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One of the benefits of being the president is being able to surprise someone with an award. Read this article to find out about this deserving individual. [More](#)

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No one whined and no one said "cheez" while they were at our March general meeting. There was nothing to complain about and much to celebrate. [More](#)

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April History

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There's always something new happening in our chapter. See which events might interest you. [More](#)

London Event

Our London Student Chapter is offering its first annual professional

The Editor's Message

Time Flies

I can't believe it is April already. It seems like just yesterday that I started working on the first issue of The Quill. I still feel like there is so much to learn, but Opal (my technical advisor) has set me up with a template with instructions embedded into it, like "<!--Start Content Here-->".

Still, I do know enough to get rid of the Microsoft tags that are left in articles that were written in Word, even after much of the Microsoft code has been stripped using the Textism Web site. In fact, Opal and Margie (my copy editor) nearly had a party when there were only two small changes that they had to make before the newsletter could be published last month. I guess maybe you can teach an old dog new tricks. Of course, I wrote this article before I finished the rest of the newsletter, so when I struggled to get some graphics and tables to work, my confidence about putting this month's newsletter together with only two errors started to slip.

Award Winners

I guess I had to write that first paragraph to indicate that I may have accomplished something too, because the articles in this newsletter are full of stories about people who have accomplished a lot. There are stories about student winners, competition winners, and award winners (both on an individual and organizational level).

development event. [More](#)

Changing Your Orientation

Patrick introduces us to the international market where it is necessary to think about the orientation of text on paper and online documentation, in addition to the content. [More](#)

Fellowships

Find out which two people will be receiving awards and what they did to receive them. [More](#)

Student and Medical Writer

It says something about our profession when even dentists want to become technical writers. [More](#)

CIC: Collecting Fees

You have to believe that you're worth it. Find out what people suggest you do to help collect outstanding payments. [More](#)

Worst Manual

We can all be confident that this article is not about something that we have written. It does, however, demonstrate just how bad documentation can be. [More](#)

STC Head Office

With so many people receiving awards, it shouldn't be a surprise that the STC has won an award of its own. [More](#)

With the quality of the people in the Southwestern Ontario chapter (and those who were once in this chapter), it shouldn't have surprised me that there could be so many award stories in one month.

Achievers

There are also stories about people trying something new. There is someone who made a career change to technical writing and there is the young London chapter that is offering an event for technical communicators.

Philosophy 101

Can anyone ever be a loser when they step outside their comfort zone? Some of us are losing more than we will ever know by not giving something new a try. Volunteering is one way to expand your horizons.

Send your questions or comments to me, Debbie, at quill@stc-soc.org



Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication





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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Mailing Address

Debbie Kerr,

The Quill Editor, 373 Imperial Rd. S., Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1K 1L3

The Quill Staff

Editor: [Debbie Kerr](#)

Copy Editor: Margie Yundt

Technical and Layout Advisor: Opal Gamble

Chapter Officers

President: [Heidi Marr](#)

Past President: [Ted Edwins](#)

Treasurer: [Carol Lawless](#)

Recorder: [Sarah-Beth Doner](#)

For a complete list of contacts, go to the site of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC at www.stc-soc.org.

STC Head Office

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

Website: www.stc.org.

Address: 901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, Virginia 222203-1822

Voice: (703) 522-4114

Fax: (703) 522-2075

E-mail: stc@stc.org ♦

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Recognizing Excellence in Lynda Baxter

by Heidi Marr, President



It is my distinct pleasure to announce that the society has granted Lynda Baxter a Distinguished Chapter Service Award for her years of unwavering dedication to our chapter. According to the [STC Web site](#), the Distinguished Chapter Service Award "acknowledges the work of those chapter members who repeatedly provide exemplary service to the society through their chapter activities".

Her Accomplishments

Our Award Nominations Committee agrees that Lynda is a deserving recipient of this honour. The inscription on Lynda's award plaque summarizes her volunteer efforts well. It reads, "For your outstanding dedication to the Southwestern Ontario chapter as president, program manager, education manager, nomination manager, and hospitality manager, and for your enthusiastic participation in chapter activities over the years". Lynda has set an amazing example through her contributions to our chapter; there are very few council positions she has not filled at least once. She has also been instrumental in securing new volunteers through her uncanny ability to make newcomers feel welcome, and to help all members -- new and seasoned -- realize their potential. The Southwestern Ontario chapter is lucky to call Lynda a member. One of the perks of being chapter president is working with an outstanding team of volunteers and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from Lynda's example.

The Presentation

Her Distinguished Chapter Service Award will be presented at our annual June BBQ, which is fitting because that event has historically been an evening of volunteer recognition. Lynda was not able to join us at the March Wine and Cheese where we would have surprised her with the award. I hope you can join us in June to help Lynda celebrate her achievement. Who knows -- maybe she'll help convince you to volunteer for your chapter :-)

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Nominations Process Coming to a Close

by Ted Edwins, Past-President and Nominations Manager



The process of collecting nominations for next year's council is well underway. We are pleased that a number of the present council have already signed up. We are also encouraged to have had new people take up a task. However, we are still well short of our goals.

Time Requirements and Positions

We have about 27 'management' type positions to fill. These positions are either as head of a committee or as leader of one of our Special Interest Groups (SIGs). There are also a number of committee member positions still available. No matter how much time you have to devote, we have a volunteer task for you.

Council understands the demands on a person's time. That is why we have worked very hard over the past few years to divide committee work into small chunks, so that people can more easily fit the work into their schedule. The range of tasks varies from commitments of a year to a few hours.

President for a Term

Among the most important of these positions still available is President. As President, you are the public face of the chapter. You are required to lead council meetings and provide information to fellow council members to help them complete their projects. The most satisfying part of the job is to present awards to chapter members. You get to meet many members of the chapter, establishing a network of contacts that you can use in your career. The President also has \$1000 of expenses covered so that they can attend the STC International Conference and participate in Leadership Day. I found Leadership Day to be the best part of the conference because I was able to talk with other chapter leaders, get ideas for our chapter, and discover that all chapters face the same challenges as we do.

More Information

For more information about council positions, please consult last month's Quill or go to <http://www.stc-soc.org/surveys/councilnominations.php>. You can link to pages describing the positions and to an online form that you can use to nominate yourself or another person. You can also contact me at nominations@stc-soc.org.

Our Future

I urge you to volunteer. As I've said before, the health of the chapter and our ability to provide stimulating programs of interest to you, our members, rests solely on the volunteers we are able to attract. If we are unable to get the number of volunteers needed, we may have to cut back on the services we provide. We would rather maintain and expand our services to give value for your membership dollar. To do that, we need your help. I hope to see you at the council table next year. ♦

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March General Meeting: Wine and Cheese

by Diane Russell, Student Liaison WLU



Our annual Wine and Cheese event, held March 9 at the University Club, was enjoyed by all who attended. It was an evening of award presentations, society announcements, and of course a chance to 'catch up' with what others are doing in the field.

Heidi Marr welcomed everyone and began the presentations by giving Catherine Hancock, the President of London's Student Chapter STC, a \$500 contribution to their diploma program.

Student Competition

Christy Simard, Student Awards Manager, announced the winners of the student competition:

3rd place: Jenna Olmstead

2nd place: Jeremy Lee

1st place: John Brawley

Our first place winner, John Brawley, was present to accept his award. He is a 3rd year student in a new double major program (Business and Math). This new program is through both the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. John's hometown is Manotick, Ontario. He enjoys both math and writing, and hopes to combine them upon graduation. What will he do with the prize money? John says, "I'd like to take a trip, if I can find the time."

Congratulations to John, Jeremy, and Jenna!

Technical Publications Winners

Competitions are not just for students; we also had 18 entrants (at the local level) for the Technical Publications Competition. Of those 18 entrants, seven received awards. Lori Shantz, the Competition Manger, announced the winners' names and put their entries on display. For full details regarding the winners in this competition, see our [Web site](#).

Fellowships

Congratulations to Deb Maskens! This energetic lady has received an Associate Fellowship Award. This award is reserved for someone with a high level of involvement in both the STC and the field of technical communication. Fanshawe

College and the University of Waterloo have already benefited greatly from Deb's expertise and commitment, and she is currently working for the University of Guelph.

Some of you likely remember Leanne Logan, another past president of this chapter. She currently resides in Memphis, and has received a Fellowship Award. Well done, Leanne!

Find out [more](#) about how Deb and Leanne came to receive their awards.

Nominations

Ted Edwins called for STC volunteers! For those of you who have never considered volunteering, he mentioned these benefits:

- Enhanced opportunity for networking;
- Input into upcoming workshops and seminars;
- Getting to know fellow members better; and
- Satisfaction that you contributed to the betterment of your club.

He encouraged people to volunteer so that this chapter can continue to do a lot for its members and students in the area, and possibly expand in the future. To do all this, this chapter needs your help. Check out Nominations page on our [Web site](#) for available roles -- you can even find out how much time is involved! ♦

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Fellows In Our Midst

by Ted Edwins, Past-President



Each spring the Society announces awards and honours that it bestows on deserving members. This year our chapter received the good news that two former members of the chapter are to be honoured for their contributions to the Society in particular and to technical communication in general.

Deb Maskens, a former chapter president and now a member of the London Student Chapter, has been honoured as an *Associate Fellow*.

The rank of *associate fellow* is conferred only upon a senior member who has attained distinction in the field of technical communication. Senior members may not apply for the rank of associate fellow; a committee composed of fellows and associate fellows must nominate them.

Deb Maskens

Deb was a member of our chapter for 13 years. During that time she was Program Manager twice, Nominating Committee member, President, and Past President. Along with Greg Cento, Deb helped develop the Technical Writing Program at Fanshawe College in London where she also taught classes and helped to kick-start the London Student Chapter. Deb was also instrumental in fundraising for the Digital Arts Communication program at the University of Waterloo. Our chapter was an enthusiastic supporter of the campaign.

Leanne Logan

Leanne Logan, also a former chapter president and now Program Manager with the Mid-South Chapter in Memphis, Tennessee, has been elevated to *Fellow*.

The rank of *fellow* is conferred only upon associate fellows who have attained such eminence in the field of technical communication that the board, by a two-thirds vote of all members, deems them worthy of being singled out as one of the select few who have distinguished the Society and the profession. Associate fellows may not apply for the rank of fellow; a committee of fellows must nominate them.

Leanne was a member of our chapter for 11 years. She was honoured as an Associate Fellow in 2003 for years of service to our chapter as Competition Judge, High School Competition Committee member, Nominations Committee member, Nominations Committee Manager, Newsletter Editor, and two terms as chapter President. An extremely short list of chapter accomplishments under her leadership includes gains in membership and recognition by the Society with a Chapter

Pacesetter Award.

The Presentations

In May, Deb and Leanne will receive their honours at the STC International Conference in Baltimore. Chapter members going to the conference are encouraged to attend the Honours Reception and Banquet where Deb and Leanne will be given their awards. The banquet will be held on Tuesday, May 11th from 6:00-9:00 pm. There is an additional \$40 USD charge for this event. Please consult the conference Web site at <http://www.stc.org/51stConf/> for full details. Let's get a rooting section together for Deb and Leanne!

Watch The Quill and the chapter website for an announcement of when we will honour Deb and Leanne at one of our local general meetings. ♦

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

by Steve Neville



As technical writers, we generally have safe jobs. There aren't many workplace hazards that befall us when we're putting together a new manual or updating some online help. One problem that technical writers do sometimes struggle with is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, or CTS.

What is the Carpal Tunnel?

CTS attacks an important but overlooked part of our anatomy -- our carpal tunnel. The *carpal tunnel* is a small passage just inside our wrist. This passage consists of the wrist bones on the bottom, and a ligament (the *transverse carpal ligament*) on the top. If you put your hand out, palm up, and feel your wrist you can feel the outside of the carpal tunnel. On the bottom, you can feel your wrist bones, and on the top you can feel the softer ligament. Running through this tunnel are arteries and veins that supply blood flow to your fingers, tendons that allow your fingers to bend, and the *median nerve* that provides feeling to your thumb, index, and middle finger.

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is quite simply the swelling of the carpal tunnel, in the form of the transverse carpal ligament. The expansion of this ligament compresses the median nerve inside the tunnel. This is primarily caused by repetitive stress on the wrist. Common occurrences are from assembly work and typing. CTS isn't new, as the American Physiotherapy Association has heard cases of meat packers as far back as 1860 who complained of similar symptoms. These symptoms include: numbness in the hand and thumb, and wrist tingling pain. Doctors often hear patients complain about a 'funny feeling' in their hands.

How do I get treated?

When detected early, the first step is to undergo strategies to prevent the symptoms from getting worse (see the following section for more information). Advanced stages may require you to wear a splint that keeps the wrist straight. Cortisone injections to reduce the swelling have been used with some success. Finally, sufferers can undergo carpal ligament release surgery. This is day surgery, undertaken with local or general anesthesia, where doctors cut the ligament to help release the pressure on the nerve. Although a very safe procedure, it comes with the usual risks of any surgery, along with time off work while you are recovering.

How do I prevent it?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome can be kept under control and prevented, if you take certain steps. If you must undergo repetitive motion stress, there are a few ways to make your life a little better. Kinesiologists recommend the following four steps:

1. *Take frequent breaks* -- Every 30-50 minutes, take a short break to rest your wrists. During the break, really rest the wrist joint and step away from your workstation.
2. *Use a stress ball* -- These round foam balls are great at not only exercising your wrist and fingers, but post-surgery they are excellent at rebuilding hand strength.
3. *Do stretches* -- One good stretch is to put your arm straight out in front of you at about chest height with your palm down. With the other hand, grasp the fingers of your outstretched hand then gently but securely pull your hand back. You are trying to make your palm vertical, with the arm and hand appearing to make a 'stop' gesture. Only pull back far enough to feel the stretch. Hold for about 15 seconds. Repeat with opposite arm.
4. *Get ergonomic devices for your work area* -- Anything that promotes your working with a straight (not bent wrist) is extremely helpful. Whether they are gel pads at your mouse or keyboard, or grip extenders, these items help alleviate the stress on your wrists. Some people opt to choose a trackball or thumbwheel instead of a mouse. Either device can be helpful for some, but for others, they find that the isolated pressure on the thumb and inside of the hand can make their symptoms worse.

Sources and Useful Links

Medical Source -- www.yourmedicalsource.com

National Institute of Health -- www.nlm.nih.gov

American Physiotherapy Association -- www.apta.org ♦

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Adventures in Translation: Finding a Vendor

by Margie Yundt



You've just kicked off a project to write a documentation suite for your company's latest software innovation, and by the way, they want whatever you write translated into French, German, and Japanese. "Oh, and could we arrange to have the software interface translated into these languages as well? We'll provide you with a dictionary file."

I can hear the silent screams now...but no need to panic, you can do this! Translation and localization can seem scary if you've never gone down this road. Working with a good translator or translation company can help ease the burden of what may seem like an overwhelming task--gosh, just handling the English version is keeping you busy enough, never mind worrying about coordinating multilingual copies! Selecting the right vendor, and building a good relationship with that vendor, is the key to keeping your sanity.

Think of it as finding the right vehicle for your journey.

Do your research: Find out where to shop

Ask colleagues about who, or which companies, they use for translations, and ask for recommendations from perspective vendors.

For **translation companies**, find out where they get their translators: are they local, or located in a country using the native language? How do they manage multiple language projects--do they have the resources to run all translations concurrently? How do they manage quality control? What do they typically charge for project management, and what does this service include?

For **independent translators**, find out how current they are in the dialect for the language they are translating into--for example, how often do they travel to the country using the target language? Do they have a source for checking their translations, and is this quality control included in their project estimate? Are they certified, professional translators?

Ask vendors for contact information from recent or current clients. Call and ask the following:

- Did the vendor meet expected timelines?
- What was the scope of the work?
- How much work, if any, was required to correct any errors?

- How responsive was the vendor to any requests or inquiries?
- Did the deliverable(s) meet your expectations?
- Would you use this vendor again?

Use this information to compile a short list of potential vendors for your project.

Get estimates: How much is this going to cost?

Next, get quotes for the project from everyone on your list. Compare results to determine how competitive the rates are, but don't compare SUVs to motorcycles. Quotes from larger translation companies that have to take into account project management costs and international rates for translators cannot compete with quotes from independent contractors, with virtually no overhead. Ask how these vendors calculate project costs--is it word or project-based? What do the quotes include? Are the costs for a larger company to do your project justified, considering the scale of the project?

Keep in mind these quotes are only as accurate as the information you provide, so ensure you provide as much information as possible, including the expectations concerning the format for the deliverables, and what you expect translated or not translated (what is *not* translated is also very important) in the document(s). If the project involves updates to existing translations, provide the vendor with copies of any previous translations for reference, and if possible, provide a glossary of terms for any unique terminology your product uses to avoid misunderstandings. Ask the vendors what they need, and accommodate each request as best you can--the extra work you put into it can result in more accurate (and realistic) estimates for project costs.

Weigh your options: Do I need a minivan or a MINI?

When the quotes start rolling in, don't assume that the lowest rate is the best choice. Remember, like the English version, these documents are a reflection of your company's image, and poor translations not only reflect badly on a company, but can also compromise the safety of using its product.

If you are dealing with multiple languages, consider a translation company that can handle all of the requested languages--this will save you time and energy managing individual vendors. They may cost more in terms of project management, but if they do their job well, it is well worth the additional cost.

If your project involves a translation to only one language, such as French, why go off the continent when you can easily find local expertise for this national language, at less expensive rates than Europe. In this case, choosing economy over the luxury

model just makes sense.

Don't be afraid to ask for a test drive...

If you are unsure, don't be shy about asking vendors to provide a sample translation. Select a short but representative piece from your project and ask them to translate it into one or more of the target languages. When they submit the sample, have an independent source--ideally a distributor or coworker fluent in the target language--evaluate the quality of the translation. Also, note how efficiently your request for translation is dealt with, and the professional nature of the deliverable: is the formatting intact? Did they follow instructions? Any small problems can turn into big headaches for larger projects--address any issues right away, and give the vendor a chance to offer an explanation.

Most vendors are happy to accommodate any reasonable requests--after all, they want your business!

Closing the deal

So, you've finally settled on a vendor to provide the translations for your project. What now? Stay tuned in the next issue of The Quill for another edition of Adventures in Translation: Preparing your documents!

In the mean time, come out to our STC chapter meeting, "Translation 101", on Tuesday, May 4th and meet our panel of translators and one technical writer who's had some experience dealing with this issue (okay, it's me). See you there! ♦

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View From the Other Side...of work, organization, relaxation, and English



by Nancy Halverson

Work continues to get more comfortable, although I'm always amazed at the time it takes to get really productive. Every time I review work I've done over the past few months, I see how much I really didn't understand when I started. Oh well, it's all getting better, right?

Possible Meeting

As well as the work, I'm trying to get a meeting of technical communicators off the ground. It's not very easy to get people together. I've told you before to count yourselves very lucky to have a group of people who can effortlessly (seemingly) put monthly meetings together.

What I'm trying to do is simply get people in a room to talk about how we might be able to help each other in our professional lives.

The industry here is fairly strong, although it's hard to know. Software producers exist in most cities. There are lots in and around London of course, and Swindon, Oxford and Cambridge (the so called OxBridge area). The reason why I'm trying to put a meeting together in Sheffield, is simply because most people who live outside of the London/Oxbridge areas find it difficult to get into the meetings held in London.

Okay, I know that people are coming from many different areas for the Waterloo meetings (sorry, Southwestern Ontario meetings). I don't think that anyone does a two-and-a-half hour train trip for a lunch meeting.

So, our meeting in Sheffield (April 24th, drop in if you can!) will hopefully include people from both the STC and the ISTC (Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators), as well as students of the M.A. of Technical Communication. There's a few publications which might help, like newsletters, but it's not that easy to get everything together.

That's the publicity part of it. I'm also doing the program, which means finding speakers. I'm pulling in some contacts I've made here in Sheffield and hoping to get about a three-hour meeting out of it. We're doing a Saturday afternoon affair, which should not only help get people here, as they don't have to leave early from work or rush through traffic (no one rushes anyway!). I'm hoping for a relaxed atmosphere, which will help the networking. It's ambitious, but I'd love to get some action going that will show the communicators here that they can help each other to enrich their

professional lives.

I'll let you know how it all goes.

The Weather

As for my life as an *expat* (chiefly British term meaning expatriate), the daily grind exists wherever you are in the world. It doesn't matter that we're not experiencing the snow and ice and sub-zero weather that you might be. We still haven't had the spring day feeling -- you know, that breath of warm wind that tells you that summer will come sometime. Oh yeah, we've got crocuses and daffodils, and the trees are starting to have tiny green leaves appearing. And yes, the grass is green all year long. But the wind is still raw and constant (never forget that this is a fairly flat rock in the middle of an ocean -- at least, that's what it feels like) and I still can't get my garden started. And don't forget, it rains...a lot.

My Home Life

My home life is getting better -- we've adopted two kittens (Snickers and Coco) who are adding a lot of depth to our home. The kittens are adorable, and watching them play together with our kids really makes a difference in my daily stress levels. Who'd have thought that taking on more responsibility would actually get me more relaxed?!

I'm about to relax even more in a few weeks -- the kids get a two-week break at Easter, and my mother is coming over for a visit, so I'm taking some time off. We've rented a cottage in Cornwall for a week, so we'll be able to see some of the south of the country. Getting away for a week will be great -- I just hope the weather goes to the mid-20's like it did last Easter. Can't wait.

Next month, I'll let you know what happens with the April meeting.

The Language

Language tidbits:

- bespoke means custom made
- a cot here means a baby's crib
- a stroller is called a push-chair
- a sliproad is an on-ramp
- a double room in England will get you one double bed -- there's almost no chance of getting a hotel room with two queen size beds.
- Oh yeah, and a queen-size bed here is actually called a king size, while a king

size is called a super-king.

Happy spring everyone! ♦

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A History of Awards in April

by Carol Lawless, Treasurer



Isn't there a saying about April showers and May flowers? Historically, April has showered a rain of accolades on our members! The Quill itself has received many awards over the years, but these stand out:

- **1991** - The Quill won its first STC Achievement Award.
- **1996** - The Quill won the Distinguished Award for chapters with 75 or less members (my how large we've grown over the last 8 years) - Lisa Bater and Patrick Hofmann, Co-editors.
- **1996** - The Quill was given the Best of Show award in the Newsletters competition: "The Quill is by far the best newsletter I've evaluated" - Lisa Bater and Patrick Hofmann, Co-editors.
- **1997** - The Quill won the Distinguished Award for chapters with 75 or less members - Lisa Bater and Patrick Hofmann, Co-editors
- **2001** - The Quill won an Award of Excellence for chapters with a membership between 151-300 - Karen Hess, Editor; Deborah Gardiner, Copy Editor.
- **2002** - Two short years ago Leanne Logan became the third chapter member to be recognized as an Associate Fellow of the STC for her outstanding and long-term work supporting technical writing.
- **2002** - The Fanshawe College Technical Writing students (under the auspices of Deb Maskins) created the new London Student chapter. The chapter is affiliated with our Southwestern Ontario chapter and we established a \$500 scholarship to be awarded to the top student in the program.

Since April is a time of growth, maybe there are still more awards to come. ♦

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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](#).

April 20 Council Meeting

6:30-8:30pm 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](#).

May 4 Translation Basics

Join our panel of experts to learn the twisty details of document translation.

Bring your burning questions for our panel! To get you started, here are a few of the questions we'll be examining in what's sure to be an action-packed evening:

- Why translate?
- What should I translate?
- How to I prepare my documents for translation?
- How do I choose a translator?
- What does this quote mean?

About the Panel

Al Daigen

Al Daigen boasts an impressive track record -- over 20 years providing French-to-English translations and writing English-language marketing communications for industry and government in Quebec, Ontario, and the United States.

Several of Al's publications have received awards from the Society for Technical Communication (STC), including the society's Award for Excellence.

Al holds an M.A. in Intercultural Communication and a Certificate in French Translation from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts with Joint Honours in French and Italian Language and Literature from McGill University in Montreal.

Before establishing Daigen Communications, Al served for eight years as a staff translator with the Government of Canada. Al is Past President of the Southwestern Ontario chapter of STC and recipient of its prestigious Distinguished Chapter Service Award. He is a Certified Member of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario.

When Al isn't working, he's probably out latin dancing or cross-country skiing. But definitely not both at the same time.

Steve Desmeules

Steve Desmeules is co-owner and vice president of DNS Translations Inc . and ACCU Translation Services Ltd. He has a B.A. in business from the University of Western Ontario in London. Steve has more than 10 years of business experience, from customer relations to project management. He is native French speaking from Quebec City and also has knowledge of the Spanish language.

Steve is in charge of marketing and special projects at DNS/ACCU. He is also managing the integration of a new company wide software that has changed its way of doing business. Steve always looks forward to a new challenge and to offering the best service to his customers. His off-work passtime is to actually work on some kind of new project on the house...very relaxing!

Rudi Vandvaerenbergh Rudi Vanvaerenbergh is co-owner and President & CEO of DNS Translations Inc. of Waterloo and ACCU-Translation Services Ltd. of Burlington. He has an M.A. in Translation (major in Dutch/French/Spanish) from Lessius Hogeschool in Antwerp, Belgium. He is an active member and accredited/certified translator of the American Translators Association and the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario.

Rudi has more than 17 years of experience in Dutch and French technical translations and in managing translation projects. He is also very involved with the Flemish and Dutch communities in Southwestern Ontario and is an official cultural representative in the area for the Flemish regional government. In that role, he helps new immigrants from his native country Belgium when they arrive in Canada and organizes events allowing children of first generation Belgian immigrants to stay in touch with their parents' culture.

Margie Yundt

Margie Yundt was sucked into the world of technical communication in the neighbourhood of 1992 and was never seen again -- *ok, just kidding*. She spent a couple of years producing a newsletter describing the technology initiatives going on in our provincial government (*no really*), then moved on to the private world of delving into software and telling people how to use it.

In her current position at Virtek in Waterloo, which produces laser projection, inspection, and engraving systems, Margie is the Team Lead for Product Information Services. In this position, she and her team are responsible for creating user, customer support, and assembly documentation for customers all over the world -- in all sorts of languages. Margie and her team contract out these translations using a variety of translators and translation companies. These translation contracts range from short legal documents to full multi-lingual localization projects, which include coordinating the creation of dictionary files for a product's software interface, translating licence agreements, and so on.

Though scared witless at first, over the years, Margie has

learned how to deal with the sometimes-daunting task of translating manuals and software, and still keep your sanity. She will share what she has learned, from one technical writer's perspective, with you.

When she is not working, Margie is chasing around her year-old son who is usually wielding the remote for the television.

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. ♦

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First Annual Professional Development Event



Hosted by

Fanshawe College Students and London Student Chapter STC

What's the Occasion?

The London Student Chapter and Fanshawe College Students are hosting their first annual Professional Development Event. Take this opportunity to learn from others and network with fellow communicators.

When?

Saturday, April 24, 2004

8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Who is Presenting?

9:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Keynote Speaker -- Peter Vogel -- Clarity and Signaling

Peter Vogel (MBA, MCSD) is a principal in PH&V Information Services. Peter will demonstrate how using effective signaling can increase clarity and keep readers on track. Peter has designed, built, and installed intranet and component-based systems for Bayer AG, Exxon, Christie Digital, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. He's also the editor of the "Smart Access" and "XML Developer" newsletters. In addition to teaching for Learning Tree International, Peter wrote their Web application development and technical writing courses. His articles have appeared in every major magazine devoted to VB-based development and can be found in the MSDN libraries. Peter also presents at conferences around the world and is a storyteller in his spare time.

Session A-1: 10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Visual Language in Technical Communication

Patrick Hofmann, a visual interaction designer with Quarry Communications in Waterloo, will discuss the failures, successes, and strategies of using pictures in technical documentation and instruction.

Session A-2: 10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Tech Writing vs. Marketing Writing

Christy Simard, an information developer with The Peer Group Inc. in Kitchener, will explore the relationship between technical writing and marketing communications.

Session B-1: 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

What I Didn't Learn in School

Christine McKarney, a technical writer with Campana Systems Inc. in Waterloo, will present tips to help writers without a technical writing diploma compete with those who have the "book smarts."

Session B-2: 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Practical Applications of XML

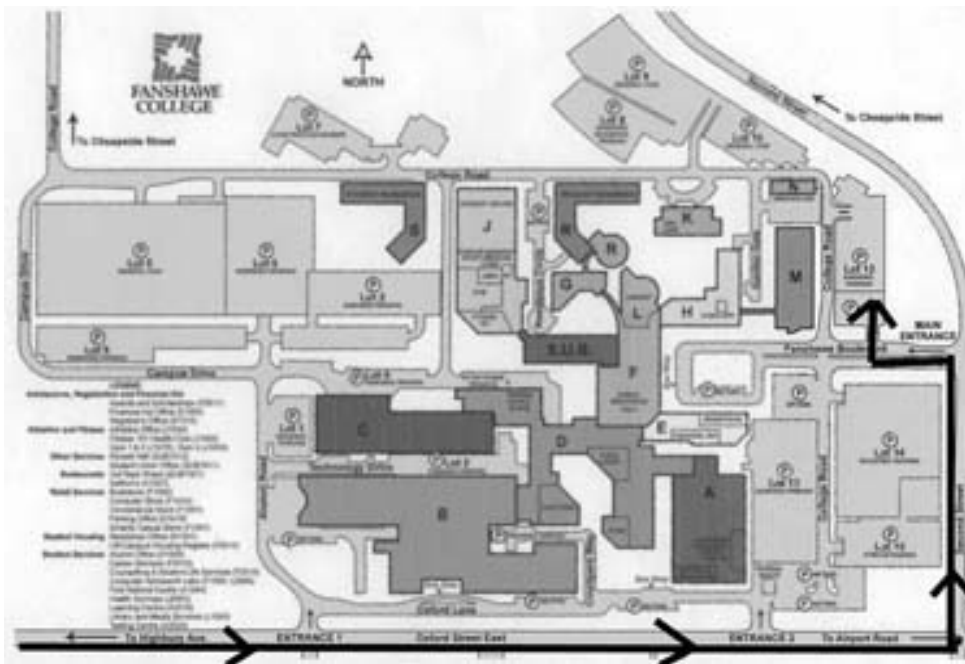
Peter Crisp, president of The EHS Corporation in London, will explain how XML can be used for structured document authoring.

Schedule

Time	Session	Speaker
08:30 -- 09:15	Registration, Refreshments, and Networking	
09:15 -- 10:00	Keynote	Peter Vogel
10:15 -- 11:15	Session A	1. Patrick Hofmann 2. Christy Simard
11:30 -- 12:30	Session B	1. Christine McKarney 2. Peter Crisp
12:30 -- 13:30	Refreshments and Networking	

Where?

Fanshawe College -- Building M



From Oxford Street, turn North on Second Street.

Turn left on Fanshawe Boulevard.

Turn right into Parking Lot 12, beside Building M.

Door Prizes!

- One Spa Package donated by Soul Mind and Body Spa
- One Digital Retouching Gift Certificate donated by Cameron Studios (www.cameronstudios.ca)

Advance Registration

STC members and students: \$10

Non-members: \$20

Registration at the Door

STC members, non-members, and students: \$25

Registration by Mail

Please print out the registration form below and mail it, along with a cheque or money order, to:

STC Professional Development

Jenna Paikowsky

585 Piccadilly Street
London, ON N5Y 3G9

Make your cheque payable to: STC London Ontario Student Chapter.

Registration Form: Professional Development Event -- London Student Chapter

Name	
Company	
Email	
Member?	Yes No Student
STC Chapter	
Session Selection	Select one A session and one B session: A-1 or A-2 B-1 or B-2
Receipt Required?	Yes No

More Contact Information

[Catherine Haycock](#) - Chapter President
(519) 662-6224 ♦

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Changing Your Orientation: Designing your work for different languages and scripts



by Patrick Hofmann

phofmann@quarry.com

For those of us who are lucky enough to write and design materials for international markets, there's no better feeling than knowing that your work is reaching parts of the globe that we've never visited.

Getting the Basics

To address our international audiences effectively, we have learned to organize and automate our documents for easy translation, to avoid using expressions and images that may be interpreted differently by some cultures, and to continually find helpful and memorable internationalization rules along the way:

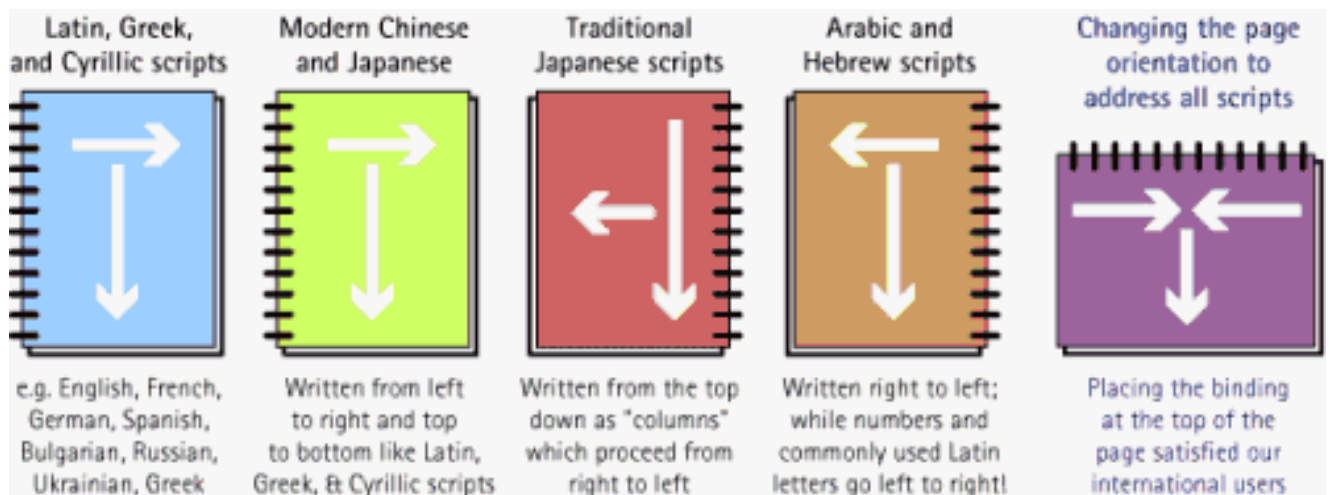
- avoid using hand and arm gestures in any images, as some are considered obscene in many countries
- estimate that other languages will typically require 30% more space than English in your online and hardcopy page designs
- be careful when using images of checkmarks and Xs, as they may represent rejections and selections in some countries
- avoid implementing and documenting keyboard commands (for example, Ctrl+Y is impossible to execute on a Portuguese keyboard).

Knowing How It Will Be Read

But before we enthusiastically follow these rules, let's take a step back. Before we plot our words or images and design the layout of our canvas, we must ask: **how** will our various international users read our work? Will they all read in the same direction? Do they scan and read their pages in the same manner that we do? If so, do those directions differ between online and hardcopy information? By considering these questions, we discover that we may need to change the orientation of our work, and design it to accommodate the different directions of different languages and scripts used on our planet.

Learning From the Past

Ten years ago, when we developed our first global wordless manuals for Hewlett Packard, we took reading direction and page orientation into account when laying out our 40-page installation guides. As shown in the diagram below, we came up with a neat design compromise. If readers of Greek, Latin, and Cyrillic alphabets read left to right, Japanese and Chinese alphabets traditionally read top to bottom, and Arabic and Hebrew cultures read right to left, why not rotate our manual by 90 degrees so the spine is at the top? Given the technical expertise and Western-awareness of our primary users, this step may have been considered unnecessary. But, in the end, this small gesture was greatly appreciated.



Getting Better

Interestingly enough, this multi-directional melée seems to have subsided somewhat with Web-based information. Although traditional Japanese and Chinese was written top to bottom in columns that went from right to left, today it reads left to right just like any Latin script. The unique exceptions are Arabic and Hebrew, whose alphabets still read right to left, but whose languages have adopted left-to-right numbering and a lot of apparently hip English. Nonetheless, the page designs for Web-based information in Arabic and Hebrew are still unmistakably reversed: corporate logos appear in the top right; radio buttons and checkboxes appear to the right of their associated text; dropdown list arrows and scrollbars appear on the left side; and search results and directory trees cascade from right to left.

Air China site in Chinese: left to right



Air El Al site in Hebrew: right to left



In the end, most of the joy of producing designs and documents for an international audience happens not after it's published, but before it's started. Whenever you get a chance, casually surf your way to international Web sites whose orientation, script, direction, and layout are dramatically different from ours. Observe the choices of colour, imagery, and typeface, and recognize how interactive elements are positioned and ordered. Honestly, it's almost like being there! ♦

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I Wanna be a Medical Writer

by Diane Russell, Student Liaison WLU



I envy all of you who discovered the joy of Technical Writing the first time around. When I started university at the age of...19? I had never heard the term 'Technical Writer'. Instead, I ended up with a degree in Environmental Science, which was never put to use because I immediately entered Dental School.

I always loved to write, and considered myself good at explanations, but after graduation I squelched any desires I may have had in the writing department and started working in the dental profession. I enjoyed it at first but, a few years ago, I realized that I probably should have selected something else right from the start. To determine my 'top ten' career profile, I filled out questionnaires with a career counsellor, and I was ultimately steered toward the field of Technical Writing.

Back to School

My decision to head back to university was met with mixed reactions from my friends and colleagues. While many said "good for you, I admire you", several made it known that I must be crazy to give up what many considered to be a lucrative profession. Undaunted, I traded in my briefcase for a knapsack, and enrolled at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) to complete an English degree. Until then, I had never written a university-level essay. I had no idea how to do literary criticism, and I'd never taken any arts courses--strictly science. To make things even more interesting, I was older than most of my professors!

But you know what? Returning to school has been a fabulous experience. Getting 'A' grades this time around has meant so much more, especially considering that two short years ago I'd never taken an English course. I went back to study English and Rhetoric, and ended up learning some history and computer technology at the same time. As a mature student, I was more focused than the first time around, and I had a drive to learn all that I could.

The Academic Paper

In addition to learning in a traditional setting, I was also asked to assist PhDs with the writing of an academic paper. An undergraduate...writing a paper with PhDs? Yes -- and it was a great experience! Two professors from WLU's Faculty of Social Work needed a dentist to co-author a paper they wanted to publish (their topic was dental treatment for survivors of sexual abuse). I was privileged to be asked, and I thought it was wonderful to share my dental knowledge while also employing my

newly-learned rhetorical strategies to help produce that part of the paper that suggests guidelines for health-care professionals. The academic paper will be published in an American professional journal some time this year and, because I have written articles for similar journals and still am a member of the Provincial dental association, I was also asked to facilitate contact with editors. I'm currently looking into the possibility of presenting the findings in the academic paper at a convention next year (I like public speaking too).

About to Graduate: What Next?

I am now about to graduate and I have several options for my future. Although medical technical writing is a relatively small field, I think there are some interesting possibilities. I'm eagerly anticipating the opportunity to combine my knowledge of the healthcare profession with my now well-developed ability to write. Here are some areas where I hope to put my skills to use:

- Designing and writing brochures for patient education;
- Writing instructions/fact sheets to give to patients about medical/surgical procedures;
- Redesigning medical questionnaires to reflect current concerns; rewording questions to facilitate better patient understanding;
- Redesigning insurance forms to make them easier for claimants to complete;
- Writing product information documents for use by other health-care professionals;
- Writing promotional documents and newspaper articles that relate to the healthcare field;
- Editing and co-authoring academic papers; and
- Editing professional journals, textbooks, and magazine articles.

Writing and Healthcare...two interesting fields that I am lucky enough to combine into one profession -- the best of both worlds! ♦

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CIC Corner: Collecting Payment from Your Client

by Elaine Garnet, CIC-SIG Coordinator



Hello Everyone:

Here's a problem that I guarantee you will eventually have to face. I recently added a new person to my list of clients. I did a small project for him in February and he recently invited me to work on an additional project that will begin at the end of March. I billed him a small amount for the first project, which he has not yet paid. I have two questions:

- What do I do if he does not pay the first amount?
- Should I go ahead with the second project and trust him to pay the larger amount next month?

Collection Suggestions

I've never had to address this problem before so I forwarded my concerns to the STC's CIC-SIG Discussion List as well as to members of our local chapter. Stated briefly, these were their suggestions:

- Send a formal reminder and follow up with a phone call or in-person meeting. The timing of the reminder will depend on the terms set out on your invoice and terms of agreement.
- Be persistent. Be up front and tell the client that you require payment. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" may work better than "out of sight, out of mind."
- Refuse to start the second project before receiving payment for the first project.
- Hire a professional to collect the debt.

Billing Strategies

Several members made suggestions for my billing strategy and the terms of my agreement. For example:

- Determine the preferred format for billing. I send my invoices by e-mail in the form of a Word document or a PDF. Some clients may prefer invoices to be sent by fax or snail mail.
- Set out the terms of payment clearly at the onset of your relationship. Thirty days is a typical pay cycle for many companies. After determining the length of time you are willing to wait, clearly state the interest that will accrue on late payments. You might want to initiate a 15-day, interest-free period.
- Build into the terms of agreement a partial up-front payment or a graduated payment scheme as the project progresses.
- State the reasons for which a 'stop work order' will be implemented. In other words, if the payment agreement is not fulfilled, you will stop work on the current project.

My Thoughts

It's a delicate matter and the solutions are as varied as the personalities of the business owner. Try to maintain your professional composure at all times. However, since you are also running a business you need to be matter-of-fact with the client. State that you need to be paid! Negotiating payment will likely come down to a 'gut feeling' about the client. If he hedges, you may want to fire him and move on to more reliable clients. Learn from the experience and file for a 'bad debt' on next year's income tax. Or, take the chance that he's poorly organized, payment has simply slipped his mind and hope that a positive long-term relationship is still possible.

Sources of Information

- STC CIC-SIG Web page at <http://www.stcsig.org/cic/>.
- Discussion list at <http://www.stcsig.org/cic/pages/cicsig-l.htm>.
- Your local CIC-SIG at <http://www.stc-soc.org/sigs/cicsig.php>.

Sincerely,

Elaine Garnet
CIC-SIG Coordinator

P.S. I still have not decided what to do. ♦

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Technical Standards Names Worst Manual

by Michelle Wier



The following is from a press release dated March 3, 2004

Annual Contest Taps into Universal Frustration Caused by Poor Documentation and Underscores the Importance of Clear Technical Writing

Escondido -- Technical Standards, Southern California's source for specialized documentation staffing and technical writing, today announced the winning entry in its fourth annual Worst Manual Contest. This year's \$100.00 prize went to Rhonda Bracey of Western Australia for her submission of a two-page Safety Section from her friend's air-conditioning unit.

"The frustration that's caused by a poorly written manual is almost a universal experience. Poor documentation can cause more confusion than comprehension and could lead to liability issues and hidden costs for companies," said Michelle Wier of Technical Standards. "On the other hand, good product documentation results in satisfied repeat customers, reduced costs, and limited liability exposure for companies."

With entries solicited from the 25,000+ membership of the Society for Technical Communication, Technical Standards' Worst Manual Contest is designed to underscore the importance of clear technical writing for everything from consumer products, computer hardware and software, to employee handbooks.

This Year's Winner:

The Safety Section of a Commercial Air-conditioner User's Guide

This year's worst manual, submitted by Rhonda Bracey of South Perth, Western Australia, is a section of a User's Guide for a commercial product marketed to the general public. Rhonda's entry only consisted of the two-page Safety Section, but that was enough! As Rhonda Bracey puts it, "translator beware!" If the phrase, "...to have the observance without fail to prevent the damage to harm and the property beforehand to the person who use this product and other persons" doesn't scare you, then some of the other text will!

The symbol key alone provided much material for the staff at Technical Standards to question. For example, the symbol key contained a symbol (twice) that wasn't referenced in the text, but didn't contain a symbol that was referenced. In another instance, the same symbol was used for both Warning and Caution, but each represented very different consequences. The difference between possible death compared to minor injury or material damage seems worth having its own

distinction. There were also some amusing symbol descriptions such as, "Attention rousing," "Prohibition" and "Compulsion."

A few excerpts:

"Please do not put the one embarrassed because it gets wet under the air conditioner."

"To apply the cold wind to the body for a longtime and so as to not exist about cooling too much"

"Do not blow the wind to animals and plants directly. It occasionally causes a bad influence for animals and plants to be exerted."

Often, poorly written manuals for consumer products can be attributed to translation problems. Clear, accurate translations are extremely important when communicating health and safety warnings associated with operating or assembling a product.

"For many end users, bad documentation amounts to nothing more than an inconvenience and possibly a poor impression of the company," said Wier. "But for companies, the results can affect the bottom line in terms of overloaded help lines, reduced revenues from dissatisfied customers who won't come back, and increased liability."

To view the top entries and more information about Technical Standards' fourth annual Worst Manual Contest, go to their Web site at www.tecstandards.com.

Contact

Michelle Wier

Technical Standards

(760) 233-7570

michelle@tecstandards.com

About Technical Standards

Technical Standards provides documentation writing and staffing services to Southern California companies in a wide range of industries. Carefully assessing the specific needs of its clients, Technical Standards provides a customized fit for each job by handpicking candidates from its pool of writers. When handling outsourced projects, Technical Standards produces clear, accurate, and understandable documentation to help ensure end-user satisfaction and reduced liability. ♦

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STC Head Office: This Time We Are Getting an Award



The following is an e-mail that was sent by Peter Herbst, STC's Executive Director, to the STC Board of Directors.

STC Organization Wins Award

STC has been chosen as the 2004 recipient of the prestigious Diana Award given by the Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Computer Documentation (ACM SIGDOC). The ACM SIGDOC gives the Diana Award to an organization that has made an outstanding lifetime contribution to the field of user documentation. Please visit www.acm.org/sigdoc/awards.html to see details.

I've been invited to attend the ACM SIGDOC conference in Memphis, Tennessee, October 10-13 to receive the award. We'll soon post an announcement on the STC Web site and in Intercom. We will also distribute press releases to appropriate media outlets.

This is an award for STC at every level -- board, chapter leaders, membership, and office staff. Congratulations -- it's an honor well deserved!

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