Byline

Quarterly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

And the Winners are...

By Elizabeth Burke

The Competition Committee is pleased to share that judging of the STC Chicago Chapter 2010-2011 Technical Competition completed on Saturday, January 8, 2010. We received 27 entries this year with 12 judges volunteering to review the submissions. With STC International revising and changing many aspects of the competition, the judging teams traversed new territory and many entries with finesse!

STC International revised the submission categories this year to address the purpose of information presented - Informational, Instructional, Promotional, and User Support, rather than the previous focus on the media used to present the information. This change recognizes that it is not only how we present the information but more importantly, what we communicate. No longer are entries judged according to the delivery media but rather the quality of information. With the change, submitters are no longer constrained to submitting based on the media presentation but can submit entries that use the wide variety of technologies available today.

While the judging teams needed a little extra time to adapt to the new forms and evaluation strategies, once they got their feet wet, the judges agreed that the new approach was better both as a judge and for submitters. Forms were changed from a checklist format to a narrative evaluation. Submitters will benefit from a broad explanation of what is on target and what could be changed to improve the product.

The Competition Committee is also pleased to share that every submission entered this year was acknowledged with an award. Additionally, this year we will

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Story Night with STC Chicago- Feb 16

How was your day, dear? How's that battle over periods and spacing? Your manager said WHAT? Oh, my, that's amazing!

Networking and storytelling are a sure way to warm up a February night, so get your story on, friend - **February 16 is all about you.** We want to hear the good, the bad, the proud, and the hilarious when it comes to your life in this nutty tech comm world.

The night kicks off at 6:30 p.m., and we'll have filling appetizers and unlimited soda. A cash bar will be available. In appreciation for all that our members do, this event is **free** to STC Chicago members. Guests and non-members are welcome to attend for a nominal fee of $10.

Prizes! Did we mention the prizes? There will be prizes for your stories! Crazy, funny, silly, awesome - whoever has the best will get some sort of fantastically validating award!

Wed. February 16, 2011 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Ballydoyle Irish Pub and Restaurant
5157 Main Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Even though this is a free event, please go to our Website at stc-chicago.org and register so we can save you a seat. Ω

Election 2011

By Chris Hester

If you would like to become more involved in the chapter, now is the time to consider volunteering for a committee or for an officer's position. The Nominating Committee is currently seeking chapter members who are interested in the positions of vice president, secretary, treasurer, and nominating committee. The elections will be held in March for positions that will govern the chapter from July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012.

Linda Kelley, who has served on several committees and is our current treasurer, offers this insight into her volunteer experience:

> While networking at the chapter meetings is great, the best way to make deeper connections with other STC members is to volunteer. Serving on the board and volunteering in other capacities has not only enabled me to get to know my colleagues much better but has also made me more visible within the organization and even provided opportunities for friendships. I've been contacted about contract opportunities out of the blue and have had a chance to meet people who might not otherwise have crossed my path. I can honestly say that being a board member has enriched my experience in being an STC member.

Elizabeth Burke, the current STC Chicago Vice President and Competition Co-Chair, offers this advice:

> If you have been in a leadership role before, this experience deals with a group where all are in your field and you get to shape the direction and perform long-term planning. If you haven't been in a leadership role before, this is an opportunity to experience leadership and receive mentoring, to avoid some mistakes, and to receive support when you inevitably make mistakes.
>
> Depending on the role, the commitment can be open-ended or limited. Most elected positions are a year, but committee positions are flexible. Explore and do what works for you. The doors it opens can be subtle but have long-term benefits.
>
> As I think about the past year, I think I'm most impressed by the credibility that volunteering gives. I've been in the profession a long time and received awards, but my role in STC as a chapter leader adds depth to the work I do and the role I have in the organization. I've discovered that the members who actively participate in volunteer activities are passionate about the profession and successful in their careers.

How to Nominate Yourself or Someone Else

The Nominating Committee has posted descriptions of officer positions on the web site (www.stc-chicago.org), along with a form to accept nominations. You can nominate yourself or another chapter member by completing the form or sending an email to nominating@stc-chicago.org. Ω

"Recognition Banquet" - Continued from Page 1

present two Best of Show awards. The awards presented this year are as follows:

Best of Show - 2
Distinguished - 8
Excellence - 14
Merit - 5

Join us at the STC Chicago Recognition Banquet in March to see the award-winning entries and find out who won Best of Show. See our website for details to register for the banquet. Ω

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 201
Associate Fellows: 5
Fellows: 5
Members: 54
Senior Members: 119
Student Members: 18 Ω

President's Message - Looking Back … Did You Know…?

By MaryKay Grueneberg

2011. When did that happen? For most of us, the beginning of a new year finds us taking a close look at the past year and making personal plans and goals for the new year. The same is true at STC Chicago. I have long understood the benefits and importance of being a member of a professional international society such as STC. As I was putting together our application for the Community Achievement Award (CAA), I started to realize that as chapter officer for the past four years, and committee manager and committee member for several years before that, I often take for granted just how much we do as a community. I also began to wonder if our membership realizes what a strong community we have.

Did you know…

…***We join forces!*** In August, STC Chicago joined forces with CISPI and CCASTD to host the third annual Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase. Once again, the successful showcase earned the enthusiastic praise of attendees and presenters alike. Approximately 250 people took part in the showcase in 2010 (175 paid attendees, 30 speakers, 15 volunteers, and 30 vendors).

…***We asked. You answered. We listened.*** In May, the Program Committee conducted a Chapter-wide survey regarding programs and workshops. The survey responses helped us design a 2010-11 program year that creates meaningful and valuable experiences for our professional community. In the survey, we sought suggestions for topics and locations, as well as formats. In addition, in response to your feedback, we have offered new programs in new venues and even in new formats.

…***We have programs, workshops, and networking events for everyone!*** In 2010, we offered:

- Chapter Recognition Banquet (March)
- Writing for Global Markets (April)
- Full-day workshop conducted by Carole Berkson-Ross, a Talent Development Professional from California, "Technical Communicators Help Your Career Ride the Market Waves." (April)
- An "Introduction to Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2 and FrameMaker" workshop was presented by Betsy Maaks (May)
- Annual business meeting and networking event (June)
- Job Search Tips for Technical Communicators (August)
- Meet the New STC Competition: Everything all new and experienced entrants and judges need to know (September)
- Truth or Dare: Social Media (October)
- SharePoint and the Tech Comm Field (November)
- STC Chicago held it first Webinar during the workday lunch hour. Prof. Brian Still from Texas Tech University spoke about agile usability in his presentation, "Agile Usability: The Benefits of Iterative Testing." (December)

…***We win awards!*** Our Chapter newsletter, *Byline*, has won an Apex award for the past five consecutive years. Our Chapter has won both Community of Excellence and Community of Distinction over the past four consecutive years.

…***We hold Technical Communications Competitions!*** The Competition Committee (the Entries and Awards Manager, Judging Manager, and Sr. Review Panel) revamped our annual local competition to use the new purpose-based Summit Awards categories of Informational Materials, Instructional Materials, Marketing Materials, and User Support Materials.

…***We judge science fairs!*** We have been invited and have proudly participated as judges in the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Non-Public Schools Science Fairs for the past *fifteen* years! In addition, our own Chris Hester was invited to be a mentor to the students this year as they prepare for the science fairs.

…***We meet informally for lunch!*** Once a month, members and non-members alike have the opportunity to meet informally over lunch to discuss the world of technical communication (or other important things like our wonderful Chicago sports teams!). This happens during the lunch hour with our Thursdays @ STC Chicago program.

…***We get around!*** In addition to our Website (stc-chicago.org), you can find our programs and events listed on a

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number of social networking sites such as Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Flickr. News articles can be found on news sites like Crain's Chicago Business, Tech Venue, and WindyBits.

…***We keep you informed!*** In addition to our bi-monthly newsletter, we keep you up to date with our monthly eDigest *STC Chicago At-a-Glance*. We also have an active Yahoo Groups discussion list.

…***We keep it official.*** We have a Bylaws Committee and our Bylaws reviewed in full every two years, updated as necessary, and distributed to the membership for an acceptance vote.

…***We have sponsors!*** Corporate sponsorships have helped our community increase revenue while establishing relationships with a number of well-known institutions in and around the Chicago metro area: Some of these corporate sponsors include: the CARA Group, Ken Cook Co., DePaul – Schaumburg Campus, and Charlie's Charhouse.

…***We grew!*** We added 40 new members in 2010!

Did you know? Now you do!

2010 was an exciting and full year in STC Chicago. I am proud to be a member of such an active professional community. I hope you are, too. Ω

STC Chicago Chapter Recognition Banquet

We hope that you will attend our Recognition Banquet in March this year. The Recognition Banquet offers you the opportunity to network with others in the industry over the course of a great meal and enjoyable presentations. We are expanding the scope of the banquet this year to cover three separate topics - Chapter Recognition, Competition Awards, and a preview of Destination 2012: STC Summit in Chicago.

Admittedly, it is always exciting to attend and acknowledge the winners of our annual Technical Communication competition. However, many of our members contribute to the success of our chapter in many ways and we are taking this opportunity to acknowledge their efforts and contributions to our chapter and our profession!

In case you are not aware, STC International is holding the annual conference next year in Chicago. If you have attended an STC International conference, join us to share in some of the memories of previous conferences. For those of you who have never attended the annual conference, join us to learn what you can expect at this exciting event. At our banquet, we will share with you some of the highlights of past conferences and preview what you can expect at Destination 2012: STC Summit in Chicago.

Mark your calendars for Thursday, March 10 for the STC Chicago Chapter Recognition Banquet. See our website for details to register. Ω

Upcoming Conferences

March 25–26, 2011
Philadelphia Metro STC Annual Conference
Philadelphia, PA
www.stcpmc.org/index.php?section=44

April 1, 2011
Rochester STC Annual Conference
Rochester, NY
spectrum@stc-rochester.org
www.stc-rochester.org

May 15 – 18, 2011
STC 2011 Technical Communication Summit
Sacramento, CA
www.stc.org

May 9 – 11, 2011
Confab: The Content Strategy Conference
Minneapolis, MN
http://confab2011.com
http://twitter.com/confab2011

June 6 – 7, 2011
Web Content Conference
Chicago, IL
http://www.webcontent2011.com Ω

Member Spotlight - Apryl Cox Jackson

Name: Apryl Cox Jackson

Member Since: STC, Spring 2002; Chicago Chapter, 2007

Job Title: Currently freelancer/contractor

STC Affiliation: I'm a senior member of STC and currently belong to the Chicago Chapter, the Technical Editing SIG, and the Instructional Design and Learning SIG. I started out in the Mid-South Chapter, which I served as newsletter editor, program manager, and vice president.

Years of Experience: 10

Tech Comm Philosophy: To help users by clearly conveying information that they need.

Favorite STC Moment: When I've worked with other volunteers to pull off chapter meetings, workshops, and conferences.

Favorite Work Moment: Any time I'm able to help something click for a user or co-worker.

Working on Now: I'm converting existing e-learning courses to a SCORM-compliant format and adding interactions. I'm using Udutu, a free authoring tool, for the first time. The tool definitely has some limitations but is a good resource for groups with simple courses and a limited budget.

Favorite Movie: One of the movies I've most often rewatched is the version of *Sense and Sensibility* adapted by Emma Thompson and directed by Ang Lee.

Favorite Music: Varies with my mood, lately 3WK's alternative online radio station

Favorite Book: The book I've probably reread the most is *A Ring of Endless Light* by Madeleine L'Engle, which I first read when I was about 11 years old. I've avoided seeing the movie.

Favorite Technical Communication Guru(s): One of my favorites is David Armbruster, a past president of STC. He has taught me innumerable lessons as a professor, mentor, fellow volunteer, and friend.

Where'd I like to be 10 years from now: Life changes too much for me to know yet.

Apryl, you've served on the planning committee for the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase for two years. Tell us about your experience working with the committee:

The eLearning Showcase is a local one-day conference run by volunteers from STC Chicago, the Chicago Chapter of the Society for Performance Improvement, and the Chicagoland Chapter of the American Society for Training & Development. This diverse group works together extremely well and laughs constantly. I enjoyed working on the program so much in 2009 that I expanded my role for 2010. I wound up helping with the program, speaker selection/coordination, the website, and committee organization.

Why should STC Chicago members attend the eLearning Showcase?

Whether or not we currently work in elearning, all of us technical communicators impart knowledge to others, and much of our work is published online. At the Showcase, you're bound to learn about some tools and/or techniques that you can apply to your job. You'll also able to network with locals from lots of different fields. You might wind up meeting a future employer, employee, vendor, or collaborator.

What advice would you give to those who plan to volunteer and/or attend next year?

Volunteering on the Showcase feels easy because of how well the group works together and divides tasks. If you're interested in helping out, fill out the volunteer interest form: http://www.chicagoelearningshowcase.com/volunteer.html

If you plan to attend, register early! The conference sells out in advance every year. Once we reach capacity, you can't get in, no matter whom you know. When you're at the Showcase, attend some sessions that are outside your usual area of expertise. Exchange contact information with speakers, exhibitors, and other attendees so that you can connect after the conference. Only so much information can fit into a single session or day! Ω

Upcoming STC Webinars

By Chris Hester

Whether you're discovering the hidden treasure of dynamic product information or looking to conquer rambling, STC has a webinar for you next week.

Regardless of size or the number of years that a company has been in business, all companies have one thing in common: they all have information. Information about their products and services is necessary to communicate with both existing and potential customers. So how do you get the information development out of the company basement and into the C-Suite of your organization? Join Liz Fraley for "Discovering the Hidden Treasure of Dynamic Product Information" so you can show how a transformative adoption in product information can differentiate your company in the market place and provide breakthrough results in driving shareholder value.

Do you tend to ramble? At crucial moments, when one should be focused and must speak with emphasis, most people - even those who are highly trained and well educated - frequently diminish their impact by going into an infinite ramble or being too feeble and perfunctory. V. J. Singal presents "Conquering the Pervasive Disease of Rambling: How to Emphasize Your Point in Three Sentences," with examples of incidents where rambling led to embarrassment, followed by analysis and discussion of several real-world examples of top-notch communicators emphasizing an important point in just three sentences. Find out how to curtail rambling with V. J. Singal and STC.

Wednesday, 2 February
1:00-2:00 p.m. EST (GMT-5)
"Discovering the Hidden Treasure of Dynamic Product Information"
Presented by Liz Fraley
Members $79; Non-members $149; Student Members $29

Thursday, 3 February
4:00-5:00 p.m. EST (GMT-5)
"Conquering the Pervasive Disease of Rambling: How to Emphasize Your Point in Three Sentences"
Presented by V. J. Singal
Members $79; Non-members $149; Student Members $29 Ω

STC Membership at a Glance

Total members: 13,263
Members residing in the U.S.: 11,236
Members residing in Canada: 1,206
Members residing elsewhere: 821
Total communities*: 155

*Includes 104 professional chapters, 30 student chapters, and 21 SIGs. Ω

Byline

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Byline is a quarterly publication of the STC Chicago Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), a non-profit membership organization serving the needs of technical communication professionals.

STC mission statement: Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

News guidelines: Send articles to *Byline* at byline@stc-chicago.org . Preferred format is a Word for Windows document file via e-mail. We reserve the right to edit for style and space.

Advertising: We encourage advertising that follows STC guidelines and promotes services to STC Chicago members.
Half page (7.5"x4.5"): $300 (1 issue)
Whole page (7.5"x9"): $500 (1 issue).
Discounts for multiple printings. For details, go to our web site and click on Byline Advertising.

The advertisement and payment must be received by the 20th of the month before the next published issue of the newsletter (e.g., submit ad and payment by November 20th for the December issue). We will not run your ad until payment is received. Submit ad files in electronic copy only in .TIF, .GIF, or .JPG format to byline@stc-chicago.org .

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Subscriptions: STC Chicago membership includes a subscription to Byline. Contact STC at:

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