

## In This Issue:

Identify this Chapter Member	2
Gigi Takes a Trip	3
Gifts for Teaching Received with Thanks	3
If You Missed Our Last Meeting	4
Upcoming WebEx Seminars	5
Tool Tips: Corrupted Documents	6
Internships, Employment, and Tech Writing, Oh My!	7
Mark Your Calendars	10
Letter from the Editor	10



## Conference is All Fun and Games

BY KELLI PHARO

I really only attend the STC conferences for the funny stories. The sessions are great and I learn a lot. The camaraderie is wonderful and I enjoy getting to know people in my professional community. Traveling to new destinations and tasting local cuisine is delightful; I love seeing new things, and eating is always big on my to-do list. But when all is said and done, the funny, personal stories and anecdotes people share are the most valuable part of conference to me.

### I Love Mark Twain

Three years ago, at the 49th annual conference in Nashville, I attended a workshop class on trimming, toning, and tweaking sentences. My notes remind me that it was a class about tautology, clichés, redundancies, nominalization, and such. But the thing that stands out in my mind was the comment that one of the presenters made when she quoted Mark Twain. Encouraging us to cure vocabulary bloat, she suggested that we "replace very with damn."

I can just imagine putting this rule into practice in the various engineering and planning reports I edit daily. Let's see how this would work. The following is a passage from a mitigation report on which I'm currently working.

*The soil in the area is a mixture of sand, silt, and clay, all resulting from historic deposits by the Mississippi River. The bearing capacity of the soil is ~~very~~ damn low.*

It does make for interesting reading.

### Don't Edit in Bed

In a session I attended on using personality traits advantageously and keeping positive traits positive, we learned about looking at

the big picture, offering solutions rather than objections, and practicing caution when editing literature in bed. That's right folks, for safety's sake, do not edit in bed.

The presenter relayed how she was reading a novel in bed one night while her husband slept soundly beside her. Being a technical communicator, she read with a pencil in her hand so that she could mark any errors she found. (You know you've all done it too.) She was reading along and enjoying the story, when suddenly she came upon a blatant grammatical error. She shouted out in glee and righteous indignation, "Ah-ha!" immediately and shockingly waking her husband from his slumber. Apparently, the ensuing marital exchange led her to assume her new motto, "Don't edit in bed."

### Don't Scare the Pilots

Seems we technical communicators can be a bit intense at times. I don't remember what conference or what session it was where I heard this story, but I can relate.

At one of our conferences, some airline pilots had a layover at the same hotel where the conference proceedings were being held. As sessions let out, the pilots, sitting in a common area, overheard two ladies berating the unknown perpetrators who had hung a banner containing a misplaced apostrophe. Later that day, one of the presenters was engaged in friendly conversation with the same pilots, when one of them asked, "Are you one of those technical communicators? They scare me."

Listen folks, good grammar is one thing, but please don't scare the pilots.

### Then There's Just My Thoughts

In the margins of my conference notes, I often jot down thoughts that cross my mind. They don't always have to do with the topic at hand. Often, they are questions for which I need answers. Sometimes they are ideas for

(Continued on page 2)

## Have an article?

Submit a new article or Chapter Meeting summary to

[newsletter@stc-orlando.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-orlando.org).

If it's printed, you win a \$5 chapter meeting discount voucher.

## Fun and Games

(Continued from page 1)

the novel I will write someday.

In a session about on-line policies and procedures, I penned: *When in a cold room where my arms, legs, feet, hands are freezing—why doesn't my face feel cold? Just a thought.*

Later in the same day, while in a

session on careers in technical writing, I asked myself the question: *Why lighters @ concerts?*

### It Is All Fun and Games

What better way to approach one's career than to look at it as a fun game or an exciting adventure. I know my job can get downright boring or infuriatingly frustrating at times. Sometimes, when I'm having a bad day—and I just

don't think I can correct someone's misuse of i.e. instead of e.g. even one more time—I picture death row as full of murderers, rapists, and grammatically-defunct engineers. But then I remember that I have a sense of humor and decide to use it (which doesn't necessarily mean that I stop picturing engineers on death row), and I get a giggle out of editing.

Why not experience STC conferences the same way? Learn a lot, meet some really great people, and have a really fun time. I hope to see you at this year's conference in Vegas where we'll let the good times roll! —MmM

KELLI PHARO IS A TECHNICAL EDITOR FOR PBS&J, A NATION-WIDE ENGINEERING AND PLANNING CONSULTING FIRM, AND THE CHAIR OF OUR ORLANDO STC MENTORING PROGRAM. SHE AND HER HUSBAND ENJOY SPENDING TIME RENOVATING THEIR HOME OR PLAYING WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND THREE DOGS.



Tom Schenck, Gail Lippincott, Kelli Pharo, and Karen Lane enjoy a bit of fun and games at Seattle's STC Conference 2005.

### Identify this Orlando Chapter Member!

Answer in next month's Memo to Members



Shameless hussy, or Tom Sawyer wanna be? Only one person knows for sure, but you can take a guess. E-mail newsletter@stc-orlando.org if you think you know who this character is.

Did you guess that this lakeside cutie is none other than Kelli Pharo?



Have you checked out STC's new Member Forum yet?

Why not now?

[forum.stcforum.org](http://forum.stcforum.org)

## Gigi Takes a Trip

BY ROSE PETRALIA

Proud grandma Gail Lippincott sends this frigid snapshot in lieu of her usual inspirational text.

That white stuff is snow, friends, and provides ample evidence of our president's recent excursion to Denver. Gail journeyed westward to visit her daughter, Mel, who is expecting her first baby in late June.

"Gigi," as she is known to her three (soon to be four) grandchildren, celebrated Mel's birthday during her visit, and hit Target hard, outfitting baby's and grandma's rooms alike. —**MtM**



## Gifts for Teaching Received With Thanks

FOR MEMO TO MEMBERS

Bonnie Spivey and Christina Hammock delivered a hefty cache of school supplies on March 20 to Orlando's *A Gift for Teaching*.

Anu Jokinen, Donor Relations Manager, thanked the STC members for "making a difference in the lives of teachers and students in need," and extended an invitation to one of *A Gift for Teaching's* Tuesday Show & Tell Luncheons. Jokinen said that "The teachers will love seeing all these items in the store!"

Bonnie collected the school supplies at January, February, and March chapter meetings. —**MtM**

## If You Missed Our Last Meeting...

BY DAVID COVERSTON

If you missed our last meeting, you missed a great presentation by Ian Koss, the editor of Ink19 Magazine, on *Writing for Online Media vs. Print Media*. Ian is one who knows, since he moved from a print publication to an online format. Ian heads up the [www.ink19.com](http://www.ink19.com) publication he started while editing the campus newspaper at Florida Institute of Technology.

Ink19 was first issued in 1991, and by the last print issue in December of 2000, sixty-thousand issues were being printed monthly. The magazine began digital production in 1994, and by 1998 was being produced by a XML-based custom-built content management system.

*“With an online publication, you are less sure of who your audience might be.”*

One major difference between a print and an online publication is that print media is fairly selective of its audience, Ian said. The readers have a personal stake, and you can target your audience. With an



online publication, you are less sure of who your audience might be.

Physical constraints, such as text length and the number of photos, differ between formats. In an online publication, you have no restraints on the length of the articles or the number of illustrations. Print distribution is a big chore compared to online distribution. The cost of the last issues of Ian's print magazine were \$25,000 an issue, compared to about \$250 per online issue.

Style is another consideration. Ian said the most important thing in online writing is to get to the point. Your introduction should be a short paragraph that targets the level of knowledge required of the reader. The writer should develop a unique voice which helps people remember what they read on your Web site.

Timeliness is a crucial factor in an online publication. Your writing will have a long life span, but interest will peak quickly. Once a print publication is finished, it is finished, but online articles are available as long as the publisher wants to maintain the older articles.

Print publications allow you more control over your page layout, but you can correct mistakes in online articles. You can also add meta-data to web pages, such as keywords and a page title, which is used for browser bookmarks and is displayed in the title bar of the browser. Online articles can also hyperlink to other articles.

One final thought from Ian—aim for simplicity as well as directness in tone and in look. —MiM

Want to be *In the Know*?

Join our **LISTSERV!**

STC-Orlando's discussion list offers access to hundreds of professionals and is an easy way to stay informed about chapter meetings and events.

E-mail [djones@ucf.edu](mailto:djones@ucf.edu) to sign up.



A percentage of your purchases from the following Web sites is returned to the Orlando chapter:

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/orlandochapte-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/orlandochapte-20)

[www.cafepress.com/orlandostc](http://www.cafepress.com/orlandostc)

Did you like the crossword? E-mail me: [newsletter@stc-orlando.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-orlando.org).

Last month's Solution:



### Upcoming WebEx Seminars

CHECK OUT [STC.WEBEX.COM](http://STC.WEBEX.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:

April 12, 2006  
1:00 pm- 2:30 pm  
**Software Simulations: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices**  
William Horton

June 14, 2006  
1:00 pm- 2:30 pm  
**Introduction to DITA**  
Paul Prescod

May 24, 2006  
1:00 pm- 2:30 pm  
**Life After RoboHelp-How We Got Here and Where To Next**  
Neil Perlin

July 12, 2006  
1:00 pm- 2:30 pm  
**Adding Panache to Your Procedures**  
Leah Guren

STC Director-Sponsor Beth Tanner had this to say about the Orlando Chapter's Employment Committee Report for 2005:

*Congratulations!! This is such a great example of establishing and nurturing ties with businesses and tech comm managers. All our communities can use ideas and success stories to determine how to develop ongoing relationships*

*with businesses. Thanks for sharing it with me. Please share your success as widely as you can.*

Of 53 postings to our chapter's LISTSERV, Richard Phipps confirms 11 jobs filled by STC Orlando Chapter members. Of the 53, 29 postings were for contract positions, 20 postings were for permanent positions, and 4 postings were for freelance positions.

*Check out WC Wiese's link to Dutch Researcher: Products Too Difficult to Understand on the STC home page! (Or see it here: [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5248994](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5248994).)*



#### We Have Lanyards!

Stylish, cheap, and personalized (no more sticky name tags!), STC Orlando Chapter lanyards are a great way to showcase your bling! Buy yours for only \$5 at our next chapter meeting.

### Love pizza as much as you love STC?

Join us Tuesday, April 4 at

**PIZZERIA UNO**  
4120 E Colonial/SR 50 East  
Orlando, FL 32803

Order take-out or dine-in, present the coupon and the STC Orlando Chapter gets a portion of your purchase.

**EASY!**



A Tasty Way To Raise Dough.

Look for April's coupon in your e-mail inbox soon!

## Tool Tips: Fixing Corrupted Documents

BY DAVID COVERSTON, ORLANDO  
CHAPTER SECRETARY

This week I had a request for help from a programmer who was working on a Word document that became corrupted. Technical writers should constantly strive to build relationships with coworkers, and I was happy to help. Not only that, I believe technical writers really add to their professionalism when coworkers look to them for solutions to problems with documentation and documentation tools. This month's column, tips on fixing corrupted Word documents, should give you a push in that direction.

First, you may want to gather some preliminary information from your user. Like what version of Word is he or she using? Often, the user won't know. Explain that by choosing **Help > About** in almost any Windows program, the program will display the version of the software, usually point releases, and what service packs are installed.

If the user got an error message, what was the exact error message displayed? The most common answer is "I don't know." Teach the user how to do a screen shot to capture the message rather than trying to write it down. Ask the user to press the **Alt-Print Scr** combination to capture just the dialog box, and explain how to paste it into Paint or into an e-mail message. I can't tell you how much better responses from technical support personnel are when they get an e-mail with a screen shot of an error message. You can also search Google for the text of the error message and often figure out the solution.

Ask your user what he or she was doing when the problem occurred

and what has been done to try to fix the problem. When you get this information, try the following procedures in this order.

- (1) The first thing to try is to close Word and delete the temporary files. Word creates these while you are working, and generally does a pretty good job of deleting them when a document is closed—but not always. When it doesn't, it can lead to trouble. The files will be in the same folder where the main document is located and will be named something like ~WRL0514.tmp. If you are not able to delete them, make sure that no one else has files open in that folder. Try rebooting and then deleting the files.
- (2) The next technique to try is to copy the text out of the document into another. Create a new, blank document based on the same template as the original document to minimize or eliminate differences in styles. Then select everything in the original except the last paragraph mark. This last point is critical. Word stores information in those paragraph marks, and the last one in the document stores the document information you don't want to keep. If you can't see the paragraph marks, click the Show/Hide button on your toolbar to display the pilcrows. The Show/Hide button has a pilcrow on it. You did know they were called that, right?



Figure 1: The Show/Hide button

If you can't copy all of the text in the document, you can isolate the problem by copying portions of the original document and pasting them into another document until you run into problems. If a table has become corrupt, you can narrow down the search for the corrupted table by splitting the document in half, determining which half causes the crash, and then splitting that half into two and so on.

*“The first thing to try is to close Word and delete the temporary files. Word creates these while you are working, and generally does a pretty good job of deleting them...but not always.”*

- (3) If the above two techniques don't work, you have to take more drastic measures. Save the file in the RTF format by choosing Save As; then select Rich Text Format \*.rtf in the Save as type drop-down list in the Save as dialog box. Then open the file and save it back into Word's .doc format. This was what my programmer friend had to do because Word was crashing when she tried to copy and paste text into a new document.

If you are not able to open the file by the first three methods, you can

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Tool Tips: Fixing Corrupted Documents

(Continued from page 6)

bypass any auto code that may be trying to run when you open the document by holding down the Shift key and double-clicking the file in Explorer.

- (4) Method four is the most draconian method and will cause you to lose all formatting in the document, but at least you won't have to retype it. Open the document using the Recover Text from Any File option in the Files of Type drop-down list of the Open dialog box. Word will open the document and extract whatever text it can from that document. It may not be everything that was in the original, depending on what the corruption affected. You can open almost any file type using this method.

Note that the problem could be with a template attached to the document or the default normal.dot template. An easy way to find out where these files are located is to use the Word Options Utility from Greg Chapman, available at [www.mousetrax.com/downloads.html](http://www.mousetrax.com/downloads.html). —MtM.

DAVID COVERSTON IS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ORLANDO CHAPTER. HE RECEIVED HIS M.A. IN JOURNALISM FROM UF. DAVID ENJOYS TEACHING OTHERS HOW TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE, AND HIS TOOL TIPS ARTICLES HAVE BEEN REPRINTED IN SEVERAL CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS.



## Internships, Employment, and Technical Writing—Oh My!

BY RACHEL EICHEN

This article offers tips and step-by-step suggestions for maintaining and extending a technical-writing based internship. It also describes the author's experience of using her technical writing degree to land a relevant position in the field.

### Help Wanted

College is a wonderful time of exploration, experimentation, and excitement. Chances are, while pursuing your Technical Writing degree, your future place of employment will be the last thing on your mind. But with such a competitive market, it pays (literally) to start your search early. Thankfully, as a technical writer, your options are wide open.

The following article applies primarily to transitioning from a summer technical writing internship to a part-time job during the fall. However, the scope is not limited to just this. A lot of these suggestions apply to other types of employment in various fields.

### Congratulations!

Boy, are you smart! By majoring in Technical Writing/Communication, you've chosen an excellent and ever-expanding field. According to the job outlook studies, "employment opportunities for writers and editors are expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations until 2010". That means that by the time you graduate, you can expect even more opportunities for employment compared to when you began your degree.

But you can't sit around and expect these jobs to come to you. The best way to get the most rewarding and highest paying job is to start from within the company itself; the perfect way to do that is with an internship.

*"There are many ways to find an internship in the field of technical writing, and it's all based on how hard you want to look."*

### Inquire Within...

There are many ways to find an internship in the field of technical writing, and it's all based on how hard you want to look. You already have access to a wonderful resource—STC! Ask around to see which companies are hiring or considering adding more technical writers to their team. Also, many schools offer job fairs each semester. Overload on resume copies, put on a fancy suit, and go to town! Talk to as many people in your area as you can, and always follow-up with any employers that you're interested in. Be persistent, polite, and professional!

### ...Or Make Your Own Destiny

Some businesses don't even realize they need a technical writer (or even know what one is). It's your job to show them how you can apply your skills to make their work-

(Continued on page 8)

## Internships

(Continued from page 7)

place better. Are their manuals outdated? Is their website non-existent? Do their brochures need some proofreading? A good suggestion (and maybe even a sample paper) just might land you a job!

### You're Hired!

So you've managed to grab yourself an internship for the summer. Don't worry—you'll still have time for plenty of social activity outside of work. Now, as an official employee, it's time to make the most of your summer. There are many benefits to a summer internship: professional guidance, future employment, a letter of recommendation. What do you ultimately want? You've got a summer to do figure it out, so get started!

*"Don't be afraid to explore outside of your cubicle. Get to know as many people as you can at your job, especially if you're in a large company."*

### Make Your Best Impression

It's important to look your best at all times. A common rule of thumb is to dress one level above your position,

but you don't have to go overboard with a suit everyday if your job does not require it. Give your wardrobe an honest audit. Don't be afraid to treat yourself to a shopping spree, especially if your closet—like mine—consists primarily of t-shirts and jeans.

### Friends, Friends, Everywhere

Don't be afraid to explore outside of your cubicle. Get to know as many people as you can at your job, especially if you're in a large company. Introduce yourself and explain what you do. Remember, as a technical writer, it's very likely that you'll work with many individuals in a variety of departments. Make friends with fellow interns and employees and always take the opportunity to go out for lunch breaks. You never know what sort of resources your coworkers can provide.

Spend time getting to know the people you work with directly. Learn as much as you can about their jobs how their positions relate to your position. Sometimes, the people on your team may not even know what a technical writer does, so let them know how useful you can be. These are the people who may be the deciding factor in your future with the company after the summer is over.

### Above and Beyond

You may have heard this cliché before, but it never holds more truth than in a summer internship: Never be afraid to go above and beyond expectations. If you finish with one project, be courageous and ask to take on another one. Brainstorm and invent new ways for the department to finish projects faster. Create tools that your fellow employees may not even realize they need.

Also, let this internship be an oppor-

tunity to learn something you may not already know. Knowledge within a particular skill may prove to be useful later on in life.

By going above and beyond what's originally expected, you'll give the company all the more reason to keep you after the summer. It may mean extra work, but if it's the key to a job after an internship, isn't it worth it?

### Post-internship

Soon, the summer will be over before you know it! Hopefully you've made some great contacts, learned new skills, and gained a confidence in your technical writing ability.

### Will You Stay or Will You Go?

No matter what your future with the company holds, do not let it affect your work. Continue to work just as productively until the last day. Leave with a positive impression; even if the company can't keep you in the fall, your boss may consider hiring you again for the following summer. At the very least, make sure you have a letter of recommendation and a good reference. Your summer internship will make another great notch on your resume!

### Saying Goodbye

When the summer is over, other individuals—such as other interns—may have to leave as well. Make sure to stay in contact with them, even if it is just with an occasional e-mail. These individuals are important resources that can possibly benefit you in the coming years.

### Welcome Back!

There's also a chance that you can stay past the internship. If so, congratulations! You have proven yourself both as an employee and as a

(Continued on page 9)



## Internships

(Continued from page 8)

technical writer. All your hard work and going the extra mile has paid off, and you're reaping the benefits.

Remember that school always remains your first priority. Work with your manager to create a schedule that can provide a balance of school and work. But most of all, have fun! This job just may be the start of something great.

*"Luckily, with a mixture of STC and classroom networking, I landed a position working for Lockheed Martin with the past president of the STC Orlando chapter!"*

## My Experience

Last year was a crazy year for me! At the start, I was still a little shaky about the field of technical writing. I heard there were a lot of opportunities out there, but I wasn't sure how to find them. Luckily, with a mixture of STC and classroom networking, I landed a position working for Lockheed Martin with the past president of the STC Orlando chapter!

There were many other summer interns at Lockheed Martin, but I was the only technical writer. I made a name for myself in my department by using my wide knowledge of

technical skills. I did a little bit of everything, including web page design and computer programming. I took every opportunity I could and worked with many different individual, allowing me to make friends with many employees throughout the company.

During the extent of my summer internship, I was hoping for a part-time position afterward. Luckily, when the time came, the vice-president of the department approved it! Now, I work approximately 20 hours a week at Lockheed Martin and go to school full-time. I rarely feel stressed, as I try to manage my time wisely. My manager is very understanding, and allows me to take time off for school-related matters when needed.

This semester, I have two technical writing classes which both require outside projects. What a better resource for semester material than my own workplace! This job has given me the opportunity and motivation to take on new work-related projects at Lockheed which I may not have had time for otherwise.

After working in an assortment of different places, I feel comfortable having a relevant job in my field! I am very glad I took advantage of all of my technical writing resources, and I encourage others to do the same.

## References

Career Outlook for Technical Writers  
[www.klariti.com/business-writing/Career-Outlook-Technical-Writer.shtml](http://www.klariti.com/business-writing/Career-Outlook-Technical-Writer.shtml)

Occupation Outlook Handbook: Writers and Editors  
[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm)

STC's Career Center  
[jobs.stc.org/home/index.cfm?site\\_id=360](http://jobs.stc.org/home/index.cfm?site_id=360)

Technical Writing Job Listing  
[www.technicalwriter.computerjobs.com/](http://www.technicalwriter.computerjobs.com/)

Monster.com: Technical Writing  
[technology.monster.com/articles/writing/](http://technology.monster.com/articles/writing/)

Resources for Technical Writing  
[www.techpubs.com/resources.html](http://www.techpubs.com/resources.html)

—MtM

RACHEL EICHEN IS A STUDENT AT UCF, MAJORING IN TECHNICAL WRITING WITH A MINOR IN CREATIVE WRITING. SHE IS VICE-PRESIDENT OF FUTURE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS (FTC), THE STUDENT-RUN ORGANIZATION FOR TECHNICAL WRITERS. A PART-TIME CUSTOMER SERVICE & SUPPORT EMPLOYEE AT LOCKHEED MARTIN, SHE ALSO WORKS AS A LAB ASSISTANT AT UCF'S TECHNICAL WRITING LAB. RACHEL IS THE "MENTEE" COORDINATOR FOR THE STC/UCF MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM.



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Memo to Members



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*Memo to Members* is published monthly and distributed via the STC Orlando Chapter LISTSERV. View archived issues at our Web site: [www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/newsltr.asp](http://www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/newsltr.asp). Comments and letters of opinion are always welcome and should be directed to the editor.

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[www.stc-orlando.org](http://www.stc-orlando.org)**From the Editor's Desk...**

Spring has sprung and lots of us are itching to get *outside*. Whether you're headed to the beach or to less accommodating climates (like Gail Lippincott, who shares a spring vacation photo with us on page 3), be sure you're home in time to pack for CONFERENCE 2006!

Kelli Pharo's front-page article pins down all the reasons you should meet up with the world's STC members in Las Vegas this May (besides, it's Vegas, baby).

Enjoy the issue and think about sending the ol' **MtM** an article, won't you?

—Rose

**Mark Your Calendars:**

- 04/04 **AdCo Meeting at Pizzeria Uno**—Eat pizza all day and earn money for STC Orlando!
- 04/12 **Software Simulations: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practice** WebEx event.
- 04/20 **State Science and Engineering Fair.**
- 04/24 **Gilbane Conference on Content Management Technologies.** San Francisco, CA. [light-houseseminars.com/](http://light-houseseminars.com/).
- 04/25 **Annual Education Awards/**

**Chapter Meeting.** 6:30 at Winter Park Civic Center.

- 05/07 **STC Conference.** Las Vegas.
- 05/14 **Mother's Day**
- 05/23 **Enterprise Information World.** Secaucus, NJ. [www.enterpriseinformationworld.com/](http://www.enterpriseinformationworld.com/).
- 05/24 **Life After RoboHelp-How We Got Here and Where To Next** WebEx event.
- 06/14 **Introduction to DITA** WebEx Event.
- 07/12 **Adding Panache to Your Procedures** WebEx event.



We Love  
our AdCo!