



## Hopes for the Future of Technology

by Michelle Corbin Nichols

SIGDOC, the Annual Conference of the Special Interest Group for Computer Documentation of the ACM, was held in RTP on October 20-23, 1996.

While this conference included great technical sessions on topics including communicating visually, writing for virtual audiences, amongst others, the highlight of the conference for me was Ben Schneiderman's speech accepting the Rigo Award for his lifetime contribution to the field of information design.

Schneiderman coined the term "direct manipulation" when talking about the graphical user interfaces we take for granted today; he also was instrumental in some of the early hypertext-based systems before hypertext was ubiquitous. Most recently he has engaged himself in studying visual information seeking. But it wasn't his past and his accomplishments that impressed me, it was his vision for the future.

Schneiderman gave the audience a preview of a paper to be published in a special issue of an ACM journal on his view of what the next 50 years in the computing industry will be like. He spoke of the three hopes—which he defined as substance (goals or plans) plus passion (purpose or drive)—that he has for technology. Coupled with hopes are almost always fears, but he urged us not to let the fears get in the way of true progress.

His first hope is universal access. Currently, the Internet and computers are designed by and for a small population of people who are computer literate. He feels that it should be completely democratic and available to everyone. The fear that goes along with this hope is being overwhelmed.

His second hope is global, computerized medical record keeping. Schneiderman feels that medical records should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from around the world. Right now our records are often perishable (they could go up in a fire) and are difficult to access, even during normal business hours. For the patients, there is a fear of privacy; for the doctors, there is a fear of visibility. To move ahead, we must push past these fears.

### Director's Chair

by Mary Wise

We all love to hear that we're great, especially from people we respect and admire. This month I'd like to tell you about four ways that STC recognizes outstanding achievement, and how you can ensure that the great communicators you know are honored.

**STC Fellows and Associate Fellows** are those members of STC who have truly excelled in the field of technical communication. These communicators have enriched the profession by delivering excellent work, conducting and publishing important research, teaching and mentoring technical communication students, and serving the Society. These are the highest honors that the Society awards.

The **Distinguished Chapter Service Award** recognizes those members who have served their chapters devotedly. Every chapter has members who have been on every committee, helped organize programs, recruited new members, greeted members at meetings, and worked on newsletters. This award honors those invaluable volunteers.

His third hope is to improve education about and by computers. We need a system of education that involves engagement, teaching collaboration within and outside of the classroom, and construction, creating a meaningful project for organizations in need. "Relate, create, donate" is his catch term for this new educational vision.

He concludes his paper with a common, but valid plea: change starts with just one person. ❁

The **Jay Gould Award** honors exceptional teachers of technical communication. More and more, technical communicators are learning the craft at a university level rather than by the seat of their pants. The Society recognizes the value of teaching and presents this award to those educators who have demonstrated outstanding educational skill.

see "Director" on page 7

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

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We also invite our readers to submit material for consideration in the *Carolina Communiqué*. E-mail articles and letters to the editors to tigger@vnet.net and stuart-jr@glaxo.com or send snailmail to:

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# Her Nichols Worth

Included in this issue of the newsletter is a letter to the editor (see page 6). I want to thank Ceil for taking the time to share her thoughts with the chapter.

In the spirit of her ideas on peer workshops, what do you think about the idea of having roundtable discussions after the main speaker at our monthly meetings? Several members from the chapter would volunteer to host a table and lead a discussion about a certain topic.

For example, I could host a table about "Information Design" because I have a wide variety of experience designing books, online help facilities, Web pages, and information for multiple media. Then, anyone who joins the table can ask questions or start a discussion about information design. What topic could you discuss at a table? Then, perhaps at one of these roundtable discussions, members

might realize that together they can put together a peer workshop that can benefit the entire chapter.

Our chapter is lucky to be situated in the heart of a technology-rich environment, with some of the best and brightest technical communicators in the field today. Let's pool our resources, knowledge, and skills and share them with the rest of the chapter.

One last note: Sherry Woodley is the lucky winner of the prize for providing feedback on the newsletter. She received "The Makeover Book, Second Edition" by Joe Grossman, a book donated by Ventana Communications Group. Thank you, Sherry! The offer still stands, by the way: anyone who sends comments about the newsletter, the chapter meetings, or the Society in general will have their name put in a drawing for a prize. ❁

## Manager's PIC—Meeting Notes

Synopsized by Kat Turk from author Charles Good's report

The topic of the September 5th luncheon meeting, held at The Kelton Group, was "Multilingual Needs: Global Companies." Companies represented at the meeting were Alcatel, The Kelton Group, Nortel, and Tekelec.

Document size and complexity often determine whether a document will be translated. Translating a newsletter into a

few languages is easy; more difficult is a seven- to ten-volume set of technical manuals, which represent 6,000 pages of text.

Many companies allow language selection on their web pages—but only on welcome or home pages. The remaining pages are

see "PIC" on page 7

## Job Bank Information

The number of jobs available for weekly posting on the telephone messaging service (a.k.a. the Job Bank phone line) has exceeded the recording capacity, forcing us to rely on our Web pages. The Web has no such limits and will serve our members better—offering more jobs, timely updates, and greater detail about each job listing.

You can reach the Web page at http://stc.org/region2/ncc/www/weeklyjobs.html.

If you do not have Web access, you can request to have a hard copy sent to you by U.S. mail or by fax. We on the job bank committee hope you find this new arrangement satisfactory and invite your comments or suggestions. Send requests or comments to NCSTCJobs@aol.com or call (919) 406-6600.

For comments about specific parts of the Carolina Chapter Job Bank Web pages:

- Lee Bungarner, Committee Chair and Resume Page Contact (lbumgar@aol.com)
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# Help with Online Help: Embedding Recorded Movements

by Ann-Marie Grissino

Have you ever thought it might be easier to *show* someone how to do something rather than explain it in words? A resounding “YES!” from us all. Now, have you ever wanted to do this in a help file? Ahh, this is verry interesting.

For example, you may need to create the help file for an application your company is developing. One of the dialog boxes is particularly tricky to get to and use. You can record screen movements showing how to do it.

You can take the file that includes your recorded screen movements and include it in your email messages or include it in the help file associated with your company’s software.

Here are the general steps to record your screen movements and include the resulting file in online help:

1. Record screen movements.
2. Save the file as an \*.EXE file.
3. Place the EXE file in the directory in the same directory as your help file.
4. Use RoboHelp to insert the WinHelp macro.

## Recording Screen Movements

Lotus ScreenCam is a great utility for recording screen movements:

1. Open ScreenCam
2. Open up the application you want to record. Practice performing the actions you want to record. You want to complete the steps as smoothly as possible, so that when you record the steps, you don’t see jerky cursor movements.
3. When you performed the steps smoothly, display the starting point for your recording. For example, if you’re starting from the application’s main menu, then display the main menu.
4. Click on the ScreenCam recording window to bring it to focus.



The window shows that you can record:

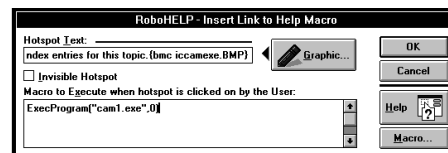
- Sound only (Mic), if you have a sound card installed
  - Both screen movements and sound (Both)
  - Just screen movements (Cam).
5. Click on **Rec**. From this point, until you click on the **Stop** icon at the bottom of your screen, ScreenCam records your cursor movements. Perform the actions you want to record.
  6. When finished recording, click **Stop**.
  7. To play it back, click **Play**.
  8. From ScreenCam’s **File** menu, choose **Save**. Save the “movie” as an \*.SCM file.
  9. From the ScreenCam’s **File** menu, choose **Export**.
  10. Choose to export the movie as a Standalone Movie \*.EXE file.

## Inserting the WinHelp Macro

Next, you want to add a macro in your help file that launches executable files (\*.EXE files). You do this with the “ExecProgram” macro. You need to put your ScreenCam file in your online help directory.

This article uses Blue Sky’s RoboHelp 3.0 as the help authoring tool.

1. Open your help file.
2. Go to the topic where you want to insert the recorded screen movements.
3. From RoboHelp’s **Insert** menu, choose **Insert Help Macro Hotspot**. The Insert Link to Help Macro dialog box appears.



4. Use this dialog box to enter the text that you want to appear as your hypertext. You can optionally use a graphic in addition to, or instead of, text.
5. Click on **Macro**.
6. Click on the arrow adjacent to the **Choose a Macro to Insert** box. A list of macros appears.
7. Choose the “ExecProgram” macro. The syntax is:  
ExecProgram(“FILENAME.EXE”,0)

8. Between the quotes, enter the \*.EXE filename that includes your recorded screen movements. Point to the location where you stored the file. The WinHelp engine looks for the file in this order: the current directory, the Windows directory, the user’s path, and the directory of the currently viewed Help file.

*HINT 1:* To debug your macro, insert the ScreenCam file in the same directory as WINHELP.EXE. When you’ve successfully created the Help file and can launch the executable, then move the ScreenCam file to your online help directory and make sure to point to its location.

*HINT 2:* Make sure you’ve entered straight quotes, not curly quotes. The curly quote format confuses the macro. Disable Winword’s Autoformat option which inserts “Smart” quotes over “Straight” quotes.

9. Enter “42” (for the 0) to represent how you want to display the EXE application. The value of “42” tells the WinHelp engine to display the file fully maximized. Other values let you display it in other ways, for example, minimized.
10. Click **Insert** to insert the macro in the Insert Link to Help Macro window.
11. Click **OK**.
12. As usual, save your file, save it as an .RTF file and generate the .HLP file.

## Finishing Up

That’s it!

1. Run the help file. Go to the topic where you inserted the recorded screen movements.
2. Double-click on the hypertext associated with the help macro you just inserted. The ScreenCam display window appears and then your recorded movements appear. ScreenCam also displays a small window that lets your online help users play the movie again or exit.



To close the ScreenCam window, click **Exit**.

# Web Walker

by Michelle Corbin Nichols

Do you have a favorite Web site that you visit on a regular basis? If so, please share it with the rest of us in this new series of articles called "Web Walker." To contribute, send the URL and a paragraph (or two) describing why you find the Web site so engaging.

I thought about starting the series off with a review of the Dilbert site, but I'm just an inDUHvidual and am not one of the chosen few. Instead, I'll talk about one of the most useful types of web sites there are: search facility sites.

I found the "SearchSavvy" site (<http://guaraldi.cs.colostate.edu:2000/>) after scanning through a back issue of the Navigate! online magazine (<http://www.netscapepress.com/zine/>), which happens to provide excellent information on designing Web pages, publishing information electronically, and reviewing software tools and Web sites, amongst other things).

SearchSavvy is one-stop shopping for searching the Internet, providing an interface for searching the Web, news groups, FTP sites, and more. From the SavvySearch home page, select Search from the navigation bar at the top of the page and you are taken to the basic search page. Then, on the page that is displayed, type your search string and then select "Sources and Types of Information" to determine how many parts of the Internet you want to search.

I found the interface for this search site to be very easy to use and provide very good results. You get the power of 28 search facilities working to locate the information you need.

(By the way, two of the sites included in the 28 search sites that I particularly like are DejaNews and AltaVista, if you want to check those out from the SearchSavvy home page.) ❁

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*All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions.*

~ Leonardo da Vinci

# Beyond Software

by Julie Davis

This issue we highlight Linda Rudd, who works in the science field as a Research Technician at NCSU in the Microbiology Department.

Linda has done a lot of editing for scholarly publications, such as the Journal of Consumer Affairs and the Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics.

When she started at one job, they didn't have a style manual, so she had to create one, basing her work on standards used in past journals. She received articles that had been peer reviewed by others in the field, edited the articles for stylistic conformity, and handled correspondence with the printer, writers, and reviewers.

Linda recently finished researching a book on microbiology. She spent a lot of time in the library, gathering quotes, information on

historical figures, and maps (imagine trying to find a map of the Black Plague). She also corresponded with sources the author wanted to quote, critiqued initial chapters, and proofed the galleys. Her background in microbiology helped her detect errors in scientific nomenclature.

Linda notes it's difficult to find full-time positions as a science writer in RTP. She currently works as a microbiologist, which involves more lab work than writing. She recently collaborated on a paper with four other writers. Linda not only wrote up her own work but also pulled the document together so "it sounded as if one person had written it" and spent about a month rewriting the paper after it was peer reviewed. The paper will appear in the Journal of Bioremediation. ❁

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## Moses and the 10 Commandments: A Case of Early Tech Comm?

*taken from the techwr-1 newsgroup*

Perhaps the earliest instance of technical communication can be found in the book of Exodus when Moses receives and delivers the Ten Commandments.

Without being aware of it, this was clearly the first recorded instance of technical communication. Please consider the following:

1. There was a definite need for some rules to live by on the part of the people who were hopelessly lost.
2. As the writer, Moses had to go to the source and get the information.
3. The source of the information was questioned from those who should have known better. The writer was once again caught in the middle!
4. The commandments were written in stone (i.e. there would be NO updates, revisions, amendment pages, etc.).
5. There were two definite groups of five (as opposed to one long list of ten, five groups of two, etc.).

6. They were numbered sequentially to make them easier to read and understand.
7. Although all of the information was determined to be important, the more important items were placed at the top of the list (i.e. believing in one God, honor they mother and father, etc.) and the less important towards the end.
8. Moses not only wrote the documentation, but also delivered it and made sure the audience was using it correctly.
9. The audience initially rejected what was written in favor of a visual image with no real substance. A second "printing" (the same as the first) then had to be delivered. This was an unfortunate waste of time, energy and resources. In hindsight, perhaps better up front planning could have avoided this costly delay.
10. Finally, the documentation had a way of staying around long after the writer had moved on to other "projects." ❁

# Into the 21st Century...

*synopsized by Michelle Corbin Nichols from Larry Kunz's "Carolina Chapter Strategic Plan for 1997-2001"*

The Carolina Chapter now has a plan that will take it into the 21st century, thanks to Larry Kunz, head of Strategic Planning. Because the Carolina Chapter is one of the largest in the STC, we needed direction that could help Chapter leaders manage human and financial resources while setting short-term goals that will make our Chapter a success.

The Strategic Plan, developed with active participation from chapter members, contains a set of objectives and detailed actions. The document will be reviewed regularly and fine-tuned to remain a useful, "living" guide to the chapter.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of the plan, please contact Larry Kunz ([ldkunz@vnet.ibm.com](mailto:ldkunz@vnet.ibm.com) or 919-254-6395).

## Stability

The first objective is "Build a stable foundation," with these strategies:

- Provide valuable services for members
- Document policies and procedures for governance
- Promote continuity from year to year
- Perform ongoing reassessment
- Recruit and motivate members and volunteers
- Recognize and reward those who serve

Some of the actions proposed to achieve this objective include providing high-quality events with a self-sustaining events schedule, having a policy manual for each office and committee, lengthening the terms for key officers and committee chairs, conducting an annual volunteer drive, and recognizing all Chapter volunteers at year end.

## Direction

The second objective is "Set the direction for technical communication," with these strategies:

- Promote the profession in the community
  - Promote the professionalism of our members
- see "Strategy" on page 6*

# Quibble Me This

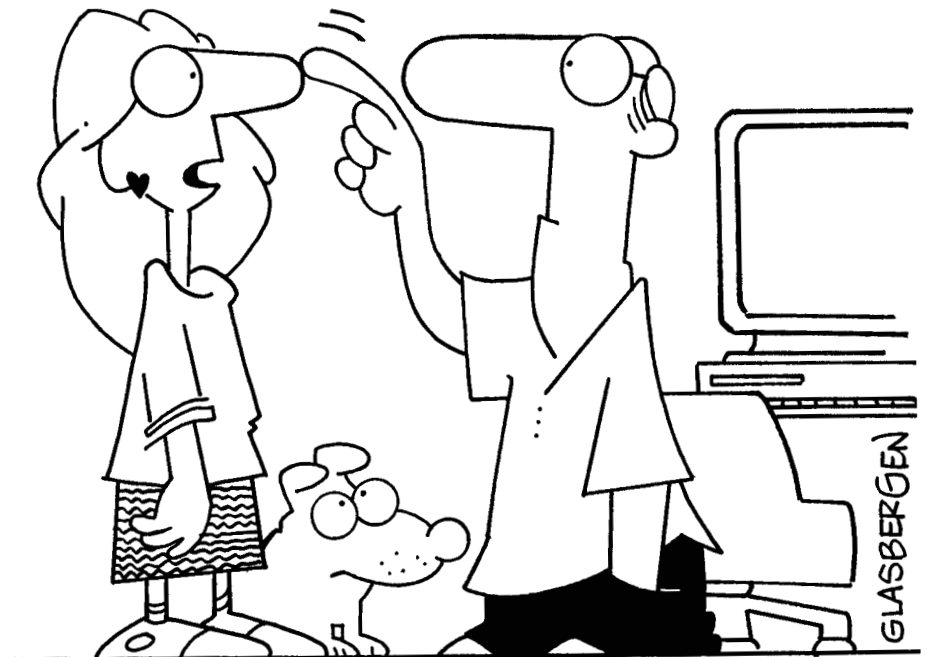
*by Patricia Tierney*

One aspect of editing that seems little discussed in this age of technology is the precision of the individual word. We write "Press the Enter key," rather than "Depress the Enter key." We watch our constructions for active voice when it is more appropriate than passive, but among technical communicators I hear very few discussions that appreciate our language without reference to technology.

For instance, a lawyer is always a lawyer (unless disbarred), but as Theodore Bernstein wrote, an attorney is an attorney only when he has a client (*The Careful Writer*, 1965). The difference is that "lawyer" describes someone whose profession is law, and "attorney" in its strictest sense means "representative." Have you ever thought the expression "attorney-at-law" redundant? It isn't. Additionally, if someone has given you documented, legal power to act in her behalf, it is a power of attorney, not a power of lawyer.

Most of us, carefully instructed in the art of "affect" and "effect," learned that the former is a verb and the latter a noun. This information is correct, but it is also true that in the right circumstances "affect" is a noun and "effect" is a verb. The correct usage depends entirely on the meaning being conveyed. For example, to effect a change means to bring a change into existence. Too frequently I have observed editorial corrections of perfectly valid uses of these words, actually changing what was right to what is incorrect.

The power of words—used precisely or imprecisely, correctly or incorrectly—is incredible. We as technical communicators must respect words as we use them to describe technology, to maintain consistency or style, and to minimize jargon. It is my hope that we extend that respect into enjoyment and continued learning—and yes, into appreciative discussions—because there is so much to appreciate and help us become even better at the work that we do. ☼



**"Peter, you never talk to me anymore.  
All you ever do is point and click!"**

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# Letter to the Editor, Peer Workshops

Sept. 4, 1996

Dear Michelle,

I want you to know what a valuable experience it was to take the HTML Workshop taught by Michael Uhl these past four weeks. It was, in fact, amazing. I can't begin to tell you, Bill Albing, and other key people in our chapter how important it was to me and to my career to take that workshop.

First of all, Michael was fabulous. He has so many skills and so much knowledge, which he generously shared with us. I really learned. Within a week, I'd actually produced my first HTML document—my resume—and two weeks later, thanks to Mike's help in the follow up session, I cleaned it up and got it ready to go online. Lee Bumgarner did a great job of telling us how to submit the resumes, and he put them online quickly.

Apart from the obvious advantage of having my skill set "out there" for

prospective employers to see, I gained the incredible benefit of getting a start in HTML: a skill that is very important to me. Ever since I became an online Help enthusiast, I've been very eager to learn HTML; and I certainly intend to be included among the technical writers who have jobs authoring the Web. Mike's workshop helped me turn that intention into a reality.

I have only one thing to say about these peer workshops: more, more, and still more, please. I would very much appreciate it if our chapter would hold as many of these workshops as humanly possible.

STC is a fantastic place to exchange information. The monthly meetings are instructive and informative. The conference I attended this summer was a tremendous help to me, as well. But, after taking the HTML workshop, it is clear to me that nothing we do could ever be as valuable as holding these workshops for one another. They provide a depth of knowledge, skill, and understanding that the other forums

can't provide, due to time constraints.

I'll be willing to teach one, if that will help. Having been a freelancer for so long, I'm still playing "catch up" in many areas; but I'd be happy to teach something like "How to sell your services to your contract employer."

Having milled around a bit at meetings and other gatherings, one thing is blatantly obvious: each one of us has at least one very special skill to share with the rest of the group. Workshops that impart these skills are the best way to spread them around and help each other. In fact, I doubt that any other kind of training could ever compare to peer workshops. Let's pull out the stops and have a lot of them!

Sincerely,

Ceil Shuman

Member, Carolina Chapter STC ❁

## "Strategy" from page 5

- Promote education
- Set standards for the profession and professional development
- Get involved at the Society level
- Define ourselves as the experts in technical communication

We hope to achieve this objective by defining the profession for the mass media, applying to host the annual international conference, and conducting research about local work opportunities.

## Visibility

The third objective is "Become more visible," with these strategies:

- Gain visibility among members
- Gain visibility among prospective members
- Gain visibility among employers in the area
- Become known as the technical communication leader in central North Carolina
- Gain recognition at the Society level

To achieve this objective, the society needs to take steps to publish an attention-getting, informative newsletter, develop a

new members' kit, give presentations to other organizations, and position members as experts.

## Information

The fourth and final objective is "Provide information," with these strategies:

- Be the information source about news and trends
- Foster communication among members

Some of the actions proposed to achieve this objective include conducting and publicizing a local trends survey, creating a Carolina Chapter list-server on the Internet, and maintaining a database of members' skills.

Many of the strategies and their subsequent actions nicely intertwine and overlap, showing a cohesive and focused strategic plan. As a member of the board, I am excited to have in place a plan that helps me focus on what I personally can do to take our Chapter, our Society, and our profession into the 21st century and beyond. ❁

*A light heart lives long;  
~ Shakespeare*

## Somewhere on the Internet

Cracking an international market is a goal of most growing corporations. It shouldn't be that hard, yet even the big multi-nationals run into trouble because of language and cultural differences.

For example, the name Coca-Cola in China was first rendered as Ke-kou-ke-la. Unfortunately, the Coke company did not discover until after thousands of signs had been printed that the phrase means "bite the wax tadpole" or "female horse stuffed with wax" depending on the dialect. Coke then researched 40,000 Chinese characters and found a close phonetic equivalent, "ko-kou-ko-le," which can be loosely translated as "happiness in the mouth."

In Taiwan, the translation of the Pepsi slogan "Come alive with the Pepsi Generation" came out as "Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead."

Also in Chinese, the Kentucky Fried Chicken slogan "finger-lickin' good" came out as "eat your fingers off."

When Parker marketed a ball-point pen in Mexico, its ads should have said "It won't leak in your pocket and embarrass you." The company mistakenly thought the Spanish word *embarazar* meant embarrass. Instead, the ad read "It won't leak in your pocket and make you pregnant." ❁

# STC Board of Directors Meet

by Jamie Conklin, Director-Sponsor, Region 6

[Editor's Note: This article has been edited to fit space constraints.]

Did you know that we now have a chapter in Sweden? The formation of the Stockholm chapter was approved by the board on May 24, 1996. The chapter has 16 members and is assigned to Region 1.

The board also approved the new STC strategic plan for 1997-2001. The plan was formulated with input from members throughout the Society, under the guidance of David Armbruster. Watch Intercom for further information about where the Society is going and how it plans to get there.

[See page 5 for an article on our own strategic plan—Editor]

In a significant step to strengthening the services offered by STC to its international membership, the board passed a motion calling for an ad hoc committee, made up of members from several associated committees, charged with immediately beginning the following tasks:

1. Encourage and strengthen local competitions in non-North American chapters
2. Research cross-cultural judging criteria

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## "Director" from page 1

The **Ken Caird Award** is a competition that recognizes excellent student writing. In particular, the award honors the best technical article written by a student in a technical communication program.

Okay, so how do you ensure that the right people are honored? If you know of members who deserve recognition, let your chapter leadership know about them! Your chapter leaders know (or can find out) the requirements for the awards, but sometimes they don't know all of the wonderful people who should have them.

But you might. So if you know of a great communicator, a loyal member, a terrific teacher, or a talented student, speak up! Contact me or your chapter leaders and we'll make sure that those great people get the recognition and congratulations they deserve. ❀

3. Report on plans for and the feasibility of including languages in addition to English in the international competition program. This report will be presented at the Spring 1997 board meeting.

Pending receipt of this report, the board tabled another motion to repeal the policy, from the 1992 winter board meeting minutes, that reads, "English remains the language of the Society's international competitions."

The board also passed a motion to reduce the Annual conference's registration fee by \$50 for fully registered program participants, and by \$15 for student and retired member program participants. To offset the reduced revenue of the previous motion, the board passed a motion to increase the Annual Conference's registration fee by \$5 for students and retired members and by \$10 for all others.

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## "PIC" from page 2

available only in the mother tongue or English.

Several attendees mentioned it was more problematic translating *from* another language to English rather than vice versa. Although not discussed at the meeting, documents from non-U.S. sources have more problems due to paper size, type of information, and font style and type size. The latter make it impossible to capture and translate a document using an optical character reader (OCR).

Although translation software exists, it can usually only check grammar, so you should only use it during the initial stages. Human translators are essential for producing easily understood and effective documents.

As a quality-control measure, always have an independent translator check your translations afterwards, to check for flaws that can occur at times when you use translators or translation services.

In one case, a translator hired used more guttural language to produce French-Canadian documents from English, which French-speaking Canadians found offensive.

Two notable appointments were made:

1. Roger Grice as program manager for the 46th Annual Conference in Cincinnati
2. Jack Molisani as the special events manager for the 46th Annual Conference in Cincinnati.

Dallas, Texas, was approved as the site for the 50th annual conference.

The board voted to approve the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a study of professional certification. This RFP has been subjected to careful scrutiny by both the Certification Issues Committee, managed by Chris Velotta, and by the board. The result is a carefully worded RFP that calls for proposals (postmarked no later than January 10) that, if a vendor is selected, would see a certification feasibility study launched no later than March 3 1997. ❀

You must also consider a country's customs when translating information, including the nationality of people shown in photographs and illustrations. Certain symbols and colors communicate very powerful messages in one culture but are meaningless in another, and people in some cultures might expect specific (perhaps traditional) images with certain ads or messages.

Cost and time required to translate large technical documents is also a factor. Many companies adopt English as their international language for technical manuals and technical training but provide multilingual support in advertisements. While they frequently hire local translators to help English-speaking instructors, some technical concepts are hard to convey in some languages. Depending on the audience, simple English sentences might require extensive explanation.

A number of Triangle firms provide multilingual translation services, such as DiaLogos International, which was recommended.

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*Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.*

*~ Sir Richard Steele*

# EduSpeak: A Call to Arms!

Doug Ryan—chair, Education/Professional Development Committee

The year has gotten off to an excellent start, training-wise, for the chapter. As Ceil Shuman's letter to the editor [see page 6] shows you, the HTML workshops given in late August by Mike Uhl were enormously successful in providing those attending with a quick dose of key new skills. Mike is not only repeating these workshops but hopes to keep giving them—possibly moving on to more advanced sessions while others give the beginner sessions.

Meanwhile, Ceil's call for “more, more, and still more” of these peer-led workshops has not fallen on deaf ears. I offer a “call to arms” this month. As Ceil points out, between us we have a lot of experience in the many areas of professional tech writing and communication. We can be as flexible as we want about the nature of these workshops. For example:

- As an alternative to creating your own workshop you can team up with other members, setting up a panel format or just sharing the planning work and any teaching or presenting.
- Workshops can range in focus from specific technical skills to broader professional skills, from FrameMaker, online Help development, and Web search tools, for example, to marketing yourself as an individual, creating and marketing a small business, time management, etc.
- Create a workshop of any length or

format you want—from a weeknight roundtable to an all-day weekend workshop or continuing series. Similarly, you can set the desired number of participants (large or small) ahead of time, and the more technical, skill-oriented workshops can range from presentations or demonstrations to fully hands-on workshops.

- Depending on your situation, you or your group can offer the workshop to develop your own skills and experience, charging only necessary costs and contributing your time. Those who already provide training professionally can charge for their time as well, giving STC members a discount while opening up the workshop to nonmembers for a higher fee. We can keep a given workshop low-key (advertised only within the Chapter), or we can open it to the public and advertise externally as well.

This is not unrealistic because the Education/Professional Development committee has been steadily gathering support. Between the interested chapter leaders and members who have already contacted me, 10 to 15 individuals have expressed interest in becoming involved on a regular basis. Several others are already interested in offering workshops.

As a result, what's also becoming clear is that the Committee can be fairly free-wheeling in structure, with a relatively small, core group of regulars (or semi-regulars).

By this I mean the following.

- Core members can solicit and evaluate members' offers to give workshops, build up the Chapter's contacts for possible workshop sites, equipment, and software, and keep track of the overall list of upcoming workshops (which they'll maintain on the Events page of the Chapter's web-site).
- Members who are creating and offering a workshop will work with the core group to line up the site and other resources, pick the date, and decide about any costs, charges, outside advertising, etc. The core committee can also invite outside training providers to offer workshops if needed.

Along with Mike's continuing HTML workshops we are currently putting together a FrameMaker workshop and considering a short course on the electronic options for marketing one's services.

So this is your wake-up call, dear reader. Think about what you and your peers in this biz can give to and receive from each other in the way of valuable professional skills. Consider as well joining the merry band of core Committee members who can help to coordinate this fruitful exchange (keeping in mind the handy contacts you can make while doing so). Don't wait! Contact me (Doug Ryan) at 490-6927 or [dsryan@dur.mindspring.com](mailto:dsryan@dur.mindspring.com) (or any of the chapter leaders you may know, if inspiration strikes when this article isn't at hand). ☼

## Membership News

The latest membership report from national:

**Total STC membership:** 18,866 (+188)

**Current chapter membership:** 360

### New members:

Cathy M. Brinsfield  
Erich A. Bumgardner  
Richard Bruce Gilbert, Jr.  
Helen A. Hawkins  
Kelley A. Cobb  
Anna M. Long

### Transfers in:

Russell V. Babbit  
Kathleen P. Cole  
Robert E. Vaglia

### Transfers out:

Camille M. Jernigan  
Rajini Prakash  
Cynthia E. Taylor

### Members reinstated:

David A. Armstrong

### Members with undeliverable addresses:

None. ☼

We are not now that strength  
which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that  
which we are, we are,  
One equal temper of heroic  
hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate,  
but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find,  
and not to yield.

~ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses”



# Ask Dr. Couth

**Q:** As you know, many Technical Communicators have discussed setting up a certification program. Do you think that we should be certified? If so, how do you propose that we get certified? Sincerely, A Technical Communicator who is certifiable

Dear TC,

Absolutely! Certifying Technical Communicators is the only logical way to ensure that we continue to get the respect and high pay that we so rightly deserve. Because I have, of course, reached the pinnacle of respect, high pay, and incredible communication skills, I can understand why you have turned to me to initiate this certification program.

To that end, I have developed the Couth Technical Communicators' Certification Program (CoTechComCertPro, for short). After I developed the CoTechComCertPro, I asked our customers to certify it to ensure that they agreed that anyone who completes the CoTechComCertPro is a Certified Technical Communicator. Because I had, with incredible precision, covered their two basic requirements—writing/editing skills and technical knowledge—they readily certified it.

Now, my dear reader, I offer you the opportunity to sign up for the CoTechComCertPro. In order to be accepted into the program, you must complete a prerequisite examination in your own cursive hand (no computer printouts, please). Write a check to Dr. Couth for \$999.99 and mail it and your handwritten examination answers to Dr. Couth in care of this newsletter. I will evaluate your writing and technical accuracy (don't even think of copying; I have a photographic memory and am widely read) to determine if you have what it takes to enter the CoTechComCertPro.

*[Editor's note: We regret that we cannot include a copy of the CoTechComCertPro prerequisite examination in this issue of the newsletter. If you'd like a copy of it, please write a second check to Dr. Couth for \$29.95 and send it along with a SASE in care of this newsletter. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you. ~ Editor-in-Chief, Michelle Corbin Nichols] ❁*

## The Prez Sez ...

Things these days.

Just as each generation tends to grow too old to understand their kids or grandkids, I fear I'm growing out of touch with the technological tools that I feel are inheriting my knowledge. I am too familiar with the way things used to be—when TVs were TVs and cars were cars and nobody thought of putting computers in either of them.

Despite my inertia, our work as technical communicators involves learning to change with the paradigm shift. We thought of computers as digital typewriters and now they are outlets of networked information. The trend is toward spending as much time at a computer researching and interviewing as composing. We thought of text as separate from graphics and distinct from layout. Now these elements merge as do the skills we need. The medium is the method. The way we work changes as the

tools we use change. The lines between author and machine and reader are beginning to blur.

Things these days.

Because of this constant change, the best way to keep up on tools, trends, methods, and madness, is through the type of peer workshops we are advocating in STC. This idea of peer workshops is growing in popularity and enthusiasm.

If you have an expertise that deserves such visibility, contact me or the Education/Professional Development committee chair, Doug Ryan, and let's talk about how you can do a seminar. This is one way to establish yourself as the expert in this area.

We think that the best talent is right here in our chapter. So don't just think about what seminars you can attend; think about what seminars you can lead. ❁

## chapter leadership

### President

Bill Albing  
kgbill@aol.com  
(919) 365-2448

### Vice President

Mike Uhl  
mikeuhl@nando.net  
(919) 541-4283

### Treasurer

Jeanne Ferneyhough  
jeanne@unx.sas.com  
(919) 677-8000 x. 6480

### Secretary

Pat Moell  
saspgm@unx.sas.com  
(919) 677-8000

### Immediate Past President

Diane Feldman  
feldmand@smtp.wg.com

### Director-Sponsor

Mary Wise  
Mary\_Wise@manu.com  
(301) 984-5436

### Membership

Kathy McKenzie  
khmck@aol.com  
(919) 572-1137

### Programs Manager

Open (Mike Uhl is acting chair.)

### Job Bank Manager

Lee Bumgarner  
jlbumgar@aol.com  
(919) 829-0258

### Hospitality Manager

Gary Spizizen  
spizizen@imonics.com  
(919) 544-5000

### Public Relations

Christopher Benz  
cjbenez@aol.com  
(919) 248-2169

### Nominating

Open

### Education/Professional Development Chair

Doug Ryan  
dsryan@mindspring.com  
(919) 490-6927

### Strategic Planning

Larry Kunz  
ldkunz@vnet.ibm.com  
(919) 254-6395

## Chapter starts program year with annual picnic

*by Mike Uhl, Vice President and acting Program Chair*

The Carolina's program schedule got off to a late start this year due to Hurricane Fran's rumble through the area. Chapter members gathered at Lake Crabtree County Park on October 10. It was comfortably cool and though darkness came quickly, we still had plenty of time for business *and* pleasure. New members of the chapter and prospective members had an opportunity to mingle and see why so many are active members of STC.

As part of this meeting, I presented Certificates of Achievement to the members of the 1995-1996 Job Bank: Susan Booker, Lee Bumgarer, Richard Evans, and Jodi Pollock. Led by Jodi, last year's Job Bank team set up an automated telephone messaging system, established a set of Web pages devoted to employment information, and hosted an excellent program at the Summer Conference. Indeed, they set a standard in performance against which we can all measure our degree of achievement. ❁

# Coming Attractions

## Lecture at NCSU

Dr. Steve Cunningham, president of SIGCHI.

Monday, November 21, 1996, 4 p.m.

Contact: Caroline Wiggs for more information

## December STC Meeting

Instead of a social, we decided to have a progression of Employment topics.

Thursday, December 12, 6:30pm at Tomkins Hall on NCSU campus (tentatively)

## Monthly Meeting Notice

**What:** Tour and Technology Demonstrations at US EPA's Scientific Visualization Center. Michael Uhl will conduct demonstrations and tours of the Center's technical capabilities and role in supporting EPA's mission.

**Where:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Research Center, B-wing. On the corner of Alexander Drive and Highway 54 in RTP. Go to the Visitor's Entrance.

**When:** Thursday, November 14, 1996, 6:00 p.m.

**Contact:** Mike Uhl at 544-0951 for more information.

 **society for technical communication**  
Carolina Chapter - Central North Carolina

c/o Michelle Corbin Nichols  
100 Romaine Court  
Cary, NC 27513

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**