



TECH

comments

March-April 2003

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TECH *comments*

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

Managing Editor

Lanette Cornwell
Lanette.Cornwell@buckeye-express.com

Layout Editor

Thomas MacLaney
tmacLANey@aol.com

Contributors to This Issue

See page 9 for this month's list.



Letter from the President

What We've Been Up To

By Catherine Titta Buerkle

It seems like we've had a busy year as a chapter so far, and it's coming to a close awfully fast! As this issue heralds the coming of spring, I thought I'd summarize some of the recent doings of your chapter council this year.

Bylaws Update Nearly Complete

The big news in our chapter is that we've undertaken a revision of our chapter bylaws, and as of this writing, have nearly brought it to a close.

The whole project started a couple of years ago, when we realized we had a single, typewritten copy of the 1989 bylaws. Sally Paul kindly volunteered to do the typing task, and when the officers next sat down to review the Word file, we realized much of the content needed updating to reflect current practices.

So, out came the red pens, and we proceeded to include descriptions for the Listserv and Web Site committees, etc. In checking with the international STC office, we learned that all chapter bylaws must undergo a review by their bylaw committee, to confirm that each chapter complies with the overall STC charter in its structure.

Well, that review brought about a few more changes, a couple in the way we run the chapter council meetings, and several terminology tweaks as well.

With all of the typing and editing and reviewing behind us, we're ready for the membership to review the proposed bylaws update, and the council will bring it to a vote at our March 3rd meeting.

I'm pleased that several members have asked to review the current and proposed bylaws changes, and I hope that people feel free to attend the council meeting to discuss this agenda item before the council decides

Continued on page 2

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to call for a final vote. As a former manager of mine always said, "The more eyes, the better!" This goes double for documents that are updated roughly once a decade, such as chapter bylaws.

Education Committee in the Works

In other council news, you may be interested to know that we are laying the preliminary groundwork for ramping up an Education Committee. At this point, we are reviewing suggestions and ideas from what other STC chapters do in their education committees, to see what would work for us.

I expect that by the end of the year, we'll have identified a mission for the new education committee. Two committee roles I'm sure we'll need are creating materials behind the scenes for committee use – great portfolio builders! – and participating in a more active community outreach role by visiting schools, etc. If anyone is interested in serving on this committee as it gets up and running, please contact me or a council member.

Well-attended Programs

We've had some very well attended programs recently, due to the quick wits of our terrific Programs team. They've responded to topic suggestions from members and also included many program topics related to the current economic market.

Please join us for these upcoming "not to miss" events:

March 20, *Technical Writing and the Law: An Overview of Copyright Law and Writer Responsibilities*, with Carol Shepherd of Arborlaw Associates. Meeting will be held at AAA in Dearborn.

April 10, *From Training Site to Web Site: Techniques and Tools for Transferring Training and Documentation to the World Wide Web*, a panel discussion and joint meeting with the local American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) chapter at Washtenaw Community College.

May, no program meeting due to international STC conference.

Early June, date TBD, our annual *Volunteer Celebration* and dinner – come to network, reward

this year's volunteers, and meet next year's chapter officers. Watch our chapter web site, www.stc-sm.org, and your mailbox for location and sign-up information.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about chapter business that you'd like to voice, please don't hesitate to e-mail me at ctittabuerkle@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading.

**Deadline:
April 14**

**May-June issue
of
TECHcomments**

E-mail submissions to
Lanette.Cornwell
@buckeye-express.com

Announcing...

The STC/SM Logo Contest!

Prize: a \$25 Amazon.com gift certificate, plus a special surprise gift.

STC/SM is looking for a colorful chapter logo that will still look good when printed in black and white. The winning logo will appear in the newsletter and on the web site. For now, chapter stationery will remain as is.

Maybe you will be the lucky member who sees his or her idea come to life!

The STC national logo may NOT be incorporated in the chapter logo. The *Guidelines for use of the STC Logo and Logotype* state, "Do not incorporate or blend the Society logo into your chapter/SIG logo in any way. A logo that is created for a chapter/SIG should stand on its own and should not need to use the STC logo to identify itself."

Contest Deadline: May 1st

The board will announce its choice for winner at the Awards Dinner/Volunteer Celebration in June.

We'll be looking forward to your submissions: GOOD LUCK!



STC/SM Board 2002-2003

President

Catherine Titta Buerkle
ctittabuerkle@yahoo.com

Vice President

Mary Jo David
maryjo@writeawayent.com

Treasurer

Colleen DeNardo
colleen.denardo@la-z-boy.com

Secretary

Deb Stacy
dstacy@creativesolutions.com

Immediate Past President &
Nominations Chair

Jennifer Regal
jregal@comcast.net

Job Board/Listserv Manager

Chris Pellar-Kosbar
Chris@thinksystem.net

Membership

Arlene Dietz
d.dynamics@attglobal.net

Programs

Cecilia Lorenz
arcs@addressisp.com

Newsletter

Lanette Cornwell
Lanette.Cornwell@buckeye-express.com

Nominations

Mike Dailey
mjpdailey@comcast.net

Web Master

Shannon Everhart
shannoneverhart@airliftcompany.com

Professional Liaison

Open

Publicity

Kelly Self
kdself@juno.com

STC@50

Celebrating our History— and our Present—with Ernie Mazzatenta

By Mary Jo David

STC/SM roots run long and deep, and Ernie Mazzatenta is living proof of that. Resting (and I use that term loosely!) in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, Ernie and his wife, Joan, are enjoying their retirement. Notice I didn't say they are taking it easy! As one of the early members of our South-eastern Michigan chapter, Ernie was very much involved in the chapter's activities and he continues to be an active member of STC—most recently participating on the STC@50 anniversary committee and serving as a head judge in the International Technical Publications Competition.

Ernie joined STC/SM in 1968, when it was still known as the Society for Technical Writers and Publishers. He recalls his assistant department head at GM inviting him to an STWP meeting. Ernie was a bit reluctant to go, but eventually gave in. I can practically "hear" his smile over the phone as he recounts walking into the first meeting to find "about six old men seated around a table." That was it—that was the meeting! Luckily, he persevered and was sold on the organization after attending his first all-day chapter seminar, where he was drawn in by the caliber and expertise of the speakers.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many STC/SM members were working in the auto industry. GM, Ford, and Chrysler employed many technical writers, as did Fruehauf Trucking and Ethyl Corporation. He also recalls that a number of members



An STC Team: Ernie and Joan Mazzatenta

A familiar face at many chapter functions, STC/SM honored Joan for her outstanding service to the chapter by recognizing her as "Honorary Chapter Member" in 1987.

were working at the University of Michigan. Ernie guided the chapter in the early '70s with the help of fellow officers Andy Murphy, Dick Behnke, and Don Blessing.

Ernie's own career began with degrees in Journalism from Kent State and Northwestern University and newspaper work for five years after college. After that, Ernie *became* the Big Three, beginning his business writing career as a newsletter editor for Ford, then moving to Corporate Communications for Chrysler, and eventually retiring from GM, where he worked as a writer and instructor in the Research Labs. At GM, Ernie's attention focused on collaborating with engineers and scientists, helping them publish articles for outside publications and teaching them to improve their own writing and editing skills.

Although Ernie's influence has touched many areas of STC, his pride and joy is the STC Technical Publications Competition. After attending his first STC/SM seminar,

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he quickly recognized an opportunity to add a chapter competitions angle to the next seminar. After successfully founding the South-eastern Michigan Chapter Communications Competition in 1969, Ernie was asked to help form a national competition. Says Ernie, "I accepted the invitation and, for the next few years, we guided the growth of the competition from one involving just three chapters to one serving chapters from coast to coast. Today, that competition is global." The benefits of chapter and international competitions have been numerous, from individual recognition to boosting membership and meeting attendance. Upon receiving awards and honorable mentions, members have shared with Ernie stories of increased visibility and respect from co-workers and management alike.

Since "retiring," Ernie and Joan have moved to Hendersonville, NC, where he is a member of

the Carolina Foothills chapter and still actively involved in STC at the international level. In his 35 years of involvement, he hasn't missed more than 3 or 4 international conferences, and of course he's making plans for Dallas in May. According to Ernie, the STC supplies "the most prolific group of speakers and presenters in the world—no other society in the world even comes close." Looking back over the many years of his STC affiliation, Ernie has this to say, "What I value most, perhaps, is the many opportunities I've been handed—from the very first year of membership right up to this year. If anyone is wondering whether they should join STC or renew membership, they should realize that our Society represents an open door to achieve. If you are looking for a chance to show creativity, to display resourcefulness, to exhibit leadership qualities, the society gives every member that chance—year in and year out."

The Mazzatenta STC Legacy Continues

- 1968:** Joined STWP (later to become STC)
- 1969:** Established chapter's first publications competition
- 1970:** Co-founded the national technical publications competition
- 1971:** Elected president of STC/SM chapter
- 1983:** Elected Society president
- 1986:** Awarded STC Fellow status
- 1987:** STC/SM declares Joan Mazzatenta "Honorary Chapter Member"
- 1995:** Received STC President's Award
- 1999:** Recognized as STC Exemplar

STC History Website

STC's 50th Annual Conference, to be held May 18-21 in Dallas, Texas, marks an important milestone in Society history. For a half-century, STC has been promoting the arts and sciences of technical communication.

In February, STC launched a Web site devoted to Society history at www.stc.org/stc@50. The site features a timeline of important dates in technical communication, juxtaposed with a chronology of developments in science and technology. Visitors are also able to contribute to a Web log that records memories and reminiscences of their experiences as STC members.

STC Launches 50th Annual Conference Web Site

The Web site for STC's 50th Annual Conference is up and running. In addition to providing comprehensive, up-to-date information on educational and professional opportunities at the conference, the site features a dynamic online registration form (www.stc.org/50thConf/regOnline.asp) that simplifies the registration process for members. When a member enters his or her five-digit member number, the name and address fields are automatically populated with information from the STC membership database. (*Note:* To register at the member rate, members *must* enter their membership number, which appears on the address labels of *Intercom*, *Technical Communication*, and all other correspondence from the Society office. Members who need to be reminded of their membership numbers should call the office at 703-522-4114.)

Another new feature of the conference Web site allows visitors to view all of the technical sessions scheduled for a particular day. The session information appears in a printer-friendly format and includes brief descriptions of the sessions, their locations and times, and the names of moderators and speakers. As the conference draws near, this information will be updated frequently with cancellations and room changes. Members are encouraged to visit the site often for the latest information.

For U.S. Members...

Deduct Your STC Dues

As the April 15 income tax deadline approaches, don't forget that 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. 2000) 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 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 \$30 (\$15 for the Society's quarterly journal, *Technical Communication*, and \$15 for the magazine, *Intercom*). The difference between the cost of membership (\$125 for members who joined STC prior to February 2002) and tangible benefits (\$30) is \$95, and you may claim that amount as a charitable contribution.

Business Expense

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

Miscellaneous Expense

Those who do not fall into the categories defined above may claim the amount of the dues as a miscellaneous deduction. (For miscellaneous deductions that can

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STC/SM Networking Lunches

STC/SM members gather for lunch each month to meet other technical communicators for professional networking and job sharing information. All interested technical communicators are welcome to attend in addition to STC/SM members. RSVPs are appreciated in order to secure sufficient table space.

Ann Arbor/Washtenaw County

Gatherings start at 11:30 a.m., but arrivals are welcome at any time. Contact Kathy Carter at 734-475-5865 (bluehoo@comcast.net) for more information or to be added to the e-mail reminder list. Networking lunch information is also available on the STC/SM web site. *Note that dates and locations are subject to last-minute change.*

2003 schedule to date:

| | |
|-----------|--------------|
| March 27 | Café Marie |
| April 30 | Red Robin |
| May 22 | Seva |
| June 25 | Olive Garden |
| July 24 | Rio Bravo |
| August 27 | Real Seafood |

Oakland and Wayne County Area

Lunches will take place on the scheduled day beginning at 11:45 a.m. and ending not later than 1:00 p.m. If you would like to host a lunch (send out reminders, call the restaurant, welcome people to the table), contact Lynnette Pryce at 248-737-7300 ext. 22004. For more information or to reserve a spot, e-mail Lynnette at lynnette.pryce@compuware.com by 5:00 p.m. the day before.

2003 schedule to date:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| March 12 | Big Buck Brewery (Opdyke Rd., Auburn Hills) |
| May 7 | Bonfire Bistro (Hagerty/7 Mi., Livonia) |
| June 12 | Chili's (Ford Rd., Dearborn) |
| July 9 | Mr. B's (Main St., Royal Oak) |
| August 14 | Pegasus (Monroe St., Detroit) |

Lansing Area Networking Lunch

Contact: Shannon Everhart 800.248.0892 ext.242
or Susan O'Doherty 517.333.0322

We are considering having networking lunches for members, or potential members, who live or work in the Lansing area. If you are interested, please contact one of the persons listed above

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affect your taxes, the total amount of miscellaneous deductions must exceed 2 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 2002 can be deducted only on 2002 tax returns. If you have any questions, contact your local IRS representative or an accountant.

Money, Not Time

In the past, the STC office has received questions concerning the deduction of time or services donated to STC. Please be aware that, while dues, contributions, and out-of-pocket expenses may be deducted, personal services may not.

Tips & Tools

FrameMaker

Timesavers

By Gina Tecos

In FrameMaker 5.5 or 6:

Graphics

Want to shrink-wrap your anchored frame around that graphic? Select the anchored frame, and then press ESC+M+P.

To copy an object's properties to the Palette, select the item, press Shift, and choose **Pick up object properties** from the **Graphics** menu.

Tables

To add a row below the current row, Press CTRL+Enter.

To eliminate orphan rows, Select **Table > Row Format**. Check **Keep With Next**. Click **Set**.

Time Savers

To repeat the last Paragraph command, Press ESC+J+J.

To repeat the last Character command, ESC+C+C.



Taking the “Dis” out of “Disabilities”: Special Needs SIG Seeks Support

Just a reminder as the STC membership renewal process creeps up on its February 28 deadline: the Society's newest Special Interest Group, the Special Needs SIG, is still looking for new members to support them in their twin mission of assisting technical communicators with disabilities in the practice of our profession and providing all technical communicators with information that will help them make our communication products more accessible to users with disabilities. A detailed mission statement is available at the Web site.

The SNSIG has already made significant progress: a comprehensive Web site (see <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml>); an online newsletter (first edition is posted at <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/newsletter.shtml>); and extensive support to the 49th STC Conference, including publication of *Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs* and an *Addendum* thereto, a successful progression, and several articles in the *Proceedings* (conference materials available at <http://www.stc-orlando.org/prodev/49notes/SNC.asp>).

But there is much yet to do, and to accomplish it, the SNSIG needs more people. It is looking both for active members, to join their initiatives, and patrons, whose affiliation will help the SIG secure the budget it needs to fulfill its objectives.

If you wish to support the Special Needs SIG, you have two options: (1) If you have not yet submitted your STC membership renewal, simply check the SNSIG box when you do. (2) If you have already submitted your STC membership renewal, download the SIG sign-up form from http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/sigform.pdf and submit it directly to the Society Office. In either case, in order to be added to the SNSIG's newsletter and/or listserv without delay, contact daniel.w.voss@lmco.com or jvinegar@myranch.com.

March Program Meeting

The Technical Writer and Copyright Law: Know Your Limits, Know Your Rights

When: Thursday, March 20th

Where: AAA in Dearborn

Schedule:

6:30 Hors d'oeuvres

7:00 Program begins

Speaker:

Carol Ruth Shepherd, Attorney with Arborlaw Associates of Ann Arbor and two-term council member for the State Bar Computer Law Section

Ever wonder whether or not you should have given a reference for that obscure quote you slipped into your manual? Ever get worried that someone might notice the generic graphic you lifted from a commercial site? Just what is legal? And what isn't?

Stop taking risks. Come to the March meeting of STC/SM and learn the ins and outs of copyright law from the expert. Our speaker will share her expertise in technical writing and the law. Carol's experience and practice enable her to come at the issue from a variety of angles. Yes, she's had long-term, hands-on practice in corporate and organizational law, licensing, taxation of intellectual property, arts, entertainment, employment, nonprofit organizations, and commercial litigation; but Carol is also a frequent writer, speaker, and conference faculty member on internet and multi-media law, computer law, independent contractor law, copyrights, and trademarks. In addition to her legal experience, Carol has also served as Executive Director of the Washtenaw Council for the Arts and has headed up Ann Arbor Playwrights, a script development and production company for emerging screen and stage writers. If there's writing and publishing involved, Carol knows the legal foundations and guidelines for every aspect of your project.

If you need to better understand your rights and responsibilities as a technical writer, come and enjoy the first-hand knowledge and practical application experience of Carol Ruth Shepherd, guest speaker for the March 20th meeting of STC/SM.

April Program Meeting

From Training Site to Web Site: Techniques and Tools for Transferring Training and Documentation to the World Wide Web

A Joint Meeting of STC-SM and ASTD, Ann Arbor Chapter

When: Thursday April 10th

Where: Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor

Schedule:

5:30 Registration

5:45 Buffet Meal opens

6:30 Business Meetings by each chapter, followed by a short break

7:00 Panel Discussion

8:30 Wrap-Up and Conclusion

Speakers:

- Dr. Charlotte Neuhauser, current faculty member and former Dean, School of Business, Madonna University
- Mary Locey, FDI eLearning
- Additional Speakers TBD

As the end of our STC-SM program schedule for 2002–2003 draws near, we join our colleagues in the American Society for Training and Development to learn how both our skills sets—technical documentation and training design—can transfer to the World Wide Web effectively, efficiently, and with dramatic learner/user impact. Come join us early for networking and a buffet dinner followed by a powerful up-to-the-minute technology application program. Learn from the experts about the latest tools and techniques for transferring user materials—manuals, job aids, training materials, and online practices—to the Internet.

Think you can translate just about anything to the Web? Think again! Our experts will explain the types of skills and knowledge that can be taught on the Web, how the Web can be used as a supplementary tool for skills that do not adapt well to a virtual environment, and what trends we can expect in this newly emerging and powerful training and documentation medium.

Profiles: Candidates for STC Second Vice President

During the month of March STC members will have the opportunity to elect leaders of the international STC organization. The position of second vice president is a very important one because the person elected will automatically become first vice president and then president.

These profiles were submitted by the candidates, and may not represent the full slate of candidates for this office. They are presented for your information only, not as an endorsement by the chapter leadership or newsletter staff.



**Sandra
(Sandi)
Harner**

**Fellow
Cedarville University
(Student Chapter Advisor)**

I am currently serving on the STC Board in my fourth year as Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs and am responsible for eight committees.

Experience

A year after joining the STC in 1984, I developed the technical and professional communication major for Cedarville University. I am a full professor and have taught in that major for more than twenty years. In 1988 I chartered the Cedarville University Student Chapter, which I have advised with a focus on core competencies, emerging technologies, and communities of practice since the beginning.

As manager of Sigma Tau Chi, I began my involvement on the international level in 1992. That quickly led to manager of the Jay



**Suzanna
Laurent**

**Associate Fellow
Oklahoma Chapter**

I am running for second vice president because, in my own way, I want to do as Henry Ford did—“learn from other people’s experiences as well as [my] own.” I want to use the lessons that I have learned in 25 years of management and leadership positions to create solutions that will ensure that the STC becomes an organization that is vital to the diverse careers of technical communicators.

Experience

As an STC director-sponsor (1999–2002), I attended conferences and gave chapter programs in every region to meet our members and listen to their ideas. This “listening tour” instilled a greater understanding of the unique challenges, concerns, and issues facing us. Working individually with leaders and other members is an invaluable experience that is crucial to being the most effective



**Deborah
Sauer**

**Fellow
Boston Chapter**

I started in this profession 20 years ago and I still write user manuals as I did then; however, now I also develop Help systems, design user interfaces, and perform usability tests. As an independent consultant, I learned that, to be successful, I needed to diversify in terms of clients, the technologies that they represented, and the tools that I used in my work. As a result, my work is far more interesting and rewarding than it was five years ago. I would like to continue to apply the lessons learned from my work to growing our professional organization.

Experience

Over the years I have worked both in the profession and in various STC roles. I can directly attribute my business skills to my work for the STC. As president of the Boston chapter, I made

Harner, continued from page 8

R. Gould Award, judge for the Ken Caird Student Article Competition, reviewer of proposals for the STC Annual Conference, and onsite judge for the International Technical Publications Competition. In addition, I have served as an independent consultant, contract writer, and trainer since 1976. In 2002, I co-authored *Technical Marketing Communication*.

Awards

I was named Fellow in 2001, received the Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication, and named Associate Fellow in 1996. In 1997 I received the STC Faculty Internship Grant and worked as a Communications Manager in a technical marketing communication firm.

Position Statement

For almost twenty years, my passion has been to prepare young people to make a significant contribution to the profession of technical communication. That role has kept me focused on core competencies, emerging technologies, and communities of practice.

In the last few years, the growth of communities of practice has broadened our traditional definition of technical communication. If we are to be effective as the leading professional organization for technical communication, we must actively embrace those formerly non-traditional groups and help employers and employees to perceive them as the technical communicators they are.

For more information see www.sandiharner.com.

Laurent, continued from page 8

leader in the “presidential chain of offices.”

Position Statement

Ford also took risks. Failing to be innovative and leaving things at the status quo is a risky business for STC and technical communicators. We must make it part of our role as technical communicators to show the value we add. It is important that STC become the “premier” organization for technical communicators. The organization that best meets the needs of its members is the one that retains its members and attracts new ones.

Ford saw failure as a lesson and applied everything he learned to improve. During the process of defining STC’s brand, we discovered and are correcting mistakes that led to misconceptions about the organization. When we accomplish proactive improvement in processes and quality of services, we will have fulfilled my vision for the STC to become an organization to which technical communicators feel membership is essential to professional status of their careers.

Read the expanded version of this article at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or contact me at slaurent@prodigy.net.

Congratulations New Senior Members

Angela Carter
John H. Miller
Walter J. Mrozek
Anthony Viviano
Arthur D. Wojtowicz

Sauer, continued from page 8

cold calls, managed teams and budgets, and initiated the development of a chapter strategic plan. In the STC annual conferences I have served as a stem manager, a program manager, and the assistant to the president for conferences. These roles have given me experience in managing projects and teams and working with large budgets as well as introduced me to innovative ways to deliver information.

Position Statement

All this enables me to view the challenges and opportunities that face the profession and the STC from a broad base of experience. I can provide the leadership needed to make sound business decisions as the STC creates programs to address the needs of our growing and diverse membership. Also, I can offer a voice on the Board to multiple interests.

For more information contact me at dsauer@sauer-design.com

Thank You to All Contributors to this issue of TECHcomments!

Mike Bates
Catherine Titta Buerkle
Kathy Carter
Mary Jo David
Shannon Everhart
Rosemary Hampton
Sandi Harner
Suzanna Laurent
Cecilia Lorenz
Tom MacLaney
Lynnette Pryce
Deborah Sauer
Brian Stout
Gina Tecos
Denise Vacek

Business Wire Sponsorship Adds Value To STC/SM Membership

An agreement entered into this past fall between the STC/SM and Business Wire could mean extra benefits for your company. STC/SM has contracted with Business Wire to deliver our chapter press releases free of charge to news organizations in southeastern Michigan in exchange for free advertising in our STC/SM newsletter. Typically, companies pay an annual membership fee and then a per-release fee for these news distribution services.

As part of this arrangement with STC/SM, Business Wire is also offering to waive the membership fee for companies that our STC/SM members work for, when those companies use Business Wire's services to distribute company press releases. If your company is considering using a third-party service for distributing news, you may want to suggest this alternative. In the short time our chapter has been using Business Wire's services to publicize programs, we've experienced a noteworthy increase in exposure with publications like *Crain's*, *Ann Arbor Business-to-Business*, and the *Ann Arbor News*.

For more information you can contact Paul Lubanski at Business Wire. Phone: 248 213-4750 E-mail: Paul.Lubanski@businesswire.com.

To qualify for the Business Wire membership fee waiver, make sure to mention your STC/SM affiliation.



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January Meeting Report

The Business of Freelancing

By Rosemary Hampton and Brian Stout

With many years of accumulated business savvy behind them, on January 20th a distinguished panel consisting of Catherine Titta Buerkle, Speed Gant, and Mary Jo David stood before another near-capacity audience in the Eastern Michigan University Building in Livonia. The audience, while diverse in age, experience, geographical area, and professional specialty, was homogenous in two ways: a) All were contractors or freelancers, and b) all but one did not have enough work. The panelists were undaunted by the diversity of needs and brought forth a spirit of hope that was not there when the panel convened.

The panelists agreed that business know-how is essential to success as a freelancer, and some up-front training can smooth away some of the bumps in the road to success. "Speed" Gant, working through the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), teaches courses in entrepreneurship and writing business plans at Schoolcraft College and the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce. Contact him at 734.697.7151 for additional details.

Networking, Networking, and Networking

All three panelists agreed that networking is one of the most important cornerstones of the business of freelancing. When Catherine established ArborComm in 1995 she did not have to market her business. She just told some people she knew that

she was now freelancing. "People don't do business with people they don't know," she said. She further suggested that you step outside of the STC to find clients, i.e., go to other professional societies to make new contacts that can help you find work. Some that were mentioned include Ann Arbor IT Zone, Ann Arbor Software Association, or Michigan Internet Society, American Society for Training and Development (note that STC/SM is having a joint meeting with this organization in April), and Association of Women in Computing.

Mary Jo's first clients were people who had heard of her work through past employers and even a past employer. When she quit her last job to establish her own business, her boss asked that she continue to do work for his company. However, she warns that you should never be a one-company freelancer. To spread your networking Mary Jo also suggests that you take contracts from temporary agencies.

Operations/Management/Business

Both Catherine and Mary Jo agree that it is tough to find subcontractors that can meet your needs at the desired level of quality and on your schedule. Having suffered "Entrepreneur Burnout" in her attempts to manage clients, employees, and subcontractors, Catherine has redefined her business in such a way that it includes personal happiness. What should

matter is what you want to do with your business and how much happiness you want from it.

In contrast, both agree that contracts are needed for you to be professional and for protection. Contracts save time, money, and can avoid misunderstandings between freelancer and client. Sample contracts are available from web sites, books, and don't forget that networking resource. STC has a Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group that is definitely worth joining when you renew your membership.

Location

Just like the business of selling a home, in the Business of Freelancing, "Location is everything," according to Speed Gant. If you locate your business outside your home, do it in a part of town where the business has the best chance to grow.

Summary

Experienced technical writers may want to commit themselves to workshops, seminars, and individual and online courses that are available locally or regionally. In the process of making the necessary changes to sustain change you may want to consider Catherine's concept of happiness. And always heed Mary Jo's warning: "If you are already employed, don't give up your job to do this."



Lanette's Lines

The Chapter Listserv—One More Time!

I swear this is the last time I'm going to bug you about this. I'm getting tired of hearing about it myself. If you're a member of the listserv already, you recently received a notice telling you that this newsletter was ready for you and waiting in PDF form on the chapter web site for you to read, or to download and read at your leisure ("Leisure"? Can anyone tell me what that is, please?).

Why Join?

If you're not a listserv member, here are some good reasons to join:

- 1) See above.
- 2) Timely notices of monthly chapter program meetings.
- 3) Reminders about the monthly networking lunches in Ann Arbor, in Oakland/Wayne counties, and coming soon, we hope, in the Lansing area.
- 4) Job postings!!!
- 5) Interesting discussions and a source of help for questions you might have about software, tools, or whatever.
- 6) Sometimes there is a need to communicate with members quickly. The chapter listserv can be that communication tool if all chapter members are also on the listserv.

How to Join

Instructions for joining are available below and on the chapter web site. They have been modified slightly, so if you had trouble signing up, try again.

1. Go to the Listserv web site at: <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcsemc-1%20>

2. Click **Join stcsemc-1**
3. Type your e-mail address in the appropriate field. Your name and e-mail address are required for participation in the Listserv.
4. Specify optional information as desired, or click Save. Your submission will be confirmed.

NOTES about those instructions:

- If the address above doesn't work for you, try it without the "%20" at the end.
- If you're manually entering the address in your browser, be sure you're typing "ell" not "one" after "stcsemc," and don't forget the hyphen.

And Now For Something Completely Different . . .

I just want to say a quick "thanks" to a great newsletter staff for the roles they're playing in making *TECHcomments* a vital part of our chapter communications. I've heard positive comments from several chapter members, but I want to emphasize that ALL comments are welcome. If there's something you don't like or that is lacking, let me hear from you so we can improve.

All submissions are welcome, and student members, don't forget that your chapter newsletter is a great place to get published and build your resume! For starters, I always need volunteers to write reports of the monthly chapter meetings. Email me!

Lanette Cornwell
Managing Editor
STC/SM *TECHcomments*
Lanette.Cornwell@buckeye-express.com

STC-SM Congratulates New STC Fellows and Associate Fellows for 2003

The highest rank that the Society for Technical Communication can confer upon a member is that of **Fellow**. Those who become fellows are associate fellows who have attained such eminence in the arts and sciences of technical communication that they are designated among the select few whose service has distinguished both the Society and the profession.

Paula R. Berger

TransAlpine Chapter

Ann Wilson Buttram

East Tennessee Chapter

Donald H. Cunningham

Birmingham Chapter

Lance R. Gelein

Sacramento Chapter

Marguerite Krupp

Boston Chapter

Lynnette R. Porter

SpaceTech Chapter

Donna M. Sakson

Puget Sound Chapter

Daniel E. Wise

Birmingham Chapter

STC recognizes and honors deserving senior members by conferring upon them the rank of **Associate Fellow**. Those selected as associate fellows are exceptional individuals who have demonstrated a consistent pattern of meaningful contributions to the Society and to the profession over a period of years.

Thomas Barker

Texas Tech University Student Chapter

Deborah S. Bosley

Metrolina Chapter

Rebecca E. Burnett

Iowa State University Student Chapter

Martha D. Collins

Suncoast Chapter

Marjorie T. Davis

Mercer University Student Chapter

Conferences and Meetings of Interest

March 14, 2002

Technicom

Twinsburg, Ohio

Jill McCauslin

jmccauslin@radcominc.net

*One-day conference hosted by
Northeast Ohio Chapter STC.
Keynote by Judy Glick-Smith,
"Embracing Change: Finding
New Ways to Apply Your
Technical Communication
Skills."*

Associate Fellow (continued)

Charles D. Fisher

Washington, DC Chapter

Douglas Florzak

Chicago Chapter

Jean C. Gabriel

Orange County Chapter

Mark Hanigan

Suncoast Chapter

Hillary Hart

Austin Chapter

Brenda P. Huettner

Southern Arizona Chapter

Michael A. Hughes

Atlanta Chapter

Norman Lambert

St. Louis Chapter

Eugene S. Larson

Atlanta Chapter

Suzanna Laurent

Oklahoma Chapter

Betsy M. Maaks

Chicago Chapter

Mary Sue MacNealy

Mid-South Chapter

Betty M. Montgomery

Washington, DC Chapter

Neil E. Perlin

Boston Chapter

Michelle Ratcliffe

Suncoast Chapter

Kay Robart

Austin Chapter

Jerilynne V. Sander

Hoosier Chapter

STC@50

STC's 50th Annual Conference
May 18-21, 2003
Dallas, Texas

Join the Society for Technical
Communication in Dallas, Texas,
for STC's 50th Annual Conference,
the largest gathering of technical
communicators in the world!
For more information and a detailed
brochure, contact the Society office.

www.stc.org/conferences.asp



March 20, 2003

STC/SM Program Meeting

AAA, Dearborn

"Technical Writing and the Law:
Copyright Law and Writer
Responsibilities"

Carol Shepherd, Arbor Law
Associates

See page 7 for details.

April 5-10, 2003

2003 Conference on Human
Factors in Computing Systems
Fort Lauderdale, FL
sigchi.org/chi2003
chi2003-office@acm.org

April 7-11, 2003

"Five Tough Technical Writing
Workshops"
Toronto

[www.gordonandgordon.com/
workshops.html](http://www.gordonandgordon.com/workshops.html)

*Discounts to STC members, and
for multiple workshops*

April 10, 2003

Joint STC/ASTD Meeting

Washtenaw Community College

"From Training Site to Web Site:
Transferring Training and Docu-
mentation to the Web"

See page 7 for details.

April 10-15, 2003

International Society for
Performance Improvement
Conference and Exposition
Boston

www.ispi.org or info@ispi.org or
ISPI (301) 587-8570

April 11, 2003

Spectrum 2003

Rochester, NY

Kathryn Wise

hhkwise@frontiernet.net

*Annual conference of the
Rochester STC chapter*

April 29-29, 2003

Content Management Strategies
2003 Conference
Washington, DC

www.cm-strategies.com

May 2-6, 2003

Annual Meeting of the Council of
Science Editors
Pittsburgh

www.cbe.org or

CSE@CouncilScienceEditors.org
or (703) 437-4377

First Week of June, 2003

STC/SM Volunteer Celebration
Location to be announced



Interesting Times, Interesting Measures

by Mike Bates,

Region 4 Director-Sponsor

We've been living in "interesting" times, as the saying goes, and many of us feel that we've had about as much interest as we can tolerate, thank you very much. Chapter meeting attendance has been down, and the popularity of technical presentations has decreased while the popularity of career cafes and career management days has increased. In any conversation between three technical communicators, at least one is unemployed, about to be unemployed, or thinking about a career change.

So after attending the first STC board meeting of 2003, I've returned with renewed hope about the employment scene, and have chosen to pass along a little good news to start the year off. Between meeting sessions, we trade notes on the health of our local chapters, the chapters in our region, and the status of our own employment situations. My conclusion is that things are getting better.

My optimism is cautious. Companies tend to stay battened down, and their willingness to spend on technical communication is a tenuous commitment, at best. Some companies are outsourcing their work. Others are looking for writers to work at bargain-basement salaries. A number of companies are looking outside of North America for their technical communication needs. Yet despite these trends, I hear stories that encourage me. A writer mentions that her temporary contract is rolling over to regular employee status. A contractor has lined up work for the first time in months. Someone else mentions that his company is stabilizing and may add a new person during the coming year. Demand seems to be on the rise.

The job market won't be the same as in the heyday of the 90s. In fact, the job market may never look the same again. It may get better, but in a different way, a changed way. How we cope with those changes will indicate our success in responding to the new marketplace. Are we willing to look beyond our core skills to our extended skill sets? Can we look at the trends and determine how we can fit? If we've let our skills fall behind, are we ready to do what it takes to catch up? Can we make the switch to being free agents? Do we have a personal "brand" that identifies us? Are we broadening our horizons in what we read, in where we look for contacts, with whom we network? In other words, do we know how to re-invent ourselves for this new market? Are we willing to learn?

This column is far too short to be helpful in setting out a roadmap for participating in the recovering economy. But there are a vast number of resources available for the taking: Fast Company (www.fastcompany.com), Career Lab (www.careerlab.com), and Career Intelligence (www.career-intelligence.com) are just a few of the online resources that turned up as the result of a simple Google search. The idea is to actually have a roadmap, to study the new landscape and determine where you want to go and how you're going to get there. The rest, they say, is a matter of interest.

Mike is the Manager of Information Architecture at Rockwell Automation and Region 4 Director-Sponsor. He can be reached at mpbates@software.rockwell.com