



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Forward

The Newsletter of the UK chapter of the STC

Volume IV, No. 5

September, 2001

In this issue

UK Chapter news

President's message.....	1
Membership news.....	2
Chapter competition.....	2
Letter to the editors.....	2
Apologies from the editors.....	3

STC chapter news

What you put in	3
STC: Designing the future of technical communication.....	3
STC Welcomes New Chapters	4
Communicators in Concert.....	4
Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals.....	4
European events: TransAlpine Chapter Mini-Conference.....	5
New Canadian Issues SIG Signing Up New Members.....	5

Conferences.....6

Technical writing.....7

Forward is the official newsletter of the UK Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). It is published six times per year: January, March, May, July, September and November. Please send articles, letters, comments, and other items for inclusion in the newsletter to the editor by the beginning of a publication month.

President's message



By Liz Hale

Hello fellow STC members (and friends who may be reading this copy of "Forward"), It is in an atmosphere of unprecedented sombreness that I pen my column this issue. I am sure our thoughts continue to be with our colleagues in STC across the world, some of

whom will have been personally affected by the terrorist attacks on the USA last week. For those of you who are not on the STC UK email list, the message I sent on behalf of the UK Chapter just after the tragedy is re-produced below:

Dear Kitty, Chris and all at STC,

On behalf of the STC's UK Chapter members, may I send our condolences to anyone in STC who has been affected by the terrible events on Tuesday? Like everyone else here in the UK, I watched with horror and disbelief as the television coverage showed the terrifying results of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. And my feelings of shared fear and empathy were all the more real as I was myself there in the World Trade Center only a matter of months ago, in April this year.

I know that nothing I can say will make you feel any better right now. But please be assured that our thoughts and prayers are with you.

With best wishes,

Liz

On the home front, we decided to go ahead, as planned, with our meeting at Sheffield Hallam University on Sept. 15th. Thanks are in order to Anne-Florence DuJardin, who kindly took time out from maternity leave to give a thought-provoking talk to Chapter members about "Communication Models". She reminded us that good communication practices too often get forgotten in the race to get the job done. (And haven't we all been there at one time or another, I felt?!)

If you want to learn more about the Technical Communication MA course at Sheffield Hallam, check out their website at: [<Birgit; David said he would supply this>](#).

UK Chapter News

Officers

UK Chapter President

Liz Hale

l.hale@kudos-idd.com

First Vice President

Vacancy

Second Vice President

Vacancy

Secretary

David Harrison

david.harrison5@virgin.net

Treasurer

Kim Berquist

kim@2kinformatic.lu

UK Chapter Managers.

Membership

Mick Robinson

mick@xara.com

Employment, Education, and Academic

Mark Clifford

markhclifford@hotmail.com

Competitions

Liz Hale

l.hale@kudos-idd.com

Program and meetings

Tina Hoffman

thoffman@pathtrace.com

Legal advisor

Paul Bakker

paul@petecom.co.uk

Web site

Richard Tuft

richard.tuft@iint.co.uk

Newsletter and PR

Birgit Bolata

birgit@bolata.co.uk

and David Farbey

dfarbey@yahoo.co.uk

STC Web site

<http://www.stc.org>

UK Chapter Web site

<http://www.stc-europe.org/uk/stcukhome.htm>

<http://www.stc-europe.org/uk/stcukhome.htm>

UK Chapter Discussion List

stcuk-discuss@chiark.greenend.org.uk

And finally, can I remind members that the closing date for this year's Competition is Sept. 28th? Surely someone out there is NOT writing Online Help systems (all the entries so far have been in the Online category!)... The judging teams and I are looking forward to seeing what you have to offer this year. The Awards Dinner will be in central London on Saturday, Nov. 24th. Put the date in your diaries now !! Till the next time.

Membership News



By Mick Robinson

We're continuing to grow and are now up to 112 members. It's welcome this time to new members:

Zoe Beal of Huddersfield

Barry Galvin of Windsor

Patrick Leahy of Cork

Joe McCormack of Bishopstown, Cork

and to

Kathryn O'Donoghue of Reading

Lisa MacDonald of Cambridge

who have transferred in from other chapters.

Also our congratulations to our former president, Mark Clifford, who has recently become a Senior member because of long service to the STC.

A reminder to all members that if their address is wrong or incomplete, please let me know and I'll ask STC in the States to correct it. (Same thing applies if you're moving house or companies - it's easy to forget to tell us your new address.)

A while ago the UK chapter decided to produce a directory of members. I asked then if anyone wanted to be excluded (no-one did) but we didn't get round to compiling the directory. I want to do this in the next few weeks so if anyone doesn't want their name included, please let me know. Best way is to email mick@xara.com. The directory wouldn't include full addresses, but would be name and town

Chapter competition

There is still time to submit your entry for the 2001 UK Chapter Technical Writing Competition. The closing date for all entries is 28th September 2001.

You can submit an entry for any of the following categories: Brochures, User Guides, Reference Materials, Style Guides, Reports, and Online.

More details and entry forms are available from Liz Hale at l.hale@kudos-idd.com or phone 0208-969-3139

Letter to the editors

Birgit and David,

Congratulations on your first edition of Forward! Just taking it out of the envelope, it makes such a professional impression -

the glossy paper, the colour, and the magazine fold. And plenty of interesting reading, of course. I didn't "sign off" as newsletter editor, so let me belatedly take this opportunity to thank everybody who gave me help and encouragement with Forward, and those who contributed articles. It was a pleasure to work with the other chapter officers and managers, and I wish you all well in the future.
Christine Woskett

Apologies from the editors

Marcus Streets' name was misprinted in our previous edition.
Sorry about that, Marcus!

What you put in ...



By Kitty Aughey

September is a good time to dust off the hackneyed remark: you get out of it what you put into it.

As you begin the chapter year (2001-2002), I am convinced that each of you can improve as technical commu-

nicators by becoming involved in leading and supporting your local STC chapter.

Juggling multiple priorities and finding personal time can be overwhelming, but the events surrounding your chapter's activities are career oriented and keep you abreast of the evolving technologies and "bright ideas" that you want/need to be aware of. As changes occur in our communicator roles, STC is the platform for presenting, evaluating and discussing the redirection. You need to make time to stay current on the job! Start your volunteer plan by offering help to the chapter in tiny nuggets - phoning for chapter surveys, hospitality greeter at meetings, chapter conference assistant, list keeper or newsletter reporter and then move onto committees and soon become a chairperson of one of the chapter's special projects, etc. Starting small is the key!

The benefits of involvement are numerous. Your employer and your fellow communicators will realize you are taking your profession seriously. The abilities to network are wide-open and you can seek and give advice on work issues and ask for information on numerous subjects. It is likely someone in your chapter has information on anything or everything you need. A real bonus is that you are now in a position to suggest programs that can benefit you and others.

Please call your chapter president today and offer help. I can guarantee a job will be waiting for you in the size you can handle.

Celebrate your action and feel good!

STC: Designing the future of technical communication

By Suzanna Laurent, Director-Sponsor Region 5, Bylaws Committee Manager

In STC, we know that leaders are a lot like eagles, they don't flock, and you usually find them one at a time. By accepting a position of responsibility in your chapter, you have already made an important step toward learning to soar like an eagle!

STC offers members many opportunities to practice and improve leadership skills. Whether you are guiding the chapter as an officer, serving as a committee manager, or participating in another way, you can make a difference this year! I encourage you to use this opportunity to sharpen your leadership, time management, and organizational skills. You will find it rewarding -both personally and professionally- and the experience will shine through on the job and on your resume.

A successful chapter year is the result of setting goals and developing plans for achieving them. By now I hope your chapter goals and programs are clearly defined for the coming year- if not, you need to start planning right away. Your chapter's strategic plan may dictate many of your activities, and that is as it should be. Even if you have a strategic plan, it is always helpful to analyze how well the chapter is meeting the members' needs and interests and gather ideas for improving chapter management, programs, and activities. As you plan, remember that good leaders are not restricted by the way things "have always been done." Their leadership is a continuing search for the best way to do things, not necessarily the most familiar way.

Here are some steps for developing chapter goals and planning activities to achieve them. Regardless of the circumstances, following these steps during the planning stage can help everyone achieve more.

STC Chapter News

Goals — Decide what you want to accomplish this year. Ideas gathered from a member survey can help you plan activities to strengthen the whole chapter or specific areas.

Functions — Decide who is responsible for achieving each goal. Is there a specific committee or member who will handle this responsibility? Discuss the goals and their achievement with those responsible for them.

Activities — Discuss activities that will help you reach the goals. What has been done in the past that should continue? What can be done that is new? Then, develop a list of activities to help achieve the goal. You may be able to choose these activities from the Chapter Achievement Award Guidelines -they are designed to help strengthen your chapter. If necessary, submit your list to the chapter or Administrative Council for approval.

Action plan — When will you do it? Once the activities are finalized, put them on your chapter calendar and set a specific date for their completion.

Celebrate — Don't forget to celebrate your victories and give plenty of recognition along the way! The most successful leaders are the ones who recognize the creative potential of the people on their teams and use that potential wisely. You are the "leaders who light the way" - those in roles such as mentors, officers, and committee or project managers. You make a tremendous difference to the Society and its members, and I enthusiastically thank you for your contributions to STC!

STC Welcomes New Chapters

Two new chapters have joined STC's ranks. The South Carolina Low country chapter currently serves twenty-five members in Charleston, South Carolina, and the surrounding areas. The chapter president is Tina K. Fei.

The Dakota State University student chapter is located in Madison, South Dakota, and includes thirteen student members. The faculty advisor is Daniel J. Weinstein.

Please join us in welcoming these chapters to STC.

Communicators in Concert

The Region One/Two Conference has been postponed, and is being planned for the fall of 2002 (rather than January 2002). I am sorry to make this announcement since many of you were looking forward to the conference in January, yet postponement is the most prudent decision given the rationale that I present here.

The postponement is due to a number of reasons that have come to light over the past few months. The re-

sponse we have received indicates three overarching issues:

- ◆ A general concern about weather conditions in the northern New Jersey area in January left many potential attendees wary about travel and the possibility that the conference might be compromised due to weather.
- ◆ Preparing for and working on a conference during the holiday season when we are already stretched for time gave many members pause about committing some of that precious time to volunteer for the conference.
- ◆ An overall tightening of the economy has left many people without jobs and many businesses keeping expenses to a minimum, leaving little or no budget for benefits such as conferences.

We envisioned a conference with much interaction and discussion, thus we wanted to keep the size of sessions small. This meant we needed a target of about 50 sessions; we received only 35 proposals (for which we are very appreciative).

We will be retaining the proposals that have already been submitted. We will notify you again when we re-issue a Call for Proposals for the Fall 2002 conference. We will update you in the future as plans for the new conference move forward and are further defined.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reply to me directly. I appreciate your interest in our conference. With the assistance of many other members, I look forward to creating the type of conference that can benefit us all.

Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals

The STC board of directors annually awards two stipends to help support short-term teaching fellowship positions lasting for at least one academic quarter, trimester, or semester. The amount of funding depends upon the complexity and duration of the teaching assignment, with a maximum allocation per fellowship of \$2,000.

Eligible applicants for a teaching fellowship must be employed full-time as technical communicators or must do a considerable amount of work in consulting or other related activities. Practicing professionals who have found adjunct or visiting teaching opportunities at a college or university may submit a proposal requesting a fellowship grant to the STC academe/industry committee, which evaluates proposals and makes recommendations to the board of directors. The next deadline to submit proposals is November 1,

2001, for spring teaching assignments. (Proposals for summer or fall teaching assignments are due April 1.) Guidelines can be found on the Web. For more information, please contact:

Kristene S. Sutliff
Manager, STC Academe/Industry
Committee
Southwest Missouri State University
kss172f@smsu.edu

Proposals Due November 1, 2001

European events: TransAlpine Chapter Mini-Conference

The TransAlpine Chapter is holding its sixth chapter meeting at the Hotel Meandro, in Gargnano, Italy, on Lake Garda November 23-25, 2001.

About the Meeting

They've designed a program based on the input from chapter members who attended the last chapter meeting. They've significantly reduced the STC/TAC presentations to about one hour. This means that the rest of the conference time is dedicated to educational activities about usability, FrameMaker, Adobe Acrobat, project management, translation, and writing.

Guest Speakers

We've invited two guest speakers: Whitney Quesenbery and Shlomo Perets.

Whitney designs user interfaces for Cognetics Corporation (www.cognetics.com), a company dedicated to the creation of user-centered software. In 1996, her team was awarded Best of Show in the STC Online Competition for AT&T's Product Documentation Development Group multimedia program. Whitney is a frequent presenter on user-centered design topics, and is the manager of the STC Usability SIG and a member of the Board of directors of the Usability Professionals Association.

Shlomo has focused primarily on developing FrameMaker and online documentation applications since 1993. He trains technical communicators to get the most out of FrameMaker and Acrobat and the combination of these tools. Developer of the SP TimeSavers and SP Bookmark Controller. Shlomo is a regular speaker at PDF and FrameMaker conferences and a PlanetPDF

columnist. Currently, his series "PDF Best Practices" is being published at PlanetPDF.

New Canadian Issues SIG Signing Up New Members

Would you like to join a group of Canadians? Now who wouldn't want that opportunity? The new Cana-

dian Issues SIG is now signing up new members and you can be a part of this new group. You'll find it's a great way to network with other STC members in Canada and elsewhere, focusing on issues pertinent to Canadians. One of the good features now is that membership is free for the rest of the year!

In May 2001, STC formed a new SIG devoted to improving communication among its Canadian members. I am Alexa Campbell, a long-time member of STC who is serving as SIG manager. I'm inviting Canadian STC members, and others who are interested in Canadian issues, to join this new group.

Right now, STC members can sign up for the Canadian Issues SIG for free until the end of the year. SIG membership dues will be billed in the 2002 STC dues notices scheduled to be sent out in November. To sign up for SIG membership, email your request to the STC membership department (membership@stc.org).

Keys to the success of any organization are the enthusiasm and support of its members. I hope many of you will step forward to help make this one of the most effective SIGs in STC. We can use volunteers to fill important positions of newsletter editor, webmaster, listserv coordinator and membership coordinator. The tasks are not hard nor take a lot of time; however, they will take your commitment.

We already have established a listserv that will be a good source for exchanging information and ideas. To subscribe to the list, go to <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stc-ca-l> and click the "Join stc-ca-l" button. Complete the information and you're there. (Note that the l is a lower case L.)

If you have any questions about the Canadian Issues SIG, please contact me, Alexa Campbell, at (204) 632-2345 or email acampbell@rrc.mb.ca

Here is some information about the Canadian Issues SIG, its mission, its name, and its goals.

Mission statement

The Canadian Issues SIG fosters communication among Canadian members of STC to allow them to exchange information and to discuss issues within STC that

- ◆ Are of a particular concern to Canadian members
- ◆ Arise by reason of political, socioeconomic, and geographical constraints because the members reside in Canada

Rationale for name

The name reflects the membership of the SIG, and carries on the title of the Canadian Issues Committee, which was formed in 1990. In the ten years of its operation, this committee helped identify and resolve many issues of concern to Canadian members of STC. Membership in the SIG is not necessarily restricted to Canadian members but is open to anyone with an in-

STC Chapter News

terest in the special needs and concerns of Canadian STC members.

Areas of interest

The Canadian Issues SIG explores the following areas of interest:

- ◆ Increasing the technical communications profile and reputation across Canada
- ◆ Monitoring, helping shape, and publicizing technical communication education in Canada
- ◆ Helping evolve standards to encourage a consistency in the technical communications courses offered across Canada
- ◆ Communicating the value of technical communication to business, industry and academe

- ◆ Enabling educational institutions, industry and practitioners to share ideas about technical communication
- ◆ Promoting a professional development program for Canadian technical communicators, by making it easier to advertise such programs

Goals

The following are the goals of the Canadian Issues SIG: To link Canadian chapters, which are spread out geographically, and which lack a unified voice in STC internationally

To provide opportunities for Canadian members to communicate about needs, concerns and issues that are unique to Canada by virtue of geography, economics or politics

To provide a venue for promoting professional devel-

Conferences

InterChange 2001

15 - 16 October 2001, Boxborough, Massachusetts

InterChange is an annual conference cosponsored by the University of Massachusetts Boston and the Northern New England and Boston chapters of the Society for Technical Communication.

For more information, go to <http://www.interchangeconference.com>.

3rd Annual Multilingual Documentation for the Automotive Industry TOP-TEC Symposium

18-19 October 2001, Paris, France

A two-day TOPical, TEChnical workshop presenting the latest developments and on-going research in multilingual documentation for the automotive industry.

PDF Brochure available via the Internet at: <https://shop.sae.org/contedu/multilingual.pdf>

For more information contact:

Bev Zunic, Program Coordinator

SAE International

Pennsylvania, USA

Tel: (+1) 724-772-8597

Fax: (+1) 724-776-5231

e-mail: bzunic@sae.org

Communicating in the New Millennium

21 - 24 October 2001, Santa Fe, New Mexico

SIGDOC is the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group for Documenta-

tion, a professional organization dedicated to advanced topics in documentation for and with computers. SIGDOC

2001 will provide an opportunity for the exchange of information related to exciting new research and experience reports in a number of areas.

For more information see: <http://www.cs.ucr.edu/~stilley/sigdoc2001>.

InfoProducer 2001

29-31 October 2001, Orlando, Florida

In its second year, the InfoProducer Conference & Expo is again co-located and integrated into Information Mapping's Making Knowledge Work Conference.

The Making Knowledge Work Conference is the annual user group event for customers of Information

Mapping, a company that has helped leading organizations world-wide use knowledge to improve performance and operating efficiency for the past 30 years.

Because these two conferences are integrated, delegates may attend sessions from either event - for just one registration fee! This comprehensive industry event is being held in Orlando, October 29 - 31, 2001.

Pre-conference workshops will be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 27 and 28, 2001.

For more information, go to <http://www.influent.com/>



Quadralay WebWorks – A Report from the Coalface

By Steve Hollas
 Technical writer
 Kudos Information Limited

Introduction

My company asked me to evaluate the effort required to publish a large suite of FrameMaker+SGML documentation in an online format. The proprietary application for this task was WebWorks Publisher Professional Edition, Version 6.0 for PC. After much discussion about the various types of online formatting, it was decided to convert the documents to Dynamic HTML.

First impressions

The *New Project Wizard* is a joy to use. The sequence is very easy to follow and you can create a project from either a FrameMaker book or a set of FrameMaker files.

The way the source files are formatted will determine how the paragraphs and characters are mapped to the WebWorks styles. Documents that use a minimum of styles (with names that match the WebWorks Publisher tags) will be mapped automatically, with little or no need to reassign mapping. Documents with a complex structure will require manual mapping.

The mapping assignments can be changed easily, and the *Getting Started* guide gives some good tips and pointers. You can build your project, have a look at the results, and then go back and change the mapping until you get the required results.

Once you are happy with the output style, you can save your project as a custom template and, provided all your documentation contains the same format in the source files, you can apply your custom template across the entire suite to give a consistent look and feel.

Larger, more complex projects can take a *long time* to load and build (for example, up to half an hour for a 1,000 page book). This will vary with the processor speed, amount of RAM available, and so on.

The pro's

When converting a range of legacy documents, the source documentation usually contains a wide spectrum of structures and styles. This makes it necessary to create customized templates. This takes time but, once you have a suite of custom templates that match the individual document types, conversion is simplicity itself.

You can add, delete, and rearrange your source files,

create your own paragraph styles and macros from within WebWorks, and modify existing ones. If your project changes in the future (and which ones don't?) the updates are easily incorporated.

WebWorks can convert FrameMaker files to a wide range of online formats, including WebWorks Help – a cross-browser, cross-platform help system. No matter what platform your clients use, you should be able to provide online documentation that complies with their specific requirements.

The con's

The *Getting Started* guide says in the preface “*To become a productive WebWorks Publisher user, you need to invest some time into learning and understanding how the tool works.*” They weren't kidding.

If you are not familiar with macro programming languages, the *Macro Reference* guide gives information such as “*you must modify this regular expression if you're using a different TOC paragraph than the one specified*”, but neglects to tell you how to do it. Further reading from various publications will be required. To a lesser extent, this also applies to the tagging styles.

You need to ensure that the WebWorks Rasterizer printer is installed as your default printer, otherwise your images will be cropped and of poor quality. If you have not done this *before* you build your project, you will have to create a new project for the changes to be picked-up.

You will probably want to change the WebWorks logo and contact details to your company logo and contact details. To do this, you copy the images into the template Support/Images directory and edit the Index, Normal, Single and TOC .asp files. You can also add a link from your company's logo to your web site. If you add an updated logo with the same name (to avoid updating the .asp files) *after* you have built your project, you must create a new project for the updated logo to be picked-up. Perhaps this is a minor point, but it could cause some level of irritation – especially with larger projects.

In a WebWorks project, the TOC should be the first file in the book. This becomes a problem if you intend to produce both online and pdf output from the same source.

Conclusion

If you are building a project from scratch and the source books or files contain consistent styles, with a naming-convention that maps directly to the WebWorks styles, conversion to an online format is straightforward and trouble-free.

As already mentioned, legacy projects provide a different challenge and considerable effort may be re-

quired. In essence, the better the source documentation is the easier the conversion process becomes.

WebWorks is a very powerful tool and, although the initial learning curve can be quite steep, with patience the end result is well worth the effort.

If you want to find out more about Quadralay WebWorks, visit:<http://www.webworks.com/>

**Advertising rates
(per issue):**

Business card	£10
1/4 page	£15
1/2 page	£25
Full page	£40

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication.

Note: by submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications. Unless otherwise noted, copyrights for all newsletter articles belong to