



## In This Issue

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

#### [Sure, but what have you done for me lately?](#)

President Opal Gamble discusses what our chapter is doing for its members, which is a good reason to select our chapter as part of your membership renewal. ♦

### [Upcoming Chapter Events](#)

Find out what events you have to look forward to in December and January, because it's always the right time to learn something new. ♦

### [Education Seminars in 2005](#)

Our annual workshop is just around the corner. In fact, in 2005, there are four mini-workshops over two days. Register early to avoid disappointment. ♦

### [Can't we just get along for the sake of the product?](#)

Read this success story about how engineering / product development and the technical documentation team worked together to create a great result for the customer. ♦

### [Technical Writing Post-Graduate Program: the field placement course credit](#)

If you are struggling to meet your deadlines and you could use an extra writer, then this may be the opportunity for both you and a student looking for a job placement. ♦

### [Getting to Know You](#)

Not everyone can make it to general meetings. Not everyone has the opportunity to introduce themselves to other communicators...until now. Find out what you can do to introduce yourself and your skills. ♦

### [Telephone Seminar Recap: the quest for a good index](#)

If you were unable to attend the index Webinar, then find out what you

## The Editor's Message

*We just received a request to address these two topics from the Society Leaders' "Tieline" newsletter.*

### **Don't Lose Touch with the STC**

Update your membership information to include your home contact information (address, phone number, or e-mail address) so that Head Office does not lose track of you when you change jobs.

You can do this by completing the address change form on the [STC Web site](#) or by contacting Head Office at (703) 522-4114.

### **Renew Your Membership Online**

Online renewal is quick and convenient; it reduces printing and postage costs; it also reduces environmental costs (for example, it uses less paper). To renew online, go to the [STC Web site](#) and access the renewal form using your STC membership number and password.

### **No January Issue**

For those of you who have been regularly submitting articles, I am giving you a reprieve for Christmas. There is no deadline to hit in December, because there is no January issue.

For those of you who look forward to The Quill and might miss it, you will just have to entertain yourself with a

missed, and do it over a pint of beer. ♦

### [Launching the 2004-2005 Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award](#)

Are you a student who is interested in technical writing? Did you ever wonder if you could win an award? Get the details by reading this article. ♦

### [Telephone Seminar Recap: Introducing Windows "Longhorn" user assistance system](#)

Microsoft is scheduled to release a new version of Windows, and with it comes a new "user assistance system." See what you need to do to get ready for this release. ♦

### [Getting My Financial Books in Order](#)

When it comes to technical communication, there are so many options and so little time. Read how one writer has been conquering the financial training world. ♦

### [View from the Other Side...the multiple sides of the weather](#)

Neither rain nor sunshine nor snow could prevent a former chapter member from giving us an update about what is happening in England (and Spain). ♦

### [General Meeting Recap: the "magic" of science writing](#)

Find out how "So what?" and "Who cares?" relates to this general meeting recap. ♦

### [Recap of the November Council Meeting](#)

Your council is trying to give you the value that you deserve for your STC membership. Find out what your council is doing for you. ♦

### [STC Costs: the cash you save may be your own](#)

Everyone likes to get good value for their money, so it's not surprising that the STC compares well to other organizations based on membership fees and the cost of registration for various conferences. ♦

good book or do some Web surfing. Whatever you come up with, don't make it too much fun: I don't want you to get used to doing something that might (but not likely) be more fun than The Quill.

### **My Suggestions**

I must have been crazy when I made that last statement; there is no way that there is anything more fun than The Quill.

If you are going to read a book, make sure the book relates to technical communication so that you can write a review of it for the newsletter. Think of the thrill you will get knowing that by reading a book you are actually performing research for an article that will get your name in print—online.

The same is true when you are surfing the Web. Why not search out new sites that relate to our field and then review them? There are so many sites out there that no one can possibly visit them all. By providing reviews, maybe we can get to more sites faster and avoid the "dud" ones.

Send your articles, 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.

## 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

Illustrator: Martin Eisenloeffel

## Chapter Officers

President: [Opal Gamble](#)

Past President: [Heidi Marr](#)

Treasurer: [Carol Lawless](#)

Recorder: [Emily Layng](#)

For a complete list of contacts, go to the Web 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.

Web site: [www.stc.org](http://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](mailto:stc@stc.org) ♦

### In this issue:

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# Sure, but what have you done for me lately?



by [Opal Gamble](#), President

The STC is reinventing itself to suit the needs and requests of its membership. I'm sure all of you have heard about the STC's [Transformation](#) from the STC Web site and various STC publications, so I'm not going to get into the details of the changes beyond this month's topic:

## *Membership.*

### **It's that time of year again...**

If you haven't seen your membership renewal in your mailbox yet, it's on its way. Big deal. You'll just sign that cheque (or get your employer to sign one) and off to the post office it goes. Right?

Well, not exactly.

This year, the process is a little more complicated, due to a new system of membership.

Now, to borrow from The Quill's [Ask The Expert column from October](#), here is a breakdown of the new membership system:

Membership	Publications	Communities	Cost
Classic	Paper & online	1 Chapter & 1 SIG OR 3 SIGs	\$145 + \$15 postage
Limited	Paper & online	None	\$125 + \$15 postage
E-membership	Online	1 Chapter & 1 SIG OR 3 SIGs	\$135 Additional chapters \$10 each Additional SIGs \$5 each
Student	Online	1 Student Chapter & 1 Professional Chapter Unlimited SIGs	\$50 Additional chapters \$10 each No charge for SIGs

The new membership scheme raises an interesting dilemma for those of you who want more than the STCs publications: join a chapter or join SIGs?

The scheme also raises another important question: why should you join a chapter at all?

**[insert sales pitch here]**

My belief is that while SIGs are useful and wonderful communities in their own right—a group of people interested in a specific topic is always a golden opportunity for learning and sharing—nothing can replace a chapter.

Now, this statement lends itself to a big, old, skeptical "what's so great about a chapter?" (Yes, you in the back row, I heard that.)

Here is just some of what's great about being an STC-SOC (Southwestern Ontario Chapter) member:

1. **Monthly meetings** Hot topics, new technologies, and networking opportunities all rolled into one, free monthly session. These meetings are free for everyone, members or non-members. Many—and by many I mean more than 80% of chapters—require an entrance fee from their members and a larger fee from non-members.
2. **Phone seminars** As a member of our chapter, you can attend these sessions for free. In the past, phone seminars have covered topics from paper prototyping and indexing. One of the upcoming session is about hazards.
3. **Networking** Even excluding the formal networking nights that our chapter is hosting this year, being a member of STC-SOC gains you valuable contacts in the local communicator community. Attending meetings (for example, general, SIG or phone seminars) introduces you to new people all the time.
4. **The Quill** You're already aware of the value of our chapter's publication, because you're reading it right now. It's the lifeline of the chapter for getting news and information to our membership (you!) and it's award winning to boot.
5. **Chapter SIGS** The Management and Contract special interest groups are alive and thriving in our community and there is room for more SIGs if the interest continues to grow.
6. **Education Opportunities** Our chapter has set a very high standard for education opportunities, and [this year](#) is no exception. Chapter members enjoy a discounted rate for our annual education days.

Now, if you're wavering between a limited membership and a e-membership or classic membership, here's the key point: *The extra funds go into your chapter to support our programs and grow the communications community in our area.*

In other words, that extra \$10 or \$20 goes right back into your chapter, letting us provide those nice services listed above.

Without your membership, there are no events, which means there are fewer face-to-face opportunities for growth and networking.

Without you, there is no chapter. ♦

### **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 autocross events (with a hybrid car, no less!) and tries to cultivate a green thumb in her garden.*

#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





## Upcoming Chapter Events



by [Peter Szabo](#), Program Manager

There's only one month to go before we welcome in a new calendar year. Of course, we're not even half way through the STC year, so there are still lots of neat things planned for 2005 including our annual Wine and Cheese networking event in March, another general meeting in Guelph, and lots more. By the way, to give us all a chance to recover from the holidays and adapt to the return to work, there's **no** General Meeting in January.

Oh, and to give you lots of advance notice, please note that the General Meeting in **February** will take place on a **Wednesday night**, instead of the usual Tuesday night. Hopefully, this change will enable those who have regular Tuesday commitments to come out to a meeting.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's look at what's happening in December.

### **December 7, 2004: General Meeting Technical Writing vs. Marketing Writing**

I'm excited about introducing the topic of marketing writing to our general meetings, because I think every technical writer will at least be asked to write marketing materials at some time in their career. And, for some technical communicators, that may be an uncomfortable prospect. I know there are a lot of shared aspects to writing in the two styles, so we'll have a short presentation that discusses the goals and skills of the two writing styles. Then we'll ask a panel of three communicators, who have successfully bridged the gap between technical and marketing writing, to share their tips and experiences.

**Time:** 7:00 p.m., doors open 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** University of Waterloo (U of W), Davis Centre, Room 1304 [[map](#)].

**Cost:** FREE for all

### **December 8, 2004: STC Remote Seminar Highlighting Hazards: Mastering Warnings and Error Messages**

**Host:** Leah Guren

Are you hiding the hazard notifications in your user documents? Do you know when and where you should include hazard notes? What about the difference between Danger, Warning, and Caution? What kind of text and graphic labels work best? Should hazard notifications be used the same way in hardware and

software documentation? Do color and placement influence user compliance to hazard notifications? Do hazard notes change for localization projects? And do users even notice hazard notifications?

Learn the theory, standards, and usability of hazards notifications in one short session.

**Time:** 1:00-2:30 p.m. EDT (Doors open at 12:30)

**Location:** CheckFree i-Solutions, 455 Phillip Street, Waterloo (for both seminars) [[455 Phillip Street, Waterloo](#)].

**Cost:** FREE for members and \$35 for non-members.

## January 2005: No General Meeting

### January 12, 2005: STC Remote Seminar Preemptive Project Planning

**Host:** John Hedtke

No one likes surprises, especially if those surprises mean more work. This presentation will teach you how to spot upcoming projects before they sneak up on you. You'll learn to prepare for these projects, avoid those nerve-wracking schedule crunches, and look like a hero in the process!

**Time:** 1:00-2:30 p.m. EDT (Doors open at 12:30)

**Location:** CheckFree i-Solutions, 455 Phillip Street, Waterloo (for both seminars) [[455 Phillip Street, Waterloo](#)].

**Cost:** FREE for members and \$35 for non-members.

### January 18, 2005: Council Meeting

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

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

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

RSVP to [Opal Gamble](#) by January 17

### January 19, 2005: Networking Meeting

**Host:** [Opal Gamble](#)

Here's a great opportunity to meet other technical communicators and just chat.

It's an informal gathering, so there are no formal RSVPs (though a note to say you are planning to attend is appreciated). Just wander in and say hello.

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

**Location:** Café Aquarius in Guelph

## WEDNESDAY, February 2, 2005: Single-Sourcing and E-Learning

When people say "single-sourcing" they usually mean creating a user guide and online help from a single document. But what about adding e-learning to the mix? Join Louis Beauregard as he describes ways to create compelling, media-rich, e-learning content—without breaking the bank. Louis will discuss the implications of e-learning as they relate to data modeling, instructional design, content creation, and production automation.

**Time:** 7:00 p.m., doors open 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** University of Waterloo (U of W), Davis Centre, Room 1304 [[map](#)].

**Cost:** FREE for all

If you have any questions about upcoming chapter events, or if you have a suggestion for a meeting topic, feel free to e-mail [Peter Szabo](#) (Program Manager).

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](#). ♦

### **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.*

### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





# Education Seminars in 2005



by [Kim Creed](#), Education Manager

You are cordially invited to participate in the Education Seminar 2005, hosted by the Southwestern Ontario Chapter of the Society of Technical Communication (STC). All presentations are practical and hands-on this year. We aim to provide you with tools and knowledge that you can transfer to your own work or organizational practices and processes.

Date	Time	Speaker	Topic
Thurs, Feb 17	AM	Vivian Viitala	Developing a Style Guide
	PM	Bernard Aschwanden	Template Development: Best Practices
Fri, Feb 18	AM	Rob Hanna	Mapping the Content Ecosystem
	PM	Russ Ward	Why You Need Structured FrameMaker

## Location

To improve accessibility for attendees, the location for the seminar is the [Hilton Garden Inn](#), just off Highway 401, central to K-W, Guelph, and a short drive from Toronto and London.

## Fees

Because we are all time-challenged and cash-challenged, we are charging last year's fees for this year's seminar. This is to make the seminar available to as many technical writers as possible.

Fees are in Canadian funds and include course materials, lunch, and refreshments. You can elect to attend either one or both seminar days.

The fee structure is as follows:

Rate	Fee (CDN)	Days
STC member	\$375	2
STC member	\$250	1
Group rate *	\$350/person	2
Student rate **	\$200	2
Non-member	\$575	2

\* Per person for 3 or more STC members from the same company

\*\* Students must be STC members to qualify for the student rate

## Registration

The chapter will make early registration available by December 7, 2004. Look for forms on our Web site at <http://www.stc-soc.org>.

Registration closes on Thursday, February 3, 2005.

## Contact Information

For registration queries, contact [Carol Lawless](#), Treasurer.

For workshop queries, contact [Kim Creed](#), Education Manager. ♦

### About Kim Creed

*Kim writes technical documents at ATS (Automation Tooling Systems). Her current workload includes documenting assembly line machinery and creating a prototype of online help. Previously, she wrote documentation for optical carriers and business process automation software. When she isn't writing, Kim practices yoga, sketches and creates stained glass pieces.*

### In this issue:

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





# Can't we just get along for the sake of the product?



by [Patrick Hofmann](#), Feature Writer

I recently returned from the European Information Design Conference in Wiesbaden, Germany, where some 1,500 technical communicators gathered to share and learn their latest ideas of our trade. Although the conference had a very heavy focus on localization and translation, I talked with a few documentation managers who were tossing around the idea of "not" translating their docs but instead, turning their regular user guides into very visual or even wordless user guides. One of their common questions was: how does developing the wordless manual fit into the engineering or product development process? Moreover, how does the doc team then interact with the engineering team? My answer: collaborate, collaborate, collaborate!

## Product Development

When we began developing our first wordless manuals for Hewlett Packard, documentation development started not only parallel to, but integrated with the product development cycle. As the product engineers focused on designing a low-cost, highly compact, easy-to-assemble network computer, the documentation and usability team focused on designing a low-cost, easy-to-understand wordless manual for the entire global market.

## Usability Testing

These two streams of activity converged after the usability testing of the first product prototype. The documentation and usability team discovered that usability participants (equipped at this point with preliminary, worded instructions) could not adequately assemble the product. The highly compact computer had too many obstructions and too little space for parts to be removed, manoeuvred, and inserted into their appropriate locations.

## Product Improvements

As the producers and recorders of the product usability tests, the documentation and usability team became allies of, and collaborators with, the product engineering team. The two teams worked together to improve the product (which would invariably improve the documentation) in three key ways:

- by integrating instructional cues on the product itself, through colour-coded

decals, warnings, and engraved labels and arrows

- by proposing alternative configurations for internal cables and card placements to help relieve the congestion of the computer's internal components and to make assembly easier
- by combining components and their supporting brackets into a single piece to reduce the number of components and simplify the assembly.

## Time Frames

The two teams achieved these objectives over a six- to eight-month development cycle. Six product prototypes were developed, with iterative usability testing occurring at every other stage (the first, third, and fifth prototypes). At these stages, a new version of the wordless manual was also evaluated.

- In the first usability test, the first product prototype was tested along with a preliminary version of the manual, where worded instructions were placed in boxed groups that would mimic the final layout of the manual.
- In the second usability test, the third product prototype was tested along with a draft of the wordless manual, including a visual table of contents and symbolic titling.
- In the third usability test, the fifth product prototype was tested along with a final version of the wordless manual.

By sticking to this iterative design and evaluation process, the product engineering and documentation/usability teams collaboratively and productively moved forward. As the product prototype improved, the documentation improved, which created an easy-to-use experience from a fully integrated product design. And, dare I say it, this success proved that tech-doc and engineering could live happily ever after. ♦

### **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?*



## **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# Technical Writing Post-Graduate Program: the field placement course credit



In the second term, all Technical Writing students are required to participate in a field placement for an organization. Ideally, each student will be working on a project-based assignment to help further the host organization's corporate goals. Completion of the independent study for the host organization will result in a course credit towards the full-time post-diploma certificate in Technical Writing.

## Workplace Health and Safety

Fanshawe students have coverage through the college.

## Host Responsibilities for Technical Writing Field Placements

The students are expected to work independently towards a project that will further the host organization's communication objectives.

The host organization's responsibilities are outlined below:

- Provide students with opportunities to learn about the Technical Writing profession.
- Approve a student-created "Learning Contract" outlining the student's responsibilities, deadlines, goals, and objectives.
- Provide the required materials for a student to accomplish his/her project(s), for example, access to phones, computers, and personnel.
- Have at least one key contact person available to orient the student to the host organization and to provide advice and encouragement as the student completes his/her project.
- Allow the student to work independently towards mutually agreed upon tasks and goals.
- Provide gentle guidance and feedback throughout the project.
- Read and approve the student's end of term Summative Report, which will delineate expected goals and outcomes as well as reveal other learning that was experienced during the semester long field placement.
- Inform Fanshawe College Technical Writing Field Placement Monitor, Marg Medeiros at [mmedeiros@fanshawec.ca](mailto:mmedeiros@fanshawec.ca), if the student is not fulfilling the mutually agreed upon tasks and deadlines

## **Optional Requirements for Field Placement Hosts**

- The host may wish to provide the student with a letter of recommendation upon his/her completion of the field placement.
- The host may wish to invite the student to networking opportunities or other events.
- Students **may be paid** by a field placement host while earning a course credit.

## **Assessment of Students on Field Placement**

A Fanshawe College faculty advisor will assess students on field placement.

## **Negotiation and Completion of a Thorough Learning Contract - 25%**

The Learning Contract will outline parameters of the student project, deadlines, work arrangements and hours, key responsibilities and expected outcomes. Due dates for progress reports will be outlined in the document. The host, the student, and the faculty advisor will sign the contract.

## **Two Progress Reports - 2 @ 15%**

The student will write two progress reports. The student can give copies to the host organization. The faculty advisor will mark the reports.

## **Work Journal - 15%**

Students will keep a work journal to record the length of time that certain tasks take and to record key observations. Students will submit the work journal to their faculty advisor with their Summative Report.

## **Summative Report - 30%**

Upon completion of the field placement, students will write a Summative Report that rationalizes their anticipated goals and objectives against their realized experiences when completing their project. The student will also present findings on unanticipated learning outcomes and experiences. The report may involve a presentation of findings to peers. The host will also receive a copy of the Summative Report and must sign it to complete the Learning Contract cycle.

## **Contact Information**

General Studies Division,  
Fanshawe College,  
1460 Oxford St. E.,  
London, Ontario, N5Y 5R6

(519) 452-4442 or (519) 452-4480

<http://gs.fanshawec.ca> ♦

### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) |  
[Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) |  
[Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#)  
| [About the Quill](#) |



# Getting to Know You

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



Attention all STC Southwestern Ontario Chapter members!

Are you new to the field of technical communications, or a long-time member looking to share some of your insight and experience? Are you a contractor or consultant looking to gain some exposure in the community? Are you looking to change careers or positions within the technical communication field?

Tell your fellow members about yourself and forge new personal and professional ties! The Quill is an excellent forum for just this purpose.

## Where to Make Submissions

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please submit a brief biography to Sarah-Beth Doner, Membership Manager ([membership@stc-soc.org](mailto:membership@stc-soc.org)), and it will be published in an upcoming issue of The Quill.

## What to Include

Biographies should be between 100 and 200 words, and should include some of the following details:

- Where you're currently working, and a description of your position.
- What interests you most about technical communication.
- Your greatest challenge or your best advice that relates to technical communications.
- Some of your goals for the future.
- Something you'd like your fellow members to know about you.
- Your name and contact information (e-mail address or telephone number).  
And please indicate if you would like your contact information included with your biography when it is published in The Quill.

Provide as much or as little detail as you choose.

## This Month's Biography: David Flett

David Flett works as a Technical Writer for MKS Inc., a company in Waterloo that provides enterprise technology management solutions. He holds an Honours BA in Psychology and Philosophy, and is working to complete his MA in Language and

Professional Writing at the University of Waterloo.

David's professional interests include documentation single-sourcing, user experience design, and usability testing. He has a love for both language and technology, and is enthusiastic to combine the two.

On the quirky side, David has a passion for puzzles and is often seen with some kind of Rubik's Cube puzzle nearby. ♦

### **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.*



#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



## Telephone Seminar Recap: the quest for a good index



by [John Morland](#) and [Michael Jager](#), Quill Contributors

*Two strangers, Mark (lost and looking for a) Quest and Johnny (doesn't have a) Clue have found themselves drinking beside each other at a bar.*

**Clue:** What do you do for a living?

**Quest:** I am an information architect.

**Clue:** A what?

**Quest:** You know, an information architect! I take information in books and make it easier to find.

**Clue:** Do you consider your audience when you do this?

**Quest:** Of course!

**Clue:** Then, you are an indexer!

**Quest:** I am a what?

**Clue:** An indexer. Just like me.

**Quest:** So what do you do as an indexer?

**Clue:** I decide what's important, what to call it, and where to put it.

**Quest:** And "it" being what?

**Clue:** Actually the "it" is an idea and there are usually lots of them in any document. I bridge the gap between an idea and the documentation

**Quest:** So how do you go about indexing?

**Clue:** Well, first I need to know as much as I can about the audience and the subject. Then I decide if the reference is trivial. If it's trivial, it's out.

**Quest:** How do you know what is trivial?

**Clue:** Well, if there's no expansion of the idea or, if the idea and the index entry are the same, then the idea's out.

**Quest:** Yes, that's happened to me – a bird is a bird is a bird. That sure told me a lot and, believe me, I was not happy! So what gets in?

**Clue:** Anything that isn't trivial. Then you know the index is complete.

**Quest:** You know this is getting awkward just calling "it" the idea. Suppose I really wanted to find something in the index.

**Clue:** That's why labelling is important. If you use the word "quest" or the word "search" you should end up at the same place.

**Quest:** Oh, so we want to have redundancy?

**Clue:** Right! This is one time in technical writing where redundancy is OK. Double posting is one way to use redundancy to access an idea.

*(While looking over the bar menu)*

**Quest:** So if I was looking up cold cut sandwiches, I could look up either:

*Cold cuts*

*Sandwiches made of,*

or

*Sandwiches*

*Cold cuts in.*

**Clue:** That's it. There are other ways to do this, too. You can index every important word. So, if I was indexing "configuring network printers", I could put index entries under C for configuring, N for network, and P for printers.

**Quest:** What if I looked under H for hardware?

**Clue:** You should still end up at the same place. Terms should be cross-referenced. In fact, the more entries the better. Use up the reader's vocabulary!

**Quest:** I'm lost for words. Is that all there is?

**Clue:** Well, actually no. Next, you have to organize the labels and give them structure.

**Quest:** What is labelling and structure?

**Clue:** Labelling usually suggests categories that you can use to give structure. Categories can go from supersets through subsets (for example, animals>pets>dogs>poodles>toy poodles.) Then there are associated categories that increase the knowledge of the subject like dogs + leashes + legal system. Also, there are equal categories like dogs, birds, cats, and fish.

**Quest:** It works for me.

**Clue:** And context is more important than labelling.

**Quest:** Why?

**Clue:** Well, if you saw the word lemons in an index, what would you expect to find?

**Quest:** Gee, I suppose I would expect to find a description of lemon as a citrus fruit.

**Clue:** What if the book was about the auto industry?

**Quest:** Ah, then I would expect to find something entirely different.

**Clue:** So here's the rule: Ambiguity in content = bad / Redundancy in navigation = good.

**Quest:** Oops, I just got paged. Where can I find out more information about indexing?

**Clue:** You should have attended the October STC Web seminar with Seth Maislin. However, the American Society of indexers at <http://www.asindexing.org> is a good place to start. Also, the STC Indexing Special Interest Group is at <http://www.stcsig.org/idx>. And if you want to contact Seth you can e-mail him at [seth@maislin.com](mailto:seth@maislin.com) or check out his Web site at <http://taxonomist.tripod.com> ♦

### **About John Morland**

*John recently graduated with honours from the Fanshawe technical writing program. John is currently looking for employment as a technical writer in the London and Kitchener-Waterloo areas.*

### **About Michael Jager**

*Michael is currently employed at a small company in London, Ontario. His employer provides IT support for companies that have no dedicated IT staff. They also perform some web design duties. Michael's current position has him building workstations and performing IT for clients.*

### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# Launching the 2004-2005 Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award



by [Christy Simard](#), Student Awards Manager

This issue of The Quill marks the launch of the publicity campaign for this year's Heidi Thiessen Memorial Award. Presented yearly to three university students, this award goes to strong academic performers who demonstrate excellent technical communication skills and true interest in the field.

## Increase in Scope

This year, the exciting news (apart from the \$1,500 we give away, the amazing students we meet, and the committed volunteers who make it happen) centers around an increase in our scope. For the first time, University of Guelph students are invited to participate in the award competition.

After keeping an eye on technical communications at Guelph for the last couple of years, we've decided it's time to reach out and make contact. Deb Maskens, a past president of our chapter, now works at the University of Guelph. Deb has kindly agreed to collect applications from Guelph students and work her magic to get the word out.

## Getting the Word Out and Getting Details

Please join us at the March Wine & Cheese to enjoy a short awards ceremony and a chance to mingle with hot talent from area universities. And, if you know any third or fourth year students at University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University or University of Guelph, please send them to our [Web site](#) to get all the details! ♦

## About Christy Simard

*Christy manages a team of information developers in Kitchener-Waterloo, where she supports traditional writing jobs, user interface design work, and marketing writing assignments. Her expertise combines an educational background in technical writing with eight years of industry experience.*

*Christy became a member of the STC in 1998; this is her third year as a volunteer on council.*



**In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# Telephone Seminar Recap: introducing Windows "Longhorn" user assistance system



by [Christy Simard](#), Student Awards Manager

If you work in the Windows world, you've probably heard of Longhorn, codename for the new Microsoft operating system due out in 2005. If you work in the Windows world **and** you write online help, you've probably wondered about Longhorn Help, the expected replacement for Windows HTML Help. What will it look like? How will it work? Where does it fit in the user experience?

At the November telephone seminar that are chapter sponsored, local writers and managers listened as Char James-Tanny shared her knowledge and experience with this fledgling help system...actually, make that a fledgling "user assistance system".

## Char's Disclaimer

The seminar started with a disclaimer: Longhorn is still under development. So is Longhorn Help. This means things can and will change. Beta release of Longhorn Help is expected some time in the first half of 2005, but timing and details are subject to change!

## Highlights from the User's Perspective

Longhorn Help will provide an "Assistance Escalation Path". This path will start with a well-designed user interface, move out from the UI and into the Help pane, then out of the Help pane and into the user community. The last stop will be Microsoft product support. The idea is that users will never encounter a dead end when they seek assistance.

The look of Longhorn Help is a little bit "traditional WinHelp", a little bit "Office 2003". You'll see one main pane of task-based help and navigation, with a secondary window for conceptual topics. You'll see the basic functions you'd expect: table of contents, index, full text search, and history. You'll also notice that Longhorn Help will look exactly the same, regardless of the application that installed it. For example, the formatting of Excel's help will match the formatting of the help that came with your new video card software.

New features will integrate application and system state information directly into the help, presumably providing more precise and accurate information. Variables

and conditions are the key mechanisms here, referred to as "reusable content" and "conditional content" respectively. "Active Content Wizards" will even present the "Do it" option, where the software executes the help steps at the user's command—the elusive "one-click solution".

## **Interesting Implementation Details**

When I attended this seminar, my biggest question was, "can I install Longhorn Help on a single server then deliver help to client computers?" The answer is...no. With Longhorn Help, you must install your help system on every single computer that will deliver your help. If you serve up help for thin-client, browser-based software, Longhorn Help is of no use to you.

Longhorn Help is fully structured; you will write it in MAML, which is a Microsoft markup language built on XML. As an author, you will work with a fixed set of topic types, each with a strict set of hierarchical elements, all of which will be formatted by a stylesheet maintained and published by Microsoft (this may change!).

Before your cringe sets in, be aware that there are gains to make. Your MAML will be transformed at run time into online help, RTF for printing, or into XAML, another Microsoft markup language that will permit software applications to share data. Longhorn Help promises a complete, single-source solution that extends single sourcing to include the interface between help and application software.

In addition to your structured content (which is compiled but not compressed), when you install your help system, you will install a "TaskData" file. This file will contain a breadth of information about your help system, like the words to show in an index, the relationships between tasks in your system, and the categories into which those tasks are grouped. This TaskData file and the metadata it contains should facilitate richer information webs. The task data for all Longhorn applications will be collected and managed within a single database, promising global search, navigation, and categorization.

## **Moving Forward**

Breathe easy. Longhorn will include the WinHelp and HTML Help engines. They won't undergo any further development or bug fixes, but they'll be there, and they'll support legacy help systems.

Secondly, if you think Longhorn Help has a part to play in your future, Char says to get familiar with XML and structured authoring. Now! The sooner the better.

Finally, if you want to keep up on the latest Longhorn Help developments, check

the MSHelpWiki at <http://mshelpwiki.com>. ♦

### **About Christy Simard**

*Christy manages a team of information developers in Kitchener-Waterloo, where she supports traditional writing jobs, user interface design work, and marketing writing assignments. Her expertise combines an educational background in technical writing with eight years of industry experience.*

*Christy became a member of the STC in 1998; this is her third year as a volunteer on council.*

#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





# Getting My Financial Books in Order



by [Roxanne Eszes](#), Quill Contributor

In November 1992 (OMG, that's TWELVE years ago!), I abandoned my job as an employed consulting engineer to become a freelance technical writer. At that time, most of the people I knew were skeptical—they thought that unless you were a journalist or novelist, writing was a hobby, not a career. Then they conceded that they had experienced many frustrating software manuals or laughable instruction booklets, and they agreed that maybe there was something to this technical writing thing after all.

But then I puzzled them even more by saying that I didn't want to do software or hardware manuals—I wanted to write science and engineering stuff! Maybe even textbooks!

## The Reason for My Focus

In my career as a consulting engineer, I routinely wrote proposals and environmental assessment reports that numbered in the hundreds of pages and, unlike my colleagues, I loved doing it. Compiling the input from multiple sources, and often doing my own research, I could put together a stellar report that even non-engineers found easy to read.

I thought that it would be easy to market my services to other engineers. After all, everybody knows that engineers (other than me) can't write, right? Well, it turned out that most engineers wouldn't concede that they couldn't put a paragraph together, and those few that did admit that their writing could use help weren't willing to pay for it.

So I struggled along for a few years, getting odd jobs here and there, but my business certainly wasn't all I had imagined it to be. Then, good old networking paid off. An acquaintance of an acquaintance knew somebody who needed help writing an introductory financial planning textbook, and I was able to arrange a meeting. After all, I could balance my cheque book, how hard could it be?

## The Stuff of Dreams

Initially, the fact that I didn't have a background in financial planning or accounting was of some concern, but frankly the client had been unable to find somebody with experience who could also write. So, I was given a banker's box full of resource materials, a 3-page extract from a 20-page curriculum document that specified the educational objectives, and a contract to produce a 75-page

chapter on personal use assets (cars, homes, cottages, etc.).

I was in heaven. Dredging through a box full of material, drawing out the relevant bits and presenting them in a coherent, reasonable fashion was my idea of a good time. And the reviewers loved it; they acknowledged that my previous lack of experience with the subject matter meant that I was coming from the same place as the students. I assumed that they didn't know anything, and built the material up accordingly.

## **The Rest is History**

I went on to write some 6,000 pages of educational materials related to financial planning, including textbooks on money management, personal income tax, retirement planning, estate planning, investment planning, risk management and insurance. From there I went on to create study aids for candidates attempting the national certified financial planner (CFP) exam, workshops on exam writing techniques, and continuing education pieces for people who have their CFP designation.

## **The Lessons Learned**

Along the way, I've learned a thing or two about writing:

- You can never provide too many examples. Theory is great, but most students learn from seeing that theory applied to a real-life situation, especially if numbers are involved!
- Start off each chapter or module by stating the learning objectives—and then make sure that the material meets them!
- Build a glossary as you go along. If you can explain your concept in a concise stand-alone glossary entry, chances are your material will make more sense, and your document will be more consistent throughout.

## **The Paper vs. Online Debate**

Over the past few years, there has been a great push to move all training materials online, and there are some valid reasons for doing so. For distance education, it can significantly reduce print production and shipping costs, and it makes updating content more efficient. However, in my experience, many online education developers get too caught up in the latest and greatest gizmo and forget about good content. Having interactive graphs and other illustrations can be informative and can break up some otherwise dull material, BUT they can be used to excess. Good content is still king, at least in my book!

## Contact Information

Roxanne Eszes, P.Eng., CFP  
Cleartech Documentation and Training  
Guelph, ON  
(519) 767-0295 ♦

### **About Roxanne Eszes**

*Roxanne is a freelance technical writer, editor and trainer, servicing the financial, environmental and engineering sectors. She operates under the business name of Cleartech Documentation and Training from her home office in Guelph, Ontario.*

#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





# View from the Other Side...the multiple sides of the weather



by [Nancy Halverson](#), Feature Writer

One of the main advantages that we wanted when we came to England was to head out to Europe whenever we could. We jumped across to Spain last week. It's a very English thing to do—there are many many many English vacationers always going to the Costas. Luckily we have friends who just moved to the Costa Blanca...a little town called Denia. Right on the [Mediterranean with mountains around](#), palm trees, as well as pebble or sand beaches.

## An Escape from the Rain to Spain

It's a wonderful place, Spain—I've always wanted to go there. And even though it was November, and it wasn't the warmest weather, it was great to get out of the [rain for a week](#). We're now planning a trip in the summer. The fact that it's overrun by the English in the summer is a little daunting, but we're going to try to get a place near our friends and just spend as much time as we can in the mountains and on the beaches.

## An Aside About English Holiday-Makers

English holiday-makers can behave more like Spring-break college kids at Daytona. After all, it was here that the 'pub crawl' originated. It's a generalization I know, but believe me, it's been proven out in many many places! Plus, when we go away, we like to live in the real part of the country, without sausage and mash and English cooked breakfasts. Ryan and I have always loved to travel, and we've rarely returned to the same place, but we're really curious about how beautiful summertime Spain can be.

## The Rain Follows Us

It was only a small part of Spain, but it's remarkable how much it affects you. When we landed, it was dry and sunny. A great switch from the dreary fall skies we left in England. It was a short-lived relief however, as we approached Denia (an hour's drive), it started to rain. And then it started to pour. Torrential waves of driving rain. Our friend was apologizing for hours—it hadn't rained for a few weeks, and was hot and sunny practically until our arrival. We seem to collect unusual weather events, and love to see how different places react in unexpected weather. We're weird that way.

## The Sunshine Returns

The weather cleared the next day, and we enjoyed a great week walking and riding in sunshine. We drove up to Valencia and toured their new aquarium—one of those that you walk through. Fantastic, even if we couldn't understand the Spanish commentary. You can understand what's going on in a dolphin show in any language.

## A Mix of the Old and the New

Spain won our hearts because of the sunshine, landscapes, and the wonderful mixture of old and new. There are lots of [old buildings](#) and, of course, narrow little streets, but there's also newly built ones that keep an old style. And, thank goodness, the Spanish architects also excel at modern, clean looking buildings as well. It's an [amazing place](#), and we're looking forward to going back.

## Reality and Snow

As for getting back to reality, we had snow here in Sheffield last Thursday afternoon. Not just a few flakes, it actually turned into real snow. Not to paint with too wide a brush, but the English generally don't do well in snow. It's understandable really, the driving test demands that everyone use their brakes in strange ways, and you're not allowed to gear down to stop. People also routinely use their parking brake at stoplights, or to stop on hills—making it a little more dramatic to start moving again. And, of course, no one uses brushes or scrapers on their icy windshields. We kept our windshield brush naturally (as well as our snow shovel!) but most Brits use this weird green spray stuff to get rid of ice and snow on their cars. I've even seen people taking kettles out and pouring hot water on their windshield—lucky for them, they don't actually crack.

Anyway, travel in the car when it snows is tragically slow. An hour and a quarter to do a 15 minute drive. It's even more difficult to believe, since there was no snow on the ground. It's the sight of snow that scares them the most, I guess.

## Big and Little Kids

We live in the hilly part of town, up almost 300 feet from the city centre. By the time we got home, there were a couple of inches on the ground. It was a winter wonderland—and so early in the season! The trees, street, flowers and houses [were all white](#). Ryan wanted to know where our kids were, and why they weren't outside playing in the snow. He was so disappointed to discover that the nanny wouldn't let the kids out to play—she'd worn shoes that wouldn't be good in the

snow and wouldn't be able to be outside with them. We tossed them into winter gear and threw them [out to play](#). They had a blast, as did we—it's impossible for Canadians to not enjoy snow if they haven't seen much of it in the past few years (well, us anyway). Even Ryan had a little fun—difficult for him, since he's on crutches. Slippery stuff snow, when you're trying to move with metal poles and a set of bare toes.

## **"Let it Snow" Mentality**

We woke up to [snow](#) the next morning as well, [breathtaking white](#) against clear blue sky. Okay, so I'm a little biased, but it's so great to see when you're away from home! I walked the kids to school with the crunch crunch of boots on dry snow. During the night, the powdery snow fell blanketing the wet snow of the previous day, and it felt great! When I got back from taking the kids, I had to drive along the icy streets (there are no snowplows in England) and hope that the hills were covered in sand (the 'gritting lorries' had been out on main roads). Traffic was remarkably tolerable, and we weren't as long in our commute as we had been the night before. I arrived at work to find all my colleagues made it in without problem—most of the region didn't actually get snow, just the higher bits like our neighbourhood. So they teased me that I was late. The Canadian can't cope with the snow. Yeah, right! I just got distracted and had some fun in it, that's all!!

## **A Work Update**

So, my work continues at a thousand miles an hour. We're on the cusp of a major release, and I've got a reference manual, online help and other bits and bobs to produce, as well as putting together the company intranet. It's always a busy time of year, and each year we plan to get ahead somehow, but it never happens. I keep on taking it upon myself to create doc formats that provide information of a different sort, and then I have to produce the information myself. Content creation is my middle name it seems—I'm not happy to leave well enough alone. Must be some kind of disease. Oh well, as long as the information gets to where it's needed, and the users and my bosses are happy with it, I figure I'm doing well.

## **Upcoming Holidays**

Enjoy your holidays everyone—the end of the year's fast approaching and I hope that you're all going to have a great December. I'm hoping that Software Santa brings me FrameMaker 7.1, and Acrobat 6/7, and Robohelp X5. ♦



## **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.*

### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# General Meeting Recap: The "magic" of science writing



by [Ted Edwins](#), Quill Contributor

Several hardy souls made the harrowing trek down Highway 7 to join a sizable contingent of students and other interested spectators for the chapter's November general meeting held at the University of Guelph. The presenter at the meeting was Owen Roberts, the university's director of research communications. Fifteen years ago, Owen started the widely recognized SPARK (Students Promoting Awareness of Research Knowledge) program where students write articles to publicize research being done at the university. He also writes the Urban Cowboy column for the Guelph Mercury.

## Journalistic Principles

In a presentation titled "Science Writing: Making the Complex Understandable", Owen outlined how journalistic principles could be applied to writing articles about complex scientific research for a general audience. He said that the principles could also be easily applied to stories with a "technical" subject. The keys to a good story are to know what topics are of importance to the readership and to have a solid knowledge of the background information.

"The two most important questions a journalist must ask," said Owen "is 'Who cares?' and 'So what?'" Asking "Who cares?" identifies the audience of the article. Asking "So what?" establishes a link between pieces of information to lead the reader to the point of interest.

## Formula for Writing Articles

Here's how it works. Owen illustrated the "Journalist's Formula for Writing Articles" with the inverted pyramid familiar to high school essay writers. The topmost and broadest part of the pyramid contains the most important information. The bottom-most or narrowest part of the pyramid contains the least important information. Sections of the pyramid represented individual paragraphs. A good article should be less than 500 words.

The lead paragraph contains the conclusion and should be less than 30 words.

The second or "nut" paragraph tightens the story. The nut tells "who" and "what" and supports the story angle.

The third paragraph should contain a quotation that illustrates the importance of

the project or event. The quotation should be conversational but not contain any new information.

The "magic" paragraph should occur somewhere between the fourth and sixth paragraphs. It explains the science of the article using simple language. The paragraph's purpose is to demystify the concepts discussed by saying, "here's how it works". The magic paragraph contains the missing piece of the puzzle for those who stray past the headline. The information in the magic paragraph can also be placed in a sidebar. A sidebar is usually a small chunk of text that is highlighted by a box or shading that draws the reader's attention.

## Prizes Received and Presented

Owen concluded the presentation with several examples of award-winning writing by the students. The students represented a wide variety of disciplines in the university from biochemistry to agriculture.

Two door prize draws were held at the end of the meeting. Tim McCormick, a University of Guelph student, won an STC membership donated by the chapter. John Morland, an STC member, won a candy-filled University of Guelph coffee mug donated by the university's Bachelor of Arts and Science Student Association.



### **About Ted Edwins**

*Ted is an independent consultant specializing in software documentation. He is a Past-President of the chapter. In his spare time he continues his futile quest to lower his golf handicap.*



### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |



# Recap of the November Council Meeting



by [emily layng](#), Secretary/Recorder

Our monthly meeting was held at CheckFree i-Solutions in Waterloo, once again, drawing sighs of envy from those less fortunate. We were a pretty small group, but hungry too. Kim and I have started running after work, so we pretty much attacked the pizza. Watch out guys, these teeth are sharp!

## Networking Night

The networking night was held at the Duke of Wellington and we had 100 percent improvement. Christy was there and she said it was a lot of fun. If you can't make it, suggest the event to your co-workers—everyone is welcome.

Sarah-Beth is going to contact Café Aquarius as a venue for the networking night in January.

## Council Meetings

We are planning on having the December meeting in a restaurant. Please feel free to join the council for a little holiday fun mixed with business.

## General Meetings

The last general meeting was in Guelph and there were 30 people there. The February meeting is going to be on a Wednesday, don't forget!

## Status Report

How are we doing?

- Well, we're all still standing, hehe.
- Marisa is looking after hospitality from now on
- Opal is going to ask Mark about spam reduction.

## Education Seminar

Kim presented her plan for the Education seminar and we are all very impressed.

She has four speakers lined up, as well as budgets and seminar fees arranged.

The menu is still being looked at. We will add vegetarian options, but so far it looks pretty good. Kudos to Kim!

We also discussed the possibility of allowing vendors to set up booths at lunch as a way to fund further program additions for our chapter.

Kim is looking into nice gifts for the speakers; she expects to have this all finalized the first week of December.

## **Wine and Cheese**

Peter gave an update on the progress of the Wine and Cheese party; it's still in progress. We're deciding about chairs or no chairs, one drink ticket or two, etcetera, etcetera. We'll keep you posted.

So that just about wrapped it up and we were on our merry way. ♦

### **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.*

#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |





# STC Costs: the cash you save may be your own



by [Gloria McConnell](#), [Sherry Michaels](#), and [Kathy Graden](#)

*STC Phoenix Chapter, November 2004*

Even if you know all of the career benefits you can realize by being an STC member or attending STC conferences, you may still wonder if the costs are reasonable and how they compare to the fees that other professional societies charge. Well, guess what? Other professional associations don't match the value that STC offers.

Recently we compared STC membership fees to membership fees charged by other professional associations that attract people in our profession. We also looked at registration fees for STC's Annual Conference versus fees for nine other technical communication or training development conferences. And we found that in both cases, STC offers the best deals.

## Membership Fees

Here's how STC's new range of membership fees fares when compared to fees for other organizations:

Association	Membership Fees
American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)	<b>\$180</b> for national membership and <b>\$75</b> for local chapter membership
Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Communications (IEEE Communications)	<b>\$191</b> , with a potential of about 30 special interest groups. Membership in each SIG costs an additional <b>\$10</b> to <b>\$40</b> per year. Publications, such as <i>Women in Engineering</i> , cost an additional <b>\$25</b> per year
International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI)	<b>\$145</b>
Association of Computing Machinery Special Interest Group for Documentation (ACM SIGDOC)	<b>\$134</b> plus separate charges for print material

Society for Technical Communication (STC) **\$145** for full membership *including publications*; **\$72.50** for retired members; **\$125** for limited membership (publications only); **\$135** for E-membership; **\$50** for student membership

## Professional Conference Costs

So, you can afford to attend only one professional conference within the next year? Which one offers the best deal? Ultimately, you choose. But here's some information to help guide your decision.

Conference	Duration	Place Held	Registration Fee
Doctrain	2 days	Tyngsboro, MA	<b>\$399</b>
SSPA (Service and Support Professionals Association)	4 days	San Diego, CA and New Orleans, LA	<b>\$1,395</b> for members or <b>\$1,795</b> for non-members
CSTD Knowledge Exchange	4 days	Toronto, Canada (in November)	<b>\$660</b> for members, early bird discount; <b>\$795</b> on site; as high as <b>\$1,040</b> for non-members
Techlearn	4 days	New York City (in November)	<b>\$1,195</b> early bird; <b>\$1,395</b> after deadline
CLO (Chief Learning Officer) Symposium	3 days	Tucson (in April)	<b>\$1,695</b> ; <b>\$1,995</b> after deadline
GlobeCom (IEEE special interest communications group)	3 days	Dallas, TX (in November)	<b>\$655</b> for early bird members; <b>\$755</b> after deadline; <b>\$875</b> early bird non-members; <b>\$1,005</b> after deadline
IEEE Consumer Communications and Networking	4 days	Las Vegas, NV (in January)	<b>\$555</b> for early bird members; <b>\$655</b> after deadline; <b>\$720</b> early bird non-members; <b>\$830</b> after deadline

WritersUA Conference (formerly WinWriters)	4 days	Las Vegas, NV (in March)	<b>\$995</b> for early bird members; <b>\$1,095</b> for registration by deadline; <b>\$1,195</b> for late registration; cheapest discount is <b>\$895</b>
STC Annual Conference	4 days	Seattle, WA (in May)	<b>\$495</b> for early bird members; <b>\$570</b> on site; <b>\$650</b> for non- member early birds; <b>\$725</b> for non-members on site

The fees listed in the preceding table cover only registration fees for the conferences; don't forget that you need to allocate additional funds for airfare, lodging, meals, etc. In many cases, your travel expenses may be two or even three times as much as the conference fee.

When compared to fees that other professional associations charge, STC's fees are comparable or less expensive. Think about that when deciding how to spend your dollars next year! ♦

#### **In this issue:**

[Contents](#) | [President](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) | [Education Seminar](#) | [Teamwork](#) | [Fanshawe](#) | [Membership](#) | [Index Recap](#) | [Student Awards](#) | [Longhorn Recap](#) | [Financial Training](#) | [England](#) | [Science Writing](#) | [Council Recap](#) | [Cost Comparison](#) | [About the Quill](#) |