

# Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

## President's Message

### Texting from a Technical Writers Point of View

By Cheri Noble

I recently received a series of text messages that seemed like the author was yelling at me. The author didn't mean to "yell," but it was the way the messages were written. The sender was trying to key the least amount of words so it would be faster, but it just caused more confusion. Do you define the voice or tone before you start writing text messages? I didn't think I did, but I try to be more aware of what I'm writing in text messages. When we try to limit the amount of words, such as when we text, we can also limit or change our message.

I'm sure you or friends of yours use acronyms like LOL or ROTFL in text messages. To be honest, there have been times I've had to Google them to understand what someone was telling me. I've never been able to shorten most of my text messages by using abbreviations or eliminating punctuation. I still write out words, capitalize names, and include commas and periods. It's not that I don't want to change, but I don't want to get lazy. Are there any other technical writers like me? Even

though most IT departments/companies create acronyms all the time, I still think a writer should write text messages as correctly as possible.

Then there is the auto-correct on cell phones! What is up with those? Even when I try to use the correct punctuation, auto-correct changes it again and won't allow what I keyed to be sent. One of the funniest text features on my phone is when my bank sends me a text that my account balance is below the threshold I set. The message tells me to key A1 200, or whatever the dollar amount is I want to transfer. My phone does not allow A1 or any letter followed immediately by a number.

I would like to wish our members and readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2014! Ω

### Renew Now!

Our events feature reduced pricing for STC Chicago members, so don't forget to renew! Read about the many benefits of membership and join or renew online [here](#). Ω

#### inside this issue

Free Webinar in January	2
Candidates Sought	2
November Meeting Recap	3
Last-Minute Gift Ideas	3
December Meeting Recap	4
Readers Write In	4
Member Spotlight	5
Scholarship Deadline	5

Find us online!



## Free STC Chicago Webinar in January

*By Adam Evans*

STC Chicago is teaming up with MadCap Software to present "Social Collaboration: How User-Added Content Enhances Documentation" for free. There's been a lot of talk about taking technical communication social, but what's in it for you? In this presentation, you'll learn:

- How social collaboration enhances customer satisfaction.
- How user-added content supplements your documentation.
- How user-added content saves you time and money.
- How to incorporate user-added content into your workflow.
- How tracking user activity helps you create more useful documentation.

You'll also get a brief introduction to MadCap Software's social collaboration platform, MadCap Pulse, so you can see these concepts in action.

Date: Thursday, Jan 16

Time: 12:00-1:00 pm CST

Register today:

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/731878073> Ω



*Speaker panel at October meeting at IIT in Wheaton.*

## Candidates Sought for 2014-15 Chapter Offices

*By Paula Ludmann*

My manager recently told me, "If you want to move up, you must show me you have leadership skills." As a lone writer without a direct report, her advice seemed a bit puzzling. Then I thought of my responsibilities as the Nominating Committee manager for STC Chicago. I explained what I've been doing to lead this committee. Thanks to this STC experience, I'll lead a cross-departmental team comprising of seven staff this coming January.

Holding an STC office is an excellent way to hone your leadership skills. You work closely with current leaders while gaining hands-on experience. Getting involved is also an excellent way to address an issue.

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**"I think the best way to get value out of STC is to get involved!"**

*Adam Evans*  
*Vice President, STC Chicago*

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The Chicago chapter is now accepting nominees for the following offices:

- Vice President (becoming chapter President in 2015 and Immediate Past President in 2016)
- Secretary (one-year term)
- Treasurer (one-year term)
- 2 Nominating committee members (two-year terms)
- 1 Nominating committee member (one-year term)

You can nominate yourself or a colleague, or ask someone to nominate you.

Candidates for all elected positions must be chapter members in good standing when the election is held in the spring of 2014. All terms begin in July 2014. Ω

If you or someone you know is interested in one of these positions, please contact the committee at [nominating@stc-chicago.org](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.org). Ω

## Friends, Connections, and Followers Learn about Social Media at November Meeting

By MaryKay Grueneberg

On Tuesday, November 19, 25 technical communicators gathered at the Portillo's in Downer's Grove. Many were members of STC Chicago, but some were new to our group. Some traveled as few as 10 minutes, while others traveled as long as 90+ minutes. They all came together to see what all the buzz is about with social media as our speakers explored what social media means to the technical communicator.

Adam Evans tantalized them with tidbits of Twitter. Chris Hester led a lively litany on LinkedIn secrets. MaryKay Grueneberg fascinated them with fabulous and fun features of Facebook. Okay, so maybe it wasn't quite that exciting, but it was a fun night! Everyone enjoyed a fantastic meal (which included decadent chocolate cake!), enjoyed some great presentations that showed the ins and outs of various social media, and had time for networking and sharing with friends new and old. And everyone left that night knowing just a little bit more about their favorite social media site. Ω



MaryKay Grueneberg "Shares" her Facebook knowledge

## Need Last-Minute Gift Ideas?

By Linda Kelley

In case you're still shopping for the technical communicator on your gift list (or if you haven't finished your own letter to Santa), I've compiled this list of a few job-appropriate items:

- "Don't pull your hair out. Hire a Technical Writer" pajamas
- "I'm silently correcting your grammar" mug
- "RTFM" mug
- "Half Technical Writer Half Ninja" T-shirt
- "Keep Calm and Trust the Technical Writer" T-shirt
- Writer's Clock
- "World's Hottest Technical Writer" bag



## Lightning Talks Entertain and Enlighten at December Meeting

By *MaryKay Grueneberg*

STC Chicago's holiday celebration took place at the California Pizza Kitchen in Schaumburg on Tuesday, December 10. The theme for the evening was Lightning Talks. If you are unfamiliar with lightning talks and you didn't join us, you sure picked the wrong meeting to miss! Lightning talks are five minute presentations using 20 slides that are automatically timed to move at 15 seconds per slide. The result is quite entertaining, especially when you have talented speakers like we have here at STC Chicago.

Four speakers accepted the challenge of creating a 20-slide presentation, and one brave soul even agreed to give an



*Paul Lockwood gives a "ninja talk" at our December meeting*

### Readers Write In

By *Linda Kelley*

**In this season of giving, tell us your favorite charity and why.**

Submit a brief response to [byline@stc-chicago.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com) by January 15 and you could be featured in an upcoming issue of Byline. Ω

extemporaneous talk with a slide deck and topic that he did not see until his five minutes started!

Our speakers included

**Becky Hall** – Becky's topic was "Adaptation," in which she gave us delightfully interesting and entertaining definitions of adaptation as she is learning to live life temporarily with just one, non-dominant hand.

**Chris Hester** – Chris' topic was "Quiet Time" and she gave us some insight to the reasons why we all need some quiet time and gave us some creative examples of how we can all find 30 minutes a day of quiet time.

**Elizabeth Burke** – Elizabeth's topic was "Desserts" and that certainly got everyone's attention, especially when she backed up her presentation with a delicious, sugary chocolate treat at the end!

**Linda Kelley** – Linda's topic was "The 30-Second Commute" in which she gave us a look at what it's like to telecommute on a full-time basis. For those thinking about telecommuting, she gave us some insight to the ups (you can wear your fuzzy slippers) and downs (the office parties are really boring) and also shared some helpful tips.

**Paul Lockwood** – Paul was our brave soul who gave an extemporaneous talk to a slide deck that he did not see ahead of time. His slides had a holiday theme, and let's just say he was very punny!

Thanks to all who attended and a special thank you to all of our wonderful speakers. Ω

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Registration for the 2014 Technical Communication Summit, taking place May 18-21 in Phoenix, is now open!

The Really Early Bird rate (available only to STC members) is just \$835, but you must register by 15 January to take advantage of it. After that, the rate goes up \$140.

## Member Spotlight: John Hartigan

*John Hartigan is Treasurer of STC Chicago.*

### **What are you working on now?**

I work for Orbitz Worldwide in their division that provides for business travel.

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

My first boss recommended STC when I started as an entry-level tech writer so I could improve my skills and knowledge.

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

Now, I write the release communication to our business clients. I also write content for the website. I've been transitioning to do more product management. It's less technical communication. But I do get to make sure I get the text I want on the website.

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

All my life except for college.

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

I like that there are so many different things happening all around. I don't like the winters too much.

### **Favorite place to visit?**

I like going to Italy and Rome, in particular. I spent a semester in Rome in college and I always want to go back.

### **Top three favorite books?**

- Homer's *Odyssey* (best in the original)
- Shakespeare's *Complete Works* (that may be cheating; if I had to pick a play, I'd go with *Hamlet*)
- Edward Tufte's *Visual Explanations* (has great life and death examples of technical communication)

### **Strangest job you've had?**

I was hired as an administrator for a small home health agency and uncovered \$30,000 of fraud.



### **Tech comm philosophy?**

Less is more.

### **Most significant thing you have learned from being involved with STC?**

It's important to know and understand your audience. Most people don't like to read tech comm so you need to know them to give them just what they want when they want it.

### **Advice you'd give other people who are thinking about joining STC?**

If you want to meet great people and learn about advancements in the field, you should join STC.

### **Favorite work moment?**

It's a work-related moment. They are a corporate partner and we're a corporate sponsor for the Chicago Cubs. In 2011, our summer event was a Cubs game. We met a player and got a small tour. I was picked to throw out the first pitch. That was awesome. I even got it over the plate. Ω

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## Scholarship Deadline: Feb. 15

Tech comm students: Don't miss this opportunity to help fund your education! STC Chicago is offering two scholarships worth a total of **\$1500** for the 2014-2015 school year. The first scholarship is for \$1000 and the second is for \$500, both to be used for education purposes. Both scholarships also include a one-year paid STC Student Membership, including Chicago chapter dues.

Eligible applicants must be a current undergraduate or graduate student pursuing a technical communication-related degree or certificate. Applicants must be enrolled at an accredited educational institution in Illinois, Indiana, or Wisconsin or be a permanent Illinois resident enrolled at an accredited U.S. educational institution.

See our website (<http://www.stc-chicago.com/resources/student-scholarships/>) for more information and to download an application form. Ω

## STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

**Total Affiliated Members: 135**

Senior Members: 85

Members: 36

New TC Professionals: 8

Student Members: 6

## STC Chicago Chapter Leaders | 2013-2014

### President

Cheri Noble

[president@stc-chicago.com](mailto:president@stc-chicago.com)

### Immediate Past President

Linda Kelley

[ipp@stc-chicago.com](mailto:ipp@stc-chicago.com)

### Vice President

Adam Evans

[vp@stc-chicago.com](mailto:vp@stc-chicago.com)

### Secretary

Donna Wampach

[secretary@stc-chicago.com](mailto:secretary@stc-chicago.com)

### Treasurer

John Hartigan

[treasurer@stc-chicago.com](mailto:treasurer@stc-chicago.com)

### Nominating Committee

Paula Ludmann, Francis Bao, Christen Meyer, Beth Najberg, Steve Napora

[nominating@stc-chicago.com](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.com)

### Competition Committee

Cynthia Laughlin

[competition@stc-chicago.com](mailto:competition@stc-chicago.com)

### Historian

Bill Leavitt

### Internship Committee

Elizabeth Burke

### Membership Committee

Dan Dornbrook

[membership@stc-chicago.com](mailto:membership@stc-chicago.com)

### Newsletter Committee

Linda Kelley

[byline@stc-chicago.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com)

### Program Committee

Elizabeth Burke

[program@stc-chicago.com](mailto:program@stc-chicago.com)

### Public Relations Committee

Adam Evans

[pr@stc-chicago.com](mailto:pr@stc-chicago.com)

### Scholarship Committee

Josée Martens

[scholarship@stc-chicago.com](mailto:scholarship@stc-chicago.com)

## Byline

### Editor

Linda Kelley, [byline@stc-chicago.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com)

### Advertising Manager

Francis Bao, [advertising@stc-chicago.com](mailto:advertising@stc-chicago.com)

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](#).

For membership information, contact STC at  
Society for Technical Communication

9401 Lee Highway | Suite 300 | Fairfax, Virginia 22031

Phone: +1 (703) 522-4114 | Fax: +1 (703) 522-2075

Email: [stc@stc.com](mailto:stc@stc.com)