



The Quill

The Newsletter for the Southwestern Ontario Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication



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Celebrating Membership Month

STC offers a little something for everyone

by Robin Dube

Is STC right for me? As Membership Manager for our chapter, I often get asked that question. People just moving into the field of technical communication, or people who are in the field, but not writing about "computers," wonder if what they do is encompassed by STC.

The answer is a resounding YES! Technical communicators aren't just software and hardware writers, although the computer industry is a major source of jobs for us. They are also designers, science writers, financial wizards, teachers, and students.

In honor of Membership Month, we are profiling chapter members who are involved in different aspects of technical communication.

Roxanne Eszes, P. Eng., CFP

Current Employment: Self-employed, Cleartech Documentation, Guelph

Please describe what you currently do in the field of technical communication: Well, I've strayed quite a bit from my original training. I have an

M.Sc. in Biological Engineering and I used to site and design landfill sites. When I realized I liked writing engineering reports better than designing waste management systems, I decided to put my writing skills to the test to start a technical writing business. Originally I

targeted the engineering and environmental sectors.

Then, I lucked into a contract in 1995 writing correspondence course materials for students who were studying to become certified financial planners (CFPs).

At that point, I had no financial training beyond balancing my own chequebook, but fortunately we started with An Introduction to Personal Financial Planning. It has been quite an education and I now know more about the Income Tax Act than I care to admit. I've since obtained my own CFP designation and spend most of my time writing educational materials for these students. In the spring and fall, a colleague and I also offer workshops to help prepare candidates who are about to take the national certification exam for the CFP designation.

continued on page 2

Bonus for new members

October is Membership Month for the STC. From October on, you can become a new member of the STC for the year 2000, and get the rest of this year FREE!

This means that if you sign up for the STC right now, you'll receive your year 2000 membership, plus get the following publications for the rest of 1999:

- *The Quill*, our monthly chapter newsletter
- *Intercom*, the STC monthly magazine
- *Technical Communication*, the STC quarterly journal

Membership fees are \$110 for new members and \$40 for students. If you want to join the STC, or if you would like more information about the STC and our Southwestern Ontario chapter, you can contact Robin Dube, the Membership Manager: 519-745-660, or rdube@golden.net.

Contents

Seeking Associate Fellows.....	3
Propagating the e-mail hoax.....	4
Chapter web site changing.....	5
September's meeting: XML.....	6
STC and career development....	7
Meet our new members.....	8
STC 101.....	9
Region 8 annual conference.....	9
Calendar of events.....	10
Workday time-waster.....	11
Chapter contacts.....	12

STC society for technical communication

Coined words



AQUADEXTROUS (ak wa deks' trus) adj. Possessing the ability to turn the bathtub faucet on and off with your toes.

DISCONFECT (dis kon fekt') v. To sterilize the piece of candy you dropped on the floor by blowing on it, assuming this will somehow 'remove' all the germs.

ELBONICS (el bon' iks) n. The actions of two people maneuvering for one armrest in a movie theater.

PHONESIA (fo nee' zhuh) n. The affliction of dialing a phone number and forgetting whom you were calling just as they answer.

TELECRASTINATION (tel e kras tin ay' shun) n. The act of always letting the phone ring at least twice before you pick it up, even when you're only six inches away.

2
Pg Dn

Local chapter members' careers challenging

continued from page 1

What other areas of technical communication have you been involved in:

Early on in my self-employment I tried a bit of software documentation, because that seemed to be where the jobs were at the time, and I did not enjoy it. I decided that it was better to stick with what I did best, so I'm proud to say I DON'T DO software or hardware documentation.

What is the most interesting project you've ever worked on? Jeez, do I have to pick just one? I can't! In 1993, I was retained by the Guelph Roundtable on the Environment and Economy to work with 5 "writing committees", each consisting of 10 community volunteers, to compile the input of over 1,000 citizens and write the Guelph Green Plan. The process of writing a report by committee was certainly challenging and the process and the topic were rewarding. Since then, I would have to say I have enjoyed preparing CFP study aids for retail sale (resulting in royalties, a novelty!) and leading the exam preparation workshops for CFP candidates.

Andrea McKenzie

Current Employment: Co-ordinator of Communications for the Mathematical & Computer Sciences, Faculty of Mathematics, University of Waterloo

Please describe what you currently do in the field of technical communication: As Co-ordinator, I develop and implement new courses, elements of existing courses, and support services to build Math & CS students' oral and written communications. Right now, our main course is English 109M (mathematics), a first year course that builds students' individual and collaborative speaking and writing skills for the classroom and the workplace.

Communicating technical information and ideas is an everyday part of all Math students' lives, but they often don't realize it (and most of the rest of the world doesn't, either). Many people seem to think that Math students "don't write." On the contrary, first year students have to logically prove their problem solutions using words and symbols. Students writing computer programs have to learn how to make appropriate internal comments so that their future audience — the person who has to update the program — can understand its

workings. And it's essential for all students to be able to communicate, both verbally and in writing, technical information to non-technical audiences. Statistical consultants, for instance, work in many fields and have to be able to write reports and make presentations that their audience can easily



STC brings together professionals from all walks of life. These two lives are about to collide. Will they fall in love?

understand. The more I teach these students, the more my definition of "technical communication" grows.

What other areas of technical communication have you been involved in: Technical writing, including computer aided learning, print and on-line manuals and documentation, interface design, and graphic design (on-line and in print). Fields I've worked in include data communications, telecommunications, animation, construction, satellite television, nuclear power, finance, insurance (medical), and adult education. (At least, that's all I remember!)

What is the most interesting project you've ever worked on? This one! Developing new initiatives is ongoing, and I learn an incredible amount about communications and technology from my students and colleagues.

Jan Williams

Current Employment: Support Analyst, Waterloo Region District School Board

Please describe what you currently do in the field of technical communication: My job involves a combination of duties. The audience I write for is school office staff and administrators—mostly school secretaries, but sometime principals, vice-principals, or counsellors. The subject matter I write about is the efficient use of "student system" software—

continued on page 3

the definition of “technical communication”

continued from page 2

programs designed to maintain student demographics, track enrolment, record attendance, issue report cards, timetable students, and so on.

I'm responsible for preparing a variety of written materials: training notes; release notes; materials for large-group presentations; user manuals for some of the in-house software written here at the board; and, most frequently, procedural manuals that explain how to complete tasks such as how to build a timetable, prepare report cards, complete Ministry-required reports and so on, often in a “checklist-style” format.

I also write product bulletins that are posted on the school board's electronic bulletin-board system, and last but not least, text for onscreen menus, help messages, etc., that appear in some of our in-house student system software.

The support analyst job also involves other tasks that might not be classed as “technical communication”, but certainly help me when I write material for our student system users. Since I train new users and provide phone support, I know my audience and their needs. Because I test and install software, I'm familiar with the bugs found, changes in features, etc. And I'm lucky enough to be involved at the design stage with our

programmer analysts when software is being revised.

I love the variety on the job: every day is busy, but each day is busy in a different way. Our student system team has wonderful co-operation.

What other areas of technical communication have you been involved in:

Before I worked at the board, I wore two hats: I had tutored in English writing and English as a second language, and I had been a programmer. My current job brings the writing and computer interests together.

What is the most interesting project you've ever worked on?

One that springs to mind was the re-design of our in-house exam scheduler. The program had a good solid core, but the original user interface was a little confusing and generated many support calls. So I had some firm opinions on how the revised product should look and work. The programmer analyst and I worked closely together on redesigning the user interface. In fact, much of the time, I wrote the user documentation first, and then he ensured his program matched the documentation—a dream situation for some technical communicators, I understand!



Psst! Know any top-notch communicators?

Committee seeks Associate Fellow recommendations

By Margaret E. Cathcart

Manager, Associate Fellows Nominating Committee

Each fall, the associate fellows nominating committee asks chapters and members to recommend STC members for the rank of associate fellow. This honor recognizes the achievements of a technical communicator in the field of technical communication and/or the work of the Society.

Any voting member of the Society can make a recommendation. Recommendations are sent to the associate fellows nominating committee, which forwards selected candidates' names to the STC board of directors for approval.

Candidates must have been active in the field of technical communication for at least fifteen years and must have been members of the Society for

at least ten years. They must have made significant achievements in the field of technical communication, done original work that contributed to the advancement of technical communication, or demonstrated significant accomplishments in the Society.

Completed nomination packages must be postmarked no later than October 22, 1999, and mailed to the Society for Technical Communication, 901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203. For more information, please contact Margaret Cathcart at cathcart@spawar.navy.mil or (619) 553-4784. Information is also available on the Society office Web site (www.stc-va.org).



Riddle



This is a most unusual paragraph. How quickly can you find out what is so unusual about it? It looks so ordinary, you'd think nothing was wrong with it and in fact, nothing is wrong with it. It IS unusual, why? Study it. Think about it and you may find out. Try to do it without coaching. If you work at it for a bit, it will dawn on you. So jump to it! Try your skill at figuring it out! Good Luck - Don't blow your cool!

Answer:

There is not one letter "E" in the whole paragraph.

3

Pg Dn



+<:-|
Message from a monk
or nun

{0-)
Cyclops

<<<<(:-)
Hat salesman

C:#
Football Player

:_(
Vincent Van Gogh

C=:-)
Chef

*<:-)
Santa Claus

:-O
Mr Bill

*:o)
Bozo

C|:-=
Charlie Chaplin

Propagating the E-mail Hoax

How to avoid being part of the problem

By Carrie Spira

Chances are you've had contact with numerous e-mail hoaxes lately, whether you are a recipient who files the majority of email under "G" (for garbage), or a well-meaning sender who feels it's his/her duty to warn every close confident and casual acquaintance. The problem with e-mail hoaxes is that they sound "real" enough that people are fooled into believing the malicious threat exists. These nervous people send the warning on to others, who in turn send it on, again and again. By the time anti-virus officials, such as Symantec (www.sarc.com/avcenter/hoax.html) and MacAfee (www.nai.com/asp/set/anti_virus/library/hoaxes.asp), acknowledge the hoax, too many people are needlessly afraid.

The following should help you decide whether the next e-mail virus threat that hits your Inbox is real or a hoax:

■ If the e-mail says the suspect virus is **triggered by reading an email message**, it's probably a hoax. Viruses can and are spread by attached files (such as Microsoft Word files), but you must open documents or run executable files in order for the virus to harm your computer system.

■ If the e-mail tells you to "**forward this warning immediately to as many people as possible**", it's probably a hoax. Respectable sources would not rely on individuals to spread the details of a new virus threat.

■ If the e-mail claims to send you **virus information from an official source** (such as IBM, Microsoft, the Government, etc.) with no contact information included, it's most likely a hoax. Like #2 above, respectable sources would release an official statement.

■ If the e-mail says **the virus will completely "destroy your hard drive and all of your files"** or it will "forward itself to everyone on your mailing list", it could be a hoax. I admit that because of new viruses like Melissa or other executable files, some lethal new viruses have proven to do serious damage to computer systems.

Though you've suffered through numerous warnings, pleas, orders, and requests from Sys Admin, friends and family, and co-workers, do not open e-mail attachments from unknown sources. Also, keep your anti-virus software up-to-date. Good anti-virus software will catch viruses as soon as they access your computer system.

Furthermore, do not forward e-mail warnings that sound suspiciously like those listed above, to anyone by posting on newsgroups, by sending emails to friends, coworkers, family, or email forums, or by posting warnings on websites. Why? There's a good chance of the virus warning being a hoax – and you'll look silly having sent out an all-points bulletin about it.

If you want to be sure, when you get e-mail warning you of a new virus, you can go to one of the following sites for more information:

- www.stiller.com/hoaxes.htm
(good list of hoaxes past and present)
- www.metro.ch/avpva
(virus encyclopedia; includes a WinHelp version you can download)



Reading on the job? Don't let it go to waste -- Send us a review! If it's recent and relevant to technical communication, and we print it, you'll get a \$25 gift certificate for The Bookshelf, Chapters, or Wordsworth Books. E-mail your reviews (500-750 wds) to sburke@spicer.com

Oh what a wicked web we weave

Web site facelift to attract even more throngs of worldwide surfers

by Patrick Hofmann, Chapter Webmaster

Like most web sites, our chapter's presence on the web began as a modest affair. We created what was basically an online brochure that covered the basics of our chapter: who we are, where we're from, when we meet, who's on first (oops, scratch that), and so on. But much like a weed, our site sprouted and grew very quickly to become a relatively up-to-date resource and reference base for local and faraway members alike. The calendar, job bank, and annual competition pages soon became frequent haunts for surfers, whose numbers were increasing as exponentially as the number of dots in our URL (www.stc.waterloo.on.ca).

Since our launch in early 1997, our host server at Quarry Integrated Communications has kept track of our site's numbers: a remarkably detailed trail of statistics that gauges the site's popularity (and challenges the mind of the poor soul who has to decipher it). The number of hits alone has skyrocketed: in April of 1997, we registered just over 1100 hits in a single month, while in April of 1999, we garnered over 31 000! In no attempt to rain on this parade, I must explain what a "hit" actually represents. It does not reflect the number of visitors accessing the site, but rather the number of files transferred during visits. For example, if you were to access our current welcome page and nothing else, you alone would instantly generate 13 hits (the sum of the welcome page's HTML file and its twelve graphic files that are transferred from our web server to your browser's cache). By focusing purely on file transfers, the "hit" value is an inflated indicator of a site's popularity, and could explain why some of our naughtier web neighbours get so many hits.

To get a better picture of the number of visitors, we have to observe the sum of "unique hosts", or the number of uniquely different addresses from which people are surfing. Although this number offers a fairly good estimate of how many individual visitors we have, it does not clearly indicate how often they have visited. Nonetheless, in April of 1997, we had 58 unique visitors in that entire month. In April of 1999, we had 1500 (a 25-fold increase)!

Aside from indicating visitor counts, the unique hosts addresses also help us determine from where the visitors are surfing. Amidst the numerous hosts from **.ca** and immeasurably more from **.com**

(which are hard to attribute to a particular nation or location), I discovered visitors from the farthest reaches of the globe, including China, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, and nearly every nation in Europe. Closer to home, I found that visitor addresses from North American soil were just as widespread: from Niagara Falls to Thunder Bay, Vancouver to St. John's, Los Angeles to Boston. As our counts climb upward, the sources of surfers will continue to expand.



To keep the visitors coming, we must keep our site cunning (er, current). Like a good produce department, our site must stay fresh: a healthy basket of up-to-date information, a colourful array of useful reference material, and a ripe sense of humour (don't worry, I'll resurrect the dancing pig and the campfire flames sometime soon). So, as the leaves fall down this autumn, our web site is going to be spruced up. I already have some wicked ideas for new content and new ways of updating the site (especially for remote assistant webmasters), but I need some purveyors of guidance and voices of reason. If you would like to be a part of our Council's new Web Site Committee, please email me at phofmann@quarry.com. To get your creative juices flowing, have a peek at www.stc.waterloo.on.ca, and give me your worst (er, best)!



Strange but True



The inscription on the metal bands used by the U.S. Department of the Interior to tag migratory birds has been changed. The bands used to bear the address of the Washington Biological Survey, abbreviated: "Wash. Biol. Surv." until the agency received the following letter from an Arkansas camper:

"Dear Sirs: While camping last week I shot one of your birds. I think it was a crow. I followed the cooking instructions on the leg tag and I want to tell you it was horrible."

The bands are now marked Fish and Wildlife Service.

Winners and Givers



Congratulations to the winners of the September meeting prize draw. Thanks to those who donated prizes.

Sonya Mehan

Ball cap, coffee mug, pens

Donated by Kristi Champ and Carrie Spira of Inscribe Technology

David Sage

T-shirt

Donated by Maia Shapley of Laubach Literacy Ontario

Coffee mug

Donated by STC Southwestern Ontario chapter

6

Pg Dn

The allure of XML, the super markup language

September meeting seduces with single-source solutions

by Leanne Rollins

I was lured to the first meeting of the year by two simple words: 'single-sourcing'. The topic for the evening was XML (Xtensible Markup Language), and Richard Lander of WatAGE Inc promised to uncover the mystery of markup to XML newbies.

Richard drew his audience into the XML discussion by expounding on the current problems faced by documentation departments. Problems such as lack of global control of documents, inefficient authoring, re-use of information for different delivery mediums, etc. We were hooked. XML could solve all these problems? Bring it on!

Richard Lander is currently completing the third year of his RPW degree at UW. Richard gained considerable experience using markup languages throughout his co-op terms, ultimately culminating in his current position as resident XML expert for WatAGE.

I'd heard a lot of hushed murmurs about XML, but didn't really understand the difference between XML, HTML, or SGML for that matter. Apparently, no one else really did either. Richard gave us a brief run-down of the basic differences between XML and HTML using a calendar as visual example.

Basically, XML documents are all about structured format, a far more simple SGML, but with the ease of use of HTML. Sort of a super markup language that appeals to both novice and power users. First, you define a structure or DTD (document type definition) for the documents, then you write the content. Both the content and the styles are independent of the actual structure. This structured format allows you to swap content easily, and deliver documents in a host of supported formats, with nary a worry about style or layout.

Now, my first thought was "but that takes all the fun out of my job – no style and layout!". XML depends on a converter and a DTD that takes the structured format and runs it through a converter. The converter takes care of all format and style issued based on the structured format of the document. Imagine!

But what about single-sourcing? Can XML really solve this legacy issue? Could I really use XML to create single-source material, never again to worry about maintaining a set of online files and

a set of printed files? The answer was yes and no or, more accurately, not easily.

You can use XML to single-source your documents, but a lot of careful thought and planning is required before any implementation occurs. That just seems to be the nature of single-sourcing no matter what tool or method you choose for implementation. I'd recommend doing a whole lot of research on your own before jumping in with both feet.

Richard concluded his talk with a description of the XML course offered by WateAGE Inc. The course is written and delivered entirely in XML. Richard gave us a sneak peak so we could see a working example of XML.

The meeting wrapped up with a draw for several door prizes, various announcements and a healthy dose of networking. See you all next month.



Speak out!

Do you have experience in an area of interest to your fellow STC members? Are you looking for the opportunity to develop your presentation skills speaking before an interested audience eager to ask questions?

We are looking for people who can speak on the following topics:

- project management
- document revision management
- usability testing
- time management
- health and wellness

The speaker candidate does not have to be an STC member, but must be able to talk for an hour on a topic and must be able to answer questions from the audience. The topic can be directly related to technical writing or can be about subjects of interest to the membership.

We'd also like to express our appreciation for the speaker's time and effort by offering a complimentary dinner prior to the general meeting, and offer both a small thank you gift and thoughtful, honest audience feedback afterward.

Interested? Please contact Ted Edwins, Program Manager, at tjedwins@mgl.ca.



Putting STC to the test

Professional organization key to a well-rounded career

by Holly Curtis

With Membership month upon us, it's a good time to think about the benefits of an STC membership and the perks that go along with it. If you are thinking about becoming a member, keep reading to discover what an STC membership can do for you. Even long-time members may want to reflect about the value of their membership.

How do you see the STC? Maybe you are just launching your career and see an STC membership as a necessary component of your career kit—like a resume or portfolio. Or maybe you are like me and see your STC membership as an extension to your career and its learning path.

Like other STC chapters, our chapter serves an important function for professional communicators. In addition to the obvious benefits (Technical Communication journal, conference discounts, newsletters, research grants, etc.), it is the key to a well-rounded career.

The STC is a resource for professional development. Our monthly speakers bring to us wisdom and research from other perspectives, saving us the hardships of trial and error. Not only do we have a variety of topics available, but our exposure to new ideas, recent research and shared experiences comes in small, manageable chunks. The 90-minute hour monthly sessions are sometimes more efficient than yearly workshops or conferences that may have little relevance in our current job situations.

On the informal side, there is value in networking, which benefits more people than just job-seekers. Whether it's information about the tools we use or grumblings about politics at the office, we can use the successes and failures of others to guide us through our careers. And,

each of us can use our own experiences and resources to help our peers in turn.



Networking is just one of the many opportunities served up by STC

As we get to know other members in our chapter and neighbouring chapters, we realize also that we have a network of support. As we struggle with issues, we can often find empathy and helpful advice from fellow STC members. And it's not always reactive—we learn to prepare for future challenges and make educated opinions about what we do and do not want to take on in our careers. Thinking back, I felt isolated as a one-person department. I counted on the support of our chapter members and, in a sense, viewed them as extended family—bringing them issues I was facing and asking for reinforcement when I needed a lift.

Council members take it one step further. On council, we have the opportunity to expand our skill set into areas we might not normally be exposed to in our daily responsibilities. In our activities, we work on fine-tuning our people and administrative skills.

If you are a member, but perhaps haven't been involved in meetings or other events, maybe its time you put STC to the test and see how it "scores" in your career.



Job Bank

To post a job or view the latest available positions, visit our new STC Toronto and Southwestern Ontario Job Bank at <http://www.stctoronto.org/jobs/>



Questionable candidates



Vice Presidents and personnel directors of the one hundred largest corporations were asked to list the "most unusual" questions that have been asked by job candidates.

"What is it that you people do at this company?"

"Why aren't you in a more interesting business?"

"Do I have to dress for the next interview?"

"I know this is off the subject, but will you marry me?"

"Will the company pay to relocate my horse?"

"Does your health insurance cover pets?"

"Does your company have a policy regarding concealed weapons?"

"Why am I here?"

7

Pg Dn



Seagull Manager - A manager who flies in, makes a lot of noise, craps over everything and then leaves.

CLM - Career Limiting Move - Used among microsers to describe ill-advised activity. For instance, trashing your boss while he or she is within earshot is a serious CLM.

Flight Risk - Used to describe employees who are suspected of planning to leave the company or department soon.

SITCOMs - Single Income, Two Children, Oppressive Mortgage. What yuppies turn into when they have children and one of them stops working to stay home with the kids.

Irritainment - Entertainment and media spectacles that are annoying but you find yourself unable to stop watching them. The O.J. trials were a prime example.

Welcome to the Southwestern Ontario STC

Irish dancing, photography among hobbies of new members

by Carrie Spira

We would like to welcome and introduce some of the new members who are new to, or have transferred to, our chapter!

Elenor Robins is a Communications Specialist at Manulife Financial in Kitchener. She writes and edits in the Individual Life Insurance Marketing Communications area, though she also has a background in journalism and marketing communications. Being a movie addict, you might find it surprising that she hasn't seen Titanic – she prefers happy endings!



Mari-Beth Nunn works at Campana Systems in Waterloo in Technical Communications writing user guides, online help, and release notes. She also has interests in the public relations field and event coordination. Apart from work, Mari-Beth likes Irish dancing and Celtic history.



Shannon Hilker is a Technical Writer and works at Campana Systems in Waterloo. Shannon joined our chapter because she feels it's a good way to expand and develop skills, and a great way to meet new people. She enjoys baseball and movies.



Robyn Peterson is self-employed with her company, Edutran Training Services, based in Guelph. She designs training programs, writes and edits them, and also delivers the training and education. Robyn heard about the STC back in the mid-seventies when she was working in the technical training department at Ontario Hydro. She loves painting and photography, including a couple at the Ontario College of Art and Design.



Robert Barlow-Busch has recently transferred to our chapter from Belgium. Instead of simply welcoming Robert, however, we should welcome him back as he's originally from our Southwestern Chapter.

Two years ago, he accepted a job with Sony in Brussels working at the Sony Platform Software Development Centre in Belgium. Now, he works at Quarry Integrated Communications in Waterloo. His job functions include project planning and management, technical writing, information design, and user interface design.

Apart from work, Robert's focus is on his 6-month old daughter, Isobel. She brings him much joy and happiness. He's also dedicated to training in and teaching martial arts. For fourteen years, Robert has studied Goju-Ryu Karate-Do, which is a traditional style of Japanese karate.



Robert and his wife have just bought an old house in Kitchener. They'll both be very busy with renovations for the next few years and look forward to the work!



Get those entries in High school writing competition

First place \$200, Second place \$100
Deadline: Friday, November 26, 1999



Contact:
Paul Kostiuk,
pkostiuk@
spicer.com
or (519) 748-
4575 ext. 258



**Deadline for the
November issue of
The Quill:**

**Wednesday, October 27,
10:10 a.m.**

STC 101: the structure of society

Where does our humble chapter fit in the big picture?

by Holly Curtis

The STC is larger than you think. Our chapter of 150 or so members is one of 140 chapters internationally. Each geographic region or concentration of people in our field has a chapter—the membership within a chapter can be as concentrated as a University or as widespread as a country. For example, the state of California has 16 chapters, while countries like Belgium, Austria, Japan, Israel, India and France (to name a few) have one chapter for the entire country. (In Canada, we have nine chapters.) Some of the STC chapters are identified as “Student Chapters” which are usually formed at or near a University offering programs in Technical Communication.

Chapters are part of a larger geographic division called “regions”. STC has eight regions throughout the world. Southwestern Ontario belongs to Region 1 along with 18 other chapters: Boston, Central Connecticut, Central New York, Clarkson University, Eastern Ontario, Fitchburg St., France, Mid-Hudson, Mohawk, Montreal, New York Metro, Niagara

Frontier, Northern New England, Rochester, Stockholm, Toronto, United Kingdom and Vermont. Each region has a Director-Sponsor who is an elected member of STC’s board of directors. Our Director-Sponsor this year is Kathleen B. Aughey, residing in North Chili, New York. As President, I report to Kathleen about our chapter’s activities. In return, Kathleen provides information from the STC board of directors, answers questions and provides resources for our chapter (like competition guidelines and regulations).

The Director-Sponsors for each of the 8 regions report to the STC Executive Council which is made up of the STC President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. This council reports to an elected Board of Directors. There are many related international-level committees, special interest groups, and offices that support the President, but that’s a whole other story...

To find out more about the STC, visit <http://www.stc-va.org/>.



Painful puns



Hangover: The wrath of grapes.

Two silkworms were in a race. They ended up in a tie.

Archeologist: A man whose career lies in ruins.

Middle Age: When actions creak louder than words.

Kleptomaniac: One who can't help himself from helping himself.

Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused his dentist's Novocain during root canal work? He wanted to transcend dental medication.

“Driving Forces in Technical Communication”

1999 STC Region 8 Annual Conference in California

Like the Los Angeles freeway system, the latest tools and trends in technical communication can be a confusing maze. The 1999 STC Region 8 Conference will prepare you for career growth by guiding you through the information interchanges you face on a daily basis. Meet your peers, share ideas, and learn about the forces that are driving our profession. Attend the 1999 STC Region 8 Annual Conference, November 11-14, 1999, at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel in Long Beach, California.

Featuring 6 preconference workshops and 47 sessions, the conference will discuss:

- **Working Under the Hood** – Introduces exciting new tools and technology trends
- **Navigating the Freeways** – Explores skill development topics and career development topics



■ **Directing Traffic** – Explores issues related both to managing people and projects, and to professional development

For more information on the conference, visit the conference Web site: <http://stc.org/region8/conferences/www/index.html> or contact Christine Stevens, Region 8 Conference Chairperson, at (310) 216-0816 or at cnl@iname.com.

Word trivia



The Inuit have 30 words for “snow.” They have no word for “time.”

In the first “Olympia Diner” sketch on Saturday Night Live, the word “cheeseburger” is spoken 84 times.

You speak around 4,800 words per day.

The word ‘muscle’ stems from the word ‘mouse’. People believed that watching muscles move looked like a mouse crawling under the skin.

Whiskey is derived from the Gaelic word usquebaugh, which itself is a contraction of the words usique beatha, which means “water of life.”

‘Of’ is the only word in the English language where an ‘F’ sounds like a ‘V.’

10

Pg Dn

Upcoming Southwestern Ontario STC events

For updates, visit
www.stc.waterloo.on.ca



OCTOBER

Thursday 7

General Meeting

Sherry McMenemy from Campana Systems will speak about indexing.

7:00 pm, UW Davis Centre, Room 1302

Friday 8

Deadline for STC Competition

Thursday 21

Council Meeting

6:30 pm, Campana

Friday 22

Associate Fellow nomination due

Saturday 23

Competition: Judges' training at UW

NOVEMBER

Thursday 4

General Meeting

T.B.A.

Monday 15

Competition: Judges return entries

Thursday 18

Council Meeting

6:30 pm, Campana

Friday 26

Deadline for High School Competition

DECEMBER

Thursday 2

General Meeting

Randall Helm will speak on Staying Healthy in a Computer-Based Workforce

Thursday 16

Council Meeting

6:30 pm, Campana

Join us on the council

Get involved in the decision-making process while you stuff yourself with pizza. Future discussion topics include scholarships, salary survey, incorporation, special interest groups, and the chapter web site. And who's picking up pizza.

Where we meet



How to get there

From Toronto:

- take Hwy 401 West
- exit North on Hwy 7/8 to Kitchener
- follow Hwy 7 East
- exit north on Hwy 86 to Waterloo
- exit on Northfield Drive, merge right turn right on Kumpf Drive (immediate)
- turn left on Randall Drive
- the entrance to Campana is on the left immediately after crossing railway tracks (behind Focus building)



Call for student papers

The Ken Caird Student Article Competition

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) invites eligible students to participate in the 1999/2000 Ken Caird Student Article Competition. This competition recognizes excellence in technical communication articles written by college students.

Awards will be presented as follows:

- Undergraduate: Distinguished (\$1,000) and Excellence (\$500)
- Graduate: Distinguished (\$1,000) and Excellence (\$500)

In addition, winning entries will be honored and displayed at STC's annual conference in Orlando, Florida, May 21-24, 2000.

Students can enter any article that has been published in a serial publication since October 1, 1997. The article must contain sufficient technical content to qualify as technical communication. Eligible publications include the following:

- STC publications
- Other professional society journals and newsletters
- Trade publications and newspapers

Although not an exhaustive or exclusive set, the following list illustrates the breadth of publication possibilities.

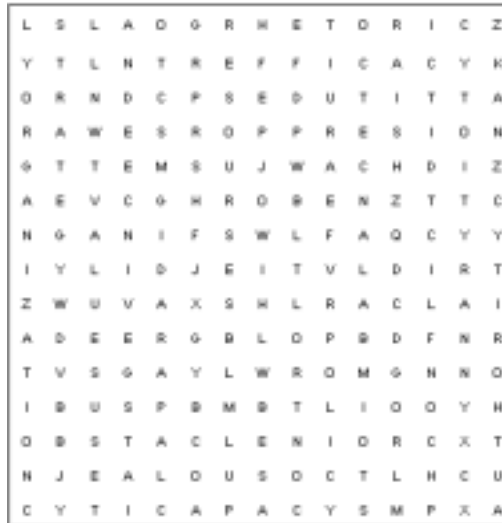
- ACM Transcriptions on Graphics*
- ASEE Prism*
- Behaviour and Information Technology*
- Cognitive Science*
- College Composition and Communication*
- Communications of the AMC*
- Ergonomics*
- Journal of Engineering Education*
- Human-Computer Interaction*
- IEEE Computer Magazine*
- IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*
- Journal of Computer Documentation*
- Philosophy and Rhetoric*
- Research in the Teaching of English*
- SIGCHI Bulletin*
- SIGIR Forum*
- Technical Communication*
- Technical Communication Quarterly*

Entries must be received by **January 15, 2000**.

For more information, see the STC Web site at: <http://www.stc-va.org/studentcomp.html>

Workday time-waster: Power of Persuasion

by Carrie Spira

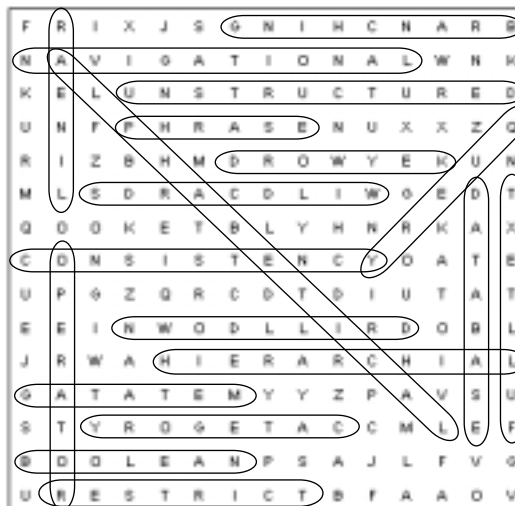


Words to Find

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| accomplishment | fear | paradigm |
| attitude | goals | policy |
| authority | greed | resources |
| capacity | jealous | rhetoric |
| conflict | obstacle | strategy |
| control | oppression | tyranny |
| efficacy | organization | values |

Solution next month

Solution to last month's puzzle



Word trivia



An Englishman may say "It's all Greek to me," but a Greek would say "Stop talking Chinese." A Chinese person would say "Your words are like Buddha's attendant: 12 feet tall, whose head I cannot reach!" A Polish person would say "I am hearing a sermon in Turkish." A Frenchman would say "Pray, stop talking Hebrew," while a Jewish person would say "Stop knocking a teapot!"

The shortest correspondence in history occurred when Victor Hugo wrote his editor asking about the sale of his new book 'Les Miserables'. He just wrote '?'. The editor, who did not believe in wasting words and ink either, answered '!'.

Bill Watterson, cartoonist for Calvin and Hobbes, is the first cartoonist to use the word 'booger' in his cartoon.

About the Quill



The Quill is the official newsletter of the Southwestern Ontario chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). The Quill is published in Kitchener, Ontario monthly, except in January, July, and August, and distributed free to all local STC members. Material in this publication may be reprinted, provided the author and the Southwestern Ontario chapter of the STC are acknowledged. All readers are welcome to submit short articles, letters, and other interesting items relevant to technical communication to the editor. Please submit items at least one week prior to the date of the general meeting.

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Contributors: Margaret E. Cathcart, Robin Dube, Holly Curtis, Patrick Hofmann, Leanne Rollins, Carrie Spira

Advertising

Business card \$10

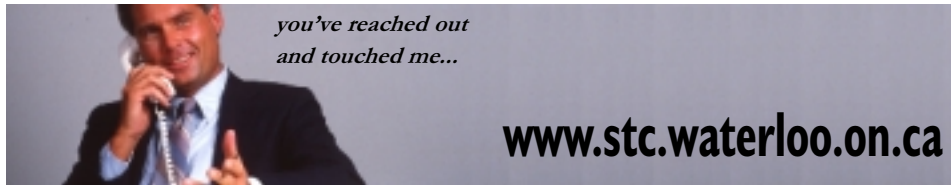
1/4 page \$30
(\$20 for 3 or more issues)

1/2 page \$40
(\$30 for 3 or more issues)

Full page \$80
(\$60 for 3 or more issues)

End

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