

Memo to Members



"Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication."

STC Orlando Chapter: A 2003 Chapter of Distinction

Volume 3, Issue 3 * November 2003

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Memo to Members is published monthly for members of the STC-Orlando chapter and distributed via our e-mail distribution list. This newsletter is also available on our chapter website at 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.

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From the President's Desk

Orlando Members Learn about PDFs at SpaceTech Chapter Dinner Meeting

By Mike Murray, Orlando Chapter President

At the invitation of STC SpaceTech chapter president David Bills, six members of the Orlando chapter attended an extremely informative

presentation by Israel's Shlomo Perets the evening of November 3. Perets, a leading authority in Adobe Acrobat PDF files, discussed "Using PDFs to Distribute Technical Documentation: Do's and Don'ts" at the dinner meeting near Satellite Beach on the east coast of Florida. Orlando chapter members who took advantage of this training opportunity included Janette Farnsworth, Heather Haas, Joanne Godwin, Mike Murray, Sandy Plasner, and Peter

For an outstanding series of focused articles designed to help you create optimal PDF files, visit Shlomo Perets' Web site at http://www.microtype.com and select the "PDF Best Practices" link. MtM

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Memo to Members

If You Missed Last Month's Meeting . . .

By David Coverston, Chapter Secretary

If you missed our last meeting, you sure missed a great time. Who says meetings can't be fun?

A distinguished panel consisting of Maggie Boreman, Janette Farnsworth, Dick Hughes, Gwen Thomas, Richard Phipps, and moderated by W. C. Wiese presented the topic "Expanding Your Horizons — Other Skill Sets for Technical Writers."

W. C. started the night by giving us an overview of aptitudes, which he defined as natural talents or abilities, as they relate to technical communicators. Aptitudes are fairly stable over

time and, according to the Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation, suggest career direction for an individual. Aptitudes cannot be learned.

Your résumé should give a concise, clear message of your background and where you want to go.

STC involvement with

Johnson O'Connor began in 1994, when JoAnn Hackos suggested that the technical communication field ought to be one of those on which the foundation had information. Johnson O'Connor agreed and in the fall of 1994 invited the STC to provide test subjects for the foundation to use to establish aptitudes for technical communicators.

In clerical speed and accuracy, the STC test subjects scored higher than average. In structural visualization, the ability to see and manipulate things in three dimensions, their scores were low. In both inductive and deductive reasoning, the STC members scored fairly high.

Each of our panelists then gave us an overview of changes in their careers in the technical communication field.

Speaking from the perspective of a technical recruiter (and as the chapter's Employment Committee Manager), Richard gave us some excellent tips on how a recruiter looks at your talent. Your résumé should give a concise, clear message of your background and where you want to go. What skills and tools pop out? Richard strongly advised against using the Microsoft Word template for résumés. As a technical communicator, the presentation of your résumé should be part of the package you are selling a potential employer. You should also show some type of problem you were able to solve. A key question for technical communicators is "Can you convey technical things to non-technical people including recruiters?"

W. C. took us back to the time of stat cameras and working with multiple authors. Things changed quite dramatically in the mid-'80s when computerization came along. Proposed process management brought big changes in his job, as did a

merge with the public affairs department. His advice: "Your job is not static. Steer it in the direction that suits you best."

Janette got her degree in technical writing at UCF and started working in software documentation. After a couple of moves, she got involved in search engine marketing and planning online marketing strategies. "You have to be detailed and analytical to do this type of work," Janette said. About half of her business now is web site optimization. "Writing for the web," she said, "is mostly marketing."

Gwen is working as a consultant for Ciber, and works with Sarbanes-Oxley business process management. Gwen started working with content and knowledge management systems and has had to do a lot of self-education to learn what she knows. Although she has done similar work in different places through the years, her titles have varied. Her vision of documentation includes having parts of documents assembled into other documentation that technical writers will take and turn into a coherent flow.

Maggie got her degree in creative writing and started out as an editor at an optical center. She went back to school when she felt that her skills had grown dull and is now teaching undergraduate writing. She gave us some excellent advice on excelling in technical communication, namely DAWWG—Discernment, Adaptability, Willingness to grow others, Willingness to grow yourself, and Guarantee value added. "You should be able to discern an organization's goals and objectives," she said. She has had to

adapt from creative writing to being a science editor to doing theses, book manuscripts, and dissertations.

She gave us some excellent advice on excelling in technical communication, namely DAWWG—Discernment, Adaptability, Willingness to grow others, Willingness to grow yourself, and Guarantee value added.

Although he took his degree in history, Dick started in technical

writing when he got a job by attending an STC meeting. From there he moved into proposal writing and did that for a number of years. When downsizing came his way, he moved into marketing writing and now works for a company that makes control systems for instrumentation. **MtM**

Word Mint X: Never Use a Small Word Where a Big One Will Do!

Polysyllabification: Preference or Pathology?

By Dan Voss, Founder, Sesquipedalian Society

Quasi-antisesquipedalianism (n), a half-hearted commitment to the value of conciseness in written or verbal communication. From *antisesquipedalianism* (n), the zealous pursuit of simplicity in language and the

studious avoidance of polysyllabic prolixity; antonym of sesquipedalianism (n), the deliberate and sometimes malicious use of multisyllabic utterances in the interest of either intentional obfuscation or sheer verbal exhibitionism. Root word sesquipedalian (adj)*, meaning to consist of many syllables. Etymological derivation is from the Latin: sesqui meaning "one and a half," as in sesquicentennial,



or 150-year anniversary; and "ped," meaning foot; thus, literally, a word that is a foot and a half long.

A future edition of Word Mint may actually try to coin such a word, but the technology does not yet exist to achieve that noble and lofty goal. Professional Example: (1) "Quasi-antisesquipedalianism is not good enough for a journalist or a tech writer; to succeed in those professions, a writer must genuinely believe and act upon the conviction that brevity is, indeed, the very soul of wit." Personal Example: (2) "Perhaps if Professor Willifred would desist from constantly using sesquipedalian terminology in his lectures, the students would actually understand him—or at least they might stay awake." Ongoing Drama: (3) "Martha took 10 weeks trying to figure out the last word in a Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle; at the precise instant that she recognized it as 'quasi-antisesquipedalianism,' Harry spilled his Bud Light onto the puzzle, causing the ink to run and blurring all the letters." See defenestration (see Word Mint II, Memo to Members, Vol. 2, No. 7, Feb 2003, p. 2). **MtM**



STC TELEPHONE SEMINAR Adding Panache to Your Procedures presented by Leah Guren

Like most technical communicators, you've probably written countless procedures. But have your procedures fallen into a rut? Are they good but not great? Do you know how to provide that "something extra" that can turn a mundane procedure into a great piece of technical product documentation?

This seminar covers all aspects of writing effective, powerful procedures. Participants will cover the purpose and theory of procedures and review the basic elements before moving on to advanced aspects of creating added value, using effective design elements, and testing. Throughout, you'll see examples of both good and bad procedures. Here is a brief outline of information to be covered:

- ◆ The Purpose of Procedures
 - Understanding User Needs and Expectations
 - Addressing the User's Mental Model
- ♦ Identifying Tasks vs. Features
 - Writing for User Goals
 - Brainstorming the List
- ♦ Applying Basic Elements
 - Clear Titles
 - Introductory Text
 - Prerequisites
 - Steps
- Creating Added Value
 - Layering Information for Mixed Audiences
 - Adding Advanced Information
 - Linking and Cross-Referencing Procedures
 - Creating Visual Flows for Complex Procedures
 - Using Graphics Effectively
- ♦ Testing
 - Simple In-house Usability
 - Tapping In-house Resources



Leah Guren entered the field of technical communication in 1980. Her experience as a writer, editor, technical publications manager, and consultant allowed her to develop a variety of training programs in technical communication. Leah currently trains new writers for this field through the course she developed for In Other WORDS, Israel's leading technical communication company; she also conducts seminars and in-house training for technical communicators and engineers internationally. Her clients include many of the top high-tech companies in Israel.

Leah brings dry theory to life, illustrating rules with real-life examples and providing clear, practical guidelines that writers of all levels and experience can apply. A senior STC member, Leah is a regular speaker at STC and other international technical communication conferences.

^{*} Acknowledgment to Jon Kessler for actually having used this word in a recent e-mail message to the author. Linguistic usage charts indicate that the last previous successful usage of *sesquipedalian* in proper context occurred in 1917 in a graduate literature course at Southwestern Saskatchewan State Teachers College. It is not expected to be used again until the early 22nd century. But it nonetheless exists. If you don't believe us, go look it up! But *don't* use it ... doing so would alter the primal energy of the universe and trigger a reverse fractionated time warp that could threaten civilization as we know it

On Your Marks, Get Set, Go!

Mentoring Program Gets Off to a Rousing Start at UCF

By Bonnie Spivey, Mentoring Program Co-Coordinator/Mentee

At last, on October 25th, at the Tech Writing lab at UCF, it was time for the moment of truth—we had quiche, coffee, and 15 out of 20 participants—but would the chapter's long-awaited mentoring program take flight or come crashing to the ground?

For the first half hour, participants enjoyed a rather extravagant brunch and engaged each other in timid conversation.

participants
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extravagant
brunch and

"The suspense mounted as mentors
and mentees warily eyed each other.
Which one will be my partner? That
one? That other one?"

-Karen Lane, mentor

Even on their own turf, the mentees looked reserved and anxious. They all wanted to know who they were paired with.

Mentoring program co-coordinator Dan Voss formally opened the meeting with a warm welcome and proceeded to cover the necessary administrative details. Then, Chapter President Mike Murray expressed his inspiring vision for the program and its implications for the Society. But it was not until we handed each participant a treasure map that we would see months of planning and coordinating come to fruition.

Initially, Dan, Mike, and I wondered if the treasure hunt would be a little over-the-top, but Dan reminded us that "our chapter certainly isn't known for 'staying in the box." So we decided to go for it. Overall, the treasure hunt turned out to be a memorable twist with good photo ops.

Many of the mentees were nervous. In fact, Rose Benedicks recalls, "Meeting with my mentor for the first time was a little intimidating. I didn't know how

"The beginning formalities gave way to one-on-one conversation, as mentors and mentees got to know each other, compared goals and agreement forms, and set to work."

—Karen Lane, mentor

to bridge the gap between student and professional, and I was worried that the things I would say would seem inappropriate or, well, childish."

Others, like Melanie Trickey, were slightly skeptical of the program. "When I signed up for the mentoring program I wasn't sure what to expect, and I didn't even know how my



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As Dan and I circled the campus taking pictures of everyone, we realized that the ball was no longer in our court. It was up to the each person individually to do his or her part in forming these relationships and there was little to

nothing for us to do now, except for making sure no one was lost. To our pleasant surprise, it seemed that not only had all the pairs found each

other, but they



Christina and Rose hiding out in the basement of the UCF Library.

were also getting along just great.

mentor would really be able to help me. I was also concerned that our first meeting would be awkward, that we wouldn't be able to relate to each other due to age and social differences. When I met my mentor, however, I felt

completely at ease. She was very personable, and we 'hit it off' immediately."

"In only one meeting with my mentee, I'm totally fired up and completely convinced that this program is destined to be a huge success."

Although Jeremy Boehl —Mike Murray, chapter president

didn't know it, he faced an additional challenge. He would have to contact his mentor for the first time over the phone.

(Continued on page 5)

Mentoring Kickoff, continued

(Continued from page 4)

Molly Townsend is temporarily located in Maryland on a special assignment at Lockheed Martin's corporate headquarters, but she has agreed to communicate with Jeremy via e-mail and

"As Bonnie and I circled the campus taking pictures, it suddenly occurred to me that the countdown was over. For the most part, our job was done. The rocket is launched. It's up to the mentors and mentees to guide it into orbit."

-Dan Voss, co-

telephone until she returns to Orlando. We didn't want to spoil the surprise for Jeremy, so we went ahead and invited him to the meeting. During the treasure hunt, we sent him in a big circle that eventually led him back to the telephone in the Technical Writing Lab where Dan and I had planted a picture of Molly and a phone card, compliments of the chapter. We checked back with Jeremy later to see how it went, and he replied "I spoke with my



We thought they would never leave. Sherry and Barbara talked for nearly two hours.

mentor, Molly Townsend, on the phone Saturday and she was very nice. It appears I am following a track similar to hers, because both of us graduated from FSU with English degrees and went on to UCF graduate school."

In the days following the kickoff meeting, the two mentor-mentee pairs who were not able to

attend were also introduced, meaning our chapter's exciting new adventure in bridging industry and academe is off and running.

I think Sandra Plasner speaks for all of us by saying, "I really appreciate my mentor's taking time out of his busy weekend to share his expertise." **MtM**



Don't be scared, Robin. No matter what they say, Mike is a nice guy.

We made W.C. go so far, he and Sandra were fighting off the squirrels.

STC-UCF Mentor-Mentee Pairings 2003-2004		
Mentees	Mentors	
Rose Benedicks	Christina Hammock	
Melanie Trickey	Karen Lane	
Robin Horn	Mike Murray	
Sandra Plasner	W.C. Wiese	
Jeremy Boehl	Molly Townsend	
Shannon Callahan	Christine Edel	
Karen White	Kelli Pharo	
Sherry Mathews	Barbara Odom	
Kevin Jones	Janette Farnsworth	
Bonnie Spivey	Dan Voss	



Locked out of the Zen Garden, Karen and Melanie came back to the Lab to get started.

Memo to Members

Tool Tips: PowerRen 2000

By David Coverston, Chapter Secretary

One of the many tasks we in the technical communication field must deal with on a regular basis is file management responsibilities. If you need the names of files for a file list or similar document, then FileGrab is just the tool for you. The November 2002 Memo to Members newsletter, which vou can find in the Newsletter section website our (http://www.stcorlando.org/), an article on this tool.

But when you have a lot of files you need to rename,

need to rename, reach for PowerRen 2000. PowerRen 2000 lets you remove or replace strings in file names, add or change the extensions, replace strings, and automatically number files for you. PowerRen 2000 can also read the ID3 tags associated with MP3 files.

To use PowerRen 2000, you select the files you want to rename in the selection window in the lower left side of the interface (Figure 1). You can select all the files in one directory with the

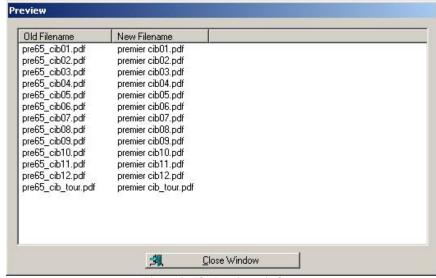


Figure 2: The Preview window

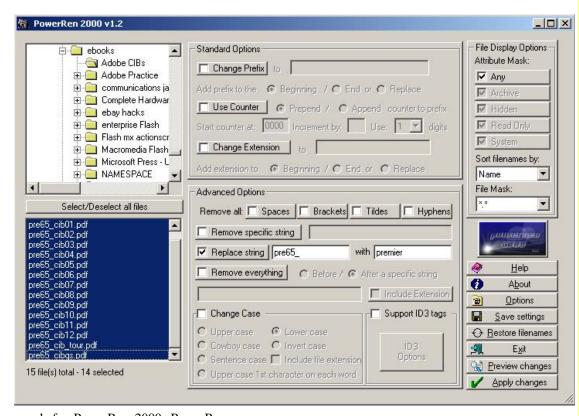


Figure 1: The PowerRen 2000 interface

Select/Deselect all files button, or you can select files with the standard Windows convention of Shift-click to select a range and Control-click for individual files. Then configure either the Standard Options or Advanced options areas to rename your files. Click Apply changes to rename your files. If you are not sure if you are about to rename all your files

correctly, you can click Preview changes. This opens the Preview window where you can see both your original file names and the names with which you are about to rename them.

In figure 2, I am renaming a group of PDF files, replacing pre65_ with premier. PowerRen 2000 creates a file named restore. dat in the directory with your renamed files. If you change your mind about the new names you have given your files, click the Restore filenames button, then select the restore.dat file in the directory with your files. PowerRen 2000 will rename your files back to the original names.

PowerRen 2000 is much easier to use than writing batch files for file renaming

Tool Tips, continued

(Continued from page 6)

operations. It also has one other feature that is quite useful and difficult to perform in a DOS window. (That means I don't know how to do it). The Options dialog box (Figure 3) lets you change the file date and time.

PowerRen 2000 can be downloaded from http://www.voodoofiles.com/. And the price? Free! You can't go wrong with that! *MtM*

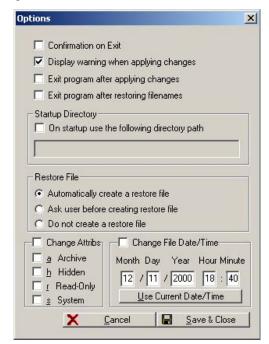


Figure 3: The Options dialog box

Society News

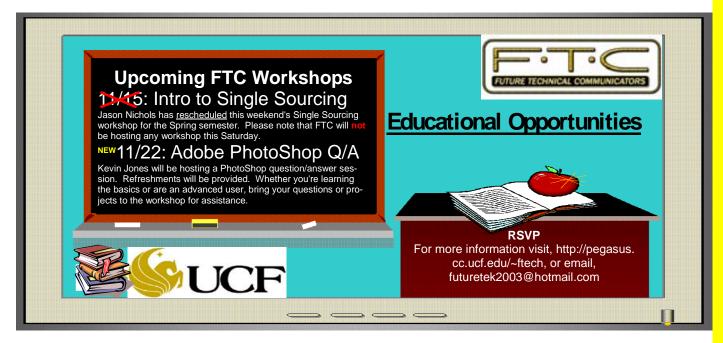
**Help STC conserve funds by renewing your membership online. Online renewal is quick and convenient, and it reduces printing and postage costs, as well as environmental costs (e.g., lots of paper).

You can access the online renewal page at www.stc.org/ renew.asp. To renew online, you will need your STC membership number and password. Those who do not renew online will receive a printed renewal invoice in late November.

- **Need help encouraging your employers to sponsor your STC membership? Point them to the publication, "STC Can Help," available via the STC Web site at: http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/new_employer.pdf
- **The STC recognizes the need to change, to meet the needs of our members in the 21st century. The expanding scope of our work, the changing nature of volunteerism, the economic change connected to a global economy—all of these factors, and more, have brought us to this place.

The Transformation Team will share its thoughts and process through a blog at http://trans4mation.typepad.com.

We hope you will engage in a dialogue with STC, through any of the members of the transformation team, as we look for an organizational model that will serve our members well into the future. **MtM**



Tuesday, November 18th: Winter Park Civic Center

Online vs. Print: Don't Miss It!

By Greg White, Vice President

Another in a series of great programs is in store for us in November. Dr. Karla Kitalong, professor at UCF, will be presenting (with the help of seven others) our "Effective Editing/Writing for Online vs. Print Media" program. This topic was ranked in the top three on our program survey!

Karla has pulled together so much mind power and talent, I am sure that this program will blow us all away. From a traditional editing and writing standpoint, Karla and her crew will show us how to weave our way through today's online media challenges.



So, burn your books and break out a laptop with some interactive media and meet us at the Winter Park Civic Center on the 18th. This program is sure to be a great time and a true learning experience!

Don't forget to <u>RSVP to Greg White at gwhite@tadpgs.com</u>. See you Tuesday, November 18th at 6:30 PM! **MtM**



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Autumn greetings, fellow society members. As we approach this hectic time of year, take advantage of some of the opportunities to easily check

some items off your "to do" list. For instance, why not use the *online* STC membership renewal feature to complete this task? Additionally, look into doing some of your holiday gifting via our Amazon.com click-through (here in this issue or on the STC-Orlando Web site). You'll save time, and a percentage of your purchase helps raise money to support your Orlando chapter.

As always, I welcome your feedback and opinions, so feel free to email me at ecoto72@yahoo.com.

Thanks for reading, Erika

YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Thanks to everyone who filled out a meeting survey for October's meeting on Expanding Your Horizons.

Check out the results:

✓ Overall Topic Rating:

Excellent - 19

Satisfactory - 0

Did not meet expectations - 0

✓ Overall Speaker Rating:

Excellent - 19

Satisfactory - 0

Did not meet expectations - 0

- ✓ Visitor Comments:
 - ◆ "Awesome! One of the best meetings I've been to."
 - ◆ "Excellent meeting!"
 - Great topic! Really reinforced some of my thoughts. Enjoyed the variety of speakers."
 - ◆ "It's nice to have panel discussions. Great refreshments too!"

Remember to fill out a comment card at every chapter meeting you attend. We value and listen to your comments; they guide our efforts towards making each monthly program worthwhile. **MtM**



Mark Your Calendars!

✓ November 18th: Chapter meeting - "Effective Editing/Writing for Online vs. Print Media"

✓ November 27th: Thanksgiving - "ENJOY!"



DO YOU HAVE A LONG HOLIDAY SHOPPING LIST BUT A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME?

Why not do your holiday shopping online via the Amazon.com click-through on the STC-Orlando.org Web site or in this newsletter? You'll find these & many other great gift items that can be gift wrapped and delivered right to your door:

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Small Appliances

Candy

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Cars Cars

-

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Music





THEN RELAX AND ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAYS!