

# Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members and Supporters

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## President's Message

by MaryKay Grueneberg

I have been a member of STC Chicago for the past 22 years. STC Chicago is not only one of the oldest chapters of STC, it is (in my humble opinion), one of the best and most active chapters.

People often ask me if I think I get my "money's worth" from being an STC member and a part of STC Chicago. Without hesitation, I always say "YES." We have some of the best and most dedicated Technical Communication professionals in the world right here in Chicago.

Did you know that STC Chicago offers a minimum of 10 in-person meetings each year? Our speakers come from all across the country as well as in our own back yard. We offer educational meetings as well as networking meetings.

Did you know that we've reinstated our monthly webinar series and that all monthly webinars are free to STC Chicago members?

*President's Message continued on page 2*

## The Technical Communicator in a Contract Role

The well-attended October 18 chapter meeting featured a lively and informative panel discussion devoted to contractors, contracting firms, and how the technical communicator fits in a contract role. The panelists represented both side of the coin, consulting firms and contract technical communicators.

Lisa Vitale, Recruiting Lead from The CARA Group, Inc. and Rose Pagliari, Senior Director Digital Learning from Mastech provided insights such as what they look for from writers who approach them, and how they identify optimal projects for the writers they represent. On the contract side was our own Elizabeth Burke (Chicago Chapter past President and Competition Manager) and Gretchen Hartke (<https://hartkedesigns.com/>).

The panel moderator, Chapter President MaryKay Grueneberg, questioned panelists to generate discussions about topics like choosing a consulting firm, does a technical communicator need consulting firm



*The Technical Communicator in a Contract Role continued on page 2 MK Grueneberg moderating*

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*President's Message* continued from front page

Did you know that we have monthly networking lunches in three locations around Chicagoland?

Did you know that STC Chicago has co-hosted an annual regional conference, Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase, for the past 11 years?

Did you know that STC Chicago is an award-winning community? We have received eight Apex Awards for our *Byline* newsletter. We have been named a Pacesetter Community three times. We have earned the Community Achievement Award for 13 years in a row, earning the top ranked award for 11 of the 13 years. And we have been twice named Community of the Year.

Did you know? Well, now you do. And now you know how special STC Chicago is. Ω

*The Technical Communicator in a Contract Role* continued from front page

representation to get the best contracts, should a writer work with more than one firm at a time, considerations for moving from full time employment to contracting, portfolio presentation, etc.

Audience members also jumped in with questions and shared their experiences, leading to discussions with various points of view. Gretchen is a firm believer of “my writing samples never leave without me” (she does not provide writing samples to recruiters or clients without her being present to tell the story), but not everyone believed this has to be the case.

The evening concluded with a short presentation by MaryKay and Elizabeth about the “dos and don’ts” of social media and the role social media plays in establishing your personal brand. They finished with an audience handout and discussion on the most common and trending technologies used in companies today, and how to become familiar with them.

Many thanks to our sponsors for the evening: the CARA Group and Ken Cook Company. Ω



*The panel (l to r): MK Grueneberg, Lisa Vitale, Rose Pagliari, Gretchen Hartke, and Elizabeth Burke*

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## Even if You're a Brilliant Scientist, Grammar Still Matters

By Margaret Larkin

Working in technical academic editing can be mind-splitting, due to the complexities of the manuscripts that are submitted to the academic journal that I work for, and the challenges of trying to decipher what the authors are communicating. Not only is the scientific content difficult to comprehend, but when combined with, let's say, "different" English, it can make a one-hour project turn into ten.

So to avoid problems, I often request that the authors, who are usually highly educated and accomplished scholars, get some help with their English on their side of the world.

Various authors find someone to check their submissions, so when they submit them again, they make more sense. The residual errors are minor and understandable, since it's difficult for even a native English speaker to perfectly write a 30-page manuscript. But there are some authors who seem to ignore editing requests, which is baffling.

First of all, I don't understand why people would contact a prestigious journal to get something published, and provide text with substandard English. Not only is it sloppy, but it's presumptuous, and appears irre-

sponsible. If I were to submit something to a journal, I would make sure that what I'm writing makes sense, even if it's a British publication, since they use different spelling and idioms. But in the back of the minds of these successful professors and researchers, they ignore the importance of language, because they seem to be elevating their science and engineering above all else.

**STEM matters; it has become a superstar and a path to notoriety and success. But language is important too.**

Yes, STEM matters; it has become a superstar and a path to notoriety and success. But language is important too, and shouldn't be pushed to the side or demeaned simply be-

cause it's there and always has been. In order for someone to effectively communicate their ideas, they need precise language, and if someone deigns to merely give a nod to its function, they're not doing it justice.

Yet despite my requests, authors add content without considering structure. They are striving towards the publishing goal, not caring about how their English requires hours of tinkering, and not considering that ignoring the importance of correct English is displaying carelessness and at times arrogance. Correct English should be elevated, not taken for granted or disrespected. Ω

## January: Designing Effective User Experience in the Digital Age

Our January 17 chapter meeting (location TBD) will rise above the noise and clutter of tech news, buzzy trends, and hyperbolic business solution promises and look closely at what makes superior user experience (UX) in the digital age. It will explore how information can be delivered in a seamless and frictionless way and even leverage technology using smart strategy. By spotlighting design thinking practices, the session will elevate the user as the key stakeholder of any communication experience.

Our speaker will be **Scott McCormick**. He is the CEO of Emergent Enterprise Consulting, a business dedicated to helping companies effectively use new technologies to be more productive and profitable, and the Editor of *emergent-enterprise.com*, a news website that includes articles on emerging technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things. He speaks nationally on topics such as UX, design thinking and emergent technology implementation and was a contributor to the book *Mastering Mobile Learning*. Ω



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# Saying, “Yes, and...?” to Leadership Opportunities

By Ben Woelk

## What If?

“Yes, and...?” is the hallmark of improv comedy. It’s also key to our growth as leaders. What if we said, “Yes, and...?” when approached about taking a leadership role in an organization?

For many of us, our first reaction to leadership requests are, “No, because...,” or perhaps, “There’s no way I can do that!” We live in an increasingly fast-paced culture with many opportunities on which to spend our time. Many of us can be quite guarded when considering external commitments. Sometimes being guarded is warranted because of our current level of obligations; sometimes we just have an automatic “No” response. We know what saying “no” provides us: security, peacefulness, free time, and a comfort zone.

Let’s look at what saying, “Yes, and...?” has done for me and what it may do for you.

## My “Yes, and...?” Journey

My “Yes, and...?” journey started about 10 years ago when I agreed to be Program Manager for the Rochester Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. My role was to obtain speakers for educational events and to help set up venues. It was a reasonably small role, and I believed I could do a good job at it.

The following spring the chapter looked for volunteers to fill their election slate. When they asked me what role I was willing to take, I said anything besides Vice President. (The Vice President role includes co-chairing our regional conference and speaking in front of a large group of people. I was not interested. As an introvert, I absolutely did not feel comfortable in that role.)

When the chapter announced the election slate, I was on the ballot—as a VP candidate! Although I didn’t believe I was suited for nor competent to take that role, I didn’t want the embarrassment of withdrawing from the role or admitting I believed it was beyond me. Providentially, the chapter nominations commit-

tee saw leadership skills in me that I did not yet see within myself. I did OK in that role. I was partnered with someone who had filled the role the previous year and I was able to act as an “understudy” and not feel as though the weight of the role was too much.

The following year, the dues structure changed in the organization and most all of the current leadership left the organization. (There were other factors—retirements, moves, etc., that also impacted their decisions.) There was no one more senior than me. I would be the next president. I became the next chapter president. It was a good year, although we had struggles without former leaders to mentor us. I attended my first Leadership Program at the STC Summit Conference in Dallas, met and engaged with other chapter leaders, and began establishing a peer network that has been invaluable to this day.

## The Next Step

After my successful year as STC Rochester president, I decided I wanted to help other chapter leaders who might face the same challenge of having no leadership mentors. I joined the Community Affairs Committee and built an outreach program and team to mentor and assist other chapter and SIG (Special Interest Group) leaders. That team made a positive impact. My “Yes, and...?” was agreeing to serve and bringing my vision for a leadership outreach team to fruition.

## Today

Fast forward to today. Next week I’ll be installed as the Vice President of the Society for Technical Communication. The following year I will become President. Unlike local chapter elections where 90% of the time candidates run unopposed, this time I had an opponent (who was also a friend). I campaigned actively for the role. I ran for office because that peer network I had become part of through the Summit Leadership Program and the leaders I had helped support, told me they needed me to run because they believed in me. They believed that I would help

*Saying, “Yes, and...?” to Leadership Opportunities continued on page 5*

Saying, “Yes, and...?” to Leadership Opportunities continued from page 5

lead positive and potentially deep changes to the organization that would address our changing demographics and ensure we’d be a viable and influential organization in the future.

### “Yes, and...?” and Me

My leadership journey has stretched me in ways I couldn’t have imagined. I’m now comfortable speaking to large groups of people. I’m able to articulate a vision of where I believe the organization needs to go. I’ve learned to build consensus and enroll others in meaningful initiatives.

I love being able to make a difference! Although I was initially tentative and doubted my ability to be a leader, I was willing. I’ve been stretched. It’s not always been comfortable.

I wouldn’t trade the journey for anything.

### “Yes, and...?” and You

Please say, “Yes, and...?” when someone (perhaps me) offers you an opportunity to serve!

Will it take you out of your comfort zone? I certainly hope so. We grow through being stretched. We grow through service to others and I believe there’s no higher calling.

Serve where you’re passionate. Make a difference! Ω

## Membership Drive Ending Soon

Full speed ahead! Network, learn, grow, and lead with STC Chicago. Don’t miss this opportunity to join or renew your 2019 STC membership. Sign up by December 31, 2018, at [stc.org](http://stc.org) and select the *STC Chicago* chapter for your chance to win one of two prizes:

- A \$75 gift card from The Grommet (<https://www.thegrommet.com/>) plus a GPS item tracker
- A prepaid \$59 STC webinar plus an eWriter. Ω

**Full speed ahead**  
Network | Learn | Grow | Lead

**STC CHICAGO**

**DEAR FUTURE  
I'M READY...**

**Join or renew membership now at [stc.org](http://stc.org)**  
Sign up by December 31, 2018, and select the STC Chicago chapter for a chance to win a  
\$75 thegrommet.com gift card + GPS item tracker | or | \$59 STC webinar + eWriter

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## Now Accepting Candidates for Officer and Committee Manager Positions

The STC Chicago nominating committee is looking for a few good people who would like to help manage the Chapter. Each April, STC Chicago holds elections for the following officer positions: vice president, secretary, and treasurer (the current vice president will automatically move up to president and the current president will move to immediate past president).

If interested in running on the 2018-19 ballot for positions that will govern the chapter for the 2019-20 program year, please send an e-mail to [nominating@stc-chicago.com](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.com).

In addition, we are always looking for new volunteers to help with our various committees. We are looking for both committee managers and committee members. See the full list of the STC Chicago committees (<http://www.stc-chicago.com/people/committees/>) and see where you'd like to help! Ω



## December: Holiday Party and Lightning Talks

2018 (the 2017-18 program year) was another big year for STC Chicago. We earned the 2018 Platinum Community Achievement Award, 2018 Pacesetter Award, and a 2018 Apex Award. The 2018-19 program year is well under way and has had a wonderful start with both in-person meetings as well as our popular monthly webinars. We think that deserves a little celebration!!

Please join us on Thursday, December 13, at our annual STC Chicago Holiday Party. We will have a full dinner at Olive Garden in Downers Grove.

As tradition demands, we will once again have Lightning Talks. Lightning talks are mini-presentations of 20 slides in five minutes on either serious or light topics. The tricky part is that the slides advance automatically, whether the speaker is ready or not! Lightning talks are an exercise in speaker brevity, concentration, and often a lot of laughter ensues.

We will have several presenters doing lightning talks and we will also have one brave speaker who will do a Ninja Lightning Talks – he will do his talk to a slide deck he will not see until he starts to speak! If you are interested in giving a lightning talk, send your topic idea to [program@stc-chicago.com](mailto:program@stc-chicago.com).

Join us for some fun and networking before the craziness of the holiday season begins. And who knows... Santa may have even left a present or two for you! For details and registration, see the December meeting announcement on our Website. Ω



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## December Webinar Series

### The Expanding Role of Content Professionals: Seize the Opportunity

In 2013 Vici Koster-Lenhardt changed careers. After 21 years working in software development at The Coca-Cola Company, she started as a consultant for the U.S. Department of State as the Global Employment Advisor for Europe. She was hired to serve more than 40 embassies in Europe by supporting the spouses and partners of US diplomats find meaningful employment while they lived overseas. Vici credits her successful career transition to the skills she acquired over 30+ years working in the technical communication industry and managing a documentation department. The transition wasn't easy or glamorous. But it reconfirmed what she's always believed: A career in technical communication will prepare you for all types of employment opportunities if you are willing to seize the opportunities that arise.

Her #1 key message for you is to realize that the skills you've developed working in this industry will take you wherever you want to go.

REGISTRATION LINK: <http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=erucd7bab&oeidk=a07efu0abca8f0a8220>

Wed, Dec 5. 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm CST

STC Chapter Members - FREE / STC Members - \$5.00 / non-members - \$10.00

#### About the Speaker

Vici Koster-Lenhardt is an STC Fellow and currently resides in Vienna, Austria. After a whirlwind romance that started with a chance meeting on the Brooklyn Bridge, Vici moved to Europe in the late 80s and landed a technical writing job with The Coca-Cola Company. She also founded the STC Transalpine Chapter, which was active from 1999 to 2010 and served STC members in Central Europe. In 2010 Vici found herself on the Austrian job market again. This time, however, she used her technical communication and management experiences to earn a living as a career transition strategist and resume/profile writer. You can learn more about her at [www.linkedin.com/in/vkosterlenhardt](http://www.linkedin.com/in/vkosterlenhardt). Ω

## Steve Johnson Installed as Wheaton Rotary Club President

President Steve Johnson has been installed as president of the Wheaton Rotary Club for the 2018-2019 Rotary year.

Johnson is the president of Copresco, a pioneer in digital printing technology and the on-demand printing of books and publications, with headquarters in Carol Stream. He has been active as an author, consultant and speaker on a variety of business and technological topics for the graphic arts and technical communications industries.

The Wheaton Rotary Club supports a wide range of community and international humanitarian service projects in Honduras, Belize, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The club also has a longstanding history of supporting local students, and has sponsored college scholarships for students pursuing their undergraduate degrees for over 30 years. Ω



*Steve Johnson*

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual STC Chicago Design Contest

Are you a designer? A graphic artist? A photographer? An artist? Do you have a creative soul? Would you like to share your creative talents? If so, this contest is for you.

In this second annual competition, STC Chicago is looking for a creative new design for the cover of the STC Chicago 47th Annual Volunteer Recognition & Awards Banquet program. All art types are welcomed. Entries can be color or B&W. The winning design will be used on the 2019 banquet program cover, with designer credit. The winning designer will receive two complementary tickets to the 2019 banquet.

This year, we would like the artwork to focus on the theme of Technical Communication – past, present, or future.

There are just a few rules:

- All artwork must be original work, owned by the submitter
- The design must include the words “STC Chicago 46th Annual Recognition & Awards Banquet” somewhere in or over the artwork
- The design must include the banquet date “March 21, 2019”
- The artwork must be designed to fit a 4.25” x 8.5” cover and should be resizable, if necessary, to accommodate borders

Please submit your entries as an attachment through e-mail to: [Program@stc-chicago.com](mailto:Program@stc-chicago.com), Subject: Banquet Cover Design Contest

All entries must be submitted by December 31, 2018.

The winner will be selected and notified in January, 2019. Ω

## 2019 Summit Registration Now Open

The 2019 STC Summit will take place May 5-8, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency in Denver, CO.

Registration is now open, with Early Bird pricing. For full details on registration, speakers, agenda, and hotel, go to: <https://summit.stc.org/> Ω

## Groups You Should Know

Two new technical writing groups entered the Chicago area.

**Write The Docs** is a free, community based organization that addresses all aspects of all technical writing. Besides their active writer’s forum, they host several conferences, notably in Portland and Prague. Many of their talks are available on YouTube. The Chicago chapter meets monthly, with the next meeting in January 2019.

**API the Docs**, focuses on API documentation. They are associated with Write The Docs. There are no monthly meetings but will be hosting a one day conference in Chicago in April, 2019. Details will be announced, although they are accepting presentation proposals now.

Write the Docs: <https://www.writethedocs.org/> API The Docs: <https://apithedocs.org/>. Ω



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## STC Chicago 2018-19 Officers

**President** – MaryKay Grueneberg, [president@stc-chicago.com](mailto:president@stc-chicago.com)

**Vice President** – Michael Burke, [vp@stc-chicago.com](mailto:vp@stc-chicago.com)

**Secretary** – Dan Dornbrook, [secretary@stc-chicago.com](mailto:secretary@stc-chicago.com)

**Treasurer** – Pete Wagner, [treasurer@stc-chicago.com](mailto:treasurer@stc-chicago.com)

**Immediate Past President** – Elizabeth Gecas, [ipp@stc-chicago.com](mailto:ipp@stc-chicago.com)

## Byline

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.

**Copyright statement:** Byline invites submissions for consideration for publication. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to Byline to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. The writer holds copyright. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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

## 2018-19 Committee Managers

**Alliance** – Linda Jansak

**Bylaws** – Becky Hall

**Competition** – Elizabeth Burke, [competition@stc-chicago.com](mailto:competition@stc-chicago.com)

**eLearning & Technology Showcase** – Linda Jansak

**Historian** – Bill Leavitt

**Byline Newsletter** – Robert Delwood, [byline@stc-chicago.com](mailto:byline@stc-chicago.com)

**Nominating** – Pete Wagner, [nominating@stc-chicago.com](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.com)

**Get Real! Professional Interview Program** – Dan Dornbrook, [interview@stc-chicago.com](mailto:interview@stc-chicago.com)

**Programs** – MaryKay Grueneberg, [program@stc-chicago.com](mailto:program@stc-chicago.com)

**Social Media** – Dan Dornbrook

**Scholarships** – Elizabeth L. Burke, [scholarships@stc-chicago.com](mailto:scholarships@stc-chicago.com)

**Sponsorship** – Francis Bao, [sponsorship@stc-chicago.com](mailto:sponsorship@stc-chicago.com)

**Webinar Series** – Adam Evans

**Web/Online** – Linda Kelley, [web@stc-chicago.com](mailto:web@stc-chicago.com)



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