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### Workshop

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### Student Awards

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### January and February History

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### News from England

Nancy Halverson is back from her holidays and back at work. Find out what has happened since December and what observations she has made about life in England. [More](#)

### December Recap

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### New Members

As people in the communication field, we are always eager to learn and always eager to welcome people with new ideas. Read this article to find out more about four of our new members. [More](#)

## The Editor's Message

The theme of this month's articles is learning. Everyone is doing it!

### Not So Groovy

Anyone who has been a technical writer knows that lunch isn't always an option. Sometimes it's not your choice, because there is a deadline that has to be met. Other times it is your choice -- you get "on a roll" and you don't want to stop. You fear that if you stop, you will lose your train of thought and it will take you a while to get back in "the groove." This is what I am going through this month. Although it was nice to not have to get a newsletter together for January, it also got me out of the groove, and it has taken me a while to figure out who I might ask to write some articles for me. Alas, I tried to get two people to write articles about education, but I was not successful. Next month I hope someone comes forward and volunteers, or I'll have to start asking people much earlier. This is referred to as being "voluntold".

### Regular Features

On the bright side, the other familiar articles are still in place. In fact, many of the articles are associated with being a student or, at least, learning of some kind. This issue deals with our upcoming workshop, our student awards, Head Office scholarships, students who have come forward to volunteer, instructions on how to prepare a financial plan, and

## Upcoming Events

The STC provides you with a lot of opportunities to learn and grow as a communicator. See which of the upcoming events might interest you.

[More](#)

## CIC Financial Forecasting

Doing some financial forecasting can be the most difficult part of your business plan, Elaine Garnet has asked an expert to provide some tips on this "daunting" task. [More](#)

## Next CIC Meeting

January's meeting was postponed until February, so you have a second chance to attend this meeting and find out how you may be selling yourself short. [More](#)

## Call for Speakers

If you think you have something to talk about London's Student Chapter's "Education Day", then read this article to find out more about it. [More](#)

## STC Head Office

Opportunities for learning are not restricted to your STC chapter. Find out about scholarship opportunities for those students who will be attending school again next year. [More](#)

Students are not the only ones still learning. Find out more about this year's conference. [More](#)

Even Head Office is learning as they revise their Web site. Read about what they have done. [More](#)

instructions on how to choose the right software to edit different types of graphics. This should not be surprising, since one of the purposes of our chapter is to learn.

## Students vs. Members

The only difference between students and members in our chapter is where we do our learning. I have always said that I like the technical writing profession because it always gives you the chance to learn something new. You can learn something new that is specific to our profession, like how to use a new software package or how to simplify something complex. You also have the luxury of learning about the subject matter that you are documenting, whether it be a new software feature, a new piece of machinery, or a new course.

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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For a complete list of contacts, go to the site of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC at [www.stc-soc.org](http://www.stc-soc.org).

## **STC Head Office**

You can find out more about the STC using any of the following methods.

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## Giving Back by Getting Involved

by Heidi Marr, President



When I have multiple deadlines looming at work, a household to run, and yoga classes to attend, the academic classroom can seem but a distant memory. Like many of you, I'm a busy STC'er with a demanding work schedule and an even more chaotic personal life. This means it can become very easy to focus on myself and overlook a particularly important portion of our chapter's membership - our student members. So, I find it refreshing when they do something to make me sit up and take notice!

In the last month, I've been reminded not once but twice how dynamic our students can be. When I think about how busy I am, I remember what it was like then, juggling a full course load, working a part-time job, and enjoying an unparalleled social life. Who had time for STC committee activities?

Two students have recently joined our ranks, and we're thrilled to have them! Late in 2003, I was faced with a challenge on our chapter's council - one of our valuable volunteers could no longer participate and we needed to find a replacement quickly. I decided to pose the problem at that evening's general meeting, knowing that the December meeting isn't historically well attended. That night it was bitterly cold and I wasn't surprised to see a small group assemble at our restaurant meeting. But, I wasn't dissuaded. I asked if anyone would be interested in taking on the recorder role for the remainder of the year. By the end of the meeting, I had a volunteer! Sarah-Beth Doner -- one of the lucky membership winners in November - decided she would earn her keep and has joined council. While we will miss Darlene's smiling face at our council meetings, we're very pleased that Sarah-Beth will record our thoughts.

With that success story fresh in my mind, I received a surprise from another student member just last week. One of last year's student award winners, Diane Russell, is continuing her studies at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) and wants to get her feet wet in the STC. Because she's willing to tackle any task, Diane is now filling the previously vacant WLU Student Liaison role, and she has also joined our Program Committee. Both are extremely important posts. These two student volunteers have reminded me that, while life can seem hectic at times, it's important to get involved in the community, regardless of your schedule. So, the next time you enjoy an article in The Quill, pick up an exciting tidbit at a workshop, find your dream job posted on our Web site, or meet a new contact at a general meeting, please consider giving back to your chapter. We rely on our volunteers and we'd love to get to know you better. ♦

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# Pictures with pixels and paths: what tools do I use?



by Patrick Hofmann

Imagine the scenario: your client or cohort emails you a screenshot or a digital photograph of their product, asking you to add some labels or annotations to it so that it makes more sense to its readers. What tool do you use to best fulfill this request? In a nutshell, it depends -- and don't shoot me, I'm only the messenger! To help me explain, let's start by discussing the type of file (whether it's raster or vector) and then launch into what tools you can use.

## Raster vs Vector images

Raster images (also called *bitmapped* images) are divided into a grid of many cells or pixels, where each cell is a solid colour. Scanners, digital cameras and screenshot-grabbers all generate raster images. When you save a high-resolution raster image, the file sizes can be quite huge. After all, the colour of every pixel in that image has to be declared behind the scenes: "This pixel is 100% blue, this pixel is 98% blue, this pixel is 47% blue, this pixel is 100% white..." and so on, repeated for thousands upon thousands of pixels. No wonder the file size can be so huge! To edit raster images, use tools like Adobe Photoshop, Corel PhotoPaint, Windows Paint, and PaintshopPro. If you're ever working with scanned images, digital photos, screenshots, you're dealing with raster graphics.



Vector images are created by mathematically defined shapes, line segments, and curves. Behind the scenes, a vector image is very similar to the functions and relations lessons we learned in high school math: "Draw a square with corners at (0,0), (12,0), (12,24), and (0,24), then fill that square with 100% blue". This way of defining a shape is far more efficient than a raster image, which painstakingly has to describe the colour of each cell or pixel in that image. This results in a dramatically smaller file size. To edit vector images, you need tools Adobe Illustrator, Corel Draw, Claris Draw, IsoDraw, and AutoCAD. If you're ever working with original line drawings and illustrations, drafting blueprints, or interactive Flash animations,

Corel Draw, Claris Draw, IsoDraw, and AutoCAD. If you're ever working with original line drawings and illustrations, drafting blueprints, or interactive Flash animations,

you're typically dealing with vector graphics.

## **Hybrid applications that deal with both**

The really confusing part: to streamline the graphic creation and publishing process, graphic software applications are now trying to be all things to all people. They have blurred the lines between raster and vector, now incorporating the editing tools for both types into a single application. With applications like Macromedia Fireworks, you can create and edit both raster and vector images, but the toolbars clearly separate the functions that apply to raster elements (like manipulating individual pixels) and vector elements (like manipulating individual paths and line segments). With applications like Adobe Illustrator, you can place raster images into a file and perform basic changes to them as a whole (changing their size, contrast, or clarity) but you can't manipulate their pixels individually beyond that.

With most vector applications, you can take your line drawing or vector-based logo and convert it to raster -- converting all those mathematical paths to individually defined pixels. But can you take a raster image and convert it to vector? Yes, but it's by no means perfect! Applications like Adobe Photoshop and PaintShopPro are readily equipped with features that can "convert pixels to paths", but if the pixels are highly variable or suffering from poor resolution, the best algorithms in the world won't convert them into perfectly smooth paths or line segments.

## **So what tool do I use?**

Back to our original scenario: what tool should you use to add those labels and callouts to that raster-based screenshot or photo?

If the image is destined for a paper document, perhaps it's easiest to use your publishing tool (FrameMaker or Word) to type the annotations into text boxes and to draw the necessary lines so that they "float" on top of the placed image. But what if the image is destined for a Web site or for online help? What tool do you use to add those annotations, and edit that image directly?

Since the image is in raster format (likely .bmp, .gif, .jpg, .pct, .tif), use any paint or photo-editing application (PaintShopPro, Corel PhotoPaint, Adobe Photoshop) to draw in the necessary lines and to type in the necessary text. If all you have is Windows' bare-boned Paint application, you can edit the image, as long as it's in .bmp format.

Alternatively, you could place the raster image into a vector application (CorelDraw, Adobe Illustrator, Freehand) to draw in the lines and type the text so that they "float" on top of the placed image -- just as you would if you placed the image into Word or FrameMaker. The only problem is: Web sites and online help won't accept vector-based artwork (except for Flash and SVG files, but that's a whole other

story!). To place this image in a Web site or online help, you will have to *export* it to a raster format (.bmp, .gif, .jpg, .pct, .tif -- which most vector applications will now do), plus save your raw work as a working vector file (.ai, .cdr, .eps, and so on) for future edits.

In the end, there may be countless other variables to influence your decision: everything from a company's document management conventions, to the potential of repurposing your image for other destinations or formats, to your personal preference for certain tools or file formats. Whatever your choice, tools are becoming more flexible in their features and more supportive of various file formats. Although performing graphical edits and exports is becoming easier, choosing the right tool seems to becoming harder. ♦

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# You Won't Want to Miss It! Our February Workshop

by Elaine Ruddock, Education Manager



The 2004 STC Southwestern Ontario Chapter Workshop promises to be one of our best yet! Make sure you're there!

## **Single Sourcing in Practice -- XML Migration Strategies and Tool Comparisons Presented by Bernard Aschwanden**

As writers and managers, it is crucial to stay on top of the changes in technology. This seminar is the ideal way to quickly gain an appreciation of XML and what it offers us, as documentation systems become more powerful through the use of XML technologies.

During this seminar, you will gain an understanding of XML from the perspective of writers, managers, and developers. There is an overview of XML, formatting technologies, tools that work with XML, steps to take to prepare for XML documentation, and more.

In addition to an XML demonstration, numerous systems will be set up with software, sample files, and demo materials -- providing you with a unique, hands-on opportunity to work with the tools!

### **Who is Bernard Aschwanden?**

A recognized publishing technologies expert and Managing Director of Front Runner Publishing Solutions, Bernard Aschwanden presents at conferences and events across Europe and North America. Bernard is an Adobe Certified Expert, a Certified Technical Trainer, an active STC member, and the author of numerous publications on publishing and single sourcing. A dynamic and entertaining speaker, he tailors his presentations to the audience and welcomes participation.

With such vast experience to share with us, this is one workshop you won't want to miss! Workshop and registration information is available on our Web site, [www.stc-soc.org](http://www.stc-soc.org), or e-mail [Elaine Ruddock](mailto:Elaine.Ruddock) ♦

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## The Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award: Connecting Students and the STC



by Christy Simard, Student Awards Manager

At our March wine and cheese meeting, we will announce the winners of the Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award for Student Technical Writing. If last year is any indication, we will enjoy meeting the winners and their supporters, and get face to face with talent from the University of Waterloo (UW) and Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU).

The Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award is an important part of our chapter. It embodies our commitment to education in a tangible way: the 1<sup>st</sup> place award includes \$1,000 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> place award includes \$500. It also brings new student members to our chapter, giving them all the benefits of an STC membership and creating networking opportunities for students and professional communicators alike.

This year, we will create new connections through our official student liaisons and former award winners. Four gregarious volunteers will publicize the award on the UW and WLU campuses. Participating in a word-of-mouth campaign, they will speak to professors of third- and fourth-year classes, and make direct contact with third- and fourth-year students in several faculties.

Combined with our poster campaign, newspaper ads, and entries on a number of scholarship websites, we will get word of this valuable award to as many students as possible.

Sincere thanks to our volunteers!

- UW student liaisons Lindsay DeClou and Sally Heath
- WLU student liaison and 2003 award winner Diane Russell
- 2003 1<sup>st</sup> place award winner Joanna Duong

You can get a copy of the entry form from the [Awards page](#) on our Web site or, you can contact me, Christy Simard, the [Student Awards Manager](#). Otherwise, we hope to see you at our general meeting in March. ♦

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# January and February History

by Carol Lawless, Treasurer



The Southwestern Ontario Chapter has a strong tradition of successful February workshops. That meant we were usually busy planning through January, but there are some notables, over the years:

- **January 1990** - Still a fledgling chapter, locally we identified 26 companies with technical communicators on staff, and a further 10 freelance/contracting companies.
- **February 1995** - Our new FTP site was up and running on the internet. Most of the chapter's executive could be reached via e-mail.
- **February 1997** - Growing fast! In just over a year, the chapter membership grew by over 40% to 141.
- **February 2001** - A new SIG was in the works - the Contractors/Independents/Consultants (CICs) SIG was looking for volunteers and members. It's going strong today!

Our first workshop like "Managing Documentation Projects, and Estimating, Scheduling and Tracking Documentation Projects" was jointly sponsored by the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC and the Centre for Professional Writing, University of Waterloo, in February 1991. A symposium on The Changed Role of the Technical Communicator in the Corporate Workplace followed.

Other successful workshops:

- JoAnn Hackos on Managing Documentation Projects.
- Jared Spool on Usability
- John Bowie on Reinventing Technical Communication
- Ginny Redish on Web Design
- Kim Goodwin on Goal Oriented Design for Communication Professionals
- Jonathan Price on Writing for Electronic Delivery ♦

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# View from the other side...of life in general

by Nancy Halverson



Greetings from an island in the middle of the Gulf Stream. Well, not exactly the middle, but we're greatly affected by it. England's dreary in winter, not quite cold and fresh, more like soggy and bleak. Forecasts are amusing here -- 'sunshine and rain' or 'organized bands of rain' -- broadcasters say it like it makes sense.

## Travel

We were so happy to get on a train and venture across the channel for Christmas and New Years. Sunny Alsace (a town called Colmar) was our destination for Christmas, and we weren't disappointed. Cold and clear, with lots of beautiful buildings and squares, great food and wonderful wine. I'm hopeful that we can go back to France soon, and often.

The second leg of our journey was a drive through Germany to a small city near Nurnberg in Bavaria. We were visiting friends and enjoyed a lovely winter holiday. Skating, walks through historic towns (500 year old buildings still being used as shops and restaurants) and gluwain -- a warm type of spiced red wine. Okay, lots of gluwain. And we loved it!

Travel to Europe was supposed to be one of the reasons that we moved here, but it's just not as easy as all that. Now that I'm working, we can finally afford it, although it's still expensive. Still, we've got a tent ready to go, now we just have to plan a trip. After we get the house together -- renovations are coming our way, even though we just moved in.

## Work

My job continues to keep my brain busy. Lots of dull tasks keep getting in the way of the interesting bits -- which probably means I'm settling in just fine. I still can't get near the design people, but I'm getting paid to put words together, so I've still got one of my career-goals in hand. My work life has been complicated by the addition of a regular exercise routine. I know some of you won't believe it, but I'm actually going to the gym at 7:30 am, three mornings a week. It's a difficult adjustment, and it's still tough getting up sometimes, but it's just one more element this aging body requires.

## Life in General

Here are some of the things I'm getting used to:

### **Roundabouts**

At first we didn't know which lane to get into, but now, we can even do 'em backwards (i.e., the other side of the road, in France). Traffic usually moves quite well around them, except when they put lights on the approach -- then it's just a complete mess.

### **Poufy hair**

Humidity (even in winter) that makes my hair curl. Uncontrollable frizz. But I just don't care anymore, it's just impossible to work with.

### **Free-form parking**

Park anywhere you can find space. Sidewalks, no parking zones, traffic humps. This city was built for buses, 10p a ride, no driveways, no parking - and then Thatcher privatized them. Now everyone drives 'cause it's cheaper than the bus fares, and it's such a mess. Makes for interesting driving.

### **Giving way to the more expensive car**

Narrow roads and lots of cars parked on both sides of the road means one lane a lot of the time. Some people think that you need to give way to the driver who's going uphill, but I'm pretty sure that Jag and Benz drivers consider it an insult if you don't let them by.

### **Spelling "ization" with an 's' and having Word try to correct it.**

We're used to that already, spelling things in Canadian. Still, it took a while to get used to.

### **Words like 'posh' 'toff' and 'tosser' creeping into my speech.**

I even say tom-ah-to when I'm in English company. Can't quite bring myself to say 'bloke' or 'cheers' yet though.

### **Hearing my children**

They speak with English accents with their friends when they don't know I'm around.

### **Really good dramatic television series that last only six episodes.**

Oh, and I'm at least six months behind in any good North American TV shows. Few, I know, but there are some.

### **Moving things**

I move things out of the way to get to whatever is stored behind or under them. Space is at a premium in these houses -- and storage space is gold. Daily chores always involve moving something out of the way.

### **Laundry in the kitchen**

I still don't like it, since the machine's loud and rattles the dishes, but at least I have a washing machine!

### **No central heating**

Our boiler died in mid-December, and we've been waiting for quotes on a replacement. We're heating a few rooms, and when it's not too cold outside, we're quite comfortable. It's astonishing to think that a house can exist without heat, but it's quite easy to live with just three heaters. We'll see what happens when the temperature goes down!

### **Thanks**

Thanks to all the people who've been writing me -- I am enjoying hearing from you. It's tough to get my head around the whole ocean thing separating me from my past life, I get the emails from Paul and read about your next meeting, and it's so hard to believe that I can't just drive for a while to get to see you all. Who's working on that transporter? ♦

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## December Meeting Recap: It's not Technical Writing!

by Carol Lawless, Treasurer



That's the second thing we heard at December's meeting. The first was how Sherry McMenemy wields a mean set of power tools. Sherry, Catalyst, Online Strategies at Descartes Systems also wields a pretty impressive collection of writing tools. She's taken her strong technical writing background and applied it to a successful career at Descartes, where she leads the Web team and handles internal communications. At December's general meeting, she shared her secrets to success.

Internal communications may not be technical writing, but there are definitely similarities:

- **Know your audience.** The secret to successful internal communications is understanding what people need to know and what they want to hear and then relating them together. This is particularly true of events that elicit emotional or sensitive responses from people (layoffs, for example). Knowing your audience also means setting and meeting expectations. If they expect regular news (especially on the intranet) make sure you don't disappoint them. They're more likely to come back.
- **Be an advocate for your audience.** If you've done your homework (a.k.a. you know your audience), make sure the communications give them what they need. It's not always about "just in time communications". Share their success stories. Talk about human interest and community news, if it's appropriate. Brag about how they averted or solved problems.
- **Understand the right media for the message.** Sometimes internal communications are broadcast via the Intranet, but there are times when that's not the best way to communicate a message. Consider things like the timelines, the frequency that some people read intranet news, and the impact -- certain things need to be delivered personally. Press releases and newsletters are great for some types of information.
- **Use metrics.** Develop a strategy to measure if the message is getting across to the audience. You may have an informal strategy. Sherry favours cruising the hallways or polling her audience to understand their take on key messages. Usually the question, "so, what do you think about . . .?" produces a great response. But remember -- whenever you solicit feedback, protect your credibility and your reader's confidentiality and never, never divulge

names.

- **Document management is important.** You want your audience to find what it needs.

Successful internal communications keep the lines open and encourage sharing both ways. It may not be technical writing, but the bottom line is much the same -- know your audience and give them the information they need. And remember, it's always about the people. ♦

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## Biography: New Chapter Members

by Tina Chonko, Membership Manager



As a new year rolls in, so do new chapter members. And as a technical communicator, I always want to find out just a little bit more about the people behind the names...

### **Marc LaPierre**

**Joined: November 2003**

Marc is a lone writer at a company in Cambridge that designs portals. Right now, he spends the majority of his time writing RFPs (Requests for Proposals), but he hopes to dabble in the creative side in the future, perhaps writing marketing materials and white papers. He enjoys doing something with a creative bent that won't take him too far away from the technology and tools used in traditional technical writing.

Marc joined the STC so he could be in touch with current issues that confront technical communicators. He hopes the contacts, information, and other resources available through the STC will provide him with a support network that will help him meet the expectations of his clients and peers.

Marc reads extensively and enjoys writing plays. He also hopes to travel again soon, with his ideal destination being either Italy or Finland.

### **Lori Shantz**

**Joined: November 2003**

As a technical writer for CheckFree i-Solutions, Lori is an enigma of sorts; even though she wasn't a registered member, she has been involved in the STC for three years. She has attended general meetings and volunteered on the council (she was the Volunteer Coordinator for two years and is now our Competitions Manager).

Lori highly recommends that people get involved in the STC even if they can't join as a full member. "Given that so many STC resources are available for free, or at a minor cost to non-members, there's no reason not to be involved. I've found the general meetings and telephone seminars very useful." Well Lori, now that you're a member, those telephone seminars will be absolutely free!

### **Sarah-Beth Doner**

**Joined: December 2003**

While Sarah-Beth is a proud resident of Guelph, she is also a co-op student at the University of Waterloo, who is currently undertaking her first work term as a

technical writer at Sybase. She plans to use co-op as a way to explore all facets of the technical communications field before settling on a specific career path; however, she does hope to incorporate her graphic design experience somewhere down the road.

In the spring, she will become one of the first participants in the new Digital Arts Communications program, which we previewed during our November general meeting. It was during that meeting that luck smiled Sarah-Beth's way and she became one of the lucky winners of our fall membership drive, although she is adamant that she was joining the STC this year anyway!

As an avid traveller, Sarah-Beth hopes to do at least one of her co-op work terms abroad, preferably somewhere where she can polish up her Spanish.

## **Judy Newell**

**Joined: December 2003**

Judy, a resident of Kitchener, is an independent technical writing contractor with varied experience. Typically, she designs and writes online documentation sets; however, she's currently working on a website development project for an international antiques dealer. Judy believes the STC is a great way to learn what other writers are doing and how they're doing it. She belongs to multiple SIGs so that she can stay focused on her areas of interest.

In her spare time, Judy likes to fold... either paper (origami) or herself (pilates). She also reads and keeps her home network running smoothly. ♦

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## Upcoming Chapter Events

by Opal Gamble, Program Manager



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](#).

### February 10

#### Word 2003 and XML

Office 2003 adds XML functionality to most of the Office applications, including Microsoft Word. Peter looks at what all this new functionality actually means to the technical writer.

There are two aspects that matter to the technical writer:

- using Word to create XML document
- saving Word documents as XML

Peter Vogel will look at the differences between these two similar sounding activities and, in addition to showing how to do both, describe why technical writers care about either. Along the way, you'll be introduced to the DocBook specification (a standard for creating documents about hardware and software), WordprocessingML (the XML dialect used by Word), and see how Word's new functionality lets Word documents be delivered over the Internet and processed on any platform. Get some insights from one of the consultants working with Microsoft on XML in Office 2003.

#### About the Speaker

Peter Vogel (MBA, MCSD) is a principal in PH&V Information Services, which provides consulting services in client/server and intranet development. Peter's white papers appeared in the Visual Studio.NET and Office 2003 release package. He also did extensive work on XML in Office 2003.

Peter was the founding editor of the XML Developer newsletter, now Hardcore Web Services Developer. In addition to teaching for Learning Tree International, Peter wrote their ASP.NET and Technical Writing courses. His articles have appeared in every major magazine devoted to VB-based development and can be found in the Microsoft Developer Network libraries.

Peter lives in Goderich, Ontario, Canada but presents at conferences all over the world. In the Fall of 2002, Peter was the keynote speaker for the XML and Web Services conference in Orlando, Florida. His next appearance is in Palm Springs, California in October where he will be presenting both at the Office Systems conference and the ASP.NET conference.

### **The Fine Print**

This month's meeting is in Room 1304, Davis Centre, University of Waterloo [[map](#)].

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

### **February 17 Council Meeting**

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

All members welcome - help your chapter by becoming a volunteer!

RSVP to [Heidi Marr](#).

### **February 18 Free Contractors and Independent Consultants Workshop The Six-Step Selling Process**

Attend this workshop from 6:30 to 9:00 pm in the Games Room of the Doon Pioneer Community Center to find out how to turn leads into paying customers. [[details](#)].

### **February 19-20**

#### **February Workshop: Single Sourcing in Practice - XML Migration Strategies and Tool Comparisons**

You don't want to miss this event! [More](#)

### **March 9**

#### **Wine and Cheese**

Come join us as we celebrate our chapter's success!

7:00 - 9:00 pm at UW's University Club. [[map](#)]

### **March 10**

#### **Phone Seminar: Keywords for Indexing and Search**

By popular demand\*, our chapter is offering this phone seminar with presenter, Seth Maislin.

Language is the first, biggest, and most obvious barrier between people and their goals of finding information. Whether you're optimizing search queries and results

presentation, improving the navigation of your Web site, or writing print and online indexes, choosing the right words can improve both accessibility and user confidence. In Seth Maislin's third practical seminar, you'll learn how to accomplish the following:

- find the words that work
- optimize context and categorization
- develop and control vocabularies
- label for storage vs. keyword for retrieval
- build searches and search results
- use dynamic presentation environments
- translate terms between audiences and languages

Owing to the proliferation of search engines and automatic content, the burden on users to guess the right index words is increasing. Improved labeling, better keyword vocabularies, and functional label architectures can relieve that burden. A summary of examples will help you realize the potential to immediately improve your index, Web, and search products.

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 **Tuesday, March 9, 2004**. In your e-mail message, please state the names of attendees and membership status.

\*Survey results from January 5-12, 2004, on [www.stc-soc.org](http://www.stc-soc.org) indicate that chapter members preferred this topic. Do you want to have a say in our programming? Check the homepage frequently for surveys. ♦

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# Starting a Business 101: Financial Forecasting



by John Chapman, FLMI, Financial Planning Advisor

Dear Entrepreneurial Spirit,

Elaine Garnet has asked me to write to you about the dreaded subject of "Financial Forecasting". Why me? Well, besides having a business of my own, I spent a good chunk of the '80s as a technical writer for a turnkey software provider and two years in the '90s as a part of a corporate tax team putting together SR&ED (Scientific Research & Experimental Development) claims for a large insurance company. So, I have a feel for writing to deadlines plus having my income dependent upon the quality of the work I do.

## The Financial Forecast

The financial forecast is the soul of your business plan because it describes numerically what you think you are worth, now and in the future. Putting it down on paper is so hard because once you do; you know that you are going to be held accountable to those numbers. Also, most of us have not thought about the excruciating details of this new and exciting business idea yet and our egos are at stake, so we shy away from doing this section of the business plan as long as we can. Well, I'm here to say that this fear, while understandable, is not necessary. It is the approach that matters. Don't start with the question of how much can I make in this business? Start with how much do I need?

## A Compelling Vision

You must start with a vision of how this new business is going to be part of your whole life and how it is going to make the financial contribution towards all of the other things that you want to do besides work. A compelling vision will energize your creative powers to develop the motivation, skills and energy to accomplish the goals that are defined by your vision.

Three big questions:

- 1) How much money do I need? (Be brave; ask the universe for what you want!)
- 2) How much time do I want to spend on my business versus my family?
- 3) Does my time need to be structured the way it is now?

Having developed that vision, you now need to translate it into the numbers that make up the financial forecast.

## **The Components of a Financial Forecast**

There are 4 components to the financial forecast. Remember, these are projections of the future vision that you are designing. Reality will undoubtedly turn out different, but this part of the plan will give you the tools to measure your success and make changes based upon changes in circumstances that happen to all business people.

### **1) The Business Assumptions**

Your numbers in the next three sections are going to be dependent on the assumptions that you are going to make about your business. This is where you spell out those assumptions. They are things like who your customers are, where they are geographically located, why your expertise is valuable and how it will be best utilized. Also included may be how upcoming changes in a particular field will create a demand for your services, how doing one project for a company will allow you to leverage that work into multiple projects. In other words, what factors are you going to take advantage of that will make you more successful than just being an employee of a single firm?

### **2) The Pro Forma Income Statement**

This is where you outline your projected income, expenses and profit for one, three and even five years. If you have been in business for a while, use your past statements as a basis to start. If you are just starting up your business, this is where the hard work comes in. Search out other people in the business; go to trade shows; find out what you can from consultants in your field. Ask questions and test the business assumptions that you've made.

### **3) The Estimated Balance Sheet**

This balance sheet projects what you will own (the assets you will bring and purchase along the way), what you will owe (the debts you expect to incur to purchase those assets) and what your company will be worth year-by-year, again over that five-year period. These are snapshots taken at specific points in time (usually quarter and year-ends) that show how your company is expected to grow.

### **4) The Cash Flow Projections**

The projected cash flow statement will help you ensure that you will always have money around when you need it. It helps you recognize when income will be coming in and when expenses are to be paid. Do it monthly for the first year and quarterly thereafter. If you have a seasonal business, it is very important to include those variations in income and expense in your projections.

## Conclusion

It is very important that the work you do initially is reviewed monthly in the first year and quarterly every year thereafter. While the business plan tends to be used most often when businesses first start up, most successful entrepreneurs will tell you that constant monitoring of these components is the key to keeping your business in good shape. Good Luck!

## Suggested Reading Material

"Business Plans Kit for Dummies" by Steven Peterson, PhD and Peter E. Jaret  
(Lots of good, practical tools for doing business plans)

"The E Myth Revisited" by Michael E. Gerber  
(Really helps you focus on why you are going into business in the first place)

"Focusing Your Unique Ability" by Dan Sullivan  
(A great tool to allow you maximize your talent with the time you have) ♦

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# The Six-Step Selling Process

A Free and Practical Workshop Presented by Lois Raats, M.Ed, and the CIC-SIG



We all do marketing to generate leads, but how does one turn those leads into paying clients? Research into effective selling has confirmed three critical behaviours common to the most successful sales people. They:

1. Ask a lot more questions
2. Encourage potential clients to do most of the talking
3. Wait a lot longer before jumping in with a solution

The Six-Step Selling Process provides a structured framework for conducting the telephone or face-to-face follow-up meeting. We will learn to use coaching techniques to truly understand the needs of our clients, and then to help the client discover how effectively we can meet those needs.

## **Speaker Information -- Lois Raats, M.Ed**

Over the last eighteen years, Lois Raats has helped over 2500 individuals and organizations to achieve results by leveraging their strengths and abilities. Her company, CoachLois Associates ([www.coachlois.com](http://www.coachlois.com)), provides coaching and training to individuals and organizations. Lois coaches individual managers, executives, and professionals to achieve balance and purpose in their lives. She also consults with organizations, helping them develop clearer communication, stronger teams, and better bottom-line performance. Lois enjoys living in Waterloo with her husband Dan, and her two sons Nicholas, 15 and Philip, 12.

## **Details**

Start the New Year on a practical note by joining us on February 18, 2004 from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. in the Games Room of Doon Pioneer Park Community Center. ♦

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## STC London Student Chapter: Call for Speakers/Presenters



by Catherine Haycock, President, STC London Student Chapter

Hello, I am Catherine Haycock, president, of the STC London Student Chapter. Over the past 2 years, (founded in 2002), we have been somewhat under the wing of the Waterloo Chapter with an incredible amount of support from Deb Maskens and Ted Edwins.

Once again we are seeking your support. We are hosting an education day Saturday, April 24/04. This will also involve the Technical Writing students at Fanshawe College.

Our need is for speakers/presenters who can volunteer their knowledge and time (our funds are very limited), for this one day event.

Our mandate is wide open at present, as we are hoping to cover the professional and student audience with a good variety of topics.

I feel this is also a great opportunity for those who have been thinking about presenting and looking for a way to 'break the ice'. (We will also be providing feedback to presenters, new and experienced).

We would like to call on your members to submit their topics/presentations by February 13th at the latest. I realize that your meeting this month is on the 10th and that does not leave to much time for submissions.

Submissions can be sent to [Catherine Haycock](#) with a brief overview of the topic, their experience, and a bit about themselves.

If you could please let me know A.S.A.P. I would appreciate that very much.

Thank you.

Catherine ♦

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# Scholarships in Technical Communication

from the STC Head Office



## Background

The Society for Technical Communication is a professional organization for people developing technical information through such occupations as technical writing, editing, graphical design, interface design, and Web design. The goal of the Society is to improve the transfer of information about science and technology from its developer (e.g., scientist, engineer, inventor) to its user or exploiter. These scholarships are for students working toward this goal.

## Purpose

To assist students who are pursuing established degree programs in some area of technical communication.

## Eligibility

- Applicants must have completed at least one year of post-secondary education.
- Applicants must be full-time students. They may be either graduate students working toward a Master's or Doctor's degree, or undergraduate students working toward a Bachelor's degree.
- Students should have at least one full year of academic work remaining to complete their degree programs, although under exceptional circumstances an award may be granted to a student for the final half-year.
- They should be studying communication of information about technical subjects. Other majors, such as general journalism, electronic communication engineering, computer programming, creative writing, or entertainment, are not eligible.

## Awards

Four awards of \$1,000 each will be granted toward school tuition and expenses. Two awards are granted to graduate students, and two to undergraduates. Awards are for the academic year (Sept.-June).

## Schedule

Applications must be received by February 16 of the year for which the scholarship is needed.

Graduate students must have notified the committee of acceptance in a graduate program by March 20. (Students enrolling in a graduate program may not know their status by February 16. They will be evaluated like accepted students, but their eligibility is contingent upon acceptance and notification by March 20.)

Applicants will be notified by mail of committee decisions by April 15.

## To Apply

Obtain application forms and additional information from your university (college) department, the [STC Web site](#), or contact either one of the following:

Society for Technical Communication

Attn: Scholarships

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1822

(703) 522-4114

[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)

Ms. Lenore S. Ridgway

19 Johnston Avenue

Kingston, NY 12401

(845) 339-4927 ♦

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## STC Launches 51st Annual Conference Web Site



*The following article was taken from the February 2004 issue of STC Tieline  
The Society Leaders' Newsletter*

The Web site for [STC's 51st Annual Conference](#) is up and running. The site provides comprehensive, up-to-date information on educational and professional opportunities at the conference and includes a dynamic online registration form. When a member enters his or her five-digit member number, the name and address fields are automatically populated with information from the STC membership database. (Note: To register at the member rate, members *must* enter their membership number, which appears on the address labels of *Intercom*, *Technical Communication*, and all other correspondence from the Society office. Members who want to be reminded of their membership number should call the STC office at 703-522-4114.)

The conference Web site also includes a complete database of technical sessions that can be searched and sorted in many ways, including keyword, day/time, topic, and session stem. The session information includes brief descriptions of the sessions, locations and times, and the names of the moderators and speakers. As the conference draws near, this information will be updated frequently. Members are encouraged to visit the site often for the latest information.

As with STC's main Web site, all pages are printer-friendly for the convenience of attendees in planning their schedules.

### **Lodging for STC's 51st Annual Conference**

STC has arranged for special rates for this year's conference attendees at five Baltimore hotels. To take advantage of these rates, attendees must make their reservations before April 18, 2004, through the Baltimore Area Convention and Visitors Association Housing Bureau. Attendees from the United States can contact the Bureau at (877) 834-3675. International attendees can call (630) 268-6580. Attendees can also make hotel reservations online through [STC's Annual Conference Web site](#). All conference hotels are within walking distance of the Baltimore Convention Center. No shuttle buses are required. ♦

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## STC's Web Site: The Next Generation



*The following article was taken from the January 2004 issue of STC Tieline  
The Society Leaders' Newsletter*

[STC's Web site](#) is undergoing a complete redesign using CSS (cascading style sheet) layout techniques, which allow Web designers to update content without changing a site's formatting. STC's webmaster will be able to control the entire redesigned site with a single style sheet, resulting in timelier updates, greater readability, enhanced navigation, and reduced page size. Work on the new site should be completed early in the new year.

Due to the redesign, many URLs on the STC site will change. In late December, the STC office e-mailed to chapter webmasters a list of the most heavily visited pages whose URLs will change.

The new site will be 100 percent compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) standards for CSS. (Please visit the [W3C Web site](#) for more information about the organization.) Because screen readers can more easily interpret standards-compliant sites, users with disabilities will enjoy greater access to information on STC's new site.

The new site will also feature a multilevel drop-down navigation system, which will make searching for information easier than ever. The new navigation system is text-based rather than image-based (a setup that reduces page size) and completely cross-browser compatible.

Over the years, the STC office has collected many user suggestions on improving **[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)**. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated into the new design. The office will conduct an ongoing usability study of the new site, and users will be able to submit feedback through a form on the site.

The office constantly analyzes site traffic statistics and keeps up-to-date with current Web development trends. Approximately 98 percent of visitors to **[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)** use standards-compliant Web browsers. Although the new design is geared toward these users, the 2 percent of visitors using noncompliant browsers (such as *Netscape 4x*) will still be able to navigate the site—the only difference will be in how the information is displayed on the screen.

We hope you enjoy the new design and look forward to your feedback. ♦

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