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Without a good résumé, you can forget finding a good job. If you

## The Editor's Message

November can be a daunting month, with winter approaching and, dare I say it, the holiday season just around the corner. For Canadians, there is no special holiday this month, which means no long weekends. With this in mind, we needed to find something to celebrate...something new. While we couldn't arrange for a new holiday, we did manage to find a few things that are new.

### New Banner for Our Newsletter

Drum roll please. The winning entry in the first banner competition goes to (pause to open the envelope)... Patrick Hofmann. The runner up is, newcomer to the the technical communication field, Stephen Neville. Congratulations to both of these winners on a great job!

Patrick's design came to him while he was practising his procrastination skills. The design's clean and simple lines are in keeping with the established 'look and feel' of our newsletter. Patrick also did a great job delivering his recent [graphics workshop](#), because it was a huge success.

Stephen submitted several banner designs, which demonstrates not only his skill, but his enthusiasm and eagerness to try new things. Having also submitted several articles to The Quill, Stephen has shown us what you can achieve when you get involved.

Thanks also go to Opal Gamble, who incorporated the features of the banner into a new look for The Quill, and

missed the October general meeting, you don't want to miss its recap.

[More](#)

## Upcoming Events

There's lots to see and do in our chapter. Find out what upcoming meetings might interest you. [More](#)

## Toronto Chapter's November Meeting

If everything you needed to know you learned at an STC meeting, it only makes sense that you should attend more than one STC meeting a month. [More](#)

## The Consulting and Independent Contracting Corner

Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC) is a Special Interest Group (SIG).

In the third installment of her column, CIC-SIG Manager, Elaine Garnet, talks about how to perform market research. [More](#)

## Recap of CIC October Meeting

It's not what you think...well actually, it is just that. Find out about Conscious Constructive Thinking (CCT) and how it can help you. [More](#)

## STC Head Office

Find out about an online meeting room that is available for Region 1. [More](#)

## Memories

Find out what technical writing was like more than 20 years ago, before computers were used. [More](#)

## Book Recommendations

If you are a manager or team leader, you may want to check out the titles of these five books. [More](#)

## Word Origins

In keeping with our general meeting in a new high-tech classroom at the University of Waterloo, the word origins this month have to do with education. [More](#)

Margie Yundt who provided her feedback in the various design phases.

## A New Web Address for Our Site

In September, Shannon Hilker developed a new look for our chapter's website. Part of that process included a new web address. Currently, users are redirected to the new site automatically if they use the old address. That redirection will not be available for much longer. Please update your browser Favorites to [www.stc-soc.org](http://www.stc-soc.org). And, in case you are wondering about the 'soc' in our address, it stands for Southwestern Ontario Canada.

## New Poll Feature

Our survey says, "We want your opinion." To let you express your opinion and have a say in the direction of the chapter's activities, regularly-changing polls are being posted on our website's [home page](#). If you participate in the current poll, you can indicate whether you like the current format of The Quill. Future polls will enable you to help choose which telephone seminars we will offer in certain months. Here's yet another reason to access our site frequently. By responding to the polls, you can make a difference.

Send your questions or comments to me, Debbie, at [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org)





## About The Quill



The Quill is the monthly newsletter of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC, which is a Canadian chapter in Region 1.

### The Quill History

In October 1989, the first edition of the The Goose was launched by editor Rick Martin, who immediately announced a contest for a new name. The winning entry was, of course, The Quill. Within two years, The Quill earned an Achievement Award for small chapter newsletters, followed by back-to-back Merit Awards in **1993** and **1994**. **1992** and **2001** saw Awards of Excellence. In **1996**, we were awarded not only the Distinguished Award, but the Best of Show for all chapter newsletters.

### Submission Deadlines

August 25	September Issue
September 19	October Issue
October 17	November Issue
November 14	December Issue
No Quill	January Issue
January 16	February Issue
February 13	March Issue
March 19	April Issue
April 16	May Issue
May 14	June Issue
No Quill	July or August Issues

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to other publications.

When you submit an article, you give the editor and the newsletter staff the right to edit your article for clarity and to ensure that it adheres to the newsletter's style and standards. All articles are edited, copy edited, and proofed prior to publication.

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## **Reprint Policy**

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## **STC Head Office**

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# Everything I ever needed to know, I learned at an STC meeting



by Heidi Marr, Chapter President

Forget Kindergarten. STC is where it's at. Here are the top three life-lessons I've taken away from STC general meetings, council meetings, workshops, and telephone seminars.

## 1. **Be nice to the person sitting next to you.**

In early September, you might have heard UW Frosh chanting towards their Laurier rivals, "That's alright. That's OK. You can work for me someday."

The ditty rings true at STC meetings. In this tight-knit community, you never know when you will be on the hiring committee reviewing a fellow-STC'er's credentials. Or, better yet, when that individual will offer you your next big break.

Besides, that particular someone might be the one who offers a witty commentary or unexpected compliment that can turn your whole week around.

I know I shouldn't admit to this in writing, but sometimes at the end of a particularly long work day, the last thing I want to do is go to an STC meeting. I don't want to learn any more facts; I don't want to be nice to any more people; I just want to go home, change into my fuzzy pajamas, and lose myself in a good book. But, like many of you, I weave through the construction we call KW and find myself at what always turns out to be an informative and enjoyable evening.

What makes it informative? The topics and speakers we attract. What makes it enjoyable? Often, the person sitting next to me.

## 2. **Pay attention to the teacher.**

All through public school, high school, and even university, I was the talkative kid in class. I just couldn't -- or wouldn't -- shut up. It didn't matter if the teacher was lecturing, or if another group was presenting. If I wasn't the centre of attention, chances were, I wasn't happy.

At STC meetings, my talkative self is a thing of the past. It's like my alter-ego discovered that listening really does pay off.

Think of all the juicy tips we receive free of charge that we can apply

immediately on the job... Meeting topics such as "API and SDK Documentation" have helped me write better tech docs. Telephone seminars such as "Creating Persuasive Executive Summaries" have aided my marketing efforts. And, workshops such as "Goal-oriented Design for Communications Professionals" have come in handy in customer meetings.

Why wouldn't I listen in class when our chapter attracts world-renown presenters to our annual workshops and highly-respected speakers to our general meetings? I'd be a fool not to.

### 3. **Watch your pennies.**

When I was in Brownies many moons ago, I was the only girl to win the coveted Thrift Badge. For this honour, I saved all my allowance for six whole months (minus the Brownie dues, of course).

Today, my husband can't understand how that thrifty girl turned into such a carefree spender. I should pay more attention to Carol Lawless -- our current treasurer -- who does such an excellent job of balancing our books each month.

A few years back, our chapter's wise council made the decision to put some money aside to be used in the future for educational purposes. Last year, because of our amazing adherence to budget, we were able to donate \$15,000 to the University of Waterloo's new program in Digital Arts Communication.

We are also able to use chapter money -- your money -- to host free telephone seminars for our membership, and continue with many of the other great services you've come to expect.

So, you see, it's not all about font choices, or gathering performance metrics. STC meetings can be about the basics, and in my opinion, the basics are what keep us coming back for more. ♦

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## Letter to the Editor -- Acronyms



Dear Editor,

I have just enjoyed reading The Quill, but I would like to make one small but, I believe, important point. The article on Acronyms should really be an article on abbreviations or, even more correctly, initialisms. An acronym is a word made up of the initial letters of other words, for example, radar, scuba, NATO, NAFTA, and so on. An abbreviation is just that, an abbreviation of a word, for example, eng. for English. An example of an initialism would be CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).

I am originally from the UK, having arrived in Canada just over three years ago. I have noticed that, this side of the pond, abbreviations are referred to as acronyms, so maybe it is a regional interpretation. However, as technical communicators, we need to be aware that our work may be read in parts of the world, where confusion could result, so we should strive to ensure there is understanding for all our audiences.

Thank you for an excellent newsletter, to which I hope to contribute in the near future.

best regards,

David Tinsley

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Editor's Response:

David, first let me thank you for writing both this letter, and the article that I asked you to write about your experience in the aerospace industry. By writing to me, you showed me that you are reading the articles and that you care enough to write.

Let me also state that although I figured you were right, I decided to look up the definitions in the online Chicago Manual of Style in the [FAQs section](#). The following quotation, which is taken from that site, shows that there was some confusion at one point, even in the Chicago Manual of Style. But, in the end, they did confirm that David is absolutely right.

**Q.** I had always understood the term *acronym* to mean an abbreviation that spells a word, such as snafu (per Webster's), but in your manual [the fourteenth edition, 1993] the two terms are used interchangeably. Can you tell me where you get your definition of *acronym*?

**A.** Since 1993, we've realized that we needed to be more precise. In the fifteenth edition, therefore, we distinguish between acronyms, initialisms, and contractions, all under the umbrellas of *abbreviation*, as follows: *acronym* refers only to terms based on the initial letters of their various elements and read as single words (NATO, AIDS); *initialism* to terms read as a series of letters (BBC, ATM); and *contraction* to abbreviations that include the first and last letters of the full word (Mr. , amt.). These distinctions can also be found in the multivolume work *Acronyms, Initialisms, and Abbreviations Dictionary*, edited by Mary Rose Bonk and published in its twenty-seventh edition in 2000 by Gale Research Incorporated. ♦

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## This Month in History

by Carol Lawless, Chapter Treasurer



The Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC is rich in history. Part of that history includes many firsts and awards. Last year, we received a joint Chapter Pacesetter Award with the Toronto chapter "in recognition of outstanding efforts made to continually improve the joint Technical Publications and Online competitions". It's now November 2003 and another successful competition is underway. It's hard to believe that ten short years ago, our two chapters were the first in Canada to hold the STC Online Documentation Competition. There were 12 online entries received and 25% earned an award.

Other November firsts:

- In **1992** we co-hosted a conference on "Usability Concepts and Procedures" with the Centre for Professional Writing.
- In **1995** we were the first Canadian Chapter to hold an STC Internationally-sponsored seminar. John Brockman presented on "Writing Better Computer Software for Users".
- In **1996** we launched our first Website. If you're reading this online, you can check out our new Website. Take a minute to answer this month's poll! (If you're reading hardcopy you can go to [www.stc-soc.org](http://www.stc-soc.org) later and complete the survey).

Each time you try something new you make history. What memories do you have of the STC? Often, you cannot appreciate how far you have come until you see where you have been. Why not take this opportunity to share some of your stories that show the changes in the communication profession over the years? Submit your ideas and stories to [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org). To start this process, your editor has submitted [some of her memories](#). ♦

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## Managing Your Employment Needs



Many of us believe that price is a good reflection of value. In the case of employment (both finding a job and finding a candidate), it's possible to get a lot of good value -- for free.

### **What does the Employment Manager do?**

In the Southwestern Ontario Chapter of the STC, Employment Manager, Ursula McCloy, provides a variety of services for two distinct audiences -- employers and job seekers.

#### **For Employers**

Our Employment Manager:

- reviews job postings and has them posted on our site
- maintains a list of potential communicators who are looking for work
- refers employers, who don't want to post to our website, to those communicators who are looking for work

If you, or your organization, has a communicator position to fill, why not have your employer send a job posting to Ursula so that she can review it and have it posted on our website? Last month alone, our website had thousands of hits, and the employment page was one of the top 10 pages that were accessed. Think of the visibility that the job posting will provide for your company.

The benefit of posting on our site is that the majority of applicants who see your ad will have many or all the qualifications that you include in your ad. When there are less applicants to put in your "discard" pile, you reduce your time and effort, providing additional cost savings.

#### **For Job Seekers**

Our employment manager:

- reviews résumés
- keeps a list of communicators who are looking for work and will reference them if a potential employer contacts her about hiring a technical communicator

- provides information about the local job market to people who are thinking about moving to the area

## What can you do?

Network. Talk to other people and businesses. Tell them about yourself, and tell them about the STC. The more employers who are aware of the STC and our chapter's job bank, the more likely that they will post jobs on our site.

Be a part of your own destiny. Spread the word that you can get something valuable for free. ♦

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# Workshop Summary -- Polishing Your Pictures: Getting Graphic with Technical Information



by Elaine Ruddock, Education Manager

On October 29, 2003, the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC hosted *Polishing Your Pictures: getting graphic with technical information*. The workshop, presented by Patrick Hofmann -- a Visual Interaction Designer at Quarry Integrated Communications -- was held at The Pines banquet facility in Cambridge.

Riddled with typical Hofmann humour, Patrick covered a multitude of topics, including:

- choosing the appropriate format;
- troubleshooting graphics;
- creating templates for graphics; and
- maximizing the meaning of graphics.

Presented in great detail -- in a very entertaining fashion -- the day-long workshop provided useful information for technical communicators who have to create systems architectures, work with screen captures, or create graphics from scratch. Participants brought examples for discussion, and everyone participated in a hands-on exercise that focused on using shortcuts to create graphics.

For those of you who were unable to attend the workshop, the following is an excerpt, from one of Patrick's articles, that summarizes some key points about creating visuals.

1. **Keep it brief.** In writing, we try to simplify our wording and include only what is vitally necessary, so that our message is as easy to read as possible. Likewise in illustrations, if we include only what is vitally necessary to the message of the illustration, we eliminate *visual traffic*.
2. **Make it task-oriented.** In writing, we aim to make our instructional information as actionable as possible. Likewise in illustrations, we should spend less time conveying the object in its anatomically perfect form, and instead, illustrate the object so that it clearly conveys an instruction.
3. **Be consistent.** In writing, we use wording conventions and structures that

bring consistency and expectation to our text. Likewise in illustrations, we should be consistent with sizes, angles, views, and so on. By repeating a common illustration and making slight modifications to it, we bring consistency to the document and we amplify the change in meaning between illustrations.

And these are just three basic, high-level rules that only begin to scratch the surface. By applying such rules to visuals, not only do we improve the value of visual information in our documents, we improve the value of our role in the production of our documents. As technical writers and authors, we can become advocates, ambassadors, and architects of meaning in visuals. Whether in words or in pictures, we are the *maximizers of meaning* for the information. ♦

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As a Visual Interaction Designer, Patrick Hofmann is "a man of few words". At Quarry Integrated Communications in Waterloo, he builds award-winning visual design strategies to improve online, hardcopy, and interface information.

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# View From the Other Side...now it's the other side of unemployment



by Nancy Halverson

I have rejoined the working world again, and it feels great. So, here's my first snapshot of English technical communication.

## My Place of Employment

The company where I work produces Oracle-based software for mortgage lenders, and I've joined them just as they are doubling their team of writers. The team has always worked from three different offices in England, mainly because the company is an amalgamation of separate software producers, coyly called Lynx Financial Systems.

## Differences in Writing Techniques

The writers don't get much time with the software -- they've been playing catch-up for a few years, trying to undo previous 'bad practices'. For years, apparently, a contractor would come in and gather up all the functional specs, and then scurry home and write stuff -- having never looked at the actual software. Luckily, minds have broadened, and the help has actually been noticed more and more. It still contains no procedures -- kinda like dragnet... "Just the facts, ma'am." But I feel I'm getting dangerously close to including a few task-based concepts on my little project.

## Remote Differences

Even though I'm working with financial software documentation, I'm not at all bored with it. Rather amazingly, it's been quite an exercise in creativity so far -- trying to keep my natural North Americanisms out of my writing, and trying not to compare the languages. I often have to ask basic questions about common practices -- and, as ever with basic questions -- some answers are surprising. The team has just set up a style guide, and we are rewriting it weekly it seems. Because we're remote, we try to debate via email, which seems odd at times, as my office-mates and I email each other when we can practically see each other's screens.

## The Lay of the Office

Because our office is overcrowded, there are no cubicles, or offices with doors. We have rows and rows of tables with one-foot high barriers to separate one side. There

are curves in the edge of each desk to 'suggest' personal space, and we each get a little set of drawers where we put our tea. No cube farm here, it feels like a giant computer classroom. Managers and workers sit side by side with nothing between them but monitors and a few computer towers. I honestly don't know if other work places are like this, but I can't believe that it actually functions as well as it seems.

## **The Pasty Van**

There's a daily watch for the 'pasty van' (pronounced pass-tee) as in Cornish pasty, if you know it. A couple of catering trucks regularly pull up outside the office doors, and those who didn't bring a packed lunch, run down and get a piping hot pasty (lots of different fillings, in a fried pastry) or a 'jacket potato' (aka baked potato with some kind of toppings -- tuna or cheese or chili). And yes, everyone drinks tea, but it's generally horrible. There's quite a lovely culture though of always asking everyone you sit near if you can get them a cuppa while you're up. It's charming. I failed miserably my first opportunity by not putting in milk where I was supposed to, and not removing a teabag quickly enough. No one accepts my offers to fetch a cuppa anymore.

## **The Lay of the Land**

And, true to Sheffield's image, I work next to a steelworks. I regularly hear the Forgemaster's blast furnaces, and my car's often covered with some industrial kind of dust when I get to it each evening. But, it's not all industrial wasteland -- there's a retail wasteland on the other side of the building -- Toys"R"Us!

My office is a half-hour commute away (via car unfortunately) through heavy traffic. Waterloo's so easy to get around (sigh). It's amazing how many sirens and firetrucks pass by on a daily commute. I pass through some great neighbourhoods though (well, evocatively named anyway). From Lodge Moor, I go by Carsick Hill and Crosspool, then I have to drive down Hagg's Hill, through Loxley, then Hillsborough and Firvale, then Grimesthorpe and finally Attercliffe. Of course, I could go through Pitsmoor, but that's just pushing your luck. It's rather depressing seeing the tender underbelly of English society every day, especially when I arrive back to my house and look out across the green valley at the grazing sheep. I guess we're just lucky that we got the kids into a school in the leafy part of town. It would have been an awful lot cheaper to live in Pitsmoor though!

## **So Much to Do**

This week has been particularly hard slogging, as we've just moved into our house and have been cleaning up the rental (getting the whole deposit back on a rental is an artform, not a science) and I've been doing a course at the university. I'm much

happier to be working but, unfortunately, it never rains but it pours, and everything landed at once.

I'm planning a meeting for STCers, and others, at the end of November. I know that there are people like me who are looking for some ways to connect with other tech writers in this region. Here's hoping that I find some helpers!

Tirrah for now ducks.

## Contact Information

If you want to reach me, email me at [nancy.halverson@btopenworld.com](mailto:nancy.halverson@btopenworld.com). ♦

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# Technical Writing in the Aerospace Industry

by David Tinsley



This article covers my experience in technical writing for the aerospace industry, which spans over ten years and two continents. My specific specialty is *avionics*, which essentially means any system on an aircraft that can be considered electronic, from the inertial navigation system to the audio controls in your seat, to the electronic countermeasures on a military fighter and all points in between. As you can imagine, a background in the industry is a prerequisite and I have never met an avionics technical writer who was not an engineer in a previous life. So it was with me. Over 25 years stuck up the bowels of aircraft gave me a good grounding for user expectations in avionics documentation!

## Typical Range of Manuals

Avionics technical writing can be split into two broad disciplines; military and civil. These may be further split into on-aircraft and component (black box) level shop maintenance. The range of manuals required for a typical project may include the following:

- Theory of operation (how does it work and what does it do?)
- Installation (how do I fit this in the aircraft?)
- Operation (how do I operate it?)
- Repair (how do I fix it?)
- Testing (how do I know I have fixed it?)
- Illustrated Parts Catalogue (IPC) (what parts can I get to fix it?)
- Modification leaflets (how do I upgrade the equipment?)
- Destruction (how do I destroy it?) (This is an interesting one. It covers the destruction of classified or essential components or systems. It is written to detail what parts of an aircraft should be destroyed to make it unfit to fly or to destroy classified equipment. It is designed to be used if an aircraft may fall into enemy hands, in wartime if a unit is about to be overrun.)

## The Process

I write the manuals following the normal procedure of interviewing subject matter

experts, poring over drawings and design specifications and, if I am lucky, sitting on the flight deck and checking the procedures. I say lucky, because, as everywhere, production cannot stop to let some lowly writer get his grubby paws on the aircraft. This is where previous experience in the industry counts a lot. If you are a professional aircraft engineer, then you are more likely to be allowed to run through your procedures.

There is little difference in the style or depth of writing between military or civil aircraft. The audience is essentially the same: aircraft maintenance engineers. Most avionic systems are the same on both types of aircraft, the main difference being the weapon control systems and electronic countermeasures on military aircraft, which aren't normally included on your average aircraft taking you on holiday to Mexico!

One major difference the writer has to consider between the military and civil users is the customer. In the civil world, buying an aircraft is much like buying your new Ford. "Here you are Sir, the keys to your new Bombardier CRJ200. We have filled the tank and here is the manual. Be sure to read it." However, it is not the same for the military customer. The manuals tend to be part of the deliverable and go through very thorough vetting for completeness, adherence to styles and so on. There are often two customers to please: the aircraft manufacturer; and the end user. So, the manual you have written for the Tornado avionic system will go to British Aerospace and then on to the UK Ministry of Defence publications procurement agency. Pleasing that bunch can be challenging to say the least!

## **Specifications**

The aerospace world is awash in documentation specifications, but at least they do achieve consistency. They cover the expected items such as page layout, font, paper weight, binding, electronic delivery. Some of the more common specifications are as follows:

- ATA 100 -- Air Transport Association manual styles
- ATA 2100 -- Air Transport Association SGML DTD
- AECMA 1000D -- The European equivalent to ATA2100
- Defence Standard 0060 --The UK MOD specification
- Mil Specs -- There are many US military specs pertaining to documentation

Luckily I only have to write to one specification on each project, but moving on to new projects can be confusing.

## **Simplified English**

The manuals I wrote for the Bombardier aircraft were written in simplified English (SE). SE is a method of writing designed for users whose first language may not be English. It is designed to remove ambiguity and achieve clarity. SE was first introduced in Europe by Airbus Industries and has its own dictionary and style guide. For example, consider the following phrase "Tighten the filter hand tight" Now I am a hulk with hands like a backhoe. My hand tight may well strip the threads. SE does not allow such subjective instructions. It would be written "Turn the filter until the sealing ring touches the housing and turn the filter a further half turn" One drawback of SE is that if English is your first language then reading SE makes you shudder in its composition! SE could be the subject of an article in itself. More information can be found <http://www.userlab.com/SE.html>

## **SGML**

The aerospace industry is one of the main users of the SGML standard. All the major manufacturers use it. At Bombardier, we used Adept Editor for inputting text. The drawback was that we did not get a WYSIWYG view and only saw the final output when the manual was published. The advantage was that we could forget about page layout etc and concentrate on the content. Personally I did not like working in SGML; I missed having control over the look and feel of the document. Again the subject of SGML is an article in itself.

## **And Finally...**

Have I enjoyed my writing career to date? You bet! To know that aircraft are being signed off as safe for flight after following maintenance procedures that you have written provides a great sense of satisfaction. The range of systems I have documented have been numerous and the advances being made in avionics means that there will always be new technology to learn. I hope this article has given some insight into an overlooked industry that employs many technical writers.

This article has only touched on the complexities of documentation in the aerospace industry. Please feel free to contact me at [mas43@sentex.net](mailto:mas43@sentex.net) if you would like any more information on my experiences. ♦

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*David Tinsley just recently left the aerospace industry to become the Supervisor, Technical Communications at Northern Digital Inc. in Waterloo.*

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## Company Recognition Award



Over the years, the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC has presented the Company Recognition Award to local companies for their support of our chapter.

This support may have taken many forms. For example, companies may have provided a meeting place, donated door prizes, allowed members to do STC work on company time, or enabled members to use their company's material and equipment. Support may also have been in the form of payment for things like STC memberships or attendance at STC events, for example, the annual international conference, workshops, and seminars.

Do you know a company who has shown support for our local chapter? If so, email [Ted Edwins](#) with a list of ways that the company has shown its support. The deadline for submissions is in early February, so take the time now to think about what company would get your vote.

Watch for details in upcoming versions of The Quill. ♦

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## October General Meeting Recap: Résumé Writing

by Paul Lofthouse



On a warm October 7th evening, a receptive crowd of 20 or so assembled in the Environmental Studies Courtyard at UW to take in a professional's thoughts on that most elusive of the Dark Arts, résumé writing.

Our guest was Val Slomke, a recruiter at SunLife Financial, on whose desk have plopped a thousand lifetimes' worth of gems and howlers. With the credibility of an established and respected local employer behind her, Val graciously spent the better part of two hours disclosing what, during a typical screening, distinguishes those applications that find their way into her "Yes" pile from those that meet a decidedly less gentle fate.

No secrets, really: clarity, relevance, good diction, directness, and a high level of cosmetic care all help. But perhaps Val's most important advice is that the jobseeker understand how characteristics such as these take a résumé only so far. If the document is not conceived with the principles of effective self-marketing in mind, you may have a higher peak to scale than you should. Error-free wording is not enough. Any signs that you are uncertain about your objectives, or not fully aware of what exactly you have applied for, can conspire to make a résumé seem a whole lot less than the sum of its parts.

Val went on to provide a list of action verbs that work for her, suggest a few strategies for following up with employers, and offer opinions on formatting, order of elements, and online applications. I came away with a few welcome additions to my bag of tricks. I also benefited from Val's pointers on the cover letter, which I admit is usually an afterthought.

Equally useful was Val's take on certain controversies in modern recruiting, as well as her response to the frustrations people experience on either side of the hiring divide. This more general discussion had many contributors offering a wide range of perspectives.

The peer review at the end was an opportunity for more specific, individual feedback on members' résumés. By all appearances, this too was constructive -- at least, I did not notice too many tails between legs as we headed for the doors!

So no magic bullets, but none promised. Self-marketing is an ongoing and evolutionary process, and it involves constant recasting, tailoring, practice, and knowledge of audience (which we should all know about!). Remember, for an increasing number of opportunities, our résumés must pass through a Val first, not

the peer or technical communications boss we may wish to impress later. It's a very good idea to job-search accordingly.

Until that much-coveted HR Bypass gets built down on Career Road, I'll take the free advice of someone in Val's position any day. Many thanks to Opal Gamble for organizing a most nourishing session! ♦

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# Upcoming Chapter Events

by Opal Gamble, Program Manager



There is no shortage of events for Southwestern Ontario Chapter members in November and December!

If you have any questions about upcoming chapter events, or if you have a suggestion for a meeting topic, feel free to email [Opal Gamble](#) (Program Manager) or [Paul Lofthouse](#) (Program Assistant).

For details about our chapter's events for the rest of the year, as well as last minute updates or additions to the schedule, take a look at the [STC calendar](#).

## **November 5 - Phone Seminar Technical Communication Departments: Establishing a Baseline of Performance**

Interested in verifiable data about the work that your colleagues in management do in technical communication? Based on the results of a recent study, this seminar presents a baseline of performance for technical communication departments.

[\[Additional seminar and speaker details\]](#)

This free seminar (\$35 for non-members) takes place at the Waterloo Recreation Complex, 101 Father David Bauer Drive, Waterloo, from 12:30-3:00 pm.

Please RSVP to [Ted Edwins](#) by **Monday, November 3, 2003**. In your email message, please state the names of attendees and membership status.

## **November 11 - Toronto General Meeting**

Find out how technical writing's focus is changing from formatting to writing content.

7:00-9:30 pm in the Burgundy Room of the North York Central Public Library.

Everyone welcome. [\[Additional details about the meeting\]](#)

## **November 18 - Council Meeting**

6:30-8:30 pm in the Seminar Room, Grand River / Stanley Park Community Library, 175 Indian Road, Kitchener.

All members welcome; RSVP to [Heidi Marr](#).

## **December 2 - General Meeting**

### **Internal Communications: Why? Who? What? How? When?**

Join expert and long-time STC member, Sherry McMenemy, for an informative

evening about the nuances of Internal Communications.

Sherry will define "internal communications" and discuss:

- why internal communications are valuable
- who contributes, influences, and participates in internal communications
- the skills required for good internal communications
- the differences between internal communications and technical communications
- what should and should not be communicated
- challenges in internal communications strategies
- available media/channels
- good and bad email
- when to communicate and how to get involved in the planning stage

### **About the Speaker**

Sherry McMenemy has been working in communications "for a while." She started in technical communications, moved to web communications, and now leads a team in a variety of web and intranet projects, as well as marketing, IT, internal communications and GUI/interface development projects.

Sherry works for Descartes Systems Group in Waterloo as a *Catalyst, Online Strategies*. When she's not doing work stuff, Sherry enjoys embellishing her house using a variety of power tools.

### **The Fine Print**

This month's meeting is in Room 1302, Davis Centre, University of Waterloo [[map](#)].

The doors open for networking at 6:30 pm; the meeting begins at 7:00 pm.

### **December 4 - Management SIG Meeting**

The management SIG met for the first time this year on October 15. This small but diverse group discusses some of the ongoing challenges that are faced by corporate managers and team leaders. Together, this group discusses issues, provides advice, and learns a lot about how other organizations work. This is an excellent support network.

This month's Management SIG meeting - noon at [Virtek Laser Systems](#). RSVP to [Margie Yundt](#).

## December 10 - Phone Seminar Adding Panache to Your Procedures

Like most technical communicators, you've probably written countless procedures. But have your procedures fallen into a rut? Are they good but not great? Do you know how to provide that "something extra" that can turn a mundane procedure into a great piece of technical product documentation?

This seminar covers all aspects of writing effective, powerful procedures. Participants will cover the purpose and theory of procedures and review the basic elements before moving on to advanced aspects of creating added value, using effective design elements, and testing. Throughout, you'll see examples of both good and bad procedures. [[Additional seminar and speaker details](#)]

This free seminar (\$35 for non-members) takes place at the Waterloo Recreation Complex, 101 Father David Bauer Drive, Waterloo, from 12:30-3:00 pm.

Please RSVP to [Opal Gamble](#) by **Monday, December 8, 2003**. In your email message, please state the names of attendees and membership status. ♦

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## Toronto Chapter's November Meeting: A Shift From Formatting to Writing Content



You write, therefore you format. Not quite cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am), but it does seem that writing and formatting have become nearly indistinguishable. If you use any of the popular tools for creating text, MS Word or FrameMaker for instance, you format the content as you write. Taken a step further, products like DreamWeaver and FrontPage enable you to create formatted web content by design.

It may be that in the future, technical writing will be much more about creating content and much less about formatting that content. This talk explores the issues that make this change in focus possible and probable. It includes an explanation of why database publishing is such a hot topic and why it is not for everybody. What drives the decision to treat content as data and what are the benefits of this approach? It includes some drawbacks of current solutions and a suggestion of what the right solution should be.

### **The Speaker**

Rob Frankland, President and CEO, Rascal Software Rob founded Rascal Software in the summer of 2002. He began his career in publications as an editor at Houghton Mifflin Co. He has been working in software development, chiefly in the documentation area, for over 20 years. He started as a technical writer at Software Arts (VisiCalc) and as a documentation manager at Lotus. He has been involved in a wide variety of software startups, including Exa, Marathon Technologies, and Millennium Pharmaceuticals. He has consulted to a number of large and small companies, including Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, Rational, AT&T Wireless, and Onyx Software. He was a founding partner of RFK Partners, a well-known CAD consulting company. Rob has been a judge for Puget Sound STC competitions for the past two years. He is also a frequent speaker at STC events throughout the country.

Rob Frankland is touring North America evangelizing XML and single sourcing. He is one of you, addressing your concerns, not just selling/pitching Rascal Software. He has spoken at several chapters where his presentation has been well received. He also spoke at the Region 8 conference.

### **When?**

November 11, 2003

7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

## Where?

The Burgundy Room,  
North York Memorial Community Hall, North York Central Public Library,  
5110 Yonge St., Toronto

Map available at <http://www.stctoronto.org> 

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# The Consulting and Independent Contracting Corner



## Starting a Business 101 -- Market Research

by Elaine Garnet,

Dear Entrepreneurial Spirit:

You have a great business idea and you have assessed your readiness to enter the business world as an entrepreneur. The next step is determining if there is a market for your services. If no one wants to buy your service, you will have to return to square one and rethink your business idea. Market research requires some fortitude, as this is the first time you may hear the word 'No'. Don't take the rejection of your great idea personally. Use the information and feedback to refine your set of services.

Market research can be divided into secondary and primary research. Secondary research uses already published or collected data. Primary research data must be collected by a variety of direct observational techniques, such as mail, fax, telephone or personal interviews. You can do all the market research yourself or hire a professional. This decision is entirely up to you and your pocketbook.

By no means is this an exhaustive list, but these are some of the questions you need to consider.

### Secondary Research:

#### What are the market trends?

Your local public library or Business Enterprise Center has volumes of data on local businesses -- data such as type of industry, products or services, size, location and contact information. Contact all levels of government, associations and media sources. You may also wish to search the Internet for business-related sites. Try government sites such as <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca>, <http://www.gov.on.ca/MBS/english/government/business.html>, or <http://www.statcan.ca>. Use all this information to help you select which companies would be most likely to buy your services.

### Primary Research:

#### Who are my potential customers?

You can use the data collected from your research to determine the type of

customer who would need your service, how many customers there are, and where they are located. Apart from customer demographics, you may need to find out about their needs and attitudes, and how satisfied they are with their current service. Can they afford your service? Do they perceive your service as essential or a luxury? How much would they be willing to pay? As noted above, a carefully worded questionnaire delivered by mail, fax, or telephone should help you collect valuable information.

### **Who are my competitors?**

Your competitors may be listed in the Yellow Pages or in directories, such as those put out by the Chamber of Commerce and the STC. In most cases, independent writers can only be found via networking. The STC and its special interest groups are good places to start. Don't be nervous about asking what niche fellow writers are occupying, what they charge, and how successful they have been. Of course, there are some who will not want to share this information. Respect their desire for confidentiality and move on to the next potential competitor. If you have a lot of competition, you might want to revise your business idea to move yourself into a less competitive niche market.

### **Conclusions:**

When you are satisfied with your primary and secondary market research, write a summary to include in your business plan. If you are applying for a loan or line of credit to finance your business, the financial institution will want to confirm that you have fully researched your business potential. You should also assemble a profile of your ideal customer. This will save you endless grief and time because you will know which type of customer to approach.

Good luck.

Sincerely,

Elaine Garnet (CIC-SIG Coordinator) 

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## CIC-SIG October Meeting: Conscious Constructive Thinking



by Ted Edwins, Chapter Past President

A small but enthusiastic group gathered on a starry, starry night on Wednesday, October 22nd at the Doon Pioneer Park Community Centre to listen to Hardy Premasukh's presentation on Conscious Constructive Thinking. Hardy is an entrepreneur associated with local companies such as Digital eMedia Inc. and Corpimage Signs. His new venture is the Institute of Maximum Success in which he acts a personal success coach.

Personal challenges have inspired Hardy to read widely in the field of psychology to determine how a person copes with negative events to create success in their life. He has established a professional relationship with some of the leading scholars in the study of constructive thought and self-esteem to further develop his theories of personal success.

The fruit of Hardy's consultation with the experts has been the development of his theory of Conscious Constructive Thinking (CCT). CCT is the process of being aware of your thoughts, thinking about your thoughts, and evaluating the validity of your thoughts. After evaluating your thoughts, you can decide on a course of action.

Hardy's belief is that a good attitude is important in life. He quoted Charles Swindoll, who said, "I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it." We have all heard of a person who has succeeded in life, not because they were more talented but because they were more persistent. Such a person is an example of how our attitude toward life has an incredible impact on our success. We may not be able to change many of the events that impact our lives but we do have the choice about our attitude towards these events.

According to Hardy, our attitude is shaped by our thoughts. He told us about the Perpetual Thought Cycle where the quality of our thoughts ultimately determine the quality of our life. The cycle is the quality of our thoughts influences the quality of our choices that become the quality of our habits, which ultimately affects the quality our life. We may have experienced the effects of this cycle when an event causes us to have negative self-thoughts that triggers a downward spiral of further negativity.

Hardy says we have the choice to pull ourselves out of this cycle and we can use CCT to do it. He outlined the STAR model of how to break the cycle through conscious constructive thinking. STAR is an acronym for the steps taken to establish CCT:

- Stop and become conscious of your thoughts
- Think about what you are thinking of
- Act on the choice you have made
- Reward yourself.

In the thinking stage, he encouraged us to determine if the thought is constructive or destructive. To break the cycle, we must exchange the destructive thought with a constructive one. Hardy emphasized that rewarding ourselves is an important part of the process. He warned that the reward should be well chosen. He gave the example of a client who rewarded herself with food but soon found she had a weight problem. The client exchanged the food reward with a social gathering with friends.

Hardy explained how CCT could benefit the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual parts of our life. He believes that CCT can:

- decrease negative 'self-talk'
- cultivate a healthy belief system
- increase self-esteem; and
- increase problem solving skills.

Hardy told the group about another client who had agoraphobia. The client used the principles of CCT to overcome her fears and to venture out into public areas.

Currently, Hardy is in the process of authoring his first book, *Reaching Your Pinnacle: A Comprehensive Program to Help You Achieve Genuine Success*. His book is based on proven psychological principles in the area of motivation, self-esteem, psychological well being, emotional intelligence, conscious-constructive thinking, and achievement. The book will contain self-tests to help you attain success in your life.



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## STC Region 1 -- Can we talk...about an online meeting room?



by Debbie Kerr, The Quill Editor

Being an international organization, it is not surprising that we would need to meet with other communicators who may be in other countries, states, provinces, cities, and towns. Even when you are in the same city, but can't attend a meeting, there is now an option available to you through the [Region 1 website](#).

The site describes this new feature as follows:

"The Region 1 web site now has an online meeting room. This area is available to any Region 1 chapter that needs to use it. The log of each session is maintained, making it easy to review what was said and what decisions were made. Please try out the meeting room and provide any feedback to the Region 1 web site, Rich Feitelberg at [webmaster@stc-boston.org](mailto:webmaster@stc-boston.org)."

When you access the meeting room, you type the name that you want to use during the meeting. Once you log in, you have the option of selecting a general room, or up to five private meeting rooms. If you want to use one of the private meeting rooms, it is recommended that you book it ahead of time by sending an e-mail to [webmaster@stc-boston.org](mailto:webmaster@stc-boston.org), the Region 1 Webmaster.

Think of the possibilities, especially when you do not have to pay long distance fees. Wouldn't it be great to share ideas and news items with other writers that you meet online? Isn't there value to being able to meet online and resolve issues without having to be in the same room? As communicators, we can appreciate any new means of communication.

As for the service, I have contacted the Webmaster, Rich Feitelberg, on several occasions, and I have always received prompt and courteous service.

With this Region 1 online meeting room, you are only alone until you promote this service to other communicators. With Region 1 supplying the place, why not try out this new service? What have you got to lose?

If you use this site, send an email to [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org) and let me know how it went.



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# Writing Memories From Over 20 Years Ago

by Debbie Kerr, The Quill Editor



As someone who began technical writing in the early 1980s, I just recently became aware of how different my experiences were compared to the 'norm' of today.

## Not So Technical Writer

My first writing job was part of a co-op work term from the University of Waterloo. I worked for the Ministry of Community and Social Services to write a manual about how to run homes for the aged. It certainly was no software manual, but it seemed complicated enough to me at the time with discussions about subsidies and various levels of care.

## No Computers

Yes, you are reading correctly. When I started writing, cut and paste was more precisely 'cut and tape'. My handwriting deteriorated quickly once I started in this profession. I didn't just use a pen and paper when I took notes; I actually wrote the manuals by hand. When I wanted to move a paragraph, I cut my lined paper to remove the paragraph and then cut the paper apart where I wanted to insert (tape) the paragraph. None of my pages were the same length when I handed them to a sort of typing pool.

I don't think the typing pool really used typewriters. They were probably using early computers or they would have killed me every time I resubmitted my paperwork, because they would have had to type everything from scratch. I never went into the actual room where they worked, so I don't know what they did behind the half door where I left my stacks of paper.

## Proofreading Marks

The women who were typing my manual for me, did not know proofreading marks, so if I wrote # or stet, the pound sign and the word 'stet' were always included in the text, so that I had to circle them and resubmit the pages to the typing pool. And, because you were dealing with a pool of people, you didn't always have the same person type your work. Once you told one person about the meaning of the marks, then you would get a different 'typist' and experience the same frustration of sending the pages back and forth a lot of times.

I eventually gave up and wrote my comments out in full.

## **Distant SMEs**

In the good old days, the term 'Subject Matter Expert' didn't exist, but their purpose has always existed. In my case, the SMEs were administrators from homes for the aged throughout Ontario, and they flew to Toronto once a month. During our three-day meetings, we reviewed the previous month's content that was written and collected information for the next month's documentation. My boss chaired these meetings like a drill sergeant to make sure we completed everything on time. When my boss was away for a month, I got to chair this meeting. It was pretty heady for a university student. I ran the meeting the same way as my boss, but, because I was new to it, they didn't threaten me with bodily harm for pushing them so hard to get everything done.


Quite different from today, there was little communication with this group while you were actually writing the manual. You relied totally on notes that were written on flip charts during the meetings. You couldn't drop by to ask a question, because all the SMEs were from out of town, and phone calls to them were rare.

## **In Conclusion**

Since those days, over 20 years ago, I now successfully use a computer, at least most of the time. I also get to write about the software that we use on the computers. I have even critiqued those software packages and had changes made that I requested.

I now make most of the changes to the documentation myself, so there is little need for proofreading marks, even when I am editing someone else's work. I also get to talk to SMEs directly and frequently, which they may wish would be only monthly visits.

## **How About Your Story?**

Each time you try something new you make history. What memories do you have of the STC? Often, you cannot appreciate how far you have come until you see where you have been. Why not take this opportunity to share some of your stories that show the changes in the communication profession over the years? Submit your ideas and stories to [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org). 

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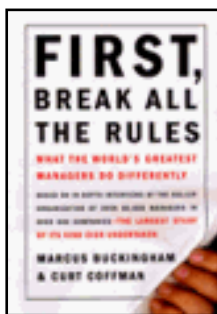
## Book Recommendations

by Christy Simard, Student Awards Manager



During the week of October 13th, roughly 55 documentation managers and business owners gathered in Hawaii for the first annual Lavacon Conference on Documentation Management. With sessions covering technical project management and department leadership and management, presenters at the conference made a variety of compelling book recommendations.

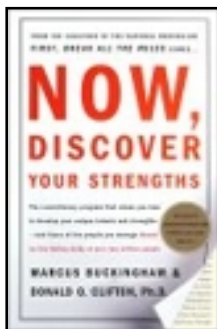
If you want to improve your ability to manage or lead teams, or report to your own manager more effectively, pick up one of these books.



***First, Break All the Rules:  
What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently***

M & Coffman, Curt Buckingham.

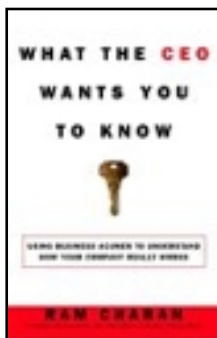
Read up on a massive study by Gallup that uncovers the secrets of great managers and successful employees.



***Now, Discover Your Strengths:  
How to Build Your Strengths and the Strengths of Every Person in Your Organization***

Marcus & Donald Clifton Buckingham.

Forget improving weakness -- harness talent to build a 'strengths-based organization'.



***What the CEO Wants You to Know:  
Using Your Business Acumen to Understand How Your Company Really Works***

by Ram Charan.

Get a grip on the central business concepts about which every C-level manager is concerned.

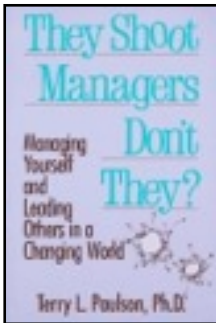


***The Goal:***

***A Process of Ongoing Improvement Revised***

Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox.

A must read for anyone in manufacturing. The novel format makes contemporary economic theory seem like a fast read.



***They Shoot Managers, Don't They?:***

***Managing Yourself and Leading Others in a Changing World***

Terry L. Paulson.

Learn the art of verbal Aikido and positive interactions in difficult situations.

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# Word Origins About Education

by Sue-Anne Schroeder



In keeping with November's general meeting, the theme for this issue's Word Origins is education.

## Educate

Verb. To educate means to bring up and guide a child physically and mentally, to expand, strengthen, and discipline the mind or the faculties, and to prepare one for a profession or a calling by systematic instruction. Educate is derived from the Latin words *educare*, to rear or to bring up, and *educere*, to lead out. The noun *education* first appeared in the 16th century.

## Edify

Verb. To edify is to instruct and improve, especially in moral and religious knowledge. This usage first appeared around 1340, and is derived from the Old French *edifier* and from the Latin *ædificare*, both which mean "to build, construct."

## Erudite

Adjective. The adjective erudite, meaning "learned and well-instructed", comes from Latin eruditus. It stems from e-, ex-, meaning "out of, from" and *rudis*, meaning rough, untaught. (*Rudis* is the source of our English rude.) One who has been brought out of a rough, untaught, rude state is hence erudite.

## Instruct

Verb. Instruct appears in Middle English (*instructen*). It is derived from the Latin *instruere*, to prepare, or build.

## Learn

Verb. The verb learn, meaning to gain knowledge, or mastery through experience or study, is found in Middle English *lernen*, and Old English *leornian*. Until the early 19th century, *learn* was used in the sense "to teach or instruct." This meaning was derived from the Old English word *læran*. We can find the word *learn* used in this sense by Shakespeare, Spenser, and other early writers.

## Professor

Noun. This word's earliest roots come from the verb profess (from Middle English

*professen*, "to take vows" from Old French *profes*, "that has taken a religious vow" and from Medieval Latin *professus*, meaning "avowed".) Usage of the verb *profess*, with the meaning "declare openly" was first recorded in 1526.

The noun *professor* is also traced to the Latin from *profitieri* "lay claim to, declare openly." Usage of *professor* as a "person who professes to be an expert in some art or science, teacher of highest rank" appears in the mid-14th century. As a title prefixed to a name, it dates from 1706.

## **Pedagogy**

Noun. Meaning "the art or the profession of teaching," the noun *pedagogy* is derived from Old French *pedagogue* "teacher of children," and from Latin *paedagogus* "a slave who escorted children to school and generally supervised them."

## **School**

Noun. This word dates back to medieval times, and was borrowed from medieval Latin *scola*, from classical Latin *schola*, which itself comes from Greek *skhole*. The original sense of *skhole* was "leisure," and then "discussion at leisure," and then "discussion at leisure for educational or intellectual purposes," and finally "school." *Scholar* was derived from medieval Latin *scholaris*, and it was *scolere* in Old English, and *scholer* by 1300.

## **Tutor**

Noun. This word dates back to the 14th century and is derived from Old French *tutour* meaning a "guardian or private teacher," and from Latin *tutor*, a "guardian or watcher." The verb came into usage around 1590. The noun *tutorial* dates from 1742.

## **Sources**

The word origins were obtained from the following sources.

- [www.word-detective.com](http://www.word-detective.com)
- [www.wordwizard.com](http://www.wordwizard.com)
- [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)
- [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)
- [www.takeourword.com](http://www.takeourword.com)
- [A Word A Day newsletter](#) (Highly Recommended)



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