

Byline



Quarterly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members

Join Us in June for Networking

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Please join us on Tuesday, June 15, 2010, for the final event of the 2009-2010 STC Chicago program year, which will be our annual mix-and-mingle networking event and happy hour.

As we did in 2009, we are combining this event with our chapter business meeting, at which our elected officers and Nominating Committee members for 2010-2011 will officially begin their terms. Members will have an opportunity to talk with chapter leaders and provide feedback on how we can serve you better.

A new feature of this year's event is a special Summit Remix, at which chapter members who attended the recent Technical Communication Summit in Dallas will provide brief recaps of their favorite or most useful part of the annual conference. If you wanted to attend the Summit but could not go this year, or if you are curious about the Summit and what it might offer you in future years, you can hear from those of us who have been there.

This year's networking event will be in a new location: Houlihan's restaurant and bar at 550

W. Touhy Ave. in Park Ridge. Houlihan's is in the recently redeveloped Uptown section of Park Ridge, kitty-corner from the historic Pickwick Theater and a short walk from the Metra station, with plenty of free parking in the neighborhood. For directions, go to <http://www.yelp.com/biz/houlihans-park-ridge> and for transit directions, go to <http://tripsweb.rtachicago.com>.

Also new this year is our special "stimulus package" price of \$5.00 if you register online by Friday, June 11, or \$10.00 if you pay by check or cash at the door. In return for this affordable price, which covers reserving the space for our event, you can purchase any food and beverages of your choice, as much or as little as you like, from Houlihan's varied menu.

STC and our chapter have come through a challenging year with a variety of successes described elsewhere in this issue of *Byline*, and we have you, our members, to thank for that. We hope you will join us as we remember our shared accomplishments and look forward to our future together. Ω



Society for
Technical
Communication

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Winners of the 2009-2010 STC Chicago Competition Awards

Online Communication Awards

Help

Distinguished

Decision Manager Help

Kim Russell

Elizabeth L. Burke

~Syntellect~

Excellence

Win/DSS Back Office Online Help

Hannah Mills

Nancy Carpenter

Margaret Dawn

~Follett Higher Education Group~

Excellence

TotalControl Help

David T. Menges

~KMC Controls~

Merit

Item Maintenance Application (IMA)

Online Help

Cheri Noble

~Sears Holdings Corporation~

Merit

Support Center Help

Elizabeth L. Burke

Dave Brock

~Syntellect~

Merit

Interaction Vault Help

Dave Brock

Elizabeth L. Burke

~Syntellect~

Merit

CARR Online Help

Margaret Dawn

Hannah Mills

Nancy Carpenter

~Follett Higher Education Group~

Promotional

Excellence

IU New Student Orientation Video

UITS Student Awareness Team

~Indiana University~

Excellence

Martin Luther King, Jr. Virtual Birthhome Tour Website

Alan Manning

Peter Xiques

~SAIC~

Excellence

East Tennessee Technology Park Website

Alan Manning

Vickie M. Reddick

Louie C. Finley

~SAIC~

Training

Merit

MOTOROKR E8 Web Tutorial

Jill Spealman

~Wordsmith, Inc.~

Merit

English as a Second Language Course

Mary McQuillen

Toni Tyson

Colleen Cunningham

~Black & Veatch~

Reference

Merit

Indiana University Information Security Office web site

Scott Z. Wilson

~Indiana University~

Technical Art Awards

Annual Report Design

Distinguished

APS Science 2008

Richard Fenner

~Advanced Photon Source

Argonne National Laboratory~

Informational Materials Design

Excellence

EPA-RTP is about Community

C. Mark Van Hook

Kim Gotwals

Renee Marshall

~SAIC~

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Promotional Materials Design

Merit

Creating a User Facility for Homeland Security

Sana Ann Sandler

Renée M. Nault

~Argonne National Laboratory~

Informational Poster Design

Merit

Journey to the Center of the Earth and Beyond

Richard Fenner

Nancy Lazarz

~Advanced Photon Source

Argonne National Laboratory~

Technical Publications Awards

Articles

Excellence

Whatever it Takes: Supporting Higher Education Executives

24x7x365

Constance (Momi) L. Ford

Jan R. Holloway

Sue B. Workman

~Indiana University~

Reference Materials

Distinguished

Firm58 Sample Reports

MaryKay Grueneberg

~Firm58~

Excellence

Quick Connect Guide

Camille Costa

~Federal Signal Corp.~

Excellence

Localizing the CIM Client Applications

Dave Brock

Elizabeth L. Burke

Kim Russell

~Syntellect~

Excellence

Call Recorder Integration Guide

Dave Brock

Kim Russell

Elizabeth L. Burke

Diana Richards

~Syntellect~

Excellence

Mitel Integration Guide

Kim Russell

Elizabeth L. Burke

Dave Brock

~Syntellect~

Merit

Item Maintenance Application (IMA) – Vendor Role

Cheri Noble

Terri Mielock-Williams

~Sears Holdings Corporation~

Merit

Green Building and Controls Glossary

Mark Stucky

~KMC Controls~

Merit

Lattice MediCopia User Guide for Specimen Collection Application

MaryKay Grueneberg

Peter Muzzy

~Lattice, Inc.~

Reports

Distinguished

Cancer: what it means to you

National Call to Action on Cancer Prevention and Survivorship

Peter Xiques

Vickie M. Reddick

C. Mark Van Hook

~SAIC~

Excellence

International Energy Agency Conservation in Combustion Report (1999-2008)

Emmeline Chen

Daniel Strong

Frank Cebulski

~Sandia National Laboratories~

Excellence

Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma

Kevin Akstulewicz

John Krupovage

Linda Higginbotham

~SAIC~

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"Award Winners" - Continued from Page 3

Merit

National Power Grid Simulation Capability: Needs and Issues

Renée M. Nault

Else Tennessen

Sana Ann Sandler

~Argonne National Laboratory~

Technical Marketing Support

Excellence

Sandia National Laboratories Biosciences Recruiting Brochure

Ken Ball

Emmeline Chen

Randy Wong

~Sandia National Laboratories~

Excellence

Sandia/California Nuclear Weapons Program Recruiting Brochure

Ken Ball

Emmeline Chen

Randy Wong

~Sandia National Laboratories~

Excellence

Argonne National Laboratory FY 2008 Energy Report

Nancy L. Erdmann

Daniel F. Sarro

Jeffrey Alicz

~Argonne National Laboratory~

Excellence

A New Kind of Bragging Rights: Builders Challenge

C. Mark Van Hook

Denton Lesslie

Pat Love

~SAIC~

Merit

FlexStat Support Documents

Mark Stucky

~KMC Controls~ Ω

Winners Honored at Annual Chapter Awards Banquet

By Andi Dunn

With definite signs of spring in the air, 50 technical communicators and their guests—some from as far away as Oregon and Tennessee—gathered on March 18 for the Chicago Chapter STC Annual Awards Banquet. The banquet, held at Francesca's Amici in Elmhurst, honors the winners of the chapter's Technical Publications, Art, and Online Communication Competition. Chapter members also receive awards at the banquet.

In addition to the awards ceremony, the banquet featured a display of the award-winning entries in each competition category. Attendees networked before dinner as they viewed the entries and enjoyed selections from the cash bar. Once seated, banquet attendees were treated to a sumptuous feast of Francesca's award-winning central Italian fare.

Each year, STC holds the Technical Publications, Art, and Online Communication Competition to recognize and encourage excellence in technical communications.

The competition gives Distinguished, Excellence, and Merit awards in each of the three competition divisions. Distinguished Award winners automatically qualify for the STC International Competition. An exceptional entry may receive the Best of Show award.

This year's STC Chicago chapter competition received 39 entries from around the country. Thirty-five awards were given, four of them Distinguished. This year's competition did not produce a Best of Show award.

Before dinner, Competition Committee co-managers Elizabeth Burke and MaryKay Grueneberg thanked the 30 judges, some of whom were present, for their efforts. Chicago Chapter members and other experienced technical communicators judge the entries in November and December.

Preceding the presentation of competition awards, STC

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Kelly Oja accepting his President's Award



Linda Jansak accepting her Distinguished Chapter Service Award



Thomas Lunde accepting his Volunteer of the Year Award

"Banquet Recap" - Continued from Page 4

Chicago leaders recognized chapter members with awards for service and contributions to the chapter that go beyond the ordinary. Kelly Oja won this year's President's Award. Chapter President, Dan Dornbrook, selected Oja, Chapter Membership Manager, for the award because of how Oja transformed the position, in Dornbrook's words, "with a series of initiatives designed to attract and welcome new members, as well as to retain existing ones, at a time when our parent organization was struggling to do both."

Linda Jansak, former chapter president and marketing manager, won the Distinguished Chapter Service Award (DCSA) for her long-term commitment to the chapter. Jansak has been continuously active in the chapter for 10 years. Her rebranding efforts were instrumental in the chapter being named a Chapter of

Distinction by STC, and the sponsorship program that she initiated has made Chapter events more affordable. The DCSA is a nationally vetted award, with chapters submitting nominations to STC International for approval.

New this year, the Volunteer of the Year Award, a chapter-level award, was presented to Tom Lunde, *Byline* editor, for his continued service in this role. Under Lunde's leadership, *Byline* has won three Awards for Publication Excellence (APEX). In addition, *Byline* has won two Excellence Awards and two Merit Awards in the STC Newsletter Competition.

Sponsors of this year's Banquet were Syntellect Corporation and the Ken Cook Company. Ω

STC Chicago Membership at a Glance

Total Affiliated Members: 165

Associate Fellows: 5

Fellows: 3

Members: 92

Senior Members: 107

Student Members: 10 Ω

Learning to Ride the Market Waves with STC Chicago

By Francis Bao and Linda Jansak

STC Chicago's recent career workshop was a resounding success. Early feedback from attendees confirms this. On April 10 at National-Louis University in Lisle, instructor Carole Berkson-Ross led an interactive seminar on how to build and maintain a successful career in the field of technical communication. Participants received valuable insights about the current state of the technical communication marketplace and what hiring managers and prospective clients require. During the course of the workshop, attendees developed a detailed action plan based on their personal career goals. Participants took away actionable information they could begin to use upon returning home that evening.

In the weeks leading up to the workshop, Carole conducted interviews with hiring managers to determine which skills are currently in demand. Her research revealed that successful candidates for employment in information technology have a strong understanding of how software is developed, broad-based experience in communications, and some experience in project management. As a general rule, successful candidates demonstrate a keen understanding of the challenges faced by the specific industry in which they are planning to work. Successful candidates are often those who focus on a specific skill set, develop deep expertise in a particular tool or technology, and understand how employees and customers think.

To fare well with hiring managers, technical communicators need to demonstrate flexibility, initiative, curiosity, and courage in the face of a constantly changing technological landscape. It is important to stay up-to-date on the rapidly expanding range of software tools available in the field. Technical communicators should also be willing to learn about new media, including how to produce and embed video in online help and

how to create and manage online communities. Finally, technical writers should communicate their enthusiasm and confidence during job interviews. Hiring managers expect candidates to have a real curiosity about the product or technology to be documented.

As you might expect, candidates for technical writing positions are often required to show a portfolio of writing and work samples during an interview. When creating an overall marketing strategy for their careers, technical writers should go beyond the portfolio to develop a variety of tactics designed to bring attention to their work. At the workshop, Carole identified three areas of focus—partnership, publicity, and stretch. In this context, “partnership” means a devotion to networking. Those seeking employment should identify meaningful contacts and draw inspiration and professional advice from a few, carefully selected, like-minded colleagues, mentors, and others who will act as a trusted “council of advisors.”

Publicity is also an important component of a successful marketing strategy. Job candidates should consider using social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to amplify and extend the reach of their existing personal networks. Technical communicators who become specialists on a specific topic can reach out to the public through volunteer organizations, newspapers, radio, TV, and professional associations. These experts should consider submitting articles to professional journals, doing presentations at conferences, and collaborating with journalists at innovative organizations like *Help a Reporter Out (HARO)*.

Finally, Carole described “stretch” as a mental “leap of faith” in which the job candidate explores new market niches, learns about new specialties, earns credentials,

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"Market Waves" - Continued from page 6

and deepens learning. New market niches include social media marketing, multimedia and video production, and YouTube service delivery. New specialties include designing for mobile environments, language translation, and localization.

Deep learning can be gained by attending webinars and workshops, reading industry journals, and working with a professional career coach. Technical communicators can also enhance their value in the marketplace by earning professional credentials. STC is currently in the process of developing a professional certi-

fication for technical communicators. More information about this new initiative will be available at STC's website soon.

STC Chicago will continue to offer career workshops. We hope you will consider attending these events as an important part of your professional development.

Carole Berkson-Ross is available to answer questions about her research on the current state of the technical communication marketplace. She can be reached via email at cjberkson-ross@gmail.com. Ω

We've Got Winners!

Late last fall, we announced a renewal incentive for members who renewed to STC and the STC Chicago chapter by various dates throughout the general society renewal period. We are pleased to announce the following winners of those drawings.

- STC Summit Registration -- **Theresa Shinners-Gray**
- STC Summit Registration -- **Sharon Merwin**
- 32 Gb iPod Touch* -- **Robert Galvin**
- 8 Gb iPod Touch* -- **Lori Melton**
- 8 Gb iPod Nano* **Emily Kowal**

*Each of the iPods were engraved with "STC Chicago 2010"

In addition to the renewal drawings, we had a door prize raffle at the April 22 Chapter meeting. Congratulations go to member **Bob Slocum** who received a complimentary registration to the 2010 MadCap Software Roadshow, which was held here in Chicago on May 17.

Changes are Coming! ..and they are Exciting!

The 2010 competition brings exciting new changes. These changes, pre-announced to a small group at the STC Summit in Dallas, are being made at the society level and STC Chicago's local competition will follow suit. We don't want to let the cat out of the bag before STC makes the big announcement, but we can tell you this: the competition redesign involves a move toward function-based evaluations, based on purpose rather than media. Instead of the media-based categories of tech pubs, art, and online, the new structure will include four new purpose-driven categories of informational materials, instructional materials, promotional materials, and user support materials. The focus of the technical communication competition will be on *why* the materials were written and how well they communicate that purpose.

More information will follow mid-summer, but we promise you this: this is an exciting change that will benefit entrants and make life easier for the judges as well! Stay tuned as we keep you up to date with the details in the coming months. Ω

President's Message - Take Pride in Excellence and Help Build the Future

By Dan Dornbrook



Ready for those flashing lights.

– Lady Gaga, 2009

The contrast between this year's Technical Communication Summit in Dallas and last year's Summit in Atlanta was dramatic.

In 2009, the combination of the economic meltdown and the after-effects of past mismanagement had thrown in STC into a financial crisis that cast a pall over the entire conference, from the "shock and awe" messages at Leadership Day to sparse attendance and fears that STC might not survive, even with drastic measures that would include an unprecedented dues increase at a time when our members could afford it least.

This year, despite the expected severe loss in membership renewal, STC is back on its feet financially, in part because more members than expected (new and renewing) have opted for premium memberships.

Most notably, the vast majority of new, returning and renewing members have opted for memberships in chapters (including ours) and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), despite both being extra-cost items on top of the increased dues – and despite past statements by some STC leaders that many members only cared about society-level services like publications and not about local communities.

Finally, conference attendance rebounded enough that, for the first time in years, STC did not have to pay a penalty to the host hotel for a shortfall in the room bookings that pay for meeting space at most conferences. The theme, repeated often, was: "We have survived, and we are moving forward."

Strike a pose, there's nothing to it.

– Madonna, 1990

Beyond survival, this year's Summit was a time of honor for the Chicago Chapter, starting at Leadership Day, where we received a Community of Excellence Award. The citation on the award certificate reads: "For guiding a successful e-learning and technology showcase, embracing social media to enhance communication among your members, and supporting technical communication students with scholarships".

This award rightly belongs to the many members who have volunteered their time and skills to support our activities in the past year, as well as those who have supported us with their dues, and we thank you. In addition, of the four winners of Distinguished awards in our annual chapter competition, two went on to win awards in the international STC competition. This is a tribute not only to the entrants who won the awards, but also to the many volunteers who made this year's competition the most shining example of excellence in our chapter.

Finally, two members of our chapter, Russ Friend and Tom Reed, received the honorary rank of STC Fellow at the Honors Banquet during the Summit. Russ was honored for his long and dedicated service to the chapter and for his dedication to our profession through teach-

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"President's Message" - Continued from Page 8

ing and mentoring. Tom was honored for sustained contributions to technical communication in both industry and academe, and for mentoring students and new professionals in the field.

In light of these honors, our chapter has much to be proud of.

If I could turn back time ...

– Cher, 1989

Still, the past year has been painful for our chapter and our society. Locally and internationally, we have lost nearly half our members, and that is due at least as much to changes in STC as to the economy. Many key volunteers who kept us going in recent years either are no longer with us or no longer have the time to give be-

cause job losses and other changes have forced them into survival mode.

This past year is not the kind of year that I or other officers envisioned when we took on the challenge of chapter leadership. I know I can point to decisions that I would have made differently if I had known what was coming. Now that we are where we are, all we can do is learn from it.

As leaders, we will be meeting soon to revisit our strategic plan and assess what we as a chapter need to do to serve our members better. We value your input as we move forward, and we thank you again for your support. Ω



Representing STC Chicago at the Honors Banquet at Technical Communication Summit 2010 (from left): Tom Reed, Russ Friend, Linda Jansak, Francis Bao, Bill Leavitt, Tom Lunde, Linda Kelley, MaryKay Grueneberg, and Dan Dornbrook.

STC Announces Work-Based Certification for Technical Writers

Reprinted from STC's Notebook

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) announced today that certification for the technical communication field has been approved. Within the next year, technical communicators will be able to attain certification in their profession.

Certification creates two enormous benefits for our profession and for practitioners. First, certification establishes a solid foundation for the legitimacy and economic contribution of technical communication. Second, certified practitioners can clearly demonstrate their expertise as technical communicators, greatly enhancing their value in the marketplace.

Practitioners will become certified in six core competency areas:

- * User analysis
- * Document design
- * Project management
- * Authoring (content creation)
- * Delivery
- * Quality assurance

As a result, employers and clients alike will now have a concrete idea of the expertise, contribution, and value that technical communicators bring to the marketplace. STC is developing a page on its website dedicated to promoting certification and explaining the value of certified technical communicators.

Certification will be based on assessing portfolios and work artifacts, not examinations. (In other words, there are no tests.) This method takes advantage of the existing methodology and infrastructure of both the publications competitions and the Associate Fellow and Fellow process. To implement the program, STC is defining assessment criteria for each of these six competency areas, then recruiting a network of examiners to review applications. In the future, as the Body of Knowledge is fleshed out, STC will look at adding an exam-based assessment as another certification method.

Once conferred, certification will be valid for three years. To ensure that competencies are kept relevant, certified professionals must become recertified for another three years. As with many other professions, recertification involves completing and participating in educational and professional activities. STC currently has a number of these opportunities available, and will be creating more in the upcoming year.

Member and nonmember certification and recertification fees are still being developed; however, these fees will be comparable to certification programs of similar associations. Ω

STC Chicago Election Results Are In

The 2010-2011 Chapter officers will be:

MaryKay Grueneberg – President

(president@stc-chicago.org)

Elizabeth L. Burke – Vice President

(vicepresident@stc-chicago.org)

Linda Kelley – Treasurer (treasurer@stc-chicago.org)

Cheri Noble – Secretary (secretary@stc-chicago.org)

Per the bylaws, the current President, Dan Dornbrook, will become Immediate Past President, which is a voting position.

In addition, the following members have been elected to two-year terms on the Nominating Committee:

Donna Cleary

Russ Friend

The President will have the option of appointing one or two additional members to the Nominating Committee. The new officers take on their official roles for the 2010-2011 program year at the June Chapter event.

Congratulations to you all. Ω

Byline

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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 printings. For details, go to our web site 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 (e.g., submit ad and payment by November 20th for the December issue). 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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Byline

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