

# Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

## President's Message Celebrating 60 Years

By Adam Evans



At last year's Leadership Day during Summit 2014, I joined officers from other chapters to share what's working for us and to learn how we can improve our processes.

What I really learned is that here in STC Chicago, we're already doing a lot of things well.

And that's never been clearer than on January 15 when we celebrated 60 years as the Chicago Chapter for the Society for Technical Communication—a milestone only one other chapter has achieved! To celebrate, 70 technical communicators and their guests gathered on the 66th floor of Willis Tower in the Metropolitan Club for an evening of memories, honors, and a glimpse at the future. If you haven't already, head over to Facebook to view a collection of photos from the evening.

One of the most inspiring moments from the night was when we recognized each individual who has been a member of our chapter for more than 10 years. As Bill Leavitt read the

names and recognized members stood, it became clear that we have a long history of commitment and professionalism that others can look up to.

The president of STC International, Kit Brown-Hoekstra, was also in attendance and spoke about the present and future of STC. She explained that in an effort to meet the evolving needs of its members, several changes are coming to the Society, starting with some organizational differences at Summit 2015. (By the way, registration is open for this year's Summit in Columbus, OH!) She also stressed the value of membership in STC, outlining its resources (like webinars, the salary database, and publications) and innovations (like defining standards in the industry and creating a certification).

Additionally, Bill Leavitt and Ken Cook, two long-time STC Chicago members, spoke about the beginnings of our chapter. They recounted stories from early Summits, their

*Continued on page 6*

### Don't miss STC's Technical Communication Summit '15!

June 21–24 in Columbus, Ohio

With 80+ educational sessions, 50+ Expo Hall exhibitors, 3 receptions, and unlimited networking opportunities.

**Get more info... Ω**

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Find us online!



## February Webinar: MS Word...Love It, Don't Leave It

**Presented by Lisa Pietrangeli, Managing Partner of ThirtySix Software, Member STC Rochester**

Whether you love working in MS Word or reluctantly rely on it, the reality is that (nearly) everyone uses it in some capacity. Word on its own offers some pretty powerful capabilities that many seasoned Word users don't even realize. Things that can really bullet-proof some of the things that likely drive you crazy. What you also may not know is that regardless of XML and other tools, Word use across companies worldwide is still the most commonly used authoring tool. That's why companies are still developing tools to make the Word experience better, more powerful, and more collaborative.

In this webinar, Lisa Pietrangeli (Managing Partner of ThirtySix Software, creator of SmartDocs) will show you some of the forgotten features, underused best practices, and supporting tools that can optimize Word. Your company already has Word...let's get more out of it. And you don't have to sacrifice easy styles, practical templates, document automation, efficient content reviews, and content management just because you're working in Word. There are tools and methods that make all of this possible and even enjoyable. For those of you exploring tools, these Word-based solutions are definitively less expensive, more accessible, and infinitely more scalable than XML/DITA based solutions. Not to mention that every other department writing content—sales proposal writers, policy and procedure writers, regulatory, HR, marketing, etc.—should have access to all these powerful tools, too. We can all agree that these types of writers in most companies will likely never be comfortable with an XML editor.

In short, you're not "old fashioned" because you are a Word author. In fact, you have the chance to be rather fashionable in Word. Let's explore opportunities for process improvements, collaboration, and having FULL control of your Word content company-wide.

**Tuesday, February 24**

**7:00 - 8:00 PM**

**\$5 Members | \$10 Non-members | \$2 Students**

**Register now!** Dial-in details will be e-mailed. Ω

## STC Chicago Recognition and Awards Banquet

We hope you will join us and keynote speaker Jack Molisani on March 19 for our Annual Recognition and Awards Banquet, where we'll present chapter and competition awards. Our competition this year had 29 entries from industries as diverse as automotive, electronics, software, HVAC, healthcare, and government. Entries will be on display before and after the banquet for your perusal.

Each of the following dinner options comes with choice of soup or salad, potato or rice, soft drink, and dessert:

- Wood roasted chicken, Grecian style (\*can be prepared gluten free)
- Center cut Pork Chop, in olive oil and herbs (gluten free)
- Fettuccine Alfredo with chicken
- Fettuccine Alfredo without chicken (vegetarian)
- Pasta Aglioli, angel hair pasta in garlic and olive oil with roasted vegetables (vegetarian)

**Thursday, March 19**

**6:00 - 9:00 PM**

**Jimmy's Charhouse**

**1180 W Devon, Elk Grove Village, IL**

**\$25 Members | \$30 Non-members | \$20 Students & Judges**

**Register now!** Ω

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## March Webinar: An Aggressive Approach to Concise Writing

On March 3, please join us for a special webinar jointly hosted by STC Chicago, STC Wisconsin, and STC S.E. Michigan. Joe Welinske of WritersUA will present "An Aggressive Approach to Concise Writing." Space is limited, so register today!

Writing concisely is a fundamental skill for mobile user assistance. Reduced screen real estate can't support large amounts of text and graphics without extensive gesturing by the user. Small font sizes make the information unreadable unless the user stretches the text. Even outside the mobile space, your

ability to streamline your content improves effective consumption by your target audience. This session presents techniques for reducing the footprint of your prose while maintaining a quality message. The examples used are in the context of mobile UA but can be applied to any technical writing situation.

You will learn

- How research illustrates the problems with overly complex text in small-screen and mobile environments.
- How Simplified Technical English and Plain English can improve your writing.
- How aggressive redesign of traditional writing styles can significantly reduce word count and improve readability.

There are only 25 seats, but feel free to watch the webinar with your colleagues (for instance, in a conference room with a projector). This is a great opportunity to show your coworkers and management the benefits an STC membership provides!

A few days before the event, you will receive an email from the speaker with a link to the webinar.

**Tuesday, March 3**

**12:00 - 1:00 PM**

**\$5 Members | \$10 Non-members | \$5 Students**

**[Register now!](#)** Ω

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## Scholarship Deadline: March 15

*By Josée Martens*

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 2015-2016 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

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## Attend the Chicago Tech-Security Conference for Free!

We are pleased to announce that STC Chicago members can attend the 2015 Chicago Tech-Security Conference on Thursday, March 19, for FREE!

Held at the Intercontinental Chicago Magnificent Mile, this conference features 11 IT security sessions and 30+ exhibits.

**[Register here](#)** for your free VIP pass (a \$100 value).

The VIP pass includes

- admission to conference sessions
- admission to exhibit areas
- breakfast
- lunch
- conference materials
- door prize and raffle entries (prizes include gift cards, iPads, or Kindles)

This conference qualifies for CPE credits and Certificates of Attendance.

The full conference schedule is available on the [2015 Chicago Tech Security Conference website](#). For more information, contact Stephanie Lange at [slange@dataconnectors.com](mailto:slange@dataconnectors.com).

**Thursday, March 19**

**8:15 AM - 5:00 PM**

**Intercontinental Chicago Magnificent Mile  
505 N Michigan Ave, Chicago IL**

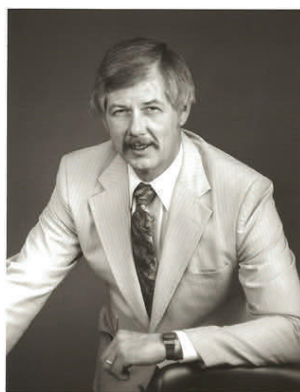
**[Register now!](#)** Ω

## 50 Years in STC

By Bill Leavitt

Excerpts from the following article were published in the November/December 2014 issue of *Intercom*.

As I approach 50 years in STC and 54 years in the technical communication profession, it seems appropriate for me to assess my career. I think it is important to see what I have learned in that time and what I can pass on to others. Also, it may be interesting to me and others to see how events in my life affected my career path.



My career has been very unusual in many ways. First, like many technical communicators, I didn't start out to be a technical communicator at all. But each change in my life moved me on in unexpected ways. For example, I started college planning to be a chemical engineer. After floundering in engineering for a year and a

half at Purdue University, I took some aptitude tests to find out what I might change my major to. I found out that while I had an aptitude for *practical engineering*, I also had an aptitude for writing. My advisor suggested that technical writing might be right for me. I had never heard of technical writing, but I really enjoyed my classes in this subject. I went on to get a degree in technical writing, with an area of specialty in chemical engineering in 1964.

From my very first job through my entire career, I always worked in some form of technical writing.

**How I got into STC.** Joining STC actually resulted from an unrelated activity while I was still a student at Purdue University. I was a feature writer for the student newspaper, and my boss, the feature editor, was Barbara Simmons, who was also majoring in technical writing. After I graduated, she contacted me and convinced me that I should join STWP (Society of Technical Writers and Publishers). Thus, I became a member in October 1964. At that time, Barb was already a leader in the local (Chicago) chapter of STWP. Within two years of

joining, she had become an officer in the chapter, and she recruited me to become chapter Treasurer in 1966. This led me to become Finance Manager for the 1967 STWP international conference, called the International Technical Communication Conference, which was held in Chicago that year. In those days, the international conferences rarely made any money. However, through the help of a great conference committee and a great location, my efforts led this conference to become the most financially successful in the organization's history. That success put me under the notice of then Executive Director Curt Youngblood, who before that conference was never sure if he would get paid on time.

Several years later I was convinced by Curt, and an influential Chicago chapter member, Bob Ellis, to run for STC international Treasurer. However, prior to becoming Society Treasurer, I had the opportunity to learn a little about leadership. In 1967-68, there was a leadership vacuum resulting from the huge effort required by the leadership to plan and conduct the 1967 conference. As a result, there was suddenly a need for someone to take on chapter leadership. I was convinced by other leaders that I was that person, and I thus became Chicago chapter First Vice Chairman for 1967-68, Second Vice Chairman in 1969-70 and then Chairman (later called President) in 1970-71. Also, after serving as Chairman, I served as Symposium Manager, Nominating Committee Manager (1972-73), and a second term as chapter Treasurer (1973-74). During those years, the various positions I held provided invaluable experience in becoming an effective and successful leader.

**The right time and place for Society-level leadership.** In 1974, I attended my second international conference, which was held in St. Louis. My purpose in attending this conference was to accept an international-level writing award. I had entered some of my work in the local Chicago chapter technical communication awards competition, and as a result of winning an award in that completion, my work was automatically submitted to the international competition. Winning the Award of Excellence in that competition resulted in several fortuitous events. First, my employer sent me to the conference to receive the award in person. Next, while at the conference, I had the opportunity to meet many STC leaders who convinced me that I was capable of serving at the Society level. I became reacquainted with Curt Youngblood (executive director) and he suggested I run for Society Treasurer. The combination of the leadership experience I had attained and receiving the international-level writing award also led my company to pro-

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mote me into management and give me a generous raise after the conference.

All this experience in STC gave me the opportunity to make many friends at the chapter and international levels. My leadership experience from the financial success of the 1967 international conference and the various chapter roles, along with the support of many STC leaders, led me to run for Treasurer in 1975. I was elected to three consecutive terms, and while I was Treasurer (1975-78), there was a period of tremendous financial and membership growth in STC.

**You can't win them all.** It was after this that I had my first STC failure. The success of my work as treasurer, even though I was only 37 years old, led me to believe I could be a successful candidate for international President. However, the STC Nominating Committee did not nominate me because they thought I was too young and inexperienced. My STC friends convinced me to nominate myself by petition. Although I had a lot of support in my effort to run for President, many older leaders campaigned against me as being too young. I then lost the election. It is hard to say whether losing the election was a good thing or a bad thing for my career.

There is no way to know if I would have been a good president at that time, but losing gave me the opportunity to get married and start a family. Also, the time off allowed me to spend a little more time developing my career. During that "time off" I did serve as Manager of the Society Nominating Committee and Assistant to the President for Publications.

Four years later (in 1983) the Nominating Committee saw fit to nominate me for the office of Director-Sponsor. That was a great development opportunity for me, because, at that time, it was a three-year term; I was responsible for dealing with the leaders and members of the chapters in my geographic region. I learned a lot about the variety of problems regular chapters and student chapters face and became a better-rounded leader.

After that I served in numerous Society Board positions, including Assistant to the President for Member Programs and member of the STC Finance Committee, and took on additional roles for my chapter. My STC work led to being elected as an Associate Fellow in 1983.

In 1987 I was elected Second Vice President, a position which automatically accedes to First Vice President, and then I became President (1989-1990). I had the honor of being the

first STC president to be installed in his or her home city; the 1989 International Conference was held in Chicago, and during the conference, Chicago chapter conducted an "inauguration" and I was crowned "King of STC." That was a lot of fun and a great honor.

Being STC President was definitely the peak of my STC career. I was able to accomplish many things for the members of STC that year. Among our accomplishments that year were holding STC's first International Member Reception at the Chicago conference, conducting formal research into STC's future success in international growth and influence, and helping Canadian members benefit from the new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Between becoming STC Treasurer in 1975 and finishing my term as President in 1990, STC changed dramatically. On July 30, 1975, when I became treasurer, STC's net worth was about \$94,000 and membership was 2900 members. By July 30, 1990, net worth had grown to nearly \$1,500,000 and membership to over 13,000. Demographically we also went from about two-thirds male members to about two-thirds females, and our average age dropped by twenty years. Also, we went from 48 chapters to 121.

I'd like to think that I was instrumental in influencing some of those changes, but I know that nearly 100 board members, committee managers and STC employees worked together to achieve them. For one thing, we were more or less successful in getting more or less equal pay for equal work and equal opportunity for women in our profession. Also, through my efforts as treasurer, STC created a long-standing policy that required the Society create a balanced budget each year and put surpluses into a fund for future needs or solving problems resulting from a recession or a sudden loss of membership. This fund made conservative investments, so it grew with the American economy. The balanced budget policy and the investment fund were major factors in the dramatic growth of net worth during the eighties and nineties.

**Life beyond STC leadership.** Most STC leaders reach a point in their careers when they feel they have served STC long enough. That was not the direction I chose to take after serving as international president. Some say I just couldn't say "no." That is true to some extent, but I like to think that I believed my efforts could continue to make STC better and more valuable to its members.



I am often asked how I can devote so much time to STC over such a long period of time (almost every single year since 1964). I guess the answer is that, first of all, I feel very fortunate to be in this profession. It was the right profession for me, and I care a lot about our members, about the success of our profession, and about getting the recognition that our profession deserves. Because of all that, I'm willing to donate a piece of my time every single year. As a result, I have been elected or appointed to leadership positions 141 times during my nearly 50 years of membership in STC. I love to attend the annual STC conferences, or as we now call them, STC Summits, because of the opportunity to see friends in STC, develop new friends, and especially to get a feeling of the pulse of STC and our profession. Also, I enjoy meeting younger people and finding out what their expectations are, and I try to motivate them into being better STC members, better professionals in our field, and maybe even STC leaders. That networking is probably my favorite activity at STC conferences. Sometimes, I even have the opportunity to help members meet the right people to get them jobs. Thus, I have attended 35 international conferences and Summits, which I believe is more than any other STC member.

The main reason I am taking the time to write this STC autobiography is to show members what opportunities there are in STC and how they can take advantage of them. Perhaps some

of our younger members (or even older members who have not achieved their potential) can be influenced to achieve all they can achieve. I love to see STC members reach their goals and then create still higher goals to motivate them through their careers. It would be a supreme accomplishment for me if a few STC members were motivated by this article to become some of the STC leaders of tomorrow. Ω

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## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

first jobs, and how the industry has evolved over the last 60 years.

In the end, the evening was a chance to celebrate our accomplishments, honor our long-time members, and look forward in this ever-changing landscape. I'm proud to lead such a vibrant community, full of volunteers willing to work and innovate.

It's not lost on me that our secret to success is our people. After all, if we didn't have members and leaders, there would be no STC Chicago. I'd like to thank each of you for your participation in STC. The future is bright. Let's continue being an example to other chapters in our society. Ω



## 60th Anniversary Gala Photo Gallery



Above: Elsie Norberg, Russ Friend, John Hartigan.  
Left: Speakers Adam Evans, Kit Brown-Hoekstra, Ken Cook, Bill Leavitt.



## Member Spotlight:

### Cynthia Laughlin

*Cynthia Laughlin is Secretary of STC Chicago and a Technical Writer at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.*

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

Updating end-user documents for Lync Instant Messaging roll-out and creating a cross-campus access guide.

#### **How long have you been working in tech comm?**

12 years.

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

As a student at NIU.

#### **What is your most common role as a technical communicator?**

My most common role is to document procedures. In addition, I train staff on various systems and administer Share-Point and a time tracking system.

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

The variety of roles technical communicators have in the industry.

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

The membership cost will pay for itself if you take advantage of the meetings and read the periodicals.

#### **What's your tech comm philosophy?**

The reader shouldn't have to read the sentence twice to figure out what you mean.

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

As an adult, 18 years.

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

Most: The wonderful theater groups and the architecture.  
Least: The weather and BNSF Metra.

#### **What are you currently reading?**

*River of Doubt* by Candice Millard about Teddy Roosevelt's trip to the Amazon.

#### **What would be your ideal vacation?**

A small group tour to an exotic locale (Africa, Asia, or South America).

#### **What's your favorite movie?**

*Blade Runner*.

#### **What kind of music do you listen to?**

All kinds. Currently I'm enjoying "Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone" by Lucinda Williams.

#### **What do you like to do on weekends?**

Read and get together with friends. Ω

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## A Message from the Nominating Committee

*By Steve Napora*

The election of STC Chicago Chapter officers is fast approaching. The Nominating Committee is seeking members to run for Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Nominating Committee. Please consider becoming a candidate!

Why should you run? For 60 years, the Chicago STC chapter has served the local community with countless opportunities to network, learn new skills, practice interview and resume techniques, or just talk and have a little fun. Ask any member, and you'll probably find that all have needed the chapter at some point in their careers. The election of officers every year gives each member the opportunity to shape the vision of the chapter. The chapter needs people like you to ensure it is always there as a gathering place of ideas, guidance, and information for technical communicators.

The responsibilities of each office are described in the STC Chicago Officer and Committee Manager Handbook, which can be downloaded from our [website](#). Contact the Nominating Committee at [nominating@stc-chicago.com](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.com) if you are interested in running. Or, feel free to submit the name and contact info of someone who you think would make a great candidate. Ω

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2015 is STC Chicago's 60th year as a chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. Thank you to our generous sponsors!



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## STC Chicago Chapter Leaders | 2014-2015

### President

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

### Immediate Past President

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

### Vice President

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

### Secretary

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

### Treasurer

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

### Nominating

MaryKay Grueneberg, Carla Martinek, Steve Napora, Donna Wampach,  
[nominating@stc-chicago.com](mailto:nominating@stc-chicago.com)

### Alliance

Linda Jansak

### Bylaws

Dan Dornbrook

### Competition

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

### eLearning & Technology Showcase

Linda Jansak

### Historian

Bill Leavitt

### Internships

Elizabeth Burke

### Membership

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

### Newsletter

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### Publicity/Marketing

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### Scholarships

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### Science Fair

Cheri Noble

### Sponsorship

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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](http://stc-chicago.com).

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