



# the Quill

the Newsletter for the Southwestern Ontario Chapter STC



FEB/MAR 2007 (Volume 18 Number 3) [About the Quill](#)

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### President's Message: Spring into action!

Debbie wants us to get involved. And there is lots to choose from this month. Read all about it! ♦

### Choose Your Job

Peter Szabo, our Consulting and Independent Contractor SIG Manager, lets us in on his life career choices—you too can choose your own destiny. ♦

### Spring Workshop: It's All About the XML

Sarah O'Keefe, renowned Framemaker guru and XML expert, provides us with a preview of what we can expect from her upcoming chapter workshop with us. Don't delay, sign up today! ♦

### Content and Convergence: Another Move Away from Content Silos

Rahel Bailie is back with some great advice and guidance for breaking down corporate silos and merging content into a single, sharable universe. Is this a pipe dream or a glimpse into our future as communicators? Click to find out. ♦

### 2006/2007 Chapter Competition: The Results Are In!

Ruth Haworth, our brave competition manager, fills us in on the winners and judges in this year's Southwestern Ontario chapter competition. ♦

### Director's Message: Spring Cleaning STC Style

In Cindy's March/April message, our Director for Region 1 encourages you to vote, attend a conference and/or board meeting and get involved in shaping your STC. ♦

## The Editor's Message

*We're baaaack.*

Yes, after a long winter's nap, your chapter newsletter lives again. We are emerging from the February blahs, and springing into an early **Daylight Saving Time (DST)** with vim and vigour, thanks to our neighbours to the South.

I am looking forward to more sunlight in my days, and actually enjoying a sunny drive home instead of escaping my desk under the cover of darkness. Even if I have to drive directly into the blinding rays, count me in!

### **DST and Y2K: Cousins?**

As I said, shifting DST up and out a few weeks is actually one of Mr. Bush's better ideas, but is it just me, or am I the only one feeling the déjà vu? Remember Y2K?

Yeah, well the world didn't blow up, but you'd have thought it was the end of life as we know it from the mobs of people whipping themselves into a frenzy at the thought of the millenium starting with a "2".

Looking back, it all seems so silly now.

But here we are again, the new DST dates are changing our lives, and conspiracy theories abound. What happens if my calendar is *wrong*? What do you mean I have to *manually* adjust all the appointments in my calendar after March 11th? And then I have to do it *again* in November?

People are outraged, and IT departments are perplexed. They push the fixes out, and the onus is on us to actually fix it on our desktops, laptops, and portable office devices.

Oh, the horror, the horror...



## Getting to Know the Candidates

Meet a few of the eager candidates in the upcoming STC elections. In this compilation of campaign spiels, Cindy Currie, Leah Guren, Robert Young, Steven Jong, and Nicky Bleiel want to tell you why you should vote them in. ♦

## Council Meeting Minutes: January/February

Rain, sleet, or snow: nothing stops your council from its appointed duties. We have been busy over the last couple of months, and would like to tell you all about it. ♦

## Upcoming Chapter Meetings & Events

We have some exciting events coming up in March—read all about it! ♦

## **It's Not Rocket Science**

It's actually pretty simple—install the updates, and move your calendar appointments up an hour. Done.

But simplicity has gone the way of the dodo. Instead, we are infusing the message with *why we have to do it*, *who is responsible*, and *how it is affecting our systems*.

Really — who cares? Just tell me what I need to do. If I want any more information, I can just Google it. Thanks.

*Questions? Comments?*

Email Margie at [quill@stc-soc.org](mailto:quill@stc-soc.org).



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



## About The Quill



by [Margie Yundt](#), The Quill Editor

The Quill is the bi-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. In **2004**, we won Most Distinguished, Most Improved, and STC Best of Show.

### Publication Policies and Frequency

The Quill is published bi-monthly, with the exception of January, so there are five issues published from September 2006 to August 2007.

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/October	September 26
November/December	November 21
February/March	February 20
April/May	April 24
July/August	August 21

### Copyright Statement

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered

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

When you submit an article, you give the editor and the newsletter staff the right to edit your article for clarity and to ensure that it adheres to the newsletter's style and standards. All articles are edited, copy edited, and proofed prior to publication.

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

## **Reprint Policy**

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

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## **Chapter Officers**

President: [Debbie Kerr](#)

Treasurer: [Lori Jankowski](#)

Recorder: [Carol Lawless](#)

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

## STC Head Office

Mission Statement:

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

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

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

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

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Fax: (703) 522-2075

Email: [stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org) ♦

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## President's Message: Spring Into Action



by [Debbie Kerr](#), President

This is my second attempt at my article. I wrote the first article to tell you about all the action that was going to take place in the spring, and then I read [Carol's recap](#) of the council meetings, and realized that she had covered everything that was in my article. Ask my children, and they will tell you that I don't like to repeat myself, but I don't mean that in the sense that you aren't listening. I just don't want to bore you. My purpose is to inspire you to take action...to get you to take part in all (or at least some) of the activities that we have planned for the rest of the year.

Some of the activities actually involve going to a particular location, while others are activities that you can do from the comfort of your PC. You might be surprised that attending a general meeting is part of the latter.

### **Participate in Our First Webcast of a General Meeting: March 6th**

We have arranged a general meeting that will be accessible both in person and through a webcast. The topic will be about learning styles and how knowing about them can help you adjust how you document information so that your audience will get the maximize information from what you write. There a few things to note for this meeting:

1. If you are attending the meeting in person, we have moved this one to the **Modern Languages building, Room 117**, at the University of Waterloo.
2. If you want to participate in the webcast, you need to **do a few installs first**, so you may want to step through these before the broadcast begins at 7pm on March 6th—the instructions are [here](#).

Since this is the first time that we are doing it, there may be some "glitches", but the benefits will far outweigh any problems, we hope. Give it a try; you have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. We look forward to your [feedback!](#)

### **Visit with Cindy Currie at Our Wine and Cheese**

For the first time in a long time, a director is coming to visit our chapter—Cindy is touring Ontario and will be stopping by our [Annual Wine and Cheese](#) on **March 27th**. I have communicated with directors in the past, but Cindy has been exceptionally responsive. Whenever I have a problem or a question, she is

right there. If there is anything that you want to say to Cindy, why not come out to our Annual Wine and Cheese event and talk to her in person? Can't make it to the meeting? Feel free to contact Cindy directly at [dir1@stc.org](mailto:dir1@stc.org) or send your questions to me, and I will be happy to discuss them with her, and get back to you.

Our Wine and Cheese is typically a night when we hand out a lot of awards, and this year is no different. There are a lot of people who have done a lot of great things that we want to recognize. Want to find out who is getting the honours this year? Well, we don't want to ruin the surprise; so you'll just have to come!

## **Voice Your Opinion**

While we offer our [annual education workshop](#) (XML anyone?) and FREE webinars to members and a nominal fee for non-members (our next one features [Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Content Management](#)), we realize that not everyone can get to our area.

For this reason, we tried to provide free online training to our members. We posted a survey on our website to see who would be interested in using this training if we made it available but as only 22 of our 171 members completed the survey, we did not have enough of a response to warrant any action. Please take the time to make your opinion known. What you say does make a difference. We want to include and make services available to all of our members, but we can't give you what you want if you don't [let us know](#) what you want.

## **Network With Us and Each Other**

If you are new to the chapter, contact our [Membership manager](#) and tell us a bit about yourself. What have you got to lose? This is a form of networking, which is one of the main purposes of our chapter. You can also send an email to someone who has written an article for the newsletter and tell that person what you thought of the article. Get a dialogue going. Email your council members with your questions and suggestions. Get involved.

As a technical communicator, you know that people learn more by doing. You will learn more about your own profession if you ask questions and interact with others in your field.

You don't have to be in this area to take part in this activity. Don't let distance be an excuse for not getting involved.

## Write an Article

Have you ever thought that you would like to see something in the newsletter and wondered why nobody has written about it? Maybe it is time that you wrote an article. If you don't do it, no one else will. Share your knowledge, or just send your story ideas to [Margie Yundt](#), our newsletter editor—she would love to hear from you! Why not get published? Maybe someone will write to you, and you will find someone entirely new to network with. I judged with someone at the international level, and I think I have found a friend for life. You just never know how you are going to connect with certain people.

## And Finally...

Whether you do any of these activities is up to you. Just make sure that you do something. The saying may be that it is better to give than to receive, but it should be, "You receive whenever you give." Give yourself a shake, and wake up out of that winter slumber. Make sure you receive all the benefits of your STC membership by giving every opportunity that presents itself a try. ♦

### **About Debbie Kerr**

*In the 20 years that Debbie has been writing documentation, she has worked in a variety of industries: government, retail, software, and insurance. She is currently employed at The Economical Insurance Group in Waterloo, where she has stepped out of her traditional role of writing user guides and help files, and now writes a variety of specifications.*

*Debbie has been a member of the STC since 1994 and has been a council member for many years. For the second year in a row, Debbie has bravely taken on the role of Chapter President.*



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## Choose Your Job

by [Peter Szabo](#), SIG Manager, Consulting and Independent Contracting



Just over a year ago, I chose to be my own boss...for the second time in my life.

After six years of choosing to give much of the control over my daily work and income to a corporation, I chose again to regain some control over my career"only to recognize that I'd relinquished a portion of that control to my clients.

### **A Bit About Me**

14 years ago, I decided to stop performing odd and meaningless jobs, and started a career doing what I loved most, writing. I started out writing brochures and newsletters for free, or very little money, so I could build up a portfolio of samples. Then I graduated to long-term contracts, writing promotional and sales materials, and policies and procedures for entrepreneurs. Within a year, I thought I'd hit the big time when I landed a full-time contract with Bank of Montreal developing book-based training materials for customer service representatives in branches across Canada. For four years, I worked mainly for this one client (which many contractors and representatives of Revenue Canada will tell you is no longer self-employment). But I was comfortable.

Then a change in upper management required that all contractors be dropped and all work moved in-house. They offered me employment but I stubbornly turned it down, thinking employment was for those with no little or no aspirations for challenge and variety.

A year later, after one new mortgage and a newborn son, my aspirations quickly shifted toward the 'stability' of employment and a predictable paycheque. So I focused on learning and growing within an organization and, for six years, I had fun—until a massive lay-off put control of my career squarely in my lap, again.

Rather than search for the ideal employer who could guarantee me the creative growth, the income, the stock options, the benefits, the camaraderie, the gourmet-coffee maker, and the pool table, I chose to join with an extremely compatible technical communicator friend and return to the field of Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC) in a partnership.

### **A Bit About Independent Contracting**

So what am I getting at here (other than introducing you to your newest STC chapter [CIC SIG](#) [Special Interest Group] Manager)? I'd like to demystify and deglamorize the independent contractor job and offer it as a legitimate option for any of you who consider it too daunting to consider. Life on the CIC side of the fence really is just a job. But one in which you call most of the shots rather than a manager in a corporation.

I'm suggesting that there's not much difference between being an employed and a self-employed technical communicator. Both are just two sides of the same job. One is not necessarily better than the other. And unless your source of income involves profits from investments, either in real estate, stocks, or a business, a job is still a job. There are different perks and different challenges based on different lifestyle preferences, but each is still a job in which you perform a service for which you are paid. Though there are many distinctions between the tasks you perform on a day-to-day basis, you are still tied to the model of exchanging your time for someone else's money.

It all comes down to a choice...your choice. For me, the great thing about the choice between employment and self-employment is that I can choose one option now and change tracks later to choose the other option. The option of being a contract technical communicator opens up a whole realm of personal and career opportunities that ultimately make me a more rounded human being, while filling up my toolkit and enabling me to take on almost any job that suits my needs.

So keep your options open. Employed or self-employed, choose the job that works for you. And when you want a change, choose the other. ♦

### **About Peter Szabo**

*Peter Szabo has been a technical writer in one form or another for 13 years. Peter co-owns Heterodox Communication + Design with fellow technical communicator, Lori Jankowski. The partnership successfully manages independent technical communication contracts throughout Guelph, K-W, and Toronto. Born and raised in Toronto, Peter currently lives in Guelph with his wife, Irene, and son, Taylor. He serves the STC Southwestern Ontario Chapter as Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC) SIG Coordinator and is also an independent filmmaker.*



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## Spring Workshop: It's All About the XML



by [Sarah O'Keefe](#), Workshop Leader

The Southwestern Ontario chapter is featuring a customized XML workshop in April, and everyone is welcome!



Although our XML and Structured Authoring course does provide the obligatory in angle brackets explanations, we will also spend a lot of time discussing why you might consider an XML-based workflow. (Incidentally, "It will look good on my resume" is not what your current employer will consider a good business case.) So, does XML make sense for your publishing requirements? Can you justify the time and effort required to implement XML? What other options are available? Do you have a suspicion that XML is in your future?

There are several common reasons why you might need XML...here's a sneak peek at two:

- **Extraordinary Metalanguage.** XML allows you to capture information about how the components of your document relate to each other. Word processors and desktop publishing tools don't do that; they see documents as a flat collection of sequential paragraphs. In a structured document file, the heading at the top of this article is grouped with the body paragraphs in the article. In a word processor, the visual formatting of the document communicates the structural relationships. In an XML document, the document hierarchy is an integral part of the document.
- **Excellent Management of Localization.** Do you translate/localize the content you produce? Using XML and automating document formatting/production results in significant cost savings. When documents are produced in several languages, cost savings are multiplied. Desktop publishing costs typically account for around 50 percent of the cost of your localization effort. In an XML-based workflow, you invest upfront to automate formatting and document production and then eliminate the repeated layout costs. Reduced localization costs alone are often enough to justify an XML implementation.

Join me for the [Spring Workshop](#) on **April 24 and 25** (for FrameMaker users, there's also an advanced session on April 26) when we will discuss these and other reasons you might need XML. Bring your questions, feel free to be skeptical, and be ready to engage in a lively discussion. ♦



### **About Sarah O'Keefe**

*Sarah O'Keefe is founder and president of [Scriptorium Publishing Services, Inc.](#) The company develops and deploys structured authoring environments, and also provides classroom and web-based training for FrameMaker, XML, XSL, and other publishing topics. Sarah's publishing credits include *FrameMaker 7: The Complete Reference*, *The WebWorks Publisher Cookbook*, *Technical Writing 101*, *FrameMaker for Dummies*, and [numerous white papers](#).*

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## Content and Convergence: Another Move Away from Content Silos



by [Rahel Anne Bailie](#), Associate Fellow, STC Canada West Coast

When technical communicators think of content management, our minds naturally go to the world of structured authoring and XML content management. If someone were to map out the direction of structured authoring over the last couple of decades, it would be a relatively simple path, from DocBook SGML to DocBook XML to DITA XML, with a few detours along the way for specialized DTDs (such as S1000D, used for aircraft maintenance).

It's probably surprising, then, to realize that in the content management world, this type of content management is considered a niche market so specialized that industry pundits haven't even bestowed on it a sexy acronym, and are just now starting to look for a common vocabulary to talk about it. There's a current attempt to call this "component content management" but whether the term will stick well, as the term is being coined from outside the industry, remains to be seen. So far, single-sourcing has been the most persistent terminology used, but even that only addresses a relatively small aspect of this type of content management which is known by terms such as structured authoring and XML content management (SAXCM is a bit of a racy acronym, but after all, SAX sells!).

Where the action is, both in terms of market size and in movement, is on the Web side. Web content management systems (WCMS) are used not only for Web sites but intranets, extranets, and portals — a fancy name for a site where some content is password protected, and sometimes different content is served up, depending on the role of the person coming to the site or logging in. Variants of these Web systems are also used for e-learning, knowledge management, collaboration, e-commerce, and a host of related applications - but let me not get distracted from my premise.

The systems used for marketing purposes have their own entourages to support their functions. There are Digital Asset Management (DAM) apps to handle all the still and moving images in low- and high-resolution, thumbnails, and print-quality downloads. To go with that, Digital Rights Management (DRM) apps are needed to control access and usage of the digital assets. Also part of the entourage is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) software that helps drive traffic to the site, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) software that syndicates content from the site.

Where this all becomes interesting is in the convergence of these two worlds, in the intersection of the worlds of structured authoring and WCMS. We came from a world of content silos, and progressed to a world of content management silos: SAXCM and WCM. But, many would say, what about Enterprise Content Management Systems (ECMS)? Doesn't that remove silos, and let an organization share and re-use content across the entire enterprise? Well - and you probably won't be surprised at the answer - yes and no.

If you consider an organization a closed system, you very well might look at ECM as a solution to getting content out of CMS silos. However, as the saying goes, "the devil is in the details" and the actual execution to get everyone's content across the enterprise readied for ultimate shareability does take a concerted, corporate-wide, executively-sponsored project to guarantee success. And yet, aren't we rapidly bypassing the ECM stage? Now, we are entering a new phase where collaboration tools, social networking tools, and tools barely entering the market are ready to change the landscape yet again.

The technical communication world is preparing for this world of convergence and integration with DITA, where topic-based content can be re-used within a document or a department, or shared with the rest of the organization or with partner organizations. The DITA standard allows content to travel, even boomerang, and be as usable when it arrives as when it left its author. In the Web world, similar standards have emerged and continue to emerge in the forms of everything from [microformats](#) to entire mark-up languages as a way of making content transportable.

The next few years will hold some interesting developments for technical communicators. The convergence of content types will have far-reaching implications, and any predictions would need to change as user reactions to new technologies affect user expectations, the way that [del.icio.us](#) and [digg](#) have affected searching for information. It's certainly a time when we need to keep ourselves aware of industry trends and align ourselves more closely with other content developers that touch our work. ♦



### **About Rahel Anne Bailie**

*Rahel Bailie is principal of [Intentional Design Inc.](#), focusing on performance improvement for communication products, and content management consultant in [Strategy A Consulting Group](#), a multidisciplinary consultancy helping organizations find effective ways to manage content as valuable corporate assets.*

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## 2006/2007 Technical Communication Competition: The Results are in!



by [Ruth Haworth](#), Competition Manager

I am pleased to announce the results of the **2006/2007 Southwestern Ontario STC Competition** for technical publications and online communication. This year we had 10 entries in the areas of software guides, non-computer equipment guides, magazines, and online help.

To ensure that each entry got maximum attention, this year, there were three teams of three senior technical writers who did the judging:

Deb Bald  
Robin Dube  
Ruth Haworth  
Gina Jackson  
Debbie Kerr  
Carol Lawless  
Ursula McCloy  
Sherry McMenemy  
Leanne Rollins

The judges worked hard to write constructive, detailed evaluations, and the feedback I received indicated that the entrants found their comments helpful.

Feedback from this year's participants included:

*"The comments from the judges are extremely helpful and much appreciated."*

*"The evaluations provided some very worthwhile feedback. I look forward to entering next year."*

*"The feedback we got from the panel of judges will be very useful to everyone on my team. It's fantastic to have such detailed comments from industry experts. This is great stuff to help guide and motivate our 2007 doc improvement plans."*

Special thanks to all the judges for their excellent work, and congratulations to all our participants!



And the winners are...

### Award of Excellence

**Catherine McNair and Robin Dube**, Agfa

*IMPAX Client Knowledge Base*

**Fran Hensler and John Krouse**, Chris Reeves, ANSYS

*ANSYS Solutions magazine*

**Ryan Lehmann**, Netsweeper

*Netsweeper Server Setup Guide*

## **Award of Merit**

**Laurene Dong**, MDS Sciex

*LightSight Online Help*

**Mark Ward and Giovanna Heffernan**, MDS Sciex

*CellKey System Service Manual*

**Giovanna Heffernan**, MDS Sciex

*CellKey System Operator's Manual*

**Wayne McEachren**, NCR

*ImageMark Archive Media Delivery Administration and Operations*

**Lise Cormier**, Quest Software

*Quest Reporter Version 5.5 Quick Start Guide*

## **About Ruth Haworth**

*Ruth Haworth has worked in Canada, England and Africa as a technical writer, journalist, research analyst and administrator. After 25 years away, she returned to her hometown of Waterloo in 1999. She currently enjoys working at Sybase iAnywhere Solutions as a Senior Staff Information Developer and living in a 100-year old primary school in Waterloo.*



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## Director's Message: Spring Cleaning STC Style



by [Cindy Currie](#), STC Region 1 Director

It's time to brush up on the candidates, polish your Community Achievement Award application forms, and dust off your business wardrobe and get ready to head to the (new, updated!) annual conference to put a new shine on your technical communication career! So, my advice to you is...

### **Get Out (er, Online?) and Vote!**

The STC election / balloting opens soon, so here is your opportunity to participate in choosing the leaders that will take us forward into the future and continue to shape the profession of technical communication! For detailed information about this year's slate of candidates, visit <http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>. All candidates are very willing to be contacted for further discussion about their views, so please take advantage of this opportunity to ask your burning questions.

The voting will be conducted from early March through mid April. Get to know the candidates' views and make a truly informed decision about who you think can best guide STC to new levels of professional leadership and global recognition. The percentage of members who voted last year (about 18%) was up nearly 5% over the previous year and we are looking forward to another big increase this year!

If you vote electronically, it's a breeze again this year. If you vote by paper ballot, please be sure to fill it out and return it quickly.

### **Shine up and submit your Community Achievement Award application!**

Community leaders, it's time to put the final polish on your Community Achievement Award (CAA) applications. Your 2007 application form should reflect activities and events conducted between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007.

The CAA recognizes a community's (SIG, professional or student chapter) accomplishments in achieving the Society's goals through a wide range of programs and activities. Additional information, including the newly updated CAA guidelines and the CAA application forms are available at: [http://www.stc.org/recog/awards01\\_comAchievement.asp](http://www.stc.org/recog/awards01_comAchievement.asp).

I am available to review applications as a sanity check ([dir1@stc.org](mailto:dir1@stc.org)) if you'd like a fresh pair of eyes to look yours over before you send it in. The application form and supporting materials must be emailed to the STC Office ([peg@stc.org](mailto:peg@stc.org)) by April 5, 2007.

Note that the CAA should be particularly interesting to community officers because pursuing the award criteria ensures that your community provides value to members, even if your community does not apply for the award. Studying the criteria can also help your community officers develop strategic and tactical plans.

### **Ascend the Summit !**

This year, make the Technical Communication Summit (STC's 54th Annual Conference) your primary source for career education. Whether you're a senior or novice practitioner, manager or individual contributor, the Summit is designed to further your professional growth and develop your job skills.

To learn more about the conference and to register, click on the Technical Communication Summit logo online at <http://www.stc.org>

Don't miss this event; it's going to be the best STC conference ever! We've heard your feedback and have incorporated it into this conference, STC's flagship annual event.

### **Send your incoming leaders to Leadership Day!**

The annual Leadership Day event is being held as usual the day before the conference begins; so on Sunday, May 13. This year's schedule is choc-a-bloc full of exceptional information for new and incoming community leaders.

And, the Leadership Community Resource (LCR), STC's new definitive resource for community outreach and support, is officially being launched during this event. Come learn what the LCR offers community leaders and how it all works to ensure that STC communities can become strong, self-sufficient entities, with various levels of support available to them, as required.

**NOTE:** *This event is highly recommended for incoming Chapter and SIG Officers!*

### **Take in a Region 1 Conference!**

Two communities are holding conferences in March:

- Philadelphia Metro Chapter, 4th Annual Conference, Current & Future Trends in Business Communication, March 17, 2007 (with workshops on March 16, 2007), [www.stcpmc.org](http://www.stcpmc.org)
- Rochester Chapter, Spectrum 2007, 49th Annual Conference, March 23, 2007, [www.stcrochester.org](http://www.stcrochester.org)

Each is a high-quality event with lots to offer attendees on many levels. Check 'em out!

## **Attend a Board Meeting!**

The STC Board of Directors recently held its winter Board meeting in Arlington , VA. The focus of this meeting was on Communities, and many strategic community-related topics were discussed, including:

- Society/Community relationship models
- Greater parity between types of communities
- Even more flexible membership options
- Restructured dues models
- Flexibility for geographic communities (chapters) to group themselves in ways other than the traditional STC "regional" model (virtual communities, SIGs, were never bound by this model)

Look for additional information on these topics and more as the board continues work on reshaping and improving the Communities area to ensure more valuable services are delivered to all.

Socially, we were treated to an evening reception held at the STC Office with many members of the [Washington DC chapter](#) attending. It was fun to meet and mingle with some old familiar faces and many new ones!

In case you are not aware, the STC Board meetings are open meetings (all except the Executive Session portion of these meetings), so any STC member may attend. I encourage you all to do so when you can. "They are enlightening," so says everyone who's ever attended! The next Board meeting will be on May 12 in Minneapolis , MN (in conjunction with this year's conference). Be there!

## **Drop by If You're Nearby**

My community visit plans for this year have been firmed up, and they look like this at the moment:

- [Boston Chapter](#), STACIES, February 28, 2007
- [Rochester Chapter](#), Spectrum Conference, March 23, 2007
- [Southwestern Ontario Chapter](#), March 27, 2007
- [Eastern Ontario Chapter](#), March, 28, 2007

I hope to see many of you at one of these events! Check the individual community websites for more information, and do plan to drop by if you're nearby to any one of these locations. ♦

### **About Cindy Currie**

*Cindy is currently the Director of STC Region 1. She is an STC Fellow and a member of the Northern New England and United Kingdom chapters, and well as numerous SIGs. She is a senior project manager at Hewlett-Packard Company.*

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## Getting to Know the Candidates



Want to see some new faces on the STC executive? Here's your chance — head office will be sending out instructions and ballots in early for next year's executive. The following are just what a few of the candidates have to say:

[Cindy Currie](#) - for Second Vice President

[Leah Guren](#) - for Director

[Robert Young](#) - for Director

[Steven Jong](#) - for Director

[Nicky Bleiel](#) - for Director

To learn more about all of this year's candidates and to ask questions, visit:  
<http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>

### **Cindy Currie (Candidate for Second Vice President)**



Hello STC members! I'm Cindy Currie, a candidate for Second Vice President (2VP). I'm currently a Director, Community Affairs Committee chair, and a Strategic Planning Committee member. I belong to the Northern New England and UK chapters and five SIGs. I've been a member since 1991 and a Fellow since 2005.

For the past two years, I've worked hard to help STC deliver more value for all members. I want to continue this work, and I feel that I can best do that by increasing my commitment to STC through the office of 2VP.

My primary focus is promoting the value of technical communication to business. We need to ensure that senior management fully understands the role we play in helping to increase the bottom line of business. It is through relationships at this level that we will succeed in bringing the profession closer to the core of business, raising its profile, and creating new and higher-level roles for technical communicators. I know we can do this by concentrating on four key areas:

- Codifying our body of knowledge – The certification debate continues, with strong feelings on both sides. Certification—if we choose to go in that direction—isn't possible without a body of knowledge (BoK) against which to certify TCs. In either case, a BoK is essential to elevating the profession in the global business hierarchy, helping to further legitimize it.
- Enhancing and expanding professional growth opportunities—Members must be ready to meet new and exciting challenges, so we must provide a

variety of business and leadership learning opportunities, as well as education and training on methods and tools.

- Creating a solid identity for STC—We need strong brand identity that loudly trumpets STC’s industry leadership of the profession, and is quickly and easily recognized as one that means quality—of both the practice and its practitioners.
- Reworking our business model and infrastructure—We must be able to identify, support, and promote changes and improvements with clarity, speed, and agility. STC is a business and we need to run it like a business with all the right frameworks in place to deliver on all of our commitments—to members, partners, academe, and business.

So, let’s take technical communication to new heights!

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### **Leah Guren (Candidate for Director)**



Greetings! My name is Leah Guren, and I am a running for one of the Director positions in the upcoming STC elections. I appreciate this opportunity to tell you a bit about myself and what I would like to focus on over the next few years.

**My background:** I entered the field in 1980, and have been active in chapter leadership (STC Israel) since 1997. In addition to serving locally, I’ve been an unofficial “international consultant” for the Society, pushing STC to slowly become more aware of international issues. I truly believe that this makes the Society stronger and helps all members become more competitive in today’s global market.

My work career spans the gamut from writer, editor, tech pubs manager, and Help author. Now, as a consultant and trainer in the field, I have the opportunity to travel and meet with technical communicators all over the world. I am continually impressed by the amazing range of skills, backgrounds, and work realities that I find as I visit different chapters.

**My goals:** This diversity is what helps make STC a strong and viable professional organization, and yet that diversity is not currently being supported as well as it could be. I would like to see STC focus on these key areas:

1. *Do more to support the needs of diverse communities.* I've had the chance to meet with many different chapters, and believe me, they are truly different! The number of members, the demographics of members, the location, and the physical size of the geographical area are just a few of the factors that create different challenges for different communities. Clearly, 600-member chapter based around one American city has different problems and concerns than a 50-member chapter that spans an entire country. At the same time, there are some common problems (getting volunteers, for example) that are shared by all communities.

To address this problem, the Society itself can explore more flexible solutions, such as offering all communities a standard base of services with a menu of pick-and-choose items, allowing each community to best meet their members' needs.

2. *Give STC members an edge in emerging trends and technologies.* The world around us is changing; while the underlying theory of technical communication may be the same, the tools, technologies, and even deliverables have changed drastically. By looking ahead at trends, STC can provide training programs to keep members competitive and current. This also means providing more advanced courses and certificate courses.
3. *Expand the PR push outside the field.* We all benefit when our profession becomes better recognized and respected. However, the Society's PR work needs to be fine-tuned for different markets. A chapter that sits in a financial corridor won't benefit from PR work that talks to manufacturing, nor will an American campaign work well in another country. Currently, there is no program in place to produce localized PR campaigns, and STC has relied on chapters to handle this daunting task on their own.
4. *Readdress certification.* It is a touchy issue, yet we must face it if we want to start gaining professional recognition. This goes hand-in-hand with both education and improving PR.
5. *Continue to grow internationally.* In the past three years, the biggest growth areas for STC have come from chapters outside of North America. Being part of an international organization and being aware of global issues will make you a better, more effective technical communicator, no matter where you live. STC has taken major steps in this direction and needs to continue to do so.

**My philosophy:** This is a challenging, exciting, and rewarding profession. Sometimes it is frustrating, funny, and just a little bit bizarre. How wonderful that we can walk into an STC meeting and share our latest adventures with

colleagues who instantly “get” it. I hope that I never stop seeing the humor in our work!

I look forward to meeting you at future conferences.

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## **Robert Young (Candidate for Director)**



I am running for a director position at the Society level. In March, you will have the choice of electing three new directors from the seven-candidate field. I humbly ask for your support to carry on the proud tradition of past and present NEO STC members who have served in Society-level leadership roles.

Bob Dianetti, Region 4 sponsor and NEO STC senior member, is entering his third, and final, year as a valued director and board member. I hope to have the opportunity to learn from him so I can continue his fine work when his term expires.

A director's duties include communicating the Society's objectives to geographic communities and virtual special interest groups (SIGs). This task will be equally important this year as STC builds on its Strategic Plan. Interestingly, many of the objectives of this plan—beefed up Public Relations and Marketing Committees, more training opportunities and corporate sponsorships, and recognition of member achievements—were successfully implemented in NEO STC's chapter last year. Therefore, I believe I could make an immediate impact in these areas.

Perhaps my biggest asset is getting others involved with the process. Participation is a key element for achieving any goal, whether at the local or Society level. I firmly believe that encouraging members to get involved instills pride and the willingness to help with tasks. It also breeds future leaders. In turn, a member develops skills and friendships to further strengthen the bonds of membership. As proof, just look at the success of our NEO STC membership campaign last year, (18% gain) which was due to the outstanding teamwork of the committees.

To further increase participation, I would like to assist in the development of templates that provide chapter leaders with clear instructions on how to implement committees and programs. A lot of the STC literature is outdated or

does not provide innovative steps on starting/maintaining programs. A good example is the recognition program for saluting senior members and the work of volunteers. I learned of this program by talking with members of the Florida STC chapter at the annual Conference. NEO STC packaged its own guidelines and we incorporated the recognition program into the membership campaign.

By providing constructive guidelines, such as how to start up and run a successful Public Relations committee, it will undoubtedly contribute to more communities starting PR campaigns. This will allow STC to better explain its message, and, thus, reach out to more potential members.

Thank you for your support to STC and my bid for a director position.

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## Steven Yong (Candidate for Director)



Thanks for taking the time to read this article! I'd like to introduce myself and give you some of my background and ideas for the Society.

### My Background

*Professional:* I've been a technical communicator for 30 years. Currently I'm a documentation project manager at 3Com. I've also delivered training in the US and Europe, and taught writing to law students.

*Communities:* I am a past president of the Boston chapter. I maintained services despite declining income; we won three chapter awards of Distinction in four years. I'm active in the Quality and Process Improvement SIG (where for ten years I was a columnist for DocQment, the SIG's award-winning newsletter) and the Management SIG.

*Society:* Since 2002 I've served the International Technical Publications Competition as a judge, lead judge, and Best of Show judge. I've presented papers at seven Annual Conferences and several regional conferences. I'm currently involved with ISO, as an author and reviewer, as they revise and consolidate the standards for software documentation.

*Nonprofit leadership:* I have experience founding and leading nonprofit

organizations to long-term stability. I started a recreational volleyball league at Digital Equipment. The corporate subsidy was eventually eliminated, but we dealt with this transition so well that the league still operates 20 years later as an independent entity. Also, for two years I was the president of my community chorus, a 501(c)(3) corporation.

### **Society Issues**

STC's biggest issue is member retention. Our profession is growing worldwide, yet membership has declined by a third over the last five years. Today less than 10% of practitioners worldwide are members. Increasingly, employers don't subsidize dues, and practitioners don't see the value of membership. We need to create an STC that more practitioners want to join and more employers want to subsidize. The challenge is to provide more value, especially to senior members, and publicize that value to both practitioners and employers. We also need an open flow of information and ideas between communities and the Society. Finally, we deserve a transparent accounting of how the Society spends our money, and why.

### **The New Director Role**

The current Director-Sponsors are being replaced by directors. While a D-S represented and supported chapters in one region, directors are expected to represent all communities and all members. The role requires a strategic view of Society goals and how to reach them. For example, a tactical concern is strengthening a community; a strategic concern is strengthening the Society. (The Leadership Community Resource is being established to support communities.)

### **Summary**

I believe what sets me apart from the other director candidates is my long experience and broad perspective. I'm a life-long technical communicator; I've been active in both chapters and SIGs, as well as at the Society level; I've traveled abroad to deliver training; and I've led non-profit organizations to long-term stability and fiscal health.

In March, when you vote for directors, I hope you will cast a vote for me. Thanks in advance!

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## **Nicky Bleiel (Candidate for Director)**



Hi, I'm Nicky Bleiel, candidate for Director in 2007. I will get right to the point—I would like your vote in the upcoming election.

### **My Vision**

Technical communicators make users more successful. I would like to help STC make technical communicators more successful by expanding its educational offerings, adding more training courses, seminars, conferences, and even books. One of STC's goals is to "Tell our powerful story," and I plan to work on projects that help promote our profession to the business community.

### **Leadership Experience**

I am the immediate past president of the Pittsburgh chapter. During my presidency, Pittsburgh was recognized as a chapter of excellence; during my vice presidency, as a chapter of distinction. I also served as membership chair and have been involved in program planning for four years, including serving on the planning committee for the successful Region 4 Conference held April 2004 in Pittsburgh. I am proud that I helped launch the popular "Software Saturdays" training program, which has been adopted by other chapters.

### **Professional Experience**

I have been a technical communicator for twelve years. Like many of us, I started my career writing books and producing them in hardcopy format, but have since embraced online help and user assistance, Web design, single-sourcing, usability, e-learning, and knowledge management. I have experience writing for products in a variety of industries, including media sales, industrial automation, simulation, and pharmaceutical.

### **Speaking and Writing**

I have presented talks at several STC annual conferences, both during general sessions and on Leadership Day. I have also presented at local and regional STC events, including Philadelphia , Cleveland , and Pittsburgh . Topics have included tools and technologies, user assistance design, single-sourcing, and wikis. I have been published in conference proceedings, on the web, and in STC's *Tieline* (the Society leaders' newsletter) and STC Pittsburgh's *Blue Pencil*.

### **Results-oriented**

Accomplishing any goal – personal, professional, or as an STC leader—requires innovation, organizational skills, and focus. As a Director, I would use these traits to deliver results to our membership. I will work with the STC Board, as well as the members, to find new ways to tackle problems and drive initiatives that will make the Society a valuable resource for technical communicators.

Thank you, and I would appreciate your vote in March. ♦

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## Council Meeting Recap: January/February



by [Carol Lawless](#), Recorder

Your chapter council has been busy since the last Quill! This recap combines the results of the last two council meetings, since much of our February agenda was a continuation of that of January.

We've been shuffling locations for our meetings – thanks to both Equitrac and PEER Group for coming through, and to Leanne and Marisa for arranging to feed the hungry council.

### General Meetings

There will be two general meetings in March.

Our February general meeting shifted so much that it is now the first week of March. We've been blazing a new trail for the Southwestern Ontario chapter! It will be a broadcast to remote members via webcast. We hope that members in Sarnia, Goderich, and other "remote" places will take the opportunity to join us! For those of you in the area, you can attend the meeting as usual. For more information, see our chapter [website](#).

The [annual wine and cheese](#) is on Tuesday, March 27. Come out and meet our Director, [Cindy Currie](#); toast our competition winners, student award winners, and our Distinguished Chapter Service award winners; plus, enjoy the company of your fellow tech writers.

### Webinars

We're moving forward with webinars—we have another booked for [March](#) and will continue to watch for topics that our membership has expressed interest in. We also discussed purchasing a projector for the webinars (and other events) and are looking into the costs.

### Education Workshop

The [April Education workshop](#) planning is moving along and promises to be a great couple of days. Take a few minutes to read the article in this issue about the workshop. We're still looking for volunteers to help promote it, so don't hesitate to contact [Leanne Rollins](#) if you can spare a little time for your chapter.

### Website Cleanup

We also managed to clear up some administrative work—the [FAQ section](#) of the website has had some early spring cleaning—it should now be up-to-date. Thanks to Karen Pogue, our [Karen Pogue](#), who provided the details that enabled us to clear up some problems with the membership information on the site. Thanks also to [Margie](#), who in addition to her Quill editor duties is also our webmaster, for posting the changes. She has been busy updating our [website](#) as events have been starting and finishing, like the [XML Workshop](#) (starting), and the [Student Awards competition](#) (finishing).

## Competitions

We had a [chapter competition](#) for online communication and technical publications. Winners wanted to be able to acknowledge that they had won in those competitions by posting a logo on their websites. In response to that request, we have asked one of our members to develop a new “STC Chapter Winner” logo. While it is not ready yet, maybe we will unveil it at our annual wine and cheese meeting.

The deadline for the Student Awards Competition has just closed and the number of entries is more than double the number that there were last year. There are entries from the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Guelph.

## Online Training

The results from the online poll about access to free online training were disappointing. Only 22 people responded with 17 being interested. We are still looking at options for a single-seat licence, where only one person at a time can sign in for the training. We will discuss this more in March.

## Professional Association Fair

We were invited to set up a booth at the WLU Career Services Professional Association Fair. If we could get an exhibit together in three weeks (no technical writer would say a three week deadline is impossible! Just get out the magic wand!), we planned set up a booth. We were ready to have a team assembled and recruit volunteers and adopted the team slogan “Miracles performed here. The impossible takes a little longer”. However, after the meeting, when Debbie contacted the organizer of the event, we found out that not everyone had as much interest or energy as we had. The “official” fair was cancelled, but we were still welcome to come and set up. We decided to wait until next year.

## Next Year's President

The search is underway for next year's president. If you're interested and would like to serve the last couple months as VP, to get comfortable, contact Debbie at [president@stc-soc.org](mailto:president@stc-soc.org). Since we pay money towards your attendance at the [STC Annual Conference](#), it is better if you step forward now, so that you can make plans to attend this year's conference.

## Conclusion

Two council meetings, 16 action items, three motions passed unanimously and lots of laughter—in a nutshell. ♦

## About Carol Lawless

*Carol has been a member of our profession since 1993 and is a senior STC member. She is a founding partner of KCA Consulting, specializing in web usability and usability testing. She's also an independent contractor, when a suitable project arises. She is our official recorder at council. Outside of the STC and work, Carol's special interest is Ancient Civilizations, and still does not tire of visiting ruins (her favourite is Delphi with Karnak a close second). In her spare time, she runs Mom's taxi and loves to read (while waiting for the next taxi run!).*



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## Upcoming Chapter Meetings & Events



### March 6th, 2007 Understanding Learning Styles



In this interactive session and [webcast](#), Jane Holbrook of the University of Waterloo shows us that although academics in the field of education argue the pros and cons of "pigeonholing" students into learning style categories, it is generally accepted that designing learning activities and course materials with a range of learning styles in mind can help educators maximize their learner's success.

We will look at some different styles, at how learning takes place in the brain, and at some strategies for creating materials and activities that will help a range of learners.

**Join us @ the University of Waterloo Modern Languages, Room 117 7:00 PM (doors open at 6:30 PM)**

**Jane Holbrook** has been the Liaison to the Faculty of Science for the Centre for Learning and Teaching Through Technology at the University of Waterloo since 2001. Her role there is to help Science faculty members enhance their teaching with technology in a pedagogically sound way. Her formal training in the Life Sciences and she has had the opportunity to teach Genetics and Vertebrate Zoology to UW undergraduates face-to-face on campus and online through University of Waterloo's distance education arm for many years.

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**March 14th, 2007 Webinar: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask**



Delving into content management (CM) is entering an unfamiliar and sometimes confusing world. It's not unusual for a well-meaning IT group of a corporation to install a well-respected, but inappropriate for technical publishing, content management application and expect the technical documentation department to start churning out documentation using the new system – and what about that return on investment they expect to see after a few months?

Knowing the basics of CM is more than a protection mechanism; it's a way of preparing for the next big trend in documentation production.

In this seminar, Rahel Anne Bailie provides the groundwork for understanding what a content management system is and what it does, the differences between various types of CM systems, some circumstances under which CM can be beneficial, and techniques for determining system suitability. The seminar will also demystify the industry vocabulary, thereby eliminating some of the barriers that can slow down the investigative process.

**Join us @ the Waterloo Public Library 35 Albert Street, Waterloo [[map](#)]  
1:00-2:30 p.m. EDT (Doors open at 12:30)**

**Cost: Free for STC members, \$35 for non-members**

**RVSP:** If you plan on attending, please RSVP to Carol Lawless at [recorder@stc-soc.org](mailto:recorder@stc-soc.org). In your email message, include the names of all attendees and their membership status. Seating is limited, so RSVP early!

**Rahel Anne Bailie** is a content management consultant helping organizations analyze their business requirements and spectrum of content to get the right content management fit. Coming from a technical communication and usability background, she understands the complexities of structured authoring and user-centered design. She is principal of Intentional Design Inc, a consultancy focusing on performance improvement for communication products, and a managing partner with the multidisciplinary Strategy A Consulting Group in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

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**March 27th, 2007 Annual Wine and Cheese Networking Event**



You are cordially invited to the annual STC Southwestern Ontario Chapter Wine and Cheese soiree. Enjoy chatting with fellow communicators over complimentary drinks and hors d'oeuvres, and find out who will be accepting the Chapter honours this year. This is also an opportunity to meet some special guests this year: Region 1 Director, Cindy Currie and vp Mark Clifford!

**Join us @ the University Club University of Waterloo, 200 University Ave.  
West 6:30 - 9:00 PM**

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