



## Competition Update!

The deadline is now Oct 8  
and we have exciting news, too!

[Click for more details.](#)

## In This Issue

### [President's Message](#)

Technical communicators aren't called communicators for nothing. They love to communicate by networking. President Opal Gamble talks about new networking opportunities that take place in a social setting. ♦

### [View From the Other Side of Sheffield, England](#)

Nancy Halverson gives us more insights into living in Sheffield and working for a new company. ♦

### [Technical Communication at an Airport](#)

Find out what it is like to be a technical communicator at Pearson International Airport as it undergoes changes. ♦

### [Minutes of the September Council Meeting](#)

Council members meet once a month to make decisions about what will be done in the coming months. Find out what was decided at September's council meeting. ♦

### [The Terrible Truth About Tutorials](#)

At September's general meeting, attendees got a lesson in "do what I say and not what I do." Participants tried their hand at various activities to get the user's perspective and to learn how they use tutorials. Learn what you can do to increase the user's chance of success. ♦

### [Identifying Ages as Significant User Groups](#)

Age does matter, especially when it comes to picking symbols and

## The Editor's Message

### Get the Picture

As you can see, we have started including line art of the people who submit articles. This is not to turn people off submitting articles; it is to give people an idea of what contributors to the Quill look like. While e-mail enables me to receive contributions from people in far away places, it also limits my ability to meet the people who are helping to provide the content for this newsletter. At least with pictures, I have an idea of what contributors look like.

### Looking Your Best

If you want to look your best in a picture, even when its line art, there are some basic guidelines that you should follow. Martin creates our line art and he recommends that the picture be:

- you looking slightly to the left or the right instead of directly at the camera,
- larger rather than smaller, and
- close to your face so that the details do not get lost.

### Ask the Expert

We would like to introduce a new column to the newsletter. I'm sure that you have all heard the phrase, "There are no stupid questions." Well it's true. Part of the purpose of the

graphics to use in your documentation. Just as technology is changing, so are the graphics that you should use when you are communicating about that technology. ♦

### [Ask the Expert About Membership Options](#)

With the changes that are taking place within the STC, it's not surprising that some of those changes are affecting our membership options. Get a quick comparison of the different types of memberships that are available to you. ♦

### [Cascading Style Sheets \(Part 1\)](#)

If you couldn't attend Part 1 of the Web/Telephone Seminars, you'll want to read this article to find out what you missed. Look for details about Part II in next month's issue of the newsletter. ♦

### [Upcoming Events](#)

There's a lot of things happening in the next few months, so make sure you read this article so that you don't miss anything. ♦

### [Getting a Temporary Visa](#)

Find out what it takes to get a temporary visa from someone who is currently in the process of getting one. ♦

### [CIC SIG's First Meeting](#)

You don't have to be a permanent employee to see the benefits of the STC. Read this article to find out what the consultants and independent contractors are doing this year. ♦

### [Get Ready: It's a Hurricane](#)

There is a storm going on in our profession. This article tells you what you can do to survive and come out ahead. ♦

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

STC is to enable members to learn from each other. To help with this process, I am asking both junior and senior members to submit questions that they would like to see answered in the newsletter. We can't answer your questions if you don't ask them.

### **Letters to the Editor**

We are always looking for feedback about what we have done and what we may have failed to do in the newsletter. The Quill is for your benefit, so it is fantastic when readers take the time to provide us with feedback. The [letters from last month](#) also gave me the opportunity to thank the people who helped make changes to our newsletter.

Keep those letters coming!

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





# About The Quill



by [Debbie Kerr](#), The Quill Editor

The Quill is the monthly newsletter of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC, which is a Canadian chapter in Region 1. Our chapter spans from Windsor to Mississauga and Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario. This area is home to the technology triangle, which is home to many high-tech industries.

## 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. In **2003**, our first year in an online format, we won a Merit Award.

## Publication Policies and Frequency

The Quill is published monthly, with the exception of January, so there are nine issues published from September 2004 to June 2005.

The following is a summary of when articles must be submitted so that they can be included in a particular issue. To help the Quill Editor to plan the content of each issue, contributors are encouraged to submit their story ideas one week before submitting their articles.

Issue	Article Deadline
September	August 23
October	September 20
November	October 18
December	November 22
January	No Quill
February	January 18
March	February 14
April	March 21

May	April 18
June	May 23
July or August	No Quill

## Copyright Statement

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication within the submission deadlines stated earlier. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to the newsletter to run the article and to other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. When you submit an article, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration 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.

The design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2004-2005.

## Reprint Policy

Articles contained in this newsletter may be reprinted if credit is given to The Quill and the author of the article. You must also submit an electronic copy of the article to The Quill Editor at [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org) OR mail two paper copies to the mailing address below.

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Past President: [Heidi Marr](#)

Treasurer: [Carol Lawless](#)

Recorder: [Emily Layng](#)

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

Mission Statement:

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

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

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# Networking Night



by [Opal Gamble](#), President

Over the years, there's been a common thread in your feedback: *Networking! Give us more networking!*

We started opening the doors on meeting nights earlier, to give everyone more time to mingle. Last year, as program manager, I practically had to haul people out of the Davis Centre at 9:00... 9:30... 9:45... so I could lock up the room and return the keys.

If there's one thing we STC-types take seriously, it's having the time to catch up with our colleagues!

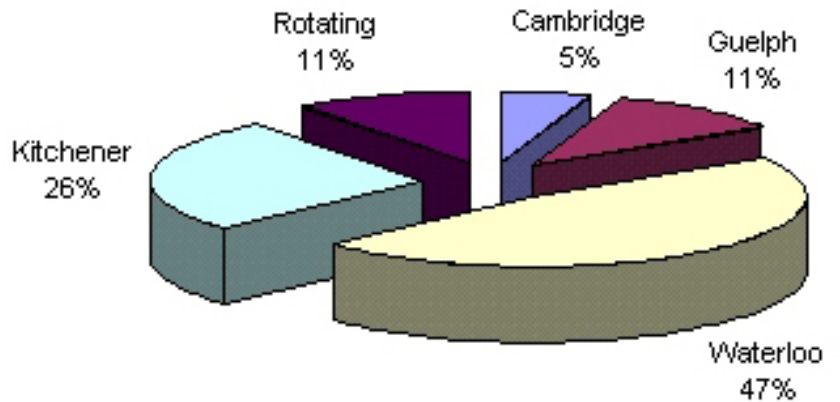
## A little background information

Peter, our Program Manager, asked for your feedback in the June issue of the Quill. Thanks to your replies, we discovered these interesting facts:

### Where would you like meetings?

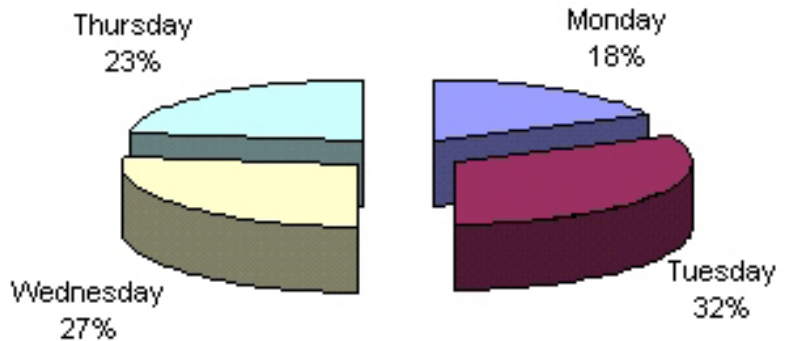
Kitchener and Waterloo are popular meeting spots, although Guelph and rotating options are also on the menu.

A small minority is in favour of Cambridge.



### What night of the week would you like to have meetings on?

Apparently our general meetings are scheduled on the right day... but most of you would also be interested in Wednesday or Thursday.



## Facinating, but cut to the chase

The bottom line here is that:

1. We know you'd like more networking opportunities.
2. Preferences for locations and nights of the week are varied, but there is a distinct trend towards KW and Wednesday nights as an alternative to Tuesdays.

So, this year we're going to try something new to help with that networking, and chatting, and keeping up with the communicator news: networking nights.

We're even going to try to share the wealth too, by shaking up the venue and moving networking night to different locations in the Golden Triangle and beyond.

## Details

### When?

October 13, 2004, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

### Where?

Paddy Flaherty's Irish Pub  
77 King St North, Waterloo (King St & Bridgeport Rd)

### Why?

It's a great opportunity to meet other technical communicators and just chat. Maybe you'll find someone who knows the answer to your burning documentation question, or you'll have the satisfaction of helping someone out.

Then again, maybe you'll just share a pint or a cup of tea with some old and new friends!

It's an informal gathering, and an experiment at that. There are no RSVPs, so just wander in and say hello.

The current objective is to have one networking event a month. The [suggestion box](#) is here if you have ideas about venues, networking activities, or general comments that you would like to share.

I hope to see you on October 13! ♦

### **About Opal Gamble**

*Technical writer, web monkey, and general geek, Opal's wanted to be a tech writer since high school; she became a STC-SOC council member in 1997. A graduate of UW's co-op Rhetoric and Professional Writing program, Opal is a Technical Writer and (unofficial) web designer at [Virtek](#). She also runs her own freelance business.*

*When she's not doing STC business, Opal participates in auto-cross events (with a hybrid car, no less!) and tries to cultivate a green thumb in her garden.*



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# A View from the Other Side...the brighter side of Sheffield



by [Nancy Halverson](#), Feature Writer

I don't know about you, but to me it always seems that September comes as a surprise. It's surprising that summer's over (although, it never really began here). It's surprising how many things I take on, and it's always surprising how early the sun rises on another hectic-flat-out day. October usually brings a sense of calm, although I have a major deadline to hit and a User Guide to produce. Oh well, life goes on, doesn't it.

## A Zoo with FrameMaker

I'm in the thick of it at work these days. My first edition of the revamped Help should be done in a few days, and then I'll have to look at porting my User Guide from Word to FrameMaker. Another learning curve is in the offing I'm sure — I'm hoping to use structured FrameMaker to set the foundations for an XML approach to all the documents. First of course, I have to justify the cost of FrameMaker software to my boss and his bosses.

## Actively Involved...Everywhere

I am extremely lucky in this job, as it's accepted for me to get involved in all the aspects of the user-facing material. I'm putting together a style guide for the programmers who write the interface, and the error messages. I'll do another one for the documentation of course, but a group of us are working on style guides for all kinds of things — from the demo discs that go out to potential clients to the marketing and Web site. I'm really pleased with this company's open-mindedness in pursuing quality and consistency.

## The Challenge at Work

Of course, being the only writer, it's a bit of a challenge to prioritize all the tasks that I'm asked to do, but it's also a great opportunity to stretch my perspective and organizing skills. My boss used to be ZOO's tech writer, so he performs the 2<sup>nd</sup> author functions quite nicely, and can clue me in when I need the more technically advanced stuff explained one-more-time. That is, when he's around.

## The Gaming Industry

Because the British software industry seems very strong on games, it's not

surprising that our little company would be here in the UK. But, located in Sheffield? London or Oxford or Cambridge would be more likely. There aren't very many gaming-type houses in this area, but there are universities close by that produce computer software designers specializing in games. (Yes, they play games all day to study, or so I've heard.) There are multi-media specialists available and lots of Java and C++ people around as well.

### **Nothing to be Avoided**

Of course, the rest of the UK thinks of Sheffield as a place best avoided, but the reputation doesn't fit with what I've seen. It's a city, like any other of course. (Britain is surprisingly dirty, with graffiti and blackening on many buildings, and garbage blowing in the ceaseless wind.) The main shopping area of the city centre, a pedestrian outdoor mall, is just a short five-minute walk from my office. While there's lots of people out and about during the day, it has a slightly dowdy surface and isn't very inspiring most days.

### **Sheffield's Rebound**

This is, after all, a working city. They made steel here for hundreds of years, with cutlery being one of the most important trades. Many historical sites still exist — historical as in the Industrial Revolution. The Thatcher years brought the end of Sheffield's steel based prosperity, and if you've seen *The Full Monty*, you'll know that the recovery's been difficult for many. But, Sheffield's becoming one of the most prosperous cities in the country again — a fact that goes quietly unnoticed in the media. It's got lots of trees and leafy suburbs on the hills that sit between the former mill-powering rivers.

### **Ups and Downs**

There are plenty of steep hills, and, of course, the narrow, twisting roads clogged by parked cars and double-decker buses (not red ones though). Actually, wherever you go in Sheffield, you'll probably be going up or down a hill, which is why I don't ride my bike to work. It would be a nice downhill run from my house to work (although almost 4 miles.) But, the uphill climb would probably kill me, if the maniac drivers didn't get me first!

### **Wretched Weather but Safe Neighbourhoods**

So, it's not a bad place to put a games software company, and even with the wretched English weather (forecast for sunshine, some heavy showers, and gale-force winds today) it's an alright life. Houses are cheaper here than in the south of

England (especially London area), and so many people are actually moving 'up here' to improve their lifestyle. There aren't very many 'bad' areas of town, although it's hard for me to tell. Frankly, any street devoid of trees or grass with row upon row of dinky houses seems like a bad idea to me. Still, even with some derelict buildings and shuttered shops, most neighbourhoods in Sheffield are pretty safe. And now, of course, they're trying to 'crack down on anti-social behaviour' by getting all the kids (under the age of 16) off the streets every night by 9 p.m. Seems the idea of a curfew for minors is a new one here, but there are a lot of kids who are just looking to destroy something as a way to amuse themselves. Leisure time is still considered to be best spent at the pub by a lot of English society.

### **Friday Night is Pub Night**

And I must admit that we've taken to spending our Friday evenings in a local pub. It's a family friendly pub, with play equipment out in the back and a majority of non-smoking seats. The kids run off to play with other children, venturing in to see if their food's arrived yet, or to tell us of their latest adventure. They've got good food and an interesting menu — not just steak & kidney pie or sausage & mash. After the week of work, I'm happy to spend £20(ish) on a good meal and a few pints. Surprisingly enough, we even meet some of our neighbourhood friends in there each week. It's always a thrill to walk into a place in a foreign country and meet someone you know.

### **Three Merry Lads**

This pub (called the Three Merry Lads) is actually right on the edge of the city — there's nothing around it but farmland and a few houses trailing off down the road. There's woods and conservation areas just down the hill, and it's lovely in the summer to set out from our house and walk through the woods to the reservoir a few miles away, and return to the pub for a rest before going home. Pubs are definitely a part of life here, and the ones where everyone just enjoys a little tippie with some food are the best. I can really live without the pubs where loads of blokes drink their faces off and go and smash things up. I guess that's the beauty of a more isolated place — not many people go to the Merry Lads without driving, and the buses don't quite make it down there, so it's a bit sheltered from the lager louts and yobs.

### **Life is Good**

The view of the Yorkshire moors continue to make life worthwhile here in England, even if we get to see more cloud than sun on them. And, as usual, I'm loving the

challenges at ZOOtech; I look forward to work every day, which is about the best one can do in this life. ♦

### **About Nancy Halverson**

*Nancy grew up in Toronto, but has lived in Ottawa, Melbourne, Waterloo, and now Sheffield. She has travelled through the South Pacific, Australia and Indonesia, which is where she met her husband, Ryan Wilson (another Canadian), along the way. A career switch introduced her to the STC in 1997. Her writing experience has included several contract positions and a position at Inscriber for several years. She has two daughters and has been living in England for two years.*

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# Technical Communication at Toronto Pearson International Airport



by [Scott Russell](#), Quill Contributor

Drinking from a fire hydrant, that's how it felt when I started work at Toronto Pearson International Airport in 2002. Toronto Pearson is Canada's busiest airport, handling more than 40 percent of the country's air traffic. Named 28th busiest airport in the world, Toronto Pearson served approximately 24.7 million passengers last year.

## Re-development Project

While maintaining daily operations, the airport authority was in the midst of redeveloping airport facilities with the largest construction project in Canadian history: a decade-long, \$4.415 billion (CAD) plan. The construction projects include:

- the construction of new Terminal 1, built with enough concrete for two CN Towers and enough steel for three-and-a-half Eiffel Towers, containing 390,000 square metres of floor space;
- the largest parking facility in Canada, an eight-storey, 12,600-space intelligent garage that reports vacant spaces to customers;
- an improved 350-acre infield cargo area, including a new 10-gate terminal; and
- a simplified roadway access with 64 bridges and the equivalent of 84 kilometres of single-lane roadway, including one-and-a-half kilometres of Highway 409, purchased from the province.

## Documentation Plan

To successfully activate these new facilities, the airport authority hired its first five technical writers. As one of these five, I was tasked with managing three documentation projects, each of which resulted in a book-length Plan of Operations. To obtain senior manager buy-in, I developed and distributed documentation plans, including Content Specifications with sample tables of contents and estimated page counts. This helped authority managers define the scope of the projects and anticipate costs.

## Content Development

Thereafter, I developed content by supporting five committees. I set their agendas, invited key participants, took minutes, and maintained issue logs. Where new programs or services were required, I helped senior managers capture their requirements. I wrote three Request for Proposals documents. I also tore through vendor documentation and interviewed authority managers, line workers, and vendor representatives.

## **Documentation Design and Process**

While content was being developed, the technical writers met regularly to define document design requirements and review the template builds as we progressed. I was tasked with developing FrameMaker and Word templates, the style guide, and a global glossary of approved nomenclature. Other writers developed the documentation process and workflow forms for managing issues, performing peer edits, proofing print, and capturing print specifications. I was one of the LiveLink local-content administrators who set up and maintained our electronic workspaces on two instances of the application: one for internal use and the other for sharing approved files with the airport community.

## **Training Programs**

Draft plans of operations were vetted by technical experts of the authority and reviewed by senior managers for final approval. After initial publication and distribution of the plans of operations to the authority, airlines, and key contractors, 154 different training courses were developed and delivered to explain new facilities, systems, and equipment, resulting in more than 5,000 hours of instruction. I developed and delivered 10 of those training programs and three sets of related job aids to support the operations I documented. Training compliance was tracked by a technical writer using reports generated from an Access database that were distributed online using a conversion macro.

## **Trials Program**

The trials program consumed many of the technical writers as the process called for the development of five deliverables for each trial and the management of at least three meetings per trial where key participants and witnesses in the authority and in the airport community reviewed and approved the planning documents. Of the more than 30 trials scheduled, I was tasked with planning, scripting, and reporting on the outcome of six of them. These trials were developed to test the utility of the procedures documented in the plans of operations and the effectiveness of the training delivered.

More than 1,400 volunteers participated in the trials program. Additionally, hundreds of authority staff, airline employees, and contractors ran through their duties in the new facilities using the new systems and equipment. More than 7,500 bags were used to test the baggage system, weighed down with tonnes of used books and paper.

## Issues Management

The trials program identified nearly 1,200 issues that required corrective action. More than 200 of these issues were named show stoppers and were corrected before Opening Day. Technical writers tracked these issues using an Access database and reported their status daily to managers of the authority. Some trial outcomes required Plans of Operations to be updated or modified, and some training courses had to be refined and repeated.

## Opening Day



Air Canada apron workers unload baggage from an Airbus A320 as the sun rises over the new Terminal 1 at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

After more than two years, the five technical writers had become 12, and the new facilities were successfully activated. Opening Day of new Terminal 1 on April 6, 2004, was a great success, unlike the experiences of other airport facility activations such as those in Denver, Athens, and Hong Kong.

It was truly rewarding to stand in the new terminal while the first customers walked through the doors that day. To see their smiles, to follow their darting eyes, to hear the roar, to feel the bristling excitement was a realization of all the work we had done. It was our shoe-clap applause. It was a day when drinking from the fire hydrant satisfied.

You can also learn more about airports by learning some of their [initialisms and acronyms](#). ♦

### **About Scott Russell**

*Scott Russell has worked at Toronto Pearson International Airport since 2002 after graduating with Honours from the Technical Communication program at Seneca College. Previously, a newspaper reporter/photographer, Scott enjoys teaching Yoshinkan Aikido and leading Wolf Cub Pack meetings.*

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# Let Your Airport Knowledge Take Flight



by [Scott Russell](#), Quill Contributor

If you didn't know that JETS are more than just a type of plane and that RAILS have to do with airports, take a look at some of the initialisms and acronyms that are used at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

- ALS (Approach Lighting System)
- ATC (Air Traffic Control)
- BIDS (Baggage Information Display System)
- CUSS (Common Use Self Service)
- DOO (Day of Operations)
- EDS (Explosives Detection System)
- ETD (Estimated Time of Departure)
- FIDS (Flight Information Display System)
- FOB (Fuel on Board)
- FOD (Foreign Object Debris)
- GIDS (Gate Information Display System)
- HAZMAT (Hazardous Materials)
- HIRL (High Intensity Runway Lights)
- JETS (Joint Enroute Terminal System)
- LAVBAY (Service area for Lavatory Trucks)
- MEDEVAC (Medical Evacuation Flight)
- PAX (Passenger)
- PWD (Passenger with Disabilities)
- RAILS (Runway Alignment Indicator Lighting System)
- RIDS (Ramp Information Display System)
- STOL (Short Take Off and Landing)
- TDC (Technical Data Centre)
- TO (Terminal Officer)
- WX (Weather)
- YYZ (International Civil Aviation Organization identifier for Toronto Pearson International)



## **About Scott Russell**

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# Minutes of September's Council Meeting



by [Emily Layng](#), Secretary/Recorder

September's council meeting at the Stanley Park Library was a cozy affair; I think a few people were:

- a) enjoying the weather or
- b) under the weather.

Not a good time of year to get sick, so shape up, and take your Echinacea. If you were out enjoying the balmy day, good for you, there's not too many days like that left.

Opal trundled in with pizza and pop, so after a few minutes of contented chewing and sipping we started, hearts brave and pens poised.

Business stuff (ignore if you so desire):

- The competition planning is coming along; we are exchanging entries with our sister chapter in Minnesota. It's a great opportunity to have more people critique our work, and it creates warm fuzzies with our neighbours. So dust off that manual that you were so proud of and send it in.
- The dreaded budget! What more can I say? Well, we wrestled the budget to the mat and beat it into submission. We are in the black once more.
- Christy is looking for volunteers to help with the general meetings, so if you are planning to attend, give Christy a holler and step up to the plate.
- Our education manager has an exciting year planned for us. She's going to recapture the hearts of our senior writers, as well as inspire the juniors with engaging speakers for all levels. Keep your eyes open for upcoming news.

We wrapped up at 8:40 (not too shabby) and a few of us made our way to Ennio's for a quick drink. Not the worst way to end an evening. So, if you are interested in attending next month's meeting, we will do our best to make it fun and informative. Besides, the pizza's pretty good too. ♦



## **About Emily Layng**

*Emily is currently working at ATS, in Cambridge, and has recently been promoted to Team Leader of Systems 1. As part of a busy group, long days and short weekends are the norm. She has been a technical writer since 1996, and has created documentation for both hardware and software companies. Outside of ATS, she is involved with a local Astrology group that is putting together correspondence courses for learning Astrology.*

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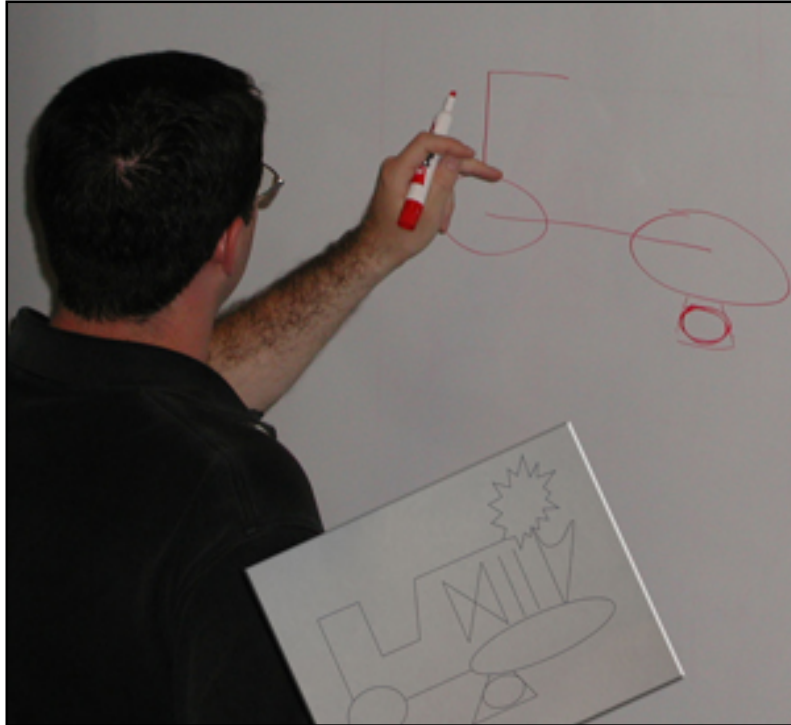


# September General Meeting: The Terrible Truth About Tutorials



by Darlene Woods, Quill Contributor

During his presentation, "The Terrible Truth About Tutorials," at the September general meeting, Peter Vogel proved that technical writers are just like their users!



Mark Ladoucer attempts to draw a picture (foreground) being described by someone else. The person describing the picture could not let participants see the picture or communicate in any way other than with words.

We don't follow tutorials step by step; instead, we modify them in order to accomplish our own goals in our own timeframe.

## Some Truths About Tutorials

Through Peter's informal presentation and some hands-on group exercises that tested our ability to follow instructions, we discovered the following truths:

- Tutorials are **examples** of how to perform a specific task that the technical writer chooses. Users want to perform tasks that are important to them. Therefore, we need to make sure our tutorials are about what the users consider important and relevant.
- Users want **feedback**. "Am I doing this right?" "Is this what I'm supposed to see?" We need to provide pictures and expected results, so that users know they're on the right track.

- Users will not always follow step-by-step instructions written like a contract that say, "You must do this, then that." What they want is a **cookbook approach** that leaves room for flexibility and variance in audience goals.
- Mistakes will happen! People using tutorials are often trying things for the first time. They will make mistakes. Hints, tips, and warnings about potential problems, and **explanations of how to correct mistakes**, are helpful to include for users. When they get back to their regular work, they will make mistakes. So, giving them warning up front and providing troubleshooting solutions go a long way in helping them apply what they learned in the tutorial.

## Parts of a Good Tutorial

There are three parts to a good tutorial:

1. **A task-oriented introduction** — so that users can find the tutorial that fits their needs. Make each tutorial independent.
2. **Steps with feedback** — to let users know what to do when things go right and when things go wrong.
3. **A summary** — to provide context for the user's accomplishments. Sometimes by the time they're done, they have forgotten exactly what they set out to do.

## Different Formats for Different Audiences

Peter pointed out that there are two basic formats for tutorials: playscript and minimalist.

Format	Audience	Description	Drawbacks
Playscript	New users Novices	Playscript tutorials describe processes that usually involve several agents. They describe "who does what, when."  <b>Step</b>  <b>Actor</b>  <b>Action</b>  <b>Response</b>	Can be too lengthy, providing too much detail for experts.

Minimalist	Experienced users Experts	Minimalist tutorials focus on the tasks of value to the user. They are brief instructions that assume the user knows the basics. Hints, tips, and recovery procedures are provided for users who will make mistakes while learning.	Can be too brief, lacking background information or reasons behind the steps.
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As with any writing, just because we are like our users, do not assume that what you have written is what you meant to say. Test, test, test (with real users), then rewrite, rewrite, rewrite! ♦

### **About Darlene Woods**

*Darlene is currently a technical writer for Witness Systems, a leading global provider of performance optimization software and services. She has spent the last eight years as a technical writer in the software industry in K-W. Before that, she spent several years as a technical writer and trainer in the financial industry.*



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# Another Audience to Consider: Identifying ages as significant user groups



by [Patrick Hofmann](#), Feature Writer

Lately, we've been reminded repeatedly that as we write and illustrate our documents we must be aware of the cultural differences of our various lingual audiences. For example, never use symbols of the hand or fingers in your documents, like the warning 'hand' or the reminder 'finger' as that may offend audiences of some Mediterranean countries.

But what defines culture? Political borders, language, religion, and traditions are typically identified as factors that distinguish one culture from another, but have we considered **age** in our work?

## A Wider Range of Ages

Age groups have become a distinctive audience of our products and documents. Due to the widespread development, accessibility, and affordability of digital consumer products — including mobile phones, music players, game systems — our once-narrow audiences have expanded considerably.

Since a six-year-old child or a ninety-six-year-old adult both are users of a cell phone, we shouldn't forget to internationalize or localize such products for multiple ages, not just languages. Using visual images and symbols as the foundation, we must recognize how different age groups interpret them.

## Symbols for Televisions



For example, as technical communicators, what symbol would we use to denote a television? Maybe I'm aging myself here, but most of would think of a monitor with

two channel knobs and some rabbit-ears on top. Would an 8-year old know what this is? Would a 10-year old? Even a 16-year old? If we simplified it to look like our standard TVs today, would that make it better? Likely not, as we have far too many appliances that look the same: microwave ovens, computer monitors, and so on. Surprisingly, to internationalize this image for most ages and countries, placing the letters TV inside this minimalistic TV set would work best, even if your native tongue's word for TV is something else.

## Symbols for Telephones



Aside from the TV symbol, what would we use to represent the telephone? Similar to the traditional TV, the telephone has come a long way in shape, size, and complexity. Not all children, even teenagers, would immediately recognize the first two telephone symbols above. As tweens and teenagers become the next generation of big-spending consumers, we must acknowledge that their interpretation of symbols is quite different than our own. The cell phone depicted above may be the newest symbolic standard for 'telephone' for most ages and most countries around the world, even developing nations, who have better cellular telephone infrastructure and penetration than we do!

## Lifespans of Symbols

But how long will that symbol last? The traditional table-top rotary-dial telephone depicted above has been around for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Will the hand-held cell-phone symbol last for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? As our users and customers age, so too do our visual images. As technology advances and consumers adopt new products, the symbolic and visual conventions that we use to instruct and inform must advance as well. ♦



## **About Patrick Hofmann**

*Patrick is an Interaction Designer at Quarry Integrated Communications in Waterloo. Although he's a rather vibrant speaker, his specialty is using illustration and visual language to communicate. When he's not trotting around the globe teaching the virtues of visual instruction and design, he conducts a 15-piece Swiss polka band in rural Milverton, Ontario. Who says tech-comm and trumpets don't mix?*

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# Ask the Expert: How have the membership options changed?



by [Debbie Kerr](#), Quill Editor

Instead of just being able to choose either a regular or student membership (if you are enrolled in school), there are two more membership types available to you as well as upcoming changes to existing ones.

## Glossary of Terms

The following are some of the terms that appears in the "Summary of Your Options" table.

**Membership:** refers to one of four membership options.

**Documentation:** refers to the format that you will receive *Intercom* and *Technical Documentation*.

**Communities:** refer to the chapters and special interest groups (SIGs) groups that you can join.

**Vote?:** identifies whether this type of membership entitles you to vote.

**Cost:** identifies the cost (in US Dollars) of purchasing a particular membership type and any additional options, like membership in more SIGs.

## Summary of Your Options

Membership	Documentation	Communities	Vote?	Cost
Classic	Paper and online access	1 Chapter & 1 SIG OR 3 SIGs	Yes	\$145 + \$15 postage
Limited	Paper and online access	None	Yes	\$125 + \$15 postage

E-membership	Only online access	1 Chapter & 1 SIG OR 3 SIGs	Yes	\$135  Additional chapters available for \$10 each.  Additional SIGs for \$5 each.
Student	Only online access	1 Student Chapter and 1 No Professional Chapter  Unlimited SIGs		\$50  Additional chapters available for \$10 each.  No charge for SIGs

## More Details

If you want more detail, you can access the STC Web site at <http://www.stc.org/transformation/article9.asp> to read a more detailed article. Watch for other articles that relate to your new membership options.

## The "Ask the Expert" Column

This is a new column that we want to appear regularly, so we need your questions. Since no one person is an expert in each area, our expert will change each month based on the topic of the question that is asked. ♦

### **About Debbie Kerr**

*In the 20 years that Debbie has been writing documentation, she has worked in a variety of industries: government, retail, software, and insurance. She is currently employed at The Economical Insurance Group in Kitchener writing design specifications.*

*Debbie has been a member of the STC since 1994 and has held several council positions over the last three years.*



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# Cascading Style Sheets: Learning the Basics (Part I)



by [Wendy Stublely](#), Quill Contributor

**Speaker:** Char James-Tanny, President, JTF Associates, Inc. in Lynn, Massachusetts

**Web/Telephone Seminar hosted by:** Peter Szabo at CheckFree i-Solutions

## Overview

Are you still working with plain old HTML? Well, it's time to update your skills because Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is where it's at now. Cascading style sheets are the new millennium update of the old Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). The good news is that you don't have to throw out your old HTML programming skills to modernize your skill set – just add CSS to your repertoire.

In her informative hour and a half Web/Telephone seminar, Char James-Tanny introduced us to the joys of creating and using CSS files.

## What is a Cascading Style Sheet?

A cascading style sheet is a separate text file that contains formatting for all the HTML pages in a web site. It is placed in the same directory as your main Web page. If you want your main headings to be blue on your whole Web site, include the appropriate "main heading blue" command in your style sheet. The style sheet filename and filepath are noted in the <HEAD> section of your HTML pages, so all your Web pages will follow the style sheet format and have blue main headings. At any time, if you want to change the colour of all of your main headings, you don't have to go through each page of your site; you just update that style in your style sheet.

## What are the advantages of CSS over HTML?

Ms. James-Tanny made some great points about the advantages of CSS over plain HTML. We learned that:

- In the short term, HTML may be easier to code, but for maintenance of large sites, CSS is much faster and easier.
- The content of your Web site is more important than how it's formatted. PDAs and screen readers for the disabled may not even be able to pick up the content of highly formatted HTML tables. They might just show blank

pages. Accessible sites for people with special needs are easier to create with CSS than with plain HTML.

- Your site will have a smaller size and will download faster with CSS than with tables and inline presentation tags. You don't need tables to make a nice-looking site. We were shown sample sites that were made with CSS and they looked sophisticated and organized.
- Web pages that are printable versions of online pages can be easily created using CSS. To do this, copy the main CSS file and change a few lines to printer-friendly format in the copied CSS file. Now, any web page that references the new CSS file will have printer-friendly formatting.

## How do you actually write a CSS file?

Here's an example to give you an idea of the logic behind the CSS code. CSS syntax is based on the following elements:

***selector { property : value; }***

**selector** is the type of formatting you want to define. *Heading* (or h1 in HTML) is a selector.

**property** is an attribute of the selector. *Font size* is a property of h1.

**value** is a description of the property. *140%* is a value of font size.

So if you want all of the pages in your Web site to have a primary heading of size 140%, you would include the following line in your CSS file:

***h1 { font-size: 140%;}***

You must be precise about the rules when creating a CSS. Punctuation is very important. Invalid CSS or HTML pages will be ignored by your browser.

## Conclusion

It looks like CSS is here to stay, so brush up your web development skills and create awesome sites that are quick to download, easy to maintain, and universally readable.

Watch for details in next month's newsletter about Part II of the cascading style sheets Web/Telephone seminar. ♦



### **About Wendy Stublely**

*Wendy is a freelance technical writer and a senior member of the STC. She lives in Waterloo with her husband and two children. In her spare time, Wendy enjoys sculpting, photography, and hiking.*

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## Upcoming Events



by [Peter Szabo](#), Program Manager

If you have any questions about upcoming chapter events, or if you have a suggestion for a meeting topic, feel free to e-mail me.

For details about our chapter's events for the rest of the year, as well as last minute updates or additions to the schedule, be sure to check our local [STC chapter calendar](#).

**October 5, 2004**

### **General Meeting: Developing a Coaching Style of Management**

Are you a manager or a leader? Or are you a team member who wants to improve your leadership skills?

This presentation will introduce you to coaching as a tool that can be used to foster team alignment, engagement, and learning. And in case you're wondering if this meeting is for you, it's appropriate for anyone who wants to understand how to increase the effectiveness of their team or their own overall leadership potential.

**Location:** October's meeting is in Room 1304, Davis Centre, University of Waterloo [[map](#)].

**Time:** The doors open for networking at 6:30 p.m.; the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.

#### **About the Speakers: Lois Raats (left) and Debra Bannister (right)**

Lois Raats, MEd and Debra Bannister, MBA PMP are principals at Meta Team Solutions, an end-to-end consulting, coaching and training company whose sole purpose is to help leaders and teams succeed.



### **October 13, 2004: Networking Night**

**Time:** 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Location:** Paddy Flaherty's Irish Pub, 77 King St North, Waterloo (King St & Bridgeport Rd).

[More details](#)

## **October 19, 2004: Council Meeting**

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Location:** CheckFree i-Solutions, 455 Phillip Street in Waterloo.

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

RSVP to [Opal Gamble](#) by October 18.

## **October 20, 2004**

### **STC Remote Seminar: A Brief, Comprehensive Indexing Primer**

**Host:** Seth Maislin

If you're looking for some solid tips and tricks about indexing, come out and join some of your fellow tech writers at this Web and telephone seminar. This seminar discusses various indexing topics such as sorting, tools, usability, information analysis, conceptual relationships, page numbers and other locators, and labeling.



**Seminar Time:** 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (doors open at 12:30 for networking)

**Location:** CheckFree i-Solutions, 455 Phillip Street in Waterloo.

**Seminar Cost:** FREE to STC members; \$35.00 for non-members.

## **November 2, 2004**

### **General Meeting: Writing for the Sciences**

For you members who are looking for a change of scenery for your monthly meeting, plan to attend a unique meeting at the University of Guelph (U of G) that will focus on the delivery of scientific information to the lay public. Not only will you learn about yet another application of technical writing (the list is endless), you will have an opportunity to meet U of G students and discuss technical communication careers in science and other areas.

**Prize:** An [E-membership](#) is available to be won.

**Location:** University of Guelph

More details about this meeting will follow in the Calendar section of our STC chapter Web site. ♦



## **About Peter Szabo**

*Peter has been a technical writer in one form or another for ten years. For the past five years, Peter has worked for CheckFree i-Solutions, a software firm in Waterloo, and is currently the Manager of Technical Publications. Born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Peter moved to Guelph in 1997, where he currently lives with his wife, Irene, and six-year-old son, Taylor. He is working on his first feature-length screenplay.*

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# Obtaining a Temporary Visa



by [Diane Russell](#), Feature Writer

My first loyalty is to Canada. So I'm not going to broach the subject of leaving Canada and emigrating to the U.S. on a permanent basis. Certainly there are Web links designed to help those who wish to become permanent residents, but their instructions are convoluted at best (although a good technical writer could simplify them). For permanent residency, my recommendation would be to hire a lawyer if this is the route you wish to take.

## North American Free Trade Agreement

At some point though, many of us have pondered the idea of "temporary" employment in a different country. Perhaps the opportunities for advancement are more prevalent. Or maybe it's just time for a change of scenery. Remember the old adage "with an education, you can go places"? Well, it's true. Thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), if you're in a designated profession and can find employment, you're welcome to apply for a TN (temporary) Visa, which legally entitles you to work anywhere in the USA.

## U.S. Immigration Web Site

A good place to start is the U.S. Immigration Web site. Go to [http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors\\_types\\_temp\\_nafta.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_types_temp_nafta.html).

- Select "Visa Types for Temporary Visitors" from the left-hand column.
- Then select "Mexican and Canadian NAFTA Professional Worker".
- Scroll down to "NAFTA Professional Job Series List".
- From this alphabetical enumeration, locate your area of expertise. Education and/or work experience required is designated for each category. Technical writers, for example, are expected to hold a degree/diploma plus least 3 years experience in their field.

## Conditions and Restrictions

Still interested? Let the job search begin — and no, this Visa does not allow for self-employment. It does, however, afford you equal opportunity with an American-trained prospect. If you've applied for a **permanent** Visa while job-hunting, employers are legally obligated to hire an American citizen over a Canadian. **TN** status, however, grants you equal footing.

## Requirements for a Temporary Visa

Once you've located that sought-after position, it's time to make it legal. Some may suggest hiring a lawyer. Don't waste your money. You can do it yourself at any border crossing. The aforementioned Web site provides a list of what to bring to the border for a TN Visa, which reads something like this:

1. **Request for admission.** The Web site does not tell you this, but this means a verbal request...from you! ("I'm here to apply for a TN Visa")
2. **Letter from employer.** This is the sticky part: there are no guidelines on the Web, but we learned the hard way (getting rejected the first try because the letter was "only 2 sentences and did not contain enough information"). To keep the powers-that-be happy, the first sentence has to request TN Visa status for you. The letter must also contain a job description, hours to be worked, and salary range. Finally, it must specify a time period for the Visa up to, but not exceeding, 1 year. At the end of the year, you can keep your job by simply renewing your Visa.
3. **Appropriate university degrees/certificates.** Don't worry about bringing those prized possessions in their exquisite frames; the photocopier they use can accommodate anything.
4. **Canadian passport**
5. **\$50.00 US, plus tax**

## Social Security Number

The Visa is issued while you wait, after which you are free to enter the country. However, you cannot actually begin paid employment until you obtain a social security number. To get one, go to [www.ssa.gov/locator/](http://www.ssa.gov/locator/) and locate a Social Security office that will be convenient for you to attend in person. Cards are issued free of charge and take approximately three weeks to process.

This type of Visa does not lead to permanent residency; it is expected that you will return to Canada at some point. Additionally, if you have substantial financial assets, you may want to discuss the implications of this with a qualified advisor before deciding to relocate. But it's good to know that your education can indeed take you places — and you're always welcome back! ♦

### ***About Diane Russel***

*Diane recently re-located to Quechee, Vermont. Her TN Visa will soon be put to good use at a hospital in Windsor, VT.*

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# CIC-SIG Meeting Report

by [Elaine Garnet](#), CIC-SIG Co-ordinator



## What do we do?

The Consultant and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC-SIG) tries to hold regular meetings throughout the year on topics that would interest a consultant or independent contractor. We try to meet every month, although this is not always possible given the busy nature of our lives and the unpredictable demands of our clients.

## When did we have our first meeting?

Friday, September 10, 2004

## Where did we meet?

We conducted our meeting over a tasty lunch at East Side Mario's in Waterloo. The reservations were kindly taken care of by Maggie Lichty.

## Who was there?

There were six attendees in all: Maggie Lichty, John Dreger, Chet Skibinski, Leo Petipas, Judy Newell and Elaine Garnet. Unfortunately, a seventh member lost her way and regrettably returned home. We missed you, Robyn!

## How did the meeting progress?

Since we had not seen each other for several months, we had a good time catching up on our personal and business news and sharing tips, which we hope will assist in our success.

## Marketing Proposal

In particular, we discussed Chet's marketing proposal, a strategy that we hope will list all of our businesses by specialty. In this way, we hope to have a centralized location, possibly a Web page, on which to market ourselves.

## Business Profiles

To bring this to fruition and assist us in developing accurate business profiles, we agreed to fill out the following business evaluation. This will help us market ourselves and provide the rest of us with useful information should we need a

writer with a different specialty. It's a great networking tool and everyone should have copies of each other's profile, so take your time and provide as much detail as possible.

1. Who are your preferred clients?
2. What are the detailed goods and services that you provide?
3. Where do our businesses intersect?
4. What can I say about your business that makes my client say, "Tell me more?"
5. What questions can I ask to see if your services would be required by my client?
6. What stories can I tell about how you help your clients?
7. What are some of the reasons your clients came to you in the first place?
8. What hours do you reserve for seeing clients?
9. Who are your centres of influence? Champions? Mentors?
10. What other businesses intersect with yours?

### **Ideas for This Year**

We also spent time brainstorming meeting topics for the coming year. These included guest speakers and workshops. Here is the list in brief:

- Invite a seasoned professional to speak to the group about marketing strategies for services.
- Meet at the KW Public Library for a guided tour of the business library and its many resources.
- Invite a tax professional to explain tax filing for micro-businesses.
- Conduct workshops on applications such as Frame Maker, PageMaker, RoboHelp, etc. We will try to arrange these through Conestoga College or the local universities.

### **Next Meeting**

Our October meeting will be held after Thanksgiving (date to be announced) and will be a lunch venue, possibly in the Conestoga Room at Conestoga College. By that time, we should all have seriously considered and filled out our business evaluations. Over the coming months, each member will get a chance to profile his or her business.

### **Requests**

On a purely practical note, John and Maggie are both looking for a reliable, nearly new computer. If you want to part with a computer, please e-mail me and I will forward the message. ♦

### **About Elaine Garnet**

*Elaine is a writer with twelve years of experience in the scientific and engineering fields. Her years of experience, coupled with three degrees and one diploma, have resulted in projects with over 30 companies during the four years that she has owned and operated her business—Words To Order.*

*Currently, Elaine writes the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) reports that technology-based companies submit to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to obtain tax credits. She also prepares documentation for Industrial Research Assistance Program grants, as well as proposals and business plans.*

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# Fall Membership Drive: A Membership to be Won



by [Sarah-Beth Doner](#), Membership Manager

**Thinking of a career in technical writing, editing, communications,  
usability, or Web design?**

## **New Senior Members**

James H. Allison

Shannon M. Hilker

Mark B. Sangster

## **New Members**

Cristan Carlson

Stephanie Hubert

Shelley L. Luft

Andrea Smirle

Greg Charles McLaughlin

Membership in the STC offers opportunities to learn new job skills, network with other technical communicators, and broaden your professional horizons. On a personal level, you receive:

- magazines and quarterly journals that provide information about new tools and technology in the trade
- members-only access to a jobs database at the chapter and international level
- invaluable networking opportunities that can help you when you are finished school and hunting for your first permanent placement

## **Win your membership!**

Come to November's [general meeting](#) and you can win a 2005 STC membership! We will be giving away one [E-membership](#) (\$135 US value), so round up your friends and colleagues and be rewarded with everything the STC has to offer! ♦



## **About Sarah-Beth Doner**

*Sarah-Beth is a student at the University of Waterloo where she is studying English Rhetoric and Professional Writing, and participating in the Applied Studies Co-op Program. Two of her co-op terms have involved technical writing at iAnywhere Solutions in Waterloo.*

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## Get Ready: It's A Hurricane

by Rahel Bailie, Director-Sponsor Region 7



In a recent conversation with an STC community leader, we discussed the changing face of technical communication and the implication for STC members in his chapter. His particular geographic area has been particularly hard hit, with a number of community members working survival jobs until they can re-enter the technical communication field, or holding onto jobs they'd otherwise have outgrown. Technical writers, he worries, are hunkering down in their cubicles, and he fears that by the time they come up for air, they will no longer have a skill set that has sufficient currency in the marketplace.

### Seeing the Results of Changes in the Field

To say that the changes in the field of technical communication are of hurricane proportions is not an exaggeration. Our workplaces, our careers, peers in our STC network — if we haven't personally been affected personally, we have been affected indirectly. Some of us have seen our jobs swept away, others have had work debris dumped on us, and ill-implemented changes often bring huge clean-ups from projects gone awry.

### Making Choices

What concerns me is hearing that the response to this flurry of change is to sit tight and keep working. Watching Hurricane Frances, then Ivan, sweep through the Caribbean and across Florida, we watched the CNN reports of people jumping to action: board up the windows to protect the home, then get out of the storm's projected path. It involves a lot of hard work, and a fast response, but the pay-off is to get to safety, and able to bounce back. When we see the eye of a storm moving toward us, is it in our best interest to sit tight and wait it out? Or should we be hustling to move our skill sets into a safer zone, one where we'll be able to bounce back once the worst of the economic storm has passed?

### Moving Up the Value Chain

Economists talk about how, as the jobs we know move around the globe, we must be prepared to "move up the value chain." This means that we need to look at adding more value as strategic contributors. How we can do this is to look up the technical communication profession chain and see what more we can do. For example: Writers can look at other content development skills that bring more value to the workplace or expand their skill set to usability practices. Editors can

look at the localization and internationalization field to see where they could add skills. Marcom writing could expand to a broader set of communication products. Departments can learn how to use content management systems to add value to their work. Usability folks can apply their principles to interaction design. Help writers can expand their horizons to interaction design. In other words, we can look for the logical expansion of our skill sets, and for each of us that will be a unique path.

## Being Proactive

How we move up the professional food chain isn't by staying in our cubicles with our noses to the grindstone. How we protect our careers and our futures is through continual professional development, networking, and life-long learning. We can learn a lot about what we want to do — or even about what we may want to eliminate as a career enhancement — by staying informed about developments in related fields, attending STC meetings to network with our peers (and the peers with whom we'd like to keep company), and by continually gaining and honing new skills. It's the surest way to survive the storms that regularly sweep through the umbrella profession that we call technical communication. ♦

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# Letters to the Editor and Recognition



by [Debbie Kerr](#), The Quill Editor

If no news is good news, then letters from readers are great news. When you are part of a team who have made changes to last year's newsletter, you are cautiously optimistic that others will like what you did. It is therefore rewarding when you actually get the feedback that indicates you are on the right track.

## Pictures

The following is an e-mail that proves you do not have to be long-winded to get your message across.

*I love the pictures!*

*Regards, Andrea Steinhauser Technical Writer NDI*

## Seminar Summaries

The second e-mail was great from two perspectives: it was feedback, and it resulted in an offer to write an article about the new terminal at Pearson International Airport. Here is part of the original e-mail.

*Debbie:*

*I read the latest issue of Quill with interest. I have enjoyed the improvements in design and format. Thank you for producing and distributing such a thoughtful publication. I especially enjoyed reading summaries of the seminars that I couldn't attend.*

*Scott Russell*

## A Team Approach

I remember the first time that I told someone that I was the editor of the newsletter and that someone else had helped me to come up with the cascading stylesheets and templates. I think it was a bit like 'lunch bag let down' to the person who thought that I did it all. I like to think that a team approach works well because:

- we share ideas that one person would not necessarily come up with on their own;
- each of us has our own strengths, which allows us to complement each other. If I created the stylesheet on my own, it would have an impact

alright, but probably not the one that I wanted it to have.

So, for those of you who liked September's issue, I wanted to ensure that those who did a lot of the work got some well-deserved recognition.

### **A Modified Format**

Prior to creating the first issue of the year's newsletter, Opal Gamble and I discussed what we would like to do with this year's newsletter and Opal made our thoughts a reality by tweaking the cascading stylesheet.

### **The Line Art**

Opal also mentioned that Martin Eisenloeffel could do some neat stuff with pictures to create the line art that you saw in the September issue of The Quill. There were a lot of pictures to take and turn into these miniature pieces of art. Thank you to Martin Eisenloeffel, who had an exceptionally large amount to do for the first issue of this newsletter and Opal Gamble for the idea and some line art creation of her own.

### **The Articles**

My hat goes off to those of you who submitted articles, especially for the first issue, when some of us were struggling to get back into the mode of writing for the newsletter. Getting back in the mode was also something that Margie Yundt had to do so that she could continue to turn those great articles into works of art.



### **About Debbie Kerr**

*In the 20 years that Debbie has been writing documentation, she has worked in a variety of industries: government, retail, software, and insurance. She is currently employed at The Economical Insurance Group in Kitchener writing design specifications.*

*Debbie has been a member of the STC since 1994 and has held several council positions over the last three years.*



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