

Newsbrief

The newsletter of the Mid-South Chapter of
the Society for Technical Communication

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The Strange New World of the Online Copyeditor

By Tammy Houck Talbott

“Language is changing,” said Tony Long, copy chief at Wired.com. Particularly language used in an online world. Although usage and tone have become more casual, even conversational, in online publications, Long stresses still putting the English language first. During a web-based seminar on Thursday, September 17, 2009, Long discussed how copyediting is changing for an online audience. Sixteen people attended the webinar offered through the Mid-South chapter of STC.



Though there are many language short cuts to be found in the online environment, basic rules should still be observed. Sentences should start with a capital letter and end with punctuation, so “iPod” at the beginning of a sentence is “IPod” and a period follows a link placed at the end of a sentence. Acronyms should not be longer than five letters and should be spelled out on first usage. Long also warned against made-up words that are permeating the online culture. He included “tweet-ups,” which relates to Twitter.com, and the name for this presentation, “webinar,” in his list.

Long pointed out a number of ways in which the job of the copyeditor has evolved with the move from print-based to online publications. For one, a much quicker turnaround is

expected. As soon as a story is ready, it is published online. The online magazine is changed almost continually. Wired.com may post up to three new stories in an hour, Long related.

The quicker pace also applies to readers. With so many more choices only a click away, the online reader’s attention span isn’t very long. Therefore, stories written for the web have to be shorter. One method of accommodating this is to use links rather than description in writing.

An advantage of the online publishing environment is that it is easier to correct errors. A mistake can be caught and fixed quickly, as if it had never occurred. However, Long notes that an error should be flagged, and it should be indicated that a *see Online Copyeditor, page 4*

In This Issue

The Strange New World of the Online Copyeditor.....	1
President’s Column.....	2
July Luncheons	3
Upcoming Events.....	4



STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media so that both businesses and customers benefit from safe, appropriate, and effective use of products, information, and services.

President's Column

by Kelly Schrank

Hello Mid-South Chapter members and friends!

I feel privileged to address you again in the chapter newsletter. The Mid-South Chapter relies on this newsletter to communicate future events, summarize past events that you may have missed, and share knowledge about the technical communication industry. This is just one of the tools that we use to network, which is increasingly becoming a critical part of being successful.

As many of us who have been laid off can tell you, the time to network is NOT after you have lost your job, especially in this economy. Everyone should always be networking and staying abreast of information in their profession. That's why you should use the Mid-South Chapter as an outlet to maximize your networking opportunities in these simple ways:

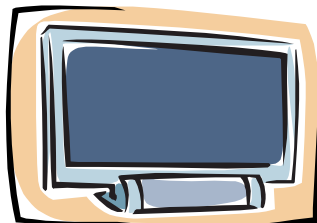
- Publish an article in the newsletter. This is an easy way of making yourself known and interacting with the chapter. You have valuable experience and knowledge to share about your profession, and we are eager to hear you. Just send an e-mail to Ken with your idea for an article or with your written article, and he will work with you to get it published.
- Get involved in our LinkedIn group. You can post discussions, ask questions,

share information, and get to know the chapter's members and friends. Increasing your LinkedIn network is an excellent strategy for getting your name out there.

- Go to meetings and get to know other attendees. If you're craving something less virtual, then going to meetings is for you. All of our meetings for the rest of 2009 have been planned and are featured in this newsletter and highlighted on our website. To try to accommodate everyone's schedules, we are alternating networking luncheons and evening program meetings in 2009.

- Volunteer for the chapter. This is the BEST way to get to know people in the industry and doesn't take that much time. We have several positions open that put you in direct contact with the community, including Membership Manager and Public Relations Manager. Also, everyone on the administrative council is employed in various disciplines, so you'll be interacting with people at several companies that may be hiring. They could recommend you for that new job.

As always, if you're interested in getting involved or if you have ideas for the chapter, e-mail me. I look forward to seeing all of you at future meetings! ✍️



Newsbrief is the quarterly newsletter of the Mid-South Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Our chapter serves the Memphis, TN and surrounding areas. We create the newsletter to do the following:

- Involve members and visitors more fully in professional 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 to *Newsbrief*, please contact the newsletter editor with your ideas.

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Advertising

Advertisements relevant to technical communicators are accepted. Base prices are listed below, and discounts will be given for ads that run in at least two consecutive issues. For more information, contact the newsletter editor.

Full page.....	\$60
Half page.....	\$40
Quarter page.....	\$20
Business card.....	\$10

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July Luncheons

Two STC networking luncheons were held in July. The Midtown Luncheon was held July 14 at Bosco's Squared (top photo). In attendance were Michelle Balbiani, Kathy Brooks, Michael Huggins (standing), Kelly Schrank, and David Armbruster.

The East Memphis Luncheon was held on July 16 at Half Shell (bottom photo). Becky Derych, Anna Acerra, Leanne Logan, and Kelly Schrank were in attendance.

Networking luncheons are a

good opportunity to meet your technical communications colleagues and discuss upcoming events for the chapter. We hope you will attend the October Networking Luncheon at Bosco's Squared on October 14 at 11:00 A.M. 📍





Online Copyeditor

continued from page 1
change from an earlier version was made.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) was a topic that garnered much discussion among seminar participants. Long includes SEO as part of the copyeditor's duties, but acknowledges that it isn't a difficult task. "Be mindful of using logical words that will put you in the search engines," he said. Some tips from Wired.com:

- include four to five links in a 500-word story;
- use two- to four-word phrases as links rather than single words;
- do not use "click here";
- avoid stringing several links together, one after the other; and
- remember that search engines pick up words to the left and right of the link as well.

Some basic knowledge of HTML is helpful to the online copyeditor. Long suggested www.webmonkey.com for an online tutorial.

The hour-and-a-half session concluded with Long fielding questions from participants. He offered to share Wired.com's style guide. I did receive a copy; drop me a line if you would like me to pass it along.

A freelance editor and writer, working primarily with health care-related publications, Tammy Houck Talbott is looking to re-enter the full-time work force. You can contact her at tammy.talbott@comcast.net. ✍️

Upcoming Events

October Luncheon

- October 14, 2009
- 11 A.M. – noon
- Bosco's Squared
2120 Madison Ave.

Live STC Web Seminar

- *Moving Unstructured Content to Structured Content*
- November 18, 2009
- 12:00 – 1:30 P.M.
- Presented by Bernard Aschwanden

November Program Meeting

- *Document Design*
- November 18, 2009
- 5:45 P.M.
- Presented by Loel Kim, U of M
- The Central Library
3030 Poplar Ave.

December Luncheon

- December 16, 2009
- 11 A.M. – noon
- Half Shell
7825 Winchester Rd.

