STC
SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

MEMO TO MEMBERS

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

The Orlando Chapter Does It with Flair – Again!

By Gail Lippincott

The notoriety of the Orlando Chapter grew every day at the 53rd Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Our colorful Active Member shirts were everywhere. Several people admiringly told me that *half* of the attendees at the Sunday student welcome reception were from Orlando, a testament to our strong ties with UCF. At the Sunday Leadership Awards, we received a Community of Excellence Award, putting us in the running for our coveted fourth win as a Community of Distinction. The Society judges recognized our special qualities, giving the award "for sustained excellence in service to your membership, students, and local community, for support of the Society, and for achieving your goals with flair and enthusiasm."
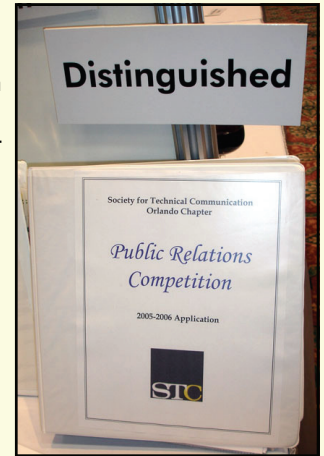
Our distinctive lanyards provided further visibility, jazzing up conference badge holders. And people everywhere envied our flair, particularly the impressive pins adorning our lanyards. We even sold a number of lanyards and chapter pins at Sunday's reception dinner—who knew that STC members were such avid pin collectors? Perhaps we should design a new one for next year.

Our international reputation grew exponentially at the Tuesday night Awards Banquet. We basked in the applause for new Society Director Mike Murray and Associate Fellow Karen Lane. We clapped and cheered when we heard that our illustrious newsletter won an Excellence award. And we were thrilled when the highest honor of Distinguished was bestowed on one entry in the Public Relations competition— Bonnie Spivey's outstanding documentation won this award for the second year in a row.

The awards continued to accrue, and our shyest chapter member, Mark Hanigan, was on stage to hug every winner. He

was especially proud to bestow hugs on Dan Voss, Mike Murray, Jen Selix, and me as we proudly helped accept the AccessAbility SIG's stunning honor, the SIG Award of Distinction.

The tension mounted and the room grew silent when new Society President Paula Berger introduced the last awards of the evening to the six Communities of Distinction. When Paula prepared to announce the winner of our category (76 to 150 members), each of the presenters on stage took a step back, and we knew we had won. Traditionally, only a few representatives of the winning community decorously walk onstage to receive their certificate. The Orlando Chapter, however, is anything *but* traditional. For the last three years, when our name was called, all our chapter members at the banquet clambered onstage to receive the award. This year the audience roared and clapped its approval as *twenty* joyous members surged onstage. We showed our flair, indeed! (Read the laudatory judges' comments on page 4).

The Orlando Chapter's Distinguished Public Relations program, headed by Bonnie Spivey

Gail shows off the Orlando Chapter's Community of Excellence award.

The AccessAbility SIG accepts the SIG Award of Distinction.

If You Missed Our Last Meeting...

BY DAVID COVERSTON

...you missed hearing a lot of great information on the relationship between technology and the law presented by Scott Draughon, the founder of the legal website mytechnologylawyer.com. Scott has hosted a number of programs of interest to technical communicators on his radio show, My Technology Lawyer, such as discussions of content management, application security, and translation. His shows can be heard in audio streaming format on his website.

Scott Draughon shares his expertise with attendees at May's chapter meeting.

Scott said he has met a number of STC members and likes to ask them this question "How did you find out about STC?" The most common answer: "I had a friend who introduced me to the organization."

Peachpit User Group Information

NEWS FROM PEACHPIT

As an official User Group, STC Orlando Chapter members are eligible for a 30% discount off the list price of any Peachpit books. At checkout, right before entering your credit card number, just enter the user group coupon code UE-23AA-PEUF (case-sensitive). This coupon code is an exclusive offer that may not be used with other coupon codes.

Find a plethora of interesting titles at www.peachpit.com.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW

A great benefit of membership is free review copies. To request a free book for review, send an e-mail to usergroups@peachpit.com.

Your e-mail should list the following information IN THE FORMAT THAT FOLLOWS:

STC Orlando Chapter (this is our group name)/YOUR NAME
ADDRESS
PHONE
QUANTITY
ISBN AND TITLE NAME

Members have 90 days to complete a review for the *Memo to Members*; once it's published here, it gets sent to Peachpit. So, not only do you get to keep a great book, you get a $5-off meeting coupon for submitting an article. Sweet!

Peachpit also likes reviewers to try to post their reviews to Web sites such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Borders.　**—MtM**

Presenting at Conference for the First Time

BY CINDY SKAWINSKI

It was almost a year ago that my great friend and mentor, Mark Hanigan, told me about the sessions he was proposing for the 53rd International STC Conference. "It would be fun to speak at conference," I thought. The only problem was that I felt like I wasn't an "expert" at anything. What could I possibly know that other writers would find useful? To find the answer to this question, I asked one of the great technical writing geniuses of our time—Bonnie Spivey.

Bonnie already had a session idea floating around in her impeccable mind and was interested in presenting collaboratively. She thought of an informative presentation on how Unified Modeling Language (UML) can be used as the basis for an entire suite of documents. Excellent! But even though I worked with UML before, I definitely did not consider myself an expert. I figured I would help create the proposal and then follow Bonnie's lead.

Over the next couple of months, we convinced Mark to join our session, created a proposal, and received our acceptance letter. Then it was time for what I was dreading—writing the session.

We proposed a beginner's lesson on UML and documentation, so with our audience in mind we gathered books and websites about UML.. Not only did these resources help us clearly define our subject and its history, but they also gave us a place to send curious attendees once our session was over.

The Orlando Chapter Does It Again!
(Continued from page 1)

I'd like to tell you about so many other fun and cool conference happenings. For instance, several chapter members gave excellent presentations. Not to be immodest, but I was pleased that our Leadership Day session on mentoring was so well received. My co-presenters Bonnie Spivey, Jen Selix, and Dan Voss were informative and enthusiastic. All 50 of our CDs featuring chapter "turn-key" programs were snapped up.

I sat in on another lively, well-rehearsed presentation in which Mike Murray proudly told of the successes of his partnerships with mentee Alex Garcia and intern Rachel Eichen. Although I couldn't stay for Dalton Hooper's two sessions, both were standing room only. As usual, Dan Voss gave numerous enlightening presentations, replete with handouts. I was delighted to hear from several people that W.C. Wiese's inspirational talk on the gift of STC was very moving (check out the handouts at

www.stc.org/53rdConf/sessions/ session.materials.asp).

Learning took place outside the technical sessions, of course. I discovered things I never dreamed of when Karen Lane and I went to see *Avenue Q,* a risque-Muppets-meet-Monty Python musical. Thanks for the education, Karen! She also set up the jaunt to Cirque de Soleil's amazing O, which Mike Murray, Dan Jones, my husband Bob, and I enjoyed with her.

Even the casinos provided learning opportunities. Who knew that W.C. Wiese was such a good teacher of Slot Machines 101? And who'da thunk that Dan Jones was such an apt pupil? Oh wait, I can't tell you about that. As you know, what happens in Vegas …

But I can say this—it was all done with great flair! **—MtM**

GAIL LIPPINCOTT IS STC ORLANDO CHAPTER PRESIDENT, AN ASSOCIATE FELLOW, AND MANAGER OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STEM FOR STC'S 53RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN LAS VEGAS IN MAY 2006. GAIL TEACHES TECHNICAL WRITING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA.

53rd Annual STC Conference Photos

Didn't make it to this year's conference? Here is a taste of what you missed. More photos can be found at STC's Conference Picture Gallery. (www.stc-cdx.org/? q=gallery)

The Orlando Chapter was well-represented at the Welcome Reception

Dalton Hooper presented two packed sessions during the conference.

Mike Murray, Alex Garcia, and Rachel Eichen lead a session on mentor relationships at the 53rd annual STC Conference.
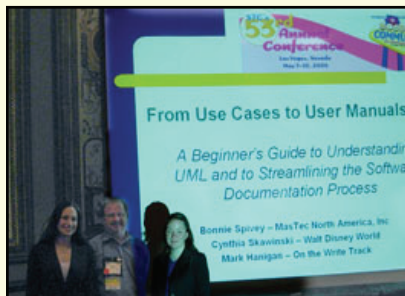

Mark Hanigan knows he is the luckiest guy at the conference while on the way to Tuesday's Banquet.

Community of Distinction Award Judge's Comments

Citation: For sustained excellence in service to your membership, students, and local community, for support of the Society, and for achieving your goals with flair and enthusiasm

- Your student-oriented activities cater to an important segment of the technical communication community. The student membership discount program showed good results among the UCF students and could result in continued professional membership after graduation. Having one monthly meeting on campus demonstrates your commitment to students and their needs while delivering a large audience. The Mentoring program seems to be thriving in its third year of service. Similarly, your members' participation in high school career day events and judging high school science and engineering fairs extends your commitment to students at a younger age.

- Your commitment to community service is commendable: Toys for Tots, The Gift for Teaching Drive (a community service activity that other communities should consider adopting), and the Hurricane Katrina food drive.

- Your community has developed many small activities that benefit Orlando STC such as the meal rebate for your Administrative Council meetings; the selling of logo items, badges, and lanyards; and the Amazon click-through link.

- With so many communities relying heavily on e-mail and Web sites to announce events, your semiannual postcards to remind the membership of future meetings is now a retro technique yet effective.

- Orlando STC has an impressive level of representation on Society-level committees and SIGs. **—MtM**

Presenting at Conference
(Continued from page 2)

Bonnie Spivey, Mark Hanigan, and Cindy Skawinski presenting at the 53rd Annual STC Conference in Las Vegas.

Combining our existing knowledge of UML-based documentation with the UML information found through our research, writing the content for our session was much easier than I imagined. Also, having Bonnie and Mark, two seasoned conference presenters, on my side made me feel at ease about the progress of our session.

When it finally came time to present, I found myself prepared to speak about my topic in front of an audience that was eager to learn. The experience taught me not to underestimate my presenting abilities. Even if I wasn't a UML expert, I knew enough to share with my audience and my audience wanted to hear what I had to say.

Tips for First-Time Presenters

So you have thought of a topic that interests you but don't know every last detail about it? That's ok! Here are some tips for creating a successful presentation without being an "expert":

- Try collaborating with someone who has presented at conference. If you would rather present alone, it is still nice to have an experienced presenter at hand for any questions you might discover during the process.

- Select the skill level for your presentation carefully. Our UML session was a "Beginner's Guide." We only needed to present the information that someone new to UML would find useful, sparing us the trouble of learning complex diagramming techniques.

- Research! Experts in your subject can be found in print and online. In addition to the local library, find out if there is a library at your workplace with relevant materials. Co-workers may also have books on your topic. Another great advantage of research is the ability to provide your session attendees with reliable resources to further explore the topic on their own.

- Find a friendly expert. Ask around at chapter meetings or use the STC-Orlando LISTSERV to find members in the area who wouldn't mind sharing their knowledge.

The deadline for session proposals is in August, so start preparing soon!

—MtM

Cindy Skawinski is the new MtM editor and works for the Source Content department at Walt Disney World.

Have an article?

Submit a new article or Chapter Meeting summary to newsletter@stc-orlando.org.

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

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

Why not now?

forum.stcforum.org

We Love our AdCo!

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 to sign up.

ART VANDELAY
ORLANDO CHAPTER STC

★Senior Member
★A-SIG
★IDL SIG
★Hero Award 2003
★President's Award 2004

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 our monthly AdCo meetings at

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

Order take-out or dine-in, present the coupon (it's right over there! ➔), and the STC Orlando Chapter gets a portion of your purchase.

The next AdCo meeting will be in August. Look for the coupon in the next MtM!

Tool Tips: CopyMessageBox

BY DAVID COVERSTON

This month's featured tool is not something I use all the time, but when I need it, it really delivers what I need. So here is the scenario where it proves invaluable: A message box displaying an error message pops up when using your favorite (or not) application. The message box has some obscure message or a cryptic string of numbers purporting to tell you what went wrong. You can grab a screen shot of the message box and paste it into an email that you shoot off to tech support. But wait… there's a better way.

Start the CopyMessageBox program. Press Alt-C to capture the obscure message text or cryptic string of numbers to your clipboard. Paste the text into a Google search box and discover that someone else has had that problem and explains how to fix it. If you can't find the answer on the Internet, you can always paste the text into an email and send it to tech support.

Let's get started by browsing to www.thyante.com and downloading the file CopyMessageBox.zip. There is only one file contained in the zip, CopyMessageBox.exe. Create a folder to extract the file to, then make a link to the file from your desktop or another folder you will remember.

That's it. No installation or uninstallation needed. You can run it when you need it, or you can set an option on the Functions menu to automatically start the program when you start your computer.

There are a couple of other neat features of this little program. You can save the images as .jpg files. CopyMessageBox maintains a history, so you can go back copy either the images or text to your clipboard from several captures ago. The time you captured the message box displays in the left column.

Commercial screen capture programs offer these features and more, but this one is free! And it does what I need it to do.

—MtM

DAVID COVERSTON IS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ORLANDO CHAPTER. HE RECEIVED HIS M.A. IN JOURNALISM FROM UF AND ENJOYS TEACHING OTHERS HOW TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE. HIS TOOL TIPS ARTICLES ARE QUITE POPULAR ON THE STC SCENE AND HAVE BEEN REPRINTED IN CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS WORLDWIDE. FIND HIS WORK ON THE STC WEB SITES OF NORTH CAROLINA, INDIA, *AND NOW*, THE UK.

Upcoming Conferences

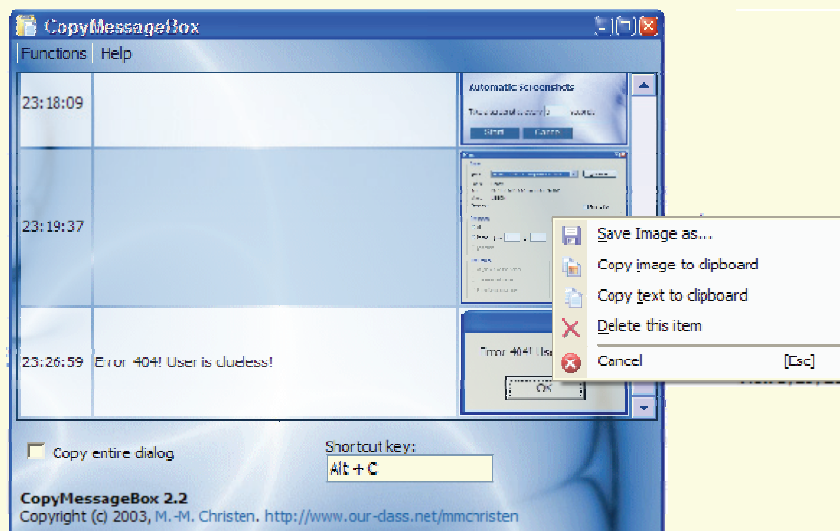### An Event Apart: For People who Make Web Sites
New York City, NY July 10

New Riders authors, and globally recognized web authorities, Eric Meyer and Jeffrey Zeldman, have taken to the road with their concentrated, one-day learning session that will change the way you approach Web design. They're best known for their books, Eric Meyer on CSS: Mastering the Language of Web Design, and Designing with Web Standards. www.aneventapart.com.

SIGGRAPH 2006
Boston, MA August 1-3

The 33rd International Conference and Exhibition on Computer Graphics and Interactive Technologies is regarded as the premier technology conference in the world, inspiring progress through education, excellence, and interaction. www.siggraph.org/s2006.

CopyMessageBox showing right-click menu.

If You Missed Our Last Meeting...
(Continued from page 2)

Scott asked his audience a question he likes to ask third-year law students, "What is the contract for?" The contract is an ordering of sovereignty—it is to plan for and manage your relationship with the vendor, he said. It should be designed to accomplish a business objective.

Technical communicators are positioned to be of great value to companies in legal matters relating to technology because the lawyers will focus on what they understand, not on the scope of work that

> *"The contract is an ordering of sovereignty—it is to plan for and manage your relationship with the vendor…It should be designed to accomplish a business objective."*

technical communicators understand, Scott said. "The action in the contracts is in the scope of work."

Scott explained the importance of milestones to us. Companies can leverage their budgets to maximum advantage by incorporating milestones in their contracts. It is what the milestones trigger that is important. Think of the work in terms of discreet steps, he said. Milestones give you control of the relationship with a vendor. They should not occur until you issue them in writing.

Ask the vendor for a requirements statement. Define the process, not the product. State what you will do, how you will do it, and what the vendor will give you. Base your product design on the requirements statement. Incorporate deliverables as time progresses. If there are changes that need to be made after the requirements statement is settled, get a time and material billing for them.

Scott explained how to use the work order. It should contain a definition of the scope of work with a task objective, methodology, and a list of deliverables. The problem with most statements of work is that you can't tell whether a task has been accomplished or not. Include a schedule for completion of the work, and a payment schedule.

> *"Milestones give you control of the relationship with a vendor. They should not occur until you issue them in writing."*

One important misconception is about what you are purchasing, Scott said. "You are buying a support relationship, not software. It's about the partnership you have with your vendor."

Scott answered questions afterwards such as "What is intellectual property?" (It's a business term, not a legal term.)

And there was the CD that Scott handed out, and more, but you had to be there! **—MtM**

Upcoming Remote Seminars

Adding Panache to Your Procedures
July 12, 1:00 pm

Procedures are the most important way that users reach goals. Without well-written procedures, your customers would flounder in a sea of documented product features and technical capabilities. The seminar covers all aspects of writing effective, powerful procedures. Throughout, the seminar uses examples of both good and bad procedures to illustrate key points.

Working in Global Teams
July 26, 1:00 pm

Virtual, global teams require us to use our communication skills in ways that were unimaginable twenty years ago. In this seminar, Melanie Doulton and Makarand Pandit discuss ways to build successful working relationships in virtual environments. Whether you're looking to optimize your virtual relationships or just getting started in a virtual team environment, you will find this presentation useful.

Find more upcoming seminar information at stc.webex.com.**—MtM**

STC Memo to Members

April 2006 · Volume 4, Issue 12

From the Editor's Desk...

What a time to become the editor of the *Memo to Members*! We have so much to brag about in this issue. Receiving the honor of being named a Chapter of Distinction for the fourth year in a row is incredible, but on top of that, several members of our Chapter also earned individual recognition! Read Gail's article to find out who was honored at conference.

As we start a new year and I get the hang of putting together the *MtM* each month, I hope to receive plenty of material from the many accomplished members of our chapter. Feedback on the issues is greatly appreciated as well! Please send me an e-mail at newsletter@stc-orlando.org and let me know what you think!

—Cindy

Corner of Distinction

Congratulations to the Orlando Chapter's newest Associate Fellow, Karen Lane!

Congratulations to Mark Wray, who received his 5-year member pin from Jen Selix at May's chapter meeting.