



# Newsbrief

Monthly Publication of the Mid-South Chapter

SOCIETY FOR  
TECHNICAL  
COMMUNICATION

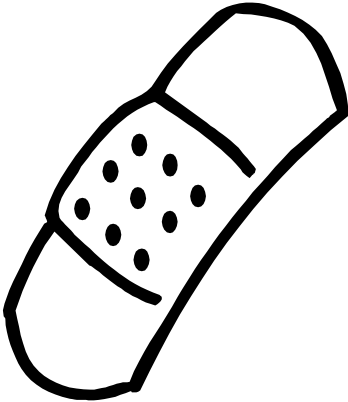
Volume 19, Number 8

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## Can Insurance Claims Affect Your Health?

by Scott Thompson

As much public lore tell us, relations between medical practitioners and health insurance companies are tension-filled and ripe for conflict. Our media is wrought with stories of insurance companies denying patients coverage, justifying these denials with a variety of legal loopholes. We hear of doctors complaining about their own lack of decision-making control when health insurance adjusters are frequently the people really making the decisions about health care treatments. Even political campaigns have acknowledged the current state of health care financing.



Public lore, however, is not enough when it comes to understanding many of the deeper complexities of these relations. In-depth research promises to increase our understanding of the effectiveness of written communications between medical practitioners and health insurance companies. Susan Popham of the University of Memphis, by examining correspondence and explanation of benefit (EOB) letters between medical practices and health insurance companies, has shown where the conflicts arise, how they are communicated and understood, and how these conflicts may be settled through writing.

Join the Mid-South chapter as we welcome Susan Popham on Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Pig-N-Whistle Barbecue Restaurant on Winchester Road. During our meeting, Ms. Popham will discuss her research into the effect that written communications between medical practitioners and health insurance companies has on patient care.

The meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. A barbecue buffet dinner will be offered at a cost of \$10.00/person, which includes tax and gratuity.

## Meeting Notes

by Alison Joyner Masilak

At first glance, wetlands conservation, duck hunters, and communicating scientific concepts don't appear to have much in common. However, they together form the mission, membership, and message of the largest and most effective waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization in the world: Ducks Unlimited (DU).

October's guest speaker, Eric Keszler, Director of Communications for Ducks Unlimited, shared with our 14 attendees the ways his organization uses different communication tools to reach its various audiences, and how the organization captures feedback to improve reader satisfaction with Ducks Unlimited's publications.

According to Keszler, Ducks Unlimited's audiences include:

- hunters and outdoor enthusiasts
- members and volunteers
- the general public
- legislators
- corporate partners
- Ducks Unlimited staff

To these audiences, Ducks Unlimited wants to communicate three key messages: wetlands are important, wetlands are disappearing, and Ducks Unlimited's wetlands conservation efforts are effective.

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Ducks Unlimited communicates these messages through:

- Ducks Unlimited Magazine
- Ducks Unlimited TV
- Ducks Unlimited Radio
- Puddler Magazine
- DU Leader Newsletter
- Conservation annual
- Web site (www.ducks.org)
- DU Email Newsletter

How the message is tailored depends on the audience. For example, their members receive Ducks Unlimited Magazine. While the magazine keeps membership informed about the organization's progress in wetlands conservation, it also includes topics that rate high in reader feedback surveys, such as waterfowling, photography, cooking, game guns, sporting dogs, and outdoor "how-to" tips.

Conservation stories are sometimes written from more of a duck-based approach — how a certain breed of duck is effected by a conservation effort — instead of based on the conservation program itself. Keszler noted that in reader feedback surveys, stories with a duck-based approach rated “very excellent” 49.3 percent of the time compared with 30 percent for program-based stories.

In contrast, Ducks Unlimited keeps its Conservation annual — a sales, marketing, and development tool — “hunting free,” focusing totally on the organization’s conservation efforts.

Puddler Magazine and the Greenwings Web site, tailored for Ducks Unlimited’s under-12 audience, offer educational information about wetlands conservation and wildlife, plus fun stuff like puzzles, quizzes, and interactive hunting games.

A current dilemma for Ducks Unlimited involves communication as a key factor. According to Keszler, the organization is considering creating a second member magazine that would focus more on conservation, like the annual, and less, if at all, on hunting. While this new publication could potentially be perceived as a distancing of Ducks Unlimited from its sportsman roots, a major benefit would

be to better present Ducks Unlimited's conservation message to those who might otherwise not realize its identity as an environmental organization.



**Eric Keszler with another captive audience. Isaac Lawrence Keszler was born to Eric and his wife O’Hara on October 7, 2001 – six days after Eric addressed the Mid-South chapter! Our congratulations go out to the Keszler family.**

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## **My European Vacation: Ineffective Communication in Five Languages**

*by Nell Johnson*

It was a classic case of the ugly American, except that this ugly American was trying to blend in. Imagine a flashing neon chameleon...

I thought I could smoothly handle the communication challenge of the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany — in 13 short days and nights of travel. The reason for this polyglot fantasy is that I am fluent in Spanish, and have a primitive knowledge of conversational French from watching a lot of Jean-Luc Godard films. I believed I could transfer language knowledge creatively and appropriately. Boy, was I wrong! And my daughter pointed this

out to me many times. As we smugly discussed our upcoming trip in my midtown Memphis kitchen, looking over brochures, travel books, and Internet print-outs, I assured her that I spoke passable French. She opened her eyes wide and replied, “I didn’t know that!” But, what she really meant was, “That’s a real whopper, Mom!” We left the French phrase book at home.

In the Netherlands, our English worked fairly well. Our real problems began in France, where they never give you enough time to ponder the correct question, much less the correct response. Questions like “Where am I?” cannot be properly formulated in English, translated into French, and elegantly presented while running to hop on a subway. And the question seems really silly once you’re already on board.

I recall sitting in a Paris café, perusing the French menu, trying to recall food vocabulary words from my French II class in college. “*Poisson*.” Wasn’t that a perfume that Elizabeth Taylor was promoting a few years back? I was confused when the waiter appeared — the moment of truth. Either I try to flex my French linguistic muscle, or retreat into a kind of abbreviated code type of English, with a lot of gesturing. Because I’m too hard-headed to retreat, I gave the French a try. After stringing a few words together as gracefully as skewering curds of cottage cheese on toothpicks, the waiter gave me a tired, irritated look. At which point, my daughter jumped in with an embarrassed smile and “translated” into English what I had just said in French! The French waiter then efficiently translated it back into French, wrote it down, and went about his business. The nerve! How can English be more understandable than fractured French to a Parisian? At least, I was showing that I was trying to blend in enough to make a fool out of myself. Give me a break, *s’il vous plaît*.

That was before I learned the system. In Europe, it’s not about trying out their languages, it’s all about being understood. Period. Europeans do not

want to teach you their language. If you can't say it correctly, apologize, and default to English.



Once I learned that lesson, it became much easier. Although I would still try to sneak a complete sentence in French here and there — twenty paces out of my daughter's earshot, I generally adhered to the communication creed. And, of course, they were right. Europe is not a big Western Civilization theme park, where the patron is catered to with a perky Wal-Mart smile. That's not the real Europe. These people are living their ordinary lives in and among this exotic, ancient, and incredibly beautiful movie set that they call home. And I was learning that I needed to have more respect for my hosts and less regard for my personal goals. I was

performing the wilderness equivalent of sneaking up on a moose for a really good snapshot to take home and show friends.

## ***“In Europe, it's not about trying out their languages, it's all about being understood.”***

On the train to Italy, as the French Riviera zoomed by in all its postcard allure, my daughter sighed and took out her Italian phrase book and opened it to Lesson One. I rolled my eyes, bit my lip, and consented. “Good day – *Buon giorno*.”

### **Chapter Scholarship for Technical Communication**

*by Scott Thompson*

For the 2001-2002 school year, the Mid-South chapter will award one \$1,000 non-renewable scholarship. The chapter initiated its scholarship program in 2000 to promote the technical communication profession here locally by furthering the education of individuals who are full-time, degree seeking students in the Professional Writing Program at the University of Memphis. The Mid-South chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) wholly funds the scholarship.

The chapter awards scholarships to students who:

- Are enrolled as a full-time, degree seeking student at the University of Memphis
- Have declared a major in Professional Writing
- Have completed at least one Professional Writing course and are enrolled in at least one Technical Writing course for the fall 2002 semester
- Have at least one full year of academic work remaining to complete their degree program

Students do not have to be STC members to apply, but the winning applicant must join the Society before the scholarship is awarded.

To apply, students must submit a completed application package, including an application form, resume, professional writing sample, and 500-word statement of their career goals. Students can obtain the application form from Dr. Michael Albers (contact information given below) or the Mid-South chapter's Web site (<http://www.stc-midsouth.org>). Application packages must be received by March 15, 2002.

Submit application packages to:

Dr. Michael Albers  
Department of English  
University of Memphis  
Memphis TN 38152  
[malbers@memphis.edu](mailto:malbers@memphis.edu)

The Mid-South chapter will establish a committee to evaluate each applicant's potential to contribute to the field of technical communication. Financial need is not a factor. Members of the Mid-South chapter's Administrative Council are excluded from consideration for the scholarship. Award of the scholarship for the 2001-2002 school award will be announced no later than April 15, 2002.

Please promote the Mid-South STC Chapter Scholarship by applying or encouraging others to do so.

## Get Published in One Month or Less

by Scott Thompson

Would you like to get published in *Newsbrief* in one month or less? The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest professional association for anyone whose job involves communicating technical information. Membership in STC offers you the opportunity to learn new job skills, network with other technical communicators, and broaden your professional horizons. The Society's various publications (journal, magazine, Web sites, newsletters) present articles about the practical application of technical communication theory, highlight the new tools and technologies available for technical communicators, and serve as a forum for correspondence between practitioners. Writing for one of these publications is an excellent way to raise your profile within the profession.

What are the specific benefits of being published in *Newsbrief*?

- First and foremost is visibility. You get your words and ideas in front of a select audience of peers, perhaps even potential employers.
- A newsletter article is a great addition to your portfolio. As Peter Bowerman — author of the bestseller *The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency As a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less* — puts it, "Ask a financial planner the keys to successful personal investing and you'll probably hear 'a diversified portfolio.' And that's sound logic: diversify and you diffuse the risk. This is a good strategy for your work portfolio as well. If technical writing opportunities slump, what other options are open to you?"
- Writing for *Newsbrief* may also provide you the opportunity to do other types of writing than you do at work. Consider too that you may be able to practice a new, more

journalistic style of writing that you may find appealing and fun.

Would you like to contribute to *Newsbrief*? Have you read any books lately that, based on your professional judgment, are relevant to our profession? Do you think our members would benefit from reading these books? Reviews of books and other publications are a great way to keep our members abreast of the issues, tools, and trends that affect our profession (See page 5 for a book review of Peter Bowerman's *The Well-Fed Writer*).

My goal as the editor of *Newsbrief* is to make the newsletter the kind of publication that people are proud to write for. Of course, this is a catch-22 situation. How do I make *Newsbrief* a great publication if I can't get members to contribute? So, I turn to you. Have any ideas for articles? Put on your thinking cap! I'd really like to hear from you (My contact information is provided on page 7 of this newsletter). *Newsbrief* offers plenty of opportunity.

The masthead on page 7 outlines the general guidelines for submitting articles to *Newsbrief*. If you'd like to submit a book review, please consider the following additional guidelines, which we've adopted from the guidelines for submitting book reviews to the Society's journal, *Technical Communication*.

### Content

The following guidelines are intended to help you focus on the book's content and context.

- Help readers decide whether they should read the book.
- Evaluate the book's merits: Most importantly, why and how would readers use the book? Does it contribute something new to our discipline or package useful information in a helpful way? How does it compare to other books? Is it well written?
- Convey the book's major points and overall structure.



SOCIETY FOR  
TECHNICAL  
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*A sharing community creating opportunity*

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- Include the details (including examples and quotations where helpful) and analysis necessary to transmit the information and support your conclusions.
- Remain fair-minded, objectively praising where praise is due while pointing out weaknesses that readers should know about.

## Style

The following guidelines are intended to help you write your reviews with an effective style.

- Directly tell readers what they need to know about the book. Most books can be adequately discussed in 500-1,000 words. However, it's more important to adjust the length of the review to the content of the book.
- Even if your book is heavy reading, write vigorously yourself. Remember that your readers are active types who predominantly view themselves as practitioners.
- Use your own knowledge and instinct to inject personality into your review. Don't try to be outrageous or clever, but do write like an individual eager to share informed insights with readers.
- You may allude to or quote from sources outside your book where appropriate, but beware of appearing overly pedantic.
- Apply page numbers for quotations, using the following style: Bowerman illustrates his mantra, "If I can do it, you can do it" (p. 9), with copious, folksy, and, unfortunately, cliché-laden examples from his own experience.
- Avoid using headings within the review.
- Provide publication details at the top of the review, using the following format:

**The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less**

Peter Bowerman. 2000. Atlanta, GA: Fanove Publishing. [ISBN 0-9670598-4-4. 282 pages, including index. \$19.95 USD (softcover).]

- Be prepared to check over the final, formatted version of your review (and, if necessary, any version that I've edited), answer queries, and revise as requested. I'll do all final proofreading.

And, finally, although *Newsbrief* invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication, it is important to note 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 retain the copyright. When you submit an article, therefore, please let me know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted to other publications for consideration.

## References

Peter Bowerman, "Marketing Writing: Diversify Your Portfolio," *CommLink* - Newsletter of the Atlanta chapter STC, Vol. 11, No. 9, November-December 2001, p. 1.

Avon Murphy, "Book Review Guidelines," *Technical Communication Online*, Society for Technical Communication, 14 February 2000 [cited 5 September 2001]. Available from World Wide Web: <[http://www.techcomm-online.org/shared/info\\_book\\_revs.html](http://www.techcomm-online.org/shared/info_book_revs.html)>.

## Book Reviews

by Marguerite Krupp

### **The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less**

Peter Bowerman. 2000. Atlanta, GA: Fanove Publishing. [ISBN 0-9670598-4-4. 282 pages, including index. \$19.95 USD (softcover).]

*The Well-Fed Writer* is about building a freelance commercial writing business,

assuming a reasonable level of writing skill, "from nothing other than your vision" (p. 5). That vision, however, must also include good marketing skills, persistence, professionalism, and the willingness to make and endure the lifestyle changes that go with establishing a business from scratch.

Peter Bowerman does not try to tell you what to write and how to write it, although he does offer some good ideas. Instead, he focuses on the professional and personal aspects of succeeding as a freelance commercial writer — the mindset required, the work itself (much more than just writing), and the financial and psychological rewards that the successful freelancer can attain.

If the very thought of marketing writing turns you off, this is not the book — or the career — for you. If, on the other hand, you've ever daydreamed about "doing your own thing," using your writing talents to make big money on your own terms, then Bowerman's *The Well-Fed Writer*, subtitled *Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less*, will, as it promises, provide you with a roadmap to your dreams. Getting there, however, is up to you.

Fortunately, Bowerman gives some fairly explicit directions. The first few chapters are motivational, in the classic self-help genre. If you're used to writing technical material, these chapters may strike you as hype and self-promotion. But wait. Think about any self-improvement book you've ever read. Didn't the author spend a good deal of time in the beginning building up your confidence? Bowerman illustrates his mantra, "If I can do it, you can do it" (p. 9), with copious, folksy, and, unfortunately, cliché-laden examples from his own experience. Those who are already professional freelance commercial writers may find his seemingly breezy attitude toward the business annoying, but anyone who's exploring this field either as a career change or as a source of additional income may welcome this as a non-threatening invitation.

Make no mistake, Bowerman does take the work of freelance commercial very

seriously. He just feels no need to confuse serious professional work with somberness. He comes by his marketing orientation honestly, having spent over 15 years in marketing and sales. Underlying the stories is some sage advice about how to be successful in any business, starting with "If you want something badly enough, you can make it happen. If you don't have the desire, you can memorize all the advice in the world about how to build a business like this, but it's not going to happen" (p. 43).

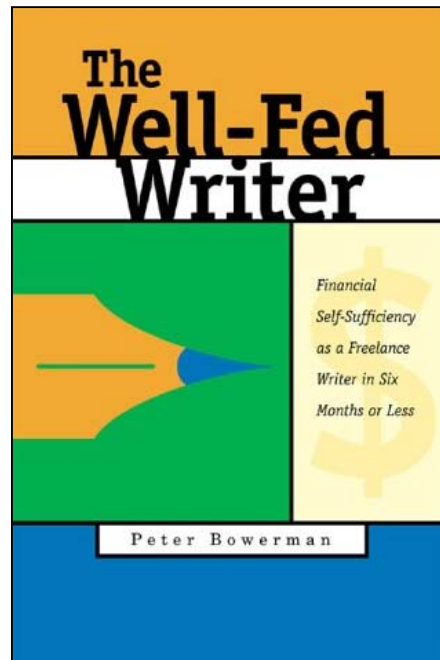
Bowerman says that before you begin, you should take a good, hard look at yourself, at what you want, and at what you're willing to do to make a go of this business. He writes in very visual terms; for example, regarding goal-setting, "I decided that I wanted to make \$100K this year. Now, just saying, 'I want to make \$100K a year' is like trying to fit a whole pizza in your mouth at once. You need to break it down into more manageable bite-sized pieces" (pp. 44–45). And then he proceeds to do so, explaining how much you'd have to make each working day to make that happen. He also suggests motivating yourself by putting copies of your goal in such places as the bathroom mirror, where you can't possibly ignore them.

A key point, especially for those of us who've spent most of our careers in technical writing, is that this book is primarily about commercial writing — brochures, annual reports, white papers, newsletters, direct mail pieces, speeches, and the like. Writing magazine and newspaper articles, he says, is good for "the thrill of seeing your name in print, and not the money. The money is gravy. I'd hate to have to count on it" (p. 23).

You can do particularly well by leveraging your knowledge and experience gained in other fields, but do be aware that commercial writing is a different craft from technical or academic writing — a craft that you can — and must — learn if you want to be successful in this business.

The bulk of the book is full of anecdotes and practical suggestions about getting started, finding and dealing with clients, setting up "paper" systems to keep track

of your business, negotiating and collecting on contracts and fees, and generally keeping your sanity through the ups and downs (or crunches and crashes) of a freelance commercial writer's life. He spends only one chapter on technology — wisely, because technology so quickly goes out of date. The client scenarios in various chapters are particularly interesting.



In the chapter "Dos, don'ts and don't forgets," Bowerman stresses the importance of integrity and good business practices. Never missing a deadline is essential. So is networking and staying visible to your clients. Sowing seeds with prospects and being able to roll with the punches can pay unexpected dividends if you're willing to look at challenges as opportunities to show what you can do to solve a client's problems. Listen carefully to your clients, ask good questions, and they'll tell you what they want, which makes your job easier. Projecting a good attitude of being competent and pleasant to work with enhances your chances of getting more work from the same clients. And because you already know their business, you'll have a shorter learning curve and can produce results faster.

Even economic hard times can work to the diligent freelancer's advantage,

particularly if corporations are understaffed and looking to outsource writing projects. Bowerman suggests several small, thoughtful things that you can do to delight your clients and stay visible to them. Even your junk mail can provide a gold mine of ideas if you analyze it and keep good records. Stretch your mind and observe all the advertising messages that come at you each day. Did you ever stop to think, for example, that someone got paid to write that on-hold message you listened to today?

Toward the end of the book, Bowerman devotes a chapter to the kinds of writing projects you might do as a freelance commercial writer. The variety is amazing, and the opportunities are constantly evolving. He also explicitly contrasts "straight technical writing" and high-tech marketing writing, which emphasizes the features and benefits of high-tech products, rather than how-to or why-to information about the same products. He says that "according to a Seattle-based STC contact," most technical writing/editing contractors in that area worked through agencies, received employee benefits, worked a full 2,000 hours per year, and were paid significantly lower rates than their freelance commercial writer counterparts (p. 210). Of course, your mileage may vary.

The last chapter is one final pep talk, reminding readers that "just about all you can control is the actions you take and that, incidentally is more than enough to be successful." As Bowerman says, this book is just a guide, a roadmap. It's up to you to pull it off. He quotes in full a poem by W. N. Murray, with the familiar tag line:

Whatever you can do, or dream  
you can—begin it.  
Boldness has genius, power, and  
magic in it. (p. 213)

For many readers, the samples in the three appendixes may be the most useful part of the book. Here, Bowerman lets his own work speak for itself as a testament to the methods he describes in the book. The index, too, is both a useful tool and a good example. Clearly, Bowerman practices what he preaches.

"Bottom line," as Bowerman might say: if you can put aside your aversion to clichés and enter into the spirit of "doing what you love and finding someone to pay you to do it" (p. 2), you'll find *The Well-Fed Writer* an easy read with some thought-provoking content. Whether you decide to follow Bowerman's roadmap is up to you, but at least you'll have a friendly guide in hand to help you make that decision.

*Editor's notes:*

*Marguerite Krupp is an STC associate fellow, an adjunct professor at Northeastern University, and a technical writer with over three decades of experience in the computer industry. She is a frequent presenter at conferences, an accomplished photographer and videographer, and the author of several general-interest freelance pieces.*

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## Leading the Technical Communication Revolution

May 5-8, 2001, Nashville, Tennessee

STC's annual conference is the world's largest gathering of technical communicators. Among the many highlights of the conference are educational sessions, workshops, vendor exhibits, and displays of the winning entries of the Society's international competitions.

Technical communication professionals also benefit from numerous networking opportunities and employment resources.

**When:** May 5-8, 2002

**Where:** Opryland Hotel  
2800 Opryland Drive  
Nashville, TN 37214  
(615) 889-1000

### Hotel Rates

\$160 single/double (plus tax)  
\$40 additional for Garden Terrace option  
Each additional person is \$15

**What:** STC's annual conference is the largest conference in the world focusing 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 award-winning entries from STC's technical communication competitions and vendor exhibits.

**Who:** STC members are technical communicators — people whose work involves making technical information available and understandable to people who need it. Conference attendees include the following professionals:

- Technical writers
- Technical editors
- Documentation specialists
- Technical communicators
- Technical illustrators
- Web designers
- Technical translators
- Information developers
- Managers of technical communication departments
- Teachers of technical communication

Conference events address the needs of technical communicators at every level of experience, from entry level to senior management.

## Newsbrief

*Newsbrief* is the monthly publication of the Mid-South chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Nine issues of *Newsbrief* are published each year (September through May). We create the publication to:

- Involve members and visitors more fully in professional development and service.
- Foster a sense of community amongst chapter members and visitors.
- Provide a link between professors and students at local universities and professionals within local industry.
- 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 Joint Photographer's Interest Group (JPEG) files; and
- Line art as Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) or Windows Meta-File (WMF) files.

Of course, we are more than willing to accept images (photos and line art alike) as Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) files, since these files are ideal for print. If you choose to submit a TIFF, however, 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. Copyright is held by the writer. 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 (1) credit is given to the author as well as the Mid-South chapter, and (2) a copy of the reprint is sent to the *Newsbrief* editor.

### Editor

Scott Thompson  
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(901) 495-7532

**Why:** STC holds the conference to provide educational opportunities to its 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 and social events, useful handouts, and a copy of the conference Proceedings.

**Rates:** All figures are in U.S. dollars:

<b>Registration Fees</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non Member</b>	<b>Student/Retired</b>
Advance Registration	\$420.00	\$560.00	\$100.00
On-Site Registration	\$495.00	\$635.00	\$155.00
<b>One Day Registration</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non Member</b>	<b>Student/Retired</b>
Advance Registration	\$220.00	\$290.00	\$100.00
On-Site registration	\$295.00	\$365.00	\$155.00

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## **Mentoring — A Gentle Alliance**

*by J. Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor*

Mentors. Role models. Idols. Call them what you like — chances are very good that one of them has impacted your life with such tremendous force the reverberations of that influence affect the decisions you make to this day. Perhaps it was a:

- Demanding coach who always knew precisely which words would most encourage you.
- Favorite teacher who pumped a genuine love of learning into your heart.
- Devoted parent who not only spoke of virtues, but modeled them as well.
- Nurturing manager who offered you the gift of shared wisdom.

The pool of available mentors is made up of a diverse group of individuals. One common interest that unites them, however, is a desire to help their protégés reach their full potential. Successful people report that a large part of their success is due to the experience they gain through working with a mentor. Many of these mentoring relationships are informal — in fact, the mentor sometimes is unaware that he or she is fulfilling that role.

***“Successful people report that a large part of their success is due to the experience they gain through working with a mentor.”***

The mentor relationship has been called the “pinnacle of work relationships.” A mentor is more than a peer, more than a coach, even more than a sponsor. Mentors typically have influence within the organization or community. They use this influence to empower their protégés. The mentor relationship is really a partnership — the mentor provides guidance and opportunities, the protégé provides energy and a fresh perspective.

Most effective mentor relationships vary in terms of length and degree of formality. They are initiated by the protégé. These relationships are true partnerships in which both parties contribute. They involve a mentor who has influence within the

organization or community and is willing to use this influence to empower his or her protégé. These are the specific behaviors that mentors should practice:

1. An effective mentor helps protégés think in terms of success. You can do this by holding visioning and goal-setting sessions with them.
2. Counsel protégés when they have problems. Guide protégés through the thought processes necessary for developing their own solutions; don't solve their problems for them.
3. Provide feedback. Tell protégés how they are doing. When negative feedback is necessary, don't preach or be overly critical. Instead, ask insightful questions, such as “What could you do differently the next time?” or “Why don't you think the project turned out as planned?”
4. Provide information. Mentors should serve as informational resources. Success secrets, short cuts, information about office politics, etc., will help protégés learn the ropes.
5. Delegate authority and express confidence in the ability of protégés to take on new tasks. A protégé's greatest need is for experience. Look for ways that will help protégés practice new skills.
6. Encourage exploration. Give your protégés as many opportunities to experiment with new ideas as possible, but don't be surprised if you learn something from them.
7. Look for opportunities to showcase your protégé's talents. Place your protégés in positions where they can meet people who can help them meet their goals. Networking events are great for this.

It may sound as though the mentor-protégé relationship requires a great deal of involvement on your part — that's because it does. Many chapters already have formal mentoring programs because STC provides great opportunities for mentoring. Take advantage of STC membership by building a “gentle alliance” with another member who would benefit from your knowledge — you will both benefit from the experience.

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## Welcome New Members!

by Scott Thompson

Over the last several months, the Mid-South chapter has gained two new members. Please welcome them!

**Rebecca Farabough** is an editor at Towery Publishing. Based here in Memphis, with a 50-year history of publishing magazines and community newspapers in the Mid-South, Towery has grown dramatically over the last decade. Today, the company produces books, Web sites, award-winning relocation guides, comprehensive business directories, and other products, many in partnership with chambers of commerce in hundreds of cities nationwide. In doing so, Towery services a wide customer base of businesses and organizations.

## TOWERY PUBLISHING, INC.

A graduate of the Professional Writing Master's Program at the University of Memphis, Rebecca also does some teaching, on a part-time basis, at her alma mater.

With a focus on the use of language in the classroom, the business world, and everyday life, Rebecca is in the process of gathering bits and pieces of real conversations that make perfect sense in context, but lack something when taken out. As she discovered while completing her master's thesis, context is very important for readers and users of specific documentation.

Rebecca continues to search for that place where efficiency of language meets creativity, and her attempts at humor and light-hearted "correct" writing have often earned her a skeptical look. She loves language, just the same, and often asks people what their favorite collective is, just so she can see the look on their faces when they ask her what she means. Even so, Rebecca loves the way words

sound on paper. The written word has always been her passion.

**David Smith** divides her time between graduate school and working as a technical writer for Sedgwick Claims Management Services (CMS), Inc., a subsidiary of Marsh U.S.A. Davida is a graduate candidate in the Professional Writing Master's Program at the University of Memphis. At Sedgwick CMS, she develops user documentation and help files for the company's claims management software products, and writes and edits content for the company's quarterly newsletter. Sedgwick CMS is an industry leader in the provision of cost-effective claims management services for workers' compensation, employers' liability, general liability, automobile liability, and short-and long-term disability claims. Through product innovation, Sedgwick CMS has also become a leading provider of services in the fast growing market for Integrated Disability Management, which combines workers' compensation, and short- and long-term disability programs.



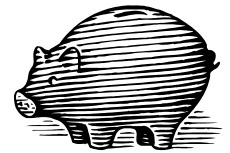
## Sedgwick CMS

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## Treasurer's Report

by Mary Sue MacNealy

This financial report reflects the balance for our treasury as of October 29, 2001.



<b>Previous Cash Balance (As of September 24, 2001)</b> .....	<u>\$1,988.86</u>
<b>Income</b>	
Interest on account.....	\$0,003.36
Proceeds from design workshop.....	\$2,040.00
Eleven members at \$90.00/attendee.....	\$0,990.00
Five non-members at \$110.00/attendee.....	\$0,550.00
Ten students at \$50.00/attendee.....	\$0,500.00
<b>Total Income</b> .....	<u>\$2,043.36</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Expenses for design workshop.....	\$0,875.34
Reception for speaker.....	\$0,448.44
Meeting room and catering.....	\$0,426.90
<b>Total Expenses</b> .....	<u>\$0,875.34</u>
(Total income less total expenses).....	\$1,168.02
<b>Current Cash Balance</b> .....	<u>\$3,156.88</u>

**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. Its 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.**

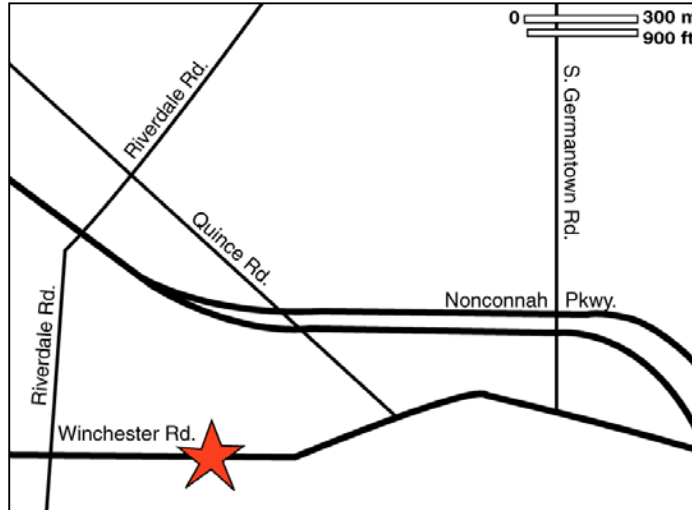
**Membership in STC offers opportunities to learn new job skills, network with other technical communicators, and broaden your professional horizons. To learn more about what the STC has to offer, visit:**

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

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## Meeting Reminder

- What:** November (Dinner) Meeting  
**When:** Monday, November 5th, 6:00 p.m.  
**Speaker:** Susan Popham, University of Memphis, "Can Insurance Claims Affect Your Health?"  
**Where:** Pig-N-Whistle  
7144 Winchester Road  
(901) 754-4400  
**Menu:** Barbecue buffet (not just barbecue!), dessert, and drink (tea and water)  
**Cost:** \$10.00, including tax and gratuity



SOCIETY FOR  
TECHNICAL  
COMMUNICATION

### Newsbrief

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