

TECH



society for technical communication
Orlando Chapter
Volume 3, Number 2
September/October 1998

RESOURCES

Online Resources for Technical Communicators, Part I

compiled by Matthew Chinn

Most technical communicators specialize or have a personal interest in one or another area of our multidimensional profession. A solid proof for that conclusion are the multitude of listservs, these most vital of Internet communities, that are devoted to technical communication. Now, thanks to Matthew Chinn, a member of the Orlando STC chapter and a technical writer at PaySys International, Inc., we all can find the perfect topic and get in on the discussion. -Ed.

Topic: Technical writing (international discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@listserv.okstate.edu
Message: subscribe techwr-l Your Name

Topic: International technical communications (announcements)
Address: majordomo@magellan.iquest.com
Message: subscribe insoft-l Your Address

Topic: Copyediting (discussion)
Address: listproc@cornell.edu
Message: subscribe copyediting-l Your Name

Topic: Proposals
Address: majordomo@ari.net
Message: subscribe proposal-l

Topic: Usability testing & human factors (discussion)
Address: listproc@hubcap.clemson.edu
Message: subscribe UTEST Your Name

Topic: Human factors (discussion)
Address: LISTSERV@LISTSERV.VT.EDU
Message: subscribe HFS-L Your Name

Topic: Technical illustration (discussion, construction of info base)
Address: mdf@uplex.net
(This is the address of a person, Mark Foster, not a list server. Send him a "regular" message asking to join the list. There is also a web site at <http://splatter.uplex.net/~mdf/techill>)

Topic: FrameMaker (discussion)
Address: majordomo@math.mcgill.ca
Message: subscribe framers Your Address

Topic: SGML (some discussion of use; not a very busy list)
Address: LISTSERV%DHDURZ1.BITNET@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU
Message: subscribe SGML-L Your Name

Topic: SGML (about the standard more than about how to use it)
Address: comp-std-sgml-request@naggum.no
Message: subscribe comp-std-sgml Your Name

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A Note from the President

Don't Miss Trends '98!

by Dick Hughes

Greetings. By the time you read this column, we will be rapidly closing in on our chapter's premiere event of the year, the Trends '98 Technical Communication Conference. I hope all of you can attend this two-day event on October 2 and 3 at the Expo Centre in downtown Orlando because we are very fortunate to have some excellent speakers and workshops on this year's schedule.

For example, on Friday October 2, the morning session offering includes two mini-workshops. "Moving to HTML Help" is one of the sessions, which will be presented by Steve Wexler, President of WexTech Systems, Inc. For those of you who have already gotten on the "high-priced help system national conference brochure mailing list," you will recognize Steve's name as a frequent presenter at these \$500 and up conferences. Next month, you can get Steve's wisdom for less than \$100 right here in Orlando. And for those of you still working in Windows-based Help applications, another Friday mini-workshop will feature Johanna Ohlsson from ForeFront, Inc. with a detailed presentation, "Using

ForeHelp as a Primary or Complimentary WinHelp Authoring Tool."

On Friday afternoon, we will have several additional presentations that cover topics such as online information development and delivery, document management, when not to use HTML-based help, and electronic performance support systems.

On Saturday, October 3, we are offering a full-day seminar, "Electronic Documentation Today ... and Tomorrow," presented by Mr. Neil Perlin, owner and principal consultant of Hyper/Word Services, an online documentation consulting, development, and training firm based in New England. Neil has presented at the annual Windows Help conference in Seattle since 1995 and at the related Help Update conference in Cambridge, MA in 1997. He presented again at this year's WinHelp Conference in Seattle on the procedures and mechanics involved in converting WinHelp to HTML Help.

Early registration discounts end on September 18, so get your forms postmarked by then. To register, point your browser to the Orlando Chapter Website at <http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/>, print out the registration form, and mail it with your registration fee to the address listed on the form. I'm looking forward to seeing you there for a fun and informative conference. ☒



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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 submissions to Nadejda Bojilova, 975 Vineridge Run #308, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714, or send them to nbojilova@paysys.com.

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

Admin Council

by Laurie Benson

The Administrative Council is working on the 98/99 budget and reviewing a new STC Education Committee Charter and Procedures. Membership is up slightly at 120 local members as of 6/30/98. Diane Heald has taken over maintenance of the STC employment hot line. Preparation work for the Tech Trends '98 conference is proceeding on schedule. ☒

Chapter Notes

by Laurie Benson

August Meeting

At the August 25th meeting, five of our local members volunteered to share their experiences and knowledge gained from their attendance at the recent National STC Conference in California. These panelists included; J.D. Applen, Lori Corbett, Karen Lane, Gail Lippincott, and Dan Voss. The meeting resembled a mini-conference as a list of 21 conference topics were posted and the audience picked which topics they wanted to hear about. Following is my summary of their summaries.



Lori Corbett, J. D. Applen, Karen Lane, and Gail Lippincott (l. to r.) and Dan Voss (not pictured) presented at the August meeting.

Will a Proposed Innovation Succeed? Keynote

Address, presented by Joel Barker

1. Is there an upside?
2. Is there a downside?
3. Does it have simplicity?
4. Is there an easy phase in?
5. Do you use familiar language?
6. Is it credible?
7. Is it a compatible fit for the situation?
8. Will there be reliable performance?
9. Is it easy in (low cost?)
10. Is it easy out (can you get out?)

How to Avoid Common Blunders in Online Documentation or Help, presented by William Horton

1. Avoid document dumping
2. Avoid the Xmas tree effect of too much blinking
3. Avoid humor
4. Limit details in the visual background
5. Maintain enough white space
6. Don't go overboard with punctuation.
7. Include a good index
8. Use an editor to catch typos
9. Avoid gruesome graphics
10. See www.horton.com/stc/blunders for more info.

Writing for the Third Millennium, presented by

Beth Agnew

Writers play an important role today because they convert bland information to useful knowledge.

Reorganizing Your Department, presented by JoAnn Hackos

Power and control forces at your organization may result in either a centralized or a diversified organizational structure for technical writers. A recent survey showed that roughly 80% of the writing organizations are ad hoc with only one writer or only rudimentary structure. Structure is not the most important factor in achieving quality and satisfying customers.

Educating Engineers in the 21st Century Presenters, presented by George Yatchisin, LeeAnne Kryder, Marty Williams, and Mark Kerr

At many universities, engineers are required to take writing classes. The newest approaches have kept up with the times by requiring a survey class to learn how to use library resources and a class to learn the skills necessary to produce educational web pages.

Mystery Fiction and Technical Communication, presented by Karen Steele, Avon Murphy, and Ann Jennings.

Did you know that technical writing resembles mystery writing because it uses foreshadowing, depends on accuracy and audience analysis, must be complete, requires research and must be technically feasible? In addition, too much trivial information can make both genres boring.

Overall, the conference offered an abundance of learning opportunities (approximately 220 sessions), at times – almost too much to absorb in the given time. Dan Voss offered to provide a copy of his conference notes if you fax him at 407/356-7449 or e-mail him at daniel.w.voss@lmco.com. Dan also hopes to place these soon on the Educational Committee page of our local web site. A full copy of the Annual Conference Proceedings on CD-ROM is available for \$10.00 from the STC society office. Contact Sara Fulmer at 703/522-4114 ext. 207 or e-mail merrick@stc-va.org.

All of us should give some thought to attending the next national conference in Cincinnati in May 1999. This can serve as a preparation for the national conference when it comes to the Orlando area in May 2000.

Doorprizes at the March meeting followed an STC theme with some conference goodies. ☒

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 Alison Stanford, 813/221-3757, astanford7@aol.com
Description Immediate opening, telecommunications experience preferred. Salary is \$40K with full benefits. Permanent position.

Position Technical Writer (Contract)
Location Greater Tampa Bay area
Contact Bernice Faraci, Technical Recruiter, Perm Placement Services, 813/818-0047, 877/868-6372, bfaraci@earthlink.net
Length 6 months to 1 year
Description Experience in C/C++ programming, background in Unix, and strong skills in MS Office Products including Word 97. The position pays up to \$40 per hour depending on the match of skills.

Position Documentation Manager
Location Orlando
Contact Paige Harrison, Human Resources Manager, Triton Network Systems, Inc., 407/903-0946, fax: 407/903-0999, pharrison@triton-network.com
Description Ability to manage 2-4 technical writers; provide leadership for creating innovative documentation to satisfy a broad range of end users; integrate online help into other media. Produce installation, implementation, and technical reference documentation. Requirements: 10-15 years experience with minimum 2-3 years in technical documentation production. Desired skills: familiarity with Network Element Management systems, including SNMP, TL1 and CMIP; technical background in RF millimeter wave theory or SONET/SDH; familiarity with FrontPage or PageMill, FrameMaker, WinHelp, RoboHelp, PhotoShop, Acrobat

Distiller. Education: BS/BA in English, Accounting, Engineering, or any science discipline; MBA, CPA, or CMA valuable.

Position Technical Writers (2 or more positions)
Location Orlando
Contact Alex Schweizer, Visteon Corp., alexs@visteon.com
Description: 2-5 years of experience documenting software (preferably Windows/Client-Server based applications). Skills: strong writing, RoboHELP or similar tool, Windows, Word, Microsoft Office. In a fast-paced, self-directed, team-oriented environment, we build software using Visual Basic. Ability to work well with others is vital. We write medical software that encompasses the HMO experience, from scheduling an appointment with a physician to submitting claims electronically.

Position Tech Writer/Documentation Specialist
Location Jacksonville
Company American Computer Technologies
Contact Rob Stadulis, 407/875-1188, ext. 206, rob@actconsulting.com
Description Detail-oriented, conscientious, critical thinker who works well with others, and is a critical thinker. Background in Microsoft Office products. Salary is \$30-35K. Do not have to be very technical. Degree in English, Journalism, Communications, Technical Writing, or Public Relations is desired. Requires excellent people skills.

Position Technical Writing Specialist
Location Orlando
Contact Lew Meltzer, Manager of Electronic Publishing, EDS, 407/659-3192, miserdoc@aol.com

Description Senior writer to design, write, and edit user documentation for a major financial software product used nation wide. Ability to interface with subject-matter experts and to work in a team environment. Requirements: BA in technical writing or a related field, and 3–5 years experience in technical writing. Experience with desktop publishing (Interleaf), online help (RoboHELP), Acrobat, Pagemaker, and Compose a plus.

Position Production Assistant (Contract)
Location Lake Mary
Contact Dennis Lyons, 407/942-6247 or Lureen Munfus, 407/942-6453

Description Long-term, full-time, flexible position with Siemens. Strong communication skills, including written, verbal (inter viewing), and group/team dynamics. Customer contact via phone may be required. Strong PC skills for testing, revising, and developing computer-based training with the Macromedia Authorware authoring software. Knowledge of basic graphics programs such as Paint Shop Pro for screen captures is often required to document our various switching systems. Looking for highly motivated individual.

Position Senior Technical Writer
Location Orlando (near Orlando International Airport)
Contact Etta Jean Smith, Hyperion, 407/888-8050, ext. 113, etta_smith@hyperion.com

Description Document the WIRED for OLAP product. Four years experience writing online help and printed doc is required. RoboHELP and Word experience highly desirable. HTML experience is a plus.

Position Documentation Specialists (2 positions)
Location Lake Mary
Contact Suzanne Williams, HTE, Incorporated, swilliams@hteinc.com, visit web site at www.hteinc.com

Description Develop user documentation for a software product. ☒

Do You Want to Be a Published Author?

Tech Trends is extending an invitation to all STC Orlando Chapter members to send us their masterpieces! We'd like to include more articles, announcements, interviews, jokes, cartoons, or any other publishable items on technical communication that are written by our own readers. Please refer to page 2 for more details on how to submit an article to Tech Trends and help us make this chapter newsletter truly local! --Ed. ☒

Xerographics Ad

Regional News

Share Your Experience and Knowledge About Our Industry

by Michelle Ratcliffe

Sharing information is the cornerstone of our industry. Perhaps that is why so many STC members do such a great job of helping each other grow and learn. This observation came to me as I scanned the list of recent chapter meetings in Region 3 and saw a common theme. Several chapters conduct annual conference wrap-up meetings so those who attended can share their experiences with those who did not.

Recently I attended the Orlando chapter meeting where the members did just that. They used a very creative presentation style borrowed from a previous annual conference keynote speaker, Gordon McKenzie. McKenzie's approach was to hang several cards with words or images on them from a line (similar to a clothesline) across the stage. Audience members selected the card that interested them and he spoke for a few minutes about the topic selected. The audience drove the content and it was a very interactive style.

The Orlando chapter members who attended the conference created cards representing the sessions they attended and hung them from a line across the room. Audience members selected cards and the attendee spoke for approximately 3–5 minutes about the topic. They summarized the content, reviewed the session, and cited resources for continued exploration of the topic. It was a wonderful encapsulation providing a very diversified review of happenings at the conference.

Thanks, Orlando, for a great meeting!

Notable Notes

Make sure to register today for Trends '98 and the Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC)! Trends '98 is a two-day conference in Orlando, FL on October 2–3, 1998 at the Expo Centre. For additional information, contact Dick Hughes at hughesrl@cdm.com. PCOC is also a two-day conference in Knoxville, TN on October 16–17, 1998. For additional information, contact Jeanne Dole at jod@ornl.gov or 423/574-2200. Additional details are also available for both conferences on the Orlando and East Tennessee Chapter's web sites at www.stc.org.

The Call for Entries for the STC communications competitions are arriving in mailboxes all across the world. Check your mailbox and enter today. Most competitions have a deadline in September or October. If you have not received an entry form, please check www.stc.org for a list of competitions and contact information. Also, how about volunteering to judge this year? It is a very fun task and a great way to see what's happening in the industry. ☒



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Free Offer of ForeHelp 3 and ForeHelp Premier 98

Many STC chapters have requested copies of ForeFront's help authoring tools for reviews by chapter members. ForeFront would like to offer to all STC Chapters a free copy of their brand-new help authoring suite, ForeHelp Premier 98. ForeHelp Premier 98 includes the just-released ForeHelp 3, plus Index Expert, QuickContext, QuickFix, ActiveX for Help and more.

ForeHelp Premier 98 features the industry's leading WYSIWYG editing environment for help development plus one-of-a-kind tools for indexing and context linking you won't want to miss! To receive a copy of the ForeHelp Premier 98 suite for your chapter, simply send a message with a subject line "Re: Special Offer to STC Chapters" and your fax number and the company will send you a request form. ☒

Be on Language

Be“Whiched,” Bothered, and Bewildered

by Mary Kendig



During the course of my editorial life, one question about an especially tricky element of our language has followed me from job to job like a stray puppy. “Can you help me understand this? ‘It’s been bugging me ever since high-school English’ has been the usual lament. In fact, I’ve heard lamentations about this topic for so long now that the aforementioned puppy has become a tired old hound. The topic? It’s the dreaded “that versus which.”

Until now, I’ve found this rule of grammar one of the most challenging to explain. And most guidebooks are of little help. The guidebook writers, who (common sense tells us) should be able to explain this rule in relatively simple terms, sometimes leave us more confounded than ever. What I’ve been in search of for some time now is not unreasonable, I contend: merely a concise yet thorough explanation, accompanied by one or more examples that illustrate the difference, and (dare I wish for too much) perhaps even a tip to help us recognize and remember when to use *that* and when to use *which*.

Well, I’m pleased to say I’ve found what I’ve been looking for in a book called *Writing: Craft and Art*, by

William L. Rivers. (Bless you, William!) Here it goes:

That defines and restricts:

Example: The car that needs repair is in the garage. In this example, *that* introduces information to define the car being discussed and to restrict the reader’s attention to *that* car (as opposed to another car).

Which describes and is not restrictive:

Example: The car, which needs repair, is in the garage. In this example, the information after *which* tells more about the car being discussed, but the clause does not attempt to define the car. The information in the *which* clause can be placed in another sentence: The car is in the garage. It needs repair.

In contrast, making two sentences of the first example would force a definition:

The car is in the garage. It’s the one that needs repair.

That is appropriately used more often than *which*.

Whenever you use a *which* clause, you should separate it from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Amen! Hope this helps you as much as it has helped me. (Say, I believe I’ll miss that ol’ hound after all . . .) ☒

Resources, continued from page 1

Topic: HTML authoring (discussion)

Address: listserv@netcentral.net

Message: sub html-list Your Name

Topic: HTML authoring (discussion)

Address: LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UNB.CA

Message: subscribe wwwdev Your Name

Topic: HTML (Writers Guild Email Discussion Lists)

(Go to this web site for information: <http://www.hwg.org>)

Topic: Indexing (discussion)

Address: listserv@bingvmb.cc.binghamton.edu

Message: subscribe index-l Your Name

Topic: Computer training

Address: listserv@bilbo.isu.edu

Message: subscribe computer-training Your Name

Topic: Training and Development

Address: LISTSERV@PSUVM.PSU.EDU

Message: subscribe trdev-l Your Name

Topic: Educational Computing and Instructional Development

Address: listserv@vm.cc.purdue.edu.

Message: subscribe ECID-L

Topic: Information Design (unmoderated supplement to InfoDesign list)

Address: majordomo@fwi.uva.nl

Message: subscribe InfoDesign-Cafe

Part II of Online Resources for Technical Writers will be published in the next issue of *Tech Trends*. ☒

Coming Up...

- Oct. 2-3** **Trends '98 Technical Communications Conference.** The Expo Center
Register by September 18, 1998 and receive early registration dis-
count. For more information, please visit [http://stc.org/region3/orl/
www/](http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/) or contact Dick Hughes at hughesrl@cdm.com.
Orlando, FL
- Oct. 16-17** **22nd Annual Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC).** Knoxville, TN
Broad range of topics focusing on the practical issues of technical
communication will be featured. For more information, please contact
Rita Johnson at rbdj@usit.net or 423/ 588-9716.
- Oct. 27** **PageMill Demonstration.** Presented by Nan Schultz and Sharon
Wissert from Active Mind, Inc., a local web design firm. Winter Park CivicCenter
Members: \$5.00 / Nonmembers: \$7.00 1050 W. Morse Blvd.
6:30 p.m. — Time for networking Winter Park, Florida
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
- Nov. 2** **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

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—PLEASE FORWARD—



society for technical communication