



the Quill

the Newsletter for the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC



March 2005 (Volume 16 Number 6) [About the Quill](#)

In This Issue

President's Message

Being the president has its advantages. Opal gets to announce two special award winners in our chapter. Find out all that they have done to earn this recognition. ♦

Upcoming Events

It's not always to know where things are "happening", but our program manager pulls it all together in one article so you can plan out your STC activities for the month. ♦

Education Seminars...two days + four seminars = success!

Our education manager tried something new this year by having four seminars over two days. If you couldn't attend, you'll want to find out what you missed during this special event. ♦

Adobe Acrobat 7.0: STC Web-telephone seminar recap

It's amazing how much information you can learn in a short period of time. Read this article and find out what new features were discussed at the Adobe Acrobat Webinar. ♦

A View From the Other Side...of a writer's marathon

We all run a marathon each day as we rush to complete our tasks. Find out what our feature writer is doing to get things in shape in England. ♦

February General Meeting Recap: Single-Sourcing and E-Learning

If you are interested in reusing information and simplifying the process to get from Point A to Point B, then this is the article for you. Find out why you do not want to miss our monthly general meetings. ♦

Recap of the February Council Meeting

It was a small but mighty group who managed to attend February's council meeting. Here are the minutes from that meeting. ♦

The Editor's Message

I don't know about you, but February has felt like the longest month of the year instead of the shortest.

Cowd and Fu Season

If you are like many people, you have been exposed to a cold or flu, whether you personally have been sick or someone else who sits near you has been sick. I know in our family, we have been mastering the fine art of "barking". It's not a skill we wanted to master, but some skills just come naturally during flu season.

Personally, I feel like I have been in a flu-like state for weeks. While I have not experienced the fever and the barking, I have felt drained. It's hard to get a newsletter together when you fall asleep on the couch every night. If you receive this newsletter before the Wine and Cheese on Tuesday, then I was able to dig deep and pull it together; otherwise, I put myself to sleep reading my own article and my forehead now sports the imprint of the keyboard.

Feedback is Healthy

Many of us—me included—take it for granted when someone does a great job and we only take the time to comment when we are dissatisfied. Currently, where I work, we are encouraged to provide others with unsolicited feedback at least once a month. We even receive training on

Fitness for the Sole Proprietor: Getting out of the office and into shape

Choosing what you want to do for fitness can be one of the most important decisions that you make. Find out what karate has to do with our CIC-SIG Coordinator. ♦

Membership News

Many people have realized that membership has its privileges, and they are either new or transfers to our chapter. Read the biographies that two members provided. ♦

Letter to the Editor

Someone took the time to sing the praises of one of our writers. Find out who is getting and giving the praise. They are both winners in our books. ♦

Doug Woestendiek: Candidate for STC Treasurer

With the STC elections fast approaching, a candidate for treasurer tells us why he's a person we can count on. ♦

STC Training

STC is pleased to announce that our first Training Program will be held October 20-21, 2005. ♦

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

the best way to give both positive and "developmental" feedback.

Although it sounds sort of strange, I thought I'd give someone praise for work that I thought was great. The end result was that she got the recognition she deserved from both her supervisor and me, and I got to feel good about the whole experience. No one really loses when you take the time to comment on an experience that you may regularly take for granted.

Why not try giving someone feedback in March to see if it will generate a warm feeling that could result in an early thaw?

Send your articles, suggestions, and comments to me, Debbie, at 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

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

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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Recognizing Outstanding Members



by [Opal Gamble](#), President

Some articles are very difficult to write; however, I'm sure I don't have to tell a bunch of communicators about writer's block.

This month's article, however, is a very easy one to write. When it comes to excellence in our chapter, there is a lot to say. Debbie may have to rein me in this month!

Distinguished Chapter Service Award

Our chapter has a long history of achieving awards from head office, and this year is no exception.

About the 2005 recipient, Robin Dube

Robin Dube is a highly valued member of the Southwestern Ontario chapter. She has served in several capacities on our chapter's council and has held some of our most challenging and respected positions including Competition Manager. In one STC year, Robin held not one but two portfolio positions and also participated as an active member on a third committee.

The following lists indicate her unwavering dedication to our chapter:

Portfolio Manager

- Volunteer Manager (1997 - 1998)
- Secretary / Recorder (1997 - 1998)
- Membership Manager (1998 - 2000)
- Competition Co-Manager (2000 - 2001)

Committee member

- High School Competition (1997 - 1998)
- Competition Judge (1998 - 1999)

Our chapter can always count on Robin to lend a hand or offer ideas. Although she has not participated on council for a few years, Robin continues to support the STC in general, our chapter in particular, and the entire profession. She has used this time to focus her attention on her own career and on mentoring emerging technical communicators.

Citation: "In recognition and appreciation of your outstanding contributions and

commitment to the Southwestern Ontario chapter."

Distinguished Service Award for Students

STC introduced a new award this year, to recognize contributions to student chapters. Almost immediately, chapters spoke up and said "we have students to recognize too!"

STC immediately amended the rules to allow full chapters to file for the award.

About the 2005 recipient, Sarah-Beth Doner

Sarah-Beth is a valued student member of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter. She is currently studying Rhetoric and Professional Writing in the Applied Studies Co-operative education stream at the University of Waterloo.

Her enthusiasm for technical writing, as well as her energy and skill as a writer, earned her employment at iAnywhere Solutions in Waterloo for two co-op work terms.

During our chapter's 2004 membership drive, we awarded two STC memberships. Sarah-Beth was the recipient of a student membership. She volunteered to become our chapter Recorder the same evening!

This year, Sarah-Beth took on our Membership portfolio. She is making an extremely positive impact on our chapter's membership count, replying promptly and thoughtfully to would-be member inquiries.

She also writes frequent articles for our chapter newsletter, The Quill, and has continued our chapter's practice of interviewing new members to publish introductory biographies in the publication.

Our chapter has a membership that sprawls over a large geographic area. Sarah-Beth took one of our chapter's goals for the year, focusing on member needs to make them feel the value of their memberships, and expanded her interviews to include biographies from members who cannot attend our monthly general meetings.

Sarah-Beth brings a fresh student perspective to our chapter council meetings. She looks for ways to reach our student membership, and helps more senior members value the contributions students can make to our chapter and our profession. Due to her dedication, we feel confident in our efforts to win new members through our student population in a "university town."

When I sent a proposal to members of our chapter council to inquire about support for Sarah-Beth's nomination, I received instant, positive feedback,

including the following, glowing comment: "Sarah-Beth is totally committed to helping us as a chapter and as an organization. It would be great for her to get some extra recognition."

Citation "In recognition of your dedication, unfailing enthusiasm, and commitment to the Southwestern Ontario chapter."

A Few, Final Words

On behalf of our council and chapter, thank you very much for your contributions Robin and Sarah-Beth.

This chapter wouldn't be the same without you. ♦

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 contract Technical Writer at [Campana](#). She also runs her own freelance business, [SiO2](#).

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.

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Upcoming Chapter Events



by [Peter Szabo](#), Program Manager

There seems to be some debate between the various groundhogs on the continent about the remaining length of our winter. Most of you are probably getting to the point of feeling that spring can't come soon enough. Rest assured that a **sure** sign of spring in our area is the Annual STC Wine and Cheese Networking Night on March 1. Add another Webinar for some education later in March and soon we'll be seeing those daffodils and tulips pushing up through the muck. So hang in there and warm yourself up with some wine, cheese, and tech writing camaraderie.

Tuesday, March 1, 2005: Annual Wine and Cheese (Networking Event)

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

Cost: FREE for members and nonmembers.

Yes, there will be food! And one free drink for everyone.

Location: University Club, University of Waterloo Campus
200 University Ave. West, Waterloo, ON

[Click here for a map of the University campus.](#) The University Club is designated by the abbreviation 'UC.'

Tuesday, March 15, 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 March 14.

Wednesday, March 23, 2005: STC Remote Seminar

TOPIC: Breaking into E-learning

Host: William Horton

Many technical communicators are well qualified to make the move to e-learning, but they must overcome some obstacles. This session will help you overcome those obstacles by teaching you about the differences between e-learning and documentation, as well as the tools and skills you'll need to develop e-learning

materials.

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

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

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

Tuesday, April 5, 2005: General Meeting in GUELPH

Topic: Intranet Documentation - A Case Study

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

Cost: FREE for all.

Location: Blount Canada Ltd., 505 Edinburgh Rd., N. Guelph, ON

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.

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Education Seminars...two days + four seminars = success!



by [Kim Creed](#), Education Manager

On February 17 and 18, the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC, hosted its annual Education Seminars. Located at the Hilton Garden Inn, Cambridge, attendees participated in four workshops over two days.

Different Crowd

In terms of demographics, this year's event got an infusion of new faces and ideas, drawing attendees from places like Ottawa, Burlington, and Toronto. In addition to technical writers and editors, the seminar appealed to a handful of marketing and business analysts. The diversity of participants provided for lively discussions and information exchanges.

1. Developing a Style Guide

Vivian Viitala, an experienced technical writer and team leader, walked us through her presentation on Developing a Style Guide. Vivian was a team leader at Leitch Technology, where she took on the unofficial role of style guide "cheerleader." Over the course of four years, the Leitch Technology writing team, located at multiple sites, worked to create a common style guide.

The Value of a Style Guide

During the presentation, Vivian stressed the value of a style guide in terms of:

- reducing the amount of time needed for team members to debate what to do in a given situation,
- managing customer expectations, and
- maintaining a professional look and feel to the documentation.

Consensus and Support

Vivian noted the importance of gaining consensus among the team members, that is, among those who must reference and apply the style developed. She recommended enlisting a champion for the cause (a member of the management team who can support the effort) to ensure that adequate departmental

resources are allocated for the project. Vivian said that, ideally, the writing team ought to piggyback development of a style guide onto another corporate- or department-level initiative, such as rolling out a new tool or process. The doubling up effort helps to feed momentum between the projects.

Shared Experiences

Participants worked through related activities and volunteered some of their own experiences. Even the lone writers could see some value to developing a style guide. Overall, it was an engaging start to the seminar.

2. Template Development

Bernard Aschwanden, accomplished author, technical trainer, Adobe Certified Expert, and founder of Publishing Smarter, provided participants with hands-on ways of working better with Adobe FrameMaker and MS Word.

After performing an impressive back handspring for the audience, Bernard shared best practices on template development for both Adobe FrameMaker and for MS Word.

Fuller Use of Tools and Templates

Bernard covered off how to review a document to identify content types, optimize formatting text using the character and paragraph designers, setting and working with master pages, to name a few. He showed us how to make fuller use of our primary writing tool and to extend template development and its usage to its full capacity.

Faster Conversion and Publication

In addition to the common look and chunking of information that a good template provides, publishing the document becomes a whole lot faster and easier. When the template is built correctly, conversion of the document from one application to another, for example, FrameMaker to RoboHelp, and using a batch feature to implement document-wide changes become possible and easy. In other words, Bernard's presentation impressed upon participants that when used correctly, the tools that writers use can free them to become writers again, and leave the formatting part to the template.

For information about Bernard's book on advanced FrameMaker usage, go to www.publishingsmarter.com.

3. Mapping the Content Ecosystem

STC Toronto VP Rob Hanna brought his fifteen years of technical writing

experience to the table to dispel what single-sourcing is not and to promote a new model for writing that separates format from content. He spent much time helping participants to re-think the way we manage information within our roles as technical communicators and at the level of the organization.

Content Modeling

To paraphrase one of the participants, content modeling is to a technical writer what object-oriented programming is to a programmer. Content modeling is akin to object-oriented writing where the content fits inside a prescribed format. The end goal of this information management model is to facilitate the ease at which content can be repurposed, and to improve the freshness of the information.

Essentially, Rob outlined that content remains fresh in this model because it is pulled from a dynamic repository. As soon as a document is published, it is committed to the page and no longer lives. Content management attempts to move publishing into real time.

Repurposed Content

Rob showed participants a demonstration of repurposed content taken from a print to an online environment. One of the participants pointed out that the online document referred to itself in the context of a written manual, which Rob acknowledged. For those who think single-sourcing is primarily about a database, the real time presentation revealed that it is not. Evidently, the writer remains central to the writing process in a single-sourcing model, and must still interpret and make intelligent decisions about the document to make repurposing content successful.

New Ways of Doing Things

Last, Rob pointed out that moving to the content management type of model implies a new way of working and a new way of thinking about information. Questions such as data ownership, and lifecycle of data, must be thoroughly investigated before a company shifts paradigms.

For a copy of Rob's white paper, The Information Management Model, go to www.ascan.ca/stc/whitepaper_imm.pdf.

4. Structured Authoring

The last, but not least, speaker came up from Pennsylvania to share his expertise on structured authoring using FrameMaker. Russ Ward, an experienced technical writer and founder of West Street Consulting, convinced participants that technical communicators already write structured documents. FrameMaker simply enables the writer to make that structure explicit.

FrameMaker Promoter

Russ is an unabashed promoter of using Adobe FrameMaker as a structured authoring tool. When he isn't writing for Spirent Communications, he consults on his own product, FrameSLT, a plug-in that transforms content for repurposing content without exiting FrameMaker.

The Importance of Structure

Citing an address as an example, Russ showed participants that the address convention contains recognizable elements, including name, street number and name, city, state (province) and zip (postal) code. When using FrameMaker as a structured authoring tool, the writer creates a structure within the template by specifying elements, such as name, street, city and state. With the explicit structure in place, the writer can employ plug-ins to perform content management operations. Structure also facilitates the ease with which a writer can manipulate elements, for example, dragging and dropping a table from location in the document to another, by working from the structured view window of the document.

Consistency is Key

By working with both the document and the structured view windows open, the writer gets a meta-view of the document and shifts into a whole new gear of control over the format of the document. This enables writers to make changes to the document quickly by manipulating elements. Additionally, if the writer inadvertently breaks the structure, such as placing a bulleted list within a procedure (against the prescribed structure in place), FrameMaker alerts the writer by showing a broken red line in the structured view window. Moreover, the structured authoring keeps all writers' documents looking consistent.

For more information, go to www.weststreetconsulting.com.

Wrap Up

The feedback for the workshop topics and for the venue has been very positive

from both participants and speakers. Thanks to all for an informative, enjoyable seminar. ♦

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.



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Adobe Acrobat 7.0: STC Web-telephone seminar recap



by [Lori Shantz](#), Competition Manager

PDF (Portable Document Format) files have become such a common part of our lives that it's hard to remember what life was like without them. Brian Wood, who presented the February 9 seminar, reports that PDF has become the de-facto standard for digital documents and there are more than 20 million PDFs on the public internet.

After speaking a bit about the widespread use of the PDF file format and describing the Adobe Acrobat family of products (which includes, Adobe Reader, Acrobat Elements, and the Standard and Professional versions of Acrobat) Brian demonstrated some of the many new features included in Acrobat 7.0. This article provides a condensed list of the new features Brian demonstrated. For a complete list of new features, visit Adobe's Acrobat site at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatpro/main.html>.

Creating PDFs

- Reduce the time needed to create a PDF. Improved PDF creation time (up to 80% faster in some cases!)
- Select new PDF formats: *PDF/X*, which uses the ISO Standard for pre-press content exchange and is designed to reduce frequent errors such as font embedding and wrong colours, and *PDF/A*, which is a new archival standard.
- Integrate with MS Outlook and Internet Explorer. Acrobat 7.0 gives you the flexibility to create PDFs from one e-mail or a whole folder of e-mails, as well as from Web pages or selected text from a Web page. When you create a PDF of a folder in Outlook, Acrobat automatically creates bookmarks by sender, date, and subject to help you locate any e-mail.
- Discover improved integration with drawing programs such as AutoCAD and Visio. PDFs created in these programs retain their layers and object metadata. Anyone viewing the PDF can show or hide layers and search object metadata for specific content.
- Create PDFs directly from a scanner. You have the option of creating text using built-in OCR (Optical Character Recognition) functionality or creating a searchable image from the scan.

Editing PDF Documents

- Add headers and footers to a PDF document. This is great for adding page numbers if you've created a PDF file from several different source files.
- Add watermarks or backgrounds of images or text and indicate whether these should be visible on screen, when printed, or in both scenarios.
- Attach files to a PDF.

Reviewing and Commenting PDFs


- Allow comments from within Adobe Reader. When you enable a PDF for commenting in Reader, the file opens in Reader with an intuitive palette of commenting options.
- Use new commenting tools for drawings, for example, create callouts or dimensioning arrows.
- Export comments to AutoCAD.
- Try a new wizard for sending a PDF out for review by e-mail. The wizard enables you to customize the review options that you want your reviewers to use.

Setting Up Security

- Create groups of security settings that you commonly use with a new "Policies" feature.

Preparing PDFs for Print

- Receive warnings about common problems like overprinting when you use the new output previewer.
- Convert colour models, for example, convert colours from RGB to CMYK values.
- Attach a JDF (Job Definition File) to the PDF.

Overall, Adobe is making Acrobat more flexible, more intuitive, and more relevant to the many needs of its users. 



About Lori Shantz

Lori stumbled into technical writing while looking for work as a museum curator. She figured that if she could explain Einstein's theory of relativity to fifth graders, she could probably explain technology to adults. (The jury is still out about which is tougher, however.)

This is Lori's fourth year on the STC council, and her second year as competition manager. She also volunteers for a local theater company (occasionally even appearing on stage!) and is a fledgling gardener, an avid reader, and a passionate cook.

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A View From the Other Side...of a writer's marathon



by [Nancy Halverson](#), Feature Writer

I'm at the beginning of the marathon, mentally preparing myself for the long run ahead. Well, not an actual marathon run—no 26 miles and four walls to push my weary body through. This is the documentation marathon. My plan to modularize and single-source the documentation workflow has been accepted. And naturally, the timeline that I proposed has been halved. It's going to be interesting.

The Benefits

We're not a big operation—I'm the only writer, and I deal with basically 10 developers producing one major product and a few minor add-ons. So it's not a huge amount of documentation that we handle. However, the modular approach makes the most sense because of the number of translations that we're going to require as the product matures and moves into more and more markets. The current urgency is the result of those moves. Keeping the formatting out of the hands of the translation companies will save us a lot of money in the long run. Setting up a system now to handle an ever-expanding range of languages will hopefully allow documents to be pulled together quickly and easily.

Money Talks

As ever, the arguments that work the best with managers were the economic arguments. This transition takes a lot of time and energy at the front-end, as well as some software and training. Of course, this change isn't for changes sake, but it's amazing how some suits will consider it to be exactly that. I guess that they need something to really motivate the outlay of cash. It's a real shame that they're willing to go into this only when it means a lot of pain to me (doubling my workload), but hey, if I can pull it off, I'm a hero. If I don't, I'll blame the compressed timeline.

The Plan

Because of the urgency, I'll be concentrating on the development of a modular system—in whatever basic format I can achieve. It may be in a basic XML doc, or in FrameMaker itself. Hopefully, that modular format will be enough to get the translations done, and then I can re-integrate the translations into a single database from where I can output fully formatted docs. Then I send the translations out for a final edit and release them.

Meeting of the Usability Professionals Association

Okay, I could be dreaming. Theoretically I figure that I can walk, so I can run. A marathon can't be much more than running for a long, long time, right? (Please don't burst my bubble just yet!) I attended the inaugural meeting of the Usability Professionals Association's UK North group a few weeks ago. A friend of mine was putting it together, and since it's very much along the same lines as the meeting that I put together for tech writers last year, I knew I had to get to it. The UPA has a varied membership, and this meeting was very well attended by people from all different backgrounds. There were about 30 of us, and that was with minimal promotion.

Food, Drink, and Location

The meeting was also well catered. Because of the distances most people need to travel to get together, there's almost always some form of refreshment (including libations) at many of the meetings I've attended. The UPA chose Manchester, as it's the biggest city in the north of England, and has some major industries. The city is also going through a renaissance, especially after the Commonwealth games a few years ago. I must admit that I thought the area around the venue was lovely. (I've booked a family weekend there in March—coinciding with an STC event).

Grand Surroundings

I took the train from Sheffield, and a friend met me at the Manchester Piccadilly station to guide me (and another STC type) to the venue. Strangely enough, it was in a YHA youth hostel. A very nice hostel, with a dockside location and well-appointed meeting rooms. Nick, my STC buddy, had booked the venue for our STC-UK North meeting and when the UPA ran into problems with their original room (too many people responded and they needed a larger room), he suggested they try the YHA. It's a great find, but unfortunately, only possible because of a subsidy from a few companies and the UPA UK. So, we won't likely be meeting in such grand surroundings again (sigh).

Getting Together is Half the Fun

Anyway, this is all just a way to say that even though the concentration of people is very high in the UK compared to North America (and especially Canada), it still takes a great deal of organization to get professional groups together. Nick's hosting the STC UK-North meeting in Manchester in March, and we're hoping to

get a joint meeting with the UPA North group in the future.

Chapter News

Our STC chapter isn't very active, but we're hoping to put together at least two day-long events this year, with a third possible in the fall. The executive get together using telephone conferencing, although that's not very often. Still, we're trying to improve things. You know how much effort it takes to get things done outside of work, and on top of work!

The Future Looks Bright

I'm collecting a list of English/South Yorkshirisms for you next month—it's still fun to collect terms that mean something in one part of the world and something totally different wherever you are. And whatever the next few months throw at me in terms of workload, it's all just more reason to look forward to our summer vacation (already booked). Cheap flights to Rome and Spain will let us enjoy three weeks on the continent. Work hard, play hard, live life.

Some Whinging

Oh, and for the Romans in the crowd, you must have noticed that the major English sport isn't Rugby or Football, or even Snooker. It's whinging. When you're far from home, in the middle of a bleak, sunless winter, whinging is what happens. When in Rome indeed. ♦

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 Inscribe for several years. She has two daughters and has been living in England for two years.

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February General Meeting Recap: Single-Sourcing and E-Learning



by [Marisa Latin](#), Quill Contributor

If you were asked to create e-learning material to complement your existing documentation, wouldn't it be great if someone showed you not only how to do it, but how to do it using the resources you already have? During February's meeting, Louis Beauregard did just that. He provided us with a road map on how to use familiar tech writing tools, such as MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, Adobe FrameMaker, Quadralay WebWorks Publisher, and Viewlet Builder to create e-learning content.

Louis Beauregard holds a Masters degree in Education, is the founder of the Montreal-area chapter of the Usability Professional's Association, and publishes a monthly newsletter called 'Hands-on Single-Sourcing with FrameMaker'. His company, Convivio, recently released BuildFire 2004, a production assistant for FrameMaker.

Your Requirements

When you start looking at an e-learning project, you need to:

- find out what the goals are,
- look at how much it's worth to you in terms of resources and what's involved, and
- consider whether your company can afford it in the long run, because the longevity of an e-learning project can be infinite.

The Process

1. Review existing content (semantic analysis).
 - Perform an inventory on a spreadsheet (MS Excel) of what you already have to work with (titles, concepts, content in your user guides, online docs, etc.), because all documents are training material (self-instruction).
 - Separate the information types (concepts, procedures, examples, etc.).
2. Identify elements used in the user guide and online help.
 - Map onto your spreadsheet where the content elements are used in

the existing deliverables (documents).

3. Model content required for e-learning.
 - o Use MS Word's outline feature to build a tree outline of your content elements.
 - o Follow instructional design 'best practices': apply consistent structure, define concepts with examples, chunk information, etc.
4. Create an e-learning prototype.
 - o Implement your content model visually in MS PowerPoint (for example) to see what the layout will look like.
5. Revisit semantic elements spreadsheet and add e-learning elements.
 - o Identify what content can be reused and what needs to be created. Add this to your spreadsheet.
6. Update your Adobe FrameMaker template to reflect all semantic elements.
 - o Create new paragraph and character tags, etc.
7. Create a conversion scheme using true single-sourcing tools such as Quadralay WebWorks Publisher or Mif2Go to convert FrameMaker to HTML.
 - o Map your paragraph and character tags to HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets).
 - o There are few tools to choose from.
8. Author text-based content in FrameMaker.
 - o Create content that is shared by all deliverables first.
 - o Identify content that would most benefit from multimedia treatment (importance to task, frequency, error rate, etc.).
9. Create animations in Viewlet Builder. Add links to Flash animations in FrameMaker.
 - o Consider adding review questions.
 - o Plan the navigation.
10. Create and automate output for true single-sourcing.

And there you have it. In 10 manageable steps, you, too, can be on your way to creating effective e-learning material using the least amount of time and resources. You can access Louis's presentation at www.convivo.com. ♦



About Marisa Latin

Marisa has been a technical writer for over ten years and is currently at Inscriber. She lives with her lively family and long list of pets. In her spare time, you can find her seeking nature's wonders and capturing 'life' on camera.

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Recap of the February Council Meeting



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

Yay, it's pizza day again! Once again we were firmly ensconced in the lunchroom at CheckFree, happily munching on pizza. It's a tight little group this time, only five of us. It seems the flu virus is alive and well this year.

Education

Attendance for the Education Seminars is good with 21 for the morning sessions and 19 for the afternoon sessions... so we're pleased about that. By the time that you are reading this article, the Education seminars will have taken place. For details, read the [recap](#) of the seminars in this month's newsletter.

Volunteers

We are dusting off the volunteer database as well, so if anyone is currently volunteering or would like to, contact Fei Min at volunteering@stc-soc.org. We appreciate it!

March Meeting—Wine and Cheese

Don't forget the Wine and Cheese event is Tuesday, March 1, at the University Club. It's a really nice place, and it's our most popular event, so come on out and meet some people and do a little networking. If anyone is interested in speaking, contact Peter Szabo at the following e-mail: program@stc-soc.org. For details about this event, or other events in March, see the [Upcoming Events](#) page in our newsletter. ♦

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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Fitness for the Sole Proprietor: Getting out of the office and into shape



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

In July 2003, I decided that my sedentary lifestyle needed remedial action and that exercise and weight loss should be a priority. Sitting in front of a computer all day long and then migrating to the couch in the evening seemed like a recipe for a health disaster. I know of other writers who work at home and I have often wondered how they deal with the inactivity—not to mention the stress.

Weight Loss Club

I joined a weight loss club in July and met lots of other people struggling to lose weight. Some of them were stay-at-home parents, retired individuals, shift workers or people who ran their own businesses. Losing weight is difficult, so having group support is very important. At least, the group got me out of the office for awhile.

Exercise Choices

Unfortunately, I have always been a poor loser as far as weight is concerned. My group leader recommended exercise to speed up the loss. What to do? Walking would get me out of the office and into the fresh air. It's boring but the dog loves his twice a day stroll. I hate aerobic classes. Dance exercise is marginally more interesting. Swimming? Well, I hate getting wet, and hauling on the bathing suit takes me a long time.

Karate

After some examination of the available leisure activities in the City of Kitchener, I chose Karate as an exciting and useful form of exercise. I just have to pop on my uniform (gi) and drive around the corner to the dojo. The classes are an hour long and nicely varied to keep my interest peaked. When I progress, I am rewarded by a different coloured belt and each new level comes with new skills to master.



Progress

At 55 years of age, my sedentary overweight body did not take well to dojo

discipline. For the first month, I couldn't kneel down. My balance was dreadful and my stamina even worse. These days my flexibility has improved, my balance is still dreadful, but I can kneel down, although I am still a little slow getting up. I have also lost twenty pounds.

Advantages

Karate isn't for everyone, but I have accrued personal health benefits that have improved my daily life. After a class, I always feel energized and alert. With a relaxed body and a clear mind, tackling a difficult report is much easier.

My advice to the sedentary writer is to take the time and do something interesting that moves the body. Your work and your health will benefit. If you would like to join me at the dojo, just drop me a line. ♦

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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Membership News

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



New Members

Paul Cocker

Marisa G. Latin

Sonya Mehan (See Biography)

Alireza Parsai

Leanne M. Rollins

Julia Sinclair

Mark Soiseth

Kate Wilhelm

Laura P. Zinn

Transfer Members

Vivian L. Viitala

Lidia Bala

Debbie Davy (See Biography)

Marc B. Shickluna

As you can see by the list of new and transfer members, the Southwestern Ontario Chapter is growing. As our numbers increase, the odds of getting to know everyone gets a little harder. This monthly membership news will introduce you to people that you have yet to meet. If you receive an e-mail asking you to tell us a bit about yourself, please take the time to respond.

Thank you to Sonya and Debbie for your biographies.

Sonya Mehan

Sonya graduated in 2003 from the University of Waterloo with a combined degree in Applied Studies Co-op, English—Rhetoric and Professional Writing, and Political Science. Many of her co-op work terms were spent as a technical writer or marketing specialist in hi-tech firms around Waterloo and Toronto. Making the

leap from student life into the "real world", Sonya is currently the Marketing Communications Writer for DALSA in Waterloo. Although Sonya enjoys the challenges of technical writing, she's thrilled to be a Marcom writer because she's allowed to let her imagination be unruly and sometimes downright outrageous! She also enjoys the opportunity to use and develop various writing styles.

Sonya joined the STC for its wealth of information and support. She is a member of a couple of SIGs and is looking forward to contributing as much as she is reaping by being an STC member.

If you want to contact Sonya, you can reach her at sonya.mehan@dalsa.com.

Debbie Davy

A technical communicator with a flair for proposal writing, Debbie Davy has over 18 years of experience writing documentation for healthcare infrastructure, laboratory health systems, medical diagnostic devices, medical informatics, chemical vapour deposition, and professional services (SR&ED and SOX04).

Debbie is currently working as a contract technical writer at Capgemini Canada Ltd., where she is writing documentation for an Ontario Laboratories Information System that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be using. Most recently, Debbie helped Ernst & Young LLP's clients get research and development tax credits and a 3-D virtual design engineering company develop a novel integrated online manual system.

Debbie is a Peer Reviewer for the IEEE Professional Communication Society Transactions Journal, a Judge at annual STC competitions, and the recipient of four technical writing awards from the STC. In the fall of this year, Debbie hopes to commence classes towards her Master of Science in the Technical Communication program at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia.

"I like technical communication because it gives me the opportunity to meet other professionals who are not only passionate about what they do but who also work on some very cool projects. I am looking forward to being part of the Southwestern Ontario Chapter."

Debbie lives in Brampton with her husband (a University of Toronto Canadian history student), two almost-grown children, assorted cats, and an iguana.

If you want to contact Debbie, you can reach her at debbie.davy@sympatico.ca. ♦



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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Letter to the Editor

by [Ted Edwins](#), Quill Contributor



Letter to the Editor:

I want to tell you how much I enjoy Nancy Halverson's "View From The Other Side" column in the Quill. "View" is the first thing I read each month. I get a kick out of the cultural differences, especially the snowy adventures of British drivers! I also have a chuckle at the translations of common terms, such as "gritting lorry" for "sand truck".

Nancy's documentation of working life is also quite interesting. She provides a window into working in a British office that shows how profound small differences can be. I am also quite jealous of all the fun things Nancy gets to do at work, like consulting with developers on the user interface of the product.

Having worked with Nancy on the Chapter Council years ago, I'm happy to hear that she and her family are successfully adjusting to life in another country. In her columns, Nancy shows how important it is to have a sense of humour when confronting an "alien" culture. ♦

About Ted Edwins

Ted Edwins 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.



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Doug Woestendiek: Candidate for STC Treasurer



by [Doug Woestendiek](#), Quill Contributor

STC Involvement

My name is Doug Woestendiek. I have been active in STC in a variety of roles, from the local chapter to the international level. Since 2001, I have had the honor to serve on the Society Board of Directors as the Assistant to the President for Technology. I was Special Events Coordinator at the STC Annual Conference in 1996. I have presented and moderated sessions at several Annual Conferences, and I have worked with stem managers as a peer reviewer for annual conference proposals. During my career, I have been a member of the Mid-Hudson Valley, Austin TX, Twin Cities, and Central CT Chapters. I served as the Mid-Hudson Valley chapter newsletter editor.

I would like the opportunity to continue my service to the STC as your Treasurer. The STC Treasurer has a dual role, working as the CFO for the Society and as a member of the Board. I have the necessary experience in both those roles.

Experience

I received my BS and MS in Mathematics of Operation Research and Statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with a Management Minor. I later earned a Human Computer Interaction (HCI) Certificate from RPI. I hold several Technical Achievement Awards from IBM, including intellectual property and publication awards. In 1995, I received a Distinguished Technical Communication award in the Northern California Technical Communication's STC Competition.

I am a member of the American Society for Quality (ASQ). In 2004, I became an ASQ certified six sigma black belt. I believe I can apply this skill to the financial processes of the STC.

I have the direct financial experience needed for this role. Since 2002, I have been Treasurer and Finance Manager for a \$16M+ valuation private property corporation. I have also served that group as VP and Director. During my career, I have managed budgets over \$10M and have reengineered financial processes.

I also bring the knowledge needed to be an effective member of the STC Board. I

have worked in large international companies and small companies. I have led major projects, worked collaboratively with competitors, and represented views to industry forums.

Early in my career, I led IBM's documentation team in the COSE CDE (Common Desktop Environment) project. This was a joint development effort with HP, Sun, and Novell, involving online help, hardcopy, and softcopy documentation. I also represented IBM in the Open Group Single UNIX Documentation project.

From 1999-2004, I was a Senior IT Architect in Financial Systems at IBM. I focused on emerging technology and e-business strategies across the worldwide portfolio of IBM finance applications. I was the lead technical architect on the Finance Portal, which served as the conduit for web-enabled Finance applications and as a productivity tool for IBM's 10,000 worldwide Finance employees.

As a Senior IT Architect at IBM, I re-engineered financial processes and systems. I also helped recommend and implement a Sarbanes Oxley solution for IBM which IBM now markets to other companies. (Sarbanes-Oxley is a bill passed by Congress which forever changes the financial reporting landscape. It mandates numerous changes to financial reporting, intended to protect investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures made pursuant to the securities laws.)

I am now the Director of Software Architecture at Marketing Management Analytics (MMA), responsible for the overall architecture of our Avista solution, holding an \$11M+ direct development budget.

Plans

Our industry is changing. From the outsourcing of jobs to the state of the global economy in the area of technology, the world we live and work in is changing. And it is changing FAST. STC needs to continue to change too. During the change, we as a Society must re-evaluate our spending and ensure it is aligned with our member needs.

It's an exciting time for STC as it transforms to provide better value to its members. I can provide fiscal oversight to the society, ensuring sound processes and adequate controls are in place. I can assist the board in making wise financial decisions. I will manage the budget prudently and make it clear to the members how money is being spent.

The Society must become more nimble in reacting to trends. We must put policies in place so we can adjust quickly to provide programs that add value for our members and address their changing needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

I would like the opportunity to continue my service to the STC by continuing on the Board as the new STC Treasurer. I want to help ensure that the STC remains relevant to our members, and that STC uses our combined fiscal resources to deliver meaningful value to members in their professional lives.

You can learn more about me at <http://hometown.aol.com/dougwoestendiek>.

Please take the time to vote! Thanks. ♦

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STC Training Program



The content of this article was received in an e-mail from STC Head Office.

STC is pleased to announce that our first Training Program will be held October 20-21, 2005, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia, just minutes outside of Washington, DC. We've included the details below. Please help us to promote this program and ensure a successful pilot.

STC's Training Program offers five two-day, comprehensive courses on topics geared to the interests of technical communicators who are seeking to further their skills and marketability. The following courses will be offered:

- **Creating and Using Personas to Improve Usability**
Instructor: **Whitney Quesenbery**
- **Focusing on Content: Making Web Sites Work for Users**
Instructors: **Ginny Redish and Caroline Jarrett**
- **Leadership in Information Management: Developing the Business Framework and Implementation Roadmap for Single Sourcing, Content Management, and Knowledge Management**
Instructor: **Rosaline Tsai**
- **The Architecture of Content**
Instructor: **Jonathan Price**
- **XML: From Hand-coding to WYSIWYG Authoring**
Instructor: **Neil Perlin**

Program attendees will receive two days of instruction from experts in the field, as well as a certificate upon completion of the course. STC members receive a discount on registration fees, which are as follows:

- **Member** with hotel accommodations*: \$1,295
- **Nonmember** with hotel accommodations*: \$1,455
- **Member** without hotel accommodations: \$1,095

- **Nonmember** without hotel accommodations: \$1,255

*Three nights' lodging at the Hyatt Regency

All registration fees include two breakfasts and two luncheons. (Discounts for multiple registrants from one company are available.) Attendance is limited to 60 students per course and enrollment is expected to fill quickly; as a benefit to our members, the first few days of registration will be open to STC members only. We'll announce the specific registration dates as soon as they're available, but we expect registration to open in early May.

A Web site providing more details about STC's Training Program, including course descriptions and registration information, will be available in late April on the STC Web site. Promotional materials will also be distributed at STC's 52nd Annual Conference in Seattle and in Intercom. In the meantime, if you have questions about the program, please contact Buffy Bennett at buffy@stc.org.

Please help us promote STC's Training Program as an affordable, in-depth educational opportunity to STC members and your colleagues. We look forward to a successful first program! ♦

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