



SOCIETY FOR
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Com•mu•ni•qué

Middle Tennessee Chapter

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Chapter Awards Our 2001 Technical Publications Competition Winners

By Virginia Pryor; list contributed by the Publications Competition Managers

On February 12, the Middle Tennessee Chapter convened at Loews Vanderbilt Plaza for our annual awards banquet, honoring the winning entrants of the Technical Publications competition.

Winning entries were displayed in the lobby outside the banquet room, where attendees drank complimentary punch or beverages from the cash bar and socialized before dinner. Following the dinner—which consisted of a salad, choice of a chicken or vegetarian entree, and sorbet for dessert—Dr. David Armbruster, our guest speaker from the Mid-South Chapter, discussed the effects of modern digitalization on single-sourcing and information archiving. For details about his speech, see the article on [page 3](#).

Congratulations to all our Chapter winners, who are as follows (for photos of all the winners, see the “[Competition Winners Gallery](#)” on [page 4](#)):

Merit

- Pamela Wesley, McLeod Software, *LoadMaster Enterprise Dispatch Administration Guide*
- Claudia Viken, Judith Meyer, and Janet Bell, HCA, *Working with ORB*
- Pete Larson and George Cassidy, Tanner Corporate Services, *BOA Direct Payments Initiation User Guide*

- Melissa Weber, Gallagher Financial Systems, *Comsquared Ascent Capture Training Manual*
- Laura Liles, HCA, *HealthStream Student Job Aid*

Excellence

- Cindy Kershner, Bill Swain, and Rita Johnson, Tanner Corporate Services, *The Guide: A Marketing and Public Relations Resource 2001*
- Joe Slagle, Lillian Hamilton, and Amy Oldham, Gallagher Financial Systems, *Gallagher Executive Summary*
- Amanda Gaston, Square D Company, *Primary High Current Injection Field Test Procedure for Modified Differential Ground Fault Protection Systems*

Distinguished

- Pat Cosky and George Cassidy, Tanner Corporate Services, and Quorum Health Resources, LLC, *The Learning Institute at Quorum Educational Offerings Catalog 2001*
- Christina Dunn and Judith Meyer, HCA, *Key Differences in Windows and Office 2000*
- Emily Parker and Tim Hunter, Square D Company, *Square D Multi-Link Structured Wiring System*
- Jane Russ, Becky Ploeger, and Brett Dye, Deloitte & Touche, *2002 Enrollment*

Best of Show

Jane Russ, Becky Ploeger, and Brett Dye, Deloitte & Touche, *2002 Enrollment* ✍



Photo courtesy of Virginia Pryor

Dr. David Armbruster and Chapter President Rita Johnson at the banquet

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Director-Sponsor Update

By Rob Houser, Region 3 Director-Sponsor

The Society's board of directors held their third meeting for the 2001-2002 year January 25-26 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Here are some of the items that affect the members of Region 3.

Awards and recognition

Chip Jones, Atlanta Chapter, was elected Associate Fellow of the Society.

Dr. Marjorie Davis, Mercer student Chapter, was chosen to receive the Jay R. Gould award for excellence in teaching.

Dr. Mary Sue MacNealy, Mid-South Chapter, was chosen to receive the Jay R. Gould award for excellence in teaching.

Grants and loans

A Special Opportunities Grant was approved for Dan Jones and Dan Voss for a study entitled "Marketing Technical Communication to High School Audiences: Creating a Tutorial for Teachers and Promoting a Writing Contest for Students." The grant will build on the great work that the Orlando Chapter has done educating students about the field of technical communication. When the study is complete, a report will be published in *Technical Communication*.

Name changes

The South Carolina Chapter changed its name to the South Carolina Midlands Chapter. This helps distinguish the three South Carolina Chapters by region: Carolina Foothills, South Carolina Midlands Chapter, and South Carolina Lowcountry Chapter.

Chapter realignment

The Transalpine Chapter was moved to Region 2 to consolidate international chapters into fewer regions. Region 3 now includes only chapters from the Southeastern United States.

New award program

A new Society-level award program was approved to recognize Special Interest Group (SIG) members for their outstanding work and dedication. This new program will be known as the Distinguished SIG Service Award (DSSA). The first awards will be selected by the board of directors and awarded next May at the annual conference in Nashville.

Standards organizations

The board of directors strongly supports a greater role for STC standards organizations such as IEEE, ISO, and W3C. As a result, they approved membership and will support delegate participation in the US Technical Advisory Group (an organization that plays a supportive advisory role for the creation of ISO standards). The board also approved delegate participation in the W3C (STC already is a member of that group).

Additional information

If you have any questions or want additional information about what's going on in STC, feel free to contact me (rob@userfirst.net). I look forward to continuing as your Director-Sponsor for the next year and a half. ✍

Highlights of Dr. David Armbruster's Speech

By Jennifer Lambe, Publications Competition Manager

Dr. David Armbruster was the guest speaker for the Middle Tennessee STC Technical Publications Awards Banquet, held at the Lowes Vanderbilt Plaza on February 12. Dr. Armbruster stressed that the publications showcased at the awards banquet were important in order to keep the scientific and technical community from having to "re-invent the wheel." He stressed that good writing and editing is often invisible, and that peer recognition, such as the awards banquet, is important for that reason. He also praised the judges for their work during the competition. "Judging creates opportunities for learning new techniques and creative solutions to communication problems," he said.

As the main focal point of his speech, Dr. Armbruster posed thought-provoking questions of how modern digitalization will affect the emerging industry trend of single-sourcing information. He defined single-sourcing as the "encoding, archiving, and accessing of information."

Some of the current issues that impact archival and access of information are:

- **Determining how important it is to document and record our history.** Dr. Armbruster referenced a drug study performed in 2001 at St. Johns University by a doctor who had written a protocol for a drug study. The doctor researched existing information for any known drug interactions; however, during the research process, the doctor missed an article written in the 1960's, which described a dangerous drug interaction. As a result of this oversight, a study participant died. The doctor missed the article because it wasn't archived.
- **The Internet has complicated information access.** Some peer-reviewed journals refuse to publish any information that has already

appeared on the Web, such as draft dissertations, because the journals only want to publish *new* material.

- **Access is not universal.** Many research libraries are dropping journal subscriptions because their budgets haven't kept pace with subscription rate increases. In addition, access to some resources is limited to campus addresses, others are available only to libraries, and in some cases, access is restricted to one or two terminals on campus.
- **Most scientific and technical information does not exist online and it never will.** Time and cost constraints prevent old or outdated information from being digitized. In essence, background data that led to current conclusions is not available in an electronic format.
- **How to determine "what" should be archived.**
- **Who should determine the final version of an online document?** How will the reader know if a document is the final version? When a document is updated, should we remove the previous version?
- **If an electronic journal is discontinued, you don't have (digitized) back issues aren't usually available to readers, as is the case with paper-based journals.**
- **Who should be responsible for archiving?** Professional societies? The government? Libraries?
- **Media Obsolescence can make information inaccessible.** For example, information created in obsolete versions of software or saved on a 5-inch floppy disk. How do we know whether we will be able to access current electronic information 10 or 15 years from now?
- **Currently, there are no archiving standards.** ✍

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Competition Winners Gallery



*Melissa Weber
Gallagher Financial*



*George Cassidy and Pat Cosky
Tanner Corporate Services, Inc.*



*Christina Dunn and Judith Meyer
HCA*

All photos courtesy of Virginia Pryor.



*Pamela Wesley (right)
McLeod Software*



*Laura Liles
HCA*



*Amanda Gaston
Square D*



*Rita Johnson
Tanner Corporate Services*



*Emily Parker and Tim Hunter
Square D*



*Amy Oldham
Gallagher Financial*



*Jane Russ and Becky Ploeger
Deloitte & Touche*

Remembering Dr. Leonard

By Catherine Nance

Way back in 1993 I was a recent college graduate embarking on a career in technical communication.

The company I worked for, Square D, and my manager, Eddie Macon, created a supportive environment for my growth as a technical writer. So, when I asked to attend the East Tennessee Chapter's Practical Conference on Communication that year, they said yes. I didn't realize what an impact the conference would have.

At that conference I met David Leonard, a professor from Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a college I should have heard of, but hadn't. He told me he was in the process of creating a master's program there. I mentioned that I would love to go to graduate school, but there weren't a lot of opportunities in my field. He took my card and said he'd let me know how things turned out. I thought, "Yeah, right."

About a year later Dr. Leonard called unexpectedly to offer me the opportunity to attend graduate school through a new-fangled program called distance learning. Dr. Leonard's new program, the Master of Science in Technical Communication (MSTCO), was ready to take students. Because this one forward-thinking technical communicator saw the need for a distance master's program in technical communication, I was able to continue working while attending graduate school. In 1997 I received an M.S. through the program.

Dr. Leonard recently passed away after a long battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In his too-brief career, he made many contributions both to academia and to the field of technical communication.

In addition to designing and developing the MSTCO program, he served as an instructor/facilitator for classes in the

program's four modules. He was also past president of Atlanta's STC chapter and presented at numerous professional conferences.

In industry, he provided management consulting to 150 Fortune 500 and other companies in Electronic Information, Knowledge Transfer, and Usability.

He also wrote several books and many articles, including:

- ***Multimedia and the Web from A to Z*** (with Dr. Patrick M. Dillon). 2nd ed.: Oryx Press, 1998.
- ***Using the Web for Graduate Courses in Technical Communication for Distance Learners***, Technical Communication; Society for Technical Communication: November 1996.

Dr. Leonard received his B.A. from Miami University of Ohio, and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

Mercer University is establishing a memorial scholarship in Dr. Leonard's name that will be awarded annually to an undergraduate or graduate student seeking a degree in technical communication. The scholarship will be based on financial need and an application essay.

As you might imagine, establishing this scholarship requires money. If you would like to make a donation, please send it to the address below. If you would like to find out more about the undergraduate and graduate programs in Technical Communication offered at Mercer, please visit their web site:

www.mercer.edu.

Donations to the David Leonard Scholarship may be sent to:

University Advancement
Mercer University
Macon, GA 31207

Editor's Note: The Middle Tennessee Chapter is donating \$100 to the scholarship fund.

For more information on the undergraduate program, visit http://www.mercer.edu/engineering/UNDERGRAD_PROGRAMS/TCO/tcodefault.htm

For more information on the graduate program and distance learning, visit http://www.mercer.edu/engineering/GRAD_PROGRAMS/tco.htm

Catherine Nance is a technical communicator trapped in the body of a project manager at Deloitte & Touche LLP. Please call her at 615.882.7651 if you would like more information about Mercer's programs, Dr. Leonard, or the memorial scholarship. ✍

New Public Relations Resource Website

www.aboutpr.com

is a new public relations website that offers free public relations information: articles, newsletter, tips, a Q&A with PR experts, case histories, templates and samples of PR documents, a PR glossary, and PR news.

Check it out for your public relations needs.

Telephone Seminar: Creating Effective Documentation Plans

By Melissa Weber, Publications Competition Manager

On February 20, I decided to use my 12:00 lunch break to listen to John Hedtke's presentation on how to create effective documentation plans for all documentation. This is a topic that could easily have been a week-long course at a university, but Mr. Hedtke did an excellent job at conveying noteworthy information in about an hour.

His presentation covered the reasons for creating a *documentation plan* before starting a documentation project. A documentation plan is essentially a proposal for the purpose, content, and time line for lengthy documentation. Documentation plans are used especially in project management areas to determine resource availability, establish time lines, and assign tasks.

To summarize, an effective documentation plan answers the five W's and one H for documentation creation:

- Why does the documentation need to be written?
- Who needs to use the documentation?
- What is the content of the document?
- When is the documentation going to be complete?
- Where is the final document going to be produced?
- How is the documentation going to be written?

He went on to say that a documentation plan serves many purposes. The following are four of the most important ones:

1. Establishes credibility

Since technical communicators obtain information from various sources, they

are able to create detailed plans for the final documentation. Therefore, the recipients of the finished documentation can be assured that the final project will contain what they asked for, and more.

2. Used as a political tool

The documentation plan can be used as a contract (although not binding) between departments involved in a documentation project. So, in many cases, the documentation plan serves as the basis of an argument when "scope creep" occurs.

All too often, technical communicators don't know where they're going with their documentation. Documentation plans establish the "where" of your excursion and, if you use them, also help you out with the "how."

3. Vital to the success of any type of documentation

Because a documentation plan contains a summary of the document's contents, its purpose, and even information about the format and layout, you and all involved in the plan's approval know what to expect in the resulting work.

3. Measures future plans

Documentation plans provide a baseline against which future plans can be measured. If you have many plans, you can accurately predict how long future

projects will take, what resources are necessary, and the type of information you need to gather.

At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Hedtke made a simple statement that I will never forget: "It doesn't matter how you get there if you don't know where you're going." All too often, technical communicators don't know where they're going with their documentation. Documentation plans establish the "where" of your excursion and, if you use them, also help you out with the "how."

This was a worthwhile lunch break. Not only did I learn new, invaluable information from Mr. John Hedtke's presentation, I got a cookie just for being there. I encourage everyone to attend these seminars. Not only do you learn a lot, you also get a cookie.

References

Peopleware: Productive Projects and Teams, by Tom Demarco and Timothy Lister

Managing Your Documentation Projects, by JoAnn Hackos

For notes, you can email John Hedtke at john@hedtke.com. ✉