



Newsbrief

The Monthly Publication of the Mid-South Chapter, STC

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January 2001

A New Year—A New Meeting Place

by Amy Hollister

To kick off the New Year, our monthly meeting will be held at a new location. Monday, January 8th, we will meet at the **Audubon Cafe**, located at 4002 Park Avenue, just East of Getwell.



We are pleased and honored to have Dr. David Armbruster, a respected Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication, as our speaker. A professor at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Armbruster co-founded the local Mid-South STC chapter in 1980. His knowledge of technical writing in the Memphis area, and his projections for the future job market in this growing field, should be of interest to everyone.



The meeting will begin promptly at **11:30 a.m.**, and a BBQ buffet will be set up for total cost of

\$8.00 per person. 🍴

Has Anyone Seen An Invisible Computer?

by Amy Hollister



Some of you know what I am talking about. Others of you probably wonder if I had too much eggnog over the holidays. If you missed the Holiday Party, you missed a good time. The Mid-South chapter had a “White Elephant Book Swap” on Monday, December 4th, 2000. There was a lot of ripped holiday paper, strewn bows and ribbons, and a few people almost brought out boxing gloves.

George Grider brought a book that proved to be extremely popular among the crowd of 12 present. “The Invisible Computer”, written by Donald A. Norman, stole the show, quite literally. If you would like to read more about this book or order it, go to:



<http://mitpress.mit.edu/news/Norman/about.html>

THE
INVISIBLE
COMPUTER

DONALD
A.
NORMAN

There were lots more surprises to be experienced that night, as there was more than one “door prize” drawing. Everyone went home with something unique and perhaps even a little bit bizarre. 🍷

For Auld Lang Syne!

by Amy Hollister,
direct descendent of the great
Scottish poet, Robert Burns

In Scotland, this song gradually displaced the century-old “Good-night and joy be wi' you a'.” In spite of the popularity of *Auld Lang Syne*, it has aptly been described as “the song that nobody knows”. Even in Scotland, hardly a gathering sings it correctly, without some members of the party introducing the spurious line: “We'll meet again some ither nicht” for the line which Burns actually wrote: “And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet”. To say nothing of adding “the days of” to the line “For auld lang syne”!

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On the 17th of December, 1788, Robert Burns sent a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, saying, "Your meeting which you so well



describe with your old schoolfellow and friend was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil these 'social offsprings of the hear'. Two veterans of the 'men of the world' would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase *Auld lang syne* exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet..." The "verses on the other sheet" turned out to be the first version of Burns' *Auld Lang Syne*.

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?*

Chorus

*For auld lang syne, my jo,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae run about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans fine;
But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,
Sin' auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd.*

*Sin' auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne.*

*And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!
And gie's a hand o' thine!
And we'll tak' a right gud-wellie
waught,
For auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne.*

The timeless Burns gem, still treasured to this day, had to wait for publication until after the Bard's death and appeared in 1796. 🐾



Welcome New Members!

by Amy Hollister

I am pleased to announce that we are blessed with the bounty of more membership! Please join me in welcoming these new additions to the Mid-South chapter of STC:



Brenda Clark

Brenda is an Associate Systems Writer in Personnel Division Online Support at FedEx.

Marnie Dorsey

A graduate of the University of Memphis, Marnie is a Senior Systems Writer with FedEx's Personnel Division Online Support. Marnie is responsible for the *PEOPLE Manual*, which is one of the most largely read manuals at FedEx.

She and her husband Brian, who also works at FedEx, are the proud, new parents of a baby boy named Jackson, who arrived in April of this year. Congratulations!

Melanie Michael

Another member of FedEx's Personnel Division Online Support, Melanie is a Systems Writer. She is responsible for the *Asian-Pacific PEOPLE Manual* and also has taken on the task of writing *The Diversity Appeal*.

Joni Tillman

Joni is a Senior Systems Writer with Personnel Division Online Support at FedEx. She has been with FedEx since October, 1979, her first office being in a hanger on airport property. (Wow!) The only aircraft at the time were Falcons, and the pilots would very often load their own planes.

She has a daughter and a son-in-law, both of whom have been at FedEx more than 20 years, and also a son living in Austin, Texas, who is a corporate pilot, and last but not least, 2 grandsons.

Joni does pen and ink sketches, some of which are hanging in homes in Memphis and Collierville. She has also been a cast member and a script writer for the Memphis Gridiron Show for many years.

Debbie Todhunter

Having been with FedEx for 6 years, Debbie's title and departmental affiliation have changed numerous times although her responsibilities have not.

Currently, Debbie is part of the Personnel Division Online Support department and her chief responsibility is writer for safety manuals (including dangerous goods, hazard awareness,

bloodborne pathogens, management safety practices, and ergonomics) though she served a stint as writer for personnel manuals for Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

Formally educated as a librarian (special and medical), Debbie evolved into technical writing. While librarian at International Paper's Southlands Experiment Forest in Georgia, she wrote and edited scripts for training videos, wrote and produced newsletters, and edited scientific reports and research papers. This led to a desktop design position in an economic consulting firm, typesetting in a graphic design



company, and writing software documentation in an auto parts corporate

headquarters.

Debbie enjoys challenges and variety which is why she stays active in problem-solving teams and troubleshooting software/hardware problems for her teammates. Most recently Debbie was part of a team that revised the corporate online library interface, for which they won a Mercury Award.

Her daughter, Sarah, is a paralegal with a local law firm, and her son, Matthew, will be off to college next year, which has freed up time for Debbie to indulge in hobbies of spinning, weaving, and lacemaking. She is active in 4 traditional skills—related guilds, has taught classes, and during spring and fall her weekends are full of demonstrations at local festivals and living history events.

Debbie seldom tires of the travel because invariably she will meet someone from whom she learns something new, as well as renewing acquaintances with enthusiasts that

she sees only at these annual events. ☺

Preemptive Project Planning: An STC Telephone Seminar

by Maurice P. Martin
Communication Director, STC National

No one likes surprises, especially if those surprises mean more work. This presentation will teach you how to spot upcoming projects before they sneak up on you. You'll learn to prepare for these projects, avoid those nerve-wracking schedule crunches, and look like a hero in the process!

This presentation will show you how to

- Gather information on projects that are just beginning to coalesce, track them on your scheduling radar, and raise the warning signs to your coworkers;
- Tracking ongoing projects using a simple spreadsheet;
- Identify projects that aren't yet official (but will be soon...);
- Share information within your group;
- Plan for upcoming projects; and
- Check your results.

As you master this new skill set, you'll also learn how to use your knowledge and to expand your ability to make accurate long-range forecasts.

The cost of the telephone seminar is per participating site, not per person. Train as many people as your conference room can hold—for one flat rate!

When?

Wednesday, February 7, 2001
1:00–2:30 p.m. (EST)

What Is a Telephone Seminar?

A telephone seminar is much like a large conference call—but in a more controlled, radio-like environment. You simply dial the 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! You then sit back and listen to the presentations, follow along with the handout material, and join in the lively Q&A sessions.

Benefits

- No travel time
- Pay per site and not per person
- Opportunity to train all your people without their leaving the office



Cost

With a telephone seminar, the cost is per site, not per person.

U.S. sites:	\$125.00
Canadian sites:	\$140.00
Overseas sites:	Please contact the STC office



An additional \$8.00 will be charged for registrations received less than five days before the seminar.

About the Speaker

John Hedtke is the award-winning author of twenty-one books. He has more than twenty years in the software business, seventeen years writing, and seven years in technical publications management. John has developed and written documentation and books for many leading software products and has received nineteen regional and international writing awards to date. A complete list of his books, articles, projects, and awards can be found at his Web site, www.hedtke.com.

John does numerous radio interviews and frequently travels to lecture and make guest appearances at conferences and seminars. John is past president of the Puget Sound chapter of STC. When not otherwise occupied writing books and consulting, John writes magazine articles, plays the banjo, and sleeps late as much as possible. He lives in Seattle with his two cats.

Obtain a Registration Form

Please call Amy Hollister at: (901) 434-8421 or send an e-mail to Amy at: awriter@midsouth.rr.com.

A copy can also be obtained from the STC National web site at:

<http://www.stc-va.org/fwhatsnew.htm>

Breaking In: How to Become an Experienced Technical Writer

by Jeff Hanvey



Everyone searching for his or her first job in technical writing encounters the same situation: tons of advertisements for technical writers with “3 to 5 years experience.” Or else, he or she has to include writing samples when sending in the resume. Even if that new writer gets an interview, one of the first questions asked is “what have you written before?”

The fact is that technical writing as a field values experience over education. It's not that writers don't value education, certification, and knowledge growth, but just that the

nature of the field is that it's difficult to mentor and train new writers—and often the documentation needs are so immediate that there just isn't time to train someone.

So, how does the aspiring technical writer break into the field and get that all-important “demonstrated writing ability”? Well, it takes patience and ingenuity.



Hints for obtaining a proven track record

1. If you're presently employed, look around your work place. There are always writing jobs needed: job descriptions, policies and procedures, correspondence. Choose small projects so that they don't interfere with your current work, such as:
2. Developing that user manual for the machine that's missing its user manual and that only one person knows how to use.
3. Documenting the processes used in your department for getting repetitive tasks done. This is especially important if there is a single person who “owns” the task and that person's absence could cause problems with customer service or deadlines.
4. Check out your social circle and ask around any clubs or special interest groups you're active in. This is a good way to score



freelance work—especially for people who own their own business and don't have the resources to hire a technical writer. If nothing else, these groups

usually produce a newsletter and other correspondence.

5. Check with your local university and develop contacts there. In fact, you might find work documenting policies and procedures there. Also, check with your alumni association and volunteer for projects with them.
6. Contact local volunteer organizations. They are always in need of people - I'm sure they'd love to have someone professionally write up instructions for their charity functions, document their procedures, or even produce a newsletter. The same holds for your church or religious organization.
7. Go online and check out some of the freelance job sites. There may be “small” things you can do and get paid for.
8. Take a look at the courses you've taken. It may be possible to revise some of the documents so that they are more accurate or that they show your skills.
9. If nothing else works, develop your own documentation. Delve into your personal life and document how you do things. Develop a personal website and include personal writing.



After awhile, you'll develop a nice portfolio full of exemplary writing samples to show the next recruiter.





What's New in Your World?

submitted by chapter members

Express Library Site Wins Silver Award

FedEx won two silver awards in the Mercury 2000 Awards competition, an international business communications contest sponsored by MerComm, Inc. Winning entries included the online Express Library, developed by chapter members **Debbie Todhunter** and **Lyn Joyner**, and designed by graphics artist Beth Tanner. Express Library is FedEx's corporate-wide intranet library web site.



The awards were announced in December, 2000 and will be presented at a ceremony at the Plaza Hotel in New York City in January, 2001.

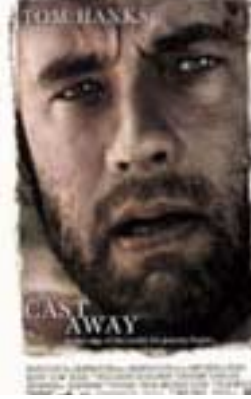
"Timely" Door Prize Winners at Recent Monthly Meetings

It just might be "time" for you to attend a monthly STC meeting. **Tracy Snyder**, **George Grider** and **Lyn Joyner** know what I am talking about. They have been the happy recipients of wrist watches. Yes, mens and ladies wrist watches have been the monthly door prizes for the past three meetings. Join in on the "drawing" fun—you must be present to win!



FedEx in the Movies Again—"Cast Away" Premiered Dec. 22

Actor Tom Hanks has a starring role as a FedEx systems engineer in the movie "Cast Away". The movie was filmed at several actual FedEx locations including



a World Service Center in Moscow and facilities in Los Angeles and Memphis. Thousands

of FedEx employees, including FedEx CEO Fred Smith, turned out for a "welcome back" scene at the Memphis hub.☺

Job Postings

by Amy Hollister



If you are looking for a job or if your company is looking for someone to fill an open position, please utilize the Mid-South Chapter eGroups site, located at:

<http://www.egroups.com/group/STCmidsouthChapter>



Teresa Johnson, our **Employment Coordinator**, researches all available avenues and faithfully posts any new listings for employment opportunities in the Mid-South area.

New listings are posted several times a week, sometimes daily. If you are not a member of the Mid-South chapter eGroups list, you are missing out on a wealth of information. Go to the website and sign up today. ☺

Treasurer's Report

by Ferris Hooshmand

This chapter monthly financial report reflects the end of November, 2000.



Cash balance\$3,213.91

Income:
Interest \$ 9.70

Total Income.....\$9.70

Expenses:
Meetings * \$ 11.50
Publication competition ** \$ 80.00

Total Expenses.....\$ 91.50

Surplus or (deficit) (\$ 81.80)

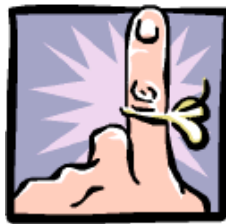
Cash balance\$3,132.11

* Speaker's lunch
** Judges' lunch; refund for entry



Meeting Reminder

Amy Hollister, Editor



What: January (Lunch) Meeting

When: **Monday, January 8th**
11:30 a.m.

Topic: UT Professor, **Dr. David Armbruster**
to speak on Technical Writer
opportunities

Where: Audubon Cafe
4002 Park Avenue
(901) 327-4488

The planned **buffet** menu and price
(including tea, tax, and gratuity) is:

- BBQ Pork with bun
- Baked Beans
- Tossed Salad
- Apple Cobbler
- Iced Tea

\$8.00



STC society for technical communication

2000 Officers National Chapter

Society President **Mark Hanigan**

Director Sponsor **Rob Houser**

Mid-South Chapter

President **Jackie Walters**

Phone: 395-5633

E-mail: jlwalters@fedex.com

Vice President **Nell Johnson**

Phone: 263-7228

E-mail: nwjohanson@fedex.com

Secretary & Newsletter Editor **Amy Hollister**

Phone: 434-8421

E-mail: abhollister@fedex.com

Treasurer **Ferris Hooshmand**

Phone: 434-8428

E-mail: fhooshmand@fedex.com

Academic Liaison **Loel Kim**

Phone: 678-3646

E-mail: loelkim@memphis.edu

Employment Coordinator **Teresa Johnson**

Phone: 365-7774 ext. 366

E-mail: tjohnson@eoncc.com

Public Relations **George Grider**

Phone: 360-4002

E-mail: ggrider@fedex.com

Publications Competition

Coordinator **Steve Gillespie**

Phone: 434-8426

E-mail: sgillespie@fedex.com

Web master **Joe Lakey**

Phone: 434-8427

E-mail: jhlakey@fedex.com

STC society for technical communication

Newsbrief

Amy Hollister

1745 Brentwood Trace

Southaven, Mississippi 38671