

## Shameless Self Promotion Enter the Online Communication Competition

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by Diane Feldman. Diane Feldman is co-manager of the Online Communication Competition. You can reach her at [feldmand@wg.com](mailto:feldmand@wg.com)

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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](mailto:feldmand@wg.com))
- Ann-Marie Grissino at 562-2464 ([keypoint@mindspring.com](mailto:keypoint@mindspring.com))
- Amelia DeLoach at 572-9337 ([ameliad@mindspring.com](mailto:ameliad@mindspring.com)).

[Editor's Note: See page 7 for an article on the hardcopy publication competition.]

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## Carolina Communiqué

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

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The Carolina Chapter publishes the *Carolina Communiqué* monthly to provide reliable and timely information to chapter and society members.

We encourage other STC chapters to reprint material from this publication as long as they credit us and send us 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 editor to [tigger@vnet.net](mailto:tigger@vnet.net) or send snailmail to:

Michelle Corbin Nichols  
100 Romaine Court  
Cary, NC 27513

### Submission Deadlines

Articles are due on the first day of every month. For example, articles submitted by November 1st are considered for the December issue or later issues.

### Points of Contact

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## A Review of PageMaker

by Michelle Corbin Nichols and Michael Uhl. You can reach Michelle at [tigger@vnet.net](mailto:tigger@vnet.net); you can reach Mike at [uhl@vislab.epa.gov](mailto: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?

# Results from the Carolina Chapter's 1997 Salary Survey

by Michael Harvey. You can reach him at [harveyem@dg-rtp.dg.com](mailto:harveyem@dg-rtp.dg.com).

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 Communicé* in September of 1994 and also in January 1997. I reported the 1994 results, based on 67 responses, in a previous issue of the *Communicé* 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 Communicé* 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?

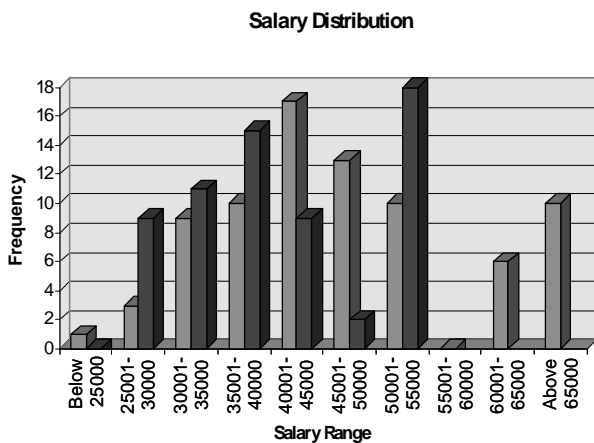


Figure 1: Salary Distribution

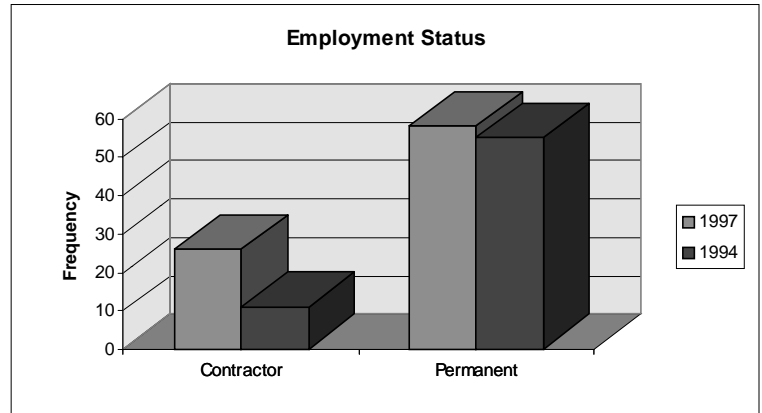


Figure 2: Employment Status

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 salary range for the more well-paid group peaks, but as you can see, I didn't. Notice, too, that 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

See "Salary Survey" on page 5

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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:

- **betamax** When a technology is overtaken in the market by inferior but better marketed competition, as in "Microsoft betamax 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.
- **cubeville** 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:

[http://stc.org/region2/ncc/www/cc\\_joblisting.html](http://stc.org/region2/ncc/www/cc_joblisting.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 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)

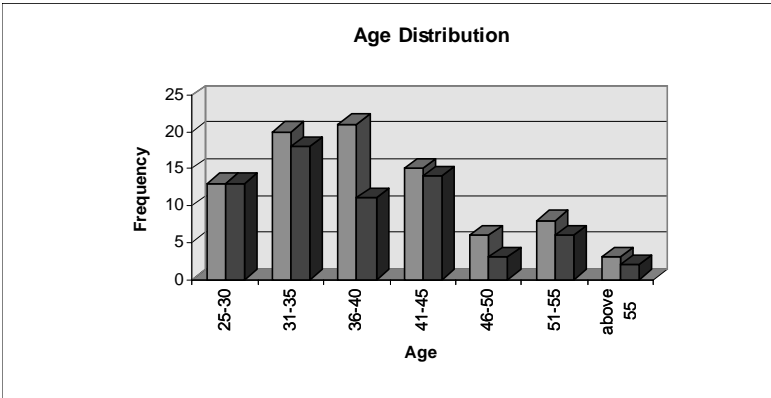


Figure 3: Age Distribution

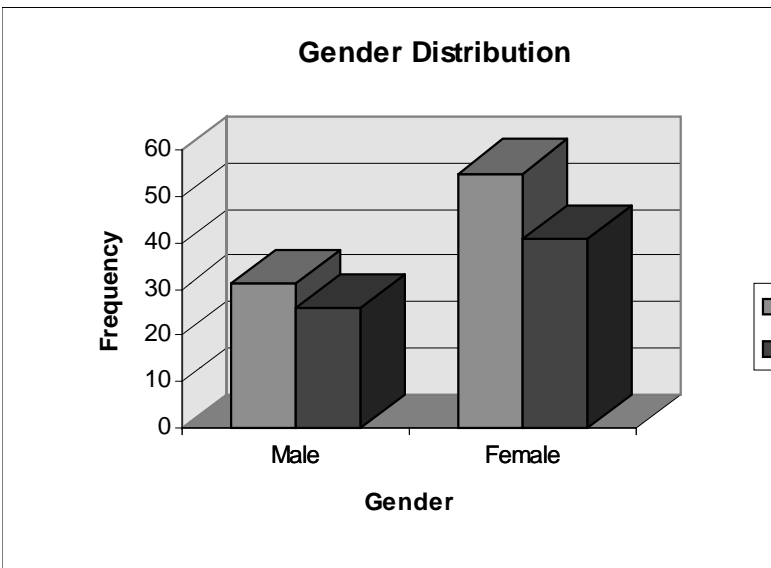


Figure 4: Gender Distribution

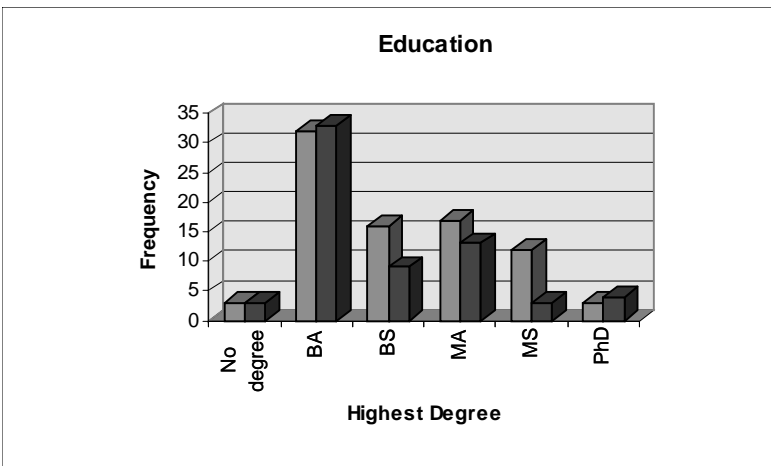


Figure 5: Education Distribution

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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We are proud sponsors of the Carolina Chapter Education Committee!

## 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.

## Strut Your Stuff Enter the Hardcopy Publication Contest

.....  
by Ven Carber. 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 <expletive deleted>  
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.

## chapter leadership

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### Strategic Planning

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# 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.



## 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  
<http://www.stc.org/region3/etc/pcoc.htm>.



### 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.



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

# 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 6:00P.M. and 7:30P.M.  
at restaurants near RTP. See the Web pages or call Doug  
Ryan (380-4552) for the location of the next meeting.



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