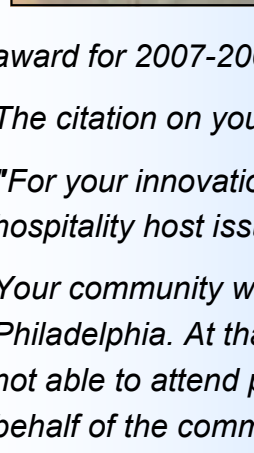


# Memo to Members

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



## Congratulations - Chapter of Excellence Members!

by Erika Higgins, Orlando Chapter President

I received the following message this week from Rachel Houghton, of the Community Achievement Award Evaluation Committee:

"As a member of the Community Achievement Award Evaluation Committee, it is my honor to inform you that the Orlando Community has earned the Excellence award for 2007-2008.

The citation on your certificate will read:

"For your innovation ideas in increasing attendance at meetings, creating sponsorship opportunities, and solving your hospitality host issues."

Your community will be recognized during the Leadership Day event on Sunday, June 1, at the summit in Philadelphia. At that time you will receive the certificate and the feedback comments from the CAAEC judge. If you are not able to attend personally, try to designate a Orlando community member to accept the certificate/feedback on behalf of the community.

As one of the most consistent and active communities in the CAA process, your community was again a strong contender for the Community of Distinction award. I hope that your community will continue to aspire that level.

Congratulations to all members of the Orlando Community.

Rachel Houghton, Member

Community Achievement Award Evaluation Committee"

Thanks for being a member of the Orlando Chapter!

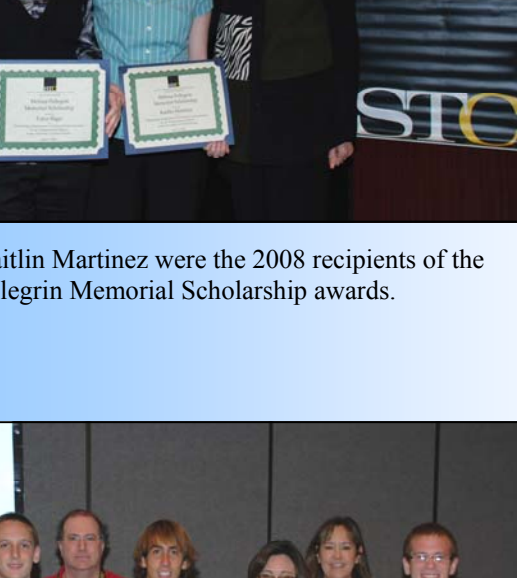


## If You Missed Our Last Meeting...

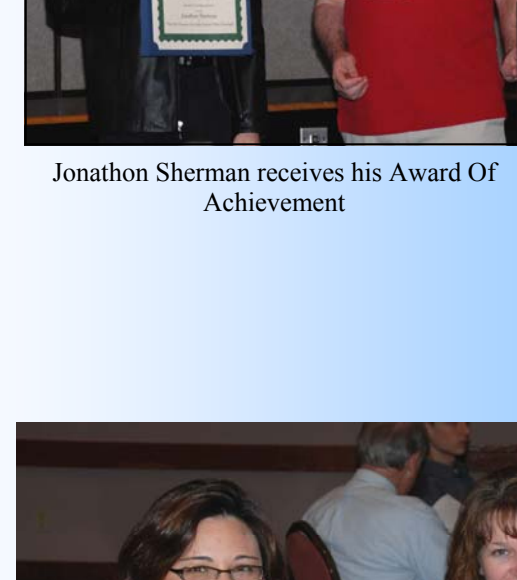
... then you missed our annual High School Writing Competition Awards Banquet, the Melissa Pellegrin Scholarship awards, and the election of our 2008-2009 Orlando Chapter officers!



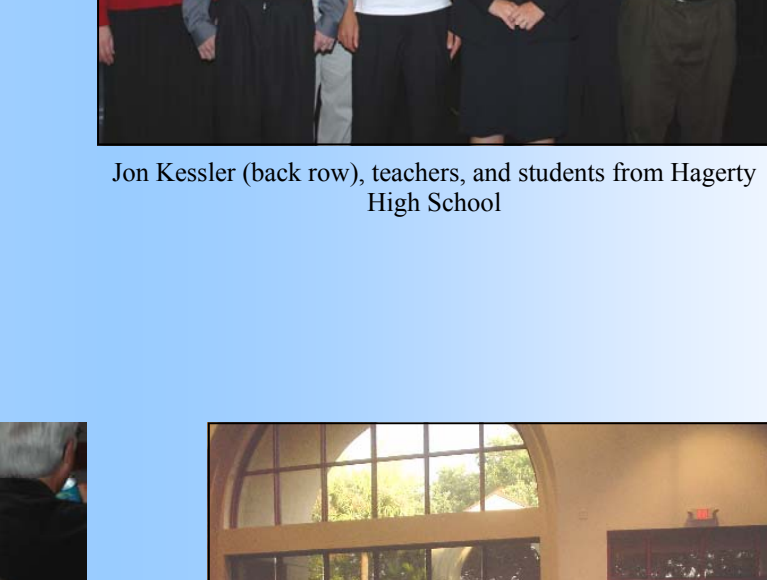
Jon Kessler moderated the 2007-2008 Central Florida High School Technical Writing Competition awards ceremony



Dr. Dan Jones and Dan Voss presented the 2008 Melissa Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship awards



Melanie Abou-Jauade receives her Award Of Merit certificate



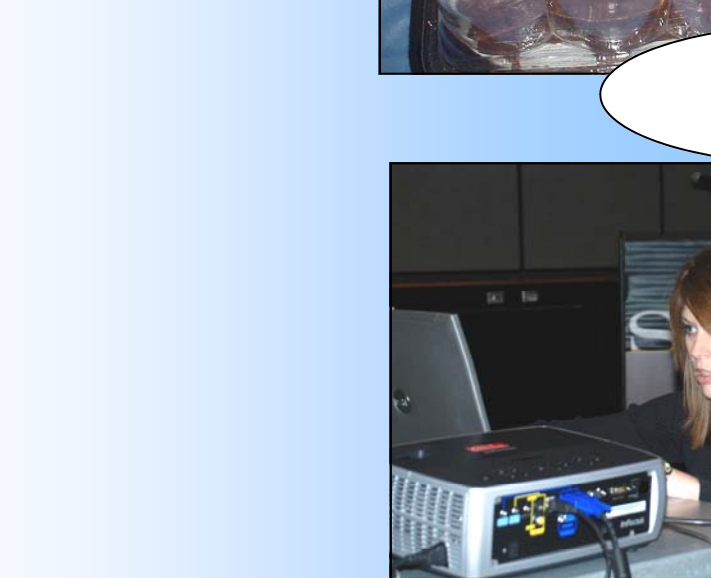
Tiana Slinger and Kaitlin Martinez were the 2008 recipients of the Melissa Pellegrin Memorial Scholarship awards.



Jonathon Sherman receives his Award Of Achievement



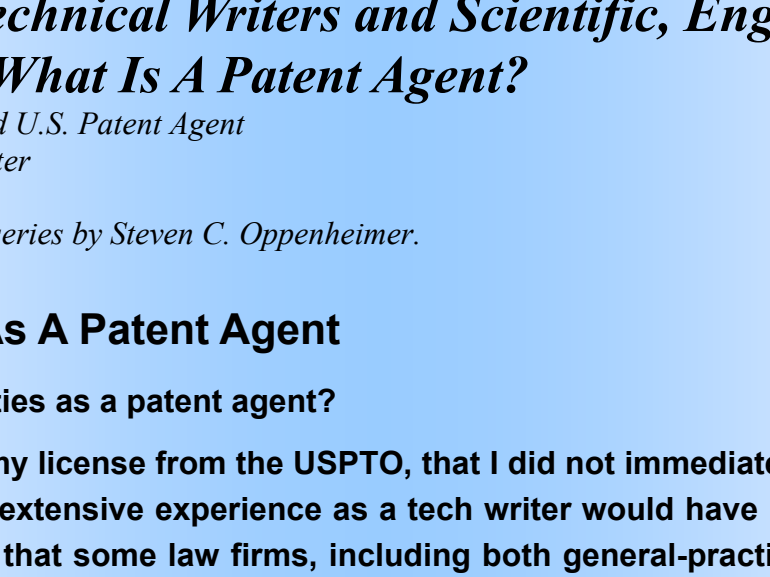
Jon Kessler (back row), teachers, and students from Hagerty High School



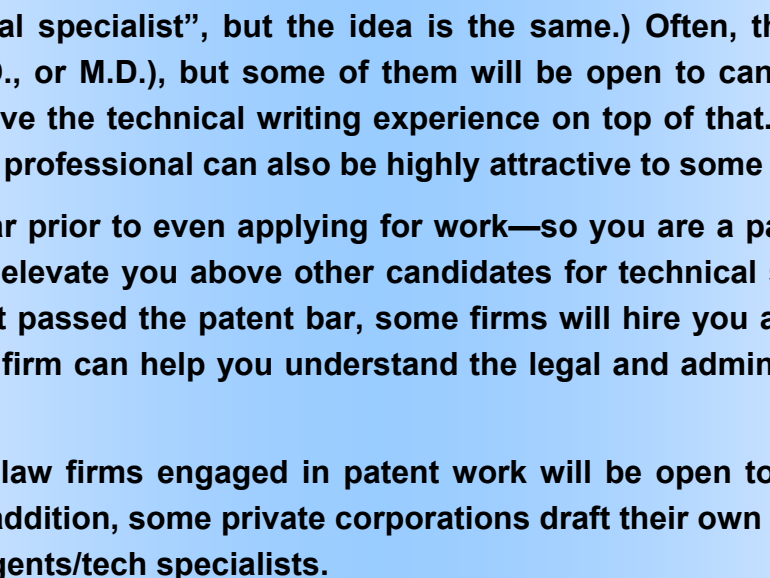
Hagerty High School teachers came to support their students



There was plenty of great food for everyone



"You sank my battleship!"



## Patent Careers for Technical Writers and Scientific, Engineering, and Medical Specialists: What Is A Patent Agent?

by Steven C. Oppenheimer, Licensed U.S. Patent Agent  
And STC Senior Member, DC Chapter

Note: This is the third in a six-part series by Steven C. Oppenheimer.

### Career Opportunities As A Patent Agent

What are the career opportunities as a patent agent?

I was surprised, after getting my license from the USPTO, that I did not immediately land work with a law firm. I would have thought that my extensive experience as a tech writer would have made me highly attractive to the law firms. What I found is that some law firms, including both general-practice law firms and intellectual property boutiques, seem to be more interested in recent law school grads than in experienced tech writers. Partly, I think it's because they are simply not familiar with technical writers; not that many people make the transition from tech writing to patent work. Partly, however, I think there is a bias on the part of some professionals in the legal community towards lawyers.

That said, some patent law firms (and some general practice law firms) will hire technical specialists, meaning people who have technical backgrounds, even if they are not licensed as patent agents. (Some firms use titles other than "technical specialist", but the idea is the same.) Often, they are seeking people with advanced degrees (M.S., Ph.D., or M.D.), but some of them will be open to candidates with a B.A., B.S., or B.S.E., especially if you do have the technical writing experience on top of that. Extensive experience as an engineer, scientist, or medical professional can also be highly attractive to some of these firms.

If you've passed the patent bar prior to even applying for work—so you are a patent agent, instead of just a technical specialist—that can elevate you above other candidates for technical specialist jobs. On the other hand, even if you have not yet passed the patent bar, some firms will hire you as a technical specialist. The experience you get at the law firm can help you understand the legal and administrative issues that you will encounter on the test itself.

So the bottom line is, not all law firms engaged in patent work will be open to patent agents (or technical specialists), but some will. In addition, some private corporations draft their own patents in-house, and will be open to working with patent agents/tech specialists.

Another issue is experience. Many law firms, and probably some private companies, want someone who is experienced in drafting claims and prosecuting the patent through the actual award of the patent. So, as with work in many fields, getting that first job may take some real persistence. (In my case, it took about six months from getting my license to getting an actual job offer.) But it's pretty clear to me that once you've gotten experience on that first job, more opportunities will open up if you decide to move on.

Also, the money-earning potential is very good. A starting position as a licensed patent agent could easily afford you the same kind of earnings usually seen by senior level technical writers. (I've checked the salary stats on this – a patent agent at two years can make as much or more as a technical writer at ten or fifteen years.) The mere fact that a license is required to do the job (and a license that requires passing a hard test!) elevates the position from non-licensed tech writing work. I'm not as sure how the patent agent salaries compare to salaries for engineers or medical professionals, but I'll bet the patent agent salaries easily match what most scientists can earn.

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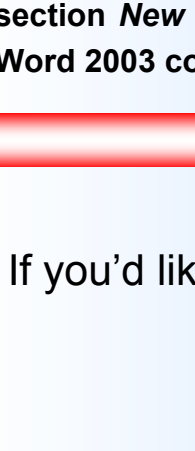
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**Sponsor A Meeting!**  
Your company name and logo can appear here. Just sponsor one of our upcoming chapter meetings. Sponsorships start as low as \$125 and include such benefits as, free admission for up to 10 employees, expo space during our meeting networking hour, and a click-through on our chapter website. For more information, contact Kelli Pharo at [vicepresident@stc-orlando.org](mailto:vicepresident@stc-orlando.org).

## First look at Word 2007

by David Coverston, Orland Chapter Membership Manager



I recently installed the Office 2007 suite at home. Can you tell this article was written using the latest version of Word? Yea, I thought not. Remember, Word is a tool. Some writers have a semi-religious attachment to their software. They'll list all the latest features and tell you why they think the application is so great, while denigrating any competing products. My attitude is this— software is a tool to get your work done. It is a means to an end. The one question you need to ask is "How will this tool help me get my work done?" Let's look at how well Word 2007 does this.

The first thing you notice about Word is the radically different interface (officially known as Microsoft Office Fluent). And you will notice it. Gone are the menus and toolbars you know so well. Microsoft touts this as a "streamlined, uncluttered workspace that minimizes distraction" in their place are "ribbons" with commands grouped on the ribbons in the order that someone thought we would use them. These ribbons are accessed through a tabbed interface. The first tab from the left, the Home ribbon, has formatting commands on it. The next tab, Insert, has things you insert into your document like tables, pictures, hyperlinks, WordArt and headers & footers. And so on.

The Office 2007 button, at the top-left of the window, replaces the old File menu. It is the most like the old menu system with its New, Open, Save, Save As commands. On the bottom of the menu is the command to set Word options. Who would have thought to look there? This is the overwhelming feeling you get when you try to perform tasks that you used to breeze through – where the heck is the command I need?

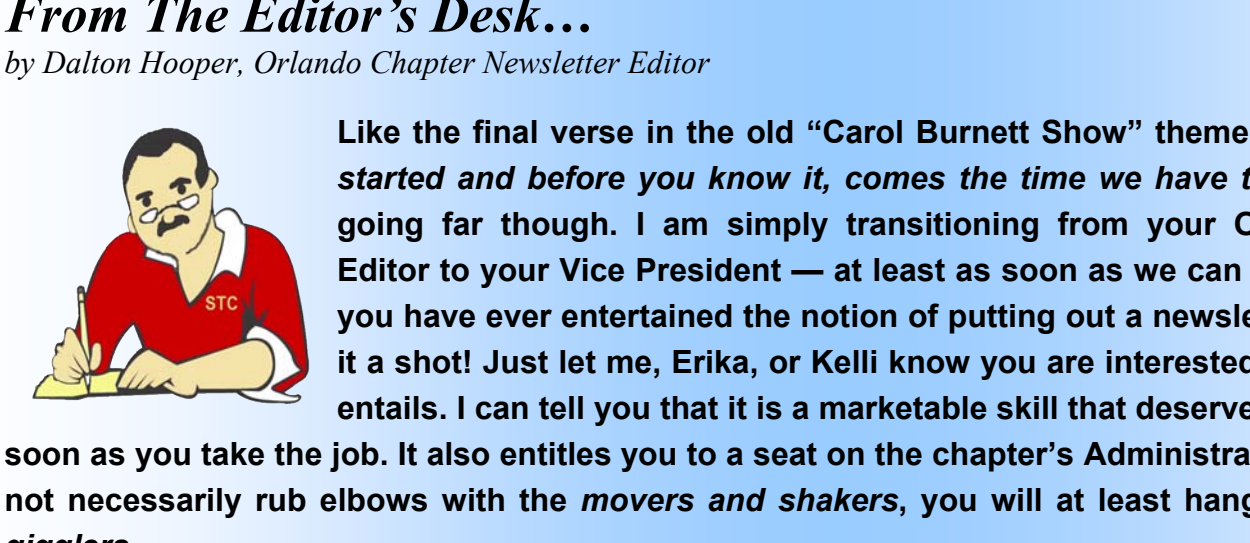
Extra fluff (Galleries) has been added in all over the application. The Header and Footer command has pre-defined templates for headers and footers. There are calendar templates for tables. There is a preset gallery of cover pages. A whole ribbon for just for mail merges. How often do technical communication authors use mail merge? If you are writing marketing materials, then these features may be a welcome and useful sight.

Another major shift is the move toward contextual commands. For example, when your insert point is in a table, the right-click menu has the table Properties command on it. Even the commands on the ribbons change, depending on where your insert point is located, or what you have selected. When in doubt, right-click. And look around to see if any other command buttons have mysteriously appeared.

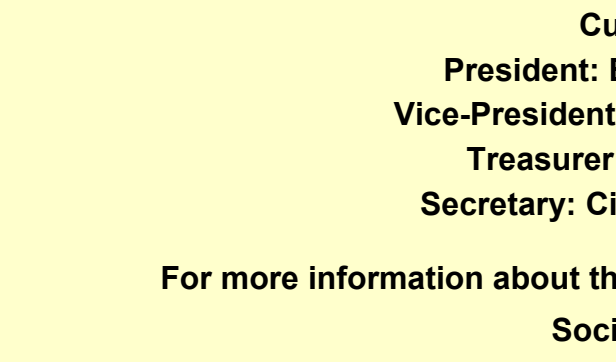
One feature I found useful is the "Live Preview" of some commands. For example, when you click the Insert > Table command, you can mouse over the grid that displays to see a preview of what that table will look like when you insert it into your document. Another example: Select some text, then mouse over a formatting command, and Word will show you what it would look like before you apply the formatting.

Some changes are just not where you would expect to find them. Style commands are on the Home ribbon, not on the Page Layout ribbon where I looked first. To convert text to a table requires you to select the Table command on the Insert ribbon, then choose the Convert Text to Table command. To convert a table to text, you have to select the table, then look at the title bar for Table Tools. Select that, then the Layout ribbon appears (not the Page Layout). Finally you see the Convert to Text command. It seems much easier to me to have them grouped together as they have been before 2007.

Other changes include the new Dialog Box Launcher and a Mini toolbar. In the screenshot, look at the "arrow in a box" icon on the References ribbon at the bottom right corner of the Footnotes and Endnote dialog box appears. Click it and the dialog box opens. I like this, but it was not intuitive to me. I found it by reading an Intro to Word 2007 book.



The Mini toolbar displays in a transparent mode when you select text. Move your mouse over it and the toolbar materializes, and lets you apply the common formatting commands on the toolbar.



Things I like:

- The shortcut keys work the same as in previous versions of Word.
- The built-in Document Inspector which strips documents of metadata when you are ready to publish it.
- The Zoom Slider at bottom right of window.

Things I don't like:

- I can't find commands I have used for years.
- The new file format, Docx file format is not compatible with previous versions. I hear that the converters are available.
- There is an unnecessary learning curve, and a considerable amount of frustration for anyone who has used previous versions of Word.

Here is some help for you if you are struggling with the new interface, or if you plan on moving to Word 2007 in the near future. Go to <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/HA100625841033.aspx>, look under the section *New locations of familiar commands*. There is a link to an Excel spreadsheet cross-referencing the Word 2003 commands to Word 2007. It's called the *Word Ribbon mapping workbook*. You'll need it.

## Why Is a Microphone Like a Breath Mint?

If you'd like the answer to this riddle, you'll want to be on hand for the May STC Orlando Chapter meeting.

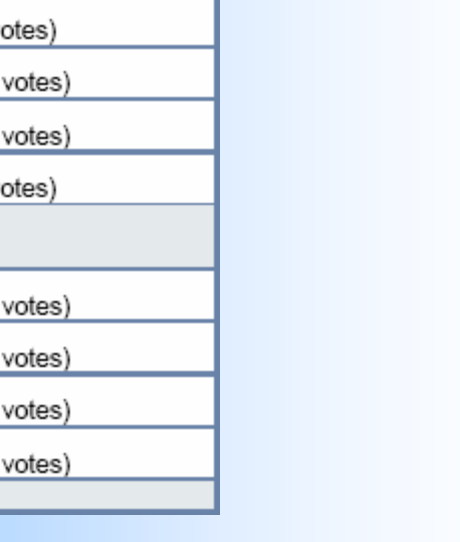


Have you always wanted to present at a STC conference, but just didn't feel your public speaking skills were up to par? Have you presented at an STC conference, but feel you could have done better? Or maybe you have been charged with delivering an important presentation at work, and could use a few tips. As communicators we often find ourselves in the role of public speaker, whether the audience is large or small, formal or informal. Author, humorist, and STC member, Dalton Hooper, will be sharing insights from his new book, "Why Is a Microphone Like a Breath Mint? and Nine Other Riddles to Make You a Better Public Speaker," at the next STC Orlando Chapter meeting. Following the presentation, print and audio versions of his book will be available for sale. Dalton will be available to sign your copy. Ten percent of the gross book sales from that evening will be returned to the Orlando Chapter.

Dalton Hooper has been a member of STC and the Orlando Chapter since 2004. He has been engaged in public speaking for over 30 years, having been in leadership positions within corporate America, as well as host of his own radio show, "Hooper In The Morning," for six years on WYGO. He is currently the founder and president of Words and Wit, LLC ([www.WordsAndWit.com](http://www.WordsAndWit.com)) and frequently speaks at professional gatherings.

Join us at the Winter Park Civic Center, Tuesday, May 20, at 6:30 p.m. for snacks, networking, door prizes, and this special business meeting. Cost is just \$8 for members and students, \$5 for student members, and \$15 for non-members.

Visit [www.stc-orlando.org](http://www.stc-orlando.org) for information and directions.



## The results of the STC 2008 elections

Second Vice President	
Michael A. Hughes	54.51% - (586 votes)
Lawrence D. Kunz	45.49% - (489 votes)
Secretary	
Sharon K. Garrity	38.87% - (412 votes)
Char James-Tanny	61.13% - (648 votes)
Director	
Suzanne E. Guess	9.60% - (448 votes)
Rob B. Hanna	12.78% - (596 votes)
Hillary Hart	14.15% - (660 votes)
Judith M. Herr	14.38% - (671 votes)
Linda S. King	9.58% - (447 votes)
Rich Maggiani	14.41% - (672 votes)
Lisa R. Pappas	15.67% - (731 votes)
Garret H. Romaine	9.43% - (440 votes)
Nominating Committee	
Dia H. Burroughs	16.15% - (310 votes)
Carolyn Kelley Klingler	28.33% - (544 votes)
Carolyn Luttrell	25.05% - (481 votes)
Thea Teich	30.47% - (585 votes)

Report generated April 14, 2008 5:57 PM Eastern time

## From The Editor's Desk...

by Dalton Hooper, Orlando Chapter Newsletter Editor



Liked and final verse in the old "Carol Burnett Show" theme song, "...seems we just get started before you know it, comes the time we have to say so long." I won't be going far though. I am simply transitioning from your Orlando Chapter Newsletter Editor to your Vice President — at least as soon as we can find a replacement editor. If you have ever entertained the notion of putting out a newsletter, now is the time to give it a shot! Just let me, Erika, or Kelli know you are interested and we will tell you what it entails. I can tell you that it is a marketable skill that deserves a place in your resume as soon as you take the job. It also entitles you to a seat on the chapter's Administrative Council. While you may not necessarily rub elbows with the movers and shakers, you will at least hang out with the wigglers and gigglers.

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