

Online Communication Competition Winners

by Amelia DeLoach. You can reach her at
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Since it began three years ago, the STC Carolina Chapter Online Communication Competition (OCC) has provided area technical writers an opportunity to garner recognition for and expert feedback on the effectiveness of their online documentation strategies. As a relatively new competition, the OCC continues to introduce new methods to increase its value to both participants and judges.

In keeping with the spirit of changing with the times, this year's competition saw two "firsts" under the guidance of veteran organizers Diane Feldman and Ann-Marie Grissino, along with newcomer Amelia DeLoach. This was the first time that local judges examined entries in their workplaces and homes instead of at a central judging site, and it was the first time that two STC chapters exchanged online entries for judging.

Joining the Carolina Chapter in the entry exchange was the Orange County Chapter that covers the Los Angeles, California area. The Orange County competition attracted 23 entries while the Carolina competition drew 13, including two from the Philadelphia Metro Chapter. Out of the 13 Carolina entries, 10 received awards with the breakdown as follows:

- 2 Distinguished
- 1 Excellence
- 2 Merit
- 5 Achievement

Best of Show was awarded to Alan Johnson's entry for Wandel & Goltermann, *Domino Internetworking Analyzer Training* which received a *Distinguished* award.

Other individuals and companies that submitted entries include:

- Cindy Smith, who submitted *Current Contents Connect Help* on behalf of Philadelphia's Institute for Scientific Information, *Distinguished*
- John Napolitano, submitted *ChemPrep, The CD-ROM for Reactions* on behalf of Philadelphia's Institute for Scientific Information, *Excellence*

- Nicholas Gattuccio, who submitted *DeskEx Body Awareness System* on behalf of Interface Technologies, *Merit*
- Mary Cantando, who submitted *IBM TechConnect CD* on behalf of IBM, *Merit*
- Barbara Baranski, who submitted *ISA's InTech Magazine Web Site* on behalf of ISA, *Achievement*
- Lynn Remaklus and Lisa Carter, who submitted the *WG RTBench Suite Help* on behalf of Wandel & Goltermann, *Achievement*
- Betsy Corning, who submitted the *SAS EIS/Presents* online help on behalf of SAS Institute, *Achievement*
- Carla Merrill, who submitted *DataDirect WebDBLink User's Guide* on behalf of Intersolv, *Achievement*
- Renee Harper, who submitted *SAS/IntrNet Software* on behalf of SAS Institute, *Achievement*
- Joy Lashley, who submitted the *SAS/EIS Software Help* on behalf of SAS Institute
- Ceil Shuman, who submitted *DCRI Pharmacy System Help* on behalf of Duke Clinical Research Institute
- Marty Tomasi, who submitted *Solutions at Work: Rapid Applications Development Examples* on behalf of SAS Institute

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Carolina Communiqué

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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 (please 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 tigger@vnet.net or send snailmail to:

Michelle Corbin Nichols
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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. Exceptions can be made for extremely timely information.

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Her Nichols Worth

One of the toughest jobs of being newsletter editor is finding articles to run in each issue. Humorous articles can be a nice change of pace, while society news is often a necessity. But, trying to determine what you, the readers, want to read is a constant worry.

At last month's newsletter meeting, we brainstormed ideas for newsletter articles. While I have managed to collect several articles from other newsletters, I was hoping to come up with some original work from within our own chapter. I recently changed jobs and have been working in a cubicle for the first time in my career. I have had quite a hard time adjusting, so I thought an article on "Living in Cubeville" would be appropriate. Thankfully, Ceil Shuman responded to my plea, and wrote a fantastic article (see page 3).

Do you have some ideas on what you'd like to read in the newsletter? Please let me know. It is often easier to ask someone to write a specific article, so please send me your ideas, and we'll see what we can do!

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A special thanks goes to the judges who participated in this year's competition efforts:

Tim Arnold
Mike Bates
Chris Benz
Deana Betterton
Buzz Borchardt
Lisa Carter
Maureen Dostert
Candee Hellberg
Susan Holahan
Ken House
Carl Lewis
Vivian McGee
Bryan Milosky
Pat Moell
Curt Mummert
Mark Nathans
Lisa Pappas
Greg Rakauskas
Mike Uhl
Morris Vaughan
Jennifer Willard

The Carolina Chapter gratefully acknowledges Wandel & Goltermann for providing their facilities for judge training and Best of Show evaluation.

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Living in Cubeville

.....
by Ceil Shuman, an active member of the
Education and Training committee and a mentor.
You can reach her at realtime@interpath.com
.....

Do you work in a cubicle? Most of us do. In fact, if you have worked for a company for awhile and the company is growing, chances are you have been moved a time or two to different cubicles, each successively smaller than the last.

Not all cubicles are created equal...some are more spacious, comfortable, and quiet than others. However, most cubicles cause at least one of the following problems:

- Close, cramped quarters
- Poor lighting
- Noise
- No privacy

Someone told me recently that business owners favor cubicles because they are less expensive to build than walls; they are easy to break down and rearrange; and they depreciate in seven years, as opposed to walls, which depreciate in thirty years. In short, our "cubes" are cost efficient, and they're probably here to stay.

How, then, are we to deal with the obstacles that they present? We don't have enough space to spread out our documents. We go crazy trying to tune out the conversation taking place in the cubicle next door. Few cubicles have doors, and people tend to view our open entranceways as open invitations to stop by and chat. Last, but not least, cubicles sometimes feel like hamster cages, causing us to feel more like "a number" than a human being. There is no way to make it nice; but there are ways to make it better. Here are some ways to cope.

Close, Cramped Quarters & Poor Lighting

1. Move the location of your computer, file cabinet, or anything else you can maneuver to get the maximum space out of the three and a half partitions.
2. Get a copy of the company's office supply catalogue from your department's administrative assistant, and insist that the department buys you the filing racks, desk lamps, file boxes, and other devices that maximize space and produce adequate lighting. Everything you need is there...from document holders to computer screen filters that minimize glare.
3. Get a cubicle hook and hanger for your coat. It'll maximize space, it's classy, and it'll make you feel good.

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"Cubeville" on page 3

4. Go to a conference room or other similar location to perform tasks that require ample desktop space, such as administrative production work.
5. Put posters on the wall that give you a feel of being in "wide open spaces." Nature scenes are terrific for this. Mountains, lakes, an open desert scene, the ocean...whatever works for you.

Noise

1. Wear earplugs. (Warning: wearing earplugs all day long could be harmful to your health; be sure to consult an Ear-Nose-Throat doctor before doing this.)
2. Use a cassette player or CD player with earphones to tune out noise. If you can't listen to music while you work, try to find "white noise" tapes or CDs, instead.
3. Whenever possible, go to an available conference room to proofread documents or perform similar activities.
4. Come in early and get a head start, before the office gets noisy; or stay late and work after people have left the office. Take a late lunch, and work while most of the other employees are out to lunch.
5. Ask your supervisor if you can perform some of your activities at home. If you get permission, reserve this privilege for activities that require the most concentration, such as proofreading and editing.
6. Be a good neighbor:
 - Keep your volume down when talking on the phone or speaking to someone in your cubicle.
 - Go to a conference room when you need to meet with more than one person or when lengthy discussion will take place. If a conference room is not available, go to the cafeteria or break room.
 - If unnecessary noise is going on around you, gently ask your neighbor to lower the volume of the radio, conversation, etc. Always be polite about this; it's hard *not* to make noise when conducting business.
 - Socialize in the cafeteria, break room, or out at lunch, rather than in your cubicle.

No Privacy

1. Hang a sign in a visible location, directly outside your cubicle (for example, on the wall just near the entrance way) that reads "Meeting a Deadline: Please Do Not Disturb." Only use it when you are very pressed for time; if the sign is up all the time, people will learn to ignore it.
2. Learn to say "no." If people stop in to chat and you are too busy for that, tell them in a polite manner that you are pressed for time. Schedule lunch or dinner with them on the spot, to avoid feelings of rejection.

See "Cubeville" on page 7

Membership News

Total STC membership: 21,563

Current chapter membership: 391

New members:

Edward Borchardt, Paul Celmer, William Eaton, Howard Goodman, Catherine Hitti, Edward Milosky

Transfers in:

Chuck Allen, Christine Hunter, Robert Nelson

Transfers out:

Linda Francis

Members reinstated:

None

Members with undeliverable addresses:

Jeffrey B. Miller

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.

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 (jobumg@unx.sas.com)
- Terry Otto (tnotto@mindspring.com)

Don't Just Join . . . Do Something!



by Michael Uhl, President of the Carolina Chapter. You can reach him at mikeuhl@mindspring.com



Maybe it's a competitive instinct, but I've always felt that our chapter should have twice as many members as it does. We have almost 400 members right now, but we should easily have 800, given the number of technical communicators in the RTP area.

Here's a wild analogy; bear with me. As a devoted follower of Jesus, I know that, Biblically and practically, Jesus exhorts me to make converts. People don't join STC for the same reasons they don't go to church or take God seriously: they're too busy; it isn't relevant; or it's not worth the money or effort.

OK. Maybe this is a stretch, comparing STC to religion. But I have proselytized on behalf of STC for more than 10 years and the response I now get in my Christian evangelism is much like I've gotten from technical communicators. Some people understand that to receive in abundance, you have to make some sort of effort.

In STC, you have to pay your dues, go to a meeting now and then, read the newsletters, and communicate with colleagues. People who just pay their dues and then wait for great things to happen to their career are just like the people who go to church now and then and wonder why God doesn't make them rich and happy. It doesn't work this way; STC doesn't work this way any more than religion does, in my opinion.

The road to a great and satisfying career success is narrow, and focused. That's the only way it works well. I will continue to preach about the benefits of being an *active* member in STC. But my expectations have changed with my increased understanding of human nature. I salute all of my colleagues in STC who nurture their careers through work in STC, and in doing so, offer opportunities to others. I have learned that those who often best appreciate STC are the people new to our profession. They tend to be the zealots, the ones who inspire others to do great things because they themselves are learning and applying all that they learn to become more in their careers. I hope that we all could have the heart of the newbies.



Duke Technical Writers Workshop

by Laurel Ferejohn. You can reach her at
lfere@mail.duke.edu

The Specifics

What: Duke Technical Writers' Workshop

When: Friday, July 31 through Monday, Aug. 3, 1998

Where: Trinity Conference Center, Salter Path, NC
(Emerald Isle)

Cost: \$595 single occupancy; \$495 double occupancy

Join other technical writers for three days of workshops, networking, and socializing at the beach. The focus is excellence in writing – not technical content. Highly experienced teachers will guide you to a new level of writing success and writing pleasure. All disciplines and levels of experience are welcome.

The tuition covers accommodations (each air-conditioned single or double room has its own bath and linens), all meals, snacks and a wine social hour each evening, and just enough free time to go for a swim or get a tan.

To receive a workshop brochure with registration information, call Duke Continuing Education at 919-684-6259; or e-mail program director Laurel Ferejohn at lfere@mail.duke.edu; or look us up on the Web: www.learnmore.duke.edu.

About the Sessions

The Art of Successful Writing, presented by George D. Gopen, JD, PhD

Technical writing is a big blanket that covers many strange bedfellows, from science and medicine to engineering, computer science, law, and business. What do they have in common? The English language, and the bottom line of written communication: connecting with readers. This bottom line does not have to do with how hard a writer tries; rather it has to do with only one question: Did the reader actually get delivery of what the writer intended to send? Dr. Gopen's sessions will introduce you to a new perspective on language, offering a relatively objective way of predicting what most readers will make of a given piece of writing. The perspective you gain will give you greater control, greater success, and greater satisfaction as a writer.

The Impossible Dream: Collaborative Writing, presented by Judith E. Dearlove, PhD

There is a bit of folk wisdom that says God was able to create the world in seven days because he worked alone. As technical writers, we often work in groups. This session will use a combination of lecture, discussion, and workshop to explore techniques for making the most out of collaborative efforts.

Who, What, Where, When, and Why: The Reporter's Approach to Technical Writing, presented by Judith E. Dearlove, PhD

Although technical writing often focuses on the "how," we can improve the excellence of our writing by borrowing techniques from reporters. We will use a combination of lecture, discussion, and workshop to explore the "who, what, where, when, and why" behind our writing.

Hands-On Manuscript Editing, presented by Susan Dakin, PhD

Here's where you'll hone your judgment in editing the writing of others. Using an excerpt from a "real-world" manuscript, Dr. Dakin will guide participants in applying successive "levels of edit." The final editing stage will illustrate how substantive editing can preserve the author's voice and feeling of authorship. Along the way, we'll discuss issues in fostering a productive author-editor relationship.

Designing Usable Tables and Graphs, presented by Susan Dakin, PhD

Learn basic principles for design of tables and graphs, with emphasis on their usefulness to the reader. Using "real-world" examples, Dr. Dakin will illustrate common design errors and atrocities and will guide participants in revising faulty tables and graphs. In hands-on exercises, you will practice deciding the most effective means of presenting a given data set and designing tables and simple graphs.

About the Faculty

George D. Gopen, JD, PhD

He is the Professor of the Practice of Rhetoric at Duke University. He is Director of the Writing Across the University program, and holds adjunct appointments in the English Department and the Law School. He has led writing workshops for professionals for 20 years both inside and outside academia, across virtually every technical and liberal arts discipline, throughout the country and around the world.

Susan Dakin, PhD

She provides writing, editing and document design consulting services, as well as on-site technical and scientific writing courses across disciplines to clients in business, education, and government. She has presented invited technical writing workshops at numerous conferences including those of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, Science: NC, and the Society for Technical Communication, and was instrumental in establishing the Center for Business and Technical Writing of the North Carolina Writers' Network.

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Subjunctive Mood Swings

by Ed Savitz, Adjunct Professor of Computer Studies, Community College of Philadelphia. You can reach him at (215) 751-8732 or sg94cshj@post.ocs.drexel.edu

Is there anyone out there who uses the subjunctive anymore? If I were a writer or speaker in a hypothetical situation, I would. If it were up to me, we would surely speak subjunctively.

As if it weren't bad enough that we dropped *shall* from our verbal cache, *hopefully* is hopelessly misplaced, we ask if we *can* when when we mean *may we*?

Mais oui, quelle dommage,
the damage we do
to language we love.

If only what was
were what is again.

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Judith E. Dearlove, PhD

She has served on the faculties of three major universities, including Duke, teaching undergraduate and graduate writing and literature. She also served as head of corporate communications for development reengineering at IBM, as well as manager of technical communications. She has developed successful programs within IBM to stimulate writing for publication and creativity/entrepreneurship; and established and taught courses in design and development of technical information.

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3. Go to a conference room and close the door if you need to have a personal or sensitive conversation. If possible, reschedule those conversations for times when you are at home.

4. Keep personal items, such as paycheck stubs, tucked away in cabinets or drawers.

5. Turn on your computer screensaver whenever you step away from your desk; password protect your screensaver.

None of these measures eliminate the problems and frustrations that cubicles present at our jobs; but they might make your life a little easier. One positive aspect of being a cube-dweller is that the adjustments I've been forced to make have improved my character and skills. I have become more aware of the needs and feelings of others, I've improved my communication skills, and I've learned to become resourceful about overcoming obstacles.

chapter leadership

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Monthly Meeting Notice

What: Sales Methods for Non-Sales Professionals, by Tim Mannix

When: Thursday, February 12, 1998

Where: Sandler Sales Institute
4325 Lake Boone Trail
Suite 301
I-440, Exit 5, off of Rexwoods Drive

Contact Ivan Manestar (919-942-2322) for more information.
Or, call the Carolina Chapter phone line at 406-6600



Other STC Events

Several special interest groups (SIGs) are becoming active in the Carolina Chapter. Here is some contact information for two of the most active ones:

- Medical, Pharmaceutical, Environmental, and General Science Writers SIG. Contact Tom Burns (365-6935) or Terry Otto (992-0181).
- Managers SIG. Contact Steve Pope (851-4064).



Education and Training Events

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

- **“Introduction to JavaScript”** by Michael Uhl. Saturday, February 21st, 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. at Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, in room 206. Cost is \$35 for members, \$60 for non-members. For more information, contact Sue Kocher at 677-8000, ext. 5176.
- **“Process Documentation”** by Bill Albing. Saturday, March 14th, 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Cost and location to be determined. For more information, contact Terry Otto at 992-0181.

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



c/o Michelle Corbin Nichols
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