



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Newsbrief

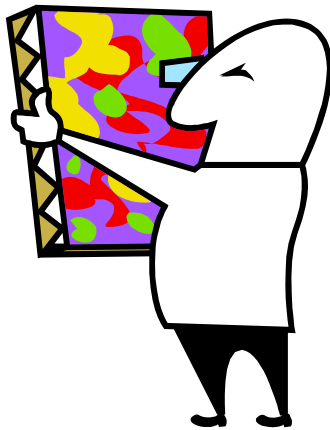
Monthly Publication of the Mid-South Chapter

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TECH PUBS EXHIBIT FEATURED IN NOVEMBER

by Nell Johnson

The Mid-South chapter of the Society for Technical Communication will hold its November meeting Monday, November 4, 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the University of Memphis Alumni Center (see map on page 6). The program will feature the traveling pubs exhibit, a showcase of the winners of the STC International Technical Publications Competition.



On display will be international award winners in the categories of technical art and print documentation. Attendees can view the “best of the best” as they personally view and page through technical manuals, reports, posters, proposals, brochures, and other examples of outstanding print documentation.

In addition to the exhibit, selected STC-ers will give short talks on their STC involvement, how to network using STC, how to participate in the pubs competition, and other topics. The meeting will be especially beneficial to students and newcomers to the profession who might want to know general information about STC and how they might benefit from involvement. Seasoned technical communicators will want to marvel at the exhibit and take ideas back to their workplaces.

Light appetizers and refreshments will be served. The public is invited.

MEETING NOTES

by Elizabeth Boone

"The Editor as Mentor" was the topic presented by Julia Cay Jones, Ph.D., Editor at St. Jude, and David Armbruster, Ph.D., Head of Scientific Communications at UT Memphis, to the 21 attendees of October's meeting. Both speakers drew on their experiences as editors as they discussed what it was to be mentored and to mentor others.

Jones spoke first, detailing her mentorship under the guidance of her first supervisor at St. Jude, Flo Witte. Jones, who has a background in the life sciences, came to St. Jude with technical expertise but no editorial experience. Fortunately, Witte not only had several years of editorial and teaching experience, she was respected among her peers, which indicated to Jones that her boss was an expert in her field.

Their mentorship went like this: Jones would receive a biomedical manuscript of approximately 20 to 25 double-spaced pages including text, references, tables, and figures. She edited the manuscript using resources such as style guides. Jones believes it was crucial that she had time to look up answers to her questions because it allowed her to learn on her own. However, Witte was always available to answer questions if Jones needed help or could not find an answer.

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Once Jones finished editing the manuscript, she passed it to Witte for review. Witte pointed out and explained errors that Jones had missed and offered solutions to the errors. She marked errors that Jones introduced and provided alternatives to the edits Jones had made. When Witte was done, Jones looked over her suggestions, asked further questions, and made changes.

In Witte, Jones found a mentor that was patient and allowed her to make mistakes. Furthermore, Witte was diplomatic and tactful about editing, while encouraging and being honest with Jones. As Witte's student, Jones

found that she had to accept criticism and to recognize that criticism of one's work is not a criticism of one's self. The mentorship helped Jones persevere as



Writers and Editors" (*AMWA Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2002). The article advocates a mentoring method in which the mentor questions the student repeatedly as a means to help the student find answers for him/herself. Jones brought up the article because she did not think she would benefit from such a method, which led her to suggest that an important aspect of mentoring is finding a strategy that is appropriate for both the mentor and student.

David Armbruster continued the discussion with definitions of "mentor," meaning a close, trusted guide, teacher, tutor, or coach, and "mentoring," which, according to one dictionary, was first used as a verb in 1982. His talk focused on two areas: mentoring authors and mentoring other editors.

“An editor has to remember that the author’s name goes on the manuscript and that the author’s voice should be maintained.”

she quickly learned that the transition from scientist to editor was not as easy as she had anticipated. However, after two years of working under Flo Witte, Jones edited faster and better, and her work met the expectations of both Witte and the manuscripts' authors.

Jones concluded her talk by mentioning an article by Thomas A. Lang entitled "Mentor-Guided Analytical Thinking (MAT): A Method for Training Medical

As an author's editor, Armbruster has the opportunity to work with authors to develop their manuscripts and therefore act as a mentor by helping authors improve their writing. He listed several tips for a mentor in a similar situation. First, "do this, don't do that" is not mentoring. An editor has to remember that the author's name goes on the manuscript and that the author's voice

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Designing the future of technical communication

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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/>

should be maintained. Editing is sometimes a matter of moving words around, which helps to keep the author's voice. An effective strategy for building a relationship with an author is to suggest that the job of the editor is to help the author communicate his/her science or technology as effectively as possible; together, the author and editor contribute more than either could alone. Editors should also avoid using grammatical jargon with authors.

Armbruster has found himself in a special mentoring situation with authors who are non-native English speakers. His experience has been that these authors want to improve their language skills, and to help them do so, editors have to be willing to correct these authors. He also believes that, at times, editors have to mentor just beyond editing by teaching authors about the ethics of medical communication or the publication process.

A benefit of editors mentoring other editors, as was the case with Jones and Witte, is that it is an effective way to become a good editor. In this way, Armbruster has found that he himself often learns from those he is mentoring. He thinks it is essential that a mentor be willing to be mentored.

Armbruster also pointed out that not everyone is meant to be a mentor and not everyone wants to be mentored. For those who do want a mentor, mentors should strive to teach them well so they in turn can go out and mentor. He reminded the group that to be an effective mentor a person must know the editorial field well and continue to educate him/herself in that area. A mentor must be able to let others make mistakes in order to learn from them. When mentoring, a person needs to explain and justify editorial changes to the student and to remember the mentor's job is to assist.

Finally, like Jones, Armbruster has found that a good mentor is patient.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETITION

reprinted from the STC website

The international student technical communication competition (ISTCC) was established in 1986 to recognize excellence in technical communication at the high school level. Each year, cash awards are presented to students in grades 10–12 whose papers demonstrate outstanding technical writing skills.

Entries are judged by a panel of professional editors, writers, scientists, and educators. Judges evaluate the quality of each student's writing, clarity of the purpose, significance of the topic, effectiveness of the organization, and soundness of the conclusions. They also appraise the use and documentation of reference materials, as well as the use of visual and graphic aids.

The ISTCC demonstrates the Society's commitment to encourage early development of technical communication skills.



For more information, go to the following website:
stc.org/student_competitions.asp.

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.

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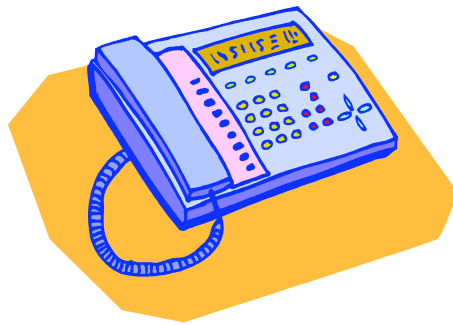
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WHAT IS A TELEPHONE SEMINAR?

reprinted, condensed from STC web site

A telephone seminar is much like a large conference call where the speaker makes his or her presentation over the phone. You simply dial the 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! You then sit back and listen to the presentations and join in the lively Q&A discussion.



Cost

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

- U.S. sites: \$145.00 USD
- Canadian sites: \$160.00 USD
- Overseas sites: Please contact the STC office

An additional \$10 will be charged for registrations received less than 5 days before the seminar.

Benefits

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

November Seminars

Getting Into Instructional Design will be taught by Constance Billé and will be held on 11/7/02 from noon to 1:30 p.m. CST.

In this presentation, speaker Constance Billé, whose own career has spanned both fields, will share information on how to acquire the additional competencies needed to take this career path, and will review competency

models developed by professional organizations that serve instructional designers. She will also discuss many educational options and career planning strategies available. Sample résumés will be used to illustrate how an ID manager might regard different backgrounds. Participants will have the opportunity to measure their own career readiness using a self-assessment and planning tool. This seminar is appropriate for any STC member interested in a career in instructional design.

Looking, Finding, Searching...How Users Do It will be taught by Whitney Quesenbery on 11/19/02 from noon to 1:30 p.m. CST.

In this seminar, Whitney Quesenbery takes a fresh look at the problem by approaching it from the users' point of view. With a model that starts from the users' perspective, the presentation helps us understand the search function as one element in the users' tool kit of information-gathering methods. Results of a series of usability tests on search behavior helped form the basis for this model.

This presentation will:

- Define a model for looking at the entire user experience of search
- Look at the design questions raised by each step of the model
- Review some successful (and a few not-so-successful) search designs
- Explore how meta-tags and other markup can improve search success
- Look at some of the new search techniques, from visualizations to facets, that are now emerging as mainstream capabilities

NEW PUBLICITY MANAGER

by Nell Johnson

Greg M. Jordan has stepped forward to take over the publicity manager position for the Mid-South chapter. Jordan replaces Teresa Johnson who did a wonderful job of making sure that STC meetings and events were adequately publicized in the Memphis area.



Greg Jordan

Jordan has extensive experience in database and application development, leading over 25 web development projects. As an Internet Developer for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, he plans, documents, and develops web applications that are used for both Intranet and Internet sites.

Jordan has guest-lectured at the University of Memphis, Fogelman School of Business, in the International MBA program on the topics of e-commerce and information architecture.

Jordan also developed e-commerce applications, such as shopping cart applications and secure ordering processes, and has designed and programmed award-winning commercial web sites.

Jordan earned a B.A. in Creative Writing and an M.A. in Professional Writing from the University of Memphis.

We appreciate all the excellent press coverage provided by our previous publicity manager, Teresa Johnson, and we look forward to working with Greg.

**NEW MEMBERS CAN STILL
SAVE ON STC DUES!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Reprinted from Tieline, September 2002

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. That's 15 months of Society membership for the price of 12.

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

WEB WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

by Nell Johnson

The recently-held web workshop organized and led by our education manager Jackie Walters offered an excellent opportunity for newcomers to the web to learn some basic programming and design concepts. The instructors, Jackie Walters, Lyn Joyner, and Tripp Howell, provided just the right mix of technology and simplicity in their presentations and interactive sessions.



Web workshop attendees design web pages.

More workshops will be offered in the future, according to Walters.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

*by Lenore S. Ridgway
reprinted from October 2002 Tieline*

STC is now offering scholarships for the 2003-2004 academic year, and once again we are looking for qualified applicants. Please think about whether you might be eligible for a scholarship or whether you know someone who should be encouraged to apply for one. As the skills and knowledge needed in the field of technical communication continue to grow, the education of technical communicators becomes more important. For the future of STC and the profession of technical communication, students must be encouraged to develop their abilities and expertise.

STC awards scholarships to students who are enrolled full-time in undergraduate or graduate technical communication programs and studying for an academic or commercial career in technical communication.

Technical communication includes graphical and online information presentation as well as written and oral communication. It may include "smart programs" or expert systems development, in which the candidate's concern is the presentation of information rather than computer programming. It does not include ordinary journalism, general broadcasting, or fine arts.

All scholarships are for the same amount, and the money is paid directly to the school. The scholarships may be used for tuition or other expenses that the school will pay.

Applicants need not be STC members. They must have completed one year of postsecondary education before fall 2003. Students completing an undergraduate degree are eligible to apply for their first year of graduate school.

Students will be evaluated on their potential for contributing to the technical communication profession, their accomplishments as technical communicators, their academic records, the content of their application letters, and recommendations of faculty members. Individual financial need is considered when applicants are judged comparable in the preceding areas. Usually, students are granted only one year of the scholarship, but those who have received the scholarship in the past are not disqualified from applying again.

To apply, students must submit a completed application package, including a description of their accomplishments and goals. The package must be received by February 15, 2003. Students can obtain application information from their department chairs, the STC Web site, or the STC office in Arlington, Virginia, or they can contact me at the address below.

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Kingston, NY 12401
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NOVEMBER MEETING REMINDER

What: November program meeting

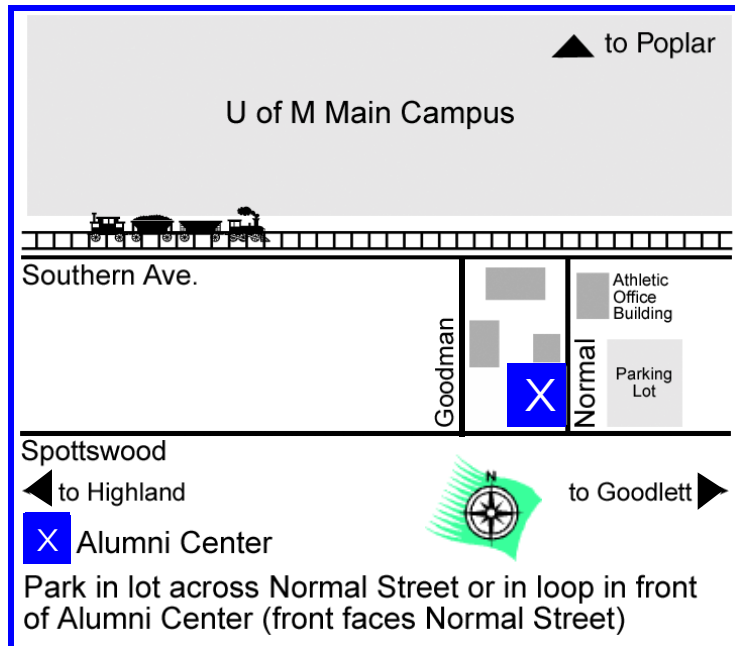
When: Monday, November 4, 6:00 p.m.

Program: Traveling Pubs Exhibit

Where: University of Memphis Alumni Center, 635 Normal (see map)

Menu: Light appetizers and beverages

Cost: Free



Newsbrief

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