



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Newsbrief

The Monthly Publication of the Mid-South Chapter, STC

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May 2001



Chapter Installation and Rob Houser, Director-Sponsor

by Amy Hollister

Working with Difficult People

Because so much of a technical communicator's job requires interaction with others, we inevitably have to deal with our share of difficult people. We interact with difficult technical resources, difficult co-workers, and even difficult managers. Many technical communicators experience great amounts of anxiety and frustration over dealing with these difficult people because they were never taught how to interact with people who may not want to interact with them or who may be trying to push them around. In this presentation, you will learn to identify and cope with several common difficult behaviors. You may even learn how your behavior may be perceived as difficult by other people.

Join the Mid-South chapter as we welcome Rob Houser on **Monday, May 7th** at the Pig-N-Whistle on Winchester. **Chapter Officer Installations will also be held and will take place prior to the speaker.** The meeting will begin at **6:00 p.m.** and a BBQ buffet will be offered for \$10 per person. ☞

Editor's note:

Rob Houser is a technical communication consultant in Atlanta, Georgia, and a founding partner of User First Services, Inc. He holds a Master of Technical and Scientific Communication from Miami University of Ohio. His research interests include instructional design, online help, and user interface design. Rob has worked as a technical communicator for eight years for technology companies such as NCR and Intergraph. As a consultant, he now helps various companies in the Southeast design and create user assistance, including WinHelp, HTML Help, web sites, and computer-based training.

Rob is currently the First Vice-President of the STC Atlanta Chapter and a member of the IEEE Professional Communication Society's administrative committee. Rob is active with conference planning for STC and IEEE. He has worked on publicity and programs for the Currents conference in Atlanta, the IEEE's IPCC conference, and the annual STC conference. This year he is stem manager for the Information Design stem at the 47th Annual STC conference.

rate drops off dramatically after an initial period of use.

ThoughtWare's Chief Technology Officer, S. J. "Sandy" Schaeffer, covered the reasons why and how to overcome these obstacles.



Sandy Schaeffer, CTO of ThoughtWare

Those of us who were present:

1. Reviewed a "state of the business" on e-Learning and were presented real statistics on usage over time and what drives usage.
2. Examined the organizational psychology that initiates and drives the decision to adopt e-Learning.

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Meeting Notes

by Amy Hollister

Web-based Learning that doesn't get stale

While appearing to be a tremendous advancement on the surface, one of the greatest failures in e-Learning today has been the low "return rate" value. The immediate high-consumption-



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3. Compared and contrasted different deployment and content models that can positively affect overall usage rate and mitigate drop-off.
4. Learned how to build a “best-case” rollout model that provides overall true “value add” to the learning population. 🐶

Your 2001 Chapter Officers

by Amy Hollister

As you know, chapter elections were held at last month’s meeting. Thanks go out to our Election Committee team, which consists of **Joe Lakey, Aodhan Richardson, and George Grider** for all their help in the nomination and voting processes. The votes were counted and the winners are:

Past President	Jackie Walters
President	Nell Johnson
Vice President	Amy Hollister
Secretary	Alison Masilak
Treasurer	Mary Sue MacNealy



Scott Thompson, Nell Johnson, Amy Hollister, Mary Sue MacNealy, and Alison Masilak

Two more new names to add as a result of change are:

Employment Coordinator	Margaret Carbaugh
Newsletter Editor	Scott Thompson

Thanks to everyone who participated in the election and the best of luck to our new officers. If I may speak for all the officers, I would like to say that we look forward to serving the Mid-South chapter in the coming year. 🐶

Chicago—STC National Conference—Are You Ready?

by Amy Hollister

When: May 13 - 16, 2001

Where: Chicago, Illinois
Hyatt Regency - Conference Headquarters

What: STC's Annual Conference



This is the largest conference in the world that focuses on the arts and sciences of technical communication. The conference includes more than 250 educational presentations. It offers opportunities for networking and a chance to view vendor exhibits and award-winning entries from STC's technical communication competitions. Who: STC members are technical communicators—people whose work involves making technical information available and understandable to people who need it.

Conference events address the needs of technical communicators at every level of experience, from entry level to senior management. Why: STC holds the annual conference to provide education opportunities for members, to support professional development, and to expand networks of contacts. Full registration entitles you to three days of educational presentations (technical sessions), vendor exhibits, social events, useful handouts, and a copy of the conference Proceedings.



To Do List

Register at reduced rates by May 4

Register online, or print out and complete the Conference Registration form and mail or fax it to:

Society for Technical
Communication
Attn: Annual Conference
Registration
901 N. Stuart St., Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
(703) 522-2075 (fax)

Forms can be found under the Conference Forms section. Additional registration information can be found in the Registration / Fees section.

Deadline:

To receive the lower advance registration rate, send your form and payment to arrive by May 4. Early registration is strongly recommended.

Make travel plans

STC has arranged for conference attendees to receive special rates on air transportation and rental cars. See the Travel Information section for details. Be sure to check with alternate carriers/providers for competitive fares.

Deadline:

Usually, you can get the best rates on travel to the conference by making your arrangements at the earliest possible date.

Make lodging arrangements

Attendees are asked to make their lodging arrangements directly with the hotel of their choice. Please see the Lodging Information section for details.

Deadline:

Make your lodging arrangements with either the Hyatt Regency Chicago or The Fairmont Hotel by April 20 to receive the special conference rate.

Sign up for Hospitality Tours

Attendees may choose to take a number of tours made available by STC. (Descriptions can be found in the Hospitality Tours section). To sign up, complete the Tour Registration form located in the Conference Forms section and send it to:

On The Scene—STC
54 W. Illinois St., Suite 550
Chicago, IL 60610

Deadline:

To reserve space on a tour, submit your Tour Registration form by April 20. After April 20, tours will operate on a space-available basis.

Didn't register in advance?

Register at the on-site registration desk.

If you are unable to mail your conference registration form to arrive at the Society office by May 4, do not mail it. Bring it with your payment to the on-site registration desk. On-site registration begins at noon on Sunday, May 13. (On-site registration rates are listed in the Registration / Fees section.)

Deadline:

On-site registration begins at noon on Sunday, May 13, and ends at noon on Wednesday, May 16. 🐾

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:



Juliet Douglas

Juliet graduated from the University of Memphis in 1994 with a Bachelor's degree in Spanish and joined the U.S. Air Force a year later. After 4 years of military service, she returned to Memphis and began graduate school at the University of Memphis in the spring of 2000. Juliet studies technical writing and is an assistant editor at Physicians Postgraduate Press.

Krista Haley

Krista is graduating from the University of Memphis in December 2001. She will be receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, concentrating in Professional and

Technical Writing. Krista enjoys attending church, reading, and bowling. She will enter the U of M's graduate program in January 2002, pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Technical Writing.

Janet Patton Wiygul



Janet has an undergraduate degree in Technical and Professional Writing from the University of Memphis and is currently working on her Masters in Technical and Professional Writing at U of M. She is married and has a 5-month old daughter. Janet hopes to complete her Masters next summer and become a part of the PH.D program at the University of Memphis. 🏠

Treasurer's Report

by Ferris Hooshmand

This chapter monthly financial report reflects the end of March, 2001.

Cash balance (at the beginning of Jan.-01) **\$1,604.61**

Income

Interest on savings	\$3.88
Grant *	\$240.00


Total Income **\$243.88**

Expenses

Meetings (2 Speakers' lunches)	\$19.90
Miscellaneous **	\$149.40

Total Expenses **\$169.30**

Surplus or (deficit)

(Total income less total expenses)  **\$74.58**

Cash (cumulative) balance **\$1,679.19**

* Web Grant from STC

** Chapter web site (DreamHost Account) via Joe Lakey



The publication of the Mid-South Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is referred to as **Newsbrief**.

Its goals are to:

- Help create a sense of community among existing members and visitors
- Involve members and visitors more fully in professional development and service
- Attract potential members by making them aware of the benefits of chapter membership
- Provide a link between the University, Professors, students, and work-place professionals

Publication Guidelines:

Submissions are encouraged, either as faxes or e-mails to the editor.

Newsletter Contact:

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Mission Statement:

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences.

Contributors This Month:

- Juliet Douglas
- Krista Haley
- Jeff Hanvey
- Ferris Hooshmand
- Janet Patton Wiygul



Campus Corner

by Jeff Hanvey

Audience Awareness and Training Technical Writers

The most important skills you need as a technical writer are:

1. Writing ability
2. Audience awareness
3. Technical knowledge

Gaining the writing ability and audience awareness comes with practicing the craft. Therefore, the new technical writer should take plenty of writing courses - but outside the standard English courses that require only literature analyses (although these courses do teach valuable researching skills). To gain a broader array of writing experience:

- Take classes in communications/PR, including journalism, press releases, and other such forms. Also, take a course in interviewing, since interviewing is an extremely important part of being a technical writer.
- Take classes in business writing (and, if it is offered, project management).



Gaining the technical knowledge is a bit tricky. However, my advice is to take some time and analyze

your intended audience: in this case, the group hiring. To find out what they want, look through the job advertisements—both online and print - and talk to recruiters in your area and find out what skills their clients generally ask for.

Now, target that audience by developing your skills in those

areas, including the software that is requested. For example, if software documentation skills are necessary, take courses in information systems and programming languages (One of the C languages and java are preferred); if architecture or engineering skills are requested, then take classes in those subjects.

Most people will say not to focus too much on software tools, but I find that they are very important. While you're in school, you may be able to work toward certifications in certain programs: definitely learn Word and FrameMaker, even if you have to buy the programs using your academic license and learning them on your own. Again, your targeted research will tell you additional software to learn. ☹

What the...?

from the Eastern Ontario STC chapter newsletter



A tech writer dies and arrives in Hell, where Satan growls, "I gotta escort these other sinners into the pit, lady. Take a seat and wait a minute!"

Terrified, the tech writer peeks behind a door and sees a tech writer agonizingly formatting 12 million lines of documentation on a flaming computer. Aghast, she peeks behind a second door and sees a tech writer writing 23 million manuals on a mountain of screen captures written by a shrill, egomaniacal programmer who shrieks at every line.

In despair, she looks behind a third door and sees another tech writer like herself, chairing a never-ending meeting, munching bonbons, surrounded by fresh-faced admiring engineers sucking up to her with gifts of flowers, fresh fruit and fine

wines and telling her she's a documentation genius.



Satan returns and asks, "Well, which door, 1 or 2?" The tech writer says, "I'd like door 3, please." "You can't have door 3," Satan says. "That's Engineer Hell." ☹

Message From The Editor

by Amy Hollister



I have enjoyed bringing Newsbrief into your homes and offices this past year. I hope that there was at least one article that truly caught your attention and was of benefit to you.

This is my last edition before turning the newsletter over to the capable hands of Scott Thompson. There will be a hiatus during the summer months, but Scott will pick right up right where I left off with a September edition.

Please welcome Scott to the position and send him all of your articles and news for upcoming editions.

Have a great summer and see you in September! ☹

Meeting Reminder

Amy Hollister, Editor



What: May (Dinner) Meeting

When: Monday, May 7th
6:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rob Houser, Director-Sponsor
Chapter Officer Installations

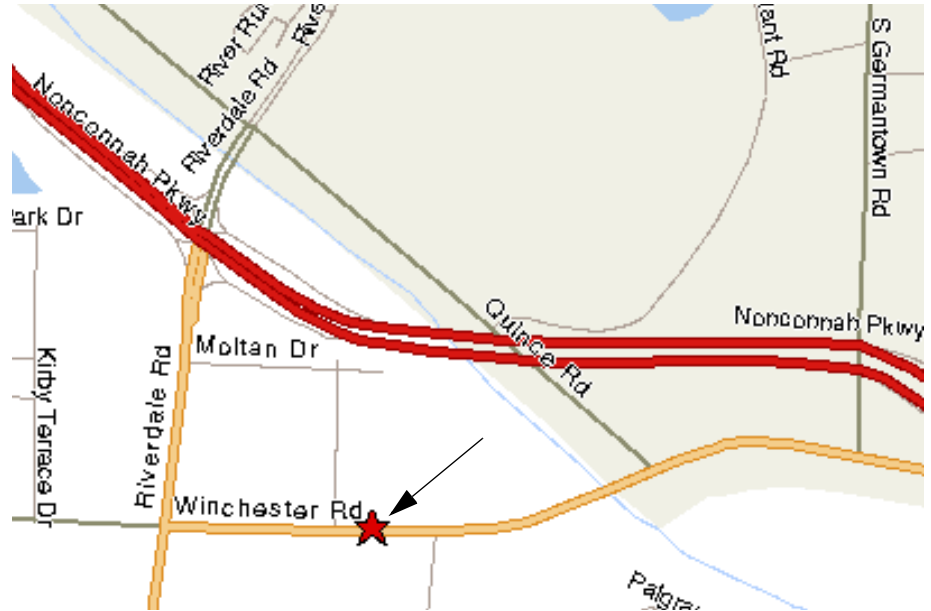
Where: Pig-N-Whistle
7144 Winchester Road
(901) 754-4400



The planned menu and price
(including tax and gratuity) is:

- BBQ buffet (not just BBQ!)
- Dessert
- Iced tea, water, or lemonade

\$10.00



Newsbrief

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