

TECH comments

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

September 2000

Volume 10, Issue 1

Annual Networking Meeting

Join us to kick off the new year at our Annual STC/SM Networking Meeting. This is your chance to greet old friends and to make some new ones. Meet the board members, learn about chapter projects and plans for the new year, find out how you can support the chapter by volunteering to help, and discover how the chapter listserv can assist you in your job search, or help you find just the right person for that opening at your company. Job seekers and employers, this could be your night.

If you're looking for a job, come to the meeting and let the rest of us know you're in the market. Employers, if you're looking for a technical communicator, you couldn't come to a better place to announce your openings and talk to candidates. Bring plenty of business cards! If you don't know how to post a job opening to the listserv, we'll have someone available to tell you what to do.

The registration deadline is Tuesday, September 12. Please register by the deadline and pay in advance.

Members: \$15

Students: \$5

Non-members: \$20

Make checks payable to STC/SM.

Register by mail or e-mail at: iriscomms@earthlink.net. Please do not register more than once. If you register by e-mail please note that you have already registered when you mail your check to:

Nancy M. Sock
Iris Communications
PMB #235
2370 E. Stadium
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Coming Events

Annual Networking Meeting
Tuesday, September 19
6:30 Hors d'oeuvres and cash bar
7:30 Chapter Business Meeting

Networking Lunch
Wednesday September 27
Up South Cafe
W. Stadium Rd. in Ann Arbor
For more information contact:
Kathy Carter
E-mail: bluehoo@provide.net

Inside

Letter from the President	2
Welcome New Members	3
TECH comments is Going Electronic	3
Letter from the Immediate Past President	4
Lawrence Tech and You	5
Director-Sponsor's Report	6
Leaders Light the Way	7
Employment Opportunity	8



society for technical communication
southeastern michigan chapter

Chapter Board Members**President**

Paul Sisler
734.996.9006
psisler@arbor-comm.com

Vice President

Jennifer Regal
734.647.9650
jregal820@earthlink.net

Employment Referral Service

517.485.2975
beckyrps@earthlink.net

Membership

Jill Bornemeier
734.332.5571
jbornemeier@availnetworks.com

Programs

Mary Hayes
mary.hayes@mindspring.com

Web Master

Carissa Coulson
734.542.5955 ext.6682
carissacoulson@hotmail.com

Chapter Web Page

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

Quote of the Month

“ A vice president in an advertising agency is a “molehill man” [who] has until 5 PM to make [a] molehill into a mountain. An accomplished molehill man will often have his mountain finished even before lunch.”

-- Fred Allen

Letter from the President, Paul J. Sisler

Perhaps our calendar should begin when the crickets chirp, the school busses run, and the apples ripen. The pervasive myth that the end begins the Tuesday after Labor Day with the reddening of the sumac is lost on me each year, as I remember fresh starts from former school days and look forward to maple leaves crunching beneath my feet, steelhead running in from the lakes, and seeing my breath rise on a cool morning.

This autumn brings several new beginnings for me: two new additions to my family, new faces in the office, and a wonderful, creative, and dedicated STC chapter board I can't say how pleased I am to work for. It makes me want to shut down the air conditioning, throw open the windows and doors, and let the outside in.

Our September kick off meeting too is an opportunity to open the doors wide. When I moved to the area not so long ago, the first place I found new colleagues and friends was the fall networking meeting. I walked in with little more than a name badge, and it wasn't long before many of you introduced yourselves.

Now, when I bump into you or friends I know from my membership in other chapters at the international conference I'm thrilled to share this dynamic profession with you. It's your open and collegial spirit I find most rewarding about working with STC. And opening doors for a fresh look outside will be a theme you'll find running through our upcoming year.

Several events in nearby sister chapters offer opportunities to reach out to others in our communities not so far away:

- The international conference this year will be hosted by our colleagues in Chicago, May 13th - 16th, 2001.
- The Northeast Ohio Chapter welcomes us to Cleveland for a Region 4 Conference, Friday, October 20th.
- The Central Ohio Chapter, based in Columbus invites you to their Leadership Conference, Saturday, October 7th

After a successful return of competitions with an online documentation competition last year, we're joining the West Michigan Shores chapter in holding a technical communications competition for all of Southern Michigan, accepting entries in online communication, technical art, and technical publications categories.

Last year we spread out to meet all of you on your own turf, by forming partnerships with businesses and universities to hold programs at their locations. This approach was tremendously successful, and we're bringing it back by popular demand. We are a large group with members as far apart as Lansing and Windsor, and it was wonderful to see each of you at your own base of operations.

Continued on next page

Letter from the President, Paul J. Sisler, *Continued*

We've had wonderful luck bringing speakers from outside Southeastern Michigan over the past few years, and partnerships with other professional organizations for combined meetings have not only been well attended, but they've given us new opportunities to share expertise with colleagues who work in slightly different areas from ourselves. We'll continue this trend, bringing in speakers from other parts of the country and from other professions that impact our own. We'll also continue our half day seminars, which have become one of our most well received types of programs.

Ann Arbor networking lunches have long been one of my favorite ways to get away from the office, break bread with friends, and learn more about what's going on in your professional lives. The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 27th at the Up South Cafe on West Stadium. Now, members in the Detroit metro area have a networking lunch of their own, and members in Lansing have been meeting informally for over a year now.

Our chapter e-mail list has become much more than an extension of our Employee Referral Service. To push out the walls of our offices to a broader community of peers, who can offer support and help answer questions. And our web site has become much more than a way to publish information about chapter events to our members. Our web site reaches beyond our community to members of other chapters, to students considering technical writing as a career, and to professionals in other areas. This year I'm sure use of the e-mail list and web site will continue to grow, and we'll explore other new ways of reaching out to one another.

We have a lot to look forward to this year, including new programs, new ideas, and new ways of communicating. But what I look forward to most are the new faces, the faces just outside our world in programming, engineering, usability, and the old faces I see in new places. Hope to see you out there.

TECH comments is Going Electronic

TECH comments is now available via e-mail! If you would rather receive TECH comments straight to your computer, please send your request to the newsletter editor at Cytheria1@aol.com. In your e-mail please include your name and the name of the e-mail account you wish to have TECH comments sent to. The next issue of TECH comments will be sent to your e-mail account. It's that easy!

Remember, TECH comments is also available monthly on the internet at <http://stc.org/region4/smc>.

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 in MS Word or ASCII. 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:

Elizabeth Sobleskie
14819 Agnes
Southgate, MI 48195
Cytheria1@aol.com

Welcome New Members!

Vicki L. Babiak
Michelle N. Knisely
Matthew J. Kowalczyk
Sonya M. Podolan
Greg Ruvolo

Letter from the Immediate Past President

How quick the seasons pass. All too soon do the greens of summer turn to the oranges and browns of fall, to the icy white of winter, and the grey skies of spring. So too do the months pass when serving as President of an STC chapter. The past year was wonderfully busy, packed with meetings, phone calls, conversations, and E-mail relating to the workings of our chapter.

It was a good year. Wait, let me rephrase that... it was a GREAT year!

For the first time in a number of years, our chapter sponsored a competition. We had excellent program meetings that were well-attended and located across our chapter. For a number of reasons, the most significant of which was the effort put forth by the Programs team, we ended the year under budget and financially sound.

The team of people running our chapter did an excellent job. You should be proud of them. I know I am. At the volunteer dinner/program, I stated that this was the finest group of people with whom I have had the privilege of working. I meant it then and I mean it now. If you have yet to meet the men and women who ran the chapter last year and those who will run it in the year to come, make an effort to do so. They are dedicated professionals who seek only the best for our chapter, our individual members, and our profession.

Our chapter is filled with many such men and women. Many have served on the board in the past, many will do so in the future. It is an excellent opportunity to work with quality people toward a common goal. A chance to meet others in our profession. To meet those with whom we share a common bond. We are an organization whose membership spans countless industries, but we all seek to provide our customers, our readers, with the clearest and most effective information possible. We all seek excellence in our work and the knowledge that will let us achieve that excellence. Working together, we can have both.

I am proud to have served as president of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of STC, but more proud of the men and women who made my job so easy. I had a lot of fun and come away much wiser than when I started. I thank you for this and regret only that I was unable to meet each of you over the course of the past year.

As I take my leave, I ask that you each give your support to the leaders running the chapter next year. They are an excellent collection of people and they deserve all the assistance and support we can provide. I wish you each success and happiness in the years ahead.

With kindest regard and appreciation,

Michael J. Dailey

Lawrence Tech Offers State-of-the-Art Technical Communication Courses

Are you interested in enhancing your existing skills as a technical communicator and in learning new techniques for the practice of technical communication? If so, Lawrence Technological University in Southfield may have just the right program of study for you.

"We have a variety of courses for everyone interested in learning more about technical communication," says Dr. Henrietta Shirk, new director of the technical communication program at Lawrence. "Whether you are a practicing professional wanting to upgrade your current knowledge and skills, or whether you want to complete an undergraduate degree in the field of technical communication, Lawrence Tech offers courses that combine state-of-the-art techniques and practices with the study of the rhetorical and theoretical foundations of the field."

Lawrence Tech offers two academic programs for technical communicators to accomplish their professional goals - a Certificate in Technical Communication (CTC) and a Bachelor of Science in Technical Communication (BSTC).

The Certificate program in Technical Communication requires only 15 credit hours, with six of those hours being electives from among state-of-the-art technical communication courses. Students are therefore able to tailor their certificate program studies to meet their individual needs for professional development.

The Bachelor's degree program in Technical Communication combines traditional training in writing and oral presentation with work in computerized communication technologies and multimedia design. Students in the B.S. degree program complete a total of 120 credit hours.

According to Dr. Shirk, "You will be stimulated and challenged by Lawrence Tech's courses in technical communication. We have an excellent faculty, most of whom have had 'real-world' corporate experience. Our goal is to produce technical communicators who can contribute to the ongoing success of organizations in today's fast-paced, technology-based workplace."

Some of the courses offered by Lawrence Tech include Desktop Publishing, Document Design, Interpersonal and Nonverbal Communication, Multimedia, Computer-Assisted Instructional Design, and Technical Editing.

For more information about Lawrence Tech's technical communication courses and programs, contact:

Dr. Henrietta Nickels Shirk, Director Technical Communication
Lawrence Technological University
Department of Humanities
21000 West Ten Mile Road
Southfield, MI 48075-1058
shirk@ltu.edu
248-204-3525

Director-Sponsor's Report, Thea Teich

I am having a hard time realizing that September is upon us along with the kickoff to a new STC year. The STC board meeting is less than a month away, and I'm stopping by the admin council meeting of SWO tomorrow.

What to do to kick off the year with a charge that gets everyone going in the direction that leads to the greatest return in terms of your professional development, learning, empowerment, and chapter vigor? Guess what, folks? Based upon some highly informal "surveys," the best way to get the most from your STC chapter is to do something to help it provide professional development, learning, etc. for the other members. In other words, the people who get the most from chapter activities are the people who help put them on.

Now, before you start thinking that your chapter leaders are self-serving, please remember that they are always willing to share their advantages with their fellow members. The price? A little assistance, a little involvement, a little expression of interest in becoming a chapter leader yourself. It's not difficult to get started, and the rewards are unlimited.

Bottom line, can you give an hour a week to help support your chapter?

You find the meetings useful, you find the networking useful, maybe some of you have found jobs and freelance projects through the people you know in your chapter.

I really don't want to sound like your local Public Broadcasting Station, but I don't know another way to put it. Can you give your chapter an hour a week? Or maybe, an hour every two weeks? Or maybe two hours once a month?

There's a lot of jobs you can do for your chapter that take just that long.

What's in it for you?

Well, there's the fact that you're helping to ensure that the chapter keeps going. The chapters that fall apart often do so because just a few people try to do everything. They burn out, they throw up their hands, and walk away – all because no one else would help send out the meeting notices.

There's the fact that you're giving something back to the chapter—in return for all you've gotten out of it.

Plus, there's the chance to do something you may have never had the opportunity to do otherwise, to prove to yourself you can do it. Want to try your hand at organizing a project start to finish—something they still aren't ready to let you do at work? Your chapter needs you.

Want to try marketing writing, when all you do in the office is documentation and help? Your chapter needs you.

Want to have a little decision-making authority along with all that responsibility? Step right up. Your chapter really needs YOU.

Just help out on a committee. I started out with competitions. I also served on the professional development committee of the Southwestern Ohio Chapter along with John, who worked at the time for a software developer on the east side of town. After I started my own business, a co-worker of John's wanted to outsource the writing of a technical marketing booklet on a product. She got my name from someone she knew at another software developer, someone she had worked with at one time. However, this potential client did not know anything about me directly; all she had was her former co-worker's recommendation.

She called me, and after I gave my spiel, I said, "do you know John, who works at your company? John has known me for years and we worked together on a committee for STC. Wouldn't you know it? She got off the phone with me and went straight to John, who vouched for me and my promise to meet her deadlines. So. There's quantitative, as well as qualitative reasons for volunteering in your STC chapter.

But the most important reason is just that: It's YOUR Chapter. Please talk to your chapter officers or committee managers soon. And, have a great STC year.

Leaders Light the Way, J. Suzanna Laurent

I have decided to call my monthly column “Leaders Light the Way!” because I know how often great leaders are developed through their participation in STC chapters. You are the “leaders who light the way”—those in roles such as mentors, officers, and committee or project managers. You make a tremendous difference to the Society and its members, and I enthusiastically thank you for these contributions to STC!

The most successful leaders are the ones who recognize the creative potential of the people on their teams and use that potential wisely. The reward for good leaders is personal and professional growth, self-satisfaction, and a chance to make a difference in the technical communication field.

As a Society-level leader, I know the same thing about STC chapters that Baskin-Robbins knows about ice cream there are many different flavors. None of STC’s chapters are just plain vanilla. The chapters don’t operate exactly the same, have the same goals, or need the same things from us. STC chapters are as varied as the people who make up their membership, and this is true of their resources as well. You probably know what is available within your chapter, but good leaders must use all of their resources, so I want to review a few that are available to you from the Society.

The number one benefit that members say they receive from their STC membership is *access to the chapter and the Society web sites*. The Society web site is at www.stc-va.org, and the amount of information stored on this award-winning site is awesome. The web site also provides guidelines for competitions, grant and loan programs, recognition programs, and so much more. Take time now to review this web site, because it is a valuable resource that should answer many questions about STC.

The Chapter Handbook on the web site provides information about chapter finances, programs, public relations, newsletters, and employment. It also gives advice on leading a volunteer board, finding and retaining members, and nurturing volunteers.

The *STC Administrative Directory* identifies members in key positions within the Society. It is published three times a year and mailed to all those listed in the directory, which includes the board of directors, assistants to the president, committee managers, editors of *Technical Communication*, *Intercom*, and *Tieline*, faculty advisors, and the chapter presidents, newsletter editors, employment managers, and membership managers.

Tieline is the monthly publication mailed to STC leaders that has articles and hints for running successful chapters. You can even search the website for past articles in this and the Society’s other award-winning publications.

To gather ideas for activities, refer to the new *Chapter Achievement Award guidelines* on the web site; they reveal the basic requirements for successful chapters.

Leadership workshops are always available at our annual and Region 5 conferences. Many chapters even host their own leadership workshops.

Don’t forget that I am also a resource. My job as *Director-Sponsor* is to serve as a liaison between the members and the board of directors. When you have a concern that cannot be solved with information from any of these resources, please contact me at suzanna.laurent@mciworld.com. Resolve now to become a better leader and take advantage of STC and the opportunities it offers to do just that!

Employment Opportunity

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is looking for Instructional Developers. Selected candidates will develop documentation both on-line and hardcopy. Individuals will plan, coordinate and implement approved projects on a divisional and corporate level; conduct front-end analysis and develop performance based training to meet operational needs; provide effective and efficient solutions to business problems and communicate recommendations to all levels of the organization; as well as evaluate documentation and training to ensure cost effectiveness.

Requirements include a Bachelor's degree in Instructional Technology, Technical Communications or related discipline with a maximum of two years technical writing experience. Demonstrated oral and written communication skills, with emphasis on syntax, grammar and presentations of materials essential. PC skills required: word processing-DOS or Windows, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and project management software.

Please submit credentials including salary requirements to:

Hillary Davis
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
27000 West 11 Mile Mailcode B424
Southfield, MI 48034
e-mail: Hdavis@bcbsm.com
www.bcbsm.com



society for technical communication
southeastern michigan chapter

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 222031854
703.522.4114
stc@stc-va.org

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

The mission of the Southeastern Michigan chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is to:

- foster a sense of community among technical communicators and provide a forum for professional development,
- enhance the professionalism of the members and the status of the profession by promoting the technical communication profession to business, government, and academic organizations,
- provide information through publications and reports,
- promote the education of members and encourage professional and academic mentoring,
- encourage the development of university, academic, and professional courses and research activities in the field of technical communications,
- encourage professional development through competition; technical programs that provide professional education related to communication technologies, methods, and applications; and networking opportunities.

TECH comments

STC/SM
P.O. Box 128
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

