

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members and Supporters

President's Message

By Rita Hovorka

It seems like the arrival of shorter days happened suddenly this year. Without a change of scenery from the school environment, every day of summer this year was very much the same for children and educators. There was no vacation travel to stimulate our sense of adventure, and no escaping to the movie theater on a hot summer night. As with all public gatherings, our Annual Volunteer Recognition and Awards Banquet was placed on indefinite hold.

Nonetheless, fall has arrived, which means it's time to renew your membership! Take advantage of all that STC Chicago has to offer—expand your professional network, and build your skill set with our monthly webinars. For those considering a career in technical communication, get in touch regarding our Get Real! Interview Program to get information on what skills you might need or what training is best. If you or anyone you know is pursuing a technical communication-related degree or certificate, be sure to check our website for the scholarships we offer.

It's also time to submit your best work to our annual technical communication competition. See the article in this issue for information on entering the competition and on being a judge.

We may not meet again in person for quite some time, but we are always virtually available for you. Be sure to join the STC Chicago LinkedIn group and stay in touch with us through Facebook and Twitter.



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Bylaws Vote Ends Oct 8

All STC Chicago members current as of August received an email in September with a link to vote on the updates to the Chapter Bylaws.

Voting closes for the Bylaws changes on October 8. Please submit your vote and comments by then.



Wednesday Webinar Series

October Webinar: Building a Business Case for Resources

(AKA "How to Get What You Want")

Do you think it's obvious that investing in content projects now will save your company money in the long run?

Are you frustrated when Management doesn't instantly agree?

Building a business case for resources can be challenging, especially if you have few (if any) credible industry metrics to quote.

Attend this **lunch session** on **Wednesday, October 7**, as Jack Molisani shares case studies, metrics, and hard-won lessons learned about how to build a business case to funds content initiatives (and to attend conferences!).

About the speaker: Jack Molisani is the President of ProSpring Technical Staffing, an employment agency specializing in content professionals (both contract and perm): <http://ProspringStaffing.com>

He's also the author of *Be The Captain of Your Career: A New Approach to Career Planning and Advancement*, which hit #5 on Amazon's Career and Resume Best Seller list.

Reach Jack at Jack@ProSpringStaffing.com, follow him on Twitter @JackMolisani, and connect on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jackmolisani/>
Jack also produces LavaCon, which is going virtual this year: LavaCon UX, a Content Strategy Conference...with a New Orleans Flair!

Register using the referral code **#TeamChiSTC** for \$100 off conference tuition: <https://lavacon.org/2020>

Note: Jack will raffle a free entrance to LavaCon at the end of the presentation. See you on **October 7!**



Virtual Fall Kickoff Program

The fall kickoff event for STC Chicago will be quite a bit different this year because of the pandemic, but we still want it to be a fun and uplifting event for all participants. With this goal in mind, we will host an "I Found a Better Way" Virtual Happy Hour on Thursday, October 22, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Please join us online with a beverage and snack of your choice, and then share with all of us how you have "found a better way" to do something over the past several months. What Tech Comm or work-related success might you share? Where have you claimed a victory, whether planned or unforeseen? What problem have you solved that deserves attention and applause? What personal or household-related discovery—perhaps in response to the pandemic—can we all celebrate together?

Bottom line, we all need good news and encouragement, a feel-good moment amid our current situations, and where we go with this is up to you! Our goal is to enjoy some time with each other to get reacquainted but also to celebrate our accomplishments, regardless of how big or small, how professional or personal.

Registration details will be announced on www.stc-chicago.com and in an email to our email list, so watch your inbox (or join the list by clicking the "Subscribe to STC Chicago" button on our website).

Members Compete for Trivia Glory

By Linda Kelley

Thanks to host Jack Molisani (and scorekeeper Kevin Meglic), STC Chicago members enjoyed a rousing game of tech comm trivia on September 10 from the comfort of our own homes. Armed with our beverages of choice, attendees battled over such categories as Famous Technical Writers, Acronym Magic, Help!, and my personal favorite, Grammar Police.

We took turns choosing categories and point values from a Jeopardy-like board, with everyone sending their responses privately to Kevin through the Chat window. The ante was upped in round two, with all questions worth double the number of stated points. Although most of us exhibited an impressive lack of knowledge about STC directors and staff, the variety of categories ensured that everyone was able to score some points, or at least have a laugh in the process.

For the final question, we could bet as many points as we were willing to risk—before hearing the question itself. A correct answer would earn the points wagered, but an incorrect answer would deduct them. Already in the lead going into the final round, Dan Dornbrook placed a strategic bet and took the big win by four points! Jack generously offered to send a free copy of his book, *Be the Captain of Your Career*, to both Dan and the second highest scorer (which happened to be me, thanks to that doubled grammar category).

After the game, Jack randomly selected one attendee to receive a free LavaCon UX registration. Congratulations to Pamela Nelson, who will be attending the virtual conference in October!

Thanks again to Jack and Kevin for a fun evening.



Looking for a Few Good Volunteers...

As the 2020-2021 program year starts gaining steam, the Administrative Committee is still looking to fill a few vacancies. With the current pandemic situation all chapter activities are being done from the comfort of people's homes, so you don't have to go far to volunteer!

Current committee openings include:

Competition co-manager

- Need to be an STC Chicago member.
- Track entries or manage the judges for the annual Technical Communication Competition (now through December).
- Work with the Program Committee to organize the annual Chapter Recognition and Awards Banquet (February and March).

Get Real! Professional Interview Program

- Offer members and non-members a chance to interview someone in the Tech Comm field.
- Must be an STC member and an experienced technical communicator.
- When a request is received, match the requesters with the volunteers from our volunteer list to conduct the interviews.

Membership Drive

- Plan and conduct an annual Fall membership drive to gain new members, encourage member renewal, and improve the participation of inactive members.
- Multiple people can share this responsibility; one must be an STC member.

If you are interested, contact any STC Chicago Officer (see back page for the current officer list).

New Entry Deadlines for STC Chicago Tech Comm Competition

Call for Entries

It's time to submit your best work to the annual STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition!

The entry deadline is October 18.

The competition is an invaluable opportunity for technical communicators and their teams to receive detailed feedback from multiple peer reviewers. Each entry is evaluated on its own merit, and judges provide detailed feedback that can help improve your work.

The categories for entries are:

- Training Materials
- Informational Materials
- Promotional Materials
- User Support Materials

Everyone is eligible to submit entries to our competition; you do not need to be a member of STC. You can enter work you completed or you can submit an entry on behalf of a colleague or subordinate. The entry must have been produced or substantially revised within the 24 months prior to September 1, 2020 and cannot have been submitted previously to any STC competition.

See <http://www.stc-chicago.com/competition/call-for-entries/> for full details, the entry form, and payment link.



Call for Judges

Judges are needed for the annual STC Chicago Technical Writing Competition. You don't have to be an STC member, and we're looking for judges of all experience levels.

Judges have a unique opportunity to review entries from different categories and industries. Reviewing the work of your peers can be educational as well as inspiring. You also get to interact with other judges and benefit from their experience.

How does judging work?

- An orientation meeting will be held on Sunday, October 25 where we will explain the judging process and introduce you to your judging team.
- Judging takes place from October 26 through December 13.
- Each judging team has a designated team lead. Team members receive 3-5 entries to review, depending on the number of entries submitted and the number of judges.
- Each judge reviews the entries using a form that highlights different elements of technical communication.
- Responses are shared within the team and modified, if necessary, as the team comes to consensus on award status of the entry.

Where do I sign up?

For full details, go to our Website at <http://www.stc-chicago.com/competition/judging-for-the-competition/>

Questions?

Contact us at Competition@stc-chicago.com

**Entries
and Judges
Needed**

2020 Volunteer Recognition and Awards Banquet Canceled

As you know, due to Covid-19, we had to initially post-pone and re-schedule the March banquet. We tried re-scheduling twice, but we have finally concluded it is in the best interest of our membership to cancel this event for 2020. We had announced this on the Website but thought we should also announce here for anyone who may not have seen the notice.

We will re-group and hopefully be able to come together in person and celebrate our members, volunteers, and friends again next March in 2021.

Member News

Copresco President's Monthly Column Moves to New Venue

Copresco President and Senior STC member Steve Johnson's monthly column "Johnson's World" moves to Printing News magazine, Wide-Format & Signage, and WhatTheyThink.com in September. The award-winning column that serves as a forum for his insights and thoughtful commentary about the state of today's graphic communications industry has been featured in American Printer, Quick Printing, Printing News, and most recently Printing Impressions.

Editor's note: Are you an STC member with some news to share? Do you have an article idea? Please reach out to byline@stc-chicago.com

LavaCon Goes Virtual

Like many other conferences this year, the LavaCon Conference is going virtual...with a twist.

Conference organizer and STC Chicago sponsor, Jack Molisani, says,

"We were supposed to be in New Orleans this year, but because of Covid we're going 100% virtual. That said, if we can't get to New Orleans, let's bring New Orleans to us!

We were supposed to do a live jazz parade down Bourbon Street. Instead, I've hired seven-piece brass band in New Orleans to play over Zoom, while attendees dance around the home office or dining room—playing a tambourine that will be included in the 'experience box' they get in the mail.

One of my attendees summarized the whole conference in a sentence:

'One of the attractions of LavaCon to me is how sassy (for the lack of a better term) it is. It gets big names from major companies covering really important stuff, but there is also a sense of playfulness.'

~L.R., Senior Content Developer

Some of the 'big names' speaking this year are from Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Twitter, Netflix, and NBCUniversal media and more! Our program this year is literally a *Who's Who* of content professionals.

If there is an upside to going virtual, it's that we've been able to score some amazing speakers that we might not have gotten if they had to take time away from work and fly to a conference."

Jack adds, "I have to say that after six months of sheltering in place, I miss social interaction. I miss my STC peeps!

If you can join us, register using the referral code **#ChicagoSTC** for \$100 off conference tuition. See you in October!"

LavaCon UX, the virtual conference on content strategy and tech comm management, will be **23-25 October 2020**.

Details at <https://lavacon.org/2020>

Hobbies

By Jack Molisani, STC Fellow

Masks, and viruses, and deadlines, Oh My!

Long hours in front of a computer screen is just part of the job for most technical communicators. Add working from home via video conferencing, helping your kids with virtual homework, while simultaneously meeting deliverable deadlines, and you've got the ingredients for a long day of video and computer fatigue.

So what's a technical communicator to do?

Take up a hobby!

Getting Your Hands Dirty

The last thing I want to do when I get home from a long day at work is sit in front of a computer and play video games. (Especially when "getting home from work" means walking from my home office to the living room!) Instead, I want to get outside, get some air, touch something solid, something *real*.

I took up cooking as a hobby, which then lead me to home gardening.

Let's discuss gardening first.

If at First You Don't Succeed...

When I was a senior in college, I took an occupational interest survey. The test didn't predict what you'd be good at, but what you probably enjoy doing as a profession. The test contained a series of questions like, "Would you rather go fishing, or go to a Broadway show?" Apparently, people in a profession tend to answer such questions similarly, so by matching your answers to theirs, they can predict what you would enjoy doing. The test predicted I would most enjoy being a Flight Attendant or a Military Officer. Which was good, as I was on an ROTC scholarship and was going into the Air Force upon graduation. And until recently, my life was all about traveling, public speaking, and choosing cities for the conference I produce. I'm happiest when I'm in an airplane, as anyone who is my friend on Facebook can attest!

So why this long explanation about occupational interest surveys* in a column about what to do after work hours? Because my guidance counselor told me I was the first person he ever met who got a *negative* double-digit score in a career field. Most fields were ranked 0 to 100 on how

well you would enjoy them. I got a -14 as an Agribusiness Manager (a farmer). And I have to admit, they were right.

While I loved the feel of dirt in my hands when I plant things, my love of gardening stopped about there. I tried planting a small garden on my apartment's patio, but it just didn't take. Add to that the cost of the gardening supplies vs. the small return on investment, I realized gardening just wasn't for me. Still, several of my STC buddies have fantastic backyard and patio gardens, such as Sharon Burton in California, Kit Brown-Hoekstra in Denver, and Dee Murr in Washington state. I am green with envy!

So, I'm going to stick with what I do best: cooking!

More on that in another article.

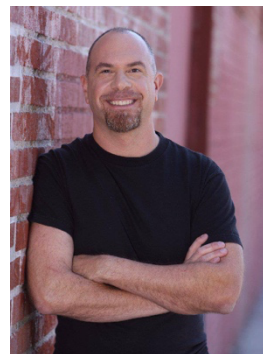
Until then, step away from your computer.

Go outside.

Hug a tree.

Start a garden.

About the Author



Jack Molisani is the president of ProSpring Technical Staffing, an employment agency specializing in content professionals: <http://ProSpringStaffing.com>

He's the author of *Be The Captain of Your Career: A New Approach to Career Planning and Advancement*, which hit #5 on Amazon's Career and Resume

Best Seller list.

Jack also produces the LavaCon Conference on Content Strategy and Tech Comm Management, to be held virtually 23-28 October 2020: <https://lavacon.org>

Follow Jack on Twitter @JackMolisani, connect with him on LinkedIn, or reach him at Jack@ProSpringStaffing.com

* There are many free online occupational interest surveys. Just do an internet search.

Society News



Society Webinar Registration Fees Discounted til End of Year

With many STC members and professionals in our wider community whose financial situation has changed due to COVID-19, we're offering the **student discount rate of \$29 for webinars and \$295 for online courses** to our members for our live programming through **31 December 2020**. We hope this provides a small bit of positivity in these troubling times. You should receive the discount automatically when you register. If you have questions, please contact us at education@stc.org.



STC's 2021 Membership Open Now

All STC memberships are on a calendar-year basis (not anniversary) and will expire on **31 December**. For any new members joining, if you join any time before December 31, you get benefits from the time you join through December 31, 2021, so join now and take advantage of the extra time!



Senior Members: Get Recognized for Your Contributions to STC

STC is now accepting applications for the honor of Associate Fellow and Fellow for those who have been active in the Society. You can nominate yourself with the endorsement of another Senior Member, or you can be nominated by another Senior Member. Any Associate Fellows who were awarded that honor as of May 2018 or earlier are eligible to apply for Fellow.

Visit <https://www.stc.org/membership/recognition/honors/> for guidelines and applications. Fellow applications are due by November 1 and Associate Fellow applications are due by November 2, so start working on your application package now!

For all the latest Society news, be sure to check out www.stc.org or see our link to the STC Notebook on the bottom of our website at www.stc-chicago.com

STC Chicago 2020-21 Officers

President – Rita Hovorka, president@stc-chicago.com

Vice President – Pete Wagner, vp@stc-chicago.com

Secretary – Dan Dornbrook, secretary@stc-chicago.com

Treasurer – Francis Bao, treasurer@stc-chicago.com

Immediate Past President – Michael Burke, ipp@stc-chicago.com

2019-20 Committee Managers

Alliance – Linda Jansak

Bylaws – Becky Hall

Competition – Rita Hovorka and [*co-manager wanted*](#), competition@stc-chicago.com

eLearning & Technology Showcase – Linda Jansak

Historian – Bill Leavitt

Byline Newsletter – MK Grueneberg, byline@stc-chicago.com

Nominating – Manager Pete Wagner, nominating@stc-chicago.com

Get Real! Professional Interview Program – Tbd, interview@stc-chicago.com

Membership Drive – [*manager wanted*](#), membership@stc-chicago.com

Programs – Dan Dornbrook, program@stc-chicago.com

Social Media – Dan Dornbrook

Scholarships – [*manager wanted*](#), scholarships@stc-chicago.com

Sponsorship – MK Grueneberg, sponsorship@stc-chicago.com

Webinar Series – MK Grueneberg

Web/Online – Linda Kelley, web@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.

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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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