

TECH comments

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

October 2000

Volume 10, Issue 2

Letter from the President, Paul J. Sisler

It's difficult, in this olympic season, not to think of goals, not to marvel at human success, not to enjoy the kaleidoscope of flags and harmonies of national anthems brought together for this single, unifying occasion. While the rest of us have been enjoying the torchlighting ceremony of our annual networking meeting and play-by-play in a new issue of our newsletter, our board has been working behind the scenes. They've been mulling over recent success, setting new goals for the chapter, and planning new ways to bring us all together. The executive board has made an initial pass at writing new chapter goals for the year, and I'd like to use this space to give you a preview of the work they've been doing to ensure our continued success, and if not a gold medal, perhaps a chapter achievement award.

We've enjoyed a lot of success the past few years. We're over a financial hump and building opportunities for new chapter activities and services. We've seen increased attendance at programs, heightened volunteerism, and growing membership. We've also successfully revived some old activities, such as the publications competition. We've expanded existing activities--there's now a networking lunch in the Detroit metro area. And we've continued to cultivate new programs, such as one-day seminars, which have become an annual Spring event. We have a strong foundation on which to build, and the board is conducting goal-setting activities to ensure we don't miss any opportunities.

Among our goals this year are identifying member needs, concerns, and interests as a basis for creating strategies that will guide our activities and services. We're beginning with a review of a lot of good information we already have, including recent phone surveys, a documents from the chapter archives, and data gathered by the international office. We'll also be plotting the density of our membership from Windsor to Lansing to better understand where we work, live, and play, and to help us plan the locations of future programs. Expect to see a chapter member survey soon. The information we plan to gather with this survey will help the board plan the activities that will best meet your needs and set the course of the chapter in the direction you want to move.

On a long-term scale, a planning committee composed of current and former chapter leaders has been created to draft a three-year plan for the chapter. This team will help us identify our needs and interests, and will help us recognize benchmarks of success for which we should aim.

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Coming Events

Networking Lunch
Wednesday, November 29
Paesano Restaurant
Washtenaw Ave
For more information contact:
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society for technical communication
southeastern michigan chapter

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Letter from the President, *Continued*

One of our themes this year is affirm our chapter's nature as an organization run for the benefit of its members. The volunteers who conduct the business of our chapter do so on our behalf. This year the board is taking extra care to ensure that board and chapter doors are open wide for greater interaction, community, and growth. We have plans to make chapter bylaws and mission available on our web site.

The board also plans to provide you with summaries of chapter board meetings and other administrative activities. Don't forget that board meetings are open for your attendance. If you have an issue to place before the board, please do so. And if your aware of an item on the board's agenda that interests you, please feel free to attend the regular monthly board meetings.

In the interest of continuing a tradition of strong community, we're also creating programs, teams, and packages for welcoming new members and transfers into the chapter, as well as to provide support for new volunteers. We'll soon create a volunteer coordinator position, develop volunteer information packets, and written job descriptions. We'll also be developing a welcome packet and putting a program into place to ensure that all new members are contacted by a chapter welcoming committee.

Not only do new technologies continue to change our professional lives, offering us new ways to provide technical information and new ways to conduct business, they also offer us new ways to interact as a chapter. This year, we'll continue our effort to investigate new ways to use computer-mediated communication to conduct chapter business and activities. We'll review emerging technologies likely to affect our professional lives in program meetings. But we'll also look into methods for conducting online meetings, online voting, and online chapter surveys. We'll review new approaches to extend existing information services, such as delivering our newsletter online and adding new features to our web site.

One of the issues that's come to the attention of the board is that we're broadly dispersed geographically. Clearly, our geographical diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It provides us with exposure to industries, colleagues, businesses, and ideas often outside the reach of a small local chapter. We'll capitalize on that strength bringing together colleagues at chapter functions and through chapter communications who might otherwise never meet because they live and work three-hours apart. We'll also continue to encourage strong local activities, such as the Ann Arbor and Detroit networking lunches, to bring people together who are close by. We'll continue to hold chapter meetings at various locations throughout the chapter to ensure that everybody has a chance to have a program close by. And we'll develop Mid-MI and East-Side task forces to find new ways to support and address the needs of members on our geographic perimeters.

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

We're also strengthening our already powerful ties to our community. We're investigating an industry-academy handshaking event to connect chapter members to nearby academic programs, to introduce new talent to employers and employers to new talent, to give chapter members in industry a look at new research and researchers a fresh look at how business is being conducted, and to help the chapter build new mentor/protege relationships. We'll also extend ourselves by reaching out to other chapters and other professional organizations through shared communication and joint activities.

It's already starting to look like an exciting year of building on a strong foundation of recent success, finding new ways to work, building new services to our community. Thanks for letting me share it with you.

The STC Story

As most of you know, Past President Mary Wise announced the new STC mission statement, *Designing the Future of Technical Communication*, at Leadership Day at the Orlando conference. Another external brand tool is the organization's "story," a brief explanation of what the organization stands for, who its members are, and how it views its future. The STC board approved the STC story—our consistent "face" we present to the rest of the world. While it is not meant to replace the more extensive literature we provide to prospective members and others, the story is the "elevator message" we can use to briefly explain who and what we are.

Through information sharing and industry leadership, STC helps professionals design effective communication for a technical world. Because technology touches everyone, STC promotes public welfare by encouraging the development of better-educated professionals whose jobs are to make complicated information usable by many.

The organization's growth has mirrored our growing dependence on technology. Initially, STC was primarily made up of engineers who, among other activities, wrote instructions and descriptions of how electrical and mechanical products worked. A profound change took place as the pervasiveness of technology and the need to understand it became an integral part of our everyday lives. With the emergence of the Internet and online communication, our members now focus on supporting all aspects of the rapidly evolving world of technology. The organization began because those working in the field recognized themselves as professionals with unique training and career issues. Today, STC is nearly 50 years old, with 150 chapters and 25,000 members worldwide. It is the largest organization for technical communicators. STC offers industry leadership and the education, networking, and information required in a world where change is "the way it is."

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.

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TECH comments is Available Electronically

TECH comments is also available in pdf format and can be sent directly to your computer via e-mail. If you're interested in receiving Tech comments through e-mail, please send your request to the Newsletter Editor at Cytheria1@aol.com.

Director-Sponsor's Report, Thea Teich

The STC Board of Directors met in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, September 14-17 and covered a great deal of ground, including:

- Forming a policy about chapter formation outside the United States and relationships with existing techcomm organizations in other countries
- Branding and corporate identity
- Web site hosting for chapters
- Approving a whole lot of Merit Grants. Congratulations to these many chapters with so many innovative and important programs in the works!

These major issues were addressed along with the “regular” STC business of, among other subjects, chapter affairs and program areas, including research, SIGs, professional development, competitions, conferences, communications, and external affairs. Because this article has to be relatively brief, these subjects cannot be described in detail. Several of them could easily be main topics of articles. It took the board 2.5 long days to deal with them. So, please contact me if you have any questions.

Committee and Program Updates

- The board authorized the STC office to conduct a membership drive using the services of a professional marketing company.
- STC will become an affiliate member of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The annual fee for this is \$5,000. W3C determines standards for Web-based communication, among other wide-ranging concerns of specific interest to STC.
- The board acknowledged three new chapters approved by the Executive Council over the summer:
 - The San Luis Obispo Chapter in Region 8
 - The Texas A&M Student Chapter in Region 5.
 - The Netherlands Chapter in Region 4
- The Instructional Design & Learning Special Interest Group (SIG) was approved with an initial budget of \$1,900.
- Denver, Colorado, will be the location of the 52nd STC Annual Conference in 2006.
- Minneapolis, Minnesota, will be the location of the 53rd STC Annual Conference in 2007.
- Freya Winsberg of the Phoenix Chapter was appointed program manager for the 50th STC Annual Conference (Seattle, 2003).
- The Conference registration fee for members for the 48th STC Annual Conference in Chicago in 2001 will be \$420. The discounted rate for speakers will remain \$350.

The following members were appointed as managers of Society committees:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward Carbrey, Boston Chapter, Jay R. Gould Award Committee • Dale Erickson, Lone Star Chapter, New Media Delivery Systems Committee in the Communications area • Jon Baker, Boston Chapter, New Media Publications Committee in the Communications area • Jack Molisani, Los Angeles Chapter, Chapter and Regional Conferences Committee in the Chapter Affairs area (2nd Vice President) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy Burdan, Hoosier (Indiana) Chapter, Scientific Communication SIG • Roy Hartshorn, Toronto Chapter, Canadian Curricula in Professional Development Committee in the Professional Development area |
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Director-Sponsor's Report, Thea Teich, *Continued*

Merit Grants and Loans to Chapters

- \$3,000 USD to Central New York to implement a comprehensive revitalization/growth plan.
- \$3,000 USD to Mid-South to build its scholarship fund.
- \$3,000 USD to Atlanta to build its scholarship fund.
- \$1,200 to Hoosier to develop the Insight Award to recognize Indiana corporations and organizations that innovatively use the skills and capabilities of their technical communicators.
- \$3,000 to Alberta to construct a portable display to be used at the all-Canada Smart 2000 Conference and Exposition in November 2000, and at regional professional, educational, and community events.
- \$2,070 USD to tAlaska to construct a portable display for use at regional professional, educational, and community events across Alaska.
- \$1,500 to East Bay to further develop its Technical Literacy Program.
- A \$6,000 USD multichapter loan to Mid-Valley and Willamette Valley to host the Region 7 conference in Portland, OR, October 2001.
- A \$3,000 loan to Los Angeles to seed a multichapter, self-sustaining technical publications, online communication, and art competition in Southern California.

Branding and Corporate Identity

The board approved a new logo and stationery program for the Society. By the end of the year, chapter presidents will receive information on how to use the new logo and various design elements in chapter stationery and hard and electronic copy materials.

I'll be talking more about the branding process, brand tools, and how they can be used by chapters as both creative "springboards" and templates to make decision making easier at the Region 4 Leadership Workshop in Columbus, OH, October 7, 2000 (sponsored by the Central Ohio Chapter).

Web site Hosting for Chapters

For the past several years, the board has been dealing with a number of difficult issues related to decentralized versus centralized hosting of chapter Web sites. Recent problems and service difficulties as STC.org's bandwidth needs have exceeded what our current ISP can provide makes this issue urgent as well as extremely important.

Over the next few months, committees in the Communications area, managed by Lory Hawkes, AP for Communications, will be developing and implementing a transition plan that will enable chapters to select their own ISPs and maintain their own Web sites in a decentralized system. Such a system means that, within some general guidelines (we do have to present a fairly consistent "face" to the world; see Branding above), chapters will have greater creative latitude and capabilities to develop and change their Web sites. ISP and other costs associated with Web sites have decreased considerably over the years, so most chapters will be able to maintain their sites with their chapter funds. Small and new chapters, which may not have enough funds, are eligible for grants for Web site startup under the existing Merit Grant program. Contact your Director-Sponsor for more details. Again, moving chapter Web sites from the volunteer-run STC.org site to ISPs selected by individual chapters will occur according to a careful transition plan, and chapter presidents will be contacted.

Again, the issues mentioned in this article are far-reaching and important, but the discussions here are necessarily brief. Please contact me with your questions. You can also find me at the Region 4 Conference, Friday, October 20, sponsored by the Northeast Ohio Chapter in Twinsburg, OH. I hope to see everyone there.



society for technical communication
southeastern michigan chapter

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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

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