

Days Gone By: A Look Into Our Past

by Michael Andrew Uhl, Vice President, Carolina Chapter, STC

The venerable Larry Kunz recently dug into the Chapter archives for old documents, including some of the correspondence among Chapter leaders, for the current Chapter leaders to examine. For those who don't know, Larry is a former Chapter president and Region 2 director-sponsor. Atypically of current leaders, he bridges both the modern world of technical communication and its older paradigm ('the typewriter epoch'), though I must quickly point out that this in no way implies he once roamed the earth with Neanderthals.

I hope to lead an effort to document our Chapter's history. Larry has promised to help me interview folks who helped form the Carolina Chapter. From them we can build the foundation of that history. I've begun my effort by looking at some correspondence between Chapter leaders during the 1970s and 1980s. I'd like to share some of my immediate impressions.

With the advent of the PC and desktop publishing, technical communication exploded in growth and changed dramatically. The Carolina Chapter changed right along with these enhancements, if not, a bit faster. In 1987, STC had about 10,000 members. Now it has almost 20,000. Similarly, the Carolina Chapter has grown. I don't have exact figures, but based on newsletters from the 1980s and 1990s, we've added well over a 100 members since the 1987-88 year.

The documents I have do not reveal much about the membership makeup, but I can distinguish a lot about our Chapter leaders. For example, the average age of current Chapter leaders is lower, by at least 10 years. We also have far fewer local

university faculty acting as leaders or as speakers at programs.

For example, at the February 1985 meeting, Professor David J. Bolter, from the Department of Classics at UNC, spoke about his excellent book, *Turing's Man*. I know it was excellent because I had read it while a graduate student studying cognitive science. Also, Dr. Edmund P. Dandridge, Jr., then associate professor of English at NCSU, was an important Chapter leader.

Also, larger companies such as IBM, CP&L, and SAS constituted the Chapter. Now, many smaller firms do. Austin Farrel was an important Chapter leader in the late 1970s, when IBM dominated the Chapter. CP&L members led the Chapter in the mid 1980s, and SAS took over in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Corporate domination had the advantage of better sponsorship, but probably narrowed the Chapter's view of the profession as a whole.

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Looking Ahead of Us

by Kathryn L. Turk and Michelle Corbin Nichols

Because this is the start of a brand new calendar year, we thought it would be interesting to check in with some of the Chapter leaders. We wanted to get a feel for where we have been and where we are going.

We asked Bill Albing (President), Michael Uhl (Vice-president), Larry Kunz (Strategic Planner), Kathy McKenzie (Membership Manager), Lee Bumgarner (Job Bank Manager), and Michelle Corbin Nichols (Newsletter Editor) these questions:

- Now that half of the STC year has passed and we're about to embark on a new calendar year, what are your goals for the chapter?
- What do you enjoy most about being a chapter leader? What do you find most frustrating?

Surprisingly, many of the leaders' comments about the Chapter and each other were similar, with these themes emerging:

- The Chapter has a strong set of members, but their talents and knowledge are untapped because of a lack of engagement. Also, members do not take advantage of the opportunities the Chapter provides.

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carolina communiqué

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The Carolina Chapter publishes the *Carolina Communiqué* bimonthly to provide reliable and timely information to Chapter and Society members. We encourage other STC chapters to reprint the material in this publication (with the exception of the cartoon) as long as they credit us and send a copy of the reprint.

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 or send snailmail to:

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Submission Deadlines

Articles are due the 1st of every month. Currently planning the following issues:

- March/April
- May/June

Her Nichols Worth

I've been asking for feedback from the moment I took over as newsletter editor. Of the people who have approached me, the common theme is "We want it every month." I hear you and I am working to collect additional articles each month so that I can have a stockpile of potential articles waiting for me to use. I am hoping to have the newsletter published monthly by the beginning of the new STC year, which will be July 1997.

I hope you are reading the newsletter carefully each month, as we are stocking it full of humor, surprises, and chances to get cool stuff. (Yes, that's a technical term.)

Win Free Admission to the HTML and WinHelp Developers Conference

by Michelle Corbin Nichols

In April, a company called Help University, Inc. is bringing an HTML and WinHelp Developers Conference to our backyard in Chapel Hill. Because STC members represent the conference's primary audience, the President of Help University, Alec Sonenthal is providing our Chapter with two free admissions to the conference and one free booth at the vendors exhibit and reception.

At one of the Chapter board meetings, we agreed that these two free admissions should be raffled off to our members. After a little cajoling by one newsletter editor

We really want you to get involved and let us know what you think and we're trying to find new and creative ways of achieving that goal.

Oh, yeah, by the way: At the November monthly meeting Penelope Foss won the door prize for the evening, which was a book titled *10 Secrets of Web Success*. Also, Michael Harvey provided the newsletter staff with feedback about the newsletter and is now the proud owner of *The HTML Programmer's Reference*. Both books were donated by Ventana Communications Group in support of the STC. ☼

(that's me, don't you know), we agreed that in order to qualify for the raffle, you must submit a feature article for the newsletter. Michael Uhl's article on page 1 or Regina Caldanaro's article on page 6 are two good examples of feature articles. If you would like to write an article, but need help coming up with an idea, contact Chris Benz (cjbenz@unforgettable.com or 572-1104).

To qualify for the raffle, you must submit your articles by February 7, 1997. Send the articles to me via e-mail (tigger@vnet.net) or give me a call (544-4940, x1249) to arrange another delivery mechanism. ☼

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. 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 (jlbumgar@aol.com)
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Are Help Authors the Best Choice for Web Publishing Projects?

by Ann-Marie Grissino, Principal of Keypoint Consultants, a documentation and media design firm. You can reach her at keypoint@ral.mindspring.com.

Companies are requesting that their publications managers, who are stretched to the limit in managing hardcopy and Help development, now find someone who can create Web-based documentation. These managers are grappling with the question of whether their current Help authors are the best choice for this new venue.

In this article, I'll describe the similarities and differences between Help and Web page development. The technology for Web page development is changing so fast, that information printed in the Fall may be outdated by now. Similarities and differences listed here will most likely change soon.

Hypertext in Help and HTML

Help authors already have a rich understanding of hypertext, topic determination, and organizational structure. These concepts are intrinsic to both help and HTML files. Because Help authors have been working in hypertext for some time, they'll have a leg up on the new HTML authors you might bring on board.

One of the most serious complaints about earlier Help systems was the ability to "get lost." Studies found that Help users (1) preferred less than six jumps in one topic, (2) needed to know where they were in the Help hierarchy at all times, and (3) wanted to be able to jump to the main contents from any location.

Help authors bring the solutions to these issues to the Web development table. One often hears about getting "lost in space" when surfing the Internet. While this may be entertaining to some in certain situations, this may be frustrating when attempting to find specific answers quickly and efficiently. Previous Help authors soon see that the navigational references, "home buttons," and the "less-is-better" concept they used to create Help systems are desperately needed in Web pages, too.

Hyper-Graphic Links

With Help, authors can define an area on an image that becomes a link to another topic. These are called "hotspots." With HTML files, authors create image maps, which reside on the server.

Rather than develop image maps, many authors now create tables where cells, which contain individual graphical elements, combine to appear as a single larger graphic.

On the image map or table, the author can select an area that becomes a link to another topic.

Although learning the intricacies of Web tables can be tricky, the use of links on images is nothing new to Help authors.

Varying Window Types

With Help, authors can create any number of window types, based on main windows, secondary windows, or popup windows. Authors can define the size, colors, and initial display location of those windows.

On the other hand, Web authors create HTML files that display in and are controlled by the browser. Colors can be specified for HTML files, but certainly not as easily as with Help windows. The browser also controls the initial display location and window size.

Popup Windows

Another disturbing limitation is the omission of popups from HTML. Oh, my. What is a Help author to do?

Popups have become a standard way to handle glossary terms, expanded notations, graphic enlargements, and much more in Help. Help authors will need to rethink how to present information that used to work well in popups.

But, wait a few weeks and you may see information about how to simulate popups in HTML!

Summary

So, will our current Help authors be able to jump into the Web fray and produce quality documentation quickly?

Absolutely. *They* are your best bet. ❁

EduSpeak: We're On a Roll!

by Doug Ryan, Education Committee Chair

The momentum continues. Not only does the Education and Training Committee's e-mail list now top 25, but the group has held its first meeting.

On Thursday, November 21st, 12 intrepid individuals stayed after the regular Chapter meeting to be present at the true birth of the Committee (*and* to take home Gary Spizzen's excellent brownies).

You'll recall from the last issue that our plan is to get individuals or groups to give peer workshops on subjects of interest to Chapter members.

The regular members of the Education and Training Committee are to function as a core group to recruit presenters and to act as a resource for those presenters.

So...the main agenda item for the first meeting was to work out in more detail how this core group could best function (i.e., with maximum division of labor and minimum duplication of it). I listed the main tasks that I thought the Committee must do, and, after 30 minutes of open discussion, we came up with the following ideas.

There are enough people interested that the Committee can consist of these 3 working groups, which together cover the main steps in creating and presenting a workshop:

- (1) recruiting and coordinating
- (2) providing resources
- (3) advising

Recruiting and Coordinating Workshops Group

This group will continue to identify topics attracting the greatest interest and recruit individuals or groups to give workshops on them. It is the overall coordinating group: its members can bring together different individuals interested in giving a workshop and can evaluate workshop proposals. It is also responsible for maintaining the official schedule of upcoming workshops on the Chapter's Web site.

see "EduSpeak" on page 6

Hands-On, Real-Life Skills: The 1997 Summer Conference

by Elizabeth Brownrigg

At the crack of dawn one morning not too long ago, the colorful yet modest band of technical communicators known as the Summer Conference Program Committee gathered in the conveniently located offices of PDR to hatch their plans for the 1997 Summer Conference. Our mission, which we chose to accept: to create a conference that

1. Offers information you can actually use.
2. The very next day.
3. At your job.

In other words, we focused our planning on the acquisition of real, usable skills, the definition of "real" and "usable" being left up to the individual committee members. Eschewing bulleted lists and the other paraphernalia of our profession, we instead leapt verbally into a fray of ideas and came up with some pretty good ones, if we do say so ourselves.

Happily for the readers of this newsletter, we had more ideas than we had presenters, especially since we envisioned many roundtables and panel discussions. Roundtables, especially, are a marvelous way for the stage-frightened to interact with a group of people without having to stand up in front of them. So. Here are the workshops and roundtables that would be improved by your presence at the front of the room or table.

Please contact Elizabeth Brownrigg, sasegb@unx.sas.com or 677-8000, x6439, if you're interested in presenting a workshop, participating in a panel discussion, leading a roundtable, or if you have an idea to add to the list.

Workshops and Panel Discussions

1. Comparative Analysis of Web and Publishing Tools by the People Who Use Them.
2. Computer Book Publishing
3. ISO 9000: What Is It and Why Should You Care About It?

4. Transition to Management: What Skills Do You Need?
5. Project Leadership, or How to Handle Responsibility Without Authority
6. Multimedia Authoring Tools
7. Teams: How to Lead Them and How to be on Them

Roundtables

(The Shy Person's Public Speaking)

1. Future Directions for the STC Carolina Chapter
2. Interviewing Techniques for Employers
3. Interviewing Techniques for Job Applicants
4. Making a Business Case for Multimedia
5. Conducting a Home Business: Telecommunication and Taxes
6. Ethical Issues in Technical Communication
7. Resume Development
8. Hiring and Keeping Good Employees in a Market with only 2% Unemployment ❁

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- The Chapter has a good set of active and enthusiastic leaders who want to serve their fellow technical communicators.
- The board members are clearly committed to providing the best possible services to the Carolina Chapter; and they all derive great satisfaction from their interactions with each other and the members.

Membership Involvement

The Carolina Chapter has 369 members with a diverse set of backgrounds. North Carolina, and especially the Research Triangle Park area, provides rich opportunities for our profession. Unfortunately, few members get involved in the Chapter, its programs and opportunities.

Michelle Nichols, Newsletter Editor, had this to say: "I'm as guilty as the next member for not having been involved in the Chapter. To try to solve this lackluster attitude, I try to bring to the board the reasons why I didn't attend a single Chapter meeting before becoming a board

member. I just didn't realize how beneficial it is to interact with a variety of people and how much fun it can be providing a service to other members." Finding ways of getting the membership involved continues to be a key focus of all the Chapter leaders.

Enthusiastic Chapter Leaders

Vice-president Michael Uhl summarizes his enthusiasm this way: "I have a Faust-like craving for knowledge and an extrovert's craving for human interaction....I enjoy working with others who are willing to sacrifice time to advance their career by helping others."

Kathy McKenzie, Membership Manager, enjoys meeting and getting to know new members. Lee Bumgarner, enjoys the "small things in helping members" and "sincere thank yous" from job-seeking members.

President Bill Albing feels "we are involved in a very dynamic and exciting profession that plays a crucial role in a global enterprise of rapid cross-communication."

Providing Quality Services

Each and every board member is committed to providing the best service possible to Carolina Chapter members. While Michael Uhl is clearly chasing the most angles for us, all Chapter leaders are focused on providing the most—and the best—information possible to our members. From the treasurer (Jeanne Ferneyhough) to the Secretary (Pat Moell), to the President and Vice-President, the board is working hard to serve the Chapter well.

Larry Kunz, our Strategic Planner, sums up the Chapter leaders' commitment to providing the best quality service this way: "I'd like to see our chapter recognized as *the* information source and *the* trend-setter for technical communication in our area—by members, by nonmembers who are in the profession, and by the general public. We can move toward this goal by having excellent information events (conferences, programs, seminars) and excellent information outlets (newsletter, Web site, job line). We're headed in the right direction, but we have a long way to go." ❁

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NCSU began its Master of Science program in Technical Communication in the Fall of 1988. This was as good as any boundary marker between the technical communication epochs. It signaled the trend toward formalizing the profession, toward developing theories of technical communication, as opposed to flying by the seat of our pants. I'll not judge the program now, but this new approach comes as the literary part of technical communication is receding. That is not to say that modern technical communicators don't love words or great writing. However, the demands of new technologies on our time have de-emphasized the literary aspects of our work. In the archives, the transition from typewritten letters to e-mail, and the content therein, reveals this trend.

Other characteristics of the Chapter in the past include more meetings at peoples' homes, more programs on local university campuses, and closer cooperation with the Piedmont Chapter. Some things haven't changed much. The Chapter's December meeting has been a social event. For example, on December 8, 1982, the Chapter meeting was a party at Adelaide and Austin Farrell's house.

A key goal of writing this history is to recognize the achievements and hard work of our predecessors. While it is easy to remember Austin Farrell and Dr. Dandridge, many others have faded into anonymity. Pat Poppleton Silva, our treasurer last year, was a chapter leader as early as 1984. I had no idea she was a longtime leader until I looked back through the archives. I regret that she has elected to pursue other interests and is no longer an STC member.

If you are a longtime Carolina Chapter member or know someone who is, please let them know that Larry and I are working on a Chapter history. Please call me at 919-541-4283 or send e-mail to mikeuhl@mindspring.com. ❁

Quibble Me This

by Patricia Tierney

"Dictionaries are like watches; the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true." A perceptive observation by English lexicographer Samuel Johnson, over 200 years ago, that English is always changing and dictionaries of English vary in their mastery of it.

Johnson's renowned 1755 dictionary, a labor of nine years, earned fame not only for its exhaustive scope but for its painstaking effort to establish good usage and illustrate usage using quotation. In 1828, American lexicographer Noah Webster published his *American Dictionary of the English Language*, an effort of over 20 years. It took Johnson's prescriptiveness a step farther by Americanizing some British spellings—plough became plow, honour became honor—and "American English" began to formally distinguish itself from "British English."

The Merriam family purchased the rights to Webster's work and name after his death in 1843. Merriam has since published and updated eight unabridged dictionaries of English under the Merriam-Webster name. The eighth, published in 1961 at a cost of \$3,500,000 and 757 editor-years as *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, caused a sensation because its approach to usage changed from prescriptive to merely descriptive. It opened incredible debates among literary people: should not a dictionary, after all, set the usage standard? By what rules (if any) do words become archaic and unused, by what standards (if any) are new words admitted, and by whose consensus does an existing word attain a new meaning?

If you favor the descriptive approach, use a desk dictionary based on the *Third*. Be aware that the Webster name lost its copyright protection many years ago, and only Merriam-Webster on the title page assures you of the Merriam quality of work.

If you prefer the somewhat more scholarly and prescriptive approach, I recommend the *American Heritage Desk Dictionary*, first published in 1969 after the dissension caused by the *Third*, and reissued several times since. The *American Heritage* maintains a fine balance between authority and the inevitability of change.

Your dictionary probably is the only tool that will stay with you the duration of your writing career. Use a good one.

And stay tuned. . . Merriam-Webster's *Fourth* is well along in development and is to be published in the next few years. The English-speaking world awaits. ❁

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A Lifetime of Learning

by Regina Caldanaro

What makes you a valued employee? If you believe the classifieds, you only need x number of years experience, training in tools or operating environment XYZ and ABC (or is it 123, 95, and 3.x?), and knowledge of the Web. Is that enough? No. If you believe the surveys of employers, you only need to write clearly and concisely, to negotiate and work effectively on a team, to be technically competent, and to have strong organization and planning skills. Now, is that enough? No.

Don't get me wrong, knowing WhizBang tools and "working and playing well with others" can be enough, but today's job market demands these things and more. An informal survey of articles and my own personal experience tells me that one of the most important things you can do to make yourself a valued employee is to engage in lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning. Continued education. Skills refresh. Training. These buzzwords and catch-phrases all mean the same thing—if you want to keep pace with the rapidly changing environment you are (or will soon be) working in, you need to be proactive and innovative (more buzzwords) in your lifelong learning.

Look at your portfolio and your past experience. Look at where you want to be. Or look at where you might be asked to go. Need to learn C++? Java? Interleaf? Have you been puzzled about the mating habits of South American tree frogs? Will you be asked to write marketing information in addition to the planning and administration manuals? Are you going to have to create an online help system for the first time?

You could wait for these opportunities to land on your desk and then scramble to learn it after you deliver the product. You could watch someone else who already has the skills get the plum assignment. Or, you could be proactive and innovative and find a way to learn it before you need it. You could say "Boss, I know that new product (read "high profile") is going to need a writer and I've been reading up on the technology. I had lunch with the

developer the other day and we were wondering who you're going to assign to the project." (This is also called political maneuvering, but that's another topic.)

Have I convinced you to be proactive? To take charge of your own destiny? Here are some ideas on how to get the education, skills, training, and so on that you need:

- **Read the book.** Buy the book. Get the book out of the library. Go to the college bookstore and buy the lab books, and do the homework. Buy the answer book if one is available so you can check your answers. If it's hard to find time to read the book, set aside one lunch hour a week to read a chapter and make it a habit.

- **Teach someone.** Nothing focuses your energy like having to present information to other people. You will find the time to prepare. If you want a refresher on writing clearly and concisely, teach someone to read (and you'll feel good too). If you know enough about Microsoft Word to get by, but want to learn more, try to teach it to someone else and together you'll find the answers (synergy, I believe it's called).

I recently took a class in C++ with a friend and we learned more trying to explain it to each other than if we had just gone to the lectures and did the lab work.

- **Volunteer or do freelance work.** If you need demonstrated experience editing, volunteer to edit papers for co-workers (and make sure your manager knows). Sign up at your place of worship to coordinate the holiday fund-raiser to get experience in project management.

- **Take a class.** It doesn't have to be expensive. You can sign up for some decent classes at your local community college for \$45 (cheaper than some books!). There are usually evening and weekend classes. And if your place of business reimburses you, then go for the big universities!

- **Use your professional associations.** For example, our very own STC chapter has held a workshop in HTML. If you're interested in topics outside of technical communication, for example, training and development, check out the local chapter of the American Society of Training and

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Providing Resources Group

This group will help locate and provide the various types of resources needed by those putting on the workshops. Resources include workshop sites, hardware and software where necessary, contact with provider companies where appropriate (for example, with Adobe, for FrameMaker), or with relevant schools or organizations (such as the NCSU Technical Writing or Computer Science programs, or with the American Society for Training and Development for professional skills).

Advising Group

This group will actively help the individuals or groups giving the workshops with questions such as: workshop strategies, format and size; intended audience; budget (workshops are to be generally self-supporting); and any advertising or promotion strategy.

The Trusty Twelve

After coming up with this plan, the Trusty Twelve put their names down as the initial members of these working groups. It's clear that the groups overlap in their functions, and we may well have to merge, subdivide, or add to them over time. But I think they offer us a good, workable way to get a number of peer-led workshops presented this Spring.

Equally important, we also decided that, for now, the full Education and Training Committee will meet together on the Tuesday evening after the monthly Chapter meeting (which is always the 2nd Thursday).

So, don't miss the chance to help influence what training the Chapter will be providing and how it will be done. There will soon be more contact names, but for now, if you are interested, contact me, Doug Ryan (dsryan@mindspring.com or 490-6927). ☼

Director's Chair: Earning Respect

by Mary R. Wise

Over the past years, we technical communicators have talked about respect: we don't get any, we deserve lots of it, we're only asked to "make it pretty." In this column, I'm going to take a stand: If we want respect, we have to earn it!

I've been thinking about this for several months, ever since I learned about an incident that involved my company and one of our clients. We sell a product that contains generic procedures. I have been loudly encouraging my company to have our clients use technical communicators to customize these procedures to support implementations of our software. By customizing the generic procedures, the client saves a lot of time and money, and ends up with a targeted procedure manual for using our software.

Well, our consulting manager listened to me and our client listened to her. The client hired a contract technical writer to customize the procedure manual. The writer spent most of the time in a cubicle, playing Solitaire on the computer. This person made little or no effort to learn the

software, interview the users, analyze the templates, or develop a plan for completing the project! Needless to say, after being seen playing Solitaire more than a few times, the writer was fired. One of our consultants finished the job as the client complained that "Hey, you recommended hiring a tech writer, and look what happened!"

What's wrong with this picture? Now, I can hear you already: That's only one writer! Maybe it wasn't the writer's fault! What's the writer's side of the story? We're not really like that!

All valid comments. However, this one experience left a bad taste in the client's mouth, in my company's mouth, and in my mouth. I feel like I have to convince them all over again of the value of having professional technical communicators work on technical communication projects.

So, how do we earn, and more importantly, keep, the respect we so ardently desire?

• **Be visible!** You must be an active participant in your projects. Introduce yourself, interview users (formally, informally, any way you can), distribute

copies of plans, outlines, drafts, and so on in person. Show the project team that you're interested and eager to produce excellent work.

• **Be curious!** Learn everything you can about the project. Why is the project important? What business problems is the project going to solve? What background knowledge is required to understand the project?

• **Be productive!** Even if there's nothing to document yet, you can develop information plans, act as scribe for project meetings, decide on a style sheet, or educate the team on how you are going to add value. Once you actually start writing, continue to be visible and curious as you meet your deadlines.

If we intend to demand respect, we have to show that we deserve it. I know that most of us already do these things, and more. To you all, my thanks! To those of you tempted to hide in your cubicles, I say, Get going! It's tough, but it's worth it. The people you work with will know who you are and how valuable you are, and you will be able to stand up and say "Respect? Needed it, wanted it, got it!" ❁

HELP UNIVERSITY'S HTML & WinHelp Developers Conference



Coming April 10-12, 1997 to Chapel Hill, North Carolina!

If you are a WinHelp or HTML developer, then the **HTML and WinHelp Developers Conference** is the perfect opportunity for you to learn, share information, and stay up-to-date with the trends and rapid changes facing our industry.

Your \$450.00 registration fee (\$499.00 after February 1, 1997) includes:

- ✓ More Than 20 General Conference Sessions and Roundtable Meetings
- ✓ Vendor Exhibits and Product Showcase Presentations
- ✓ One ½-day Seminar of Your Choice on Saturday
- ✓ Two Corporate-Sponsored Networking Lunches and Vendors Reception

Conference sessions on Thursday and Friday will cover a wide range of topics presented in three tracks: Basic WinHelp and HTML Development, Design and Management, and Case Studies and Advanced Issues. The ½ day seminars on Saturday will provide a more in-depth view of emerging online technologies.

To register call 1-800-801-HELP or check the Help University web site for up-to-date information and registration forms at www.helpuniversity.com.

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Development (ASTD). If you want to learn Smalltalk, go to the Smalltalk User's Group meetings. (Look on the Web for locations and schedules for all sorts of associations.)

• **Find a mentor at work.** If Joe knows PERL, ask him to teach it to you. If Susan is an expert in Lotus Notes databases, ask her for a demo. Most people are happy to show you what they know. You can treat your new buddy to lunch and ask for an explanation of object-oriented programs, ATM technology, the reintroduction of endangered species into former habitats, or whatever it is that you need to know.

You have six ideas here, and being the creative, intelligent people you are, I'm sure you can think of even more ideas. The key point here is that lifelong learning doesn't stop (hence the word "lifelong"). Once you master one area, begin in the other.

Showcase what you've learned in your portfolio. If you wrote an applet as part of your online Java tutorial, show it off. Tell your manager, toot your horn in an interview:

"At my last position I didn't have an opportunity to learn HTML and CGI, but I volunteered to create the Web pages for the Jaycees. Here's the URL so you can look at it."

"I notice that you expect the writers to handle system manuals and marketing brochures. I've created some sample brochures after a seminar I took in marketing writing. What do you think?" ❁

Membership News

Total STC membership: 19,854

Current chapter membership: 369

New members:

Meredith A. Blackwelder
Melinda Dawn Borden
Dawn L. Carr-Seneres
Michael D. Carver
Francoise Fry
Francis J. Hale
Kelly F. Horn
Mark D. Nathans
Patricia Shore
John M. West

Job Bank Offers "Job-Searching Techniques"

by Lee Bumgarner, Job Bank Manager

At the 1996 summer conference, speaker Susan Booker handed out a booklet titled "Job-Searching Techniques," which turned out to be as good as gold. Leftover copies of this fourteen-page guide were placed on display tables, to be quickly snatched up by conference attendees.

Because "Job-Searching Techniques" proved to be so popular and such a beneficial job-search aid, the Chapter will reprint it. Beginning in January 1997, STC members may purchase copies for a small fee (to cover printing and handling costs).

Susan Booker and Michael Uhl spent many hours searching for information, compiling and writing the guide, and putting it into a

very usable form. "Job-Searching Techniques" offers direction, tips, and information for technical communicators, whether they are newly graduated and looking for their first job or experienced and seeking something different or better.

"Job-Searching Techniques" offers direction for setting vocational goals, salary, and other job requirements; describes how to plan a job search, beginning with your resume and ending with a portfolio; lists local and national job-search resources, both print and online; and offers advice for interviewing and landing that perfect job.

For more information, see http://stc.org/region2/ncc/www/cc_joblisting.html, or contact Lee Bumgarner at 829-0258. ❁

Call for STC Research Grant Proposals

by Stephanie Rosenbaum

Do you perform research in technical communication? Are you interested in collecting research data to answer some of the questions and uncertainties that face us as we make planning decisions about the content, style, and media of our work products? You may be eligible for an STC Research Grant of up to \$10,000.

To receive a grant in 1997, you must submit your proposal by the next deadline: February 15, 1997. Grants recommended by the committee will be reviewed at the STC's May Board meeting, so projects can begin in the summer if researchers prefer.

The STC Board budgeted \$60,000 for research grants in 1996-97, a 50% increase over last year. As always, no single grant can exceed \$10,000, but STC has made the commitment to sponsor more research than last year, if we receive enough top-quality proposals.

The Research Grants Committee especially wants to encourage proposals for research that will benefit practitioners in technical communication. Many past proposals have primarily addressed teachers of technical communication; such research will benefit the next generation of technical communicators, but is less useful to current STC members. Therefore, the committee urges researchers to consider projects whose results will be immediately valuable to practitioners.

If you're considering submitting a proposal for an STC Research Grant, begin by asking the STC office for the "Guidelines for STC Research Proposals." For more information about STC Research Grants, please contact:

Stephanie Rosenbaum
Call for STC Research Grant Proposal
Tec-Ed, Inc.
P.O. Box 1905
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
(313) 995-1010
Fax: (313) 995-1025
stephanie@teced.com ❁

1997 Carolina Chapter Salary Survey

by Michael Harvey

The Carolina Chapter of the STC is again surveying its members to find out who they are, what they do, and for whom they work. The first survey, finished in 1995, told us a lot about ourselves.

We found that experience and, to a lesser extent, education, predicted a writer's salary. But whether a writer was contract or permanent, male or female, or old or young, made no difference in terms of salary. We also learned whether we felt overworked or under-trained. We found out about the tools we use, and whether we use them to write new or revise existing material.

For survey details, please visit the following World Wide Web site:
http://stc.org/region2/ncc/pubs/Salary_Survey.html

We'd like to poll members again, and compare the new data we collect to the old. What, if anything, has changed? What trends can we discern from the changes we find?

Please complete the enclosed survey, using additional sheets of paper if needed. Using the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided, mail your survey by February 14, 1997. We'll compile the results and report findings in a later issue of this newsletter. ❁

Free! Free! Free! Home Pages for Free!

by Lee Bumgarner, Job Bank Manager

Need to show off your HTML, Java, or JavaScript skills to prospective employers but don't have server access? Want to make your resume chock-full of technical communication talent available to hiring managers around the world? Well, here's the URL for you: <http://stc.org/region2/ncc/www/resumes.html>.

Your chapter offers you an opportunity to advertise yourself and display your web talents for free! Shop around: You won't find anyone cheaper than that! All you have to do is create your web page or your resume in HTML, double-check to make sure all the links work, and send it to Lee Bumgarner to be placed on our web site. You get an URL, for *nothing!*

The Job Bank Committee created this web page as a Chapter benefit. Members of the Carolina Chapter can place their resumes or professional web pages online for review by contract agencies, temporary agencies, and other profit, nonprofit, private, and public companies and their representatives... At *no cost* to you!

And, if you don't know how to create a web page, your chapter continues to provide HTML workshops. For workshop information, contact Michael Uhl at mikeuhl@nando.net.

For information about placing your resume or Web page on the Web, contact Lee Bumgarner at lee.bumgarner@virtus.com, or call 829-0258 (This is a toll-free call). ❁

chapter leadership

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Vice President

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Treasurer

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Director-Sponsor

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Kathy McKenzie
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Programs Manager

Open (Mike Uhl is acting chair.)

Job Bank Manager

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Hospitality Manager

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Nominating

Open

Education Committee Chair

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Strategic Planning

Larry Kunz
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society for technical communication

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Fourteen awards of \$2000 each will be granted for academic year 1997-98. **Application deadline is February 15, 1997.** Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office:

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1854
(703) 522-4114

Come, Celebrate!

by Helen Weeks

Celebrate with the winners of the STC publications competition by attending a reception in their honor on Thursday, February 8, at 6:30. Enjoy lavish hors d'oeuvres at the reception and stay for the presentation of the awards.

Awards will be given for both hardcopy and online publications. The reception and awards presentation will be at SAS Institute's Training Center.

Directions:

From I-40, take the Harrison Ave. exit into Cary. (Eastbound travelers should turn right and westbound travelers should turn left at the top of the exit ramp.) Turn left at the first stoplight (SAS Campus Drive). Follow SAS Campus Drive to Building F. The reception will be in the Training Center, which is located on the right side of the building. Plenty of parking is available behind Building F. ☘

Coming Attractions

February 16 - February 22

National Engineers Week

February 20, 6-9pm

National Engineers Week Banquet at the McKimmon Center, NCSU. Contact Bob Simril (787-8500). Price is \$20.00 for adults, \$10.00 for all students. Guest speaker is Dr. Charles Hamner, Jr., DVM, Ph.D, President, N. C. Biotechnology Center. Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, UNC at Chapel Hill. He'll speak on "The Role of Engineers in Biotechnology."

March 21 - March 22

Page One Festival of Books in downtown Cary. STC Carolina Chapter will have a booth. Contact Sarah Sheffield (460-4973) for more information

April 10 - April 12

HTML & WinHelp Developers Conference in Chapel Hill. See the advertisement on page 7 for more information.

Monthly Meeting Notice

- What:** "Distributing Documents Electronically: A New, Versatile Approach"
A demonstration and description of how Nortel uses the Internet, compact laser discs, and magnetic media to distribute its Meridian Digital Centrex (MDC) product feature catalog to its customers.
- Who:** David Moody of Nortel.
- When:** Thursday, January 9, 1997: 6:00 p.m.
- Where:** Nortel; Highway 54 near Davis Drive; North side of Highway 54. Research Triangle Park, NC
- Contact:** Michael Uhl (uhl@vislab.epa.gov or 919-541-4283) for more information. Special thanks to Ven Carver for setting up this program.

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

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

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