

MEMO TO MEMBERS

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

STC Orlando Chapter: A Four-Year Chapter of Distinction • September 2006 • Volume 5, Issue 3

In This Issue:

If you missed our last meeting...	2
Peachpit User Group	2
Freelancing at Home with Baby	3
Upcoming Conferences and Seminars	4
The Benefits of Sigma Tau Chi Membership	5
Sponsors Spotlight: Darden Restaurants	5
Get Active, Be Well Dressed!	6
Our Next Meeting: Guest Speaker Mary Ann Etzer	8
Greetings from the STC Board Newbies	9
From the Editor's Desk...	12
Corner of Distinction	12



Paper or Plastic?

BY ERIKA HIGGINS

Surely you've been asked this question countless times when shopping at the grocery store. Maybe while ordering a meal at a fast-food restaurant they have asked if you wanted fries with that. Both of these instances represent attempts by business to ensure that you, the consumer, are getting exactly what you want or need. This year, my goal is to have the same be said for your Orlando Chapter STC.

As much as possible, I want to make sure that you, the member, have what you want or need from your membership. And, as a result of receiving this level of "customer satisfaction," I hope that you are encouraged to take a more active role in the chapter. With each monthly meeting program we host, each issue of Memo to Members we publish, each job posting we list, and so on, I trust that you are seeing the value of being affiliated with the Orlando Chapter. But, if you aren't, I want to know about it so that I and the other Chapter leaders can work to rectify the situation.

I'll be honest with you; taking over the presidency of a four-time Chapter of Distinction is a daunting task. But, awards and accolades aside, I believe it comes down to how well we serve our members that matters most. So, at the start of our annual Leadership Retreat this past July, I designated the slogan for this chapter year: "How can the Orlando Chapter Help You?"

Those of you who missed our exciting Washlines meeting did not get to hear my Paul Harvey-esqe, "Rest of the Story" speech—complete with sound effects. The long and the short of it is that I have enjoyed a great deal of professional success *outside* of the Chapter as a result of having been so involved in the Chapter. I want each of you to have a great, inspiring "rest of the story" to tell about your membership with the Orlando Chapter! As the old saying goes, "you get out of things what you put into them." So join me in my goal to make this chapter year one of the best for each and every member, and together we will strive to achieve distinction once again —**MtM**

ERIKA HIGGINS IS STC ORLANDO CHAPTER PRESIDENT, A SENIOR MEMBER, AND MEMBER OF THE A-SIG AND IDL SIG. ERIKA WORKS AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER IN THE FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY.



New STC-Orlando President Erika Higgins (standing) addresses the chapter at August's "Washlines XII" meeting.

If you missed our last meeting...

BY BONNIE SPIVEY

Spirits were high at the August chapter meeting as Dan Voss (aka Dapper Dan the Casino Man) successfully captured the essence of the 53rd Annual STC Conference with his Vegas "spin" on the 12th Annual Washlines Presentation. From casino games to cocktail servers, it was certainly a night to remember!



Dapper Dan (right) helps Jon Kessler (left) place his bets at the roulette wheel during August's Washlines Chapter meeting.

The first hour of the evening was designated for gaming. Upon arrival, each attendee was given a bag of poker chips and encouraged to try his or her luck at the tables. The incentive: the evening's door prizes. At what tables, you might ask. Well, amazingly, the Orlando Chapter is a wealth of Vegas-style gaming expertise—from Cindy Skawinski's black jack table to Bonnie Spivey's Texas Hold 'em tournament to W.C. Wiese's uber-modern e-slot machine, it was a sight to behold. Without a doubt, Dan and Ria Voss were the most memorable characters of the

evening. Clad in full casino garb, Dan manned the roulette wheel while his wife, Ria, operated the mini craps table.

In true Vegas style, Heather Stearns (complete with red feather boa) and Alex Garcia (our new Hospitality Manager) catered the event famously, serving appetizers on cocktail trays instead of the traditional table spread.

At the close of the casino hour, attendees retired to seats in the audi-

ence and awaited the first-ever Washlines via roulette wheel presentation. Forget picking a number out of a hat or simply calling on people from the audience, this year's Washlines unfolded "as the roulette wheel turned." One by one, audience members came up to spin the wheel.

The resulting number/color combination indicated which panel member would be presenting and what the topic would be. With over 51 topics and 16 presenters, it was impossible for everyone to present everything; amazingly, everyone was able to present at least once.

For more information on the topics and handouts available, refer to the article in last month's Memo to Members (http://www.stc-orlando.org/newsletter/2006/memo_2006_08.pdf) or contact Dapper Dan (Daniel.w.voss@lmco.com). —MmM

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 lots 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 email 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. —MmM

Freelancing from Home with Baby

BY VICKI TOUATI

After the birth of my son in January 2005, I became a stay-at-home mom after nine years of working as a technical writer and instructional designer. I also became a part-time freelance technical writer. This article provides insights on finding work, setting up your office, managing your time, and taking care of yourself.

Introduction

Becoming a stay-at-home mom last year was a dramatic change for me. Going from the corporate world to full-time at home presented a new set of challenges as I found myself alone most of the day with a new baby. I soon realized that motherhood was the most demanding job on the planet. Working as a freelance technical writer became a way for me to supplement my family's income and keep my skills up-to-date.

Finding Work

Freelancing became a possibility for me when an old co-worker asked me if I'd like to develop a training course for new supervisors. I gladly jumped at the opportunity. When the client asked me for my hourly rate, I had to do some research before I blurted out the first number to pop in my head. I was able to determine how much to charge based on information I found in the following sources:

- Editorial Freelancers Association, USA
- National Writers Union, USA
- What Technical Writers Are Paid, School for Champions sponsored by Lanex, Brookfield, WI
- STC 2005 Salary Survey

I also found work with past employers and business contacts, and by applying for STC job postings. I tried to let everyone I knew know about my availability. I had business cards printed, and carried them with me at all times. After all, you never know who you might meet on the playground. Having a Web site that advertises your services is another great way to showcase your writing and design skills; although, I have to admit I'm still working on mine.

When I first decided to give freelancing a try, I was urged by a family member to get an occupational business license and register for a fictitious business name. I followed this advice and paid the small fee for the license. Doing this allowed me to operate under a business name; however, I later found out from my accountant that this was not a requirement for taking business-related tax deductions as independent contractors are entitled to a wide array of deductions.

Setting Up Your Office

I quickly found that my office had to be fully functioning and separate from the rest of the house. Apart from the benefits of being able to shut the door and disappear for awhile, a designated home office can be used as a tax deduction on Form 8829 (Expenses for Business Use of Your Home). There were a few items I had to purchase to get started, such as a comfortable chair, the latest versions of a few software programs, reams and reams of paper for printing long documents, and a few other items. One very important purchase was an up-to-date security software package with firewall, anti-virus, spyware, and scam blocking programs. Now that I was my own system administrator, I had to

implement security at the highest levels to protect my client's data. And being the mother of the most curious baby on earth also caused me to improvise with some exterior security features, such as taping a piece of heavy cardboard over my PC's power button to prevent little fingers from shutting down my computer at critical moments. During my first project, I learned the importance of regular back-ups after having to restore my system two times. Also, I found that placing the keyboard on top of the monitor when it's not in use can help avoid undecipherable bits of baby blog from appearing in the middle of a document.

I saved hard copies of signed contracts, client correspondence, and project files in appropriately labeled folders in my file cabinet. For one particular client, I found myself frequently referring back to hard copies of edits and notes I had taken during meetings. For tax purposes, I saved all pay stubs and receipts of business-related expenses. As an independent contractor or sole proprietor, you can deduct business-related expenses on your taxes. These include but are not limited to office supplies, software used for work, operating expenses (such as your monthly ISP bill), marketing costs, journal subscriptions, memberships to professional associations, equipment purchased for your business, and mileage. Diapers and sippy cups do not count.

Time Management

When you work as a freelancer, you might be tempted to use every free moment of your time to work. As a mother of a toddler, this is next to impossible and rapidly leads to mommy burnout. For my own well being, it was extremely

(Continued on page 4)

Freelancing from Home with Baby

(Continued from page 3)

important to determine how many hours I could realistically work per week. Due to my mommy responsibilities, I did most of my work in the evenings and weekends. This limited me from taking on large projects with aggressive deadlines. I also wasn't able to take on projects requiring lots of travel or trips to client offices. Luckily, most of my clients preferred to communicate via email.

Taking Care of Yourself

I must be honest, at times it is very challenging and tiring to juggle working from home while being a stay-at-home mom. Finding a routine that allowed me to keep things balanced and prevent burnout has enabled me to keep my sanity and stay focused. I found it important to take time for myself by doing things I enjoyed such as reading and going to the gym. Making friends with other mothers who have experience working from home was a great support, and choosing work that is manageable with my schedule was key to my success. I'm very grateful to be in a field that allows for such flexibility.—**MtM**

VICTORIA TOUATI IS A GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA'S TECHNICAL WRITING PROGRAM. PAST EMPLOYERS INCLUDE SUNTRUST, IMAGE SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGIES, TILDEN, LOBONITZ, & COOPER, AND INFOSOURCE, INC.



SHE HAS WORKED AS A TECHNICAL WRITER, EDITOR, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER, AND TRAINER. EMAIL HER AT [TOUATI@EARTHLINK.NET](mailto:Touati@earthlink.net).

Upcoming Conferences and Seminars

Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate - in Half the Time

Phone Seminar September 28

Macromedia/Adobe Captivate is a powerful tool for creating software simulations, also known as Computer Based Training (CBTs). While recording Captivate movies, your recording options include Demonstration, Assessment Simulation, and Training Simulation. During this seminar, you will explore the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each mode and learn how to maximize the potential of each, including how to create "hybrid" CBTs that will cut your development time by 50 percent. stc.webex.com

Documentation and Training Conference

Boston, MA October 3-5

The 7th Annual Documentation and Training Conference features over 50 sessions and speakers. Included with your registration are keynotes by Tom Davenport (*Thinking for a Living: Improving Performance of Knowledge Workers*) as well as JoAnn Hackos (*Do I Really Need a Content Management System?*). Along with case studies, a technology showcase, and panels of industry experts, the Documentation and Training Conference also offers a Management Summit comprised of 11 sessions.

In addition, JoAnn Hackos is delivering a Content Management Workshop on October 4-5, which can be added onto registration as a special option.

www.doctrain.com

Association for Educational Communications and Technology

Dallas, TX October 10-14

The AECT Annual International Convention focuses this year on making stronger connections: (1) Between theory and practice, (2) Between new technologies and educational goals, (3) Between researchers around the globe; and (4) Between new professionals and more experienced colleagues. www.aect.org

Designing Business Forms: A No Nonsense Approach

Phone Seminar October 11
Nathaniel Lim

Filling out forms is a part of life. Job applications, tax forms, health insurance claims... the list of common forms goes on and on. The design of a form determines how clean and complete the data on it becomes. This presentation focuses on the basic designs of hardcopy forms, common design pitfalls, use of white space, placement of instructions, and logical flow. Examples of good and bad forms will be presented.

stc.webex.com

Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) Annual Conference

San Francisco, CA October 12-14

CPTSC's program theme is topical and important: "Meeting Challenges of the New Economy." Our well-known and highly regarded keynote speaker, JoAnn Hackos, will kick off our focus on this theme. And our distinguished plenary panel—Sam Dragga, Laura Gurak, Carolyn Miller, and Jim Zappen—will develop the theme further, with respect to program positioning.

www.sfsu.edu —**MtM**

The Benefits of Sigma Tau Chi Membership

BY PEGGY BIVINS

If you are a student, consider applying for membership in Sigma Tau Chi (STX), STC's student honor society. STC sponsors STX for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in technical communication programs.

Besides the recognition associated with admission into STX, you will receive a one-year paid membership in STC. You will also be recognized at a student reception at STC's 54th annual conference in Minneapolis and receive a pin and a T-shirt. To qualify for membership, you must have a 3.5 or higher cumulative grade point average, actively participate in STC, and display potential for making a significant contribution to the technical communication profession.

If you meet the qualifications and plan to apply, you should do so before the November 1, 2006, deadline. Go to STC's Web site at www.stc.org/recog/awards01_STX-AS.asp for the application form and additional information about the application process and STX.



Sigma Tau Chi Pin and T-Shirt

STX's membership list includes two members from the University of Central Florida, Mary Ellen Gomrad and Peggy Bivins. Apply for membership before the November 1 deadline so you can reap the rewards of membership and add yourself to STX's membership roster.—**MtM**

PEGGY BIVINS RECEIVED HER B.A. IN ENGLISH/TECHNICAL WRITING, SUMMA CUM LAUDE, FROM UCF IN MAY 2005. A MEMBER OF SIGMA TAU CHI AND RECIPIENT OF THE MELISSA PELLEGRIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, PEGGY IS NOW COMPLETING HER TECHNICAL WRITING M.A. SHE WORKS AT DIMENSIONS INTERNATIONAL IN ORLANDO.



Sponsors Spotlight: Darden Restaurants

BY JEN SELIX

There are many individuals and businesses in Central Florida that help support the Orlando Chapter's scholarship and outreach programs. We are grateful for all that they have contributed to our chapter and we want to let them know that we appreciate their support.

Yet, there is another, lesser known source of support that deserves recognition. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of those in the Catering and Food Service industries that have donated their

time, goods, and services to help make our meetings and special events a success.

This month, we would like to thank **Darden Restaurants** for donating gift cards to give away as door prizes at our monthly meetings. We always try to supply fun, useful door prizes each month, but the "goods" come at a price. Darden Foundation Administrator, Patty **DeYoung**, generously donated \$25 gift cards which can be used at any of the Central Florida Darden Restaurants including Red Lobster, Olive Garden, and Smokey Bones. The contribution helped us bring added value to our meetings—and a tasty twist to our giveaways.—**MtM**

Get Active, Be Well Dressed!

Make Your Fashion Statement at Work by Being an Active Member of the Orlando Chapter

BY W.C. WIESE

You may have seen Mark Hanigan beam last meeting as he received his 2nd Active Membership shirt. Here's a guy who has been part of the soul of the Suncoast Chapter for over a decade, remains active at

future than one that recognizes the bedrock active participation of our chapter members.

And we keep score!

This will be the 6th year that the Orlando Chapter will recognize members who are consistent in their attendance and do a little

something more. In general, you have to do just a little more than attend every meeting to be an active member. As the points table shows, you earn points every month you attend a meeting, put on the program, attend an Administrative Council meeting, or serve as a judge or mentor.

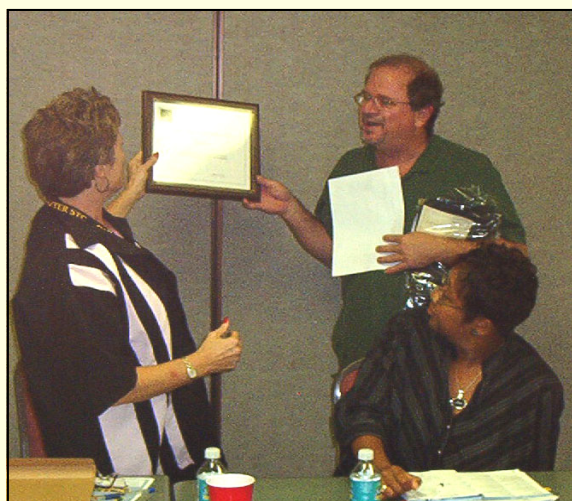
Active members receive attractive "Orlando Chapter Active Member" polo

Member Activity	Points Awarded
Meeting Attendance	1
Program Presentation	2
Elected Officer	1
Committee, Mentor, Judge	1

shirts at our awards ceremony in June. They professionally distinguish chapter members, and they've been a knockout at the annual conference for the past four years—and Society leadership has noticed. In fact, last year, the Northeast Ohio chapter copied us and had a great experience. The Lone Star chapter will start their program this year.

The shirt also lets our members celebrate chapter pride in the workplace whenever they choose to wear it. It sends a positive message to employers and co-workers: *I am committed to my profession and committed to self-development. I am a member of STC!*

Will you be an active member? We'll keep score in upcoming issues of *Memo to Members!*.—Mm



Mark Hanigan receives his Active Member shirt at August's Chapter meeting.

the highest levels of STC, and has a diverse collection of clients that he supports. Yet, for a second year, he attended meetings, acted as a mentor, and presented programs to earn enough points to earn active membership recognition in our chapter. And did you see that smile? Mark gets it!

The Orlando Chapter gives many awards each year: Senior member pins, Distinguished Chapter Service Award, Retiring chapter officers, High school writing, Rising Stars, The Jaffe Award for Excellence in Technical Communication. Scholarships.

But at the end of the day, no award is more important to our chapter's



Jen Selix, here with Heather Stearns, shows off her Active Member shirt at August's Chaptermeeting.

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

www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/orlandochapter-20

www.cafepress.com/orlandostc



FTCC Call for Entries

Don't forget that entries to the Florida Technical Communications Competition, hosted by the Suncoast chapter, must be received by October 14, 2006.

www.stc-suncoast.org/ftcc/



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

Why not now?

forum.stcforum.org

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.

Love pizza as much as you love STC?

Join us Tuesday,
October 10th 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 will receive a
portion of your purchase.

A TASTY WAY TO RAISE DOUGH.



**Uno will donate
up to 20% of
your check to:**

To Benefit: **Society of Technical Communications**

Fundraiser Date: **TUESDAY October 10, 2006**

Valid only at:

4120 East Colonial Drive
(S.R. 50 East)
Orlando

407-895-7404

Please present this certificate at the time of payment to have up to 20% of your check's value, excluding tax and tip, donated to the organization above. Not to be used with other coupons or discounts. Tickets are not to be distributed in the restaurant or within the perimeter of the parking areas.

Valid only for date listed above.

Our Next Meeting: Guest Speaker Mary Ann Etzler

BY KELLI PHARO

Married to husband Bruce for 10 ½ years, and mother to two boys, Luke (3 ½) and Zachary (8 months), Mary Ann Etzler loves spending time with her family watching movies, riding bikes, and going to parks (theme and natural). She also has two cats in the yard, and a very, very, very fine resume (if I may borrow from Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young).



September's Guest Speaker:
Mary Ann Etzler

Following her AA degree in Law Enforcement from Century Community College in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, in 1977, Mary Ann received her BS in Business from the Univ. of South Florida, St. Petersburg Campus in 1990. She started law school in 1992, graduating in 1995 from Cumberland School of Law at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

After taking the bar in July of 1995, Mary Ann started as a

certified legal intern with the State Attorney's office in August 1995. She passed the bar exam and was sworn-in on September 21, 1995. Mary Ann then stayed with the State Attorney's office until 2000, when she moved on to private practice.

Mary Ann spent about 9 months starting The Affiliates, the legal staffing division of Robert Half International in Orlando. She then went back to practicing law full time in July 2001 with her present firm, deBeaubien, Knight, Simmons, Mantzaris, & Neal, LLP. In addition, she has taught numerous law classes for the University of Phoenix and for the Police Academy at Valencia Community College.

So, if you haven't been keeping track, Mary Ann is a wife and mother who has done criminal prosecution, criminal defense, family law, juvenile prosecution, juvenile defense, juvenile dependency and GAL work, complex commercial and general business litigation, landlord/tenant law, insurance litigation, employment and environmental, and some federal bankruptcy.

Mary Ann believes that all degrees form a basis for some aspect of practicing law. She has found that the closer a degree is related to business and business issues, the more likely the degree will help not only in law school but in real practice, both criminal and civil.

Although she does not practice Intellectual Property (IP) law on a daily basis, Mary Ann got involved in the field as a result of teaching classes for the University of Phoenix and through questions from various clients. One attorney in her firm handles a significant amount of trademark and copyright matters on which Mary Ann periodically assists.

"...anyone who writes for a living should be interested in how they can protect their work and creations."

She states, "Technical communications are relevant in nearly everything we do. We are constantly creating documents and putting our ideas on paper. So anyone who writes for a living should be interested in how they can protect their work and creations."

Mary Ann will be sharing more on this topic at our upcoming September chapter meeting. Come on out to our new digs at PBS&J, and hear our guest speaker, Mary Ann Etzler, as she speaks on intellectual property, trademark, and copyright law.. —MtM

Reminder!

**STC-Orlando has a new meeting location
starting Tuesday, September 26th!
6:30 pm Networking/7:00 pm Meeting**

PBS&J Offices in Maitland

482 South Keller Road
Orlando, FL 32810
(Map)

Greetings from the STC Board Newbies

Let Us Hear From You

BY MARK CLIFFORD, CHAR JAMES-TANNY, MIKE MURRAY, AND JEFF STAPLES, MEMBERS OF THE STC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

With this year's STC elections, the four of us now have the opportunity to represent you on STC's International Board of Directors. This is an exciting time for STC with a host of initiatives being formulated to keep the Society moving forward and to enhance an open dialog between all members of the Society.

This article provides a brief introduction for each of us, including our duties on the Board and a bit of personal insight. Photos are included so you will recognize us at STC events.

Mark Clifford, STC Second Vice President



Hello one and all.

After ten years on the administrative council of the UK chapter, and last year as an assistant to the STC President (Suzanna Laurent) for Global Affairs, I have to admit to some trepidation when running for

second vice president! Yes, you can change the world – but STC? Well, the next three years will be interesting!

Work Activities

Since completing my engineering publications apprenticeship with British Aircraft Corp. (BAC) in the mid-70s, I have worked as editor, writer, manager, and recruiter, primarily with publications consultancies and service companies. I have lived and worked across Europe, working with Dutch, Belgian, French, and Swedish companies, holding board-level positions with three of them. Somewhere in there, I graduated from the University of Luton's Business Program.

I currently run my own information design and recruitment company, which provides consultancy, resource, and ID solutions for European clients from offices in the UK and France.

STC Duties

As this year's Second Vice President, my responsibility is leading the Marketing area initiatives.

Marketing STC and our members to the world is one of our key strategic goals. STC is poised to put technical communication, both for its practices and its practitioners, firmly back on the business agenda. The new STC strategic plan is designed to market our profession by communicating directly to those that use or buy our services. At the same time, it addresses the individual need for continuing professional growth.

I have committees working on developing interests with a variety of other organisations, gaining society-level sponsors, and publicising our achievements. All of these have a huge impact on getting our message out.

Personal Bits

When I'm not involved at work or with STC, I like to escape by going bird watching – especially in coastal areas and wetlands. It's a very relaxing and fascinating hobby. I'm not a 'twitcher' so you won't find me dropping everything and rushing off to find a rare bird!

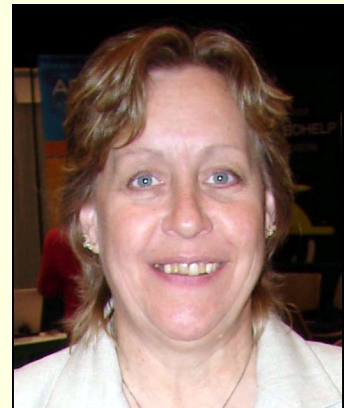
In quieter moments, I'm an armchair historian. I read military histories and biographies. My passion is the Napoleonic period in Europe, in particular Wellington's campaigns in Portugal and Spain.

I have three grown children and a six year-old granddaughter who has me wrapped completely round her little finger.

Cheers!

Contact Mark at 2vp@stc.org or mark@cliffordsells.com.

Char James-Tanny, STC Secretary



Hi. :-)

I'm Char James-Tanny, the new Secretary for the STC, and I'm really excited about the things the board has planned for the upcoming year.

(Continued on page 10)

Greetings from the STC Board Newbies

(Continued from page 9)

(Char James-Tanny, continued)

At last year's conference, I decided that I would invest two years in making STC a premier organization—one that every technical communicator would want to belong to. With my election, that's been extended a bit, as the Secretary has a two-year term. (This just gives me more time!)

Work Activities

I'm basically the geek on the board. :-) I want technology to make my life easier, and I plan on bringing it to the board to make their lives easier.

Last year's board did some amazing groundwork for us by creating the Interim Strategic Plan and new organizational chart (both available at www.stc.org). We get to take it to the next step by implementing those pieces.

STC Duties

My job as Secretary is to record the minutes, notes, action items from all meetings, and support all committees. I have big shoes to fill: Lori Fisher did an awesome job during her term, and she also paved the way for some of the changes I want to make.

One of the things that I'm going to implement is a Web-based Communication System (or, as I fondly refer to it, the WCS). WCS will initially be available for board and committee members, but I hope to eventually open it to the membership. (It will probably take us a couple of

months to get it installed and set up correctly.)

I'm one of the proponents of certification, at least until we get more information. I think that certification could be a valuable benefit for members, and I'm in favor of anything that brings value.

Personal Bits

Because I run my company out of my home, I tend to keep fairly weird work hours. I'm online as soon as I wake up, and I tend to work nights after my son has gone to bed. I am typically not available most weekdays from 3:30 pm until 8 pm, because my son, Jesse, has a life. ;-)

He is a member of the North Shore Swim Club, and he's been swimming competitively for two years. He also plays soccer and belongs to two teams: one travel and one intramural (that I coach). He's my joy in life, even as our house fills with pets of all kinds, including dogs, a cat, parakeets, a cockatoo, a parrot, and a fish tank. Because my husband works nights (in addition to running the other half of our company), Jesse and I spend a lot of time together, and I wouldn't miss it for the world.

I love to cook and bake. My favorite gifts are kitchen tools and gadgets. I use my time when flying to catch up on TV shows that I haven't had a chance to watch (we have Tivo, so I pull them onto my laptop) and read.

You can reach me at stc@helpstuff.com.

Mike Murray, STC Director



An enthusiastic "Hi" to all of my STC teammates around the world. Several folks asked me to run for Director, and I am extremely glad that I did. My best friends are in STC. I love this organization.

Work Activities

In my 28th year with Lockheed Martin, my current role is as the principal writer in the corporation's Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) organization, the only virtual organization in the company. I specifically support the marketing activities for these products and services. Many years of virtual communications experience add another important qualification to my STC resume.

My years at Lockheed Martin follow 10-1/2 years in the U.S. Air Force, which also exposed me to international cultures.

STC Duties

I am a strong "people person," and I was pleased when STC President Paula Berger assigned me to the Communities area along with fellow directors Sherry Michaels and Beau Cain. The Communities committee includes the Leadership Community Resource (LCR), Virtual Communities, and Community Recognition.

(Continued on page 11)

Greetings from the STC Board Newbies

(Continued from page 10)

In addition, Paula asked me to be the Board of Directors representative on a task force that will develop a new community business model. The task force will consist of 10-12 leaders from communities of various sizes and types around the world AND our new Executive Director Susan Burton, an amazing lady!

I do a lot of mentoring, both individuals and groups, and am especially good at examining an organization and zeroing in on what its leaders need to do to strengthen it.

Personal Bits

Outside of work and STC, I love sports announcing. I regularly announce for various organizations, including Dr. Phillips High School (football and basketball) and Rollins College (volleyball and basketball). I am especially proud of my support of Dr. Phillips High School, where I have announced for the entire 20 years of its existence. The school inducted me into its Hall of Fame in 2001. I am also the part-time stadium announcer for the Osceola Outlaws, a professional team in the National Indoor Football League.

For several years in a row, I have received the national President's Volunteer Service Award, which goes to individuals who demonstrate a sustained commitment to volunteer service each year. My service in Central Florida has involved restructuring and strengthening youth organizations such as Pop Warner Football, Little League Baseball, and Cub Scouts.

I have been married for 38 wonderful years to my best friend Kay. We live in Orlando with our delightful dog Butterscotch, a Schnauzer-Poodle mix. She cuddles, hugs, kisses, loves to play and have her belly rubbed, and loves to swim in our pool. Wait, maybe that's Kay I just described. No, it's definitely Butterscotch. J We have two adult sons and five wonderful grandchildren.

I love people and would love to hear from you at dirmm@stc.org.

Jeff Staples, STC Director



Hello, Members. After much deliberation (and extreme indecisiveness), I submitted my "packet" for nomination for Director. Needless to say I was surprised to win the election, and wondered if it was the right decision/result. However, once I began reading/hearing all the activity with the STC leadership, I became excited and was happy to learn that everything wasn't just "status quo." Everything is basically wide open, and it's an opportunity for the members and the STC leadership/management to continue and enhance this organization as the premier leader in technical communication.

Work Activities

In my career life, I am generally a "commodity" writer, often focusing on formatting and making the document "look pretty." But that's

okay, because this type of writer is still in demand. And in whatever we do, being professional and good at our work brings recognition to our profession. And, in with the basic writing tasks do come some exciting tasks, such as working on a safety survey and then formulating the mechanics to get it live on the web.

STC Duties

I am one of the first two directors to be elected from the entire STC membership. This kind of created a gray area in what my responsibilities as Director would be. However, STC President Paula Berger took care of that. <grin>

The new STC org structure assigns each Director to a strategic area. I consider myself fortunate to have landed in the Communications area along with Director Cindy Currie. This area holds great potential in all areas of STC communication but especially in the areas of Member Communication and the STC website and publications.

Personal Bits

In December '05, I began what has become a regular yoga practice. I originally began practicing for back problems and overall mental health, and it has helped in those areas. However, I have come to learn that yoga helps basically all parts of the body. For example, when you perform a twist, toxins are squeezed out of your internal organs (similar to squeezing water out of a sponge). Then, when you release out of the twist, the organs are ready to absorb fresh blood.

In addition, I enjoy independent and foreign films and books out of the normal fare, such as those by Ayn Rand and Philip Roth.

Drop me a line at dirjs@stc.org.—MtM



Memo to Members



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From the Editor's Desk...

When I took on the newsletter from Rose, I was amazed at how much work went on "behind-the-scenes" before each publication. There were many details that I took for granted as a reader that suddenly became important as I edited.

I felt much the same way when I attended my first Administrative Council meeting. After glancing over the agenda that Erika handed to me, I was amazed at the number of responsibilities that come with running our chapter. What impressed me more was the number of volunteers stepping up to

take on those responsibilities and help lead this Chapter of Distinction.

This month, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the members of the Administrative Council. Their continued dedication to excellence makes our Chapter second to none.

I also encourage you to get further involved in the Chapter. Whether you run for office in 2007 or contribute an article to MtM (hint, hint), you will be recognized and celebrated for helping us continue our "Distinction!"

—Cindy

Corner of Distinction



Thank you, Dan Voss, for setting up the tremendously successful Washlines XII meeting. It wouldn't have been the same without ya!