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Vision Day Update

Invest in *Yourself* – support STC!

Tech stocks are up! Blue chips are back! Stock market madness continues! Everywhere, we are encouraged to invest. And Vision Day 2000 was no exception. Only the message wasn't to invest in the stock market, or in dot-coms, or even in a savings account. The message was "Invest in *Yourself*." And what better investment tool than STC?

How can you invest in yourself by supporting STC? Well, the answers were plentiful at this year's Vision Day. A quick polling of the participants revealed the following top three ways they use STC as an investment tool:

1. As a professional development tool— Monthly meetings offer speakers and topics that are of interest to members. Whether the topic is geared towards tool knowledge or career growth, the end product is professional development. The training programs offered by the chapter are an ideal way to learn new tools as well as strengthen soft skills. Finally, the Summer Conference provides an arena for attendees to sharpen their professional skills as well as increase their knowledge base. (Don't forget this year's Summer Conference on August 11-12.)

2. As a networking tool— The Carolina Chapter is fortunate to have a virtual cornucopia of networking opportunities each month. The monthly membership meetings provide a wonderful chance to network among our peers. And our SIGs (Special Interest Groups) offer the perfect chance to focus on a select area and network accordingly. Whether it's editing, management, online skills, or independent consulting and contracting, there is a place for members to invest in themselves through SIG networking.

3. As a way to "give back"— Many of the Vision Day participants stressed how rewarding it is to invest their time and energy by giving back to the technical communications community. This underlines a particular challenge to the chapter leadership. How can we make volunteering in STC more appealing to our members? The answer lies in restructuring volunteer positions so that they require a manageable commitment of time and energy. The end result will be a greater number of volunteers willing to invest their resources in the chapter. This will, in turn, strengthen the chapter and provide greater opportunities for all members.

Each year, the primary goal of Vision Day is to look ahead and create a sort of wish list for the chapter. Among this year's wish list items are: the concrete formation of a mentoring program, the addition of more peer-led training programs, and a greater emphasis on increasing awareness of STC in the business community. If you have any ideas or suggestions concerning these items (or if you want to volunteer some time to them), please e-mail me at emily_toone@hotmail.com.

I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone who participated in Vision Day, especially the new members. Everyone's enthusiasm and commitment made it fun as well as productive!

Contributed by Emily Toone, Carolina Chapter President

Inside

Forum 2000 Report ...
page 2

Director-Sponsor's
Message ...
page 3

Meeting
Announcements ...
page 4

2

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A listing of other committee managers, with their contact information, is on the Carolina Chapter's Web site at www.stc-carolina.org.

Forum 2000 Report

Conference draws nearly 400 delegates from 23 countries

Nearly 400 delegates from 23 countries attended Forum 2000, which was held at the Commonwealth Centre, London, England, June 12-14. The conference drew a wide spectrum of technical communication professionals including writers, editors, educators, usability professionals, Web-site designers, and translators. Forum 2000 was organized jointly by the STC, the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC), the IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS), and tekcom (Germany).

Format

The conference was largely based on the "Forum" format pioneered by Ulf-L Andersson. This format is intended to encourage the spontaneous exchange of information and ideas. It consists of "Idea Markets," theme tables for lunch, and "break-out" groups where ideas generated in the Idea Market are explored in greater depth. The Idea Markets are based on short papers written by session "activators" and published prior to the conference to provide a basis for discussion rather than simply impart information. Ideas coming out of the discussion were recorded by the activators and will be included with the revised original papers in the Conference "*PostHarvest*." For a list of all the presentations, go to the ISTC Web site at www.istc.org.uk.

Topics covered in the Idea Market and lunch table discussions included: hardcopy vs. online information, measuring information quality, modular documentation, Web-page design, academia-industry relationships, globalization, and professional skills.

Chapter Speakers

STC Carolina Chapter members **Mary Cantando** and **G. David Heath** made important contributions by activating Idea Market sessions and hosting theme tables.

Mary Cantando, Vice President of the e-Publishing Division of Interleaf, Inc., activated an Idea Market session titled, "Why XML?" The discussion focused on reasons for migrating to XML and the lessons learned in such migrations. Rather than discussing XML from a

technical perspective, she focused on the business and user capabilities of XML, discussing both the positive and negative aspects. With the Idea Market participants, she explored the current and future capabilities of XML, when to use XML timing issues (inertia factors and accelerators), DTD issues, and the challenges encountered when converting to XML. Mary also hosted a theme lunch table with the topic, "Becoming an active mentor

in your business environment."

**STC
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David Heath of IBM Corporation, Research Triangle Park, activated an Idea Market session titled, "Building an editing team through mentoring." It identified critical editing skills in the current work environment and discussed the mentoring techniques

that he uses to develop the skills in new editors. His editing team has to deal with everything from technical-support information on the corporate Web site, through traditional hardcopy customer and service documentation, to sales collateral—much of it against a very tight deadline. David also activated an Idea Market session titled, "Editors face new challenge with Web-based technical support." This dealt with the problems that editors face when the World Wide Web replaces the telephone as the medium of choice for providing technical-support information. David hosted a theme lunch table "Measuring quality in technical communication."

Other key speakers

Forum 2000 also included presentations of formal papers and debates of interest to all delegates. One of the more lively debates, between **Barbara Giammona**, Manager of Information Technology Documentation for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, New York, and **Bogo Vatovec**, a Senior Human Factors Consultant with Icon Medialab in Germany, explored the concept of information quality.

Contributed by **G. David Heath**, *Carolina Communiqué* editor.

Pleased to meet you!

As you might know, I became Region 2's Director-Sponsor (D-S) during STC's Annual Conference this past May, replacing **Tracey Chiricosta**. It's already been a pretty wild ride, but I'm glad that I have this chance to stop and introduce myself, and I hope to meet many of you in person over the next three years.

For those of you who don't know what a D-S is and does, I'll discuss that in more detail in future articles; but for now, let me just say that I am your representative on STC's international board of directors. So if you have any questions, comments, ideas, or concerns that need Society-level attention, please let me know, and I'll see what I can do for you:

Chris.Benz@e-pubcorp.com (919)226-0060 (w) (919) 479-4891 (h)

One of my many roles as a D-S is to attend STC board of directors meetings three times a year. The board uses these meetings to discuss and vote on issues that affect our Society in both the short and long term. This year's Spring meeting took place on May 20 in Orlando, Florida, the day before the start of STC's Annual Conference. Here are the items the board approved (all dollar amounts are USD):

Merit Grants

- To the Michigan Tech University student chapter, \$3,000 in seed money for a scholarship fund to send selected students to STC international and regional conferences.
- To the Northeast Ohio chapter, \$500 to support and expand its mentoring program.
- To the Northeast Ohio chapter, \$1,000 to enhance its publicity program.
- To the Central Ohio chapter, \$1,500 for a Region 4 leadership training workshop and conference for leaders of both student and professional chapters.
- To the Singapore chapter, up to \$1,000 to ship the International Technical Publications Competition winning entries.

Loans

- To multiple chapters, \$2,500 for the Region 6 Conference.

Research Grants

- To **Saul Carliner**, \$9,960 for "What Do We Manage? A Survey of the Management Portfolios of Large Technical Communications Departments."
- To **Michael Albers** and **Loel Kim**, \$10,000 for "User Web Browsing Characteristics Using Palm Handhelds for Information Retrieval."

Brand Tools

- Several tools presented by the Brand Development Team to help focus and strengthen STC's brand. (More details on this as we start rolling out these tools.)

Interim Executive Council Actions

- Dissolved the Illinois State University student chapter.

- Dissolved the Montana student chapter and from it formed the Montana chapter with a \$200 start-up grant.
- Formed the Long Island chapter with a \$350 start-up grant.

Industry Fellowship for Faculty

- To **Dwedor Morais Ford**, a \$2,000 Industry Fellowship for Faculty, contingent on her obtaining an industry internship position.

Contributed by **Chris Benz**, the tallest STC board member EVER

Competitions Now accepting entries

The STC Carolina Chapter is now accepting entries for the 2000-2001 Technical Publications and Online Competitions. Entries are due by the end of September with the exact date stated in our official Call for Entries brochure, which will be mailed in August.

There is a new award for Most Improved. If you worked on a publication and improved it substantially, send the original and revised publication and you could win!

In September, both competitions will be looking for judges.

Contact Ann-Marie Grissino, Chairperson for Online Communications Competition at keypoint@mindspring.com, or John Simone, Co-Chairperson for Technical Publications Competition at jfs999@mindspring.com.

3

Carolina Resources

STC Carolina Web site:
www.stc-carolina.org

Meeting Telephone Message:
(919) 406-6600

Online Newsletter:
www.stc-carolina.org/pubs/communique/index.html

STC Metrolina (Charlotte)
Web site:
www.stc.org/region2/mnc/

STC Piedmont (Greensboro)
Web site:
www.stc.org/region2/pd/

Monthly meeting announcement

There is no monthly program in August; instead, please consider attending the STC Carolina Chapter's 8th Annual Summer Conference.

Annual Summer Conference

August 10 - 11

What: 8th Annual Summer Conference

Where: Friday Center in Chapel Hill, NC

Purpose: The Conference will:

- Provide cost-effective workshops, seminars, roundtable presentations, and training opportunities.
- Provide networking and job-searching opportunities.
- Kick off the new year for the STC Carolina Chapter.

Details: See <http://www.stc-carolina.org/www/conference/index.shtml>.

Other meetings

August 19

What: PowerPoint 97: Creating Dynamic Presentations

Where: ECPI (across from Crabtree Valley Mall), 4509 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh

Who: **Denise Tawwab**, presenter

Time: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Cost: STC members \$40, non-members \$55

To register, please contact **Tim Roney** at (919) 250-1719 (troney@nando.com).

This class will introduce you to the skills needed to create and deliver dynamic PowerPoint presentations quickly and effectively.

Newsletter Deadlines

Articles for publication in our newsletters are due by 3 pm on the 7th of every month.

Articles—on chapter business—will be published in our print-based newsletter. Please submit them to **David Heath** at heathd@us.ibm.com.

All other articles will be published in our Web-based newsletter. Please submit them to **Mark Hoskins** at mhoskins@cisco.com.

4

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