Byline

Quarterly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

President's Message - How Did We Get Less Snow than D.C.?

By Dan Dornbrook - Chapter President

Inside This Issue

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Familiarity is often said to bring comfort, but many of us sometimes find the opposite to be true.

Take Chicagoland traffic – please! Or take the lingering snow and cold that remind those of us who grew up in this climate of our long-ago childhoods – but not in a good way now that we have more to do than build snow forts. Or, take the feeling that many of us get in our stomachs when we hear ourselves talking the way our parents did when we were at the age where we least wanted to hear "that" again, whatever it was. (What do you mean, "Enough already!"? Ahem.)

On a much happier note, change is often good, for us individually and for our chapter.

Kudos to Competition Co-Managers

For example, we restructured our awards competition this year with two new co-managers: MaryKay Grueneberg (also our chapter vice president) to coordinate judging and Elizabeth Burke to coordinate awards and entries. Not only did MaryKay and Elizabeth divide the work smoothly and efficiently, but they took management of the competition to a whole

new level, where entrants were notified of their awards earlier than in past years, among many other improvements.

You can see the fruits of their labors – and those of our many judges and this year's winning entrants – at our Awards Banquet on March 18. Please check the Upcoming Meetings section of this issue for details.

In addition to honoring competition winners, the banquet will include awards to volunteers who have served our chapter and STC especially well. Online registration for this event is open, and we hope to see you there!

Thanks to Volunteers

Indeed, volunteers are critical to our chapter, and members who succeed in one volunteer role often take on new or additional roles. For example, Elizabeth recently stepped up to serve as chapter secretary, a key officer position because of the legal requirement for us as a not-for-profit organization to keep written records of our leadership meetings and decisions. In addition to taking minutes for the Administrative Council (AC), the secretary compiles reports from our various volunteer committees and prepares agendas to keep AC meetings focused and efficient.

Elizabeth was appointed secretary after Malcolm Culbertson, who was elected as secretary last spring, stepped aside to focus on other professional and personal responsibilities. Malcolm had served two previous terms as secretary (from 2005 to 2007), as well as managing our awards competition from 2002 to 2004 and serving two terms on our Nominating Committee (2002-2003 and 2008-2009). He remains a loyal member, and the chapter thanks him for his years of service and wishes him well.

Candidates Sought for 2010-2011

Speaking of the Nominating Committee, this year's committee is seeking candidates for some elected officer positions and some Nominating Committee positions for the 2010-2011 program year, which begins in July. If you know of worthy candidates, or if you wish to apply for any of these positions, please contact the current committee manager, Chris Hester, at nominating@stc-chicago.org.

In addition to elected officer positions, we often have opportunities to serve on one of the many committees listed on our web site, www.stc-chicago.org (click on "About STC Chicago," then click on "Committees"). Committee managers are appointed by the elected officers and always welcome new volunteers.

As always, your chapter leaders welcome your ideas about how to make our chapter better and stronger. Please contact me at president@stc-chicago.org or MaryKay at vicepresident@stc-chicago.org, and let us know what we can do to serve you better. Ω

Register Now for Tech Comm Summit 2010

Now is the time to register for the Technical Communication Summit 2010, STC's annual international conference, on May 2 to 5 at the Hyatt Regency at Reunion Tower in Dallas, Texas.

Early Bird rates, available through March 15, are:
- $845 for STC members
- $1045 for non-members

Advance rates, available from March 16 to April 20, are:
- $995 for STC members
- $1245 for non-members

Walk-in rates after April 20 are:
- $1195 for STC members
- $1345 for non-members

Additional discounts are available for students and retirees. For more information, visit www.stc.org. Ω

Volunteers Needed for Showcase

The Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase is seeking volunteers for August 2010. The Showcase, now in its third year, is a joint venture of STC Chicago, the Chicago International Society for Performance Improvement (CISPI) and the Chicago Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (CCASTD). Please contact info@chicagoelearningshowcase.com for details. Ω

Summit Grants Now Available

STC Chicago is excited to announce that this year, we will be able to help ten members attend the 2010 STC Summit by providing $200 Summit Grants. The purpose of these grants is to help with registration and travel expenses. To request a grant, please e-mail a copy of your Summit registration confirmation to treasurer@stc-chicago.org, along with your mailing address. These grants are available on a first-come, first-served basis, for STC Chicago members only. Ω

Spring Workshop Announced - Technical Communicators Help Your Career Ride the Market Waves

By Francis Bao

Carole Berkson-Ross

As a technical communicator, are you currently looking for a job? Alternatively, are you a student who is going to graduate from a university with a technical communication degree?

You may ask yourself questions such as, "How should I apply my skills and expertise to connect my career goals to current and future marketplaces?" Or, "How should I make myself the most valued technical communicator in this profession during today's economic downturn?" Or, "What do clients want to pay for?"

Our spring workshop will help you answer these questions and strengthen your value as a technical communication professional. Our facilitator, Carole Berkson-Ross, a talent-development professional from California, will educate us on real-world needs for technical communicators and what hiring managers want to pay for. She will report on primary and secondary research into hiring managers' needs and expectations for product development, training, and marketing in information technology and other specialized industries.

She will also conduct collaborative sessions on aligning, publicizing, and expanding your current skills to meet market opportunities. This workshop will result in individual Action Plans. Carole will offer individual follow up coaching options for members who want to break through professional barriers and ensure consistent progress on their Action Plans.

Carole Berkson-Ross is the developer of many multimedia "firsts," including the original Apple Videodisc Toolkit and the groundbreaking corporate knowledge base Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS) which won all three top awards from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI), and Bill Gates' Windows World Brilliant Solution. Carole's success in profitably applying new technologies comes through her leadership of teams and her coaching for individual careers. As a hiring manager for technical communicators, Carole has coached many professionals to develop their skills, expand their roles, win awards, and create careers they want.

Carole initiated the first two ASTD Technologies for Training conferences. She has hosted business delegations from countries around the globe on the subject of American Business and New Technologies. Carole holds several professional certifications, including Project Management Professional (PMP) and Certified Performance Technologist (CPT). In addition to her success as architect and project director for award-winning projects, Carole is an accomplished writer and an enthusiastic facilitator and mentor.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 10, 2010, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at National-Louis University, 850 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL. For online registration information, please check our chapter website, www.stc-chicago.org. Ω

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, March 18: Awards Banquet

Meet winners from the chapter's annual awards competition and see their winning entries.

When: 5:30 p.m. (dinner at 6:30, ceremony at 7:30). Full dinner (including non-alcohol beverages) will be served family style. Cash bar is available.

Where: Francesca's Amici, 174 N. York Road, Elmhurst

Register at: www.stc-chicago.org (click the "Meeting Registration" link). Please register by Friday, March 5, or pay full price (cash or check only) at the door.

For directions: Call 630-279-7970 or visit Francesca's web site: www.miafrancesca.com/restaurants/amici/location.asp.

Wednesday, April 18: Writing for Global Markets

Translators Catherine Deschamps-Potter and Hans Fenstermacher will discuss ways to optimize your documentation for translation for global markets.

When: 6:30 p.m. (presentation at 7:00). Coffee, soft drinks, and desserts are included.

Where: DePaul University Rolling Meadows Campus, 2550 W. Golf Rd. Suite 255, Rolling Meadows.

Register at: www.stc-chicago.org (click on "Meetings" then "Meeting Registration")

Rates: $10 online, $20 at the door

For directions: Call 847-437-9522 or visit the campus web site: http://suburbancampuses.depaul.edu. Ω

Membership Renewal

By Chris Hester

There is still time to renew your STC membership for 2010 and your Chicago Chapter membership! Remember, when you renew your membership and continue as a member in the Chicago Chapter, that you are part of an award-winning community that supports your professional development as a technical communicator.

Members who renew their membership before February 28, 2010 (including those who renewed prior to December 31, 2009) will be entered in a drawing to win one of the following:

- a complimentary registration to the 2010 STC Summit in Dallas (two names will be drawn, registrations are valued at $845 each)
- an Apple iPod touch (32GB, valued at $299)

Members who renew their membership between March 1 and March 9 will be entered in a drawing to win an Apple iPod touch (8 GB, valued at $199). Members who renew their membership between March 10 and March 19 will be entered in a drawing to win an Apple iPod nano (8 GB, valued at $149).

The Summit registration winners will be notified by March 5. Other winners will be notified by March 28. Ω

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 298

Associate Fellows: 7

Fellows: 7

Members: 92

Senior Members: 178

Student Members: 14 Ω

Stay Connected!

Find STC Chicago on Facebook and follow @stcchicago on Twitter to keep up-to-date on chapter activities and local events! Ω

STC Efforts Realized as U.S. Government Acknowledges Technical Writers as Distinct Profession

Reprinted from STC News and Notes

The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its newest *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH) in December and, as STC announced in April, "Technical Writer" has its own chapter for the very first time.

The change acknowledges that the requirements of technical writing are sufficiently distinct from all other writing professions to warrant according technical writers their own chapter in the 2010 edition.

"This is a breakthrough achievement for STC and for the profession of technical communication," said STC President Cynthia C. Currie. "It is the result of a long-standing relationship with economist Richard O'Sullivan and our vision that technical writers (and all technical communicators) be recognized as the special breed of communicator they are."

O'Sullivan, principal of Change Management Solutions, is an association economist who has been advising BLS for 25 years and assisted STC in this endeavor. "To go from where we were in late 2006 when STC approached OMB to having a new category of technical writer in 2010 is amazing," said O'Sullivan. "Usually, putting through changes like this can take up to a decade. But our argument was compelling and the differences STC focused on were clearly apparent and hard for OMB to argue against. We had our proof in the marketplace."

STC responded to a request from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to update the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOCs), the classification system used by all US and state government agencies when collecting and publishing information on employment, wages, and salaries. The *Occupational Out-look Handbook* is one of the Department of Labor's most popular programs and an essential tool for the human resource management profession. The reference details the latest changes in the 820 different occupations tracked by the BLS each year.

"Having the US Bureau of Labor Statistics recognize technical writers as a profession distinct from all other writing professions independently confirms STC's claim that not all writers can do technical writing," explained STC Immediate Past President Mark Clifford, who was STC President at the time of the initial announcement. "We're very pleased to have this distinction made in an important reference tool that is so well respected by the human resource community."

The OOH presents some good news in its inaugural Technical Writer chapter as well. It states that technical writers held close to 50,000 jobs in 2008, and more importantly, employment is expected to grow 18 percent—"faster than average," and nearly twice the rate projected for the nation's workforce in total—from 2008 to 2018. The chapter also calculates a median salary of $61,620 as of May 2008, with further breakdowns for specific industries. (For a comparison, "Writers and Authors" had a median salary of $53,070 at the same

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

time, while "Editors" checked in at $49,990. And job growth for the positions is expected to be over two percentages *below* the rate for the entire workforce from 2008 to 2018.)

The OOH description of the position clearly differentiates it from similar jobs. As significant points, it lists the following:

- "Most jobs in this occupation require a college degree—preferably in communications, journalism, or English—but a degree in a technical subject may be useful.
- Job prospects for most technical writing jobs are expected to be good, particularly for those with Web or multimedia experience.
- Excellent communications skills, curiosity, and attention to detail are highly desired traits."

Overall, the inclusion of the position and the information provided are good news for STC members and the profession. "The OOH is the most important reference tool used by HR professionals," said O'Sullivan. "To have this distinction being made by the DOL in this document is important for the profession. It supports STC's position before employers and HR departments and provides an unbiased and respected voice backing what STC has been saying for years."

To access the new section of OOH for technical writers, visit www.bls.gov/oco/ocos319.htm. To read the Handbook in its entirety, go to www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm. Ω

Call for Nominations for Chapter Offices 2010-2011

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 secretary's position is ideal for newer members, and if you have accounting experience, you may be interested in the treasurer's position. If you are a senior member who has attended chapter activities and are familiar with our membership, the nominating committee could use your expertise.

In March, STC Chicago members will elect the administrative council (AC) officers who will govern the chapter in the upcoming year (e.g., July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011). These officers, except the immediate past president, are elected by the membership for one-year terms. (Even though the chapter vice president ascends to the president's position, the vice president must be listed on the ballot as the candidate for presi-

dent per the chapter bylaws.)

The nominating committee is now accepting nominations for Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Nominating Committee Members. Send an e-mail message to nominating@stc-chicago.org to nominate a member (or yourself!) for one of our officer positions.

The Nominating Committee recruits and vets candidates for the elected positions. Because of their relationships and knowledge of members' experience and participation, the Nominating Committee members are able to help the Vice President with chapter outreach and volunteer recruitment. The chapter membership elects three members to this committee, and the President appoints an additional one or two members.

This year, since the newly elected officers are expected to attend Leadership Day at the STC annual summit, the chapter will pay for the officer's registration and provide a $200 travel allowance.

In addition to these elected positions, we have a variety of committees that need volunteers. Participating on the administrative council provides valuable opportunities for both personal and professional development, allowing you to develop leadership skills, strengthen your networks, and learn more about our profession and its practitioners. If you have any questions about volunteering or running for an office, please contact nominating@stc-chicago.org. Ω

Chapter Bylaws Need Approval

Every two years, STC Chicago reviews the Chicago Chapter Bylaws to keep them up to date with current practices and with changes in the way STC is governed. To enact these bylaws, a majority of the voting members of the chapter must approve them.

The revisions are more significant than in past years for several reasons:

- Electronic voting has had an effect on the elections portion of the Chicago Chapter bylaws.

- It is important to make sure that the bylaws are consistent with current practices in the operation of the Chicago Chapter.

- Changes in the way the international level of STC interacts with chapters require changes in the bylaws.

- The STC office has requested that all chapters make bylaws consistent with New York state law, since STC is a New York corporation.

Please review the bylaws at www.stc-chicago.org and then vote online using the link on the web site. You will need your STC member number to vote. Ω

Byline

Newsletter for STC Chicago Members
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