BLUE PENCIL

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, STC HTTP://WWW.STCPGH.ORG VOL. 41, NO. 5 - FEB/MAR 2005

Pick of the Issue

We made it the front page story, but it is still worth highlighting: Janis Ramey has been elected an STC Associate Fellow. This honor is not granted easily or quickly; a recipient must earn it through a long and distinguished career. Janis certainly has!

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Janis Ramey Elected STC Associate Fellow

by Nicky Bleiel, STC Pittsburgh Vice-President

Janis Ramey has been elected an Associate Fellow of STC and will receive this honor in May at the 52nd Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington.

The citation on her plaque will read "For continuous and outstanding support of the Society of Technical Communication, the field of technical communication, and for a lifetime of outstanding achievement in the field." This succinctly describes her more than 40 years in the field of technical communication—45 of them as an active member of STC.

Janis is a graduate of the first-ever class of technical writing majors in the country, and has been an influential force in the Pittsburgh technical writing community and STC since then. She graduated from Carnegie Mellon University (then Margaret Morrison Carnegie College) in 1962, and was the first recipient of an STC Pittsburgh scholarship—in fact; she was most likely the winner of the very first STC student scholarship. After earning her BS in technical writing and editing, she went on to earn an MA in English.

Upon graduation, Janis found that many technical writing jobs were restricted to men, so she began a freelance technical writing business (Ramey Technical Writing) which she still runs today. A pioneer in the field, she has provided the following services to over 70 clients since she started her business in 1969: technical writing, editing, documentation planning, production management, training, consulting, courses and seminars in technical writing, web content development, design, graphics, and web site design. She has created manuals, user guides, articles, brochures, catalogs, proposals, newsletters, online help, and web sites. During her career, she has always embraced the transformations in the practice of technical communication, learned about them, and taught others. Fortunately for

Janis Ramey, cont. on page 5

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

President's Column

by Barb Stanton

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate one of our fellow STC Pittsburgh members on being granted Associate Fellow member status. At the January board meeting, the STC's Board of Directors voted to accept the nomination of Janis Ramey for Associate Fellow. This is a great honor for a member to reach this status.

According to the Society's web site "the rank of associate fellow is conferred only upon a senior member who has attained distinction in the field of technical communication. Senior members may not apply for the rank of associate fellow; they must be nominated by a committee composed of fellows and associate fellows." This means that Janis' professional tenure has been filled with many milestones and achievements to earn her enough respect from her peers and colleagues to consider her for this honor.

When I was reviewing her nomination form, I was amazed at what she has contributed to the field of technical communication and what she has accomplished over the years. It is truly a remarkable career.

Thinking about Janis' accomplishments throughout her career taught me a valuable lesson - the value of setting professional milestones and goals. By setting some professional goals, you continue to stay focused and determined to excel in the industry. You continue to add to your portfolio, build your résumé, increase your value to your employer and clients, and learn more about the industry. Having even the smallest goal forces you to stay fresh and learn something new.

It is important to keep perspective of where you are in your career when you are setting these goals. Make the goals something attainable, something that you know you can achieve. Maybe set a goal to get published over the next six months. But don't aim for *Intercom* right off the bat, start off by submitting an article to the *Blue Pencil,* or other local newsletter to get a byline, and then work up. Maybe you want to present in the next year. Start off by volunteering to present at a WorkQuest™ meeting or CICs SIG meeting. Perfect the art of presenting and then move to the next level – maybe a chapter meeting for STC or another professional organization. Writing and presenting force you to research a particular area and learn more about it so you are educated enough to write and talk about it.

Maybe you want to learn a new piece of software, take a professional course at a Community College or sit in on a one-day seminar that is offered through an organization. Once you have learned the basics of the software, you can use it to create samples for your portfolio. Continuing education is a great way to expand your professional knowledge and learn a new skill.

The more goals and milestone's you set for your career, the more you will be improving your résumé and portfolio – essentially your own nomination form. The important part is that these goals need to be fulfilling to you.

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Membership at a Glance

(as of January 5, 2005)

National

Total Members: 18,518

Total chapters: 147

Pittsburgh Chapter

Total Members: 146

No New Members

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Notes from the National Office

Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars

Cost: $99 (STC Members), $149 (non-members). See stc.webex.com for more information and to register.

March 9, 2005

That's a Good Question! – Elizabeth Frick

1:00-2:30 PM ET

This seminar will help you learn how to brainstorm and ask questions. Learn and practice different types of questions (including open-ended, closed, restatement, and probing questions), and develop a questioning strategy that will help you get valuable information (and get closer to the truth in any situation). Learn what to avoid in questioning sessions and how to answer questions that are asked of you.

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Upcoming Society Events

March 19, 2005

The Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC will hold its annual conference on the Great Valley campus of Pennsylvania State University in Malvern, Pennsylvania. The conference includes a keynote address by Jean-luc Doumont and a presentation by Chris Kojm, the deputy executive director of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, who will speak about the development of The 9/11 Commission Report. For more information, please contact: Gary Samartino (610) 701-0577 garys@infoventions.com www.stcpmc.org.

April 8, 2005

The Rochester Chapter STC will hold Spectrum 2005, the longest-running local STC conference, at the RIT Conference Center in Rochester, New York. The conference theme is "The Amazing Spectrum of Communications." For more information, please contact: Lisa Moretto, Spectrum 2005 Conference Chair LisaM@rgilearning.com

April 8-9, 2005

The Carolina Chapter STC will hold Tri-Doc 2005: Shaping the Future of Technical Communication at the North Raleigh Hilton in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. For more information, please contact: Steven Meeks (919) 564-2360 www.stc-carolina.org/conference.

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 2004 issue of Tieline (www.stc.org/tieline.asp). Information on the Leadership Day schedule (May 8) was published in the January 2005 issue of Tieline.

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Complimentary STC Membership for Nonmember Conference Attendees

Nonmembers who register at the full conference rate for STC's 52nd Annual Conference, to be held May

National Notes, cont. on page 4

National Notes, cont. from page 3

8-11, 2005, in Seattle, Washington, will be invited to join STC—free—for the remainder of 2005. The STC office will include an application for a complimentary membership with the conference registration confirmation receipt letter. The deadline to return the application to the STC office by mail or fax is June 30, 2005.

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Felice Frankel Named Honorary Fellow for 2005

STC is pleased to announce that renowned science photographer Felice Frankel is its 2005 honorary fellow. Frankel will be honored at STC's 52nd Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, May 8-11, 2005, and will give a presentation titled "Envisioning Science" on Monday, May 9, at 11 AM.

A research scientist in the School of Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Frankel creates photographs that reveal the beauty of biological processes, illuminate scientific principles, and make science accessible to lay audiences. A *Wired* review praised her book On the Surface of Things: Images of the Extraordinary in Science (Chronicle Books, 1997, with G. M. Whitesides) for "convey[ing] the profundity of scientific inventions and observations in visual lyrics that intrigue the eye—and mind." Her most recent book, Envisioning Science: The Design and Craft of the Science Image(MIT Press, 2002), is a photographers' handbook on creating images for journal submissions and scientific presentations.

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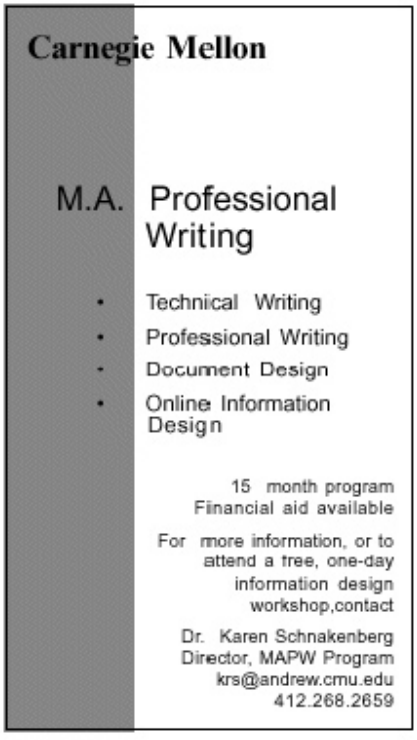
Deduct your STC Dues

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.



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WorkQuest ™: Past, Present, and Future

by Mary Ann Pike

Over two years ago, Janis Ramey, a long-time member of the Pittsburgh chapter, started a group called STC WorkQuest™ to help local unemployed technical writers. It was the summer of 2002, at the low point of the economic downturn, and work was scarce for people who were recently laid off and for contractors, whose clients had no money to spare. Today, even though the economy has improved, Janis is still meeting regularly with people who need help dealing with unemployment and looking for new jobs.

A few months ago, the Pittsburgh chapter of the STC officially recognized WorkQuest™ as a committee of our chapter. They formed a board of directors for the committee with Janis serving as the Executive Director. Dennis McCarthy, a WorkQuest™ alumnus (as we call those who been successful in their job hunt) has graciously agreed to serve as the Chair of the WorkQuest™ board. Other members of the board include John Clark, Dick Dupree, Chuck Lanigan, Rick Lohmeyer, and Mary Ann Pike.

The board has decided to schedule quarterly WorkQuest™ alumni meetings to give the current WorkQuest™ members an opportunity to network with people who are currently employed. They also are in the process of upgrading the WorkQuest™ web site to provide more discussion groups and more space to store materials related to unemployment and job searching. The board is hoping to take WorkQuest™ to the next level in providing help to the unemployed of our region.

Janis Ramey, cont. from page 1

the Pittsburgh Chapter, her outlet for service to the technical writing community has been STC. She has recruited many STC members directly and by her contributions to the Society and the field.

Janis' service to the Pittsburgh Chapter includes holding more than 10 different chapter offices, and organizing and speaking at numerous Pittsburgh Chapter events. She is the author of many *Blue Pencil* articles, served as the archivist of chapter history for almost 10 years, has been a competition judge many times, and started and supervised the Chapter's Speakers Bureau for 10 years.

Her insight and dedication to the field of technical writing come together with the creation of WorkQuest™. In 2002, Janis created this STC SIG to be both a support group and a career development resource for those out of work, or contemplating rejoining the workforce. She presented her WorkQuest™ work at the 2004 STC Annual Conference as moderator of the session "Marketing Yourself."

You can read Janis' newsletter and many of her articles on her web site, www.technical-writing.net. To learn more about WorkQuest™, see www.STCWorkQuest.org.

The Pittsburgh Chapter congratulates Janis on this honor!

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

Doug Woestendiek - *Candidate for 2005 STC Treasurer*

STC Involvement

My name is Doug Woestendiek. I have been active in STC in a variety of roles, from the local chapter to the international level. Since 2001, I have had the honor to serve on the Society Board of Directors as the Assistant to the President for Technology. I was Special Events Coordinator at the STC Annual Conference in 1996. I have presented and moderated sessions at several Annual Conferences, and I have worked with stem managers as a peer reviewer for annual conference proposals. During my career, I have been a member of the Mid-Hudson Valley, Austin TX, Twin Cities, and Central CT Chapters. I served as the Mid-Hudson Valley chapter newsletter editor.

I would like the opportunity to continue my service to the STC as your Treasurer. The STC Treasurer has a dual role, working as the CFO for the Society and as a member of the Board. I have the necessary experience in both those roles.

Experience

I received my BS and MS in Mathematics of Operation Research and Statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with a Management Minor. I later earned a Human Computer Interaction (HCI) Certificate from RPI. I hold several Technical Achievement Awards from IBM, including intellectual property and publication awards. In 1995, I received a Distinguished Technical Communication award in the Northern California Technical Communication's STC Competition.

I am a member of the American Society for Quality (ASQ). In 2004, I became an ASQ certified six sigma black belt. I believe I can apply this skill to the financial processes of the STC.

I have the direct financial experience needed for this role. Since 2002, I have been Treasurer and Finance Manager for a $16M+ valuation private property corporation. I have also served that group as VP and Director. During my career, I have managed budgets over $10M and have reengineered financial processes. I also bring the knowledge needed to be an effective member of the STC Board. I have worked in large international companies and small companies. I have led major projects, worked collaboratively with competitors, and represented views to industry forums.

Early in my career, I led IBM's documentation team in the COSE CDE (Common Desktop Environment) project. This was a joint development effort with HP, Sun, and Novell, involving online help, hardcopy, and softcopy documentation. I also represented IBM in the Open Group Single UNIX Documentation project.

From 1999-2004, I was a Senior IT Architect in Financial Systems at IBM. I focused on emerging technology and e-business strategies across the worldwide portfolio of IBM finance applications. I was the lead technical architect on the Finance Portal, which served as the conduit for web-enabled Finance applications and as a productivity tool for IBM's 10,000 worldwide Finance employees.

As a Senior IT Architect at IBM, I re-engineered financial processes and systems. I also helped recommend and implement a Sarbanes Oxley solution for IBM which IBM now markets to other companies. (Sarbanes-Oxley is a bill passed by Congress which forever changes the financial reporting landscape. It mandates numerous changes to financial reporting, intended to protect investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures made pursuant to the securities laws.)

I am now the Director of Software Architecture at Marketing Management Analytics (MMA), responsible for the overall architecture of our Avista solution, holding an $11M+ direct development budget.

Doug Woestendiek, cont. on page 7

Quick Tip...Reducing the Size of Graphics

Editor's Note: When I copied this tip from my email, I inadvertently lost the attribution. If anyone recognizes this piece as your own, please send me an email, so I can properly credit you in the next Blue Pencil. Thanks.

If you think capturing a screen shot, copying it to the Windows Clipboard, then pasting it into a Word document is easy, you're right. If you think this is a good way to minimize the size of the finished document, you're wrong.

Why?

When an image is captured and copied to the clipboard, Windows stores the image *internally* as a Bit-mapped graphic (BMP) format. This is a very inefficient and often bloated file format. Consequently, when the image is pasted into the destination document, its bloated size adds to the overall file size of the document. The more images you copy and paste, the more bloated the document.

An example:

I recently updated a document that was 49 pages long, contained about 20 screen captures, and was 7.8MB in size. All of the images were captured using Paint Shop Pro, copied to the Windows Clipboard, then pasted into the document. It was my task to add new content, new screen shots, and replace outdated images with new ones. For each new image, I captured the screen with Paint Shop Pro, saved the image to a GIF format in a scratch folder, then flipped over to the document and inserted the image using Insert > Picture > From File. (To make the process more efficient, I configured Word and Paint Shop Pro to use the same scratch folder.)

When I finished, I had added 33 pages, about 15 new screen shots, and replaced 90% of the existing screen shots. The document almost doubled in page count & number of images, yet the file size *reduced* to just 1.3MB!

Saving screen captures as GIF files, then inserting them into a document does take a few more steps than the simpler copy-and-paste method, but the advantages gained from reducing file bloat may be worth it.

Doug Woestendiek, cont. from page 6

Plans

Our industry is changing. From the outsourcing of jobs to the state of the global economy in the area of technology, the world we live and work in is changing. And it is changing FAST. STC needs to continue to change too. During the change, we as a Society must re-evaluate our spending and ensure it is aligned with our member needs.

It's an exciting time for STC as it transforms to provide better value to its members. I can provide fiscal oversight to the society, ensuring sound processes and adequate controls are in place. I can assist the board in making wise financial decisions. I will manage the budget prudently and make it clear to the members how money is being spent.

The Society must become more nimble in reacting to trends. We must put policies in place so we can adjust quickly to provide programs that add value for our members and address their changing needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

I would like the opportunity to continue my service to the STC by continuing on the Board as the new STC Treasurer. I want to help ensure that the STC remains relevant to our members, and that STC uses our combined fiscal resources to deliver meaningful value to members in their professional lives.

You can learn more about me at http://hometown.aol.com/dougwoestendiek. Please take the time to vote! Thanks.

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STC Member

March Chapter Meeting - Graphic Facilitation for Enhancing Knowledge Capture and Communication

Speakers: Peter Durand and Alicia Diane Durand of Alphachimp Studio, Inc.

Date: Monday, March 14, 2005

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

The March meeting is a joint with the Pittsburgh Regional Knowledge Management Consortium. This talk will provide an experience of a unique form of knowledge elicitation and capture that helps to facilitate collaboration and shared understanding. Based on case studies of their work and experience, Peter and Diane of Alphachimp will demonstrate what they do and how it dovetails with the information and knowledge needs of groups and organizations. A longer description can be found at the STC Pittsburgh web site: http://www.stcpgh.org.

Cost: $15 STC and PRKMC members; $20 non-members; $10 unemployed and students

(includes hors d'oeuvres and beverages)

RSVP: by March 9 to Darlene Mullenix - 412-288-8676 or dmullenix@federatedinv.com

Location: Pittsburgh Technology Council building, 2000 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA

Quick Tip...Adding Line Numbers to Documents

Robert P. Mohr

The other day, a developer in the cube next to me popped his head over the wall and asked if it was possible for Word to number every line in a file. He wanted to look at specific lines identified by compiler error messages. Of course it's possible! Here's how:

1. Set the View mode to Page Layout.
2. Select the text you want to number (press Ctrl+A for the entire file).
3. Select File > Page setup > Layout tab.
4. Click the Line Numbers button.
5. Click the Add line numbers check box and specify the numbering attributes you want.
6. Click OK until all dialog boxes are closed.

2004-2005

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

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