TECH

Online Resources for Technical Communicators, Part II

compiled by Matthew Chinn

*T*his is the second installment of the two-part list of Internet discussion groups (listservs) on technical communication and related topics. -Ed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Topic: Information Design (announcements & moderated discussion)
Address: majordomo@fwi.uva.nl
Message: subscribe InfoDesign

Topic: Designing maps, charts, graphs, diagrams (moderated discussion)
Address: majordomo@fwi.uva.nl
Message: subscribe InfoGraphics

Topic: Working in the computer industry (news & politics)
Address listserv@Sunnyside.com
Message: SUBSCRIBE CPSR-CPU Your Name

Topic: Information technology (abstracts of news)
Address: listproc@educom.unc.edu
Message: subscribe edupage Your Name

Topic: Marketing communications (discussion)
Address: listserv@rmii.com
Message: subscribe htmarcom
or: subscribe htmarcom-digest (Also see this web site for more information: http://www.bayne.com/wolfBayne/htmarcom/)

Topic: Teaching of technical & scientific communication
Address: listserv@clvm.clarkson.edu
Message: subscribe cptsc-l Your Name

Topic: Language and translation (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@SEARN.SUNET.SE
Message: SUB LANTRA-L Your Name

Topic: Graphic design (discussion)
Address: listserv@ulkyvm.louisville.edu
Message: subscribe graphics Your Name

Topic: Copyright (learned discussion)
Address: listproc@cni.org
Message: subscribe cni-copyright Your Name

Topic: Computer book publishing
Address: list@studiob.com
Subject: subscribe or: subscribe digest

PRODUCT and COMPANY INFORMATION

Topic: Adobe Acrobat (discussion)
Address: acrobat-request@blueworld.com
Message: subscribe or: subscribe digest

Topic: Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Premier (discussion, largely technique)
Address: LISTSERV@WSUVM1.CSC.WSU.EDU
Message: subscribe ADOBEPS Your Name

Topic: Adobe Acrobat Capture software
Address: majordomo@emrg.com
Message: SUBSCRIBE CAPTURE-L Your Address

Find us on the Web at
http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/

Inside this issue:

A Note from the President . . .

It's This Time of Year Again...

by Dick Hughes

Can you believe it? The holiday season is almost upon us — again. Where did the year go?

First I'd like to thank all of you who supported the chapter at the Trends '98 conference. While our registration was down this year, many of the attendees reported that they learned a lot from the sessions and workshop. Looking ahead to future events of this type, the chapter is evaluating the possibility of offering some one-day topical workshops by noted technical communicators , which would be easier and less expensive to manage. I'll keep you updated as to how this proceeds. And of course, we can't forget that in 18 months, May 21–24, 2000, the STC Annual Conference will be right here in Orlando.

As the end of the calendar year draws near, it's also time to remind everyone about upcoming membership opportunities and renewals. If you join STC in October, November, or December of this year, you actually receive more than a full year's membership with no additional cost since your membership is good for the next full calendar year. So let your colleagues and/or employers know of this benefit and maybe they will get an early holiday present.

It was good to see the great turnout at October's chapter meeting on web page design using Adobe PageMill. The chapter's own webmistress, Sharon Wissert, and her boss, Nan Schultz, from Active Mind, Inc. gave a very entertaining and informative presentation that could have gone on much longer. And last but not least, I hope to see all of you at our December 1 meeting where we'll learn about some Year 2000 compliance issues.⊠

Melissa Pellegrin Awards Go to Cooper and Gaal

by Gail Lippincott

Kelli Cooper and Anna Gaal topped a competitive field to receive the coveted undergraduate and graduate grants presented from the chapter's Melissa Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship Funds. The awards were presented at the *Trends '98* technical communication conference at the Orlando Expo Center on October 2.

The undergraduate and graduate awards, each worth $300, come from the scholarship fund established last year to honor the memory of a recent UCF graduate, fellow chapter member, and esteemed professional colleague. The recipients' names will be added to the memorial plaque on permanent display in the UCF English Department.

In addition to the UCF scholarships, excellence awards of $100 each were presented to Brad Paddock of Seminole Community College and Patricia Pierattini of Valencia Community College.

Cooper, who works two part-time jobs while carrying a full course load, maintains an overall GPA of 3.7. She was especially pleased to combine her love of horses with a love of writing when she designed and produced an operations manual for an equestrian facility as a required independent study project.

Gaal finds her undergraduate degree in creative writing

VP Peeps
And We're Off...
by Lori Corbett

We've started off with some excellent meetings, culminating in the October meeting at which Sharon Wissert and Nan Schultz demonstrated the PageMill product and showed us some of the nuances of HTML code.

And things just keep getting better…

Join us on **Tuesday, December 1**, when John Matelski, Assistant Directory, Technology Management for the City of Orlando shares information about getting ready for the Year 2000. Mr. Matelski has been at the forefront of the Year 2000 issue since 1990 and is the current Chairman of the Central Florida Year 2000 User Group. He has participated in and chaired numerous committees and has worked with a number of commercial and government entities in establishing guidelines, timelines, and remediation strategies to proactively deal with the millennium issues.

Come to the December meeting and find out how you can help your company prepare for the new millennium. Networking time at this meeting will be a bit special as we enjoy some seasonal delights and share the spirit of the season!
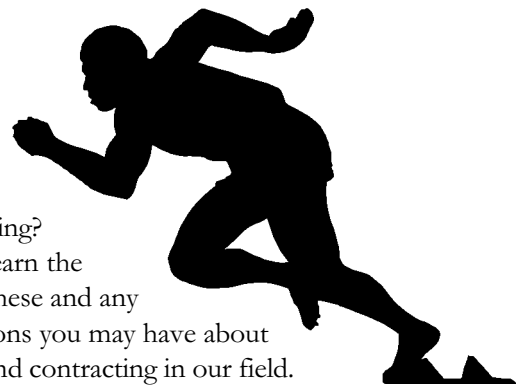
Looking Forward to 1999
The following schedule describes the highlights of our upcoming meetings in early 1999. Except where noted, all meetings will be held at the Winter Park Civic Center, with networking and refreshments at 6:30 followed by a short business meeting and presentation at 7:00.

Date: Tuesday, January 26
Topic: On Your Own: The Pitfalls and the Payoffs, presented by Barbara Odom, Independent Consultant

Have you thought about going independent? Is it the right move for you? How does being independent differ from sub-contracting? Come and learn the answers to these and any other questions you may have about consulting and contracting in our field.

Date: Wednesday, February 24
Topic: Getting Ready for STC's 46th and 47th Annual Conferences, information session led by Richard Wrye, Conference Support Committee Chairperson

Did you know that the Florida chapters will be hosting the STC Annual Conference in 2000 (right here in Orlando)? Our chapter has a great opportunity; find out how you can reap the rewards and benefits of this occasion.

Date: Thursday, March 25
Topic: Field trip

Field trip to Full Sail, one of the world's foremost schools for digital media, audio, film, and video careers. And it's right here in Orlando! Full Sail provides extensive instruction in creative media, emphasizing hands-on experience that provides solid, practical knowledge.

Date: Wednesday, April 28
Topic: Looking Forward to Retirement: a financial checkup, presented by Frank Dasse.

It's never too early to plan for the day when you retire. Come to this meeting and learn about the opportunities that you can take advantage of when you start early enough.

Chapter elections for the 1999-2000 chapter year will also be held during this meeting.

I look forward to seeing each of YOU at a chapter meeting soon.⊠

Awards, continued from page 2

a good foundation for graduate work in technical communication. Maintaining a 4.0 average, she works part-time at Federal Express. After gaining more industry experience, she plans to teach technical communication.

"We congratulate all of the students on their scholarships and awards," declared Dan Voss, manager of the STC Education Committee which made the selections. "They were tops in an excellent field. We had a difficult time making our decisions."

In the conclusion of her essay in the scholarship application, Gaal stated that "At last year's *Trends* conference, I was struck by the impression Melissa Pellegrin had made on faculty, students, and colleagues within the field of technical communication. I would consider it an honor to be awarded a scholarship in her name, and would continue to pursue the highest standards for both the field of technical communication and myself."

Such is the unique challenge of our profession.⊠

Impressions from TRENDS '98

by Nadejda Bojilova
Between the many useful sessions (top and center), there was time for networking (second down) and browsing through the winning entries from the Technical Publications competition (bottom).⊠

Technical Writing One of "20 HOT JOB TRACKS"

by Maurice Martin
The Oct. 26, 1998 issue of U.S. News and World Report features a series of articles on career opportunities for the new year. Page 85 of that issue includes information on technical writing, with quotes by STC member Sharon Murphy and statistics from STC's 1998 Technical Communicator Salary Survey.

You can read about STC on the U.S. News and World Report Web site. The Society information can be accessed through that site's home page, http://www.usnews.com, or directly at http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/beyond/bcchot5.htm.⊠

Employment Opportunities

by Diane Heald

Here are the additions to our employment hotline. Remember to check the hotline (262-2064) or contact Diane Heald at 407/277-8458 or heald@iag.net for the latest employment opportunity information.

Position	Technical Writer
Location	Orlando
Contact	Judi Alamia, Attorneys' Tile Insurance Fund, Inc., 407/240-3863, Fax 407/240-2932, jalamia@yahoo.com
Description	2-5 years experience in writing and editing, both hard copy and online, preferably in a team. 6 months experience desired in at least one: RoboHELP, FrameMaker, Ventura, or ForeHelp. Adobe Acrobat. B.A. in English, Technical Writing or a related field. A skills test will be administered.

Position	Technical Writers – several positions
Location	Central and Southern Florida
Contact	Tom Haley, TAD Technical Services, 561/368-8597, vpark2@aol.com
Description	Strong technical documentation skills using MS Word, Quark, and FrameMaker. Online help experience, preferably using RoboHelp. Knowledge of programming languages, development tools, and operating systems desired. 3 - 5 yrs. experience but a strong junior level person will be considered as well.

Position	Technical Writer
Location	Orlando
Contact	Din Bissoondial, ACSYS, Inc. I.T. Division, 407/426-2040, fax: 407/426-2050, dinb@acsysfla.com
Description	Experienced Technical Writer with Java, Windows NT, C++, UNIX, FrameMaker, and telecommunications experience. College degree in associated field, excellent writing, verbal, PC skills, strong work ethic, self-starter, goal oriented. Telecommunications experience a plus.

Position	Business Systems Analyst
Location	Maitland, Florida
Contact	Doug Hayward, Bairnco, 407/ 875-2222 ext 239, dhayward@bairnco.com
Description	The position involves technical writing, but as the individual becomes more proficient, tasks will evolve into "internal" consulting support. Leading to a role as someone who analyzes business areas and recommends and helps to implement systems to manage our data. Travel: 30% to 50%. ⊠

Chapter Notes

by Laurie Benson

October Program on HTML

The October program was led by Sharon Wissert and Nan Schultz from Active Mind Inc. Their company offers web design and development and so they are in the mainstream of the new web technologies. Since the inception of the company, PageMill has been the HTML editor of choice. PageMill was created by Adobe in 1993 and was one of the first tools in this field.

Although PageMill is easy to use, Sharon and Nan sometimes revert to the Notepad editing tool to make specialized HTML entries. You can only

Nan Schultz and Sharon Wissert from Active Mind Inc. presented the web editing tool PageMill (top) to a captive audience (left)

stretch a Windows-based HTML converter tool so far before you reach its boundary — WYGIWYG (What you get is what you get). So, when PageMill can't build the unique design you see in your head on the screen, inserting an HTML code directly into the editor can do the trick. PageMill still saves you time by enabling you to get 90% of your work done with the mouse and pull-down menus instead of typing code.

Nan and Sharon also shared the following tips they have learned on the job.

- Design for 640 x 480 pixel screens because too many computers out there use this resolution. In fact, using a width of 585 allows room for scroll bars.

- Use the 216-color web palette because dithering can make a mess of customized colors on some screens.

- Use the standard fonts, such as Arial or Helvetica, which are found on most computers.

- Name the beginning page for each directory level "index.htm" to allow direct access to different levels.

- Achieve a good layout by using tables, which are in fact the only way to use customized bullets and get your text to line up properly.

- Use a clear GIF image that is 2 x 2 in size to create spaces as needed for layout within your table. You then expand the transparent image to be the exact size you need. By using only one actual image you avoid the download time required to load different graphics.

  · Use any 1-pixel color graphic with a wide tail for back grounds.

  · Stay with fixed widths for the outer table measurement and only use % allocation for tables within the outer table.

Both Sharon and Nan were knowledgeable and entertaining in their presentation. You can look at their company's web site at www.activemind.net.⊠

Admin Council
by Laurie Benson

The Education Committee is working on producing special one-day or evening educational sessions for local STC members. These new sessions would be longer than our monthly meetings in order to delve deeper into the scheduled topic. Our monthly meeting format includes time for networking and so the scheduled topic time seems to pass too quickly. The new educational sessions differ from the big *Trends* conference as well, which offers overviews of many topics. The committee will be looking for one-day sessions that concentrate on a single popular technical communication topic. If you have any ideas for topics or would like to offer your assistance please contact Gail Lippincott at.lipp0015@tc.umn.edu.⊠

Resources, *continued from page 1*

Topic: Electronic publishing (discussion of effect on publishing & education)
Address: listproc@@cosn.org
Message: sub epub Your Name

Topic: Adobe Illustrator (discussion)
Address: listserv@netcom.com
Message: subscribe ILLSTRTR-L Your Address

Topic: Adobe Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-adobe Your Name

Topic: PageMaker (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@INDYCMS.IUPUI.EDU
Message: SUBSCRIBE PAGEMAKR

Topic: Desktop publishing, particularly PageMaker (discussion)
Address: digestif@antigone.com
Message: subscribe dtp-l Your Name

Topic: ISO 9000 and all that (discussion)
Address: Listserv@VM1.nodak.edu
Message: subscribe iso9000 Your Name

Topic: Adobe Acrobat & PDF (discussion)
Address: Majordomo@binc.net (or is it majordomo@emrg.com?)
Message: SUBSCRIBE PDF-L Your Address or: SUBSCRIBE PDF-DIGEST (or PDF-L-DIGEST?) Your Address
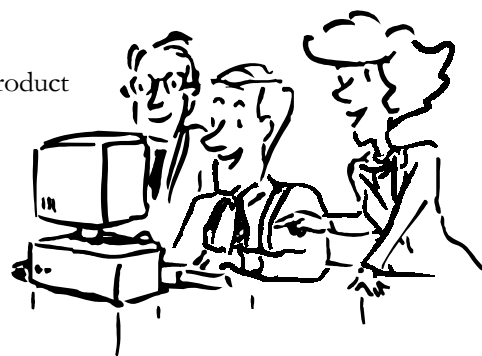
Topic: TeX
Address: LISTSERV@SHSU.EDU
Message: subscribe INFO-TeX Your Name (discussion; this is ported to comp.text.tex.)
subscribe ctt-Digest Your Name (for daily digest of comp.text.tex postings not from INFO-TeX)
subscribe Ling-TeX Your Name (discussion: Linguistics and TeX) subscribe TeX-Pubs Your Name (TeX periodicals, redistribution)

Topic: Apple Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-apple Your Name

Topic: DEC Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-dec Your Name

Topic: Hewlett-Packard Product/Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-hp Your Name

Topic: IBM Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-ibm Your Name

Topic: Oracle Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-oracle Your Name

Topic: Sun Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-sun Your Name

Topic: Unisys Product and Training Information
Address: listproc@ucdavis.edu
Message: subscribe ucd-unisys Your Name

Topic: Microsoft Word on PC (discussion)
Address: MXSERVER@ufobi2.uni-forst.gwdg.de
Message: subscribe word-pc Your Name

Topic: Microsoft Word on Mac (moderated discussion)
Address: listproc@scu.edu.au
Message: subscribe word-mac Your Name

Topic: Windows Help authoring (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@ADMIN.HUMBERC.ON.CA
Message: SUBSCRIBE WINHLP-L Your Name

Topic: Ventura
Address: discuss-ventura-sub@discuss.corelnet.com
Message: (anything at all will do)

HEALTH CONCERNS:
Topic: The health effects of computer use
Address: listserv@iubvm.ucs.indiana.edu
Message: sub C+HEALTH Your Name

Topic: Carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis etc. (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@ITSSRV1.UCSF.EDU
Message: subscribe sorehand Your Name

Topic: Repetitive stress injury (newsletter)
Address: majordomo@world.std.com
Message: subscribe rsi

Topic: Migraines, cluster headaches, vascular headaches (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@SHSU.EDU
Message: subscribe headache Your Name.⊠

Regional News
New Beginnings

by Michelle Ratcliffe

September 17, 18, and 19, 1998 were several very BIG days for the Society for Technical Communication. On these days, STC conducted its first Board of Directors meeting and related Strategic Planning workshop outside North America. Also, thanks to the fantastic hospitality of the France chapter, STC rounded out this now historic period by conducting the first International Day conference. International Day brought together over 120 individuals from 13 countries, delegates from other communication organizations, and the STC Board to discuss and share ideas and opportunities for technical communicators around the world.

I cannot express how tremendously valuable and educational this experience was. International Day started with a presentation of the charter and planned activities for the new STC International Interests Committee headed by Vici Koster-Lenhardt (Austria) and Bogo Vatovec (Slovenia). We then enjoyed presentations from the Belgium, France, Sweden, United Kingdom, and Israel chapters about their history, activities, and achievements.

Did you know that the France chapter has been holding competitions in multiple languages since 1994? That the Israel chapter formed in the 1960s? That the Swedish chapter subsidizes their activities by offering their programs to the public?

We also met with delegates of other technical communication organizations from France, Sweden, Ger-

many, and the United Kingdom. INTECOM (the International Council for Technical Communication, an association of communication societies to which STC belongs) presented a summary of their activities and plans for FORUM 2000, a multi-day conference to be held in London in 2000.

International Day participants communicated their concerns and needs to the STC Board and we learned an incredible amount. Many of the challenges we discussed are not too different from those experienced in North American chapters such as geographically distanced members, funding, and volunteer burnout. We also learned about concerns unique to non-North American members, including specific cultural and monetary issues, legal and political impacts on the workplace, and lower availability of formal training programs.

Overall, I believe we all will benefit from the outcomes and the relationships forged through these events. As a Society, this was one step in the process of strengthening our ability to work globally. I am very excited

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by the events that occurred, the information we gained, and the possibilities that are yet to unfold.

Summary of 1998 Fall STC Board meeting actions:

· Passed the 1999 balanced budget.

· Changed the site for the 2004 annual conference from New York to Philadelphia. This change was made because New York sources estimated hotel costs of $400 a night.

· Appointed Richard Wrye (First Coast chapter) to the position of Conference Support Manager for the STC 2000 Annual Conference in Orlando, FL.

· Approved the STC Strategic Plan for 1998-2003.

· Approved revisions to the STC Ethical Principles for Technical Communicators (previously named the STC Ethical Guidelines for Technical Communicators).

· This statement in the policy on election campaigning: "Campaigning by candidates for Society level office is not

eye on Language

The Spin Doctors

by Mary Kendig

Is it me, or have you too sensed some people's general "Why should I care" attitude these days? The attitude seems to have gotten more widespread lately, at least in my little world. Of course, these feelings of disenchantment, cynicism, or negativity probably stem from a great many causes I won't dare get into here. But, even in the world of written documentation, I've noticed a growing careless, even negative attitude. Specifically, many of the writings we produce contain statements that use noncommittal, evasive, vague, and negative words and sentence structures that serve only to confuse and frustrate readers. Let's examine just a few examples, shall we?

Negative: You cannot perform any action on the window other than repositioning the graphic.
Positive and specific: The only action you can perform on the [name] window is to reposition the [name] icon.

Negative and evasive: This action will not be recognized by the system unless certain steps are taken. *What action? What steps? Who should take the steps?*

Positive: The system will recognize the address change you have entered if you take the following steps: [list the steps].

Negative and "with attitude": The issue will not be taken into consideration unless our other requirements are met. *What issue? By whom will it not be taken into consideration? What the heck are those other requirements?*

Positive and cordial: Our company will consider the system upgrade you propose if you can meet our other requirements, specified below. [Specify the requirements.]

And how about the carelessness exhibited by writers who make up words by attaching the prefix non- to a legitimate word, thereby creating a "non-word"? Take the word non-specific, for instance. What do we really mean? Vague, generic, common, confusing? Whatever it is, let's try saying it instead of dodging around it. Sure, this straight-ahead tone might sting a little, but we'll be better off (and maybe more appreciated) in the long run for being more direct.

So, will putting this positive and direct spin on our sentences create a world filled with happy, peppy, caring people? Of course not. But we can do a lot to avoid the confusion, frustration, even cynicism caused by having to endure endless paragraphs of noncommittal, evasive, vague, or negative language if we use a more direct and positive approach in all our communications, be they written or oral.

Beginnings, continued from page 8

forbidden by the Society Bylaws, but should be discouraged; if done, the candidates should be ethical in their methods. (9/88)" will be replaced with: "Candidates for Society-level office who conduct campaigns for office should be ethical in their methods." In other words, campaigning for STC offices is no longer discouraged, provided it is done in an ethical manner.

· Dissolved the Front Range (Utah) and Columbia River (Oregon) student chapters. The Intermountain and Willamette Valley chapters will serve the needs of the student members in the area.

Additional Notes

The new Quick Reference to Resources publication for 1998-99 is on the STC office web site (stc-va.org) under Administrative Guidelines as is the Chapter Handbook and other key guidelines.

Chapters are encouraged to send copies of public relations materials, including chapter brochures, published articles, and other promotional materials, to their Director-Sponsor and the STC office for archiving.

Coming Up...

Dec.1 — **Chapter Meeting: Holiday Gathering and Presentation:** **Are You Ready for the Year 2000?** presented by John Matelski, Assistant Director, Technology Management for the City of Orlando. Find out how we can help our companies prepare for the new millennium.
Members: $5.00 / Nonmembers: $7.00
6:30 p.m. – Time for networking
7:00 p.m. – Business meeting and presentation
R.S.V.P. to Lori Corbett at 407/828-5315 or Lori_Corbett@wda.disney.com

Winter Park CivicCenter 1050 W. Morse Blvd. Winter Park, Florida

Jan.1 — **STC Membership Fees Due.** You should receive your membership renewal notice in the mail in late November or early December. A grace period for the payment of the dues extends to February 28, 1999. Note that only members who have paid their dues by February 28 will be eligible to vote in STC elections this spring.

For questions contact the STC membership department at 703/522-4114, or e-mail at: membership@stc-va.org

Jan. 26 — **Chapter Meeting:** Presentation and Discussion: On Your Own: The Pitfalls and the Payoffs, presented by Barbara Odom, Independent Consultant
Members: $5.00 / Nonmembers: $7.00
6:30 p.m. — Time for networking
7:00 p.m. — Business meeting and demonstration
R.S.V.P. to Lori Corbett at 407/828-5315 or Lori_Corbett@wda.disney.com

Winter Park CivicCenter 1050 W. Morse Blvd. Winter Park, Florida

Jan. 4 — **Submission Deadline for the November/December issue of Tech Tech Trends.** Contact Nadejda Bojilova at 407/ 660-0343 x.321 or at nbojilova@paysys.com for more details on how to submit articles for the Orlando STC chapter newsletter.

TECH TRENDS

Orlando Chapter
P.O. Box 1343
Orlando, FL 32802-1343

—PLEASE FORWARD—

society for technical communication