

# com • mu • ni • que

society for technical communication

1997

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## Meet the Officer Candidates at Our May Chapter Meeting

*By Connie Williams  
Chapter President*

Following the last newsletter, several of our members have volunteered to be on the ballot for offices next year. There is a little more time to put your name on the ballot, and as you will note, we are still looking for a candidate for Vice President, Employment.

The Employment Vice President provides a service to local STC members and to anyone in the technical communication community who is seeking a job or recruiting applicants for a vacant position.

Margie Myers, our current employment officer, answers phone and mail queries about openings, posts announcements of positions in the monthly newsletter, reviews sources of local job information, and helps orient newcomers to the technical communication job market in Middle Tennessee.

I'm sure she will be happy to talk with you in more detail if you are interested.

*continued on next page*

### Don't Miss the May Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 20

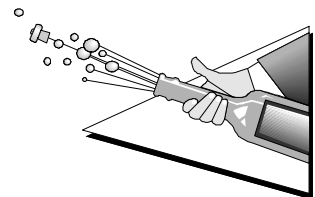
Time: 6 p.m. dinner

Where: Rio Bravo

3015 West End Avenue

What: Election  
End-of-Year Blast!

See page 2 for directions.



## Com•mu•ni•qué

c/o Connie Williams, President  
4022 Sells Drive  
Hermitage, TN 37076

### Chapter Officers & Board

President  
Connie Williams (615) 882-7929

Vice President/Publicity  
Mary Helen Clarke (615) 297-2969

Vice President/Employment  
Margie Myers (615) 366-2608

Treasurer  
Greg Hinkle (615) 882-7913

Membership  
Tim Hunter (615) 366-2604

Newsletter Editor  
Shannon Thurman (615) 882-7613

Publications Competition  
Jim Giordano (615) 287-3583  
Kathy Collins (615) 287-3343

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Submissions are welcome in hard copy or in ASCII text. Send to Shannon Thurman, Deloitte & Touche, 4022 Sells Drive, Hermitage, TN 37076-2930 or to sthurman@dtus.com.

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(Please recycle—we do.)

## . . . Meet the Officer Candidates

*continued from page one*

Here are the candidates:

### President

**Shannon Thurman**  
Deloitte & Touche

### Vice President, Publicity

**Mary Helen Clarke**  
Tanner Corporate Services

### Vice President, Employment

?

### Treasurer

**Greg Hinkle**  
Deloitte & Touche

### Membership Manager

**Tim Hunter**  
Square D

### Newsletter Editor

**Jim Giordano**  
Square D  
**Pam Livingston**  
Tanner Corporate Services

### Publications Competition Manager

**Kathy Collins**  
Square D  
**Margie Myers**  
Square D

### Chapter Web Site Manager

**Jacqui Gross**  
Deloitte & Touche  
**Carol Jaquith**  
Deloitte & Touche

Please send me a voicemail or e-mail message by May 16 if you are interested in any of the above positions and I'll make sure you are added to the ballot. This is a sincere request for your service, not just an attempt to build up the ballot. For offices in which we have more than one volunteer, we will find a role for the runner-up, either as a co-officer, as in the case of the publications competition manager in recent years, or as an understudy who wants to gain experience.

Please consider that our chapter leadership will be stronger if we add officers from businesses other than Tanner, D&T, and Square D. Although these organizations have provided considerable support for our chapter in recent years, there is much to be gained from the diverse corporate cultures represented within our chapter membership.

You will have a great opportunity to meet the officer candidates at the May meeting and cast your vote.

## Directions to Rio Bravo

Take I-440 towards Memphis and exit at West End, east. Turn right onto West End; cross Blakemore Avenue. The Rio Bravo parking lot is almost immediately to your right.

# Currents '97: Taking You Online

by Margret Buxkamper

The Atlanta STC chapter's Currents '97 Conference April 4 began with a one-day workshop by Dr. JoAnn Hackos, "Downsizing Your Paper and Online Documentation—a Minimalist Approach." Over 100 participants attended the workshop.

Catherine Nance, Frances Page, and I attended from the Middle Tennessee chapter, joining representatives from chapters all over the Southeast. Dr. Hackos, a technical communication expert and CEO of Comtech, has practiced the principles of minimalism in her own company for many years. She emphasized the fact that minimalism is not downsizing.

It is not just about reducing the volume of paper. Instead, minimalism is an approach to communication that emphasizes doing rather than reading. Although the outcome is often a reduction in paper, that is not the goal. Some of the methods she suggested for designing streamlined, focused documentation included these:

- Don't distract users with lengthy descriptions of the system.
- Give users immediate actions to perform to get them involved.
- Be sure the instructions you give users relate to the work they do.
- Separate information into different types such as purpose statements, actions, feedback, user options, consequences, and description. Use the different types consistently.
- Recognize the different user levels—novice, advanced beginner, competent performer, proficient user, and expert.
- Arrange information so users at different levels can easily access the types appropriate for their level.
- Avoid clouding instructions with pseudo-tasks that have no meaning to users.

Conversations with other attendees during breaks brought out two things we all had in common. The first was a concern for how we could find ways to observe users at their work—we had learned that this is a prerequisite for producing focused, useful documentation. The second was the realization that minimalism means hard work for the writer. There are no magic formulas.

As the workshop ended, however, we realized that even without a magic formula, streamlining our documentation could be a reality. Dr. Hackos had given us something more important than a formula. She had given us tools and a vision. It is up to us to let the vision inspire and empower us to use those tools.



## Society Publishes Two New Books

STC recently released two new books: *International Dimensions of Technical Communication*, edited by Deborah Andrews, and *Defining Technical Communication*, edited by Dan Jones.

*Dimensions* consists of eight essays, all previously unpublished, designed to help professional communicators think globally and take advantage of emerging technology.

The essays address a broad audience, including practitioners, managers, training consultants, and technical writers. Teachers and students will also find them useful.

*Defining* includes many of the best articles on defining technical communication published over the past thirty-five years.

It provides students, teachers, and professional communicators with many insights into the distinctive qualities of technical communication.

Both books sell for \$20 to members, \$30 to nonmembers. For more information, call the Society office at [pubs@stc-va.org](mailto:pubs@stc-va.org).



## Regional News and Views

By Mark Hanigan  
Director-Sponsor, Region 3

Well, for me, this is hello for the last time as your director-sponsor. I have so much to tell you in this last, short column that I hardly know where to begin. Oh wait; yes I do. I can begin by saying "Thank You."

Thank you for sharing with me your successes and aspirations. Thank you for inviting me into your chapters, and to some extent, into your lives. Thank you for your hard work and dedication—to our profession, to our region and Society, and to each other.

Forgive me for bragging just a bit, but when I took office three years ago, I hoped that we could accomplish three goals. I am happy to report that we accomplished the first one solidly, nearly accomplished the second one, and accomplished the third one.

The first goal was to establish a regional student conference. The second edition in Melbourne last month built on the successes of the first one. The second goal was to double the STC membership population within our region. We did not quite make it. We were around 1,200 three years ago. In February, we topped 2,200.

The third, and perhaps most important goal was to help the chapters grow and strengthen. I did not want to see any chapter fold—could not see any reason for that. Well, we did not lose any chapters; in fact, we added two and there are stirrings for three or four more to come in the

near future.

Most of the Region 3 chapters have thrived and continue to grow. And, although there are a couple of chapters that are truly struggling, in each I see a brighter future. I am reminded of the early days of my own Suncoast chapter; there was a time when it almost closed up shop. But the vision and hard work of a couple of people prevailed, and today it is a vibrant chapter.

Well, this provides a nice segue into the next portion of my column—introducing you to my successor, Michelle Ratcliffe. For me, it has become a pattern to have Michelle follow me in STC positions—in the Suncoast chapter hierarchy and in the international competitions arena.

I promise you; you will enjoy Michelle as your new DS. And speaking of the elections, congratulations to Region 3's Martha Collins and Jeanne Dole. Martha was elected treasurer of the Society, and Jeanne was elected to the nominating committee.

As most of you know, I took a shot at the second vice president position, but did not prevail. I cannot tell you that it did not hurt to lose; it did. But it is a funny thing when you are running for office against someone who is a true friend. I know from personal observation and from working with her that Mary Wise will do a great job.

As for my STC future, I look forward to new opportunities. Still, I count my blessings and thank you all for your kindness and support.

## Job Bank

### Group Manager, Technical Communications

Salary up to \$70k + bonus up to 10%—Norcross, Georgia

This person will manage the operation of a 17-person technical communications group (writers, illustrators, and formatters). Work teams are located in Duluth and Norcross, Georgia. Will prepare annual operating plans and budgets and long-term resource requirements. Will manage all group activities focusing on the writing and production to print and online documentation. Candidates should have a minimum of 10 years technical writing experience with solid group management skills. Candidates must have a degree. A bachelors degree in English, Journalism, or Technical Communications is desired. The company will relocate candidates. Interested parties should contact:

Sean Broom, Corporate Search Consultants, 1931 Georgetown Road, B, Hudson, OH 44236. Phone 216-656-3399 or fax 216-656-2561.

### Compaq Position

There is a job opening in Houston, Texas, at the main campus of Compaq Computer Corporation. They're looking for a Training Specialist with 3+ years experience analyzing, developing, and conducting internal and external adult training. Should have experience with Intel-based servers and software, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint. Some travel. Relocation funds available. Contact Margie Myers, vice president for employment, at (615) 366-2608 for the details.

## Mark Your Calendar

The Middle Tennessee chapter of the Society for Technical Communication meets on the second Tuesday of each month, with networking at 6 p.m. and the program at 6:30 p.m. Meeting places vary, but details will either be here or in the flyer sent out before the meeting.

- May 20** 6 p.m., Rio Bravo, election  
(**Note:** This meeting is held a week later than usual because of the Annual Conference.)

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*Address Correction Requested*

