Shameless Self Promotion
Enter the Online Communication Competition

by Diane Feldman. Diane Feldman is co-manager of the Online Communication Competition. You can reach her at feldmand@wg.com

Developers of online communication: How would you like to:
• Acquire detailed feedback about your work from skilled professionals?
• Obtain recognition for your excellent work?
• Demonstrate added value to your company?
• Contribute to the visibility of technical communication as a profession?
• Establish professional standards for online communication?

All of the above can happen for you when you participate as an entrant or a judge (or both!) in the Carolina Chapter’s Online Communication Competition (OCC).

All entries in the OCC receive detailed comments from the judges about the strengths and weaknesses of the work. For many technical communicators, the feedback alone is reason enough to submit an entry. But there’s more! Winning an award is an excellent way to demonstrate your professionalism to your colleagues, clients, managers, and subject matter experts. One of last year’s winners tells me that her company is advertising “award-winning online help” as one of its product’s features!

Qualified entries include online help, demos, technical marketing materials, tutorials and training, newsletters, manuals, references, and user support tools such as wizards. The Call for Entries describes each of the categories in detail and describes how to enter. If you did not receive a copy or if you need another, you can obtain one from the competition’s Web page, http://stc.org/region2/ncc/onlncomp.html, or by contacting one of the organizers listed below. Don’t delay! Entries must be received by October 6, 1997.

A strong, viable competition is a solid way to establish professional standards and to contribute to the visibility of our profession. In the evolving world of online communication, we all benefit from sharing ideas and having examples of our best work to hold as standards. When you participate in the OCC, you contribute mightily to these common goals.

Whether or not you submit an entry you can...Be a judge! Share your expertise, see the best examples of our craft, and make new contacts in the field. This year, the Carolina Chapter OCC is exchanging entries with the Orange County Chapter in California. Our judges will get to see how it’s done on the West Coast! To be a judge, you should have experience as a user or producer of online communication and the use of an Intel-based or Macintosh personal computer to evaluate entries. Contact one of the organizers below with a message describing your experience in using or producing online communication and your available computer resources.

Organizers for the 1997 Carolina Chapter Online Communication Competition are:
• Diane Feldman at 941-5740 x4245 (feldmand@wg.com)
• Ann-Marie Grissino at 562-2464 (keypoint@mindspring.com)
• Amelia DeLoach at 572-9337 (ameliad@mindspring.com).

[Editor’s Note: See page 7 for an article on the hardcopy publication competition.]
A Review of PageMaker

by Michelle Corbin Nichols and Michael Uhl. You can reach Michelle at tigger@vnet.net; you can reach Mike at uhl@vislab.epa.gov.

This year Adobe provided the Carolina Chapter with a free review copy of the latest version of PageMaker (version 6.5). I use it every month to produce our newsletter. In return for this gratis copy of PageMaker, Adobe asked me to write a review of the product (hence, a free review copy).

Unfortunately, the only experience I have with PageMaker is the production of this newsletter. Additionally, I inherited a wonderful template that preset the page layout, the styles, and many of the features we use in the newsletter. I learned the basics of how to work within PageMaker and have not taken it much further. Getting the newsletter out the door in a timely manner has inhibited me from exploring and experimenting as much as I would have liked.

Switching from version 6.0 to 6.5 was very easy and intuitive. While some of the shortcut keys I had come to depend on changed, I found the latest version much easier to work with. The interface is “cleaner” and much easier to look at. I found the online help system to be excellent and have always been able to find answers to my questions.

Because my experience with PageMaker has been so limited, I asked Michael Uhl, a past newsletter editor and avid user of PageMaker, to provide some words of his own about PageMaker. Here is what he had to say: “I’ve been using PageMaker since version 1.0 came out for the Macintosh in what seems like a previous life. I switched from the Macintosh version to the Windows version 4.2 and have since upgraded to version 6.0. PageMaker has always been and remains to be the ideal tool for short documents that require sophisticated layouts, such as newsletters, brochures, and resumes. I’ve also used PageMaker for technical documentation that incorporates a lot of imported illustrations. With the addition of a built-in, save-to-PDF option, PageMaker has also adapted well to the Web environment.”

Currently, the Carolina Chapter makes the newsletters available in PDF format on our Web site. All courtesy of PageMaker. The Carolina Chapter warmly thanks Adobe for its generosity and support of the newsletter by providing this free review copy. I wonder if Adobe would give the Carolina Chapter a free review copy of Adobe PhotoShop to help me deal with some of the graphics in the advertisements?
More jobs seem available for technical writers than ever before. But just three years ago, the market for technical writers seemed sluggish. What, if anything, has changed during that time?

To try to get some answers, I polled the readership of the Carolina Communiqué in September of 1994 and also in January 1997. I reported the 1994 results, based on 67 responses, in a previous issue of the Communiqué and, in more detail, on the Carolina STC World Wide Web Site. In a series of articles beginning with this one, I’ll share the 1997 results.

Eighty-six Carolina Communiqué readers responded to the 1997 survey. As with the 1994 survey, I wanted to determine the salary range of our chapter’s membership, as well as age range, gender breakdown, and level of education. I also wanted to compile statistics about what we do, where we work, and how long we stay with a job.

For both surveys, I used the SAS system to statistically test the following questions:

• Does education predict salary?
• Does experience predict salary?
• Do contractors earn more than full-time regular employees?
• Do males earn more than females?
• Do older writers earn more than younger writers?

Of all the variables that I tested, only experience and education predicted salary in 1994. An analysis of variance confirmed that effect. In 1997, I performed similar analyses on the new data. This time, only experience predicted salary.

So what happened to eliminate the effect of education on salary? Did highly educated writers take lower paying jobs? Are there simply more technical writers in the area, with a wider range of education? In a future article, I will look more closely at the data and tell you what I find. Still, the implication is the same now as it was in 1994: the more experience you have as a technical writer, the more money you make.

Figure 1 compares the salary distribution in 1997 to the distribution in 1994. In 1994, the highest salary category I surveyed was “Above $50,000/year.” As you can see, that category had the biggest response. Wanting a more discriminating measure of this response, I added four salary categories above $50,000/year in 1997, the highest being “Above $65,000.”

Notice that the 1997 and 1994 curves look similar, strongly suggesting two distinct groups of writers. Considering the results of my statistical analyses, I conclude that there is a less-experienced group making between $25,000 and $50,000 a year, and a more-experienced group making $50,000 a year or more. I thought I would find where the peak salary for the less-experienced group appears to have risen since 1994. I’ll try to determine whether the increase is statistically significant.

Figure 2 shows how many of us are contractors and how many of us are “permanent” employees. Even though employment status had no significant effect on salary, it
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Neologisms: The Key
For those of you that are still baffled by last month’s article, here is the key to all the neologisms used:

- **betamaxed** When a technology is overtaken in the market by inferior but better marketed competition, as in “Microsoft betamaxed Apple right out of the market.”
- **blowing your buffer** Losing your train of thought.
- **carbon community** The physical world (as opposed to the virtual). Also facetime, F2F, and meatspace.
- **cobweb** A Web site that never changes.
- **cubevalle** A collection of cubicles in a large, open area.
- **cyberspace** The online world of computer networks.
- **generica** Fast food joints, strip malls, subdivisions, as in “we were so lost in generica that I couldn’t remember what city it was.”
- **going postal** Totally stressed out and losing it like postal employees who went on shooting rampages.
- **high dome** Egghead, scientist, PhD.
- **percussive maintenance** The fine art of whacking a device to get it working.
- **prairie-dogging** In companies where everyone has a cubicle something happens and everyone pops up to look.
- **salmon day** Swimming upstream all day to get messed up in the end.
- **siliwood** The coming convergence of movies, interactive TV, and computers.
- **square-headed boyfriend (girlfriend)** Computer.
- **treeware** Manuals and documentation.
- **world wide wait** World Wide Web (WWW).
- **yuppie food coupons** Twenty dollar bills from an ATM.

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:


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 hope you find this arrangement satisfactory and invite your comments or suggestions.

Send requests or comments to NCSTCJobs@aol.com, or call (919) 406-6600.

For comments about the Job Bank Web pages:
- Gina Caldanaro, Co-chair (ginacal@vnet.ibm.com)
- Dick Evans, Co-chair (infodex@mindspring.com)
- Lee Bumgarner (jlbumgar@aol.com)
- Terry Otto (tnotto@mindspring.com)
strongly correlated to job satisfaction in 1997. “Permanent” employees were more likely to report that technical writing met expectations in terms of job satisfaction than contractors were. Even so, all but four 1997 respondents said that they’d recommend technical writing to a friend. It’s interesting that writers who are less than satisfied with the field would recommend it. Finally, notice in this graph that roughly the same number of “permanent” employees responded both years, but that over twice as many contractors responded in 1997 than in 1994. Can this be a result of corporate downsizing?

Figure 3 shows the age distribution of the surveyed groups. Look at how the tallest peak in the 1997 distribution is from 36-40 years of age, whereas in 1994, the tallest peak was from 31-35. The biggest disparity between 1997 and 1994 is for the 36-40 year group. Otherwise, the numbers in each group look similar.

The gender breakdown did not appear to change from 1994 to 1997, as Figure 4 shows. Thirty-one males and 55 females responded in 1997. Twenty-six males and 47 females responded in 1994. The percentages are almost identical: 40/60.

Finally, the only thing that appears to be different between the education distributions (see Figure 5) is that there might be more folks with master’s degrees in 1997.

In future articles, I will report which skills we think are important to our profession; report where we work, how long we worked there, and where we worked before; closely examine variables such as job satisfaction, professional growth, and tools used; and more closely analyze the differences between the 1997 and 1994 data. I’ll also post detailed tables of descriptive statistics on the chapter’s Web page.
From *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, edited by C. Fadiman

Ernest Hemingway’s son Patrick asked his father to edit a story he had written. Hemingway went through the manuscript carefully, and then returned it to his son.

“But Papa,” cried Patrick in dismay, “You’ve only changed one word.”

“If its the right word,” said Hemingway, “That’s a lot.

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**Membership News**

**Total STC membership:** 19884

**Current chapter membership:** 357

**New members:** Tim Arnold, Karen Brown, Mark Dumas, Tanya Emerson, Randolph Lundberg

**Transfers in:** R. Stanley Dicks, Keith Stallings

**Transfers out:** David Kaylor

**Members reinstated:** None.

**Members with undeliverable addresses:** None.
## Chapter Leadership

<table>
<thead>
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### Strut Your Stuff

**Enter the Hardcopy Publication Contest**

*by Ven Carver, Ven is Public Relations Manager for our chapter. You can reach him at ven.carver@nortel.com*

If your efforts haven’t been getting the recognition they deserve, it’s time to do something about it: enter the Carolina Chapter’s 1997 Technical Publications Competition.

The competition is open to all technical writers, graphic artists, and others involved in the production of conventional printed materials that convey technical, scientific, or marketing information. Eligible publications include software and hardware user guides, brochures, training materials, magazines, newsletters, annual reports, trade or news articles, scholarly or professional articles, and books.

The deadline for entries is Friday, Oct. 31 (you’ll get a treat for your creative tricks, perhaps?).

To qualify for the competition, an entry must have been produced since Sept. 1, 1995, for publication by an employer or a client. A reissued publication qualifies only if it has been substantially revised. Entries may not have been previously submitted to competitions sponsored by the Carolina Chapter or by other chapters of the Society for Technical Communication.

The entry fee is $40 per submission for STC members and $50 for non-members. For further information, contact Eleanor Moore (919-905-7609 or eleanor.moore@nortel.com) or go to the chapter Web site at http://stc.org/region2/ncc/.

All entries receiving Distinguished Technical Publication honors (the highest of our competition’s four award levels) will be submitted to the STC’s international competition.

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### STC Carolina Chapter T-Shirts

The Carolina Chapter has its very own t-shirt! That’s right, you can be the talk of casual day in your fashionable, light blue, STC Carolina Chapter t-shirt. Sporting a fantastic cartoon depicting one of the coolest acronyms for technical communicators (RTFM = read the &lt;explicative deleted&gt; manual), it is a must have for everyone’s wardrobe.

At the annual picnic, many of the board members proudly wore them, after coughing up their own dough for the t-shirts. The Carolina Chapter is selling the t-shirts as a fundraiser to support the various chapter activities. T-shirts are available in sizes M to XXL and are $15. Contact Ven Carver for more information.
Monthly Meeting Notice

What: 
Investing in Your Future: Retirement Planning Basics 
by Catherine Gillespie Perry.

When: 
Thursday, October 9, 6:00 P.M.

Where: 
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on the corner of Hwy54 and Alexander Drive.

Contact: 
Michael Uhl (mikeuhl@mindspring.com) or 
919-541-4283 for more information.

Education and Training Events

Other STC Events
21st Annual Practical Conference on Communication 
(PCOC, pronounced “peacock”) is being held October 23-25 
in Knoxville, Tennessee. For more information contact Karla 
McMaster, at 423-966-0072, x541, or visit their Web site at 

Special Offer Only to STC Members!
Mallett Technology is offering Adobe’s full 3-day, hands-on 
Basic FrameMaker course at half-price for STC members 
($450, includes the manual and the certificate). The dates for 
the course are October 18, October 25, and November 1. 
Half-day courses on FrameMaker hypertext and FrameMaker 
graphics are also being offered for $35 each on November 8. 
Contact Kay Ethier at 406-1500 x22 for more information.

Education and Training Events

The Education and Training Committee, led by Doug Ryan 
(who can be contacted at 919-380-4552) and supported by 
many, has the following seminars or workshops available in 
the coming months:

- “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Abel Valls. 
  Thursday, October 23, 6:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. Cost is 
  $15. For more information, contact Doug Ryan at 
  919-380-4552.

- “Beginning HTML: Putting your Resume on the 
  World Wide Web” by Candee Hellberg and ceil 
  Shuman, Saturday, October 25, 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. 
  Cost is $25. For more information, contact Jerry Pople at 
  919-834-5272.

- Other seminars include “Online Help” by Diane 
  Feldman and Carol Ryner sometime in early November, 
  and “Introduction to JavaScript” by Mike Uhl, 
  sometime in early January.

The Education and Training Committee meet on the Tuesday 
after the regular chapter meeting (which is the 2nd Thursday 
of every month). They meet between 6:00 P.M. and 7:30 P.M. 
at restaurants near RTP. See the Web pages or call Doug 
Ryan (380-4552) for the location of the next meeting.