

## Candidates for STC Second VP

by JoAnn T. Hackos  
 Manager, STC Nominating Committee  
 Associate Fellow, Rocky Mountain Chapter

The 1996 STC election date is approaching. In March, you'll vote for STC candidates. Please take a moment to learn about Binion Amerson, Lance Gelein, and Larry Kunz, who are candidates for Second Vice President.

Binion Amerson works for OpenConnect Systems. As Senior Writer, he writes, edits, and illustrates hardcopy and online documentation for hardware and software. Binion earlier worked for the Smithsonian, conducting ecological research. His field research included writing, editing, and publishing technical information.

Lance Gelein, owner of The Gold River Group, is involved in technical and marketing communication, usability testing, hypertext, project management, and innovative learning systems. Lance appears on the ballot by petition.

Larry Kunz works in a vendor-support program for networking software at IBM Research Triangle Park. He's responsible for marketing communication, including product catalogs, magazines, World Wide Web home pages, and press releases.

Now, the candidates speak for themselves.

*Q: What is the most important problem facing technical communicators today?*

**Binion:** Our biggest problem is membership growth — we must improve member participation, education, and communication.

With membership exceeding 20,000, more members are participating. We must re-evaluate member services and benefits at the chapter and Society levels and look at new ways to involve all members. We must educate through expanded chapter and Society programs; improve our publications, recognitions, and research efforts; evaluate our profession; and enhance our professional credentials. We must re-evaluate how our profession communicates, which means keeping abreast of trends and looking for innovative ways to use technology.

**Lance:** Our members face the challenges of being all-in-one communicators — graphic artists, layout specialists, editors, writers, multimedia specialists, and more. Many are also independent,

learning to market and run their own businesses. Even those in corporations must market to ensure their continued existence. STC can help by providing training in marketing and business; developing programs for the independent contractor; producing a high-profile magazine to increase public awareness. The future is bright for technical communication, an exciting adventure waiting to unfold. STC needs to be part of the adventure, not a bystander.

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## Director's Chair

### Report from the Winter Board Meeting

by Mary R. Wise

As I look out onto another 11 inches of snow here in Maryland, I can't help remembering sunny and warm Santa Barbara, CA, and the recent Board of Directors meeting. From January 26 through the 28th, the Board met to discuss and act on several items, summarized here.

Liz Babcock was approved as the 1996-97 Nominating Committee Manager.

These chapters were dissolved due to inactivity:

1. Toronto West Chapter (Region 1)
2. Mason-Dixon Chapter (Region 2)
3. Northwest Ohio Chapter (Region 4)
4. Eastern Michigan U. Student Chapter (Region 4)
5. New Orleans Gulf Coast Chapter (Region 5)

A merit grant of \$1,210 was approved for the Northern Gulf Coast Chapter to develop media background kits, and to conduct three membership drives and open houses.

Funding of \$10,000 was approved for Ann Hill Duin and Ray Archee's proposal, "Electronic Environments for Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Support for Technical Communicators Worldwide."

John Shipman of the South Carolina Chapter was approved as the new manager of the STC International Science and Engineering Fair Student Technical Communication Competition.

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## Carolina Communiqué

A publication of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), Carolina Chapter

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The Carolina Chapter publishes the *Carolina Communiqué* monthly to provide reliable and timely information to Chapter and Society members. We encourage other STC chapters to reprint the material in this publication provided they credit us and send a copy of the reprint.

We also invite our readers to submit material for consideration in the *Carolina Communiqué*.

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# On the Road Again

by Jamie Conklin, Director-Sponsor,  
Region 6

The New Year always brings certain tasks and events: some pleasant, others not. For example, it's time to pull together my company financials and deliver a heap of paper to my accountant. It's time to gather my home office expenses, car expenses, and mileage calculations to work out allowable 1995 deductions for Revenue Canada. It's also time to open negotiations with my major clients, to set in place the long-term contracts that represent the better part of my business.

The start of the new year means it is also time to get a new daily calendar book, and transfer important phone numbers and dates. One of the first dates that I mark is the STC Annual Conference.

Okay everybody, repeat after me: STC 43rd Annual Conference, May 5-8, 1996, at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, Seattle, Washington.

In January, I give myself permission to start daydreaming about the upcoming conference. Last year in Washington DC, more than 2,200 technical communicators from around the world attended more than 200 workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and progressions. I met with people from around the region and around the world, renewing old friendships and making new friends with people from Florida and France, Toledo and Taiwan. As always, I emerged from the conference with the contradictory sense of being both exhausted and refreshed.

I felt exhausted by the hectic flurry of activity that made up the week. But I also felt refreshed with a new commitment to the profession, a renewed confidence in the importance of our shared enterprise, and a new sense of awe at the talent and knowledge and creativity that all of you contribute to the important work of giving a human focus to technology.

That, more than anything else, is what I look forward to about the annual conference. I relish the energy generated by thousands of committed professionals coming together for a week of learning and celebration. For those of you who have not yet attended an annual STC conference, I urge you to get to Seattle.

Seattle expects more than 2000 of us in the Convention and Trade Center's large meeting rooms. The conference organizers invite us to ponder the conference slogan, *Evolution, Revolution: Changing How the World Communicates*. We will experience the growing importance of new communication and information technologies, and will find that for the first time the Tools and Technology stem has more sessions than the Writing and Editing stem. The conference organizers are excited about their presentations on online and Windows Help, the World Wide Web, and Usability Testing.

Let's not forget that Donald Norman, who has written such witty and informative books on usability and product design, will be feted as our Honorary Fellow.

Do your best to be on the road for Seattle this May. If you can attend the conference, come to the Region 6 Reception—the hottest ticket in town! 🌸

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Michelle Ratcliffe of the Suncoast Chapter was approved as the manager of the International Online Communication Competition.

Annette Reilly was approved as the Program Manager for the 44th Annual Conference (Toronto). Lory Hawkes was approved as the Program Manager for the 45th Annual Conference (Anaheim). Deb Sauer was approved as the Program Manager for the 47th Annual Conference (Orlando). Jonathan Price was approved as manager of Publications Production Committee.

Mississippi will be moved from Region 5 to Region 3. Saskatchewan will be moved from Region 7 to Region 6. Neither of these regions has any chapters at this time. Please forward any comments to me.

By now you should have all received your Annual Conference Preliminary Program. I'll be there! If you come to Seattle, be sure to come to the Region 2 reception. The time and place will be listed in the Final Program, but I'll certainly update you before then. Come and meet your Region 2 neighbors, have a drink, munch a bit, and sing the Region 2 anthem! 🌸

# Currents '96 Conference

by Dick Evans

On February 16 and 17 I attended some sessions of the Currents '96 conference sponsored by the Atlanta STC chapter.

William Horton, an authority on technical communications and owner of William Horton Consulting, lectured and conducted hands-on exercises in using graphics to communicate technical information. Topics ranged from the very basics (avoiding colors that clash and objects that fade into their backgrounds), to more esoteric topics, like why you don't use a hand gesture as a graphic. (There is no hand gesture that is not considered rude or obscene somewhere in the world.)

He stressed the importance of planning for translation when writing documents and pointed out that appropriate graphics require little or no translation. Translation services may charge up to \$5.00 per word for translation, so saving words can save money. (Yes—that's \$5.00 *per word*. We are in the wrong business.)

The most striking point he made was that some employers will not consider a writer with only writing skills and knowledge of a word processor. While you don't yet have to be a graphic artist, you do need to

understand how and when to communicate with graphics.

During one of the breaks I met Atlanta members involved in setting up member resumes in an online database. We on your local job bank committee have been discussing this as an adjunct to our service, but have had questions. Lo and behold, our colleagues in Atlanta have already set up such a database and were most willing to share their experiences.

The morning of the 17th I attended a workshop conducted by Lori Lathrop of Lathrop Media Services in Idaho Springs, Colorado. The topic was "Editing an Index for Quality and Usability." Lori is a former writer for IBM, now specializing in indexing technical manuals and books. She began the session by distributing five sample indexes and asking the audience to review and rate them from best to worst. She then provided pointers on identifying good and bad indexes and had the audience repeat the exercise.

During the lunch break we saw demonstrations of RoboHelp, FrameMaker, and Lotus WordPro. I wanted to attend them all, but opted for the WordPro session

(I have recently migrated to it from AmiPro). Dawn Maxson from Lotus Corporation conducted the session. I cleared up some troubles I was having (How do you revert from a bulleted list to a plain paragraph?) and picked up some new skills (You can break a large document into divisions, each one flagged with a page tab, making it easy to jump around without scrolling).

After lunch the topic turned to freelance writing. Two local STC members and freelance writers (Frank Harper and Steven Knapp) gave advice on the pros and cons of freelancing, getting started, equipping your office, finding work, setting rates, and tax considerations.

Other sessions that I wanted to attend included keeping your skills current, improving the quality of technical writing, and using the World Wide Web in business. I missed the closing ceremonies to catch a plane, but the sessions I did attend were worthwhile. ☸

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## STC Membership

Current Chapter membership: 372

Total STC membership: 19,646

We have six new members:

Lorilyn Bailey SAS Institute Inc. SAS Campus Drive Cary, NC 27513 (919) 677-8000	Beth Hardin SAS Institute Inc. SAS Campus Drive Cary, NC 27513 (919) 677-8000
Carl M. Lewis Wandel & Goltermann 1030 Swabia Ct. RTP, NC 27709 (919) 941-5740	Karen Olander SAS Institute Inc. SAS Campus Drive Cary, NC 27513 (919) 677-8000
Patsy Poole SAS Institute Inc. SAS Campus Dr. Cary, NC 27513 (919) 677-8000	Michael W. Walden 3539 Hope Valley Rd. Durham, NC 27707 (919) 315-3829

Two members transferred to our chapter:

Laura Major 7403 Brigatine Blvd. Oriental, NC 28571 (919) 249-2702	Gary S. Spizzen 805 Queensbury Cir. Durham, NC 27713 (919) 544-5000
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# Job Bank

**Larry:** If we want to be taken seriously, we have to take ourselves seriously. Too many of us think of STC as a social club or a way to find a better job. In a world where opportunities and competition are global, instability the norm, and technology both dazzling and ubiquitous, STC should take the lead by:

- defining a body of knowledge
- establishing a certification program — the right program — or articulating clearly why it won't work
- guiding the development of academic programs that prepare people to succeed
- working in harmony with, not in ignorance of, communication trends outside North America.

Every STC member needs to demonstrate their value. Sitting cloistered in cubicles isn't an option.

*Q: What is your vision for the Society?*

**Lance:** Although more than 100,000 people work as technical communicators, STC's membership hovers around 18,000. We need to reach our potential in membership and leadership by offering people reasons to belong. Some of the most talented and creative minds in technical communication are in our Society. STC should take a more active role in assessing trends and leading changes, not following behind.

**Larry:** I envision a Society whose members are confident and competitive in a world where "downsizing" is common, our value is questioned, and we're viewed as commodities rather than professionals.

I envision a Society seen by both members and others as a leader — setting trends that shape our profession, not reacting to them — and by members as a vital resource in their careers. I'll work to help define our profession, strengthen the link between academia and industry, and give members growth opportunities.

I'll work to get more members actively involved and to make them feel like STC work is satisfying and important. The more people involved, the more we can spread out the work; the more good ideas we have, and the more we can accomplish.

**Binion:** STC must be the leader in technical communication. We must define a body of knowledge, improve the relations between industry and academia,

and improve our education, conference, recognition, research, and other programs. We must lead, and not be led.

In STC, working out a leadership vision is a continuous process. As a Society leader, I will continue the outstanding work of my predecessors. I will use my experience and enthusiasm to assist chapter leaders and members, and to promote the profession.

*Q: What jobs have you held in STC?*

**Larry:** I have been chapter newsletter editor, vice-president, and president. Today I manage the chapter's Strategic Planning committee. For the Society, I've served as Region 2 Director-Sponsor, manager of the Bylaws committee and Standards Council, and am currently Assistant to the President for Professional Development. Professional Development is studying job competencies and the profession's body of knowledge, analyzing trends, investigating certification, and defining ethical guidelines.

**Binion:** I have held most chapter-level positions, including chapter president. Today, I actively serve my chapter as Historian. For the Society, I've served as Assistant to the President for Recognition Programs, Manager of the 40th STC Annual Conference, and am currently Region 5 Director-Sponsor. I've served as judge in the International Technical Publications Competition and member of the Recognition Advisory Committee.

**Lance:** I've been president and employment manager of my chapter. For the Society, I've served as Region 8 Director-Sponsor. Currently, I serve on the STC Chapter Development and Job Competencies committees and have served on the Internet committee.

*Q: What should the relationship be between the Society's international activities and local chapter activities?*

**Binion:** The STC Board of Directors sets policy for the Society; the chapter officers govern the local chapters. Likewise, the Society's international activities set the tone for the local. Conferences and PICs are examples of activities occurring at all levels in the Society. With increased membership, international Society activities and chapter activities are growing. We must find ways to improve these chapter activities.

**Lance:** The mission of the Board and Society office is to support the local chapter and its members. As Second VP, my job is to listen, working with Director-Sponsors to support the local efforts. Although chapters have their own personalities and challenges, standard problems exist — like a shortage of volunteers and leadership burnout.

**Larry:** I don't believe in telling chapters what to do; I believe in listening. Most good ideas in STC come from chapters. They should percolate to the Society level and circulate among the chapters. Every chapter ought to be hooked into a vibrant, supportive network that contributes to members' success. The Director-Sponsors — links between chapters and the Board — are the key to making this happen. As Second VP, I'll encourage and help them as much as I can.

*Q: As Second Vice President, you are responsible for chapter affairs. How would you work with Director-Sponsors to improve service to chapters?*

**Lance:** The Society must provide new ideas. For example, leaders in Region 8 learned that chapters holding STC leadership workshops were significantly more effective and recruiting volunteers and developing tomorrow's leaders than they were before the workshop. Programs such as these will grow our leadership and our chapters.

**Larry:** Chapters often view the Society as bureaucracy, not resource. It's up to those at the Society level to set a tone of cooperation, to listen more than talk. We need to facilitate the delivery of services chapters need. We can use new technology, like email and Web pages, for fast, easy communication. We should review procedures to make sure we're working efficiently.

**Binion:** As Second VP, I'll work with the Director-Sponsors to improve service to chapters in three areas — communication, participation, and education. I was the first D-S to provide a Region 5 World Wide Web page. I'll assist others with regional Web pages and we'll help chapters construct and improve their own Web pages. The Web can provide information to members and nonmembers. I'll work to strengthen regular and student chapters, especially seminar and recognition programs. ❁

## Chapter Leadership

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## Be a TV star!

by Chris Benz, Carolina Chapter PR Committee Chair

Support your community, promote your chapter, and eat for free—Join your fellow STC members on Saturday, March 16, 11:15 am-3:30 pm, for WUNC-TV's FESTIVAL '96.

FESTIVAL '96 is WUNC-TV's annual fundraising telethon. Their goal this year is to raise \$2 million in one month, and they need your help. You can work take pledge calls on-air, process pledge forms, or prepare refreshments for other volunteers. Supporting FESTIVAL is a first for our chapter, and we're committed to providing at least 10 volunteers. Everyone over age 14, member or not, can join us in this worthy cause.

If you can't make it for FESTIVAL, we're also planning two more outreach efforts: We're hosting an information booth at the Page One Festival of Books (see below). On Wednesday, April 3, several Chapter members are attending Eastern Carolina University's Information Exchange Day, where we will share stories of the trials and tribulations of our careers.

If you're interested in joining in any of these activities, contact me at (919) 968-4925 (h), (919) 483-2169 (w), or cjbenz@aol.com.

## Page One Festival of Books

Festival of Books is an annual literary event for writers and readers. The festival offers writers' workshops, public readings and signings, a book market of commercial dealers and nonprofit literary organizations, interactive displays, and activities for all ages. One workshop will be *Writers in Cyberspace: The Virtual Library, Interactive Literature & Electronic Publishing*.

Visit us at our information booth on March 23, 1996, 9 am-5:30 pm at the Cary Community Center, 404 N. Academy St. If you would like to help, call Donna Zimmer at (919) 481-4506. For more information, call the Town of Cary at (919) 469-4343.



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