MEMO TO MEMBERS

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

STC WINNER

Winner of STC's Chapter of Distinction Award, 2003 and 2004

From the President's Desk
Orlando Chapter Completes Rechartering Initiative
By Mike Murray, Orlando Chapter STC President

As you have heard by now, the Society for Technical Communication is in the process of a three-year effort to reexamine the way it does business and how it maximizes the value of your membership experience. As part of the Society's overall "transformation" process, all chapters have been asked to take a close look at their operations and rethink their values and the ways they bring value to their membership. This analysis utilizes a formal process called "rechartering."

Having fun while getting the work done
Because the rechartering process required an additional leadership meeting during the month of February in addition to our usual Administrative Council meeting (second Wednesday of every month), we decided to combine work with play. Education Committee manager Gail Lippincott (always the creative one) came up with a wine tasting session at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management! After a few sips (gulps, Mr. Voss?) of the grape and a very informative talk from Dr. Frank Juge, we were ready to do the job of rechartering the Orlando chapter. Some of you might remember Frank's wife, formerly Etta Jean Smith, from her days as Orlando chapter vice president. A former technical writer, Etta Jean is now using her outstanding photography skills to communicate.

Bob Shydo, Dan Voss, and Mary Wray mug for photographer Gail Lippincott as Mike Murray makes his dinner selection.

Taking a close look at ourselves
After a nice meal at a nearby Italian restaurant, the team of Gail Lippincott, Mike Murray, Bob Shydo, Dan Voss, and Mark Wray set to work answering the sharply focused rechartering questions supplied by the Society. Karen Lane later pitched in with some excellent editorial input. The rechartering form gave us an opportunity to think about our community (chapter), its goals, current activities, and future activities. As we reviewed our accomplishments and envisioned our hopes for the future, we came to the exciting conclusion that the process wouldn't be very tedious for a chapter that has focused heavily on member value for the past four years!

Employment and Career Showcase
By Christina Hammock, Orlando Chapter STC Vice-President

Join us Tuesday, March 22nd when our chapter is hosting our first ever Employment & Career Showcase! Whether you are looking for a job, interested in a career in technical communication, or just curious about what other local companies do, then this is a meeting you won't want to miss.

The Showcase will begin at 6:30 and conclude at 7:30. After the showcase, Dalton Hooper, a Documentation Manager at Walt Disney World, will present "Why I didn't Hire You," a fun and informative

Join Us!
Tuesday, Mar. 22nd, 6:30 PM
Winter Park Civic Center
RSVP by March 21st, 2005 to
vicepresident@stc-orlando.org

Initiative, *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

Answering the questions

The questions on the rechartering form required us to reexamine and document our chapter's goals, strategies, and activities. For many chapters, filling out this part is a good opportunity for their leaders to set the group's agenda for the upcoming years. As we update the Orlando chapter's long-range plan in the next chapter year, the results of our rechartering effort will be a valuable source of information. Here are just a few of the questions we answered as part of the process:

- What is the mission statement of your community (chapter)?
- What are the goals of your community?
- What strategies will your community strive to implement to achieve your goals?
- What programs and activities will your community offer to implement your strategies?
- Describe the members whom you hope to attract to your new community.
- How will your community provide value to the larger STC community and further the overall goals of the Society?

With rechartering behind us, we are more excited than ever to see what the coming years hold for the most dynamic and fastest-growing chapter in all of STC!

(If you would like a copy of our "STC Community Rechartering" document, contact Mike Murray, chapter president, at president@stc-orlando.org.) *MtM*

Mark Wray, Bob Shydo, Gail Lippincott, Mike Murray, Eda Jean Juge, Dr. Frank Juge, and DV finish their wine tasting session in front of the Rosen College of hospitality management's extensive wine and beer vault.

Your Vote Counts!

Just a reminder to Orlando Chapter members to be looking for your 2005 Annual Election Ballot. The election period continues to April 15th.

You may not know how much power you have. In past elections, only 1 member in 8 has voted. So, put another way, when you cast your vote this month, you'll really be casting the vote of 8 STC members.

Please respect that power you have and don't forget to use it! The candidates are listed below. For more details on the election see the March 2005 issue of *intercom.* http://www.stc.org/intercom/PDFs/2005/200503_29-39.pdf

PRESIDENT
- ☐ Suzanna Laurent

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
- ☐ Mike Bates

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
- ☐ Paula R. Berger
- ☐ Linda L. Oestreich
- ☐ Deborah F. Sauer

TREASURER
- ☐ William C. (W.C.) Wiese
- ☐ Douglas C. Woestendiek

DIRECTOR, REGION 1
- ☐ Cynthia C. Currie
- ☐ Richard P. Maggiani

DIRECTOR, REGION 5
- ☐ Jackie A. Damrau
- ☐ Sherry J. Michaels

DIRECTOR, REGION 7
- ☐ John V. Hedtke
- ☐ Rachel A. Jordan Houghton

NOMINATING COMMITTEE
- ☐ Joanna Castner
- ☐ Michelle A. Didier
- ☐ Lori J. Klepfer
- ☐ Martha K. Sippel

W.C. Wiese for STC Treasurer!!

WC Wiese, past-president of our own ORLANDO chapter, founder of the Jaffe Award for Outstanding Technical Communicator, and former (5 years) treasurer of the Orlando Chapter, is running for Society Treasurer. Let's stand behind our fellow chapter member and elect W.C. Wiese for STC Treasurer!

hometown.aol.com/gt6pilot/myhomepage/index.html

GOOD LUCK, W.C.!

Tech Communicator Spotlight: Heather Haas

The technical communicators of the Orlando Chapter STC have wide varieties of specialties, skills, and careers. This new column will introduce us to a different member every month and answer some questions about his or her job and industry.

Heather Haas is a Technical Editor for Information Design & Development with Hughes Supply, Inc., a wholesale construction distribution company. She has worked as a marketing writer, technical writer, and technical editor for five years, almost all of which at Hughes. She earned her BA in English from UCF in 1999 and is a senior member of STC.

Q. Can you provide a brief summary of your position?
I'm the technical editor for the Information Design & Development department at Hughes Supply (corporate IT). My job is largely to edit new or changed documentation for a group of four writers and one instructional designer. I'm also responsible for our style guide, championing changes and updates. Currently, I'm involved in a major department project to move to structured writing, content management, and single sourcing. Occasionally, I take overflow writing assignments for new company projects.

Q. What kind of documentation do you write?
- System-related policies and procedures (detailed)
- Hughes PC-related policies and procedures (more general)
- Hughes Web application policies and procedures
- Training material for instructor-led classes
- Job aids (quick reference cards, flowchart posters, etc.)
- Computer-based training

Q. What software do you use?
I use Arbortext Epic Editor, Framemaker, Acrobat, MS Office products, Macromedia products, Corel, and Photoshop. Once we finalize our content management/single sourcing plan, we'll move all of our relevant doc to Epic, which we'll integrate with Documentum.

Q. Who do you report to? Who do you have to interact with in developing products (Engineers, HR, etc.)?
I report to the Information Design & Development manager, who reports to the IT Customer Service director. (Our customers are Hughes employees.)

As the editor, I really only interact with the writers. They,

however, get their information from a variety of sources: system support help desk analysts, quality assurance analysts, programmers, operations employees, implementation consultants (trainers), even customers who are deemed subject matter experts in their departments.

Q. Does your company employ other technical writers?
No. Other departments such as Marketing and Corporate Communications employ writers but not for "technical" writing.

Q. What do you feel is unique about being a technical writer in your industry?
Technically, I work in the construction distribution industry, but I don't really write about construction distribution. I write (well, edit) documents about the software used to run the business. Writing software documentation isn't all that unique in itself, but as I mentioned, our customers are Hughes employees, and our products are not part of a package anyone pays money for. That puts us closer to our users than most. We get feedback through our intranet site that we can usually act on immediately. I don't know of many companies in this industry that devote an entire department to providing documentation resources for its employees. *MtM*

In addition to being a successful technical writer, Heather Haas is a new mom. Say "hello" to little Jalen Haas. Congratulations, Heather!!

Want to be featured in the next "Tech Communicator Spotlight"?

Always dreamed of your fifteen minutes of fame? Want to impress your office mates, your boss, your family or friends? Is there an empty space on your mantel just waiting for a framed feature of you in *MtM*? Simply send an e-mail to newsletter@stc-orlando.org and you could be our next spotlight subject.

Tool Tips: New Folder Button
By David Coverston, Orlando Chapter Secretary

I confess, I'm a speed freak. I get tired of waiting for dialog boxes to open or for Window operations to finish before I can go on to my next task. My workplace network logon is so slow I usually start my PC, then go make myself some hot tea while I am waiting.

Of course I do my part to slow my machine down—filling my hard drive with files, installing program after program, and running any number of programs at once. Yes, I typically have anywhere from two to six sessions of Windows Explorer running at one time. I can justify all this because I do a lot of file management tasks, and I always try out and use all of the programs I write about in this column. Usually I have tried several different programs before I recommend one to my readers or implement it for my coworkers.

So when I find a tool that speeds up common tasks I perform, I get a little excited. A simple tool for a simple task: creating a new folder.

It seems that choosing File > New > Folder sometimes takes forever. So some smart people at BAxBEx software came up with a toolbar button for Explorer to make a new folder. And it's fast. And it's free for personal use.

Start by going to http://www.baxbex.com/products.html and downloading bxnewfolder.exe. Double-click the file and follow the prompts to install the file. A New Folder button shows up on your Explorer toolbar.

To use your new tool, navigate to the folder where you need the new folder, then click the New Folder button. (Figure 1)
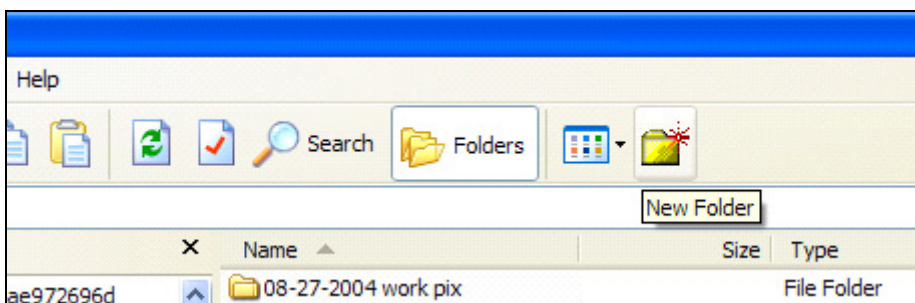
The "Create new folder" dialog box displays (Figure 2), and you type the name of the folder you want to create in the "New subfolder" text box and click OK. Your new folder will appear much faster than using Explorer's built in menus. Not only that, but the dialog box "remembers" folders you have created before and performs an autocomplete function

Figure 2: The Create New Folder dialog box.

to fill in the text for you. If you want to move into the new folder you are making, hold Shift when you click the OK button.

One more feature I like about this tool is that it provides a hotkey (F12) to create a new folder. It's fast and simple. What more could you ask for? *MtM*

Figure 1 *New Folder button.*

> **"** Say all you have to say in the fewest possible words, or your reader will be sure to skip them; and in the plainest possible words or he will certainly misunderstand them.**"**
>
> **—John Ruskin (1819 - 1900)**

If You Missed Our Last Meeting. . .
By David Coverston, Orlando Chapter STC Secretary

If you missed our last meeting, you may not know that the three tools an editor needs are a blue pencil, a style guide, and a dictionary. At least these *were* the necessary tools when Doug Kerr began his career. Doug, a Lockheed Martin employee, presented "The Levels of Edit" at our last meeting.

Doug described five levels of editing and correlated them with nine types of edits. Understanding this matrix will help you estimate the cost of editing a project. When estimating project costs, Doug said you must be careful to define the scope of the project. If you have to edit the same document multiple times, then you have to count the time spent for each edit. "The change factor, sometimes called 'scope creep,' can rapidly erode your time," Doug said. What this

Mike Murray presents Jon Kessler with the "hockey puck."

means is that the project you start with undergoes a number of changes, and the changes add up to a significant amount of time that was not estimated in the original project. So, back to the blue pencil. If you did a Google search for "blue pencil" you'd find:

- A site where you can take an interactive editing test, http://www.prenhall.com/bluepencil/
- The Pittsburgh STC Chapter newsletter http://www.stcpgh.org
- The Blue Pencil newsletter of the Society of Editors in Australia
- The article "Wielding Your Blue Pencil" by Dennis L. Peterson http://www.writeronline.us/writing-mechanics/Peterson12a.htm
- A description of a pencil whose markings do not show up in photographs, thus making it useful for editing copy.

You also missed seeing Jon Kessler win a Chapter Hero award, aka the "Hockey Puck." Jon has been a dedicated Webmaster for the chapter and has also been a vital part of the Education Committee. Congratulations, Jon! *MtM*

Showcase, continued

presentation with tips for the job search.

Mr. Hooper will give practical advice on the hiring process including:
- ❑ Resume challenges
- ❑ Interview tips
- ❑ Sample Questions

Be sure to bring plenty of resumes and your employment questions!

Companies currently scheduled to attend include:

- ❑ Consultis of Central Florida http://www.consultis.com/
- ❑ Dimensions International http://www.dimensionsinternational.com/
- ❑ PBS&J http://www.pbsj.com/
- ❑ FPMI http://www.fpmisolutions.com/
- ❑ PCS, Inc. www.pcs-inc.net
- ❑ Walt Disney World www.disney.go.com

MtM

Seattle Conference Provides Unique Opportunities

By Suzanna Laurent, STC First Vice President, Associate Fellow, Oklahoma Chapter
Submitted by Beth Tanner, STC Region 3 Director

How long has it been since you updated the knowledge and skills you use to perform your work? If you lost your job right now, would your present skills be sufficient to land a new one? What have you learned recently about the emerging trends in technical communication? Plan now to attend the world's largest gathering of technical communicators in Seattle, May 8-11, to take advantage of the opportunities STC provides to learn new job skills, network with other professionals, and enjoy demonstrations of new products useful to your work. As STC members, we receive these and other benefits in a variety of ways, but it is up to us to take advantage of the many opportunities offered. You may be one of those members whose employer still pays for training at a conference such as this, but I've only experienced that a couple of times in my almost 20 years in the profession. Nevertheless, because I know the importance of keeping my knowledge and skills up-to-date, attending the annual conference is an investment I make in myself every year. I believe it helps to ensure my future!

The annual conference helps members further their education and expand their network of contacts. Over 200 technical sessions offer technical communicators—from entry level to senior management—opportunities to improve their technical skills and personal development. Session topics are categorized under Usability and Information Design; Management; Professional Development; Theory, Research, Education and Training; Tools and Technology; and Writing and Editing.

There are many other opportunities at the conference as well. You can meet new friends, renew old acquaintances, learn about technological advances, review employment opportunities around the world, and try the latest software solutions to your work-related problems. You can hear motivational speakers and view the international competition award winners. A special event is the Honors banquet where you can meet STC Fellows and Associate Fellows and learn which communities won the coveted Achievement and Pacesetter awards for outstanding achievement. Optional events include post-conference tutorials and workshops and a variety of SIG meetings and networking luncheons. Sample Seattle's hospitality by taking one of the special tours available. And, don't forget to leave time to visit the STC Bookstore. In all, there are four days of educational presentations, vendor exhibits, and social events, including a full day of leadership training. You receive a copy of the conference Proceedings as well. I often refer to my copies of past proceedings when seeking information on a particular topic.

When you divide the number of educational sessions you can attend into the registration cost, you will find it is an inexpensive way to further your education, yet it is tax deductible. Continuing your education shows employers that you are interested in improving yourself and that you are not content to just do your job without taking the initiative to learn more and stay up-to-date with the emerging trends.

Plan the sessions you want to attend well in advance, mixing personal and professional development topics with other seminars that relate directly to your interests to get the most "bang for your buck." Delivered with the March 2005 issue of Intercom was a comprehensive conference program guide. It is a great source of pre-conference information. Also available at www.stc.org/52ndConf is more information on sessions, tours, and events for the annual conference.

If you would like help getting support from your employer to attend this conference, visit www.stc.org/52ndConf/PDF/getting.support.pdf to read some great tips. No matter how you get there, you will return with information and ideas that will contribute to your growth and advancement as a technical communicator. Start planning now to take advantage of this marvelous opportunity offered by STC at its next annual conference!

Reduced rates are available to participants who register on or before April 22nd via the Web, mail, or fax. The rates listed on the registration form are in U.S. dollars. Participants may also register on site at the conference at a more expensive rate.

For me, this will be an especially memorable conference as I will be installed at the annual business meeting on Tuesday, May 10, as the Society's 2005-2006 president. This is a goal I've worked toward for many years, and I hope you will be there to cheer me on as I take over the leadership of our international organization that provides unique educational and networking opportunities. I guarantee you that I can see some exciting things in STC's future! *MtM*

Click here for more information and to register for this year's conference.

It Takes a Chapter: Putting on a Successful Workshop

By Gail Lippincott, Education Committee Manager

☺ *"Every word was extremely relevant and immediately useful!"*
☺ *"You've given me a lot to think about…. [T]here are strategies I can implement right away. I'm looking to 'gain an inch' so I can do more usability."*
☺ *"This would be a great college course."*
☺ *"Nice presentation on a tough topic."*

Those are only a few of the comments about the successful workshop taught by international usability expert Whitney Quesenbery on March 5 at the University of Central Florida (UCF). The day-long workshop, "Personas: Bringing Users to Life," presented a focused technique of audience analysis.

In the workshop, Whitney used what one attendee described as "a nice balance of lecture and activities" to show 33 participants how to create personas, which Whitney defines as "hypothetical portraits of typical users, based on research, data, and insights."

Rebecca Middlebrook, new STC student member, called the workshop "awesome."

"Personas help us design usable documents and web sites that communicate clearly," Whitney explained. "Each persona also embodies a story. We all love stories, because they share information, vision, and values."

In future issues of *MtM*, you'll read stories about the workshop, but today's story is about how our Chapter of Distinction brought this fabulous opportunity to Orlando.

The Story Behind the Story
Energized by her experience at last May's STC conference in Baltimore, Jen Selix searched for a way to bring an outstanding STC presenter to UCF. As president of the Future Technical Communicators (FTC) club at UCF, Jen learned last fall that the FTC could apply for a grant from the UCF Student Government Association (SGA) to sponsor a speaker at the university. Gail Lippincott, her mentoring partner and chair of the chapter Education Committee, suggested Whitney Quesenbery, a popular presenter and one of STC's newest Associate Fellows. Jen and Gail proposed the idea to the chapter Administrative Council, who agreed on the condition that the event at least break even financially, because the chapter budget was already in place. Then the real fun began.

It Takes a Village
Jen began a dogged pursuit of sometimes elusive SGA meetings, and Gail contacted Whitney to arrange possible dates and topics. Mark Wray investigated suitable rooms at UCF and their availability, a delicate balancing act. Dan Voss encouraged us to "think big," and Whitney agreed to try a larger-than-usual workshop format.

After Mark pinned down some possible dates, Gail and Whitney negotiated a free Saturday carved out of Whitney's full consulting and lecturing schedule. Because the workshop had to be held at UCF, we were limited to weekends and had to work around spring break. We all settled on March 5.

Meanwhile, the publicity clock was ticking away. In early February, Jen successfully secured SGA's approval on funding. Publicity manager Bonnie Spivey immediately kicked into action. She asked student member Rose Petralia, who had earlier admitted to a penchant for creating flyers, to create one for the workshop. Within two days, Rose drafted a striking flyer based on Whitney's Web site (see www.stc-orlando.org/events/personasflyer.pdf). Whitney approved the design, and while Rose went through several quick revisions, Bonnie sent Jen a nine-bullet list of action items to publicize the event at UCF.

Bonnie also asked student member Laurel Moll to create certificates for the workshop, and Laurel came up with an attractive design as one of her mentoring activities (for *that* story, see p. 7 of Feb. 2005 *MtM* at www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/2005/memo_2005_02.pdf).

Mark coordinated catering and room arrangements, and VP Christina Hammock offered to oversee food service at the workshop, although she didn't think she could attend the session. Luckily, an unexpected break in her busy weekend allowed her to participate all day.

As the UCF technical writing faculty promoted the workshop to their students, Dr. Karla Kitalong spread the word to faculty colleagues interested in usability, particularly in psychology, human factors, and industrial engineering programs. Jen, of course, buttonholed students. Gail promoted the workshop at the February chapter meeting and sent Rose's flyer out to various organizations. Bonnie sent an impressive press release to her media contacts, which was published in several venues.

The Village Widens
Our most avid supporter, of course, was President of Distinction and head cheerleader Mike Murray. He kept in constant touch with Gail and Mark and offered sage advice. Mike also promoted the workshop to presidents of other Florida chapters, a move which paid off handsomely—attendees came from Suncoast, Gulf Coast, and Space Tech chapters.

The week before the workshop, Suncoast member Karen Bachmann generously offered to sponsor three students for the workshop. In return, she asked that they write articles about the workshop or usability-related topics. These articles, to be published in future editions of *Memo to Members*, also will appear in Suncoast's newsletter,

Workshop, continued

Write*Up*. The students' portfolios will shine when their articles are published in the newsletter of STC's Usability and User Experience Special Interest Group (UUX SIG), the *Usability Interface*. Karen, it turns out, is manager of this SIG, and Whitney is the Webmaster (see www.stcsig.org/ usability/).

Three students immediately applied for Karen's generous offer. Next month, look for stories by student members Jen Selix, Drew Hoffmann, and Rachel Eichen. Prediction: The Orlando Chapter STC will proudly follow their careers as our newest rising stars in the technical communication profession.

Speaker Whitney Quesenbery discusses the personas created in the workshop.

On Our Way to a Three-Peat Award

We all know the experience of being the lone writer on a team or in an organization. We can identify with the sentiments of this workshop participant: "I'm an army of one. I can put it [the persona method] to work for myself, but we really need to put it to work in other departments."

The strength of the Orlando chapter is that we don't let anyone work alone, as this story proves. The efforts of one student member quickly grew from an "army of one" to encompass recruits from the chapter and university communities. As always, the wider STC community will reap many benefits from this one workshop, and we raised the visibility of our chapter, STC, and our profession in Central Florida.

Is there any reason to doubt the STC Orlando Chapter is on its way to becoming a three-peat Chapter of Distinction? *MtM*

Society News

**STUDENT MEMBERSHIP REVISITED
In the midst of STC Transformation, we promised "do no harm." We have listened to many responses from students and student chapter advisors about the new definition of student member as well as the process of applying for student membership. This week the STC Board voted unanimously to return to the original definition of student member as well as the original process for applying for student membership.

It is the intention of the STC Board to encourage and support student membership in every way possible. The definition reads as follows:
To be eligible for student membership, an applicant must be (1) enrolled in an accredited university, college, community college, or technical school; (2) taking at least two courses or their equivalent each term; and (3) preparing for a career in technical communication.

In addition, the application must be signed by an STC Student Chapter Advisor or a faculty advisor teaching in the technical communication program.

**CONSUMER REPORTS MONEY ADVISER CALLS TECHNICAL WRITING A "BRILLIANT CAREER"
Consumer Reports Money Adviser newsletter included an article in its September 2004 issue titled "Your brilliant (second) career." The article is aimed at those who have reached middle age (or beyond) and are considering a career change.

Included in the list of careers was that of technical writer. The text mentions STC and lists statistics from the Society's annual salary survey. For those interested in technical writing careers, *Money Adviser* says "...you should be a clear, concise writer with some background in the industry in which you plan to work."

**U.S. MEMBERS: DEDUCT YOUR STC DUES!
If you pay taxes in the United States, keep in mind that STC dues are tax deductible. Please note, however, that *dues must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid*. In other words, dues paid in 2004 may be deducted only from 2004 tax returns. Members who have questions should contact their local IRS office or their accountant. *MtM*

It's Good to Use Grammar Well

By Peggy Bivins, illustrations by Kelli Pharo, STC Orlando Chapter Mentees

I was asked to write an article that focuses on a grammatical or mechanical topic (creative formatting encouraged), all kinds of ideas jumped into my head. I decided to focus on some commonly misused words and mechanics of grammar. We see so many words used incorrectly, so it is easy to get confused about the correct way to use a word.

Selecting whether to use *who* or *whom* is puzzling to many of us. To make this choice easy, try this quick shortcut instead. Substitute a personal pronoun for the relative pronoun. If *he*, *she*, or *they* fits within the context of the sentence, use *who* or *whoever*. If *him*, *her*, or *them* fits, then use *whom* or *whomever*.

The word *like* is frequently misused. *Like* is a preposition that indicates comparison. However, we often see *like* used incorrectly as a subordinate conjunction. The rule for using *like* is easy. Do not use the word *like* to connect a phrase to a main sentence. Here are two examples to illustrate this rule. This sentence is correct: This cake tastes *like* clay. However, in the following sentence, the word *like* is used incorrectly to connect the phrase and the main sentence: This cake tastes *like* it was made from clay.

The words *good* and *well* are often used incorrectly. This sentence incorrectly uses the word *good:* She sang *good* today. However, if the word *well* is substituted for *good*, the sentence is correct: She sang *well*. The word *good* should only be used as an adjective, not to modify a verb. In this sentence, the word *good* is used correctly as an adjective: It was a *good* day to go to the beach. The word *well* can be used either as an adjective or an adverb. When *well* is used as an adjective, *well* has three meanings. *Well* can mean to be in good health, to appear well dressed or well groomed, or to be satisfactory.

Perhaps one of the most frequently abused parts of grammar mechanics is the apostrophe. Use the apostrophe to form the possessive case of nouns and indefinite pronouns and to indicate the omission of letters in a contraction. The apostrophe is commonly misused to form the plural of nouns. I recently received a flyer saying that yard trash was going to be collected on Tuesday's. A sign in the gym where I work out says to turn off your camera phone's. It is also common to see the contraction *it's* (meaning *it is*) used in place of a possessive, as illustrated in this incorrect sentence: The dog lost *it's* collar. Remove the apostrophe and the sentence is correct: The dog lost *its* collar.

By following these simple rules and thinking for a moment about the proper use of a word before we write, we can avoid making these common mistakes. *MtM*

Its, It's, Good, Well, and Such
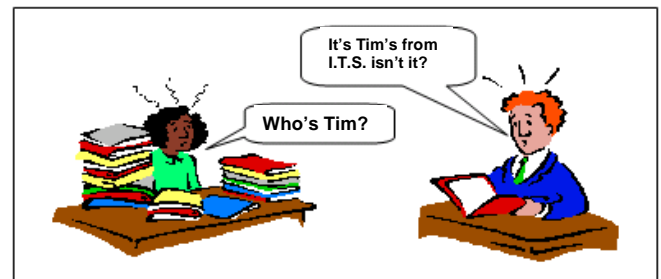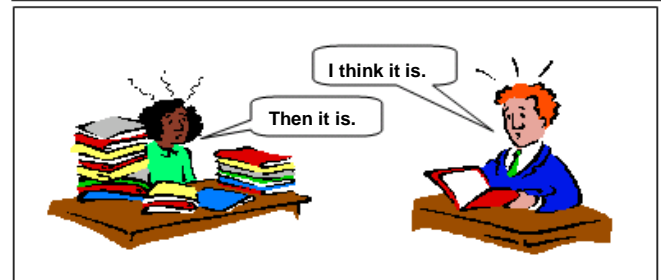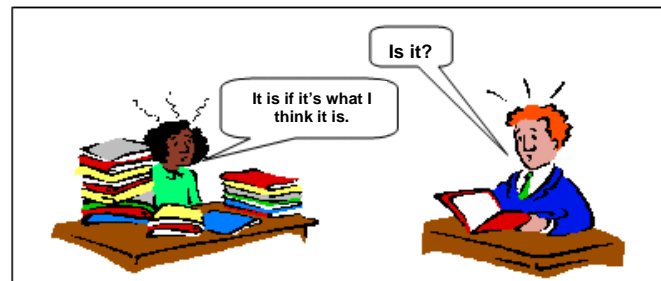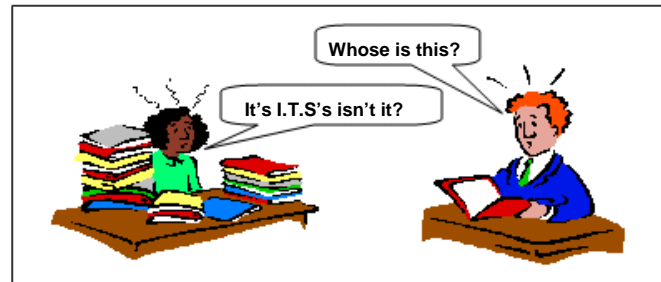
Gail Lippincott Receives NCTE Writing Award for Research Article in Journal

By Dan Voss (from hiatus)

The Orlando Chapter has learned that Education Committee manager and Associate Fellow Gail Lippincott is the recipient of a prestigious writing award from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) for an in-depth research article she published in the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication (JBTC)* back in 2003.

Gail earned the 2004 NCTE award for the Best Article Reporting Historical Research or Textual Studies in Technical or Scientific Communication—one of six top writing awards presented by the NCTE each year. The award is sponsored by the Association of Teachers of Technical Writers (ATTW).

The article that put this latest feather in Gail's cap was a 39-page mini-dissertation entitled "Rhetorical Chemistry: Negotiating Gendered Audiences in Nineteenth-Century Nutrition Studies," which appeared in the January 2003 edition of *JBTC*. At the time, Gail was teaching technical communication at the University of North Texas.

Quoting Gail's pithy abstract:

> *… women historically have been active knowers and users of science and technology.*

The article employs neoclassic and feminist rhetorical perspectives to investigate the persuasive strategies in two scientific articles written in the late nineteenth century by Ellen Swallow Richards. One of the first credentialed female scientists in the United States, Richards wrote about nutrition research she conducted in her experimental food laboratory, the New England Kitchen, to persuade two separate audiences—one predominantly male and the other predominantly female—of the scientific value of nutrition studies. The article adds complexity to our historical underpinnings by querying how gender—of the writer, of the audience, and in the nature of the topic—contributed to the writers' rhetorical burdens and provides evidence that women historically have been active knowers and users of science and technology.

Award-Winning Author and Researcher Par Excellence: Gail Lippincott!

The exhaustively researched article cites 76 sources; the bibliography alone spans 4 pages! In drafting the scholarly tome, master-sleuth Gail drew upon research she performed for her doctoral dissertation, and she also conducted front-line research digging through musty archives in Boston, Alexandria, and Chicago under the auspices of an STC grant.

It all shows in this masterful work, which, despite its firm moorings in academe, also ventures into fascinating historical and sociological territory. See for yourself. For your very own PDF of this intriguing document, fire off an e-mail to glippincott@earthlink.net, newsletter@stc-orlando.org, or daniel.w.voss@lmco.com.

Way to go, Gail! We're all proud of you! *MtM*

Active Membership Corner

By W.C. Wiese

Aided by outstanding participation for the Jaffe Awards and joint meeting with UCF, the chapter continues on a record pace for 2005. With 79 members and guests attending, the meeting was the 2nd largest January meeting on record, up from 54 last year (86 attended the Jaffe Award presentation with UCF in 2003).

That brings year-to-date participation to 254, which is **23 percent larger** than last year's total. Sixty-nine Orlando Chapter members have earned points so far.

Current active membership points leaders are listed below. A total of 13 points are required to receive an active membership shirt at our awards celebration in June (except for Mark Hanigan – also a Suncoast member – who will have to earn 26 for that reason!).

Members with 8 points are on track for their shirts! *MtM*

Karen Lane, **19.0**
Gail Lippincott, **18.0**
Mike Murray, **18.0**
Jon Kessler, **17.0**
Mark Hanigan, **16.0**
Jennifer Selix, **16.0**
Bonnie Spivey, **16.0**
WC Wiese, **13.0**
Christina Hammock, **12.0**

Sara Morris, **12.0**
Rosalie Petralia, **12.0**
Kelli Pharo, **10.0**
Daniel Voss, **10.0**
Mark Wray, **10.0**
David Coverston, **9.0**
Richard Phipps, **9.0**
Erika Coto, **8.0**

2005 Activity	Points
Chapter Meeting	1
Board Meeting	1
Meeting Program	2
Committee Meeting	1
Mentor - Month	1
Judge - Month	1
Bring Paid Guest	1
Total Required	**13**

Educational Outreach Moves North

Flying High at Embry Riddle
By Dan Voss (In a jailbreak from sabbatical leave!)

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University sure is located in an appropriate place.

To get to it, over land that is, you have to drive past two major transportation landmarks in Daytona Beach—the famous Speedway and the international airport. Fortunately, as you can deduce from some of the accompanying photos, I have the perfect high-tech vehicle to blend in with such surroundings.

After many guest appearances (and teaching one course) at UCF, I had occasion to get my first exposure to ERAU a couple weeks ago when I took advantage of an off Friday at work to head north instead of south on I-4 to make a guest presentation on proposals and integrated communication.

The audience was a technical communication class populated exclusively with honors engineering students—21 young men, several in ROTC uniforms, and one young woman.

> **Things got off to a rocky start from a technical standpoint …**

The professor was Dr. Lynnette Porter, a long-time colleague and friend within STC. You may recall the outstanding presentation on distance learning that Dr. Porter gave at the January 2004 chapter meeting at UCF. She and I met at the 37th annual international STC conference in Santa Clara, California, my first international conference, back in 1990—my, how time flies when you're having fun!—and we've renewed our networking friendship at nearly every conference since then.

The morning began with a planning session at Cracker Barrel, where Dr. Porter gave me some insight into the audience and we caught up on events in our lives since we last saw each other. She and I picked up right where we'd left off in some hallway at the Baltimore convention center, and we were jabbering so intensely that the waitress had to interrupt us four times and finally slap me about the head and shoulders with the menu to get us to place our orders before the country gravy started to congeal.

[For those who are relatively new to STC, especially student members, permit me a brief "commercial interlude" to mention how fulfilling it is to have so many friends and colleagues from all over the world—truly, an extended family. It is one of the intangible but, in my view, most important benefits of membership in the organization and attendance at the annual conference.]

OK, back to the story. Things got off to a bit of a rocky start from a technical standpoint, but fortunately, we were smart enough to get to the conference room a half hour early to allow for Murphy's Law to kick in and still give us time to react.

It actually started the day before when I went to the User Resource Center at Lockheed Martin to check out the laptop I would be using to drive the multimedia presentation. I got there at 2:01 (they only check them out from 2 to 5), and already there was a line. Not a good sign. Ten minutes later, the person in front of me was told, "You're lucky. This is the last one." An even worse sign.

ONCE A TEACHER, ALWAYS A TEACHER—Former school teacher Dan Voss regales commercial airliner pilots of tomorrow at ERAU with proposal war stories from the wild and wooly world of aerospace.

Through a pitiful public display of groveling and pleading, I managed to get the technician behind the desk to drag out a laptop that was in for repair and do something called "re-imaging" it on the spot to get it back in service. I'm not sure what re-imaging is, but I do know it takes an hour and a half. And, I'm here to tell you, I was not about to leave that User Resource Center with several other supplicants still engaged in pitiful public displays of groveling and pleading—not without that laptop in my hot little hand!

> **It was like a freshman computer geek asking a Tri-Delta sorority senior for a date …**

Well, to make a long story short, the technician finally re-imaged the ailing laptop, and I thought I was home free. Until the next day, 30 minutes before the class came in, when the technician at Embry Riddle discovered that my laptop was flat refusing to talk to their projection device. It reminded me of the old Melanie Safka song, "I've Got a Brand New Pair of Roller Skates and You've got the Only Key" [careful—admit you remember that one, and you're admitting you are almost as old as I am!], except in this case it was more like "I've Got a Brand New Dell Computer Here, and You Ain't Got No Key." The technician tried every trick possible to coax my laptop into getting cozy with their projection device, but it was like a freshman computer geek asking a Tri-Delta sorority senior for a date—it wasn't going to happen.

So much for Plan A. Plan C was the hard copies of the presentation. Fortunately, we were able to go to Plan B. I had the presentation on CD, and the technician was able to dig up an Embry Riddle computer that had the right DNA match with the projection device.

The presentation itself went very well. The subject was how the Communications team at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire

Embry Riddle, continued

Control in Orlando used integrated communication to put together a proposal and a media/marketing campaign that landed the company a contract for the Joint Common Missile (JCM) with a long-term business value of $6 billion.

It was a natural fit with the curriculum, since the class was just beginning a unit on competitive proposals. The students displayed a keen interest in the subject—particularly the animated video of Apache attack helicopters firing JCMs to blow up a tank and live video of a test sequence showing a warhead penetrating a brick-over-block target and showering the camera with flying debris. They responded in much the same way the class of senior engineering students at Apopka High School did last fall when Bonnie Spivey and I showed the same imagery during our visit to promote the high school tech writing competition. That audience, also, was predominantly male.

Call me sexist, but face it, little boys *like* explosions. Big boys too, for that matter. Talk to Gail Lippincott about my checkered history of militaristic metaphors (and she'll carpet bomb you with lurid examples).

> **Face it, gals—the old Loreal commercial had it backwards …**

I focused mostly on how communicators and engineers, as well as specialists in other disciplines, work as a team to nuke the competition and put together a successful bid for an aerospace contract. Along the way, I did manage to get in a few plugs for our profession—not in the spirit of suggesting the audience would want to be anything other than aeronautical engineers (and Embry Riddle certainly is one of the best places in the world to become one), but stressing that by polishing their communication skills they will turbo-charge their climb up the career ladder.

Following the presentation, which ran about 30 minutes, was an animated question-and-answer session that ran right up until the bell (some things don't change), which sent the students scurrying for the other side of campus.


NASCAR "Groupies" Stand in Awe—Aeronautical engineering student Megan Grow (left) and Professor Lynnette Porter marvel at the state-of-the-art high-tech air-flow system in the 550 cubic-inch racing engine of Mario Voss's latest NASCAR entry. "Yes, Megan, the duct tape makes <u>all</u> the difference."

All except for one, who stopped to tell me she had a friend who was working on C130J's at Lockheed Martin's manufacturing facility in Marietta, Georgia, and to ask some questions. Don't ask me why it was the one female student out of 22 who stayed after to ask me questions—I guess I must be getting like Clint Eastwood and John Wayne in their twilight years. Face it, gals—the old Loreal commercial had it backwards—it's *men* who don't get older, they get better!

It's OK, Gail and Lynnette, you can stop laughing now. It isn't *that* funny. The students were young enough to be my sons or daughters. (I notice they get younger every year. Weird how that happens.)

All in all, it was a most delightful morning, another page in our chapter full of educational outreach experiences (pun intended), and, if my bad jokes haven't totally ruined Gail's day, another point in my quest for one of this year's Active Member T-shirts!

Seriously, though, if you haven't ever made a presentation to a high school or college class, I urge you to consider doing so. Every time I have done so, the outcome is the same. I've taught. But I've also learned. I've given. But I've also received.

At the end of the day, it comes to this conclusion: I derive at least as much from students as I give to them, in terms of energy, enthusiasm, fresh perspectives, and, above all, idealism. Twenty-six years in the aerospace biz have a way of producing jaded cynicism. In fact, the rule of thumb is that anybody who has been in it for more than 5 years is either a cynic or an idiot. I'm confident many of you can provide similar stories of how the treachery of the business world, unless counterbalanced, can poison one's outlook.

Trust me—mentoring students is the best antidote! ***MtM***

> **Member High Fives!**
>
> Great things our members are doing. . .
>
> The following four Orlando chapter members have attained the rank of Senior Member:
>
>
>
> ☺ Jennifer Cokias
> ☺ Heather R. Haas
> ☺ Stephanie P. Phillips
> ☺ Heather Watson
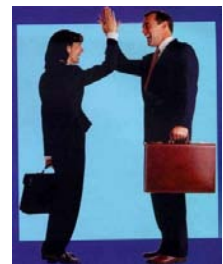
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I am especially proud of this issue because it contains so many new and wonderful contributions like the article on grammar and the Technical Communicator Humor. Hopefully this is the shape of things to come. Our Chapter is enjoying a great March what with the success of the Personas Workshop, the exciting Employment and Career Showcase on the 22nd, and the educational outreach at Embry Riddle. Let's keep it up. Who knows, maybe we'll be able to boast a triple crown at the upcoming annual conference.

As always, I welcome your feedback and opinions, so feel free to e-mail me at newsletter@stc-orlando.org.

Thanks for reading,

Erika

YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Remember to let a chapter leader (red badge) know if you have any ideas for ways we can make chapter meetings even more valuable to you. *MtM*

Technical Communicator Humor
By Kelli Pharo
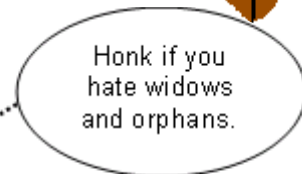
Mark Your Calendars!

- March 22nd: Orlando Chapter Meeting at the Winter Park Civic Center, 6:30 PM
- March 23rd: Web/telephone seminar "Breaking into E-learning"
- April 3rd: Daylight Saving Time Begins—Spring Forward One Hour
- April 6th: Web/telephone seminar "Building Brand into Your Product or Web Site"
- April 13th: STC Orlando Chapter Council Meeting
- April 20th: Web/telephone seminar "Magical Numbers"
- April 26th: Orlando Chapter meeting at the Winter Park Civic Center, 6:30 PM