



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Oklahoma Chapter Dialog

Volume 28 Number 3
October 2004

To design the future of
Oklahoma's technical
communicators

Letter From the Editor

by Fran Danner, Managing Editor

Welcome, again!

Let's hear a warm welcome for Linda Stark, our newest assistant editor on the *Dialog* editorial staff. Linda has been a member of STC since 1999. She has her own company, Stark Clarity, LLC, a writing, editing, and web services company. We are now three strong but there is always room for more. If you, too, want to be a member of the Dialog staff, send me an email to fransfootnotes@sbcglobal.net. The work is not hard and is very rewarding.

As an avid scrapbooker, I spend many of my weekends at scrapbooking retreats where, for 48 hours straight, my scrapbooking *sisters* and I fill albums full of our family pictures, memorabilia, and journaling. At this past retreat, there was a contest for the best-embellished page, the best-journaled page, and the best all-around page. As a staunch believer in journaling every page in my albums, I entered one of the pages from the book I am creating about my youngest daughter's graduation from OU medical school. On that page is a description of her illness as a baby and how, through prayer and love, she was healed and grew into the lovely young woman she is today. When the voting was done, my page won a \$25 gift certificate for best journaling.

How many times have you wondered who your ancestors are? How they lived? Where they worked? What they did for fun? Both my parents and grandparents are deceased and they did not write anything to pass on to their children and grandchildren. Fortunately, I am a saver and have every letter my mama wrote to me over the years. Whatever family history we have is in those letters. If you haven't done it yet, interview your grandparents and parents about their lives when they were young. I have a treasured audiotape of my grandmother's stories in her own voice along with the names of most of the people in her photograph album. Until I asked her about them, their names were just in her memory and, unfortunately, she had already forgotten some of them. Now what she did remember and pass on to me is saved for her future generations. I regret not taking the time to get all the stories. My advice to all of you is to start gathering your family history, label pictures, and put them in albums that are of archival quality. It doesn't have to be fancy – just get it written so you won't have any regrets when those dear family members are gone and there is no more time to write the stories.

As technical writers what better place to practice our craft than to save our family histories for future generations.

Happy Scrapbooking!

Fran Danner
Managing Editor
fransfootnotes@sbcglobal.net

In this issue:

- Letter From the Editor
- President's Corner
- STC Board Establishes New Membership Categories
- OKC October Meeting
- Tulsa October Meeting
- Student Chapter
- STC Scholarship Applications Available
- Amazing, huh?
- Save the Date
- OKC - September Meeting Recap
- Trivia
- Tulsa - September Meeting Recap
- Did you know?
- STC's 52nd Annual Conference
- Letters to the Editor
- 7 Leadership Qualities (5-7)

President's Corner

by Jim Wolf

President, Oklahoma Chapter

The other evening as I arrived home after work, there were a couple of new magazines that I had not noticed before. Just to see them cause me to think about how much reading material we are bombarded with these days. Whether it is email or snail mail, the line of material that various groups and companies want to pass in front of my eyes seems to reach from my door to the farthest planet in some other universe.

I suppose about 95% of the material is simply to sell me something. It has been helpful in recent years to have a strategy to counter this effort. If the objective of the sender is to have the material make its way into my house in hopes that it will be reviewed, then perhaps a reasonable response is to be sure that it does not enter the house. My tactic is to make sure the outside trashcan is just behind the gate, so that junk material from the mailbox can be easily deposited before entering the front door. After all, if home is kind of a sacred place, and most of us would probably agree on that, then how is junk mail entitled to enter a place we hold dear? Clearly it is not entitled to arrive at such a fine destination. (An essential part of this process is to carefully check the material to assure that only junk goes to the trash.)

Junk email is no less time consuming. My best strategy so far on this topic has been to delete any email that does not have a recognizable subject line or sender entry. Even then one must be careful because junk email can arrive with a subject line designed to raise the curiosity of the recipient. "About your inquiry" is a common junk mail subject line. Another well-worn subject is "Contact Us Immediately." By deleting suspicious email with some criteria to apply, the effect also reduces the chances of picking up a computer virus that I just don't have time, energy or sometimes the expertise to deal with.

But this column is not so much about dealing with junk mail. Junk mail is a diversion of both time and attention. What is important is to deal with it quickly and move on to reading that has value. We can determine reading that has value pretty easily. It often has an association with the quality of life, whether vocation, avocation, loved ones or sometimes, strictly leisure.



The two magazines on the counter were there for a reason. They passed the junk mail screening test and got to come in the house. The reason they passed the test is because they were related to very helpful topics that I could use to make better decisions, to be more informed, to make course corrections in my life based on the latest research available.

We should cultivate our ability to focus on information that matters. There are many pieces of information that come our way daily, some in print, others verbally, still others as images of some sort. When we are trying to make the most of work related tasks, or any tasks that we have deemed worthy of serious pursuit, it is important to let the distractions fall to one side or another and keep progressing toward the goal to be achieved. Yes, it is also important to take a break, and doing so often supplies a short-term boost in productivity. But there is a difference between taking a break to get some perspective and being led astray by some contrived strategy to obtain mind share when we prefer our mind be on a topic worthy of focus.

This exercise is ongoing, but I believe that if we are to approach our potential, it is important to have an awareness of what is worthy of our time

Junk mail is a diversion of both time and attention.

and what is not. Certainly it appears that those creating the more meaningless distractions in life have no alternative plan and will continue to try tested and innovative methods to direct us toward things that matter less instead of those things that matter more.

We need to read what matters. Click on what matters. Talk about what matters. Experience what matters. Other things are simply other things. Distractions will usually take as much time as we give them, but giving them our time does not increase their value.

STC, Communicating Opportunity!

Jim Wolf
jimwolf264@yahoo.com

STC Board Establishes New Membership Categories

From the STC Web site

The Society board of directors recently approved the cost of member dues for four of STC's new membership categories. Membership dues have not been increased. The board also decided how many STC communities members might select. The new categories will appear on dues renewal forms (to be mailed in November) and on new member applications for 2005. The board will establish the amount of community rebates for fiscal year 2006 at its annual meeting in May. (The deadline to file for the 2005 rebate is September 30.)

Descriptions of the new membership categories follow. All dollar amounts are in USD.

Classic Membership

The classic membership entitles members to the paper versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* and access to the online versions; full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site; and a choice between the following options for membership in STC communities:

- one chapter and one SIG, or
- three SIGs

The costs of classic membership are as follows:

U.S. members:	\$145
Canadian members:	\$145 + \$15 postage
Overseas members:	\$145 + \$35 postage
Retired members:	\$72.50

Members who choose classic membership may join additional SIGs at a cost of \$5 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter. To be eligible for the retired member rate, an individual must be retired and have been an STC member for ten years. As in the past, retired members will not be counted in the calculation of chapter rebate amounts.

E-Membership

E-membership entitles members to the same benefits as classic membership, except that e-members will not receive paper copies of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. E-members may join additional SIGs at a cost of \$5 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter. E-membership costs \$135 for members worldwide.

Limited Membership

Limited membership includes subscriptions to the paper versions of *Intercom*

As part of its transformation initiative, STC will introduce five new membership categories this fall. The new categories vary in price and give members the option of joining multiple STC communities (chapters and SIGs).

and *Technical Communication* and full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site. Limited memberships do not include membership in communities (chapters or SIGs). The costs of limited membership are as follows:

- U.S. members: \$125
- Canadian members: \$125 + \$15 postage
- Overseas members: \$125 + \$35 postage

Student Membership

Student members receive the same benefits as e-members, but have no voting rights. Student members may join additional SIGs at a cost of \$5 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter. Student memberships cost \$50.

Students must carry 6 hours to qualify as a student. They can serve on a committee in a regular chapter but cannot hold office unless they are a full member (full dues) of that chapter.

Corporate Membership

To allow for further study, the board has postponed a vote on the costs and benefits of corporate membership.

For more information and the full article, go to:
<http://www.stc.org/transformation/article9.asp>

OKC October Meeting

Indexing Overview

The Oklahoma City and Stillwater area meeting will be held at the Edmond Library at 10 S. Boulevard on October 23, 2004 from 10:30 a.m. to noon. The library is three miles west of I-35 at the 2nd Street exit (Exit 141). It is located near the southeast corner of the UCO campus.

The who, what, where, why, and how of indexing will be covered in this informative session dealing with indexing as both a profession and a service. Information will be provided to help you improve the quality of the documents you publish by adding the right type and level of index. Tips and techniques will be covered to help you index your own materials or find an indexer suitable for your subject area. As an additional benefit, links of interest to potential indexers or people who need indexing services will be provided. More details will be made available as the date gets closer.

Next OKC area meeting to focus on indexing as a profession and a service

Tulsa October Meeting

Quality Communication As It Relates to Project Management

The Tulsa Area monthly meeting for October will focus on the importance of quality communication as it relates to project management. Since every documentation assignment is essentially a project to be managed, this session should have something for everyone. Our speaker will be Bridgitte Steinheider, Ph.D., MBA, and a cornerstone faculty contributor to the new OU-Tulsa Organizational Dynamics Graduate Program.

Dr. Steinheider received her MS degree in Psychology at the Heinrich - Heine University in Duesseldorf, Germany. Her MBA is from the University of Applied Sciences, also in Duesseldorf. Her doctorate in Psychology is from the Technical University in Dresden, Germany. She has worked extensively on projects for commercial and governmental entities in Germany, France, and the United States.

Dr. Bridgitte Steinheider to speak at Tulsa regular meeting

Her perspective on working through teams to maximize communication and effectiveness is regarded as one of the most reliable directions for organizations today. Dr. Steinheider brings a remarkably fresh international assessment of communication, team building, and project management to obtain quality results. A very personable professional with extensive credentials, she will definitely have information important to all who attend.

Join us at the Crowne Plaza (formerly the Adam's Mark) Deco restaurant upstairs on Wednesday October 13. This program is scheduled from 12:10 until approximately 12:55. The presentation is directed toward all members, whether working in a contractual arrangement, employed, or looking forward to their next work opportunity.

The Tulsa monthly meetings are on the second Wednesday of the month June through April, except for December. The May meeting is at the STC National Conference; the December meeting is an informal meeting in the evening.

Student Chapter

Oklahoma State University offers one of the top educational programs for technical communication as a part of their English department. Students have access to current software in the English lab and are taught both the theory and practical application of communication to enable them to travel far in the fields related to technical communication. The program offers BA, MA, as well as PhD degrees in English.

In addition, a student chapter of STC exists on campus that encourages networking and provides additional educational and social opportunities for students in the English and Technical Communication programs. The student chapter meets monthly in Morrill Hall on the Stillwater campus. For more information about the student chapter, visit their Web site at <http://www.stc-osu.org/>.

The future of STC and the field of technical communication lie with the students and the coming generations. Help us encourage growth in this field and build relationships with the next generation of technical writers. Consider these students when looking for new employees, contract help, or interns.

*Help us . . . build
relationships with the next
generation of technical
writers.*

STC Scholarship Applications Available

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of \$1000 each will be granted for academic year 2005-2006. Application deadline is February 15, 2005. Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office:

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
(701) 52204114

www.stc.org

\$1000 Scholarships

Amazing, huh?

This is an unusual paragraph. I'm curious how quickly you can find out what is so unusual about it? It looks so plain you would think nothing was wrong with it! In fact, nothing is wrong with it! It is unusual though. Study it, and think about it, but you still may not find anything odd. But if you work at it a bit, you might find out! Try to do so without any coaching!

Can you see it?

Give up? For the answer, see page 9.

Save the Date!

Big doings are in the works!

Put a big red circle around Wednesday, October 27.

Be looking for an announcement through the STC Reservations notification list. We are planning a fun evening to promote STC to prospective new members and to reacquaint you with your fellow STC members.

10/27

OKC – September Meeting Recap

STC OK President gives Career Workshop

Regular meetings of the Oklahoma City, Stillwater and Edmond STC group resumed on Sept. 18 with a double dose of excellent advice, thanks to Jim Wolf, STC Oklahoma Chapter President. Wolf not only gave the presentation at the meeting, but also hosted a pre-meeting career development workshop.

At the workshop, Wolf offered suggestions for members who found themselves in a career transition. Among the topics he covered were how to handle getting references when in a few months, the people you work for may no longer be with the company, and how to use your business card as a sales tool for your skill set.

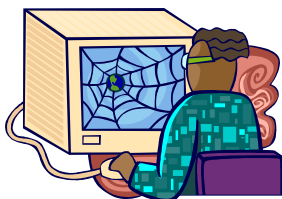
Wolf said that one approach to references that has worked well for him is to ask for a letter of reference as a contract is nearing successful completion. While some companies and individuals might be a bit squeamish about giving out such a letter these days, he said, by the time a contract nears completion you usually know what kind of reception such a request might get.

As for marketing your skills, Wolf said, a well-designed business card can be an excellent sales tool for your skills. He suggested scoping out business-related breakfasts or luncheons, such as those sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in some cities. When you introduce yourself, you can hand out your card, which, if well designed, conveys your message. In addition to the usual contact information, your card should list your areas of expertise. For example, you might list proposal writing, user documentation, oil and gas documentation, or software documentation.

Wolf's presentation, "Web Sites: A Survey of Design Styles by Industry," focused on analyzing what makes a site good or bad.

For the presentation, Wolf divided his sample sites by industry, including mega-corporations like Sony Entertainment, hospitals, legal firms, retailers, and banks.

Everything sends a message to users, he pointed out. The trick is to be able to stand back and analyze exactly what message is intended, and what message is actually conveyed to the user.



One excellent way of practicing this kind of analysis is to look closely at a number of sites. What do you like about them? Why? What do you not like? Why? The choice of colors, the choice of pictures, the location of

information on the page and the location of links all affect the user, Wolf pointed out. Some of the questions you should ask when analyzing a site are:

- What is the purpose of the site? To sell? To inform?
- Is the screen real estate used to maximum advantage?
- Are certain fonts more readable? Are they too big or too small?
- What adds to the clarity of the message?
- What characteristics cause a site to look unprofessional?

Wolf said he plans to put his Web site design styles presentation on the Oklahoma Chapter STC Web site (<http://www.stc-ok.org/>) for members who missed the meeting.

*The Oklahoma City area
STC meetings are held
the third Saturday of the
month.*

Trivia~

NO ONE has emailed me the correct answer to the trivia questions. Get your answer in TODAY! The first person to email me at fran_stc@sbcglobal.net with the correct answer to the following question wins a thin-line cooler.

The sailor's term "Roaring Forties" refers to what?

Tulsa – September Meeting Recap

For research questions large and small, the library's probably got an answer

By Greg Dent, Secretary

Need a map pinpointing where the local high-income crowd lives? How about a quick bio of your competitor's vice-president? Maybe you need some building code information about a city in Tennessee.

Try the library. The research area of the Tulsa City-County Library System houses a trove of obscure, specialized information and is often the quickest and best source of that nugget professional people suddenly can't do without. Martha Gregory, manager of the library's Research Wizard, offered an overview at STC's Tulsa meeting in September.

There are three ways to get at all this research – on the phone, online and on-the-spot. If your needs are reasonably modest – and you're a Tulsa County resident – it's usually best just to call and ask, Gregory said.

Someone will be happy to do the work for you and call you back. Email should get the same results.



If you need more detail, you can try an array of online resources, including several business directories, newspaper and magazine databases, small business information, and much more. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. For heavy-duty research, you may have to drag yourself to the downtown Tulsa library and pull volumes from the shelves. That's where you'll find numerous

detailed directories of people, companies, and products; various scientific journals; patent records; and more.

For bigger projects that you don't have the time and/or expertise to research yourself, there's Research Wizard. With RW, you essentially hire a librarian to do the work. That's especially efficient if you're looking for in-depth information in one of the Wizard's eight specialty clusters, including competitor intelligence, market research, and industry analysis. The fee for Research Wizard is \$60 an hour, or \$50 an hour for members who pay a \$120 annual fee.

How to contact

AskUs Hotline: (918) 596-7977 or research online at <http://www.tulsalibrary.org/research/index.htm>.

Did you know?

THE PAOMNNEHAL PWEOR OF THE HMJAN MNID

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttae in waht oreodr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Try the library

STC's 52nd Annual Conference 2005

It's never too early to start planning your trip to next year's annual conference.

STC's 52nd Annual Conference will be held in Seattle, Washington, May 8-11, 2005.



Letters to the Editor

To the Dialog staff: Thanks for your work on the *Dialog*. The newsletter is informative and easy to read. Keep up the good work. – Pat Wade

Do you have a comment about the *Dialog*, a particular article, or have a question for your OK STC leadership? Then email your concerns and questions to fran_stc@sbcglobal.net.

We want to hear from YOU!

7 Leadership Qualities

By Jackie Damrau, Senior Member and President, Lone Star Chapter

Used with permission from The Society for Technical Communication, Arlington, VA, U.S.A.

In last month's *Dialog*, the first four qualities were listed and discussed:

Quality 1: Become a Master of Change

Quality 2: Earn Their Trust

Quality 3: Give Feedback

Quality 4: Building Enthusiasm

Now for qualities 5-7:

Quality 5: Get Involved

It is well and good to sit on the sidelines and squeal our disgust at the direction that the Society is going in. Have you made your concerns known? Have you read the information on the Transformation web site (www.stc.org/transformation)?

The Society does have certain things that cannot be discussed in an open forum. However, those things that are for open discussion are made available to us. The Society officers have established independent committees that are looking into various aspects of the transformation. These committees include Communication, Communities, Education, Finance, Governance, Membership, and Technology.

Take the time to go to the website and read Newsletter Issue 2: Communities. The purpose for each committee appears in that issue. I encourage you to get involved in embracing this effort by providing your feedback (positive/negative) to the officer(s) of the committees. They are not doing all of this in a "closed-door" environment.

Just like we grow from baby to child to teen to adult, the Society needs to grow and develop into a more viable professional organization. This takes us to the next to last quality, Growth and Development.

Get Involved

Quality 6: Growth and Development

The Society has reached its zenith. It is time to launch a new nova that will help the Society to grow back into an organization that meets our ever-changing needs. In years past, Society members were *only* technical writers inside technical industries. Through the years, we have been able to redevelop ourselves into webmasters, instructional designers, facilitators, project managers, proposal developers, and the list goes on.

Regardless of your profession today, the world of technical communication is growing into new areas. Many other professional organizations exist that may directly focus on one particular aspect of what we do, but STC offers you a more rounded opportunity to meet with other technical communicators to learn from their experiences. The Society's and each chapter/SIG/community will be growing and developing as a result of the transformation effort.

We can focus on the good side, which is to return to a successful professional organization. Or, we can focus on the bad side, which means the demise of the Society, in general. Should this happen, we will turn to one of the other professional organizations to meet our needs. Will we be any happier with that organization? Will it address our specific needs as technical communicators? Will they (or are they now) experience the same growth and development pains?

The final quality is leading people to improvement. I'd like to rephrase this to:

Quality 7: Lead STC Improvement

Hammers and Gschwandtner say:

"There are subtle, yet profound differences between innovation and ongoing improvement. Innovation demands big steps leading to breakthroughs and fast results. Ongoing improvement depends on small steps, relies on conventional common sense, pays great attention to process, and teases out results in small doses over time." (p. 65)

Leading the Transformation Initiative requires innovation and ongoing improvement. Innovation to provide additional membership value; ongoing improvement to look at how to restructure itself into a viable professional organization that can continue meeting its members' ever-changing needs for their professional growth and development.

As Hammers and Gschwandtner said it takes small steps, common sense, attention to process, and communication in small doses to affect a major change. The Transformation Initiative is following this process.

We are the future of the Society. Without our acceptance of change, trust, feedback, enthusiasm, growth and development, and ability to improve, we will not have a Society that meets our professional careers. Let's support the Society and stand behind them as they take the baby steps needed to transform us into a renewed professional organization.

Answer to Amazing, huh?

There are no es in the paragraph.

Growth and Development

Lead STC Improvement

Dialog is written and published monthly and e-mailed to members by the Newsletter Committee of the Oklahoma Chapter of STC. Submit entries to the editor by the first of each month. Information may be reproduced for recruitment and educational purposes, if credit is given. Contributions to content were made by various members and STC's International Society Office.

2004 - 2005 Oklahoma Chapter Officers

Jim Wolf
President
president@stc-ok.org

Rachael Hutchinson
Vice President
vp@stc-ok.org

Fran Danner
Treasurer
treasurer@stc-ok.org

Greg Dent
Secretary
secretary@stc-ok.org

Betsy Callahan
Past President

Dialog Editor
editor@stc-ok.org

