

blue pencil



Chapter Awards Banquet Celebrates the Past, Present and Future

by Meg Papa

The chapter Awards Banquet this year provided members an opportunity to look back on the rich history of the Pittsburgh chapter STC, acknowledge the achievements of current members, and consider where we should be headed. Add to that tasty food, interesting conversation, and a few laughs, and you have a memorable evening.

Remembering the Past

Janis Ramey put together an elaborate display of Pittsburgh chapter publications, pictures, and other memorabilia from its

45-year history. Our chapter has been around almost as long as the national organization itself, which is celebrating 50 years this spring. The display included the chapter's founding charter and a t-shirt from the 1981 national conference, which was held in Pittsburgh and the first to include a trade show. In addition to that innovation, our chapter holds claim to a number of other firsts. It was the first chapter to present an undergraduate scholarship and to sponsor a student chapter (at Carnegie Mellon). It was also one of the first chapters to run a student writers contest and have a Independent Writers SIG. Pittsburgh is also the parent chapter of the STC chapter in Morgantown, WV.

Celebrating the Present

The present was celebrated in three ways – by a display of the chapter competition winning entries (a full list is shown on page eight), and by presentations of chapter certificates of appreciation and a Distinguished Chapter Service Award. The latter was presented to Marlene Miller. Marlene is past president of the Pittsburgh chapter, past editor of the chapter newsletter, and current online competition coordinator. She frequently volunteers for last-minute and urgent tasks which range from serving as interim treasurer to preparing 200 postcards for mailing.

Chapter President Alan Houser said, "Marlene completes all of her tasks with enthusiasm and always does excellent work." Her award plaque reads, "For your

sustained support of the Pittsburgh chapter, for your wisdom and enthusiasm, and for excellence in all that you contribute.' Marlene has been a chapter member since 1989.



(continued on page 3)



Janis Ramey outlined the chapter's rich history

Contents

Chapter Awards Banquet Celebrates the Past, Present and Future	1
President's Column	2
People News	4
Notes from the National Office....	4
Access Database Primer, Part 3 ..	5
WorkQuest™ Meetings	7
STC Pittsburgh Chapter Monthly Meeting: RoboHelp Overview	8
Chapter Publications Competition Awards	8
Editorial Calendar	8
Article Deadline	8

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Blue Pencil

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President's Column

I've always been impressed by the number of free resources available in the Pittsburgh region for professional and career development. Consider some of the following scenarios and the local resources available to help you:

Problem: I'm having trouble keeping up-to-date with new technologies and keeping my skills current. I can't afford to buy the latest books about the latest technologies, let alone the latest software packages.

Solution: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has an excellent science and technology department, which includes an impressive collection of trade press books. On the shelves of the main branch in Oakland, you will find books about topics including Web development, the latest software packages (including PhotoShop, GoLive, DreamWeaver, and many others), XML, and Web services. Many books include a CD with a trail version of the software. You can access the library catalog online at <http://www.clpgh.org>.

Problem: I'm looking for a job (or thinking about looking), and would like some feedback on my résumé and advice on job search strategies.

Solution: The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh hosts a Job and Career Education Center (<http://www.clpgh.org/locations/jcec/>), which offers an array of job-search resources, as well as free sessions with a career advisor. Also keep in mind our own WorkQuest (<http://home.earthlink.net/~workquest>), the chapter's special interest group for writers and others who are seeking work.

Problem: I would like to learn more about new companies in the Pittsburgh region. It would be nice to know about today's startups, any of which might become the FreeMarkets or FORE Systems of tomorrow.

Solution: Read T.E.Q., the newsletter of the Pittsburgh Technology Council. You can find T.E.Q. online at the following URL



<http://www.pgtech.org/news/teq/index.cfm>, or at your local library.

Problem: I would like to meet new people, grow my professional network, and learn about new professional development topics.

Solution: There is a free or low-cost networking and/or educational event in the region almost every day. You can find a list of upcoming events each Sunday in the business section of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, or online in the Pittsburgh Business Calendar (URL is <http://businesscalendar.org>). To learn about what you are missing, see TechyVent (<http://newsletter.techyvent.com>), a weekly email newsletter that includes summary articles about the previous week's events, as well as announcements of upcoming events.

These are only a few examples of the resources I've encountered and used to support my own professional development. I hope that some of you will take advantage of them and find them to be as useful as I have.

Alan Houser

President, Pittsburgh Chapter

Chapter Awards Banquet Celebrates the Past, Present and Future

(continued from page 1)

Several chapter members received certificates of appreciation for their contributions to the operation of the chapter in the past year, including Chris Keefer, Marlene Miller, Darlene Mullineux, Meg Papa, Janis Ramey, Karen Riley, and Barb Stanton.



Chris Keefer won the grand prize in the raffle

Prior to the start of the award presentations was a raffle drawing. The prizes included a magnetic poetry kit (I'm not sure what it is either), an STC pen "in the attractive little case," an STC bistro mug, a stainless steel travel mug, and an STC backpack. The grand prize was a copy of FrameMaker 7, which was won by Chris Keefer.

Examining the Future

Thea Teich, the current first Vice President and incoming President of STC National, provided a look to the future with her talk titled "Where Are We Going? The Future of Technical Communication." She discussed the business perception that technical communication is a cost center, not a profit center, and therefore one of those areas that is downsized or eliminated when an organization needs to cut costs. The results of this attitude are "bargain basement" salaries, a loss of knowledge, and increased outsourcing.

What we as technical communicators know, and must show to others, is that "we enable people to effectively use the technology in their lives to do their jobs." We help businesses to grow, we help increase the return on investment, we help reduce costs by reducing errors and maintenance needs, we help increase employee productivity. In turn, customer loyalty and transaction success rates increase for the business.

Our responsibility, said Teich, is to make sure everybody knows these things. This is the hard part! Subtlety is no longer effective, and we must overtly market our skills, in terms of the business advantages that affect the bottom line of an organization. Teich concluded with a charge to all of us: "Consider it part of your job to demonstrate your value."

The chapter is grateful to Bright Path Solutions for donating the copy of FrameMaker for the raffle, and to TheNewMediaGroup for donating the projector used by our guest speaker for the evening.



First Vice President Thea Teich gave a thought-provoking talk on the future of technical communicators



Notes from the National Office



Current Chapter 193

Total STC 22,730

Up from 22,222 in January

Wel come:

Susan Kauffman
(new member)

Catherina R. A. McCleary
(transfer member)

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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.

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.

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.

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Access Database Primer, Part 3

by Robert P. Mohr

In last month's article, I discussed how to modify forms and create reports. In this article, I'll discuss how to create a query, and how to use that query as the data source for a report.

Forms enable you to enter data and tables hold the data, but queries are the means by which you *manipulate* data in a database. Think of queries as answers to questions about your data. Using our mini-knowledge base database as an example, you might ask, "How many records do I have for MS Word references?" This question is easily answered with a query and can be shown as a report.

First, create the query:

1. Select **Queries** from the **Objects** list and click the **New** icon.
2. Select **Simple Query Wizard** from the New Query box and click **OK**. The Simple Query Wizard launches.
3. Select **Table:Text** from the **Tables/Queries** drop-down list.
4. Select **Date**, **Topic**, and **Source** fields from the **Available Fields** list and move them to the **Select Fields** list using the > button.
5. Click **Next >** to continue.
6. Type a name for the query, such as, **Number of Word References**, and select the **Modify the query design** radio button.
7. Click **Finish**. The QBE (Query by Example) grid is displayed.

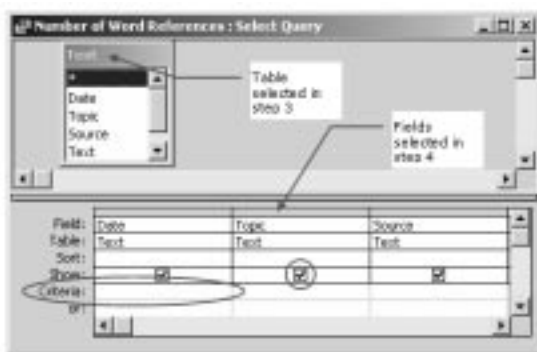


Figure 1: QBE grid




To execute the query, click the **Run**  icon on the toolbar. All of the records in the text table are displayed.

Figure 2: Query results showing all records in the Text table

Since this report is to show only records related to Word topics, the search must be narrowed. This is done by entering the name of the topic in the **Criteria** box in the **Topic** field column. (See Figure 1.)

1. Return to the QBE by clicking the **Design View**  icon.
2. Type "MS Word" (with the quotes) in the **Criteria** box in the **Topic** field column. This will select only the records with MS Word as the Topic.
3. Click the check box in the **Topic** field column to remove it. Since the new results will be only Word related, there's no need to display the extra field.
4. Click the  icon to verify the new query result.
5. Save the query and close it.

Next, create the report:

1. Select **Reports** from the **Objects** list and click the **New** icon.
2. Select **Report Wizard** from the New Report box and select **Number of Word References** from the drop-down list.
3. Click **OK**. The Report Wizard launches.
4. Move both fields into the **Selected Fields** list using the >> button and click **Next >** to continue.
5. Skip the grouping option by clicking **Next >**. (This is optional for this example.)
6. Include a sort order, by selecting **Source** from the **1.** drop-down list, and selecting **Date** from the **2.** drop-down list. (You can also select **Ascending** or **Descending** for the date.)
7. Click **Next >** to continue.

(continued on page 6)

Access Database Primer, Part 3

(continued from page 5)

8. Accept the **Tabular** layout by clicking **Next >** to continue.
9. Accept the **Corporate** style by clicking **Next >** to continue.
10. Type a title for the report, such as, **List of MS Word References**, and select the **Modify the report's design** radio button.
11. Click **Finish** to view the report in the Report Designer window.
12. Click the **Print Preview** icon to view the report. You can tweak the report as much as you like at this point. Refer to last month's article for tips on modifying the report format and properties. When you finish, the report might look something like this:

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

The query example in this article is extremely simple; however, queries can be quite complex, and Access provides queries that enable you to quickly add new records, remove old records, create a new table from query results, and much more. If you want to know more about queries (and reports), a good place to look is the online help in Access. It's loaded with examples.

Next month's article will explain how to pull the pieces of your mini-knowledge base together into a menu-driven application using the Switchboard Manager. 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 the author of The Elements of Word. He can be reached via e-mail at rpmohr@writemohr.com.

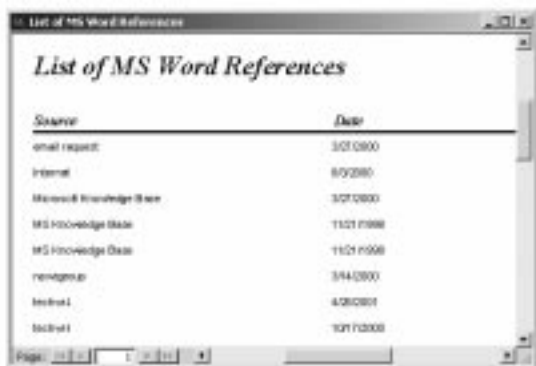


Figure 3: Sample report based on a query

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WorkQuest™ Meetings

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

February 11 – Unemployment Compensation

Anne Caster of the PA Dept. of Labor and Industry gave an overview of how to apply for unemployment compensation (UC) and what the criteria are for collecting it. Anne's talk was very informative, providing information that most of the members didn't know, even though many of them had been collecting UC for months.

Anne told us that any money you earn while you're collecting UC will go toward allowing you to collect more UC when your initial allotment is used up (although obviously at a much lower level than you were entitled to from your full-time salary). You would need to earn six times your weekly benefit in order to open a second UC claim based on your earnings while unemployed.

Self-employed people are not eligible for unemployment. If you call yourself self-employed after you are laid off from a permanent job, it may prevent you from collecting the UC you are entitled to from your permanent job. To get out of paying UC tax, some employers try to force you to declare yourself as self-employed if they hire you on a temporary basis. But the Department of Labor considers some contract work as temporary employment, and will review your case to decide what your status is. If you are denied benefits, you have a right to appeal.

February 18 – Job Search Challenges

This day was one of the coldest and most miserable meeting days of the year, but a few souls braved the elements to come and talk about their frustrations in their job search. Sometimes it can be cathartic to talk about your problems with others who understand what you are going through. Some of the problems that people encounter in

their job search include:

- Not getting any feedback when you are rejected
- Inability to get companies to talk to you unless your technical skills exactly match the job listing, even if you are a talented person
- Competition with people who are vastly overqualified for jobs and willing to take a low salary because of their unemployment situation
- Companies that think you're overqualified and won't hire you because they are afraid you will look for a new job as soon as the economy improves.
- Agencies that prevent you from talking to the companies who have the jobs

In addition to this discussion, Rox Vanguard made a presentation on the current job market and methods to attract offers. Some of his points included:

- Try to talk with the hiring manager. Don't waste your time with informational networking interviews.
- Make your résumé as long as necessary to showcase your talents. Include specific technology and information on how you can benefit a company.
- Look for work in sectors that are projected to need employees in the next few years – healthcare, education, government, and IT.
- Don't use the Internet to look for work. Use local newspapers and contacts in professional associations.
- Be personable; show you'll fit in. Give your interviewer the message that you are smart, easy-going,

and can start saving them money tomorrow.

February 25 – WorkQuest™ Library

A large number of members showed up to inspect the new WorkQuest™ library. Many STC members and others have donated materials that members of the WorkQuest™ group can use to improve their technical skills or hone their job searching or business management skills. Many books and some software packages have been donated to the group. See the WorkQuest™ website for more information about the contents of the library.

March 4 – Starting Your Own Business

Marc Snyder, a WorkQuest™ member, spoke to the group about starting your own business and working internationally. Marc provided the members with a summary of information about the Small Business Administration. They have chapters at Duquesne University and the University of Pittsburgh. Every two weeks, they hold a seminar on starting your own business. Those who attend the seminars have an opportunity to present ideas for new businesses, and submit a business plan for SBA approval. If your plan is approved, The SBA will help you find money to start your business.

Marc also talked about his international experience. Marc has lived in a number of different countries and speaks fluent French. He is trying to use his international contacts to develop a successful global business. Marc talked about how you have to learn the cultures of other companies to compete globally, and offered to provide information and contacts if anyone was seriously interested in working or starting a business overseas.

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™ website <http://home.earthlink.net/~workquest/>.

STC Pittsburgh Chapter Monthly Meeting: RoboHelp Overview

Thursday, April 17

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Pittsburgh Technology Council Training Room

Join fellow STC member Leslie Johnson for an overview of using RoboHelpX3 to develop cross-browser and cross-platform WebHelp, and for a brief overview of using RoboDemo to develop small size interactive tutorials. Whether you're new to

RoboHelp or an experienced user, there will be information for you.

Leslie Johnson has used RoboHelp since the early 1990's to develop projects in various Help formats including WinHelp and WebHelp.

The Pittsburgh Technology Council is located at 2000 Technology Drive, in the Pittsburgh Technology Center. The Technology Center is a riverfront office park on Second Avenue in the Hazelwood section of Pitts-

burgh, just off the Bates Street Exit of the Parkway West. For directions to the Pittsburgh Technology Council, see <http://www.techcenter-pgh.com/contact/directions.html>.

Parking is free in the Technology Center's lighted parking lot. The lot and building are patrolled by Technology Center security.

Please RSVP to meeting coordinator Darlene Mullenix at (412) 288-8676 or dmullenix@federatedinv.com. There is no

Chapter Publications Competition Awards

Technical Publications: Award of Excellence

Make It Look Easy Ad Campaign for Element K Courseware (promotional material) – Robert A Green, Jr., Jennifer Wagner, and Heather Bryant, *The Verdi Group, Inc.*

Technical Publications: Awards of Merit

CompTIA Lead Generation for Element K Courseware (promotional materials) - Robert A Green, Jr., Jennifer Wagner, and Mary Bonaccio, *The Verdi Group, Inc.*

C-COR Technical Publications Reference Guides (organizational materials) – Benjamin M. Rush, III, Monica L. Meagher, and Andrea E. Kohler, *C-COR*

Online Communications: Award of Merit

McKesson AcuScan – RX End User Training (tutorials/training materials) – Lou Camerlengo, *Five Star Development, Inc.*

Technical Art: Award of Excellence

Element K Courseware Catalog (catalog design) - Robert A Green, Jr., Lonna

Robinson, and Heather Bryant, *The Verdi Group, Inc.*

Technical Art: Awards of Merit

Network + Box for Element K Courseware (packaging design) - Robert A Green, Jr., Lonna Robinson, and Heather Bryant, *The Verdi Group, Inc.*

Brainbench Track Poster for Element K Courseware (promotional poster design) - Robert A Green, Jr., Jennifer Wagner, and Heather Bryant, *The Verdi Group, Inc.*

Article Deadline

The deadline for the next issue of the Blue Pencil is Monday, April 14. Please send your submissions to Meg Papa at mv0t@andrew.cmu.edu.

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 May 12	April 28	April 7