

# MEMO TO MEMBERS

STC Orlando Chapter: A 2003 Chapter of Distinction

Volume 3, Issue 1 ♦ September 2003



## The Florida Fireflies

By Mike Murray, President



Something happened to me one evening recently that I'll always remember.

I don't recall if I have *ever* seen fireflies in Florida. Perhaps there has been the occasional one or two, but not enough to even remember.

Fireflies were an *extremely* pleasant part of my childhood in Kentucky. Every evening, those fairy-like twinkles of light danced around the yard, making for a truly enchanting environment along with the rustling oak trees and cool, sweet-smelling Kentucky grass. These sensations were occasionally topped off by the distant wail of a train's whistle, a sound that enchants me to this day. It was a magical time in my life.

Well, a few evenings ago, my wife and I were having dinner on our back porch. That's not always something you can do in Florida due to the uncomfortable humidity, but the day and evening were particularly pleasant. The Kentucky fireflies popped into my head, and I said to Kay, "You know what would make

this evening perfect? Fireflies." She agreed, and we finished our meals and went back inside to avoid the mosquitoes.



About an hour or so later, when nightfall had completely descended, our dog Butterscotch indicated that she needed to make a trip to the backyard, so I put a leash on her collar, and out we went. Where our back yard ends, a thickly wooded area begins. As I stood there waiting for Butterscotch to finish, I could not believe what I saw — and yet, there it was again, the unmistakable twinkle of a firefly near the woods! As I watched, I saw one more near that one. They seemed to blink 3 or 4 times just for my pleasure, then they disappeared. As I turned, a third firefly blinked just above Butterscotch's head. She saw it immediately and stood up on her hind legs to investigate. Two more

blinks, and the third and final fairy melted away into the cool evening.

I stood there for a full minute or more looking around, totally thrilled to the depths of my soul. I'm not sure if the goose bumps have ever completely gone away. I excitedly told my wife, who asked (with a big smile), "Fireflies in Florida?" I assured her that I had seen them, and that Butterscotch was my witness.

I'll long remember my night with the fireflies, the ones that don't exist in Florida. What an awesome world we live in, and what an important reminder as to what's really important and beautiful in our world!

### In this Issue. . .

The Florida Fireflies. . . . .	1
Special Interest Groups. . . . .	2
Selling Yourself with Your 'Elevator Speech'. . . . .	2
Word Mint VIII. . . . .	3
First Phone Seminar Scores A Big Success. . . . .	3
Tool Tips. . . . .	4
August Meeting Recap. . . . .	5
Society News. . . . .	5
September Meeting Preview: Intro to XML and Product Demo. . . . .	6
Welcome New Members. . . . .	6
Key Chapter Dates in September. . . . .	6

## Memo to Members

*Memo to Members* is published monthly for members of the STC-Orlando chapter and distributed via our listserv. This newsletter is also available on our chapter website at [www.stc-orlando.org](http://www.stc-orlando.org) under the link [Newsletters](#). Comments, suggestions, and questions are always welcome and should be directed to the Editor, Erika Coto, at [ecoto72@yahoo.com](mailto:ecoto72@yahoo.com).

Our ad rates are as follows (prices are the same for black & white or color):

- ♦ Full-page ad \$90
- ♦ One-half page \$50
- ♦ One-quarter page \$30
- ♦ One-eighth page \$20



Ad payment should be made to the Treasurer.

Please submit articles, graphics and letters of opinion for publication. Permission to reprint any material herein is given provided that credit is given and a copy of the issue is sent to the editor.

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

[Contact Us](#)

## Special Interest Groups

By Mike Murray, President

STC's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) provide a way for STC members to share their interest in particular areas of technical communication. *Society* SIGs at the international level have hundreds, even thousands, of members, and many publish a newsletter, host an electronic newsgroup, and sponsor events and sessions at STC's annual conference. *Chapter* SIGs usually have fewer members, but because their members live in the same area, they can meet regularly and address members' local needs.

Each SIG fosters an environment that:

- ◆ Offers its members a basic understanding of the special interest area and its effect on their role as technical communicators.
- ◆ Encourages member-to-member dialogue as well as dialogue with other professional organizations to broaden the range of members' technical knowledge.
- ◆ Offers its members a platform from which to demonstrate and share information, especially with a view to educating novices.
- ◆ Keeps members abreast of new developments in the special interest area.

### Society-Level SIGs

Following is a sampling of some of the current Society-level SIGs, followed by an Internet link that leads you to detailed information and a contact for each SIG, a "SIG Sign Up Form" for Society-level SIGs, and various SIG administrative documents.

- ◆ AccessAbility
- ◆ Canadian Issues
- ◆ Consulting and Independent Contracting
- ◆ Education and Research
- ◆ Emerging Technologies

For details, go to:

[http://www.stc.org/sig\\_info.asp](http://www.stc.org/sig_info.asp)

### Chapter-Level SIGs

If our chapter has members who are interested in a specific area of technical communication, and no organization, either within or outside our chapter, addresses their unique needs, then we need a SIG! Note that it's okay to have a chapter-level SIG on a topic that is not represented at the Society level. For example, if members wish to form a Multimedia SIG, they may certainly do so (with chapter guidance) even though a Multimedia SIG does not exist at the Society level.

An effort is currently underway to get a Job

Search SIG established here in Orlando.

When deciding if you wish to be involved in forming a chapter-level SIG, an important fact to keep in mind is that your group will be expected to form and manage the SIG. While chapter leaders are more than willing to provide expertise, guidance, and reference materials, these members already have their hands full with other chapter responsibilities.

If any group of members wishes to form an Orlando Chapter SIG, please have a representative from your group contact chapter president Mike Murray at [mike.murray@lmco.com](mailto:mike.murray@lmco.com) or 407-306-4681 (days) or 407-384-6657 (evenings) for guidance, resources, and encouragement!

## Selling Yourself with Your "Elevator Speech"

By Richard Phipps, Employment Manager

An elevator speech is a brief description of what you do and who you do it for. It describes how you offer value, benefit, and quality to your customer, client, employer, or prospect. It is short, concise and it comes out naturally. And most importantly, you phrase your elevator speech in such a way that the other person can't say:

- That's nice, but I'm already doing business with... or
- We already have someone who does that in the office. or
- Thank you, but we don't need any.

An elevator speech is typically 15 to 20 seconds in length. The idea behind the elevator speech is that—by accident—you meet a target prospect in an elevator on the 25th floor. She asks what you do. You have an opportunity to give it your best shot before getting to the ground floor where you both get off. When you arrive at the lobby she now knows everything of importance about what you do for a living, and why it is valuable to her and her company to consider becoming a customer or employer of yours.

**You are going to use it to sell you!**

If you think you can communicate your sales message clearly and concisely without doing this exercise or discipline, it might be an interesting exercise for you to try doing it your way with a disinterested third party, and then circle back and do it this way, and let them compare. The elevator speech is a very powerful job hunting tool for almost everyone. Here are the six basics of constructing an elevator speech:

1. What is your product/service/solution?
2. Who is the customer it is intended for?
3. What need or problem does it address?
4. What does it do?
5. How does it work and what are the benefits to me?
6. Why are you different and better than others?

Try some of these techniques on your own, and see how they work.

Remember, In a world where we're all competing for people's attention, an elevator speech gives you the edge. Best of all, these mini-speeches can be given anytime and anywhere, not just in elevators!



Word Mint VIII: The Perils of Ossification

## Green-Visored Bureaucratic Obstructionists of the World, Unite! You Have Nothing to Lose but the Calcium Deposits on Your Brain

By Dan Voss

**Anti-ossificatory** (adj). Designed to resist rigidity and promote flexibility. Antonym of *ossificatory* (adj), meaning to cause rigidity and reduce suppleness. From *ossification* (n), meaning the process that converts animal tissue to bone. Root word is *ossify* (v.i.), meaning to turn into bone; become hard or calloused. While technically applicable in a physiological context, as in “anti-ossificatory medications can be useful in delaying the calcification that causes a heel spur,” the term is more commonly applied within a behavioral or institutional context. For example, an “ossified attitude” applied to a person indicates an inflexible personality characterized by an unreasonable and unwavering adherence to pre-conceived beliefs, whether or not those beliefs collide with empirical evidence or situational reality. Applied to an institution, such as a company, “ossification” refers to rigid policies rooted in the past that are often counterproductive in the face of current business realities yet which are zealously defended by the ossificatory powers that lurk deep within the bowels of an organization. In this context, then, “anti-ossificatory” refers to any action designed to breach the adamantine walls of bureaucratic obstructionism and to defeat the intractable green-visored automatons whose cerebral cortex has long since been subject to irreversible ossification. Anti-ossificatory activism within a corporate culture is generally viewed as a high-risk activity, because one of the foremost characteristics of the terminally ossified is the inability to recognize their own fossil-like behavior; therefore, armed with the power of rank with the

organization, severe ossificants can not only be obstructionist, they can be extremely dangerous.

Examples: (1) **Business:** Ossificationally crippled by cyber-phobes in senior executive positions clinging to deep-carpeted corner offices against increasing pressure to retire, the enterprise was unable to display the nimbleness necessary to flourish in the burgeoning world of e-commerce and wound up in Chapter 11. (2) **Personal:** Marsha told Harry that unless he showed some sign of life during Monday Night Football, she was going to defenestrate (see “Word Mint I,” *Memo to Members*, January 2003) the television, to which he replied,

“Sheddup and gimme ’nudda beer”—clear evidence both of his advanced state of ossification and the likelihood that not only the television, but Harry himself, would soon be subject to retaliatory conjugal defenestration.



*“Ol’ Bonehead,” a.k.a., Green-Visored Ossificant in Natural Habitat. Note stone-like countenance. Do not approach with new ideas; can be dangerous when aroused.*



### STC TELEPHONE SEMINAR **Adobe Acrobat 6.0 for Technical Communicators** presented by Brian Wood

This seminar will teach you how to use Adobe Acrobat 6.0 to save time and money, improve workflows, eliminate paper-based processes, and reduce errors in your business document exchange. Adobe's latest version of Acrobat can help you efficiently create, share, review, secure, and archive files in the Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). A de-facto standard trusted by enterprises, governments, and small businesses worldwide, Adobe PDF preserves the integrity of the source document, including fonts, colors, formatting, and graphics, regardless of the application and platform used to create it.

**SIGN ME UP!**

**Wednesday,  
October 8th, 2003  
1 - 2:30 PM EDT**

Brian Wood is an Adobe Acrobat specialist working for Adobe Systems. An Adobe Certified Expert (A.C.E) in Acrobat, GoLive and InDesign, and co-author of the Acrobat 6 ACE exam, Brian also runs eVolve, a rapidly growing freelance business for which he acts as principal, computer graphics consultant, trainer, and ePro.



### First Phone Seminar Scores A Big Success

By Dan Voss

The Orlando Chapter added a page to its professional development playbook on September 10 when Intuitive Information hosted a successful STC telephone seminar on Paper Prototyping conducted by Carolyn Snyder. In paper prototyping, representative users interact with a paper version of an interface that is manipulated by a person “playing computer.”

Intuitive Information not only hosted the event, which was coordinated by staff writer Dale Reichel, it also underwrote part of the cost, enabling the five chapter members who participated to do so at the bargain basement price of \$15 apiece.

“The forum appeared to be very successful,”

**Memo to Members**

## Tool Tips: Finding It on the Internet

By David Coverston

If you have ever tried to find something on the Internet, then you probably have used a search engine. For years several search engine sites battled for the clicks of users. HotBot, AltaVista, the list goes on. Recently one site has emerged as the top dog for technical communicators and IT personnel to find the information that they need — [Google](#).

According to Danny Sullivan, the editor of the *Search Engine Watch* online newsletter, Google represents 75% of all Internet searches. Google customers include Yahoo and AOL, which license Google's technology and even route search queries through Google. Google has even been verbed, as in "I googled 'XML and EDD' and found the answer to my problem." A recent *USA Today* article gave these amazing figures: 200 million search requests a day — more than 2,300 every second — in 88 languages, indexing 3.1 billion Web pages with the help of 10,000 supercomputers. See <http://searchenginewatch.com/> for more information on Google and other search engines.

According to the *USA Today* article, Google bases its results on popularity, judging pages by how many sites link to them from other sites. More links give higher results on the PageRank.

There are several Google sources of information of interest to technical communicators. One I frequently use is the newsgroup archive. In 2001 Google acquired Deja.com's Usenet archive dating back to 1995. As one person put it, it's Deja News all over again. You can find it at: <http://news.google.com>

In addition to the news site, Google has a beta Internet shopping site, <http://froogle.google.com/>. If you are looking for stuff for your office or home, don't overlook this site.

There's a lot more. But my favorite way to mine Google's riches is with the Google Toolbar. Like my other favorite toys, this one is free, too. You can get it by going to <http://toolbar.google.com/> and clicking the Get the Google Toolbar! Button.



Figure 1. The Google toolbar.

You will be taken to another page which explains their privacy policy. There are two versions of the toolbar, one with advanced features and one without. In respect to the toolbar with the advanced features, Google has been criticized for its privacy policies, which include the use of a persistent cookie. This cookie contains a unique ID that's assigned to your browser. When you visit Google, with the advanced features version of the toolbar, the cookie helps it remember it has seen your browser before. The user is anonymous, but it can track where you go on the Internet. I don't particularly like that, so I

chose the version without the advanced features.

You can also clear your search history on the toolbar, which is another measure you can take to protect your privacy. To use the toolbar, just type your search terms in the search textbox on the toolbar, and press Enter. Google support Boolean searches, and will take up to 10 search words, but there are ways around this limit by using wildcards. When you click a link on the search results page, your search terms will appear next to a search icon, like the word "Tahiti" in Figure 1. Click that link to find and highlight your search term on the page being displayed.

Clicking the Google drop-down menu gives you quick access to more tools, such as advanced searching and language tools. If you want to search the newsgroups with the same search you just used for searching the web, just click Google Groups on the drop-down menu and Google will search the Usenet archives with your search terms. You can even customize your toolbar!

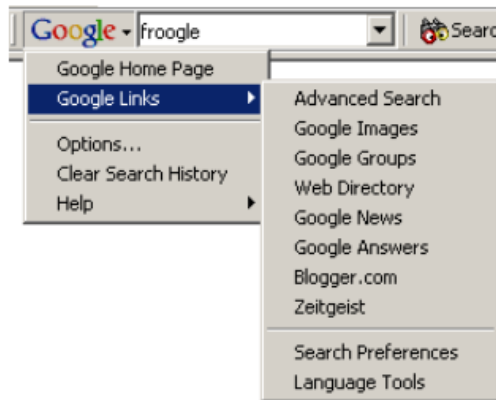


Figure 2. The Google drop-down menu.

get to Amazon, remember to use the link on the STC web page. It won't cost you any more, and the STC will benefit from it.

For more information on how to use Google, check out the Google Help page, or try the titles offered at Amazon.com. One I particularly like is the O'Reilly book. To

### For more information:

*Google Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools* by Tara Calishain, et al, paperback 384 pp.

*How to Use Google : The 30 Most Important Tips, Hacks and Tricks* by Tod Sacerdoti [PDF]

*Google Pocket Guide* by Tara Calishain, et al, paperback: 140 pp.

*Google in 30 Pages or Less* by TimesaverBooks.com, paperback

## August Meeting Recap

By David Coverston

If you missed our last meeting, then you missed seeing our washline collapse. Not the annual washline meeting, but the washline itself—the one with all the pieces of paper with pictures on them representing topics that had been presented at the national conference. Not to worry, though—a couple of volunteers hung it back up.

Conference attendees veterans Karen Lane and W. C. Wiese, along with newcomers Christina Hammock and Esther Schuyt, answered questions about the conference and gave some enthusiastic presentations on their topics.

Christina spoke about the transition from students to employees, and said the one thing they all had in common the first day on the job was not having a computer. She also spoke on Avoiding Traumatic XML/SGML Transitions and a related topic, Selecting the Right Single Source Tools. With her employer moving to Arbortext, she was able to share some first-hand experience on this topic.



Christina's fellow employee Esther, tackled the topic of Content Management. Her advice was "If you can't figure your DTDs and FOSI, then you should consider hiring someone to do it for you."

Karen pulled out a couple of older topics on Cascading Style Sheets and Copyright Implications

of Intellectual Law. She said that Internet publishing has changed a lot of parameters in copyright law. The 1998 Digital Copyright Act has not been very helpful. Karen also spoke on Web Design for the Visually Impaired. She said web sites are required to comply with government regulations for the handicapped.

W. C. took us on the adventure of Exploring Our Future: Technical Communication in the Year 2013. The way technical writing is taught today will change by encouraging more self expression. Telecommuting will put individuals into global competition, and certification becomes more important. W. C. also took the topic of Information Process Modeling. The basic principles are write what you do and do what you write. To assess where you are in a maturity model you need metrics.

Also during the August meeting, Bonnie Spivey kicked off the Mentoring program, Jon Kessler provided some information on the student writing competition, and W. C. caught us up on happenings at the national STC level.

## Society News



STC's Web site now includes this year's salary survey for technical writers and editors in the U.S. and Canada. This survey, one of STC's most popular publications, has been posted in PDF format on the members-only section of our Web site. Please visit [www.stc.org/salary.asp](http://www.stc.org/salary.asp) to see salary and benefit statistics broken down by

geography, experience level, and other factors.

STC Orlando and UCF are featured in the September 2003 issue of *Tieline*, the Society Leaders' Newsletter. Of STC Orlando, the article says:

"The Orlando chapter, which has the fourth highest student population in the Society, recognizes the importance of cultivating ties with local colleges and has recently announced the creation of a new mentor program that pairs experienced technical communicators with students at nearby University of Central Florida (UCF)... The chapter also holds a joint UCF-STC meeting on campus every January and distributes coupons to UCF students for free chapter meetings.

'We have found that students bring energy and new ideas, and we've identified strong potential leaders in the chapter,' says Orlando Chapter president Mike Murray. 'The continued future success of our chapter has a lot to do with students.'"

## Phone Seminar, continued

(Continued from page 3)

Reichel reported. "The presenter was obviously very well prepared. She used a nice blend of points and anecdotes."

"The 90-minute session was divided into three sections with questions and answers after each," he went on. "The pace was brisk and the subject was geared toward an introductory audience. Everybody appeared to be getting a lot out of it."

Our thanks to Bob Shydo and Intuitive for getting the ball rolling on this exciting new medium for low-cost professional development. We are thrilled to report that Intuitive has agreed to continue to host these events, including the upcoming October 8 telephone seminar on Adobe Acrobat 6.0, if the interest is there.

**We will be needing a coordinator to spearhead this activity.** Watch the listserv for updates.

Tuesday, September 23rd: Winter Park Civic Center

## Introduction to Extensible Mark-up Language (XML) and Product Demonstration

By Greg White, Vice President

A very special guest speaker will be making her way from a "little town in Texas" to school us on the history and in the present use of XML. Mrs. Kimberly Willmott, co-owner of Pentecom (a document conversion company) has been involved with both technical and managerial positions in the SGML/XML conversion and publishing industry since 1992. Kim has been a driving influence in the information systems industry since the mid-'80s.

Here is a little taste of what's in store for us on Tuesday. XML evolved from Standard Generalized Mark-up Language (SGML) out of a need to electronically transfer data. SGML was too stringent and HyperText Mark-up Language (HTML) was too loose. XML allowed for the viewing capabilities of HTML along with the intelligent reuse of data that we see in SGML.

The XML revolution started with the exchange of financial information over the web, but now is incorporated in software such as desktop publishing systems, word processing applications, and bookkeeping packages. Most of these products provide XML support to some degree. XML provides a consistent way to break up data into small

components so that you may reuse your information. XML is sufficiently structured that you can specify the granularity of your document. This information is capable of being set up for automatic assembly for different audience types or multiple types of media.

Some of the tools Kim will be demonstrating are Arbortext®, XMetaL®, Stylus Studio® and Antenna House®. Time permitting, Kim will be giving a demonstration of structured FrameMaker®.

You do not want to miss this learning experience. If this technology has crossed your career path, you will want to attend this meeting. If this technology has NOT YET crossed your career path, IT WILL. We look forward to seeing you all there!

Tuesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, at  
6:30 p.m. at the Winter Park Civic  
Center, just one block off US 17-92 in  
Winter Park. **RSVP to Greg White at  
407-971-0184 or [gwhite@tadpgs.com](mailto:gwhite@tadpgs.com).**

THE ORLANDO CHAPTER OF STC WOULD LIKE TO  
WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS WHO  
JOINED AT LAST MONTH'S MEETING!



**SUE O'BRIEN  
CATHY PARISH  
BOB O'LEARY**



### Key Chapter Dates in September 2003

- ✓ **September 17** - Administrative Council Meeting
- ✓ **September 23** - Chapter meeting on XML
- ✓ **Coming Soon** - Mentor Program Kickoff