



IN THIS ISSUE:

From the President.....2
 Upcoming Events.....2
 STC News.....3
 Feature Article.....4-5
 Sidenotes.....6
 Job Opportunities.....6
 About the Chapter.....7
 About the Newsletter...7



STC Mission Statement:
 Improving the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide. Check out the website at www.stc.org.

Snake River Chapter Mission Statement:
 Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication. For more information, visit our website at www.stc-src.org.

MEETING NOTICE

No May Meeting...But a June Barbeque!

Due to the 54th Annual STC Conference held in Minneapolis, MN, we will not be holding a May meeting. Please fill out the survey sent to you by membership manager Theresa Sherman so we have your vote for the date and location of the June barbeque!

EVENT NOTICE

54th Annual Tech Summit Conference

Advance registration was closed May 4th, but you can still register to attend the national conference in Minneapolis up through May 13th!

Workshops include:

- Developing Successful e-Learning Courses (presented by Jane L. Smith)
- Developing for XML/DITA: FrameMaker, XMetal, and Related Tools (presented by Bernard P. Aschwanden)
- Away With Words: Designing Wordless Instructions for International Audiences (presented by Patrick Hofmann)

Certificates include:

- TechComm 101—Basic Technical Communications
- Master Writers— Undiscovered Country: Taking Your Information Design to the Next Level
- Usability—The Science and Art of Effective Interface Design
- Content Management— Moving to Content Management: From Justification to Implementation
- Team Management—Managing Culturally Diverse Teams and Successfully Managing Geographically Dispersed Teams

Registration fees after May 4:

Member \$895 ~ Non-member \$1,120 ~ Student Member \$250

Student Non-member OR Retired Member/Non-member \$255

FROM THE PRESIDENT **A Few Brief Notes**



by Ryan Martin, STC Snake River Chapter President

Schedule

We do not have any chapter meetings in May due to the annual conference. In June, we have our Annual chapter picnic and networking opportunity. Please check the Meetings page for the date which will be posted in a few days. After June, chapter activities begin again in September.

Elections

In May, expect to be receiving voting ballots for the election of officers onto the administration council for next year. We may be sending the ballots electronically to save on postage and paper. We are still looking for volunteers to serve on the administration council. It is fun, and we have a good group of people to serve with so I encourage you to please volunteer. Having new members on the council helps to ensure the chapter stays strong.

Discussion Board

Ah, the discussion board. I know ye well. Yes, it does exist. It is out there. Waiting. Watching. Ok, maybe not watching, but May is the target month to release it to chapter members. We are just finalizing some discussion rules and the discussion board will be active. Thank you all for being patient with this.

Employment

I wanted to take a moment and remind our chapter members that we have an Employment page on our Snake River Chapter web site. Please visit that page for a list of local employers searching for technical communicators. Please also contact Darla Scott, our Employment Liaison, if you are looking for work or if you want to post a job that you are seeking to fill.

UPCOMING EVENTS **May & June**

May

Since the national STC conference is held this May 13th to 16th, we will not have a May chapter meeting. Refer to the cover sheet for more information about the conference.

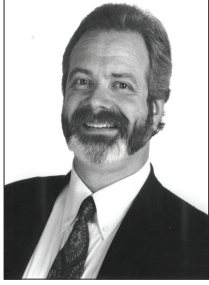
June

Traditionally, the Snake River Chapter June barbeque is held the second week of June, but this year the date will largely depend on YOU. Fill out the survey sent out to all members (if you didn't receive it, email Theresa Sherman at membership@stc-src.org) and as soon as the date and location are decided, we'll let you know.

Tentative Date: June 15th

Tentative Location: Quarry View Park

A Note from John Hedtke



by John Hedtke, Region 7 STC Director

The Conference

We are only a week out from the conference and there are now over 1000 registered conference attendees, which is about double what it's been at this point for the last four years. We need only ~250 more registrations to make our primary conference budget goal. Anything above that just makes our finances that much better... and the conference that much more fun!

What's cool about this year's conference? It's been completely redesigned. I'm looking forward to something that's not the Same Old Conference anymore. There are certificate programs--not certification, but certificate, the vendors are going to be there through Wednesday, and too many other things to mention. (Okay, I will mention that this year's Open Jam session should be very exciting. A lot of acts are queuing up to perform already.) Go to the STC Conference web site, <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/index.asp>, for information. Be sure to check out the keynote speakers while you're checking out the conference web site.

If you haven't been going to STC conferences the last few years because they've been a little lackluster, consider giving this year's conference a try. And, if you're brand new to STC conferences, this one should be a great introduction to how informative and exciting STC conferences can be.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is still hard. The change from Director-Sponsor to Director a couple years ago did not happen with anything in place to take over the sponsorship functions and, as a result, there hasn't been nearly as much local support available as in the past. The Leadership Community Resource (LCR) committee, now under the guidance of the amazing Mary Jo Stark, plans to do something for sponsorship but I have no details at the moment.

In the meantime, I could use people who'd like to do some basic sponsorship activities: contacting chapters and communities, finding out if everything's going well and what I/the Board/the STC Office might do for them, and so on. It's a relatively easy job, you get to meet a lot of really great people, and there's no heavy lifting. Phone or email me if you'd like to do some of this, even if it's only for your local chapter.

Still More Good News

I have still more good news, but I'm going to make you go read my director's column (ably edited by Carol Larson of the Willamette Valley Chapter), which can be found at http://www.hedtke.com/STC/2007-04_R7Dcolumn.doc.

I'll see you in Minneapolis!

John Hedtke can be reached by phone at 541-685-5000 (office landline) or you can email him at john@hedtke.com (primary email) or johnhedtke@aol.com (secondary email).

by Dalton Hooper, Orlando & Suncoast Chapter member

Lesson 1: Providing a Sample of Your Work

Do you bring examples of your writing with you on job interviews? Hopefully, you answered in the affirmative. But, did you know that someone sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled?

The Most Important Writing Sample

Would you expect a candidate applying for a job as a tailor to show up at the interview wearing a suit that did not fit well? Would you expect a candidate for an auto mechanic's job to pull into the parking lot in a car that was knocking loudly and spewing black smoke? Then why would you, as a technical communicator, send a résumé to a prospective employer that was not an example of your very best documentation work?

As a technical communicator you are unique, in that you are able to get the interviewer to see a sample of your work without having to wait for an interview. The person who sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled was — YOU! If you haven't caught on by now, your résumé IS an example of your work! The question is: Is it an excellent example?

What Would Make Your Résumé Excellent?

Let's think about this for a moment. What is the value that we, as technical communicators, typically bring to the creation of documentation to make it excellent?

Some examples include:

- Identifying the intended audience (the interviewer)
- Assessing the needs of the intended audience
 - What is the interviewer looking for?
 - How can you meet the interviewer's needs?
- Understanding how the documentation will be used (as an aid in deciding who to interview)
- Determining the optimal method by which to transform the source information into understanding for the intended audience (creating a résumé with the right information, in the right amount, and in the right layout)

It is appropriate to think of your résumé as a type of job aid, with the interviewer being the user and the objective being to assist in the decision whether to pursue you further (i.e., interview). Consequently, an excellent résumé would be one that convinces the reader that you should be interviewed.

The Right Information

Your résumé should contain information supporting your assertion that it is in the company's best interest to pursue you further. Your résumé should only address what you can do for the company — not what the company can do for you.

(Article continued on page 5.)

In too many instances, résumés waste valuable space (not to mention the reader's time!) in relating what a position with Acme Widgets would mean to the candidate's career, livelihood, and self-esteem. Frankly, companies are not in business to serve the needs of their employees, but to serve the needs of the owners (stockholders) of those companies. Filling the needs of the employees is simply a fortuitous byproduct.

The Right Amount

Your résumé should contain enough information to convince the reader you should be interviewed. No more, no less. That is, after all, the objective of a résumé — to get you the interview!

The Right Layout

This is very important: Your résumé should be easy to skim, with liberal use of white space. The first thing the reader sees when viewing your résumé for the first time is not the content — but the layout! The layout sets the tone in the reader's mind before they have even read the first line. If your layout is very busy, with small point type (less than 10 pt), narrative form (i.e., little or no bulleted lists), and goes on for too many pages, the reader will dread the upcoming reading, rather than be enticed by it.

The more you give the reader a feeling that they will be able to easily glean the information they need from your résumé, the more likely it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Write Stuff

Even if you followed all the advice mentioned above, if your résumé contains a misspelling, grammatical error, nonparallel construction, or any other violation of documentation standards recognized by technical communication professionals, it will rightly go on the “reject” pile. After all, when deciding which writing samples to bring to an interview, you wouldn't dream of including an example that had not been spell-checked, grammar-checked, proofread, and critiqued, would you? Why hold your résumé to a lesser standard? It is, after all, what determines whether there will even be an interview in which to show off those writing samples.

About the Author

Dalton Hooper is currently the documentation project manager for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Information Technology. Dalton directs a team of technical writers responsible for providing all relevant technical documentation during the development and support of internal business systems for Disney parks and resorts worldwide. He can be reached at dalton.hooper@disney.com.

This article first appeared in the December 2006 issue of the STC Orlando chapter newsletter, Memos to Members.

Corporate Partners

We would like to thank ExecuTrain, H&W, Healthwise, iLevel by Weyerhaeuser (formerly Trus Joist), and Barnes & Noble for generously donating their facilities for chapter functions. We also thank SolutionPro for hosting our website.

Presentations for Fall 2007

The presentations schedule is still being developed for fall 2007. People who would like to present or who have ideas for presentation topics or locations may contact Russell Willerton at programs@stc-src.org.

Chapter Info

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is a non-profit, educational organization, officially formed in 1971, which currently has over 16,900 members worldwide. The Snake River Chapter, STC was formed in June of 1990 to serve technical communicators throughout the southwestern portion of Idaho and the eastern part of Oregon. Our eastern border extends to Idaho Falls, Idaho, while our western border extends to Ontario, Oregon.

Our chapter is made up primarily of technical writers and editors, although educators (and their students), graphic designers, and other disciplines are represented as well. The chapter includes representatives from over 18 local businesses in addition to several independent contractors.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity Knocking...

by Darla J Scott, Snake River Chapter Employment Liaison

If you're looking for employment opportunities, don't forget to use the chapter web site as a resource! Several local company representatives and recruiters regularly notify me of their hiring needs, and we get the positions posted as soon as they come in!

In the "Spotlight Links" section of the home page (<http://www.stc-src.org>), click the View local job postings link to view details on the current openings:

- Content Writer - DBSI Discovery Real Estate Services (Posted 04/21/07)
- Technical Communications Department Manager - iLevel by Weyerhaeuser (Posted 04/21/07)
- Technical Publications Manager - MotivePower (Posted 04/15/07)
- Creative Director - Healthwise (Posted 03/15/07)
- Technical Documenters / Writers - CRI (Posted 03/07/07)

A slight caveat: I'm working to get aforementioned representatives and recruiters to notify me when positions have been filled—so that I can keep the opportunity information "fresh"—but it's an uphill effort.

I have found, however, that you shouldn't assume an opportunity is lost, just by the posting date. Generally speaking, the demand for skilled technical writers, copywriters, and editors currently exceeds local availability.

Elected Council Members:

President: Ryan Martin (president@stc-src.org)

1st Vice President (Programs): Russell Willerton (programs@stc-src.org)

2nd Vice President (Membership): Theresa Sherman (membership@stc-src.org)

Secretary: Angela Fleischmann (secretary@stc-src.org)

Treasurer: Kathy Hinds (treasurer@stc-src.org)

Immediate Past President: Kit Brown (pastpresident@stc-src.org)

Appointed Council Members:

Public Relations Manager: Kara Godfrey (publicity@stc-src.org)

Newsletter Editor: Adrienne Martin (newsletter@stc-src.org)

Web Content Manager: Jeff Carter (webmaster@stc-src.org)

Employment Liaison: Darla Scott (employment@stc-src.org)

ABOUT THE SIDEBAR NEWSLETTER



Adrienne Martin
Newsletter Editor

The Sidebar is the official publication of the Snake River chapter (SRC) of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). Issues are published monthly from September to May. The design and layout of this newsletter are ©2007 STC.

Publication Policies

The Sidebar invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. We welcome contributions, book and product reviews, letters, and articles that are relevant to the field of technical communication. Content is due the 26th of every month. Your text may be edited to conform to style guidelines and space restrictions of the newsletter.

Copyright Statement

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Reprint Policies

You may reprint original material appearing in The Sidebar as long as you acknowledge the source and email us the bibliographic information. If you are reprinting the article in a web-only publication, please email us a link to the article.

Distribution

The Sidebar is posted each month on our website: www.stc-src.org. We will eventually have a listserv for subscribers.