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Getting There from Here

Lessons Learned on the Information Superhighway

Shannon Thurman—Chapter President

This month's meeting features our chapter's new, updated Web page and our two Webmasters who have worked furiously to meet an immovable deadline. Jacqui Gross and Carol Jacquith took our original Web page, designed by Kay Mann, and changed the design to meet the dynamic needs of our chapter.

The difference in the two sites made me think how much my sensibility has changed when it comes to Web

pages. On my first forays onto the World Wide Web, I was so amazed at the breadth of topics available, that I wasn't all that concerned with format and design. Indeed, just knowing I could click an underlined sentence and go to more information was so thrilling that I didn't even pay much attention to how the information was worded (a horrible thing for an editor to admit).

Remember some of the earlier Web pages? Colored backgrounds and simple graphics took forever to load, but instead of being irritated, I found the waiting a tedious but necessary evil so that I could get to whatever information I needed. I recall having conversations with friends where we loudly compared how long it took us to load Web pages, and how many times our systems crashed while in the process.

Certainly, these sorts of problems haven't disappeared. It all depends on your

technical setup as to how quickly you can get to the Web and how fast the images load for you. And even the provider makes a big difference. After suffering bouts of impatience with AOL's major traffic jams in the morning and late afternoon, I decided to move over to Mindspring. It made an amazing difference, and I no longer feel frustrated when it's time to surf.

In the last year, my coworkers and I have put together an Internet standards guide, critiqued various sites for clients, and designed and constructed Web sites. We discovered that the older designs definitely don't work anymore. We have to consider an array of issues in building a decent Web site. We look at titles, fonts, ease of use, colors, graphics, icons, content, and photos. From this list, you might think we have it all covered, but if we don't pay sufficient attention to the navigator—how the user is going to travel through a site—we will have largely wasted our time because a good Web site should be a coherent, comprehensive place to get information.

All this to say: if you'd like to see a fantastic, coherent, and comprehensive Web site put together by two of our chapter members, please attend our meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 14, at Deloitte & Touche in Hermitage. (See page 2 for additional meeting information and directions to Deloitte & Touche.) ■

M E E T I N G I N F O

What: Chapter Web Site Demo

When: Tues. Oct. 14, 6 pm

Where: Deloitte & Touche Hermitage, TN

[see page 2 for directions]

Chapter Website Unveiled

At the October Meeting

Jacqui Gross

We are proud to announce that the Middle Tennessee chapter is about to unveil our new web site. At the October 14 meeting, Jacqui Gross and Carol Jaquith, our chapter's web managers, will formally present the site. Attendees will be the first to see the site, since it will not become live until shortly after the meeting. Since the site will not be live at the time of our meeting, this means that we are hoping for feedback on the site—this is your chance to be involved. We do hope that you like the site, and we would welcome your suggestions for enhancement.

It is our hope that with the collective brilliance of the Middle Tennessee chapter members, and our surrounding student chapters, we can continue to make this site useful to the Technical Communication community. In addition to

publishing the chapter newsletters on this site, we would like to create an area for technology tips that would consist of information about the tools we use in our everyday work, and the research we are doing into new methods, tools, and techniques for effective communication.

Please join us at the Deloitte & Touche LLP PracticeServiceCenter in Hermitage. We will be meeting in Training Room 3. Networking begins at 6:00, followed by the meeting at 6:30. ■

Deloitte & Touche
4022 SELLS DRIVE, HERMITAGE.

Directions From Downtown: East on I-40 toward Knoxville. Get off at the Old Hickory Boulevard exit, which is just past the Hermitage exit. Turn right onto Old Hickory Boulevard and take the first left, which is Sells Drive. Drive around the building to the back parking lot. Someone will let you in.

The Job Bank

Sr. Technical Writer/ Team Leader
Atlanta, GA
Salary: to \$54K

Minimum six years technical writing experience in a hardware oriented, engineering-based documentation environment. Must have proven team or project leadership skills and responsibilities. Bachelor's degree in English, Technical Communication or technical equivalent mandatory.

This is a team leader position whose role will be 40% administrative and 60% writing functions. Primary focus will be to lead a group of 3 writers in creating, writing, and editing product manuals, installation guides, field service handbooks, and instruction sheets for industrial equipment, robotics, and automation.

Contact Sean R. Broom
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Communiquè—c/o Shannon Thurman, President, 4022 Sells Drive, Hermitage, TN 37076.

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Submissions are welcome in hard copy or as an e-mail attachment (preferred method). Send to: Jim Giordano, Square D Company, 295 Tech Park Drive, Suite 100, LaVergne, TN 37086. E-mail giordanj@squared.com.

Colophon—This document was designed by Jim Giordano and created using Adobe Pagemaker 6.5 on a Macintosh. Fonts used include Century Gothic for body copy and headlines, and Adobe Garamond for deck heads and the Communiquè nameplate.

Speakers Focus on Practicality at PCOC

There's Still Time to Register

Susan Barnes—East Tennessee Chapter

Want to know how to "fire proof" your communications career? Learn some new interviewing techniques? Polish up your portfolio? Or maybe you need to know the latest in designing online documentation, how to "edit with flair," or how to take Framemaker from frustration to time-saver.

Those are only a few of the topics that will highlight the 21st annual Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC) October 23-25 in Knoxville, Tenn.

Sponsored by the East Tennessee Chapter, PCOC (pronounced Peacock) brings together technical communicators from across the country to share experiences, insights, methods and research in the field. This year's preliminary program includes 35 speakers who will present 27 different sessions of interest to a wide range of professionals, at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Knoxville.

Keynote speaker for the opening session is Mark Hannigan of St. Petersburg, Florida, secretary of STC. Other conference highlights include:

- A welcome reception on Wednesday evening,

- An opening night party at Ijams Nature Center, an innovative educational and interpretive woodland and park on the banks of the Tennessee river,

- Display of winners of the International STC Technical Publications Competition throughout the conference, and

- A Saturday evening walk in the Smoky Mountains, led by Fred O'Hara, STC Fellow.

The Saturday portion of the conference will focus on issues pertinent to independent consultants and contractors, including creativity, how NOT to make a living freelancing, marketing your business, and responding to client needs.

Registration and a full preliminary program description are available online at <http://www.stc.org/region3/etc/www/schedule.htm>.

Conference registration can be discounted by \$15 by registering on or before September 30. With the discount, the full conference registration is \$200 for STC members and \$215 for non-members; two day registrations are \$165 and \$180, respectively. One day registrations are \$125 and \$140. Discounted student registration is \$25 and includes the conference sessions, but no meals

or proceedings.

All registrations (except student) cover one full meal per day and refreshment breaks. Guest tickets are available for meals at \$20 for Thursday's dinner, \$20 for Friday's lunch, and \$15 for Saturday's lunch.

Room rates at the Hilton are \$84 per day for both single and double rooms. Reservations can be made in the STC block by calling the Hilton directly at 423-523-2300.

For more information about the conference, call Karla McMaster, conference chair at 423-966-0072 ext. 541, or e-mail to mcmaster@cti-pet.com. ■

Don't Forget to Enter

The October 24 deadline for the Middle Tennessee Chapter's technical publications competition is fast approaching. It's time to get your entries in the mail. Don't forget that you'll need to submit three copies of each publication you enter. And if you'll pay by company check, get that company check request in now. (We know how slow corporate accounting departments can be.) If you did not receive a call for entries form in the mail, contact Kathy Collins at 287-3343 or elcollins@aol.com.

Regional News and Views

From the Region 3 Director/Sponsor

Michelle Ratcliffe—Director/Sponsor

Wow, is it October already? I can't believe it. But, it must be true - the evidence is all there. STC program meetings are back in full swing, competition deadlines are looming on the horizon, and we've already concluded two of the five conferences offered in region 3 - Practical Career Help and Information in Communication Conference (PCHICC pronounced "peachick") and Trends. Oh, and of course for those of you who live north of Tampa, there are probably other signs too like changing foliage, lower temperatures, and that sort of thing.

Last week, I attended the first PCHICC in Knoxville, TN. This conference was designed for the University of Tennessee students interested in technical communication as well as students who may not know about the field of technical communication or who are not in a traditionally related degree program.

I have to tell you that this was one of those experiences that really makes me glad I am involved with STC. I spoke about the organization of STC, the benefits of STC membership, and the importance of establishing,

building, and cultivating a personal and professional network. The interaction with the attendees and the conference planning committee was tremendous. It is easy to rejuvenate your professional spirit when surrounded by such enthusiasm, curiosity, and energy. This was the same feeling I got from participating in the Region 3 Student Conference last year. I highly recommend participation at these events. Not only do you feel good by sharing your experience, you make great contacts for future recruits.

Congratulations to Sharon Sharp and the PCHICC committee and Alice Senott and the Trends committee for your successes!

Pssst! Hint, Hint (yes, you)

It is not too late to enter an STC competition. Check www.stc.org for a list of competitions and deadlines. Also, check with the contacts to see if they need any judges or volunteers to help with judging day.

Notable Notes

Activity for selecting nominees from your chapter for Distinguished Chapter Service awards should be well under way. Each chapter is encouraged to make

at least one recommendation each year. If you have less than 100 members, you may nominate one person. If you have more than 100 members, you may nominate one person for every 100 members. To nominate someone, your chapter administrative council must submit the name of the nominee along with a brief paragraph explaining why the individual is being nominated. The nomination should also include a brief citation. The Board uses this general criteria when considering to make the award to individuals: length of chapter membership consistency of service during the time of chapter membership variety of service to STC Once your chapter selects a nominee, the next step is to submit nominations to me by November 1. I'll review the nomination, and then present my recommendations to the board of directors at the January board meeting. The board reviews the recommendations, and authorizes the signing and distribution of the beautiful Distinguished Chapter Service Award plaques. For the award guidelines, contact the Society office in Arlington. ■

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Mark Your Calendar

STC Meetings and Other Important Events That You Won't Want to Miss

The Middle Tennessee Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication normally meets on the second Tuesday of the month. The tentative meeting schedule is shown below. Watch this newsletter for exacting meeting locations, dates, and times.

Tentative Chapter Meeting Schedule

October 14 Chapter Web Site Demo
 November 11 Project Management
 January Annual Twelfth Night Party

February Telecommuting
 March Distance Learning
 April Online and Publications Competition

Other Dates to Remember

October 24 Deadline for entering Middle Tennessee publications competition
 October 23–25 PCOC Conference (Knoxville)
 October 3–4 Trends Conference (Orlando)
 May 17–20 STC Annual Conference at Anaheim

1997-98 ITAC Accepts Online Entries

With the widespread use of computers, the media used by technical artists have changed. To recognize this growing segment of the technical art and design market, the 1997-98 International Technical Art Competition (ITAC) is accepting online entries in addition to its more traditional physical media.

The ITAC accepts online entries on the PC, Macintosh, and World Wide Web (WWW) platforms. The ITAC will also accept entries on other platforms under special arrangements.

All online entries must be integrated into a viewer application that is not dependent on the design package used to create them. For example, a piece of art

included in a Windows Help file or HTML page is acceptable. A file saved from a design or graphics application is not acceptable.

If you design art that is viewed online, plan now to enter your products in a local competition. Look on page 31 of the August/September *Intercom* to find the

closest local competition that is accepting online art, then contact the manager to get instructions on how to submit your work. And don't forget to come view the award winners at the 1998 STC Annual Conference in Anaheim! ■

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STC Press Announces Second Edition of Popular Secrets Book

Since its first release in 1991, William Horton's book *Secrets of User-Seductive Documents* has become one of the most popular offerings of the STC Press and a widely read reference for those in the technical writing field. Now, STC Press is pleased to announce a second edition that expands and updates the material with tips on developing electronic documents and Web sites.

Secrets explains how documents can be used to catch and

hold the users' interest, offering practical tips on everything from writing copy to composing illustrations and selecting typefaces. The use of humor and psychological tricks of the trade are also discussed.

The new edition of *Secrets* sells for \$20 to STC members, \$30 to nonmembers. For ordering information, please contact Merrick Bechini at (703) 522-4114 ext. 202 or merrick@stc-va.org. ■

Newsletter Via E-Mail?

Would you like to receive this newsletter as an e-mail attachment in Adobe's PDF format? (You'll need Acrobat Reader 3.0.) If so, send a "request for Communique" via e-mail to Jim Giordano at giordanj@squared.com. The benefits of this are that you'll get the newsletter a day or two earlier and you'll get to view the newsletter in two glorious colors. You will no longer receive the newsletter via snail mail.



society for technical communication

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Address Correction Requested