

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

President's Message

Time flies when you're having fun!

By Adam Evans



According to legend, that phrase originated in 1896 when the clock winder for Big Ben drank too much beer and overwound the clock mechanism to such an extent that the clock advanced by 1,440 hours during the next 24 hours. Upon

discovering his mistake, the inebriated clock smith allegedly proclaimed the now-famous phrase.

That sentiment certainly rings true for me with STC. It seems like yesterday when I attended my first STC Chicago meeting where I met some of the members who continue to play a major role in the chapter today and who are responsible for getting me involved.

At that meeting, then-president Elizabeth Burke kindly introduced herself and talked about several volunteer opportunities. She facilitated an introduction to Linda Jansak who at the time was heading up the Summit 2012 committee that I became actively involved with. I also met Chris Hester, Linda Kelley, Cheri Noble, Bill Leavitt, and others who continue to make an impact on the chapter and on my professional development.

As I start my tenure as president, I look to those who've come before me as examples of leadership and professionalism—especially last year's officers. I have big shoes to fill, but I'm excited to plan another year of activities and events with a new set of officers.

Speaking of events, Cynthia Laughlin and I recently represented the chapter at the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase where we networked with hundreds of technical communicators and instructional designers. We fielded a host of inquiries about membership, our upcoming meetings, and what resources we offer. The Showcase continues to be a valuable resource for us year after year.

Additionally, our Program Committee has been hard at work planning a year of interesting and diverse meetings. Our first event took place Thursday, August 21st where we covered the following topics:

- Moving from PDF docs to Online Help
- Working with SMEs
- Working from Home
- Professionalism in 2014

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Have work you're proud of?

Enter our annual Technical Communication Competition!

Submission deadline: Sept 27

[Learn more...](#)

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Find us online!



September Program: Rapid eLearning Tools

A Look at Creating eLearning—Captivate vs. Articulate with Tanya Blakley

By Cheri Noble

In this program, we'll explore some key differences between two of the most widely used rapid eLearning software applications, Articulate Storyline and Adobe Captivate. Bring your iPads and your Notepads, as Tanya Blakley will share some sample courses developed with both tools and walk through the features of each program used in their creation. You'll discover some helpful how-tos and learn about adding video, sound, quizzes, and other interactive elements.

Tanya has more than 17 years of experience in training and instructional design. She holds a Master's degree from Boise State University in Educational Technology with a focus in Online Teaching. She is currently an instructional specialist with a prominent pharmacy benefits management company and is considered their primary eLearning designer with courses deploying to an employee base of over 4,500.

Thursday, September 18

Networking and Dinner 6:00 PM | Program 7:00 PM

IIT Rice Campus, 201 East Loop Road, Wheaton

\$20 Members \$30 Non-members \$15 Students

[Register here.](#) Ω

Highlights from the eLearning & Technology Showcase

By Cynthia Laughlin

The annual Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase took place on August 5th at the NIU Naperville Conference Center. The showcase was hosted by the Chicago Chapter of American Society for Training & Development (CASTD), the Chicago International Society for Performance Improvement (CISPI), and the Chicago Chapter of the Society for Technical Communicators (STC). Nearly 340 people attended the event, which was the first one held at a suburban location.

The morning started with a generous breakfast followed by a keynote lecture by Cammy Bean, the Vice President of Learn-

ing Design for Kineo. Bean presented "Careers in eLearning: Moving from Accident to Intention"—a lively presentation about becoming a more well-rounded eLearning practitioner. Attendees commented on the scope of her talk as well as her animated speaking style.

Sessions continued throughout the day and covered topics such as game theory, scenarios, eLearning tools, WordPress, and using mobile technology. To help attendees spend their time effectively, sessions were organized into Design, Development, Mobile Learning, and Strategy tracks. Several STC members attended a session called "How Interactive Storytelling™ Reached Our Audience & They Loved It!" Kris Adzia from Robert Crown Center for Health Education and Liesl Mahnke from Reflection Software explained how they developed and designed an interactive program to teach students about the science and reality of heroin addiction. The session provoked questions about accounting for research time accurately and how to measure success on long-term initiatives.

Between sessions, attendees visited the well-stocked refreshment area, reconnected with colleagues, and visited exhibitors' booths. There were a number of booths representing local companies and organizations such as CARA, CISPI, and STC Chicago. This year, the raffle prize of a Kindle drove a lot of foot traffic to the STC booth. Although people stopped by to enter the drawing, they were also interested in hearing about STC and its programs. Not surprisingly, since most attendees were eLearning professionals, there was a lot of interest in the September topic, "Rapid eLearning Tools: A Look at Creating eLearning—Captivate vs. Articulate." In addition, a number of former members stopped by and expressed interest in attending programs.

The day ended with a humorous sprint through the exhibitors' area, as Matt Elwell, the Showcase Emcee, moved from booth to booth joking and raffling prizes. Some of the item



raffled off were iPads, subscriptions, books, and conference registrations. The STC prize was won by a former member, Ellen Smatlak.

Although the host committee is still tallying surveys and working on the final report, this year's event appears to have been another successful showcase. [Ω](#)

The Annual Competition Has Begun and We're Looking for Judges...

By Cynthia Laughlin

If you've never judged before, it's a great way to get involved in the Chapter and learn from your colleagues. If you've judged before, we need your experience! If you've judged before, but not in a while, consider giving it a try again. Our categories, forms, and format have changed. The Competition Committee works hard to make the event fun and mostly painless!

For more information and to sign up, visit [Judging for the 2014 STC Competition](#). [Ω](#)

Tips for Effective Editing of Technical Documents

By Francis Bao

A highly polished document reflects the professional image of an organization. Technical editing plays a significant role in developing technical documents, such as user manuals, procedure manuals, software guides, and organizational brochures. Think of editing in the big picture of process; it is a crucial part of all technical writing projects. However, we have to remember there are multiple levels of technical editing, which makes the task more challenging.

Level 1: Spec Editing. Editors need to check if documents have satisfied all the macro requirements specified in the documentation plans. This process includes format check and readability check.

Format Check. Editors should check to see if a document contains correct chapters, sections, page numbers, and glossary, as well as whether or not the document includes a table of content, index, and list of figures and tables, as well as copyright information.

Readability Check. The language and readability level should be appropriate for a specific audience.

Level 2: Style Editing. Editors also need to check if the officially approved abbreviations, acronyms, and stylistic conventions specified in corporate or client guidelines have been used. All acronyms in the description should be spelled out when they appear in the document for the first time. Any unnecessary jargon should be eliminated. All figures and table captions should be formatted the way they're supposed to be. Font family, font size, and color palette need to be handled properly. Language used in the technical document should be free of obvious gender bias.

Level 3: Comprehensibility Editing. This process should answer a simple question: Does the material presented in the document form a logical, easy-to-understand sequence? Logical flow of information is an important element that professional editors should focus on during the editing process. They need to check to see if the documents meet high standards for the way words form phrases, phrases form sentences, sentences form paragraphs, and paragraphs compose large sections.

Level 4: Copy Editing. Editors should check grammatical errors as well as typos in the technical documents. More importantly, editors also need to check if individual sentences are well-formed. In a scientific or a technical document, sentences should be written in a short and straight-forward manner. Technical editors should avoid long sentences, since long sentences may contain complicated clauses that will confuse readers who are trying to locate technical information.

Technical editing will affect the style of writing in the field of technical communication. Professional editors should follow these tips to produce sharp-looking technical documents. Before releasing documents to public audiences, editors should always check these editing guidelines—because not only do these factors catch the eyes of readers, but they also will impact the quality of polished products. [Ω](#)

This article previously appeared in, Corrigio, the Technical Editing SIG newsletter.

Looking Forward to the 2014-15 Program Year

By Elizabeth Burke

The STC Chicago Program Committee is excited to announce the 2014-2015 program series. We've scheduled a mix of chapter favorites and new topics for this year. As always, we try to rotate the meeting sites around the Chicagoland area to make the meetings convenient for as many of our attendees as possible.

This year we are trying a new idea. Our goal, whenever possible, is to hold our meetings on the third Thursday of the month. We hope the schedule will help you attend meetings and avoid any confusion about meeting dates.

Take a look at the list of topics planned this year and be sure to visit our website, <http://www.stc-chicago.com>, for details throughout the program year. You may also notice that the Chapter is planning a special celebration as the STC Chicago Chapter celebrates 60 years as an organization.

If you have any questions, please contact the Program Committee Manager at program@stc-chicago.com.

Month	Date	Topic or Speaker	Location
September	9/18/14	Rapid eLearning Tools	IIT Wheaton
October	10/16/14	TBD	TBD
November	11/13/14	Social Media for Tech Comm	TBD
December	12/18/14	Lightning Talks / Holiday Celebration	TBD
January	1/15/15	Thirty-Six Software or Scott Abel	Webinar
	TBD	60 th Anniversary Celebration	TBD
February	2/19/15	Agile vs. ADDIE Instructional Design	TBD
March	3/19/15	Banquet	TBD
April	4/16/15	Navigating the Company Environment: Large, Small, Contracting	TBD
May	5/15/15	Summit Preview	TBD
June	7/18/15	End-of-Year Business Meeting	TBD

Member Spotlight: Betsy Maaks

Betsy Maaks is Vice President of STC Chicago. She is an STC Fellow and a longtime member of the Chicago chapter.



What are you working on now?

Really boring documents with really great people at Discover Financial Services (aka Discover Card).

How long have you been working in tech comm?

Sometimes it feels like since dirt was invented.

When and how did you first get involved with STC?

I started with STC Chicago at the end of the effort to create the Institute for Professional Learning with NIU.

Is there anything you wish you had known about STC when you first joined the organization?

STC has really great people at all levels of the organization.

What's the most significant thing you've learned from being involved with STC?

Being active in STC offered management opportunities that I did not have at work.

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

Volunteer. We are all volunteers who put our collective heads together and use our skills to offer enrichment opportunities to the tech comm community.

What's your favorite STC moment?

Staring at my STC Fellow plaque, wondering if that's really my name.

What's your favorite movie?

Cyrano de Bergerac, the French version with Gerard Depardieu.

What kind of music do you listen to?

"Bro-country" (both kinds: country and western).

What do you like to do on weekends?

I'm on a competitive dance team. We perform combined line dance and couples Country Western dance.

Where would you like to be 10 years from now?

Volunteering in STC and dancing every night of the week. Ω

Call for Entries for the 2014 Technical Communication Competition

By Cynthia Laughlin

Last Sunday, the 2014 Call for Entries was announced to our local and national chapters. The competition is a great way to receive feedback and recognition for your work in Training Materials, Informational Materials, Promotional Materials, and User Support Materials

Entrants may win awards of Distinguished, Excellence, or Merit. Entries winning Distinguished or Excellence will be eligible to apply to the International Summit Awards competition. All winners will receive plaques or framed certificates, which are presented at the annual banquet.

If you want more information, visit [2014 Call for Entries](#). The page has important details for anyone considering entering the competition—such as dates, rules, and entry forms. We look forward to seeing your work. Ω

President's message

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Keep an eye on your inbox for news about our upcoming events!

I encourage you to attend as many events as you can this year. When I'm asked what I get out of STC, I always say the most valuable resource for me is the connections I make with fellow technical communicators. Our educational offerings and publications are excellent, but time and time again, the resource I rely on the most is the individual I meet who's doing something innovative who I want to emulate.

If you're at an STC Chicago event this year, please take the initiative to introduce yourself. I'd love to learn what you do and what your experience in technical communication has been. See you out there! Ω

STC Chicago Chapter Leaders | 2014-2015

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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 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.

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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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