

# Byline

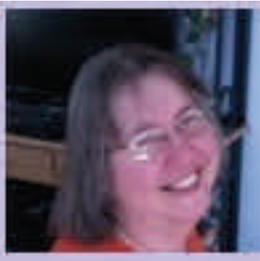


Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

## Vice-President's Message

### New Year, New Opportunities

By Elizabeth Burke



As I begin this article, I would like to offer thoughts and prayers for so many who have lost loved ones during the recent tragedies our world

has experienced. We like to think that this time of year is filled with joy and laughter, but that is not true for so many. Even if you do not personally know someone affected by these tragedies, through the power of technology we are all drawn into the loss and sadness. There are no words to ease the pain, but let us send thoughts of peace for all who face difficulty in whatever manner at this time.

As we end 2015 and begin 2016, I would like to say thank you to all who contribute their time and talents to our Chapter. We can only offer the many services and benefits to our members and guests through the kindness and hard work of our generous volunteers. STC Chicago offers a wide array of activities and opportunities from those just entering the world of technical communication workforce through to experienced communication

specialists who have seen many changes in technical communication over the years.

I encourage you to explore the many benefits our Chapter offers. As you begin to consider your New Year's resolutions, find out how STC Chicago can contribute to your goals for 2016.

Our Chapter schedules monthly evening programs on a broad group of subjects—informational, skill-building, industry tools, and more. New this year, we offer a monthly lunchtime session from the STC International catalog of webinars. One additional success story is our first Thursdays@STC Chicago networking lunches. The lunch sessions are a casual way to meet with your fellow technical communicators and discuss workplace experiences, discuss new trends, and get help with problems you might be experiencing.

Another recent addition to the offerings through STC Chicago is our Get Real! Interview program. This program allows recent graduates

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**Renew your STC membership and choose STC Chicago as your community before Jan 1, and you'll receive a promo code for 50% off all STC Chicago monthly programs during 2016!**

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Find us online!



## January Program

### Taking Advantage of UX Tools and Methodologies

As a technical communicator, you're not only concerned about content, you also want to ensure the user is receiving the best user experience possible—both with the documentation and with whatever it is you're documenting. The discipline of User Experience uses various tools and methodologies to evaluate and improve how users interact with software.

In this session, we'll explore Design Guidelines, Personas, and User Testing options, and we'll discuss how these tools can inform or be informed by documentation. You'll receive samples of tests and personas and tips on creating your own materials to fit your needs. You'll leave equipped with the tools necessary to start your own user experience processes and the knowledge to keep user experience at the forefront of your content creation process.

**Thursday, January 21**

**6:00 - 7:00 PM Dinner**

**7:00 - 8:00 PM Presentation**

**The Offices of CARA Group**

**Drake Office Plaza**

**2215 York Road, Suite 300**

**Oak Brook, IL 60523**

**\$20 Members | \$30 Non-members | \$10 Students**

Dinner is included with registration.

[Register now!](#)

#### About the speaker:

**Zakiya Vallier** is a UX Experience Architect and the UX Team Lead at kCura, an e-discovery software company. Over the past 10 years Zakiya has worked in software, starting as an Implementation Engineer and eventually moving to Product Management. As a Product Manager, she saw a huge gap in the design process and delivery of work to development. She began to informally fill the UX gap, and after some time officially moved into the UX role. As a UX Team lead at kCura she focuses on infusing a user-focused mindset into the product, design process, and company. Ω

## October Recap

### CSS3 and HTML5 with Scott DeLoach

*By Kayla Womack*

STC Chicago's members and guests gathered at Flight 112 Wine Bar and Grill in Elmhurst on October 21 to learn about the essentials of HTML5 and CSS3. Speaker, author, and founder of ClickStart, Scott DeLoach, shared his professional insight and provided numerous examples of using HTML5 and CSS3 to build a webpage.

Scott covered some of the following topics:

- ◆ CSS3 concepts including classes and ids
- ◆ Formatting tables
- ◆ Formatting headings and paragraphs
- ◆ Using HTML5 with old browsers and
- ◆ Using new form element types and attributes

Scott provided us with examples of CSS3 tables alternating colors, using different font colors, creating a navigation bar, styling borders and formatting bulleted and numbered lists. The biggest take away from Scott's presentation was to remember who your audience is and what their needs are; remember to make your web pages reader and user friendly. Ω

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## 4 Tips for Easing into Content Management

*By Suzanne Mescan, Vasont Systems*

Do you have a goal to implement a component content management system (CCMS) and structured authoring in XML but don't have the budget to plunge into the deep-end of training? Are you wondering if it's possible to break the implementation down into smaller, manageable steps? You can incrementally familiarize your employees by using some CCMS features before all your content is ready.

#### Modify mindsets.

One of the toughest challenges of moving to a structured authoring and CCMS environment is changing the way that writers work. Setting up similar styles for unstructured con-

tent in your documents can train writers to apply this structure when they write XML content. These styles can also be used to make the conversion process to XML cleaner, easier, and cheaper.

#### **Start big in the database.**

You can install the CCMS and begin to use its features with your unstructured documents. Load files and begin using the CCMS as a document management repository. Features such as workflow manage the processes that need to take place on the documents while tracking all versions of the documents.

#### **Gradually go granular.**

As you get the resources, convert active content into XML components and begin working modularly. You will immediately see the benefits of content reuse in the CCMS as you drill down into the details of your content.

#### **Maintain a mix.**

Keep files of legacy content stored as documents in the CCMS along with your XML content. Now, all of your structured and unstructured content is stored in one place for easy retrieval. To save costs, convert pieces of legacy content as needed. If you convert everything to XML, you may find you spent a lot of money converting content you'll never need again.

*Suzanne Mescan is Vasont Systems' Director of Marketing, with responsibility for the Company's marketing and public relations efforts. For more than 25 years, she worked in all aspects of the information management and publishing industry, from content management to editorial and production. Suzanne has authored numerous articles about content management for industry publications and has delivered presentations for the CM Strategies/DITA North America, Intelligent Content, AIIM, and LavaCon conferences, as well as in industry-related group meetings and webinars. She was also a contributing author for the book Virtual Collaborative Writing in the Workplace: Computer-Mediated Communication Technologies and Processes by Beth L. Hewett and Charlotte Robidoux (Eds.).*

*Vasont Systems provides component content management software and XML data services to Fortune 1,000 companies and global organizations from a variety of industries, including manufacturing, technology, publishing, financial, and healthcare. Vasont Systems is a member of the TransPerfect family of companies. For more information, visit [www.vasont.com](http://www.vasont.com).* Ω

## Salary Database

Only members who have renewed for 2016 receive STC's new Salary Database FREE. Everyone who renewed by November 16 was emailed a PDF of the Salary Database. For everyone renewing after November 16, there is a link to the Salary Database embedded in their renewal receipt. If you didn't receive the email, didn't see the link in their receipt, or can't find your receipt, request a copy by sending an email to [stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org). This is a valuable publication to conduct more powerful job searches, make a strong case for a raise, or prepare department payroll budgets (a \$149 member savings). Ω

**Registration** for the 2016 **TechComm Summit** May 15 – 18 in Anaheim, California, is now open! The Early Bird registration rate is only \$895 for STC members (a \$400 member savings). Ω



STC International president Bernard Aschwanden presents at our December meeting at the Carleton Hotel in Oak Park.

## Wednesday Webinars

# Overview of STC's Professional Certification for Aspiring CPTCs

The first tier of STC's relaunched Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) program opened in 2015. Join STC's certification representatives Chris Lyons and Liz Pohland in this informational webinar for technical communicators interested in learning more about becoming certified and about the three tiers of the credential (Foundation, Practitioner, and Expert).

**Wednesday, January 13**

**12:00 – 1:00 pm CDT**

**FREE STC Members | \$5 Non-members**

**Register now!**

### About the Speakers

**Chris Lyons** is the Chief Executive Officer of STC. He has worked for the past 15 years as a manager and business transformation consultant assisting nonprofit, commercial, and government clients in developing strategies and improving their operations. His experience and skills span most aspects of program execution from strategic visioning and initiative scoping to project management and risk mitigation. Chris has assisted clients with issues in change management, process improvement, organizational design, Web development, outsourcing, financial analysis, and portfolio optimization. Chris began his professional career in 1997. He also spent nine years in the Navy as an officer and pilot. He earned a BA in economics from the University of Maryland in 1985 and an MBA from the Sloan School of Business at MIT in 1997.

**Liz Pohland** is STC's Director of Communications and the editor of Intercom, with over 20 years of experience in publishing as a content and production manager, writer, editor, and designer. During her tenure with STC, she has worked closely on the certification program and the body of knowledge. Liz is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Technical Communication and Rhetoric from Texas Tech University; she earned a BA in English and French from Hollins University and an MA in English from Virginia Tech. Ω

## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

or those considering a career in technical communications to speak with an experienced professional in the field and get answers to what one can expect in this career.

Did you know that our Chapter also offers student scholarships to encourage and help those entering this field of work? New for 2016, we are expanding the scholarship to high school seniors. Be sure to visit our website, [www.stc-chicago.com](http://www.stc-chicago.com), to find out more and spread the word.

STC Chicago offers many more services and opportunities. I encourage you to attend a monthly program, attend an Administrative Council meeting, or visit our website to find out how our Chapter can help you. Take advantage of the services that your local STC Chapter offers. Get involved. You never know what fortuitous events or opportunities you might find through STC Chicago.

One new and special benefit STC Chicago is offering for 2016: Join STC or renew your membership and select STC Chicago as your community by December 31, 2015, and you will receive a 50% discount on all STC Chicago monthly programs during 2016. The discount also includes our annual Awards and Recognition Banquet in March. What a fantastic two-for-one benefit! You join a community of professionals in your chosen field of work, and you receive a discount to develop new and enhanced knowledge and skills.

Before you move on to the next article in our newsletter, I have a request for each of you. If you have an idea, suggestion, or request for an STC Chicago activity or service, please reach out to one of the Chapter officers and let us know. We are always looking for new and different opportunities to offer, and the next great idea could be yours. One of our most important goals is to continue to explore new ways to support our membership and guests. Please help us to continue to serve you in the best manner possible by delivering the opportunities you need and want.

And, as we end 2015 and enter 2016, I wish you a few days, a few hours, a few minutes of fun and happiness with family and friends. Take some time for reflection and good memories. Don't forget to sneak some time just for you during this hectic time of year to re-energize yourself, celebrate the good things from 2015, and plan some exciting adventures for 2016. Ω

## Member Spotlight

### Elizabeth Gecas

*Elizabeth Gecas is a technical writer at Enterprise Recovery Systems, Inc.*



#### **How long have you worked in tech comm?**

I have been learning about technical writing ever since I took a course on it during my sophomore year of college. Since then, I have continued to develop my skills by being involved in writing clubs while I was at school and taking internships during my summers. During my last year of college, I started an internship at my current company, and it turned into a full-time position right after my graduation. I've been working at this company for just over a year. Including the three-month summer internship, I've had one year and almost six months of experience working as a technical writer outside of college.

#### **When and how did you first get involved with STC?**

I first heard about STC when my technical writing professor mentioned the organization during a lecture. I didn't get an opportunity to be involved in STC until after I graduated college. My manager invited me to the monthly meetings and encouraged me to get involved. This was a great opportunity for me because I wasn't sure how to connect with STC. After attending a couple meetings, I became a member officially and I am getting involved by judging entries for the STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition.

#### **What is your most common role as a technical communicator? Do you play any additional roles?**

There are only three technical writers at my job. We work hard to balance a large amount of different types of projects, so we have to take on many different roles. I write a number of documents including policies, procedures, training materials, and quick references. Sometimes this involves minor updates and editing, and sometimes it involves meeting with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop entirely new material. All work is quality checked by my technical writing manager before the document is presented for release. I enjoy seeing my hard work released for others to use.

#### **What advice would you give someone who is thinking about joining STC?**

I would encourage anyone who is looking to get more involved in the technical writing field to join. I wish I joined

while I was still a student because I would have been able to develop my skills earlier. STC is a great resource and community of writers. Don't wait around. Jump on the opportunity because you will be happy you did.

#### **How long have you lived in Chicago?**

My family first lived in Evanston right next to Lake Michigan. We then moved to western suburbs of Chicago and I have been there for eighteen years.

#### **What do you like most (and least!) about the city?**

Ever since I was young, I had periodic weekend trips into the downtown area of the city. My earliest memories are of Lake Michigan and the Field Museum of Natural History and I still love visiting these destinations. I'd have to say I least enjoy the overpriced Taste of Chicago, and the fact that GPS never works properly in the downtown area.

#### **What do you like to do on weekends?**

I've recently adopted a dog from a local rescue, so much of my weekend is dedicated to her. On nice days, our adventures include hiking through the forest preserve and visiting the dog park. I also take her to training classes on Sundays because she is smart, and I want her to get through the advanced courses. Once we do that, maybe I can look into agility or therapy in the future. Whenever it is cold or rainy outside, we enjoy curling up and watching a movie or a good show on TV.

#### **Where would you like to be 10 years from now?**

I hope to still be working in the technical writing field. I love writing and solving the different types of challenges technical writing encounters. I want to use the resources STC offers to develop my skills and learn new things about technical writing that I was never exposed to in my education or workplace. I am still fresh to the field, so I look forward to where technical writing ultimately takes me. Ω

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## New SIG

Join the newly added Application Programming Interface (API) SIG. The API SIG will provide recommended resources for learning about APIs/SDKs, opportunities for getting training on documenting these products, and discussions about best practices for documenting APIs/SDKs using tools such as Doxygen, Javadoc, and Swagger.

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2015 is STC Chicago's 60th year as a chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. Thank you to our generous sponsors!



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Byline is a bi-monthly 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@stc-chicago.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com). Preferred format is a Microsoft® Word document file via email. 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 issues

The advertisement and payment must be received by the 20th of the month before the next published issue of the newsletter. (Byline is published in February, April, June, August, October, and December.) 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.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com).

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**Subscriptions:** The current issue of Byline and all archived editions are available on the [STC Chicago website](#).

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