

Memo to Members



Winner of STC's
Chapter of
Distinction
Award, 2003

From the President

The Road to Distinction

by Mike Murray

In some ways, it still seems like a wonderful dream.

Other than right now, have you ever had a time in your life when a group of incredibly talented people somehow found each other, formed an energetic, cohesive, synergistic team, and achieved a level of success that you'll always remember, always talk about every chance you get? In many cases, it was that one remarkable season, that one memorable event, that one unforgettable evening that you knew was a once-in-a-lifetime memory. As a member of STC's Orlando Chapter of Distinction, you are now living that dream—and it has only just begun!

The Road Began

If you were fortunate enough to attend the January chapter meeting, you heard Gloria Jaffe talk about that first get-together in her house when a handful of people decided they wanted to form the Orlando Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. The road began on that special night.

Over the years, the chapter's prosperity ebbed and flowed. Sometimes, a small handful of dedicated members kept us on the road; sometimes one special

person kept the thread from breaking. To try naming everyone who was instrumental in keeping us on the road to Distinction would be a mistake, as too many names might be inadvertently omitted. If not for every past and present chapter member, we would never have had the opportunity to be a Chapter of Distinction. But there *is* one very special person who must be honored, who is an integral part of Orlando's success, someone we cannot do without.



President Mike Murray being congratulated by STC Past President Mark Hanigan.

The Renaissance Started

The Orlando Chapter's current renaissance began the evening of the 2000–2001 end-of-year banquet at the Winter Park Country Club. The Club was nearly deserted after the meeting when a few members gathered on the darkened steps and decided to strengthen the chapter's foundation. Several dedicated leaders immediately got behind the effort, and we were on our way.

The 2001–2002 year was one of backing off from trying to do too much, focusing on what was most important, and establishing a new personality for the Orlando chapter. We emerged from that year with a new sense of who we were, one that focused on innovative solutions, membership value, and professional identity. Soon, we started noticing a "club house atmosphere," a "buzz" that continued in the room after every meeting. The members were coming together as a

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The Road, cont'd

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team. And while certain members played a key role in the chapter's rapid progress, there still remains that one very special person who must be thanked.

The Dream Came to Be

As a common goal, this year's leaders dedicated themselves to further solidifying the chapter's foundation by adding as much value as possible to STC membership. Having achieved Chapter of Merit status in 2001–2002, we set our sights on the next level—Chapter of Excellence. What happened next was truly remarkable!

As the year progressed, new leaders joined a small, dedicated staff, and the chapter's momentum increased rapidly. About halfway through the year, it became obvious that we would complete the required checklists and meet our goal of Excellence—but wait! We had also begun completing several of the requirements for Distinction! It wasn't planned that way, but by then that one special person, the final ingredient that assured our success, had stepped forward.

Distinction:

1. Excellence in quality or talent
2. Something done or given as a mark of respect or honor
3. Recognition of high achievement or a grade that signifies this

The Final Ingredient Appeared

On the evening of Tuesday, June 24, the Orlando Chapter honored our leaders, members, and *especially* that one very special person who played such a pivotal role in completing what has evolved from a dirt road to a superhighway of success—YOU! Without you, there would be no chapter, no honors, no celebration. Whether you support the chapter by simply renewing your membership, attending meetings, or taking an active role in chapter activities, we extend very special thanks to *you*. Looking back, we now realize that Distinction isn't a destination after all—it's a continuing journey. Thank you for joining us in that journey, and congratulations! From now on, you can proudly proclaim to whoever will listen, "I'm a member of an STC Chapter of Distinction!"

Designing the future of technical communication in Central Florida—Orlando Chapter STC!

Need a Verb? Simply Tack on "ize"...Works Every Time

Word Mint IV: The Beat Goes On

by STC Fellow Dan Voss



Quasi-ruggedizability (n.). The quality of being somewhat but not altogether capable of being made more durable. From *ruggedizable* (adj), meaning having the inherent capability to be made more durable. Root word is the relatively recent coinage *ruggedize* (v), popular in military circles, meaning to make more rugged or tougher. Generally used to refer to equipment, although it could be applied equally well to people, given the opportunity and sufficient disregard for linguistic propriety. Examples: (1) The quasi-ruggedizability of the cheaper printed wiring board (PWB) made it a potential candidate for the new missile, but the inherently more ruggedizable incumbent PWB got the nod, to reduce development risk. (Sadly, there are people in aerospace who might actually understand—lo, even *use!*—this statement.) (2) After having been beaten over the head several times with his own bowling ball by his wife Martha after stumbling home from a kegling tournament three sheets to the wind, Harry decided to ruggedize his skull by wearing a helmet. Unfortunately, he imprudently chose a plastic helmet, achieving a quasi-ruggedization at best. The result was that he was knocked unconscious and defenestrated (reference Word Mint II, Vol. 2, No. 7 of *Memo to Members*, February 2003).

STC Year-End Banquet at the Citrus Club

There's Still Time To RSVP!

Come see the Chapter of Distinction – winning portfolio, which will be on display at the meeting.

Our featured speaker at next Tuesday's year-end banquet, former STC President Mark Hanigan, will present "Lists and Mileposts on the Burma Shave Road."



Event Facts:

- Date - June 24th, 2003
- Time - 7:00 PM
- Location: Citrus Club in Downtown Orlando
- RSVP by: June 18th
- Visit <http://www.stc-orlando.org/> for more information.



Roundup: What Does Being a Member of a Chapter of Distinction Mean to You?

In celebration of the Chapter of Distinction award that the Orlando Chapter won at this year's annual conference, we wanted to hear from you about what this honor means to you. Here is what some of our members had to say.

"Being a member of any professional organization shows your support for and dedication to your chosen profession. Being a member of a "Chapter of Distinction" proves that support and dedication. It means that our members care, not just about "appearing" distinctive, but also about the people who made it distinctive. I feel privileged and honored for being able to play a small part in the Orlando STC Chapter."

—Heather Haas, *Technical Editor Hughes Supply Information Technology*

"Two years ago, the Orlando Chapter wasn't even thinking about awards. Last year, as we began to rebuild, we thought about it but didn't apply—and yet we still were named a Chapter of Merit. At the beginning of this year, Mike Murray set our sights up a notch, aiming for a Chapter of Excellence award. He miscalculated. Seriously, to come from where we were 2 years ago to beat out 25 other chapters in our size category and bring home the Society's most coveted chapter award is nothing short of amazing. We have every reason to be proud."

—Dan Voss, *Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control*

"For those who were active in the chapter a few years ago, this is remarkable proof of how good we

knew we could be.

I continuously marvel at the way the Orlando Chapter lets members make the individual professional contributions they want to make, and that we are doing so much together that has a leadership impact within the Society. After years of admiring other chapters for their accomplishments, I was very pleased to hear from several leaders that they are now looking up to us!"

—W.C. Wiese, *Past Chapter President*

"For myself, being a member of a chapter of distinction results in two very strong emotions, a wonderfully confident feeling of validation and a tremendous sense of pride. The validation is internal. The award gives me great confidence that our chapter members are on the right track, our leaders have made good decisions, and we have come together as a cohesive team. That's a feeling that money can't buy! At Lockheed Martin, we're working to develop a 'Writing Center of Excellence' concept. Talk about instant credibility! And when my office mate is Christina Payne, runner-up for the Gloria Jaffe Outstanding Technical Communicator Award...WOW!

The pride comes from two sources. The first is announcing to any STC member who will listen, 'I'm from the Orlando Chapter!' At the Dallas conference, I was chatting with Mark Hanigan, when David Armbruster walked up and sat nearby. Mark asked, 'Dave, do you know Mike Murray? Mike is president of the Orlando chapter.' David looked up, smiled, and replied, Oh, that's a good chapter!' David is a past Society president

(1991–1992), as is Mark (2000–2001). Orlando chapter members walk with confidence, make lots of eye contact, and can't help smiling nearly all the time! My second source of pride is YOU, a valued member of the Orlando Chapter. I'm so darn proud of you, I don't know if this smile will ever leave my face. I know for sure that you will always be in my heart."

—Mike Murray
Orlando Chapter President Lockheed Martin

"I feel fortunate to be a part of the STC Orlando Chapter, whose leaders consistently go above and beyond the call of duty to make each and every chapter event a success."

—Janette Farnsworth, *Scribe Tree*

"Being a member of a Chapter of Distinction means that I am now part of an elite club. And when you become active in any club, the members become almost like your extended family. Like any family, you support one another, you laugh together, you occasionally squabble, and hopefully grow together; but you enjoy your collective education and experiences so much you keep coming back. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'A right rule for a club would be, admit no man whose presence excludes any one topic. It requires people who are not surprised and shocked, who do and let do, and let be, who sink trifles, and know solid values, and who take a great deal for granted.' One of the reasons we are a Chapter of Distinction is that we follow all but one of Mr. Emerson's rules; we don't take anything for granted and constantly strive to do better for

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Roundup, cont'd

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ourselves and our organization."

—Barbara Odom

"I've been a member of STC and the Orlando chapter since 1984. Over the years, I attended many outstanding chapter meetings and have seen many first-rate chapter officers come and go. Of course, there were times when some of the programs could have been better and when the chapter leadership could have been stronger. You can't expect every year to be an outstanding year. But this particular chapter has had many outstanding years and is much deserving of the Chapter of Distinction award. A chapter is, finally, only as good as its members, and we're fortunate to have so many of the best people around as our members. In retrospect, the other chapters competing against us this year never had a chance."

—Dan Jones Professor of English
University of Central Florida

Happy Trails

Parting Words from Our Current V.P.

by Bob Shydo



What being a member of a "Chapter of Distinction" means to me.

Well, I seem to recall a series of less than stellar meetings several years ago, one of which was an ad hoc planning meeting for the 2001–2002 year where many ideas and comments were shared. I figured this "information" would, as many times it does, fall by the wayside, but I was surprised. Many things happened; a

survey to the members to gain information on programs that the members wanted to see, an enthusiastic and energetic board willing to take on all the planning and activities that were needed to succeed, a president with the vision and leadership capabilities to direct the turnaround, and a vice president who put it so well when he wrote that if he had to describe the upcoming year it would be "Back to the basics." And so it was.

What was accomplished was an amazing turnaround. The board was visible and available to the members. The programs were interesting, the members' expectations were being met or exceeded, and the meeting attendance was increasing. The organization had a vision and was implementing it. They documented and communicated their goals and objectives, and, most important, they measured their successes against meeting their objectives. Although the chapter didn't apply for an award (a conscious decision), they received a Chapter of Merit award and

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Guest Article

I Walk, I See, I Hear

by Jodi Shumway, Student Member, Lone Star Chapter

For years, 40 to be exact, my body has functioned in a way that is defined as normal in today's society. At least I thought it did. Although I've had two procedures on my left knee and nerves removed from both feet due to nerve damage, I am able to walk for hours at Six Flags without a problem. With the aid of bifocal lenses, I can see with 20/20 vision. And if I sit at the front of the classroom or church auditorium, I can hear just fine.

At least I thought my body was functioning "normally." That is until I started researching the hospitality tour sites that had been chosen for the STC's 50th Annual International



(from left) Jodi Shumway, Jennifer Grant, former Orlando chapter member Gail Lippincott, and Mel Haughton at an AccessAbility (formerly Special Needs) SIG medieval costume party at the conference in Dallas.

Conference in Dallas, Texas. I discovered that there was one part of me that hadn't functioned "normally" until this spring—my observation skills.

For 40 years I had taken no notice of the locations of ramps in public buildings, or the height or number of stairs, or if pay phones had instructions in Braille. It never occurred to me that a sitting area with 4 steps and no alternate ramp could mean the difference between a person with chronic fatigue syndrome being able to rest or having to walk another 20 feet to a sitting area with no steps. I never noticed if a sink in a public restroom was accessible or not for a person using

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Parting Words, cont'd

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received it. Not a bad showing for the first year of a turnaround. So now the real test: was this a bubble or the start of a trend?

The 2002–2003 chapter year started out as strong as the previous year. The program survey went out to the members, and after several iterations a list of strong candidates for programs was identified. The schedule and programs were "locked in" for the year, communicated to the membership on the Web site, and business cards were printed with the chapter information on one side and the meeting programs and schedule on the reverse. The programs were interesting and they were fun. This year was a growth year led again by a president with vision, a board with conviction, and a very active immediate past president. The chapter initiated a new award, the "The Gloria Jaffe Outstanding Technical Communicator Award" for technical writers. The big difference with this award is that individuals had to be submitted by their manager to be considered. This award honored Gloria Jaffe, a founder of the Orlando chapter of STC, and again set a new benchmark for other chapters to meet. During the joint UCF–Orlando chapter meeting, the chapter offered to assist students to be members. This membership drive was highly successful. Our membership grew, and we now have a strong contingent of students continuing to attend the monthly meetings. This year our chapter president challenged the board to achieve the next level, "Chapter of Excellence." He himself spent many (too many) hours of his personal time to document the chapter's achievements in a manner that exceeded all expectations. As a result, we delivered a document that has set a new benchmark for chapters to meet for future submissions.

It was an honor and a pleasure beyond expectations to serve on this year's board and especially to be a member of the STC Orlando "Chapter of Distinction." I want to thank President Mike for the fun experience I had during the 2002–2003 chapter year.



I Walk, cont'd

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a wheelchair or scooter. My, how things have changed for me since January!

I took on the challenge of writing the Special Needs SIG's

Ms. Shumway is one of three Lone Star Chapter members to work on the Conference Guide for People with Special Needs for the Society's 50th International Conference in Dallas.

Conference Guide for People with Special Needs for the Society's 50th International Conference in Dallas as a Mass Communication/ Technical Writing internship project. What I learned about accessibility, the letter of the law and the spirit of the law, far outweighs the credit hours I will receive at the end of the semester.

When I began making trips to the Wyndham Anatole Hotel, the DFW Airport, and the hospitality tour sites, I had a very abbreviated list of "things to investigate." On my initial list I had restrooms, parking lots, signage, and stairs and elevators. After my second or third stop, I realized that there were so many more things that needed to be investigated. I added to my list things like desk height, visual obstructions, restroom plumbing, weight of doors, slopes, and thresholds. With each visit I added something new to my list of observances. I learned that there are companies and organizations that make their establishments ADA-compliant to the letter of the law and there are those who take it a step further and meet the spirit of the law, by trying to make their establishments user-friendly for everyone.

I did investigative tours for several weeks and made multiple stops at some of the places on my tour list. As we are now [were] finishing the manual and getting it ready for the conference attendees to use, I realize [realized] there are [were] probably many more things I could have investigated and included.

This project was supposed to be a learning experience for me, and what I learned is twofold:

- ☑ Those of us who don't have to think about stairs, restrooms, room noise, elevator location, distances from one room to another, and so on, in some ways have a greater need than people who depend on a wheelchair or a hearing-aid. Our need is to have our eyes opened to the fact that the letter of the law isn't good enough when it comes to ADA compliance.
- ☑ The Special Needs SIG is of vital importance to the Society for Technical Communication and to the business world in general, because we are the ones who can help companies and organizations realize the need to make their establishments step over the boundary from the letter of the law to the spirit of the law.



Think Baltimore!**The 51st STC Conference Is Just Around the Corner***by Dan Voss*

"Come on!" I hear you cry. We haven't even had our traditional chapter-year-opening August "Washlines" meeting sharing information from last month's 50th Annual International STC Conference in Dallas (FLASH: *Washlines IX* is coming to a Winter Park Civic Center near you, Tuesday, August 26, 6:30 p.m.), and here we are worrying about *next year's* event?

"Dan, are you nuts?"

Well, actually, I thought that had been established some time ago. At least that's what my wife tells me with some regularity—and since she is a psychologist by profession, I always have to ask her to specify whether that is a professional diagnosis or a spousal opinion.

But nuts or not, the headline is more factual than you might realize—especially if you are a prospective presenter for the next conference. So colossal, in fact, is the task of putting on what is probably the world's largest professional development and networking event for technical communicators—ask stem manager Karen Lane—it demands a 10-month setback on proposals for the technical sessions. Which means that scarcely have you switched off the online projector for this year's presentation before you have to come up with a proposal for next year's.

The deadline for proposals for the 51st STC conference is—get this!—August 1, less than 6 weeks away.

In point of fact, two of our chapter's perennial presenters, the writer and his Lockheed Martin colleague W.C. Wiese, have historically used the plane flight home from the STC conference to put pencil to pad on

the following year's presentation.

Let me take this opportunity to encourage Orlando Chapter members



Baltimore is the host city for the 51st Annual International STC Conference May 9–12, 2004.

to consider submitting proposals to present a technical session at the 51st conference in Baltimore May 9–12, 2004. The conference seeks experts in a wide range of disciplines. Its core subject areas, or "stems," comprise the following areas: management; professional development/STC-related sessions; theory, research, education, and training; tools and technology; usability and information design; and writing and editing. There are also five possible formats in which to present: a paper and an oral presentation based on the paper, a panel discussion, a progression, a workshop, and a demonstration.

The Call for Papers and examples of successful proposals for presentations in all five conference formats can be found at <http://www.stc.org/51stConf/index.asp>.

Making a presentation at a major international conference is a huge professional plus—and it is also a very achievable goal. Presenters also have the opportunity to publish a paper of up to six (6) pages in the conference *Proceedings*—a relatively painless process that does not require peer review or extensive revision cycles—in short, a fairly easy but nonetheless valuable publication credit for one's résumé and portfolio.

You don't have to be a 30-year veteran to consider a proposal, either.

This year, for example, three UCF students have already teamed up with two chapter members to submit a proposal for two presentations. Such alliances are valuable learning experiences for all concerned.

All the Orlando Chapter members who presented at the conference in Dallas (or who led and managed other presenters)—viz., Dan Voss, W.C. Wiese, Mike Murray, and Karen Lane—extend an open offer to the chapter membership to guide and mentor anyone who is interested in putting together a proposal before the August 1 deadline.

Don't be shy, folks—you can *do* this!

Even if you are not interested in presenting at this time, we urge you to consider attending the conference. At \$450 for a regular 3-day registration, \$350 for a presenter, and \$100 for a full-time student (these are 2003 prices, but not likely to increase significantly), the annual conference is a remarkable bargain in terms of the opportunities it brings for expert training, professional development, and networking with one's technical communication colleagues from all over the world.

The timeframe for *attending* the conference is much less stringent than it is for presenting at the conference—there is no August 1 deadline staring you in the face. But life being what it is, most of us are unlikely to step out at the last minute and commit 4–5 days (in this case May 9–12, 2004) for professional development. We are only likely to do such a thing if we plan it in advance.

Probably the most critical element in

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The 51st, cont'd

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that planning for many of us is the cost. The writer has been extremely fortunate in that his employer has generously covered the costs in return for presenting at the conference (thereby representing the company) and also in bringing back information to the department. Not all are so fortunate.

If you believe you have a shot at getting funding support from your employer but need help building a business case, contact the STC Office. I remember seeing a letter they published which does precisely this. W.C., Mike, and I would also be glad to offer suggestions in this area.

If this is not a realistic option for you, or if you are self-employed, it may still be possible for you to come up with a cost-effective strategy to attend the conference. On a couple of occasions, I have had to attend conferences "out of pocket," and as manager of the AccessAbility SIG, I have worked with a number of people without a financial sponsor to help them devise a low-cost approach.

Options include finding alternative lodging close to the conference headquarters hotel (which, quite frankly, is typically rather pricey, even at the discount conference rate); finding a room-mate(s) to share cost; contacting members of the host chapter to seek alternative lodging; booking flights early at bargain prices—even such basic strategies as banding together at the conference to cover cab-fare to a restaurant or walking two blocks to a nearby Denny's for breakfast, as W.C. and I did three times in Dallas to escape the hotel's wallet-killing \$5 bagel syndrome.

Where there's a will, there's generally a way. Give it a try. You'll not regret it.



The deadline for proposals to present at the 51st STC Conference is August 1!

The A-SIG "Troika"

by Dan Voss

One of the highlights of the 50th conference came when the founder of the Special Needs Committee, Judy Skinner of the host Lone Star Chapter; outgoing Special Needs SIG manager Dan Voss; and incoming AccessAbility SIG manager Fabien Vais (the one with the starfish badge) celebrated Judy's receipt of the SIG's first Distinguished Service Award at the traditional honors banquet. All future AccessAbility SIG Distinguished Service Awards will bear Judy's name.



Get Published in the STC Newsletter!
If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please contact **Erika Coto** at ecoto72@yahoo.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Past Issues of *Memo to Members* are available on the STC Orlando Chapter Web site at: <http://www.stc-orlando.org>
- If you are a member and are not receiving meeting announcements, the monthly *Memo To Members*, or any other valuable postings, you may not be on the listserv. Contact Dan Jones, the E-mail List Administrator, at djones@ucf.edu to have yourself added.

May Meeting Recap

Do You Need Help?

by David Coverston and Barbara Odom

Do you know what kind of Help you need? At our last meeting a distinguished panel of experts, chaired by Barb Odom, presented an explanation of the various kinds of Help.

Janet Methven presented help from the view of an information architect. She defined information architecture as the organization and delivery of information, and gave three steps on how to do it. The first step for the information architect is to do an analysis of the audience. The second step is to create a storyboard from the perspective of an audience member. You must ask yourself "What does my target audience want to find?" and "How will he find it?" Finally, you must decide what level of detail is appropriate. Janet said that Help is usually organized in three ways: by scenarios,

menus, and topics. The first step in writing Help is to decide on the organization, then make a list of the topics you need to cover. Jon Kessler gave us an overview of the evolution of the major help formats. The most prevalent format is the Winhelp format, he said. By using RoboHelp, you can produce the tri-paned view of the newer Help format. Another advantage of using RoboHelp is that it installs into Word, giving you the advantage of using a familiar tool. If you want to get started cheaply, Jon suggests getting the free HTMLHelp editor from Microsoft (see links below).

Janette Farnsworth presented an overview of HTML and Web-based help. HTML-based Help files such as WebHelp, HTML Help, JavaHelp and Oracle Help all use HTML files as their source. The

advantage to this format is that it is platform independent, but a disadvantage is that you may have to understand programming and actually code some of the files manually.

We've heard it before: "Work smarter, not harder." These days, online Help authors are facing pressure to deliver a wide variety of information products, to deliver content in multiple formats and for multiple audiences, and to meet rapidly changing technical requirements. Many of use are being asked to deliver similar content in print or PDF, in HTML for the Web or enterprise intranet, and as online Help for software applications. So, what's hot in the world of on-screen user assistance, also known as online Help?

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June 2003						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

6:30 Admin.
Council
Meeting@ Chapters

7:00pm -
STC Banquet
@ Citrus Club

Do You Need Help?, cont'd

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When planning a Help project, it is very important to design the outline and architecture up front and to make sure your audience's are considered. Much like hard copy documentation, you need to be clear, concise and correct. But with online Help, you have graphics to consider, hotspots to place, and a table of contents to create. RoboHelp is still the tool of choice for creating WinHelp files. And then there are all those markup languages: HTML, XML, etc. And don't forget JavaHelp, Oracle Help, and online assistance for Palms and other portable devices. It's enough to give a technical writer a technical headache!

One of the newest developments in the world of user assistance is "Embedded Help." According to Mathew Ellison writing for WinWriters, Inc., "We are seeing a gradual blurring of the distinction between application user

interfaces (be they desktop or web-based) and user assistance. The notion of a separate Help system running in its own independent window is regarded by some professionals as outmoded, and a variety of interesting new approaches are being proposed. These range from Help embedded in a dedicated pane within the application, through to user assistance that is merged within the interface of the application itself." Embedded Help is a core component of application development rather than an accessory to the application, therefore, creating Embedded Help requires a closer relationship between the product developers and information developers. Therefore, if Embedded Help is in the plan for an application, the user interface should be designed from the beginning to accommodate at least the possibility of embedded Help. If technical communicators are involved (and they should be!), we get involved early on in the

development cycle; as opposed to "Oh Gee, the app is ready to ship—what about doc and Help?"

A good example of Embedded Help is right in front of you! In Word, click Help / Show Office Assistance. After typing a question and clicking Search, your page shrinks and a panel opens to the right of your screen with instruction.

Another example is pop-up text within the user interface, sometimes known as "mouseover help," or "cheat balloon help" that appears when the user "mouses over" a field and hidden text displays. This text, which could include options for field entry as well as general instruction, disappears when either the user moves the mouse or clicks elsewhere.

All STC monthly meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except July) at 6:30 p.m. at the Winter Park Civic Center unless otherwise specified.



Links to Help Tools

- ☑ HelpScribble \$99 <http://www.helpscribble.com/winhelp.html>
- ☑ Microsoft HTMLHelp home page Free
<http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/htmlhelp/html/vsconHH1Start.asp?frame=true>
- ☑ Help & Manual, a stand-alone authoring tool 279.00 <http://www.helpandmanual.com/index.html>
- ☑ EasyHelp/Web An HTMLhelp & Windows Help editor/compiler for Microsoft Word \$245
<http://www.easyhelpweb.com/index.htm>
- ☑ helpMATIC Pro shareware, \$40 <http://www.helpmatic.net/>
- ☑ RoboHelp Office 2002 \$1199 <http://www.ehelp.com/>
- ☑ Information on Help <http://www.helpmaster.com/>

Tool Tips: Sharing Your Tools

by David Coverston

When you have developed some wonderful tools and you want to share them with someone else, how do you do it? Well, it really does depend on the type of tools you have made. You could break out the Wise or InstallShield programs or perhaps the Microsoft Office Developer's kit and make regular installation files. But that's really overkill for smaller projects. I'll share some of my tips with you on how I've dealt with some smaller tools projects.

I want to make things as easy as I can for my audience. That's one big reason why I like developing new tools to begin with. By making it easier for my co-workers to do their jobs, I can help them be more productive. So I also want to make it easy to install the new tools, both for them and me.

One method I use is the old tried and true batch file. The following code installs the Autotext plug-in for FrameMaker. It does this by copying the necessary two files from the current directory, which is where the referenced files sit on a LAN, to the correct directory on the users machine.

```
copy AutoText.dll "C:\Program Files\Adobe
\FrameMaker7.0\fm\init\Plugins"
copy AutoText.fm "C:\Program Files\Adobe
\FrameMaker7.0\fm\init"
```

The batch file is a text file I created in Notepad and named "install Autotext.bat". All the user has to do is double-click the file and restart FrameMaker. A "DOS box" window flashes on the screen and it's done. The plug-in is installed as well as the AutoText document with the modifications I have made to it. I made another batch file for a different set of users that copies a different AutoText document to their computer.

Hard coding the file path name in like this only works if you know how your users machines are setup, and they are all the same. When they are not, you have to make some adjustments. The following code shows how I did this adjusting for an MS Office application template installation.

```
Copy Matrix.xlt "C:\Documents and Settings\%username
%\Application Data\Microsoft\Templates\"
```

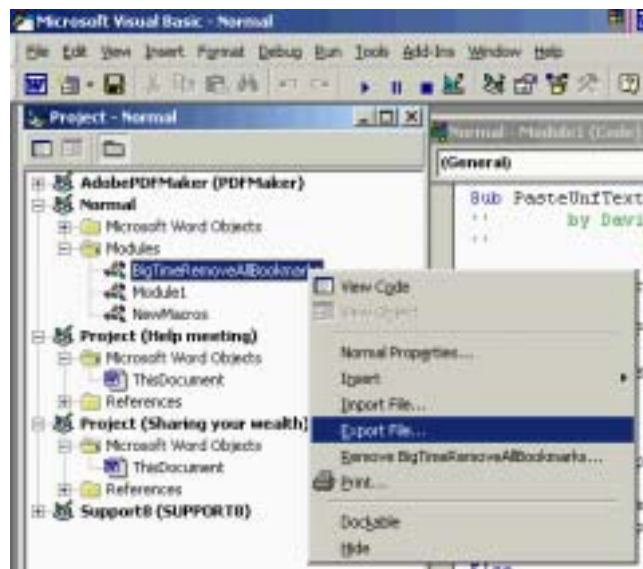
```
Copy Matrix.xlt "C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office
\Templates\"
```

Again, the file is a text file I created in Notepad and named it "install matrix.bat". Because MS Office is not always installed in the same directory on different writers machines in our shop, I had to find where it was installed and copy the Excel template to the correct directory. Since all the platforms are Windows 2000, I knew where

the templates were supposed to go, but had to account for a different template path which is based on the user name. By using %username%, which is a system variable for whoever is logged onto the machine, I was able to copy the template file into the correct place.

When I have a Word macro or set of macros that I need to copy to someone's machine, there is an easy way of doing this, but you have to plan ahead. Well, you don't have to, but it is easier if you do. I put all the macros for that person in one code module and name it according to its functionality to make it easier to remember what it was for six months down the road. Only put the macros you want to send to the other person in this module.

If you have read my earlier columns, you might remember how to open the Visual Basic for Applications Editor (Tools>Macro> Visual Basic Editor). Open the editor and select the code module with your macros in it. Then right-click the module and choose Export File.

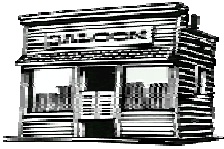


The VBA Editor

Select a location and name for your file in the Export File dialog box if you want something different than the default. The Editor will save it with a BAS extension. I recommend keeping the file name the same as the module so that you will remember what it is for. Here's another tip: save the file to a LAN location where everyone who needs it can get to it.

To install your code on your target machine, simply choose Import File from the File menu of the VBA Editor. Make sure you have your normal.dot selected in the Project Explorer window so that the code module is copied to the right place. Enjoy!

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Contact Us

President: Mike Murray
407 306-4681
mailto:mike.murray@lmco.com

Vice President: Bob Shydo
407 302-2735
bob@intuitive-info.com

Secretary: David Coverston
407 551-3444
DCoverston@paysys.com

Treasurer: Karen Lane
407 421-7795
mailto:klane@klane.com

Past President: W.C. Wiese
407 356-4792
william.c.wiese@meadsintl.com

Newsletter : Erika Coto
Editor 407 234-1008
mailto:ecoto72@yahoo.com

Hospitality & Membership Mgr.: Barbara Odom
407 831-5820
mailto:BCOdom@aol.com

Education Committee Manager: Dan Voss
407 356-6508
mailto:daniel.w.voss@lmco.com

E-mail List Administrator: Dan Jones
407 823-5160
djones@ucf.edu

Employment Manager: Richard Phipps
407 682-1300
mailto:rhipps@ciber.com

Co-Webmasters: Jon Kessler
407 992-8005
jkessler@csisoft.com

Sharon Wissert
407 365-1396
mailto:skw@cfl.rr.com

Web Site: <http://www.stc-orlando.org>

Mailing Address: STC Orlando
P.O. Box 540444
Orlando, Florida 32854-0444