

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

President's Message - Happy New Year!

By Elizabeth Burke

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Let me assure you that I am not delirious from the summer heat! I just want to signal the new STC Chapter term. On behalf of the AC board and committee managers, I would like to extend a heartfelt, "Hello," to all of our *Byline* readers. I hope you are enjoying your summer with family and friends. And, a day or two for yourself to unwind and relax with a good book or a day of solitude at your favorite museum or park. For those of us who relish the hot days of summer, we had plenty this year. For those of us who long for the crisp days of fall, hang in there. The temperatures will eventually drop below 80 degrees.

As you read this newsletter, the 2011-2012 STC Chicago AC board and committee managers have met and are working on many events and activities for the coming year. This year is shaping up to be an exciting time. In addition to our Chapter programs and workshops, activities and events, we have the honor of hosting the 2012 Summit. Hopefully, you're aware that the Summit will be held in the Chicago-land area in May of 2012. If not, each issue of *Byline* will bring you news on activities and plans. Also, be sure to check our website frequently, as we will post all the latest news.

As well as supporting the Summit activities, we have a number of Chapter goals for this year. Efforts are underway on a series of programs and workshops offering a range of timely topics. A fall workshop is scheduled for November that complements our September program on job searches and employment changes. We are excited about the upcoming launch of our new website that includes changes to the look and feel. Additionally, we hope to offer an internship for an upcoming communication student to help us

with our website. These are only a few of our goals. There's much more on the horizon.

I encourage you to get active with STC Chicago. The Chapter offers a wealth of information and support to our members and guests. Ω

Byline gets a new Editor

By Thomas Lunde

After five years of serving as *Byline* editor, (since Fall 2005) I am handing off the responsibility of *Byline* to Kim Sikora.

I really enjoyed my time as *Byline* editor and I got to know a lot of you in the process. *Byline* has served the members of STC Chicago for many, many years and it was a privilege for me to be the editor. During my tenure, the STC Chicago chapter has changed and grown a lot and we are a very different organization than when I started.

Although I served *Byline* as editor, *Byline's* success would have been impossible without the contributions of our members and regular contributors. Because of the excellent contributions by our members and others outside the chapter, *Byline* has won the following:

- 2 Excellence Awards at the STC International Competition
- 2 Merit Awards at the STC International Competition
- 5 consecutive APEX Awards of Excellence

Please welcome Kim Sikora to her new position as *Byline* editor and keep sending in your excellent articles. Ω



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Upcoming Programs and Events with STC Chicago

By MaryKay Grueneberg

For full details and meeting registrations, see our website at stc-chicago.org.

SmartDocs: Content Management and Content Reuse in Microsoft Word

August 11 – Noon (CDT) – 1-hour Free Webinar

Join us for a *free* 1-hr product demo of SmartDocs, presented by Lisa Pietrangeli, Director of Client Solutions, and Bryan Lynn, Director of Technology at ThirtySix Software.

SmartDocs is a content management solution for Microsoft Word that integrates powerful content reuse, conditional text, and document assembly capabilities into your MS Word authoring environment. In this webinar, learn how SmartDocs can help your organization optimize content reuse directly in Word. SmartDocs will allow your company to save time, save money, and generate higher quality documentation.

Whether you are a technical communicator, technical writer, medical writer, instructional designer, proposal writer, etc., if you are one who is developing content that needs to be reused in a variety of documents, kept consistent over time, or updated frequently, you should join us for this enlightening Webinar.

The Webinar is free, but we need you to register so that we can send you the login and password information.

2011 Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase

August 16 – 8:30 am-5:00 pm – Union League Club of Chicago

See the showcase website for cost and registration:

<http://chicagoelearningshowcase.com/>

Celebrate the emergence of Chicago as a world-class center for elearning. Join hosts [CCASTD](#), [CISPI](#), and [STC Chicago](#) at the fourth annual Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase for a cutting-edge exploration of new media and interactive elearning tools.

The Showcase provides a full day of presentations with an emphasis on the role of new media and interactive methods in organizational training. Our speakers will explore all aspects of elearning—instructional design, development tools, media re-

sources, virtual classrooms, social and interactive applications, mobile learning, rapid elearning, and more.

Who should attend? Anyone who wants to experience the latest elearning technology platforms, tools, and delivery methods. If you attend the Showcase, you will have an opportunity to network with a wide variety of industry professionals, including the following:

- Instructional Designers
- Instructional Developers
- Trainers
- Technical Writers
- eLearning & Technology Marketers
- Training Managers/Directors
- Content Managers
- New Media Developers/Managers

Optimizing Content Reuse in Unstructured and Structured Authoring Environments and How to Build a Business Case: Selling your Ideas to your Company

August 25 – 6:30pm check-in, program begins at 7pm.

Charlie's Charhouse, Elk Grove Village,

Cost is \$20 members, \$30 non-members, \$15 students (heavy appetizers and soft drinks included)

Whether you are working in an unstructured Word environment, directly in XML or anything in between, there are measures you can take during content development that will allow your company to maximize content (and translation) reuse. This two-part session will be presented by Lisa Pietrangeli, Director of Client Solutions and Bryan Lynn, Director of Technology at ThirtySix Software.

This session will begin with two individual case studies. One will address content management strategies in a structured authoring environment, the other in an unstructured authoring environment. The combined stories of the two speakers will demonstrate content reuse strategies and how different technologies support them.

We'll answer the questions: Why is content reuse important to my company? How does technology affect content reuse opti-

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mization? How do different authoring methods impact technology options? What technical options are available for writing teams working in these two unique environments? What's the best way to maximize reuse? How do I help make sure that my company's brand and message are consistent worldwide? How do I determine ROI and present the idea to my company?

In the second part of our presentation, we'll focus on how to build a business case and sell your ideas to your company. As a technical communicator, you are up-to-date on all of the new writing methods and innovative tools of the trade. You know how important content reuse is, how critical good templates are, and how best to work on a team. However, when you identify a better method, a better tool, or recognize opportunities for process improvements, it can be a challenge to get others to explore your solution and to get a budget approved. Lisa will talk about how to build and present a case for improvements for your company.

Selecting the Right Technology to Support Your Content Reuse Strategy

September 8 – Noon (CDT) – Webinar

Cost is \$10 members and \$15 non-members

A successful content reuse implementation consists of a content reuse strategy and technology that effectively supports this strategy. In this session, learn how to identify, evaluate, and select the right technology to support your organization's content reuse needs.

Technical communicators need to take advantage of content reuse in order to save time, save money, and generate higher quality documentation. A successful content reuse implementation requires a well planned, well thought-out content reuse strategy and a technology that effectively supports this strategy. This presentation outlines a practical approach for identifying and evaluating content reuse technologies to ensure you select the one that best supports your content reuse strategy. In addition, this presentation will emphasize the importance of having a sound content strategy in place before you begin shopping for the right technology.

Join us for this 1-hour webinar presented by Lisa Pietrangeli, Director of Client Solutions and Bryan Lynn, Director of Technology at ThirtySix Software. This is the perfect follow-up to the August meeting. Even if you are unable to join us on August 25, this Webinar can still provide some great and useful information.

Job Hunting Secrets that May Surprise You

September 22 – 6:30pm check-in, program begins at 7pm.

Siemens offices, Buffalo Grove

Cost is \$20 members, \$30 non-members, \$15 students (pizza, salad, and soft drinks included)

Presented by Jack Molisani *of ProSpring Staffing*

2011 is showing an uptick in job posting as companies come out of recession mode, but with so many people still looking for work, the competition for jobs is at an all-time high. However, there ARE actions you can take to move to the front of the line when applying for a new position.

Have you ever applied for a job you wanted, but didn't even get an interview? Whether you are unemployed and looking for a job or are employed but looking to move up or move out, don't miss our September 22 meeting! Ω

Program Committee Seeks Co-Manager

By Dan Dornbrook

The STC Chicago Program Committee plans, schedules, and coordinates program meetings for the chapter. The meetings are meant to meet the professional growth needs of chapter members.

The work of the committee includes:

- Finding speakers and topics for meetings that are of interest to members and will support our professional development.
- Finding locations for meetings that are convenient for as many members as possible and are conducive to the type of event that we want to present.
- Scheduling meetings for times and dates that are as convenient as possible for as many members as possible.
- Arranging refreshments (including food) that will make our meetings as welcoming as possible for members and guests.

For the 2011-2012 chapter year, our Immediate Past President, MaryKay Grueneberg is managing this committee. She is seeking a co-manager for the committee to assist with the above responsibilities, especially with finding locations and arranging refreshments. If you would like to help organize our chapter's events, please contact MaryKay at ipp@stc-chicago.org. Ω

STC Chicago Wants You!

By *Elizabeth Burke*

At this time, the Chapter is in need of a manager for the Scholarships committee. If you have never volunteered for an STC position, or if it has been some time since you volunteered, I ask you to consider helping with the Scholarships committee. Our chapter is successful in our goals and mission only with the help of our members.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the chapter President, Elizabeth Burke, at president@stc-chicago.org. I would be happy to discuss any questions.

Thanks to everyone in advance for considering my request.

Scholarships

The Scholarships committee works together with local faculty members to award financial support to students who wish to continue their education in the field of technical communication.

Responsibilities

Work with local university and college faculty to solicit entrants for scholarships.

Review all applications for scholarships and recommend scholarship winners to the current Administrative Council.

Work with the current treasurer to ensure the scholarship is delivered to the recipient's school. Ω

Student Opportunities for the Coming Year

By *Linda Kelley*

STC Chicago is pleased to announce that we will once again offer scholarships to eligible college students who are studying technical communication. Application forms and requirements will be available on the Chapter website as soon as details are finalized.

The Chapter will also be looking for two interns to assist with the Chapter website and Byline. While these internships are unpaid, the knowledge and skills gained and the opportunity to work closely with experienced technical communicators will be invaluable. Again, more information will be published as soon as possible.

Interview Preparation and Techniques Workshop - Saturday, November 5, 2011

By *Elizabeth Burke*

Whether you are looking to change jobs or you want to keep your interviewing skills fresh, this fall, STC Chicago is offering a workshop to help you prepare and practice for job interviews. This workshop consists of three distinct areas – resume preparation, work samples, and interviewing skills.

We are fortunate to have representatives from The CARA Group to share information and techniques in preparing for job interviews. CARA recruiters will share information you should include in your resume and how to present your work samples. They will also walk you through techniques to use for different interviewing scenarios – onsite, phone, and video interviews. You will also have the opportunity to review your resume and work samples using job aids created for this workshop. During the workshop, you will practice the skills and techniques with fellow attendees and receive feedback on the different components discussed. When you complete the workshop, you will have a series of checklists to serve as reminders when you prepare for job interviews in the future.

Reserve Saturday, November 5 for our fall workshop on interview preparation and watch our website for details.

The CARA® Group specializes in custom learning, and performance and change management solutions for Fortune 1000 organizations. CARA designs, develops, and implements programs that directly contribute to an organization's productivity and growth. CARA services include instructional design, training, performance support, web-based training, eLearning, project management, technical writing, course design and development, needs analysis, performance consulting, and organizational design and development. Ω

STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition, an Opportunity

By Elizabeth Burke

Submit your entries for the 2011-2012 STC Chicago competition beginning Monday, August 29 through Friday, October 7.

The STC Chicago Chapter 2011-2012 Technical Communication competition will kick off soon. Each year our chapter holds the competition and a very loyal group of submitters enter. If you are one of those loyal submitters, you may have become comfortable with the event and forgotten the benefits of entering. Those who have not previously entered the competition may be unaware of all the advantages. Whether you have entered the competition, read on as I share my experience.

I am one of those submitters who enter year after year. I always appreciated my awards, and I've always felt honored, but I've experienced comments that in many ways dismiss the advantages of entering. Listening to others, I sometimes lost an appreciation for what the competition says to me.

I've heard comments such as, "An award is not going to get me a job." "As a hiring manager, I don't want to see awards, I want to see product." And, "If a candidate starts talking about awards, I'm done listening." Very rough comments.

Now, allow me to share a personal experience as well as some thoughts about entering this year's competition. I re-entered the consulting field a year ago. I had won many STC Chicago competition awards over the course of ten years and, absolutely, I included a line item about the awards on my resume. But, I didn't give it much thought beyond a notation.

On receiving a request to meet for a potential project, I took those "award" comments to heart. I intended to convey to the client that the work I was presenting was award winning, but I wouldn't overplay the awards. As I reviewed my presentation before meeting my potential client, I thought about all of the highpoints of my products and the skills I bring to writing. I reviewed every detail of how I approach a project, how I scope a document, get up to speed on unfamiliar content, and the tools I use.

I arrived at my meeting with a Fortune 100 client, only knowing that they wanted to talk about a database guide. We exchanged pleasant introductions. We took our seats. And, the

first question from the client, which was actually more of a statement, was this: "So...tell me about all of these awards you've won."

While I mentally picked myself up off the floor and maintained my composure, I explained how my STC competition awards represent validation by my peers that the writing in the products demonstrates a level of industry standards expected by experienced writers and instructional designers in the industry. I explained that the peer review evaluations and subsequent awards confirm a quality that supports the intended audience experience. And I secretly felt validated, in contrast to those comments that dismissed the competition.

I know I've shared the following thoughts in articles publicizing our competition and at our banquets during which we honor the winners. I firmly believe that these thoughts represent true benefits achieved when you enter our annual competition.

- If you are the member of a large team, it is easy to become comfortable with the status quo. Frequently, team members adapt each other's styles but forget to look externally to see how others in the industry are updating and changing communication techniques.
- It is beneficial to have someone unfamiliar with your product review it. It's easy to miss the finer details of content that you see day in and day out. Competition judges look at your product with fresh eyes and see what you do not see.
- If you are a lone writer, perhaps a consultant, you don't always have someone you can turn to for a peer perspective. The competition gives you feedback from a three-member team of experienced technical communicators.
- Stakeholders sometimes, but not always, remember to tell you that you did a great job on a difficult project. You can never have too much praise for a job well done.
- It is sometimes a challenge to impress your peers. When you receive feedback that confirms your hard work, it's even more rewarding.
- And, sometimes the truth is that it is nice to be recognized for a good job. There is nothing wrong in feeling a sense of accomplishment for hard work. What better way to remind yourself of your effort than with an award from STC Chicago?

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“Competition” - Continued from Page 5

You may not get a job because you won an STC Chicago competition award, but the truth is that it feels nice to be recognized. I encourage you to enter the competition this year, even if you only enter one product. You cannot be recognized if you don't enter and it only takes one entry to be recognized. Everyone likes to feel validated, and our competition provides an opportunity for you to get feedback on your products. Judges also share a perspective of how your product presents to others and changes to consider in future products.

You can submit entries for the 2011-2012 STC Chicago competition **Monday, August 29 through Friday, October 7.**

Judging begins Saturday, October 15 through Saturday, December 3. Results are announced shortly following consensus judging.

Please send your entries to:

Elizabeth Burke
STC Chicago Competition
706 New Mexico Trail
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

By the way, I did get the project and three subsequent projects from the same client as well. Ω

The STC Summit Is Coming to Chicago

By Bill Leavitt and Linda Jansak, co-managers, Chicago Host Summit Committee



Members of the Chicago Summit host committee and volunteers attended the STC Summit in Sacramento in May 2011 to invite STC members to the Rosemont – Chicago Summit next May. Our promotional efforts were extremely successful, thanks to the work by the committee and volunteers.

At our booth in the industrial exhibits area, we gave out ribbons designed to be attached to attendee's badges that said "Rosemont – Chicago 2012," and stickers that said "See you in CHICAGO Illinois." These promotional elements became the hit of the Summit, with several hundred people stopping by our booth to pick up our materials. Discussions at the booth centered on what makes Chicago a great place to visit and why it has the reputation of being "the best convention city in the U.S."

Traditionally, the luncheon on the last day of the Summit is the opportunity for next year's host committee to put on a presentation to promote the following year's Summit. In addition to the usual presentation of the qualities of Chicago and what the Summit will have to offer, we did a skit. After a brief video about Chicago and Rosemont, a musical introduction preceded the entrance of the Blues Brothers, Jake and Elwood

Blues, and a bunch of Blues Brothers and sisters. Jake and Elwood were dressed in complete Blues Brothers outfits, including hats and dark glasses. The rest of the group had Blues Brothers hats and dark glasses. Elwood and Jake invited STC members to Chicago in their unique Blues Brothers way and drew winning tickets for complementary registrations to next year's Summit.

At the end, "Sweet Home Chicago" was played and the Blues Brothers and sisters danced on stage. It was so exciting that, not only the audience was well entertained, but the president of STC was motivated to don a Blues Brothers hat and dark glasses and dance on stage with us. Needless to say, no one left Sacramento without a clear idea of where next year's Summit will be held.

Our thanks go out to volunteers from Chicago who helped out at the Summit. Also many of the Chicago Host Committee members who attended the Summit helped out at the Chicago Booth or in the Blues Brothers skit: Dan Dornbrook, Linda Kelley, Leigh Lillis, Kristi Leach, Cheri Noble, MaryKay Grueberg, Mike Starr, Mary Ryba Knepper, Chris Hester, and Betsy Maaks. The Blues Brothers and sisters included Bill Leavitt (Elwood), Dan Dornbrook (Jake), Linda Jansak, Linda Kelley, Kristi Leach, Leigh Lillis, and Cameron Orr.

Thanks to all for helping us make Chicago a preferred destination for STC members next year.

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“STC Summit” - Continued from Page 6

We are currently planning for the Chicago Summit. In Rosemont next year, we will be conducting the Communities Reception and the evening event following the reception. Besides assisting with these events, we will need volunteers to handle the hospitality booth to help STC members find their way around the Summit and the Chicago area, and to wear “Ask Me!” badges around the Summit. We are planning trips to local hot spots, tours of historical venues, and other activities to round out the Summit experience.

Anyone interested in working on the Chicago Host Summit Committee and/or volunteering time at the Summit next May should contact Linda Jansak or Bill Leavitt. Ω

Readers Write In!

By Kim Sikora

We at Byline want to hear from our readers! Answer the following question in 2-3 sentences, and your name and response could be published in a future issue. Even better, one lucky submitter will receive free registration to the September 8th webinar “Selecting the Right Technology to Support Your Content Reuse Strategy.”

The question: “What is your favorite Chicago tourist attraction or activity?”

Submit responses to byline@stc-chicago.org by Friday, August 25th at 5 p.m. to be entered in the drawing! AC members are ineligible for the drawing but are still encouraged to respond.

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 135
Associate Fellows: 4
Fellows: 5
Members: 31
Senior Members: 87
Student Members: 8 Ω

Byline

Editors:

Tom Lunde byline@stc-chicago.org
Kim Sikora

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* at byline@stc-chicago.org. Preferred format is a MS Word® document file. 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. For details, visit our website at www.stc-chicago.org and click on Byline Advertising.

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.org.

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Subscriptions: The current issue of *Byline* and all archived editions are available on the STC Chicago website at www.stc-chicago.org.

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