

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNICATION

What do the disparate fields of construction and technical communication have in common?

by Leanne Logan

Brad McAdon, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Memphis, will discuss technical writing activities and experiences in his work in the construction field. He'll also link his practical experience in the construction field with the theory of technical communication by sharing his story about creating and teaching at the School of Construction Science in College Station, Texas.



Brad McAdon earned his Ph.D. in English, with a concentration in the History of Rhetoric and a minor in Ancient Philosophy, from Texas A&M (College Station, TX). His primary research interests include Classical Rhetoric (especially Aristotle), the History of Rhetoric, Historiography, New Testament Rhetoric, and Argumentation. Prior to completing his Ph.D., he worked at many different and diverse levels within the construction industry and was co-owner of a residential construction company for eight years. These construction industry experiences proved helpful as he developed (in conjunction with Jackie Palmer) and then taught the pilot-program Technical Writing courses for the School of Construction Science at Texas A&M.

We're excited to be able to have Brad speak to us about his experience marrying the technical field of construction with the practice of communicating technically to this unique audience of construction workers. See the last page of this newsletter for complete details about the December program meeting.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS HELP VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

by Nell Johnson

Bring your used wireless telephone to the December 2 meeting and donate it to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Working phones, batteries, and chargers will be collected and distributed to family violence shelters, to be given to individuals who are victims of family violence and in risky domestic situations.

Your discarded wireless telephone may be the communication lifeline for an abused spouse or child. Don't miss this opportunity to help those with a special need this holiday season.

Telephone collection will take place at the December 2 program meeting at the Pig'n'Whistle restaurant. See details on the last page of this newsletter.



CONTENTS

Constructing Communication	1
Technical Communicators Help	
Victims of Domestic Violence.....	1
Meeting Notes.....	2
September Board Meeting Held in Boston.....	4
Our Hospitality/Membership Manager	4
Hey, Join Back Up!	5
Deduct Your STC Dues	5
Anatomy of a Program Meeting.....	6
December Meeting Announcement.....	7

MEETING NOTES

by Elizabeth Boone

The STC International Technical Publications and Art Competition exhibit at November's meeting was a certifiable hit, drawing a crowd of 49, most whom were students. Having the meeting at the University of Memphis

passionate and excited she is about her chosen field. In her career, she has been a professional speaker, note taker, manual and newsletter writer, and usability tester, among others. She went on to list some characteristics of technical communicators and alerted students to the diversity of the field by mentioning the STC special interest groups. Next, Mary Sue MacNealy



Above left to right: Education Manager Jackie Walters and Program Manager Leanne Logan chat with a technical communication student.

Right: Winning entries were available for inspection.



Alumni Center allowed the chapter to introduce students to the field of technical communication and STC.

Several members testified about their experiences as technical communicators and in STC. Leanne Logan revved everyone up by expressing how

introduced the other University of Memphis professional/technical writing faculty and described the types of courses taught in the program. She cited the benefits of membership in STC,

Continued on page 3



Designing the future of technical communication

Society PresidentEdward J. See
Region 3
Director-Sponsor.....Rob Houser

Mid-South Chapter

A sharing community creating opportunity

Officers

President.....Amy Hollister
901.395.7764 abhollister@bellsouth.net

Vice Presidentopen

SecretaryElizabeth Boone
901.274.5801 eboone@psychiatrist.com

TreasurerAlison Joyner Masilak
901.274.0215 ajoyner@memphis.edu

Past PresidentNell Johnson
901.434.8426 nwjohnson@fedex.com

Managers

ProgramLeanne Logan
901.274.0080 llogan@quarry.com

Academic LiaisonLoel Kim
901.678.3646 loelkim@memphis.edu

EducationJackie Walters
901.434.7489 jlwalters@fedex.com

Employment.....Beverley Henderson
901.797.5535 bhenderson@fedex.com

To view employment information, go to:
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/
STCmidsouthChapter/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/STCmidsouthChapter/)

Historian.....David Armbruster
901.448.5051 darmbruster@utm.edu

Hospitality and
MembershipSue Easley
901.323.5965 seasley@midsouth.rr.com

Newsletter EditorNell Johnson
901.434.8426 nwjohnson@fedex.com

PublicityGreg M. Jordan
901.495.5075 greg.jordan@stjude.org

Scholarship.....Mike Albers
901.678.4776 malbers@memphis.edu

Webmaster.....Joe Lakey
901.434.8427 jhlakey@fedex.com

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. It is the largest organization of its type in the world. The Society's 25,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, multimedia artists, Web and Intranet page information designers, translators, and others whose work involves making technical information available to those who need it.

Membership in STC offers opportunities to learn new job skills, network with other technical communicators, and broaden your professional horizons.

To learn more about what the STC has to offer, visit:

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

which include subscriptions to the magazines *Technical Communication* and *Intercom* as well as networking opportunities.

The publications seen in the exhibit, explained Logan, were a showcase of international winners. Each year, many STC chapters hold their own publications contests. Those winners are then entered in the international competition. Members Lyn Joyner and Nell Johnson have both participated in the competition and spoke about the value of doing so. Joyner said contests



Attendees enjoy the food and peruse the materials.

offer her a new perspective on her work and often judges' comments stay with her and may influence how she approaches new projects. Other groups sponsor similar competitions, but Joyner's experience has been that they cost much more to enter than STC and the judges' comments are limited to a checklist. She said that anyone (for STC nonmembers the entry fee is higher) can enter any STC contest, i.e., the contest

does not have to be sponsored by the local chapter.

Nell Johnson entered the STC competition after a colleague at the time, member Steve Gillespie, encouraged her. Her document group produced a software/hardware manual that took a year to complete and won a merit award. The STC award has meant a lot to her because of the peer recognition.

Lyn Joyner and Nell Johnson, who both work at Federal Express, also shared with the group what they do as technical communicators. Joyner gave a glimpse of how much the field can change, saying that she started out as a technical writer but now she and her colleagues are system writers or editors and that she now works exclusively online. Johnson told of how she got into the field and of landing a job through STC.

Leanne ended the testimonials by mentioning a few more facts about technical communication and STC. According to her, the United States is the only country that offers Ph.D. programs in technical communication. She described STC's annual conference and suggested arranging to attend as part of job negotiations. She concluded by reiterating the networking opportunities that STC offers.

The attendees then dispersed to network and look at the competition winners, which were awarded with excellence or as distinguished. A total of 40 technical publications were displayed and

Continued on page 4

Newsbrief

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

Newsbrief is the monthly publication of the Mid-South chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Twelve issues of Newsbrief are published each year. We create the publication to:

- Involve members and visitors more fully in professional development and 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 an article to Newsbrief, submit:

- The text portion of the article as a text (TXT) or Microsoft Word (DOC) file, or as text incorporated within the body of an e-mail.
- Photos as JPG or TIFF.

If you choose to use a TIFF, please set the file resolution to 150 dots per inch (dpi) or higher.

To ensure that we publish articles within a timely fashion, we ask that you submit your articles by the tenth of each month for the coming month's issue. Send all submissions to the editor of Newsbrief.

Copyright

Newsbrief invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. 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. When you submit an article, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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 a copy of the reprint is sent to the Newsbrief editor.

Editor

Nell Johnson 901.434.8426
nwjohnson@fedex.com

The STC Special Needs SIG Wants You!

...Visit us at www.stcsig.org/sn/



Do you have a disability of any kind?



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included annual reports, books, software guides, technical reports, promotional materials, and documentation sets, among many others. Thirteen technical art awards in areas such as cover design, informational poster design, and photography were also exhibited.

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING HELD IN BOSTON

by Rob Houser

Membership, budget, and member services were the focus of the STC board of directors meeting in Boston on September 26-28 2002. As with many organizations, STC is feeling the effects of a weak economy—membership, the value of our investments, and conference attendance are lower this year. Despite the challenges from the economy, the board spent a significant amount of time addressing ways to increase membership and improve the quality of member services.

The following actions were taken at the September board meeting:

- Approved the new strategic plan. You can see the plan at www.stc.org (under About STC).
- Approved the budget for fiscal year 2003.
- Revised the way that the Society pro-rates dues. Dues will now be pro-rated by month rather than only at the end of the year. The effect on new members is that they can join at any time during the year and receive at least 12 months of membership. During the transition, members joining through the end of this year will receive membership through December 31, 2003.
- Changed the way that chapter rebates will be paid for 2004 onwards. In the future, half of the



rebate will be paid upon receipt and approval of the chapters' financial report and 990EZ (if applicable) and the remaining half will be paid the following January. The main reason this action was taken is to reduce the drain on the cash flow for the Society during the year. Chapters should plan ahead since they will receive two smaller rebates during the year rather than one large amount.

- Approved previously committed support for INTECOM (The International Council for Technical Communication), an organization of 15 international societies focusing on technical communication.
- Increased support for Society representation at the standards organizations related to our profession: National Information Standards Organization (NISO), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
- The Chapter Achievement Award was updated to increase the profile of membership activities in chapters of all sizes. The revisions apply to chapters submitting this year (2002-2003), so make sure you get a copy of the revised guidelines from the Society web site.

The following items were discussed at the board meeting:

- The Society web site initiated the "members only" area starting October 1, 2002. The purpose of this move is to increase the value of membership in STC. We will be monitoring the success of this effort closely over the next 6 months.
- The board discussed ways to increase the role of the SIGs in the Society. The SIGs represent the diversity of our membership and are important communities for technical communicators.
- Membership was discussed throughout the board meeting. You will see

more of a focus on recruiting new members in the months to come. We also discussed retaining existing members, which is important; however, the biggest drop off is in new members. In preparation, start thinking about ways that you can help STC reach the many technical communicators who have not yet joined our community.

If you have questions or comments about the STC board of directors or any of the items mentioned in this article, please contact your director-sponsor, Rob Houser, at rob@userfirst.net.

OUR HOSPITALITY/ MEMBERSHIP MANAGER

by Nell Johnson

In case you're wondering who the gracious, friendly person is who smiles and speaks to you when you walk into the program meetings, she's Sue Easley, our hospitality/membership manager.



Sue Easley greets and meets.

Originally from Savannah, Tennessee, Easley moved to Memphis in 1979 to attend Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis). For many years, she explored a variety of jobs and career paths, including real estate, where, although she disliked sales, she had a knack for understanding and explaining contracts and the mechanics of buildings and materials. During the 15 years she spent as a catering event manager, she became a relentless analyst of company procedures, trying to improve efficiency.

Easley further developed her technical communication skills in other fields. In 1996, her brother, a software developer,

Continued on page 5

asked her to do some editing of software documentation that he and his team were writing. In 1998, she took a part time position at Lichterman Nature Center. In addition to teaching kids and their parents and teachers about nature (and learning more herself), she jumped into writing programs and exhibit content, where her focus was directed to technical writing.

Easley received a B.A. in English in Professional and Technical Writing in 2002 from the University of Memphis. Easley has also studied Information Technology and Graphic Design.

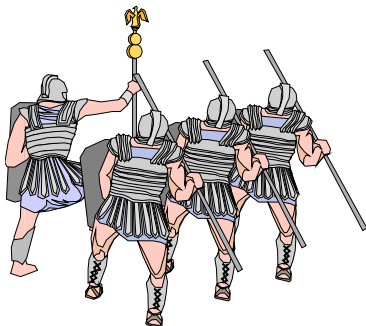
Currently, Easley is an independent contractor whose projects include patient education brochures, surgical techniques, marketing materials, press releases, white papers, and proposals.

When she's not writing, Easley enjoys gardening with native plants and travel. She and her recording engineer husband Doug have been married for 17 years.

HEY, JOIN BACK UP!

by Nell Johnson

Dues renewal invoices for the 2003 Society year will be mailed in late November to all STC members who have not renewed their memberships online. For membership dues, STC accepts checks in U.S. dollars or Canadian equivalent, and American Express, MasterCard, and VISA payments. Dues payments must be received by January 1, 2003. (A grace period extends to February 28, 2003.) Only members who have paid their dues by February 28 will be eligible to vote in next year's STC elections.



As part of its annual fall membership drive, STC offers a special discount to new members who join the Society on or after October 1, 2002. For the regular member rate of \$140 (\$125 for dues plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee), new members will be credited with dues paid for the remainder of 2002 and for calendar year 2003.

Among the benefits of Society membership are subscriptions to *Intercom*, the Society's monthly magazine, published ten times a year, and to *Technical Communication*, the Society's quarterly journal. These periodicals contain essential articles on the theory and practice of technical communication. Other membership benefits include discounts on STC's annual conference, the largest gathering of technical communicators in the world; eligibility for association group rate insurance; and access to STC's special interest groups. For more information on these and other benefits, visit the STC Web site at www.stc.org.

Please pass this article to a prospective member. To join STC, prospective members can fill out an electronic form or download a membership application at www.stc.org. Those who prefer to have a membership application mailed to them can request one from the STC office at the following address:

STC/Membership Department
901 North Stuart Street
Suite 904
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1822
Fax: (703) 522-2075



DEDUCT YOUR STC DUES

condensed, reprinted from November 2002 Tieline

If you pay taxes in the United States, your STC dues are tax deductible. You can claim dues as a deduction in several ways.

Charitable Expense

All STC members who pay taxes in the United States can deduct at least a portion of their STC dues if they claim this portion as a charitable donation. IRS publication 526 (rev. 2000) defines this option:

You may be able to deduct membership fees or dues you pay to a qualified organization. However, you can deduct only the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive.

As a 501(c)(3) organization, STC is a qualified organization. The only determination you need to make is the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive. STC's tangible benefits can be estimated at \$30 (\$15 for the Society's quarterly journal, *Technical Communication*, and \$15 for the magazine, *Intercom*). The difference between the cost of membership (\$125) and tangible benefits (\$30) is \$95, and you may claim that amount as charitable contribution.

Business Expense

Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Miscellaneous Expense

Those who do not fall into the categories defined above may claim the amount of the dues as a miscellaneous deduction. (For miscellaneous deductions that can affect your taxes, the total amount of

Continued on page 6

miscellaneous deductions must exceed 2 percent of your adjusted gross income.)

If dues are deducted as a charitable expense, business expense, or miscellaneous expense, they must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid. In other words, dues paid in 2002 can be deducted only on 2002 tax returns. If you have any questions, contact your local IRS representative or an accountant.

Money, Not Time

While dues, contributions, and out-of-pocket expenses may be deducted, personal services may not.

ANATOMY OF A PROGRAM MEETING

by Amy Hollister, president

Many of you attend the monthly program meetings and I would like to personally thank you. For those of you who are members or visitors, but have yet to partake of one of our great presentations, you might be wondering just what do they do at these meetings? Well, for those curious ones, here is a brief synopsis of the goings on.

Each first Monday of every month (unless it is a holiday, and then the date falls to the following Monday), fellow technical communicators, students, visitors, and others arrive anywhere between 5:30 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. Each person is welcomed by hospitality/ membership manager Sue Easley and encouraged to sign the meeting roster, register for the Door Prize drawing, take an STC application and/or literature (if not already a member), acquire a meal voucher (if planning to eat dinner), and submit any comments or suggestions in the appropriate collection box.

The group forms a line for the barbecue buffet and

enjoys a meal and a time of networking. The president (that's me) rises and quiets the crowd at 6:30 p.m. Attendees are encouraged to introduce themselves, offer their company name, job title, etc. If the company is looking for new employees, this information may be offered at this time. If the attendee is looking for employment, this may also be offered at this time.

Once all introductions are made, the program manager, Leanne Logan, is introduced. Logan rises and addresses the crowd with the introduction of the presentation and the speaker.

Once the presentation is completed and the speaker is seated, the president rises and makes any pertinent announcements, which might include information regarding the next month's meeting. A name is drawn from the collection of registrants and a door prize is awarded to the winner. Prizes vary from month to month. Attendees are reminded at this time to submit his or her meal voucher, along with payment, to the register at the front of the restaurant. If only the buffet and standard beverage (iced tea or water) were consumed, the

price is \$10, which includes tax and gratuity. If alternate beverages or additional food items were ordered and consumed, the server will submit a separate ticket for payment.

The meeting is adjourned before 8:00 p.m. and attendees are encouraged to network with each other or ask the speaker additional questions, as time permits.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at abhollister@bellsouth.net or via telephone at 901.395.7764.

I look forward to seeing each of you at the next meeting. Meetings are advertised in the Mid-South chapter monthly newsletter *Newsbrief*, in local newspapers (*Shelby Sun Times*, *Commercial Appeal*, *Memphis Business Journal*), and via Yahoo Groups.

If you would like to be added to the Yahoo Groups listing, please contact Sue Easley or me. Easley can be reached via e-mail at seasley@midsouth.rr.com or via telephone at 901.323.5965.



Attendees enjoy a variety of presentations throughout the year.

**DECEMBER MEETING
REMINDER**

What: December program meeting

When: Monday, December 2, 6:00 p.m.
Networking dinner starts at 6:00,
program starts at 6:30.

Program: Constructing Communication
(see article on page 1)

Where: Pig'n'Whistle Restaurant
7144 Winchester Road
901.754.4400

Menu: Barbeque buffet with all the
trimmings

Cost: \$10, includes tax and gratuity



Newsbrief

Nell Johnson
668 North Idlewild Street
Memphis, TN 38107