

Carolina Chapter Vision Day

by Larry Kunz Manager, Chapter Strategic Planning Committee

Mark your calendars: The second annual Carolina Chapter Vision Day is set for Saturday afternoon, June 1, at Blue Jay Point County Park near Falls Lake. All Chapter members are welcome.

Last year's Vision Day, in the words of one participant, gave the chapter a "zap of energy." An enthusiastic group had fun together, wrote the Chapter mission statement, and identified some of the building blocks for turning the mission statement into reality.

This year we'll bring the vision into clearer focus and put the finishing touches on our strategic plan, which is now in draft form. We'll do lots of brainstorming and exchange some good ideas. The relaxed setting, along with **free food**, will allow us to generate more of that good energy.

In case you've forgotten (shame on you!), our Chapter's mission is to: Promote the profession of technical communication and the professionalism of its members. Be the information source about technical communication for our members and our community. Set the direction for technical communication in the future.

This mission statement has provided the impetus for many of the new things we're doing this year, like volunteering at WUNC's fund-raiser and establishing a Webpage and telephone Hotline.

More details about this year's Vision Day, including directions to Blue Jay Point, will appear in a subsequent Carolina Communiqui. In the meantime, if you have comments or suggestions, or if you'd like a copy of the draft strategic plan, contact me at 919-254-6395 or ldkunz@vnet.ibm.com.



Florida STC Conference

by Dick Evans

You say you are facing development of an online documentation system and you have to pick the best online form and the tools to create it? What are the differences among computer-based training, computer-based teaching, and computer-based open learning? What makes an automated authoring tool different from a desktop publishing tool? How do you compare features and ensure that you choose the tool best suited to your job?

Had you been at the 12th Annual Technical Communication Conference sponsored by the Orlando Chapter of the STC, you would have found your answers. These topics and more were covered by Dr. Conrad Gottfredson of The Gottfredson Group of Alpine, UT. Dr. Gottfredson kicked off the conference with a keynote speech about what he calls the "Ten Laws of Online Documentation." He is an eloquent and entertaining speaker who delivered his message against a backdrop of a professionally prepared video that

illustrated his points with scenes of his native Utah. (How is weaning a calf like weaning a user from offline information to online?) Among his ten laws were such gems as: if you move it online, they will print it; junk moved online is still junk; and if you ignore their traditions, they will ignore your solutions.

In an afternoon session, he lectured on "Selecting the Right Online Tools." In that session he offered answers to the questions above and even presented a checklist of features with which one can compare and rank competitive software packages. (I have the checklist, if anyone wants it.)

In another session, Daniel Wise of Wise Words in Homewood, AL, spoke on "When is a Writer Not a Writer?" His answer (no surprise to many of us) was "about 90% of the time." The audience was mostly technical communication students from the University of Central Florida and the goal of the session

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Carolina Communiqué

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

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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 the material in this publication provided they credit us and send a copy of the reprint.

We also invite our readers to submit material for consideration in the *Carolina Communiqué*.

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Who's Sustaining Whom? STC Sustaining Membership as a Chicken or an Egg Theory

by Adrian West, President, Advanced Concepts Business Communications, Inc.

When starting Advanced Concepts in 1986, I was a lonely pioneer among contract technical writers in the Triangle. Then, Help Wanted ads for tech writers were sparse, and the contract houses where I peddled my services had few writing assignments. Now, 10 years later, much has changed: the demand for technical communication, the number and skill sets of technical communicators, and my business approach for matching the two.

Today, contract service providers dot the Triangle. Many of these agencies have difficulty including technical communication services. They are challenged to fully understand and appreciate the scope of the technical communication profession. While regularly providing adequate talent to meet the area's growing demand for technical communication, few agencies have chosen to specialize in it, or even to promote it. Meanwhile, Advanced Concepts is building its niche as one of the area's premier vendors for technical communication services. One way it has chosen to distinguish itself is through supporting the Carolina Chapter of STC as a *Sustaining Member*. [Editor's Note: Information about the Sustaining Membership program can be found at <http://www.clark.net/pub/stc/www/sustain.html>.]

Advanced Concepts has become a sustaining member of the Triangle area STC to take advantage of the synergy created between a membership organization of technical communicators and a company dedicated to keeping them employed.

The Carolina Chapter of the STC provides a regular forum for those with professional interests in the many forms of technical communication. When individuals enter the Triangle technical communication job market, whether from area schools or from out of state, STC is often the first place they turn for professional camaraderie, counsel, and employment leads. As new specialties evolve, such as Web page authoring, the

Carolina Chapter offers newsletter articles and programs for the uninitiated. STC also recognizes individual achievements through its annual competitions for professional writing excellence. No other organization in the Triangle offers the same comprehensive grasp over the range of issues technical communicators face.

The management of Advanced Concepts is composed of experienced contract technical writers. We know firsthand the types of challenges faced by those on assignment in high-tech companies, whether the business is pharmaceuticals, telephony, electronics, computer applications, or any other number of disciplines. Because we know writer issues, we know how to recognize talent and have become expert at creating opportunities to sell and promote it.

Advanced Concepts is constantly branching into new areas of technical communication. Recent project opportunities include:

- process documentation consulting and development for Quality initiatives, corporate restructurings, or business improvement efforts
- online software and hardware documentation (user guides, installation guides, engineering reference manuals, technological updates, etc.)
- training materials
- document design and control
- FDA regulatory documents
- Web page design and authoring
- medical insurance provider manuals

All over the Triangle, companies are realizing that effective internal and external communication is key to their business success. Fewer software developers write their own documentation. Fewer businesses turn to advertising agencies for developing technical marketing and proposal materials. Fewer managers of process and quality initiatives are staking success on the part-time efforts of already overburdened

Job Opportunities at the STC Annual Conference

by Jody Pollock

There will be a self-service Employment Booth at the annual conference in Seattle, WA, in May 1996. This will provide an excellent opportunity for job seekers and employers to contact other technical communicators outside of their region. There will be resume notebooks available for employers organized by region:

Region 1: Connecticut, France, Maine, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New York, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont

Region 2: Delaware, Israel, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, DC, West Virginia

Region 3: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee

Region 4: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio

Region 5: Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Region 6: Iowa, Kansas, Manitoba, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin

Region 7: Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Idaho, Japan, Montana, Oregon, Saskatchewan, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

Region 8: California, Hawaii, Nevada, New Zealand, Republic of China, Singapore

Job openings will be posted with copies available for job seekers. A message board will also be available for job seekers and employers to contact one another. Even if you can't attend the conference, you can still benefit from this service. Job seekers should follow these instructions to have their resume included in the notebooks:

1. Print your resume on one 8 1/2x11 sheet of paper, double-sided if it's more than one page. If you send resumes printed on more than one sheet of paper, only the first page will be placed in the notebooks.

2. On the top right-hand corner of the resume, note the regions where you would consider accepting employment.

3. Make six copies of your resume for each region. For example, if you want your resume included in two regions, make twelve copies, six for each region.

4. Place six copies in one plastic sheet protector punched for three-hole notebooks. If sending resumes for more than one region, include a plastic sheet protector for each region.

5. Mail the resume packets to the address below on or before April 19th. (Or you can bring your resume packet to the Employment Booth at the conference.)

Employers should follow these instructions to have job posting(s) included:

1. Print your job posting on one 8 1/2x11 sheet of paper, preferably on one side only. If a representative of your company will be at the conference to conduct interviews, state that information clearly on the job posting.

2. Make 100 copies of the opening for posting the listing in the Employment Booth and for having copies available for job seekers.

3. Send the copies to the address below on or before April 19th. (Or you can bring the copies to the Employment Booth when the Exposition area first opens.)

Job seekers will be able to pick up job postings at the employment booth or have the postings mailed to them after the conference. If you want copies of the employment booth job posting mailed to you after the conference, please send a stamped (\$3.00 in U.S. postage), self-addressed, large (8 1/2 x 11) envelope to the STC Employment Information Committee Manager:

Roger E. Masse, Manager
STC Employment Information
3750 Benton Street
Santa Clara, CA 95051



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was to show them that the role of technical communicator is more than just putting words on paper.

Other roles commonly include: scheduler/planner, historian, editor, translator, tester, etc.

Lastly, I attended a session about creating manuals and online help from a database. Taylor Jordan and Melissa Pellegrin from EDS CUBE in Orlando showed how to use MS Access to create a common database of information that uses dynamic queries to produce a variety of documentation. Suppose you were preparing a series of manuals and online documents for the banking industry and you needed to explain how to create a variety of accounting reports. Using Access, you could create a database entry for each type of report and store up to 16 pages of text and graphics for each type. Because Access is a relational database, you could also link additional or alternate text to the main entry. You might have a passage of common text in the main entry but two alternate passages: one for clerical staff and one for technical support staff. When it comes time to write the users' guide for the clerical staff, you would export the main entry and the appropriate alternate to MS Word. To write the guide for the system technician, you would select the same main entry but a different alternate. The advantage is that source material is only changed in one place, thus reducing the chance of errors creeping in when changing multiple versions.

As you may remember from last month's *Communiqué*, I attended the Atlanta conference a few weeks ago. At the time, it didn't seem important to report that it snowed while I was there. On this trip, however, I arrived in usually sunny Orlando to find gray skies, drizzle, and cool temperatures. I'm beginning to think it's me.

Job Bank

Growing and Getting Busier

by Bill Albing, Chapter President

As the year progresses, we are becoming a bigger chapter, better able to provide more benefits to members. When prospective members call, I now mention that our chapter has over 380 members, has a 24-hour telephone information line, provides job listings over the phone, in the newsletter, and on the Net, and will soon be offering HTML and FrameMaker training. Our chapter newsletter is now published monthly to a growing circulation. The planning of our summer conference is under way and there are plenty of attendees at our monthly meetings.

The Pubs Competition was, I think, especially significant because we showcased both online and hard-copy publication winners. Perhaps next year we can have a regular program where interested members display their online documenta-

tion and share ideas for good design. The chapter leadership is investigating the possibility an Internet listserver where Chapter members could exchange information locally, much as technical communicators do internationally on TECHWR-L.

In March, a group from our Chapter, lead by Chris Benz, our chapter's public relations chairperson, volunteered to answer phones in support of WUNC-TV's fundraising effort. At the Page One Book Festival in Cary we set up a booth and promoted our profession in the greater writing community. On April 1, many of our members attended East Carolina University's third annual Information Exchange Day. These members answered questions about STC, their own companies and industries, and the technical communication profession in general.

In early April, I am meet with professors of technical writing programs at various universities and with fellow presidents of chapters in North Carolina. Your chapter leadership is increasingly reaching out to the students, other professionals, and the community at large in pursuit of the chapter mission to promote the technical communication profession.

I am sorry to see Michael Ocampo step down as Education committee chair. His move to New Bern, NC was a good move professionally, but we will miss his immediate involvement in leading the chapter. ☸

STC Membership

Current Chapter membership: 384
Total STC membership: 20,264

We have seven new members:

Hugh J. Findla 1006 Iredell St. Durham, NC 27705 (919) 286-5739	Travis E. Russell Tekelec 5151 McCrimmon Pkwy #216 Morrisville, NC 27560 (919) 460-2172
Emily Gaucher 4514 G Simsbury Rd Charlotte, NC 28226 (704) 344-3978	Cindy P. Stevens 102 S Randolph St Goldsboro, NC 27530 (919) 580-0957
Michael McGinnis Technology Planning & Management 4815 Emperor Blvd. Canterbury Hall Ste. 310 Durham, NC 27703 (919) 941-6522	Betty Tew 5564 Hamstead Crossing Raleigh, NC 27612 (919) 571-0605
Ivan M. Miller 413 Wildoat Place Raleigh, NC 27610 (919) 713-1120	

Two members transferred to our chapter:

Lisa Tripp 102 Kindletree Ct #1C Cary, NC 27513 (919) 991-8736	Robin J. Wade 5317 Burning Oak Court Raleigh, NC 27606- 9595
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employees whose talents and priorities lie elsewhere. At long last, technical communication is coming of age in the Triangle.

So which came first? The chicken or the egg?.... Have we become sustaining members of the STC because of the available talent?....or has the available talent allowed us to become sustaining members of the STC?! As a sustaining member, our company benefits by being given the opportunity to discover new vertical market niches and to explore new communications technologies with other professionals in the field. At STC meetings and functions, we meet writers we haven't worked with (but would like to) and share ideas with other companies who have also built their businesses through the effective communication of technical ideas.

At Advanced Concepts, we are actively "fighting the good fight" to promote technical communication. Every day, we show our clients how effective communica-

tion improves their bottom line. Although successful in our chosen market, we know that our success depends, in part, on experienced professional talent. Many of our best writers are STC members. Advanced Concepts' Vice President David Stinson points out, "One of our best drawing cards is our experience in the trenches. We know what it's like to roam from assignment to assignment as a contractor and, for many, that's a radically new employment paradigm. We're sensitive to the nature of this business. That's why, when we tell people that we want to be the area's preferred vendor for technical communication services, they believe we're sincere. We don't believe in sustaining a relationship by check. We'll always provide more than that." For more information on Advanced Concepts, contact Ron Duncan, Director of Business Development, PO Box 12702, RTP, NC 27709. Telephone (919) 782-2393. Resumes from experienced writers may be faxed to (919) 563-0888. ☸

Chapter Leadership

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<i>N.C.S.U. Liaison:</i>	Cindy Haller cindyh@unity.ncsu.edu (919)-515-4137

Meeting Announcements

Design Principles for Multi-Window Online Information Systems

On Thursday, April 11, 1996, at 6:00 pm, Robert Berry and Michelle Corbin Nichols will give a sneak preview of their presentation for the May 1996 STC Annual Conference. Their presentation will be in the Main building of Glaxo Wellcome (former Burroughs Wellcome) on Cornwallis Road (near the Durham Freeway). Contact Chris Tilley at (919) 859-7706 (w) for more information.

SGML User's Group Presents: Panorama: An SGML Browser for the Web

On Thursday, April 15, 1996: 6:00 p.m., Moira Forbes, Technical Product Specialist, and Todd Crane, Regional Sales Manager for SoftQuad, will present a program on SGML for the World Wide Web - "View the wider world of SGML on the World Wide Web with Panorama PRO." The program will take place at Brighton Hall Solution Center, Research Triangle Park.

Directions: From Raleigh, traveling on I-40 West to RTP, take exit 282 to Page Road (you will see the Sheraton Imperial Hotel). At the bottom of the ramp, turn right onto Page Road. Merge into the left lane immediately. At the next light, turn left onto Emperor Blvd (Imperial Center). Turn right at Slater Road, immediately across from the hotel. Go to the last office building on the left, Brighton Hall. Parking and building entrance are on the side facing away from Slater Road. Meeting is being held in the Solution Center, which is on the ground floor to the right immediately as you enter the building.

From Durham and Chapel Hill, traveling on I-40 East to Research Triangle Park, take exit 282 to Page Road. At the bottom of the ramp, go straight through the traffic light into the Imperial Center (Emperor Blvd.). Turn right at Slater Road, immediately across from the Sheraton Imperial Hotel. Go to the last office building on the left, Brighton Hall. Parking and building entrance are on the side facing away from Slater Road. Meeting is being held in the Solution Center, which is on the ground floor to the right immediately as you enter the building.

For more information, contact Pete Gegen (peteg@raleigh.ibm.com).



c/o Michael Andrew Uhl
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