

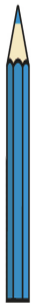
BLUE PENCIL

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, STC

[HTTP://WWW.STCPGH.ORG](http://www.stcpg.org)

VOL. 41, No. 4 - JANUARY 2004

Editor's Note



Welcome to the newly-redesigned Blue Pencil! We have tried to introduce a bit more color into your newsletter, both to provide contrast and make it easier to find regular features and columns. There will probably be tweaks in the design over the coming months, so don't be surprised if you see some additional changes. In the meantime, please let me know what you think of the new design - what works for you and what doesn't.

-Meg

P.S. The ads will be back next month.

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Electronic Documentation Review Software Packages by Nancy Carpenter

For many technical communicators, "review time" means printing and distributing multiple hardcopy drafts, collecting those drafts, and incorporating hand-written comments back into the draft documents. Some reviewers like to interact by email, but email comments often provide ambiguous information or unclear page references. In all cases, managing multiple reviewers is a tedious, time-consuming, and often inefficient task for technical communicators

Alan Houser addressed the process of electronic documentation review and described how two software packages, Adobe Acrobat and Quadralay FinalDraft, can make that process efficient and straightforward.

Adobe Acrobat

Acrobat can be used to distribute a review of any project, including a web site. If you use Microsoft HTML Help to create your help file, you can decompile the .chm file to its component html files then generate the pdfs. The navigation remains!

Your reviewers use the annotation feature to insert comments. Then you combine them by exporting each one to an .fdf file, then importing all .fdf files into one pdf. Acrobat allows you to print just the comments as well as the fully annotated text.

Quadralay FinalDraft

FinalDraft converts a Microsoft Word or FrameMaker file into an HTML file. It also can be used to distribute a WebWorks Publisher project for review. It provides a free viewer for distribution with this file to your reviewers.

The reviewer inserts comments then clicks the Send Comments button to email them to you as an attachment. To incorporate them into the original document, you open the document in FinalDraft, click on the attachment and drag it into the project window. When you double click on a comment, FinalDraft opens it in the native document format - Word or FrameMaker. You can keep the comments or delete them as you incorporate them.

Alan Houser is president of Group Wellesley, Inc., a firm that provides consulting, training, and application development services to support single-source publishing, electronic publishing, and XML-based publishing.



President's Column

by Barb Stanton

There is a positive buzz in the air this year for our chapter. We have had a really great lineup of programming over the past few months, and there is much more to round out the second half of the year.



A new web site made its debut this summer and a new newsletter will quickly follow. We have experimented with new methods for promoting meetings and seem to be reaching a broader audience using these new methods. Some members have

volunteered their services to step in roles where the chapter could really use some help and some of the regular volunteers have been revived to kick it in again.

Aside from the tangibles that you can see just by browsing the web site or checking your email, there are some other positive things happening for members of the chapter this year and I wanted to take a moment to send out some professional kudos. These professional accomplishments illustrate the quality programming and the caliber of members.

Christopher Juillet, our featured presenter in September, had the cover story in the November issue of Intercom. Even though Chris is not a member of our chapter, he has attended chapter events in the past.

More importantly, he further exemplifies the talent in the programming arena we have sponsored. Karen Schriver, our featured presenter for October's meeting, is nationally known for her work on information and UI design. She is a member of the chapter and also an Associate Fellow. Our featured presenter for December, Chris Keefer, a Senior member of the chapter, had the cover story in the March 2004 issue of Intercom.

Our members have not only been published, but they present too. Pittsburgh will be well represented at this year's WritersUA conference in April. Alan Houser, a Past President and Senior Member, and Nicky Bleiel, current Vice President, will each be presenting at the conference. Alan was also the featured presenter for November's chapter meeting. Nicky will also be presenting at STC's national conference in May this year.

I know there are probably many more members who have been published over the past several months and others who have presented. I was only able to mention those I know about, but I want to illustrate the quality of members our chapter has and the type of programming we are developing for our members.

Plus, we go many days without recognition for the work we do and its important to catch those professional kudos to keep us motivated and buzzing in the industry.

If you or a fellow chapter member has been published or otherwise recognized, please let us know!

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Membership at a Glance

(as of October 31, 2004)

National

Total Members: 18,196
 Total chapters: 147

Pittsburgh Chapter

Total Members: 147
 No New Members

Upcoming Society Events

May 8-11, 2005

Mark your calendars. STC's 52nd Annual Conference will be held in Seattle, Washington. The Preliminary Program will be mailed with the February issue of *Intercom*. Information on registration rates was published in the November issue of *Tieline* (www.stc.org/tieline.asp).

STC Offers Scholarships in Technical Communication

Pass the word to students you know - the STC is offering two graduate and two undergraduate \$1000 scholarships to students pursuing degrees in some aspect of technical communication.

- Applicants must have completed at least one year of post-secondary education.
- Applicants must be full-time students. They may be either graduate students working toward a Master's or Doctor's degree, or undergraduate students working toward a Bachelor's degree.
- Students should have at least one full year of academic work remaining to complete their degree programs, although under exceptional circumstances an award may be granted to a student for the final half-year.
- They should be studying communication of information about technical subjects. Other majors, such as general journalism, electronic communication engineering, computer programming, creative writing, or entertainment, are not eligible.

The deadline for receipt of applications is February 15, 2005.

For more information, or to download an application, visit http://www.stc.org/scholarshipInfo_national.asp.

Deduct your STC Dues

If you pay taxes in the United States, keep in mind that STC dues are tax deductible. Please note, however, that dues must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid. In other words, dues paid in 2004 may be deducted only from 2004 tax returns. Therefore, if you pay your 2005 dues on or before December 31, 2004, these dues can be deducted only from your 2004 return. You can claim dues as a deduction in several ways: as a charitable expense, a business expense, or a miscellaneous deduction.

For more information, see the October issue of *Tieline* at www.stc.org/tieline.asp.

New Definition of Student Membership

The STC board of directors has adopted a more stringent definition of student membership. To be eligible for student membership, a member must now be a full-time student. Previously, professional technical communicators enrolled in part-time continuing education classes could qualify for student membership. The new definition ensures that the benefits of student membership are available, as intended, only to students.



Quick Tip...Obtaining Folder Listings in Windows - Bob Mohr

Ever have a need to obtain a list of files in a folder (and subfolders) so that you can include the file names in a document? Windows doesn't have a means of doing this through its WYSIWYG interface, but such a list can be generated using a DOS command and something called a batch file. A batch file is a text file but is treated by Windows as an executable. The batch file's DOS commands do two things: generates the contents of a given folder to a scratch file called `dir.txt`, then starts Word and automatically loads the `dir.txt` file for you. (If you prefer, you can substitute "winword" with "notepad" or some other editing program.)

Create the batch file in Notepad:

1. Type the following lines—exactly as shown:

```
@dir %1 /-p /o:gn > "%temp%\dir.txt"
start winword "%temp%\dir.txt"
```

2. Save the file as **DirFile.bat** (in Text Document format). (You can name the file something else, but it must have a .BAT extension.)

Locate the SendTo folder on your machine:

1. Select **Start > Run** and type **sendto** in the **Open** box.
2. Click **OK** and take notice of the path displayed in the **Address** box.
3. Move the batch file made above to the sendto folder.

Test the batch file:

1. Open Windows Explorer and navigate to a folder with files in it.

2. Right-click on the folder and choose **Send To > DirFiles.bat** from the pop-up menu.

The batch file generates a list of files found in the folder to `dir.txt`, starts Word, and opens the `dir.txt` file. Now you can edit the contents of the file as needed.

To remove unwanted date, time, file size information from `dir.txt` (while in Word) do the following:

1. Place the cursor at the beginning of the unwanted text.
2. Press Ctrl+Shift+F8 to turn on the (vertical) selection mode.
3. Press the Down and Right arrow keys (or click and drag the mouse) to highlight the unwanted text, then press Delete.

Once the unwanted information has been removed, you can copy & paste the filenames elsewhere or save the list as a new file—with a name other than `dir.txt`. (`Dir.txt` is a scratch file that will be overwritten each time the batch file is executed.)

A final tip: To create a batch file that includes subfolders in the `dir.txt` file, change the first line to include a `/s` (e.g., `@dir %1 /-p /s /o:gn > "%temp%\dir.txt"`).

Try creating two batch files on your system: `DirFile.bat` and `DirFileSub.bat`. With these you can generate either type of list with just a mouse click.

December Chapter Meeting Addresses Networking by Nancy Carpenter

According to Paul and Sara Edwards, networking is meeting people, developing contacts and carefully listening to see how you might develop business. It is not a hard sell. It involves initiating conversation, gleaned common interests and keeping in touch.

You can network even if you are not looking for a job. A network can make you more valuable to your employer since you know people who can get things done. You also can become a resource to others on the network.

There are common roadblocks to networking, but you can overcome them:

I don't know what to say

Tell them who you are, how you got their name, your situation and what you want and how to contact you. After the first contact, sent a card or letter expressing your appreciation for meeting them. Speak distinctly and slowly enough for them to catch what you are saying.

I have no time

Schedule ½ hour per week. Set an objective to contact 3 people. Keep it brief.

I hate cold calls

When you call strangers, if you have a reference, mention it. In e-mail, write a short subject that would interest them, but not sound like junk mail. Alternately, send a letter.

I hate bothering people at work

Call them very early, at lunch or at end of day. These are the most common free times.

I can't remember names

Get their business cards and write a note on them as to how you got their names.

Print your own cards on an uncoated stock since it is easier to write on. Take your cards and a pen to any event.

Grammar Game – Watcher Beware! or, How the Media Make Us Stupid

by Meg Papa, Blue Pencil Managing Editor

I enjoy watching television, but there are many things on television that can make one cry out in frustration. While my mother tends to yell at the characters (“Why are you going into the basement without turning on the lights, you stupid woman!”), I tend to yell to anyone in the room (“He didn’t lock his car! Who wouldn’t lock his car on the street in New York City?!?”). Lately, however, I have been directing my outbursts at the language on T.V. No, not the swearing or the crudity; it is easy enough to avoid those shows altogether. I’m talking about the other kind of bad language – nonsensical English. And the problem isn’t limited to television; it shows up everywhere.

Below is a list of some phrases that have appeared in the media. Can you figure out the problem with each entry, and suggest a possible solution? Some of the problems are stupidly obvious; others are subtler.

1. “Every agent has one case that haunts them.” (Promo tag for a recent episode of Without A Trace)
 2. “To Boldly Go Where No Man Has Gone Before.” (Opening titles tag from Star Trek: The Original Series)
 3. “What if God was one of us?” (Line from the opening titles music for the series Joan of Arcadia)
 4. “Kartoon Knuggets” (Title of a single-panel cartoon off the web)
 5. “Inspire the Next.” (Hitachi commercial tag line)
- Here’s a trio from various Toyota Tacoma commercials:
6. “Roomier. Versatilier.”
 7. “Adrenalitis sufferer.”
 8. “Customer can receive Cash Back from Toyota or can apply Cash Back to Down Payment.”
 9. “Whether you live in a big city, or a small town like me, you can make a difference.” (NFL public service announcement encouraging volunteering which was shown on Thanksgiving Day)
 10. “We just have to keep our nose to the grinder.” (Eagles coach Andy Reid after the 11/28 Philadelphia win)

Editor's Note: The Blue Pencil will publish submitted statements from any candidate running for STC office. The presence of a candidate's statement does not imply endorsement by any member of the Blue Pencil staff or the Pittsburgh chapter STC.

Linda L. Oestreich

2005 Candidate, STC Second Vice President

Hi, I'm Linda Oestreich, one of your 2005 candidates for STC 2nd Vice-President. I have been an active, dedicated member of STC ever since I became a technical communicator in 1979. In fact, in 1996, I was honored by the Society with the title of Fellow. And, for the past three years, I have been Director-Sponsor of Region 5.

You will have my "official" write-up with your ballot materials and in *Intercom*. So, this article is my way of bringing to you some of my ideas about the Society and our profession that I hope will help you understand who I am.

You have three choices for this office this year. Each candidate brings with her a wealth of experience, wisdom, and dedication. Naturally, I hope you decide to vote for me, but no matter whom you choose, please do vote!

Relationships and Communities

Our profession and our Society are about relationships and communities. Merriam-Webster says *relationship* means [the state of] "having an aspect or quality (as resemblance) that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working together or as being of the same kind." Sounds like a bunch of STCers, doesn't it?

Many of you have heard about the move to call all of our chapters and SIGs *communities*. Merriam-Webster gives its first definition of *community* as "a unified body of individuals." Even better, a second definition is "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society." Change the word *living* to *working*, and we have a perfect fit!

Relationships naturally exist within communities. And communities exist to help their members, to provide support, and to offer growth. Communities also have relationships with other communities. STC is, has been, and I hope, will always be, about the relationships within, among, and between communities and the individuals within those communities. It is this aspect of the Society that has kept me excited about being a member and leader for more than 20 years. If you have ever heard me speak, you know that I love what I do, but even more so, I love helping others be better at doing what they do!

The STC Community

The Society for Technical Communication is a vehicle to help all of us be better at what we do. In these days of change, turnover,

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Deborah F. Sauer

2005 Candidate, STC Second Vice President

My name is Deborah Sauer and I am writing to you about why I am running for second vice president and why I am qualified to serve in this office. I am running because I want to work with you to ensure that the STC serves you in the best way possible. I will represent your interests in this critical time of change. My professional career and STC experience gives me the skills necessary to achieve this.

I have clear priorities. You, the members, are first. The STC is a member-based organization. Everything in the STC, the board, the office, the communities (chapters and SIGs), exists because of you. In fact, it exists to *serve* you. The board is at the bottom of the organization; you, the members, are at the top. I want to find out how you want the STC to serve you and then work to implement that vision. Tell me what you want your organization to be in three years, five years, or ten years. I'll ensure that *your* voices are heard, not just the voices of the vocal few.

I am a leader and a manager. The Boston chapter experienced a great deal of change during my presidency. We changed our approach to managing our newsletter by creating an editorial team, we changed our approach to planning for the future by creating a strategic plan, and we changed the way we managed our chapter affairs by revising the chapter bylaws. I initiated, facilitated, and participated in these changes.

I am a team player. My experience on several annual conference program committees and as assistant to the president for conferences proves that I work well with individual members, committees, and the office staff. In managing the annual conference, I consult with leaders and members to ensure that we all have a balance of input before making changes or launching new initiatives. This experience will be useful in managing the Transformation as we need to consider all of the ramifications and make careful decisions before proceeding.

I can balance long-term vision with near-term results. While vision is important, the ability to execute it in a practical and timely fashion is critical. I have a proven history of taking input, processing it, distilling it, and acting on it with clarity and focus. I have done this in various aspects of my professional life, including my career as an employee, as the owner of a consulting business, and as an STC volunteer in the role of assistant to the president for conferences for the past five years.

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Oestreich, from p. 6

outsourcing, and offshoring, the global community absolutely needs what we do. Technical communication is necessary. As long as we have technology and change, we will have people who need good technical communicators who can provide bridges to understanding.

I believe in the STC community. I believe that the Society provides and will continue to provide a path for our success. Just as the work we do provides the words and tools that act as bridges to better understanding, I believe that STC provides a way for us to excel in that work. STC communities even help us better understand technical communicators in other fields, in other cities, and in other parts of the world.

A Two-Way Love Affair

Our world is about relationships. Sometimes we forget that relationships need two-way energy. They need feedback and they need care. If you are one of the STC members who wants more value for your membership, perhaps you need to give more than your membership fee to STC.

I have loved STC for more than 20 years, and I have worked hard to be part of its success. STC has loved me back with opportunities. It has shown me the way to new employment, to new heights of my profession, to higher salary levels, and to lifelong friendships that I treasure. For me, it has been you, the people of the Society who have made those benefits possible. I want to be 2nd Vice-President and ultimately President of this Society because I believe in you. You are the people of the Society. I believe you are its heart, and I believe that the changes the Society is experiencing are for ultimate good.

Our organization must be known and respected by industry, by academe, by government, and by everyday people. I want STC to be a recognized acronym—even with people who have never written a users guide, a journal article, a research grant, a help file, or a hardware manual. I want our spouses, our children, and our parents to understand the value we bring to the world. We, as members of the Society, can make that happen through better marketing, varied and accessible educational programs, enthusiastic grass root activities, and strong communities.

Relationships are Our Strength

Communities of practice; communities of interest; communities of geography, communities of communities! It doesn't matter what we call ourselves when we form relationships, what matters is the relationship.

Our STC relationships provide ongoing mentoring and form a substructure of strength that we can depend on. As the Society

see Oestreich, p. 8

Saver, from p. 6

I have listened to your input and provided results. Post-conference survey feedback from attendees showed that you felt that 30 concurrent sessions was too many. There are now about 20 concurrent sessions, so there's less risk of missing a session that you want to attend. Conference attendees also wanted more time in the exhibit hall. Now, you can visit the exhibits after the keynote session and there's extra time before lunch one day. There have been many other changes. So, you see, we've been listening to you.

I have a vision as to what the Society can be for you in the future. You said that you want more in-depth training. In October, 2005, the Society will offer the pilot program of what we hope will be a series of two-day training courses taught by well-known, experienced instructors. A variety of people contributed their ideas to this program, so I will not take sole credit. But, the idea started with the seeds you planted in your post-conference surveys, and my vision for what the Society can provide to its members. The pilot for the training program is just one aspect of that vision. We're working on other initiatives that will add value to your membership.

I am a diplomat. I have successfully managed difficult situations with positive results in which all parties feel that their needs have been addressed. I work to ensure that everyone feels that their concerns have been heard, that they have been treated fairly, and that they can live with the solution. These skills are important in managing the Transformation.

I hear your concerns about your relationship with the STC. The primary goal of the Transformation is to provide member value. Value as you define it, not as I define it, or as the board defines it, or as the office defines it. Defining that value and providing it to you requires that the members, the board, and the office to work together. I have a proven track record of working well with all of these groups. I will work to provide member value while closing the gap that members feel between themselves (as individuals and as communities) and the Society (both the board and the office).

I foster an environment that encourages change, innovation, and idea exchange. We must have the vision to embrace change to our advantage. We must view change as an opportunity. It allows us to reinvent ourselves, or, in this case, reinvent *your* Society. This is your organization. You must provide the direction for the change.

As second vice president, I'll be your voice in a place where voices can sometimes get lost, to make sure that your voices are heard, and to help set the direction of the Society in light of what you, the members, want the Society to become. For these reasons, I am asking for your vote in the upcoming election. Let's work together to make a better STC.

February Chapter Meeting Tours New Perspective Productions

Date: Monday, February 7, 2005

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Tour Leader: CTO Mike Jeffrey

Please join us on a tour of New Perspective Productions, lead by CTO Mike Jeffrey. New Perspective is one of the region’s leading audio, video and multimedia development company providing corporate communications, broadcast TV and radio, sports marketing and interactive multimedia solutions including CD/DVD authoring and specialized Internet

applications. A longer description can be found at the STC Pittsburgh website: <http://www.stcpgh.org>.

Cost: \$5 for members; \$7 nonmembers; \$3 for students & unemployed (sandwiches and snacks will be served)

RSVP: by February 2 to Darlene Mullenix - 412-288-8676 or dmullenix@federatedinv.com

Location: New Perspective building, Strip District, Pittsburgh, PA. Directions at www.new-perspective.com; click on the “Find Us” link on the bottom of the page.

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moves forward with new programs and new technologies, we find areas of the Society that are in need of repair, recycling, and retirement. However, we also find areas that are strong, viable, and valuable. As we live our professional lives, we choose the parts of the Society that work best for us. Yet, no matter what programs or technologies we embrace, the relationships and the communities of STC are at the core.

I will do all I can to make my belief in this Society contagious. But, you are the key. As a member of the Society, you have a relationship

with other members, and you have a relationship with your SIGs, your chapters, your competitions, and your conferences. You can make those relationships strong and reciprocal. As a Society leader, my job is to help ensure that the Society returns your efforts with value.

I am passionate about STC. I believe that passion will help me lead the Society with wisdom and integrity. I hope you believe so, too.

2004-2005

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Open Committee Chairs (3): Employment Information, Publicity, & High School Writing Competition

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