


# BLUE PENCIL

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, STC

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

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## Pick of the Issue



*Communication is all about connecting with others. We can be electronically connected, via email and the web; physically connected through old-fashioned face-to-face meetings; emotionally connected through our concern for one another. STC Pittsburgh has fostered all of these types of connections, as you can see in this month's Blue Pencil.*

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## Technical Communications Competition Finishes Another Successful Year

*by Marlene Miller*

The Pittsburgh Chapter recently wound up another competition year, with 22 entries received from four states—Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee and Pennsylvania— and Japan. The entries in the Technical Publications, Technical Art and Online Communications competitions ranged in category from online help to interpretive illustration to technical reports and informational materials.

This year, 36 percent of the entries were from organizations in and around Pittsburgh. By comparison, just under 20 percent of the entries in the 2005–2006 competition were from Pittsburgh-area organizations.

Nineteen volunteer judges reviewed entries, meaning that every entry had at least two or, more often, three evaluations. The Pittsburgh Chapter is well-known for the quality of our competition evaluations, which can suggest ways to enhance and improve the authors' work. The evaluations rated an entry depending on the entry's category. Such elements as the navigation of a website or a book's index were considered as well as the structure, organization, and readability of content. Judges were selected according to their familiarity and experience with a particular type of entry.

One Technical Publication entry won a Distinguished award in this year's competition and was automatically entered in STC's International Technical Publications Competition (ITPC). Those results will be announced later this month.

This was the chapter's third year using Invision's Power Board (professional bulletin board software, [www.invisionpower.com](http://www.invisionpower.com)) to conduct online judging discussions and voting. After receiving their entries in the mail, judges were able to discuss them with each other and vote for awards in a customized judging forum. Judges downloaded evaluation forms and judging guidelines

*Awards, cont. on page 4*



## President's Column - *by Beverly Spagnolo*

I'd like to share a story with you. I'm not sure that it has a major point, but it made me think about how much the "information age" has changed everything in our lives.

Many (many) years ago, I was working as a production editor in a technical society. While I was there, I met a man, and we became good friends. As is the way with most work friendships, however, when we no longer worked at the same place, the friendship faded away. We kept in touch sporadically over the years, both of us moving to different parts of the country at different times. Sometimes it would be a couple years without any communication. And now, it had been well over 12 years since I'd seen or talked to him—I didn't even know where he lived anymore.

A couple weeks ago I was doing my normal hard and diligent job at work when lo and behold, didn't I get an email from this person! He wanted to wish me well with my cancer treatments (which, by the way, are producing results, but I really hate them). Well, the only place I know that I wrote about having cancer was in my president's column in the Blue Pencil last fall. My jaw dropped, and I just couldn't imagine that I'd be hearing from him—I mean, how could he possibly know how to contact me or how could he know anything about me?

Until I Googled my own name, and discovered dozens of entries. Most of them were because I was the RSVP contact for STC meetings last year, but some of them were as obscure as being listed on HP's website because I asked a support question a couple years ago!

Which makes me wonder how the rest of you feel about this new world of totally open information. Do you mind knowing that anything you do or say can probably be made available with just a little bit of searching? I've always considered myself a relatively private person, and seeing my name listed for all the world to see I decided to Google the officers of our chapter, and found that each of them had at least 100 listings! Some of the listings had email addresses, home mailing addresses, and phone numbers.

Maybe the "younger" generation doesn't mind this ultimate lack of privacy; maybe they're become so accustomed to it that they would be surprised not to be able to hook up with people from years past. But I'm not sure that I like it. I still like having that sense of anonymity that seems to be less and less as time goes on. Is it okay with you with you to be losing it, or do you still prefer knowing that your world is not available to anyone?

It certainly was interesting to re-communicate with someone I knew so many years ago, but on the other hand, it was a bit disconcerting knowing that our lives really have become open books.



### STC Pittsburgh Senior Members

We're pleased to announce the following members have attained the rank of senior member:

- Sulbha Bahl
- Lisa R. McNany
- Dena Haritos Tsamitis

The Society grants senior member status upon those who have held membership in STC for five years.

Congratulations!

## Society for Technical Communication

**Pittsburgh Chapter**

P.O. Box 133  
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[www.stcpgh.org](http://www.stcpgh.org)

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Fax: 703-522-2075  
[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)

**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](http://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.

The cost for each seminar is \$99 for members and \$149 for non-members. All seminars are scheduled from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. EST (EDT?).

**March 28, 2007**

Visible: The New Valuable

Presenters: Austin Skaggs and  
Christine Granger

Documentation departments have value; however, because of the disconnection from the rest of the company, that value rarely gets accurately communicated. Therefore, it is the department's responsibility to show its value by becoming more visible. This presentation describes how one technical writing department overcame negative perceptions by making itself visible.

**April 11, 2007**

Creating Interactive CBTs with  
Captivate-in Half the Time

Presenter: Kevin Siegel

**May 2, 2007**

Choosing the Right Usability  
Technique (to answer the right  
question)

Presenter: Whitney Quesenberry

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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>

\*\*\*\*\*

**Israel Chapter Celebrates 40 Years**

**June 4, 2007**

The Israel Chapter STC, which will celebrate forty years as a chapter—and as the oldest STC chapter outside of North America—will hold its semiannual convention, “The Proactive Technical Communicator: Multiple Disciplines, Multiple Perspectives,” at the Daniel Hotel, Herzliya, Israel. For more information, please e-mail [convention@stc-israel.org](mailto:convention@stc-israel.org) or visit [www.stc-israel.org.il](http://www.stc-israel.org.il).

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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](http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineArchive01.asp)).

Awards, cont. from page 1

via the judging board, and then took advantage of other features like subscribing to discussions about specific entries and voting for awards in preparation for the final consensus vote for each entry. As is common with most technology, Invision could provide the judging forum, but it couldn't lead all of the judges to use it before established deadlines. However, Invision allows judges to participate in a relaxed environment, at a time convenient to each of them, so it usually garners more kudos than unkind words.

#### Thanks to Volunteers

The chapter wishes to thank the volunteer judges who gave the entries the benefit of their valuable

time and expertise: Technical Art judges Greg Harrison, Todd Pinkham, and Leanne Lappe; Technical Publications and Online Communications judges Wendy Austin, Sulbha Buhl, Mike Crawmer, Susan Gatt, Mike Grape, Martin Houser, Krista Kay, Mary Kate Kelley, Susan Kushner, Wendy Loreti, John Lum, Diana Mathis, Mary Matzen, Marlene Miller, John Morley, Nancy Ott, and Bill Proudfoot.

Marlene Miller and Heather Lum managed this year's competition with assistance from Susan Gatt and Wendy Austin. Please contact Heather at [hlum@pobox.com](mailto:hlum@pobox.com) or Marlene at [mgmiller33@hotmail.com](mailto:mgmiller33@hotmail.com)

if you would like information about helping with next year's competition.

#### Award Winners

Competition award winners are listed on page 5, and will be recognized at the annual STC Pittsburgh Awards Banquet on Monday, May 21. The scheduled speaker for the banquet is Tony Norman, columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Please check the chapter website and future issues of the Blue Pencil for place, time and other details.

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Director, MAPW Program  
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## Technical Communications Competition Award Winners

<b>Award</b>	<b>Entry Title</b>	<b>Competition</b>	<b>Submitter</b>
<i>Distinguished</i>	<i>Ultra-Large-Scale Systems</i>	<i>Technical Publications</i>	<i>SEI</i>
<i>Excellence</i>	<i>Genomics: GTL: Systems Biology for Energy and the Environment</i>	<i>Online Communication</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Excellence</i>	<i>Genomics for New Energy Resources: From Biomass to Cellulosic Ethanol/ Understanding Biomass: Plant Cell Walls</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Excellence</i>	<i>Simplified Representation of the Global Carbon Cycle</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Excellence</i>	<i>DOE Genomics: GTL Roadmap; Systems Biology for Energy and Environment</i>	<i>Technical Publications</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>ComponentOne FlexGrid for .NET</i>	<i>Online Communication</i>	<i>ComponentOne</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>ComponentOne WebInput for ASP.NET</i>	<i>Online Communication</i>	<i>ComponentOne</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>MySecureCyberspace Web Portal</i>	<i>Online Communication</i>	<i>Carnegie Mellon Bylab/INI</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>Get Connected</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>Temple University</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>The Adventures of Ricky &amp; Stick</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>SEI Communications</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>Ultra-Large-Scale Systems</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>SEI Communications</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>Photosynthetic Electron Transport Chain</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>DOE Genomics Research</i>	<i>Technical Art</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>FS-6950 Printer Operation Guide</i>	<i>Technical Publications</i>	<i>Kyocera Mita Corp.</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>The Adventures of Ricky &amp; Stick</i>	<i>Technical Publications</i>	<i>SEI Communications</i>
<i>Merit</i>	<i>Genomics for New Energy Resources: From Biomass to Cellulosic Ethanol/ Understanding Biomass: Plant Cell Walls</i>	<i>Technical Publications</i>	<i>Oak Ridge National Laboratory</i>

## Our Modern Era: To Google or to Search?

by Meg Papa, Blue Pencil Managing Editor

When Beverly sent me her President's column for this month's newsletter, she had a parenthetical question about whether the verb "googled" should be capitalized or not. I wasn't sure, so I did what any good 21<sup>st</sup> century researcher would do; I looked it up online! What I found was interesting.

Google (the company) is understandably concerned that using its name as a verb could possibly dilute the name's copyright protection. Copyright is only effective when the copyright holder enforces it. The entry for "Google" from Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, states the following:

Google has attempted to discourage use of the word as a verb, fearing the dilution and potential loss of its trademark, like Yo-Yo, Xerox and escalator... In an article in the Washington Post, Frank Ahrens discussed the letter he received from a Google lawyer that demonstrated "appropriate" and "inappropriate" ways to use the verb "google" It was reported that, in response to this concern, lexicographers for the Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary lowercased the actual entry for the word, google, while maintaining the capitalization of the search engine in their definition, "to use the Google search engine to seek online information" (a concern which did not deter the Oxford editors from preserving the history of both "cases"). In October 2006, it [Google] sent a plea to the public entitled 'Do you "Google?"' requesting that 'you should please only use "Google" when you're actually referring to Google Inc. and our services'.

So, should Beverly's use of the word be capitalized, or is it even legally correct? The answer is: stay tuned for further developments.

*P.S. If this subject captures your interest, I suggest you go to the Wikipedia entry for "Google (verb)." There are links to several of the references mentioned above.*

Spring Is Coming !



### SAVED

Pennsylvania businesses \$170 million  
in proposed new state and local taxes

### DELIVERED

\$2 million in savings on recruiting  
costs for 5,829 job postings

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## April Chapter Meeting: Estimating for More Fun and Greater Profit

**Speakers:** John Hedtkke

**Date:** Monday, April 9, 2007

**Time:** 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Knowing how much to estimate is one of the most important skills for any technical communicator. If you can't estimate, you can't set rates, schedules, or production dates. Conversely, being able to set precise estimates lets you make accurate bids and tighten your schedules so you can squeeze in that much more work. This 90-minute presentation by international award-winning author John Hedtkke will show you how to

- create documentation plans (so you know what you're producing)
- develop personal metrics (so you know how long it'll take you to produce it)
- understand rates and how much is "enough" (so you won't starve while doing the first two)

Both freelancers and in-house staff will benefit from this presentation. Making solid estimates keeps you from having to put in lots of time and makes you look like a hero no matter where you work. Managers will also enjoy this presentation for information on setting rates as well as on creating effective documentation plans and making firmer estimates within their departments.

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

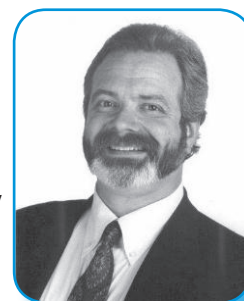
**RSVP:** by April 4th to Nancy Carpenter - 412-820-2221 (w) or [vicepresident@stcpgh.org](mailto:vicepresident@stcpgh.org)

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

*John Hedtkke is the award-winning author of 25 books. He has over 20 years in the software*

*business, 17 years writing, and 7 years in technical publications management. John has developed and written documentation*

*and books for many leading software products, and has received 24 regional and international writing awards to date.*



### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

#### 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.

#### 2006-2007

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Vice President

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Immediate Past President

Region 4 Director

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Janis Ramey

Meg Papa

412-766-7200 (W)

412-820-2221 (W)

412-779-1795

412-281-0678 x130 (W)

412-697-3066 (W)

724-744-3687 (H)

412-823-0151 (H)

412-833-8651

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412-784-0254 (H)

412-473-3119 (W)

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