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### FEATURE: Diamond in the Rough



I'm a diamond in the rough: plain rock on the outside, but glowing inside, just waiting for others to see the glittering potential I carry within. The process began in the hands of LSC immediate past president, Mel Haughton. As the first layers are chiseled away, a new stone is formed. [more](#)

### February 7: Three Guys on Interaction Design



Have you ever had an interaction with a product that felt more like a confrontation? Have you had the unique pleasure of experiencing a product that functions perfectly out of the box, like a natural extension of your mind and body, where all functionality is purely intuitive? The college dropout, Steve Jobs of Apple, said, "Design is a funny word. Some people think design [more](#)

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### Editor Corner

by [Jackie Damrau](#), Managing Editor



*"You can't send a duck to eagle school" – Mac Anderson*

Reflect on this quote for a bit. What is your wildest imagination do you think it means?

I know what I thought about it when I saw it earlier this week in one of the many inspirational e-newsletters that I read. When you think about an eagle, you know that it flies freely through the sky looking down upon us all. As it flies, it simply enjoys the view from 10,000 feet or more, or it is looking for its next meal. The eagle represents our national freedom, spirit, and pursuit of excellence.

I value the eagles in our community. The Lone Star Community is so blessed to have many, many eagles at work for its members. These eagles don't fly solo; they take the ducks and the fledgling eaglets and nurture them to become helpers, mentors, and leaders. My blessings have come through the support of our Administrative Council and the work they've been doing this year. I also clap my hands and bow to say thanks to the many contributors and my newsletter staff that have provided material for the newsletter you read each month.

I enjoy putting this newsletter together. I "need" eagles that are willing to step up and write articles. I know you're out there. I know you have thoughts and ideas for wanting to write an article. I encourage you to consider moving from being a duck into being an eagle. Especially those of who are looking for work, consider this one way of sharing with prospective employers your writing talents. Your portfolios may be thin because your past work has involved writing for proprietary software. Write a few how-to articles and use these to showcase your work.

Mac Anderson knows that even eagles need a push now and again. So I'm being the "mama" eagle and pushing all you ducks and eaglets to share your talents and experiences.

For those, who think I've gone afoul, I haven't. I'm simply reflecting on what life offers as I turn a magical age this year. What that age is, well, only a few of us know...

Visit to <http://www.theeagleschoolmovie.com/?SRC=WPOIDUCKM> to see Mac Anderson's 3-minute movie about becoming an eagle. As I said, my inspiration came from an e-newsletter.

Until next month...

[Home](#) > [Fox Tales](#)**Fox Tales: What are the Milestones on the Road to Philly?**by [Susie Lynn Fox](#), President

If you've been involved in any type of organization long enough, you soon learn there are some familiar milestones that traditionally mark the march through each calendar or fiscal year.

For me, the trip down the road is marked by the following STC milestones, leading step by step to the STC Annual Conference. These milestones seem like stand-alone events, but they're actually interrelated stepping stones.

**☑ Step One: Enjoying STC Membership Benefits All Year Long**

Before or shortly after ringing in the happy new year, the first milestone on my calendar is to renew my STC membership. I've found that joining STC for the first time and renewing my membership each year is a personal commitment to be proactive about my career all year long.

STC membership has many benefits, as Lone Star Community (LSC) Membership Manager, Jeanne Foster, can tell you. One benefit is a cost savings for STC members who register for LSC monthly meetings. There is also a cost savings for STC members who register for the STC Annual Conference.

Making time to attend LSC meetings provides me with an opportunity to learn something new that can help me in my daily work life and that will keep me updated on the latest trends and technology. Attending LSC meetings and participating in volunteer activities also provide fun, friendly ways to meet others and to network with folks who share my passion for technical communication.

**☑ Step Two: Learning from Others at the LSC Competitions Awards Banquet**

As an STC member since 2003, I quickly learned that LSC kicks off the year with a big bang at the annual LSC Competitions Awards Banquet in January.

This year was no exception, drawing many talented folks from the greater LSC community and also highlighting top entries in a popular Parade of Stars presentation on January 10. I really enjoy hearing about top-winning projects straight from the winners' mouths and having a chance to look at their entries, too.

I'd like to say a big thanks to Kathryn Poe who successfully made the cut as LSC Competitions Manager this year. She corralled a first-rate Competitions staff, herded a distinguished blue-ribbon panel of judges, and lassoed entries from talented professionals.

**☑ Step Three: Planning and Budgeting for the STC Annual Conference**

Now is the time of the year that I start planning and budgeting for the STC Annual Conference. STC's 55th Annual Conference and EXPO, titled the [Technical Communication Summit](#), is to be held June 1-4, 2008, in Philadelphia, PA.

Community and special interest group (SIG) leaders are also invited to attend Leadership Day sessions on June 1, which I found very helpful at last year's conference.



STC members who register for the STC Annual Conference by the early-bird registration date of March 17, 2008, or by the advance registration date of May 23, 2008, will realize cost savings and can look

forward to a wide variety of sessions. The hard part for me is choosing which sessions to attend, but that's a good problem to have.

In the meantime, STC receives and judges the locally top-winning competition entries from around the world, including LSC's top winners. At the STC Annual Conference, STC announces and displays international Best of Show winners.

### **Looking for Upcoming Milestones on the Horizon**

After the STC Annual Conference in Philly this year, next year's milestones will start appearing on the distant horizon. LSC will start planning for the upcoming 2008–2009 program year, the LSC Competitions Manager will start making plans for next year's competitions, and plans will already be underway for the 2009 STC Annual Conference.

Catch a ride now to join in the fun and learning as we look down the road to Philly and beyond!

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## Meetings

### Read about:

- [February Meeting: Three Guys on Interaction Design](#)
- [January Review: Annual Awards Banquet](#)
- [December Workshop Review: Intuitive Images](#)

## February Meeting: Three Guys on Interaction Design

by [Jim Korth](#), PR Committee member

Have you ever had an interaction with a product that felt more like a confrontation? Have you had the unique pleasure of experiencing a product that functions perfectly out of the box, like a natural extension of your mind and body, where all functionality is purely intuitive? The college dropout, Steve Jobs of Apple, said, "Design is a funny word. Some people think design means how it looks. But, of course, if you dig deeper, it's really how it works."

Interaction designers strive to create useful and usable products and services. Following the fundamental tenets of user-centered design, the practice of interaction design is grounded in an understanding of real users—their goals, tasks, experiences, needs, and wants. The Lone Star Community is fortunate to host three noted interaction designers from Perot Systems in a panel discussion at its February 7th meeting. The program is entitled "Three Guys on Interaction Design." Jim

Machajewski, Vic Case, and Kevin Mattice of Perot Systems will be the panel participants.

We all interact with products, but making those interactions enjoyable and easy take a special set of skills. Interaction designers define and design the ways in which people work with the final product, making our points of contact with the product simple to understand and intuitive in nature. So what does a good user interaction look like? And how do effective interactions improve the overall quality of a product? Our guests will explain why this aspect of product development is critical to a satisfying user experience.

With his Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications, Jim Machajewski has spent the last twelve years focusing on user interface and interaction design. Early in his career, Jim taught himself HTML, JavaScript, and CSS, and his focus as a consultant was on ease of use and simplicity of implementation, a definite "less is more" approach. His list of clients includes Verizon, Kinko's, and Hewitt Associates. Jim's work has been recognized by CIO magazine's CIO100 award for innovation. For the last four years, Jim has been the Information Architect manager at Perot Systems. His role includes user research, user interface design, interaction design, information architecture, usability analysis, as well as managing and staffing a team of information architects.

### Details

**Thursday, Feb. 7, 2008, 6:15 to 8:00 p.m.**

Crowne Plaza Hotel North Dallas-Addison  
14315 Midway Road  
Addison, Texas

**Directions:** [http://www.stc-dfw.org/pages/meet\\_monthly.htm#locations](http://www.stc-dfw.org/pages/meet_monthly.htm#locations)

**Reservations (Reservations made after 5pm on Feb. 4 are subject to a \$5 penalty)**  
[Click to register for the meeting now!](#)

#### Dinner (with reservations):

- \$20 STC members / Students with student ID
- \$25 non-members

#### Program Only Attendance:

- \$5 STC members / Students with student ID
- \$10 non-members

Vic Case has worked with interactive software development since 1991, with prior training and experience as a magazine editor. For several years he focused on interactive multimedia training as an instructional designer, informed by an M.A. in Educational Technology Leadership. He migrated to designing and developing Web sites by starting his own business, where his niche was crafting sites to help users achieve goals. He then joined in an Internet consultancy, where he worked as an Information Architect for major corporate business-to-business and consumer Web sites. He has been at Perot Systems since 2001 supporting the Tenet Healthcare account. Major projects have included an intranet publishing project using a content management system, a case management application, and a patient registration application. Vic has experience in designing user interfaces and interactions for both Web and Windows applications.

As a former Air Force intelligence analyst and Gulf War veteran, Kevin Mattice's entire career has been oriented around the collection, processing, analysis, and presentation of information. After 12 years in the military (the last three of which were spent training others in the intelligence disciplines), Kevin entered the civilian world of information design. Since 1997, he has held a number of different positions, including instructional designer, interaction designer, 2D and 3D illustrator, and technical writer. With recent experience at the Department of Homeland Security and Travelocity.com, Kevin currently works for Perot Systems as a User Experience (UX) Architect specializing in the design of Web- and desktop-based user experiences for the healthcare industry.

Jim, Vic, and Kevin are eager to share with the Lone Star Community the secrets of what makes for great interaction design. Please join us on Thursday, February 7th.

## January Review: Annual Awards Banquet

by Christye Fuller, UNT student

During the awards banquet on January 10, 2008, the Lone Star Community (LSC) awarded recognition certificates to two teams of technical writing students from the University of North Texas (UNT). These teams competed against 15 other teams as a class project to redesign four pages of the LSC Web site and copy-edit each page. Shannon Sawyer and I represented our respective teams at the awards banquet. This article is about my experience at the banquet.

Professionals, amateurs, part-timers, and full-timers mingled in the Whispering Oaks room at the Crowne Plaza in Addison, Texas. It was a dazzling venue for the stars of the evening to shine. Everyone was a star this night, yet a few shone brighter as they accepted their well-deserved awards. Shannon and I sat among the stars at an up-front-and-center table. This gave us the opportunity to listen and learn from veteran members.

This was the first time I attended an STC LSC meeting, but not my first contact with the awards process. This makes the years—eternal years—all worth it. This award is just one goal among many I hope to achieve in the coming years, yet this award is the one that solidifies the jitters I get when I wonder: Am I doing the right thing with my life? Did I make the right career choice? Is this what I really want to do for the rest of my life? And the image that flashes through my mind is a certificate clearly printed with the words: Yes! Yes! Hell yeah! You go, girl!



**CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL  
FROM THE LONE STAR COMMUNITY  
OF STC!**

## Award Winners: Online Communications Competition

### Online Help

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Intervoice, Inc.	Intervoice Banking 4.0 Installation Guide	Elsie Sanders, Intervoice, Inc.
Distinguished	Intervoice, Inc.	Control Center User's Guide	Kelly Burch, Diana Beebe, Intervoice, Inc.
Merit	TechWrite OnTime	RezOvation GT Online Help	Shannon du Plessis, Ben Littler, Mary Scheltz-Wendel
Merit	Intervoice, Inc.	Media Server 3.6 VoIP Single Server Installation Guide	Paul Rook

### Technical Marketing

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Content Solutions	Powerpedal.com	Louellen Coker & Brittany Bailey
Distinguished	Michaels & Associates	Michaels & Associates Web Site	Patti Quinn, Maggie Haenel, David Gauer
Excellence	Institute of Behavioral Research at TCU	Institute of Behavioral Research at TCU website	Charlotte Pevoto, M. Ed, Dwayne Simpson, Ph.D
Excellence	PepsiCo	Take the Security Tool Time Challenge	Barbara Randall, Sherri Areneson, Becky Lormor
Merit	Ariba	Ariba University Supplier Network Training	Rob Koczo
Merit	PepsiCo	Password Strength: It's All In Your Imagination	Barbara Randall, Peter Litwin, Sherri Areneson

### Tutorial/Training

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	MLink Technologies	Nokia 95 8GB eLearning	MLink Technologies Sara Lambert, Nokia
<i>Best of Show</i>			
Excellence	MLink Technologies	How to Sell Direct Mail eLearning	MLink Technologies Donna Economu, FedEx Kinko's
Merit	MLink Technologies	Account Vision eLearning	MLink Technologies Sadie Stanley, Critical Path Strategies Howard Hicks, HOLT CAT
Merit	MLink Technologies	Brinker Selecting for Success eLearning	MLink Technologies Pete Premenko, Brinker Intl.
Merit	Michaels & Associates	Using Docntrain for Client Project Mangers	Patti Quinn, Beverly Tester, David Gauer Michaels & Associates

### User Support Tools

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Merit	Dell Computers	Dell PowerVault Modular Disk 3000i Systems Installation Guide	Betty Littrell, Reed Williams, Robert Reed
Merit	Dell Computers	Dell PowerVault MD3000i RAID Enclosure Hardware Owner's Manual	Betty Littrell, Reed Williams, Mary Scheltz-Wendel

## Award Winners: Technical Publications Competition

### Informational Materials

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	Content Solutions	Jack Creek-Kurten Project	Louellen Coker & Brittany Bailey

### Quick Reference Guides

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	MLink Technologies	Nokia 8600 Luna Talk-A-Round Card	MLink Technologies Erin Meador, Nokia
Merit	Dell Computers	Setting Up Your Dell Power Vault MD3000i	Betty Littrell, Reed Williams, Rober Reed
Merit	Prodea Systems	Pro Pulse Starter Kit User's Guide	Louie Reynolds, Eric Lyk

## Software Guides

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	Hyphen Solutions	PunchList User Guide	Monica Winkleman
Excellence	Intervoice Inc.	NuContact Workflow Builder User's Guide	Shelly Wills-Gidelatorre

## Computer Hardware Guides

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Dell Computer Inc	Dell XPS 720 H2C Edition Owner's Manual	Karen Richey, Gary Haas, Gloria Salinas

## Training Manuals

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Michaels & Associates	UTI BTC111: Introduction to Electronics	Crystal Carlyn, Ron Obstfeld, Maggie Haenel, Teresa Gadlow
Excellence	RDB Consulting	HP OpenView Select Identity 4X- Adv. Product training	Rob Brown
Merit	PDI	PDI Users Conference and Training Seminar	Allison Emery, Jeannie Frei, Christine Granger

## Annual Reports

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Merit	Content Solutions	Bryan Utilities 2006 Annual Report	Louellen Coker & Brittany Bailey

## Magazines

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Content Solutions	Texas Coop-Power Magazine Local Pages insert	Louellen Coker & Brittany Bailey

## Newsletters

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Merit	Weatherford Intl.	Wildcat Wisdom	Veronica Hobson, Daniel Barcroft

## Reports

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	Galderma Laboratories L.P.	Galderma Laboratories L.P.	Cindy Kee, Bob Kling, Peter Sonnenreich, Kimberly Eby

## Scholarly/Professional Articles

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	Texas Tech University	Online education in an Age of Globalization...	Kirk St. Amant

## Books

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished <i>Best of Show</i>	Fire Protection Publications	Fire and Emergency Services Company Officer	Fredrick M. Stowell, Barbara Adams, Cindy Brakhage

## Documentation Sets

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	Garmin International	GPSMAP 5000 Series	Kirk Smith, Nicholas Semrau, TerrieMeade

## Award Winners: Technical Art Competition

### Annual Report Design

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Merit	Content Solutions	Bryan Utilities 2006 Annual Report	Louellen Coker & Brittany Bailey

### Promotional Poster Design

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Excellence	PepsiCo	Security Tool Time Challenge Poster	Barbara Randall, Kevin Kelly, Sherri Arnerson

### Quick Reference Design

Award	Company	Title	Contributors
Distinguished	Dell Computer, Inc.	Dell XPS 720 H2C Edition Setting Up Your Computer (Set up diagram)	Gary Haas, Karen Richey, Gloria Salinas
<i>Best of Show</i>			

## Award Recipient Photo Gallery



**Technical Publications Competition Winners**



**Online Competition Winners**



**Kelly Burch and Carol Faldet viewing competition entries**



**Dale Erickson receiving the BALA award from Binion Amerson**



**Mike Hiatt viewing competition entries**

## December Workshop Review: Intuitive Images

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

On December 7, 2007, Visual Interaction Designer Patrick Hofmann presented an all-day workshop for LSC titled Intuitive images: creating and evaluating usable graphics for international audiences.

We started our morning with a visualization exercise. How do you explain how to use a toilet to a community who has never used a toilet before? Do you use the human figure? Do you show different ways of performing the task? Do you need to consider the user's past experiences?

After several minutes of intense drawing and giggling, we came to the conclusion that, more often than not, we don't need to include the human figure in our instructions. Also, we should always show the simplest, most succinct way of doing a task. And ALWAYS consider how users are going to perform the task before you start writing instructions or sketching graphics.

When you need to visualize something—create mental images of instructions before you write them—think Origin, Action, and Result (OAR) or Intro, Cause, and Effect (ICE). Think first about why you are writing about this topic and introduce it (Origin or Intro). Then, think about what you have to do next (Action or Cause) and what happens as a consequence (Result or Effect). Always conceptualize steps at a higher level, with less detail, and provide information in small chunks.

The rest of this article presents the main points I took from Patrick's presentation.

### Keep It Simple Stupid! (KISS)

Only show what is necessary for the user to perform a task. For example, don't show all the details behind a VCR if all you're trying to show is one little connector. Visualize the instruction—not the objects in their true form.

Keep information to a minimum. Create 2" by 2" squares for each step and enter either handwritten information or text in 10 pt Arial. If the text doesn't fit in the squares, you have too much text and you KNOW to cut it down.

### Style Sheets

Determine the style of primary, secondary, and annotation text. It's hard to come up with standardized text, but if you think of it beforehand, you will save time.

Besides building style sheets for your text, you also need to establish illustration style sheets and build graphics of standard sizes. Even lines should have consistent weight. To ensure consistency, draw or render your pictures at the size that they're going to take on the page.

### Tips for Using Screenshots

Here are some basic tips for screenshots:

- If you have big screenshots, use a legend instead of using callouts.
- If you use colors for legends, stick with different tones for light/dark contrast.
- If you have light screenshots, readers look for darker items.
- If you have dark screenshots, readers look for lighter items.



Patrick drawing circles

## General Tips for Graphics

The focus of attention should be the heaviest part of your illustration. Patrick reminded us that exaggeration can be a good friend. He said that different sizes make people pay attention and notice something on the screen. Make one graphic bigger than the other to get people's attention and highlight the focus.

- Differentiate between icons and photos.
- Use different shades/tones of colors.
- Reduce proximity of eye movement.
- Simplify your message so you have less to draw.

## Tips for Creating Flowcharts

When creating flowcharts:

- Create vertical flowcharts most of the time.
- Use horizontal flowcharts only for historical timelines.
- Make boxes and lines consistent.
- Create breaks or stopping points that are clearly labeled, and make the tree trunk bold.

## Good Resources

Patrick shared a list of resources with us. We truly thank Patrick for giving us an excellent workshop and spending his day with us!

1. Horton, W. "Illustrating Computer Documentation: The Art of Presenting Information Graphically on Paper and Online." (ISBN 978-0471538455)
2. Horton, W. "The Icon Book: Visual Symbols for Computer Systems and Documentation." (ISBN 978-0471599005)
3. Dreyfuss, H. "Symbol Sourcebook: An Authoritative Guide to International Graphic Symbols." (ISBN 978-0471288725)
4. Modley, R., Myers, W.R., and Comer, D.G. "Handbook of Pictorial Symbols." (ISBN 978-0486233574)
5. Evany, M. "World Without Words." (ISBN 978-1856693196)
6. Mullet, K., and Sano, M. "Designing Visual Interfaces: Communication Oriented Techniques." (ISBN 978-0133033892)
7. Krug, S. "Don't Make Me Think! A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability." (ISBN 978-0321344755)
8. McCloud, S. "Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art." (ISBN 978-1563895579)
9. [Arts & Letters](#)
10. [Open Source Initiative](#)

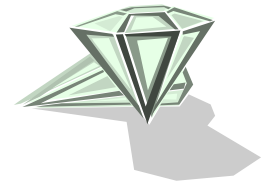
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**FEATURE: Diamond in the Rough**

by Christye Fuller, UNT student

I'm a diamond in the rough: plain rock on the outside, but glowing inside, just waiting for others to see the glittering potential I carry within. The process began in the hands of LSC immediate past president, Mel Haughton. As the first layers are chiseled away, a new stone is formed.



My experience with LSC and STC is the most rewarding and exciting, as well as frightening. My previous experience with the real world has consisted of which cut of meat to buy to efficiently and effectively feed my army of children. As rewarding as my life is, LSC brings me to a level that until six years ago, I hadn't even considered. Each year in college added a bit more confidence and direction. Now with the aid of Mel, STC, and LSC, that direction and confidence have focus. I always knew I wanted to write, and I always knew that it came easily to me, but I never knew the work that was involved could lead to such rewarding, fertile ground. The options and opportunities are unlimited.

I mingled with the bright-minded elite of technical communicators, and when I felt that I was out of my depth, someone would immediately reach out and pull me back. Sometime during the night, someone mentioned that technical writers are an odd breed. I must say that I agree with her, and the more of them I met, the more proud I was to be a part of that unique group. Yes, I've made the right choice in my field and imminent career.

Through STC and LSC and the guidance they offer, the world opens up and offers you as much in return as you offer it. Anyone who passes up the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful community, locally and internationally, is missing the close knit community atmosphere, camaraderie, and opportunities it affords those who join.

This room alone includes writers, editors, graphic artists, Web content managers, educators, and students. I'm proud to be sitting among them and hope that others will take advantage of the gift offered through STC and LSC.

I may be a diamond in the rough, but I am well on my way to starting the polishing phase of my journey, and I have Mel Haughton, LSC, and STC to thank for this wonderful opportunity.

*Christye Fuller is a non-traditional student majoring in English with a specialization in technical writing. She will graduate in the spring of 2009—an event for which her kids will be grateful.*

## Documents That No Project Can Be Without

by David Dick, Associate Fellow and member of Washington D.C. STC chapter

Short deadlines force project teams to quickly design, test, and release the product with little or no design documentation. If these documents are written, they generally are not well-written and are not comprehensive. The fact of the matter is that most project teams do not have enough staff to design the product, let alone write and manage documentation. This situation creates an ideal opportunity for technical writers to assist the project team in more ways than writing a user guide.

This article describes essential documents that no project can be without, why they are necessary, and how to write them.

### Why Well-Written Documents Are Not Optional



Did you know that the greatest inventors of our time kept intricate notes of their inventions? One such inventor was Thomas Edison. Although he is credited with perfecting the light bulb, he also conducted experiments to perfect car batteries, film, and the phonograph, to name a few. His lab in West Orange, New Jersey, includes a library of books that detail his inventions, including product designs, test plans, and test reports.

These days, most product development teams avoid documenting their designs because they think the proof of their work is the product—not the document. They are rewarded for products that delight users, not documentation that is filed away from sight. When management demands documentation, project teams claim that they are engineers, programmers and developers—not writers. Agreed, so why not hire technical writers to document the product design and leave the product development to the experts? Technical writers know how to ask constructive questions of subject matter experts, and they know how to adapt the writing style to the target audience.

Whether your organization follows ISO 9000 or CMMI, each phase of development requires artifacts (documents) for each phase of the development cycle (specification, architecture, design, implementation, and testing). No matter how large or how small the project, there are several artifacts that no project can be without, and that can be written with the help of technical writers:

- Project Management Plan
- System Requirements Specification
- Functional Requirements Specification
- Requirements Traceability Matrix
- Design Document
- Test Plan
- Test Report
- Release Notes
- User Guides and Training Manuals

### Project Management Plan

Every project needs to answer the proverbial questions: Who, What, When, How and Why. A project that cannot address these questions is probably a project that is doomed to fail, and failure is not an option. The solution is to create a Project Management Plan (PMP).

The PMP defines the project scope, tasks, schedule, allocated resources, and interrelationships with other projects. It incorporates the risk management plan, which identifies, assesses, and ranks potential risks to the system development project; develops plans to mitigate these risks;

and provides a control mechanism to monitor, report, and direct all risk mitigation activities. The PMP provides a framework for the project manager to conduct meetings, to discuss progress, issues, and constraints.

A project without a PMP is like taking an ocean voyage without maps and a compass; the project team has no direction and guidelines. Even if the information is written in a notebook, and the milestones drawn on a board, it's better than nothing at all. The PMP should be distributed to the project team and project stakeholders at the onset and updated as needed throughout the project.

**Suggested Resource:** The [Project Management Institute](#) provides templates and instructions on all facets of project management

## System Requirements Specification

Whether a project involves building a house, a bridge, or designing the next generation computer, it must satisfy somebody's wants and needs. A system requirements specification (SRS) (also referred to as the software requirements specification) is a document that identifies the users' (client's) expectations of the product.

The SRS must be well-written and precise, without ambiguity, because the outcome of the product depends on it. A well-formed requirements document identifies a product's functionality (a capability) that can be validated, solves a customer problem or achieves a customer objective, and identifies how that capability can be qualified by measurable conditions and bounded by constraints. The IEEE Standard 830-1993, Recommended Practice for Software Requirements Specifications, is an ideal source for understanding good structure and layout, and provides templates for structuring the content.

Business analysts follow a process that involves meeting with system owners, users, and project stakeholders to identify the product's context of use. The SRS forms a contractual agreement for design and performance of the product. The SRS provides a basis to estimate costs and scheduling, a baseline for verification and validation of requirements, and a basis for future enhancements of the finished product. That's why it's important for the system owners, users, and project stakeholders to work together to create the SRS; because once it is approved, any and all changes must adhere to a process to control changes.

A project that has no SRS has no agreement for the design of the product, and no reference for the project team to follow. E-mails, meetings and telephone calls are no substitute for an SRS. Mistakes made collecting system requirements are the costliest. Failure to manage changes to requirements causes the project to spiral out of control and run over budget.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. [Recommended Practice for Software Requirements Specifications](#), IEEE standard 830-1993
2. Donn Le Vie, Jr. "[Writing Software Requirements Specifications](#)."
3. Christel, M., and Kang, K. "Issues in Requirements Elicitation." Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute.  
(<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/publications/documents/92.reports/92.tr.012.html>)

## Functional Requirements Specification

When the SRS is approved; the next step is to define the internal workings of the product. The Functional Requirements Specification (FRS) describes the calculations, technical details, data handling, processing and other specific functionality. All of which are supported by non-functional requirements that impose constraints on the design or implementation (such as performance requirements, security, quality standards, or design constraints).

The FRS describes the required behavior, which may come from organizational or business rules, or discovered through elicitation sessions with users, stakeholders, and other experts within the organization.

A project without an FRS has no agreement for design of the required behavior of the product, and no resource for the project team to design the product. E-mails, meetings and telephone calls are no substitute for well-written FRS. The FRS must be updated when changes are approved to the SRS. And just as with the SRS, mistakes made in the functional requirements are the costliest.

**Suggested Resources:** [Task Descriptions as Functional Requirements](#)



## Requirement Traceability Matrix

According to Leffingwell and Widrig in “Management Software Requirements,” every project must have the ability to trace requirements artifacts through the stages of specification, architecture, design, implementation, and testing to assure quality software implementation. The ability to track these relationships and to analyze the impacts of changes form a key thread throughout many high-assurance software processes, particularly in life-critical medical products and business- or mission-critical activities.

Many project teams oppose creating the RTM because it takes time to write and effort to maintain, and brings no added value to the product—so they think. Allow me, if you will, to describe why the RTM is essential to every project.

The Requirement Traceability Matrix serves two purposes:

- Lists the requirements. Only by validating the product against the requirements can the project team verify that the product is delivered according to specification.
- Traces the origin of the requirements, and identify how they are satisfied; how they are tested; and what impact will result if they are changed.

Traceability matrices can be created using a variety of tools, including requirements management software, databases, spreadsheets, or even employing tables or hyperlinks in a word processor. It makes no difference what tool you choose to create the RTM, so long as it is well written and maintained.

Without an RTM the project team cannot verify that the requirements are met, and cannot identify affected system components when there is a requirements change, affected components allows the impact of requirements changes on the system to be determined, facilitating cost, benefit, and schedule determinations.

**Suggested Resources:** Hull, E., Jackson, K. Dick, J. (2005). “Requirements Engineering (Second Edition).” Springer, pp. 9-13, 131-151.

## Design Document

After the FRS is approved; the next step is to create one or more design concepts. The Design Document communicates decisions (concepts) on how to create the product. Diagrams show how functions and features work, the connectivity of components and, if the design is for a software product, diagrams the user interface. Depending on the circumstances, approval of the design concept may be a prerequisite before development begins. A well-written design document addresses the requirements stipulated in the system requirements specification and functional requirements specification, and how the design satisfies them. Scott Hackett writes in *How to Write an Effective Design Document* that the hardest part of writing a design document has nothing to do with the writing. The difficult part is working through the logical design before coding.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. [Writing a Design Document](#)
2. Hackett, S. "[How to Write an Effective Design Document.](#)"

## Test Plan

Every product should be thoroughly tested to verify and validate that it satisfies the requirements for which it is intended.

A test plan identifies the objectives, scope, approach, and focus of product testing. The process to prepare a test plan is a useful way for the project team to consider the efforts needed to verify and validate the acceptability of the product, and if it satisfies the requirements stipulated in the SRS and FRS. The test plan should be detailed enough to be useful, but not so thorough that no one outside the test group will read it.

Test plans should be written to cover the following types of testing:

- Integration testing is conducted to validate if the individual software modules (combined and tested as a group) function properly.
- Unit testing validates that a particular module of source code works properly.
- User Acceptance Testing (UAT) is conducted to validate if modifications or additions satisfy requirements. In software development, UAT is one of the final stages of a project and will often occur before a client or customer accepts a new system.
- Usability testing measures how well people can use some human-made object (such as a Web page, a computer interface, a document, or a device) for its intended purpose. That is, usability testing measures the usability of the object.

Without a test plan, people testing the product do not have guidelines to know which features and functions to test and what results to expect. Allowing testers to "play with the product" or "try to break the product" is not a substitute for structured testing.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. Japenga, R. "[How to Write a Great Software Test Plan.](#)"
2. Galvan, A. "[Why do we write a test report?](#)"

## Test Report

A test report is written by the individuals who tested the product. It identifies the findings and recommendations to fix bugs and suggestions to correct product defects. The test report should be detailed enough to be useful, but not so thorough that no one outside the test group will understand it. The test report identifies the tests conducted (e.g. integration testing, unit testing, and user acceptance testing) and results.

Without a test report, the project team does not know what features and functions were tested and the results, and cannot follow through on recommendations for correcting problems in order to qualify the product for delivery to market or implementation.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. [Software Testing](#)
2. [Dimensions of a Good Test Report](#)

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are the hallmark of a well-run meeting. They provide a record of date and time of the meeting, topics discussed, decisions, open issues and action items. Minutes provide useful information for people who did not attend the meeting and a written record of the proceedings for attendees. Meeting minutes should be written immediately at conclusion of the meeting while the information is still fresh in everybody's mind, and archived in a location that is accessible to members of the project team.



Without meeting minutes, the meeting has no record of discussions, decisions, open issues and action items.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. McKay, D. R. "[Taking Meeting Minutes.](#)"
2. [Minutes](#) from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Release Notes

Every product has new features and functions, system requirements, and installation instructions that users should be aware of. The best way to communicate the information is with Release Notes. There are many ways to deliver Release Notes: as a separate document: on the product's packaging, software products that can be downloaded from the Internet be presented on a separate Web page or on CD-ROM. Release notes contain specific information about a particular product version such as system requirements, installation, new features and functions, changes to the product or release, and contact information.

Without Release Notes, users do not know important information about the product that can make the difference between a simple installation or a disastrous upgrade. Release Notes are not a substitute for a user guide; and a user guide is not a substitute for Release Notes.

### **Suggested Resources:**

1. Ozibug: A Web-Based Bug Tracking System. "[Release Notes.](#)"
2. [Automating Software Management](#)

## User Guides and Training Manuals

If the project team does not recognize the importance of documenting the product design, it will publish a user guide and training guide. The user guide and training manual instruct users on how to use the product, but they are written differently and serve different purposes.

- A user guide provides information on how to use features and functions, procedures to perform a variety of tasks, and tips to solve common problems. The user guide might be delivered as PDF on CD-ROM, hardcopy, or as help files embedded in the application or system.
- A training manual provides information on features and functions, exercises on how to perform a variety of tasks. The training manual may be more effective if delivered as classroom training; a video on a CD-ROM might be an economical solution to classroom training for self-paced training.

### **Suggested Resources:**

Whitaker, C. "[The User Guide and the Training Manual: Learn to Write Both](#)" to learn more about the distinctions of a user guide and training manual

## Creating a Fire Safety Web Site for Teenagers Who Are Deaf

by Lacy Landrum, Doctoral Student at Oklahoma State University

I am honored to receive the Lone Star Community's (LSC) Traditional Education Scholarship. This scholarship will enable me to complete my dissertation research, which involves building and testing a fire safety Web site specifically for teenagers who are deaf.

### **The Research Idea Is Born**

During the last two years, I have been the lone technical writer for a series of projects in Oklahoma focused on fire safety for people with disabilities. The first project consisted of four guides customized for people with mobility, hearing, and/or vision impairments. The project's consumers received a specialized smoke alarm and one of the guides, which included information about testing and maintaining the alarm, creating a home escape plan, and preventing fire hazards. In addition, we created a fire safety DVD in American Sign Language (ASL).

As I edited and guided the messages through production, we undertook a second project focused on young children—a 15-day fire safety curriculum. We met with educators from the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf to discuss accommodations and how to ensure their students could benefit from the curriculum. During one of these meetings, a teacher said the best way to reach middle school and high school students who are deaf is through a Web site. The wheels in my head began churning as I realized my experience in Web design might enable a worthwhile project for all of us.

### **STC Experiences Pave Way for Current Research**

My experiences in STC have paved the way for my success year after year. For example, maintaining our STC student chapter's Web site at Oklahoma State was how I learned Dreamweaver. My first conference presentation, focused on Web design, was at the 2003 STC Annual Conference hosted by LSC. Now, STC is providing me another chance to succeed through this scholarship.

## My Dissertation: Intersecting Accessibility and Usability

My dissertation research challenges my Web design skills by intersecting accessibility and usability issues for people who are deaf. Much of the current research in Web accessibility focuses on people using assistive technology. We have assumed that people who are deaf should have few problems accessing Web sites because they can see just fine, though their differences in linguistic and cognitive processing are well documented.

I am testing this assumption, so we can add or revise any necessary guidelines as we finalize Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/>). I am testing whether people who are deaf can benefit from ASL video and more concrete navigation systems. Through think-aloud interviews with students at the School for the Deaf, I am also testing whether we can use instant messaging software, in lieu of interpreters, to facilitate usability testing. This technique could provide a cost-effective way to include in testing an often overlooked population who depend on Web sites far more than people with average hearing ranges.

## Conclusion

The results will benefit all of us, especially as we deliver complex safety information to those most likely to be injured or killed in a residential fire. Before I began this research on my own, the program knew of six families saved through the education materials and specialized smoke alarms. Now, by funding this new research, LSC can rest assured that you are enabling more lives to be saved along with paving a new path for Web design and usability testing. Thank you for making this research possible.

Visit ABLE Tech's Web site, <http://okabletech.okstate.edu> (and select **Fire Safety**), for more information about the fire safety messages and DVD.

## Keeping the “Love” Alive in Your Career

by [Louellen Coker](#), Senior Member



When I started my business almost five years ago, I'll be honest, I was terrified. Not terrified for the obvious reasons, which in and of themselves were pretty scary. I was scared that I was embarking on a journey from which there was no return. You see, until I hung out my shingle, I reinvented myself every two or three years as the result of burnout or boredom. The scariest question I faced when I accepted my first contract was: How do I keep the 'love' alive?

As my company approaches its fifth birthday (July 1), I am happy to say, that I've been able to keep those feelings of tedium at bay. How do I keep the spark alive with my business? Well, it's just like any relationship—I work at it every day. Here are a few ways that I keep the “love” alive.

**Read every day.** I am constantly reading. I read books, magazines, blogs, e-mails, and whatever I can get my hands on for both business and pleasure. Reading let me stay abreast of all that is going on out there, gives me new ideas, and often takes me away from reality just long enough to recharge my batteries.

**Learn a new skill or further a skill you already have.** I know that you've heard this one before, but it's true. There's no better way to keep a spark alive than to add some new spice. While I don't have time or money to take part in formal training on a regular basis, I do at least

one new thing each month. Sometimes I'll try a new graphic technique I read about; other times, I'll ask myself: What will happen if I choose this command?

**Exercise.** I can always tell a difference in my productivity and my spirits when I get in as little as 3-4 hours of exercise a week. Sweating it out through your exercise of choice helps you clear away the cobwebs and work through so many issues. So grab a friend, your dog, or your Walkman and take a walk!

**Do the twist.** While dancing is lots of fun and will fall under the exercise category, this is a twist of a different sort. Look around you and pick out the great ideas that others have had. Don't spit their ideas out verbatim, take them to the next level. Sometimes you can make a great idea fabulous by a simple twist here and there. (This article is a twist on a blog posting I enjoyed last fall.)

**Make mistakes.** I'll admit mistakes can be embarrassing and sometimes even painful. Don't run from mistakes, though, because the upside is that you'll definitely learn from them. Some of our best ideas come after making mistakes. Don't believe me? Edison made over 100 mistakes before he invented the light bulb.

**Work for free.** You may have seen or heard my name around the Lone Star Community, had your competition entry judged by me, read some of my articles in Intercom, or sat in on my session at an STC Annual Conference. I do quite a bit of volunteer work for STC and other organizations. I don't get a paycheck for any of these things, but through my activities, I have met some really neat people, been able to visit neat places, learn new things, and the list goes on.

**Review what you've done and pat yourself on the back.** Quarterly, I try to update my portfolio and review my accomplishments, failures, and areas in which I've become stagnant. We get so caught up in our daily lives that we forget our talents and how far we've come. We tend to discount our successes because we're on our way to the next one or a recent failure has us side-tracked. If you're in a stagnant or non-growth stage, ask yourself why.

**Have fun.** Though this falls at the end of my list, it very well may be the most important element of keeping the love alive. Turn your radio on, have lunch with a colleague, strap on a snowboard and go as fast as you can down a mountain. Do something every day that makes you smile—especially when you don't feel like smiling.

How do you keep the love alive in your career? Share your techniques with your fellow members on the Help Desk. I'm always looking for something new.

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### LSC News

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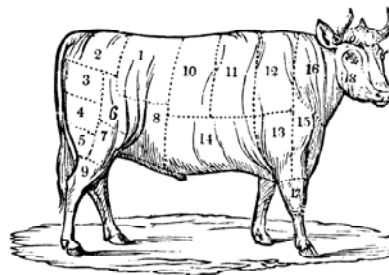
### LSC Notes and Committee Reports

Did you see Mel Haughton's article, "Lead Volunteers to Superstardom," in the January 2008 STC *Tieline*. If not, you'll definitely want to read this article.

Go to: <http://www.stc-cdx.org/tieline/2008/01>

### LSC Competitions Are Over!

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Competitions Manager



Cow design used with permission of the STC Phoenix Chapter

**Until next year...**

## **Mentor Committee**

by [Ann Balaban](#), Associate Fellow and Manager, Mentoring Committee

Early in their careers, technical communicators in corporate environments often find that technical writing is perhaps the easiest and quickest of the many tasks they perform.

Probably the most difficult, time-consuming chore they face is locating the information needed to perform the writing task. First, the writer needs to find the person with the required knowledge and then find the right way to interact successfully with this individual while navigating within corporate cultures and politics.

How do new technical communicators find the best mentors to help them solve these problems? One way is to take advantage of the Mentoring program from the STC Lone Star community. As a new technical communicator or as a student in technical communication, you have valuable resources available to you through STC.

Research literature shows that mentors provide vocational and psychosocial support to protégés. One researcher found a link between these functions and the career mobility of protégés. Research also shows that technical communicators have relatively high job satisfaction, but that their corporate mobility and career development is relatively low. Mentors can help technical communicators become aware of additional avenues for career advancement because they often know what is required for other positions and how to prepare for assuming them.

Having a mentor can improve your skills in organizational communication and management, as well as increase your overall productivity and job satisfaction.

### Resources:

1. Henrietta N. Shirk and Howard T. Smith, "Developing Effective Mentorships for Technical Communicators," STC 1994 Annual Conference Proceedings.
2. Gordon, Thomas, *Leadership Effectiveness Training*, Wyden, New York, 1974.

## Why Mentoring Matters

STC is always looking for new leaders. One way to locate and retain our next generation of leaders is by mentoring.

Mentoring can help STC develop new leaders while enhancing your career development and improving your technical knowledge. Besides all these great benefits, it really improves your self-esteem! The mentor's growth occurs right along with the protégé's.

The purpose for mentoring is to encourage growth of a less experienced person in their profession and within STC. Your experiences learning about and working with others qualifies you to be a mentor. If you had a mentor when you were starting out, imagine what a difference it would have made—if only I knew then what I know now! This is your chance to share your experiences, your enthusiasm for your work, and your interests with someone just starting out in technical communication.

In a mentoring relationship, the mentor and protégé:

- Identify objectives, goals, and development needs
- Define and establish a plan to accomplish goals
- Meet regularly in person, by phone, or through e-mail to review and evaluate progress

Mentoring is all-inclusive—no one is excluded who wants to participate. You do not have to be a student to be a protégé. Whether you are new to technical communication—just starting out or making a career change—or you have been a technical communicator for awhile and need guidance to jump-start your career, you can be a part of the mentoring program. Success is based on what you want to do. A mentor can suggest methods for advancement, recommend books and other resources, and offer résumé assistance and career guidance. As a protégé, you have requirements to fulfill, too. You should ask questions, listen and be open to suggestions, and keep the lines of communication open.

The STC Lone Star community is continually looking for mentors and people who need mentors. This is a wonderful program that benefits all involved.

Resources:

1. About.com: [www.about.com](http://www.about.com)
2. The Mentoring Leadership & Resource Network: [www.mentors.com](http://www.mentors.com)
3. The Resources Agency Mentor Program
4. Catheryn Mason and Elizabeth Bailey, "Benefits and Pitfalls of Mentoring," STC 2005 Annual Conference Proceedings.

## **Scholarship Committee – Silent Auction Helps Scholarship Fund**

by Robert Carr Harris, Manager, Scholarship committee



In January, the Scholarship Committee held a small silent auction during LSC's Awards Banquet. Many bid, yet only three would win. The lucky bidders were:

- Associate Fellow **Ann Balaban** top bid on a Spyder2express monitor calibration package, donated by Content Solutions in Denton.
- Member **Jessica Stowell**, with her high bid, won a Sony Cyber-Shot digital camera, donated by BearCom in Garland.
- Guest **Brittany Bailey** bid highest on a Camtasia Studio and SnagIt software bundle, sponsored by TechSmith Corporation.

The Scholarship Committee wants to thank the businesses who donated the wonderful auction prizes, as well as everyone who helped make this silent auction successful. All proceeds from last month's silent auction benefit the LSC scholarship fund.

Remember, this season's scholarships deadline is coming up.



The new application deadline is **midnight, March 28**. We are again offering two scholarships this season:

- The "Traditional Education Scholarship," which assists students who are pursuing a technical communication degree or certificate and who intend a career in the field.
- The "Continuing Education Scholarship," which helps professionals enrolled in workshops or courses in the field of technical communication or who are planning a professional conference to advance their professional development in technical communication.

Visit the [Scholarship](#) link on the LSC Web site for more information on these scholarships.

Thank you again for your support!

**Member Recognition Committee**

by [Mel Haughton](#), LSC immediate past president

Celebrate our newest BALA LSC Star!

**Dale Erickson, 2008 BALA Recipient**



**Are you a Superstar?**



Do you like making a difference and stepping up to help? Do you need a few more samples for your portfolio? Do you want to work on your networking skills? How about get your head around a new piece of software?

If you answered **yes** to any of these questions, then dive in and start volunteering today. You'll be on your way to becoming a Superstar!

You automatically receive points each time you participate in LSC activities. Points are based upon the activity and its point values and are listed in the table below.

LSC Activity	Points
Attend a monthly meeting	1
Attend a council meeting	1
Volunteer at an event	2
Contribute to a community service effort	1
Judge competitions	3
Contribute an article to newsletter	1
Bring a guest to meeting	1
Be a mentor	5
Present at an STC event (Local, regional, or international)	2
Speak to a student group about Technical Communication and STC	2
Convince a guest to join	5

Our Volunteer Wrangler will keep score from August 1, 2007 to June 1, 2008. Collect a total of 20 points to become an LSC Superstar. All Superstars will be recognized at the September 2008 meeting.

So, start volunteering today and become a Superstar and become part of the Superstar team. Winners receive a unique LSC Superstar shirt. The only way to get this shirt is to get involved and earn those points.

Send an e-mail to [volunteers@stc-dfw.org](mailto:volunteers@stc-dfw.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

**Volunteer Committee: Want to help a little?**

by [Mel Haughton](#), LSC Volunteer Wrangler

Have you thought about the difference you can make in someone's life just by offering a bit of your time? How does it make you feel when you need help and someone actually comes through? Does it bring you happiness? Does it feel good to get something done as a team?

Where I come from we have a saying: "One hand helps the other." If you give a bit of your time to help someone, one day someone will help you out as well. That's how we like to work here at the LSC. We're a big happy family, and we're always looking for talented individuals to help us out!

We currently have the following opportunities that would take a limited amount of your time:

- Edit our Web site (a two- to three-hour job)
- Be a greeter or help at the Registration desk (a 30-minute job) during our monthly meeting
- Write, edit, and print programs for our monthly meetings (a two-hour job)
- Write articles for our online newsletter, *Technically Write*. (The time commitment depends on how much you write!)

So it doesn't take that much time! And if you think you can spare more time than this, think about organizing half-day workshops or serving as an assistant to a committee manager.

E-mail me at [volunteers@stc-dfw.org](mailto:volunteers@stc-dfw.org) if you want to make a difference in LSC.

What's in it for you, you ask? Think about how you will increase your network! Think about the additions you can make to your résumé and your portfolio! Think about how many people will appreciate you for your efforts.

Send your e-mail to me right away, and let me know where you can help. I look forward to hearing from you!

## LSC Membership Minute

by [Jeanne Foster](#), Manager, Membership and SIN SIG

The Lone Star Community currently has 286 members. Are you one of the 286? If you are and you need advice on claiming membership dues on your federal tax return, check out the Tieline article, "U.S. Members: Deduct Your STC Dues" located at <http://www.stc-cdx.org/node/820>.



**New Member Spotlight** Two of our newest members are **Teresa McEwen and Donna Frano**.

**Teresa** graduated from Texas Woman's University with a B.S. in Mass Communications and has worked for Thermadyne for six years. She has been writing and consulting for the past six years in various capacities: marketing, technical, and journalism. Teresa tells me, "I am a huge soccer fan, play on a women's league, and coach for the Denton Soccer Association." Like many of us, Teresa joined STC to learn about the various facets of technical communication and meet other communicators. Welcome, Teresa!

**Donna** just took early retirement from EDS, where she had worked for 20 years, first as a technical training developer, then as a jack-of-all-trades, aka project manager. Donna tells me she "was a member of STC way back when, but so far back I think they lost the record!"

Donna hopes to forge ahead into the world of contract work as a technical writer and a training developer. She is eager to brush up old skills and learn new tools to (as she says) "prime the pump." Donna is currently taking an Information Mapping course and looking for more opportunities to learn. She feels that "obviously, STC is the place to be if you are trying to get back in touch with what is going on in technical communication today, as well as get a picture of the current job market in the field."

Donna's hobbies include, what else, reading! She says it is her biggest passion, "mostly science fiction and fantasy, but also nonfiction on an embarrassing range of topics." She claims, "I am an old Tolkien fan and a new Bujold fan, and I am very passionate about PJ Tips tea, dark chocolate, Starbucks® Mocha Frappuccinos®, and politics."

Welcome, Donna and Teresa! We're glad you've joined us.

**SIN SIG (Shy, Inactive, and New).** Looking for new people? Join us! The Shy, Inactive, and New Special Interest Group (SIN SIG) meeting is open to all our members. It is a great way to network before the meeting and learn more about our community. Please consider dropping in before the next meeting begins. Our number and makeup fluctuate wildly. Some months we have only newcomers. Other months, we have a mix of old-timers and newcomers. All are welcome!

**What Happens at SIN SIG?** Before the February 7th LSC meeting, we will once again meet at 5:45 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Dallas-Addison. This month, our guest of honor is Immediate Past President, Mel Haughton. Mel will share information about volunteer opportunities with the Lone Star Community.

**We Miss You!** Please help us find some members listed in the "undeliverable addresses" category of the monthly STC membership report. If you have contact information for any of them, e-mail me at [membership@stc-dfw.org](mailto:membership@stc-dfw.org):

- Eddie Hollon
- Rebecca Marsh

**Change or Upgrade Your Membership.** Upgrade your STC membership (from "Limited" or "E-membership" to "Classic") or add communities or SIGs to your existing membership.

- Mail or fax a completed STC Membership Change/Upgrade Form to the STC office.
- Download and print the form: [http://www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/memberApp2006.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/memberApp2006.pdf)

## Human Factors: Kelly Burch

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



Welcome to the Human Factors column. My intent is to talk to some of our senior members and officer 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 person the same questions each month and their answers will appear right here. Feel free to send your ideas and comments to me at [kpoe@ursaminorservices.com](mailto:kpoe@ursaminorservices.com) to make this information more useful to you.

+++++

**Name:** Kelly Burch

**Job Title:** Senior Technical Writer

### What do you actually do?

Manage and maintain assigned technical documents, typically by product category. I research and analyze content needs for new documents and content changes for existing documents. I design and develop new documents and make the identified changes to existing ones. I work with engineers and developers to gather information for content. I also have the responsibility for maintaining the departmental online style sheet and template. (And there are a million more things I could list here....)



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

I primarily work with Adobe RoboHelp, but we're in the process of switching to MadCap Flare and actually getting training for that (!). I also use TechSmith SnagIt, Microsoft Visio and Word, and Adobe FrameMaker. I build cascading style sheets (CSS), so I'm always trying to improve that knowledge. I keep my tool skills fresh by "pushing the envelope" on how I use them. Instead of doing only what is necessary to get the job done, I try to use new features when I can and learn tricks and tips to take my output to the next level. A little bit of effort can improve your value tremendously. Keeping up with new trends and technology is very important, and one way STC can help you. I attend conferences and webinars when I can. I read tons of articles, books, and Web sites to keep up and learn as much as I can about subjects such as online help and online documentation trends, project management, content management, information design, eXtended Markup Language (XML) and Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA), and so forth. Keeping fresh, up-to-date, and in-the-know is up to YOU, and it benefits YOUR career.

**Do you consider yourself a guru at any particular subject?**

If guru means that people come to me for help and advice about a particular subject, then I'd have to say that I'm a Microsoft Word guru—primarily by necessity. For many of my jobs it was the primary tool allowed, and I had to become an expert to get out of it what I or my department needed. I also am known (or so it seems) for my Web design and development knowledge and experience. That includes expertise in working with CSS.

**What is the greatest benefit of being an STC member?**

Meeting and networking with fellow technical writers and the collective expertise available through the organization and its members.

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

The ongoing knowledge I gain through membership benefits (including meetings and conferences) and networking with colleagues.

**What positions in LSC and STC have you held?**

- Lone Star Newsletter Editor
- Lone Star Web Site Designer/Manager
- International CIC SIG Newsletter Editor and Web Site Manager
- Lots of other miscellaneous volunteer tasks

**How can I get involved and if I do, what's in it for me?**

Just ask. There's always something that needs to be done. And, you gain tons of experience and exposure. It looks good on your résumé, too.

**How have you benefited from volunteering?**

One of the biggest things for me personally has been that I've met many of the STC members (locally and elsewhere) and made friends, which has added tremendously to what I gain out of STC overall. Being comfortable in a group lets you relax and take in more of the knowledge and experiences all around you at meetings, seminars, and conferences. Additionally, I've gained more confidence in my planning and organizing abilities that volunteering requires, as well as being able to add the experiences and results to my résumé and portfolio.

**How do I meet/recognize senior members?**

First you have to attend a monthly meeting, read the newsletter and Web site, or attend some other event where members congregate. Then, you have to overcome your shyness and introduce yourself and ask a question. The rest is easy.

**Do senior members/council members really want to talk to me?**

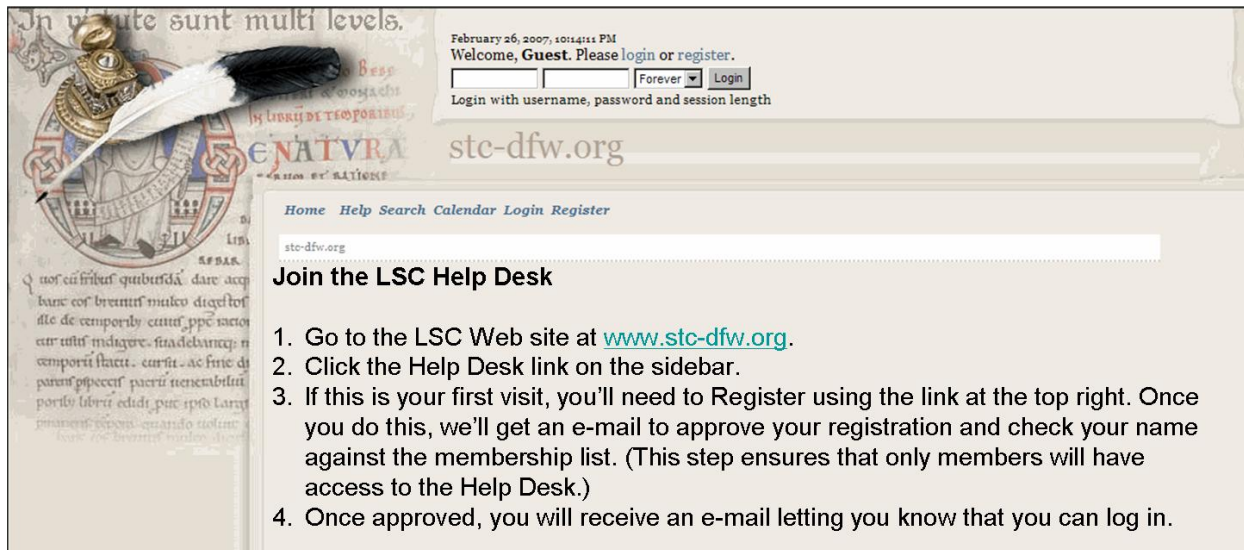
Believe it or not, I'm pretty shy and still struggle with meeting new people. I try to meet and talk to at least one new person at every meeting I attend, and I usually manage to do that. If someone approaches me first, I'm thrilled to talk to them and help however I can.

**Can STC really help me find a job?**

The more people you know, the better your chances of finding opportunities. I found out about my current position through someone in STC, and having the STC experiences listed on my résumé were points in my favor during the interview process. I found my previous job through the STC Job Bank. Once again, I got my résumé to the top of the stack by knowing someone from STC. Technical writing in the Dallas-Fort Worth area really is a "small world." Almost daily I'm asked "do you know so-and-so?"—either because they're interviewing a candidate and want to know the "scoop" or they met someone through networking and want to make connections.

## LSC Help Desk

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



February 26, 2007, 10:14:11 PM  
Welcome, **Guest**. Please [login](#) or [register](#).  
Login with username, password and session length

stc-dfw.org

[Home](#) [Help](#) [Search](#) [Calendar](#) [Login](#) [Register](#)

stc-dfw.org

### Join the LSC Help Desk

1. Go to the LSC Web site at [www.stc-dfw.org](http://www.stc-dfw.org).
2. Click the Help Desk link on the sidebar.
3. If this is your first visit, you'll need to Register using the link at the top right. Once you do this, we'll get an e-mail to approve your registration and check your name against the membership list. (This step ensures that only members will have access to the Help Desk.)
4. Once approved, you will receive an e-mail letting you know that you can log in.

## LSC SIG News

### Independents and Networking

by [Jo Byrd](#), CIC SIG Manager

Working in the consulting/contracting arena requires an extensive network if we're to be successful or if we want to enjoy more or less continuous employment. Sadly, we all need to expand our network.

Send e-mail to [jbyrd@byrdwrites.com](mailto:jbyrd@byrdwrites.com) for more information.

### 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

<a href="#">Alamo</a>	<a href="#">Alamo Tech Line</a>
<a href="#">Austin</a>	<a href="#">Austin Newsletter/Blog</a>
<a href="#">Houston</a>	<a href="#">Dateline Houston</a>

### STC Student Communities in Texas

<a href="#">College Station (TAMU)</a>	
<a href="#">Texas Tech University (TTU)</a>	<a href="#">Events</a>

## Educational and Networking Opportunities

Organization	Day	Place
North Texas PC Users Group (NTPCUG)	Third Saturday	King of Glory Lutheran Church
DFW Usability Professionals' Association (UPA) E-mail: <a href="mailto:dfwupa@yahoo.com">dfwupa@yahoo.com</a>	Third Tuesday	varies
Dallas Association of Women in Computing	First Thursday	Crowne Plaza, Addison
North Texas Adobe Captivate User Group E-mail: <a href="mailto:Walt.Stewart">Walt Stewart</a>	Third Tuesday	varies

### **February 19, 2008**

**Dallas InDesign User Group (IDUG)** will be hosting Lisa Niday from Adobe Systems who will be discussing "Transparency in InDesign – How to Design for Successful Output." Lisa will be presenting best practices for both designers and printers for successful output of files that contain transparency. If you have ever had issues with files with transparency, then you don't want to miss this meeting.

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**Location:** Clampitt Creative Center, 9207 Ambassador Row, Dallas, TX 75247

#### **Agenda:**

- 11:00 – 11:15 Socializing, Announcements Eating
- 11:15 – 12:30 Presentation
- 12:30 – 12:45 InDesign Questions
- 12:45 – 1:00 Closing and Raffle

To register: visit

[http://www.indesignusergroup.com/members/index.php?continue=%2Fmembers%2Fmember\\_page.php%3Fcmd%3Dregister%26event\\_id%3D521](http://www.indesignusergroup.com/members/index.php?continue=%2Fmembers%2Fmember_page.php%3Fcmd%3Dregister%26event_id%3D521) .

## Home > STC News

### STC News

#### Read about:

- [STC 2008 Elections: Candidate Slate](#)
- [STC 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Candidates Share Their Views](#)
- [Upcoming STC Webinars](#)
- [STC Community Events](#)

### STC 2008 Elections: Candidate Slate

The annual STC election will be held in March and April, 2008, and only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2008, will be eligible to vote. An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2008 allows members to receive their ballots via e-mail. In March, members who selected this option will be e-mailed voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive their ballots by first-class mail.

Be sure to renew your membership by **February 28** to have a say in STC's future!

Office	Candidate / Web Site URL	Candidate Biography URL
2 <sup>nd</sup> VP	Michael A. Hughes <a href="http://www.mindspring.com/~mikehughes">www.mindspring.com/~mikehughes</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=1">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=1</a>
	Larry Kunz <a href="http://lk81924.googlepages.com/home">lk81924.googlepages.com/home</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=2">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=2</a>
Secretary	Sharon K. Garrity	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=3">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=3</a>
	Char James-Tanny <a href="http://www.helpstuff.com">www.helpstuff.com</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=4">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=4</a>
Directors	Suzanne E. Guess <a href="http://www.210comm.net">www.210comm.net</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=5">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=5</a>
	Rob B. Hanna <a href="http://www.ascan.ca/stc/election">www.ascan.ca/stc/election</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=6">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=6</a>
	Hillary Hart <a href="http://www.ce.utexas.edu/prof/hart/">www.ce.utexas.edu/prof/hart/</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=7">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=7</a>
	Judith M. Herr <a href="http://wellchosenwords.biz">wellchosenwords.biz</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=8">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=8</a>
	Linda S. King	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=9">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=9</a>
	Rich Maggiani <a href="http://users.adelphia.net/~richmaggiani/">users.adelphia.net/~richmaggiani/</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=10">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=10</a>
	Lisa Pappas <a href="http://www.stc-carolina.org/tiki-index.php?page=Resume+of+Lisa+Pappas">www.stc-carolina.org/tiki-index.php?page=Resume+of+Lisa+Pappas</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=11">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=11</a>
	Garret H. Romaine <a href="http://writingdocs.blogspot.com/">writingdocs.blogspot.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=12">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=12</a>
Nominating Committee	Dia H. Burroughs	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=13">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=13</a>
	Carolyn Kelley Klinger	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=14">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=14</a>
	Carolyn Luttrell	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=15">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=15</a>
	Thea Teich	<a href="http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=16">www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=16</a>

## STC 2nd VP Candidates Share Their Views

### Lawrence D. “Larry” Kunz: Providing Value: STC Takes the Lead

Are you getting value for your investment in STC? Many members, as they renew their memberships for 2008, are asking what value they receive in return for the dues they pay.

I'm pretty well sold on the value of STC. Just last year I got a new job after spotting the opening on my chapter's employment page. During the interview process, I benefited from the experience I've gained through STC and the contacts I've made in STC.

But that's just one person's experience. STC must offer real value, consistently and across the board, to members and prospective members. STC will need to offer even more value to remain competitive in the next few years.

Yes, I said "STC" and "remain competitive" in the same sentence. STC is a business, and it confronts significant issues and stiff competition in today's marketplace. It's nice to think that STC is more than just a business and that it'll always be here. But the reality is that, to remain viable in the short term, STC must do better at proving its value.

Taking a longer view, however, STC has an opportunity to provide value in ways that go far beyond what's possible today. STC is uniquely positioned to take the lead in defining the profession of technical communication. When we do that, we'll provide significant and enduring value for our members, for practitioners who haven't yet become members, for the people who employ us, and even for society in general.

**Defining the Profession.** Ever since I joined STC 25 years ago, we've been saying that technical communication is a profession. But we're an immature profession, and as a result, our work often isn't taken seriously by the people who employ us and the people who buy our products.

To grow into a mature profession, we need at least two things:

- An agreed-on code of ethics. STC has its own ethical code, but it doesn't represent the consensus of the entire profession, and it's not enforceable.
- A unique body of knowledge and the expectation that each practitioner has mastered that body of knowledge.

The technical communication profession is desperate for leadership—desperate for a set of ethical values, an agreed-on body of knowledge, and perhaps a credentialing system.

Today, all of the pieces are in place for us to develop technical communication into a mature profession. We have the will, we have the know-how, and we have an organization—STC—with the stature, the broad reach, and the resources to lead the way. STC can assemble the building blocks for our profession, it can forge consensus, and it can gain buy-in among the significant stakeholders in the worldwide community of technical communicators.

**What Is STC Doing?** As a member of the STC Board of Directors, I'm leading the effort to formulate a strategic plan, or roadmap, that positions STC as the leader in defining the profession, especially by establishing a body of knowledge and promoting ethical standards. (We've already begun working on the body of knowledge.)

You might have heard the phrase telling our powerful story. The strategic plan focuses on raising the profile of all technical communicators and emphasizing the value we provide to our employers and to the world in general, by marketing our people and the work we do.

The strategic plan also emphasizes establishing and expanding partnerships. By teaming with other organizations, STC will strengthen its leadership role in the profession and position itself to provide even more value to its members.

STC doesn't need to be fixed. It needs to be modernized. The board of directors, along with the executive director and her staff, understand this. We know that STC must keep providing value over the short term while setting the stage for long-term value by defining the profession. We're implementing plans to keep the business of STC strong by retaining and attracting members and by constantly reviewing its suite of programs and services to ensure that they still make sense.

I believe that we can find a way to develop technical communication as a profession and continue delivering real value to our members—all without losing the social and interpersonal aspects that have made STC so special to so many people over our history.

**What It Means to You.** Defining the profession will benefit every technical communicator because it'll make us more valuable to the people who sign our paychecks. Instead of simply saying "I need some manuals and online help" (which reduces technical communication to a commodity, not a profession), our employers will realize that they need professional people who contribute value to the organization by increasing customer satisfaction and making products easier to use—thus easier to sell.

We'll prove our value on a much wider stage as well. By providing information that makes technology work for the people who use it, we contribute real value to society as a whole.

I'm running for second vice-president because nobody is better acquainted with the issues that STC will have to confront as it leads the profession to where we want it to go. I can foster a climate of creativity and cooperation in which we'll plot a course for the Society and the profession. STC needs leaders who can build consensus and explain decisions to the membership at large. I hope you'll entrust me with your vote.

The next few years will be exciting. Along with my membership dues, I've chosen to invest my time and energy in being a part of this effort. I hope you'll agree that STC's future, and the value it'll bring to you, is worth investing in as well.

*Lawrence D. "Larry" Kunz, a candidate for STC second vice-president, is a member of the Society's Board of Directors and immediate past president of the Carolina chapter. He is employed as a Senior Technical Writer at Systems Documentation, Inc., in Durham, NC, where he manages a large software documentation project. To learn more about Larry, check out <http://lk81924.googlepages.com/home>.*

## Introducing Mike Hughes

I am Mike Hughes, and I am running for Second Vice-President for the Society for Technical Communication. In this article I tell you a little about me and my vision for our profession.

**Who am I?** I am a Society Fellow currently on the editorial advisory board for Technical Communication and the Ken Rainey Excellence in Research award committee. I chaired the subcommittee on Research at the STC Academic-Industry Leaders Summit in 2007, and I was organizer and leader for the Sharing Corporate Knowledge Institute at the Summit Conference in 2007. I am also currently filling an interim director position on the board. In my day job, I am a user assistance architect for IBM. I have a master's degree in Technical Communication and a PhD in Instructional Technology, and I am a Certified Performance Technologist through the International Society for Performance Improvement.

**Who are we?** Technical communication is a diversified profession, one that supports multiple career paths and roles. Whether we call ourselves technical writers, information developers, instructional designers, content managers, or whatever, we improve the user technology experience by providing information that eases and enhances that experience.

When our profession was emerging, we stated our value in terms of the correctness and completeness of our documents and the clarity of the language in those documents. Then, as we matured, we started defining our value in terms of how we benefited our end users. And now we are taking our value proposition to yet a higher level: how we support the missions and objectives of the organizations that employ us. This means that our value can't stop at the quality of the communications we produce; it must extend to the effectiveness of the actions they enable, and beyond that, to how the improved effectiveness of our users benefits our sponsors. The list is long, but these are just a few benefits:

- **Increased customer adoption** because new products and services are easier to install and use
- **Reduced support costs** because product owners can maintain their own products better
- **Lowered medical costs** due to better patient compliance with medicines and procedures
- **Improved product quality and reduced production costs** because workers can comply with best practices that are easily understood
- **Increased customer loyalty** because the Web sites and other communication channels we create build communities of common value and interests)

**What should STC be?** If those are some of the things we are about, what should the role of STC be?

- Provide professional development programs in the core body of knowledge that defines us as a profession
- Show leadership and provide education in the emerging tools and technologies that direct our future as a profession

- Serve as our advocate within government and industry to articulate our contributions and needs as a profession

We have invested a lot of our society energy and resources over the last several years in improving the structure and governance of STC. I think we can quit reinventing ourselves now and put our new structure to work. We need to shift our focus outward again and ensure that, as members, we are getting full value for our dues. My main focus as an officer will be the following:

- Maintain a balanced budget that funds the programs that add the most value for members
- Ensure that our publications and conferences provide the content that helps members do their jobs
- Create a collaboration where members, vendors, employers, and academic communities help technical communicators keep up with the ever-changing demands for tools and technology knowledge
- Support a certification program through STC that helps our sponsors trust and understand our value and that creates sustainable careers for technical communicators

Visit my Web site at <http://www.mindspring.com/~mikehughes/index.htm> to get more information on my background or read some of my published papers. Go to my blog at <http://user-assistance.blogspot.com> and click the **STC** label to read more about my positions and thoughts on specific topics related to my candidacy.

### Upcoming STC Webinars\*

<p><b>February 13</b> Converting <i>Capitvate</i> Demonstrations into Simulations</p> <p>Presenter: Keven Siegel</p>
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**Time:** All Web seminars take place from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time unless otherwise noted.

**Cost:**

- STC Members: \$79
- Nonmembers: \$149

**Reservations:** Go to <http://www.stc.org/webinars/webinars.aspx>

\*Registrants are provided a toll-free number, a secure URL, and access to both the audio and online elements of the presentation.

## Other STC Community Events

### **March 14, 2008**

**France Chapter STC** will host its annual conference in Paris. The theme is "Communicating Europe" celebrating the diversity of technical communication.

For more information, e-mail [conference@stcfrance.org](mailto:conference@stcfrance.org) or visit [www.stcfrance.org](http://www.stcfrance.org).

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### **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 [www.stcatlanta.org/](http://www.stcatlanta.org/)

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### **March 28, 2008**

**Rochester Chapter STC** will hold "Spectrum 2008" at the R.I.T. Inn and Conference Center in Rochester, New York. Ginny Redish, a usability consultant for Redish & Associates, Inc., is the keynote speaker.

For more information, watch [www.stcrochester.org](http://www.stcrochester.org).

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### **April 14 – 15, 2008**

**Manitoba Chapter STC** and Red River College will hold their fifth annual conference at the Red River College Princess Street campus.

For more information, contact Brad Friesen at [Brad.L.Friesen@gmail.com](mailto:Brad.L.Friesen@gmail.com) or visit [www.stcmanitoba.org](http://www.stcmanitoba.org).

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### **April 16 – 18, 2008**

**TransAlpine Chapter STC**—representing Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Switzerland—will hold its 2008 conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

For more information, visit [stc-on.org/transalpine/](http://stc-on.org/transalpine/).

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### **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 [www.stc.org/55thConf/index.asp](http://www.stc.org/55thConf/index.asp).

Home > Calendar



February 2008

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 5:45pm <a href="#">LSC Meeting</a>	8 Time: Event	9 Time: Event
10 Time: Event	11 Time: Event	12 Time: Event	13 Time: Event	14 	15 Time: Event	16 Time: Event
17 Time: Event	18 Time: Event	19 Newsletter Articles due	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	

March 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Time: Event
2 Time: Event	3 Time: Event	4 Time: Event	5 Time: Event	6 6:15pm LSC Council	7 Time: Event	8 Time: Event
9 Time: Event	10 Time: Event	11 Time: Event	12 <a href="#">BALA Apps Due</a>	13 5:45pm <a href="#">LSC Meeting</a>	14 Time: Event	15 Time: Event
16 Time: Event	17 	18 Newsletter Articles due	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					

April 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		 1	2 Time: Event	3 6:15pm LSC Council	4 Time: Event	5 Time: Event
6 Time: Event	7 Time: Event	8 Time: Event	9 Time: Event	10 5:45pm LSC Meeting	11 Time: Event	12 Time: Event
13 Time: Event	14 Time: Event	 15	16 <a href="#">BALA Apps Due</a>	17 Time: Event	18 Time: Event	19 Newsletter Articles due
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			

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## About TW

### Read about:

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- [Technically Write Staff](#)
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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.

## Reprint/Linking Policy

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 e-mail: [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto: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

STC Lone Star community reserves the right to refuse ads.

## Inquiries and Requests

Contact the Managing Editor at e-mail: [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto: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  
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## 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: [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto: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.
- Use our Style Guide when writing your articles.

## 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
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### Technically Write Staff

Managing Editor: [Jackie Damrau](#)

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Contributing Editor: **OPEN**

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[Karl J. Morris](#)

[Jeanne Foster](#)

[Alan Oak](#)

[Melissa Haughton](#)

[Paula Robertson](#)

[Mike Hiatt](#)

[Arroxane Ullman](#)

[Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

[Monica Winkelman](#)

Contributors: David Dick, Larry Kunz, Michael Hughes, Christye Fuller, Lacy Landrum, Robert Carr Harris, [Jeanne Foster](#), [Paul Holland](#), [Jim Korth](#), [Elisa Miller](#), [Ann Balaban](#), [Mel Haughton](#), [Jo Byrd](#)

Columnists: [Susie Lynn Fox](#), [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#), [Alan Oak](#), [Kathryn Poe](#), [Louellen Coker](#)

Photographers: [Douglas Dow](#), [Dale Erickson](#), [Mel Haughton](#)

Photo Editor: [Douglas Dow](#)

Graphics: [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

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 IPIC 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.

**Jeanne Foster** is a lone writer for Jasper Design Automation, a privately-held electronic design automation (EDA) company headquartered in Mountain View, California. Besides technical communications, her varied career includes everything from government service to early childhood and elementary education. Jeanne is a recipient of the LSC 2007 Distinguished Community Service Award. She has volunteered as Region 5 Conference Registration manager and LSC Hospitality manager, and she is currently the Membership chair and SIN SIG manager. Beyond LSC volunteer opportunities, Jeanne enjoys beach vacations, dining at fine restaurants, and light-hearted banter with her colleagues.

**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

**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.)

**Jim Korth** has worked in technical communications and support for twelve years with Microsoft, Compaq, and IBM. He holds technical certifications from Microsoft, Novell, and ITIL. Jim previously worked in banking at Citigroup and holds a B.S. Degree in Accounting from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

**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.

**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**, Associate Fellow and past 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](mailto: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.

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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

**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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