TECH TRENDS

A Note from the President ..

Giving a Little Thanks
by Lori Corbett

As the chapter year flies by and the season of Thanksgiving is upon us, I thought I would take a moment to reflect on our successes thus far and thank those who helped make them happen.

Monthly Chapter Meetings

Thanks so much to **Gail Lippincott** for producing the best meetings I could possibly imagine. We have set some amazing attendance records at each meeting with standing room only at several of them. I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the Orlando STC members who presented at three of the four meetings we have had thus far. Washline V provided an amusing and varied look at all the opportunities our members took part in at the 46th Annual STC Conference in Cincinnati. The panel consisted of: **Nicole Burley**, **Ruth Eversole**, **Gwen Thomas**, **Dan Voss**, and **W.C. Wiese**. The ColdFusion software demonstration by **Jim Druckenmiller** was a sell-out. We know that you are hungry for all the information you can get about current tools and technology, and we hope to be able to provide more opportunities like this in the future. The excellent turnout we had for **Karen Lane's** web indexing tour was quite impressive too.

High School Writing Competition

Spearheaded by **Jon Kessler** and helped by many volunteers, our chapter's Education Committee is in the middle of the most successful High School Technical Writing Competition to date. Many thanks go to those of you who helped spread the word about this wonderful opportunity throughout central Florida. If you know of anyone who might want to take part, the deadline of December 1 is fast approaching.

Florida Technical Communication Competition

Although the Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC) is managed by the Suncoast chapter, Orlando members have always played a big part in its success. This year is no exception as we had eight members serve as judges. Shown below (left to right) is Gail Lippincott, Sharyn Pierce, Paula O'Brien, Gwen Thomas, Alicia Fellure, Lori Corbett, W.C. Wiese, and Karen Lane.

Inside this issue:

Giving a Little Thanks (continued)

47ᵗʰ Annual STC Conference
Last, but not least, I'd like to thank everyone who is going to participate in the Annual Conference. I know it's a bit premature, but I also know that we have a great membership who will help us produce the most successful conference in STC's history!

As of now, the STC office has added a third hotel (the Coronado) to the list of host hotels because of the large turnout that is expected. This hotel will have more "moderate" pricing and will provide dedicated shuttles for conference attendees. By the way, you might like to check out the Conference Web site on the Society's web page. Just go to *http://www.stc-va.org* and click on **Conferences**. So far, the Web site includes preliminary hotel and registration information.

Looking Forward
Soon, we will announce the availability of our local web site, which will provide local color information about the conference and its location. (Thank you, **Sharon Wissert**.) I wish you all a wonderful Thanksgiving, happy Chanukah, merry Christmas, and happy Kwanza! ❖

TECH TRENDS

Deduct Your STC Dues

(Reprinted from Tieline, *the STC newsletter for chapter leaders.)*

Did you know that you can claim your STC dues as a tax deduction in several ways:

Charitable Expense
All STC members who pay taxes in the United States can deduct at least a portion of their STC dues if they claim this portion as a charitable donation. IRS publication 526 (rev. 1996) defines this option: "You may be able to deduct membership fees or dues you pay to a qualified organization. However, you can deduct only the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive." As a 501(c)(3) organization, STC is a qualified organization. The only determination that you need to make is the amount that is more than the value of the benefits you receive. STC's tangible benefits can be estimated at $20 ($10 for the Society's quarterly journal, *Technical Communicatio*n, and $10 for the magazine *Intercom*). The difference between the cost of membership ($95) and tangible benefits ($20) is $75, and you may claim that amount as charitable contribution.

Business Expense
Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Miscellaneous Expense
Dues may also be deducted as a miscellaneous deduction. (For these deductions to affect your taxes, the total amount of all miscellaneous deductions must exceed 2 percent of your adjusted gross income.) If dues are deducted as a charitable, business, or miscellaneous expense, they must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid. In other words, dues paid in 1998 can be deducted only on 1998 tax returns. If you have any questions, contact your local IRS representative or an accountant.

Money, Not Time
STC recently received a question concerning the deduction of time or personal services donated to STC. Please be aware that while dues, contributions, and out-of-pocket expenses may be deducted, personal services cannot. ❖

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

Inquiring minds certainly want to know about software tools — attendees at the September meeting filled our room at the Winter Park Civic Center to capacity. Jim Druckenmiller showed why technical communicators should care about interactive Web development in his excellent presentation on how to develop an interactive document management system for the Web using Cold Fusion. He noted that "this technology costs little to develop and even less to deploy, but has great payoffs."

Jim Druckenmiller answers questions about Cold Fusion and its applications.

Anything related to the Web continues to be a crowd pleaser, and Karen Lane's October presentation, "Order from Chaos: Indexing Your Web Site," challenged our notions of just what a cyber index should look like or do. We critiqued a number of (alleged) indexes on various Web sites, and she bravely included her own work for the Society of Indexers. Indexing is an art that no software can do well, although Karen noted the usefulness of several products.

Member News

The Orlando Chapter congratulates Diane Heald on attaining the status of senior member.

We'd also like to congratulate chapter members Alicia Cook (formerly Baskin) and Denise Fritz (formerly Vessenmeyer) on their recent marriages.

Karen Lane's Web indexing program was also very well attended.

Admin Council

by Din Bissoondial

Highlights of the September 9 Administrative Council meeting included a review of the final draft of the Education Committee's high school competition brochure, the receipt of our annual dues rebate, and early discussions on listservs and Associate Fellow nominations. These items were talked about further at the Council's October 4 meeting along with an update on annual conference planning, getting the word out about the judging for the Florida Technical Publications Competition, new information on future chapter programs, the details of a fall membership drive, and brainstorming related to a possible spring 2000 seminar at UCF relating to technical communications and the law.

Looking ahead . . .

Wednesday, Dec. 8
Winter Park Civic Center

We'll kick off the holiday season with some excellent door prizes at our December 8th meeting. Lori Corbett and I are delighted to welcome Patrick Koster from Koster Associates, Inc., an Adobe-Certified Training Provider in Melbourne, FL. A FrameMaker trainer and an experienced presenter at STC meetings, Patrick will demonstrate FrameMaker's capabilities for document design and publication. His company's Web site explains that this product "combines word processing, page layout, graphics, and color features as well as electronic distribution capabilities in a single application. With FrameMaker you can create a wide range of documents from simple memorandums and reports to complex multi-chapter books and technical manuals." Bring your questions! And the door prizes? Let's just say that Adobe will contribute some *very* nice gifts!

Tuesday, Jan. 25
Winter Park Civic Center

Thinking of going back to school, but can't squeeze any more time out of your day for a long commute? Want to know exactly what's involved in that much-touted distance learning? Ask the experts! Susan Gonzalez and Betty Roberts of Fiserv, Inc., will share their experiences in "The Virtual Classroom: Real-Life Experiences of Distance Learners." Find out why this presentation was a hit at the Cincinnati conference. ❖

Education News and Updates

Chapter High School Competition
As Lori mentioned earlier, the Orlando Chapter's Central Florida High School Technical Writing Competition is soon to enter the judging phase. Competition manager Jon Kessler, will be sending out copies of all entries to members of the Education Committee in early December for initial evaluations. Then, committee members will meet for a serious evening of deliberations and final selection of this year's winning entries, which will be forwarded to STC's international level competition. Our local winners will be honored at a chapter meeting in the spring.

Special Opportunity Grant
The Chapter's Education Committee is also undertaking the development of a proposal for a Special Opportunity Grant that will focus on the Society's initiative to increase support to secondary education throughout the United States and Canada. One key feature of the Orlando Chapter proposal

will be to produce a multimedia presentation about STC that will be shown to area high school students to introduce them to our profession and to inform them of our high school writing competition. Dan Jones is coordinating this proposal-development effort.

STC Scholarship Program
Of interest to our student members is the announcement of STC's 2000-2001 college scholarship program. Fourteen awards of $2,500 each will be granted toward school tuition and expenses. Seven awards are granted to graduate students and seven to undergraduates. Applications must be received by February 12, 2000. Application forms and additional information can be obtained from the STC web site at *http://www.stc-va.org/facademic.htm,* through the STC headquarters office at (703) 522-4114, or from Ms. Lenore Ridgway at (914) 339-4927.

Teaching Fellowships for Practicing Professionals
STC is in the process of implementing a partnership program with industry and academia that offers paid, short-term teaching assignments (fellowships) for practicing professionals. The goal of these STC teaching fellowships is to promote positive academic and industry connections and to make it possible for practitioners to help in the education and training of future technical communicators. Currently, two teaching fellowships of $2,000 each are available for award. Typically, a fellowship lasts for one academic quarter or semester; however, the duration of fellowships for which funding may be awarded can be up to one academic year. Proposals must be submitted by April 1 to be considered for summer or fall teaching assignments and by November 1 to be considered for spring teaching assignments. STC will be issuing a more formal news release on this program in the near future. ❖

Help UCF Plan for the Future

The Department of English at UCF is preparing a proposal for the Florida Board of Regents to implement a new PhD degree in Texts and Technology. This degree, designed for academicians as well as professionals in industry, will study the relationship between discourse and technology. Courses will consider the many theoretical, historical, practical, and creative dimensions of technology's influence on texts such as print, film, video, and online environment. For a fuller discussion of the degree, please visit our Web site at *http://ucf.edu/~english/phd.html*.

Here's where you can help. One section of the proposal is a needs assessment that requires letters of support from "interested parties." For the Texts and Technology degree, such interested parties include those companies to which members of the STC belong. To be successful, UCF needs letters of support—brief statements that will note the utility of such a degree to the local economy—to include in their proposal. These letters do not commit your company to any financial or personnel support for the degree; rather, the letters announce your organization's philosophical belief that such a degree would benefit our area.

Please consider seeking your firm's support for this innovative degree program. For further details contact either Dan Jones *(djones@pegasus.cc.ucf.edu)* or John Schell *(schell@pegasus.cc.ucf.edu)*. Statements of support on letterhead may be mailed to either of us at the UCF Department of English, Orlando 32816. ❖

Here Comes the Judge !

The 1999-2000 International Technical Publications Competition (ITPC) Call for Judges has been officially announced.

There will be 33 to 39 judges selected to serve on 11 and 13 teams to judge entries from 17 ITPC categories. Most teams will travel to Atlanta for a final consensus judging event on February 18-19, 2000. Travel and lodging expenses are reimbursed for most judges.

Judging qualifications and application forms are available from Mr. Ken Ries, ITPC Manager, KEMET Electronics, P.O. Box 5928, Greenville, SC 29606-5928, *kenries@kemet.com*.

Completed applications need to be returned to Ken by December 15; you will be notified of the results by December 31. ❖

Regional News

by Michelle Ratcliffe

Neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night ... but Floyd, that's another story! Thanks to hurricane Floyd, STC had its first "virtual Board meeting" this fall. That's right! We may not have executed business in the environment we had planned – we were supposed to meet on the South Carolina coast on the same day that Floyd came through – but we still were able to conduct business. These are some of the decisions made at the 1999 STC Fall Board of Directors meeting:

- The FY 2000 budget was approved.

- The board approved a new dues structure effective January 1, 2000. Regular member dues will be $110.00. Student member dues will be $45.00.

- Five merit grant or loan applications were approved:

  - The Atlanta chapter's $3,000 grant will help establish their scholarship program.

  - The Chicago chapter's $1,000 loan will support a series of technical training programs, and its $2,000 grant will be used to start a public relations program.

  - The Wisconsin chapter's $3,000 grant will be used to develop and expand their mentorship program.

  - The Aloha and Los Angeles chapters' multi-chapter $6,000 loan will be used for the joint Region 7-Region 8 Pan-Pacific Conference to be held in October 2000.

- The External Relations Committee presented a two-year plan that will develop and roll out the STC

brand. The first step in this plan will be to publish the *Request for Proposals (RFP) for Brand Development*, which was reviewed and approved by the Board. The vendor selected for this phase of the plan will conduct branding research – interviewing and surveying various STC audiences – and work with a team representing all aspects of the Society to determine preliminary brand components and tools. At the May 2000 Board meeting, the brand and tools will be presented to the Board for approval. Keep your eyes open for the RFP, which is posted on *http://www.stc-va.org*.

- The guideline for the Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals was approved. Under this new program, which is similar to the existing Faculty Internship Grant Program, the Society may award stipends to enable practicing professionals in the field of technical communication to serve as adjunct or visiting faculty in colleges and universities. If you are interested in learning more about this program, the guidelines are posted on *http://www.stc-va.org*.

- Starting in the year 2000-2001, an online category will be added to the existing hard copy category for the International Student Technical Writing Competition.

- The appointment of Charles Fisher (Washington, DC) as Technical Program Manager for the 49th Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee was approved. ❖

eye on Language

by Mary Kendig

"Surfin' USA"

Most of us in the technical writing and editing business have been experiencing (or will shortly begin to experience) a significant shift in focus from paper-based to online or Web-based products. I trust that most of us have also discovered that writing for the Web is different than writing paper-based documentation.

In this column, I want to share with you some useful Web-based resources that my colleagues and I have uncovered in our travels through the Internet. These resources discuss Web design, standards, and styles: what makes for good design and content, and what makes for not-so-good design and content. I'm sure that you've also found some good resources. If so, send me an email (*mjkendig@gate.net)* and share them with me. I'd appreciate it!

Here's a short list of what I believe are some relevant and informative resources for learning about Web design, standards, and styles:

- Vincent Flanders' humorous site: *http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com* (Here, you'll learn good design by looking at bad design.)

- Web Home Improvement — A Web Design Style Guide: *http://www.htmltips.com/index.html*

- Jakob Nielsen's Web site: *http://www.useit.com* (Jakob Nielsen has been called "the smartest person on the Web" and one of the "Web's most influential people.")

- Sun Microsystem's highly regarded style guide: *http://www.sun.com/styleguide*

- Yale University School of Medicine's highly regarded style guide: *http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/contents.html*

- William J. Strunk's *Elements of Style* online: *http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html*

- Two great sites for learning about Web tools and Web design: *http://www.hotwired.com/webmonkey* and *http://www.htmlgoodies.com*

- Some other interesting sites: *http://www.teachonweb.org/tools* (Offers several links to online Web resources.)

  http://www.pixelfoundry.com/Toms/QuickTen/index.html (Lists 10 quick tips for better site design.)

  http://www.dreamink.com (Provides Web design tutorials and resources.)

  http://www.mvd.com/webguide (Keeps "weary wandering Webmasters" on the cutting edge of Web design and functionality. And I, for one, can identify with the "weary wandering" part!)

Of course, I've just skimmed the surface here in terms of good Web resources, but I believe that the sites I've listed above will be of value to you in preparing your information for the Web or improving on what's already "out there."

Happy surfin'! ❖

Coming Up...

December 8 **Chapter Meeting:** FrameMaker Demonstration by Patrick Koster of Koster Associates, Inc. (Adobe Certified Trainer)

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

January 5 **Submission Deadline for the January/February issue of *Tech Trends***

January 25 **Chapter Meeting: The Virtual Classroom: Real-Life Experiences of Distance Learners. Presented by Susan Gonzales and Betty Roberts of Fiserv, 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

May 21-24, 2000 - STC Annual Conference   **Orlando, Florida**

TECH TRENDS

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P.O. Box 1343
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http://stc.org/region3/orl/www/

—PLEASE FORWARD—

STC

society for technical communication