

TECH



society for technical communication

Orlando Chapter
Volume 4, Number 5
March/April 2000

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A Note from the President

As we near the end of the first quarter of 2000, I'm amazed at the number of accomplishments achieved by our chapter.

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I especially want to give kudos to **Dr. Dan Jones** and **Sharon Wissert**. Dan launched the Orlando Chapter Listserv in January. The listserv is available only to Orlando chapter members. If you are a member, but are not yet on the listserv and wish to be included, please send a request via email to Alicia Cook at (acook@paysys.com). After verifying your membership, Alicia will forward your request to Dan who will send you notification after he adds you to the list. The listserv has already hosted several threads, including translation information, job leads, print driver questions, just to name a few. As the chapter grows, I am sure the listserv will be extremely helpful. And if you haven't yet taken a look, I invite you to check out our updated web site at <http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>. Many thanks go to Sharon for providing an extremely professional and pleasing site.

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But wait, there's more. **Barb Odom** has enthusiastically taken a leadership role by inaugurating the Orlando chapter's first Special Interest Group (SIG). She is heading up the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG, which held its first meeting on March 2. If you currently are an independent consultant or contractor or are contemplating becoming one, I strongly urge you take part in this group. By sharing information, we can support each other in our professional growth.

Conference Volunteer Opportunities

It seems like the conference is still far off, but you'd be surprised how quickly May 21 is going to come around. Please be sure to check out "STC Annual Conference: Calling All Volunteers!" on page 2 and send your availability and interest information to Sue Nurczyk as soon as possible.

Upcoming Chapter Elections



Finally, according to chapter bylaws, I'd like to alert all members to the upcoming annual chapter elections in April. Thus far, the chapter's nominating committee has developed the following proposed slate of officers for the 1999-2000 chapter year:

- President: Marty Goodwin
- Vice President: Ann Vogt
- Secretary: Paula O'Brien; Vickie Kirkpatrick
- Treasurer: Etta Jean Smith; W.C. Wiese
- Nominating Committee: Barb Odom; Bob Lanni.

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else to be added to the slate, please contact Gloria Jones at gjones@paysys.com. Special election ballots will be mailed to all paid chapter members in early April. You can return your ballot by mail or bring it to the April 26 chapter meeting. Details will be included in the mailing. ❖

Visit the Orlando Chapter Web site at:
<http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>

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STC ANNUAL CONFERENCE - Calling All Volunteers!

Do you want to be a part of the excitement of hosting the STC Annual Conference in Orlando this year? Then we need your help!

The Annual Conference is less than three months away, and now it is time to sign up for the volunteer positions needed to support the conference. The Volunteer Committee is accepting volunteer applications from STC members of all Florida chapters (First Coast, North Central Florida, Northern Gulf Coast, Orlando, Palm Beaches, SpaceTech, Suncoast). All volunteers must be active STC members, so please be sure your membership is current before volunteering. The committee will hold a volunteer training day on Saturday, May 6 in Orlando; attendance is mandatory for all volunteers.

Most jobs are easy and require only a small chunk of your time—typically 1-3 hours. We need help with the following:

- Setting Up the Competition Exhibit (Saturday)
- Volunteer Room Host (Sunday through Wednesday)
- Registration Line Host (Sunday afternoon)
- Student/Faculty Reception (Sunday evening)

- Hotel Assistance (Sunday and Monday, throughout day)
- Welcome Reception (Sunday evening)
- Closing Reception (Wednesday late afternoon)
- Breakfast Greeters (Monday and Tuesday early AM)
- Newsletter Distributors (Monday through Wednesday early AM)
- Honors Banquet (Tuesday evening)
- Networking Lunch Ticket/Sales (Monday lunchtime)
- SIG Networking Lunch Ticket/Sales (Wednesday lunchtime)
- Hospitality Booth (Sunday through Wednesday, throughout day)
- Tearing Down the Competition Exhibit (Wednesday afternoon).

If you would like to volunteer, please send the following information to Sue Nurczyk, Volunteer Committee Coordinator, Elcotel, Inc., 6428 Parkland Drive, Sarasota, FL, 34243 (or email this information to snurczyk@elcotel.com).

- Your Full Name
- Home Address
- Home Phone (10-digit)
- Work Phone (10-digit)
- Cell Phone (10-digit) <if we can reach you this way during the conference>
- Home Email
- Work Email
- Your Chapter
- Membership Grade (member, senior member, student member)
- Date of Arrival at Conference
- Hotel
- Preferred Job
- Preferred Day and Time Slot (Monday afternoon, Tuesday morning, etc.).

We will do our best to match your preference to the available positions; however, we cannot guarantee that you will be assigned to the job you prefer. Please be flexible, and thanks for your support! ❖

TECH TRENDS

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STC Region 3 Director/Sponsor

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Tech Trends, published six times per year, is the official publication of the STC Orlando Chapter. We encourage letters, articles, and other items from STC members for publication. Please refer to "Coming Up..." for deadline information. Address (email) submissions to Dick Hughes at dhughes@ema-inc.com.

You may reprint original material appearing in *Tech Trends* if you acknowledge the author and source and send the editor a copy of the publication.

Tech Trends .pdf files available at <http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>.

Employment Opportunities

To update our employment services to our members and provide the most current information, all employment listings and opportunities are now listed on our chapter Web site at: <http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>.

VP Peeps

To Summarize...

by Gail Lippincott

Our February meeting took the pulse of marketing trends in the technical communication field, on both a local and a national level. Barb Odom assembled an outstanding panel to share knowledge, experience, and trend projections with the chapter. Along with Barb, who is now an independent contractor, Etta Jean Smith, Bob Lanni, Joe Mooney, and Din Bissoondial represented technical writing from the vantage points of independents, employees, managers, and consulting firms.

The interactive session was shaped by audience responses to a straw poll Barb conducted. Attendees ranked their interest in five key tech writing trends for 2000, some drawn from JoAnn Hackos' recent article in *Intercom*:

- Across the board, organizations generally are doing more with fewer people. Senior management is expected to increase overall productivity with the same or smaller staff.



Panel members (l to r): Joe Mooney, Din Bissoondial, Bob Lanni, Etta Jean Smith, and Barbara Odom.

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Admin Council

by Din Bissoondial

Highlights from the February Administrative Council meeting included updates on the Education Committee's High School Technical Writing Competition, Pellegrin scholarship selections, and plans for continuing education workshops for chapter members. Vice President Gail Lippincott reported on upcoming chapter meetings and programs; Treasurer W.C. Wiese presented a chapter budget and financial update report; and membership updates were also discussed. The next Council meetings are scheduled for Thursday, March 9 and Thursday, April 13. ❖

Member News

The Orlando Chapter extends special congratulations to two longtime chapter members who have recently been elected to the rank of STC Associate Fellow and Fellow.

- Dick Hughes has been elected STC Associate Fellow
- Dan Jones has been elected STC Fellow.

Dick and Dan will be among those honored at the STC Annual Conference in May at the society's Honors and Awards banquet. We hope many of you can attend. ❖

- Hackos predicts a decrease in telecommuting opportunities for technical writers because of an increase in the use of information databases and cooperation between writers and technical staff.

- Hackos suggests we refocus our attention from "sitting with engineers" to "going to work for the customers" because users don't necessarily want to know what a product can do, they want to know how to do what they want to do. Along that same line of thinking, some companies have taken the initiative to teach their

VP Peeps (continued)

technicians and engineering staff how to write documentation.

- Hackos believes that “Documentation databases will prove the demise of desktop publishing.”
- SGML is being introduced into some organizations for standardizing information, print on multiple platforms, and maximize information reuse.

Tech writers are not shy, of course, and the audience engaged the panelists in a lively discussion. The meeting continued our tradition of valuable information exchange — audience members and panelists clarified definitions of new technology, processes, and acronyms. Thanks to all for an enlightening evening. ❖

Looking ahead . . .

Tuesday, March 28
Winter Park Civic Center

She whetted our appetite at the February meeting, identifying the new trend of “knowledge management.” Gwen Thomas, a past Orlando Chapter vice president, champions the management of organizational knowledge as a crucial role for technical communicators. As Corporate Knowledge Manager of PaySys International, Inc., Gwen challenges us to think outside the documentation box. She’ll discuss some tools and techniques of knowledge management and then describe opportunities for savvy technical communicators.

Wednesday, April 26
Winter Park Civic Center

The Annual Awards Dinner showers the excitement and glamour of those televised awards ceremonies on our own Central Florida celebrities, without all the dumb speeches! Join us for fun and food as we honor the ten winners of the High School Technical Writing Competition, their teachers, and their parents; award the Melissa Pellegrin undergraduate and graduate scholarships to two deserving UCF students; and confer chapter-level and Society-level awards on many of our dedicated members. Congratulate the new chapter officers and let them know what kinds of programs you’d like next year.

Menu and dinner prices will be announced on the Website and the chapter listserv. ❖

Education News and Updates



Lake Brantley Rules Technical Writing Competition

Lake Brantley students dominated the Orlando Chapter’s 4th Annual Central Florida High School Technical Writing Competition, carrying off eight of ten awards. The other award winners were from Cocoa Beach and Melbourne Central Catholic High Schools. In all, one \$150 Excellence award, four \$75 Merit awards, and five \$25 Honorable Mention awards will be presented, along with plaques and certificates, at the April awards dinner at the Winter Park Civic Center.

Ethan Heintzelman, a sophomore at Lake Brantley High School, earned the Excellence award for his essay, “Satellite Television.” Cocoa Beach High School sophomore Sean R. Samuelson received a Merit award for his essay, “What are the Major Benefits of C++ Programming?” Three Lake Brantley sophomores also earned Merit awards: Jeannie Hu for “Spina Bifida,” Angela Goodwin for “The Effects of Melatonin on the Bodies of Organisms,” and Sean Amormino for “Autoimmune Diseases.”

The Honorable Mention winners included Megha Shah, a junior at Melbourne Central Catholic, who wrote “Insomnia and Melatonin: Is there a Significant Association?” Three sophomores and one junior from Lake Brantley also won \$25 Honorable Mentions: Michael Behr for “The New Future in Biotechnology: Human Gene Therapy,” Nancy Brown for “Female Athletes and Eating Disorders,” and Christine Offerman for “The Hubble Space Telescope,” and junior Alyssa M. Zerkowitz for “An Introduction to the Role of

(continued on page 5)

Outer Membrane Proteins in Mediating Antibiotic Resistance in *B. cepacia*.”

Dr. Sue Behel, faculty advisor of the eight Lake Brantley High award winners, continues to motivate her students, who have garnered numerous awards in previous competitions. This year, the other faculty sponsors of award-winning entries were David Schiffert of Cocoa Beach High and Joy B. Patterson of Melbourne Central Catholic High.

Five of the entries, the Excellence and Merit winners, now move on to the 2000 STC International High School Technical Writing Competition. Winners will be honored at the 47th Annual Conference, to be held in Orlando. ❖

Education Outreach

Education Committee members Jon Kessler, Gail Lippincott, and W.C. Wiese took their proclivity for judging high school technical writing to the wider field of science fairs. Jon and Gail volunteered to judge in the Seminole County Regional Science, Math, and Engineering Fair, held on February 5 at Seminole Towne Center Mall. W.C., chapter treasurer, judged projects at Edgewater High School's recent science fair. In addition, W.C. and Gail applied their persuasive skills to encourage their spouses to share the fun as judges in the respective fairs. ❖

Noteworthy Quotes about Writing & Communication

“If you would be pungent, be brief. For it is with words as with sunbeams: The more they are condensed, the deeper they burn.” - Robert Southey

“Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.” - William Strunk Jr.

“Nearly all books on nearly all subjects ... are much too long.” - P.B. Medawar, *The Limits of Science*, preface.

“Clean, precise writing or speaking requires systematic, sequential thought. Words have to be crafted, not sprayed.” - Norman Cousins, “The Communication Collapse,” *Time* essay.

“All honest thought is a form of prayer.” - Lance Morrow, “The Best Refuge for Insomniacs,” *Time* essay, 29 April 1991.

“Any addition to the truth is a subtraction from it.” - Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writing. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to the reader.” - Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

“I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paperwork.” - Peter deVries

“Whatever is clearly expressed is well wrote.” - Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. ❖

Xerographics Ad (drop in)

Regional News

by Michelle Ratcliffe

Professional Development Opportunity: One-Day FrameMaker Training Sessions

The Orlando Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is pleased to announce two one-day training sessions on Adobe FrameMaker. Patrick Koster of Koster Associates, an Adobe®-certified trainer, will conduct both sessions at the University of Central Florida's Technical Writing Lab in the English Department.

Session 1 is a hands-on introductory session, intended for those who have not used FrameMaker or who have just started using the program. After an overview of the Adobe FrameMaker document window, menus, and tools, topics covered may include creating FrameMaker documents, defining paragraph formats, defining character formats, defining page layouts, and autonumbering.

Session 2 is a hands-on session for intermediate users of FrameMaker. Specific topics will be decided beforehand by the participants, and may cover items such as creating and formatting tables, anchored frames and graphics, creating cross-references and footnotes, creating a book file, generating a table of contents and index, conditional text, adding hypertext features to your document, saving as HTML or PDF, or online document review using Adobe Acrobat.

DATES AND TIMES

Session 1: Introduction to FrameMaker
Saturday, March 18, 2000; 9 am - 4 pm
(one-hour lunch break on your own).

Session 2: Advanced FrameMaker
Saturday, March 25, 2000; 9 am - 4 pm
(one-hour lunch break on your own).



SESSION COSTS

- Member of Orlando chapter - \$150
- Member of another chapter - \$195
- Non-STC member - \$245.

Discount of 10% for two or more persons from the same company. Lunch is on your own (plenty of fast food and sit-down restaurants available at University Blvd. and Alafaya Trail.) Campus parking fee \$2. Each session is limited to 20 participants. Adobe®-developed training material included.

RESERVATION AND PAYMENT DATES

Reservations with a credit card must be made by the Wednesday of the training.

(Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, & Diner's Club are accepted.)

You may also choose to pay by cash or check on the day of class, but your spot must be reserved first with a credit card. A session with fewer than 10 participants will be cancelled, and payment will be fully refunded. If you must cancel your reservation, all but \$25 will be refunded, to cover training materials and processing fees.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

To reserve your spot, contact Gail Lippincott, Orlando Chapter vice president.

Telephone - 407.679.8457, Email - rglsolutions2@earthlink.net, regular mail - PO Box 1447, Goldenrod, FL 32733-1447.

For Session 1 (March 18), make reservation by March 15. For Session 2 (March 25), make reservation by March 22. ❖

And Just In Case You Haven't Heard ...

The Society for Technical Communication will hold its 47th Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, May 21-24, 2000. The conference will feature more than 250 technical sessions covering technical writing, editing, management, Web design, multimedia, and other subjects of interest to technical communicators. Information on the conference is available on the STC office Web site at <http://www.stc-va.org>. A copy of the conference Preliminary Program, including a registration form, can be obtained by calling (703) 522-4114 ext. 200. ❖

on Language

by Mary Kendig

“A Sniglet a Day”

I wonder how many of you got as big a chuckle as I did from the “Witful Thinking” column by Maurice Martin in Intercom magazine’s February 2000 issue. It struck me particularly because I’m an old sniglet junkie. As Martin mentioned in his column, sniglets were an ’80s phenomenon that came from the mind of humorist Rich Hall. Hall defined sniglets as “any word that doesn’t appear in the dictionary but should.” One of my cubicle walls at work is prominently papered with my favorite old sniglets from the calendar of the same name that I got as a gift years ago. After 15 years or so, these cube-sized pieces of paper are now severely curled over and have turned a peculiar shade of yellow-gray, but I’m not ashamed. I still hang ’em proudly, and they are still good for a laugh every now and again, especially when the workday turns ugly. So, let me share with you a few of my favorite old sniglets — “oldlets,” if you’ll permit me — and introduce you to a few new ones I’ve come up with (with a little help from a friend) that apply especially to technical communicators like you and me.

Selections from the Cubicle Wall — The Mary Kendig Oldlets Hall of Fame:

irkwipe: The annoying flyer placed on your windshield by ambitious entrepreneurs.

bullsheet: An advertising supplement in a newspaper.

negaffirmative: Nodding in agreement with someone even though you don’t have the slightest clue as to what they’re talking about.

ugshot: The picture on your driver’s license.

barcathrottle: The wooden lever on the side of a recliner that acts like a gearshift.

omitary: The list of those “not pictured” in a group photo.

mallcontents: The collection of bored, ticked-off husbands you always see sitting on benches in the middle of a shopping mall.

Minisculini: Tiny portions served in fancy restaurants.



spruce sprigsteens: Those pine-scented car fresheners you see hanging from some rear-view mirrors. (Okay. Maybe that one wasn’t so funny, but hey, I’m from Jersey, so humor me.)

And here are a few “sniglets for the new millennium” (a.k.a., “Y2Klets”):

mailaise: The momentary letdown you experience on discovering that you have no new mail messages.

URLiness: A Web user’s exasperation on receiving a “URL Not Found” alert.

epsstentia: The absence of an electronic performance support system in a company’s product line.

antisoft: One who espouses the use of FrameMaker over MS Word as the definitive document management tool.

e-mania: The overwhelming desire to check your e-mail program for new messages every 15 minutes.

webantsy: Having a strong compulsion to move on if you’ve waited more than 10 seconds for your Web page to load.

multimeetia: A business environment wherein the frequency of scheduled meetings prevents you from getting any real work done.

sunupping: Working through the wee hours to meet a project deadline that’s fallen behind schedule (probably due to multimeetia; see above).

acronomics: The art of reducing communication to a series of abbreviations.

indextrious: Having the ability to construct a thorough and useful index after others have tried and failed.

So, if you’re suffering from mailaise or URLiness, or if multimeetia or sunupping has made you surly and you need a chuckle, maybe a little “sniglet fix” will help get you smiling again. As TV’s Det. Sgt. Rick Hunter often said to his esteemed colleague Dee Dee McCall back in the heyday of the sniglet (1984), “Works for me!” ❖

Coming Up...

March 28 Chapter Meeting: Knowledge Management - Another Opportunity for Technical Communicators. Presented by Gwen Thomas, Corporate Knowledge Manager, PaySys International, Inc.

Winter Park Civic Center
1050 W. Morse Blvd.
Winter Park, Florida

Members: \$5.00 / Nonmembers: \$7.00
6:30 p.m.: Sign-in and Networking
7:00 p.m.: Program

April 26 Chapter Meeting: Annual Awards and Election Dinner for High School Technical Writing Competition winners, Melissa Pellegrin Scholarship Winners, and New Chapter Officers.

Winter Park Civic Center
1050 W. Morse Blvd.
Winter Park, Florida

Costs and menu to be announced on Listserv and Web Site
6:30 p.m.: Sign-in and Networking
7:00 p.m.: Program

May 1 Submission Deadline for the May/June issue of *Tech Trends*

May 21-24, 2000 - STC Annual Conference

Orlando, Florida

TECH TRENDS

Orlando Chapter
P.O. Box 1343
Orlando, FL 32802-1343
<http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>

—PLEASE FORWARD—



society for technical communication