

# Newsbrief

The Publication of the Mid-South Chapter, STC

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 5

May 2000

## Meet The New Mid-South STC Chapter Officers!

by Amy Hollister, Editor

The votes have been tallied and it looks as if we have four winners...

- President:** Jackie Walters
- Vice President:** Paige Marshall
- Treasurer:** Ferris Hooshmand
- Secretary:** Amy Hollister



From left to right:  
Jackie, Paige, Ferris, and Amy

Jackie is a Senior Technical Design Analyst with FedEx's PowerPad/ Project Management (Systems Design & Integration).

Paige is employed with Software Earnings, Inc. as a Communications Specialist.

Ferris is the manager of FedEx's Ground Operations Policy Analysis group.

Amy is an Associate Technical Writer in Ferris' group at FedEx and just recently became our *Newsbrief* editor.

All four officers bring in excess of 70 years worth of writing experience to the Mid-South Chapter.

Thank you to all who participated in the recent election, by casting your vote!



Don't miss the next Chapter meeting on **Thursday, May 4th**. Join us at 11:30 AM for lunch at **Barnhill's Country Buffet**, located at 857 South White Station (just South of Poplar and North of Park) in the East Gate shopping center.

## Welcome Jackie Walters, President-elect

by Amy Hollister, Editor

As Rebecca Mabry exits as the current chapter President, Jackie Walters steps up to the plate, ready for action. Jackie is geared up and is excited about the upcoming STC year. She plans to attend the Annual conference



scheduled for May in Orlando, where she is sure to pick up some great tools and fresh ideas.

## Mid-South Chapter Officers to Attend 47th Annual STC Conference

by Amy Hollister, Editor

Representation, representation, representation. That is exactly what you will get at this year's annual conference in Orlando. (Geez, Orlando...who would want to go *there*?) The new President, Vice President and Secretary - that's who! Jackie, Paige, and Amy will join Steve Gillespie and Joe Lakey in the quest for more than 250 educational presentations known as "technical sessions" that will address the needs of technical communicators from all over the globe. Several general areas of learning are encompassed,

### CONTENTS

- Big Leap Forward: Mid-South Scholarship Fund Grows Towards Goal .... 2
- Writer's Digest Honors STC Office Web Site..... 2
- A Career in Online Writing and Editing .... 3
- Serious Branding is Serious Fun ..... 4
- Job Postings ..... 5
- Technical Writing 2000 ..... 7
- Writer's Block..... 7
- What's New in Your World?..... 7
- Meeting Reminder ..... 8

including Information Design, Writing and Editing, Theory and Research, Tools and Technology and even Management and Professional Development.

The conference will surely be a great opportunity to expand our networking contacts, learn more about supporting professional development within our own local chapter, and meet communicators of various levels of experience. There will also be a chance to view award-winning entries from STC's technical communication competitions and vendor exhibits.

The conference will be located at the Walt Disney World Dolphin hotel and the opening session will begin bright and early on Monday, May 22nd. So many technical sessions...so little time.

A *First Timers'* session will be a fantastic way to hear how conference managers and veteran conference attendees share their views about how to get the most out of the STC program for those attending a Society conference for the first time. 🏠

**Big Leap**



**Forward:**

## Mid-South Scholarship Fund Grows Towards Goal

*submitted by local Chapter member*

The University of Memphis Foundation announced a major increase in the Technical Writing Scholarship Fund, established by the Mid-South Chapter last October. The fund now stands at \$18,056.11 - a sizable increase over the \$15,000

raised by the Chapter to establish the fund. To be fully funded and begin awarding scholarships, the account must contain \$25,000. The \$3,056.11 generated by the University's management is a major step toward the scholarship becoming fully funded.

The scholarship will continue to grow next month when the Mid-South Chapter board makes its annual contribution. The Chapter has traditionally set aside \$1,000 from its treasury to fund chapter activities until the national dues rebate arrives in mid-summer and then contributes the balance to the Scholarship Fund. This year, the contribution should be well over \$1,500, because of careful management of the chapter's expenses, plus the profits of the publication competition (\$304.61) last Fall, and the potential profits of the Indexing Seminar in April.

Plans for growing the Scholarship even further toward the goal of being fully funded include a combination Book and Garage sale in the Fall. Members are encouraged to start looking around for books and other items they would like to contribute to this sale.

When fully funded, the scholarship will pay tuition and fees each semester for one graduate or undergraduate student, majoring in technical writing at the University of Memphis without touching the principal. The scholarship recipient will be chosen by a representative of the Mid-South Chapter in consultation with the Chair of the English Department at the University of Memphis. If the fund continues to grow at its present rate, the scholarship could be awarded for the Fall of 2001!



The scholarship represents a lot of hard work by Mid-South Chapter members. The first fund raising activity was a church newsletter workshop, organized by Margaret Carbaugh. Mary Sue MacNealy and Bruce Speck, faculty of the English Department of the University of Memphis, donated their time and expertise as seminar leaders. This first fund-raising effort netted \$1,000. Other seminars, also arranged by Margaret Carbaugh brought well-known experts in technical writing, such as Roger Grice and JoAnn Hackos, to Memphis as seminar leaders. Rebecca Mabry, current chapter President, has also organized a chapter book sale for each of the past two years. In all of these fund-raising activities, other chapter members have pitched in by providing transportation and overnight accommodations for seminar leaders, by serving as ticket and book sellers, and by working to publicize the events. 🏠

## Writer's Digest Honors STC Office Web Site

*by Maurice Martin*

The STC office Web site


([www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org))

is one of the "101 Best Web Sites for Writers,"

according to Writer's Digest Magazine.



The May issue of Writer's Digest features the new "101" list on its cover; that issue will arrive at newsstands on April 18. At the same time, the "101" list will be available Find out how you can contribute

on the Writer's Digest Web site at ([www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)). According to Brad Crawford, assistant editor for Writer's Digest, the list is produced using feedback from readers combined with input from the magazine staff and the magazine's advisory committee. "The STC office Web site had a particularly good mix of information directed at the STC membership and information designed to educate the general public about the field of technical writing," said Crawford. Features that he singled out as particularly useful on the Web site include STC's salary surveys for technical writers and editors, the searchable database of schools offering technical communication coursework, and the list of STC grants and loans. The Society for Technical Communication is a professional organization for technical writers, editors, illustrators, managers, and educators. It is the largest professional organization in this field, with more than 25,000 members in 146 chapters worldwide. Information about STC and its programs can be found at the STC office Web site: [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org) 



## A Career in Online Writing and Editing

from *monster.com*  
written by Sacha Cohen

A few years ago, the title of editorial content manager or online writer didn't really exist. Today, these jobs are all the rage. After all, someone has to write and edit the millions of words on the Web. It's surprising that it has taken this long to become a legitimate field! The Web is now overflowing with sites dedicated to online writing and editing profes-

sions, with more cropping up daily. If you are a print writer or editor, or aspire to be one, you might consider writing for the Web in addition to print. Also, if you have a liberal arts degree or are considering PR, marketing or advertising, it can't hurt to understand the fundamentals of writing for the Web as well.

As the Web evolves and becomes more sophisticated, so will the role of online editor and writer. Not only should you be a competent and engaging communicator, but it can't hurt to also learn the fundamentals of Web design and production as well. A background in Web technologies such as Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash and Java are helpful, but those can be added later. First, focus on your core competencies.

The best way to break into the online writing field is with a strong writing and/or editorial background. If you don't have a degree in English or journalism, you can improve your skills by taking continuing education writing and editing classes, and it never hurts to take a seminar occasionally to help you brush up on your editing skills. Knowing basic HTML, HTML editors (such as Allaire HomeSite or

### For Your Reference Shelf

For more complete information, there are several style guides written specifically with the Web in mind including:

*Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity* by Jakob Nielsen

*Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* by Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton

*Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age* by Constance Hale and Jesse Scanlon

Microsoft FrontPage) and content management tools (such as Vignette's Story Server) are helpful. However, it's your primary job to make the site's content compelling and relevant to your audience.

Where Do I Begin?



On the Web, of course!

It's one of the best places to gather information about the field and to learn how others are using online media to communicate, entertain and inform. I usually suggest that you visit the following sites to get a taste of what's out there:

Sites with good content and good design: [Garden.com](http://Garden.com), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [PBS.org](http://PBS.org). For great content, but awkward design, check out [Word](http://Word), [Feed](http://Feed) and [Salon](http://Salon).



Three great sources for more information about online writing and editing are the [Online Journalism Review](http://Online Journalism Review), [Contentious](http://Contentious) magazine and the [Content Exchange](http://Content Exchange). There is a huge and growing market for online editors and writers who know how to communicate via the Web and who understand the principles of writing for this medium. Salaries vary a great deal depending on experience, but here's an example: An online managing editor with three to five years experience working in a major urban market should expect somewhere from 55 to 75K.

Don't forget to use common sense. Think about what you enjoy reading online, why certain sites are more engaging than others and what troubles you about some Web sites (such as long scrolling text, hard-to-read fonts, poor organization, and meaningless links).

Print the following tips to supplement your in-depth style guide:

- Know your audience -- they should always be foremost in your mind.
- Write well, edit like crazy. Concise, to the point -- people read 25% slower onscreen, so text needs to be about 50% shorter.
- Include attention-grabbing, meaningful headlines, links and subheads.
- Avoid using jargon and buzzwords. Be direct, clear and concise.
- Use proper grammar. Just because it's on the Web doesn't mean it's OK to be sloppy.
- Keep ideas and thoughts in chunks. A paragraph should only contain one idea.
- Avoid scrolling text. However, sometimes readers want to print out articles or information, so offer a printer-friendly version in addition to breaking up text.
- Make sure links make sense contextually. In other words, don't link a phrase or a word to something that is completely irrelevant. You want to keep your audience's attention, not lead them down a dead end.

In addition, a few good ways to break up text so it's easier to read on the screen include using lists, bulleted items, short phrases, brief summaries, sidebars, and links to additional pages.

Finally, spend time online so that you are comfortable with the medium. Think about it: You wouldn't write for a magazine without reading several issues first and getting to know the magazine's style, tone and audience, would you? The same is true online. 🐼

*Copyright 2000 -- TMP Interactive, Inc. All Rights Reserved. You may not copy, reproduce, or distribute this article without the prior written permission of TMP Interactive, Inc. To see other career-related articles, visit [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com).*

## Serious Branding is Serious Fun

by Mary Wise,  
STC Society President



The Society for Technical Communication. STC. Who are we? What do we do?

We are many. We do lots.

I'd like a better definition.

Last May, I explained that one of my goals as President of STC was to better define who STC is and what STC does as a professional society of technical communicators. Now, I'd like to fill you in on our progress in that area; the STC Branding Project.

No, we're not burning the STC logo into our hides with a hot iron! We are going through a process to discover and develop the STC brand.

"So, Mary," I hear you cry, "what's a brand? Isn't it the logo?"

Actually, integrated branding is much more than just a logo, or mission statement, or public relations plan. According to *Integrated Branding*, by F. Joseph LePla and Lynn M. Parker: "integrated branding is an organizational strategy used to drive company and product direction - where all actions and messages are based on the value the company brings to its line of business." To put it more succinctly, integrated branding is the promise you keep.

So how do we go about figuring out this so-called brand?

First, I realized that this process was not going to be quick and easy. To do this right, we had to involve the board and the membership during the

whole process. Second, I knew that we could not do it by ourselves; we needed professional assistance. Finally, I decided that we needed to take this year to define the brand, and leave the rest of the work until next year. Believe me, that's hard for an STC president to do!

So what have we been doing?

Last summer, our Corporate Identity committee, headed by Donna Sakson, developed and released a Request for Proposals to several firms that we knew were experts at integrated branding. We were very pleased to receive a proposal from Parker LePla, and we selected them to help us uncover the STC brand.

Uncover the brand?



Believe it or not, our brand already exists. This process helps us discover that brand and explicitly define it. When we do that, we can then make decisions for the Society based on the brand.

During the fall, Parker LePla conducted a series of interviews with board members, STC members, non-renewing members, prospective members, and office. We also formed the brand team, a group of 12 STC members who are charged with defining our brand. At the winter board meeting, the board participated in a workshop so that we could learn what branding was about and to learn some of the early results of the interviews.

What's next?



In mid-March, the brand team will meet to analyze the data and define the brand: our mission, our values, our associations, and our personality. I'm confident that the result will be a stronger, more visible STC - a

Society with a promise to its members; a Society that will keep that promise.

I welcome your comments and questions on this important project. Please feel free to write to me; my e-mail address is: mwise@manu.com.

Believe me, it's some serious fun! 🐼

---

## Job Postings

from  
www.careerpath.com  
April 16, 2000



### Crystal Report Writer

Memphis, TN

**Years of Experience:** 2

**Contact Number:** (888) 821-4294

**Contact Fax:** (901) 821-4299

**Contact Name:** Technical Recruiter

**Job Status:** Contract to Hire

**Contact E-mail:**

MemphisJobs@MetroIS.com

**Employer Name:**

Metro Information Services

**Employer Address:**

5100 Poplar Avenue, Suite 2902

Memphis, TN

**Date Posted:** Apr. 3 2000 4:10AM

**Full Description:**

Straight Crystal Report writing

Metro Information Services, founded in 1979, is a \$315M Company supporting more than 3000 professionals who provide a wide range of Information Technology Consulting Services to Fortune 1000 Clients throughout the United States. Metro is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Please indicate **Position ID: CP370-194** when responding.

from *The Commercial Appeal*  
www.gomemphis.com  
Sunday, April 16, 2000

### Tech Writer-- JAVA, Adobe Illustrator, HTML

**Duration:** 6 - 9 months

Memphis, TN

**Requirements:** Windows; Macromedia Director; Graphic Artist & Web Designer Software required. Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, Pagemaker PowerPoint and HTML. Preferred: Front Page, Java and Macromedia Dreamweaver.

**Additional Job Skills Needed:**

Windows; Macromedia Director; Graphic Artist & Web Designer Software required. Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, Pagemaker PowerPoint and HTML.

**Compensation:** Call for details

**Contact:** Recruiting Specialist  
National Computer Services

**Phone:** (800) 854-0581

**Fax:** (901) 850-0915

**E-mail:**

ncstn00+ado@net-temps.com

**Source:** Net-Temps

---

### Technical Writer Project/Tech Lead



**Duration:** 9 - 12 months

Memphis, TN

**Platform:** windows.

**Skill set:** COBOL, DB2, Freehand, Microsoft Access, PrimaVera, Shockwave, Visual Basic, Win NT, Win 95.

**Bachelor's Degree/equivalent**

(Technical Writing Degree Preferred). 5 to 7 years of experience in technical writing in the particular area/field with whom they are being contracted.

Ability to interpret engineering blueprints, writing diagrams/schematics, and/or engineering specifications (including hardware/software development, database, financial project), where applicable. Word processing skills using software packages for schematics, text or graphics, charts, data flows, presentations in a MS windows environment, and project management tracking. Experience technical research and analysis. Strong interpersonal and communication skills.

**Comments:** The technical writer will be supporting Managing Director, and 5 Master Account Receivables staff members with varying responsibilities from Project Planning and Management and Project presentations to Technical Analysis and Design and CLER's. Both formal and informal papers will be needed with a professional touch including graphics, tables, charts and schematics. Also, White papers will be written covering technical research results

**Compensation:** Open

**Contact:** Tara Johnston

Cook Systems International, Inc.

**Phone:** (800) 266-5185

**Fax:** (901) 260-1642

**E-mail:**

patp00+ado@net-temps.com

---

### Technical Writer Senior Level

**Duration:** 1 - 3 months

Memphis, TN

**Platform:** Windows

**Skill Set:** Macromedia Director  
Graphic Artist and Web Designer

**Software required:** Adobe  
Illustrator, Photoshop, Pagemaker  
PowerPoint and HTML.

**Preferred:** Front Page, Java and

Macromedia Dreamweaver  
**Compensation:** Open  
**Contact:** Tara Johnston  
Cook Systems International, Inc.

**Phone:** (800) 266-5185  
**Fax:** (901) 260-1642  
**E-mail:** |  
patp00+ado@net-temps.com

## Technical Writer



**Duration:**  
9 - 12 months  
Memphis, TN

The contractor will be supporting the managing director, & 5 Master Account Receivables staff members with varying responsibilities from Project Planning & Management & Project presentations to Technical Analysis and Design.

### Requirements:

Bachelor's degree/equivalent (Technical Writing Degree Preferred): 5 to 7 years of experience in technical writing in the particular area or field with whom they are being contracted. Ability to interpret engineering blueprints, writing diagrams and schematics, and/or engineering specifications (including hardware/software development, database, financial, project), where applicable.

Word processing skills using software packages for schematics, text or graphics, charts, data flows, presentations in a MS windows environment, & project management tracking. Experience Technical Research & Analysis Strong interpersonal & communication skills

**Compensation:** Call for Details  
**Contact:** Jonathan Morgan at SCB

Computer Technology  
**Phone:** (800) 221-1640 Ex 4770  
**Fax:** (800) 533-0786  
**E-mail:**  
scbtn00+ado@net-temps.com  
**Source:** Net-Temps

---

*from The Commercial Appeal*  
*www.gomemphis.com*  
**Sunday, April 16, 2000**

Thriving East Memphis agency with many new clients looking for self-motivated, versatile individuals for the following positions:

- Public Relations Writer
- Copywriter
- Account Manager
- Research/Marketing
- Manager
- Media Buyer

Please fax resume to:  
*WestRogers Advertising*  
Attn.: Amy Smith  
(901) 682-0605  
or e-mail to:  
**westrog@mindspring.com**

---

## Research Assistant I

Education & Development Specialist position funded by grants, contracts & other resources with the Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State University.

**Responsibilities include:** facilitate workshops & conferences for state & local government officials; identify training needs & researching, designing & implementing training programs; ensure that classroom interaction is of highest quality; build relationships with internal & external clients; manage & track training database; coordinate & direct projects, contracts & grants; write grant proposals (including budgets, forms & proposal), technical briefs,

articles & final reports; conduct research & analyze data resulting from that research; and make presentations for contract & grant fulfillment. This position requires excellent communication skills in oral & written contracts with citizen groups & state, local & federal government officials.

**Qualifications:** Master's degree in Public Policy Administration or a combination of Bachelor's degree & education/experience in a related field. Salary will be commensurate with qualifications & experience. Applications will be accepted through May 15, 2000, or until the position is filled.

**To apply:** Submit a letter of application, current resume, unofficial transcripts & three letters of recommendation to:  
Dr. W. Martin Wiseman, Director,  
John C. Stennis  
Institute of Government  
P.O. Drawer LV  
Mississippi State, MS 39762.

---

## Web Designer



Talented, experienced web designer sought to help lead expansion of newspaper web site.

Successful applicant will be able to create compelling, innovative, exciting banners and client web sites. Strong art, design and technical skills essential. Ability to multi task and work in small team setting necessary.

Linda Steen, Employment Manager  
The Commercial Appeal  
495 Union Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38103  
**steen@gomemphis.com.**

# Technical Writing 2000

by Jackie Walters, President-elect

Many great products have failed for lack of understandable documentation. Technical documentation does its job if it tells the readers those things they need to learn to use the product effectively. Can things really be this straight forward? They can if the writer understands both the product and its users.



In high-tech technical writing, the trick lies in mastering three things that are often worlds apart:

- Understanding how to use the product (which often requires an engineering background).
- Understanding the reader's knowledge of the subject matter.
- Knowing how to write in a way that is clear, organized, and in a form that is accessible to the reader (when first encountered and when used as a reference).

As technical writers we learn to be flexible and continue to build the critical skills needed to stay ahead of the market. Successful writers are able to cover all three bases. In the old school, that I came from, we often used two or three people (such as an engineer, a marketer, and a writer) to hold down the three requirements. This process was fraught with peril: peril of miscommunication, delays, and disagreements. Organizations often added a fourth person to manage the other three, making things even worse. The high-tech technical writers of 2000 are able to do the job of three, and often four people,

saving companies time and money, while enabling organizations to meet critical deadlines. 🐶

## Writer's Block

from Edmond H. Weiss,

Writing Remedies:  
Practical Exercises  
for Technical Writing  
(Oyrx Press, 1990)



## Misused Terms

Beware of commonly misused terms. Whenever you suspect - even slightly - that you are misusing a word, look it up in a reliable dictionary. Here are some words that are misused daily:

Suspect Word	Wrong Meaning	Right Meaning
comprises	makes up	includes
decompose	disassemble	decay
due to	because	caused by
embattled	harassed	ready to fight
enormity	hugeness	evil
hopefully	we hope	with hope
infer	imply	deduce
presently	now	soon
transparent	invisible	obvious
verbal	oral	in words
verbiage	text, words	wasted words



## What's New in Your World?

by Amy Hollister,  
Editor

Sherri Yeager-Williams and her husband, Mark recently celebrated the birth of their son, Andrew Jonathan. The baby boy decided to arrive early (March 23rd) and surprise everyone, especially Sherri. Andrew weighed a healthy 7 pounds, 7 ounces and measured 19 1/4 inches. Sherri and Andrew are reportedly doing well and Andrew is adjusting well to his new "siblings"; three cats and a dog! 🐶

## About Newsbrief

by Amy Hollister, Editor

Newsbrief, the publication of the Mid-South Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, is mailed monthly to all Chapter members. Its goals are to:

- Help create a sense of community among Chapter members
- Involve members in professional development and service
- Attract potential members by making them aware of the benefits of Chapter membership
- Provide a link between the University and the workplace

### Submissions:

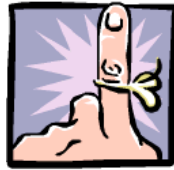
To submit an article, contact Amy Hollister at [abhollister@fedex.com](mailto:abhollister@fedex.com) or call 395-4088.

### Circulation:

Visitors to Chapter meetings can request three complimentary issues of Newsbrief. Subscriptions are available for \$12 per year. 🐶

## Meeting Reminder

by Amy Hollister, Editor



**What:** May Meeting

**Topic:** Communications Management:  
A Critical Project Management Knowledge Area

**Speaker:** Roger Day  
Manager, PowerPad Project Management  
Systems Design and Development  
FedEx Ground Operations

**Where:** Barnhill's Country Buffet  
857 South White Station  
(Cost of buffet, drink, and 15% gratuity is \$8.00)



**Date:** **Thursday, May 4th** (Note new day!)

**Time:** 11:30 AM

**STC** society for technical communication

### 2000 Chapter Officers

#### National Chapter

Society President ..... Mary R. Wise  
Director Sponsor ..... Michelle Ratcliffe

#### Mid-South Chapter

President ..... Jackie Walters  
Phone: ..... 395-5633  
E-mail: ..... jlwalters@fedex.com  
Vice President ..... Paige Marshall  
Phone: ..... 755-2164  
E-mail: ..... marshall@softwarearnings.com

Secretary &  
Newsletter Editor ..... Amy Hollister

Phone: ..... 395-4088  
E-mail: ..... abhollister@fedex.com

Treasurer ..... Ferris Hooshmand

Phone: ..... 395-4033  
E-mail: ..... fhooshmand@fedex.com

Jobs Coordinator ..... Teresa Johnson

Phone: ..... 365-7774 ext. 366  
E-mail: ..... tjohnson@eoncc.com

Public Relations ..... George Grider

Phone: ..... 360-4002  
E-mail: ..... ggrider@fedex.com

Publications Competition  
Coordinator ..... Steve Gillespie

Phone: ..... 395-3237  
E-mail: ..... sgillespie@fedex.com

Web master ..... Joe Lakey

Phone: ..... 395-4972  
E-mail: ..... jhlakey@fedex.com

**STC** society for technical communication

Amy Hollister  
2710 Nonconnah Boulevard  
Memphis, TN 38132

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

