



Technically Write: New Look

Welcome to the recently revamped *Technically Write*! Take a minute to adjust to the changes of STC's premier news source. Our new layout symbolizes the dawn of a new era in online newsletter reporting. The two boxes below will include the Feature Article and the LSC's Monthly Meeting program announcement.

More convenient, sharp, and topical than its former style, *Technically Write's* user-friendly design helps you access information quickly and easily. The navigation menu in the banner shows you the main sections in each *Technically Write* issue. To the left is our main menu, which serves as your guide to the contents of this newsletter. These menus may change as time goes on. New articles, interviews, and opinions are always just a click away.

Don't hesitate; indulge in everything that the new *Technically Write* has to offer!

Louellen S. Coker



Louellen Coker received a Master of Arts degree in Technical Communication from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Arts from Baylor University. She serves as President Elect of the Women Business Owners

of Denton County [more](#)

Susie Lynn Fox



Since joining STC and the Lone Star Community (LSC) in 2003, Susie Lynn Fox has made it a priority to attend the monthly meetings in Addison as well as the international STC conferences in Dallas, Baltimore, Seattle,

Las Vegas, and Minneapolis. [more](#)

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Editor Corner

by [Jackie Damrau](#), Managing Editor

Summer is almost over! Texas seems to have sloshed itself through the rainy part and is beginning to warm up. This doesn't mean that your Newsletter staff or your local STC officers are sitting by the pool sipping daiquiris.

You'll find that this summer edition of *Technically Write* is more a magazine than a newsletter. Drop me an e-mail at newsletter@stc-dfw.org to let me know your thoughts about the new *Technically Write*.

In this issue, you'll find...

- Mel's "[Final Flight](#)" and Susie's "[Fox Tales](#)"
- [UNT student articles](#) (winning newsletter team) and one from Louellen Coker's intern from UNT, [Brittany Bailey](#)
- LSC members reviewing the [STC Annual Conference articles](#)
- Special columns:
 - [Common Writer Mistakes \(Mary McWilliams Johnson\)](#)
 - [Human Factors with Kathryn Poe](#)
 - [Finding a Job, Web 2.0 Style \(Alan Oak\)](#)
- LSC News:
 - [Review of the May meeting with Ginny Redish](#)
 - A [photo gallery](#) of the May meeting attendees and your favorite LSC'ers at the conference
- and all the other items

Enjoy your summer reading!

Fox Tales

Read about:

- [Susie Steps Up](#)
- [Mel's Final Flight](#)
- [Learn More About Susie](#)

Susie Steps Up

By [Susie Lynn Fox](#), 2007-2008 LSC President

As President of the STC Lone Star Community (LSC) for the 2007-2008 program year, let me be the first to say, "Welcome, everyone! You are our community individually and collectively. Without you, we wouldn't be who we are. You make a difference!" I am looking forward to all of us meeting and greeting old and new friends and enjoying the many extra initiatives that make LSC such a distinctive community!

This summer your council has been reviewing lessons learned, planning long-term strategies, and training folks for new volunteer jobs. If you're interested in helping make it all happen, please see our Past President and Volunteer Wrangler Mel Haughton.

We have a wonderful year planned for our members, students, and guests. Our First Vice President Elisa Miller is gearing up for a year full of interesting and informative programs.

In 2007-2008, I envision us continuing to benefit from the rich legacy of LSC's distinguished history and traditional programs and events. At the same time, I would like for us to nourish the emerging focus on students, mentoring, and education that kicked off in 2006-2007. See [Immediate Past President Mel Haughton's column](#) that so aptly summarizes last year's amazing whirlwind of accomplishments and great ideas.

Personally speaking, the whirlwind started early for me when I volunteered to help the council in April 2006. The offer to help translated into serving as First Vice President in charge of programs. As a fairly new member since 2003 and as a brand new officer and council member, I had lots to learn and lots of great folks to learn from at every turn. What a blessing they all are!

Honestly, there were times I felt like I'd been literally ejected out of my comfortable seat at the monthly dinner meetings and fully immersed in the inner workings of the LSC council. The result is that I've been through quite a transformation process.

Volunteering is a great way to get to know others, to learn new skills, and to benefit from your STC LSC membership. The most important things I've learned are that we are a community, we make things happen together, and there is always someone available to help.

I continue to be delightfully amazed by the diverse talents, abundant energy, and professionalism of the LSC officers, committee managers, volunteers, members, students, and soon-to-be-named SuperStars who are the LSC experience!

There is much we can all learn from each and every one of us, so I'll be listening for please share your ideas and input! Have a great summer!

Mel's Final Flight

by [Mel Haughton](#), Immediate Past President

When I look back at our laundry list of accomplishments this year, I'm quite speechless. I'm going to list as many as I can in this article. Remember that I didn't do this alone. I had a wonderful council of amazing people behind me. Without all these wonderful people, the LSC would not be what it is today.

Received International Recognition

- **Distinguished Chapter Achievement Award.** Every year, STC provides an opportunity for chapters (geographical communities) and special interest groups (SIGs) to apply for the Chapter Achievement Award (CAA). The CAA recognizes communities and SIGs for their accomplishments in that specific program year. The Distinguished honor is given to only one community per size category. This year we directly competed against Atlanta, Orlando, and Phoenix. And we won for our category, which is between 150 and 300 members. Why should you care? Because you belong to the best community in this category! That means we've been internationally recognized for our outstanding programs, volunteer effort, and educational opportunities. **YOU** get to reap all the rewards for being a member of the LSC!
- **Honor of Becoming a Fellow.** *Elizabeth Bailey* became a Fellow of STC at the May 15 Awards Banquet in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The rank of fellow is conferred only upon associate fellows who have attained such eminence in the field of technical communication that the board, by a two-thirds vote of all members, deems worthy of being singled out as one of the select few who have distinguished the Society and the profession.
- **Honor of Becoming an Associate Fellow.** *Kathryn Poe* and *Doug Dow* became Associate Fellows of STC at the May 15 Awards Banquet in Minneapolis. 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.
- **Best of Show Newsletter.** *Technically Write* received the Best of Show award this year. Newsletters play an integral role in communicating news and information between STC communities, SIGs, and their members. They also help members and non-members develop an interest in Society goals and activities at both the community and Society levels. The STC newsletter competition honors community and SIG newsletter producers who strive to achieve these goals and excel in newsletter publication. Thanks to *Doug Dow* for his hard work on the newsletter the past five years, and thanks to *Jackie Damrau* for taking over the duty as Newsletter Manager.
- **Distinguished Public Relations Award.** The STC public relations competition recognizes the effectiveness of communities and SIGs in sustained or special-event public relations efforts. Good public relations programs enhance the image of STC and our profession in the view of employers and the general public. This year, our community received an award of distinction for its efforts. Thanks to *Lauren Womack* for her outstanding work.
- **LCR Volunteer of the Year.** The STC Leadership Community Resource (LCR) committee provides sponsorship to communities, mentoring and training to community and Society leaders, and help for communities in crisis. At STC's Leadership Day on

May 13, 2007, this Committee awarded our own *Jackie Damrau* the LCR Volunteer of the Year Award. Congratulations, Jackie!

- **Distinguished Chapter Service Awards.** The Distinguished Chapter Service Awards acknowledge the work of members who provide exemplary service to the Society through their dedication to the local community and its activities. STC awarded three Distinguished Chapter Service Awards this program year. *Jackie Damrau*, *Jeanne Foster*, and *Paul Holland*.

Organized a Successful Region 5 Conference

We successfully organized the Region 5 Conference held in November 2006. We had 118 attendees, and we made \$2411.77. During the Conference, we held a silent auction to raise scholarship funds. Several vendors donated products, and we raised \$1300 in scholarship money.

Provided Educational, Scholarship, and Mentoring Opportunities

- **Scholarship Opportunities.** We awarded five \$1000 traditional education scholarships to area students in the fall semester. In the spring semester, we awarded one \$500 continuing education scholarship—a brand new scholarship we’re now offering—and two \$1000 traditional education scholarships. This means we awarded \$7500 in scholarship money this program year.
- **Mentoring Opportunities.** We also revived our mentoring program and worked in conjunction with University of North Texas (UNT) students to create a new mentoring brochure.
- **Educational Opportunities.**
 - On January 31, we sponsored a brown bag session on e-portfolios at the University of North Texas (UNT). Past President *Louellen S. Coker* taught UNT technical writing students how to put together a portfolio. This event also allowed us to advertise our mentoring program. Fifteen students attended the event.
 - Our council members worked closely with *Mr. Donny West*, Technical Writing lecturer at the University of Texas at Dallas. His students interviewed our council members to find out what we do every day as technical communicators.
 - The LSC served as a corporate sponsor for the Dallas BEST competition. We provided judges for the competition’s technical binder evaluation and gave monetary awards for first, second, and third places to three area schools.

Held Successful Competitions and Award Banquet

We held successful competitions and *Jackie Damrau* did a great job as Competitions Manager. Our Awards Banquet in January had more than 60 attendees. It was a lively night.

Organized Fun Events

We organized several networking luncheons and other social events. On July 13, 2006 we also had our first ever Meet ‘n’ Greet, where *Clare Davis*, Vice President of MLink Technologies, shared with the audience the four critical success factors of eLearning. A free meeting for everyone, it was held at La Madeleine (where we usually hold our council meetings). We were impressed by the number of people who came! We were expecting about 15, and 31 people showed up.

Heather Steele, incoming Second VP, also organized a mixer in Denton on March 21, 2007 for UNT students to meet technical writing professionals. This was a great opportunity for students to ask questions and network with people in our field.

Recognized our Wonderful Volunteers

During the previous program year, we created the Binion Amerson Leadership Award (BALA), which recognizes enthusiastic dedication, willingness to accept challenging goals, and inspiring leadership in service to the Lone Star Community. LSC members may nominate a community member through a written description of his or her achievements relative to the Award criteria, after which a panel of judges identifies the BALA recipient. In May 2006, we awarded this honor to *Binion Amerson* himself. This year, during the 2006 Region 5 Conference, the BALA was awarded to *Jackie Damrau* for her outstanding contributions to the LSC.

We also developed the LSC SuperStar program. We worked with the Orlando Chapter to create a point system to praise our volunteers. From August 1, 2006 to June 1, 2007, members received points each time they participated in LSC activities. Points are based upon the activity and its point value. A member needs a total of 20 points to be an LSC SuperStar. We've totalled up points, and those who have reached 20 will be awarded a very special LSC shirt at the September 2007 meeting. Members may not purchase or order this unique shirt. It can only be earned.

Provided Member Value

We had nine successful monthly programs in 2006-2007. From return on investment to usability and presentation techniques, all of our meetings were well attended, with an average of 50 attendees per meeting.

We also created the LSC Help Desk, which is located at <http://www.stc-dfw.org/HelpDesk/index.php>. The Lone Star Community is blessed with many senior members who have broad and varied backgrounds. The Help Desk is a new way to leverage all that knowledge and help us solve problems. It's like a forum, where ONLY LSC members can join to share information. *Kathryn Poe* is currently moderating the site. The LSC is a rich resource, and this is a great way to share our knowledge.

Our Job Bank continues to hop. We've had 167 job postings from April 2006 through February 2007, which is a 13.6% increase over last year. We also developed an e-postcard that we send quarterly to recruiters who have posted jobs at our site. The e-postcard reminds recruiters of our free job posting service and asks them to visit our Web site. We're hoping to increase traffic on our website with this tactic. Our PR, Job Bank, and Webmaster committees worked hard to see this through.

Our Newsletter continues to receive awards and recognition nationwide. Every month, *Jackie Damrau*, who took over as newsletter editor in January, wows us with new technologies and resources. You can access the newsletter from our website at www.stc-dfw.org.

Conclusion

This was an outstanding year. We have a wonderful team of officers gearing up for a new program year, and I am positive that you'll have more amazing experiences in the year to come.

It has been my pleasure to be your president this year. I learned a lot, and I met some amazing people. As LSC members, we have great resources at our fingertips. All we have to do is use them. Thanks for a wonderful year, and I can't wait to see what Susie has in store for us next year!

Susie Lynn Fox

Since joining the STC and the Lone Star Community (LSC) in 2003, Susie Lynn Fox has made it a priority to attend the monthly meetings in Addison as well as the international STC conferences in Dallas, Baltimore, Seattle, Las Vegas, and Minneapolis.

“There is always something new and interesting to learn from each and every meeting and conference speaker,” Susie said. “And I have also learned that the STC and LSC folks are an amazing group of talented professionals who have a tremendous amount of energy, enthusiasm, and knowledge to share.”

In April 2006, Susie surprised herself by volunteering to help LSC and ended up serving as First Vice President in charge of programs in 2006-2007. She is serving as President in 2007-2008.

After many years as a technical writer and editor, Susie decided to join STC because it offers several core benefits to her:

- The STC conferences and the monthly LSC programs meet Susie’s annual training requirements at work and also keep her informed of the latest industry trends.
- Joining and participating in a professional organization gives Susie the added benefit of networking with other professionals and making new friends.
- The STC and LSC job banks are great assets to technical communicators looking for a job and to employers looking for technical communicators.

“It’s really great to know that you are associated with folks who have like interests, care about their profession, and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others,” said Susie.

“Mentors have been very important to me. My love for the written word started with my mother and grandpa who were writers, poets, and readers,” said Susie. “I enjoyed English classes all through school and really found my niche as a two-year journalism student at Haltom High School. My inspirational journalism teacher, Larry Giddings, taught me the basics of journalism, which I consider a gift to this day.”

At Tarrant County Junior College-Northeast Campus (now Tarrant Community College), Susie was co-editor of the campus newspaper. She continued learning from her favorite journalism college instructor, Eddy Gallagher, who helped her hone her reporting and editing skills.

Susie earned a B.S. in journalism from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M at Commerce). During college, she also wrote Sunday School lessons, teaching procedures, and free-lance magazine articles for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

After college, Susie worked as managing editor of a weekly business newspaper. She soon segued into technical writing and has worked as a technical writer and editor in the oil field industry, the computer software industry, a printing company, and is currently a senior technical writer and editor at American Airlines, Inc.

Susie lives in Irving, Texas, with her computer analyst hubby, Mark, has a stepson, David, who currently serves in the Peace Corps in Macedonia, and enjoys the company of four happy cats, Sylvia, Ashley, Priscilla Michelle (aka Prissy Missy), and Abigail.

UNT Articles

Read about:

- Louellen S. Coker
- The Pleasures and Perils 1
- The Pleasures and Perils 2
- Searching for a Definition
- A Naive Experience
- Technical Communication Intern's Path to Success

Interview with Louellen S. Coker

By UNT Students



Louellen Coker received a Master of Arts degree in Technical Communication from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Baylor University. She serves as President Elect of the Women Business Owners of Denton County, a non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging women-owned businesses. Louellen is also a current member of the Communications Committee for the Dallas Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development.

We who? decided to pick Louellen's brain to find out more about the life of a technical communicator and the inner workings of technical communication.

Q. Why did you pursue this career?

LC: I have a passion for writing and graphic design. I pursued this career because it would allow me to do what I like and get paid for doing it. When I was working on my degree, the pay scale and ability to make money quickly was much better in this field than in teaching or creative writing.

Q. What is a typical day in technical communication for you?

LC: Insanity! Especially in deadline weeks. Here is a breakdown:

- Email: usually 45 minutes to 2 hours each day (I receive about 400 emails/day with about 100 of them requiring response)
- Organization: 30-45 minutes divided between morning and afternoon
- Phone calls: about 1 hour
- Volunteer work: about 30 minutes – 1 hour
- Work on customer projects: 3-4 hours (includes writing, editing, designing, troubleshooting, project management, research, and so on)
- Continuing education: approx 1-2 hours/week when I'm lucky)

I work from 9 - 5 Monday –through Thursday, sometimes 9 - 12:00 on Fridays, with occasional late nights and weekends.

Q. What do you enjoy most about your job? And least?

LC: There is not very much that I don't enjoy—being out of the corporate fray, setting my own hours, being able to work from the back of my boat or anywhere I want to be. I don't like the late hours and, as the sole proprietor, being responsible for every department—IT, Accounting,

Marketing, etc. Sometimes I have to spend more time running the business than actually doing business.

Q. What qualifications are you looking for when hiring an employee?

LC: I prefer some coursework in technical communication and/or web and graphics design, a willingness to learn, and basic understanding of Word, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, GoLive, and a few other software programs that I use in my business. Right now, I hire college students as interns, so I provide online training to bring the skills up to the level I need and spend a great deal of time mentoring the intern. A good attitude and self motivation is required.

Q. How do communications stay the same in different areas where you travel?

A. We are all people and access information similarly, so usability principles are very important and remain the same across the board. The difference is found in culture. For example, when in Korea I would work with my employer and make suggestions for improving our documentation, he would kindly nod his head, say it was a good idea, yet nothing would happen. If my husband, who was my supervisor with this employer, would make the same suggestion, using the same words, it would be implemented immediately. I learned that as a woman and a subordinate to my husband (as far as profession—he's a lawyer, a very revered profession in their culture—and position within the company), I would not be able to get much done. After the discovery, my husband and I would make suggestions conforming to their culture rather than American culture. Life became much easier, and we experienced much fewer communication breakdowns.

Q. As part of your job, are you asked to slant your writing to favor particular focus groups or consumers?

A. Absolutely—audience analysis, remember? I do not, however, mislead or misguide the group or consumer. I always consider who is using it, why it is being used, and how it is being used as an ongoing part of every project I complete. It's my job as a TCer (technical communicator) to meet the needs of my client and the audience with honesty and integrity.

The Pleasures and Perils, Part 1

by Jenny Paul

My experience as a technical communicator is minimal. Technical writing was a requirement for me, as it satisfied a foreign language credit (go figure). As a biology major, I was expecting to learn how to, well... communicate technically (a common occurrence in the sciences). You can imagine my relief to learn the true dynamics behind the trade. I reveled in the creativity of designing optically pleasing documents, and best of all, learning how to make Microsoft Word do what I want it to! (Have you ever tried to make a table of contents by manually entering the dots? It is an un-pleasurable endeavor for sure.) Currently in my second semester of tech writing, I began to wonder about the "real world" experiences of a technical communicator.

A friend of mine, J.P. Sol, recently graduated from the University of North Texas with a Bachelor's in technical writing. I thought he would be able to give me a better perspective on what life as a technical communicator is like.

Jen: Did you have another major before you decided to become a technical writer?

JP: Well, I started out as a pre-med student in Austin in 2001, but after two years on the pre-med track, I was ready for something else, something different... so I went with English.

Jen: What made you decide on technical writing?

JP: I hadn't even heard of technical writing until I arrived at UNT in 2004. After my first technical writing class, I decided this is what I want to do. I've redesigned and edited over 50 documents and put together four manuals during my time at UNT.

Jen: Did you have a job while you were going to school?

JP: I was an intern for a business newspaper in Plano. My technical writing background really helped when they would have me copyedit the paper before it went to print.

Jen: Where are you working now and how has your technical writing background helped you?

JP: Actually, I'm still looking for a technical writer position. Currently I work for a small realty company.

Jen: Based on your experience, how would you define technical communication?

JP: A technical communicator is the bridge between the highly skilled and trained and the average Joe. It is often our job to break down very complicated processes into simple steps that can be comprehended by anyone.

Jen: Thanks JP, you've been a big help!

JP: No problem.

The Pleasures and Perils, Part 2

After speaking with JP, I thought I might talk to someone who has been in the profession for a few years to gain a deeper perspective on the matter. I decided to interview Melissa Haughton, president for the Lone Star Community.

Jen: When and from where did you graduate and what is your degree in?

Mel: I graduated in May 2003 with a Master's in Technical Writing from UNT. My undergraduate is a double major in Journalism (PR) and Spanish, also from UNT.

Jen: Did you have another degree in mind before you chose the one you did? If so, what made you change?

Mel: I didn't change my mind. I just got my undergrad degree in August of 2001 and then September 11 hit. The jobs were scarce. It was a no-brainer to go back to school. I was also an international student. For me to stay in the US, I'd have to work for a company that would sponsor me. With 09-11 that became nearly impossible.

Jen: Did you have a job while you were in school? How did your technical communication classes help you?

Mel: Yes. I was a lab tutor in the tech writing lab from 1997 through 2001. I was the lab manager in 2001. Then I decided to go to grad school and was a tech writing lecturer through 2003. As you can see, all my jobs are related to tech writing. Working in the tech writing lab and helping students with their projects made me want to get a Masters in the area. I always thought that if I could help the students, I could do it myself!

Jen: Where are you working now?

Mel: I work at a privately-owned company in Lewisville called MLink Technologies (www.mlinktech.com). I am an instructional designer and project coordinator. I write and edit eLearning courses as well as develop print materials such as job aids and quick start guides. Everything I do is tech comm. From writing to editing to asking SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) everything I need to know to complete a project, I use my tech communication skills every day. I also do quite a bit of project coordination and management.

Jen: How has your education helped you with your current occupation?

Mel: The only reason I have the job I have today is because of my education. I apply everything I learned in school to my daily activities. I was fortunate enough to study a subject matter that interested me, and I've been really lucky with the job opportunities that I've had. Being involved with STC and the Lone Star Community has also helped me immensely in staying current in skills and technology and finding the job I have now.

Jen: Based on your experience, how would you define technical communication?

Mel: The reason I love tech communication is because so much can be considered tech comm. In my personal definition, any time you're taking complex content and "translating" it into content that the average Joe can understand, you're doing tech comm. It's a field that has multiple possibilities.

Jen: Has your idea of a technical communicator changed much from before your graduation until your technical career?

Mel: Definitely. While I was in school, we focused a lot on instruction writing. Although I still write a lot of instructions, I also do instructional design now, which is a lot more conversational and fun in my opinion. I learned all the principles of tech comm in school, and mainly how to write correctly. I can apply those principles to pretty much anything out there!

Searching for a Definition

To further our understanding of technical communication, the UNT students polled several University of North Texas students with that topic in mind: we asked them What is a technical communicator? The most common answer, from 12 of the 47 people polled, was "someone who communicates technically". Concise as the answer is, it still leaves us with questions.

Several people, four in fact, were similarly clueless; their rebuttal to our query was "I don't know." Seven people equated the profession directly with computers, and one person, an education major, was convinced that a technical communicator was a computer.

Negotiator, machine, "someone who wears professional clothes," "someone who uses proper grammar," and "somebody who uses PowerPoint presentations" are all answers that could be correct in a sense, but aren't exactly inherent to the profession. A speech-language pathology major claimed that "an individual that transfers everyday speech into computers and symbols" was a technical communicator, but we imagine that her description is in fact the complete opposite of the job.

"Like a technical writer, except broader" is a definition from a philosophy major that is closer to the philosophy of technical communication but still slightly obtuse. A biochemistry major continues the exploration, declaring a technical communicator is "someone who cuts text to its most basic elements to facilitate quick referencing." Assuming that they're using the verb "cut" to mean "shape" or "construct", this answer is effective, but it lacks scope because it only references text; technical communicators instead use a variety of media.

Closing the gap, a biology major emphatically states that a technical communicator is "clearly, someone who can get their point across with no option of misinterpretation from his or her audience." A computer science major then sums up that point precisely when he declares a technical communicator to be "someone who can speak or write effectively to any demographic or group."

This description strictly echoes the way other technical communicators described their profession in our interviews—transforming complicated processes into a format that is easily and universally understood.

Finally, a sound definition is offered to our seemingly impossible question. Though technical communication remains broad and elusive—part of its charm, thankfully, "someone who communicates technically" is now appropriately explained.

A Naïve Experience

by Ryan Bachman, UNT Senior

If I was asked three months ago, when I enrolled in advanced technical writing at the University of North Texas, to define what technical writing was, I would have had no idea. I would have given some answer that would have been partially correct. Being a biology major, I apply the term to what I know and understand, so I would assume that technical writing is the type of writing in lab reports and manuals: straight-forward and to the point, in a method that is easily understood by the audience meant to read it. This is correct, but it is not the whole answer.

Now I can answer the same question in depth. To begin, I now know that technical writing does not have much to do with the subject matter or type of writing used. Technical writing can be found in almost every form of writing—how-to manuals, office memos, or even political advertisements. Technical writing is not the subject matter or even the type of writing; it is rather how it is written.

Technical writers use proper formatting and care about the audience. For example, life insurance is sold to a young, wealthy business man with a different slant than to an elderly woman with little financial security. So, to define technical writing after being in advanced technical writing, I would say it is writing to make the purpose clear and meaningful for the target audience, without insulting or ignoring anyone.

I now ask technical writers as a group whether they feel that there is anything wrong with the fact that, as a senior at UNT, I probably would not take technical writing if it was not required to graduate? I am not an English major and I do not want to work in a business office setting, but I am going to be an active member of the workforce in less than one year. I would like everyone with whom I work or meet to at least have an idea what I do for a job. Technical writing could help me get a job by informing the person doing the hiring what I bring to the table from the degree that I earned and what advantages I have over other people.

The Lone Star Community may want to consider taking a proactive role in the community to teach technical writing. This may be as simple as working with local education facilities such as North Texas and the University of Texas at Arlington to a greater degree. They could work with the higher education facilities to help provide internships for interested students, or work with classes on projects. Both of these would be good opportunities.

On a larger scale, it may be possible, working with alumni groups, to encourage that technical writing, even on the simplest level, should be part of the core curriculum for more majors. As a result, more graduating students would enter the workforce with an understanding of the services that technical writing provides.

Tech Comm Intern's Path to Success

By [Brittany Bailey](#), Intern to Louellen Coker, Content Solutions, Inc.

Before becoming an intern, I wondered how internships give students the opportunity they need to be able to succeed in their careers. Who could have thought that being an intern could provide me with so many door-opening opportunities? I found my internship has given me the chance to win photography awards, have by-lines, make connections, and build an amazing resume.

I started working my sophomore year of college as an intern for Louellen Coker, owner of [Content Solutions](#), a communications firm in Denton. For a college student, this was a dream job, the chance many students dream of and admire. I am a photography major, with an advertising journalism minor at the University of North Texas (UNT). The programs, the techniques, and the creative abilities I have learned since I began as an intern are much more than any teacher has taught me in any class.

The three years of classes behind me—including English, Design, Drawing, History, Computer, and Photography classes—helped me to get this internship. The two more years of school ahead of me will only continue to give me more knowledge I can use toward my internship, and future career advances.

Classes may offer the technical aspects of communicating, the hows and the whys, but they do not teach what an internship experience with a technical communicator can. When I walked into my interview for this internship, I was shaking, and didn't know how to answer any of the questions. I seek to grow from being an intern, to be able to walk into an interview with the confidence that I know I have the skills that companies are seeking. My intern experience will give me the confidence to know the questions they ask so I won't shake. I look forward to designing graphics, taking photographs, building Web sites, and communication design. This internship with Content Solutions is giving me the courage to go to future interviews—the courage and the belief that I can reach my goals, and that I can achieve my future dreams. Everything a class has taught me is different when applied to actual experiences.

The experience and knowledge that I have gained from this internship will help me to succeed further down the road. So far, it has taught me the importance of deadlines. Clients demand their project to be done when they want it, even if it means staying up until 10:00 pm to meet the deadline. When you add the demand of your instructors to the demand of a client, then you definitely have a busy schedule; but, it is all worth it in the end. Managing the client's expectations is a skill that cannot be taught, it is something that can only be learned by experience. I have learned the importance of consistency, within conversations with clients and within designs.

Organizational skill is something that every teacher spends hours trying to ingrain into students' brains; the connection never worked until I was in the environment that required it. The environment of an internship does not allow you to lose files or forget about tasks. Creating a successful schedule and planning tasks are key aspects of maintaining the organization needed in a workplace. To me, one of the major perks of a technical communication internship is learning the computer applications needed to succeed in this field, how to write code for websites, and knowing the tools within each application and when to use them.

The learning curve that comes with your first job in any field is only one of the obstacles to overcome. Louellen helped me overcome most of the obstacles I have encountered while being an intern for her and her company. Just because I have a boss rather than a teacher, does not

mean I don't have my homework. The internship requires you to do your fair share of research and homework. If you are given a project during the day that you honestly have no clue how to start, you have to go home and do your research, so you're prepared to start the project the next morning. You won't survive if you rely solely on a boss. Going home to do research and training was not a negative thing to me. I felt like I had a chance to learn something that other students don't. I jumped at the chance to be ahead of the game, and ahead of my fellow classmates.

At Content Solutions, I not only have a boss, I have a mentor. My mentor teaches me what a class never could. She helps to guide me where I need to be when I graduate college. The internship is more than just a job; it is a life changing experience, that when given the opportunity, I would recommend jumping at the chance. Louellen looks over my shoulder, not to monitor my activity, but to monitor my growth and ability. As the year has gone by, the quick year that it was—I have noticed that she peeks over less and less. To me, that is a sign that I have learned what she has taught, and I have effectively gained from this experience. The mentoring Louellen has given me has made me who I am today.

Features

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Minneapolis: Second Visit, Great Time!

by [Dale Erickson](#), Fellow

The 2007 STC Annual Summit was the second conference that I have attended in Minneapolis. I remember the 1994 conference for my official induction as an Associate Fellow. I'll remember the 2007 edition for significant honors that our community and individual members received.

The individual honors began at the Sunday Leadership Session when *Jackie Damrau* was named as the LCR Volunteer of the Year. At Monday's Opening Session, our own *Beth Bailey*, manager of the Newsletter Competition, presented *Doug Dow* with the Best of Show award for Lone Star Community's *Technically Write*.

At the Honors Banquet, Lone Star again shone bright. I proudly cheered and photographed our honored members: new Fellow, *Beth Bailey*, and new Associate Fellows, *Kathryn Poe* and *Doug Dow*. The evening culminated in the announcement that Lone Star was the Community of Distinction for the fourth time in the last five years. Then we watched Doug distinguish himself on the dance floor in his snazzy dancing shoes. See [photos](#) for a sampling of his dance partners.

Besides the fun and the honors, attendees availed themselves of informative sessions, some organized into new institutes that emphasized topic threads. The popular sessions were standing-room only, an indication of relevant topic selection by the Program Committee.

I look forward to next year's conference in Philadelphia, a city that I have never visited. Maybe I can see you there, too.

Minneapolis and Mary Tyler Moore

by [Paul Holland](#), Senior Member

I attended the 54th Annual Conference this year in Minneapolis. As always, conference was a valuable opportunity to spend time with other technical communicators.



First of all, Minneapolis rocks. It was a delightful city to visit and the local STC community did a fabulous job of welcoming the STC. And Mary Tyler Moore, what more needs to be said? I visited that statue twice.

The Conference is always an interesting event. In justifying the cost to my employer or in deciding whether to spend my own cash, it is often difficult to define a specific, tangible benefit because, quite frankly, much of the information that is shared is available on the Web, and the training sessions. Even at 90 minutes, the sessions are not long enough to acquire a new skill set. Technical communicators will still end up doing a self-study program to really internalize the new skill.

What the sessions *are* long enough to accomplish is determining what skill sets will provide the best return on investment if I invest the effort in acquiring them over the coming year. We are all far too busy to invest the hours required to master a skill set, a new software tool for example, and then find that our efforts would have been better expended developing a different skill.

Another benefit I have found at the Conference is the opportunity to explore and evaluate best practices. Everyone has an opinion on the best way to complete a given task, and sometimes these are all correct because various personalities are effective using one or another methodology. Other times, however, there really is a specific, time tested, best practice, and discussing the challenges others have experienced and the solutions they have found most effective is very valuable.

The Conference is also a wonderful opportunity to meet technical communicators from other industries and to see their exciting work.

“Our Community.” That has a wonderful ring to it. So often we are defined, rightly or not, by what we do. My brother is a lawyer or I am a doctor or she is a scientist, and so on. But there is value in being a technical communicator and as our jobs expand to include other skills, and as we more inclusively define what our job entails, identifying the community has value. Doctors have the AMA, lawyers ABA, and we have the STC.

I cringe when I hear someone say, “Oh, I was a technical writer but I moved on,” as though this is a stepping stone and not a destination. The annual conference helps maintain the enthusiasm each of us should have for our profession. Being a technical communicator, complete with inner geek and grammarian is very cool.

Lastly, networking for new opportunities or for new resources is easily accomplished at the conference. There is not a better location to connect with opportunities within the communications profession.

It is hard to “spreadsheet out” the benefits of conference but once you have attended one, you will understand how it can keep the horizon visible and prevent us from focusing too much on what we can see here alone in our positions, hunkered down in a cubicle, staring at the Shell station across the street that keeps raising its gas prices (2.71 the day this was written).

Destination Minneapolis with Lake Wobegon Stopover

by [Susie Lynn Fox](#), LSC President (2007-2008)

When I first heard that the 54th Annual Conference of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) was going to be in Minneapolis on May 13-16, 2007, I was ready to pack my bags and enjoy learning cool new technical communication stuff in the cooler climes of Minnesota.

I was also eager to make a stopover in the fabled, imaginary town of Lake Wobegon. As luck would have it, Garrison Keillor's radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion* (PHC), was scheduled to broadcast live from the historic, elegant State Theatre in downtown Minneapolis on Saturday, May 12. So I snapped up a PHC ticket before boarding my flight.

Upon arrival, I checked into a hotel near the Minneapolis Convention Center and asked for walking directions to the State Theatre. After a quick nap, I traipsed through the closed-off, pedestrian-friendly streets, outdoor cafes, and shops that comprise Nicollet Mall. I had a bite to eat at nearby Rock Bottom Brewery restaurant before the PHC show.

Message to Moms

When I entered the lobby of the theater, I was tickled to see a table with little slips of paper and stubby pencils with no erasers. I knew that audience members use the supplies to write personal messages to friends and family back home. If your message is sweet or quirky enough to make the cut (mine didn't), Keillor reads it on the air. Here's my unaired Mother's Day message to my mom and mother-in-law:

"Happy Mother's Day, Mama Crispy Critters and Mom Fox! Don't forget to feed the pet turtles, Mama Crispy, and don't forget to feed all the little foxes, Mom Fox! Love, your favorite oldest daughter, Tweety."

Live Broadcast ... Starting NOW!

I found my seat in the air-conditioned, darkened theater, and watched other PHC devotees trek in. Soon the air was filled with expectant chatter. The orchestra tuned up at 4:45 p.m., as scheduled. Then the red-sneakered Keillor bounded on stage and began his spell-binding conversation with the audience.

I was already swept up in the entertaining music and on-stage chit-chat when everything came to an abrupt, split second of complete silence. It's as if everything and everyone froze in mid-air. Then without warning, the moment of silence erupted into action as the PHC show's theme music and song kicked off the live broadcast!

Cast of PHC Characters

The usual PHC characters ambled on and off the stage. The talented guys and gals of Guy's All-Star Shoe Band punctuated the show with musical standards and creative twists. Tim Russell, man of many voices, Sue Scott, woman of many voices, and Tom Keith, man of many sound effects, shared their cacophony of talents. Guest artists included a well-known band named WILCO.

Keillor plied the audience with songs and with his favorite stories about Guy Noir, private eye, and the latest goings-on about the folks in pretend Lake Wobegon. Prior to the show, a family of four was selected from the audience to sit on the front porch of the two-story farmhouse prop on stage. Watching the family watch the show was almost as entertaining as watching the show itself!

Cast of STC Characters

The PHC show was over too quickly, but the STC Conference in downtown Minneapolis was just kicking off. The amazing array of technical communicators you can meet at the STC Conference is one of the main reasons to attend.

A great way to meet folks is to attend the Sunday night welcome reception, the networking lunches, the Monday night musical jam session and talent show, the Tuesday night honors banquet, and the after-banquet party. The cast of STC characters, including talented musicians, dancers, and singers, is an unending show that rivals the PHC stars!

This year I especially enjoyed going to dinner on Monday night with Lone Star Community (LSC) members, *Dale Erickson*, *Douglas Dow*, and *Marsha Oliver*, along with *Melanie Flanders* who is working in Nanjing, China, *George Slaughter* from STC Houston, and *Makarand (Mak) Pandit* from STC India.

“And that’s the good news” from the STC Conference in Minneapolis, where all the technical communicators are better than average and their content is always accurate, consistent, usable, and accessible!

Minneapolis: Land of 10,000 Learning Opportunities

By [Susie Lynn Fox](#), LSC President (2007-2008)

Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes, but I quickly learned that the 54th Annual Conference of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) in Minneapolis was a land swimming in learning opportunities.

Reorganization of the 2007 conference format meant that attendees could choose from 100 technical sessions during the conference and/or concentrate on particular topics by attending multiple technical sessions, called institutes. Vendors also offered product sessions and demos and hosted the vendor exposition. To earn a certificate in a particular subject, early attendees could sign up for pre-conference sessions as well as specific technical sessions during the conference.

I arrived early to attend Leadership Day on May 13 and also opted for technical sessions during the main conference:

- **Leadership Day.** For the first time, I attended Leadership Day where Society leaders presented vision, leadership, resource, and industry topics. Other presenters provided a progression of how-to topics, such as community programs, public relations, virtual education, treasurer, volunteer recruitment, Society project management, Society leadership, virtual collaboration with communities, Society marketing, Society’s benefits for communities in areas where they exist or serve, and community newsletters by *Douglas Dow* from the Lone Star Community (LSC). Also, LSC’s *Jackie Damrau* helped unveil the latest news for the STC Leadership Community Resource (LCR).
- **Keynote Address: Fermat’s Last Theorem.** Simon Singh—physicist, author, journalist, and television producer—described how he transformed his best-selling math book into an award-winning film. The high point for me was seeing the emotional a-ha moment on the face of a mathematician when he recalled solving Fermat’s last theorem. On May 14, STC named Singh an honorary fellow for 2007.
- **Web 2.0 101: Understanding Web 2.0 and Its Impact on Technical Communication.** Scott Abel (The Content Wrangler, Inc.) explained how the current Web 1.0 allows searching and viewing content and how the emerging Web 2.0 allows creating, mixing, and publishing content. For example, wikis and blogs allow folks to write collaboratively

on the Web. Really Simple Syndication (RSS) data feeds allow reusing and mixing content from multiple sources.

- ***Developing and Delivering Content: Myths and Trends in the Changing English Language.*** Thea Teich (Teich Technical & Marketing Communication) and Karen O'Keefe (Haverstick Government Solutions, Inc.) explored the rules, myths, and trends of the ever-changing English language and how these changes affect decisions made by writers and editors. Did you know that double spaces after a period started in the old days of hot lead typesetting machines and monospace fonts and began disappearing in the modern days of computer typesetting and proportional fonts? That's one theory ...
- ***Producing and Publishing Information: Podcasting Production 101.*** Jerry D. Franklin (Bricsnet) provided a demo on how to produce a podcast. Today, 2 to 10 million users listen to pre-recorded, downloaded audio podcasts. By 2010, 60 million podcast users are predicted.
- ***Applying Research and Theory to Practice: How Does the Web Sound?*** Jennifer E. Jobst (University of Texas at Austin) showed audio and video demos of how a variety of visually impaired users experience the Web via screen readers. Design and code changes can make the Web more accessible.
- ***Web 2.0 Institute: Using Wikis for Collaborative Writing.*** Char James-Tanny (JTF Associates Inc.) listed the pros and cons of using a wiki as a collaborative writing tool in the Web 2.0 environment. She defined wiki visitors, communities, administrators, and contributors and also explained the administrative aspects of operating a wiki.
- ***Applying Research and Theory to Practice: E-mail and Digital Literacies: What We Know from the Field of Internet Studies.*** Laura Gurak described how e-mail, the number one digital communication tool of the Internet, affects all forms of writing. E-mail applications have fundamentally changed the way that people communicate in such areas as speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity.
- ***Managing People, Projects, and Business: Using Coaching as a Management Technique.*** Timothy McClernon (People Architects, Inc.) and Victoria Frank (Blue Cross/Blue Shield Minnesota) discussed how managerial coaching techniques can improve employee performance in the workplace. Coaching differs from mentoring, counseling, and friendship.
- ***Web 2.0 Institute: Distributed Writing: A Psychology of Social Computing Practices.*** Johannes Strobel said that social computing tools, such as wikis, blogs, and podcasts, have increased distributed writing on the Web and created a new form of literacy. With social computing tools, technical communicators need to straddle the traditional world of quality, written deliverables and the new world of quick, collaborative writing processes.
- ***Developing Your Skills and Promoting Your Profession: The Art of Friendly Persuasion.*** Suzanna Laurent (Communications Design Group) and Candice D. McKee (University of Central Oklahoma) described how people can recognize and use their influencing styles to meet the legitimate needs of everyone involved. Influencing styles include dominance, partnership, putting others first, bargaining, and withdrawing. I took the test and discovered that my primary influencing style is partnership.

Minnesota Fun with Friends!

By [Jackie Damrau](#), Newsletter Editor

May was full of fun and camaraderie as the STC Annual Conference took place in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. I call this the “city of skywalks where you can get lost quite easily!”

Experiencing Minneapolis

Honestly, though, my greatest time in Minneapolis (outside of the conference activities and honors) was visiting the two-story Target department store that included a shopping cart escalator. This was the first time that I had ever experienced such a thing. During my nine-day stay, I visited the Target store every two days, just to take a shopping cart up the escalator! Yes, call me crazy (if you didn’t know that already, well...), but I find the little things in life help reduce the stress of the big things in life.

I also discovered a very nice used book store where you know that a writer cannot pass by without going in to look and coming out with a purchase or two. Before you ask, I did purchase two books for my husband who is collecting hardback first-edition copies of Rex Stout’s “Nero Wolfe” detective novels. It is interesting what you find in these old used book stores. I then wandered up the street a few more blocks and visited the Minneapolis Public Library and its used book store. I walked out of there with a great book on writing requirements for the sage price of \$1.

After the conference, [Mike Hiatt](#) and I met up and shared a shopping trip via the rail line to the Mall of the Americas. You can’t visit Minneapolis and not go here. We didn’t visit each store, nor did we walk the entire mall. We did, though, ride one rollercoaster together (I rode the other one myself) and visited the underground aquarium. The next day we met to go on a narrated Twin Cities tour with stops at Minnehaha Falls Park, the Mississippi River, St. Paul Cathedral, and Summit Avenue Victorian-era mansions. It was very nice to share these trips with someone I knew.



Minnehaha Falls



St. Paul’s Cathedral

Experiencing the Conference

The STC Annual Conference itself was different this year as the STC tried a new format. From what I've heard, the conference format was a success and will be repeated again next year in Philadelphia on June 1–4, 2008 (finally, a conference not held on Mother's Day weekend).

Here's my review of the sessions that I attended:

Sunday, Leadership Day, May 13th

The morning started with the outgoing and incoming STC presidents giving their vision of the future of communities within the organization. Cindy Currie, the incoming 2nd Vice President and Community Advocacy Committee chair, then announced that the "LCR (Leadership Community Resource) is up and running." Cindy then opened the Leadership progression on 12 leadership topics.

During the progression, Mary Jo Stark and I hosted the LCR table where we had the online leadership training on display and met with community leaders or members to see where the LCR can help struggling communities or acquaint folks with the purpose of the LCR.

During the Sunday festivities, I assisted in awarding the Merit and Excellence awards to STC communities. I was also rewarded for my efforts by receiving the LCR Volunteer of the Year plaque with the following citation:

"For your leadership, passion, desire, and willingness to seek and encourage members to help STC and our profession continue its growth. This includes your work with the IDL and Management SIGs, the funding model project, the LCR Training Planning and Development Committee, and the Newsletter Competition team, as well as your service as a *Technical Communication* book reviewer, 2006 Region 5 Conference chair, 2006 Lone Star competitions general manager, and as a contributing newsletter editor."

Monday, May 8th

- **Keynote Speaker: Simon Singh, Author of "Fermat's Last Theorem"**

Simon talked about how he went about creating the documentary about how Andrew Wiles solved the proof of Fermat's last theorem. He shared with us how this form of communication is important as well as the importance of not messing with (or altering) the interviews that you conduct with subject matter experts. Simon says that in the world of documentaries, it is often easy, with clever editing, to have experts say things they really didn't. The most impressive part of this talk was in how Andrew Wiles' professional character climbed after taking seven years to solve Fermat's last theorem only to plummet severely when it was discovered that he had made an error. Andrew didn't give up though; it took him another thirteen months to actually *solve* Fermat's last theorem.

- **"Incorporating Usability into Content Management: A User- and Customer-Centric Approach"** (Pamela Kostur, Parallax Communications)

This session talked about how implementing content management is not just about the tools: It's about the content. I learned that technology can enable content re-use; yet the business needs to figure out what it wants to do with the content to serve the users. Pamela asked everyone who is considering using content management to approach it first by asking two questions:

- 1) What are the goals of the content management project?

2) Where does usability fit?

Following this, she reiterated the importance of performing a needs–user–content analysis; asked us to always focus on the purpose and use of the content, define the key information types in our industry and design structures that fit into them, and then to ensure that we communicate within our organizations about the need to follow an established process.

- **“Participatory Design: Political Statement to Business Model”**
(Bill Hart-Davidson)

This session talked about how Participatory Design (PD) focuses on user-centered design and user participation where you work with and alongside users to understand aspects of the project. PD lets users take an active role in the project and advocate a view of the systems broader than their technical components alone. In some instances, you can use paper prototyping to ensure that everyone is speaking the same language. Plus it involves users at every design cycle stage, thus ensuring that the final result is a product that is usable by the intended audience. Bill then spent a bit of time talking about contextual inquiry and the difference between taxonomies and folksonomies.

- **“Instructional Design & Learning SIG Progression”**
(My IDL SIG progression session)

My session topic during this progression was on “Designing and Developing Online Training for STC Leaders.” I presented on how my LCR team of eight worked virtually over two years to produce the online Leadership Training course, the reason we chose to use RoboHelp, and to ask attendees for suggestions on what else they would like to see. Many of the attendees were interested in how this team was able to produce all the content we did by holding one teleconference a month, with the rest of the work being conducted by e-mail.

- **STC Annual Business Meeting**

We discussed the revision to the STC Bylaws, the reasons why it is necessary to revise them, and the timeline for getting them out to the membership for voting on by early September 2007. The incoming STC officers were installed; the major theme “The Now World of STC” was announced; and the 2007–2008 committee managers were introduced.

Tuesday, May 9th

- **“Knowledge Management 101”**
(George Hayhoe, George Hayhoe Associates)

This session explored the basic concepts and methods of knowledge management, including organizing and leveraging communities of practice, creating organization “yellow pages,” implementing best practices systems, capturing and transferring strategic knowledge, designing intranets and portals, and selecting and implementing collaborative tools.

During the presentation, I learned that companies should consider conducting a knowledge inventory to collect, in writing, the intellectual capital from its employees before they leave the company. A sample knowledge inventory should ask:

- What areas of the company have you worked in or with on projects (Engineering, IT, Marketing, HR, etc.)?
 - What unwritten business processes do you perform on the job?
 - Who else knows how to perform each of them?
 - What do you regard as the three most important skills or areas of expertise you regularly draw on in doing your job?
 - How did you learn each of these?
- **“What Is Knowledge Harvesting?”**
(Larry Todd Wilson)

This session presented a proven methodology for rapidly converting expertise into knowledge assets that can dramatically improve corporate performance, competitiveness and valuation. During this session, I learned that it is often difficult for subject matter experts to share their information, language is an ultimate barrier, and there are four types of knowledge: contextual, declarative, procedural, and social. Depending on where your business model and its processes are, a knowledge management professional needs to be aware of how to harvest information from individuals using various techniques that are specific to each knowledge type. Harvesting knowledge follows a similar process to that of a project, where you focus, find, elicit, organize, package, apply, evaluate, and adapt the information you receive into re-usable content chunks for future business dealings.

- **“Making Your Career Happen”**
(Panel discussion: Scott Abel, *The Content Wrangler*; Rahel Bailie, *Intentional Design Inc.*; and Ann Rockley, *The Rockley Group*)

This session provided tips and suggestions for how to learn about the content management field, areas of opportunity, and guidelines for making it happen. The main points that I took away were:

- You need to be *aware* of the tools, but you don't have to be knowledgeable of or have experience with them all.
- You need to become a knowledge management evangelist outside your area and knowledge set by writing well-informed documentation and learning more about the tools and their use.
- You need to present like a professional when interacting with senior management or company executives.
- You should manage by results, not process. (Do the right thing, not produce the wrong thing.)
- Get out of the corporate silo by collaborating! Independence = isolation.

Wednesday, May 10th

- **“Using Unified Language Artifacts 101 – Getting Started”**
(Mark Hanigan, *On the Write Track*, and Cindy Skawinski, *Walt Disney World Operations*)

This session presented a basic overview about Unified Markup Language (UML) concepts and artifact deliverables.

- **“Ten Things You Should Know about Mobile Learning”**
(Ellen Wagner, Adobe Systems)

This session provided a great overview for why many businesses today are not yet ready to deliver online learning or training to the popular portable consumer devices such as mobile phones, PDAs, iPods, handheld devices, and game consoles. Ellen cited the work of Ambient Insight and Adobe's own benchmark research on the difficulties of providing online training through these devices. She provided us with the 10 questions that we should ask when the business asks for training to be delivered to mobile devices. You can ask me for those questions if you have an interest in them.

- **Keynote Speaker: Ze Frank, Author of “Fermat’s Last Theorem”**
Ze spoke about how technology and creativity intersect, especially in Web design, marketing, and new forms of media. This was a comedic look at the many different communications materials that people tend to collect, such as airline vomit bags and safety cards. We were all rolling in the aisles.

Common Mistakes Writers Make

by [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

For whatever it's worth, I have jotted down five mistakes writers make over and over again--even experienced writers and journalists (especially TV and radio newscasters)--and technical writers, too.

Yes, even the "professionals" do violence to our language every day. Which makes me worry that people who see these aberrations in print (or hear them on the airwaves) are going to think it's all right to go right on mimicking the aberration.

My contention is that professional writers and anyone who wants his/her writings to appear professional should continually seek guidance from style manuals and grammar guides. It's hard to know everything, even if you're a Rhodes Scholar, and styles do change over time. We should not take comfort from the fact that others mangle the language and get away with it.

Subject and Verb Don't Agree

I wince when I hear a network announcer say something like, "Neither of the two leading candidates have won a clear majority." The subject of the sentence is *neither*, which is singular; therefore, the correct verb is *has*.

Here are several situations where some writers might be tempted to use a plural verb, but of course you wouldn't make such mistakes.

Wrong: Neither John nor Mary are to blame.

Right: Neither John nor Mary is to blame.

Wrong: The President or one of his cabinet members are expected to attend.

Right: The President or one of his cabinet members is expected to attend

When a compound subject is joined by *or* or *nor*, the subject remains singular. In the second sentence, don't be confused by the prepositional phrase "of his cabinet members" that comes just before the verb.

Here are some other examples where a writer might be tempted to use a plural verb because a prepositional phrase with a plural object snuck in just before the verb.

Any of a number of solutions is likely to work.

"Of a number" and "of solutions" are prepositional phrases; the subject is *any*.

Each of the soldiers has received a decoration.

The subject is *each*, not *soldiers*.

Making Inappropriate Comparisons

The offense of inappropriate comparisons is committed daily by the advertising fraternity and the broadcast industry. Fortunately, when a professional writer sees such words on paper, he or she usually catches the error.

A network announcer, reporting on insurance rates, said that one company's rates were the "highest of any insurance company." Sorry, but that can't be. Their rates could be "higher than those of any other insurance company" or "the highest of all," but not "highest of any," since *any* implies *any ONE*.

Advertisers often say their product is the "best of any." Nothing can be the "best of any," since (again) *any* implies *any one*. The product can be "the best of all" or "better than any other."

Using *Infer* and *Imply* Incorrectly

Here's a case where constant misuse of a word has just about made its incorrect use acceptable. People constantly say, "Do you infer that I was to blame?" when they mean, "Do you imply..."

Infer means "conclude or judge from premises or evidence."

Imply means "to indicate or suggest as something naturally to be inferred."

A correct use of *infer* would be, "I infer from your comments that you think I was to blame." (Implying is something the talker or writer does; inferring is something the listener or reader does.)

Using *Oral* and *Verbal* Incorrectly

If you have erred on this one, you're in good company because almost everyone talks about a "verbal agreement" when they mean an "oral agreement." After all, *verbal* means "of or pertaining to words." Every agreement, written or spoken, is a verbal agreement since it consists of words. The only way to distinguish an agreement not committed to paper is to call it an "oral agreement." Similarly, we need to avoid using "verbal instructions," "verbal argument," etc. (I'll have to admit this is somewhat academic because almost everyone seems to have consented--however wrongly--that *oral* and *verbal* mean the same thing.)

Putting Quotation Marks in the Wrong Place

Even though you may sometimes see commas and periods placed outside quotation marks in published material (such as British literature), the best American style guides maintain an ironclad rule:

- Periods and commas go inside quotation marks.
- Colons and semicolons go outside.
- Question marks and exclamation marks go inside or outside, depending on whether they belong to the quotation.

Examples:

He said, "I love you." She swooned.

"I'll take bacon and eggs," she said briskly.

"It's quitting time," she said, "but I have twenty more pages to type."

Did he say, "Four score and seven years ago"? (Question mark does not belong to the quotation.)

She asked, "When do I get a raise?" (Question mark belongs to the quotation.)

He yelled, "Stop that car!"

While we're on the subject of quotation marks, another mistake writers frequently make is the use of single quote marks to set off quotations. This is a "no-no." Single quotation marks are used only to set off a quotation within a quotation.

She said, "I yelled 'Stop!' but he kept right on running."

Using Online Reference Sources

Even if you aced your college English classes, it's wise to constantly check with modern reference sources to be sure you're up-to-date with current English usage, spelling, and punctuation. I depend on Internet reference sources to keep me on track.

For spelling, I use Dictionary.com. I find it keeps pace with current trends in correct spelling.

As for style guides, I'm a devotee of *Chicago Manual of Style*, but unfortunately its online version is available only by subscription. So I use reference sources like Bartleby.com, where you'll find links to several style guides, like the great Strunk's [The Elements of Style](http://Bartleby.com/The Elements of Style). Using Bartleby's handy search tool, you can check out several style guides in one session. But, beware of the obscure guides, which lack authenticity. Stick with Strunk's. I also like Jack Lynch's [Guide to Grammar and Style](http://Bartleby.com/Guide to Grammar and Style).

Happy wordsmithing!

Human Factors

By [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



Welcome to the inaugural version of the Human Factors column. My intent is to talk to some of our senior members and officers so you can get to know them and they can share with you. LSC has a plethora of folks who have been in technical communications for some time. We have seen major changes in technology, expectations, and direction since we started and here is our chance to communicate some of that to you. As I like to tell the newbies I meet, if I can keep you from stepping in a few of the potholes I have found, it is worth the effort.

By way of exposition, I will ask a different person the same questions each month and their answers will appear right here. Please feel free to [send your ideas](#) and comments to make this info more useful to you. Let's start with me...

Name: Kathryn Poe

Job Title:

I've had lots of titles—from Word Weasel to Special Ops and Keeper of Words. I am currently a Documentation Specialist.

What do you actually do?

I write and maintain a suite of software docs including help, release notes and training. This entails gathering information from requirements and interviews with tech staff.

What hard skills have you found most useful and how do you continue to cultivate those skills?

I use both hard and soft skills every day. This can mean using software such as RoboHelp, Word, Frame or SQL Query Analyzer, to knowing how to ask the right questions. The key is to not fall behind and keep up with changes in technology so you have the skills you'll need to stay sharp. It is easy to lose your relevance if you don't keep up and you end up being treated like a glorified secretary.

Do you consider yourself a Guru at any particular subject?

I am a good public speaker because I have a big mouth and I'm not afraid to speak in front of groups. I have also developed excellent ways of interviewing geeks by practice and living with one for nearly 20 years. For most situations where you are not getting the info you need from a techie, there is a logical reason for it. Remember that these folks are very literal just like the code they write. They answer exactly what you ask—no more or less. Once you get that, it gets easier.

How long have you been in STC?

About to be 11 years. Time flies when you are having fun!

What is the greatest benefit of being an STC member?

There are many for me—from jobs to good friends and a never-ending network of people I can ask almost anything. It is practically a living database made up of people who have varied backgrounds and ideas—so cool. It is also nice to be recognized for your efforts. Awards and accolades are great and can occasionally get the attention of your employer in interesting ways.

Why have you stuck around so long? What's kept you here?

It is so nice to have folks around you who understand what you do and share your frustrations

and triumphs. I stay because I continue to learn and meet new people who do what I do and more.

What positions in LSC and STC have you held?

I started out as the advertising manager for *Technically Write* a while ago. I wrote for the newsletter as well then did PR a few years. I moved into 1st VP, the President and Past President of the LSC. I ran the International PR competition for several years and now participate in the Leadership Resource Committee (LCR) and the PR Committee at the international level. I am still active in LSC as well running the competitions and community service this year. I can't imagine not being active locally since that is where my heart belongs.

What are you up to this year?

I am managing the local competitions this year and still doing the community service thing. I now serve on the International PR committee and the LRC.

How can a person get involved and what's in it for them if they do?

It is so easy. Talk to [Mel Haughton](#), our volunteer wrangler or almost anybody from the admin counsel. Don't know who they are? Just ask someone or look for the ribbons on their badges at meetings. You can also e-mail any of us. There are tons of things to do that take little time—up to the big jobs.

How have you benefited from volunteering?

Again, I have met some great people and learned so much. My first writing samples were done on a volunteer basis while I looked for a job. At least one of these grew into a great contract position later. I never felt as useful as on the days we worked for the Salvation Army Angel Tree Warehouse. STC is like life—the more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it. I encourage folks to dive on in.

Can STC really help me find a job?

Absolutely, it can. I have found both contract and permanent gigs through people I met in STC. I have also been able to help fellow LSCers get jobs in places I worked. When it comes to hiring a technical communicator, the first thing I look for on a resume is STC membership.

Finding a Job, Web 2.0 Style

by [Alan Oak](#), Member

Web 2.0 is not only changing the way technical communicators *do* our jobs, it's changing the way we *find* our jobs. More and more, savvy recruiters are looking online to find the best talent and the best matches for their organizations. If you're a technical communicator looking for a new job – or even happy with your current job, but wise enough to see the value of Web presence – it's time to get savvy yourself and expand your opportunities with Web technology.

Meta Job Search Engines

It takes a lot of time to parse through all the (now) traditional jobs sites such as [Monster.com](#) and [Hotjobs.Yahoo.com](#). There is a better way: new Web 2.0 meta job search sites such as [Jobster.com](#), [Indeed.com](#), and [Simplyhired.com](#) do the parsing for you. Think of them as a [Google](#) or [Yahoo](#) for job sites. IN addition, they will let you set up an online profile for recruiters searching for someone just like *you*. These sites can even send you e-mail updates or [RSS feeds](#) of your custom searches, saving you time and hassle. When you're using these cool new tools, don't forget the best site of all – our own [LSC Job Bank](#).

Social Networking Sites

If you're a member of the STC, you already understand the value of networking. Nothing will replace the face-to-face connection, but why not take it online as well? More and more companies are looking for talent on social networking sites like MySpace.com and Facebook.com, as well as professionally oriented social networking sites like LinkedIn.com. Companies who troll these sites are hip to the personal tone of the content. They speak the language. As an added bonus, you get the opportunity to go on the aggressive and meet people from companies you want to work for. Be yourself, be open, but don't post anything you wouldn't want your mom to see.

Blogging

Have a professional interest or perspective to share? Blog about it. Read other people's blogs. Post on other's blogs and used [trackbacks](#) from their postings about yours. Employers are looking for people who are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects, and so they look at blogs. Blogging is a way to establish a track record as an expert on your subjects and get to know other experts. It is also another way to showcase your writing skills and is fast becoming part of many people's job descriptions. Blogs are a cinch to set up on Blogger.com, Wordpress.com, and other sites.

Discussion Groups

Recruiters are looking through discussion group postings for sharp people. They look at the discussion subjects for who's asking the good questions, who's answering them, and who's getting them right. Sites like [TECHWR-L](#), [MITWA](#), and our own [Help Desk](#) cater to technical communicators and can help you with daily professional challenges. But don't overlook other discussion groups. Whatever your personal or professional interests, however small a niche, log in and participate. Let people know what you are about.

Web Sites

Don't forget about the good old Web site. There's nothing like a central hub at "yournamehere.com" to showcase your resume and portfolio. When you post to blogs and discussion groups, have your personal URL in your signature so people – potential employers and people who know potential employers – can get the bigger picture of what you, talented you, are all about.

The Basics

Through it all, online and off, don't forget about the basics: a good attitude, hard work, nice manners, and a friendly smile. Thank-you notes and gifts of chocolate are (almost) never a miss.

LSC News

Read about:

- [May 2007 Meeting Review](#)
- [Local Photo Gallery](#)
- [LSC Notes & Committee Reports](#)
- [LSC SIG News](#)
- [LSC Membership News](#)
- [LSC Help Desk](#)
- [Lone Star Job Bank](#)
- [STC Texas Chapters](#)
- [Educational & Networking Opportunities](#)

May 2007 Review: Ginny Redish

by Michael McAuliffe, Meeting Reporter



Nationally recognized usability expert and author, Dr. Ginny Redish, Ph.D. addressed the May meeting of Lone Star Community (LSC) and the DFW Usability Professionals' Association. Dr. Redish detailed strategies that we can use to produce effective Web content and shared practical examples of the challenges that technical communicators face when creating and adapting content for the web.

Dr. Redish began the evening's discussion by examining the goals that drive viewers to a Web site. Most viewers, according to Dr. Redish, visit Web sites to achieve goals that are not specifically related to the Internet. For most, viewing a Web site is one of many activities that are used to achieve a task. In most cases, this task is to find an answer to a question. The Web is a convenient delivery device, but your viewers are likely more interested in achieving their goals than in experiencing your Web site.

So, if people are visiting your Web site to achieve a particular goal, how can you best satisfy them and make sure that they become repeat viewers? Dr. Redish's research indicates that the three primary requirements viewers have for a Web site are:

- High quality content
- Frequently updated content
- Easy-to-use design.

The idea that Dr. Redish uses to link these three requirements is that, "Every use of the Web site is a conversation started by the user. You have to satisfy the need that they came for before they are receptive to marketing. Most people, most of the time, are too busy to read," said Dr. Redish. "They want quick answers to their questions." We can therefore assume that the quality content we produce is most valuable to viewers when they can find what they are looking for quickly.

Dr. Redish cited usage statistics that detail the amount of time we can expect from viewers when they visit our Web sites. On average, our viewers will spend:

- 25 - 30 seconds on a home page
- 45 - 60 seconds on an interior page
- 30 seconds using online help.

Perhaps most importantly, viewers will spend less than two minutes looking for information before they abandon a site. If we make our Web sites hard to navigate or obscure information with marketing, we will lose the viewers for whom we created the content.

So, if our viewers don't want to read, why do we create online content? We may hope that our content educates, persuades, or entertains, but Dr. Redish suggested that, fundamentally, our content serves a more utilitarian purpose. Online content allows us to communicate in a way that is less expensive and requires fewer resources than traditional telephone or print-based communication. By empowering viewers to find the information that they need without direct support, we save money while, hopefully, increasing profits.

Dr. Redish concluded the evening by suggesting techniques for producing content that helps viewers find the information they want. A few of these techniques were:

- **Create clear, question oriented titles that clearly state the purpose of the content.**
Question-oriented titles speak directly to the user's needs because viewers are usually looking for an answer to a question.
- **Use entire phrases for hyperlinks and avoid using "click here."**
Viewers who use screen reader technologies will more efficiently navigate your site if your hyperlinks clearly support your organizational structure.
- **Avoid placing mission statements or welcome statements on your home page.**
If your viewers are interested in reading this information, they will navigate to it. Forcing them to read information that is not directly related to their goal wastes their time and encourages them to abandon your site.
- **Attempt to organize information so that viewers perform a minimum of scrolling.**
Separating information with hard dividers or large amounts of vertical space suggest that the information is not as important.

Local Photo Gallery

LSC Officers, 2007-2008



(L-R) Susie Lynn Fox, President; Chris LaPorte, Treasurer; Elisa Miller, 1st Vice President; Heather Steele, 2nd Vice President; Kristy Nolan, Secretary; Mel Haughton, Immediate Past President

STC Annual Conference Online Photo Journals

We had several local photographers (Doug Dow and Kathryn Poe), Rachel Houghton, Willamette Valley STC, and the STC photographer, who share their photos from these links. Enjoy!

- **Doug Dow:** <http://public.fotki.com/amtexasaxman/stc-convention-mn>
- **Kathryn Poe:** <http://public.fotki.com/KSMP/stc-minneapolis-2007/>
- **Rachel Houghton:** <http://www.kodakgallery.com/l.jsp?c=cqwaou6.3y7tm9xi&x=1&y=-x15yeo>
- **STC Conference Photographer:** gallery3.stc-cdx.org

Student Award Recipients



**UNT – Denton Campus
“Best eNewsletter Design”
students** (with Jackie Damrau
and Mel Haughton)



**UNT – Dallas Campus
LSC Brochure
competition students**
with Mel Haughton)

May 2007 "You Rock" Award Recipients



Kathryn Poe awards
“You Rock” to
Jeanne Foster



Kathryn Poe awards
“You Rock” to
Dale Erickson

2007 President's Award Recipients



Mel Haughton awards
2007 President's Award to
Katherine Poe



Mel Haughton awards
2007 President's Award to
Susie Lynn Fox

LSC Notes and Committee Reports

Community Service Committee:

Thanks from Half Price Books!

Kathryn Poe received the following e-mail from Scott Ward at Half Price Books regarding our 2006 book drive:

"I just got back to the warehouse this morning, and I was very pleased to see the books collected by the book drive by the Lone Star Community of the Society of Technical Communication. There seem to be some very nice, very wonderful books there collected by your membership. We will probably place these books with various D-FW area school teachers, and just in time for summer reading programs! On behalf of those teachers, I want to thank you for Half Price Books, thanks for reaching out to help keep our communities reading. We look forward to next year!"

Web Team Committee Report

By [Alan Oak](#), LSC Web committee member

We're at the start of an exciting new year for the Lone Star Community and an exciting new year for the Web site. Besides the continuity of great service you've come to expect from the Web Committee, we've got something special in mind—a new site! It's a little early to make wild claims about what we're going to achieve, but the ball has started rolling on a site redesign to include a more contemporary feel and some newer Web technologies. As the year picks up speed in the fall, you'll hear more specific information about our goals, how we're going to achieve them, and the part you can play to make it happen.

While a new look and new features are wonderful, consider taking a look at the great features already on the site you may not have used yet. The [Help Desk](#), for example, keeps growing in usage and fascinating discussions. Even if you don't have a burning question this minute, the posts make for fun reading. If you read "[Finding a Job, Web 2.0 Style](#)," you'll see I've been looking at the Web tools out there for finding technical communication jobs. Well, as far as job postings go, our own [Job Bank](#) has the best selection of jobs I've seen in the Dallas market.

It's an honor to be your webmaster for the 2007-2008 year. I'll do my best to serve this community with distinction. With the great support of former webmasters *Paul Holland* and *Elizabeth Bailey*, we've got a team that can't fail. Please, e-mail me at webmaster@stc-dfw.org with ideas, updates, editing errors, the works. Whatever the site needs to serve you better, we'll do our best to make it happen.

LSC SIG News

SIGs are on summer vacation. Stay tuned for more information starting in September!

LSC Membership News

By [Jeanne Foster](#), Membership Manager

Change or Upgrade Your Membership

You can upgrade your STC membership (from "Limited" or "E-membership" to "Classic") or add communities or SIGs to your existing membership. Just mail or fax a completed STC Membership Change/Upgrade Form to the STC office. You can download and print the form from the STC Web site at http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/membersApp2006.pdf.

LSC Help Desk Statistics

By [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow

The LSC Help Desk is doing well for itself. We have many lurkers and have seen postings rise from 27 to 46 in June. For those who are interested, here's the statistics on the usage of the LSC Help Desk.

stc-dfw.org - Statistics Center

General Statistics				
Total Members:	37	Average registrations per day:	0.1	
Total Posts:	138	Average posts per day:	0.44	
Total Topics:	34	Average topics per day:	0.12	
Total Categories:	1	Total Boards:	1	
Users Online:	1	Latest Member:	kwampus	
Most Online:	9 - June 07, 2007, 11:01:28 AM	Average online per day:	2	
Online Today:	5	Male to Female Ratio:	1:4	

Top 10 Posters		Top 10 Boards	
Steele03	24	General	138
kpoe	21	Discussion	
Lauren	19		
jwalther	15		
Mel	11		
lcoker	9		
KristinK	7		
jeannefoster	6		
kristynolan	5		
elisam	4		

Top 10 Topics (by Replies)		Top 10 Topics (by Views)	
What do you calls us?	7	What are your fave tech comm books or references?	719
How do you do Help? Acrobat Reader	7	Using "will" in documentation	607
What are your fave tech comm books or references?	6	Newbie needs info on creating training guides	488
Using "will" in documentation	6	Help Authoring Tools	482
Printed Documentation vs On-line Help	5	Why Docs matter....	474
Vista & Office 2007 Documentation vs Agile	5	Packaging guidelines	466
Questions for Sr. Members	4	Single-source documentation tools	448
Resume trends	4	What do you calls us?	379
		Vista & Office 2007	378
		Word usage	350

Top Topic Starters		Most Time Online	
Steele03	8	kpoe	16h 43m
Lauren	6	Steele03	3h 57m
kpoe	5	jwalther	2h 31m
lcoker	4	Lauren	2h 13m
Jenm55	3	Mel	1h 54m
KristinK	3	sdpoe	1h 15m
jwalther	2	lcoker	1h 13m
Mel	1	jeannefoster	1h 5m
cpl	1	pabloholland	51m
jeannefoster	1	mhiatt	49m

Forum History (using forum time offset)				
Monthly Summary	New Topics	New Posts	New Members	Most Online
July 2007	0	0	0	7
June 2007	10	54	1	9
May 2007	6	27	4	8
April 2007	5	15	2	9
March 2007	0	1	0	6

Lone Star Job Bank

Lone Star's [Job Bank](#) is online at the LSC Web site, listing local employment opportunities. The Job Bank is updated as jobs are submitted.

If you're looking for work, or wish to post a position, visit the Web site and follow the instructions.

The international [STC Web site](#) maintains nationwide job listings, along with some international opportunities.

STC Texas Communities

Links to Texas STC resources:

STC Communities in Texas

[Alamo](#)
[Austin](#)
[Houston](#)

[Alamo Tech Line](#)
[Austin Newsletter/Blog](#)
[Dateline Houston](#)

STC Student Communities in Texas

[College Station \(TAMU\)](#)
[Texas Tech University \(TTU\)](#)

[Events](#)

Educational and Networking Opportunities

Organization	Day	Place
North Texas PC Users Group (NTPCUG)	Third Saturday	North Lake College, Irving
DFW Usability Professionals' Association (UPA) Email: dfwupa@yahoo.com	Third Tuesday	varies
Dallas Association of Women in Computing	First Thursday	Crowne Plaza, Addison
North Texas Adobe Captivate User Group Email: Walt Stewart	Third Tuesday	varies

STC News

Read about:

- [STC Tieline Articles](#)
- [STC Community Events](#)
- [Upcoming STC Webinars](#)

STC Tieline Articles

Browse on over to the [July/August 2007](#) issue of the *STC Tieline, The Society Leaders' Newsletter*, where you can find these interesting articles:

- [Public Relations Documents: Templates to Use for Your Community Publicity Plan](#)
- [LCR Web site](#)
- [Jackie Damrau: LCR Volunteer of the Year](#)
- [New Associate Fellows Nominations Encouraged](#)
- [Bylaws Forum Recording](#)
[Bylaws Referendum to be held in Fall](#)
- [New STC Community Relations Manager](#)

Other STC Community Events

October 12, 2007

STC's Region 4 Conference, "The Crucial Communicator," will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn and Gateway Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Sessions will feature presentations and discussions on how technical communicators can more effectively demonstrate their indispensability in the workplace. The ISO JTC 1 SC7/WG2 group—comprising international experts in standards and user documentation from the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States—will be in attendance.

Contact co-chairpersons [Bob Young](#) and [Stephanie Webster](#) with topic requests or to subscribe for conference news.

For more information, visit <http://www.neostc.org/conf>

March 14 – 15, 2008

Atlanta Chapter? STC will host its conference, "Current 2008," at the Southern Polytechnic State University campus in Marietta, Georgia.

For more information, visit <http://www.stcatlanta.org/>

June 1 – 4, 2008

Technical Communication Summit — STC's 55th Annual Conference will be held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

For more information, visit <http://www.stc.org/>

Upcoming STC Webinars

Stay tuned for the 2007-2008 schedule.

Home > Calendar

August 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Time: Event	2 Time: Event	3 Time: Event	4 Time: Event
5 Time: Event	6 Time: Event	7 Time: Event	8 Time: Event	9 Time: Event	10 Time: Event	11 Time: Event
12 Time: Event	13 Time: Event	14 Time: Event	15 Time: Event	16 Time: Event	17 Time: Event	18 Time: Event
19 Time: Event	20 Time: Event	21 Time: Event	22 Time: Event	23 Time: Event	24 Time: Event	25 Time: Event
26 Time: Event	27 Time: Event	28 Time: Event	29 Time: Event	30 Time: Event	31 Time: Event	

September 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Time: Event
2 Time: Event	3 Time: Event	4 Time: Event	5 Time: Event	6 Time: 5:45pm LSC Mtg.	7 Time: Event	8 Time: Event
9 Time: Event	10 Time: Event	11 Time: Event	12 Time: Event	13 Time: Event	14 Time: Event	15 Time: Event
16 Time: Event	17 Time: Event	18 Time: Event	19 Time: Event	20 Time: Event	21 Time: Event	22 Time: Event
23 Time: Event	24 Time: Event	25 Time: Event	26 Time: Event	27 Time: Event	28 Time: Event	29 Time: Event
30 Time: Event						

October 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Time: Event	2 Time: Event	3 Time: Event	4 Time: 6:15pm LSC Council	5 Time: Event	6 Time: Event
7 Time: Event	8 Time: Event	9 Time: Event	10 Time: Event	11 Time: 5:45pm LSC Mtg.	12 Time: Event	13 Time: Event
14 Time: Event	15 Time: Event	16 Time: Event	17 Time: Event	18 Time: Event	19 Time: Event	20 Time: Event
21 Time: Event	22 Time: Event	23 Time: Event	24 Time: Event	25 Time: Event	26 Time: Event	27 Time: Event
28 Time: Event	29 Time: Event	30 Time: Event	31 Time: Event			

About TW

Read about:

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- [LSC Officers](#)
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About *Technically Write*

Published monthly from September through May, *Technically Write* is the official newsletter of the STC Lone Star Community. It is produced by, for, and about the members, associates, and friends of the STC Lone Star Community.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the STC nor the STC Lone Star Community. Neither the STC nor the STC Lone Star Community endorses products or services, but may, as part of our educational activities, allow their mention in articles and notices.

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STC communities and organizations worldwide are welcome to link to or reproduce original material in *Technically Write* with proper attribution (source, issue date, and author's name) in the link text, or in the byline.

For specific file path information, contact the Managing Editor at email: newsletter@stc-dfw.org. Kindly notify the Managing Editor through e-mail when electronic reprints are published, or send a copy of publications containing reprinted versions to the Managing Editor at the address below.

Mailing Address:

Technically Write
P.O. Box 515065
Dallas, TX 75251-5065

Advertising

Advertising is available in Technically Write in an advertising section. If you have Web-ready (the 21st century equivalent of "camera-ready") content in the form of a GIF or JPG file, we can include it, if it is 432 pixels (6 inches) wide or less. (Anything larger will be resampled.) It will be placed in an advertising section on its own page. It will NOT be a "banner" ad. The rate for one issue is US \$125. Discounts apply as follows:

	Single Issue	Five Issue Package	Nine Issue Package (Full Volume)
Price	\$125	\$600 (\$120/issue)	\$900 (\$100/issue)
Discount	\$0	\$25	\$225

We do not support animated GIFs or other animation technologies at this time.

Payment

Payment can be made by check, money order, or purchase order made payable to Lone Star STC. PayPal® is also available. Full payment arrangements are due before the ad runs. The payment address is:

Lone Star STC
 PO Box 515065
 Dallas, TX 75251-5065
 Attn: Treasurer, Newsletter Ad

Terms of Service

Lone Star STC reserves the right to refuse ads.

Inquiries and Requests

Contact the Managing Editor at email: newsletter@stc-dfw.org for more information.

Copyright and Trademark

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles they wish to be considered for publication. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Some articles might refer to companies or products whose names are covered by trademark or registered trademark. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Reference to a specific product does not constitute an endorsement of the product by the LSC or STC.

Newsletter Design and Layout:

Courtesy of University of North Texas, Spring 2007 English 4180 class
 © STC, 2007

Submit to *Technically Write*

Technically Write is pleased to accept contributions from community members and student members on a wide variety of topics, including (but not limited to):

- Evaluations of tools, software, trade publications, and the like
- Lessons learned, tips, advice for the newbie
- Testimonials regarding the value of STC to the member
- Sharing STC Conference insights
- Bios of STC members
- News of charitable undertakings by members, whether or not they involve trade skills.

Technically Write is published on the first Thursday of each month (September through May).

The editorial team retains and exercises the right to edit submitted and requested material for clarity, length, and appropriateness.

Contributions to *Technically Write*

- Must be submitted no later than the deadlines listed below. E-mail to newsletter@stc-dfw.org.
- Are best submitted in Word format, or in the text of an e-mail message.
- Have no length limit, but need to be written with online presentation in mind.
- May have accompanying graphics in GIF or JPG format. Editors reserve the right to resample, crop, or exclude images if necessary.
- Should also include a short (25-word) biography of the author.

Author Guidelines

In case you haven't noticed, *Technically Write* is an online magazine, or e-zine. From Kurt Ament to Strunk and White, e-zine savvy people have this advice:

- Write short sentences.
- Make short paragraphs, 3 to 5 sentences at the most.
- Do not use semicolons (;). They are an excuse to lengthen sentences.
- Aim for no more than 500 to 700 words of content. If you desire to write a longer piece, please subdivide it with subheads, so that it can be serialized.

2007-2008 Submission Deadlines

Deadlines for article submissions for this year are:

Issue	Deadline
September	August 21
October	September 18
November	October 23
December	November 20
January	December 18
February	January 22
March	February 19
April	March 19
May	April 16

Technically Write Staff

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Editor: **OPEN**

Contributing Editor: **OPEN**

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[Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

[Monica Winkelman](#)

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Columnists: [Susie Lynn Fox](#), [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#), [Alan Oak](#),
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Photo Editor: [Douglas Dow](#)

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Ex-Officio: [Chapter Officers](#)

LSC Officers

President: [Susie Lynn Fox](#)

1st Vice President: [Elisa Miller](#)

2nd Vice President: [Heather Steele](#)

Newsletter Editor: [Jackie Damrau](#)

Visit the [LSC Web site](#) for a complete list of community contacts.

Staff Bios

Ann Balaban, a former LSC president (1996-97), has produced award-winning documentation at Texas Instruments (TI) for many years. Recently, high-quality documentation was cited as a significant factor in obtaining new business at TI.

Jo Byrd survived through two degrees and a job from hell before she discovered she didn't want to be a librarian and after several additional missteps to find technical writing. A member of STC since 1992 and CIC SIG Manager since 1995, Jo helps others as she was helped early on.

Louellen S. Coker, owner of Content Solutions, a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), is a past president of the Lone Star Community and is also a member of the CIC, Lone Writers and Marketing SIGs. When not at her computer, you can find her training for that next marathon or sailing with her husband.

Jackie Damrau works at T-Mobile USA. She has more than 26 years of combined experience in technical writing and instructional design. Besides supporting STC activities through LSC and two national SIGs, Jackie enjoys going to the movies and reading classic literature, Irish/Scottish/English historical romance novels, or time-travel romance novels.

Doug Dow has been a member of the Lone Star Chapter since 1990, when he transferred from the Boston chapter. He has served in various capacities, including competition judge, chair of the Community Service Committee, and five years as newsletter Managing Editor. His interests outside of the cubicle include T'ai Chi, swing dancing, and honking on one of his many saxophones.

Dale Erickson serves the Lone Star Community as a Technically Write photographer and manager of the IPIIC mailing list. He has been an STC member since 1982 and holds the rank of Fellow. Dale is senior technical writer at One Network Enterprises in Dallas.

Susie Lynn Fox, a Lone Star member since 2003, is serving as the 2007-2008 President of LSC. She enjoys the great learning opportunities and fun at the local meetings and national conferences. Susie is a senior technical writer at American Airlines, Inc.

Melissa (Mel) Haughton is an Instructional Designer and Project Coordinator for MLink Technologies in Lewisville, TX. She has a Master's degree in Technical Writing from the University of North Texas. Mel is the immediate past president and volunteer wrangler of the Lone Star Community.

Mike Hiatt is a former journalist who owned his own newspaper at one time before realizing surviving in Dallas required a bigger paycheck. Mike's father, a technical writer for 30 years, prompted his move into technical communications. He started as a proposal writer (responding to customer requests for proposals, not grant writing) before moving into the technical publications department at a small Dallas telecommunications company. Mike has primarily documented software writing user guides and help files

Paul Holland is currently a communications manager at Plexon Inc in Dallas, Texas. A graduate of Hiram College (B.A. in communications), he has served as a volunteer of the Steamship William G. Mather Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, before moving to Dallas.

Mary McWilliams Johnson is a retired technical writer and Web designer. Check out her Web site: GraphicsByMary.com: <http://www.graphicsbymary.com>. (The SuperConnect site no longer exists.)

Elisa Kaplan Miller took a checkered path to her current position as User Experience Architect at Perot Systems. She's been a journalist, trainer, college professor, editor, analyst, and usability lab manager. She spends her free time as LSC membership manager, trying to expand the view of what STC thinks of as technical communication professionals.

Karl J. Morris is a native of the San Francisco Bay Area. He has a background in sales, marketing, and technical writing within the telecommunications industry. Karl holds a BS degree in Information Systems from Golden Gate University in San Francisco and a Graduate Marketing Certificate from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He worked five years as an information/course developer for Nortel Networks. In addition, he spent three years as a marketing communications consultant for Efore USA. He has spent the last two years working in event marketing, currently working at the AT&T Experience store at Northpark Mall.

Kristy Nolan is a Training/Publications Developer for Southwest Airlines. Her Masters Degree is in Education from John Carroll University in Cleveland, and her undergraduate degree is in Biology from Hiram College. She moved to Dallas from Cleveland, Ohio, when Southwest Airlines promoted her to a developer position in Ground Operations Training.

Alan Oak is majoring in English—Professional Writing at Ellis College of the New York Institute of Technology to train for a new career in technical communication. His prior career experience is in information technology. Alan is looking forward to paying work as a technical communicator after his 2008 graduation. Currently, he is serving as Web master of the Lone Star Community's Web site.

Kathryn Poe, Senior Member and former chapter president, is a self-proclaimed Knowledge Wrangler. She is currently enlightening minds in the financial sector.

Paula Robertson's Technical Communication career comprises twelve years as writer and editor of software and hardware documentation for domestic and international clients in transportation, telecommunications, and other industries. A previous career in computer graphics rounds out her skills as a "full-service" editor. As a Senior Member of STC, Paula has learned the value of the term and the practice of "networking."

Arroxane T. Ullman is a Senior Technical Writer at Sundance Digital. She has an MA in Technical Writing and a BS in Liberal Arts. Arroxane has an eclectic background and is a former US Marine. She is grateful to be an active member of LSC and a Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas.

Monica Winkelman is the lone technical writer at Hyphen Solutions in Addison, which produces scheduling software for construction home builders. She has a B.A. in Journalism and an M.A. in Technical Writing from the University of North Texas in Denton.

Lauren Womack is the owner of Algonquin Consulting and the functioning Lone Writer Information Designer for HySecurity in Washington State. She is working on creating a single-source information solution for their customer-facing documentation. A Senior Member of STC, and the grateful recipient of a 2006 Distinguished Community Service Award, Lauren is the PR Manager of the Lone Star Community (3rd year!) and can be reached at PublicRelations@stc-dfw.org. With this position on the community council, she hopes to expand her skills and network while she serves the Lone Star Community. Lauren looks forward to meeting YOU at any community function in the near future, and is always looking to help members find leads and jobs.

STC Mission Statement



"STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and all media."

STC is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. It is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 18,000 members include technical writers and editors, content developers, documentation specialists, technical illustrators, instructional designers, academics, information architects, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, Web designers and developers, and translators - anyone whose work makes technical information available to those who need it.

For more information, contact the STC headquarters:

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Technically Wired

A proof-of-concept experiment in 1996, Technically Wired took the content of Technically Write and combined it with the graphical potential of the Web. Three issues were produced until the Internet Professional Interest Committee (IPIC)—as SIGs were known then—decided it was too intensive an effort for one person.

Links and e-mail addresses in these issues have been disabled, since they're likely to be extinct.

[September 1996](#) [October 1996](#) [November 1996](#)