

blue pencil



Chapter Meeting Schedule Kicks Off with Talk on CyberLaw

The first chapter meeting of the year ventures into legal territory. The presentation will cover a variety of legal issues of import to technical communicators developing content for and conducting business over the Internet. Topics include recent developments in copyright, trademark, defamation and contract law with respect to web sites and Internet communication. Also covered is UCITA, the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act, which will be considered by many state legislatures. As UCITA is adopted by the various states, it will drastically alter the way in which in-

dependent consultants will conduct business, as well as the liabilities they will incur as business owners. The presentation concludes with a brief discussion of the issues related to conducting a website legal audit.

Date: Monday, Sept. 13, 2004 6:30 pm

Time: Meetings start at 6:30 p.m. with 1/2 hour for networking/dinner. The program runs from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Topic: CyberLaw and You: What New Media Professionals Must Know

Cost: \$5 for members; \$3 for students

Location: Pittsburgh Technology Council, 2000 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA. Directions at:

<http://www.tc-p.com/aboutus/directions.asp>

Speaker: Christopher Juillet

A self-employed technical writer, publisher, consultant and attorney, Christopher Juillet has been a working technical writer since 1979 and a private consultant since 1984. He has written numerous publications and articles on a variety of computer-related topics. In addition to operating a successful consulting practice, Chris also practices business, computer and intellectual property law in Michigan. Chris holds a B.A. in Journalism (with Distinction) from the University of Michigan and a J.D. (cum laude) from Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University.

Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG September Meeting

The next meeting of the Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC SIG) will be Wednesday, September 22, from 6:00-8:00 p.m., at the Panera Bread Company on the Boulevard of the Allies. The meeting topic is *The Independent Life: Tales From the Trenches*.

A panel of seasoned independents will discuss their experiences and lessons learned. Come hear how and why these independents chose the independent life, the pros and cons of being an independent, and what advice they have for other independents. Everyone at the meeting is encouraged to share their experiences.

This first meeting of the year is a great chance to get out and meet your fellow in-

dependents and to get involved in the CIC SIG. At this meeting we'll also talk about the upcoming year, so bring ideas about meeting topics and ways in which the CIC SIG can help you.

There is no charge for the meeting, but Panera has a great selection of soups, sandwiches, and salads. For directions and menu information, visit www.panera.com.

The Pittsburgh Chapter CIC SIG provides learning, support, and networking opportunities for technical communicators who are consultants, independent contractors, and freelancers. For more information about the meeting or about the CIC SIG, contact Marcie Milletary at msm@telerama.com or 412-901-4006.

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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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Message from the President

Welcome back! That's the big phrase in every school system across the country this month as students prepare for a new year, a new start, and a new set of goals and challenges. I would like to say welcome back to my fellow STC members and welcome to a new year, a new start, and a new set of goals and challenges.

The new year begins with a few new board members and heads of various committees. Bob Dianetti - new Region 4 Director/Sponsor; Nicky Bleiel - new Vice President; Beverly Spagnolo - new Membership Coordinator; Phillip Miller - new Web Master; Marlene Miller - new Historian, and Marcie Milletary - new Consulting and Independent Contractors SIG coordinator.

The new start began in June when the board met to discuss plans for the upcoming year. The first change was the chapter's Web site, which made its debut at the end of July. The site has been completely reorganized to offer you more information in a user-friendly design. (Everyone in the industry knows the value of a good design!) This is just the beginning; stay posted for additional content and features that will lend more value to the site and to your membership.

The new set of goals and challenges begins with our effort to give you the most value for your membership.

The first step is to hear what you have to say. We offered an online survey to find out what you expect from a chapter membership. We want to know about everything from the SIGs, to meetings, to the Web site and the newsletter. Our goal is to find out how we can maximize the value of your membership.

The next step is to develop valuable programming. This year we have a variety of meetings with speakers from around the region. We kick off the year with a presentation on cyberlaw and wrap it up with a discussion on contemporary first amendment issues. In between there are there some technical presentations and discussions on various industry issues.

So with all these changes, I would like to welcome you back to a new year of membership and all the benefits it has to offer.

Barbara Stanton
President, STC Pittsburgh



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STC Member

102 Meetings: Second Anniversary of STC WorkQuest™

Janis G. Ramey

Looking for work can be lonely, frustrating, depressing, and demoralizing. Job seekers can battle these effects by joining a support group that not only motivates and empowers, but also provides concrete information about how to conduct a job search. STC WorkQuest™ is such a support group sponsored by the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. See the STC WorkQuest™ website for more information about the group and about job search topics: www.STCWorkQuest.org.

STC WorkQuest™ has been functioning for two years as a support group for people looking for work. Our focus is on the specific tasks and issues of job searching, such as improving resumes, finding job leads, working on interviewing skills, and navigating the unemployment benefits maze. At our weekly midmorning meetings, group members or guest speakers present topics and lead discussion.

We also conduct a check-in during which members describe the type of work they are looking for plus what they have done during the past week to find that work. The check-in has been especially beneficial because it generates ideas and enthusiasm for the job search.



Typical meetings include a check-in round. Left to right: Donna Rohaus, Chris Downs (hidden), Tess Kirchner (hidden), Robin Fowler, Art Probola, Janet Kanaskie, Bill King, Dick Dupree.

We're Proud of Our Accomplishments

- 102 meetings and nearly that many presentations (Every week except Christmas for two years)
- About 125 participants, most of whom have found jobs
- Poster and brochure
- Region 4 conference (two consecutive years)
- Annual conference paper and presentation
- Speakers at the chapter employment roundtable meeting (two consecutive years)

- Public website with up-to-date meeting calendar
- Private discussion group and website
- Slide show about WorkQuest™

Benefits

Most people seem to benefit from the meetings by leaving with a higher level of motivation for their job search, some concrete suggestions on how to proceed, and the expectation that they will be held accountable at the next meeting.

Members get to know each other's capabilities and job interests and become possible sources of referrals. But more importantly, WorkQuest™ meetings offer members a safe place to practice describing themselves and their capabilities.

The weekly meetings give people something professional to do each week, especially when they present topics for discussion, which often require research. And since the meetings are held at various locations, members learn to be comfortable finding their way to unfamiliar parts of the city.

WorkQuest™ is a source of FREE information and advice on job hunting.

An important lesson that most WorkQuest™ members eventually learn is that few jobs are permanent and that keeping net-

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Dr. Karen Schnakenberg
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krs@andrew.cmu.edu
412.268.2659



Membership at a Glance

(as of July 31)

National

Total Members: 17,453

Pittsburgh Chapter

Total Members: 148

New Members:

Kristen Rose

Donna A. Schwartz

Society for Technical Communication

Pittsburgh Chapter
P.O. Box 133
Pittsburgh, PA 15230
Contact: Alan Houser
Phone: 412-363-0387
arh@groupwellesley.com

National Office
901 North Stuart Street
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102 Meetings: Second Anniversary of STC WorkQuest™

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work contacts active will help smooth the next job hunt. They also learn that **there's no shame to being unemployed**; it happens to almost everyone several times during the length of a career.

Members

We try to recruit STC members who have been laid off, contractors and freelancers whose business is down, non-STC technical communicators, recent graduates and people who want to enter technical communications, and other professionals. Since our programs and discussions are about job search issues that are universal, about 30 percent of our members come from other professions.



Members and guest speakers from a variety of backgrounds have donated their time and expertise. Left to right: Rob Sterbal, Janet Kanaskie, Amy Hollister, Art Probola, Kathleen Downey, Judith Scanlon.

Since we started in August of 2002, about 125 people have participated. About 100 of them have found jobs. Most job seekers (about 90%) hoped to find permanent full time positions but about 40% of the jobs found were temporary contracts. The technical writers in the group have been particularly affected by this trend.

www.STCWorkQuest.org

Potential and current members find the WorkQuest™ website to be a valuable source of information about job searching. It includes publications, mostly written by members, about job search techniques and issues. It also contains links to other resources, such as job search websites. The calendar is particularly useful since it lists meeting locations and programs.

WorkQuest™ also maintains a private website that contains archived email messages, complete library catalog, and other items of interest to the group. This website is restricted to WorkQuest™ members.

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102 Meetings: Second Anniversary of STC WorkQuest™

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Library of Books and Software

Donations from several chapter members, including Marlene Miller and Kay Ethier, formed the basis of a significant collection of books on job searching and business practices. The library also contains tutorials for software applications and software itself. Members can borrow these items to improve their search techniques and to improve their skill with some of the important software tools.



Dennis McCarthy (left) and Dave Vaglia (former librarian). Current librarian is Bill King (not shown).

Electronic Discussion Group

WorkQuest™ maintains a private email-based discussion group that encourages exchange of ideas and information. Membership is generally restricted to people who have attended meetings. Most of our members who have found jobs elect to remain in the discussion group even though they can no longer come to meetings. They add an important dimension to the discussion, especially when they describe how they landed a job.

We also use this resource for distributing meeting announcements and circulating job leads.

Publicity

Since the nature of the group is such that members usually drop from active participation after a few weeks or months, publicity is a continuing need. Unemployed people need to learn about

WorkQuest™ and be encouraged to attend meetings. Our publicity efforts are in these areas:

- Email announcements via distribution lists (WorkQuest™ members, “friends of WorkQuest™”, STC mail list)
- On-line calendars (business events calendar, newspaper business calendar)
- Chapter newsletter monthly articles
- Website announcements (both chapter and WorkQuest™)
- STC annual Employment Round Table meeting
- WorkQuest™ business cards distributed freely at STC meetings and other events
- Region 4 conference welcome table
- Chapter kick-off meeting welcome table
- Word of mouth

Our most effective publicity is word of mouth, which is why we try to keep the STC membership informed of our activities.



Rocky Hayeslip and Diana Mathis (not shown) represented WorkQuest™ at the STC Region 4 conference in Pittsburgh, March 2004

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102 Meetings: Second Anniversary of STC WorkQuest™

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Janis Ramey (right) moderated a panel and presented a paper about WorkQuest™ at the STC annual conference in Baltimore, May 2004. Other panel members were Marissa Levin, Chris McRae, Kevin Berni, and Christina Hammock.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Mary Ann Pike, Diana Mathis, Jim McCarty, John Clark, Dennis McCarthy, Janet Rex, and Joe O’Keefe for their enthusiastic support of WorkQuest™ and their contributions to the annual conference presentation. Thanks to Tod Pike for creating our website and to Dick Dupree for maintaining it. We get a lot of publicity help from Leslie Johnson and Rob Sterbal.

Thanks to Becky Stenger for creating our brochure and poster and to Pennsylvania Association of Notaries for printing the brochures. Thanks to Rick Lohmeyer for suggesting the name WorkQuest™ and to John Clark for designing our logo.

Without the considerable encouragement of the officers of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the STC, WorkQuest™ would probably not exist. Thanks to the chapter and Nancy Carpenter for their help with the expenses of the five WorkQuest™ members that presented the WorkQuest™ story at the Region 4 STC conference in 2002. Finally, thanks to the members of WorkQuest™ for making it a dynamic and effective program.

Janis Ramey is the founder and leader of STC WorkQuest™. She’s a senior member of the Pittsburgh Chapter. website: www.technical-writing.net. email: ramey@technical-writing.net

Editorial Calendar

Below is the editorial calendar for anyone who will be writing an article for the *Blue Pencil*. Articles are due to me, Meg Papa, three weeks before the monthly meeting. Publication of the *Blue Pencil* will occur ten days later, or roughly ten days before the monthly meeting.

You can find an overview of the monthly meetings on last page of this issue.

Article Submission Deadline (Monday)	Blue Pencil Publication Date (Thursday)	Meeting Date (Monday)
September 20	September 30	October 11
October 18	October 28	November 8
November 22	December 2	December 13
December 13	December 23	January 10
January 17	January 27	February 7
February 21	March 3	March 14
March 21	March 31	April 11
May 2	May 12	May 24 (Tuesday)

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Grammar Game: In Memoriam

by Meg Papa, *Blue Pencil* Managing Editor

I was thinking about heroes recently, and how we all may have a few, some of which may be surprising to others. I have never held much more than a passing admiration (at the most) for any sports figure, entertainment icon, or politician. No, my heroes are people like Mother Teresa, Michael Collins (bonus points for those of you who can identify him), and a woman who passed away on August 16, Mary Newton Bruder. She was more widely known as The Grammar Lady.

Calling her a hero may seem a bit extreme; after all, she was known for harping on the fine, some might say obscure, points of the

English language. But she understood what many people have missed: our culture is defined, in part, by what we say and how we say it. Our first impression of people is usually dictated by two things: how they look, and how they sound. Even the most well-groomed person will be unappealing if the first words out of his mouth contain a subject-verb disagreement or a split infinitive!

Perhaps I exaggerate, but I think you understand my point. Language is important. What we say (and write) matters. And *how* we say it matters. If we let the language of our culture slip without (gently) bringing correction, pretty soon no one will know what is correct and what is not. So, let's

have a cheer for the grocery stores that have replaced their "Eight items or less" signs with ones saying "Eight items or fewer." Let's have a cheer for people who use "continuously" and "continually" correctly. Let's have a cheer for everybody that buys a "Word-a-Day" calendar and actually reads it. And let's take a moment to remember a lady who, with humor and intelligence, reminded us to strive for excellence in our words.

In honor of Ms. Bruder, this column contains no deliberate grammatical errors. The regular Grammar Game column will return next month.

2004-2005 Meeting Schedule Overview

Date/Time	Speaker	Topic	Location
Oct. 11 6:30 pm- 8 pm	Karen Schriver , Ph.D. KSA Document Design & Research, Inc.	Document Design	Pittsburgh Technology Council
Nov. 8 6:30 pm- 8 pm	Matt Willen Assistant Professor Professional and Technical Writing Director of Freshman Writing Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA	The Technological Preparation of Technical Writers	Pittsburgh Technology Council
Dec. 13 6:30 pm- 8 pm	Alan Houser President, Group Wellesley www.groupwellesley.com	Electronic Documentation Review with Adobe Acrobat and WebWorks FinalDraft	Pittsburgh Technology Council
Jan. 10	Annual Employment Meeting		TBA
Feb 7 6:30 pm- 8 pm	Michael P. Jeffrey Partner/Chief Technology Officer, New Perspective Productions www.new-perspective.com	Tour of New Perspective Productions Building	New Perspective Building, Strip District
March 14	TBA		
April 11	TBA		
May 24 Awards Banquet	Robert D. Richards Professor of Journalism and Law and Founding Co-director of the Pennsylvania Center for the First Amendment at Penn State.	Contemporary First Amendment Issues	TBA

Meetings start at 6:30 p.m. with 1/2 hour for networking/dinner. The program runs from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. The Employment meeting and Awards Banquet usually run longer.

Information is current as of 8/6/2004; for updated listings, please see the STC Pittsburgh website at:

<http://www.stcpg.org/calend/index.htm>