Pick of the Issue

To be its best, the STC needs you – at all levels. STC elections are right around the corner, and it's your chance to have a voice at the national level. See the articles on pages 1 & 4 for more info. We want to hear from you as members of the Pittsburgh chapter, too, as you can see on page 2. Your input will help the STC better reflect your interests and respond to your needs - at any level.

Table of Contents

STC National Elections to Be Held in March

Below is the slate of candidates running for STC national office. Elections will open in early March 2007. To learn more about each candidate or ask them questions, go to www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp. Statements from candidates who submitted such to the Blue Pencil begin on page 4.

President:

Linda Oestreich, (unopposed), Houston and San Diego Chapters

First Vice President:

Mark Clifford, (unopposed), Northern New England and United Kingdom Chapters

Second Vice President:

Cynthia Currie, Northern New England and United Kingdom Chapters

M. Katherine (Kit) Brown, Rocky Mountain and Snake River Chapters

Director (three to be elected):

Jonathan Baker, Boston, India, Israel, Silicon Valley, & TransAlpine Chapters

Mollye Barrett, Wisconsin Chapter

Nicoletta A. Bleiel, Pittsburgh Chapter

Leah Guren, Israel Chapter

Steven Jong, Boston and Northern New England Chapters

Robert Young, Northeast Ohio Chapter

Treasurer:

William C. (W.C.) Wiese, (unopposed incumbent),Orlando Chapter

Nominating Committee (two to be elected):

Jackie Damrau, Lone Star Chapter

Rachel Jordan Houghton, Mid-Valley and Willamette Valley Chapters

President's Column - *by Beverly Spagnolo*

Our chapter had a Board meeting a couple weeks ago, where it was reported that we have 144 members, and we're solvent. But while we were discussing the things that have been going on—upcoming meetings, the publications and newsletter competition, WorkQuest, employment strategies, a new brochure, a redesigned web site (take a look!), student coordination, I started to wonder if we are meeting your needs.

Looking around the table the Board members, we had a diverse group of people who I'm sure are representative of the chapter:

- Experienced technical writers
- People new to the profession
- Manager of technical communications departments
- Freelancers and consultants

And all of those people have different but perhaps overlapping needs in an organization. So my question is, are we as a chapter meeting your needs?

Do you read the monthly Blue Pencil (for which I so diligently write a column!)? Do you find it interesting and informative? Do you take away information from it that helps you in your profession?

Are the monthly programs worthwhile? Do you get "pumped up" after a meeting, wanting to pursue more information about the topic? Do you talk about the topic with others in the organization and with whom you work? Have you ever participated in any of the meetings?

Have you ever taken advantage of the publication competitions or conferences that are presented, not only by the Pittsburgh chapter but surrounding communities and the national organization?

Many people have devoted a lot of time to committees and activities that are dedicated to giving you what you want and need. Our dedicated committee members are willing to help all chapter members fulfill their potential and technical communicators.

But…

We really need to know if we're meeting your needs. Are we heading in the right direction? How can we be sure that your membership in STC Pittsburgh provides value for you? Is there a topic you'd like to see addressed either at a meeting or in the Blue Pencil? We're already starting to plan next year's meetings, so your input will help you receive what you need.

Do you have an idea for a function or activity for the chapter that is not currently available? Maybe there's something you think could add value and help you and other members that we aren't doing now.

STC Pittsburgh is your community. Please contact me or anyone else on the Board with any and all concerns, ideas, suggestions, gripes, kudos, and so on. We are communicators, so let's communicate!

And speaking of communication...

STC Pittsburgh Listserv Up and Running

STC Pittsburgh now has a "member and friends" discussion listserv.

We've launched this list by popular demand and hope this forum encourages lively discussion of issues relevant to the technical communication community in the 'Burgh.

To join, please go to http://mailman.stc.org/mailman/listinfo/stc_pittsburghchapter This link also includes information about posting to the list and access to the archives and digest options.

Let's talk!

STC Pittsburgh's Mission Statement

STC Pittsburgh's mission is to provide professional support for technical communicators in the region. The chapter strives to:

* Provide opportunities for professional enrichment

* Help members achieve their career goals

* Support the local business community

* Promote technical communication as a career.

Keep Your Information Current

Receive your STC emails and publications on time! Update your STC contact information at www.stc.org. STC Members, Member Directory, Address/ Restriction Change Form link: (http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/ formAddressChange01.asp).

Notes from the National Office

Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars

See http://www.stc.org/edu/ seminarsList01.asp for more information and to register.

February 21, 2007

Working in Global Teams

Instructor: Makarand Pandit

Do you work in a geographically distributed team? Have you only "met" your colleagues over the phone or on video? Are time zones a primary concern when setting up meetings? Whether you're looking to optimize your virtual relationships or just getting started in a virtual team environment, you will find this presentation useful.

Virtual, global teams require us to use our communication skills in ways that were unimaginable twenty years ago. In this seminar, Makarand Pandit discuss ways to build successful working relationships in virtual environments. If you are working with teams in India, this seminar will be especially useful: The speaker will discuss the state of technical communication in India and share the experiences of Indian technical writers working in virtual teams based on their 2005 survey.

March 14, 2007

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask

Presenter(s): Rahel Bailie

Delving into content management (CM) is entering an unfamiliar and sometimes confusing world. It's not unusual for a well-meaning IT group of a corporation to install a well-respected,

but inappropriate for technical publishing, content management application and expect the technical documentation department to start churning out documentation using the new system – and what about that return on investment they expect to see after a few months? Knowing the basics of CM is more than a protection mechanism; it's a way of preparing for the next big trend in documentation production.

This seminar provides the groundwork for understanding what a content management system is and what it does, the differences between various types of CM systems, some circumstances under which CM can be beneficial, and techniques for determining system suitability. The seminar will also demystify the industry vocabulary, thereby eliminating some of the barriers that can slow down the investigative process.

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Atlanta Chapter STC Annual Conference

March 9-10, 2007

The Atlanta Chapter STC will host its annual conference, "Currents 2007," at the Mercer University Atlanta campus. Conference session topics include management, online content, tools and technology, writing and editing, usability, consulting and independent contracting, and marketing. Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director, will deliver the conference keynote address. For more information, please contact Dirk Bender at dirkbender@gmail.com, or visit www.stcatlanta.org.

Nicky Bleiel
2007 Candidate for STC Director

Hi, I'm Nicky Bleiel, candidate for Director in 2007.

I will get right to the point – I would like your vote in the upcoming election.

My vision:

Technical communicators make users more successful. I would like to help STC make technical communicators more successful by expanding its educational offerings, adding more training courses, seminars, conferences, and even books. One of STC's goals is to "Tell our powerful story," and I plan to work on projects that help promote our profession to the business community.

Leadership experience:

I am the immediate past president of the Pittsburgh chapter. During my presidency, Pittsburgh was recognized as a chapter of excellence; during my vice presidency, as a chapter of distinction. I also served as membership chair and have been involved in program planning for four years, including serving on the planning committee for the successful Region 4 Conference held April 2004 in Pittsburgh. I am proud that I helped launch the popular "Software Saturdays" training program, which has been adopted by other chapters.

Steven Jong
2007 Candidate for STC Director

I'd like to take a moment and introduce myself. My name is Steven Jong, and I am a life-long technical communicator, a senior member of STC, a former president of the Boston Chapter, and a candidate for Director in the 2007 STC election.

To me, the most important issue facing the Society is member retention. The profession is growing worldwide, but STC is shrinking-smaller by a third over the last five years. Too many experienced practitioners don't remain as members. We need to provide more value, and publicize that value to existing and potential members as well as to employers. I want to help create an STC that more practitioners want to join and more employers want to subsidize. Also, I believe in transparency: members need to know where the Board is directing the budget, and why. Finally, we need clear and open communication between the Board, communities, and members.

For more information about me, please visit www.StevenJong.net. If you agree with what I want to do, I ask for your vote in March. Thanks for your time!

Steve Jong
steven.jong@stevenjong.net
978-413-2553 (mobile)

Robert Young
2007 Candidate for STC Director

Hello. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Robert Young, and I am a senior member and immediate past president of the Northeast Ohio STC (NEO STC) community.

To sustain STC membership, we need to increase participation at the local and Special Interest Group (SIG) levels, which in turn will boost membership and retain existing members. To do so, we need to rewrite outdated literature to give geographic communities and SIG leaders specific guidelines to enact programs that have proven to work.

For example, Northeast Ohio members spoke with numerous STC groups for ideas prior to formulating and outlining our membership campaign. We enacted a multi-tiered plan of action that included reaching out to past and present members, rejuvenating our Public Relations committee, seeking corporate sponsorships to pay for webinars and seminars, and starting an innovative Recognition program.

As a result, we increased our membership by nearly 18 percent. We have implemented a member recognition program to acknowledge and honor our senior members with an STC Senior member pin on their 5-year anniversary. We also

Professional experience:

I have been a technical communicator for twelve years. Like many of us, I started my career writing books and producing them in hardcopy format, but have since embraced online help and user assistance, Web design, single-sourcing, usability, e-learning, and knowledge management. I have experience writing for products in a variety of industries, including media sales, industrial automation, simulation, and pharmaceutical.

Speaking and writing:

I have presented talks at several STC annual conferences, both during general sessions and on Leadership Day. I have also presented at local and regional STC events, including Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. Topics have included tools and technologies, user assistance design, single-sourcing, and wikis. I have been published in conference proceedings, on the web, and in STC's *Tieline* (the Society leaders' newsletter) and STC Pittsburgh's *Blue Pencil*.

Results-oriented:

Accomplishing any goal – personal, professional, or as an STC leader – requires innovation, organizational skills, and focus. As a Director, I would use these traits to deliver results to our membership. I will work with the STC Board, as well as the members, to find new ways to tackle problems and drive initiatives that will make the Society a valuable resource for technical communicators.

You can contact me at bleiel@zoominternet.net. Thank you, and I would appreciate your vote in March.

For more information, see my biography at: http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=23.

recognize our members who volunteer the most with polo shirts, which have a NEO STC logo embroidered on them. Members can proudly wear these shirts at work and meetings to further communicate STC's message to co-workers. A corporate donation paid for the polo shirts.

I am pleased to note our overall community involvement for the membership campaign and Public Relations received STC awards. For more details on how we achieved success, please see *Revitalize Your Membership: A Guide to Hosting a Membership Drive*, which I wrote for Tieline in September 2006. These types of programs need to be outlined and presented to the STC community and SIG leaders to boost participation and membership ranks.

Please contact me at Ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net if you have any questions regarding my candidacy or the membership drive. I humbly ask for your vote for Director in the 2007 STC elections. Thank you.

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC Annual Conference

March 16-17, 2007

The Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC will host its annual conference, "Current and Future Trends in Business Communication," in the conference center at Penn State Great Valley, located in the Philadelphia suburbs near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Featured speakers include Cheryl Lockett Zuback, Neil Perlin, Ed Marshall, Stephanie Morgan, and keynoter Robert Glushko. For more information, please e-mail conference@stcpmc.org or visit www.stcpmc.org.

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STC Technical Communication Summit - 54th Annual Conference

May 12-16, 2007

Extensive information about the upcoming STC Annual Conference in Minneapolis is available online at http://www.stc.org/54thConf/. More information will continue to be posted in the coming days. You may register online NOW at http://www.stc.org/54thConf/register/index.asp

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STC Dues Are Deductible

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 2006 may be deducted only from 2006 tax returns. More information can be found in the November issue of Tieline (www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineArchive01.asp).

March Chapter Meeting: Rules or Myths: The Changing English Language

Speakers: Thea Teich and Karen O'Keefe

Date: Monday, March 12, 2007

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

We all have ideas about the English language that stem from lessons learned in childhood. Many people erroneously believe it is incorrect to split an infinitive, end a sentence with a preposition, or start a sentence with a conjunction. And yet, all of these "rules" are commonly held myths. Further, English is a changing language, so what is incorrect today may become perfectly acceptable tomorrow. Add to this the tendency of technology to test the bounds of grammar, usage, syntax and punctuation, and the job of technical communicator becomes more challenging.

This session will explore common myths about the English language, delve into trends we can expect to continue, and identify the factors needed to make usage decisions.

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to

* Discuss evolution of the American English language (for example, database began as data base, morphed to data-base, and then became a single word)

* Separate commonly held myths from actual American English language rules

* Consult provided resources when faced with editing decisions

Cost: (includes dinner and beverages)
$12 STC members;
$15 non-members;
$10 students and unemployed

RSVP: by Mar. 7th to Nancy Carpenter - 412-820-2221 (w) or vicepresident@stcpgh.org

Location: Pittsburgh Technology Council Building (see http://www.pghtech.org/aboutus/directions.asp for directions)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

April Meeting: Documentation Planning and Estimating
Date: **Monday, April 9, 2007**

Software Saturday #2: Introduction to MadCap Flare
Date: **Saturday, April 21, 2007**
DATE CHANGE

Chapter Awards Banquet
Date: **Monday, May 21, 2007**

Region 4 Conference
Date: **October 2007.** Hosted by the Northeast Ohio chapter.

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