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**Get Active, Be Well Dressed!
Your Involvement is What Makes the
Orlando Chapter Distinctive...**

BY W.C. WIESE, PAST PRESIDENT

It began with the belief that there is no such thing as too much member recognition, and when that recognition is carried visibly into the workplace it is even better.

The Orlando Chapter gives many awards each year. We like to surprise new senior members by giving them STC recognition pins as soon as they complete 5 years of membership. We identify a Distinguished Chapter Serve Award recipient who makes a sustained contribution to the chapter. We recognize the sacrifice and leadership of chapter officers when they leave office. We award scholarships to students enrolled in the technical communication program at the University of Central Florida. We also recognize outstanding achievement in online and publication competitions, and through our Jaffe Award for Excellence in Technical Communication, we recognize area professionals who best exemplify our ability to contribute to organizational success.

But at the end of the day, no award is more important to our chapter's future than one that recognizes the bedrock active participation of our chapter members. And we keep score!

work of the chapter as officers, mentors, judges, or committee leads.


In general, you have to do just a little more than attend every meeting to be an active member. As the points table shows, you earn points every month you attend a meeting, put on the program, attend an Administrative Council meeting, or serve as a judge or mentor.

MEMBER ACTIVITY	POINTS AWARDED
Meeting Attendance	1
Program Presentation	2
Elected Officer	1
Committee, Mentor, Judge	1

(11 points used for award guideline based on 10 meetings)

Active members receive attractive "Orlando Chapter Active Member" polo shirts at our awards ceremony in June. They professionally distinguish chapter members, and they've been a knockout at the annual conference for the past three years – Society leadership has noticed. The shirt also lets our members celebrate chapter pride in the workplace whenever they choose to wear it. It sends a positive message to employers and co-workers: I am committed to my profession and committed to self development.

Will you be an active member? We'll keep score in upcoming issues of *Memo to Members!*—**MiM**



Eat at Pizzeria Uno (corner of Bennett and Colonial) when the Administrative Council meets Nov. 8th, and a portion of your tab will be returned to the Orlando chapter!

Fundraiser coupons will be emailed soon...keep your eyes peeled!



Active member Mike Murray addresses a student crowd.

This is the 5th year that the Orlando Chapter will recognize members who are consistent in their attendance and do a little something more—put on a program perhaps, or serve on a committee. Above all, we want to reward those who do the

A SENIOR MEMBER AND ASSOCIATE FELLOW OF STC WITH 33 YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN AEROSPACE MARKETING SUPPORT AND PROGRAM COMMUNICATIONS AT LOCKHEED MARTIN, W.C. IS TREASURER OF STC AND PAST PRESIDENT OF STC'S ORLANDO CHAPTER, FOLLOWING A 5-YEAR TENURE AS TREASURER, INCLUDING CONFERENCE TREASURER FOR THE 47TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN 2000. HE IS THE RECIPIENT OF A DISTINGUISHED CHAPTER SERVICE AWARD. W.C. HAS SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE *JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION* AND HAS PRESENTED AT 10 PREVIOUS STC ANNUAL CONFERENCES.



Conference Dance Fever

BY GAIL LIPPINCOTT

On my flight home from an exhausting but fulfilling STC weekend in Crystal City, VA, I reflected on how proud I am to be an STC member. As a stem manager for the upcoming 2006 annual conference, I spent September reviewing over 60 mostly excellent proposals on professional development and STC-related topics. This weekend I negotiated with seven other stem and program managers to get many of the sessions in my stem accepted for the conference, which will be held in Las Vegas next May 7-10.

In preparation for the Saturday meeting, I weighed several reviewers' comments and wrote up my final reviews by Friday evening, but was still filling out forms in my hotel room until nearly dawn. After a few hours of sleep, I was ready to party with the rest of the team, which included three Society office staffers. At 8 am we began the frenzied but exciting all-day dance of the sticky notes as we built the conference program.

The stem managers sat around a U-shaped table, eyes fixed on the dance card—an enormous paper grid divided into days, times, and rooms. We had printed each session's information on a sheet of our assigned color (mine was turquoise) paper, plus a recap of details on a sticky note of the same color. Taking turns, we each offered our next four proposals to program manager Pam Ecker, who looked for an open slot with an appropriate time and room configuration for that session (workshop, progression, panel, or presentation). Once Pam identified a slot, she placed the sticky note in

it. Then we waited while office staffer Buffy Bennett tapped and clicked the proposal number into her database. If a presenter was already booked for that time slot, the sticky note was shuffled and Buffy tapped again.

By 3 pm, the colorful grid was filled with sticky notes for about 180 technical sessions from Monday through Wednesday of the conference. Our grid didn't account for the Sunday Leadership Day sessions or the Thursday post-conference sessions, but I was able to contribute proposals from my stem to both of these important days.



*Mission accomplished!
...nice Active Member shirt, Gail..*

We spent the final two hours of the meeting going over the next steps. The stem managers will stay busy every month from now until May. Once the Society office sends out acceptance and rejection letters in late November, I'll be in frequent contact with presenters and session moderators.

So what is it about this sometimes grueling process that makes me proud? The generous participation of members as potential presenters, reviewers, and stem managers. We're all volunteers in this STC organization, but when I asked for reviewers on several e-mail discussion lists and in person, many enthusiastically said yes. Ultimately, 7 of my 24 reviewers came from my own chapter (and

several more asked to be on the back-up list); at the September chapter meeting I learned that three members had also reviewed for other stems. (Tally up the Active Member points, W.C.!)

I also am pleased that a number of Orlando chapter members submitted proposals, and I know that the FTC students are flexing their rhetorical muscles as they prepare a proposal to help fund their Conference trip.

Finally, I am most proud that my dear friend and colleague Karen Lane has been approved as the program manager of the 2008 conference in Philadelphia. Come to think of it, I can take some credit—I got her involved way back in 1998 by asking if she was interested in managing the post conference workshops for the 2000 conference in Orlando; I was manager of the Theory and Research stem for that conference. She agreed, even though, as she says, "I didn't know what a stem manager even was, at the time."

Hmmm, if you give an STC leader a cookie, your dance card may fill up with colorful events...—*MiM*

GAIL LIPPINCOTT IS STC ORLANDO CHAPTER PRESIDENT, AN ASSOCIATE FELLOW, AND MANAGER OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STEM FOR STC'S 53RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN LAS VEGAS IN MAY 2006. GAIL TEACHES TECHNICAL WRITING AT UCF.



If You Missed Our Last Meeting—

BY DAVID COVERSTON AND MOLLY FROATS

—you missed Mark Hanigan's "Shoes and SOX- Getting a Foot-hold on Sarbanes-Oxley." This was the first occasion I had to visit the campus of DeVry University, and I must say they have nice facilities there. Good drainage too, judging by the amount of rain that fell during our meeting.

Mark asked how many audience members were familiar with Sarbanes-Oxley, and more than half raised their hands. In case you don't know, SOX is an acronym for Sarbanes-Oxley, aka the U.S. Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Act of 2002. The name comes from the sponsors of the law—you can see why the shorter name is used.



W.C. and Christina talk shop after class. Hey...that wouldn't be an Active Member shirt you're wearing, would it, W.C.?

SOX was enacted following a number of corporate scandals, including those involving Enron and WorldCom, and applies to any company that trades in a US exchange. This includes foreign companies but does not apply to privately held companies.

SOX has turned out to be a "boon" to auditing firms, ironically, perhaps even the ones that contributed to the law's necessity! The



This DeVry student is a true winner!
...nice Active Member shirt, Erika.

reason for this is that SOX now mandates both internal and external audits. Previously, only one audit (and one auditing company!) was required.

The law itself is short—only 66 pages. Mark recommended that we download and read through the entire law, even though technical communicators will be mainly interested in just three of the eleven titles. Those titles are II, III, and IV. Section 404 of Title IV is of special interest. The questions from this section that technical communicators need to ask are:

- (1) Do you have a process in place?
- (2) Is it documented?
- (3) Is it measurable?

Mark explained that this is where we shine. Technical communicators fit into SOX because we are able to capture processes—it's the kind of documentation we're good at delivering. That means jobs.

Studying SOX and emphasizing your business analysis skills will make your resume more attractive.

Also of interest to technical communicators is the fact that new document types related to SOX have appeared with titles like "SOX narrative," "Gap Analysis," and "Process Maps with Control Points." Mark pointed to the audience and said "You can do that!"

The government's concern in all of this is control and security. Businesses are concerned with being in compliance and the financial impact of the act. Many companies are adopting a standard called CobIT, which stands for Control Objectives for Information and Related Technology. To illustrate the overlap of government concerns and business concerns, Mark used two volunteers from the audience to create a human Venn diagram. You really had to be there for that one.

But the biggest story of the night was the news of Mark's departure. Mark Hanigan has contributed to the Orlando chapter at a level that few have paralleled. There's no guessing how many technical communication careers he has fostered. We'll miss you, Mark! Thank you, from all of us, for your inspiration.

Some links to check out:

www.isaca.org

www.inc.com/magazine/20050901/surviving-so.html

www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1863711,00.asp

www.zjournal.com/Article.asp?ArticleId=1080

—MIM

Tool Tips: XML Pad

BY: DAVID COVERSTON

Before we look at this month's featured tool, XMLPad, let me give you some background on why you might be interested in using this tool. XML stands for eXtensible Markup Language. FOLDOC (foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc/index.html) defines it as "An initiative from the W3C defining an 'extremely simple' dialect of SGML suitable for use on the World-Wide Web." The W3C says "Originally designed to meet the challenges of large-scale electronic publishing, XML is also playing an increasingly important role in the exchange of a wide variety of data on the Web and elsewhere." Today, XML remains divided into two classes: publishing applications and data applications. The recent emphasis on XML stems primarily from its data management capabilities rather than its publishing applications.

However, XML is the driving force behind content management. There is an important distinction between content management and document management. Document management deals with information at a document level, such as a Word document, a Web page, or an Excel spreadsheet. Content management deals with information at the level of an element or part of a document. Content management systems enable you to reuse parts of documents that correspond to XML elements. They also allow you to track usage and easily change all occurrences of an element. An example of element reuse could include a paragraph

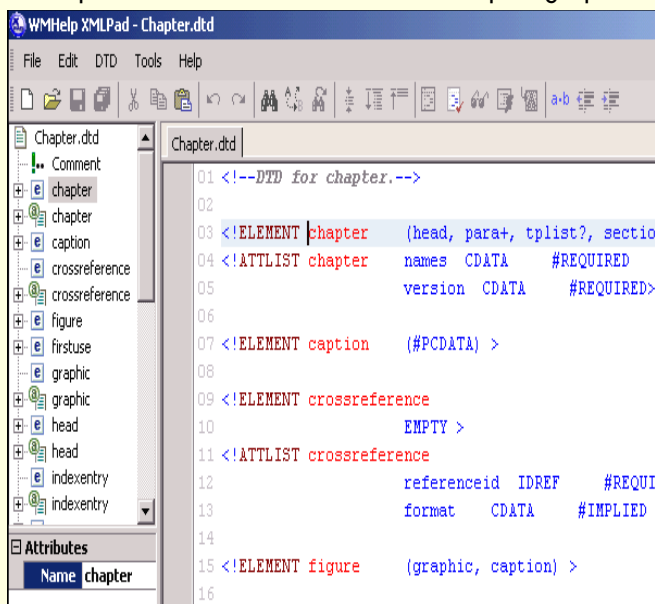


Figure 1 XMLPad Editor.

used in a printed sales brochure, a company web page, and a PDF owner's manual.

Like all markup languages, XML uses tags to store metadata. Unlike HTML, which has a pre-defined set of tags, XML has user-defined tags, hence the extensible part of its name. (Should it be called EML? It's probably too late to change it now.) Users must also create a set of markup tags and their interpretation. This document is known as a Document Type Definition, or DTD. The DTD contains a list of legal elements in a document, along with their order, their attributes, and the values of the attributes. XMLPad helps you create and edit DTDs, as well as XML documents.

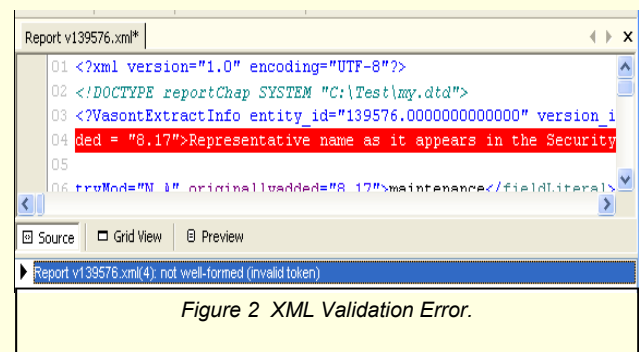


Figure 2 XML Validation Error.

XMLPad includes an XPath expression wizard and an XSL transformation tool. To get started, go to www.wmhelp.com and download the latest version. Unzip and run the single file in the download, setup.exe. An installation wizard will walk you through the installation.

One of the things I liked about XMLPad is that it will validate a DTD for you. It highlights errors for you, then you can right-click and go to the specific line that contains the error. XMLPad will also diagram your DTD for you, and lets you export the diagram as a .emf file.

Other features include color syntax highlighting, line numbers, and tree and properties views. One helpful feature is bookmarks. You can insert a bookmark to mark your place in a file. Editing views include source, grid, and preview.

XMLPad has more great tools:

XPath expression builder — view the results of an expression

DTD To XML wizard — creates an XML file from a DTD

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XML Pad

(Continued from page 4)

XML To DTD wizard—creates a DTD from an XML document.

One lack in the tool is Unicode support, but that is a primary goal for

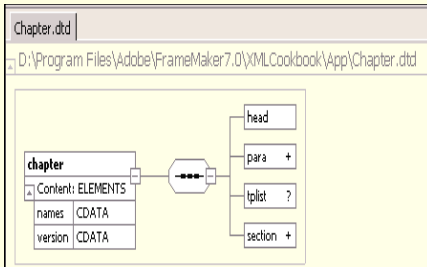


Figure 3 DTD diagram.

the next major release. As yet, XMLPad does not support XSD schema and XSL spreadsheet editing, but again, this is planned for the next release.

XMLPad is a great tool that is free to download, and free to use. —*MtM*

DAVID COVERSTON IS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ORLANDO CHAPTER. HE RECEIVED HIS M.A. IN JOURNALISM FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA AND HAS WORKED IN MANY



AREAS OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION RANGING FROM WRITING DOCUMENTATION FOR MAINFRAME AND PC PLATFORMS AND SERVING AS DEPARTMENTAL IT LIAISON, TO AUTOMATING DOCUMENTATION PROCESSES THROUGH MACROS AND SCRIPTS. DAVID ENJOYS TEACHING OTHERS HOW TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE, AND HIS TOOL TIPS ARTICLES HAVE BEEN REPRINTED IN SEVERAL CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS.

Employment Forum: Shhh...Secret Agents!

BY RICHARD PHIPPS, EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

I've mentioned this before, but since they are such a significant part of a job search, I wanted to remind everyone again about job search "agents." Job search "agents," which may have varying names depending on which job board you visit, allow hopeful job searchers to receive e-mail alerts based on saved job search criteria. When jobs matching the criteria are posted, users are automatically notified by the agents via e-mail.

Whether you're actively looking for a job or content with your current employment, it's important to keep a few sets of active agents "on the lookout." By letting these agents do the dirty work, you receive reminders of the value of your current job, as well as updates on the value of possible future positions.

For active job seekers (those who keep a resume posted on the job boards), keep in mind that job recruiters use search agents too. Recruiters receive e-mail alerts when a posted resume has met "prime candidate" criteria. Since these agents list recently posted resumes ahead of older resumes, be sure to update or repost your resume on a regular basis in order to keep it at the top of the list. —*MtM*

NEED A NEW JOB? RICHARD PHIPPS KEEPS YOU ON TOP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ORLANDO AREA. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS SIGN UP FOR OUR LISTSERV BY E-MAILING djones@ucf.edu.



Letters to the Editor

What a beautiful job you've done on the newsletter! Thank you for keeping us "in the know." —Shearon Arnott Training and Development Manager of Florida Virtual School, www.flvs.net

It looks wonderful! Congratulations! —Mark Hanigan

Editor's note: I really do like to hear from you, and your comments help to make the MtM better (just get a load of the snappy pull-quotes Dan Voss suggested!). E-mail me at newsletter@stc-orlando.org, and if you don't want me to print your message (you've got something against being famous?), just let me know.

Errata, Et Cetera

In last month's issue I led readers to believe that our chapter **must** have at least one member in a Society-level office to qualify for a Chapter of Distinction award. The *truth* is, having W.C. Wiese as our Society treasurer earns points for the Orlando chapter, but it's not a must. Oopsy!

In other news...the Memo's getting a new staff member.

Drew Hoffmann expands his role as volunteer copy editor/proofreader to become our official associate editor beginning with the November issue. Drew has been an STC member for the past two years and currently writes technical documentation for the big cheese, Mickey Mouse. Welcome aboard, matey.

Technical Documentation Teams: Industry Best Practices

BY DALTON HOOPER

According to About.com, "a best practice is a process or procedure that consistently produces superior results." The *U.S. General Accounting Office* defines best practice as "the processes, practices, or systems identified in public and private organizations that performed exceptionally well and are widely recognized as improving an organization's performance and efficiency in specific areas." And pemcocorp.com defines best practice as "...a technique or methodology that, based upon experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result."

desk calls went down after we revised our user documentation, so the reason for less calls must be due to the documentation changes").

In the absence of established best practices, we can make a reasonably assured attempt at creating one by looking at common practices among successful documentation organizations. If a particular way of doing things is shared among several successful groups, it is logical to assume that practice as a best practice—at least, until an "official" one comes along.

During the Fall of 2004, I conducted numerous interviews with documentation managers from various disparate companies around the country. To track the information gleaned from these interviews into

- Is your documentation budget zero-based? (Yes 29%)
- Does your documentation team typically use Contractors? (Yes 29%)
- Do you, as Documentation Manager, report to an executive? (Yes 100%)
- Does your documentation group publish standards and styles? (Yes 93%)
- Do you, as Documentation Manager, participate in establishing your documentation budgets? (Yes 50%)
- Do you, as Documentation Manager, typically have visibility to your future projects or work? (Yes 100%)
- Does your documentation budget separate expense from capital dollars? (Yes 21%)
- Have you established metrics for measuring the value of your documentation? (Yes 50%)

"Currently, there are no 'official' industry best practices for IT technical documentation teams."

Currently, there are no "official" industry best practices defined for IT technical documentation teams. This lack of a defined class of excellence is due in no small part to the fact that the value of technical documentation, as well as the technical writers who produce it, is nearly impossible to quantify. As a result, there are practically no metrics available to prove a direct correlation between technical documentation methodology and ROI. The value is, for the most part, anecdotal or perceived ("The help

some organized form, I developed a standard set of eleven yes/no questions that I asked each interviewee.

- Do you have a centralized documentation group? (Yes 93%)
- Do you have a segregated documentation budget? (Yes 64%)
- Do you manage a separate project plan for documentation? (Yes 64%)

By asking the eleven questions stated above, I was able to determine common practices, but not necessarily best practices. Therefore, in each interview, I also asked each interviewee which practices they felt were not working for them and how they would answer the same questions if they were operating as

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Want to be *In the Know*?

Join our **LISTSERV!**

STC-Orlando's discussion list offers access to hundreds of professionals and is an easy way to stay informed about chapter meetings, events, and job postings.

E-mail djones@ucf.edu to sign up.



A percentage of your purchases from the following Web sites is returned to the Orlando chapter:

www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/orlandochapte-20

www.cafepress.com/orlandostc

Communicator Spotlight: Bonnie Spivey

BY ROSE PETRALIA

Bonnie Spivey is a technical writer for MasTec North America, Inc. (www.mastec.com) in downtown Orlando. Many of you probably know Bonnie from her involvement in STC where she currently manages the Public Relations committee and is a mentor in the 2005-2006 STC-UCF Mentoring Program. She is also coordinating this year's Rising Stars fund-raiser and will accept your donations with her usual charm and grace. Bonnie has a BA in English-Technical Writing from the University of Central Florida.



How did you get your start in technical writing?

Funny story...I was sitting in my guidance counselor's office after failing organic chemistry for the third time, when he inspected my transcripts and proceeded to bestow the following life-changing wisdom on me:

"Miss Spivey, it appears that you really like science and technology, but you seem to be struggling in those areas. On the other hand, you are obviously talented in English but you don't seem interested in pursuing it as a major. Have you ever considered a degree in technical writing?"

Well, of course not. I'd never even heard of technical writing before! Yet all it took was the brilliant combination of those two words, and I was sold. My only regret is that I spent 3 years studying the wrong thing—thus, I now invest a great deal of my time and energy in spreading the technical writing gospel.

Looking back, have all of your jobs been in the technical communication field?

Before my career in technical writing, I held a variety of unrelated but interesting jobs. During high school, I served pricey cocktails at a high-end restaurant on the Indian river and spent holidays selling Halloween costumes and fireworks. With my restaurant job as a steady source of income, I devoted my free time to working in my field of interest. I spent a summer in the Space Station Processing Facility at NASA as a biomedical engineering intern and lots of time at the community college microbiology lab washing test tubes and making nutrient auger. I eventually landed a position as a medical assistant for an allergy and immunology clinic where I administered allergy shots and conducted skin testing (no, I never sent anyone to the hospital). Once I found my niche and arrived at UCF, I quickly became an assistant in the Technical Writing Lab and was later promoted to Lab Manager.

How important is your community of tech writing peers?

Despite my varied employment history, I never forget that it was through networking at STC meetings that I landed the Walt Disney World Information Technology internship that kick-started my career as a professional technical communicator. I owe a wealth of thanks to Dan Voss and Mark Hanigan, who did so much for me when I was starting out and who continue to provide countless resources and support to me and the other up-and-coming tech writers they take under their wings.

Describe your normal day. What's exciting about your job?

As technical writer for MasTec North America, I coordinate and write technical proposals for the engineering department of the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) division. I elicit requirements from large government contracts, engineering plans, and technical specifications and manage subcontractor compliance across multiple projects. I also write training materials and testing procedures to meet Florida Department of Transportation specifications, and when the opportunity arises, I design marketing materials and facilitate our company presence at industry-related tradeshow. The most exciting aspect of my job is that I am constantly being challenged with new and unexpected assignments. One day I might design the template for an upcoming proposal and the next I might make a site visit to the Port of Canaveral or attend a City Council meeting. The most unique aspect of my job is that I work directly above Kate O'Brien's Irish Pub in downtown Orlando, which is not something I complain about. —*MIM*

Best Practices

(Continued from page 6)

they think they should. The following represents those responses:

- Should you have a centralized documentation group? (Yes 100%)
- Should you have a segregated documentation budget? (Yes 79%)
- Should you manage a separate project plan for documentation? (Yes 93%)
- Should your documentation budget be zero-based? (Yes 36%)
- Should your documentation team typically use Contractors? (Yes 29%)
- Should you, as Documentation Manager, report to an executive? (Yes 100%)
- Should your documentation group publish standards and styles? (Yes 100%)
- Should you, as Documentation Manager, participate in establishing your documentation budgets? (Yes 79%)
- Should you, as Documentation Manager, typically have visibility to your future projects or work? (Yes 100%)
- Should your documentation budget separate expense from capital dollars? (Yes 43%)
- Should you establish metrics for measuring the value of your documentation? (Yes 79%)

Some of the documentation managers interviewed considered their

teams to be successful and indicated they would not change any of their current practices, if given the opportunity. Other managers, however, named one or two practices they felt needed changing in order to help them become successful.

It is interesting to note that when a manager indicated a practice in need of change, it invariably was a practice that was out of sync with the self-described successful organizations. We can surmise, therefore, that of the eleven practices cited,

certain of them are clearly considered to be best:

- There should be a centralized documentation group, rather than having technical writers as members of development groups. (Yes 100%)
- There should be a separate project plan for documentation efforts, rather than documentation tasks being part of a larger development plan. (Yes 93%)
- The documentation manager should report to an executive-level manager. (Yes 100%)
- The documentation group should publish the standards and styles for the organization's documents. (Yes 100%)
- The documentation manager should be afforded visibility to upcoming work. (Yes 100%)

The following practices are also

worth considering, with 79% of the interviewees recommending them:

- Documentation work should be funded separately from other development efforts.
- The documentation manager should participate in establishing the documentation budget (s).
- Metrics should be established for measuring the value of the technical documentation.

"When a manager indicated a practice in need of change, it invariably was a practice that was out of sync with the self-described successful organizations."

Until an "official" version of Documentation Teams Best Practices becomes available across our industry, perhaps these will do. If you would like further details regarding the data gathered in my research, including comparative charts, please contact me at daltonhooper@cfl.rr.com. —MiM

DALTON HOOPER HAS BEEN A TECHNICAL MANAGER OF PEOPLE SINCE 1979, ENJOYING CAREERS WITH AT&T AND WALT DISNEY WORLD. MR. HOOPER HAS LED A TEAM OF TECHNICAL WRITERS FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS AS WALT DISNEY WORLD'S IT DOCUMENTATION MANAGER. HE'S THE ONE ON THE LEFT.



Getting your ducks in a row: What to consider before moving to a structured writing environment

BY BRET FREEMAN

Originally published in the CIDM e-newsletter (www.infomanagementcenter.com/). Reprinted with permission. Part two of two.

DUCK THREE: How should our new environment look?

Once you know what your current environment looks like, your team can dream about your ideal environment—emphasis on dream! Don't be afraid to think big in this stage. Look at Duck Two and think "Ok, this is what we have—but what would we LIKE to have." A few points to keep you on the right track:

- Know where you are going. What is your destination, or final deliverables?—Don't lose track of this in your brainstorming, or you will end up with a really interesting environment that doesn't get you to your deliverable.
- What should your final deliverable look like?—In other words, does it need to be published in print, on the Web, and CD-ROM? Or just print? Does it need to be in English only or in multiple languages?
- What should your document lifecycle, or workflow, look like to get to that destination? What tasks must get accomplished?

If your team can answer those questions, then they are most likely ready to block out a roadmap of how to get from an unstructured to a structured writing environment.

Congratulations! Before leaving this duck and moving on to the next one, be sure to go back and compare your ideal environment with duck number one. Does it address your pain points? Then compare it to duck number two. Does it include your most valuable points? If the answer to both questions is yes, move on to duck four.

DUCK FOUR: How are we going to get there?

Duck four is the "road map" step. Based on the previous, in-depth analysis your team has done to get to this point, it is time to put together a road map of how your group will get from its current environment to its new structured writing environment. The previous analysis was crucial because it will ensure that you choose your tools and your path based on your unique situation and your goals,

"The final decisions you make need to be solidly based on your organization's unique situation."

rather than letting your tools dictate your goals. The final decisions you make need to be solidly based on your organization's unique situation—but because you have your ducks in a row, that won't be a problem!

Here are some of the decisions your team must make:

- Which DTD is right for our situation?
Based on your analysis, you'll need to decide whether to create a custom DTD or pick one off the shelf, such as DocBook or DITA. Don't forget to include metadata in your discussion. Metadata enables your authors to locate and use

information and is a big part of working within a structured writing environment.

- Which tools will help us to reach our goals?
A major part of your overall move to a structured writing environment will be implementing the appropriate technology. This will probably include an authoring tool, a content management tool, and a publishing tool. If you are nervously patting your wallet, that's ok. This is where the financial investment comes in, but don't let that intimidate you. Today's vendors provide a variety of options and are willing to work with you to put together a plan that works for your team as well as your budget. Ideally all three systems should be selected simultaneously. They should be

evaluated with each other throughout the process to ensure that they work together seamlessly, ensuring the most efficient editorial process possible.

- Should I use a phased in approach?
By now you are probably thinking, "Wow, this is becoming a huge undertaking." Don't panic. For many organizations, a good way to begin this new initiative is to run a pilot. Running a pilot of just one project is a useful way to figure out the kinks and benefits of the new environment and will probably make everyone feel

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Get Your Ducks in a Row

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more comfortable. Though this varies, if your company is ready to jump right in, by all means go ahead!

- How/when do I turn off my old system and turn on my new one?

The easy answer here is: when you don't need the old one anymore. Some overlap is inevitable and not a bad thing. There is comfort knowing that the older, more familiar system is there if the newer system should encounter a problem. But once you have your content switched over to the new system and your staff is comfortable with it, it is probably a good idea to remove the old system—to avoid mistakes and duplication of effort.

Dealing with Challenges

Having all of your ducks in a row will greatly help to minimize the challenges you will face when moving to a structured writing environment. Although every organization is different, there are still a few common obstacles that you should be aware of in case they arise.

First, be aware that writing in a structured writing environment and using a content management system

"Be aware that each of your authors will have an adjustment period and that the length...may vary from author to author."

is fundamentally different than writing in an unstructured writing environment. This opens up a whole new way of thinking to your au-

thors, some of whom will find it exhilarating, while others will find it a little intimidating. Be aware that each of your authors will have an adjustment period and that the length of that adjustment period may vary from author to author. A strong training program as part of your content management system implementation will go a long way to helping the entire editorial staff become more comfortable with the change and get excited about the system. Be sure to ask each of the vendors that you work with about what training and support is available.

"It is helpful to identify what tasks are repeated the most often, because they are often the tasks that can be the most helpful when automated."

Second, even with previous analysis, when it comes time to actually implement the tools needed for a structured writing environment, some organizations find that they haven't adequately addressed the issue of legacy content. Many organizations have so much legacy content that it is difficult to form a plan of attack. The simplest is often to divide the legacy content into three categories: used often enough to store in the content management system's repository, important enough to save but not used often enough to store in the CMS repository, and not important. If a large

amount of content falls into the second category, don't worry. As the editorial department continues to work in and become more comfort-

able with the structured writing environment, it will become easier to sort through the legacy content.

Third, organizations often have a harder time identifying an ideal workflow than one might think. Sometimes it is difficult to tell where the "entry point" to the process is. The authors point to the editors, who point to the managers of the department, and so on. Often, editorial workflows actually start outside the editorial department, when the development team draws up the specs for a new product. Then they tell the editorial department

that they need new materials, and that is what actually initiates the workflow. After identifying the entry point, some organizations stumble when trying to automate their workflow processes. Should they use automated email? What tasks need to be automated? It is helpful to identify what tasks are repeated the most often, because they are often the tasks that can be the most helpful when automated (i.e., author sends an email to the graphic designer requesting an image, author sends email to editor with content for review, etc). CMS vendors can provide helpful advice and guidance in this area, because they know their systems well and have usually worked with a variety of unique organizations.

Guaranteeing Success

Finally, there are a few final tips that can help guarantee success:

Set goals. Goals give your plan a

(Continued on page 11)

Get Your Ducks in a Row (Continued from page 10)

direction. Even the best technology can not succeed without a well-designed implementation plan.

Set milestones on the way to each goal. Projects of this size often get so large that they can seem out of control to the people actually involved. By celebrating milestones along the way, the people involved can see that steady progress is being made, reflect upon lessons learned, and build on each milestone until the ultimate goals are reached.

Build measurable results. Be sure to structure all goals and milestones in a way that is measurable—"We will improve our editorial process." Ideally everyone can improve their editorial process, but how will you improve yours? Will you shorten production time by X days or weeks? Do more with less people? Keeping goals and milestones measurable will also make them easier to report to upper management and to celebrate when you meet them.

Evaluate progress. As you proceed, always evaluate each goal and milestone. In fact, evaluate your progress in between each goal as well. The true value of having your ducks in a row is being able to always look back to make sure that you are on the right track—but that is only valuable if you take the time to do it! —*MtM*

BRET FREEMAN IS THE EASTERN REGIONAL SALES MANAGER FOR VASONT SYSTEMS (WWW.VASONT.COM) AND CAN BE REACHED AT BFREEMAN@VASONT.COM. *MtM* THANKS BRET FOR PERMISSION TO REPRINT HIS SUPERB ARTICLE.

*Have an article?
Submit a new, 500 word
or longer article to
newsletter@stc-orlando.org.
If it's printed, you win
one free regular chapter meeting
voucher.*

Are you a Stellar Communicator?
Think about nominating yourself (or someone you know) for the STC Orlando Chapter's **Fifth Annual Gloria Jaffe Outstanding Technical Communicator Award**. Stay tuned to www.stc-orlando.org for forms and details, or e-mail chrishammock@gmail.com



Education Station

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE:

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of \$1,500 each will be granted for academic year 2006-2007.

Application deadline is February 15, 2006.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office:

901 N. Stuart Street, Ste 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
(703) 522-4114
www.stc.org

Society News

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED HERE AND THERE

Plain Language Conference:

The **Fifth International Conference on Plain Language** will take place at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C. November 3–6, 2005. The conference is sponsored by the Plain Language Association International, the Plain Language Action and Information Network, and the Center for Plain Language. For more information, go to www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/conferences/2005/.

Board Report is Posted:

Want to know what the STC board of directors discussed at their meeting in September? Keep your eyes on the STC Web site, where an official report on the meeting is now posted. Some of the issues addressed at the meeting include STC's copyright policy, STC's campaign policy for Society elections, the new localized dues initiative, and a new corporate value program. The official report will appear at www.stc.org/chapterResources.asp. —*MtM*

Congratulations to STC Orlando's newest senior members!

Erika Coto Higgins
Ann R. Nunez
and
Anna J. Schmidt

What do You Think of Localized Dues?

BY W.C. WIESE

As an educational organization (defined by 501(c)(3) of the US Code), STC is a primary provider of the information and practices that designate professionals in technical communication. As a global organization, our charter is to provide this education to those who need it. As things were, those people couldn't afford it—the pricing structure for membership in emerging nations is a vastly higher percentage of salary than we pay in the United States or Western Europe. Therefore, we couldn't actually be a global society.

The Board sees the opportunity to be the professional organization of choice around the world if we take appropriate steps now. And, as you'll see from Society President Suzanna Laurent's matrix (reprinted with her letter below), the cost of membership is still very high for someone in India who earns one tenth of someone in the States. But by moving first to attract membership in emerging markets for technical communication, we expect to strengthen the society and the opportunities for member interaction in the years ahead.

Localized Membership
(www.stc.org/memberLocal04.asp)

Dear STC member,

There's no doubt STC is a global organization with members around the world! The percentage of STC members outside North America has grown steadily for the last five years, and this growth presents enormous opportunities for the Society.

Times such as these call for thought-

ful deliberation and bold action. The Board of Directors recognizes its responsibility to support all members residing in a wide range of countries and economies, and representing diverse cultures and markets. Given the vital role the Society will play in global expansion and extending the influence of technical communication, the STC

pricing, airlines would have been unable to capture significant business.

Our Board of Directors believes that localized dues are important to the future of the profession. By including and engaging more members from around the world, we lay the groundwork for the broader

"Times such as these call for thoughtful deliberation and bold action."

Board, consistent with its leadership role, acted to shape the future. By adopting localized dues as part of an overall strategy of tailoring the STC value proposition to meet local needs around the world, we will meet that challenge.

This initiative will introduce three tiers of localized dues for developing, emerging, and mature markets. Localized dues will enable technical communicators in developing and emerging markets to pay dues that more closely reflect their local economies and related costs of living. Technical communicators in countries with mature economies will pay dues comparable to those currently paid by all STC members. (For details about the initiative, see page 13.)

The benefits of localized dues are numerous. In addition to bringing fellow professionals from developing and emerging markets into the Society and expanding our community, we would increase our influence and capacity to advance the interests of all our members. By not localizing dues, STC would fail to capture many opportunities that exist now and many more that will surface in the future. Airlines have successfully instituted localized pricing; you pay different prices for plane tickets depending on where you buy them. Without localized

community to share information and elevate our work. We will have the reach and resources to support educational programs on every continent. Imagine an STC annual conference with a global thrust, a more diverse gathering, and the participation of far-flung experts focused on new markets and global products. In short, STC will become the organization representing technical communication to the world community.

We realize that this step involves risk. Thus, we want your thoughtful input before we decide how to implement this initiative. We greatly value your opinion. As we move toward a decision, we need to hear from you. Rest assured that we will carefully consider your thoughts.

We have designed a simple feedback mechanism that will take only a few moments to complete. Let us know what you think by completing the survey. Since our annual STC membership drive begins soon, a rapid response is encouraged.

Now is the time to make your voice heard. Please take a moment to share your opinion with the Board.

Sincerely,
Suzanna Laurent
STC President

(Continued on page 13)

Upcoming Seminars

PROJECT PLANNING AND QUALITY CHECKS:
PARTS 1 AND 2
SPEAKER: JOHN WILSON

Why is technical documentation an "afterthought" in the minds of some of your co-workers? Why do some of them secretly perceive producing documentation as a "necessary nuisance" in the product development cycle? Solid, well-considered project and documentation plans can help you alter counterproductive viewpoints and get co-workers on the same page—literally—by showing

them how technical documentation is one of many product components.

Think of your document as a round of golf. Now think of each help desk call your document produces as a golf stroke. This two-part seminar will help improve your "handicap."

In Part 1 of this two-part seminar, John will present general project planning and user analysis techniques before delving into detailed documentation planning practices.

Because Part 2 continues the discussion held in Part 1, students should

plan to attend both parts of John's seminar.

Please see descriptions, pricing, and registration instructions at stc.webex.com.

Project Planning and Quality Checks: Part 1

Wednesday, October 19, 2005
1-2:30 pm ET

Project Planning and Quality Checks: Part 2

Wednesday, October 26, 2005
1-2:30 pm ET

"Globalization has dramatically increased inequality between and within nations, even as it connects people as never before"

-Jay Mazur

Localized Dues

(Continued from page 12)

Three Tier Initiative

	<i>Classic</i>	<i>E-Membership</i>	<i>Limited</i>
Tier 1 Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States	\$150	\$140	\$130
Tier 2 Bermuda, Hong Kong, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Taiwan, Russia, UAE Also: Eastern European countries (EU)	\$120	\$105	\$90
Tier 3 Brazil, China, Costa Rica, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela Also: Other African states, Eastern European countries (non-EU), ex-USSR countries, other South American countries	\$80	\$75	\$70



Memo to Members

September 2005 · Volume 4, Issue 5



Memo to Members is published monthly and distributed via the Orlando Chapter STC listserv. View archived issues and an editorial calendar at: www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/newsltr.asp. Comments, suggestions, and letters of opinion are always welcome and should be directed to the editor.

We welcome your original articles and reprint suggestions. By submitting an item for publication, you implicitly grant a license to *Memo to Members* to run the article and for any other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. Please let the editor know if an item you are submitting has run elsewhere and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications. Permission to reprint any material herein is given provided that credit is given and a copy of the issue is sent to the editor.

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From the Editor's Desk...

Finally it feels like fall! Wish I could blame the late appearance of the October issue (just a few days, right?) on the weather enticing me outside, but truth be told I'm just a busy gal. Hey, W.C., do I get Active Member points for pouring Kool-Aid® and making dinner? Darn.

Thankfully, next month my good friend Drew Hoffmann begins earning his own Active Member points as our new Associate

Editor. He'll be keeping us on track (no, he's not pouring drinks for my kids...) and I'm betting we'll meet our deadline in style.

So, another informative and hopefully entertaining issue is delivered—here's hoping a cool breeze is blowing through your windows as you read it.

Rose

Mark Your Calendars:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 10/25 Chapter meeting. Content/ Document Management with Scott Abel. Winter Park Civic Center at 6:30 p.m. | 11/11 <i>Veteran's Day</i> |
| 10/30 Nov. <i>MtM</i> article deadline | 11/15 Chapter meeting. Usability Testing with Dr. Karla Kitalong. Winter Park Civic Center at 6:30 p.m. |
| 10/31 <i>Halloween</i> | 11/24 <i>Thanksgiving</i> |
| 11/01 Deadline to apply for STX and AS. See www.stc-orlando.org/awards_STX-AS.asp for info. | 12/04 Dec. <i>MtM</i> article deadline |
| 11/05 Information Strategies for Content Management Workshop. See www.rockley.com/WorkshopRegister.htm . | 12/06 AdCo meeting. 6:30 p.m. at Pizzeria Uno |
| 11/08 AdCo meeting. 6:30 p.m. at Pizzeria Uno | 12/13 Chapter Meeting. Topic TBA. Winter Park Civic Center at 6:30 p.m. |
| | 12/25 <i>Christmas</i> |
| | 12/31 <i>New Year's Eve</i> |

Corner of Distinction

The STC Board of Directors has approved our very own Karen Lane as program manager of the 55th annual conference in Philadelphia. Karen has served on the board of several STC annual conferences and is very deserving of this honor.

She also earns points toward a Chapter Achievement Award for Orlando Chapter STC!

