

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

President's Message

By Cheri Noble

Some of you may not know me, so I'll give you a "Reader's Digest" version! I'm Cheri Noble, and I've worked as a Senior Technical Writer for Kmart and now Sears Holdings for several years. I mostly develop online help, paper documentation, and eLearning for software applications.

Like many of you, I had many "careers" before deciding on becoming a technical writer. My education is in Human Resources with a specialization in Training and Development. As a trainer, I also had the opportunity to develop the training materials. That was when I realized that it wasn't as easy as throwing a bunch of steps into a guide to be used for the training class. I was fortunate enough to be in a large department of instructional designers and technical writers; that became my education AFTER college! We developed a style guide, standards, and templates for all of the training created by our team.

That was a long time ago and so many things have changed, including my company leaving the state of Michigan and moving to Illinois; none of my co-workers made the move. Like I said, I was fortunate; now I am a lone writer and I continue to use those guides, with minor updates, today.

I appreciate the STC Chicago monthly program meetings. These meetings give me

the opportunity to learn new skills/tools and network with other technical communicators to share information, frustration, and achievements.

To get the most out of my membership in STC Chicago, I attended meetings and volunteered.

All I had to say was, "Is there anything I can do to help?" and that was it! I started by helping on our annual competition. I met some fantastic people and found how much fun it was to be part of this organization. Once I got to know some of our past leaders and members, I learned how dedicated they are to our chapter and STC; then I knew I was in the right place.

The Administrative Council we have this year is superb, as it has been since I joined the Chicago chapter in 2006. I am looking forward to the challenges we will overcome together over the next year. We are currently looking for persons to volunteer to help with the Program Committee this year. We are hoping several people will step forward and offer to help with at least one event. If we are able to use the skills of many of our members to find locations, secure the location and food, help define topics, and be a greeter at a meeting, we'll have another

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Early Renewal Discount

Our events feature reduced pricing for STC Chicago members, so when membership season opens, 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!



Don't Miss Our September Kickoff and Networking Event!

By Linda Kelley

Our September networking meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 18 at the RAM Restaurant in Rosemont. Join us for an evening of good food and great conversation. Meet up with old friends or make some new ones!

We will be raffling off a free registration to a future chapter meeting of the winner's choice (banquet excluded). You must be present to win.

When: Wednesday, September 18
6:30 to 9:00 pm

Where: RAM Restaurant & Brewery
9520 Higgins Road, Rosemont, IL

How much: \$10 members and students in advance
\$15 non-members or at the door
Includes heavy appetizers and soft drinks. (Alcoholic beverages are available for purchase.)

Visit our website to register for this event! Ω

Who Won at Trivia on June 25?

By Linda Kelley

After a very brief business meeting, five teams competed for the big bucks at our Trivia Night at Elmhurst Public House in June. For a while it was neck and neck, as the teams successfully answered questions on a wide variety of topics.

In the end, though, one team emerged victorious. Congratulations to our first-place team, Out of Orbits! Teammates Dan Dornbrook, John Hartigan, Chris Hester, and Paul Lockwood each took home a \$10 Starbucks gift card. The Aquanettes (Jessica Behles, Trina Grieshaber, Tracey Riedle, and Cynthia Robison) were awarded \$5 gift cards for their second-place finish.

Thanks to everyone who came out to play with us! Ω

Calling All Marketers

By Adam Evans

We're looking for someone to help with STC Chicago's marketing efforts this year! If you love social media and you have a flare for writing (we all do, right?), then STC Chicago has a great opportunity where you can serve the chapter and flex your marketing muscle.

Marketing may not be second nature for all of us, but our professions require us to know how to structure information and present clear, concise messaging. That's all it takes—that, and a little social media savvy.

I've served as the Marketing Committee manager for the last year, and while I love the job, my responsibilities as Vice President are slowly overtaking my availability with Marketing. I could use some help! If you've retweeted an STC Chicago tweet or liked an STC Chicago Facebook post in the last year, chances are you've interacted with something I've posted. You could be the person posting these messages and driving engagement!

Not only is this a valuable role in the chapter, but it's also pretty fun. You could help promote our monthly meetings, advertise our annual Technical Communication Competition, spread the word about our student scholarship, put together our monthly At-a-Glance newsletter, and so much more.

We're looking for someone to help on a part-time basis. This is not a full-time commitment, and someone from STC Chicago can teach you any of the systems you're not already familiar with. If you're interested, please contact pr@stc-chicago.com. I look forward to working with you! Ω

Attend WebVisions Chicago

Sept. 25-27, 2013
Siskel Film Center

WebVisions Chicago offers a 20% discount to STC members. Two- and three-day passes are available. Visit our website today for more information. Ω

2013 Call for Entries

By Adam Evans and Cynthia Laughlin

STC's Chicago Chapter annual Technical Communication Competition has begun and we need your entries!

Although this is a competition, each entry is evaluated on its own merit. Judges will provide detailed feedback on an assessment form. Some of the reasons to participate in the Technical Communication's Competition are to

- Establish professional standards for our work
- Provide visibility for our profession
- Recognize outstanding work effort of technical communication professionals

The categories for entries are

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

To read more about entering the 2013 Competition, please visit www.stc-chicago.com and click on the Competition link. Ω

Judging for the 2013 STC Chicago Competition

By Adam Evans and Cynthia Laughlin

The annual competition begins mid-August and we need your expertise. We rely on our members to assess competition entries. Please consider applying to be a judge in this year's competition.

Why should I be a judge?

We are recruiting judges for the annual STC Chicago Technical Writing Competition. Judges have a unique opportunity to review entries from different categories and industries. Entries can be websites, manuals, help documentation, newsletters, etc. Past entries have come from industries as diverse as aerospace, manufacturing, agricultural, software, and medical associations. Seeing such different work can be educational as well as inspiring. You also get to interact with other judges and benefit from their experience.

How does judging work?

Judges are placed in three-member teams with a designated team lead. The team members receive three to eight entries that must be reviewed over a two-month period. Each judge reviews the entries using a four-page evaluation form that highlights different elements of technical communication. Responses are shared within the team and modified if necessary. Once the judging team agrees on an award level for an entry, the team lead communicates with the judging coordinator.

What does a team lead do?

Team leads need to set up a review schedule. Ideally, each team should be completing a least one entry per week. If there is a difference of opinion, the team lead brings the team together (either by phone, online, or in person) to discuss. Once consensus is reached, the team lead emails all evaluation forms to the judging coordinator along with the recommended award level.

Where do I sign up?

Go to stc-chicago.com and apply before October 19.

When will I get my entries?

Entries are handed out at the judging orientation on November 2, 2013. The orientation will be held at the office of the CARA Group in Oak Brook. Note: Entries cannot be mailed. Ω

Congratulations to Byline and editor Kim Sikora for winning an APEX Award of Excellence in the category Newsletters - Electronic & Web!



Our Program Year

By Cheri Noble

2013-2014 Program previews

The monthly programs are an opportunity for our members to get together to socialize and network, as well as to improve their knowledge in topics they may not be familiar with.

Below is a list of some of the programs and/or ideas we have so far for this year:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| September | Networking |
| October | Academic Progression |
| November | TBD |
| December | Lightning Talks/Holiday Social |
| January | Tools Series 1: Social Collaboration - Flare |
| February | Tools Series 2: TBD |
| March | Recognition and Awards Banquet |
| April | Content Strategy with Jack Molisani |
| May | Member Planning Workshop (after the Summit!) |
| June | Member Appreciation |

The above meeting topics are subject to change. As each event is confirmed with a date, location, speakers, and volunteers, it will be posted to the [STC Chicago calendar](#).

Program meeting locations

Our Chicago chapter has members from as far north as Milwaukee, as far south as Indianapolis, as far west as Ann Arbor, and lots of places in between. Wow, we are a very geographically diverse chapter! I wanted to try and schedule our program meetings closer to the areas that our members live, but that may prove to be pretty tough. One thing we can do is try to offer more webinar programs during the day to give those who can't attend meetings in person a chance to participate.

The Administrative Council is willing to conduct program meetings at different locations but we need help from you. We need you to tell us where you would like to meet. Do you know of a restaurant or other venue with a private meeting area, where the room itself is free except for the cost of any food we might

order? Does your company have a free meeting space we could use, where we'd have the option of hiring a low-cost caterer? We need room for at least 25-30 people, and we are open to new locations, but we need to keep the cost low so the prices we charge for the meetings are reasonable. Maybe we can arrange to have a future meeting at your location! If you are willing to help us find a meeting location, email president@stc-chicago.com with any ideas.

Program meeting topics

We want our program meetings to be relevant and timely for our members, but you need to let us know what you want. You don't have to know a speaker; we'll do our best to locate someone.

We need to know what kinds of topics you're interested in learning about. For example,

- Is there a software tool you'd like to learn more about?
- A development process you'd like to understand?
- More career development topics?
- Are you being asked to develop eLearning but don't know where to start?
- Are you ready for higher education? What are your options in the Chicagoland area?

At one of our past program meetings, a member mentioned that a "portfolio review" would be great. A few months later, we held a Portfolio Review program meeting! We worked in groups, going over pros and cons in setting up a portfolio. Before attending the meeting, I thought my portfolio was very nice and detailed. By the time I left the meeting, I had a list of ideas and changes to make to my portfolio to make it more polished and professional. I am so glad I went!

Maybe there is a topic you are experienced in and you'd like to share with us. Or maybe you'd be willing to help coordinate one or more program meetings this year. We could really use your help. We would like to have several people help out with each event to limit the time commitment for each person. If you think you may be able to help with an event, send an email to president@stc-chicago.com with your contact information. Ω

President's Message

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strong program year. Consider if you can volunteer your time and talents to help with just one program meeting. If you can, email president@stc-chicago.com with your contact information and what you can do to strengthen our programs this year.

As our year progresses, feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions you have to improve our chapter! Ω

Readers Write In

By Linda Kelley

Submit a 2-3 sentence response to the following question and your name and response could be published in a future issue.

This issue's question: **What's your favorite book about technical communication or writing in general?**

Submit responses to byline@stc-chicago.com to be featured in an upcoming issue! Ω

2013 eLearning Showcase: Uplifting, Well-Attended, Thought-Provoking

By Linda Jansak

Where were you on August 20?

If you are an eLearning specialist and you live in the Chicago area, odds are you attended the high-energy Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase at Northwestern University, School of Law. STC Chicago hosted this popular event, along with our fellow host organizations, CISPI and CCASTD. A dedicated team of volunteers came through to help make this unique event happen. And, once again, we enjoyed the generous and enthusiastic support of sponsors and exhibitors. What a great collaborative effort it was!

This year, nearly 400 learning and communications professionals gathered to hear about the newest developments and practices in the field of eLearning. A total of 40 speakers covered a wide range of topics including development tools, media resources, virtual classrooms, social applications, and mobile learning. Attendees chose from a total of 21 sessions in 5 different tracks. If you didn't get a chance to attend, you can find conference materials, presentation slides, photos, and videos from the event online. Access is available [here](#). Ω



CARA Group is a Gold Sponsor of the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase

Tom Reilly, winner of a WiFi Smartpen provided by CARA Group, is pictured here at the Showcase with CARA Recruiting Managers, Gina Arinyanontakoon and Lisa Vitale.

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 132
Members: 39
Senior Members: 86
Student Members: 7

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](http://www.stc.org).

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