Orlando, Florida submitted the

winning proposal to develop a survey and one or more focus groups. The surveys have been approved and will be mailed soon. Approximately one in five members will receive a survey. Results should be known by May 1998.

It is a lengthy survey, but one designed to find out as much as possible about members' attitudes toward certification. If you get one, please take the time to fill it out completely and mail back the answer sheet. Please let the members of your chapter know about the survey, and encourage them to complete and return the survey if they receive it. The board will rely heavily on the survey results to make decisions about certification. □

## Did You Know . . .

- > The Main Library at Indiana University sinks over an inch every year because when it was built, engineers failed to take into account the weight of all the books that would occupy the building.



- > It is impossible to keep your eyes open when you sneeze.



- > The world's longest recorded chicken flight was by a headless chicken.
- > Bookkeeper is the only word in the English language with three consecutive double letters.
- > The phrase: "the whole nine yards" does not, in fact, stem from football. Nine square yards is the amount

## Calendar of Events

**February 18 (Wednesday)**

**STC/SM Board of Directors Meeting**

Abbreviated meeting to be held before the  
program meeting

**February 18 (Wednesday)**

**STC/SM Program Meeting**

Joint Panel Discussion with AMWA

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

Email: ellen\_burgett@medstat.com

**March 11 (Wednesday)**

**Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon**

Paesano's on Washtenaw

Begins between 11:30 and noon

## 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  
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# TECH comments

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STC/SM

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