Byline

President's message

By Linda Kelley, President

Where has the summer gone?! It seems like the kids just got out of school, and now here it is August already. (And I work from home, so it should feel longer for me.) I hope your summer has been enjoyable and productive, and that you've managed to stay cool, both in temperature and composure.

We ended last year on an exceptionally high note, with a very successful Summit in our backyard and another Community of Distinction award to add to our growing collection. I'd like to take a moment to publicly thank our outgoing President, Elizabeth Burke, and the rest of the elected Administrative Council, Cheri Noble, Mary De Jong, and MaryKay Grueneberg, for their outstanding service to this community. You guys are a tough act to follow. And thanks again to Bill Leavitt and Linda Jansak, for all of the blood, sweat, and tears they put into the Summit on behalf of the chapter, as well as to all of our wonderful committee managers.

We're poised now to carry all of that energy forward into another amazing year. The entire AC has been hard at work, planning not just for the upcoming program year but also setting strategic goals for the next two years.

We've got opportunities for professional development, networking, education, recognition, outreach, and information exchange — and it's my personal hope that you'll also have some fun in the process.

Right off the bat, we've got the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase on August 16 at the Hilton Chicago, an event so popular that it has sold out in previous years. Less than a week later, we have our kickoff chapter meeting, Tech Comm as ROI, on August 22 at Black Steer Charhouse in Elk Grove Village. And don't forget about Thursdays @ STC Chicago, which are informal gatherings in various Chicago-area locations the first Thursday of every month. Visit **www.stc-chicago.com** for details about any and all of these activities.

I'd like to challenge each of you to attend or participate in at least one chapter activity this coming year. It's going to be a great one, and I look forward to meeting all of you! Ω

Check out the blog!

Did you know STC Chicago has a blog? Check it out for event recaps, new software and apps for our industry, and Tech Comm Friday - a weekly roundup of all things technical communication.
www.stc-chicago.blogspot.com

Find us online!

STC CHICAGO

Have you renewed?

All our events feature reduced pricing for STC Chicago members. So if you haven't renewed your STC membership, now is the time to do so!

Read about the many **benefits of membership** and join or renew online **here**. Ω

More reasons to attend the 2012 eLearning Showcase
By Linda Jansak

Now there are even more reasons to attend the 2012 Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase on August 16 at the Hilton Chicago.

If you attend this unique conference, you'll have an opportunity to network with more than 320 elearning professionals, hear from a wide variety of speakers, exhibitors and sponsors, and see demonstrations of cutting-edge elearning tools and techniques.

You will also have an opportunity to hear from Chad Udell, keynote speaker at this year's event. Chad is the author of Learning Everywhere: How Mobile Content Strategies Are Transforming Training. He is Managing Director at Float Mobile Learning, instructor of web and application design at Bradley University, and Solutions Architect for The Iona Group. You can follow Chad on Twitter at @visualrinse.

Finally, if you register for the eLearning Showcase before August 9, you will be automatically entered in a drawing to win a complimentary seat to ASTD's eLearning Instructional Design Certificate Program. This giveaway (valued at $1,095 or more) is provided courtesy of Allen Interactions, custom learning solutions provider and creator of the ZebraZapps authoring system.

Online registration for the Showcase will remain open through Wednesday, August 15 – unless we sell out sooner. To be eligible for a free seat in ASTD's Certificate Program, be sure to register for the Showcase by 7:00 pm CDT on Thursday, August 9. For more information about this year's event, see **www.chicagoelearningshowcase.com**. Ω

2012 program survey results
By MaryKay Grueneberg

In June, we sent out our annual program survey and asked you to tell us what types of programs you want us to plan. We asked for your opinion about the program topics, speakers, formats, and locations. In a nutshell, here is what you had to say:

Meeting format types
The two-hour evening meetings were the most popular. Meetings that were less expensive, those with just a dessert and beverage provided or those that are BYO, were ranked higher than those where a full meal was pre-selected and provided. Evening webinars were just slightly more popular than lunch-hour webinars. Workshops, regardless of duration, were not as popular but still did garner interest by more than half of the respondents.

Meeting location suggestions for travel by car were quite varied and included many of the locations we use already. Suggested locations included:
*Arlington Heights, Bolingbrook (Islamorada Fish Company), *Buffalo Grove area, Crystal Lake, *Downers Grove, *Elk Grove, Elmhurst, Evanston/Skokie, Lombard, Mount Prospect, *Naperville, *Near North Side, Niles, Northbrook, *Northwest Suburbs, *Oak Brook, *Oak Park, Rolling Meadows (DePaul University Campus), Rosemont, *Schaumburg, Southwest Suburbs, West Loop, *Western Suburbs, Wheaton, *Wheeling (RAM Brewery or Siemens offices), Wilmette, and Woodstock. (Locations with asterisks were mentioned by multiple respondents.)

Meeting location suggestions for travel by public transportation:
Approximately one-third of respondents using public transportation suggested *Downtown Chicago. Other options included: Arlington Heights, Downers Grove, Edison Park or Jefferson Park, Elmhurst, Lakeview area, Lincoln Park, *Oak Park (Carlton Hotel, Maya Del Sol), Oakbrook, Palatine (Emmett's Brewing Co), and Skokie. (Locations with asterisks were mentioned by multiple respondents.)

2012 program survey results, continued

Meeting topic suggestions included:
- Panel on emerging trends, cutting edge technology
- Panel of tech comm grad students talking about the relative merits of returning to grad school (and the hot topics covered in today's tech comm departments)
- Panel of tech comm grad students who are also MBA candidates, talking about the relative value of a dual degree
- Lightning talks
- Half-day workshop playing with tools
- Using social media
- Transitioning from PDF to online help only
- Working evening on the BOK
- Evening of What I Learned at the Summit
- Short Program about certification
- New software
- Plain language for the technical writer
- Is there an easy way to publish an e-Book?
- Skill building for the unemployed
- How to design interactive instructions that combine print and video
- Bleeding edge technologies
- What do local technical communicators do at their jobs?
- Localization topics
- Working in Agile Dev environments
- How-to topics like "How to be a better editor because your company won't hire a real editor"
- Grammar and editing refresher with lots of hands-on activities to test yourself
- Social-enabled documentation
- A "day in the life" of tech writers
- Use of SnagIt or other software tools
- DITA, Enterprise publishing, structured authoring
- Something other than beginner level

Meeting speaker suggestions included:
- Tristan Bishop "Surfing the Perfect Storm"
- Neil Perlin
- Geoff Hart, Bernard Ashwanden, Leigh White, Mollye Barrett for things like graphic design
- Joe Welinske or any of our speakers from the past couple of years
- Bernard Ashwanden and Jack Molisani
- Use more chapter members as speakers (don't rely on vendors and out of town speakers)

Meeting attendance frequency preferences:
When asked how often you want to attend meetings, responses were almost evenly split between monthly and quarterly. Only a few said twice yearly and one respondent choose to not attend any meetings.

Reasons cited for not attending meetings included location/distance from work to meeting venues, topics not personally relevant, work schedules, and just plain too busy.

So, there you have it. We asked. You answered. What we found is that what we provided in the 2011-12 program year was quite popular, with just a few things missing. To address some of the location requests, this year's plan includes at least one program to be held in Greek Town and one in the Skokie area. We will try to offer fewer full-meal programs, thus reducing some of the program costs. We will once again focus on bringing in as many sponsors as possible to help keep costs down as well. For details of some of the things we have planned already for the 2012-13 program year, see the article *What's in store for you in 2012-13*. Ω

Drawing winner

We randomly picked one name from the survey respondents who chose to give us their name and email address. Our winner is **Steven Soria**. Steven will receive a complementary pass to a monthly program of his choice (with the exception of the annual recognition banquet).

Congratulations, Steven and thanks to all who participated in this year's survey. Ω

What's in store for you in 2012-13

By MaryKay Grueneberg

In June, STC Chicago conducted a member survey that asked what types of programs you wanted to attend and what locations and venues you would like us to use. Based on the feedback from the survey and the feedback we received throughout the year from our members, we have put together a preliminary program plan for the 2012-13 program year. (For the full survey results, see the article *2012 program survey results*.)

Some pieces of the lineup are still in the planning stages, but we wanted to give you a look at what we have in store for you during the upcoming program year.

All dates, programs, and venues listed below are subject to change. Watch the **STC Chicago website** for full program details and registration information as each monthly event is announced.

Date	Program	Venue/Location
Aug 16	Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase --full day of presentations and hands-on workshops --STC Chicago is co-host with CCASTD and CISPI	Hilton Chicago 720 South Michigan Ave. Chicago
Aug 22	Tech Comm as ROI – profit center not cost center --presentation by Christopher Ward, WebWorks	Black Steer Charhouse 1180 W Devon Ave. Elk Grove Village
Sept Week of 9/17	Content Management --presentation by Mary Parsons, SDL	RAM Restaurant 9520 West Higgins Road Rosemont
Sept	Topic TBD --Webinar by Lisa Pietrangeli, Thirty-Six Software	n/a
Oct 17	Taxonomy --presentation by Leigh White, STC Chicago member	Northbrook
Nov 15	How to ace an interview using a portfolio --presentation by Jack Molisani	Greek Town West Loop
Dec 5 or 6	Lightning Talks (+holiday celebration) --lightning speakers: Chris Hester, Beth Najberg, Adam Evans, Mollye Barrett, Betsy Maaks, Ralph Strozza (possibly more)	Olive Garden 1211 Butterfield Road Downers Grove
Jan	Possible Webinar	n/a
Feb	Member Appreciation Night --networking event	TBD
March	Chicago Chapter Recognitions and Awards Banquet --tentative keynote speaker: Bernard Aschwanden	Black Steer Charhouse 1180 W Devon Ave. Elk Grove Village
April	Preview of a Summit presentation --speaker TBD, will be STC Chicago member	Skokie
May	TBD	TBD
June	End of year celebration and annual business meeting --networking event	TBD

Join us for our kickoff of the 2012-13 program year
By MaryKay Grueneberg

Join us on August 22 to hear Christopher Ward talk about "Tech Comm as ROI" as he explains how to make tech comm a profit center, not a cost center. Christopher will give us a simple look at content creation workflow and describe how a technical expert can extend the process to include customer retention and company profitability. We will discuss how online help and other customer facing content, when developed properly, transforms you and your team into a profit center for your company.

Christopher Ward, Director of Sales at WebWorks, specializes in helping small teams accomplish big things by better aligning departmental processes with overall company strategies. Christopher's experience in strategy development began as an Analyst for U.S. Army Intelligence and then later moved in to the corporate world when working for Dell computers. For the last three years he has been working for WebWorks and enjoying getting to know the technical communications industry. His diverse experiences allow Christopher to recognize untapped potential in a company's overall business strategy and help them achieve that potential.

See the **STC Chicago website** for full details and for registration information. Ω

2012 Technical Communication Competition
By Cheri Noble

We are excited to get started on this year's Technical Communication Competition. Now is the time to start looking at the work you've produced over the past year or so and decide if you're going to enter the 2012 Technical Communication Competition. We are looking for a lot of diverse entries this year; will you be one of them?

The categories for entries are:
*   Training Materials
*   Informational Materials
*   Promotional Materials
*   User Support Materials

Though the title is a "competition", entries are not compared against each other to determine a "winner". Each entry is evaluated on its own merit and a judging evaluation form is completed with detailed comments. This is an opportunity to have other professionals judge your entry and provide feedback.

Some of the reasons to participate in the Technical Communication Competition include:
*   Establishing professional standards for our work
*   Providing visibility for our profession
*   Recognizing the outstanding effort of technical communication professionals

When does the competition begin?
We'll start accepting entries in early September with a deadline on October 19, 2012.

Who is eligible?
Anyone, member of STC or not, is eligible to submit one or more entries to the competition. Work can be entered whether completed by an individual or on behalf of a colleague or subordinate.

All dates and links to the forms for entry and for judging will be posted on the Competitions page of the **website** soon.

Have any questions? Attend our August 22 program, "Technical Communication as ROI," at the Black Steer Charhouse in Elk Grove Village. See you there! Ω

Member spotlight: Jessica Behles

By Kim Sikora

I asked STC Chicago member Jessica Behles for her thoughts on the city, literature, and STC. Here's what she had to say:

How long have you lived in Chicago?
I moved to Chicago (from Albuquerque, New Mexico) on May 3rd, but I've been visiting family in the area once or twice a year for my whole life. Those visits were enough to convince me that I'd want to live and work here. Got the "live here" part taken care of.

What do you like most (and least!) about the city?
It's hard to choose one thing to like most. I love trying new foods, so I love the sheer variety of culinary offerings Chicago presents. I also love how there's almost always something to do, even with a limited budget. Also, frozen custard. Somehow, this heavenly substance has not yet made it to the Southwest.

I will say that I'm not altogether fond of the weather. I was born and raised in the high desert, so although I don't mind the heat so much, the humidity feels pretty brutal sometimes. I'm not looking forward to the winter, either. Fortunately, I have a thriving scarf collection.

When and how did you first get involved with STC?
My first ever contact with the STC was winning some awards (sponsored by the local chapter) for the final reports I wrote to accompany projects in a computer programming competition way back in high school. At the time, I didn't know who the STC was. During college, I was active in my school's student chapter on an on-and-off basis, and I attended the 2008 Summit in Philadelphia. Chicago is my first professional chapter.

Top three favorite books?
I can't really say I have favorite books. I enjoy reading about science (especially geology) and about how languages develop and evolve. I also read fantasy and young adult novels as a guilty pleasure when I don't feel like thinking and reading at the same time.

Favorite place to visit?
I love to people watch (and eat funnel cake) on Navy Pier. I also enjoy visiting just about any library. Something about the smell of books is extremely comforting.

Strangest job you've had?
During a high school summer vacation, I worked mornings at an organic vegetable farm. There's nothing quite like a ripe cherry tomato, plucked fresh from the vine.

Most significant thing you have learned from being involved with STC?
The STC provided my first introduction to the field of technical communication, so I think that on its own is more valuable than any one specific thing I've learned.

What advice would you give other people who are thinking about joining STC?
Your personal and professional network is much more useful if it's actually in place before you need it, and the STC is full of networking opportunities.

Thanks, Jessica!

If you'd like to be featured in a future member spotlight, send an email to **byline@stc-chicago.com**. Ω

Judging for the 2012-2013 STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition

By Cynthia Laughlin

We're currently recruiting judges for the annual STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition. Judging has many benefits and can enrich your experience with STC Chicago. Read on for answers to some of the most common questions.

Why should I be a judge for the STC Competition?
Judges have a unique opportunity to review entries from different categories and industries. Entries can be websites, manuals, help documentation, newsletters, etc. Past entries have come from industries as diverse as aerospace, manufacturing, agricultural, software, and medical associations. Seeing such different work can be educational as well as inspiring. You also get to interact with other judges and benefit from their experience.

How does judging work?
Judges are placed in three-member teams with a designated team lead. The team members receive between three and six entries that must be reviewed over a two-month period.

Each judge reviews the entries using a form that highlights different elements of technical communication. Responses are shared within the team and are modified if necessary. Once the judging team agrees on an award level for an entry, the team lead communicates that information to the judging manager.

Where do I sign up?
We will publish a sign-up form in August.

When will I get my entries?
Entries will be handed out at the judging orientation on November 5, 2012. The orientation will be held at the office of the CARA Group in Oakbrook. Ω

Twitter isn't just for the birds

By Adam Evans

When Scott Berkun took the stage for his keynote address at the 2012 Summit, the first thing he asked was "How many people have never used Twitter?" and half the audience raised their hand. Now, I think it's your choice whether you want to use Twitter—I'm not here to force you to do something you don't want to do—but as technical communicators, it's our job to remain relevant and stay up-to-speed with the latest and emerging technologies. Why wouldn't you want to give one of the most powerful information-sharing networks a chance?

As a technical writer, I stay up-to-date on the latest articles, blog posts, and news in the industry. As a travel blogger, I receive updates from some of my favorite destinations and travel brands. As a news junkie, I follow most news networks who alert me of breaking news the moment it happens. Twitter is my go-to resource for just about everything—here are a few examples:

Twitter is fast
I was about to board a plane in Seattle headed to Chicago when Delta canceled my flight. They immediately emailed me my information for my new, which departed 10 hours later. Not only was that a terrible inconvenience, but I knew there were earlier flights I could get on. As I stood in line at the ticket counter, I took to Twitter:

Adam: @DeltaAir rescheduled my flight for 10 hrs later without asking. Very inconvenient. Trying to get an earlier flight.
Delta: @AdamEvans send us your flight number and we'll see what we can do.

I sent my info, and voilà. Before I even reached the front of the line, Delta rescheduled me on an earlier flight and notified me via direct message. I love Twitter.

Twitter isn't just for the birds, continued

Twitter saves money
When American Airlines tweeted that they were having a 24-hour Twitter sale on flights to Hawaii, I pounced. What's normally an $800+ flight was over 50% off, so between that discount and my airline miles, my wife and I went to Maui for less than $400. Have I mentioned that I love Twitter?

Twitter gives you access
You may not care about this as much as I do, but I've had several Twitter encounters with "celebrities". Namely, Kirstie Alley, Sherri Shepherd, Bethenny Frankel, and Kathy Griffin. Not A-list celebs by any stretch of the imagination, but known names (maybe). Most encounters occurred after I congratulated them for an achievement—except I said something fairly mean-spirited to Kirstie once and she blocked me. Oops. The point is, Twitter puts you in contact with people and brands you admire and care about.

Practical Application
Twitter isn't just all fun and games, though. It has real business value that many companies are monetizing. Consumers are talking about brands, and companies can no longer control the conversation through traditional marketing measures. We—companies, marketers, writers—have to learn to contribute and monitor the conversation, allowing customers to express themselves, and coming alongside to support and assist when necessary.

At STC Chicago, that's exactly what we're trying to do. As the newly-minted chapter PR Manager, I've been overseeing the STC Chicago Twitter account for the past several months. Summit 2012 was the first real chance the chapter had to interact with users in a dynamic way. I intended to use Twitter to: engage attendees, answer questions about the Summit or Chicago, and share attendees' blog posts and comments.

We were having great interactions with Summit goers, and then late Sunday night, Karen Mardahl tweeted to STC Chicago:

> **Karen Mardahl**
> @kmdk
>
> @stcchicago @chris_oh @Kristil Help? @rjhoughton needs ankle brace or ace bandage; Hyatt doesn't have on-site. No access to a car.

This certainly wasn't what I expected, but when you open yourself up to questions and feedback, you're often surprised at what you receive. Helping was a no-brainer. I was in the city when I received this message, so I simply stopped at Walgreens, picked up an ankle brace, and trained back to the Summit. All the while I responded privately to the individual who needed a brace to let her know help was on the way.

We met up and I delivered the brace. After the conference, I followed up to make sure everything was OK. She responded:

> **rjhoughton**
> @rjhoughton
>
> @stcchicago Definitely helped – my ankle would have been way worse without compression! Thanks for helping out!

And that, my friends, is the power of Twitter. In many cases, it's the most efficient form of communication. It not only allows users to access people otherwise out of reach, but it also gives businesses and organizations the chance to meet (and exceed) customer expectations. So, if you've never given Twitter a try, consider creating an account and taking it for a spin. There are plenty of resources out there to help you along the way, like **this**, and **this**, and **this**. And one of my favorite recommendations for new users is to take a 30-day challenge like **this guy did**.

Twitter isn't just for the birds. It's for anyone who wants to learn, remain relevant, and experience the expanding power of social media. Ω

Couldn't attend the Summit? Now you can "attend" anywhere!

By Kevin Cuddihy

Editor's note: This article was originally published in the STC notebook on May 24, 2012 and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

The STC Summit just concluded, with attendees choosing from over 80 education sessions in 10 different tracks. They brushed up on old skills and learned new ones. But we realize not everyone could travel to the Summit. Taking time off from work? Getting budget approval from your supervisor? Spending your own hard-earned money to travel? Not everyone could do that, and that goes double for our global members.

That's why STC is bringing the Summit to you, with SUMMIT@aClick. We realize that it wasn't possible for everyone to come to Rosemont and experience the Summit in person. So while we can't bring you the all-important networking that took place at the Summit, we can bring almost all of the sessions directly to your computer. SUMMIT@aClick offers conference sessions with audio synched to PowerPoint and also allows access to speaker materials (when available). The Summit offered dozens of sessions and SUMMIT@aClick will include almost all of them! (See the Summit program for a list of sessions and icons marking which ones were recorded.)

Even Summit attendees, who receive SUMMIT@aClick free with registration, couldn't get to everything they wanted. "I'm going to be referring to SUMMIT@aClick for the next year," said one previously. "There's just so much stuff that I didn't get to see!"

And you can see it all, too! SUMMIT@aClick for the 2012 conference will be live roughly six to eight weeks after the event, but preorder now and get a special discount rate of $149 for members, $299 for nonmembers. That gets you all the recorded sessions and lets you learn from some of the top technical communication minds … all on your computer and on your schedule.

Best of all, you can return to these sessions again and again throughout the year. If you need to review DITA in August, SUMMIT@aClick is there. If your department decides to explore XML in November, you can bring up a few sessions to share. And if you're assigned a new job duty in January, SUMMIT@aClick can help. (Access good through March 31, 2013.)

You must order by July 13 to get this preorder price. After July 13 the price goes up to $249 for members and $499 for nonmembers.

Editor's note: The special preorder price has been extended. Sign up today!

Click **here** to sign up to take advantage of all the sessions for 2012. To log in and purchase, use your preferred STC email address as your username and your last name as your password. This will verify you as an STC member and allow you to receive member pricing for SUMMIT@aClick.

Bring the Summit back to you with SUMMIT@aClick! Ω

Readers write in
By Kim Sikora

Submit a 2-3 sentence response to the following question and your name and response could be published in a future issue.

This issue's question: **What's your favorite thing about the back-to-school season?**

Submit responses to **byline@stc-chicago.com** to be featured in an upcoming issue! Ω

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 138
Members: 35
Senior Members: 78
Student Members: 17 Ω

STC Chicago Chapter Leaders 2012-2013

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Byline

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**. Preferred format is a MS 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.

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