BLUE PENCIL

Pick of the Issue

Those of us who are part of the Pittsburgh Chapter STC have a pretty good thing going, but we can't forget that STC is a national organization with national events. Check out Nicky's final president's column detailing her experience at the STC Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Apparently, many STC folks outside of Pittsburgh think we have a pretty good thing going, too.

Table of Contents

Nancy Carpenter Named Recipient of Distinguished Chapter Service Award

Longtime STC Pittsburgh Chapter member Nancy Carpenter has received the Distinguished Chapter Service Award.

Nancy has been a member of STC for 26 years, all of which she has spent with the Pittsburgh chapter. She has worn many hats in that time: chapter secretary, production editor of the *Blue Pencil*, Region 4 conference committee member, and competition judge.

As the chapter secretary since 1998, Nancy has had an exceptional record of attendance at chapter meetings and Board meetings, taking copious notes and providing meeting minutes in a timely manner. She has also written up many meeting summaries for the newsletter.

She has been the *Blue Pencil* production editor since 1999 – spanning three different editors. In this role, she edits and formats *Blue Pencil* articles, and proofreads the final product.

Nancy was on the committee for the 2004 Region 4 Conference in Pittsburgh, and in addition to performing many duties in preparation for the conference, she also served as a room monitor the day of the conference, keeping her track running smoothly.

She has taken on other special projects as needed, often volunteering to tackle jobs with enthusiasm. She has also served as a competition judge multiple times.

All of us in the Pittsburgh Chapter would like to recognize Nancy's dedicated, distinctive enthusiastic, and conscientious service to our chapter with this award.

Congratulations

President's Column: News from Las Vegas - *by Nicky Bleiel*

This year, STC's 53rd Annual Conference was held in Las Vegas. It was a great meeting and I think it is fitting that my final President's Column recaps the week's events.

First of all, there was a great deal of positive buzz about the Pittsburgh Chapter -- many Board members and other chapter Presidents stopped me to compliment us on our activities and enthusiasm. It doesn't go unnoticed.

On Leadership Day (the Sunday before the conference officially begins) our Chapter was awarded "Chapter of Excellence" for "Sponsoring Software Saturdays to meet your members' specific professional development needs." (See the sidebar for the judges' comments.) I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Board and Committee members for the work you did throughout the year to make this award possible. All of your efforts are worthy to compete on a national level.

- **Beverly Spagnolo**, Vice-President
- **Barb Stanton**, Immediate Past President and Student Liaison
- **Marlene Miller**, Treasurer and Historian
- **Meg Papa**, *Blue Pencil* Editor
- **Nancy Carpenter**, Secretary
- **Phil Miller**, Website Coordinator
- **Heather Lum**, Competition Chair
- **Janis Ramey**, WorkQuest Executive Director
- **Chuck Lanigan**, WorkQuest Chairman
- **Nancy Ott**, Special Projects Coordinator
- **Chris Keefer**, Member Liaison

"Chapter of Distinction" (the award we won last year in addition to "Chapter of Excellence") was awarded to the

Orlando Chapter this year. Our category also included Northeast Ohio and India, so the competition was tight (and varied) this year. There's always next year!

I did a progression table on Leadership Day -- "Communicating with your Membership" -- that was very well received. Everyone was excited to learn about our e-mail, snail mail, and web-based communication methods.

In other news, Alan Houser was awarded Associate Fellow at the Annual Honors Banquet. It was great to see him receive his award alongside the 22 other new Associate Fellows. I can't wait to see who will join Alan, Janis Ramey, and Karen Schriver as Pittsburgh's next Associate Fellow or Fellow.

To wrap up, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as President of the Pittsburgh Chapter. It was a memorable and exciting year – thanks so much for the opportunity. Hope to see you all in the fall.

PS.: Oh, and I won $15 at Blackjack...

"Chapter of Excellence" Judges' Comments:

- Your chapter initiatives were relevant to chapter goals and membership needs. Topics offered during Software Saturdays are of interest to every technical communicator and the price was right!
- The chapter's monetary donation to Hurricane Katrina victims and WorkQuest's offer to help find jobs for hurricane victims relocating to Pittsburgh was commendable.
- Your online judging is intriguing. It would be interesting to know more about how it works and what the judges like best about this method of judging.
- I really like the concept of your chapter's archive and history section on your web site. This is a great way to preserve your history.
- The Pittsburgh Chapter appears to be healthy and meeting its members' needs.

Society for Technical Communication

Pittsburgh Chapter

P.O. Box 133
Pittsburgh, PA 15230
Contact: Nicky Bleiel
Phone: 412-697-3066
nbleiel@matrixplus.com

National Office

901 North Stuart Street
Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
Phone: 703-522-4114
Fax: 703-522-2075

Membership at a Glance

(as of April 30, 2006)
National
        Total members: 13,370
        Total chapters: 137
Pittsburgh
Total members: 140

Notes from the National Office

Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars

Cost: $99 (STC Members),
  $149 (non-members)
Time: 1:00-2:30 PM ET
See stc.webex.com for more
information and to register.

June 14, 2006

Introduction to DITA

Instructor: Paul Prescod

July 12, 2006

Adding Panache to Your Procedures

Instructor: Leah Guren

July 26, 2006

Working in Global Teams

Instructors: Melanie Doulton &
    Makarand Pandit

August 9, 2006

Creating Training that Sticks

Instructor: Maggie Haenel

August 23, 2006

It Might Be GUI, but It Doesn't Have
    to Be Messy!

Instructor: Leah Guren

****

**STC Board Selects Susan Allen
Burton as Executive Director**

The STC is excited to announce the
selection of Susan Allen Burton as
the new Executive Director. Susan is
scheduled to join the STC Board by
August 2006.

Susan is an accomplished association
executive, with extensive experience
in all areas of professional and trade
association management. For the
past two years as President and CEO

of the American College of Health
Care Administrators, she conducted
internal legal, human resources
and association audits to determine
the state of the association,
initiated a proposal process, and
developed a culture of openness and
transparency.

After Susan's first interview,
she wrote, "I am excited about
working with the STC Board of
Directors to transform STC into
the preeminent organization for
technical communicators seeking
professional advancement in the
world. Together we can establish
STC as the professional portal
that will serve globally as the
'Technology, Tools, and Service
Central' for the profession of
technical communication."

****

Upcoming STC Events

October 13–14, 2006

STC's Region 2 Conference, **Making
Cents of Making Sense: The Business
of Technical Writing**, will be held in
London, England. The audience for the
conference includes anyone involved in
the business or production of technical
documentation, including writers,
editors, documentation managers,
translators, technical illustrators, and
publishers. For more information,
please visit www.stcuk.org/R2conf.

****

$10,000 Research Grants

The Society offers an annual award of
up to $10,000 for research proposals
on practical basic and applied research

topics that are of concern to the Society's mainstream membership. The selection of the award recipient involves a three-stage process.

1st Stage: Query

The deadline to submit a proposal is midnight, Friday, June 30, 2006. Researchers should submit an electronic copy of a cover page and a five-page query sent as a single e-mail attachment in a message addressed to Rachel Spilka, manager, STC research grants committee (spilka@uwm.edu).

On the cover page, include the project title and researchers' names and institutional affiliations. The query should include the following:

- Problem statement, research questions, and project description

- Explanation (with a brief literature review) of how the project promises to contribute to the field of technical communication and benefit the Society

- Description of the project design and methodology

- Description of researcher qualifications

- Citations list

2nd Stage: Selection of Two Finalists

From the queries received, the research grants committee will select two finalists, who will be notified in September 2006. The finalists will receive detailed feedback on their queries and on the viability of their research ideas to help them develop a full proposal, which will be due December 1, 2006. Finalists also may be asked for additional information and materials to help the committee in its review and deliberation.

3rd Stage: Final Selection

The research grants committee will recommend one of the two projects to the STC board of directors for funding, and the awardee will be notified by January 30, 2007.

Use Your Résumé To Help Negotiate a Higher Salary - *by Deborah Walker*

Most job seekers believe that salary negotiation starts once they have an offer in hand, but nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, your résumé can make the difference between negotiating at the top end or the bottom end of the salary range in your next job offer. If that sounds strange to you, consider the following points:

- A prospective employer's first impression of you is created entirely by your résumé.

- The employer's first impression of you will assign a value and build a level of urgency for the employer to contact you—before someone else does.

- First impressions are nearly impossible to change.

If your résumé sells your skills short, then you can't expect to receive offers at the upper end of your salary scale. Your current résumé could be losing you thousands of dollars in income power. By making a few key changes in your résumé now, you can position yourself for higher salaries in the future.

There are three résumé strategies for promoting high salary negotiation success:

1. Show that you are a high return on investment with quantifiable results.

Many job seekers throw around the phrase "results oriented", but they fail to back it up with concrete evidence—leaving the reader to conclude otherwise. You may feel that you have no quantifiable evidence of your value in previous jobs, but every job has quantifiable results that can better reflect your worth on your résumé.

Revenue, sales dollars and material costs are not the only results that use numbers.

Consider using the number of man-hours saved in process improvements, the percentage of repeat customers, or the number of peers helped by a particular efficiency to help reflect your abilities. Every employee is hired to solve problems, and most problems have some quantifiable element at their core.

> "Your current résumé could be losing you thousands of dollars…"

2. Illustrate the breadth of your experience.

Notice the use of the word "breadth" rather than "length" of experience. Just because a candidate has been doing a job for a long time does not necessarily mean he is worth more. Breadth of experience focuses on quality, not quantity.

There are two key ways to express breadth of experience:

Industry knowledge

Since industry expertise is usually in high demand, you can show your value through insider understanding of industry issues.

Transferable skills

If your career spans many industries within the same occupation, highlight the transferable skills that have enabled you to bridge the gaps from industry to industry.

3. Entice the reader to want to know more about you.

Job seekers often make the mistake of assuming that the job of their résumé is to inform the reader. Not so! The ONLY job of your résumé is to entice the reader to want to know more about you.

What that translates to is an understanding of what to include and what to leave off your résumé. Too much detail can distract the reader and lose his interest, but not enough information, and the reader will wonder what you have been doing with your life. A proper balance between detail and result will win the reader's interest and leave them saying, "I've got to call this guy for an interview today!"

A professional résumé writer can create a résumé that sells you as a high return on investment. By portraying you as someone with great breadth of experience and a wide range of critical skills, potential employers will see you immediately as someone of high value, building their vision—and your self-confidence—of you in the upper end of the salary scale.

Deborah Walker, CCMC
Career Coach ~ Résumé Writer
888-828-0814
Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com
Find more job-search tips and résumé samples at: www.AlphaAdvantage.com

Creating Metadata – A Quick Checklist - *by Suzanne Mescan*

Metadata is your friend.

Too many technical writers consider metadata to be just one more thing they need to worry about. Used poorly, it is. Used well, it is a technical writer's best friend. It can make content more organized and more efficient to search and reuse.

Start by defining what content you have

+ *Define Your Content*

The key is to start big and work your way down. Define what type of content you have; then break it down into meaningful and reusable pieces of content. For example:

> 1. Lawn Mower
>   Documentation
>   a. User Manuals
>   i. Model
>   numbers
>   ii. Parts diagrams
>   iii. Procedures
>   iv. Cautions and warnings
>   b. Parts Catalogs
>   i. Part numbers
>   ii. Parts diagrams
>   iii. Assembly instructions
>   iv. Model numbers

"Organize your content in the way in which it is reused, not the way in which it is published."

+ *Organize Your Content*

Defining your content allows you to see your content reuse potential and to better organize your content. In this example, you may want to consider storing your parts diagrams and model numbers as a separate collection of content since they are used in both the user manuals and parts catalogs:

Parts diagrams	Model numbers
- Graphic 1	- Model A
- Graphic 2	- Model B
- Graphic 3	- Model C

This way, the content can be stored one time, located easily for reuse, and managed for future updates and revisions. Remember to organize your content in the way in which it is reused, not the way in which it is published!

+ *Apply Useful Metadata*

Consider the following:

- How will you want to search for this content? By author? By model number? By the size of the engine? By the date it was written? Make sure key search criteria are included in the metadata.

- How does each piece of content relate to other content? If you change one piece, what else will need to be updated? Such relationships can be expressed in the content's metadata.

- Do you need to process or calculate on this content? Maybe it is useful for your department to be able to count all of the part descriptions that go into a given manual. Add that number to the metadata ("part description = 12").

- What tool should your technical writers use to edit the content: FrameMaker or MSWord? What will the output be: Print, PDF and/or HTML? Clearly identify input and output in the metadata so there are no questions.

Tips

- Use naming conventions consistently! For example, use "Model number, retired" instead of "Retired model number" for better sorting and easier searching.

- Use metadata in a way that is useful for your department, not the organization next door.

- Make sure that everyone in the department is educated on and thoroughly understands your naming convention and metadata protocol.

Is it worth it to bring in an outside consultant?

For many companies, yes it is. They find it very useful to have an outside expert opinion assist in strategy development. However, it is also possible to create your metadata strategy on your own if you do some research on how your content is used by your team and plan accordingly.

Suzanne Mescan, Vice President of Marketing at Vasont Systems, is responsible for the Company's overall marketing and public relations efforts. Suzanne most recently served as the Vice President and General Manager of Progressive Publishing Alternatives, a sister division of Vasont Systems offering project management, editorial and design services. Prior to joining Vasont Systems, Suzanne was a Marketing Analyst at Advanta. In this role, she was responsible for product planning, advertising, and the promoting of financial services. Suzanne earned a bachelor's of science degree in Marketing from The Pennsylvania State University.

Beverly Spagnolo, Alan Houser, and Nicky Bleiel
at the STC Annual Conference in Las Vegas

Quick Tip...Updating Table of Contents and Indices in Word *- by Meg Papa*

After generating a table of contents or list of figures in Microsoft Word, it is really easy to update them after making changes to the body of the document. You don't have to go back into the INSERT menu and reselect your Index/Tables options.

1. Insert your cursor anywhere in the ToC/List of Figures, etc.

2. Right click your mouse and choose the "Update Field" option.

3. You will typically get a choice between "Update page numbers only" and "Update entire table". If you have made some edits to your ToC that you don't want overridden, or have not made any changes to your chapter/section/table headings, you can choose the first option. If the body of your document has gone through extensive changes, use the second option.

4. Click "OK". Your ToC/Figure list will be updated to reflect the current document.

A Reminder about Summer STC-related Activities

Summer Slam Five

Whether you are a devout Java programmer, a developer committed to Microsoft's .NET framework, a DBA working with Oracle or an IT professional dedicated to SQL Server - set aside your differences for a day as PITTSBURGH USER GROUPS UNITE!

For the fifth year the summer socials for many of Pittsburgh's user groups, including PittJUG, Pgh.NET, PghOUG, STC, and PSSUG have been combined for a unique night of networking and fun.   Attendees will learn about the benefits and challenges of each technology through informal conversations with your peers. Appetizers and a cash bar will be provided, and great raffle prizes will be available.
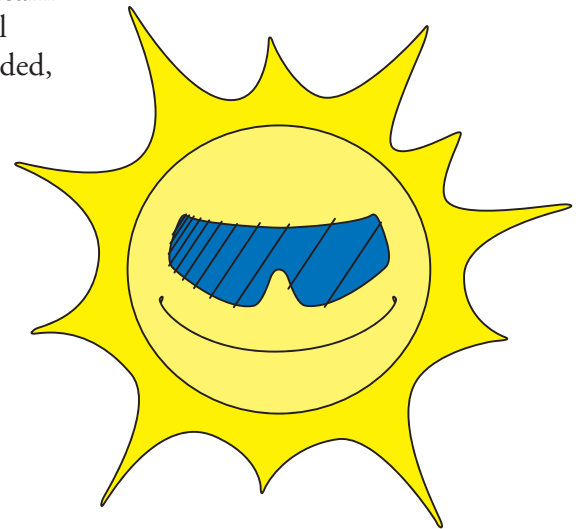
Date: Thursday, July 20

Time: 5:00-8:00 p.m.

Location: Station Square - Margarita Mama's (1 East Carson Street)

Price: Free

RSVP: 412-918-4229 or events@pghtech.org

STC Pittsburgh Chapter Social

Keep an eye on the stcpgh.org website and your email for details on the annual end-of-summer chapter social. A date has not been set yet, but it usally happens in mid-August. Stay tuned!

2005-2006
STC Pittsburgh Officers

President	Nicky Bleiel	412-697-3066 (W)	nbleiel@matrixplus.com
Vice President	Beverly Spagnolo	412-766-7200 (W)	bspagnolo@klauscherarchitects.com
Treasurer/Historian	Marlene Miller	412-281-0678 x130 (W)	mgmiller33@hotmail.com
Secretary	Nancy Carpenter	412-820-2221 (W)	carpentn@genco.com
Region 4 Director	Bob Dianetti		dir4@stc.org
Committees			
Web Site Coordinator	Phillip Miller	724-744-3687 (H)	webmaster@stcpgh.org
Publications Competition	Heather Lum	412-823-0151 (H)	pizzercat@pobox.com
Member Liaison	Chris Keefer	412-384-1811 (W)	keefercj@adelphia.net
Special Projects Coordinator	Nancy Ott	412-784-0254 (H)	vielottfamily@hotmail.com
WorkQuest™ Chairman	Chuck Lanigan		cdlanigan@comcast.net
WorkQuest™ Executive Director	Janis Ramey	412-833-5548 (W/H)	ramey@technical-writing.net
Past President/Student Liaison	Barbara Stanton	412-893-0383 (W)	bstanton@seec.com
Blue Pencil			
BP Managing Editor	Meg Papa	412-243-3026 (H)	meg@alumni.cmu.edu
BP Production Editor	Nancy Carpenter	412-820-2221 (W)	carpentn@genco.com

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.

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION