blue pencil

A Walk Down Memory Lane: STC International Seeks Your Memories

By the STC 50th Anniversary Committee

When STC members from across the world gather, a favorite activity is sharing stories about the memorable times we've had — the great session at the Annual Conference that changed our lives, perhaps a mentor in the Society who helped with our careers, or the technical communication "firsts" and transitions we shared.

During such a story fest, we also laugh about the fun times and the difficult times that turned out to be fun — the Publications Competition conducted during a hurricane in Tampa, for example.

In preparation for our May 2003 celebration of STC's 50th Anniversary, the 50th Anniversary Committee wants such stories

from you. We need humorous and inspirational anecdotes that we can collect in an STC archive, and we want to publish some of your most sparkling or inspirational stories in a brochure to be distributed to all members.

Whether you're a Society leader or a chapter member, a member of many years' duration or one who recently joined, a technical communication specialist or a novice, a U.S. member or one located in another country, we hope you will participate.

Your involvement is easy. Whenever you think of a story you'd like to include, send an e-mail or snail mail to Liz Babcock (lizbab@iwvisp.com or 401 N. Warner, Ridgecrest, CA 93555). Liz is the committee member who has volunteered to serve as the initial collection point for your stories.

Those stories will be most useful to us if they are succinct (250 words or less on any given topic) and entertaining. We would love to receive several stories from you, with each story to the point and on a single topic.

Here are some questions we hope will inspire you:

· What amusing or inspirational story can you tell us about how you joined the profession? How did you overcome obstacles that our members will find educational or amusing?

· What career and/or Society highlight can you share with us? (We will construct a technical communication

Communicating Clarity: Make Your Technical Marketing Matter

STC TELEPHONE SEMINAR
with Pamela Selker Rak

Where: Your office

When: March 6, 2002, 1-2:30 P.M. EST

For technology-driven companies, strategic marketing has several key elements. It must be grounded in an understanding of customers' unique needs. It must simplify technically complex innovations while crystallizing the benefits of these innovations. And finally, it must create a clear, cohesive

image of the organization's products and services. Every communication that a company produces reflects the entire corporation. This seminar taught participants how to establish and maintain effective technical marketing tactics, including a distinctive corporate "voice."

For more information about the telephone seminars and to register online, visit the STC website at www.stc.org/seminars.html.

Contents

January Meeting Minutes

By Elizabeth Barrow

Steve Bland and Tracy Royston spoke on January 16, 2002, at the Pittsburgh Technology Center about the current state of the high tech industry in the Pittsburgh area. Tracy works for the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, which coordinates resources for businesses starting in or relocating to Pittsburgh. Steve (who previously worked in the same office with Tracy) is President and CEO of Mango Start, which helps faith-based and small businesses operate. Here is a summary of the meeting:

PITTSBURGH MAYOR'S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Steve Bland opened with the statement that $1 million and 1,000 people are currently employed in the high tech industries in Pittsburgh. Mayor Tom Murphy started the Office of Economic Development (OED—and *not* the dictionary!) to make sure he knew what was going on in the business community, and to make sure Pittsburgh would be attractive to the businesses. This not only means such things as tax incentives, but also those things that attract good employees. The trails, riverfront developments, and downtown projects such as our new skating rink were mentioned as examples.

Tracy Royston continued by discussing some projects she had found particularly interesting. These included working to attract Siemens Westinghouse to the area, and the development of Herr's Island (Washington's Landing), which was cited by Prince Charles as an excellent example of brownfield reclamation. She added that not only are high tech companies looking for an available and affordable workforce, they are looking for a very particular kind of employee. The universities in Pittsburgh provide the educated young people who are needed; what Pittsburgh is trying to do is to keep them in the area.

The OED calls local businesses, asking what their needs are; it helps them find financing and the employees they need. Because of that, both Steve and Tracy believe that Pittsburgh will be in a good position to recover from the current economic slowdown than many other cities.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TECHNICAL WRITERS?

Mary Ecsedy mentioned that the reason she had called the OED in the first place was because the STC had such a hard time finding a good place to meet. Tracy and Steve both could think of places that might be available, so we'll see what happens in the coming year. They suggested keeping up with the Pittsburgh Technology Council calendar to know what the "hottest" professions were, which Steve thought were in the biomedical field.

The PA CareerLink is the government source for jobs. Contact them at:

www.careerlink.state.pa.us

A Walk Down Memory Lane

STC International Seeks Your Memories

(Continued from page 1)

timeline, so your stories in this area could be especially helpful.)

· What's your favorite STC memory?

· What mentor or role model inspired you in your career or in the Society? What makes that person memorable? What did he/she do to help you?

· What experiences, humorous or inspiring, have you had with our changing technology — typewriters to computers, red pencils to redlining?

· What can you tell us about a chapter or regional event or accomplishment that changed you, your chapter, or the Society?

This list of questions is intended to rekindle your memories, not to restrict your flow of ideas.

Please communicate with one of the following people:

Liz Babcock, 401 N. Warner, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 or lizbab@iwvisp.com

Georgina Cantoni, committee chair, gcantoni@techcomm-solutions.com

Ken Cook, kenc@kencook.com

Marguerite Krupp, mkrupp@cisco.com

Bill Leavitt, skibilll@aol.com

Ernie Mazzatenta, Jande@a-o.com

Bill Stolgitis, bill@stc.org.

We look forward to your messages!

Help Wanted

The Pittsburgh Chapter needs volunteers in three categories. Job descriptions are given below. To apply for any of these rewarding, interesting, and positions, please contact one of the following chapter officers. Application deadline is noted in the job description.

· Pittsburgh Chapter President Mary Ecsedy,

 mary.ecsedy@verizon.net

 or call at 412-422-0213

· Vice President Alan Houser,

 arh@groupwellesley.com

 or call at 412-363-3481

***Blue Pencil* Staff**

Volunteers are needed to work on the Chapter's newsletter, either as Managing Editor or in assistant roles. Managing Editor is needed by May 31. Other assistance is welcome at any time.

Nancy Carpenter will continue as Production Editor, assisting with all phases of publication.   She is, of course, happy to share that with anyone for whom newsletter production seems like good clean fun.

Treasurer Needed

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is seeking a member to fill the post of treasurer. The treasurer's term of office will begin April 1, 2002 and will continue through May 31, 2003.

Duties of the treasurer include bookkeeping, banking, and check signing, as well as developing chapter fund-raising activities and serving on the chapter board. Interested members may schedule a candidate interview by contacting one Mary or Alan by March 22

Vice President Needed

Nominations are being taken for the office of Vice President. This is a two-year term of office. The first year is spent as Vice President, with responsibilities for arranging the meetings for the year. Remember that Darlene Mullenix will assist with arranging meeting sites and taking reservations. The second year is spent as President.

Portfolios: Better than Ever

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 21 MEETING
By Nancy Carpenter

Your portfolio can be better than ever, and Marlene Miller and Nancy Ott can tell you how. They have faced a lot of the issues that any writer could face, have researched the latest resolutions, and have incorporated their own advice into their portfolios. They shared the results at the February chapter meeting.

WHY DO A PORTFOLIO?
Sometimes, a portfolio (a.k.a, writing samples) is requested. Even when not requested, it is recommended for many good reasons. Creating a portfolio helps you to prepare for job interviews. It gives you room for details that do not fit on your resume. It can maximize your assets, proving that you can do the job well. It gives the interviewer a tangible illustration of your skills, accomplishments, and personality. It gives you a competitive edge and distinguishes you from other candidates.

GET STARTED
Don't wait until you have an interview lined up. As you complete a project, get permission to put it in your portfolio. If your employer asks whether you are seeking work, remind him that you showed a portfolio to him, and you make a policy of keeping it up to date.

CONTENT
Always put your resume first. Include a business card. Do not include large documents; rather use excerpts. Possible items include chapters, online help files, web pages or screen captures of web pages, pdfs of online documents, reports, brochures, newsletters, article from *Blue Pencil,* indexes, before and after sets of chapters or tables of contents, graphic designs, photographs of large document sets, a page showing your editing markup, a PowerPoint presentation, or a movie of a set of documents. (Lotus Smart Suite's Screencam, and

People News

Memberandums

Congratulations, Senior Members!
The following members have reached senior member status:

· Noelle C. Conover

· James Hager

· William J. O'Donnell

· Nancy Pearson

· Denise L. Wittkofski

February

Current Chapter   223

Total STC   25,068

New Members

Sulbha Bahl

Randy K. Bobbert

Ann M. Bombergen

Tracey A. Depellegriin
Connelly

David W. Dietz III

Roberta A. Ryan

Employment Issues: Negotiating your Salary in a Weakened Economy

By Pam Schmidbauer

Associate Area Manager - Aquent

Salary negotiations can be stressful at the best of times, but in a bad economy it can be downright frightening. There's always the fear that you'll price yourself out of an amazing new opportunity or be undercut by the competition. The poor economy doesn't necessarily mean you'll have to settle for less when taking on a new position.

HOLD OFF ON NEGOTIATING

Secure the job first and leave the money discussion until the very end of the recruitment process. Psychologically, once an employer decides that you are the right candidate for the job, they will be willing to offer more to bring you on board.

BE UNIQUE

Searching for a job is all about marketing a unique product - in this case, that unique product is you. Emphasize your unique combination of skills and experience you bring to a prospective employer. No matter how the economy is, once the employer has de-termined that you are the candidate they want, then it becomes a matter of figuring out how they can make it work for all parties involved.

THINK OF THEIR BOTTOM LINE

Focus on two things when interviewing in a poor economy - generating additional revenue and cost cutting. These are skills you want to emphasize in a weak economy because those are things that are important to the employer. When the economy is weak, managers are under pressure to generate a strong bottom line. Demonstrating how you can enhance the company's profits by reducing operating costs or improving sales will increase your value to that company.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

You can prepare by understanding the current employment market. Do research through current salary surveys and your network to find out what the real going rate for your skills is and adjust your expectations. You must also research your prospective employer. Being aware of what is going on within the company shows that you are interested in working there. Before negotiating your salary, keep three things in mind: know the possible or likely perks in your field, know the salary ranges of people in your position, and know how your background stacks up against other candidates.

Focus on the value of the total package and not just the total of your regular paycheck. Perhaps this company offers career growth. If there is a development opportunity, it may be an acceptable trade-off.

Pam Schmidbauer is Associate Area Manager at Aquent and can be reached at pams@aquent.com or 412-322-4940. Aquent (www.aquent.com) is the world's largest talent agency for Web, creative and IT professionals. In its 15-year history, the company has made more than 200,000 matches of independent professionals with client companies worldwide. Headquartered in Boston, Aquent leverages both the Internet and its global network of offices to provide independent professionals access to work, professional training and the same insurance, retirement, and cash-flow management benefits enjoyed by traditional W-2 workers.

Portfolios: Better than Ever

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 21 MEETING

Macromedia's Flash can be used to create the movie.) Often it is helpful, and enlightening, to include annotations that explain your role in the project, problems, solutions, and why this is a good sample of your work.

STYLES

There are several style choices: comprehensive or targeted, hard copy or online, carry along or leave behind, binder or briefcase. The choices you make depend on the type of work for which you are applying, your knowledge of what impresses the interviewer, and your own comfort and skill.

Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

· Comprehensive portfolios contain a representative sampling of your work and show the breadth of your experience. They describe you completely, but can be too large, so trim the size of the items. Replace old items with newer ones that are comparable.

· Targeted portfolios focus on a particular subject or application, most often, the job for which you are applying. They show the depth of your experience in that area. They keep you from overwhelming the interviewer with un-necessary information, although you might consider taking the rest of your samples in a separate binder because you might find that something will interest the interviewer and sway him in your direction.

· Hard copy is appropriate in many cases.

· Online is particularly appropriate if the job requires online work. You can be comprehensive and targeted with this medium.

· Whether you leave samples depends on whether they are proprietary and on whether you are comfortable hav-

Tools and Tips: Word 2002 – First Look

By Robert P. Mohr

I've been using Word 2002 (aka XP) for a couple of months now and have found it to be a big improvement over previous versions. The interface is basically the same; the real difference lies in several new features: task panes, smart tags, a drawing canvas, and the HTML filter.

TASK PANES

A task pane is an additional bit of screen area that sits off to the right of the document you're working on. For example, here's the Styles and Formatting task pane:
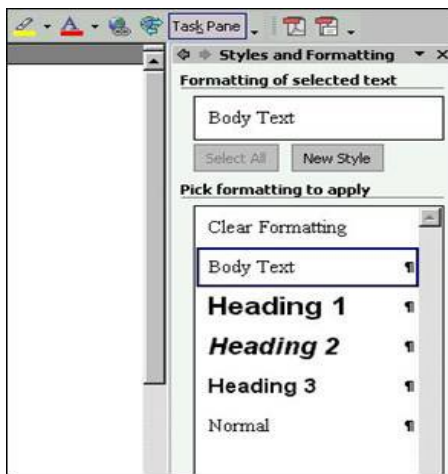

FIGURE 1: STYLES AND FORMATTING TASK PANE

There are eight different task panes:

- New Document – this pane displays a list of previously opened files, lets you create a new blank document, or offers a gateway to your templates folders. In fact, clicking File > New, as you would to select a template, now displays the New Document task pane. The difference is more options are displayed.

- Clipboard – this pane shows you the contents resulting from multiple copies to the Clipboard. Each time you do a paste operation, a clipboard icon appears offering several paste options.

Graphics referenced in the Clipboard task pane are shown as thumbnails; text selections are referenced with their first dozen words or so. Pressing Ctrl+C twice is a hot-key sequence that pops up the Clipboard task pane if it's not already open.
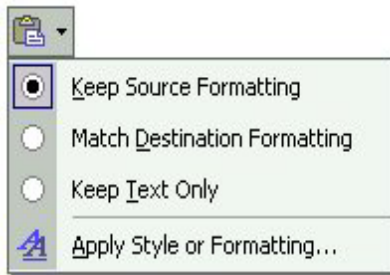

FIGURE 2: CLIPBOARD TASK PANE

- Search – this pane acts much the same way the Windows Find works. You can search for text within specified file types and locations.

- Insert Clip Art – this pane has a built-in search feature that lets you search based on text, clip art collections, and media file types. It's also a gateway to the Clip Art Organizer and Microsoft's online Clip Art Gallery.

- Styles and Formatting – this pane is much like the old Format > Style option in that it lets you modify and create styles. However, as you can see in Figure 1, all of the styles used in the current document are shown in a scrollable list for easy reference and access. You can highlight text in your document and select a style from the task pane to apply it. It works very much like FrameMaker's paragraph catalog.

- Reveal Formatting – this pane contains a feature that former WordPerfect users have longed for in Word. Using the Reveal Formatting task pane, you can see exactly which attributes have been applied to the text in question.

Figure 3 shows an example of this task pane.
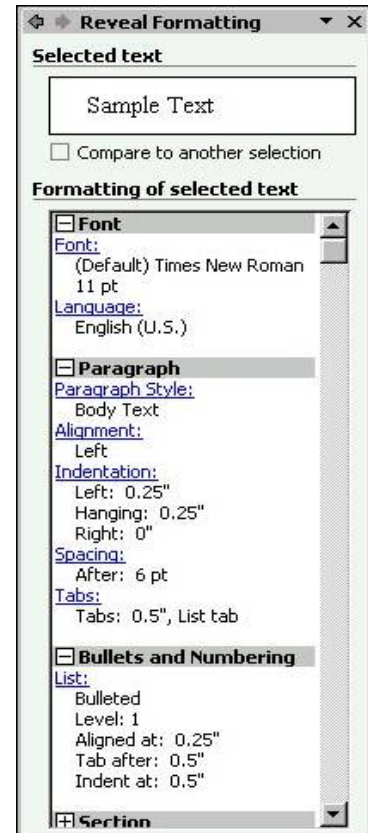
FIGURE 3: REVEAL FORMATTING TASK PANE

The content of the Reveal Formatting task pane updates dynamically as you move from text to text in your document.

- Mail Merge – this pane really fronts as a six-step merge wizard. The wizard prompts you for information regarding the primary (merge to) document and the data source (merge from) document. The data source can also be a table from an Access database—and you can select specific data from the table as well. The mail merge toolbar provides much the same functionality as the task pane.

- Translate – this pane seems to offer language translation services. You can translate selected words from the cur-

Tools and Tips: Word 2002 – First Look

(Continued from page 6)

rent document, or the entire document, select the target language, and let Word do the translation. The use of this task pane requires the installation of the language translation modules (which I didn't install).

SMART TAGS

Smart tags are used in conjunction with data of a specific type that Word recognizes. It is up to you to select the types of data you want Word to recognize.
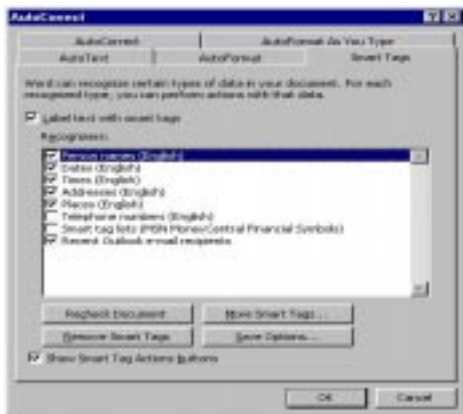

FIGURE 4: SMART TAG SETUP

As you can see in Figure 4, Word can recognize a person's name. When it does, it underlines the name with a dotted line and displays an icon that you can click on to drop-down several options. For example, if I clicked on the name "Bill Smith" and clicked on the smart tag icon, I would see the options.shown in Figure 5.
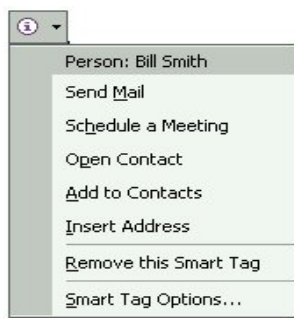

FIGURE 5: SMART TAG OPTIONS

As with the other new features in Word, the smart tags are designed to help you work more efficiently.

NEW DRAWING FEATURES

In the past, Word enabled you to make drawings in your documents; however, they were difficult to control and once made, resizing them was even more difficult. Word's new drawing canvas has made drawing creation much easier and far more flexible than before. The drawing canvas has its own set of attributes, just like the other drawing objects have: text wrapping, borders, colors, positioning, etc., along with one other key attribute: Scale Drawing. Before, when you grouped several drawing objects and resized them, the objects shrunk, but their text remained the original size. This required the time-consuming task of reducing the font sizes to match the objects. The Scale Drawing feature changes all of that. Now you can drag a corner of the drawing canvas and everything in it—including the text—resizes proportionately.

A new addition to the standard drawing tool set is an organization chart and diagram maker. Five types of diagrams are available: cycle, radial, pyramid, Venn, and target.

And, finally, a set of nine connector types has been added to the AutoShapes library. These make it easy to draw connecting lines and arrows between the other AutoShapes and objects.

CLEANER HTML

Word 2002 has a built-in HTML filter designed to create "clean" HTML files. This is in addition to its normal Web page output, which does create a seemingly excessive amount of tags so as to accommodate "round-tripping" from DOC to Web, and back to DOC again.

Creating a clean HTML file is nearly the same as creating a Web page:

- On the File menu, click Save As.
- In the Save as Type box, click Web Page, Filtered.
- Click Save.

ODDS AND ENDS

Booklet printing used to be a real pain in other versions of Word. Now it's a piece of cake. All you need do is select the Book fold option in the Pages section of the Page Setup dialog box. Word handles the rest. To print the booklet, use your printer's duplex capability, or use the manual/duplex printing option found in Word's Print dialog box. In effect, you print all of the odd pages in one pass, then replace the sheets in the printer, answer a prompt, and print the other half. I tested the manual method on a sample booklet, and it worked great.

The same flexibility in customizing the toolbars and menus still exists in Word 2002, though a few of the steps to do so are slightly different. Any custom toolbars and menus you use now should be acceptable in the eyes of Word 2002. Mine were. The first thing I did after installing the new Word was to delete its Normal.dot file and replace it with my old Normal.dot file from Word 2000. Word 2002 accepted it without question. All of my macros, toolbar icons, and menu options remained exactly the same.

All in all, I'm pleased with Word's new look and new feature set. Give it a try. I'm sure you'll like it too.

Bob Mohr is a senior member of STC and a technical writer at BillingZone, LLC. He can be reached through email at bob.mohr@billingzone.com.
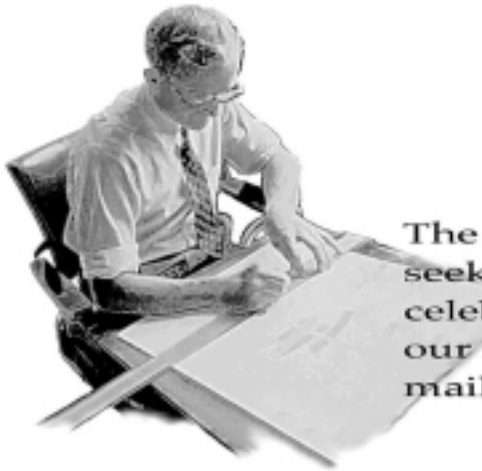
Salary Survey

The latest salary survey was published in the September/October issue of *Intercom*. You can find all the surveys from 1997 to 2001 at the following link:

http://www.stc.org/salary.html

SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

STC@50

We want your memories!

The STC 50th Anniversary Committee is seeking member anecdotes to help us celebrate 50 years of accomplishment at our 2003 conference. You can help by mailing or e-mailing your short anecdotes to

Liz Babcock
401 N. Warner
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
or liz@iwvisp.com

or to another member of the committee, as follows:

Georgia Cantoni, committee chair, GCantoni@emerituscorp.com
Ken Cook, kenc@kencook.com
Marguerite Krupp, mkrupp@cisco.com
Bill Leavitt, skibilll@aol.com
Ernie Mazzatenta, Jande@a-o.com
Bill Stolgitis, bill@stc.org

Here are some questions to get you started:

■ What amusing or inspirational story can you tell us about how you joined the profession? How did you overcome obstacles that our members would find educational or amusing?

■ What career and/or Society highlight can you share with us? (We will construct a technical communication timeline, so your stories in this area will be especially helpful.)

■ What's your favorite STC memory?

■ What mentor or role model inspired you in your career or in the Society? What makes that person memorable? What did he/she do to help you?

■ What experiences, humorous or inspiring, have you had with our changing technology — typewriters to computers, red pencils to redlining?

■ What can you tell us about a chapter or regional event or accomplishment that changed you, your chapter, or the Society?

Portfolios: Better than Ever

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 21 MEETING

(Continued from page 8)

ing people read your work without being there to explain things.

· Office supply stores have many inexpensive and professional looking cases, some with numerous pockets and with pull-out handles. The briefcase or binder should look professional and not fall apart if dropped. A table of contents and tabs will look impressive and help you navigate. Sheet protectors will keep the samples clean and neat. Magazine holders are available to hold an entire issue. Envelops are available for CD-ROMs. The CDs should have labels and be in jewel cases, even if they are in a binder envelop. Be sure to put your name and contact information on the label. Be sure to virus scan it! Put an autorun program on it to avoid clumsy startup, but inform the interviewer first that you have done this, in case he has any operating system problems with it. Websites should be easy to read and logically organized. Avoid busy backgrounds. Check all links!

THINK AHEAD

If you are taking a CD or plan to show a website, ask the interviewer what facilities are available — a computer, in case you do not have a laptop; power, in case your laptop battery does not last long enough; large projection equipment, in case there will be more than one or two people in the room.

PERMISSION

You must get permission to use work you were employed to do. If confidentiality is a problem, ask whether you can extract a portion or make some changes that will make the piece acceptable to use. Negotiate to see whether you can present the item, but not leave any samples. Create a mock sample that is similar to the one you wanted to use, but uses no proprietary data, but be sure to inform the interviewer that you have done this, since you did not have permission to show the real information.

BUT I HAVE NO SAMPLES

Yes, you do. You can create them in many ways. Volunteer to create a website, newsletter, brochure, or user's guide for your church, hobby, STC, a freeware software developer, or an open source application developer. Use school papers and reports, and describe what they show about your skills.

PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Practice so that you can navigate easily through the portfolio. Anticipate questions and interruptions, and practice responses. Annotate items to help you remember what you wanted to say.

If no portfolio was requested, offer it, but do not force it on someone. Present with confidence. Maintain control of the portfolio—do not hand it over to the interviewer.

AND FINALLY

Keep this article in a folder with your resume. The advice is timeless.

Board Meeting, March 6

Your officers held a board meeting on March 6, 2002. The items discussed included the following:

· **Treasurer and Vice President.** These positions must be filled by the end of this season.

· **Meeting Notices.** Processes were put in place for getting the meeting notices disseminated by the end of the first week of the month.

· **Your Contact Information.** A link will be placed on the web site to allow members to update their personal contact information.

· **April and May Meetings.** The last few meetings of this season will have speakers. A summer fun gathering still is in discussion.

· **Next Season's Meetings.** Half the meetings for the 2002-03 season are planned and confirmed.

· **Email.** The chapter listserv contains only about half our members. Its instantaneous communication needs to be extended to the entire membership.

· **Chapter Work.** Volunteers are greatly needed in all areas of chapter work.

· **Competition.** No competition awards were given this Spring because too few candidates were received.

· **Writers Available/Needed.** Employment in Pittsburgh is on the rise! Keep posting your notices with Noelle Conover, our employment coordinator.

· **Fund raising.** We will need to raise funds for the chapter soon. Ideas are being solicited.

The board wants to remain responsive to the needs of the members. If you have an item that you want the board to consider, please notify Mary C. Ecsedy at:

<mary.ecsedy@verizon.net>

Monthly Chapter Meeting

TOPIC:
Online Help Authoring Tools by ComponentOne

A TRIVIA QUESTION:
One of the two largest vendors of authoring tools for Windows online help is based in:

A. Boston

B. San Francisco

C. Pittsburgh

If you guessed (C), you are correct!

WHEN: Tuesday, March 19, 2002
5:30 - 6:30 (dinner and network ing)

6:30 - 7:30 (presentation)

WHERE: Jameson's Restaurant, 45 Bates Street in Oakland (just off the Bates Street exit of the Parkway East).

COST: $12 for STC members

$13 for non-members

$5 for students and unemployed

RSVP: Please reply by 3 pm on Monday, March 18, to Darlene Mullenix, Meeting Coordinator, by calling her at (412) 288-8676 or by emailing her at dmullenix@federatedinv.com.

STC society for technical communication

P.O. Box 133
Pittsburgh, PA 15230

MARCH, 2002

ONLINE HELP AUTHORING TOOLS BY COMPONENTONE