



TECH comments

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

April 1998

Volume 27, Issue 8



President's Message:

Being an Effective Leader

by Karen Gilbert President, STC/SM

It's not because it's difficult that we don't dare—it's because we don't dare that it's difficult.
—Seneca

Many people have asked me how I like being president of the Southeastern Michigan chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC/SM). My answer is simple and honest, I love it!! The position is challenging and rewarding. I encourage anyone who has thought about serving our chapter to do so, you won't regret it.

The greatest rewards I've received this year have come in the thank-you messages from members, students, and the general public. It's the best feeling in the world to know that in some small way, my efforts have helped someone. In a recent letter, an aspiring technical communicator wrote to me, "...thank you for all the help you have given me. You inspire me and I'm sure others will be equally inspired by your example." How often in our daily jobs do we receive this type of recognition?

At the March program meeting, I was humbled when the staff and students at Eastern Michigan University (EMU)

presented me with an EMU sweatshirt for my support of the technical communication program and of the students. There's no greater sense of achievement than to be recognized for your efforts by your alma mater. The feelings of pride and self worth when Ann Blakeslee, EMU Associate Professor, acknowledged the chapter's efforts, was truly an experience I'll cherish forever.

Becoming an Effective Leader

As chapter president, a mentor, and a manager, I have come to learn that being an effective leader takes understanding. As a manager, I understand that every person has a different skill set. It is my responsibility to help each writer develop all skills needed to become an effective technical communicator. This involves motivating the team, while giving each individual the confidence needed to succeed. Likewise, it's my responsibility to make lively and interesting those subjects that are tedious and dry. Additionally, I continually challenge myself so that I'm never bored. The resulting enthusiasm overflows to the team.

An effective leader is someone who listens. It is often said that people don't have the patience to listen, so they judge. I found that what matters, is not to judge people, but to help them evaluate themselves so

that they can grow. In my opinion, listening is the first sign of respect for another person.

Another sign of respect for a person and/or that person's efforts is recognition. It's a fact—people need recognition. Praising an effort generally means creating motivation for a result. It takes only a few moments to thank someone for a job well done. More important, recognition gives people the opportunity to be proud of their accomplishments.

We all have the ability to be effective leaders. It's just a question of whether we're up for the challenge. If you'd like to have a leadership role within the chapter, please contact Ruth Blough for more information.

Also, if you know an STC/SM member who truly exemplifies what it takes to be an effective leader, please consider nominating that person for our prestigious Outstanding Chapter Member award. Please see "1997 Outstanding Chapter Member" on page 3 for additional information.

Once again, I thank all my volunteers for your dedication and commitment. I appreciate your continued demonstration of leadership and involvement. Keep up the excellent work!! □

Inside . . .

Director-Sponsor Message	2
Welcome New Members	3
Quote of the Month.....	3
Meet the Speaker	3
Outstanding Chapter Member.....	3
Current Job Postings.....	4
Tell Us About Your Awards.....	5
Program Meeting	5
Did You Know	5
Calendar of Events.....	6
STC/SM Election.....	6

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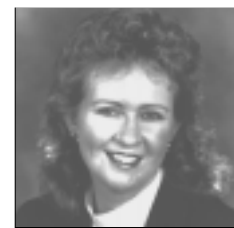
STC/SM Information/Web Page

734.332.9371

<http://stc.org/region4/smc>

Director-Sponsor Message: Competition Judging: An Honor, a Privilege —and a Lot of Work!

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



STC sponsors publications, art, online, video, and student technical writing competitions—at both the local chapter and international levels. Each year, thousands of technical communicators (mostly STC members), throughout the world, volunteer many hours of their time to plan, organize, and conduct competitions. They manage or work on committees that perform competition functions such as:

- Soliciting entries (producing and distributing a “call for entries”)
- Planning how to physically “handle” the entries when they come in
- Coordinating judges of the materials
- Sending the top entries to STC’s international competitions
- Presenting awards

And many technical communicators serve as judges in those competitions.

Being a Judge is an Honor

No, it’s not an *honor* in the sense of defending your country or anything as important as that! I mean it’s an *honor* because you are asked to share your expertise in the field of technical communication by judging communication pieces that are produced by others in our field. In many cases, chapters have to practically beg their members to volunteer to judge in STC competitions. However, in some cases, judges must actually apply and be chosen by a committee.

Such is the case for STC’s international-level competitions. This year in the international technical publications competition, for example, over 90 people applied to be judges. Only 36 judges were needed. It is an honor if you were chosen.

Being a Judge is a Privilege

Hey, I’m not trying to pretend that this is an “all-American, baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie” kind of thing. But when you’re a judge in a competition, you have the opportunity to look at some of the best examples of communication that are in the market today.

You can get great ideas about how to present something that you’re currently working on yourself. For example, you might see a very effective page layout or screen capture or graphic representation of information that you can imitate in a project—either now or in the future.

You also usually have the opportunity to interact with other judges in discussing the merits and areas for improvement on the entries that you judge. This often results in receiving more good ideas that you can use for improving your own projects.

Being a Judge is a Lot of Work!

No, it’s not always easy to judge the work of others. And sometimes it requires a lot of time and effort. Competition pieces are judged on many different aspects of their communication qualities. Therefore, judges have to look at the entries from several different points of view and with various standards of measurement in mind. They have to fill out forms that are sometimes complex and tedious; they have to give compliments on the good things and “constructive criticism” on the not-so-good aspects of each piece.

Let’s face it: There aren’t many of us who are experts in all of the areas of technical communication! That’s why we usually judge competition entries in teams. With a judging team of two to four technical communicators, people from the different communication fields can work together—each representing his or her area of specialty as a “subject expert” and give general comments on the other areas. And that requires hard work and cooperation among the team members.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

Director-Sponsor Message:

But Don't Let that Stop You

If you're asked to be a judge (or invited to apply), don't hesitate to try it. In addition to judging being an honor, a privilege, and a lot of work, it also can be a lot of fun! Take the job seriously, work hard on it, and cooperate with your judging team members—and have fun and reap the rewards. After all, you may benefit more from the experience than the people who receive the awards from STC!

The Recognitions Advisory committee provides guidance and continuity in planning and managing all Society recognition programs at the international, regional, and chapter levels. The committee makes the expertise of its members available to conference-planning committees to provide advice and guidance on standards and procedures for recognition activities at the annual conference. □

Meet the Speaker

This month's Program Meeting presentation, "The Meter is Running," is given by Christopher Julliet, one of STC's most active advocates of the self-employed. His presentation covers key aspects of how to set consulting rates based on a business practice, not happenstance.

A self-employed technical writer, publisher, and consultant, Chris has been a technical writer since 1979 and a full-time independent consultant since 1984. His clients include manufacturers of hardware and software for general business, and in the automated vision, automotive, health care, and robotics industries.

An STC Fellow, Chris has been active in

STC/SM since 1980, serving as president, vice president, membership manager, program manager, newsletter advertising manager, conference manager, Bylaws Committee manager, nominations manager, and information systems manager.

In addition to his chapter service, Chris was founding manager of STC's Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee. He has made a variety of presentations on consulting and self-employment at chapter meetings and conferences, and at STC annual conferences.

Whether you are currently self-employed or merely interested in finding out more about it, we hope you will join us for what promises to be an informative and entertaining evening. □

Outstanding Chapter Member

**Welcome,
New Members!**

- Nanette L. Andrusiak*
- Teruo Fujino*
- Susie K. Landes*
- Theresa N. LaVeck*
- Kristen E. Malechuk*
- Stephanie M. Nieman*
- Susan C. Piaka*
- Denise S. Roe*
- Bryan H. Shuman*
- Evelyn A. Slowik*
- Ann M. Suman*
- Christopher M. Viertelboeck*
- Steven F. Warden*
- Aaron J. Yacks*

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

Quote of the Month

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.

—*Groucho Marx*



Ruth Blough, STC/SM Senior Member, accepts the 1997 Outstanding Chapter Member award from Jim Anastasiow. Ruth's dedication to the chapter and her tireless efforts on its behalf make her a natural for this honor.

The STC Board votes to elect a chapter member for the Outstanding Chapter Member award each year. If you would like to nominate someone for this award, please contact a board member by April 30, 1998.

Current Job Postings

Permanent Full-Time

2/26/98

Creative Solutions in Dexter seeks a manager of technical communications and a technical writer.

Manager of Technical Communications

Opportunity for a positive, effective leader to staff/schedule project assignments, manage/support writers, research new software technologies/upcoming project needs, and build a strong relationship with other departments within the company.

Candidates must have:

- > BA/BS in technical communications, English or related field
- > 5+ years experience writing software documentation, tutorials, and Windows online help
- > One year experience supervising technical writers/support specialists
- > Expertise using RoboHelp 95, Ventura Publisher, FrameMaker, PageMaker, and MS Word
- > Experience developing and/or conforming to corporate style guides
- > Experience on local area networks

Must be able to perform multiple tasks on strict deadlines, to deal with shifting priorities, and to foster a productive work environment. Knowledge of tax and accounting principles and software a plus.

Technical Writer

Opportunity for technical writer with the following qualifications:

- > Excellent writing and editing skills
- > Demonstrated attention to detail
- > Commitment to quality
- > Excellent interpersonal skills
- > Ability to work on multiple projects and meet tight deadlines
- > Experience coordinating large projects or multiple projects simultaneously
- > Experience developing Windows 95 online help systems

Ideal candidate will also have:

- > Knowledge of tax and accounting principles
- > Experience with Ventura Publisher, WordPerfect, MSWord, RoboHelp 95

Excellent benefits and profit sharing.

Dept. LSV
Creative Solutions, Inc.
7322 Newman Blvd.
Dexter, MI 48130
Fax: 734.426.5860
Email: recruiting@CSIsolutions.com

2/23/98

Hines Industries, a small machine tool company in Ann Arbor, seeks technical writer to develop hardcopy operation and troubleshooting manuals. Responsibilities include documenting ISO 9001 policies and procedures, developing promotional and instructional videos, and supporting Marketing and Service department documentation needs.

Must have experience with Ventura Publisher, Corel PhotoPaint, Corel Draw, MS Office, and ISO 9001.

John Wakeman
Hines Industries
793 Airport Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
Fax: 734.996.9192

3/2/98

SPX Corporation has immediate opening in technical publications. Position requires strong written and verbal communication skills, word processing skills, experience in procedure or diagnostic development, and the ability to read various engineering documents. Also requires an ASE or state certification, or 3+ years experience as an automotive technician. Knowledge of SGML and ArborText is a plus. Competitive compensation and benefits package, including 401(k).

SPX Corporation
Attn: Human Resources
1633 Fairlane Circle, Suite 100
Allen Park, MI 48101
Fax: 313.749.0020

3/2/98

DataNet Quality Systems needs technical writer to maintain existing suite of printed and online documents for manufacturing quality control systems. RoboHelp and MS Word skills required; DemoShield and other multimedia or Web experience desired.

Ned Greenberg
DataNet Quality Systems
24567 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 430
Southfield, MI 48075
Phone: 248.357.2200
Fax: 248.357.4933
Email: sales@winspc.com
Web: www.winspc.com

3/2/98

Sandy Corporation seeks a program coordinator for its Chevrolet Certified Technician (CCT) training program. CCT is a training and motivation program for 34,000 mechanics at 4,000 Chevrolet dealerships nationwide.

Primary responsibility is to coordinate all daily activities for the CCT program in the areas of account services, editorial, production, computer services and budget. Future assignments will include designing and writing training programs using video, print and computer-based media.

Experience/skills required:

- > Degree in technical writing, English, journalism or equivalent experience
- > Hands-on experience with automotive repairs is a plus
- > Ability to work well with clients, CCT participants, staff, and suppliers
- > Good oral/written communication skills
- > Ability to work successfully under deadlines
- > Ability to efficiently manage personal workload and prioritize details
- > Computer literacy or ability and drive to learn computer operation

Roles and Responsibilities:

- > Meet with client to obtain directions for program

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

Current Job Postings

- > Understand program elements; inform staff and client of upcoming steps
- > Write elements for program activities
- > Conduct exam question validation with subject matter experts, including coordination of revisions with writers
- > Inform production of elements needed and schedule
- > Supply production with scripts, art/photo requirements, etc. Inform programmer of services required
- > Forward exam questions, revisions, and appeal results to computer services for processing
- > Understand program budget, including specifications for all elements and processes
- > Inform staff of requirements prior to beginning work

Paul Mlotkowski
Sandy Corporation
1500 W. Big Beaver
Troy, MI 48084
Email: PaulMlotko@SandyCorp.ds.adp.com

Contract

3/3/98

Contract-to-hire technical writer needed with 1-2 years experience. CAD/CAM or engineering experience helpful. Writer will create technical manuals to support training efforts within local engineering firm. Proficiency in Word and Power Point required. Must have excellent written and verbal communication skills and the ability to interact effectively with individuals at all levels.

Toni Pollock
Jawood Management Associates
Fax: 248.269.9644

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. □

Tell Us About Your Awards!

As a technical writer, you hear about the various STC-sponsored competitions, national and international. Included are competitions for technical art, publications, and online communication. These competitions provide you with the opportunity to have your work evaluated by your peers and to receive recognition for outstanding work.

We feel that it is important that you hear how our chapter members fare in these competitions. For those of you who have won awards, contact us, let us know. We'd love to hear details about the competitions, and details about the awards you have won. We'll be publishing award information in the next issue of *TECH comments*.



Send award information to:

Jill Bornemeier
Managing Editor
Jbornemeier@nei.com

April 22, 1998

Program

Meeting

The Meter is Running

Christopher Juillet

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

Entrée Choices:

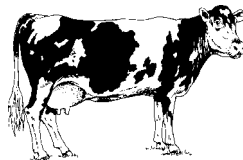
Breast of Chicken with Mushrooms
& Artichokes with Wild Rice
Vegetarian Stir Fry with
Fettuccine Noodles

RSVP: Ellen Burgett

734.913.3074

Email: ellen_burgett@medstat.com

Did You Know . . .



> Most cows give more milk when they listen to music.

> Historically, the day with the highest number of collect calls is Father's Day.

> In the early days of typewriters, proficient typists could type so fast that the keys frequently jammed against each other. In an effort to space often-used keys apart to prevent jamming, the familiar but illogical QWERTY pattern was developed.

> Humans can only smell one twentieth as well as a dog. Deodorant does help the situation some.



Calendar of Events

April 6 (Monday)

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

April 9 (Thursday)

Ann Arbor Networking Luncheon
Mediterrano (on Eisenhower Parkway)
Begins between 11:30 and 12 noon

April 22 (Wednesday)

STC/SM Program Meeting
The Meter is Running
Christopher Juillet
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

May 17-20

STC 45th Annual Conference
The Anaheim Convention Center



STC/SM Election

Your vote for the 1998/1999 Southeastern Michigan chapter's elected offices shows your support for the individuals who have offered to serve our chapter in leadership roles. Please mail your ballot before April 25 to have your voice heard!

If you have not received your ballot, please call Ruth Blough, Nominations Committee Chair, 248.305.9362.

Remember To Vote!!!

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. We accept manuscripts in both hardcopy and electronic format with 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:

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TECH comments

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