



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Com•mu•ni•qué

Middle Tennessee Chapter

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Chapter Holds Consensus Judging for Partner Entries

By Jennifer Lambe, Publications Competition Manager

On December 1, 2001, the Middle Tennessee Chapter (MTC) Competition Judges met to hold Consensus Judging at the offices of Tanner Corporate Services, Inc. Seven teams of three members each met for two hours to evaluate and determine award levels for the fourteen entries sent by the Northeast Ohio Chapter (NEO).

Prior to the Consensus Judging, MTC provided the judges with a training packet of instructions for individual judging and their assigned NEO entries. Each judge reviewed his or her documents and assessed them against appropriate STC Technical Publications Standards.

The Consensus Judging brought team members together to determine a single assessment for each entry. Of the fourteen NEO entries, MTC judges awarded one document with a Distinguished Award, four documents with an Excellence Award, and seven documents with a Merit Award.

The Chapter would like to thank the 21 judges for their hard work and participation in the competition. The MTC judges are as follows:

- Matt Conley, Gallagher Financial Systems
- Jeff Corzine, HCA
- Pat Cosky, Tanner Corporate Services

- Christina Dunn, HCA
- David Dunn, Freelance Contractor
- Nancy Garrett, Tanner Corporate Services
- Jason Hunt, ClientLogic
- Karen Ingram, Deloitte Consulting
- Miles Kimball, Murray State University
- Laura Liles, HCA
- Shannon McCue, Gallagher Financial Systems
- Mark Marshall, Tanner Corporate Services
- Jonathan Meadows, Freelance Contractor
- Judith Meyer, HCA
- Mike Mini, EDS
- Amy Oldham, Gallagher Financial Systems
- Holly Quick, Tanner Corporate Services
- Sharon Smith, Freelance Contractor
- Beth Tanner, Tanner Corporate Services
- Melissa Weber, Gallagher Financial Systems
- Brian Wilkins, Square D

The MTC Competition Managers also deserve recognition for their hard work in planning and holding the competition. The Competition Managers are Pam Livingston (Deloitte & Touche), Margret Buxkamper (HCA), Melissa Weber (Gallagher Financial Systems),



Photo courtesy of Rita Johnson and Holly Quick

Nancy Garrett and Jennifer Lambe caught taking a break.

and Holly Quick and Jennifer Lambe (Tanner Corporate Services, Inc.).

In This Issue...

Laurent Shares Her Vision for STC . 2
 Make a Difference! Vote for Your Future! 3
 MTC Receives Results of Competition Entries 4
 STC Telephone Seminar. 5
 Telephone Seminar Schedule . . . 5
 Two Candidates for STC Secretary Weigh In 6
 Presentation Tips for Technical Communicators 7
 2001 Salary Survey Points to Financially Rewarding Career Field 8

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Laurent Shares Her Vision for STC

By J. Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor and Candidate for Second Vice President of STC

Last November while attending the STC Region 4 Conference in Michigan, I visited the Henry Ford Museum. During that visit I learned a lot about Ford and the automobile he made so successful. Many people have the mistaken idea that Henry Ford was an inventor, but Ford did not invent the automobile. He didn't even "invent" the assembly line.

So what did Henry Ford do? He learned from other people's experiences as well as his own. He took risks. He saw failure as a lesson, and he applied everything he learned to perfect the product, the process, and the policies that shaped the American automobile industry. In short, he was a great *innovator*. And because he was so willing to share the lessons he learned, he became an inspiration to many others.

I am running for the office of second vice president of STC because in my own way, I want to do as Henry Ford did. I want to use the lessons that I have learned in my 25 years in management and leadership to create innovations that will make STC vital to the careers of all technical communicators in the many fields within our profession.

One of the more innovative things that I've done in my three-year term as Director-Sponsor for Region 5 is to attend conferences in *every* region to meet our members and listen to their ideas. This "listening tour" has given me a greater understanding of the challenges facing the Society, its chapters, and our members.

STC members work in more diversified environments than ever before, with experience, skills, and talents that vary widely. Nonetheless, we share the desire to be recognized for our contributions to our workplace. I believe that STC can help members achieve this goal. By proactively promoting the profession of

technical communication, we can make a difference in the lives and careers of our members.

My strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Teaching members how to define the value they add to the products and services we provide, how to measure that value, and to add more value
- Continuing the innovative, proactive, and forward-thinking implementation of the branding and governance initiatives
- Ensuring that the STC board of directors becomes a policy-driven board
- Communicating more effectively with organizations outside our profession and with STC members and chapter leaders internally
- Providing better training for Society and chapter leaders
- Creating opportunities for members to learn so that they can become more successful in their careers.

With these strategies, and with experienced leadership and guidance, STC can become the catalyst that enables technical communicators to achieve the professional status they have earned. And when that is accomplished, we will have fulfilled my vision for STC to become an organization whose members feel that the Society is absolutely essential to their profession!

I believe that I am the candidate who is most qualified to provide the leadership necessary to achieve this vision for STC. This article does not provide the space for me to properly describe the experience and personal traits that qualify me, but you may find out more about my qualifications by visiting my website at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or by sending me an e-mail at slaurent@prodigy.net. ✍

Make a Difference! Vote for Your Future!

By Andrea L. Ames, STC Assistant to the President for Recognition and Candidate for Second Vice President of STC

The Vision

If elected, I will work for the next four years to raise our strategic value—both as individuals and as an industry—to the organizations for which we work.

My vision for the industry is one in which:

- Our main goal is to ensure users' success—not necessarily to write documentation or to coerce our users to read documentation
- We design and develop information to enable users to use products—not to fill in for the deficiencies in product design

As I've traveled around the country speaking with members, I've met many of you who share this vision. From my 17+ years of experience in the industry, my vast network of associates, and the strategic work I've done with various kinds of organizations, I'm convinced that this is the right vision. The question remains: How will it happen?

The Implementation

The move toward this vision has already begun—primarily via STC. As our new mission statement proclaims, we are certainly “designing the future of technical communication.”

To do this, I want to work with the Society as I have during my 15-year STC career to enable members of our industry to become leaders and to be recognized for that leadership—particularly within our organizations and among our employers' and clients' industries. Working with the Board of Directors, committee managers, and chapter leaders, I can support and maintain important programs—like branding and

governance—that are already working to move us in this direction. I can also work with other leaders to devise new initiatives to raise the visibility of STC and our industry, as well as help our employers and clients further recognize our value.

Why Me?

I've spent most of the past four to five years working to begin changing our industry to fit my vision. In my own career, I have focused on learning and developing skills, technologies, and tools to design and develop information for products and user experiences, rather than documentation deliverables. I am a technical communicator specializing in audience analysis, information and interaction design for product user interfaces and online assistance, usability, and user-centered product and information design and development process.

I used my term as Director-Sponsor (1998-2001) to learn as much about you and the Society as possible. I've also participated very actively in two very important Society initiatives: Integrated branding and Governance.

I've also served the Society extensively in other international-level positions and at the regional, local and chapter levels. And although I've spent a lot of time talking to members of the profession, I also draw from extensive experience of my own in the corporate world, academia, and government—both as a direct employee and as a consultant.

I hope you'll consider the future of your career and what you would like from your professional organization. Then I urge you to vote, as your vote does make a difference!

Contact Andrea at aames@pobox.com ✉

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MTC Receives Results of Competition Entries

By Jennifer Lambe, Publications Competition Manager

The Middle Tennessee Chapter (MTC) received 25 entries in response to the Call For Entries for the 2001 Technical Publications Competition. This was one more entry than last year's record-breaking (at least in recent years) number of entries.

The MTC entries were collected, catalogued, and sent to the Northeast Ohio Chapter for judging. MTC Competition Managers received the actual results of the judging in early January. However, specific document awards will not be disclosed until the February STC Technical Publications Competition Awards Banquet.

Of the 25 entries MTC submitted, one entry was awarded Best of Show, three entries were given a Distinguished Award, three entries were given an Excellence Award, and five entries were given a Merit Award.

The Chapter wishes to thank all of the members and/or companies who submitted entries. The NEO judges' comments should provide valuable insight on the things that worked in each document and, even more valuable, suggestions on what could make the documents better.

If you didn't submit a document in this year's competition, consider submitting an entry in the next competition. It's a cost-effective way to get feedback on your document and a great way to support your local chapter. ✍



Photo courtesy of Rita Johnson and Holly Quirk

MTC members gathered at Tanner Corporate Services for our chapter's consensus judging.



The Middle Tennessee Chapter cordially invites you to attend a banquet honoring the winners of the 2001 Technical Publications Competition.

Enjoy an entree of lemon-thyme chicken or eggplant Napoleon, hear an awards presentation from David L. Ambruster, former Society President, and view the award-winning entries.

Tuesday, February 12, 2002, 6:30 PM
Loews Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel
2100 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN

\$10—STC members, judges, entrants, and special guests
\$20—Non-STC members
Parking is \$3 for garage and \$5 for valet

Learn more about our speaker and his presentation at
<http://www.stcmidtenn.org/Feb12Speaker.htm>

RSVP by Feb. 5 at <http://www.stcmidtenn.org/rsvp/index.htm#>
or by calling 615-292-8686 or 615-344-8639.

STC Telephone Seminar:

“Building a Product, Manual and Website Using Customer-Focused Design.”
Presented by Basil White, January 16, 2002

By Jeff Klein, MTC Member

Thirty people sitting in a room, listening to a disembodied voice. Sounds like a seance, doesn't it? Actually, this was the first of six STC telephone seminars occurring over the next two months, designed to offer instruction and food for thought.

The presentation was made via telephone, and the audio was great. Everything could be heard very well, including the phone calls from listeners (despite occasional static). It rolled along with nary an interruption or technical problem.

The speaker, Basil White, was a mite dry and would have benefited from using specific, concrete examples. The only visual was a handout consisting of ten pages. More and better visuals would have helped this sort of seminar – why not video teleconferencing? Isn't this the 21st Century? I should note that, through the entire 90-minute program, I didn't see a single soul walk out.

The workshop was primarily intended for project managers of enterprise technology products, who want to implement low-cost usability assessment and customer-focusing tools to ensure that their product development plans meet unmet business needs and contribute efficiently to an overall enterprise architecture plan. (I'm quoting from the handout—no Steven Ambrose I.)

The objective for the workshop was “to teach information technology development teams a method for constructing a customer-focused plan for a product consisting of a goal hierarchy, a process flowchart and a product state table.” The demonstration was supposed to show these three models in the context of a sample product. This demonstration did

not occur, possibly due to time constraints.

The Schedule Of Activities began with Product Goals and Their Relationships, including How To Build A Goal Hierarchy. It weaved through User Processes and Their Relationships, Possible States of the Product; and finally, User-Focused, Goal-Directed [Documentation, Training, Customer Support, Online Help, Interface Design]. Unfortunately, there were no actual exercises in which the audience could partake, and I was not the only one disappointed by this.

Mr. White suggested that Goal Hierarchy could help with a customer support system, and this was clear from his flow chart. He explained how it could help improve customer support, by identifying where users have the most problems.

I'll admit, the subject matter was over my head, so I wasn't sure I was qualified to write a review. But when I queried folks afterward, three out of four told me they got little out of the conference as well. One person noted that, while it gave her a different perspective, she didn't feel it was any better than her normal way of working. She agreed that Mr. White's approach was sort of like reinventing the wheel.

This contention was further supported during the seminar, when Mr. White was fielding phone calls from listeners. One caller wondered how Mr. White's Goal Hierarchy was different from User Task Analysis. Mr. White allowed that they were similar, but argued that User Task Analysis is more detailed, while Goal Hierarchy is more abstract.

It would have been far more effective—and intriguing—if Mr. White had started with an example of a specific product or

model that failed, and then applied his Goal Hierarchy to show how the failure might have been averted.

Listening alone, I would have had a hard time staying interested. However, attending in a room with some thirty folks upped the dynamics and interest level for me. I clearly see the value in this kind of presentation, and anticipate the next one on February 20. ✍

Telephone Seminar Schedule

By Christina Dunn, Publicity Officer

Our chapter of STC is sponsoring four STC Telephone Seminars at the HCA Corporate Campus this quarter. If you are an STC member or an HCA employee, these seminars are FREE. If not, the cost for each seminar is only \$5. The seminar times are from 12:00–1:30. You can bring your lunch, and HCA is providing drinks and cookies.

Find the registration form, seminar details, and directions to the HCA seminar site at <http://www.stcmid Tenn.org/registration>. The next three seminars are:

Creating Effective Documentation Plans, February 20
http://www.stc.org/seminar_022002.html

Communicating Clarity: Make Your Technical Marketing Matter, March 6
http://www.stc.org/seminar_030602.html

Creating Usability Goals: Understanding What Usability Means to Your Users, March 20
http://www.stc.org/seminar_032002.html

Two Candidates for STC Secretary Weigh In

Andrew Malcolm

First, I'd like to ask you to vote for me for Secretary of STC. There's an old tale of a candidate who thanked his friend for voting for him, but his friend said, "I didn't vote for you." When asked why he said, "You never asked me and your opponent asked me and I said 'yes.'" Consider yourself asked.

I hope you will read the word-limited text that each STC member will receive with the ballot, and I'll try not to repeat that here.

The responsibilities of Secretary of STC are delineated in STC Bylaws (§IV.2.D) to be found in the annual directory issue of *Technical Communication*. [1] The duties are as—you suspect—to prepare, distribute and maintain the minutes of Society, Board and Executive Council meetings. [2] The Secretary also conducts official correspondence. [3] The Secretary is a member of both the Board and the Executive Council and in those roles is responsible to vote upon the issues brought before the Board or Council (§IV.2 and §IV.8). [4] There are also the traditional roles of [a] Manager of the Bylaws Committee as appointed by the President (§VI.1 and §VI.4.B) and [b] recorder of the discussion at the annual *STC Forum*.

[1] The Secretary must have the skill to record proceedings and to distill content into minutes. Thus, the Secretary needs both keyboarding and technical writing skills. My very first employment was with an office dictation equipment distributor and I acquired touch-typing skills long ago from a public school. Distilling content into understandable prose is what technical communicators do and I've won awards for technical communication. Distilling discussion into prose is a skill enhanced by experience. I've been a member of STC 38

years—the material you'll receive with the ballot tells of my STC and other professional society experience.

[2] The Secretary must from time-to-time also sign certain legal documents on behalf of the Society. Again, experience is a guide to this essentially review function. My experience and education as a licensed real estate salesman, director of two corporations, and zoning board member have given me valuable insight into legal document language. (I was licensed in California, 1964–67, served as director of corporations owning a Rochester, NY FM radio station and a New York City theater company, and I served on two zoning boards of appeals for an aggregate of more than ten years and chair of one for four and a half years.)

[3] As a member of both the Board and Executive Council, the Secretary must vote on the plethora of issues that appear before those bodies. Votes are guided by experience; I've attended about a dozen Board meetings and was present (but not voting) at the meeting at which the Board accepted the resignation of Curt Youngblood, Bill Stolgitis' predecessor (ca. 1982). At that time, it was proposed to have STC managed by an organization that manages several professional societies. (STC was managed by such an organization for a year before Curt Youngblood became Executive Director.) Your officers wisely chose to have STC continue to 'steer its own ship.'

[4a] In addition to the duties specifically proscribed by the Bylaws, the secretary is often assigned by the President to oversee the work of the Bylaws Committee just as other officers are assigned other committee oversight functions and Director-Sponsors oversee the chapters. I've had a good deal of experience with bylaw establishment and revision in other organizations including

the rather extensive bylaw creation and revision of the English Department at the Rochester Institute of Technology where I worked for 29 years.

[4b] A minor but significant traditional function of Secretary is the recording of the discussion at the annual conferences' *STC Forum*. At the *Forum*, members express their concerns and opinions—often passionately. Without minutes of these meetings, important issues and articulately expressed viewpoints might be lost. I pledge to accurately distill these discussions.

After having read all of that, I think you might ask, "what are your positions on various issues?" I would answer that I believe that STC should *stay the course*. We must be doing a lot of things right, or we would not have had our tremendous expansion in membership and annual conference attendance. When I joined STC, née STWP, our 'office' was the dining room of our executive director and his secretary was his wife. Conferences attracted a few hundred attendees, and conference program managers accepted papers to assure that presenters added to attendance! All of that changed with the policies we've followed, so I say, *stay the course*.

Guy K. Haas

I am a candidate for Secretary of the STC because I believe communication and attention to detail are vital.

The STC could do a better job of communicating with its membership. The Board of Directors does publish meeting summaries in a timely fashion, but sometimes upcoming decisions are not well-publicized. In most chapters, it is not difficult to attend a council meeting and keep abreast of issues. At the inter-

continued on page 7

continued from page 6

national level, the members have more limited access. The STC Forum at the annual conference is a once-a-year chance to raise issues and engage in dialogue, and the cost of participating is rather high unless you live nearby. I suggest that we need an electronic venue where members can discuss matters that will come before the Board—not award decisions, grants, and the like, but such items as certification, collaboration with other organizations, technical communications education, and member benefits. The Board or the staff could post a discussion topic, provide some background information, and allow interested members to ask questions and share viewpoints before the Board makes its decisions.

During the last three decades, I have served on the boards, councils, and bylaws committees of several organizations, including social and alumni groups, homeowners organizations, school and school district organizations, and my STC chapter. I often have served as secretary, as treasurer, as web master, and sometimes as presiding officer. Most of these bodies have had legal requirements about record keeping and reporting. I have sometimes drafted and often edited and amended the bylaws of the organizations in which I participated. Before becoming a technical communicator, I was a software developer, and served for several years on two programming language standards committees of the American National Standards Institute (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology). Please allow me to bring my detail-orientation to the office of STC Secretary.

You can reach me by email at gkhaas@usa.net. ✉

Presentation Tips for Technical Communicators

By Virginia Pryor, Newsletter Editor

On January 8, approximately eleven members gathered at HCA to enjoy snacks and beverages provided by the chapter and to hear Mary Dimmit and Christina Dunn's presentation about... well, how to give an effective presentation, and how to improve your public speaking skills.

Christina began the presentation, which included handouts of the Power Point slides she and Mary used, with the topic, "Take the Terror Out of Talk." As a member of Toastmasters since 1994, and President of HCA's Toastmasters club for two years, Christina has a wealth of experience in public speaking, and provided valuable tips on how to first get over stage fright, and then to practice your speech for an effective delivery.

Christina said that stage fright or nervousness is normal for anyone who is concerned about how well they will perform. But, she asserted, you can use it in a way that can be valuable. "The key is learning how to control it." She gave several techniques, such as practicing your speech, doing a mental rehearsal, and using relaxation techniques to reduce nervousness. Additionally, she said that breathing through the diaphragm "reduces shortness of breath and supports your voice." Always remember that the audience wants you to succeed.

To be fully prepared to give a speech, make sure you are aware of your physical surroundings, she said. Pay attention to the room conditions, microphones, and the layout of the room. Most importantly, practice, practice, practice so that you are comfortable and know your speech before you give it. Her rule of thumb: "Before you give a presentation, your speech should leave your lips at least three times; otherwise, it will not flow."



Mary Dimmit and Christina Dunn

Mary Dimmit, a Senior Manager of Controller Development in the CFO department, who has been at HCA since 1988, is renowned at HCA for her clear, concise, and well-designed Power Point presentations. She gave us all extremely helpful tips for designing effective presentations using this slide program.

She explained that your slides should be clear, relevant, interesting, and well-organized. The design should be simple, effectively use patterns and concepts, and the slides should flow and transition well. Her rule of thumb is the "6-6-6 Rule:" No more than six words per bullet, six bullets per slide, or six word slides in a row—blend your text and graphics.

Mary also gave some important "Do's and Don't's" to remember when giving a Power Point presentation. Don't read your slides or turn off all the lights. In either scenario, your audience is likely to lose interest, and will be less likely to actively take notes. Do say things to support your slide, end with a summary slide, and use easy language.

Finally, be sure to use contrast, with type size, style, grouping, color, and spacing, in order to clearly show the hierarchy of your concepts. ✉

Photo courtesy of Virginia Pryor.

2001 Salary Survey Points to Financially Rewarding Career Field

ARLINGTON, VA — Are you looking for a challenging career field that is financially rewarding? According to a recent survey, the technical writing and editing field may fit the bill.

The average salary and benefits for technical writers and editors in the United States and Canada continues to increase, according to the 2001 salary survey conducted by the Society for Technical Communication. The average salary is \$55,360 in the United States, up 6.8 percent from \$51,850 shown in the 2000 survey, and \$54,140 in Canada (in Canadian dollars), up 8.5 percent from \$49,910 in 2000.

STC conducts the salary survey each summer. This year, questionnaires were sent to more than 3,500 people in technical communication jobs. “The survey results show a career field with increasing financial compensation,” said Judith Glick-Smith, STC president. “Good technical writing is a skill employers are willing to pay for.”

The survey covers the responses of more than 1,200 technical writers and editors working in entry through senior-level/supervisory jobs across the U.S. and Canada. Notably, the survey shows a narrowing gap in salaries between men and women. The average salary for U.S. men is \$56,310 while that for women is \$54,860. In Canada, the average salary of Canadian men is \$56,580 and that of women is \$52,730 (Canadian dollars).

“The survey results show that female technical writers/editors in the U.S. earn 97 percent of what their male counterparts earn,” Glick-Smith pointed out. “In Canada, females earn 93 percent of their male counterparts. This smaller ‘gender gap’ points to financial opportunities for women in the growing field of technical communication.”

The U.S. Department of Labor statistics for 2000 show that among full-time

employees in all professions, women earn 76 percent of men’s salaries (Labor Force Statistics from Current Population Survey, Table 37; www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm). In Canada, 1998 figures for full time workers show women earning 72 percent of men’s salaries (Canadian Statistics, Average Earnings by Sex and Work Pattern; www.statcan.ca/English/pgdb/people/labor/labor01b.htm).

The complete 2001 Technical Communicator Salary Survey is available for free on the STC website at www.stc.org/salary/html.

Editor's Note: If you wish to interview experts in the technical communication field, STC can put you in contact with:

- Managers of technical communication departments at high tech companies,
- Educators in the technical communication field, and
- Leaders of STC.

The Society for Technical Communication is the world’s largest professional organization in its field with more than 23,000 members in 153 chapters world-

wide. STC members work as technical writers, editors, illustrators, managers, educators, translators, and other communicators who make technical information understandable and available to those who need it. Information about STC and its programs can be found at the STC website, www.stc.org. ✉

Congratulations

to the following Middle Tennessee Chapter members, who have recently attained Senior Member status:

- Courtney L. Johnson
- Adrienne R. Myres Utley

Feedback, suggestions, comments about the new online version of Communiqué? Please send all comments (and article ideas or submissions) to Virginia Pryor, Newsletter Editor (see the contact information on page 3).

Training Discount Available to Our Members

STC Members are eligible for a 15% discount in vendor-certified training from PUBSNET, including training on products such as Framemaker, Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Webworks Publisher...as well as technologies such as XML and Javascript. This discount is in effect only through June 30, 2002, and you must identify yourself at time of registration as a member of STC.

For a list of courses and seminars available, including the Masters Series at Boston University, check:
<http://www.pubsnet.com/training.asp>

Or contact PUBSNET at 978-649-8555, or by email at info@pubsnet.com.