

Newsbrief

The newsletter of the Mid-South Chapter of
the Society for Technical Communication

January 2010
Volume 27 • Issue 1

President's Column

by Kelly Schrank

Hello Mid-South Chapter members and friends!

It's the time of year to make new resolutions. What did you put off last year that you really wish you had done?

I know I put off working out and eating right when I started grad school and a new job that required me to be on call. Now that my on-call job has ended, and I am a little more used to the requirements of school, I know I



Our December 10th Luncheon was held at Half Shell on 7825 Winchester. Attendees were (l-r): Kelly Schrank, Leanne Logan, Ben Hopper, Anna Acerra, Becky Derych, Ginny Yeager, and Julie Grady.

In This Issue

President's Column.....	1
2010 Slate of Candidates for STC Office.....	2
2010 STC Campaign Election Guidelines.....	3
STC "Document Design" talk — November 2009.....	4
Upcoming Events.....	4
2010 STC Dues Information.....	5
Member Spotlight.....	6
January–February 2010 Webinars.....	8



STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media so that both businesses and customers benefit from safe, appropriate, and effective use of products, information, and services.

need to make health and fitness a priority.

Like some of you, I also need to find a new job. I will be pushing myself to network, contacting people I know via LinkedIn and email, getting more involved in STC, and going to more Career Transition group meetings.

And as I do every year, I am going to try new things. Will this be the year I try belly dancing? Or join Toastmasters? Or learn to quilt? It's too early to tell. Do you have any ideas for me? What are your resolutions?

Our administrative council hopes you make renewing

your membership or joining STC one of your resolutions this year! While there are many benefits that non-members can reap from the chapter, like the Employment page on our website, free meetings at the library, and networking luncheons, there are many reasons to join. Members get reduced fees at meetings like January's webinar, the ability to gain leadership skills as a member of the chapter Board, and access to all of the benefits from STC.

Personally, what keeps me coming back to STC is being involved at a local level with this chapter, volunteering
see **President's Column**, page 5

2010 Slate of Candidates for STC Office

Please note that the election slate presented below reflects changes to the composition of the Society Board of Directors. Based on the results of the Knowledge-based Governance Survey of the membership conducted in August 2009, the STC Board of Directors voted during its 24 August 2009 meeting to amend the Society Bylaws to reflect the following position changes:

- Remove the Second Vice President position
- Remove one Director position
- Change Director terms to two years
- Allow Directors to serve two consecutive terms

A full copy of the revised bylaws is posted on the STC website at:

http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/bylaws.pdf.

Congratulations to all of the candidates, and thanks to everyone who expressed interest in running for office.

NOTE: All STC members must have paid their dues by 28 February 2010 to vote in the election!

For President: Mike Hughes will automatically succeed from First Vice President.

For First Vice President: Hillary Hart will automatically succeed from Second Vice President.

Candidates on the slate for the 2010 STC election:

For Secretary:

Rachel Houghton and Steven Jong

For Director (three positions to be elected)*:

Nicky Bleiel, Al Hood, Tricia Spayer, Makarand (Mak) Pandit, and W.C. Wiese

*Lisa Pappas resigned from the STC Board effective 23 November 2009, which creates an additional position for someone to serve the one year remaining in her term. For the 2010 election, STC members will elect three directors-at-large, with the top two winners serving the two-year terms and the third winner serving the remaining year of Lisa's term.

For Nominating Committee (two positions to be elected):

Lory Hawkes, Nathaniel Lim, Linda Mikkelsen, and Preeti Mathur

The 2010 Society election is scheduled to begin 9 March and end 8 April 2010 at 11:00 A.M. CST. Please watch the STC website after 2 January 2010 for detailed information about the candidates and to access a question and answer area that you can use to ask questions of the candidates. 📧

See page 3 for 2010 STC Campaign Election Guidelines

Newsbrief is the quarterly newsletter of the Mid-South Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Our chapter serves the Memphis, TN and surrounding areas. We create the newsletter to do the following:

- Involve members and visitors more fully in professional service
- Foster a sense of community among chapter members and visitors
- Provide a link between professors and students at local universities
- Promote the benefits of chapter membership to attract new members

Submissions

If you would like to contribute to *Newsbrief*, please contact the newsletter editor with your ideas.

Copyright

Writers are invited to submit articles for publication consideration. Please note, however, that by submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to *Newsbrief* to run your article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. You as the writer nonetheless hold the copyright. Please let the newsletter editor know if your article has run elsewhere or been submitted to another publication.

Reprints

Articles published by *Newsbrief* may be reprinted in other STC publications if credit is given to the author as well as the Mid-South Chapter and if a copy of the reprint is sent to the newsletter editor.

Subscription

To receive email notification when *Newsbrief* has been posted online, send your email address to the newsletter editor.

Advertising

Advertisements relevant to technical communicators are accepted. Base prices are listed below, and discounts will be given for ads that run in at least two consecutive issues. For more information, contact the newsletter editor.

Full page.....	\$60
Half page.....	\$40
Quarter page.....	\$20
Business card.....	\$10

Contact Information

Newsletter EditorKen Armstrong
newsletter@stc-midsouth.org

Society for Technical Communication

<http://www.stc.org>

Society President

Cynthia C. Currie
stc_cindycurrie@yahoo.com

Executive Director

Susan Burton
susan@stc.org

Mid-South Chapter

<http://www.stc-midsouth.org>

Officers

President

Kelly Schrank
president@stc-midsouth.org

Vice President

Open

Secretary

Anna Acerra
secretary@stc-midsouth.org

Treasurer

Manny Karkowsky
treasurer@stc-midsouth.org

Managers

Academic Liaison

Loel Kim
academicliaison@stc-midsouth.org

Employment

Julie Grady
employment@stc-midsouth.org

Hospitality

Open

Scholarship

Susan Popham
scholarship@stc-midsouth.org

Webmaster

Glenn Sanders
webmaster@stc-midsouth.org

2010 STC Campaign Election Guidelines

STC and its Nominating committee seek to provide a fair election environment. Everyone should review these guidelines regarding campaign activities.

What STC provides for each candidate

STC Web Site. STC provides an area on the STC Web site (stc.org) with the following information:

- Name of candidate
- Position for which the candidate is running
- Candidate's personal Web site URL
- Statements of specific length (the answers provided by the candidate to specific questions on the candidate application form)

Each candidate will have an area to answer questions asked by the membership. The STC office will provide instructions on how to access the "Question and Answer" area to answer any questions. Candidates will receive an e-mail when someone sends a question to all candidates for a certain position. Candidates' answers are posted on the site for all members to view.

STC e-Blasts. The STC office will send out up to two (2) campaign messages per candidate (by email on a first-come, first-serve basis to all STC members who have not opted-out of receiving Society e-mail. (Note: The office will send only one email per day to the membership. Be

patient if your email does not go out the day you submit it. They will all be sent out based on order of date received.) This message will include automatically added information about how recipients can opt-out of receiving future campaign messages. Candidates should remember that recipients may perceive large numbers of e-mail messages as spam, thus reducing the impact of future messages.

The voting for STC's 2010 election begins March 9, 2010 and closes at 11:00 A.M. CST on April 8, 2010. The STC office will not accept campaign e-mails after March 2, 2010.

What the candidate is required to do

- Candidates must include the URL for their Society page in any campaign materials (see below for allowed campaign materials).
- Candidates must prepare statements of specific length, adhering to maximum character limits defined by the STC office for each venue (STC Web site, *Intercom*, and election ballot).
- Candidates may prepare an article of up to 1000 words for use in community newsletters. If desired, candidates may ask the office to send them the contact information for community newsletter editors and webmasters. It is recommended that candidates prepare their articles and contact

see **Election Guidelines**, page 5

STC “Document Design” talk — November 2009

By Kathy Brooks

Gestalt principles underlie many of the visual rules that graphic designers use today — which is why University of Memphis professor Loel Kim discussed them at the November 18 STC meeting at the Central Library.

“The human being is a pattern-seeking creature,” she said. “We try to make order out of chaos by way of patterns.”

Gestalt principles were developed by German psychologists in the 1920s to help explain human perception and why people often visually organize individual design elements into a whole. Some of the key principles that Kim discussed were:

- **Emergence**, “a stimulus without all of the information” as demonstrated by a black-and-white picture apparently showing a Dalmatian and a tree in a park.



- **Reification**, “one of those principles that helps us fill in information,” Kim said. It involves illusory contours that encourage people to perceive more than is actually there.
- **Multistability**, “the tendency to move back and forth between two or more visual interpretations. The key to this is your eye has to move... We’re always refreshing the mental picture in our brain of what we’re seeing.”
- **Invariance**, which involves recognition of images despite changes in scale or rotation.

The main laws governing Gestalt principles are:

- **Closure**, which causes people to see complete figures even when part of the visual information is missing.
- **Similarity**, in which similar elements are grouped as a whole.
- **Proximity**. Elements that are close together are perceived as belonging together.
- **Symmetry/ figure-ground relationships**: Some objects recede into the background while others predominant visually. “White space is important for visual cueing,” Kim said, noting the Air Norway logo that brings in several meanings.
- **Continuity**: As an example, the mind perceives a cross when it sees four intersecting lines.

see Document Design, page 7

Upcoming Events

January STC Program Meeting

- January 13, 2010
- 12 noon – 1 P.M.
- “The New Face of Documentation”
- Speaker: Rahel Bailie
- Q-Source, 3175 Lenox Park Blvd, Suite 309. For directions, click here.
- \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members
- Pizza and drinks will be provided. Please arrive a little early, so you have time to sign in (pay and get a receipt if needed), grab some pizza and a drink, and settle in.
- RSVP to president@stc-midsouth.org.

Memphis IIBA Chapter January Meeting

- January 19, 2010
- 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.
- Free Catered Meet and Greet
- Jason's Deli, Conference Room; 3473 Poplar Ave, Suite 102, Memphis (Intersection of Poplar and Highland)
- More details at <http://memphis.theiiba.org/>
- RSVP to iibamemphis@gmail.com by January 15, 2010



2010 STC Dues Information

Membership Category	Included In Membership	Dues	Chapters	Special Interest Groups
Basic Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publications • Other member benefits 	\$215	\$25 each	\$10 each
Gold Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publications • 1 Chapter • 1 SIG • 7 Web Seminars • 1 online certificate course • Salary Database • Premium Listing (50-word description) in Online Buyers Guide & Consultant Directory 	\$395	\$25 each for additional	\$10 each for additional
SIG Value Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publications • All SIGS 	\$375		
Student Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publications • 1 chapter • 1 SIG 	\$75	\$25 each for additional	\$10 each for additional
Retired Membership (contact Membership Dept. for eligibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online publications • 1 chapter • 1 SIG 	\$145	\$25 each for additional	\$10 each for additional

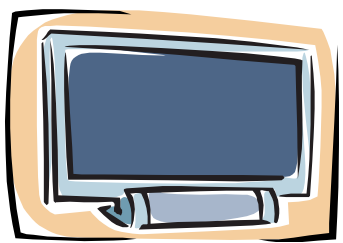
President's Column

continued from page 1
with the Technical Editing SIG, reading the Lone Writers SIG email list, and the sessions and camaraderie at the conference. Last semester, having electronic access to all the STC pubs was a new and helpful benefit.

If the basic membership of \$215 is too much to swallow at one time, STC will spread the payments over 4 months. I added the chapter (\$25) and my two favorite SIGs (\$10 each) for a total of \$270 over 4 months; I think I am get-

ting incredible value for my \$67 a month for those four months. And if you are a student, membership for the year is only \$75!

As always, if you're interested in getting involved or if you have ideas for the chapter, e-mail me at president@stc-midsouth.org. I look forward to seeing all of you at future meetings! ✍️



Election Guidelines

continued from page 3
newsletter editors and webmasters as soon as possible after announcement of the slate.

- Candidates are required to refrain from negative campaigning.
- Candidates are also strongly advised to avoid making promises they cannot keep. If elected to the STC Board of Directors, candidates will vote on issues as representatives of all members, and not a particular

see **Election Guidelines**, page 7

Member Spotlight

Julie Grady

How long have you been a member of STC? 2 years, this time, [but I] was previously a member as a grad student.

Have you ever held a position in STC? This is my first, current employment manager of the Mid-South Chapter.

Are you a member of any STC SIGs (Special Interest Groups)? Quality and Process Improvement (QPI) and the Environmental, Safety, & Health Communications

Why are you involved with STC? I am involved for the sake of networking and the support of peers. If I have an issue with my work, or a problem I can't figure out, I have the opportunity to bring it to a larger, knowledgeable audience. Also, it is nice to keep up with the opportunities/various fields for applying my degree by interfacing with others who do so in different ways than I have experienced. This lets me know not only what's possible, but additional certifications, seminars, or work experience that can help get me where I want to be or better succeed where I'm at.

What is your current position? (Title, Company)
Technical Writer, QSource, External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) team.

What do you do on a daily basis? I help put together EQRO reports for TennCare, the Medicaid oversight agency in Tennessee. I also support

the business development personnel with grant responses, support the Communications Department of the Quality Improvement Organization arm of the company, and train/assist fellow associates with Word.

What do you enjoy most about the field? I literally get a rush editing, clarifying, and beautifying documentation. I have also been privileged enough to be a part of informing legislation and affecting lives with words through working for people who have produced reports for state agencies, research studies, health impact assessments and World Health Organization documentation.

What would you consider an educational or career highlight? A career highlight would be preparing the original and finalizing an encyclopedia entry for the online Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), developed under the auspices of the UNESCO at <http://www.eolss.net>.

Another would be work I did for a potential book or paper on coping mechanisms for caregivers of children with cerebral palsy and a feeding tube. Though the particular coding work I completed was not used in the one journal article produced from the study to date, I was able to find tools for coping studies and had to communicate with and translate documentation (using software) from the Utrecht Institute in the Netherlands. I thought to use



their coping questionnaires to guide categorizing and coding of the lengthy observation transcripts from the study and it was an effective means that I came up with independently in my own research.

What advice do you have for new technical communicators? Figure out the area you'd most like to go into (healthcare, environmental, human factors, etc.) and speak to those in that industry and review their job postings to ensure that you take control of and build your career to achieve what you want. Stay on top of industry trends and job requirements so that you remain marketable.

How did you get into technical communications as a career? I was 20 and working on a degree in visual arts and psychology, working whatever jobs I could when I heard about a job proofreading for a hardware distributor from my sister. She said that it was time for me to get a real job and felt like I had helped her

see **Member Spotlight**, page 8

Document Design

continued from page 4

- **Common fate:** Elements falling in the same direction visually are grouped together. “It draws your eye along the movement and it draws your eye to its culminating point.”

“We’re motivated to be pleased sensorially,” Kim said, in conclusion.

—Kathy Brooks is a writer/editor/media-outreach specialist in search of her next professional challenge. To contact her, call 767-8347 or email

KatBr@bellsouth.net. ✉

Election Guidelines

continued from page 5

constituency. Furthermore, even if you do not vote with the majority, you are bound to support the final decisions of the Board. You may want to reconsider running for STC office if you feel you cannot fulfill this obligation.

Permitted campaign materials

Candidates are allowed to provide campaign information on their own personal Web sites and by contacting individuals personally. The candidate biography page on the STC Web site (at stc.org) will provide a link to the candidate’s personal Web site page.

NOTE: E-mail lists that are administered through the Society office and subscribed to based on an elected position in a community, such as the Presidents’ list or

Treasurers’ list, are not appropriate venues for campaign messages from individual members.

What communities can provide to candidates

Communities can provide only the following information about the election and only in the following venues:

- **Community Web Site.** Community Webmasters may post an information page about the STC election. The information includes the election positions, candidate names, and candidate biography Web page URL for each candidate. Webmasters may also place a link on the community home page to the information page. Webmasters may request an election Web page template to use as a guideline through the STC office. The template is adjustable as needed to fit your community’s style.
- **Community Newsletters.**
 - Community newsletter editors must post an informational article or column about the election slate. The information includes the election positions, candidate names, and candidate biography Web page URL for each candidate. Newsletter editors may also provide a link or URL (depending on delivery format, printed or online) to the community Web site information page and the STC elections page.
 - Community newsletter editors may accept an arti-

cle from each candidate. Candidates may provide an article of up to 1000 words.

- Community newsletter editors may decide not to print candidate articles if newsletter space is at a premium or the issue schedule does not permit.

Community Webmasters and newsletter editors will receive the STC election information once the preliminary slate is announced.

What individuals can do

As community members, individual members may do the following:

- **Endorsements.** As an individual member, you may endorse a particular candidate. The appropriate place to endorse a candidate is in the STC Ideas Ning site, the STC LinkedIn group, or STC Twitter. (**NOTE:** Group endorsement of a candidate by a community, chapter, or committee is not allowed. E-mail lists that are administered through the Society office and subscribed to based on an elected position in a community, such as the Presidents’ list or Treasurers’ list, are not appropriate venues for endorsements from individual members.)
- Ask the candidates questions. The STC Web site (stc.org) will provide a “Question and Answer” area where individual members can post a question for all candidates for a position. All see **Election Guidelines, page 8**

Member Spotlight

continued from page 6

a great deal in high school with improving her papers and could therefore excel in the position. I was hired and got a kick out of the work. I took an editing class to see if that was really my calling instead of art therapy, and I loved it and all the possibilities that the professor told me for career and pay (though the pay part has yet to come to fruition).

My company was great, paying for me to complete an undergrad degree and most of my grad degree in professional writing. I moved along the ladder to desktop publishing, catalog copy/research specialist, and eventually team leader, effectively changing the focus of the catalog department from getting it out fast to getting it out right and complete, and fast. I instituted an electronic proofing, editing and approval process and learned a great deal. My next position was with a university professor's research institute, where I worked as a writer/project associate focusing on state funded health matters, which directly led to my current position in healthcare and with the official title of technical writer.

What's been your biggest challenge as a technical communicator? Making correct and well-written information a priority for management when writing and editing is not the business's primary objective, and having to collaborate with writers of

varied background that can often conflict with or under-value technical writing tenets, such as journalism and marketing folks. 📧

Election Guidelines

continued from page 7

candidates for an elected position will receive the question by email and have the opportunity to post an answer.

- Offer an opportunity to each candidate. If you would like to extend an opportunity to candidates to present their views, the opportunity must be submitted through the "Question and Answer" area to all candidates.

For more information

Contact the manager of the nominating committee, Jackie Damrau, jdamrau3@airmail.net, +1 214-505-0100, if you have questions about these guidelines or running for office. 📧

January–February 2010 Webinars

January 2010

Wednesday, 20 January |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
12:00–1:00 P.M. CST
What Technical Documentation Can Learn from the Comics
Presented by Alan Porter

Wednesday, 27 January |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
12:00–1:00 P.M. CST
Useful Shareware for Technical Communicators
Presented by Ed Marshall

February 2010

Wednesday, 3 February |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
12:00–1:00 P.M. CST
Ten Things You Thought You Knew about Writing
Presented by Leah Guren

Wednesday, 10 February |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
12:00–1:00 P.M. CST
Quick Reference Guides: Short and Sweet Technical Documentation
Presented by Ben Minson

Wednesday, 17 February |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
To Be Announced

Wednesday, 24 February |
Members \$79; Nonmembers \$149
12:00–1:00 P.M. CST
Managing Conflict on a Global Team
Presented by Judy Glick-Smith 📧

