

Tech comments

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

November 1998

STC

Volume 28, Issue 3



Ginny Collins-Llope
President STC/SM

The Juggling Season

Halloween is over and the truly scary business of juggling our work schedules with holiday preparations and social events begins! I hope your holiday season will be busy and fun, but stress-free and peaceful. I think that's possible. I get closer every year anyway. Do you have some good tips for dealing with work and the holidays? Any secrets you care to share? Perhaps we can run some in the next issue.

November Program

In any case, I'd like to suggest that you put a couple of STC events in contention for your valuable time over the next 60 days or so. The program meeting, Wednesday, November 18 should be of great interest to anyone who may be translating documents from one language to another. I'm curious to know how the technology has changed to allow software to be truly useful in this task.

Holiday Gathering

The second event is our annual Holiday Gathering on Thursday, December 17. We changed from Wednesday to Thursday thinking that most people would be in a more festive mood toward the end of the week. However, we didn't want to hold the event on a Friday or Saturday because many of you have office parties on those days. I'm telling you all this so it will stick in your mind!

We are holding the party in the Long Acre house in Farmington Hills (very easy to find—right off of 696) for the third year. It is an old, large, stone farmhouse with just the right mix of casual and elegant—perfect for a holiday gathering. Make time to come, unwind, and toast the holidays with us. You'll be glad you did.

I'll Be In Touch

I couldn't think of a way to segue to this, so I'll just jump in with it. I'm planning to make some phone calls over the next few months. My goal is to speak with every member by next June; I think that's doable. When I call you, I'd like to discuss STC/SM; what you like, what you don't like (phone calls don't count), and how you might feel about spending a little time on a committee. I'd like to know what you think. Together we'll make sure STC/SM is heading in the right direction.

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The Path To Paris**24 September 1998**

Because I am not sure when your individual
ers will publish this article, I want to let you
that I am writing it shortly after returning from
September STC board meeting, held this year for
first time outside the U.S., in Paris, France. Now

e anyone levels charges of *junket*, I want to assure you that the entire board spent
10 hours on September 17, five hours on September 18, and about 11 hours on
September 19 holed up in hotel conference rooms (within sight of the Eiffel
Tower) working on society business (Sept. 17 and 18) and attending a meeting of
representatives from European and Israeli chapters (International Day, Sept. 19).
And, by various means, including winding up with the middle seats in a row on
United 777 flights (which are 11 across, by the way), my airfare totaled \$585 round
trip. A number of other board members also found similar relatively low airfares.

Just to remind you, STC (i.e., you guys) covers board members' transportation and
lodging costs during meetings and a \$20 per diem for meals and incidentals. Since
lunch at the International Day conference was \$30, it is obvious that the per diem
rarely covers all the expenses board members incur. I was asked twice by European
chapter members whether board membership carried any compensation for time
spent. Mais non!

The next question might be, "so why do we do it?" Rather than delve into the
philosophy of motivation and volunteerism, let's just say that most chapter leaders,
both at the STC board level and at the individual chapter level would probably
agree that:

- a. They usually receive more from their involvement in STC than they invest,
although what they receive may be less quantifiable than the number of hours
they donate.
- b. They find that the usefulness of a professional organization to them personally
increases with increased involvement.
- c. They want to have a voice in running or changing the services to members.
- d. They are more oriented toward *doing* in general.

They have actually received specific rewards in terms of chapter recognition (which
can be reflected in workplace recognition), referrals (especially in the case of
independent, self-employed members), opportunities, etc.

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The Path To Paris

Because of the work they are called upon to do, chapter leaders have opportunities to learn to manage committees, events, and activities. They also have opportunities to do things they may not usually encounter every day, such as run membership drives, produce marketing materials, or handle media relations. All these experiences are prime résumé additions.

Would I have otherwise had an opportunity to personally meet so many members of STC's European chapters and hear about their concerns if I were not on the board? Not likely.

Furthermore, would I now understand their concerns as well? It's very doubtful. STC Regions 3, 4, and 5 do not include any non-US chapters, so I do not hear regularly from these groups. Would I have ever visited France and spent time in wineries in Burgundy, Alsace, and Champagne before heading to Paris and the board meeting? Possibly, but not likely.

So, there's a case for involvement in chapter and STC leadership. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that volunteering to handle Southwestern Ohio chapter competitions in 1990 would lead to a trip to France in 1998. Now, of course, in between . . . well, let's just say there's been a lot of time spent, efforts made, support offered, and rewards received.

Your current chapter leaders are always on the lookout for their own replacements and for volunteers to handle the never-ending list of possible services to members your chapter might provide. Please join the *core crews* in your own chapters.

I would be pleased to hear any comments from you; I may use them in future columns. Thanks again for your time and attention. q

You can reach Thea Teich at:

Phone: 513.521.8102

Fax: 513.521.8139

TeichTMC@aol.com

Welcome New Members

Beck L. Brooks

Gil G. Brueckner

Patrice A. Davignon

Virginia Singer

Ann Marie Solomon

Patricia J. Yoder

And transferring in:

Shannon Hall

Marjorie Radella Welch

Kathryn A. Young

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

Membership Renewal: STC Takes Plastic

STC will mail dues renewal invoices for 1999 in November. Dues are payable on January 1, and must be paid by February 28 you to be eligible to vote in STC elections in the spring.

Dues may be paid by check, American Express, MasterCard, or VISA.

The rate for regular members is \$95. Members who joined between July 1 and September 30 receive a credit of 50 percent toward 1999 dues. Members who join after October 1 are paid in full through December 31, 1999.

Dues are deductible in part as a charitable donation on U.S. income tax returns. Read "Deduct Your STC Dues" on page 4 for more details.

q

Deduct Your STC Dues

(Reprinted from Tieline, October 1998)

If . . . [you] pay taxes in the United States, . . . STC dues are tax deductible. You can claim dues as a deduction in several ways.

Charitable Expense

All STC members who pay taxes in the United States can deduct at least a portion of their STC dues if they claim this portion as a charitable donation. IRS publication 526 (rev. 1996) defines this option:

“You may be able to deduct membership fees or dues you pay to a qualified organization. However, you can deduct only the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive.”

As a 501(c)(3) organization, STC is a qualified organization. The only determination that you need to make is the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive. STC's tangible benefits can be estimated at \$20 (\$10 for the Society's quarterly journal, *Technical Communication*, and \$10 for the magazine *Intercom*). The difference between the cost of membership (\$95) and tangible benefits (\$20) is \$76, and you may claim that amount as charitable contribution.

Business Expense

Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Miscellaneous Expense

Dues may also be deducted as a miscellaneous deduction. (For miscellaneous deductions to affect your taxes, the total amount of all miscellaneous deductions must exceed two percent of your adjusted gross income.)

If dues are deducted as a charitable expense, business expense, or miscellaneous expense, they must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid. In other words, dues paid in 1998 can be deducted only on 1998 tax returns. If you have any questions, contact your local IRS representative or an accountant.

Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Money, Not Time

The STC office has recently received a question concerning the deduction of time or personal services donated to STC. Please be aware that while dues, contributions, and out-of-pocket expenses may be deducted, personal services cannot.

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Join Us For Holiday Cheer December 17

Come celebrate the holidays at the annual STC/SM holiday party on Thursday, December 17. Sample an assortment of delectable hors d'oeuvres and chat with your STC colleagues in the warmth of the historic Longacre House in Farmington. The festivities begin at 6 p.m. and end at 9 p.m. Watch for your invitation in the mail or check the STC/SM web site for details.

Current Job Postings

Permanent Full-Time

Cabletron Systems seeks experienced technical writer. We use FrontPage 98 and HTML Help to create web-browser viewable user documentation. Experience in either beneficial, but not mandatory. Must have strong computer background, experience writing documentation for technical products, and be a self-starter and quick-learner. Competitive salary and benefits.

Mary Cutting
Cabletron Systems, Inc.
305 E. Eisenhower Parkway
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
Fax: 734.995.1114
Email: mcutting@nei.com
Web Site: <http://www.cabletron.com>

Health Level Seven (HL7) seeks technical writer to maintain Web site and edit and convert technical documents into PDF and HTML formats. Experience in medical writing and Web design and maintenance preferred.

HL7 develops standards for exchange of clinical data. Small office, fast-paced, exciting environment.

Karen Van Hentenryck
Associate Executive Director
Health Level Seven
3300 Washtenaw Ave., Suite 227
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-4250

Compuware seeks technical writer/editor with 1-5 years experience to write and update manuals and on-line help for client/server software. Must have experience with large-document desktop publishing tools. Software documentation experience preferred.

Karlen Dunlavy
Compuware Corporation
31440 Northwestern Highway
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48334
Phone: 248.737.7300
Fax: 248.737.7564
Email: karlen_dunlavy@compuware.com
<http://www.compuware.com>

Contract

Three-month contract to work on Windows Help manuals. Commute to Toledo 2-3 days a week; work from home 2-3 days a week.

Arun Nikore
Technical Recruiter
ADSC Ann Arbor
adsc.aa@ix.netcom.com
Phone: 734.761.2626, ext. 232
Fax: 734.761.5777

Writer needed to work on print-based training program for major Detroit area retailer. Almost full time through end of January. Work to be performed primarily in client's facility.

Robert Steinmetz, Ph.D., President
Learning Systems Sciences
11338 Moorpark Street
North Hollywood, CA 91602
Phone: 818.505.6222 ext. 114
Email Rsteinmetz@lss.net

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.

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Quote of the Month

What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember, what I do, I understand.

Confucius

Graduate Programs In Technical Communication

Representatives of Eastern Michigan University, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and Bowling Green State University, speaking at the October program meeting, encouraged us to consider returning to school to pursue a graduate degree in technical communication. They suggested that the benefits of such a program would be the opportunity to broaden our perspectives on our area of work, to acquire new conceptual tools and skills, and to explore different aspects of our field.

The speakers provided us with a brief summary of the programs available at their institutions.

Ann Blakeslee stressed the wide range of course options available in multiple disciplines and the large writing faculty at Eastern Michigan University.

Gary Heba told of the importance Bowling Green State University places on the practical experience that is a requirement of its program.

Frances J. Ranney spoke of the opportunities her students have to contribute to the development of Wayne State University's program.

Leslie Olsen described the strong emphasis on technology of the program of the University of Michigan, which is located within the College of Engineering.

These programs allow students to pursue a degree part-time while continuing to work. ¶

October Seminar

You don't go into business just to make money, but you must make money to stay in business.

Independent consulting is not right for everyone.

These were among the words of wisdom provided by Christopher Juillet at STC/SM's October seminar. Chris, an STC fellow, a long-standing member of the Southeastern Michigan chapter, and a 15-year veteran of independent consulting, shared his experience and hard-won wisdom with 35 fellow writers.

STC members came from cities in western Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois, as well as from the greater Detroit area to hear practical advice on setting up an office, which contract provisions are essential for agreements with clients, marketing, and determining the rates to charge for services. Those attending also enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences and start friendships with newly-met colleagues.

If you were unable to attend but would like to know what Chris had to say, a collection of his articles is available in either paper or HTML format at a cost of \$25. To order the articles, contact Chris at:

cjuillet@compuserve.com

-or-

Christopher Juillet
P.O. Box 1725
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Discount Tickets For Auto Show

Discount tickets to the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) are available to STC/SM members. With orders of 25 or more, the adult ticket price is \$6.00 each; the regular adult price is \$9.00. For information on this offer, call the NAIAS office at 248.643.0250 and refer to ticket purchase program #ASSOC99.

The show will be held in Cobo Center from January 9 to 18, 1999. ¶

Program Meeting Explores Translation Technology

Demand for translation is rising at a rate of 30% per year. Pressure on translators to produce high-quality results in shorter times is likewise increasing. For these reasons, computer technology has become a significant part of the translation industry. Translators who shunned certain technology as recently as five years ago now find themselves embracing it. The truth is that technology is needed just to meet market demands. Translators now routinely use all sorts of tools, from basic off-the-shelf software to high-end translation memories and digital translation systems. At the November 18 program meeting, Dr. Winfield Scott Bennett will share with us how current technology can help translation and translators.

Dr. Bennett has been a part of the machine translation community for 19 years. Beginning in 1979 with the Siemens-sponsored METAL project at the University of Texas at Austin, he has worked in research and development, marketing and sales and customer support. In 1993 he ended his tenure with Siemens and moved to Logos Corporation where he has had responsibility for linguistic development, customer support and quality assurance. He is now director of marketing at Logos. He has published a number of papers on both theoretical and practical issues of digital translation and organized several professional conferences.

Join us on November 18 at the Holiday Inn North Campus in Ann Arbor to learn about current trends in translation technology. Watch your mail for the registration flyer. ☐

Rays on Computing

A weekly syndicated column providing practical information for computer users who are not computer experts is now available to your local paper. "Rays on Computing" is written by Deborah S. Ray and Eric J. Ray, co-editors of the Technology Reviews department of *Technical Communication*, STC's professional journal. Their new column will focus on using computer technology to simplify complicated processes and generally make life easier. It is offered by Globe Syndicate. ☐

journal. Their new column will focus on using

November 18, 1998

Program Meeting

Current Language-Translation Technology

Dr. Winfield Scott Bennett
Logos Corporation

Holiday Inn North Campus
3600 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Cash Bar 6:30

Dinner 7:00

Presentation 8:00

Dinner and Meeting

Members: \$10.00

Nonmembers: \$30.00

Meeting Only

Members: \$5.00

Nonmembers: \$10.00

Entrée Choices:

Chicken Marsala

Baked Ziti

RSVP: Ruth Blough

248.305.9362

Email: ruth_open_door@msn.com

Calendar Of Events

November 18 (Wednesday)

Program Meeting

Machine Translation

Holiday Inn North Campus

Ann Arbor

November 19 (Thursday)

Ann Arbor Networking Lunch

Cooker Restaurant

2000 Commonwealth Blvd.

Begins between 11:30 and noon

December 7 (Monday)

Board of Directors Meeting

Home of Jill Bornemeier

6:30 p.m.

December 17 (Thursday)

Holiday Gathering

Longacre House

Farmington Hills

6:00-9:00 p.m.

January 20 (Wednesday)

Program Meeting

Susan Musico

Year 2000 Documentation

Holiday Inn North Campus

Ann Arbor

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.

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