

# blue pencil



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## Report on the 12th Annual STC Region 6 Conference: "Gateway to Your Future"

By Mary C. Ecsedy

Last October I attended the 12th Annual STC Region 6 Conference, held from the 12th through the 15th in St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis is my hometown, and I also planned to spend some extra time visiting my family. Since I no longer enjoy flying, but I still like to drive, I decided to do a Road Trip. We only have one car, so I reserved a rental, and instead of the "intermediate sedan" I reserved, the rental agency sent me out in a snow-white Mustang, feeling like the most conspicuous thing on the road. I made the trip in almost record time.

The conference was held at the Millennium Hotel, which is located downtown near the Gateway Arch. My room was on the 16th floor, overlooking the Arch, Laclede's Landing, Ead's Bridge, and the Old Cathedral where my grandparents were married. It was fun to be back in town as a tourist. I drove down on Sunday the 13th, and arrived in time to check in, unpack, and spend some time at the reception. Then I got back into my car and drove another hour west to my parent's house in time for my sister's 40th birthday party.

The next morning the conference began in earnest. We had a continental breakfast with lots of coffee, and then settled into the main auditorium for the conference welcome and the presentation by the opening speaker, Ron Blicq. Ron's topic was "Technical Communication: A Creative Endeavor with a Significant History." He gave a highly entertaining and informative overview of the history of our profes-

sion, and where future trends are pointing. The conference theme was "Gateway to Your Future," and Ron's presentation provided a good foundation for the rest of the conference to build upon.

Conference presentation materials, including Ron's, will be made available on the conference website: [http://www.stcregion.org/region6/conference/conf2002\\_General\\_Information.htm](http://www.stcregion.org/region6/conference/conf2002_General_Information.htm).

The two morning sessions I attended were:

### Marketing Yourself as a Technical Communicator, by Thea Teich ([www.teichtmc.com](http://www.teichtmc.com))

Thea discussed various aspects of marketing yourself, for both independents and employees. She pointed out that very few of our bosses or clients know exactly what we do, or they have a very narrow view of what we do. It is up to us to market ourselves.

During economic downturns there is a real tendency to view documentation as a cost center, and marketing yourself, making your contribution to the bottom line more visible, is important to avoid downsizing. Thea suggested that we take advantage of any training opportunities in order to expand our horizons and job skills. Do the work that needs to be done, and really try to understand the financial decision-making process as much as possible. However, the most important marketing is to do a good job, learn that people do business with people, and treat your network as your most important marketing asset. She advocated

understanding clearly what you are trying to do so you can clearly explain it to people. She recommended having a "30 second" description of yourself and what you do.

### Keynote Address: Seeding the Clouds - How to Make It Rain on You even During a Dry Spell, by John Hedtke

John gave a lively talk to a room filled with technical writers who are in various stages

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**Blue Pencil**

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## Message from the President

by Alan Houser

As I've experienced the stagnant economy first-hand, I've been thinking a lot recently about pent-up demand. I'm seeing companies delay long-term initiatives that will improve processes and decrease costs. I'm seeing companies choose tools based on price alone, not effectiveness or appropriateness for the task at hand. I'm seeing companies "make do" by providing existing internal documentation to their customers, or do without technical documentation entirely (requiring labor-intensive hand-holding of every customer).

This appears to be taking place across departments and industries. I recently heard an employee of an IT department for a major Pittsburgh corporation say, "We're not spending money to fix anything unless something is *really* broken."

This pent-up demand had a trickle-down effect. Because my consulting business is slower than I would like, I'm making do with older equipment. All but my most essential software stays at the current version. The new laptop computer that I had hoped to purchase nearly a year ago remains a wish list item. My focus is on meeting the most basic of business expenses.

The encouraging part of this is that the pent-up demand must eventually be satisfied, and the satisfaction of pent-up demand also trickles down. As the U.S. economy pulls out of this stagnation, companies will begin to spend more freely. As companies spend more freely, professionals like us will have more opportunities to contribute. These opportunities will translate into different things for different people. The full-time employees may find more job security, improved budgets, and better compensation. As a consultant, I hope to find more work, better compensation, and greater ability to re-invest in my business by hiring staff, taking on new projects, and buying that new laptop computer.

There is already a lot of pent-up demand out there for our services, and I know this demand will need to be met in the future. I don't know whether this will happen next month, next quarter, or next year, but I think it will be a lot of fun to be in our field when it happens.

*You can contact Pittsburgh chapter president Alan Houser at [arh@groupwellesley.com](mailto:arh@groupwellesley.com), or 412-363-3481.*

## We Need Your Old STC Stuff

By Janis Ramey

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This year we're celebrating 50 years since STC was founded. There will be special displays and programs at our annual meeting in Dallas plus articles in the Intercom. As chapter historian, I'm planning to create a display for our March chapter meeting us-

ing items from our archives. If you have any items you'd like to donate to the archives, please contact me. We'd like to add photos, programs from meetings, announcements, award certificates, old newsletters, etc.

For a catalog of the current contents of the archives, go to the "links" section of my website: [www.technical-writing.net](http://www.technical-writing.net).

I look forward to seeing your contributions!

## Taking the 'Dis' out of 'Disabilities': New Special Needs SIG Seeks Support

Just a reminder as the STC membership renewal process creeps up on its February 28 deadline ... the Society's newest SIG, the Special Needs SIG, is still looking for new members to support them in their twin mission to assist technical communicators with disabilities in the practice of our profession and to provide all technical communicators with information that will help them make our communication products more accessible to users with disabilities. A detailed mission statement is available at the Web site.

The SNSIG has already made significant progress: a comprehensive Web site (see <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml>); an online newsletter (first edition is posted at <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/newsletter.shtml>); and extensive support to the 49<sup>th</sup> STC Conference, including publication of *Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs* and an *Addendum* thereto, a successful progression, and several articles in the

*Proceedings* (conference materials available at <http://www.stc-orlando.org/prodev/49notes/SNC.asp>).

But there is much yet to do, and to accomplish it, the SNSIG needs more people. It is looking both for Active members, to join their initiatives; and Patrons, whose affiliation will help the SIG secure the budget it needs to fulfill its objectives.

If you wish to support the Special Needs SIG, you have two options: (1) If you have not yet submitted your STC membership renewal, simply check the SNSIG box when you do. (2) If you have already submitted your STC membership renewal, download the SIG sign-up form from [http://www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/sigform.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/sigform.pdf) and submit it directly to the Society Office. In either case, in order to be added to the SNSIG's newsletter and/or listserv without delay, contact [daniel.w.voss@lmco.com](mailto:daniel.w.voss@lmco.com) or [jvinegar@myranch.com](mailto:jvinegar@myranch.com).


## December Meeting Minutes: Life Skills-- Finding Work

On December 10, four of our own WorkQuest members gave presentations on the following topics:

John Clark, "Presenting Yourself"  
Mary Ann Pike, "Job Search Preparation"  
Jim McCarty, "Finding Opportunities"  
Diana Mathis, "Nurturing Yourself"


These presentations were the same ones they recently gave at the Region 4 Conference. Details are available on the WorkQuest website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~workquest>.

WorkQuest members have found that 93% of them are experienced and 78% are editors or proofreaders. Most are looking for permanent work, but right now, most of the jobs are temporary. The skills they are honing through their meetings are gook ones for all of us to maintain.



**Check out Group Wellesley's  
First Quarter Class Schedule**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ WRITING</li> <li>▶ CONSULTING</li> <li>▶ DEVELOPMENT</li> <li>▶ TRAINING</li> </ul> <p>TEL 412.363.3481<br/>FAX 412.363.3482<br/>info@groupwellesley.com<br/>www.groupwellesley.com</p> | <p><b>FrameMaker 7: Beginning Authoring</b><br/>February 26-28</p> <p><b>FrameMaker 7: Advanced Authoring</b><br/>March 10-11</p> <p><b>Introduction to XML</b><br/>Call for schedule</p> |
|--|---|



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# Notes from the National Office

## November Membership

**Chapter 189**

**Total STC 21,456**

### New Members

**Jim Esson**

### Upcoming Telephone Seminars

Wednesday, February 5

*Creating Persuasive Executive Summaries*  
– Stacia D. Kelly

Thursday, February 13

*Fast and Easy Time Management* – John V. Hedtke

All telephone seminars are held from 1:00-2:30 p.m. EST. Members can register for the seminars at [www.stc.org/seminars.asp](http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp). Cost for a seminar is per site, not per person. U.S. sites: \$145; Canadian sites: \$160.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Don't forget to look for the preliminary program for the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, to be held May 18-21 in Dallas. The program was mailed with the February 2003 issue of *Intercom*. The program contains registration materials, hotel information, and session titles.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Membership Dues

STC membership dues for 2003 were payable on January 1. In order to be eligible to vote in the upcoming STC elections, membership dues must be paid by February 28.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Don't Lose Touch with STC

The Society Office encourages all STC members to update their membership information with home addresses, home phone numbers, or home email addresses. Many members provide only their work contact information, and the office often loses track of these members when they change jobs. To update your membership information, complete the STC address change form at [www.stc.org/address\\_change.asp](http://www.stc.org/address_change.asp) or contact the office at 703-522-4114.

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# Access Database Primer, part 1

By Robert P. Mohr

Last month's column touched on how you can perform merge operations using Word documents and Access databases. This month's column will kick-off a 4-part series describing how to create a database application with Microsoft Access. The database is going to be a simple one—though practical and useful. The version of Access I will use is 2002 (XP). The steps used to create the tables, forms, reports, queries, etc. are generally the same in previous versions, though some of the menu options may vary slightly. You should be able to follow along and create the same database components with any version of Access. At the end of each column, I will provide a URL to the database file as it exists at that point in its development so that you can download it for reference.

The application I'm going to describe is one that will store tidbits of information. You will be able to copy text from e-mails, Web pages, PDF files, and other electronic media and paste it into the database. Later, you can return to the database and search it, view results, and print reports. Think of it as a mini-knowledge base. Put a shortcut to it on your desktop, and the information will be at your fingertips.

First, a little terminology. Database components are tables, forms, queries, macros, and reports. Tables are containers for data. Each row in a table represents a data record. Each record is comprised of data fields. Fields can vary in the type of data they hold. For example, numeric fields can only hold numbers; date fields can only hold dates. Forms are used as a GUI through which data is entered and viewed. Queries are used to extract data from tables based on some criteria. In our application it will be possible to query all records based on a particular topic. An Access macro is just like a Word macro: VBA code that performs some function. Reports are renderings of (usually) queried information designed for paper or screen.

To create a new Access database:

1. Start Access.
2. Select **File > New**, and select a **Blank Database** from the **New** list on the New file task pane.
3. Enter a location and filename for the database file. (Access databases are saved as a single file with a .mdb extension.) and click **OK**.

You now have a database to which you can add tables and other components.

The first step in the design of any database is to identify the data to be stored. Since this application is a simple one, it requires only five data fields:

- Date
- Topic

- Source
- Text
- Comments

All of these fields will constitute a single data record in a table. To create the table in Access:

1. Click the **Tables** object if it's not already selected.
2. Double-click the **Create table in Design view** option in the Database window. The database design window is displayed.

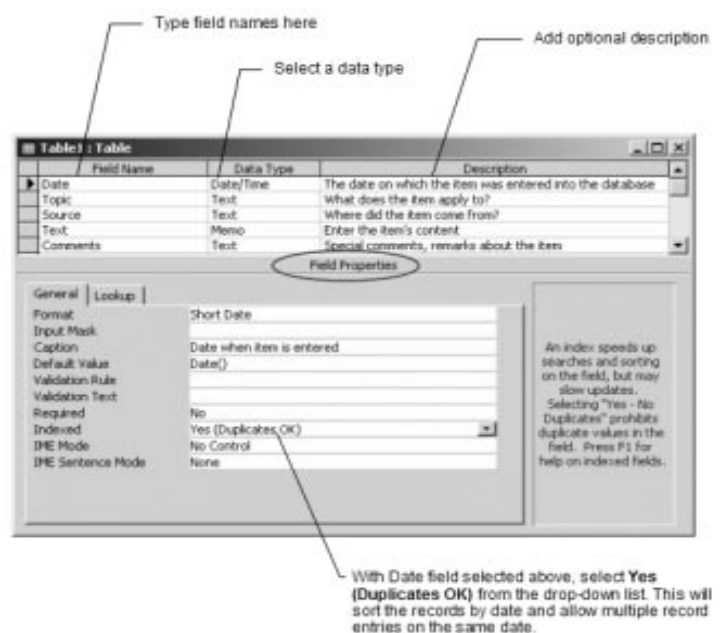


Figure 1: Table design window

Property options in the Field Properties area change according to the data type chosen above them. Most of the properties are selectable from drop-down lists.

1. Type the five field names and select **Data Types** and **Properties** for each.
2. Select **File > Save** from the main menu.
3. Enter a name for the table.
4. If prompted to add a primary key, click **No**. (It is not necessary for this application.)
5. Close the table design window.

Thinking ahead toward the GUI, consider the **Topic** and **Source** fields. Suppose the information you gather is mostly for FrameMaker. You'd have to type "FrameMaker" in the Topic field (continued on page 8)



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of unemployment, including recent, current, or anticipated. That covered everyone in the room; things are hard for technical writers everywhere right now. John's most important piece of advice for writers who are looking for work is this: try something different than what you are doing now. He also gave the following list of tips and suggestions:

- Update your résumé and tailor it for the work you're seeking.
- Ensure there are no typos in your résumé or cover letter. Ever. His two best examples were: "I am a technical technical writer" and "I have excellent poofreading skills."
- Create a good portfolio.
- Build a website that lists your skills and background. He had reservations about putting your résumé online, for reasons of control and security.
- Increase your skills. There are plenty of tutorials and software evaluation packages available online, so take advantage of them.
- Get certified in something.
- Change your "mode", i.e., if you've been working freelance, look for full-time; if you've been working full-time, look for freelance contracts.
- Change your venue, or the type of writing that you do. Build on your experience to branch out into other things. For example, if you've been writing online help systems, look for work in training or curriculum development.
- Change your geographical limits. Not all employers are enlightened about remote workers, but enough are to make it worthwhile to look for work in other cities and countries.
- Avoid posting your résumé on the big job sites.
- Look back at what you've done in the past for new ideas.
- Write magazine articles.
- Speak to groups. Successful contractors write articles and books and speak in public; unsuccessful contractors look for work by cold calling and mailings.
- Network as much as possible. Go to every single STC function that you can, and always have a copy of your résumé or at least your card. Go to non-STC functions also.
- Volunteer.
- Participate in your alumni association.
- Consider lowering your standards. Better to work as a temp at \$15 an hour for awhile than to lose your house.
- Write a book. It's hard work and will stretch you a great deal, and people will be REALLY impressed.
- Write 3rd party books.
- Don't let your employment situation adversely affect your life.
- Be ready for the flood when all of this starts to pay off.
- Help someone else get a job whenever you can.

In sum: Do more. Do it differently. Have fun with the process.

After lunch, I spent the rest of the afternoon at the CICSIG:

## Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG Progression and Open Forum

I was a presenter in this session. The focus of my talk was how to learn from your mistakes strategically as you start down the road of freelance or consulting work. There were about six presenters, and we had a good turnout for our session. The best part was the last half-hour, when the discussion was opened to the whole room, and we had a good conversation about finding work.

\*\*\*\*\*

We had a nice exhibitor reception, with lots of pizza and deep-fried ravioli (a regional delicacy), and prizes, and then about 20 of us headed out for dinner at a famous steak

restaurant down the street. It was expensive and I was "between contracts" at that time, but it was a great meal and I really enjoyed the conversation with other writers from as far away as South Dakota, Colorado, and Texas.

The next morning, I again brewed up a pot of coffee in my room and watched the sunrise over the oil refineries and chemical plants across the river in East St. Louis and Sauget. It was very beautiful, all shrouded in rose-colored mist with flames leaping high from the towers like something from Blade Runner, with the neon lights from the riverboat casinos flashing in the foreground...

But back to the conference. I attended two presentations on this second morning:

## Quantifying the Value of Technical Communications: How to Make Beautiful Metrics Together, by Jim Romano

Jim stressed that it is critical that we be able to quantify what we do, especially in an economic downturn. Technical writers need to be able to point to the numbers to make developers and management understand the real value of what they can bring to the project. The trouble is that we don't often think of what we do quantitatively, and Jim did a good job of showing how to think in these terms. "If you can't measure it you can't improve it," he said. He uses metrics to bridge the value gap between our perceived and our actual value. He also uses the following steps to improve quality, by capturing and analyzing metrics at each of the following steps:

*Define* -- Project goals, customer (internal and external users) requirements

*Measure* -- Gather data

FMEA (Failure Mode & Effects Analysis), i.e., analyze what can go wrong

Identify patterns in the process

*Analyze* -- Organize causes and effects

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# Report on the 12th Annual STC Region 6 Conference: "Gateway to Your Future"

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*Improve* -- Find solutions and implement them

*Control* -- Control quality with project documents, SOPs, monitoring and evaluating progress, and achieving project closure

We each have plenty of examples of how our work can save money - often a \*lot\* of money. It doesn't take much to create extremely clear and convincing charts and other visual aids that show the value of our work. Jim suggested looking through Edward Tufte's books on visual representations of quantitative data for inspiration.

## Writing Independent-Study Online Technical Communication Courses with Integrated Self-Evaluation, by Ron Blicq ([www.rgilearning.com](http://www.rgilearning.com))

Ron's presentation described how he and his team developed online training courses for engineers who need to improve their business writing skills, such as how to

write effective email, formal and technical reports, etc. Ron and his team wanted to create courses that would provide intense interactivity, meet the needs of users with varying skills, integrate self-evaluation, and keep costs down by avoiding the need for an instructor. After evaluating several commercial applications, they decided to develop their own, which proved to be quite a challenge.

The full course consists of over 1,100 screens, and Ron said that the only reason it works is because they took the time to do complete storyboarding first. They used small screens and short paragraphs, a "pyramid" writing style (providing the most critical information first), and incorporated positive reinforcement at all times. If the user gets a wrong answer, they are sent to a remedial instruction screen instead of "back" for example. There are three

mandatory, foundational courses, and five optional advanced courses.

It was a really interesting project, and you can see a demo as well as additional information on their website.

\*\*\*\*\*

After lunch in the revolving restaurant at the top of the hotel tower, I had to leave the conference before the last presentations, in order to beat rush hour traffic through the Chesterfield Valley on Highway 40 to get to my parents' in time for dinner.

I had a wonderful time at the conference! I met a lot of interesting people, and it was a terrific morale boost; that alone made it worthwhile. I'm very pleased that some of our chapter members were able to attend the Region 4 conference, because I know it did them some good as well. I encourage all of you to attend these regional STC conferences whenever you have a chance.

## WorkQuest Meeting Summaries

The Pittsburgh Chapter's WorkQuest group continued its weekly meetings in November and December.

### November 12 – Job and Career Education Center

The Nov 12<sup>th</sup> WorkQuest meeting was held at the Job and Career Education Center in the main Carnegie Library in Oakland. The JCEC, created in the 1970's to help displaced steel workers find new jobs, has a wealth of resources for job seekers. Some of the items you can find there include:

- lists of schools
- study books for graduate admissions tests (GMAT, GRE, etc.)
- books listing statistics about various careers
- books listing statistics about local and

national companies in various industries

- books on job searching, interviewing, writing résumés and cover letters, etc.

In addition, the JCEC provides access to computers that can be used to do research, write résumés and cover letters, and take an interest inventory test. They offer classes in all of the Microsoft Office applications, job searching online, and other topics of interest to job seekers. The JCEC is also a mini-center for CareerLink, the Pennsylvania job seekers service. They have a volunteer career counselor who is available by appointment to evaluate your job search effort and give you suggestions for job hunting. The JCEC is a great resource to augment your job search, and is free to the public.

### November 19 – Region 4 Conference Discussion

At this meeting, Janis Ramey, Mary Ann Pike, and Jim McCarty discussed the sessions that they attended at the Region 4 STC conference, where they presented a session describing the WorkQuest group and its job searching philosophy. In addition, Jim mentioned a networking group he discovered that meets at The Lighthouse on Route 8 in the North Hills. The focus of the group is discovering your talents using a religious perspective.

### November 26 – Making Job Contacts

The guest speaker this week was John Gilmore, a freelance human resources consultant who volunteers at the Carnegie

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# Access Database Primer, part 1

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each time you add a new record. And, if the source happens to be the Framer's list, then you'd have to type "Framer's list" for each record as well. This would be tedious. It would be easier to create another table to store values for Topics and simply select a topic value from a drop-down list. The same is true for Source. Tables used to look up values in this way are called look-up tables. So, create a table for Topics and one for Source. Each table will contain only one field that can be referenced from the GUI. The fields can be indexed but without duplicates. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Topic and Source tables



Now that the data fields and tables have been addressed, it's time to create the GUI. To create a new form:

1. Click the **Forms** object if it's not already selected.
2. Double-click the **Create Form by using wizard** view option in the Database window. The form wizard starts.
3. Select **Table:Text** from the **Tables/Queries** drop-down list.
4. Select all fields from the **Available Fields** list and move them to the **Selected Fields** list.

5. Click **Next >**.
6. Accept the default **Columnar** layout and click **Next >**.
7. Choose a color scheme and click **Next >**.
8. Add a **Title** for the form and click the **Modify the form's design** radio button.
9. Click **Finish**. The new form is displayed in the form designer. See Figure 3.

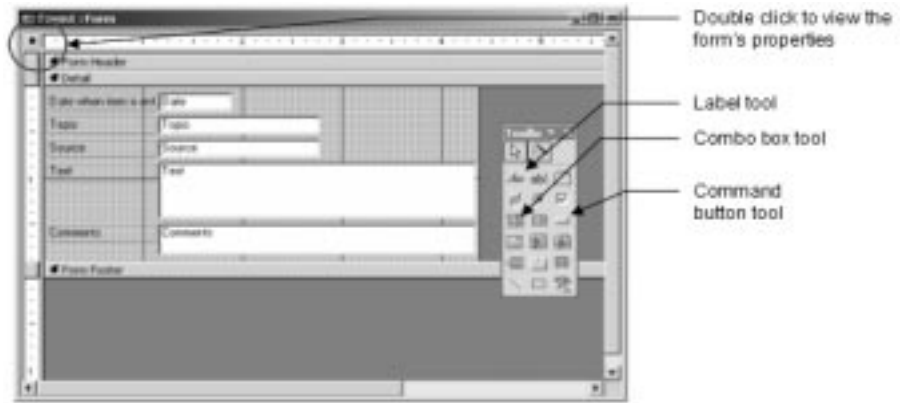


Figure 3: Wizard's rendition of the form

The form wizard does an adequate job of creating the basic form, but you'll want to spruce it up a bit. A lot can be done here, and much of it falls to personal taste and good usability rules. Several articles would be needed to cover all of the design tools and icons on the form design toolbar. Instead, I'll skip ahead and let you experiment with changing the form's appearance. The form shown in Figure 4 below was altered using the Toolbox options called out in Figure 3 above.

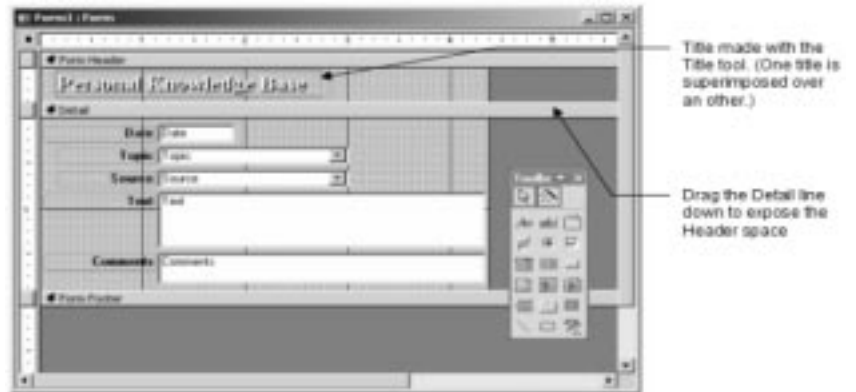


Figure 4: Combo boxes added for the look-up tables  
(continued on page 9)





# Access Database Primer, part 1

(continued from page 8)

Notice that the Topic and Source input boxes are different from the other input fields. I deleted the originals and replaced them with combo boxes linked to the look-up tables. Combo boxes are added using a combo box wizard:

1. Click and drag the combo box tool from the Toolbox. This launches the combo box wizard.
2. Accept the default value, **I want the combo box to look up the values in a table or query**, and click **Next >**.
3. Select the appropriate table, **Table:Topics**, and click **Next >**.
4. Select the field from the **Available Field** list and move it to the **Selected Fields** list.
5. Click **Next >**.
6. Accept the default presentation of the combo box and click **Next >**.
7. Select the **Store that value in this field** radio button and select **Topic** from the drop-down list.
8. Click **Next >**.
9. Enter a label for the combo box and click **Finish**. The combo box is added to the form. You can then format it and its label to match the other fields and labels.

Repeat the process for the Source combo box. You can see what the form will look like by clicking the **View** icon, .

Click the **Design** icon, , to return to the design window. When you're satisfied with the form, you can save it and close it. Your form should look something like Figure 5.

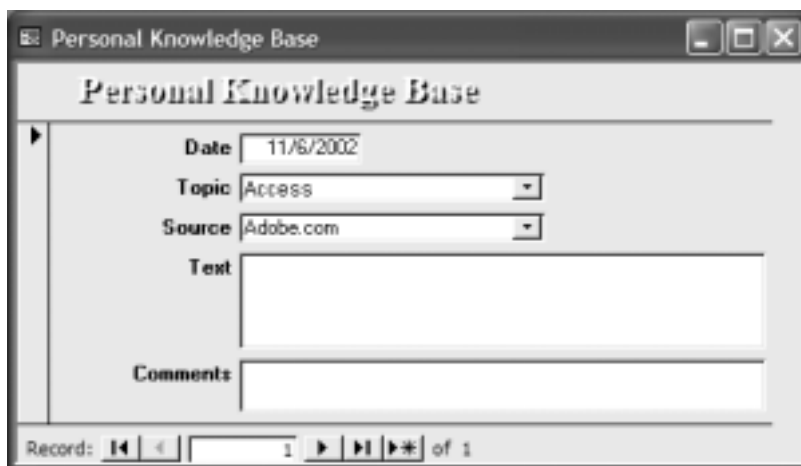
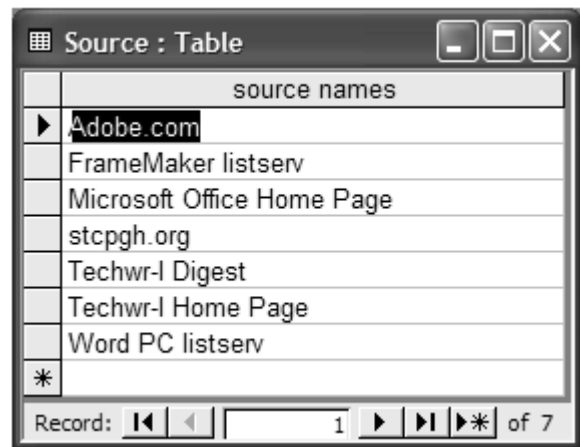


Figure 5: Sample form

Notice that Figure 5 shows Access in the Topic field and Adobe.com in the Source field. That's because I added them as records in their respective look-up tables so I could test the form. Figure 6 shows the look-up tables with a few records in them.



| Source : Table |                            |
|----------------|----------------------------|
|                | source names               |
| ▶              | Adobe.com                  |
|                | FrameMaker listserv        |
|                | Microsoft Office Home Page |
|                | stcpgh.org                 |
|                | Techwr-I Digest            |
|                | Techwr-I Home Page         |
|                | Word PC listserv           |
| *              |                            |

| Topics : Ta... |               |
|----------------|---------------|
|                | topic name    |
| ▶              | Access        |
|                | Adobe Acrobat |
|                | FrameMaker    |
|                | PageMaker     |
|                | PDF tips      |
|                | Visual Basic  |
|                | Word          |
| *              |               |

Figure 6: Sample records in look-up tables

To add records to the tables, click the Tables link in the Objects list, then double-click one of the tables listed on the right. The table displays like a spreadsheet. Add as many records as you like to the tables. For a little practice, you could create data entry forms for the two tables.

If you want, you can compare your database to mine by downloading mine from [www.writemohr.com](http://www.writemohr.com). Next month, I'll continue this series with a discussion of form properties and simple reports using the report wizard.

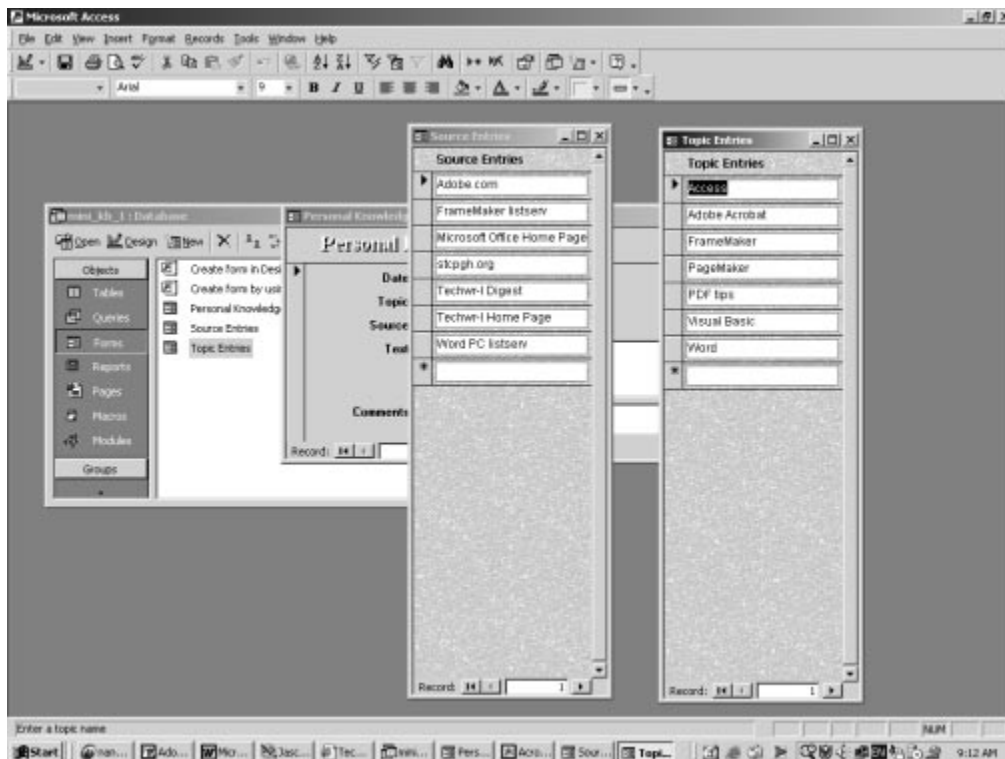
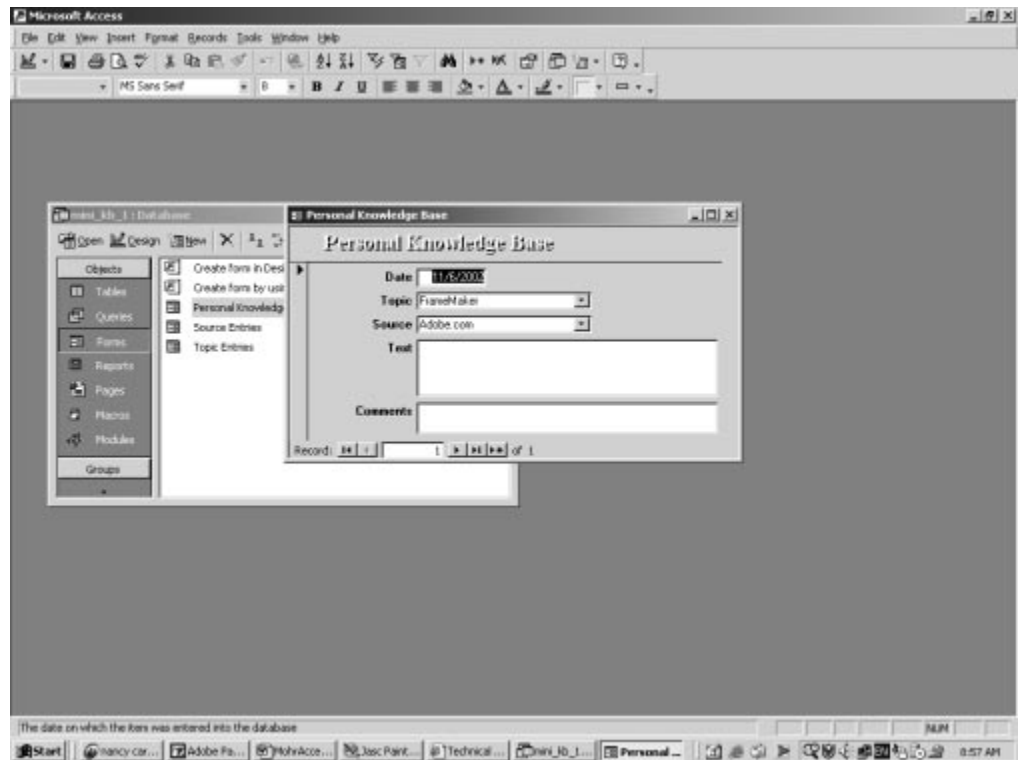
(continued on page 10)

# Access Database Primer, part 1

(continued from page 9)

**Ed. Note:** Use the search function on Bob's web site to find "access database primer" then click on the "database" download link. The Personal Knowledge Base database opens in the Forms object as shown on the right. You can use dropdown lists to select entries in the Topic and Source fields. You can edit those dropdown lists by double clicking the Topic Entries or Source Entries forms. These two forms are open in the figure below.

Bob Mohr is a senior member of STC and can be reached at [rpmohr@writemohr.com](mailto:rpmohr@writemohr.com)



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## WorkQuest Meeting Summaries

(continued from page 7)

Library Job and Career Education Center mentioned earlier. John's focus for this meeting was making contacts that lead to a job.

John suggested that you always try to find the name of the person who is reviewing résumés for companies when you submit a résumé in response to an advertisement. He said that you often can call the HR department of a company and ask for the name of the recruiter who is handling a particular job. Once you have a name, you should try to speak with the person to give them more information about yourself than can be included on your résumé so that they will be interested in interviewing you for their position. If you are having someone that you know recommend you for a position in their company, he suggests asking your friend to hand-carry your résumé to the HR department so that it will receive more attention from the HR representative.

As many previous WorkQuest speakers have done, John stressed the importance of networking. He suggested telling everyone you know that you are looking for a job: relatives, friends, fellow church members, parents of children in your school, and neighbors, to name a few. He suggests identifying some organizations where you would be particularly interest in working, then trying to make contacts within those organizations.

John says that the idea is not to get a job immediately, but to let people in those organizations get to know you so that when a position opens that match your skills, they will think of you. He suggests sending an email to set up a networking meeting, then following up with a phone call. If possible, try to meet your contact in person, but at least try to get a phone interview. Be sure to dress well as well for networking meetings as you would for interviews. Also be sure to send a note thanking the person for their time.

### December 3 – Writing Effective Cover Letters

At this meeting, Tod and Mary Ann Pike gave a talk on how to write effective cover letters. Unlike a résumé, a cover letter lets you set yourself apart from other applicants. It allows you to show off your communication skills and provide more information than is usually included your résumé. It provides the opportunity to highlight the aspects of your background that will be most relevant to the reader.

Your opening should be brief and to the point, but it should grab the reader's attention and make the reader want to continue. Mention the specific job you are applying for, if there is one, and how you heard about the position. Mention a contact who referred you to the position, if there is one. Tell them what attracted you to apply to that particular company.

Following paragraphs should tell the company why they should interview you. List your skills that would be pertinent to the position for which you are applying. Mention specific problems they have that you could solve, if you know of any. Give a list of specific achievements in your career (use bullet points to draw attention to items).

Tell the company why you want to work for them. Make two or three points about why you are interested in the job, the firm, and the industry. Show that you've done some research about the firm and let them know specific things you like about the company and the industry.

Keep your closing short. Note that you've enclosed your résumé, that you'd like to meet in person, and that you will call in a week to ten days to answer any further questions they may have. Be assertive but courteous.

### December 17 – Marketing Materials Swap Meet

At this meeting, the members shared some delicious caraway cake made by Diana, and shared some of their marketing materials with the other members. The members all pointed out the features they liked about the materials, and made some suggestions about what they thought might make the materials even better. The items discussed ranged from business cards and stationery to résumés, cover letters and brochures. They also discussed the software they used to design their materials, and good places to buy paper and have stationery printed.

WorkQuest was formed as a resource for you. Notices of the meetings can be found on the WorkQuest web site <http://home.earthlink.net/~workquest/>.

# RAMEY

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## Upcoming Chapter Meeting - FrameMaker 7 Demonstration

Join FrameMaker guru Kay Ethier for an overview of the great new features in FrameMaker 7.0! Kay's presentation hits the high points of Adobe FrameMaker 7.0. Coverage includes structure for XML, automated master page application, revised PDF setup, and tagged PDF advantages. This is designed to provide current users with information about migrating from previous versions of FrameMaker and FrameMaker+SGML.

Kay Ethier is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and several prior versions. As an expert in FrameMaker and XML, she instructs training classes, performs consult-

ing services, and provides hotline support for clients in a variety of industries. She resides in the Research Triangle Park, North Carolina area, yet serves clients from across the United States, in Canada, and in the UK. In 2001 Kay co-authored the book, "XML Weekend Crash Course", for HungryMinds. She has most recently been a contributing author on "Advanced FrameMaker 7", a book planned for early 2003 release. Kay will be teaching a FrameMaker Boot Camp course in Pittsburgh from February 10-14. For more information, contact Bright Path Solutions at 919-656-2653 or visit their web site at <http://www.travelthepath.com>.

**WHEN:** Tuesday, February 11, 2003.

**WHERE:** To be announced. See our web site.

**COST:** No cost. Light refreshments will be served.

**RSVP:** Please reply by Thursday, February 6, 2003 to Darlene Mullenix at: [dmullenix@federatedinv.com](mailto:dmullenix@federatedinv.com) or 412-288-8676. Include your telephone number.

## STC Chapter Meeting Schedule

Mark your calendars! Here are topics and tentative dates for the remainder of the 2002-2003 meeting calendar. More details on each meeting will be published as the dates draw closer.

February 11 (Tuesday) — Frame 7 (Kay Ethier)

March 11 (Tuesday) — Chapter 50th Anniversary Party and Awards Banquet (Janis Ramey)

April 8 (Tuesday) — Robohelp (Leslie Johnson)

May — Spring Fling Party (date to be determined)

## Editorial Calendar

Please send your submissions to Meg Papa at [mv0t@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:mv0t@andrew.cmu.edu).

| Meeting Date     | Blue Pencil Publication Date (Monday) | Article Submission Deadline (Monday) |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Week of March 10 | February 24                           | February 3                           |
| Week of April 7  | March 24                              | March 3                              |
| Week of May 12   | April 28                              | April 7                              |

## We Need your Help:

### Corporate Sponsors Needed

Corporate sponsors are needed to provide occasional meeting space and use of a projector. Please ask your company if STC could hold a monthly meeting in your conference room. If you can offer this space, contact Darlene Mullenix at 412-288-8676 or [dmullenix@federatedinv.com](mailto:dmullenix@federatedinv.com).

### Share your Expertise with WorkQuest

WorkQuest, our newest SIG, needs your help. Please consider sharing your expertise to help other writers who are out of work. Contact Janis Ramey at 412-833-5548 or [ramey@technical-writing.net](mailto:ramey@technical-writing.net).

## STC's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In May of 2003, STC will be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a national professional organization. Please see the web site to find out where you can send your memories and to find out how the Pittsburgh Chapter plans to mark this occasion.