



# Dialog!

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## Upcoming meetings

September 17 - Tulsa Photoshop Workshop  
September 22 - Local OKC meeting  
See the events schedule on Page 3 for details and meeting dates for 2005-06.

## Special Event

This is your chance to play supersleuth and help to find the doer of the dastardly deed that did away with Sir Homer Relic. See Page 13 for details of Dead Books Society Murder Mystery Dinner.

## The Chapter President's Report

By Barbara Harrison  
*Oklahoma Chapter President*

### Hello!

Welcome to a new year for the Oklahoma Chapter of STC! This year we have all sorts of "new" to look forward to. We have a new Web site, a new meeting agenda, new fundraising ideas, and new opportunities for learning and involvement.

### Chapter Web Site Changes

Our Web site is new and improved! We've had an intern from OSU working on it, and it looks great! We're currently adding updated content and information, and we even have the new RSS feed from STC headquarters! (Really Simple Syndication [RSS] is a lightweight XML format designed for sharing headlines and other Web content).

### Meeting Changes

As anyone who's been in the chapter for any length of time knows, one of our biggest challenges is meeting the needs of such a geographically diverse chapter. As gasoline prices continue to soar, this challenge is becoming even greater.

This year, we're implementing a new way to meet this challenge. We are only having a few statewide meetings this year, and the location of these meetings will rotate among the largest member-population areas: Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Stillwater. These meetings will be held on a Saturday, and will be a workshop format.

This month, the meeting is in Tulsa, and we'll be having a workshop on Photoshop. On the months that we are not having statewide meetings, each geographic area will have a smaller meeting, either during the workday or in the evening, with a local speaker and topic. Refer to the table on Page 3 of this newsletter for dates, times, and locations. For each meeting, details and RSVP information will be distributed via e-mail and the listserv. The information will also be posted on the chapter Web site.

We hope this new format enables members to attend meetings more often, and offers the opportunities for in-depth learning.

Remember that for each meeting you attend, your name goes in a hat for a drawing that pays for the international conference registration fee! Your name also goes in the hat again for each guest you bring!

### A Murder Mystery Dinner

Fundraising? Yes, fundraising! Fundraising is always an important part of any non-profit group, and ours is no exception.

We've done various things in the past, such as hold a publications competition and an art competition. This year we're doing something radically different that is sure to be a roaring success.

In December, the chapter will host a Murder Mystery Dinner Party called "The Dead Book Society Murder."

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## The Chapter President's Report

The event will be at the Stroud Best Western hotel on Saturday, December 3, and will be open to the public, as well as the chapter membership. Be looking for an invitation in the mail in late October.

Meanwhile, if you know of a place where you could put up a flyer for the event (coffee shops, book stores, libraries, etc), contact Barbara Adams ([barbara@osufpp.org](mailto:barbara@osufpp.org)) or me for a copy of the flyer. Also contact Barbara if you'd like to be a character in the "murder."

### Judges Needed

One opportunity for learning and involvement is being a judge in a publications, art or online competition.

This year the Southeast Arizona Chapter is sponsoring a regional competition, and they are looking for judges from all the chapters within the region.

This is a great way to meet communicators from other areas and to get to see some fantastic examples

of technical communication.

If you are interested in being a judge in this year's competition, please contact me as soon as possible, but no later than the end of September.

I'm looking forward to a great year! If anyone has any questions, thoughts, or comments, I'm happy to talk! Call me at 918-744-9385 or email me at [<bh2228@sbcglobal.net>](mailto:bh2228@sbcglobal.net).

*Barbi*

## PAO regional competition judges needed

If you're a seasoned technical communications professional, consider helping us out as a judge in the Southwest Regional PAO competitions. The benefits to judging are many: the opportunity to see up close some of the best technical communication products our field can produce, the chance to work closely with other judges and the competition committee (thus showing off your own skills!) and the gratitude and glory that come with being a judge (you get your name on the Web site and in our newsletters).

You can participate as a judge even if you're entering the competitions--we'll make sure that you don't judge your own entries and we'll avoid any other conflicts of interest. The more qualified judges we get, the fewer entries each judge must evaluate.

For more information on becoming a judge, contact the PAO competition liaison for your local area. This year, the liaisons are:

Tucson	Brenda Huettnner	<a href="mailto:bphuettnner@aol.com">&lt;bphuettnner@aol.com&gt;</a>
Phoenix	Tom Barnett	<a href="mailto:tpbarnet@srpnet.com">&lt;tpbarnet@srpnet.com&gt;</a>
Kachina	Judy Prono	<a href="mailto:jprono@lanl.gov">&lt;jprono@lanl.gov&gt;</a>
Oklahoma	Barbara Harrison	<a href="mailto:bh2228@sbcglobal.net">&lt;bh2228@sbcglobal.net&gt;</a>

## Treasurer's Report: FY2005 Chapter Financial Report

By Barbara Adams  
Oklahoma Chapter Treasurer

(Covering period July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005)

Cash balance at the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1, 2004)	\$ 3,268.19
Total Income	<u>\$ 1,320.00</u>
Total	\$ 4,588.19
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 2,679.53</u>
Cash balance at end of fiscal year (June 30, 2005)	\$ 1,908.66

# Oklahoma Chapter Activity Calendar 2005-06

September		
17 (Sat.)	Rm. 202, Main Hall OSU-Tulsa Campus 700 N. Greenwood Tulsa	<b>Statewide Photoshop CS Workshop</b> 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Price includes lunch. Speaker: Dr. Jeff Price, Media Design professor, OSU Cost: \$30 for members; \$35 for nonmembers (cash or check only)
22 (Thurs.)	Hideaway Pizza 6616 N. Western Oklahoma City	<b>Fun, networking dinner</b> 7 - 9 p.m. Order from the menu. Win door prizes. Enter into drawing for free conference registration! Bring a friend or a coworker or both!
October		
11 (Tues.)	Stillwater	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
12 (Wed.)	Tulsa	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
20 (Thurs.)	Oklahoma City	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
November		
19 (Sat.)	Francis Tuttle Technology Ctr. 12777 N. Rockwell Ave. Oklahoma City	<b>Statewide Grant Writing Workshop</b> 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Speaker: Linda Mason Come with a particular grant application in mind or just come to learn. Cost: \$20 for members; \$25 for nonmembers. Price includes lunch.
December		
3 (Sat.)	Stroud Motor Lodge 1200 N. 8th Ave. Stroud, OK (On Hwy. 99, just off Turner Turnpike)	<b>"The Dead Books Society Murder"</b> Social hour starts at 6 p.m.; Dinner and party at 7 p.m. Join the fun when guests travel back to New Years Eve 1999. Pin the murder of Sir Homer Relic on one of the suspects! Cost: \$25 per person; includes meal, soft drinks, tax and entertainment POC: Barbara Adams
January		
21 (Sat.)	Stillwater	Workshop with lunch; Details to be announced
February		
8 (Wed.)	Tulsa	Lunch meeting; Details to be announced
14 (Tues.)	Stillwater	Lunch meeting; Details to be announced
16 (Thurs.)	Oklahoma City	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
March		
18 (Sat.)	Tulsa	<b>Statewide workshop with lunch</b> ; Details to be announced
April		
5 (Wed.)	Tulsa	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
11 (Tues.)	Stillwater	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
20 (Thurs.)	Oklahoma City	Dinner meeting; Details to be announced
May		
20 (Sat.)	Oklahoma City	<b>Statewide workshop with lunch</b> ; Details to be announced
<i>Meeting points of contact:</i>		
Stillwater	Barbara Adams < <a href="mailto:Barbara@osufpp.org">Barbara@osufpp.org</a> >	
Tulsa	Barbi Harrison < <a href="mailto:bh2228@sbcglobal.net">bh2228@sbcglobal.net</a> >	
OKC	Linda Stark < <a href="mailto:linda.stark@starkclarity.com">linda.stark@starkclarity.com</a> >	

## STC welcomes new interim executive director

By Suzanna Laurent  
STC President

Hello STC Members:

Peter Herbst's last day as STC's Executive Director will be Sept. 16, 2005. I hope everyone will join the board of directors as we wish Peter well and thank him for his 21 years of dedicated service to the Society. We know that he will be very successful in the future.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the STC board of directors has approved the hiring of Robert H. Moran as STC's Interim Executive Director. Rob's first day at STC is Sept. 19. He will serve until a permanent Executive Director is hired; yet he will not be a candidate for that position.

Rob is a successful association executive and consultant with more than 25 years experience leading complex organizations at the international, national, and state level. His career reflects his passion and commitment to service and to enhancing the effectiveness of organizations and people.

He has a national reputation as a creative and strategic thinker who has provided leadership to a number of organizations engaged in large-scale change. He has consistently achieved outstanding results and assisted organizations in their efforts to capitalize on opportunities.

Rob holds a Master of Public Administration from Harvard and a Master of Business Administration from

Marymount. He has served on a number of boards and executive committees on the state and national level, and as the Chief Elected Officer of a national association of state health care executives.

Rob's company, the Ancora Group, assists associations and people as they respond to change, adapt and transform, and realize their full potential. His work focuses on transformational leadership, transitional management, organizational development, and executive coaching.

Recent client activities include coaching executives in the association, academic, and pharmaceutical sectors; designing and collaborating on an association transformation; strategic planning for a culture change coalition; leadership development for senior level managers; and conducting a management audit for a large association. In addition Rob is currently conducting a research project focusing on the competencies of Association CEO's, and exploring the critical partnership between the CEO and the Boards of Directors.

The STC Board of Directors is looking forward to working with Rob and we feel that his extensive experience ensures that he can provide excellence in managing our office and developing programs and services that will provide more value for more of our members in the future.

Please join us in welcoming Rob and offering him your full cooperation as he guides us through this transition.

## Southwest Regional competitions call for entries

Have you or your company produced technical communication products that you think are worthy of awards? This call for entries is your invitation to participate in the following Society for Technical Communication (STC) competitions:

- Online Communication Competition
- Technical Art Competition
- Technical Publications Competition

### Who is eligible?

Anyone is eligible to submit entries, you do not have to be a member of STC. You may enter work as an individual or on behalf of a colleague or subordinate.

### What can be entered?

Entries in all categories must contain sufficient technical, scientific, medical, or similar content to qualify as technical communication. Entries must have been produced or substantially revised within 24 months preceding Sept. 1, 2005.

Entries must have been originally prepared for and accepted for publication by a client, employer, or publisher. Entries are subject to all restrictions listed in the official Entry Rules, which will be posted soon!

### What awards are given?

The Southwest Regional competitions will award the following levels of recognition:

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## Southwest Regional competitions call for entries

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- Merit
- Excellence
- Distinguished Technical Communication (DTC)
- Best of Show

For Merit, Excellence, and Distinguished Technical Communication awards, the entries are judged against a standard of excellence, not against each other. Thus, there can be multiple winners of each award within each category. The winners of the DTC are then judged against each other to determine a single Best of Show award for the regional competition. All DTC award-winning entries, including the Best of Show, are automatically submitted to STC's international competitions.

### How are the competitions structured?

STC's competitions recognize and encourage excellence in online communication, technical art, and technical publications. Local and regional competitions are the first level of the competition, held by a single chapter or region. Winners of the Distinguished Technical Communication Award in each category of each local and regional competition are automatically submitted to the appropriate international competition. After you enter the regional competition, no further action is necessary.

### Deadlines, fees, and where to submit

All entries for the Southwest Regional competitions must be received by Sept. 30, 2005.

Fees for each entry are:

- Students: \$45
- STC members: \$65
- Non-members: \$80

To submit an entry into more than one competition, you must submit a separate entry fee for each competition. Entries must include three copies of the submitted material, four copies of the entry form, and the appropriate fee.

You can download the entry forms from the official STC competition site or from the Southwest Regional PAO site at <http://www.stc-saz.org/competitions/index.html>. Entries should be sent to:

Brenda Huettner, Competition Manager  
c/o Southern Arizona Chapter STC  
8987 E. Tanque Verde #309-155  
Tucson, AZ 85749

### List of Categories

The following lists include the category number and names. For more detail on what each category covers, see this year's Southwest Regional PAO site at <http://www.stc-saz.org/competitions/index.html>.

### Online Communication Competition Categories

1. Help
2. Demonstrations
3. Technical Marketing
4. Tutorials/Training
5. Reference Material
6. User Support Tools

### Technical Art Competition Categories

(An entry in any category can be physical media or online.)

1. Mechanical Illustration, Line
2. Mechanical Illustration, Tone
3. Interpretative Illustration, Line
4. Interpretative Illustration, Tone
5. Photograph
6. Manual/Book Design
7. Annual Report Design
8. Catalog Design
9. Magazine Design
10. Cover Design
11. Promotional Poster Design
12. Informational Poster Design
13. Packaging Design
14. Promotional Materials Design
15. Informational Materials Design
16. Quick Reference Design
17. Display

**Note for physical media entries:** Entries in categories 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12 must be mounted.

**Notes for all entries:** For categories 1, 2, 3, and 4, each copy of the entry must be accompanied by a sample of the illustration's publication or an example of its use. For category 9, submit three consecutive issues.

### Technical Publications Competition Categories

1. Promotional Materials
2. Informational Materials

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## Southwest Regional competitions call for entries

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3. Quick Reference Guides
  4. Software Guides
  5. Hardware/Software Combination Guides
  6. Computer Hardware Guides
  7. Noncomputer Equipment Guides
  8. Organizational Manuals
  9. Training Materials
  10. Annual Reports
  11. Magazines
  12. Newsletters
  13. Technical Reports
  14. Trade/News Articles
  15. Scholarly/Professional Articles
  16. Scholarly/Professional Journals
  17. Books
  18. Documentation Sets
- For categories 11, 12, and 16, submit three consecutive issues.
- For categories 14 and 15, submit only tear sheets or reprints, not photocopies.

## Fran's Footnotes: Which will it be, i.e. or e.g.?

By Fran Danner

Senior Member STC – OK

Recently, I have been editing documents written by several different people in an IT group. Two very popular abbreviations at this company are *i.e.* and *e.g.* Unfortunately, few know when and how to use these abbreviations and even fewer know how to punctuate them.

The abbreviation *i.e.* is short for the Latin *id est*, which means “that is.” The abbreviation *e.g.* is short for *exempli gratia*, which means “for the sake of example.” Now that you know what they mean, which of the following are correct?

1. Select one of the HP servers, *i.e.*, MRXT, MRNT, or MROT.
2. Select one of the HP servers, *e.g.* MRXT, MRNT, or MROT.
3. Select one of the HP servers, *e.g.*, MRXT, MRNT, or MROT.
4. Select one of the HP servers, *e.g.*, MRXT, MRNT, or MROT, etc.

(Answers: 1. Incorrect because *i.e.* does not introduce a list. 2. Incorrect because *e.g.* is followed by a comma. 3. Correct 4. Incorrect because a list introduced by *e.g.* is never ended with etc.)

When you want to give an example, use *e.g.* followed by a comma. When you want to explain a point, use *i.e.* Can you pick which of the following are correct?

1. Select one of the servers, *i.e.* the ones in the corporate office.
2. Select one of the servers, *i.e.*, the ones in the corporate office.
3. Select one of the servers, *i.e.*, the ones in the corporate office, etc.

(Answers: 1. Incorrect because *i.e.* is followed by a comma. 2. Correct 3. Not sure if it is correct, but because the etc. does not make any sense, it must be incorrect. I threw that one for confusion's sake.)

One way to be sure you are using the correct abbreviation is to substitute for example when you want to use *e.g.* and that is when you want to use *i.e.*

- Select one of the HP servers, for example, the MRXT, MRNT, or MROT.
- Select one of the servers, that is, the ones in the corporate office.

In researching the use of *i.e.* and *e.g.*, I found these other facts:

- The letters within them are followed by periods and have no space between them.
- Both abbreviations are followed by a comma when they are being used in their functionary role; *i.e.*, not when they are being used as nouns as in several places in this article.
- Some style manuals require these abbreviations be italicized.

# A review of the Seattle STC conference

By Fred Stowell

Managing Editor, *Dialog!*

The annual meeting of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) provides technical editors and writers with an opportunity to learn about advances in the publishing and technical writing profession. Session topics include project management, tools and technology, usability, theory, information design, graphics, as well as writing and editing. The benefits from participation in a national conference are many: networking, seeing examples of award winning products, learning about advances in software and other products, and hearing nationally recognized speakers in the field.

As part of our professional development, Barbara Adams and I attended the STC Annual Conference in Seattle on behalf of Fire Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University. The conference was held from May 8-11.

We made a conscious effort to attend different presentations in order to increase the amount of information we could learn. We also provided an overview of our participation to the other members of the FPP editorial staff. This article is based on that overview.

STC competition winners were mostly textbooks and software guides, but all had the more efficient one-column format with learning objectives, chapter list of contents, key terms, information boxes (often called insights), and descriptions of other products that could be used with the text.

## Sunday, May 8 – STC Leadership Day

As the incoming Oklahoma Chapter/Community Treasurer for 2005-2006, Barbara attended several sessions related to STC chapter/community organization and leadership: overview of past year's achievements and plans for the year ahead, a progression session on financial issues and the STC transformation changes, rechartering, and zero-based budgeting.

The incoming national president of STC is Suzanna Laurent, a long-time member from the Oklahoma Chapter/Community.

## Monday, May 09, 2005

The opening session of the STC annual meeting included a keynote address by Patrick Whitney, Director of the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Whitney discussed models

for determining the types of information, goods, or services that a company can provide to its clients. He suggested that simply asking a client what they want will not always result in a product or service the client will benefit from. He suggested that it is important, through the models he presented, to observe the clients in action to determine what they really need to improve their lives. In reality, this is the task analysis that the fire service uses to develop training materials or skill sheets.

## Session 1— *Creating Internal and Operational Guides*

Barbara attended the session on creating and using internal style and operational guides to increase consistency and productivity. This is significant for FPP because we are struggling with developing and implementing an editorial style guide.

## Session 1— *Writing a Truly Professional Book Review*

This session that I attended was presented by Avon Murphy. Although this workshop focused on writing book reviews for technical journals in the communication field, the information is applicable to reviewing manuscripts submitted to FPP. The information would be valuable for any acquisition editor.

## Session 2 — *Sentence Diagramming: Making Sense of Sentences*

Barbara attended the session on how to diagram a variety of sentence types and review basic principles of syntax and grammar to objectively analysis and correct sentence structure. Barbara is a project manager and editor at FPP, correcting the writing of contract writers and staff technical editors.

## Session 2 — *Rules or Myths: The Changing English Language*

I attended this session which dealt with the origin and evolution of many of the style rules that are used in technical writing. Because there is no single style guide for English language usage, it is essential to have a corporate style guide that all contract writers, editors, proofreaders, and indexers adhere to.

## Tuesday, May 10, 2005

## Session 1 — *Syntax or Sin Tax: Which Should an Editor Choose*

Another writing session attended by Barbara. She learned how to use interactive exercises to review standards for diction, tone, grammar, style, punctuation, and syntax.

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## ***A review of the Seattle STC conference***

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### ***Session 1 — Conducting a Job Task Analysis***

Conducting job task analysis is a function of Fred's duty as a technical editor. This session consisted of an explanation of job task analysis, an example of the process, and an exercise in creating a task analysis. It was based on the use of Post-its to assemble a visual diagram of the job title, role, tasks, steps, processes, and guidelines in a moveable flow chart.

### ***Session 2 — Managing Content Tone for Diverse Audiences***

Content tone helps readers decide whether information is useful, reliable, and worth keeping; how content tone can boost readership around the world. Barbara attended this session.

### ***Session 2 — Using Rhetorical Figures in Technical Writing***

An interesting session attended that I attended. The presenters provided three figures, incrementum, anti-metabole, and antithesis, and demonstrated how they can be applied to technical writing to add emphasis, interest, and variation to the subject.

### ***Session 3 — Developing "Global English" Writing Skills***

This session, attended by Barbara, was helpful as FPP expands into the international market. She learned that strengthening global English makes a more effective write for both English and non-English speaker

### ***Session 3 — Managing the Technical Editing Process***

I attended this panel discussion. The four presenters each addressed a segment of the editing process: convincing management of the need and value of an editor; how to hire an editor, how an editor can also work as a writer; and tips for more efficient and effective editing. The last section was the most valuable and included the use of checklists for both the contract writer and the editor.

### ***Session 4 — Tips for Editing More Quickly and Accurately***

The presenter drew on 20 years of experience in editing to provide numerous recommendations in how to reduce the time and stress associated with editing. Most of the tips dealt with saving time and keystrokes by creating templates, macros, and single key changes. I attended this session.

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

### ***Session 1 — Manual Evaluation Workshop***

Both Barbara and I took examples of FPP manuals for review. This is an exceptional opportunity for writers and editors to have their work critiqued in a non-threatening atmosphere.

### ***Session 2 — Effective Page Layouts for the Nonartist***

Barbara learned simple but solid principles for clean, harmonious, effective page layouts.

### ***Session 2 — Effective Slides: Design, Construction, and Use***

Jean-luc Doumont used sample PowerPoint slides to illustrate problems that normally occur with this type of visual aid. The slides were taken from various presentations used at the conference this week. Fred attended this session.

### ***Regional Luncheon***

This was an opportunity to meet with other members of the STC Region 5 that Oklahoma is a part of. Discussions revolved around challenges various editors were having in their jobs and upcoming regional events.

### ***Session 3 — Transforming a Chapter: Advice from a Pilot Community***

Barbara attended this panel discussion of experiences in the STC rechartering process with hints, ideas, dos, and don'ts of creating the charter document and meeting its goals.

### ***Session 3 — Designing Information for Online Reading***

I attended this panel discussion. Topics included methods to navigate websites based on gender preference. (Males and females search sites differently.); how to use visual indicators properly in illustrations; and tips for creating interesting PowerPoint Slides.

### ***Session 4 — Writers and Editors Face Off***

Barbara attended this panel discussion on the uneasy alliance between writers and editors with experience stories and questions from the audience. Points emphasized: It is easier to find a good writer than a good editor. When it comes to editing, the more eyes that see a document, the better. A good style guide helps everyone involved.

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## A review of the Seattle STC conference

### Closing Session

The closing keynote address by William Gribbons focused on the latest trend in developing products and services, User Experience. This trend is intended to replace usability and help organizations determine what products/services to develop and how to stay competitive in the marketplace.

## Strengthening our core competencies

### Competence of a past decade is not the competence of today

By Rahel Anne Bailie

Former STC Region 7 Director-Sponsor

(This article was originally published in the *Montana Cyber Lines*, September 2005.)

Recently, my business grew to the point where I have a couple of subcontractors working on client projects at any given time. This has been an illuminating experience for me—and I'm sure for some of the contractors—as I connect client to contractor, trying to make the fit as neatly interlocked as puzzle pieces. There is always that sigh of relief when I've made a good match, and both the client and the contractor agree that they enjoy working together on a project.

The task is certainly easier when all the factors are known: a client needs a help system, and I know a contractor or two who can structure help files in their sleep and make the software do things we didn't think possible; or a client needs some usability work done, and I remember someone who would be super at just that type of project.

The match gets trickier in situations where I must use a new contractor, or the client wants industry-specific knowledge as well as core technical communication skills. I look over portfolio pieces and talk through the client requirements, hoping that I'll be able to tell if the contractor has what the client wants and what I want: core competencies of our craft.

Most times I get it right, but the odd time I end up with a contractor who can make a piece of software sing, but has no clue how to structure the content. I remember that another local business owner used to make every applicant—it didn't matter how experienced or how good your reputation—take a writing test; she explained that it weeded out those with poor base skills. This makes me wonder: What are core competencies in today's technical communication world?

### Conclusion

This is the second annual conference that I have attended. In both cases, I have felt that it was worthwhile and that I gained a great deal of knowledge from my participation.

Have the core competencies changed from, say, 10 years ago? How can we ensure that we get and retain our core competencies while building out our specialties?

The core competencies in today's marketplace begin with the same basic skills (learned) and abilities (innate) that technical communicators (TC) have used for many years, but the definitions of those core competencies have changed with the times. From a business owner's perspective, then, here are the competencies that I consider critical.

- Excellent writing and editing abilities. This competency is a deal-breaker. If a TC has all the other competencies, but cannot write, then there is a competence deficiency. To paraphrase the saying that perfection is achieved when nothing can be taken away, writing excellence is achieved when nothing can be taken away, when the writing is complete, correct, clear and concise.

- Structuring information. In the context of core competencies for TCs, writing means far more than proficiency with spelling and grammar, more than the 4Cs of good writing. Much of this begins with ability, but must certainly be supplemented with skills gained by learning the theory of the craft. Competency means being able to write to genre, whether that genre be hardware guide, user guide, reference guide, help system, software development kit, policies and procedures, training materials or a user interface. You must know the forms of writing appropriate to each genre and be able to create content accordingly.

- Conducting thorough research. Competent TCs know how to get the information they need from subject matter experts, end users and other project

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## Strengthening our core competencies

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stakeholders. This requires a contextual understanding of the business paradigm in which the product or service exists, and the ability to grasp new paradigms. To communicate the feature, benefit, or function of a product to an audience, you must be able to investigate and then parse, not simply regurgitate in a new form, the information gathered through interviews or background documents. Some might say this is an ability—either you have the talent or you don't—but I believe that this is a skill that can be acquired through learning and experience.

- Grasp complex material quickly. Successful TCs have the ability to learn through trial and error, under sometimes chaotic circumstances, and without the benefit of training. (After all, it's TCs who create the training materials.) TCs who become competent in this area are those who can sit down in front of an undocumented piece of hardware, software or process, and fearlessly tackle it until they understand it and can explain it in the context of the industry of use. I once discarded the resume of a candidate who listed training on email as professional development; someone who can't figure out simple email software probably wouldn't survive a typical technical communication project.

## Community Paragraphs

### Hoooo-Ha! What a day!

By Sherry Michaels  
Director Region 5

Have you seen the 1984 movie "Romancing the Stone?" There's a line in it that I frequently think of these days. Michael Douglas delivers it after he and Kathleen Turner slide down a muddy slope to escape assassination, "Hooo-Ha! What a day!"

STC is the midst of a time that can only be described as "Hooo-Ha! What a day!"

Since induction at the annual business meeting in Seattle, the newly elected Board of Directors (BoD) has dealt with a number of significant issues. Among the most impactful have been the resignations of its Executive Director, Peter Herbst and its First Vice President, Mike Bates. We are also continuing the work initiated by previous boards of moving STC into becoming a more responsive and open association for its members. In

- Skill with industry tools. Owning carpentry tools does not make a good carpenter, but without knowing how to use the tools properly, one cannot become a good carpenter. To put theoretical knowledge to use, TCs must have mastered the appropriate tools, know which tools are appropriate to use in various situations, use them with above-average skill. Rusty skills on outdated tools does not contribute to core competency.

One of my favorite university professors taught: Your world is limited by your vocabulary. The richness of your vocabulary is an indicator of the breadth and depth of concepts you can articulate.

This principle certainly applies to the competencies of technical communication professionals. The competence of a decade past is not the competence of today. To remain competent, we can't be complacent, let our skills lapse, ignore trends. We need to keep our professional vocabulary — our concepts — current.

This list of competencies is by no means the definite word on the topic. I don't mean it to be. However, none of us can go wrong by working toward these competencies and committing to continuous improvement of them.

In addition to that work and those events, we continue to develop better ways of communicating STC events and progress and accountability to our members.

Our most important task, that of visibly making our actions accountable to the members, and communicating them is taking time to develop. The STC BoD does not act in a vacuum. Every decision must be deployed and enacted using one of three resources:

1. A competent, highly leveraged office staff
2. Committees, made up of members like you together with various BoD members (recruited and elected from members like you)
3. Outside consultants, which we obtain for below market price, to whom we refer for expertise outside that of the BoD

Such deployment demands creativity, reasoned approaches, and the responsible use of our finite resources to meet the member needs.

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If I were to outline priorities that interest you most, I'd start with the following:

First, Suzanna Laurent, our president, developed steps of a process and appointed a committee to begin selection of a new Executive Director. Suzanna then sent out a message to community leaders (via the President's listserv) that we had change underway in this position, and the steps she took to manage the situation. When the committee finds worthy candidates, they will present the candidates to the board to decide upon. If we need an interim Executive Director, the committee has sorted through the resources and has plans in place to manage this potential issue.

Next, Mike Bates had responsibilities as committee member for Governance, Finance and Education Support. These are all vital committees charged with improving STC into the future. Mike's resignation also left a decision vacuum that we had to fill immediately.

According to the current bylaws, Suzanna appointed 2nd Vice President Paula Berger to step into Mike's 1st Vice President position. Then Suzanna filled the 2nd Vice President position through appointment of Linda Oestreich (who had been a candidate for 2nd Vice President in the last election, and had won the second highest number of votes).

Linda has served on the board and has been actively dedicated to STC for more than 20 years. I believe that with so many of us new to STC governance, it's a very good thing to have legacy knowledge that Linda can provide. A balance of progressive, new, reform-oriented board members and learned, knowledgeable board members can only be good for the membership of STC. Linda will serve as 2nd Vice President through the May 2006 annual board business meeting.

An essential piece of providing support and mentoring of community leadership is the Leadership Community Resource (LCR). The 2004-2005 board heard you when you said you needed the support of the "sponsor" side of Director-Sponsors. In response to your voices, the board asked Judy Glick-Smith to put together a resource pool that acts as a "triage" resource to any community that wants it.

Judy and her team are developing a database that contains volunteer mentor names that LCR committee members can assign whenever a community wants advice on anything, such as leadership roles, volunteer

recruitment, member recruitment, financial management and so forth. In the meantime, while Judy and her committee members are developing the structure and putting it together, Directors still will perform the Director-Sponsor role.

Finally, in September, we will approve our 2005-2006 budget. The approval process generates a great deal of examination, questions and recommendations by the board members. Our newly elected Treasurer, W.C. Wiese, asked for and received a number of questions from each of us. The responses to those inquiries and the inspection and discussion of them will lead the board members to an informed and balanced budget approval.

In addition to my role as the Director of Region 5, which means I am responsive to members and I vote responsibly for those members, my "other job" is to complete the rechartering process for our communities. In that effort, I report to committee manager Victoria Koster-Lenhardt, Director of Region 2. Rechartering is part of the Community Affairs committee, and I serve on that committee with Bob Dianetti, Director of Region 4, and Vici.

For the sake of managing STC committees well, STC presidents pair each new Director with a second-year and third-year Director. Bob is in his second year as a Director and Vici is in her third. This process protects STC (the members) by assuring the passing on of legacy information.

For the sake of managing the STC board well, the STC BoD has a reporting structure. I report to the 2nd Vice President, who was Paula Berger, but with the new changes in effect as of August 12, my STC "boss" will be 2nd Vice President, Linda Oestreich.

As for communications, Suzanna appointed STC Fellow Lory Hawkes, as Communications Committee manager. Paula Berger, Cindy Currie (Director for Region 1), and I serve on this committee. We are working on several initiatives to get you more information and get it to you faster.

We've gotten a lot of really good ideas from every source, and we will be implementing them as soon as we can. Our objective is to get information out to you, and to funnel information from you quickly, proactively, responsibly and fully.

STC is a mature, big association. It is the biggest as-

*Continued on Page 12*

sociation of its kind in the world. It takes the combined skills of volunteers (reform oriented and legacy), a very loyal and hardworking staff, and skillful management to ensure that your trust as a member is well-placed.

STC is in the process of transitioning into a more dynamic, responsive organization that serves members more fully. In accomplishing this, we will no doubt encounter roadblocks and events that at times seem overwhelming and seem to be larger than our com-

bined leadership experience, as diverse as it is. In these times, we ask your indulgence as we work steadily, competently, and as quickly as we can in our volunteer capacities to move STC into a better place.

To sum up activity in STC at the board level over the last three months, I simply have to borrow from the script of "Romancing the Stone."

Hooo-Ha! What a day! What a great new day for STC!

## STC competition's peer review process builds confidence

By Mary Ellen Vazzana

Associate Editor: Mary Oliver Flebotte

(This article was originally published in the Boston Broadside.)

If anyone asked me to state the most confusing and frustrating part of being a technical writer, then I would say that it is the subjective nature of presenting technical information. Structure of material, writing style, even font selection—what is right and what is wrong? If you're like me, you probably find yourself digging through style guides and information that was written in the past and praying that what you've selected makes both your editor and the software development team happy.

I have read several books on technical writing, most of which taught me how to be a more efficient writer. However, because our reading audiences are so diverse, accommodating their needs constantly challenges me to find new and inventive ways to present information. Therein lies the subjectivity. And this is what initially attracted me to the STC Competition.

The judges in the STC Competition are our industry peers, many of whom have numerous years of experience in technical communication. When we enter work in the competition, the judges are actually acting as peer reviewers of our efforts. It's a great way to get positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, and even new ideas.

Material entered in the competition is judged on its own merit, against a set of well-honed evaluation criteria. The STC judges are all trained in advance of the competition to be sure they thoroughly understand the judging process, how to use the criteria and forms, and how to provide comments that are most useful to the entrant. In the publication's competition, the judges first evaluate their sets of entries independently and later meet with fellow judges to come to a consensus on the entries. This process adds the extra benefit of providing entrants with several points of view. Not only do they receive individual comments, but the entrants also receive the collective thoughts of the consensus team.

Whether or not a particular piece officially wins an award, every competition entrant still comes out a winner. I found the local and international STC judges' feedback to be extremely valuable. I make it a point to evaluate their feedback closely and share the information with my co-workers. The feedback enables me to improve my work, grow as a technical writer, and best of all, provide better technical documentation to my readers.

In the end, everybody wins.

*Mary Ellen Vazzana is a technical writer at AutoDesk, Inc. Mary Oliver Flebotte is the NNE Chapter Vice President and a software technical writer at BAE SYSTEMS.*

**Don't miss the Photoshop Workshop scheduled for Sept. 17 in Tulsa.**

Cost: \$30 for members; \$35 for nonmembers (includes lunch)

Space is limited. To reserve your spot, call Barbi Harrison at 918-744-9385

For workshop details, see the see the Chapter Activity Calendar on Page 7.

# “THE DEAD BOOKS SOCIETY MURDER”



## - A 1999 New Year's Eve Murder -

Two HOURS OF FUN and Exciting Adventure as guests attempt to pin the murder of Sir Homer Relic, the Book Society Chair, on one of the suspects! Officers/members of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) will play the suspects, who include...

- **Ima Relic:** The widow who is free at last...
- **Ava Gard:** Who believes in a license to KILL!
- **Maury Gore:** He already loves to write about murder, so maybe...?
- **Rita Moore:** She surprises folks with her writing. Could she also be a killer?
- **Ghana Winsome:** She would kill to keep her TV ratings up...
- **Sue Anne Geetrich:** Greedy lawyer. Need I say more?
- **Olive Furbooks:** Desperate publisher. How desperate?
- **f. f. lemming:** Already a crazy professor...
- **Hope Fulwrighter:** She'd killed to get a book published...
- **Steward Mitty:** Quiet nerd. What's he hiding?
- **Nevel Ben Wright:** Incompetent but NOT uninterested police investigator.



DATE: Saturday, December 3, 2005  
PLACE: Stroud Motor Lodge  
1200 N. 8th Ave.  
Stroud, OK (On Hwy. 99, just off Turner Turnpike)  
TIME: Social Hour begins at 6 p.m., Dinner & Party at 7 p.m.  
COST: \$25 per person (includes meal, soft drinks, tax, and entertainment). Dressy attire requested but not required.

Photos will be taken and available for purchase. Open to the public.

Make Your Reservations today to attend the Oklahoma STC Chapter's MURDER MYSTERY DINNER PARTY! Call 405-372-6423 or 580-320-2827.

Entertainment by <<http://www.murdermysteryparties.com>>.

## Believe it or not, you can read this.

Submitted by Fran Danner

Sr. Member STC-OK

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdgnieg.

The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid Aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are,

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Amzanig huh?

## Oklahoma Chapter Contacts

Comments? Suggestions? Questions? Contact us. Let us know what's on your mind. We'd love to hear from you.

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- **Fred Stowell, Managing Editor:**
- **Pat Wade, Electronic Distribution**
- **Linda Stark, Layout**

### Oklahoma Chapter logo courtesy Hui Zeng

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Letters to the editor are always welcome, as are articles. Please send letters and articles to Fred Stowell <[stowellf@osufpp.org](mailto:stowellf@osufpp.org)>.

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