

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

President's Message

By Cheri Noble

My company has a third-party benefits company that creates correspondence for associates. The first letter I received from them last year was written so poorly, I honestly have no idea what they were trying to tell me.

I recently received another letter in the mail from the same company. It was four pages long and in a very large font (Arial 18pt), which is very unusual for business communication. Here are just a few things I noticed:

- It never stated why I received the letter. (Most associates did not receive it.)
- It stated, "...can help you decide whether or not you want to join a Medicare drug plan." (I am not eligible for a Medicare drug plan!)
- It only capitalized our company name in some references, but not all.
- Paragraphs 2-6 were all in bold font.
- The fourth paragraph stated, "Information you need to make decisions...is at the end of this notice."
- At the very end of the letter was, "Note: You'll get this notice each year."

(Shouldn't that be "You'll receive this notice annually"?)

I'm still not sure what they were trying to convey to me. I believe the four pages could have been completed in one page with a business font size and a clear writing style.

My point is this: Who is being hired to write corporate correspondence? They don't have to be technical writers but, at the very least, they should be writers. This is especially true when they are communicating company benefits or information that they want people to use to make monetary decisions.

I don't need to tell you that when we write, we learn as much as we can about the topic so we can write succinctly and clearly to our audience. When I write, I submit a draft to a sample of the audience for them to review with a critical eye and provide feedback. I have been out of school for several years and have wondered what skills technical writers/communicators are being trained on

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Early Renewal Discount

Our events feature reduced pricing for STC Chicago members, so make sure you renew early!

Read about the many benefits of membership and join or renew online [here](#). Ω

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Find us online!



October Meeting: Panel Discussion on Career Trends and Tracks in Technical Communication

A career is a journey. Are you satisfied with the path you're on?

Technical communicators, information architects, and other similar professionals have both the opportunity and the challenge to define career tracks. Join us on Tuesday, October 29 to discuss how we, as digitally centered knowledge workers, are acquiring new skills and using emerging technologies to transform the field of technical communication.

At the meeting, we'll explore what it takes to compete in today's rapidly changing marketplace and look at how universities are preparing leaders to communicate and share knowledge in new ways. Representatives from DePaul, IIT, and Northwestern will join us to share their views and take your questions.

Panel Discussion on Academic Trends and Career Tracks for Technical Communication Professionals

Date: Tuesday, October 29

Time: Dinner 6:00 pm
Panel Discussion 7:00 pm
Close 8:30 pm

Location: Illinois Institute of Technology, Rice Campus
201 East Loop Rd. Wheaton, IL

Rates: Members, \$15
Non-members, \$20
Students, \$10

Register today!

Thank you to our sponsor, InterPro! Ω



September Meeting Recap

By John Hartigan

To quote Edward Bulwer-Lytton: "It was a dark and stormy night," as close to 20 intrepid technical communicators gathered in Rosemont to start the 2013-14 STC Chicago year. People came from as far away as Florida to meet, network and discuss events in technical communication. Adam Evans presented a series of fun and relevant questions to spark discussions. Everyone had a good time meeting new people, exchanging job advice, and catching up with current events in the field. After the lightning had passed, we returned home enlightened by our conversation and camaraderie. Ω

Be a Judge for the 2013 STC Chicago Competition

By Adam Evans

We're currently recruiting judges for our annual Technical Communication Competition. We need your help evaluating and providing feedback for our competition entries. You don't have to be an STC member, and we're looking for judges of all experience levels. **Sign up now** to help out with the competition!

How judging works

Judging is a great way to get involved in the industry and with STC without over committing yourself. Judges perform the following activities:

Judges Orientation – you're asked to attend a Judges Orientation on Saturday, November 2 where we explain the judging process and introduce you to your judging team.

Judging Teams – judges are placed in three-member teams with a designated team lead. Each team reviews three to six entries and evaluates them using an evaluation form. Responses are shared with the team and modified if necessary. One your team comes to a consensus, the team lead communicates with the judging manager.

Judging Team Lead – the team lead sets up a review schedule and stays in touch with each team member. If

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Be a Judge

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there are differences of opinion on the team, it's the team lead's job to lead the team to consensus.

The Judges Orientation date is fast-approaching, and we hope you can join us. Sign up online to be a judge—we look forward to hearing from you! [Learn more...](#) Ω

Two Scholarships Available for 2014 - 15 Academic Year

By Josée Martens

This year, the Chicago chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is sponsoring two scholarships worth a total of **\$1500**.

1st Scholarship:

- \$1,000 for educational purposes
- 1 year paid STC Student Membership including the Chicago Chapter dues

2nd Scholarship:

- \$500 for educational purposes
- 1 year paid STC Student Membership including the 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.

Application forms and specific requirements and deadlines are posted on the chapter website. If you are interested and eligible, please submit a completed form and the requested writing samples by February 15, or if you know of a student who might qualify, please refer them to our website (www.stc-chicago.com).

A panel of senior members will evaluate all applications and notify the winners in March. The winning recipients will be invited to attend STC Chicago's Recognition Banquet in March. Scholarship monies will be paid in the students' name directly to the educational institution(s) at which the recipients are enrolled. Ω

Readers Write In

In the last issue, we asked, "What's your favorite book about technical communication or writing in general?"

Jim Jones, a senior member, responded, "*How to Write and Present Technical Information*, Charles H. Sides, Oryx, 1999. This is my favorite book on technical communication. I'm taking a graduate-level Computer Science class [finished my U of Chicago Linguistics BA over the summer and am interested in Linguistics, Mathematics, and Computer Science all three], and I was delighted to learn that this book, which I've had for years, was to be one of our textbooks for the communication-centric class."

Thanks for the recommendation, Jim! Ω

Tech-Security Conference Offers Free VIP Passes to STC Chicago Members

DataConnectors has offered STC Chicago members free admission to the **2013 Chicago/Oakbrook Tech-Security Conference**, featuring 11 IT security speakers and more than 30 exhibits. The VIP passes include breakfast, lunch, conference materials, and entrance into all conference sessions and exhibit areas. In addition, attendees get the opportunity to win gift cards, iPads, Kindles and many other door prizes and giveaways.

Location: Doubletree by Hilton Chicago Oak Brook
1909 Spring Road
Oak Brook, Illinois

Date: Wednesday, November 13th, 2013
8:15am-5:00pm

Click [here](#) to register for your free VIP pass.

This conference qualifies for CPE credits and certificates of attendance.

For the full conference agenda click [here](#), or contact Chris Meier at cmeier@DataConnectors.com or (636) 778-9495 for more information. Ω

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 137

Senior Members: 87

Members: 36

New TC Professionals: 8

Student Members: 6

STC Chicago Chapter Leaders | 2013-2014

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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. 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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