



SOCIETY FOR  
TECHNICAL  
COMMUNICATION

# Forward

The newsletter of the UK chapter of the STC

Volume V, No. 1

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*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.*

Hi everyone and a very Happy New Year to you all! As we start another year, I would like to express my thanks to Tina Hoffman (who made a number of contributions to the November 2001 Newsletter and who is playing a key part in arranging our 1-day conference mid-2002). Also to Chris Benz, our new Director-Sponsor, who will "take up the baton" on our behalf, as part of STC's Region 2, for the coming year. And finally may I also thank our Newsletter Editors (past and present) who put in so much work to ensure that our "Forwards" are interesting, on-the-ball and timely - Christine Woskett, Birgit Bolata and David Farbey. Well done and thank you to you all.

I would also like to draw your attention to a message from our new INTECOM representative Mary Wise on Page 7. You may not be aware of it but INTECOM is an important body in influencing things in the European Tech Comms world, so it is very important that STC continues to support INTECOM and that we ensure our views are properly represented in the European forum.

If you have any opinions or suggestions that you would like Mary to represent on our behalf at INTECOM during 2002, please email her at [mwise@manu.com](mailto:mwise@manu.com). I am sure she will be very pleased to hear from you.

This year, I would very much like to see someone else organize the UK Chapter's Technical Publications Competition - if only because I feel I have hogged this prestigious post for far too long already! So, if you fancy wielding a big stick, bullying your colleagues when they volunteer to act as judges, and making "the big speech" at the next UK Chapter Awards Dinner, please feel free to contact me. And if you don't fancy taking on quite that much responsibility but feel you would like to act as one of the judges this year, please drop me a line to put your name on the list for Autumn 2002.

Finally, please take a look at the pictures from our Awards Dinner held in November 2001. It was an excellent evening, with good food,

## UK Chapter News

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### Officers

#### UK Chapter President

Liz Hale

[l.hale@kudos-idd.com](mailto:l.hale@kudos-idd.com)

#### First Vice President

Vacancy

#### Second Vice President

Vacancy

#### Secretary

David Harrison

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Kim Berquist

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### UK Chapter Managers

#### Membership

Mick Robinson

[mick@xara.com](mailto:mick@xara.com)

#### Employment, Education, and Academic

Mark Clifford

[markhclifford@hotmail.com](mailto:markhclifford@hotmail.com)

#### Competitions

Liz Hale

[l.hale@kudos-idd.com](mailto:l.hale@kudos-idd.com)

#### Program and meetings

Tina Hoffman

[thoffman@pathtrace.com](mailto:thoffman@pathtrace.com)

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Birgit Bolata

[birgit@bolata.co.uk](mailto:birgit@bolata.co.uk)

and David Farbey

[dfarbey@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dfarbey@yahoo.co.uk)

#### STC Web site

<http://www.stc.org>

#### UK Chapter Web site

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

#### UK Chapter Discussion List

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc\\_uk\\_discuss/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc_uk_discuss/)

fine speeches and (of course) brilliant company all round. It will be a challenge to find a better venue for the 2002 Dinner but one which I hope one of you reading this will decide to accept. I look forward to meeting many more of you in person during 2002.

With very best wishes,

Liz Hale, STC UK Chapter President 2001/2.

### Membership news



*By Mick Robinson.*

Firstly a welcome to two new members:

David Griffiths of Stockport

Emma Lawrence of Newmarket

and also to

Catherine Brys of Glasgow who transfers in

from the Belgium chapter.

Welcome to all three.

At the end of the year we had 120 members in the UK chapter. At the end of 2000 we had 105 members so we continue to grow at a healthy rate. It's especially healthy considering we lose several members each year, either through them leaving the industry or moving to another country.

Just a reminder to anyone who hasn't renewed yet, that 2002 subscriptions are now due. If you don't renew by March 31st, your membership automatically lapses. Please send payment direct to the US office. (If you joined in the last quarter of 2001, your 2001 membership covers 2002 as well so you won't receive a renewal notice.)

### The new chapter mailing list

The new email mailing list for the UK Chapter was set up in December 2001, and we already have 51 subscribers. If you have not yet joined the list, please do so as soon as possible. Details of how to join are given below.

In the past, the email addresses of all Chapter members were added to the mailing list by the list administrator. This meant that you did not have to do anything to join the list. This is not the case with the new list, and you do have to join the list yourself. You can join the list either by email, or over the Web.

#### Why did the Chapter need a new list?

The old mailing list was based on a single, privately-run server, which was often subject to delays and interruptions. The Chapter's use of the server was based on an informal arrangement, and administration was difficult at times.

The new email mailing list is based at Yahoo! Groups, which offers a free service, supported by advertising. The Yahoo service

is based on multiple servers and is therefore far more reliable. It also offers services that were not available before such as a message archive, a digest service, and the option of Web access.

### **Email access to the list**

To join the list by email, just send a blank message to the following address:

[stc\\_uk\\_discuss-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:stc_uk_discuss-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To leave the list send a blank email to the following address:

[stc\\_uk\\_discuss-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:stc_uk_discuss-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To post a message to the list which will be seen by all subscribers, use this address:

[stc\\_uk\\_discuss@yahoogroups.com](mailto:stc_uk_discuss@yahoogroups.com)

To contact the list owner, write to :

[stc\\_uk\\_discuss-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:stc_uk_discuss-owner@yahoogroups.com)

You can access the message archive at the list's home page ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc\\_uk\\_discuss/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc_uk_discuss/)) even if you are an email subscriber.

### **Web access to the list**

To join the list on the Web you need to have a Yahoo! ID, which you should set up first by visiting <http://uk.my.yahoo.com> and following the link "Get Your Own My Yahoo!". This is a free service, and gives you a free Web mail account, as well as Web access to the dozens of lists at Yahoo! Groups.

Once you have a Yahoo! ID you can join the list on the Web, by visiting the list's home page at:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc\\_uk\\_discuss/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stc_uk_discuss/)

### **Why you should join the list**

If you have not already joined the list, please do join up as soon as you can. The old list is being shut down and after it's gone the new list will be the only way you'll be able to be up-to-date with Chapter news and announcements on a daily basis.

It would be good to see the email list develop into a useful discussion forum for technical writers in the UK. There are a number of other email lists for technical writers (as I described in my recent article in "Forward") but the UK Chapter list is the only one specifically for UK writers, their problems, and their solutions. You can really make a contribution to the technical writing community in the UK by joining the list and taking part in discussions.

Looking forward to meeting you online,

David Farbey

[stc\\_uk\\_discuss](mailto:stc_uk_discuss) List Owner

[dfarbey@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dfarbey@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Employment, education and Academic news**



As you might know we have a new chapter manager joining our ranks: Originally from Canada, Briana Wherry's career has seen her living in the US before making the U.K her permanent home. Her 13 years technical authoring

experience ranges many industries as a consultant, editor, documentation manager, and localisation manager. Briana is a senior member of the STC.

Briana is particularly keen to improve the UK Chapter's Job Bank (online) and encourage STC Members and potential Employers to make far more use of it in the future. Briana has some great ideas, plus experience from 3 previous chapters to bring to play. She and Mark Clifford have agreed to collaborate on the role of Education & Employment, where Mark will look after the former and Briana will drive the expansion of the latter. By the end of January, Briana will put together a proposal to the UK Chapter Officers for developing the Education & Employment site and services. We are really looking forward to seeing some exciting new additional Jobs services for the UK Chapter in 2002.

By the way, in case you have all forgotten (or didn't know in the first place) there is already a Jobs Site on the STC UK Chapter's website at: <http://www.stc-europe.org/uk/jobads01.htm> . Sadly, there is nothing (no actual jobs) to see there at the moment - that's why we need Briana to help us!

To post details about a Tech Comms vacancy to the STC UK Chapter's website, send an email to:

[stc\\_uk\\_jobs@hotmail.com](mailto:stc_uk_jobs@hotmail.com).

### **Email addresses ....**

*By Mick Robinson.*

Each month I get an update from the STC office of changes in members' details. Probably the most regular item that changes is email addresses. Obviously some people change companies and so get a completely new address. But even with personal email accounts (such as Hotmail) many of people change providers. In fact a few people change email addresses several times during the year. I don't know whether people actually change providers or just find that, say, Hotmail is better than Talk21 and so swap over their preferred address.

Which raises the thought that most of us probably have more ways of being contacted by email than any other

## UK Chapter News

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means. I have perhaps five different phone numbers (three at work, one mobile and one home) and a couple of mail addresses (home and work) but probably at least eight email addresses (several of which I never look at, usually because I've forgotten the address). Use BT as an ISP and they now insist on giving you an email address even on pay-as-you-go. It's a bit like store loyalty cards - shop here and we automatically give you a loyalty card. At least unwanted store cards make good ice scrapers. I don't know of any use for unused, unwanted email addresses but suggestions are welcome.

The other thing I've noticed is a steady increase in the number of people with personal web addresses for their email (Fred Bloggs might have [fred@bloggs.com](mailto:fred@bloggs.com)). Is this

the Internet equivalent of personalized number plates? I can certainly see the attractions of it - it looks a lot better than [fred\\_bloggs5729@btinternet.com](mailto:fred_bloggs5729@btinternet.com). In our industry where so much is Internet-based, I can also see the advantage of having a personal web address or email address when looking for employment. The point I'm making is that about two-three years ago only the really Internet-savvy had their web address. Now, like so much of the Internet, it's becoming more widely spread. Perhaps in a few years time a web address of [fred\\_bloggs5729@btinternet.com](mailto:fred_bloggs5729@btinternet.com) will mark you down as technically backward, the equivalent of using a 286 computer.

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## STC Awards dinner - 24th November, 2001



This year, 11 UK Chapter members attended the "do" at Cafe Uno, Baker Street, London W1 - many bringing their partners/spouses along as well, so the evening was well supported.

The evening tumbled into action as the casual banter receded and we took our seats for the first course of a very enjoyable meal (thank you Café Uno, and thank you Liz for booking it).

As the last course was cleared, Liz asked one or two of the committee to say a few words about the past year so Mick Robinson, our membership secretary, first took the floor. He told us how he was pleased that the membership while not increasing was at least holding steady and that he hoped 2002 might see some improvement. Next David Harrison, chapter secretary, followed on with a few words of thanks to all for coming. It was, in fact the highest turnout for any event over the last twelve months and, he hoped, a pointer for improvements to come. If the folks tonight enjoyed the event then 'perhaps' the rumour that Chapter meetings were worth supporting might spread. Finally, Tina Hoffman, told us of her aspirations for the forthcoming seminar, which will be the UK Chapter's first one-day event. This, she knows will be well received and that, by choosing a mid-week date, many employers will take a favourable view of the event as quality training and sponsor members in their attendance. Tina also spoke about the need to consider weekday meetings also, as there were members who would support more Chapter meetings if they moved away from weekend timings. (Keep your eye on the 2002 Chapter diary for announcements and details).

After this brief opening, we moved on to the year's Awards - details about which were published in the last Newsletter. But for those of you who did not notice, the results of the 2001 UK Chapter's Competition were printed in the previous issue

The awards certificates were kindly presented by our Region 1 Director-Sponsor, Kathleen (Kitty) Aughey who had come to visit us from Rochester, New York. Her first remarks were directed primarily towards the prizewinners who

were told to take pride in their achievements and to make sure that this recent acclaim was added to their CV where it could give that 'extra edge'. Kitty told us how she had come across similar entries in CVs that accompanied some job applications that she handled. When the final choice was finely balanced, it was the urge to meet such a 'prize-winner' that helped sway her decision.

We were then informed about Kitty's meeting with Liz, two nights before, and how Liz had expressed concern about the slow progress in attracting new members into the UK Chapter; also that recent Chapter events have not been very well attended. Her reply to Liz then, and to us tonight, was that we are not alone and not to worry unduly. In fact, the UK Chapter runs in a similar manner to so many others in the USA and, despite sharing the same concerns about attendance and support, they were still rolling on and maintaining their strength.

Funnily enough, this evening was both a hello, and a goodbye, from Kitty. She acknowledged that she we were about to get a new Director-Sponsor, when the UK chapter moved (in January 2002) into Region 2 - along with all the other European Chapters in fact. However, Kitty assured us that would not mean that she would forget about us and she would continue to take an interest in how we fared in the future.

The future for Technical Communicators, said Kitty in finishing, is changing and uncertain, but despite the recession, and all that is happening, it still looks good for us. Yes, there were signs in America that many major players were laying off Authors and that subsidiaries in Europe might follow suit. But the work was still there and the manuals, guides and instructions were still needed. Kitty saw that, in the next few years, we may see some shift from permanent to contract but, however the work materialised, it would be plentiful.

Liz Hale thanked Kitty for her words of encouragement and then changed tradition by presenting Kitty with a small gift rather than the usual bouquet. She knew that Kitty was travelling on to other parts of Europe before returning home, and hoped that a present of traditional English perfume by Yardley would be more appropriate than a cumbersome bouquet of flowers! Kitty was delighted with the choice and, in return, presented a 'Beany Teddy' to Liz, and a second one to Dave Griffiths for his birthday.

The audience showed its appreciation and the casual but jovial banter returned as the evening faded away.

Write-up by David Harrison (UK Chapter Secretary).



## STC News

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### Greetings in the New Year

*By Kitty Aughey - Director Sponsor Region 1*

Winter is the season for many holidays. Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Ramadan, and the Chinese New Year are only a few of the many cultural and religious holidays we celebrate. What is hoped for in all traditions is that they lay the groundwork for a better world. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> changed all of us in America. We embraced patriotism, marveled at the

bravery of firefighters, police and all emergency workers and, reached out to our families and friends. We hug and kiss those closest to us more often and are thankful we have them. We appreciate all we have and we are generous in giving to those less fortunate. Yes, we have changed...perhaps, for the better.

We are getting on with our lives. In that context, I want to relate to STC. In 2001, we developed a new logo and a new mission statement: *STC: Designing the future of*

*technical communication*. We kept a steady membership and had a successful annual conference in Chicago. It was a good year!

In 2002, we begin the year with the election of Society officers. On the ballot are two people running for Director-Sponsor of Region 1. I have enjoyed having this job for three years. It has been my favorite job! It is so important that everyone votes and it is so easy to do online. Please don't forget.

As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, Region 1 will change. The France, Sweden and UK chapters will move to Region 2. This puts all the European chapters in one region. Philadelphia Metro and the New Jersey Chapters will move to Region 1 – Welcome! I look forward to meeting with the new chapters and I will miss those chapters that are moving.

Please remember that the job of a Director Sponsor is to “be there” when you need support. I am always willing to travel for chapter visits...just waiting for an invite. My best wishes to everyone for a Happy and Peaceful New Year!

Kitty

### **Candidate Second Vice-President's Article Laurent Shares Her Vision for STC**

*By Suzanna Laurent - Director-Sponsor Region 5*

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 Web site at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or by sending me an e-mail at [slaurent@prodigy.net](mailto:slaurent@prodigy.net).

## INTECOM... An introduction.

By Mary Wise.

Hello Everyone,

I'd like to introduce myself and tell you what I've been doing. I'm Mary Wise, past president of STC and current INTECOM delegate. I replaced the former INTECOM delegate, Jeff Hibbard, effective last May. I'm so sorry it's taken me such a long time to contact you all. I want to assure that I represent ALL of STC, not just the USA. INTECOM is the International Council for Technical Communication. It's a society whose membership is composed of other technical communication societies; in other words, its members are organizations, not individuals. Currently, there are 16 member organizations throughout the world, each of which has one delegate. The purpose of INTECOM is to support the worldwide recognition and respect of technical communication as a professional activity and to improve the performance of that activity. The society is registered as a legal entity in Switzerland

INTECOM sponsors several activities; two of the most notable are the FORUM conferences and the TC-Forum magazine. The FORUM conferences are now being held every three years; the next one is scheduled for June of 2003 in Milan, Italy. INTECOM only recently adopted the formerly independent TC-Forum magazine. One of the other projects that INTECOM is working on is a language standardization project; Ron Blicq, current president of INTECOM and IEEE-PCS representative, is heading up that initiative.

I will be frank with you; like any other volunteer organization, INTECOM struggles with its aspirations and reality. It's a tiny organization and most of the member societies are themselves very small. STC is by far the largest society; TEKOM, the German society, is second. We have 22,000 members; TEKOM has 4,000; the rest of the societies are far smaller, even smaller than many STC chapters. One of the byproducts of this discrepancy is the feeling that STC is trying to "take over the world" and encroach upon the membership of the other societies. Of course, we are not. That's why we don't actively solicit new chapters outside North America. In fact, we don't actively solicit new chapters anywhere! It's always been a grassroots effort. Before going into more detail I would like to stop here.

As I said, I represent all of STC, so please do feel free to contact me with your questions or concerns. I'll do my best to address them. The best way to reach me is email:

mwise@manu.com

I hope you all have a wonderful 2002.

Best regards,

Mary Wise

## February 2002: STC Telephone seminars

Two STC telephone seminars will be held in February 2002. On Wednesday, February 6, Hans E. Fenstermacher will host *From World-Weary to World-Ready: Usability for International Users*. On Wednesday, February 20, John V. Hedtke will present *Creating Effective Documentation Plans*. Detailed information on both seminars can be found on the Society Web site. We encourage chapters to reprint this information in their newsletters or on chapter Web sites. As a service to your members, chapters might consider sponsoring a telephone seminar. Because you pay only for the connection, not the number of people participating, telephone seminars are a cost-effective way to train groups of technical communicators. Costs per site are detailed below.

- US sites: \$125.00
- Canadian sites: \$140.00
- Sites outside North America: Please contact the STC office

An additional \$10.00 will be charged for registrations received less than five days before the seminar.

For more details about STC's upcoming telephone seminars, including registration information, see the December 2001 issue of Intercom or visit the STC Web site.

## STC Sacramento Call for Papers

We need your help. We are having our annual Writer in the Workplace Conference in Sacramento, California, on April 6, 2002 and we would like to get more proposals. This year's conference, entitled **Communication: The Vital Link**, is a multifaceted look at the technical communication profession, professional development, and career management. The conference is organized into four stems: Vital Links, Polished Links, Career Links, and Missing Links. Speakers will include leading visionaries from industry, academia, and government.

Our annual Writer in the Workplace Conference is always a great experience! Go to the STC Sacramento Website's conference page at [www.stcsacramento.org/WIW2002/index.htm](http://www.stcsacramento.org/WIW2002/index.htm) for more information about the conference itself.

## Conferences

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### Graphics, visualisation and XML

*21 February 2002, Chilton, UK*

This is a conference of the XMPL and SGML UK user group. For more information, go to: <http://www.xmluk.org>.

### Spring 2002 Event on Elearning

*5 March 2002, Place yet unknown*

Not much is known on this conference but for more information, go to <http://www.stc-europe.org/belgium/events.htm>.

### Online learning 2002

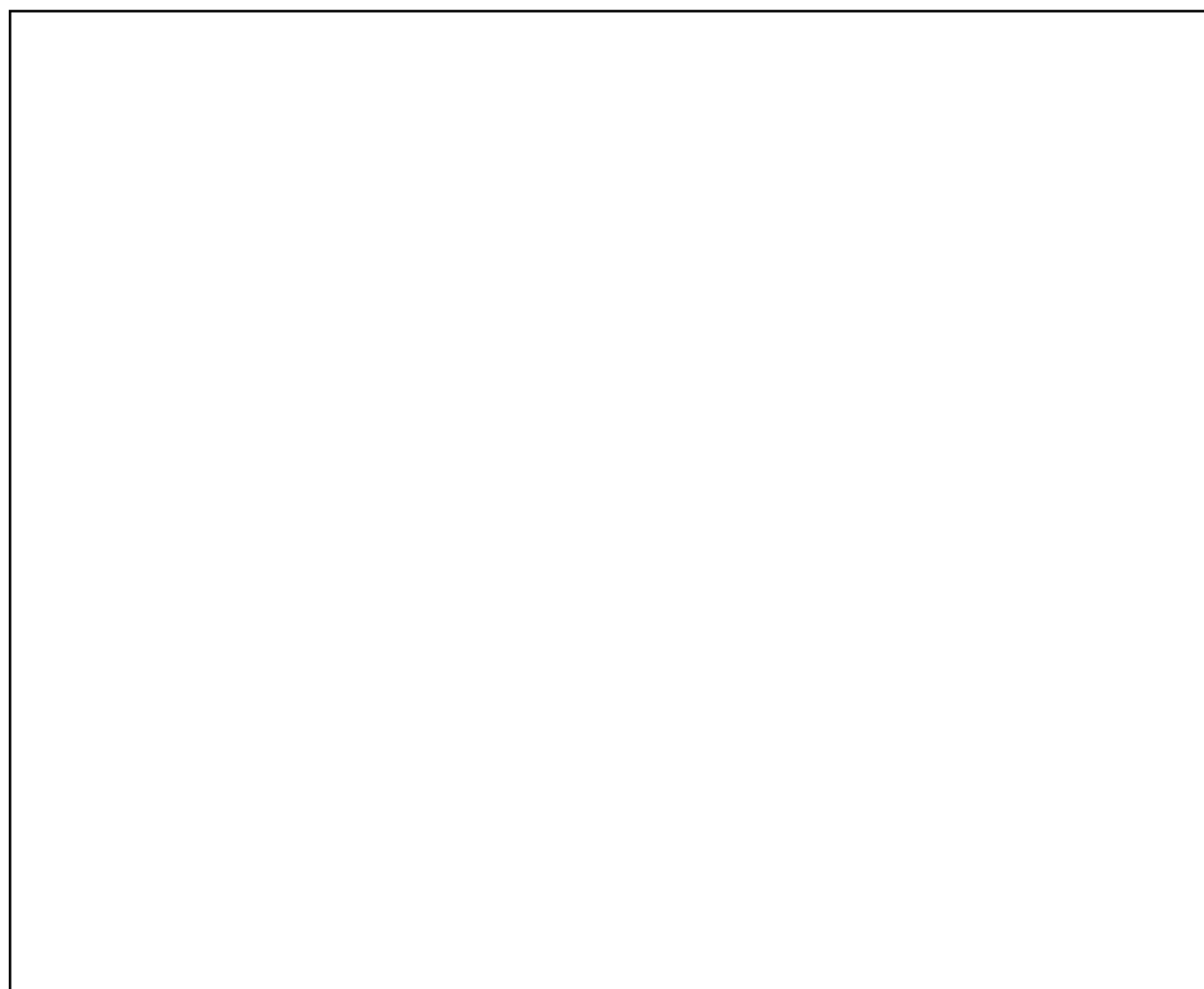
*5-6 March 2002, London, UK*

The biggest European conference on Online Learning. For more information, go to: <http://www.vnuonlinelearning.co.uk/>

### STC 49th Annual Conference

*5-8 May 2002, Nashville, USA*

The preliminary program will be sent out with the February issue of Intercom. Meanwhile, if you want more information, go to: <http://www.stc.org/conferences.html>



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1/4 page	£15
1/2 page	£25
Full page	£40

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