



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Newsbrief

Monthly Publication of the Mid-South Chapter

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A New Meeting Place

by Apryl Cox

On Monday, September 8, we are going to hold our monthly program meeting at a new location.

Recently, we have been shopping around for a new place to hold our meetings. Ideally, the location would be near the center of the city so that no one has to drive too far, quiet so that we can hear the speaker, and inexpensive so that as many members as possible can afford to come.

We think the Cottage at the Four Seasons (4932 Park Ave.) might be the perfect place. It is located only a few miles from the University of Memphis and has a kitchen and several rooms that will be occupied by only the Mid-South chapter during our meetings. Admission will cost \$5 for students with a valid ID and \$10 for nonstudents, regardless of STC membership status. (Please bring cash.) Beverages and hors d'oeuvres are included in the price of admission.

Please come and let us know what you think about the Cottage. See page 8 for a map. •



September Meeting Program: Using Design Principles to Redesign Forms

by Leanne Logan

Ever been frustrated by just how long it takes you to fill out a form? How much time have you spent in your lifetime filling out forms in order to achieve your goals? In the last week, I filled out forms while sitting in a new doctor's office, standing in line at the post office, working in the office to ship a package, and hanging out at home long enough to complete my taxes. Each of these forms was designed to achieve a specific goal, but many asked me to provide the same information in different ways, in different orders, and in different formats.

Over the years, I've watched communications standards emerge and evolve for a variety of document types—from letters to memos to reports. A major goal has been helping people to recognize what information to expect and where to find it on the page. These guidelines are based on ever-changing design standards, styles, and emerging research. Interestingly, rarely have these same learnings been applied to good form design.

Student member Tracy Hughes, in her recent internship at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, had the opportunity to redesign a medical form to improve its functionality for all its users. Tracy called upon her skills as a technical communicator to

- Interview the end users, e.g., nurses and director
- Research the requirements, i.e., learn existing

standards and best practices from other cancer research centers

- Determine the information needs and the form's ultimate purpose
- Prototype a new form design
- Review and test the new form with the end users
- Redesign and retest the form until it met the needs of the end users

Please join me to learn more about how Tracy used her skills as a technical communicator to help reengineer how one form captured valuable information from the nursing staff at St. Jude.

Tracy is currently both a Production Assistant at Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc. and a Master's candidate in professional writing at the University of Memphis. She will share her experiences on September 8 at 6 p.m. during the next program meeting of the Mid-South chapter.

For additional meeting details, please see page 8. ♦

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From the Editor: Beginnings

by Apryl Cox

Change is afoot in the Mid-South chapter this month. We are trying a new meeting place for our September program meeting, and as Mary Sue MacNealy details in her monthly column, Nell Johnson is moving after years of serving our chapter.

I would like to thank Nell for setting high standards for her many contributions to the Mid-South chapter, including serving as our most recent *Newsbrief* editor. She has been extremely encouraging and helpful as she has handed over the reigns of (and many files related to) *Newsbrief*.

I am looking forward to serving as editor of *Newsbrief* and hearing what you think. After reading this issue, please provide me with any feedback about content and format. An important purpose of *Newsbrief* is to inform Mid-South chapter members about local and international goings-on in our professional community. If you feel we are meeting this purpose well or

need to improve, please let us know. I would love to receive letters to the editor and articles to publish in future issues of *Newsbrief*.

Another way for you to provide input on the newsletter and the chapter is to complete the survey on page 7. We need your comments to help us serve you better!

If you have not been active in the chapter recently, now is a wonderful time to start. Getting involved benefits not only the chapter but also you. Take a look at the highlights from our recent programs on pages 3 and 4 to see what you have been missing. See page 5 for an article from a member of another chapter that lists the networking benefits of getting involved. If you are still wavering about participating, see pages 1 and 5 for special reasons you should come to our next program meeting.

I look forward to seeing you at the Cottage on September 8. ♦

Coming Soon...Mid-South Chapter Directory

Update your information today!

Help Jackie Walters compile a new Mid-South chapter membership directory. Bring your latest contact information to the next chapter meeting, or send it to Jackie via email (jlwalters@fedex.com).

You should also update your information with STC via the Address Change Form (http://www.stc.org/address_change.asp) or by email (membership@stc.org).

When the directory is ready, Mid-South chapter members may pick up a copy at a monthly chapter meeting.

From the President

by Mary Sue MacNealy

Sad and glad: that's how I'm feeling this month. The sad news is that we have to say goodbye to Nell Johnson. Nell has worked hard in so many ways for our chapter. She has faithfully attended both chapter meetings and board meetings for several years. She helped set a positive tone for our board meetings when she agreed to become president two years ago. And she worked hard as president. She was especially effective at welcoming every person who came in the door to our chapter meetings. She certainly

earned the Distinguished Service Award that she received a few months ago.

Her leaving will create a tremendous hole, especially for me as I have come to rely on her wise advice and cheerful support. Nell is a great example of a truly professional writer. Even though I am sad to see her go, I am glad for her that she has this opportunity to live in the beautiful city of Portland, Oregon, and be near her grandchild.

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Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication

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Region 3

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A sharing community creating opportunity

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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), rich text (RTF), 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.

Please submit your article by the 10th of the month to be considered 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

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From the Pres continued from page 2

Two other reasons to be glad are two new members of our board: Jill Greenman, who is our new PR manager, and Apryl Cox, who is our new *Newsbrief* editor.

Jill is working on her MA in professional writing at the University of Memphis, where she has already earned a reputation as a thoroughly dependable and competent professional writer. And she pulled a coup by somehow getting our July meeting written up twice in the *Commercial Appeal*!

Apryl, I'm proud to say, has a BA degree with a concentration in profes-

sional writing from the University of Memphis. Apryl made a strong impression on her professors when she was a student, and she made an excellent presentation at our June meeting when she described her experiences as an attendee at the International STC conference in Dallas. I think we can expect a bright future for our newsletter. Apryl is currently employed as a medical writer at Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc.

At our next regular chapter meeting, please help me welcome these two new additions, who hope to help your chapter become even better. ♦

July Meeting Highlights

by Jackie Walters

The chapter toured the Pink Palace Museum on Friday July 11, 2003. The Pink Palace was originally designed to be the dream home of wealthy entrepreneur Clarence Saunders. The museum derives its name from the mansion's ornate pink Georgian marble facade.

Saunders, an entrepreneur and founder of Piggly Wiggly, began building the house in the early 1920s, but due to a legal dispute with the New York Exchange, he had to declare bankruptcy. The unfinished building was eventually given to the city to use as a museum in the late 1920s.

We were given the behind-the-scenes tour. Our guide, assistant curator Natasha McCallister, took us to the area where fossils



The Pink Palace is located on Central Ave. near the University of Memphis.



Assistant curator Natasha McCallister shows us plaster cast moldings the museum has created of artifacts.



Curator Ron Brister explains the Pink Palace's record-keeping system.

are cleaned and stored. Curator Ron Brister provided in-depth details about how records are stored and backed up in filing cabinets because many years ago museums realized that they would be around for years to come and began using complete dates to categorize items.

July Highlights continued on page 3



Many animals are stored for future exhibits. The one above is also known as Mike Albers.

Our trip also included a showing of *Coral Reef Adventure* at the Pink Palace's IMAX theater. The film follows the real-life expedition of ocean explorers and underwater filmmakers Howard and Michele Hall.

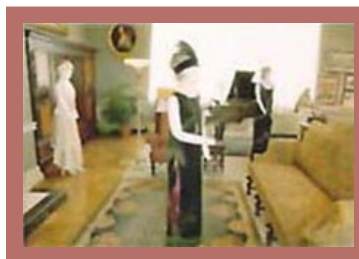
The film was narrated by Liam Neeson. The music for the film was written and recorded by Crosby, Stills, and Nash.

The Halls guided us to the islands and sun-drenched waters of the South Pacific, including Australia's Great Bar-

rier Reef, Fiji, Tahiti, and the mysterious depths of Rangiroa Atoll, to document the health and beauty of coral reefs. During the film, we gained new insight into our underwater friends and the benefits of the coral reefs.



Coral reefs help both the creatures who live in them and the people who live near them to thrive.



These are some of the fashions on display at the museum.



While at the Pink Palace, we watched an IMAX film by MacGillivray Freeman.

From the IMAX we were on our own to tour the many exhibits in the museum. ♦

Nell Johnson to Be Honored at September Meeting

by April Cox

During the September meeting, we will honor Nell Johnson for her countless contributions to our chapter. Nell is retiring from her job at FedEx and will be moving to Portland, Oregon, at the end of the month.

In her many years with the Mid-South chapter, she has filled numerous roles. In recent years, she has served as the president (2001–2002), past president (2002–2003), and newsletter editor (June 2002–August 2003). And Nell has always been willing to take on tasks that did not fall directly under her responsibility. Her countless behind-the-scenes contributions and pleasant attitude will be missed.

Please come to the September meeting to give Nell your good wishes and to make her send-off memorable. ♦

We Need Used Cell Phones!

The Mid-South chapter continues to collect used cell phones at our monthly chapter meetings to benefit victims of domestic violence. Working phones, batteries, and chargers will be collected and distributed to individuals at family violence shelters.

STC Publications Win Four APEX 2003 Awards

Russ Bombardieri, STC's Webmaster, won a Grand Award for STC's Website in the "Web and Intranet Sites" category; George F. Hayhoe, editor of *Technical Communication*, earned Awards of Excellence in the subcategories "Magazines and Journals-Online and Electronic" and "Columns and Editorials"; and *Intercom* received an Award of Excellence in the "Magazines and Journals-Printed Four Color" subcategory. The APEX awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and overall communication effectiveness. APEX 2003 received close to 5,000 total entries in 11 major categories; of these, 100 (about 2%) won Grand Awards, and 1,541 (about 31%) won Awards of Excellence. The APEX competition has been conducted annually since 1989 by Communications Concepts, Inc., the Springfield, Virginia, publisher of *Writing That Works: The Business Communications Report*.

August Meeting Notes

by Elizabeth Boone

Tripp Howell, a Senior Analyst in Information Technology at The Alpha Corporation (a.k.a. AOC), relayed to the 14 attendees of the August chapter meeting the lessons he and his company have learned in the process of the localization of their Websites. AOC is a business located in Collierville that specializes in the chemical manufacturing of resins, a product found in everything from bowling balls to ladders. In 2001, the company decided "to provide pertinent business information to prospective customers in target locations around the world via the Web." Localization of AOC Websites involved making each site linguistically, culturally, and content

appropriate for the region where it would be viewed. The locations targeted were the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Italy, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Asia, with the intention that eventually each area would have its own Website.

Translations Lessons

Lesson 1

Select a good translator or translation agency familiar with your industry. Being able to speak a language does not necessarily qualify a person to be a translator. Like other communicators,

August Notes continued on page 5

translators need to have a firm grasp of the grammar rules of the languages they are translating from and into. Furthermore, translators need to understand and be able to communicate a company's concepts. When selecting a translation agency, choose one that works with great care to avoid careless, but costly, mistakes. Do not assume that one translation agency can translate all languages.

Lesson 2

Realize that proofreading is absolutely essential. Tripp admitted that his company learned this lesson the hard way. AOC tried to save money by using nonprofessional proofreaders, but some of these individuals misunderstood what they were being asked to do and ended up doing more editing than proofreading.

Lesson 3

Simplify text to be translated. Long sentences with multiple modifiers may run the risk of being mistrans-

lated. Short, clear sentences can prevent many translation headaches.

Lesson 4

Consider not translating everything. As AOC discovered, some things do not translate well, i.e., they sound ridiculous in a foreign language.

Technology Lessons

Lesson 1

Recognize that different locations have different connectivity, e.g., servers, Website loading times, infrastructure. Use location-specific testers to check the effectiveness of a Website.

Lesson 2

Understand how users in a specific location tend to use the Web. For example, some users may not read on screens, so make sure Web pages print out easily.

Lesson 3

Stay up-to-date on technology.



Tripp Howell listens to audience members' questions after his presentation at the August meeting.

Business Lessons

Lesson 1

Understand and communicate the magnitude of implementing and supporting a localization project. Identify who in the company is sponsoring the project.

Lesson 2

Establish new business processes to support the changes related to localization.

Translation Resources

For anyone considering or beginning a localization project, Tripp recommended Lingo System's *The Guide to Translation and Localization: Preparing Products for the Global Marketplace*, free copies of which are available at http://www.lingosys.com/Forms/guide_register_lingo.htm.

Below are addresses for AOC's United States site as well some of its European sites.

<http://www.aoc-resins.com/us>

<http://www.aoc-resins.com/global/europe/netherlands/default.asp>

<http://www.aoc-resins.com/global/europe/uk/default.asp> ♦

Hail and Farewell: Society Selects New Executive Director

Reprinted from the July/August issue of Tieline

At the opening session of STC's 50th Annual Conference in Dallas, the Society bade farewell to retiring executive director Bill Stolgitis. Referring to Bill as "the heart of the organization for 21 years," outgoing STC president Ed See presented him with a special president's award. During Bill's tenure, Society membership grew from about 5,000 and peaked at more than 25,000.

STC's new executive director, Peter Herbst, will take over in September 2003. Peter has worked in the STC office since 1984. He currently serves as deputy executive director, overseeing the day-to-day functions of the Society.

My Not-So-Gentle Reminder

by Carol Gasser Zollinger, reprinted from the July/August issue of Lines and Letters, the newsletter of the STC Northeast Ohio Chapter

Each time I go to the annual conference, I go with expectations. I'll learn a lot. I'll find at least one fabulous session that, by itself, was worth coming for. I'll stay up nearly all night, at least once, talking to friends that I only see once a year. (Which of course makes it exceedingly difficult to get up for the following morning's session, but is definitely worth it. I can even justify this professionally—read on.) I've never been disappointed in the past, and I wasn't this year, either.

This year, however, is the first year I noticed a theme that seemed to be directed specifically at me. Either all of

the presenters have been spying on me and decided to teach me a lesson, or I was feeling guilty about something, because I got nailed to the wall. The guilt thing seems more likely, but it's just so much easier to maintain righteous indignation if it's someone else's fault, so I have decided that they were spying on me.

I went to a session about estimating time for projects. They talked about metrics, and project management techniques, and networking within client companies. Then I went to a session

Reminder continued on page 6

where a panel of experienced technical communicators dispensed advice, told us funny stories, and answered any nosy questions we came up with about their careers. And told us to network. Then I went to a progression for independent contractors and consultants. They talked about job boards and marketing and networking and contracts and networking. Oh, and networking. Then I looked at my schedule and I saw that I myself had conspired against me and scheduled me for a networking luncheon. What was I thinking?

Besides, I said to myself, I know I have to network! Everybody knows you have to network. This is not a new concept. And after I chewed on this for a while, I sat myself down and gave myself a good talking to. (If only my mother knew that I do this for myself, she could stop intervening. But I digress.)

Young lady, I said, you have not attended one chapter meeting since you relocated from the Hoosier chapter in September. That's eight months! I don't care that it takes awhile to get to the meetings, or that you were too busy, that you were too tired, or that you just didn't feel like facing a crowd of people that night. There is just no excuse! No, don't even try to argue with me. No excuse! (Do you see how my mother is with me even when she's not? I'm digressing again, aren't I?)

And ultimately, there is no excuse. We all know why. You build relationships. Those relationships lead to more relationships. These relationships lead to new ideas, new jobs, new ways to handle the stressors of your job, and new information about software and other tools. The list goes on and on.

My new resolve after the annual conference got me to the May meeting of the Northeast Ohio Chapter, though the gentle reminders from some very excellent chapter leaders may have helped. And do you know, networking isn't even so bad? I actually enjoyed myself! It's kind of like exercising. Takes me forever to drag my lazy self out to do it, and when I'm doing it I

think, "Well, you know, this is kind of nice. Why did I wait so long?" (Please note that running is an exception to this rule. Running has always been at least as bad as I thought it would be.)

The problem, of course, is that the metaphor keeps working. Like exercising, no one can do your networking for you. STC can help by providing great program meetings, networking luncheons, an annual conference every year, and, if you are very lucky, your own personal reminder system via friends in the chapter. But nobody can actually show up for you. We all have to show up ourselves. And again, like exercising, it's not enough to just show up. We have to talk to people, listen, and share information. We all have to make new acquaintances and stay up all night talking to the ones we already have. (See? I told you I could justify that. I can justify anything.

Next time you are explaining an expensive new kitchen gadget or another power tool to your significant other, you call me. I can help.) We all have experiences or information that somebody else can use. Chances are, somebody else at this very moment has the information that you could use.

I don't really like to think of myself as thick, but I had to be hit over the head with the intellectual equivalent of a two by four to remember what I needed to be doing. Hopefully, by sharing my own reminder, I'll prevent some of you from needing your own. So, I hope to be meeting all of you, or seeing you again, at chapter events in the upcoming months. And if I myself am not there like I said I would be, you have my permission to drag out the two by four again, and apply it liberally.

See you soon! ♦

Web Workshop for Beginners

The STC Mid-South chapter will host a Web workshop for beginners on **Saturday, October 18, 2003**, at the Hampton Inn Southwind, Hacks Cross Rd, Memphis, TN from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Learn about the fundamentals of HTML, designing for the Web, and writing eBay ads that sell. The workshop is open to the public and limited to 20 students. The \$79 registration fee includes continental breakfast and course materials. To reserve your space, contact Jackie Walters at 901.434.7489.

Agenda

- 12:00–12:15 Introduction (Jackie Walters)
- 12:15–1:30 Fundamentals of HTML (Tripp Howell)
- 1:30–2:00 Class Exercise (All)
- 2:00–2:15 Break
- 2:15–3:00 Designing for the Web (Lyn Joyner)
- 3:00–3:45 Writing eBay Ads that Sell (Jackie Walters)
- 3:45–4:00 Questions and Answers (All)

Nearby Chapters Holding Publications Competitions

Following are some of the closer chapters that are holding publications competitions in September or October. To find out more details, email the contact or visit one of the chapters' Websites. (You can locate a chapter's Website at http://www.stc.org/chapter/chapter_search.asp.)

Chapter	Contact Name	Email	Due Date
Atlanta	Roger Siegel	roger.siegel@fds.com	10-20-03
Lone Star	Jan Shelton	jshelton@metasolv.com	10-03-03
Middle TN	Laura Liles	laura.liles@hcehealthcare.com	9-24-03
South Carolina Lowcountry	Deborah Gard	deb.gard@eds.com	10-30-03
Southwestern Ohio	Sarah Wigser	competitions@stc-swo.org	10-10-03
St. Louis	Stephanie Matthews	stephaniematthews@msn.com	10-17-03

STC Mid-South Chapter Survey

Please answer the following questions to help us improve the Mid-South chapter. Bring this completed survey (name optional) to the monthly program meeting on September 8 or October 6, and receive an entry form for a door prize drawing.

Are you a member of the Mid-South chapter of STC? Yes No

Do you know how to access the Mid-South chapter's Website? Yes No

How many times per year do you visit the Mid-South chapter's Website?
 0 1 to 3 4 to 7 8 to 10 11 to 12

How many of the 12 monthly program meetings do you attend each year?
 0 1 to 3 4 to 7 8 to 10 11 to 12

Rank each of the following chapter functions in order of their importance to you. (1 is most important.)
 Social aspect Networking Keeping current on the field Research
 Advice from other members on professional issues Other _____

Rank each of the following topics according to which interests you most. (1 is most interesting.)
 Writing Editing Print design Web design
 Software design Proposals Project management Manuals
 Research Careers Translation Localization
 Other _____

Rank each of the ways you would like to learn more from the chapter about software. (1 is most preferred.)
 Tips in *Newsbrief* Presentations at program meetings Workshops

Are you interested in submitting letters to the editor to be published in *Newsbrief*? Yes No

What are your suggestions for improving the chapter, including its meetings and publications?

What do you think the strengths of the chapter are?

Tear below if you would like to submit your contact information separately from the survey.

Optional: If you would like more information or want to become more involved in the Mid-South chapter, please complete the following.

I would like more information about (check all that apply)
 Joining the Mid-South chapter Submitting articles to *Newsbrief* Presenting at a program meeting
 Serving on a committee Helping with a workshop

Name: _____

Address: _____

Work phone: _____ Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Email address: _____

Upcoming Meetings

Please plan to attend the following upcoming events of the Mid-South chapter:

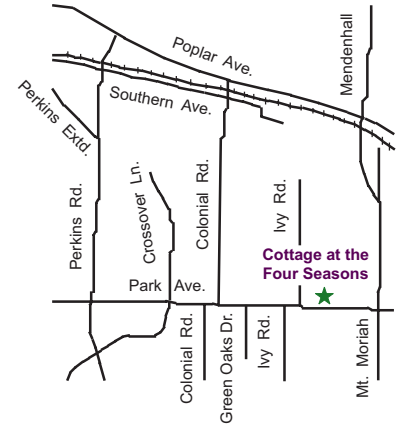
Monday, September 8, 6:00–8:00 (Speaker starts at 6:30.)

Speaker: Tracy Hughes

Topic: Information design conventions in patient education documentation forms

Presentation: Farewell to Nell Johnson

Location: The Cottage at the Four Seasons, located on the north side of Park Ave. between Perkins Rd. and Mt. Moriah/Mendenhall (see map). The Four Seasons is next door to (west of) the Buntyn Restaurant and across Park Ave. from Marquette Park. A large free parking lot and the entrance are behind the Cottage.



Monday, October 6, 6:00–8:00

Speakers: FedEx technical communicators

Topic: Panel of FedEx employees discussing the diversity of roles for technical communicators at FedEx

Location: The Cottage at the Four Seasons

November Special Event

Mid-South Chapter 20th Anniversary Party

Topic: A celebration of the people and history of the Mid-South STC chapter

Note: This event will be held on a Friday night in early or mid November. We welcome past and present Mid-South members and their family and friends to socialize, celebrate our past, and welcome the future of technical communication. Look in the October issue of *Newsbrief* for more details about the date, time, and location.

Monday, December 1, 6:00–8:00

Topic and speaker: To be determined

Location: The Cottage at the Four Seasons

Contact Leanne Logan for additional details (llogan@quarry.com, 901.489.6473). ♦



Newsbrief

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