

blue pencil



Chapter Awards Banquet: Technical Communication Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Come to the Chapter Awards Banquet to celebrate the Pittsburgh Chapter's 45th anniversary and STC's 50th anniversary! We'll be honoring this year's publications competition winners and Distinguished Chapter Service Award winners.

Thea Teich, the current first Vice President and incoming President of STC, will be joining us to talk about the future of technical communication. And Chapter Historian Janis Ramey has assembled a fascinating collection of chapter artifacts and an online presentation about the history of the Pittsburgh Chapter. Don't miss this chance to commemorate our profession's past, present and future!

Bring a Friend!

If your friends or co-workers are thinking about joining STC but haven't yet done so, invite them to the banquet! We'll be giving away a one-year STC membership to a person who isn't currently a society member.

Door Prizes!

All attendees will have a chance to win STC memorabilia in our door prize drawing, including STC coffee mugs, magnetic poetry kits, and other good stuff. We'll also be raffling off a copy of FrameMaker 7.0 (generously donated by Kay Ethier, who presented at February's meeting) to anyone who is interested in using FrameMaker and doesn't have a copy.

What is the Future of Technical Communication?

Most technical communicators are highly trained, very capable, and deeply committed people who bring a breadth and depth of knowledge and skill to any table. Why then, is so much technical communications work in danger of becoming a commodity — a "product" differentiated primarily in terms of price? How can you turn this perception — and its ramifications — around? The answer is not simply learning to deal with the latest technology. Your STC membership is one important component. What else is essential for a future in technical communication? Let's talk about it on March 11.

Thea Teich has more than 25 years of experience in marketing and technical communications and has held positions with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and industry.

Since 1995, she has run Teich Technical and Marketing Communications, offering marketing planning, writing, editing, desktop publishing, web content production, and indexing services. She also teaches marketing communications in the Informational Technologies program at Cincinnati State Community and Technical College.

Thea is currently 1st vice president of STC and will serve as president starting in June of 2003. She has also held the positions of Region 4 Director-sponsor and 2nd vice president. She is a past president of the Southwestern Ohio chapter.

Meeting Venue

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 11 at the Engineer's Society of Western Pennsylvania. For details, please turn to the last page of this newsletter.

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Blue Pencil

Blue Pencil is the official newsletter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), Pittsburgh chapter. It is published monthly from September through June by the Pittsburgh chapter to inform and promote communication within the chapter and the Society. Material contained in this publication may be reprinted by other STC chapters, provided credit is given. Please send a copy of the reprint to the editor. Readers are invited to submit ads, short articles, news, reviews, and other material of interest to technical communicators by the 10th of the month prior to publication to:
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Chapter Online Competition Award Winner

Award of Merit

Five Star Development, Inc. and McKesson Automated Healthcare

Title: McKesson AcuScan-RX End User Training

Category: Training

Usability Live!

By David Caruso

On a cold winter morning we made the trek north.

No this is not the start of a Jack London tale, but rather how to best start the story of the joint meeting of three STC chapters hosted by Youngstown State University (YSU). The meeting, held January 18, was a presentation entitled "Usability Live!" given by Mike Bates, Manager of the Information Architecture team at Rockwell Software and STC Region 4 Director-Sponsor.

Representatives from the three chapters involved (Pittsburgh, Northeast Ohio, & YSU student chapter) numbered around 45 and we were a lively bunch. We had to keep moving as the temperature in the auditorium barely reached 50° C the whole time we were there. But there was hot coffee and a chance to see everyone in their winter finery. Who says proper environmental conditions are a pre-requisite for an effective meeting?

The four activity highlights were:

1. Prepare customer surveys
2. Conduct card sorting activities
3. Design and evaluate low-fidelity prototypes
4. Conduct live usability tests

Right at the start Bates set the expectations for the group: we were not there just to watch a usability test with all the gadgetry of a mobile usability lab (we would get to that), nor were we there to learn all the background of what makes usability a sought after specialty and a required phase

in major product development. No, we were there to learn (in four short hours) the major usability activities that would occur in a mock project, namely the redesign of the YSU technical communications website.

After an overview of the website project, the attendees divided into groups charged with developing survey questions for potential users of the site. Each group then shared its questions with everyone. Example questions were "How much does the program cost?" "What classes are offered?" "What background do the faculty have?" We then broke for lunch, but not before getting an assignment: we were to create index cards containing categories of information which answered specific questions generated from the previous survey. These cards would be used to develop the organization of the website.

Lunch, was a very nice "buffet with waiter service" event and my kudos to the staff who put on a great (and HOT) meal. We were all glad not to see lunchmeat (COLD-cuts) on the menu. We even got to take home the leftover food.

In the card-sorting event which followed lunch, the user (a brave YSU student) was seated in front of 50+ cards, each with a piece of information on it. The facilitator instructed the user to sort the cards into logical groups. These groups were then assigned a name by the user, such as "faculty," admissions," financial aid," etc. The sorted cards and category titles were passed on to the next stage: the low-fidelity prototype. Each of the previously formed groups took one or two of the categorized card

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Usability Live!

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groupings and developed web page prototypes. In the case of our website, the prototype was paper sketches (no CAD drawings or Flash modules).

These sketches were what we would use for the actual usability test. In the test, another volunteer YSU student user was brought in and the prototype put before him. He then used the model to achieve two tasks; both involved finding information by “clicking” on the mock-up and being directed to the information as it had been designed using the card-sort exercise. Our student volunteer did very well and our prototype was successful.

Bates then demonstrated how his mobile set-up would be used during an actual test. Cameras, audio recorders and software allow for user comments, facial expressions, and keyboard strokes to be recorded. The information could be cataloged on DVD if

there were many tests to complete in one remote visit.

Hints and tips from the presentation included:

- Time to Market – a key concept that defines the company’s deadline to ship or launch a product...get it “out the door.” This impacts the placement of usability testing in the design.
- Watching a user generates much more usable data than an interview
 - Watching = how it really is
 - Interview = how the user remembers it
- When asking questions of the user consider what is most important to them, not you
 - What do they want to know?

- What action do they want to take?

While the information presented was vital to the understanding of usability practices, the timeframe was way too short. Mr. Bates said that the day’s presentation was abbreviated from an eight-hour presentation and one audience member from the NEOH chapter told me that she had seen his presentation three times and they all felt rushed since there was so much information to cover.

And while I enjoyed the warm reception by the people in the host chapters, I have to say that the facility was not ideal given the thermostat problems. I also challenge the leadership of the Pittsburgh Chapter to host a joint event with the Ohio chapters and engage in an open dialogue with these folks. There are many ideas we can share and diverse resources from which we can all benefit.

FrameMaker7 Demonstration

At the February chapter meeting, Kay Ethier presented an overview of the latest release of FrameMaker. It combines “plain vanilla” Frame with SGML. You can select ordinary FrameMaker or the structured SGML version when you launch it.

Here are some exciting new features:

XML-related features

- Documents have hierarchical structure and element tagging consistent with XML.
- You can convert to XML and back to FM.
- Namespaces are supported
- Cascading style sheets are supported.
- Unicode characters can be used.
- FM7 comes with xDocBook, xHTML, and WebWords Publisher Standard.

Graphics support

- SVG graphics are supported.
- You can import Adobe Illustrator files.
- You can import PDFs.
- You can size a graphic by dpi or percent, and Frame remembers the original size.

Single-sourcing features

- You can print a book to PDF as a single file or as separate PDFs from the dialog box.
- File information is now part of the document – such as author, title. This transfers to the PDF.
- PDF is now tagged, that is, it has structure information, which is useful for keeping a multicolumn flow in its proper order.

FrameMaker enhancements

- Acrobat Distiller 5.05 is included. Save as PDF now works!
- An automated master page lets you apply a master page based on a paragraph style. Maximum number of master pages is 100.
- If you insert a rotated page in a double-sided document, Frame adjusts to make sure that your right/left master pages are correct.
- The Import Format dialog box now has a Select/Deselect button to make it easier to select what you want to import. You now must select the files in the book that you want before you import.
- There is a Browse button on the Print to File field of the Print dialog box.

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Notes from the National Office

**January Membership
Pittsburgh Chapter 192
Total STC 22,222**

Welcome new members
Barbara J. Levine
Tam A. Malloy
Deborah S. Pollio

Society for Technical Communication

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International Communication SIG is Looking for Features

Global Talk, the newsletter of the International Communication Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), is looking for feature articles on intercultural communication for its upcoming issues. Features should be short (250-500 word) essays, commentaries, or articles on issues dealing with

- Culture and communication
- Culture and design practices
- Technology and intercultural communication
- Translation and localization concepts and practices
- Interactions involving clients and co-workers from other cultures

Individuals interested in either submitting feature articles or proposing/discussing ideas for feature articles should contact Kirk St. Amant at stamankr@jmu.edu.

Upcoming Telephone Seminars

Wednesday, March 12

Making the Complex Clear and Pretty – Phylise Banner

Wednesday, March 19

Evaluating an Index (Even if You Only Have Five Minutes) – Seth Maislin

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. Cost for a seminar is per site, not per person. U.S. sites: \$145; Canadian sites: \$160.

50th Annual Conference

The website for STC’s 50th Annual Conference is up and running at www.stc.org/50thConf/. In addition to providing comprehensive information on educational and professional opportunities at the

conference, the site features an online registration form for members. You can also view all the technical sessions scheduled for each day. Members are encouraged to visit the site often for the latest information. The 50th Annual Conference will be held May 18-21 in Dallas.

Deduct Your STC Dues

If you pay taxes in the U.S., you can deduct your STC dues in one of several ways:

Charitable Expense

If you claim your dues as a charitable donation, you can deduct the dues amount minus the portion that goes for tangible benefits. For the STC, the tangible value of your dues is \$30 (\$15 for *Intercom* and \$15 for *Technical Communication*).

Business Expense

Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Miscellaneous Expense

Those who do not fall in the categories about can claim their dues as a miscellaneous expense.

Check your tax information booklet or consult with a tax representative for exceptions, limitations, and other regulations.

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 or contact the office at 703-522-4114.

FrameMaker7 Demonstration

(continued from page 3)

- There are 12 Running H/F variables. You can customize headers and footers to your heart's content.
- UNIX font management is included.
- Save as MIF (Maker Interchange Format, a format that any version of Frame can open), FM6 PDF, Word, Word Perfect, HTML, XML, SGML
- Tables now come across.

Special Structured FrameMaker features

- In a numbered list, if you move Number1, Frame rennumbers for you! No need to adjust the paragraph styles.
- Formats are in the template EDD. No need to import formats when you update or correct.

Help through the Help button

- On-line
- User's manual

- XML Cookbook
- FM7 Reviewer's guide
- Overview of new features
- Workgroup guide, a feature used for document control
- Tutorials
- Structured templates

You also can order from www.adobe.com a CD copy of the Guide to Enterprise Publishing, which describes how various industries use FrameMaker.

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.

2003:

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

April 8 (Tuesday) — Robohelp (Leslie Johnson)

May — Spring Fling Party (date to be determined)

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Access Database Primer, Part 2

by Robert P. Mohr

In last month's article, I discussed how to create tables, forms, and combo boxes. In this article, I'll discuss how to embellish your forms using form properties and input masks, and also how to use the report wizard to create simple reports.

1. Begin by opening the database you created last month. All of the form enhancements made in this article will pertain to the main input form.
2. Click **Forms** in the **Objects** list to display all available forms.
3. Right-click on the **Personal Knowledge Base** form and select **Design View** from the shortcut menu. The Form Designer is displayed, as shown in Figure 1.

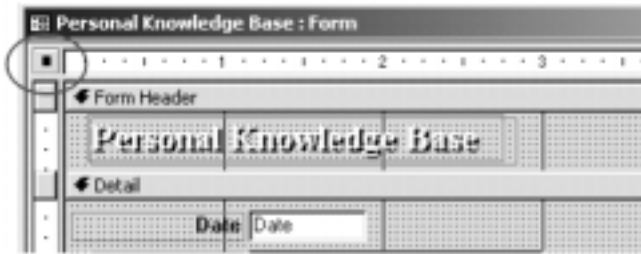


Figure 1: Form in the Form Designer window

1. Double-click the black square to view the form's properties.
- The Form's properties box enables you to alter the appearance and function of the form:

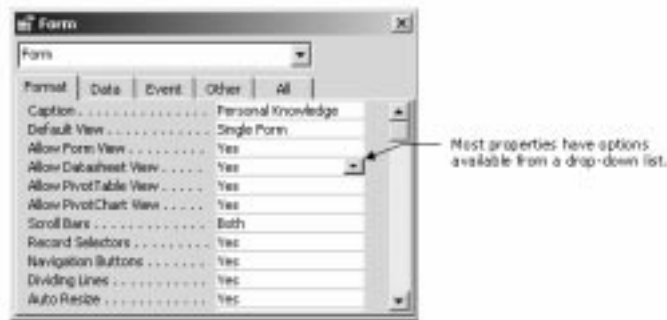


Figure 2: Form properties box

Each property tab has a role to play:

- **Format** – contains properties to control the form's appearance.
- **Data** – contains properties related to the source of data displayed by the form, filtering information, and options pertaining to data entry.

- **Event** – contains functions that the form can perform based on one or more events, such as when the form opens or closes.
- **Other** – contains properties for related help files, toolbars, menus, and the form's modality.
- **All** – all properties from all tabs are displayed in a single list.

Changing any of the properties is simply a matter of clicking on them and selecting from the list of available options. For this form, the changes are few.

1. Change the following **Format** properties:

Format property	Change to
Allow Datasheet View	No
Allow PivotTable View	No
Allow PivotChart View	No
Scroll Bars	Neither
Record Selectors	No

1. Click the **X** in the upper-right corner of the box to save and exit the properties.

Now change the background color of the Detail section of the form:

1. Right-click anywhere in the Detail section of the form and select **Properties** from the shortcut menu. Another properties box is displayed.
2. Change the **Back Color** property under the **Format** tab:
 - a) Click the **Back Color** property's button. A color palette is displayed.
 - b) Choose a new color from the palette.
 - c) Click **OK**.
 - d) Click the **X** in the upper-right corner of the property box. The form's background color changes.

Try changing the background color of the form's Header section using similar steps.

The last change to make to the form is to add an input mask to the **Date** field. Input masks make good visual references to clue users in on how data should be entered. Input masks can also save time and improve consistency in data entry because they can provide certain *default* characters.

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Access Database Primer, Part 2

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1. Right-click on the input box portion of the **Data** field and select **Properties** from the shortcut menu.
2. Click in the **Input Mask** property under the **Data** tab.
3. Click the **Input Mask**'s property button to launch the Input Mask wizard.

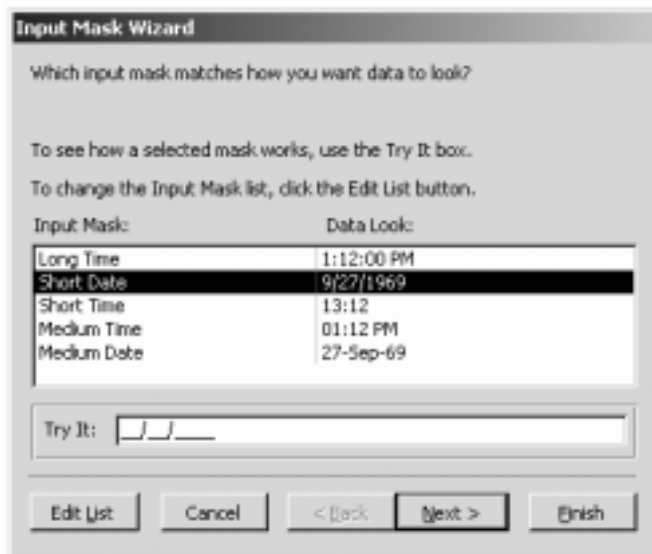


Figure 3: Input Mask wizard

1. Select the **Short Date** option. To see what the mask will look like, click in the **Try It** box.
2. Click **Next >** to continue. Here, you can alter the placeholder character if you wish. The underscore is the default character.
3. Click **Next >** to continue.
4. Click **Finish** to complete the Input Mask. The Input Mask is displayed in the **Input Mask** property box.
5. Click in the **Default Value** property box and type: **Date()**. This causes the current date to automatically fill in. You can override this date by entering another date.
6. Click the **X** in the upper-right corner to close the properties box.

Finally, set the tab order so you can “Tab” from field to field:

1. Click anywhere in the Detail section’s background.

2. Select **View > Tab Order**.
3. Click and drag the fields in the Custom Order list to rearrange them or click the **AutoOrder** button. For this simple form, **AutoOrder** works fine.
4. Click **OK**.
5. Save and close the form.

Open the form and examine the changes. Try entering a few records. (You’ll need some data to view in the report anyway.)

Using the Report Wizard

The easiest way to create reports is with a wizard. Access offers several wizards for a variety of reports. You can create labels, charts, and standard reports. The following example creates a report of all records in the database organized by topic and by date. Once the report is created, you can tweak it as much as you want.

1. Click **Reports** in the **Objects** list.
2. Click the **New** icon. The New Report box is displayed.
3. Select **Report Wizard** from the list, choose the **Text** table from the drop-down list, and click **OK**. The Report Wizard is launched.
4. Select the **Date**, **Topic**, **Source**, and **Text** fields and click the **>** button to move them to the report.
5. Click **Next >** to continue.
6. Select the **Topic** field and click the **>** button to create a group.
7. Click **Next >** to continue.
8. Select **Date** from the **1.** drop-down menu and click the **Ascending** button to toggle it to **Descending**.
9. Click **Next >** to continue.
10. Accept **Stepped** as the default layout by clicking **Next >** to continue.
11. Select **Corporate** for the style.
12. Click **Next >** to continue.
13. Type a name for the report, such as **Knowledge Base Contents**.
14. Select the **Modify the report’s design** radio button. This places the report in the Report Designer where you can modify it if necessary.

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WorkQuest™ Meeting Summary

The Pittsburgh Chapter's WorkQuest™ group continued its weekly meetings in January.

January 7: New Year: New Approaches to Job Searching

At the first meeting of the year, members described the changes they planned to make to their job search techniques. The plans reflect the variety of people at the meeting and the variety of techniques they employ.

Some people felt they have been spending too much time at meetings and not enough in making phone calls and sending out résumés. They plan to cut back on meetings. Others felt just the opposite – that they had not been spending enough time networking and plan to do much more. They thought they would start attending networking groups such as PAPEN or Geek Night or attending other technical society meetings.

At least one person plans to shift his energy away from the survival job he's been doing to focus more on his search for a technical writing job. Another person has decided to shift his focus from looking for permanent full time work to collecting enough contracts to keep him busy full time.

Several people plan to completely redo their résumés and to create additional sample cover letters so they have something easily and quickly adaptable to any job situation that comes along. One or two people plan to create a job search website. Almost everyone wants to become more organized and to keep better records of contacts, phone calls, résumés sent, and responses.

January 14: Human Resource Issues – John Gilmore

John returned for his second appearance as a guest speaker. John is a freelance human resource counselor who also volunteers at the Carnegie Library Job and Career Education Center. This meeting focused on how to network to make contacts that will lead to a job.

John and STC WorkQuest™ member Jim McCarty did some roleplaying of good and bad ways to try to network with someone. John suggested for people who don't want to make networking cold calls, find a friend of a friend who may be in a position to help you find a job and is willing to talk to you. Try to talk to as many people as possible, and don't let refusals bother you. John then gave some tips about what to do when you make a networking contact.

- If you can get someone to have a networking meeting with you, ask if you can send them a résumé so that they are familiar with you before the meeting, but never force your résumé on a contact. The purpose is not to ask the contact for a job at the first meeting, but to familiarize them with your background and see if they can give you any information that can help you in your job search.
- When you answer a job advertisement, try to call and talk with the company's HR department even if it says not to call in the advertisement. Don't ask about a specific job, but about the company in general. When you call a company, try to identify the HR person who is handling the job you are interested in, or even the person who is the hiring manager for the position.
- When you make a networking contact, always offer to return a favor if you're asking for one.

John suggested talking with people at the Pittsburgh Technology Council. Many of them are willing to help people who are looking for technical jobs.

January 21: Marketing Materials

On this very cold day, a small but dedicated group showed up for the meeting, including one new member. As a followup to our December 17th meeting, the group discussed marketing materials that you can use to sell yourself. We discussed all of the marketing pieces that the members brought. Jay

Keefer brought some exceptional brochures that he and his wife Chris made up for their businesses. They bought their brochure paper from a catalog/online company called Paper Direct. Most of the members brought their résumés, and the group members commented on good points, and made suggestions on possible improvements. One member brought a flyer that contained a description of all of the services that they could provide for a client.

January 28 & February 4: Setting up a Job Search Website

Originally, only the January 28th meeting was scheduled to discuss setting up a personal job search website. There was so much interest in the presentation of WorkQuest member Joyce Hall and her husband Jim Gogots that it was extended to the February 4th meeting. The two meetings were very well attended.

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Access Database Primer, Part 2

(continued from page 7)

15. Click **Finish** to create the report. You should see something similar to Figure 4:

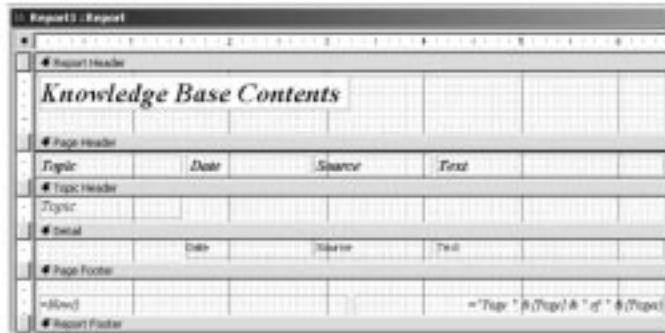


Figure 4: Report in the Report Designer window

Your report should look something like this:



Figure 6: Partial view, in Print Preview, of the finished report

Click the **Print Preview** icon at any time to see how the report looks. Click the **Close** icon to return to the Report Designer window.

You can modify just about everything about the report. Like forms, reports also have properties which are accessed by clicking the black square in the upper-left corner (see Figure 4). You can also rearrange and resize the fields. Left click on a field to select it. Once selected, you can drag it, change its font, justification, etc. Right-click on a field to access and change its properties. Figure 5 shows the report after I relocated a few fields and resized the **Text** field to show two lines of the field's text in the report.



Figure 5: Modified report

When you're satisfied with the report's appearance, save and close it.

Next month's article will introduce queries and how to use queries as the source for reports. You can go to www.writemohr.com (Free Stuff section) and download a copy of the database with the enhancements explained in this article.

Bob Mohr is a senior STC member and author of The Elements of Word. He can be reached via e-mail at rpmohr@writemohr.com.

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The following individual submitted a statement on her candidacy for STC second vice president. This statement is included here for your information. Inclusion of this statement in the *Blue Pencil* does not imply endorsement of the candidate by the officers of the Pittsburgh Chapter STC or of the *Blue Pencil* staff.

Statement of Sandi Harner, Candidate for Second Vice President



The position of second vice president of STC is a very important one because the person elected will automatically become first vice president and then president. I would appreciate your vote for second vice president of STC.

My experience with STC began in 1984 when I became a member. In 1985, I developed the technical and professional communication major for Cedarville University where I have now taught for more than 20 years. In 1988, I chartered the Cedarville University Student chapter, and have advised it since then. The value that I've received from my STC membership is immeasurable. Through chapter meetings, publications, and conferences—both regional and annual—I have learned so much while developing a professional network as well as a network of friends.

I began my involvement on the international level in 1992 as manager of Sigma Tau Chi. That quickly led to manager of the Jay R. Gould Award, judging for the Ken Caird Stu-

dent Article Competition, reviewer of proposals for the STC Annual Conference, and onsite judge for the International Technical Publications Competition. I am currently serving on the STC Board in my fourth year as Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs. In that capacity, I am responsible for eight committees.

I was named Fellow in 2001, received the Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication, and named Associate Fellow in 1996.

As full Professor at Cedarville University, I have directed the technical and professional communication program since its beginning. My responsibilities, in addition to teaching a full course load, include developing curriculum, securing and supervising fulltime and adjunct faculty, advising students, supervising independent studies, placing and supervising student internships, and advising the STC student chapter.

In addition, I have served as an independent consultant, contract writer, and trainer since 1976. In 1997, I received the STC Faculty Internship Grant and worked as a Communications Manager in a technical marketing communication firm. In 2002, I co-authored *Technical Marketing Communication*, part of the Technical Communication Series published by Allyn & Bacon/Longman.

For almost twenty years, my passion has been to prepare young people to make a significant contribution to the profession of technical communication. That role has kept me focused on core competencies, emerging technologies, and communities of practice. My current position on the STC board for the past four years has provided many opportunities to work at the Society level with initiatives such as research grants and special opportunities grants, as well as chapter-level activities in helping to develop

mentoring guidelines and education committees.

In the last few years, the growth of communities of practice has broadened our traditional definition of technical communication. This is evidenced by the significant growth in the STC SIGs, which now number more than 20 with a total membership of 26,441.

If we are to be effective as the leading professional organization for technical communication, we must actively embrace those non-traditional groups such as Web designers, technical marketing communicators, usability experts, instructional designers, and others who make up the workforce of today's technical communicators. The challenge is to help the employers and employees alike to perceive them as the technical communicators they are.

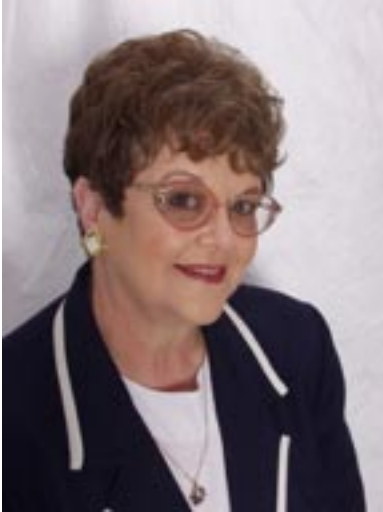
I believe that all these experiences prepare me to fulfill the responsibilities of the second vice president of STC, as well as first vice president, and finally the president. The Academic Vice President, my Dean and Department Chair have pledged their full support should I be elected second vice president. This support will be evidenced by a decreased teaching load as well as financial support for the travel involved in the position.

When it is time to vote in the STC election, please take the time to go online or mark your ballot and vote for Sandi Harner—STC Second Vice President.

For more information, please see www.sandiharner.com

The following individual submitted a statement on her candidacy for STC second vice president. This statement is included here for your information. Inclusion of this statement in the *Blue Pencil* does not imply endorsement of the candidate by the officers of the Pittsburgh Chapter STC or of the *Blue Pencil* staff.

Statement of Suzanna Laurent, Candidate for Second Vice President



While visiting Detroit's Henry Ford Museum, I learned about Ford and the automobile he made so successful. Many people have the mistaken idea that Henry Ford was an inventor, but Ford did not invent the automobile. He didn't even "invent" the assembly line.

So what did Henry Ford do? He learned from other people's experiences as well as his own. He took risks. He saw failure as a lesson, and he applied everything he learned to improve the product, the process, and the policies that shaped the American automobile industry. In short, he was a great innovator. And because he was so willing to share the lessons he learned, he became an inspiration to many others.

I am running for second vice president because in my own way, I want to do as Henry Ford did. He wanted to "learn from other people's experiences as well as his own." I want to use the lessons that I have learned in 25 years of management and leadership positions to create solutions that will ensure STC becomes an organization that is vital to the diverse careers of technical communicators.

One innovative thing I did as a director-sponsor (1999-2002) was to attend conferences and give chapter programs in every region to meet our members and listen to their ideas. As a result, I have presented 103 conference sessions, leadership workshops, and chapter programs in locations from Toronto to Hawaii. In addition, I have written 30 articles that have been published over 500 times in STC newsletters. This "listening tour" instilled a greater understanding of the unique challenges facing us, some of which are addressed in my articles.

While serving as director-sponsor, I gained a thorough understanding of the issues and concerns about STC at many levels. Working individually with leaders and other members is an invaluable experience that is crucial to being the most effective leader in the "presidential chain of offices."

Ford also "took risks." Failing to be innovative and leaving things at the "status quo" is a risky business for STC and technical communicators. We must make it part of our role as technical communicators to show the value we add. We must continue to learn more, do more, and be more. It is important that STC become the "premier" organization for technical communicators. One way we can do that is by listening to what our members want, because the organization that best meets the needs of its members is the one that retains its members and attracts new ones.

Ford "saw failure as a lesson, and applied everything he learned to improve...." During the process of defining STC's brand, we discovered where we were making our mistakes and that we were not being perceived as we wanted to be, so we've made changes to correct some of those misconceptions.

As we seek new ways to prosper, we must improve our processes and the quality of our member services.

STC members work in more diversified environments than ever before, with experience, skills, and talents that vary widely. Nevertheless, we share the desire to be recognized for our contributions to the workplace. By more proactively promoting our field, I believe that STC can make a difference in the careers of our members.

There are other important strategies to consider as we seek to progress. To learn more about my experience and what I have contributed pertaining to these strategies, read the expanded version of this article at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or contact me at slaurent@prodigy.net.

With experienced leadership and guidance, STC can become the catalyst that enables technical communicators to achieve the professional status they have earned. When that is accomplished, we will have fulfilled my vision for STC to become an organization to which technical communicators feel membership is essential to their careers.

I would sincerely appreciate your vote for me as the next second vice president, because I firmly believe that when a collection of minds, hearts, and talents work together, great things can happen!

Meeting Details: March Awards Banquet

Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Location: The Engineer's Society of Western Pennsylvania, 337 Fourth Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh. Maps and directions are available at <http://www.eswp.com>. There are parking lots and garages in close proximity to the Engineer's Society building.

Schedule:

- Networking (cash bar): 5:15 - 6 PM
- Dinner: 6 - 7 PM
- Presentation: 7 - 8 PM

Menu Selections:

Select one:

Chicken Riviera – Boneless breast topped with sliced tomatoes, garlic butter and Asiago cheese

Tenderloin of Beef Alexandria – Lightly breaded with a sauce of lemon, shallots and mushrooms

Stuffed Shells

Cost: \$22.00
\$12.00 students and unemployed

RSVP: To Darlene Mullenix at dmullenix@federatedinv.com or 412-288-8676 (W) by **March 7, 2003**. Include your entrée selection and a daytime phone number.

The banquet cost must be paid in full before the banquet! All checks must be received by March 7, 2003. Make your check payable to "STC-Pittsburgh" and mail it to:

STC-Pittsburgh
P.O. Box 133
Pittsburgh, PA, 15230

IMPORTANT! Cancellations received after March 7, 2003 will be charged full price.

WorkQuest™ Meeting Summary

(continued from page 8)

A personal job search website is used to present your skills and talents to potential employers. It is similar to a website that advertises a business, but unlike a business website, it would be dismantled once you find employment. You can create your website in an HTML editor like FrontPage, or even use Word and write your pages out as HTML. Some of the points discussed by Joyce and Jim included:

- Consider cost – development time, money and maintenance involved in setting up the site
- Define your sales message – know your target audience, address their ques-

tions about your skills, offer them a benefit, set yourself apart

- Brand your web site – have a consistent look to it that can be identified as yours, have a motto for yourself
- Include your contact information
- Use good design techniques – color and style should project your business image; use a simple, clean look; use small graphics that download quickly
- Test your page before publishing it on the web

Several of the WorkQuest members exhibited their own personal job search websites and made some suggestions for items that should be included. Some of

these suggestions included: testimonials from clients, case studies, either a résumé or a short biography and a list of experience areas, pictures of items you've had published, lists of awards you've won, and types of projects you've worked on. There was some discussion of whether to list specific clients because some of them might not want to be listed, and the list could possibly be used by your competitors as a source of possible clients.

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

Editorial Calendar

Please send your submissions to Meg Papa at mv0t@andrew.cmu.edu.

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

Article Deadline

The deadline for the next issue of the Blue Pencil is Monday, March 3. Please send your submissions to Meg Papa at mv0t@andrew.cmu.edu.