



In this issue, you'll find...

- Susie's "[Fox Tales](#)"
- LSC Events
 - [April Meeting: No User Left Behind – Designing Online Help That is Helpful](#)
 - [March Meeting Review: Going Global or Going Native? GILT edged, or guilty...](#)
 - [LSC Elections for 2008–2009 Chapter Officers](#)
- Articles:
 - [FEATURE: Frame and RoboHelp Are NOT Dead...](#)
 - [Patent Careers for Technical Writers and Engineers...](#)
 - [You CAN Migrate to Office 2007 and Still Collaborate](#)
- [STC News](#)
- and all the other items

**FEATURE ARTICLE:
Frame & RoboHelp Are NOT Dead...**



FrameMaker and RoboHelp have been rumored to be on their death beds for years, and you would think that Adobe's announcement last fall of the Technical Communication Suite that includes FrameMaker,

Acrobat 3D, RoboHelp, and Captivate would have finally laid those rumors to rest. [more](#)

**April 10: No User Left Behind –
Designing Helpful Online Help**



Does searching through online help sometimes feel like you're digging through a giant electronic ring binder? When you enter a simple string of arguments into an online search engine, do you

get a listing of replies that are so far from what you want that you just give up? Do users complain that they get bogged down [more](#)

Home > Editor Corner

Editor Corner


by [Jackie Damrau](#), Managing Editor



April is here! March did its proverbial “coming in like a lion, going out like a lamb.” Now, we anxiously try to scramble around looking for all those receipts and other taxable items that we’ve squirreled away into shoe boxes, file folders, drawers, or closets so that we can find out if we’re one of the lucky ones to “get” money back from the IRS or have to “pay” the IRS. Life goes on!

This month’s column is going to be a bit of “this and that.” Y’all know that I read quite a bit of different things, both electronic and paper-based. So I’ve collected a few things that I thought you might enjoy.

1. To Doug Dow, I found your Soliloquy for the Semicolon on the Content Wrangler’s community on Linked In (<http://thecontentwrangler.ning.com>). A challenge you gave me, which I accepted. Here in print for everyone else is your poetry:



Soliloquy for the Semicolon
by Doug Dow

Blessings on thee, little one,
But you’ve left the job half-done.
Hard to see and oft misused,
No wonder you are so abused.
While literati sing your praises,
In tech writers it simply raises
Questions whether you’d be missed
In preference to a bulleted list.
And as to independent clauses –
I don’t care how long the pause is –
Cut it off, make sentences short!
Technical writers, this I exhort:
Rather than semis, few or myriad,
Make two sentences – each with a period.

2. Electronic newsletters that I recommend for technical communication professionals:
 - Writer's Web Watch (<http://www.WritingThatWorks.com/free-mailnewsletter.htm>)
 - The Content Wrangler Newsletter (<http://www.thecontentwrangler.com/>)
 - Workplace eXpert (www.workplaceexpert.com)
 - Information Week Daily (<http://www.informationweek.com/>)
 - WalkTheTalk.com (http://www.walkthetalk.com/information.php?info_id=16)

Until next month...

[Home](#) > [Fox Tales](#)

Fox Tales: What Is Your Technical Communication Advice for Dad and Son?

by [Susie Lynn Fox](#), President



As STC Lone Star Community (LSC) president, my e-mail inbox is full of a variety of interesting mail and occasional spam. As expected, some mail is from STC office personnel, and other messages are from LSC officers, committee managers, and members.

Sometimes I also hear from potential employers and people looking for work opportunities, so I direct them to the LSC Job Bank and to our upcoming LSC meetings. Other folks like to check in with someone before attending an LSC community meeting for the first time. So I encourage them to attend the Shy, Inactive, and New (SIN) special interest group (SIG) before the LSC community meeting.

In addition, I hear from folks who want advice about planning or transitioning to a technical communication career. For example, I recently received this thought-provoking inquiry from a concerned father and son (names have been changed to protect the advice-seekers):

Dad/Son Question: I have a son who is a junior at an area university and is majoring in English. He would like to be a tech writer when he graduates. He is currently getting his minor in business, but is wondering if there are other college minors that would complement a tech writing career.

Susie's Advice: Let me ask the experts on my council what other complementary disciplines they recommend (besides business), and I'll get back with you. My initial guess is that your son should find a discipline he enjoys and minor in that. And if he already enjoys English, he might also enjoy a tech writing emphasis or journalism emphasis. These fields might prepare him better for technical writing.



Technical communication folks come from many disciplines and also work in many different industries. Some tech writers work in the medical field. Others work in telecom. Some work in a variety of hardware and software computer companies. Others write business proposals, write grants, or document policies and procedures. Some work with the government in various facets. There are careers in usability, academia, accessibility, information architecture, and so on.

Personally, I have a B.S. degree, with a journalism major and an art minor. I worked in journalism only a short time before jumping into tech writing. When I switched to tech writing, journalism was a great benefit to me, especially the journalism writing and editing classes. Tech writing is a skill that you can take to any industry. In my career so far, I've worked in religious publishing, oil field, computer software, and transportation industries.

I hope these ideas are helpful. I'll let you know what other ideas my experts have.

Mike's Advice: Journalism or communications would be a good one. I'm partial to the print world having been a print journalist. Any of the tracks available will benefit a future tech writer. I especially recommend the writing and editing track or whatever they call it these days where the student works for the student newspaper or radio station. It forces you to get out and talk to people to gather information, return and write a story (for either print or broadcast), and chunk information (to some extent) so the story can be cut to fill the available space without losing important information. Many times you are working on deadline, which is good experience for the real world of shifting deadlines and rush jobs.

Heather's Advice: Well, my minor was biology, but I wouldn't suggest that to anyone. I think graphic design or computer science would be a wonderful complement to a technical writing degree. What school does the son go to? He may not even have to have a minor, it wasn't required at the University of North Texas (UNT).

Jo's Advice: Information science courses. Librarians know everything, right? Um ... no. Librarians know how to find information, extract said information, organize the information, and then distribute it. And we do what as tech writers?

Louellen's Advice: I agree with Mike, but would add graphics design in there to get a foundation in Photoshop, Illustrator, and document layout software. Go confidently in the direction of your dreams!

Kathryn's Advice: Yeah, I would say any computer science or graphics would be great. Those are things I have always been lighter on than I wanted.

Paul's Advice: I want to weigh in on the recommendation. I think Mike hit the nail on the head with the journalism emphasis. The ability to interview and pull out what you need from a reluctant subject matter expert (SME) is invaluable. If you take graphics classes, I think they should be more on what is good design rather than the software, because the software version used in class during junior year may be two or three revisions old by the time the student hits the real world. Plus, one frustration I know we have all experienced is some boss saying I like this or that, but not really understanding there are design principles that need to be followed, just like there are grammar rules. Learning the software is essential, but there are so many excellent resources over and above undergraduate classes, that are hands-on and immediate.

Chris' Advice: What area of technical writing is the student interested in—software, medical, hardware, Sarbanes-Oxley? Industrial? Classes in those areas would be good. As Mike mentioned, writing for an English class or a journalism class are very different. I had an occasion to use the same material for an English class and a journalism class. I got an "A" in the journalism class and "D" in English.

Ann's Advice: Computer science and/or any kind of science or engineering. They say there's going to be a big market in biotech so anything along that line would be great. I agree. This person definitely needs to take some journalism classes, too.

Rob's Advice: Hey! I loved my biology degree! All the suggestions that everyone has made are wonderful. I agree that journalism classes would be beneficial. The writing skills he would get from these courses would kind of transcend the advances of any technology. However, if he is interested in document design, I would recommend that he take those graphics design courses. Having those graphics skills is certainly handy, particularly if he wants to be the type of technical communicator who works in a design-heavier industry. Plus, design is just plain fun!

Kristy's Advice: I loved my biology major! (And, my psychology minor.) A minor in biology wouldn't be bad if he has any interest in medical writing. Any science/math-type degree would encourage paying attention to details. That's where most of the trouble with tech writing comes from, I think—lack of attention to relevant details. Let's also not forget that part of the reason for going to university is to learn how to think and problem-solve—not just to learn one specific skill.

Susie's Conclusion: I'd like to thank the LSC experts for their amazing array of sage advice! Their responses reflect the broad bandwidth of talents, disciplines, interests, and experiences that constitute today's technical communication world.



Your Advice: Now it's your turn to:

Drop a letter to the editor (newsletter@stc-dfw.org) and share your advice to the newest generation of technical communication students.

Moms, Dads, daughters, and sons want to know what you think.

[Home](#) > [Meetings](#)

Meetings

Read about:

- [April Meeting: No User Left Behind – Designing Online Help That is Helpful](#)
- [March Meeting Review: Going Global or Going Native? GILT edged, or guilty...](#)

April Meeting: No User Left Behind – Designing Online Help That is Helpful

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

Does searching through online help sometimes feel like you're digging through a giant electronic ring binder? When you enter a simple string of arguments into an online search engine, do you get a listing of replies that are so far from what you want that you just give up? Do users complain that they get bogged down while digging through a Table of Contents and never get beyond it?



On April 10th, Marlowe and Marc will deliver their "No User Left Behind" presentation that walks the audience through a proven, real-life help solution that is both user-centric and cost-effective. Learn how to

easily redesign your online help without changing your existing tools or processes and deliver help content your users will actually use. Marlow and Marc are authorities on designing effective online help systems. They recommend that to successfully help our users, we must first understand what they really want and provide that information when they need it.

We all like pictures. Yet, too often, online help contains way too many screenshots, requiring excessive scrolling which can cause users to get lost, especially if the screenshots are not right on target for what the user is seeking. Online help should have fewer screenshots than paper-based documentation.

Online help design often includes window field definitions, tasks, and reference information single-sourced from large user guides. Although comprehensive, these strategies often leave the user lost in a tangle of "See Also" links.

Users of online help often complain that all they want is a simple answer to a simple question and instead they get an entire manual handed to them. Users find themselves forced to move between several topics within online help to get the complete answer. Often, online documentation is generated from the same printed documentation source. When this happens, the online help ends up being structured in the same sequential reading format as a printed document, which is a practice that doesn't always work well with online help.

Marlowe Wakeman has fourteen years in technical communications experience across multiple industries. She currently leads the Information Development Group at BBS Technologies in Houston. Marc Bryant has nine years of software documentation experience developing award-winning help systems using RoboHelp, Flare, and ePublisher Pro.



Details

Thursday, April 10, 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

Reservations (Reservations made after 5pm on April 7 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

March Review: Going Global or Going Native? GILT edged, or guilty...

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



During your visit to the Republic of Ireland, you referred to the country as one of the British Isles. When you visited the home of a Japanese client, you kept your shoes on after entering. Visitors from China seemed to oddly take notice when you left your chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice. In each instance you made a cultural blunder.

Staying aware of cultural norms of other peoples and keeping your geographic facts straight is very important in the age of globalization. When creating documentation for non-American audiences, we must be sensitive to our differences with other cultures. Mark Clifford, speaker at the LSC March 13th meeting, delivered an amusing and informative program that illustrated the importance of maintaining this sensitivity.

Mark is the incoming president of the Society for Technical Communication and has years of experience adapting documentation to several cultures at the same time. Early in his career, Mark worked for a large aerospace manufacturer. Correct writing and translation of manuals for jet aircraft maintenance professionals is of critical importance when the technicians speak a variety of languages.

Mark outlined four important elements of getting cross-border technical documentation right by using the acronym GILT, which stands for:



- **Globalization**, which means correct alignment of product design, marketing, packaging, and support materials with a global product strategy.
- **Internationalization**, which is creating a flexible system architecture and processes for the product and documentation so that they can be easily customized to meet the needs of a specific locale.
- **Localization**, which means adapting a product so it is acceptable for the specific locale.
- **Translation**, which is the transformation of text from one language to another. Good translation takes into account conventions, idioms, and expectations of the target audience.

Mark noted that the average reading level of a population differs greatly from one country to another. Product documentation authors write for one level, but translators must then translate for many levels. Getting things right at the outset with the right translation vendor for a project's needs is critical. The original documentation authors and the translation vendors must understand all parties' expectations clearly from the beginning or risk a very expensive disaster.

Because of the proliferation of collaboration tools and the Internet, documentation writers no longer control content as they did previously. Every constituency within a company can find a way to get their hands on the material and wants to have their say. After documentation writers lose control of the process, it cannot be recovered. The complexities and nuances of documentation for other cultures make this problem even more difficult.

Mark recommends using a limited vocabulary when writing documentation that will be translated into other languages. He recommends using very few words and using each word in one way only. Only short words should be used, and emphasis should be on the use of simple words whose meanings are not easily confused. At the aircraft manufacturer, these practices were mandatory when documenting engine maintenance procedures.

Mark wisely advised that we all recognize that our world is changing. He urged us to learn about GILT and how these important subjects affect our work and our lives. Be part of the change. Vive la différence!

Articles

Read about:

- [Feature: Frame and RoboHelp Are NOT Dead... \(Mike Hiatt\)](#)
- [Patent Careers for Technical Writers and Engineers... \(Steven C. Oppenheimer\)](#)
- [You CAN migrate to Office 2007 and Still Collaborate \(Louellen Coker\)](#)

FEATURE: Frame and RoboHelp Are NOT Dead or Technical Communication Gets Its Due from Adobe at Last

by [Mike Hiatt](#), Senior Member



FrameMaker and RoboHelp have been rumored to be on their death beds for years, and you would think that Adobe's announcement last fall of the Technical Communication Suite that includes FrameMaker, Acrobat 3D, RoboHelp, and Captivate would have finally laid those rumors to rest.

Not so, apparently.

I attended the FrameMaker Chatauqua training put on by BrightPath Solutions in Raleigh, N.C. in mid-February, where R.J. Jacquez, a self-described FrameMaker evangelist and now the Technical Communication Suite evangelist, delivered the keynote address. In beginning his talk, he stressed his belief that this new software suite shows Adobe's commitment to both FrameMaker and RoboHelp. Which prompted someone in the audience to report that they had seen a post on the FrameMaker User Group the week before asking if Adobe was abandoning development of FrameMaker.

There were many interesting sessions, and I got to meet other FrameMaker users, including some from other parts of Texas. I thought LSC members might be most interested in the keynote address and the FrameMaker 8 session.

Adobe in Technical Communication and Instructional Design (Keynote Session)

The keynote speech focused on Adobe's continuing support of technical communicators for both traditional technical writing and instructional design with FrameMaker and Acrobat, as well as moving forward into the future with the new suite to provide the ability to meet the changing demands of technical communication and instruction in today's world.

Key trends that Jacquez cited as providing impetus for the creation of this suite were:

- **Animation in documentation:** We live in an increasingly visual world where people are, increasingly, not readers, but viewers. Animation engages them and provides access to content for those who learn differently. It can also overcome language barriers to some extent by showing rather than telling.
- **Rich media:** Demos, simulations, and "show-me" movies are part of the package for the future. (Captivate, which lets user's create demos, simulations, and eLearning including tests, is one of the fastest growing products in Adobe's portfolio, according to Jacquez.)
- **3D illustrations:** 3D illustrations with their ability to be rotated and exploded to expose more information are needed as documentation becomes increasingly globalized and visually oriented.

Jacquez pointed to the convergence of various document types as the future of documentation.

As part of this convergence of document types, increasing globalization, and expanding demand for visual information instead of or besides text, he talked about using “Show-me” movies in help files, information systems, and knowledge bases, as well as inside PDF technical manuals and training. Using Captivate to create these as Flash movies, there is no need to launch a browser window or player to view them.

Two interesting statistics Jacquez gave were:

- 94% of all PCs have Adobe Reader installed
- 98% of all PCs have the Flash player installed

Jacquez said the decision to add Acrobat 3D to the suite was driven by design engineering challenges related to trying to present 3D drawings in 2D. The solution, he said, was to add 3D support to PDF and then include the 3D PDF capabilities in the suite.

He compared the new suite to Creative Suite stating that once the company created Creative Suite for the graphics arts professionals and saw the reception it got, it was an easier sell for creating the Technical Communication Suite. Jacquez said that the new suite is a result of Adobe understanding what to do with the products they acquired in the purchase of Macromedia and using those products to provide the products most commonly used by technical communicators according to their research.

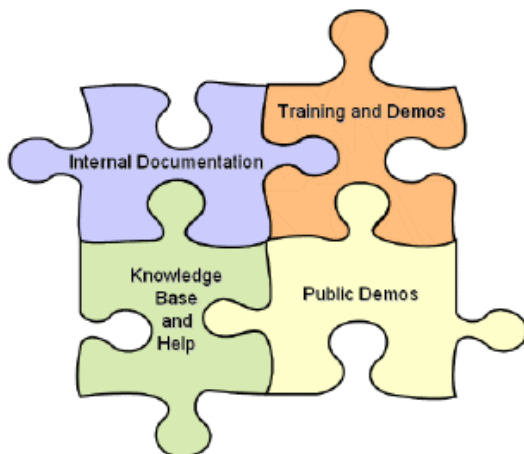
He added that he felt while the Technical Communication Suite was a good start and covered most areas needed by technical communicators based on their research, he could see the possibility that additions would be made to the suite, similar to the additions that have been made to Creative Suite over time.

He said that the new suite was not just a collection of products on the same CD provided at a bundled price. Jacquez said that buying the suite provides integrations of the products that are not available by buying the four products individually. For example, from within FrameMaker or RoboHelp, you can decide you need to include a Captivate movie of some sort (a “Show-me” film or software feature demo). You can launch Captivate from within FrameMaker or RoboHelp, create the desired Captivate object, and have it placed into the originating document without having to leave FrameMaker or RoboHelp. When the Captivate object is created and inserted, you return to the application you were using before opening Captivate.

Another example is that FrameMaker and RoboHelp (in the suite) have a live link between them that enables you to synchronize the changes made in either product with the other. This eliminates the issue of tweaking in the help tool not appearing in the source file or having to exit the help tool to open the source file to fix a problem and then regenerate the help to include the correction.

Visit <http://www.adobe.com/products/technicalcommunicationsuite/> for more information about the Technical Communication Suite.

Visit www.adobe.com/go/techcom_seminars for a variety of On-Demand eSeminars on topics related to the trends R.J. talked about and how Adobe suggests you address them using its products.



FrameMaker 8.0: New and Improved, but How

Jacquez delivered this session on FrameMaker 8. He promoted FrameMaker as the bridge from static content to content laced with rich media (Captive movies, Adobe 3D drawings, and so forth). While he said that they have revamped the user interface (UI), my take was that it has been tweaked with some obvious and some not-so-obvious changes. However, I don't think most experienced FrameMaker users will find anything that will hinder them when making the switch. (When I eventually upgrade, I may learn otherwise, but I expect most of it will be simply learning where they moved things I regularly use.)

One of the big things was that Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) support is built into FrameMaker. It has been moved off the File menu and now has its own listing on the menu bar. Jacquez said he sees customers:

1. Doing a pilot project to move from unstructured to structured.
2. Then converting the rest of their documents to structured.
3. Doing a pilot project to move the structured documents into DITA.
4. Then converting the rest of their documents to DITA.
5. Doing a pilot project to move from DITA to XML.
6. Then converting the rest of their documents from DITA to XML.

You can visit the Adobe Web site and look at the list of new features for FrameMaker 8.

The following features that appear in the table below were pointed out during the session. Some, like Unicode support, are extremely important for support of additional languages in FrameMaker, especially Eastern European languages, and for support of more than two languages at a time in a single FrameMaker document. Others are "what took you so long" features that sometimes got applause or a group "finally."

Sidebar: Install the Patches

by Jeanne Foster, LSC Newsletter Copyeditor

One of the perks of working on the "Technically Write" staff is seeing the next newsletter's articles in advance. I have trouble finding enough hours in the day to accomplish everything, so volunteering here is a way to guarantee I'll set aside time to read these great articles. So, when the April articles became available for editing, I scooped up Mike Hiatt's review of FrameMaker 8.0 in his article, "FrameMaker and RoboHelp Are NOT Dead or Technical Communication Gets Its Due from Adobe at Last." Between the attractive new features and the fixes for nagging issues (like no scrolling and no Undo history), I was sold!

A word of caution:

After you install FrameMaker 8.0 and before you take it out for a test drive, do install the patches.

If you are using a Windows platform and creating PDFs from your FrameMaker books, the patches are critical. The original 8.0 version crashes when you attempt to create a PDF with the default settings. There are two patches, 8p266 and 8p273 (also known as 8.0.1 and 8.0.2).

I imagine you're familiar with the term, "Your mileage may vary." But here are a few tips from my personal experience:

1. Back up the files you plan to open with the new version before your test drive!
2. Access the patches through your FrameMaker 8.0 application (Help > Updates).

(Note: If your IT people have disabled this feature, it's worth asking them to enable it. My experience with downloading from the Web site was not fruitful.

3. Choose the 8p266 patch.
4. After the Updater dialog opens, close FrameMaker.
5. Install the patch.
6. Repeat the process for the 8p273 patch.

| Feature | Description |
|---|--|
| Unicode support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern European languages are now supported without resorting to special mappings. • Word documents using unicode can be opened in FrameMaker. • Text in dialog boxes, including style names, will now appear in the non-English language instead of cryptic symbols. • Search and replace can be done with the language required instead of the cryptic symbols. • Text converted to PDF bookmarks will appear in their language instead of as cryptic symbols. |
| Support for mouse scroll wheels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FrameMaker 8 natively supports the scroll wheels on mouse devices — finally. No more trying to find a driver that makes the scroll wheel work, but doesn't cause other flaky mouse actions. |
| Track Text Edits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to Word's feature, but far more limited. Deleted text is red with a strikethrough while inserted text is green. No support for multiple editors with different colors of text. • Can accept or reject edits individually or collectively. • Has a preview function that lets you see how the document would look showing the inserted text with the color turned off. Exiting preview shows all the changes with their colors. |
| Enhanced Conditional Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditional text uses the the familiar interface with some additional dialogs for the new features. • One new feature is the "Expression Designer" which lets users create custom expressions to set rules for conditions using AND / OR / NOT rules. • Users can create custom colors for conditions and applying multiple conditions no longer produces magenta, but a color based on mixing the colors of the applied conditions (for example, applying conditions set to red and yellow to the same text will produce orange). |
| Filter bases on attributes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the structured world, users can filter based on attributes to provide more control. |
| XML enhancements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New XML templates and structured applications are included as part of FrameMaker. |
| Font preview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Font previews pop up when rolling over fonts on the Format/Font menu or in the Paragraph Style Designer. |
| Direct PDF creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Save to PDF and Save to PDF (send for review) options on the File menu. • Replaces having to select File/Save As and then pick PDF in the Save as type field and, if sending for review, having to open the file and turn on commenting. |
| DITA support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More DITA support. DITA now has its own menu bar item. |
| View tabbed bar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides tabs of all open documents with their file name displayed so you can file them easily when multiple files are open. Very nice! |
| Additional template for structured FrameMaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional templates have been added for structured FrameMaker. The templates have been included in the Samples and More Samples dialog boxes. |
| Acrobat 3D support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My notes on this are a little unclear, but I believe it works this way: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FrameMaker will import a PDF created from a 3D drawing using Acrobat 3D (included in the Technical Communication Suite). ○ When a PDF is created from the FrameMaker 8 file, Acrobat can then manipulate the 3D file with all the available 3D tools to rotate the drawing, explode it, and so forth, from within Acrobat. |
| Support for Captivate creations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FrameMaker can import a Captivate creation into an anchored frame and the Captivate file will run in a PDF file created from the FrameMaker file. This may also work for other conversions from the FrameMaker file, such as ePublisher output. |

Patent Careers For Technical Writers and Engineers, Scientists, and Medical Professionals

by Steven C. Oppenheimer, Licensed U.S. Patent Agent (*Reprinted with author's permission*)
Copyright © 2008 Steven C. Oppenheimer, <http://www.OppenheimerCommunications.com>

After working more than fifteen years working as a freelance technical writer, I discovered another career option that draws heavily on my technical writing background and potentially offers significantly better money. The purpose of this article is to help other technical writers decide if they want to explore this interesting option. This same career option is also open to scientists (in physical, chemical, and biological sciences), engineers, and doctors. (Possibly nurses, too – read on....)

Please bear in mind that what I describe here applies exclusively to the career option of being a patent agent in the United States of America – I have no idea if there are parallel career options in other countries, though possibly similar career options exist!

What Is A Patent Agent?

Let's start by defining both patents and patent agents.



A **patent** is a legal document which describes a new invention, and in particular characterizes those aspects of the invention which are really “new” or “inventive”. A patent has several parts, but the crucial parts are the detailed discussion of the invention (sometimes referred to informally as “the disclosure”) and the claims.

The disclosure gives an overall description of the invention, in sufficient detail that someone who is well-versed in the overall field of technology at hand could build the invention based on the disclosure. The claims are a section of the patent which—by means of very specific, structured legal language and conventions—indicate precisely the aspects of the technology that the inventor asserts are original, and which should therefore be protected by law as his or her unique invention.

In the United States, inventors are legally permitted to draft patent applications for their own inventions. Most inventors, however, recognize that drafting an effective patent requires specialized training. As such, they turn to patent attorneys or patent agents to draft their patents for them. Patent attorneys and **patent agents** are licensed to draft, file, and prosecute patents on behalf of inventors.

“Drafting” a patent application entails gathering necessary information from the inventors and writing up the patent application. Patent “prosecution” entails a kind of legal dance between the patent applicant and the United States Patent and Trademark Office, or USPTO. It is common for the USPTO to initially reject all or most of the claims in a patent application. The claims can be rejected on various legal grounds, but the typical reason is that there is a prior public disclosure, in the form of a prior patent or other publication which the Patent Examiner considers to anticipate the claimed invention. (Sometimes the Patent Examiner argues not that patent application is anticipated by a single existing invention, but rather that the application is “obvious” in light of a combination of existing technologies. These details are not central to our discussion here, so for now we’ll just lump it all under “anticipation”.)

In other words, Patent Examiners at the USPTO will argue that someone else got there first. The patent applicant or applicants—typically represented by their attorney or agent—may then either amend the patent claims, or present factual arguments that the claims are not actually anticipated by prior inventions. Sometimes the attorney/agent will do a combination of both, amending some claims while trying to argue around other rejections. This dance can go through one or more rounds, and sometimes winds up going through administrative appeals within the USPTO. (It can even go beyond the USPTO, into the court system.)

Both patent agents and patent attorneys are licensed to fully represent inventors in all respects before the USPTO. In other words, from the standpoint of patent prosecution with the USPTO, there is no practical difference between a patent agent and a patent attorney.

The difference is, a patent attorney can also represent an inventor in various legal proceedings which may take place in courts beyond the jurisdiction of the USPTO. In addition, attorneys can advise inventors on contractual issues, licensing issues, and other legal matters which are beyond the strict scope of patent filing and prosecution. Still, there is a lot of work to be done just in the realm of patent filing and prosecution, more than enough to keep a patent agent very busy!

A patent agent, under the supervision of a licensed patent attorney, may also engage in “opinion” work. This means, typically, giving legal advice to a client about whether one of their inventions violates a patent claim of another patent (usually from another company or inventor), or whether a competing product violates one of their patents.

How To Become A Patent Agent

Drafting and prosecuting patent applications is not exactly the same as technical writing, but there is significant overlap in the skills involved. Certainly, it is crucial to be able to work with subject matter experts (like engineers or biologists) to gather technical information, and further to be able to write up the information in clear language. Drafting the patent claims involves additional legal skills that would be new to technical writers, but it certainly can be learned.

In the U.S., however, there are strict limits on who can become a patent agent. On the one hand, a law degree is not required. On the other hand, there is a licensing exam which is administered by the USPTO. In order to qualify for the exam, you must have significant technical training in a field such as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, chemistry, biology, physics, or medicine. (Studies in math are not considered acceptable, but computer science is. Also, please note this is not a full list of the allowed technical backgrounds; you can obtain that from the USPTO Web site, as described further below.)

As such, the patent agent field is wide open both to technical writers with the necessary academic training, and also to engineers, scientists and medical professionals who want to make a switch, and who enjoy working with the written word.

Typically, you must have at least an undergraduate degree in one of the appropriate fields, or the equivalent. In my own case, my college degree was for a kind of independent major, self-designed program of study; however, I was able to provide the USPTO with documentation showing that I had essentially completed all the coursework that one would normally take for a physics major. That was enough to qualify to take the test. The exact requirements for being able to take the test can be found at: <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/oed/examregist.htm> (Click on the link for “General Requirements Bulletin” for a .pdf file that lists the exact requirements.)

Once you apply and qualify for the test, you must take the test, which consists of 100 multiple choice questions! (90 of the questions are actually graded, the other 10 will be “questions under development” by the USPTO.) Studying for the test is an entire art in itself, and perhaps I'll write a separate article on that at some point. In essence, however, the licensing test is not a technical test—if you qualified to take the test, it's assumed you know something about technology or science already—instead, it's a test on law and administrative issues related to patents. It's a very detailed test, and the pass rate is not all that high. In other words, you really need to study for it.

Everything you need to know about patent law and regulations can be found in a book called the MPEP, or Manual Of Patent Examining Procedure, which can be downloaded from the USPTO web site. Unfortunately, it's about 3000 pages long (really), and it's hard to know exactly what to study from that book! When I took the test, I was able to study off of old tests, which can also be downloaded from the USPTO web site at <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/oed/pastexams.htm>.

However, in 2005 the USPTO switched from paper tests to an electronic testing system. They no longer publish recent test questions, and the existing old tests (from 2003 and before) become progressively more out of date as the patent law and regulations evolve over time. However, I would not completely ignore these old tests. While the specific questions and answers may become dated over time, the types of questions on the old tests still reflect, at least in a broad sense, the kinds of issues likely to be raised in the future.

There are patent prep course which you can take, and others which can be obtained via mail-order. They are not cheap (expect to spend anywhere from \$1000 to \$5000), but if you are determined to make a career transition the prep courses may help you pass the test. For what it's worth, however, I managed to pass the test my first time, simply by working off of some books I found on patent law at a legal bookstore, plus studying off the old tests.

Here is a link to a site where you can get more advice on studying for the patent agent/attorney licensing exam. (Agents and attorneys both take the exact same exam.) Visit <http://www.intelproplaw.com/>, go to the "forums", and find the discussions on patent careers. There are also discussion groups on Usenet related to patent law, where you can get advice. (See the newsgroup misc.int-prop)

Here is one site (among dozens that you will find, if you search the Web) for course materials you can find for the patent bar: <http://www.patentpublishing.com/index.html>

Career Opportunities As A Patent Agent

What are the career opportunities as a patent agent?

I was surprised, after getting my license from the USPTO, that I did not immediately land work with a law firm. I would have thought that my extensive experience as a tech writer would have made me highly attractive to the law firms. What I found is that some law firms, including both general-practice law firms and intellectual property boutiques, seem to be more interested in recent law school grads than in experienced tech writers. Partly, I think it's because they are simply not familiar with technical writers; not that many people make the transition from tech writing to patent work. Partly, however, I think there is a bias on the part of some professionals in the legal community towards lawyers.

Note: For what it's worth, I was also seeking flexible hours, and that was almost surely a factor in some law firms being less than fully enthusiastic. If you are willing to work conventional hours, that will be one less obstacle in your way.

That said, some patent law firms (and some general practice law firms) will hire technical specialists, meaning people who have technical backgrounds, even if they are not licensed as patent agents. (Some firms use titles other than "technical specialist", but the idea is the same.) Often, they are seeking people with advanced degrees (M.S., Ph.D., or M.D.), but some of them will be open to candidates with a B.A., B.S., or B.S.E., especially if you do have the technical writing experience on top of that. Extensive experience as an engineer, scientist, or medical professional can also be highly attractive to some of these firms.

If you've passed the patent bar prior to even applying for work—so you are a patent agent, instead of just a technical specialist—that can elevate you above other candidates for technical specialist jobs. On the other hand, even if you have not yet passed the patent bar, some firms will hire you as a technical specialist. The experience you get at the law firm can help you understand the legal and administrative issues that you will encounter on the test itself.

So the bottom line is, not all law firms engaged in patent work will be open to patent agents (or technical specialists), but some will. In addition, some private corporations draft their own patents in-house, and will be open to working with patent agents/tech specialists.



Another issue is experience. Many law firms, and probably some private companies, want someone who is experienced in drafting claims and prosecuting the patent through the actual award of the patent. So, as with work in many fields, getting that first job may take some real persistence. (In my case, it took about six months from getting my license to getting an actual job offer.) But it's pretty clear to me that once you've gotten experience on that first job, more opportunities will open up if you decide to move on.

Also, the money-earning potential is very good. A starting position as a licensed patent agent could easily afford you the same kind of earnings usually seen by senior level technical writers. (I've checked the salary stats on this – a patent agent at two years can make as much or more as a technical writer at ten or fifteen years.) The mere fact that a license is required to do the job (and a license that requires passing a hard test!) elevates the position from non-licensed tech writing work. I'm not as sure how the patent agent salaries compare to salaries for engineers or medical professionals, but I'll bet the patent agent salaries easily match what most scientists can earn.

From Patent Agent To Patent Attorney

A final, very important perk is that—and, this is a whole other branch of this career path—if you do get a job with a law firm and decide to pursue a law degree, many firms will reduce your full-time requirements while you go to law school at night, and may help pay your law school tuition. So, this is a potential route to making the transition from tech writer/scientist/engineer/doctor to patent attorney. A lot of work, but with the potential for large financial rewards.

The Washington, DC area is particularly fertile for patent work, because so much of patent work revolves around interaction with the USPTO. (For example, it's convenient to be able to meet on occasion with Patent Examiners.) However, most large cities and most major high tech corridors around the U.S. will have at least some law firms that do patent work. Before deciding to pursue a career as a patent agent, you might want to investigate the career possibilities in your geographic area.

Finally, it's worth noting that there are independent patent agents. It's probably hard to start out this way—again, companies want you to have experience before sending work your way—but once you've been in the field for some years, you can probably set up shop on your own as an independent consultant.

Working As A Patent Agent

I have been employed as a patent agent for close to two years now, but in some respects I'm still learning what the job is about. (There's a lot to learn!) But, there are at least a few things I can share:

First, if you work at a law firm, expect to juggle many projects for many clients at the same time. You will not be working on one patent, you will be working on six or eight or possibly twenty. The work tends to be stop and go in nature.

As a beginner, you will do some work on a project and then have it reviewed by more senior staff before continuing. But even as an experienced patent agent, the work has breaks and pauses. A client may send you preliminary information about an invention, and you can start to do some researching and writing, but then put the project on hold until you can interview the inventor or another subject matter expert. Once you've drafted the patent, it will probably be reviewed by another, more experienced legal professional, as well as by the client, before finishing touches are put in place. So, you can see the need to have multiple projects in the pipeline.

In addition to drafting patents, you can also expect to be involved in patent prosecution, meaning you will reply to correspondence from the patent office. As indicated above, the work entails determining whether rejections raised by the patent office are in fact valid, and then either revising the claims in your patent or arguing the merits of the patent vs. the prior references (prior inventions cited by the patent office).

The writing itself is also different from technical writing. There are a host of legal requirements, both formal (meaning things you must do in drafting a patent) and prudent (meaning things that are not legally

mandatory, but that make for a better, stronger patent application). You can expect to constantly encounter new technologies, and you will be called upon to grasp the essence of those technologies quickly.

One thing that I've found particularly challenging is the need to sometimes be more general in my writing. As a technical writer, filling in the details—and filling them in early in a document—was often crucial to clearly conveying an understanding of a technology. With patents, by contrast, the goal is to define the invention clearly, but at the same time to not narrow the invention too much; the ideal patent “claims” the invention as broadly as possible. (The objective is to exclude competitors from gaining patents on inventions that are essentially or substantially the same, with only minor differences).

Broadly speaking, however, the work calls upon the same kinds of writing skills, thinking skills, and people skills as technical writing, while providing a somewhat different challenge, and significantly better opportunities for pay.

A Related Path: Patent Examiner



In addition to opportunities as a patent agent or attorney, another option is to become a patent examiner. Patent examiners work for the United States Patent And Trademark Office (or similar agencies in other countries). Their job is to review patent applications and determine whether or not the applications meet the criteria for patentability (such as the invention being novel, non-obvious, and other criteria).

The USPTO provides free training for its patent examiners, and of course the job can provide the kind of security typically associated with government employment. An additional benefit is that, after some years working as a patent examiner, examiners can automatically be licensed as patent agents without having to take the licensing exam. (I don't know the number of years required, but that information is available from the USPTO. I think [fuzzy memory at work here...] it's on the order of five years or so, so it is not as if you need to spend a lifetime as a patent examiner before skipping out on the exam.)

Of course, once you've waived out of the exam, and become licensed as a patent agent, that opens significant opportunities in the private sector. In particular, some law firms may especially welcome your expertise, precisely because you've worked “inside the system”, and understand how the USPTO operates.

Steven Oppenheimer is a patent agent at a boutique law firm specializing in intellectual property. Mr. Oppenheimer specializes in electronics, software, mechanical, and business method patents. He may be reached at steveqdr@yahoo.com.

Notice is served that while Mr. Oppenheimer is employed as a patent agent at a law firm, and while he maintains a Web site for his (currently dormant) technical writing services, doing business as “Oppenheimer Communications”, there is no association between Oppenheimer Communications and the law firm. Further, the law firm is not responsible for the content of this article, and does not endorse any of the contents of this article.

This article is Copyright © 2008 Steven C. Oppenheimer. All rights reserved. This article may not be reproduced or redistributed without the express written permission of the author. <http://www.OppenheimerCommunications.com>

You CAN migrate to Office 2007 and Still Collaborate

by [Louellen S. Coker](#), Senior Member



After being thrust into the Windows Vista world last year, there has been a general outcry against Microsoft, because suddenly, much of our software wasn't Vista compatible. It became a very expensive, time-consuming endeavor to stay up with technology.

Still reeling from the Vista launch debacle, many people are hesitant in migrating to Office 2007. The most-often voiced objections I've heard include:

- The interface is completely different and there is a real learning curve.
- No one can read my documents that were created in an Office 2007 application.

Dispelling the myths

It's different and has a learning curve

When you open your Office 2007 application, be ready for a COMPLETELY different interface. The difference is as big as going from Windows to Windows XP a few years back or even from Windows XP to Windows Vista. In fact, when my IT company whacked out my Office 2003 installation, they recommended that I go with Office 2003 rather than 2007 because, "It takes some time to become oriented with and be able to use the applications, because it is completely different and people don't know how to handle your files."

Disgusted with myself because I was forced to buy a new Office suite since I had misfiled my installation disk and could not find it, I was taken aback by my representative's suggestion. I figured it had to be bad if a techie was warding me off. The business side of my brain started screaming, this does not compute. After all, why would I want to spend that much money on an application that was five years old and wouldn't work with 2007 files that my customers were starting to send me? And I was at deadline. I could go to any number of stores and buy it off the shelf, whereas if I went for 2003, I'd be out of commission for three days at a minimum.

I literally had 30 minutes to make a decision, so I made my way to the Microsoft site at http://us20.trymicrosoftoffice.com/default.aspx?re_ms=oo&culture=en-US and discovered that I could take it for a test drive. Be prepared for a time investment for the download, but it is well worth it! It took me all of three minutes to discover that the new interface is really quite logical. In fact, it makes much more sense!



Off I rushed to get my tool. Once installed, it truly was like a breath of fresh air. There is no denying that it is different, and if you don't like change, you may not like it... at first. But if you are willing to let go of the standard menu bar, you'll find that everything makes more sense and things are much easier to find and use than in earlier versions.

There are so many new and über-cool things that are available in the new suite that it is well worth the learning curve plunge.

No one can open my files

I hear this all the time from professionals and casual users alike. Well, it is absolutely not true! If you are the only one in your department or regularly send people Word (or any of the Office suite files), you can enjoy the new interface and collaborate with others just as you always have.

There are several ways you can work in 2007 and collaborate with others:

- If you occasionally work with someone who has an older version, simply select  > **Save As > 97-2003** document.
- If you work in a department of mixed suites, you can set your preferences to always save as a backward compatible document by selecting  > **Word Options**. On the **Save** tab, you can set the default manner in which you want to save your files.
- If you want to save everything as a 2007 compatible file, you may consider adding a link to the Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats download (<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=941B3470-3AE9-4AEE-8F43-C6BB74CD1466&displaylang=en>) that installs a converter.

Have you been afraid to migrate to Office 2007 because you're afraid that few people will be able to open your files? Well, never fear. With a quick change of preference, you can have your cake and eat it, too!

LSC News

Read about:

- [LSC Notes & Committee Reports](#)
 - [LSC Officer Elections for 2008–2009 \(Mel Haughton\)](#)
 - [Celebrate our latest DCSA and Fellow Recipients](#)
 - [Member Recognition: Are You a Superstar \(Mel Haughton\)](#)
 - [Scholarship Committee: March Prize Winners \(Robert Carr Harris\)](#)
 - [Volunteer Committee: Want to help a little? \(Mel Haughton\)](#)
 - [Mentor Program: Why Mentoring Matters \(Ann Balaban\)](#)
- [LSC Membership Minute](#)
- [Human Factors with Kathryn Poe](#)
- [LSC Help Desk](#)
- [LSC SIG News](#)
- [Lone Star Job Bank](#)
- [STC Texas Chapters](#)
- [Educational & Networking Opportunities](#)

LSC Notes and Committee Reports

LSC Officer Elections for 2008–2009

by [Mel Haughton](#) and [Jim Chambless](#), 2008 Nominating Committee

The election of a new LSC Administrative Council will be held at the **April 10** program meeting. This year's Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following slate of officers for the 2008-2009 program year:

| Office | Candidate |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| President | Elisa Miller |
| First Vice President | Kristin Kirkham |
| Second Vice President | Arroxane Ullman |
| Parliamentarian | Mike Hiatt |
| Treasurer | Chris LaPorte |
| Secretary | Robert Brown |

About the Candidates

Each candidate provided biographical information. Click on the candidate's name to read his or her biography.



- **Elisa Miller (President)** — Elisa joined STC in 2000 during the dot-com boom, and she immediately made her presence felt in LSC by helping with public relations for the Winter Workshops. Since then, she has served as Public Relations and Membership Managers and co-chaired the 2006 Region 5 Conference in Dallas. Her efforts resulted in her receiving the Distinguished Chapter Service award last year.

Elisa started writing when she was seven, putting out her first newsletter when she was eight. She has a degree in Journalism and Marketing from the University of Arizona in Tucson and earned a master's degree in Instructional Technology from University of Texas–Austin. For the last ten years, Elisa has been involved in Internet/Web work, content strategy,

information architecture, and interaction design and usability research for a number of companies, including Scient, Perot Systems, and Texas Instruments. She is currently a user experience architect for Ariesnet, a virtual web development company. Elisa's focus as an STC leader is on new career paths within the profession and on expanding opportunities for LSC members.

- **Kristin Kirkham (First Vice President)** — Kristin first joined STC as a student member at Texas Tech University in 2005. She graduated in May 2006 with a BA in Technical Communication. Upon graduation, she joined the Lone Star Community, where she currently serves as Secretary.



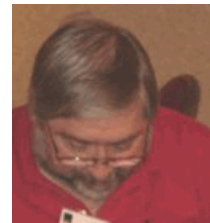
Kristin's first job involved technical writing for a software company in Addison. Currently, Kristin is the lone writer for BearCom, a wireless solutions company in Garland. Her duties there include creating white papers and product overviews, crafting RFP responses, writing and editing for the company magazine, creating marketing copy for the website, crafting success stories and news releases, and maintaining the writing standards and branding guidelines for the company.

Serving the LSC in a leadership position is something that excites Kristin, and she looks forward to another great year!



- **Arroxane Ullman (Second Vice President)** — Arroxane 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 U.S. Marine. She is grateful to be an active member of LSC and a Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas.

- **Mike Hiatt (Parliamentarian)** — Mike is a senior member of STC, having been a member of the Lone Star Community since he joined. He currently is a senior technical writer with GENBAND, Inc., a telecom signaling and switching company. He previously served three years as Treasurer of the LSC and is currently serving as Parliamentarian. Major accomplishments include moving the LSC's checking to a no-charge account to eliminate banking fees and amending the bylaws to allow for electronic voting by the Administrative Council. He has volunteered for various projects, including judging STC competition entries for several years. Mike notes that he has enjoyed serving on the LSC council and looks forward to again serving the LSC in a leadership position.



- **Chris La Porte (Treasurer)** — Chris is a senior member of STC who has, as he put it, "had the honor to serve as Treasurer for the past three years." His education includes a BS in Journalism and a certificate in Technical Writing from Richland College. After five years in the Air Force, he spent 25 years in the business world before turning to technical writing. Currently, he is a senior IT Technical Writer at Aviall, a division of Boeing.

- **Robert Brown (Secretary)** — Rob is a senior member of STC. He has been active in our community for about six years, serving as Competitions General Manager, Technical Publications Manager, and competitions judge. He has been a technical writer and instructional designer in Dallas for the past 20 years and received STC's 2005-2006 Distinguished Community Service Award for his work as Competitions Manager for the LSC. As Secretary, he will work closely with the community president to ensure that all admin council meetings are accurately documented and that a draft of the minutes is quickly distributed to all admin council members after each meeting.

The Election Process

The election of officers takes place during the **April 10 LSC meeting**. The election process follows:

| Who | Task |
|----------------------|---|
| Each LSC member | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives a ballot at time of registration Completes ballot and places it in ballot box before start of program |
| Nominating Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tabulates ballots Presents results to President |
| Community President | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announces 2008–2009 officers to Community members |

Officers must be elected on the first ballot by a majority of members voting, either in person or by written proxy. If no majority is obtained for a particular office on the first ballot, or if there is a tie, a second ballot is taken for that office to decide by plurality among the two or more candidates who received the greatest number of votes on the preceding ballot.

Voting by Proxy

If you cannot attend the **April 10 meeting** and would like to transfer your voting privilege to another LSC member, you must do so with a written proxy, using the Absentee Ballot [<insert link>](#).

- You can complete the proxy ballot and give it to the stated authorized LSC member.
- The person who is granted your proxy must present the signed proxy when registering for the meeting.
- If you do not want to grant full proxy and instead authorize a vote for a specific person and office, state that in the proxy. Such a proxy is valid only on the first ballot.
- The proxy is valid only if the member granting the proxy signs it.

ABSENTEE BALLOT
2008-2009 LSC Election

President

Elisa Miller (unopposed)

First Vice President

Kristin Kirkham (unopposed)

Second Vice President

Arroxane Ullman (unopposed)

Secretary

Robert Brown (unopposed)

Treasurer

Chris La Porte (unopposed)

Parliamentarian

Mike Hiatt (unopposed)

LSC Member (please print)

LSC Member (signature)

Date



Celebrate our latest DCSA and Fellow Recipients

LSC awarded Louellen Coker and Kristy Nolan with the Distinguished Chapter Service Award (DCSA) at its March 13 meeting. The DCA recognizes exemplary dedication to a chapter and its activities. This STC program began in 1988 with the first awards presented in 1989.

Mel Haughton, Immediate Past President of LSC and chair of the DCSA nominating committee, presented each recipient with a framed certificate and a floral bouquet. The citations for Louellen's and Kristy's awards appear below their photos. Congratulate these two LSC members the next time you see them!



Louellen Coker, DCSA Recipient

Citation: For her exceptional leadership as Lone Star Community president and her encouragement and support as a mentor in the profession.



Kristy Nolan, DCSA Recipient

Citation: For sustained contributions to the Lone Star Community and for her experience, continuing education, hard work, and enthusiasm.

LSC also congratulated Jackie Damrau, LSC Past President, on her recent honor of being awarded the rank of STC Fellow. This is the top membership rank that one can achieve. Jackie has served in a LSC leadership or committee management for the last eight years. Jackie will be honored at the STC Technical Communication Summit conference's Awards Banquet to be held on June 3, 2008, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Susie Fox, LSC President, presented Jackie with a floral bouquet.



Susie presenting Jackie Damrau with flowers for achieving the rank of STC Fellow
(Join us in Philly to celebrate Jackie's achievement at the Awards Banquet on June 2nd!)

Member Recognition Committee: Are You a Superstar?

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



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 to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

Scholarship Committee – March’s Raffle Recipients

by Robert Carr Harris, Manager, Scholarship committee



A wonderful array of prizes and the participation of attendees helped make the door prize drawing special at LSC’s March meeting. The prize sponsors included the Chili’s, Cinemark, Origins, and Barnes and Noble.

The following three were the meeting’s lucky prize recipients:

- **Louellen Coker**, who won a navy STC totebag filled with an STC leather-bound memo pad, a leather-bound journal, an hors d’oeuvres set serving 24, and a time capsule kit.
- **Susie Lynn Fox**, who was the lucky winner of a dinner-and-a-movie prize pack, which included Chili’s gift certificates and two guest passes for Cinemark theatres.
- **Kathy Goodman**, who won a body care gift basket from Origins.

The money collected goes toward the LSC Scholarship fund. The latest Scholarship deadline was March 28. We will announce the Spring 2008 Scholarship recipients in May at our final program meeting of the season.

Visit the Scholarship page on the community Web site at www.stc-dfw.org for more information on the scholarships that LSC offers.

Volunteer Committee: Want to help a little?

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

Do you want to get involved, learn new skills, network, and make a difference? It's your time to shine! Take a look at our current openings and let me know where you fit in! Just email me at <mailto:mhaughton@gmail.com> and let me know where you want to help!

Industry Researcher: Want to help us update the list of companies who hire technical writers in the DFW area? This is a great opportunity for you to find out who is hiring and make contacts in the industry. This job requires about 8 hours of your time. This is a one-time job.

Assistant Treasurer: Want to help our Treasurer, Chris LaPorte, keep track of LSC's finances? This job requires about 5 hours of your time every month, and you'll learn a lot about Quicken and Excel.

Public Relations Assistant Manager: Work with our Public Relations Manager to write and distribute press releases. This job requires about 3-5 hours of your time every month.

Mentoring Manager and Assistant Manager: Help set up programs for LSC mentors and protégées so they can share knowledge, bond with new members in our community, and avoid common mistakes. This job requires about 3 hours of your time every month.

Scholarship Manager and Assistant Manager: Get the word out to students in our area about scholarship and learning opportunities, and help raise money for the LSC Scholarship Fund. This job requires about 3-5 hours of your time every month.

Competitions Managers: We're looking for Online, Technical Publications and Technical Art Competitions Managers and Co-Managers. This job will require about 8 hours of your time monthly from October 2008 through January 2009. Several positions are available. You'll help judge and organize the yearly LSC Competitions. For more information, go to http://www.stc-dfw.org/pages/comp_main.htm.

LSC Fort Worth Satellite Manager: Do you live and Ft. Worth and want to get a group together in your neck of the woods? This job requires about 3 hours of your time every month, and you'll help set up meetings in Ft. Worth.

Mentor Committee: Why Mentoring Matters

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

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
2. The Mentoring Leadership & Resource Network: 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.

LSC Membership Minute

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



New Member Spotlight: This month we have **nine** new members. Introduce yourself when you see these folks at the next LSC function.

Gavin Larson has actually been an STC member since 2001. He attends the annual conference every year, but he let his membership expire last year, so he registered as a new member. Gavin has spent most of his time as a member of the Austin STC chapter.

Gavin has been doing technical writing for about nine years, but "technical writer" has only been in his job title for the last five. He tells me, "I have a Bachelor's degree (and an Associate's) in Technical Communication, and I hope to start my Master's in Human Computer Interaction this fall." He currently works at Medtronic, Inc., writing documentation for neurosurgical bone-cutting devices (drills, saws, and so forth). He previously worked for Stryker Corp. (another big medical device company) and Dell, Inc.

Besides Gavin, we welcome the following new members:

- Esther Asham
- Alan Braun
- Kathryn Goodman
- Stacy Grosgebauer
- Reggie Moore
- Keith Roberts
- Winfred Shields
- Srikanth Subramanian

Welcome to LSC!

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. This informal gathering is a great way to network before the meeting and learn more about our community. All are welcome!

Plan Ahead. On the evening of the **April 10th** LSC meeting, SIN SIG will gather at 5:45 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Dallas-Addison. This month, our guests of honor are Mel Houghton and Jim Chambless. Mel and Jim are both LSC past presidents. They will tell us everything we ever wanted to know about the LSC election process. We'll also have time to get to know each other and talk about topics of general interest.

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

Human Factors

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



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

By way of exposition, I will ask one of our veteran LSC members the same questions each month and her or his answers will appear right here. Please feel free to send your ideas and comments to me at kpoe@ursaminorservices.com to make this information more useful to you.

+++++

Getting to Know Mel Haughton

Job Title: Project Manager and Instructional Designer



What do you actually do?

In a nutshell, I work with programmers, clients, developers, and writers to create eLearning courses. Initially, I work with clients and my account manager to figure out what the client really needs from the eLearning course. Then, my instructional designer develops the course and I edit it for quality control. After the client approves it, I work with my developers and programmers to develop the course. Then, I edit it again for quality control. Once I approve the content internally, we send the course to the client for alpha, beta, and final review. The process could take from one month to several months. It just depends on the project.

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

I find these most useful: project management, editing, instructional design, writing (grammar and so forth) and software such as Captivate, Flash, and Office. I don't have any formal software training, but I keep my skills fresh on the job. I attend STC meetings to keep myself current, and I read *Intercom* articles or any books pertaining to skills I'm trying to acquire.

Do you consider yourself a guru at any particular subject?

Not at any particular subject, no. In my job, I need to learn a lot about different things. I need to adapt to the needs of the market.

What is the greatest benefit of being an STC member?

Networking

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

STC gives me a good venue to publish articles and lets me have resources at my fingertips. It also enables me to meet several people, so that if I ever need a new job, I can easily contact the people I know for help. Plus, it's a bunch of fun people. Volunteering helps you get to know people on a personal level, which makes it fun to stick around.

What positions in LSC and STC have you held?

I have been very involved in the local level: Community Service Chair, Second VP, First VP, President, and now Past President.

How have you benefited from volunteering?

I joined STC when I was a student. STC gave me the opportunity to meet people in my field and publish my first articles. I was also able to help on several projects and increase my project management and leadership skills.

Advice/Thoughts on STC for Newbies?

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

You can easily pick up some small volunteering projects, such as editing newsletter articles and helping at community meetings. If you want to get more involved, you can become a committee member or even run for office. The main benefit for me was in meeting people. Through volunteering, I got to know people on a personal level—much more than I would from just attending monthly meetings. I also met presenters and had to get out of my shell to convince people to come to the LSC from several parts of the U.S. and present at our community meetings.

How do I meet/recognize senior members?

I never cared too much about the distinction between senior members and regular members. I care about what people know and the conversations I can have with them. I'm not even a senior member yet!

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

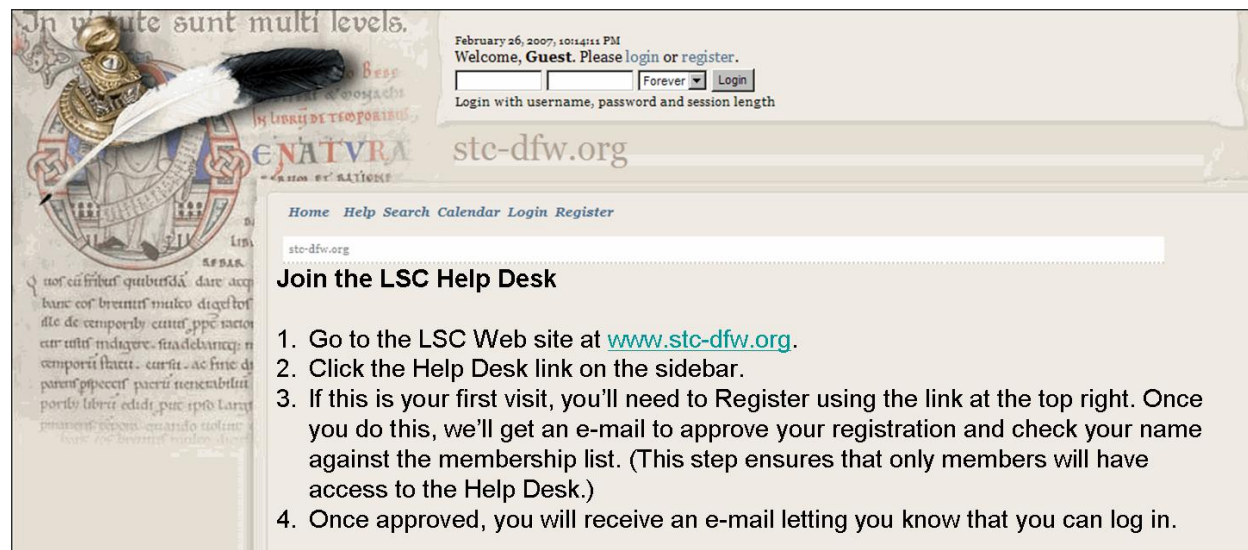
Of course we do! It's all about meeting new people—all you need to do is get out of your shell and come to a meeting. Meetings are a great place to make new friends and to keep your skills current!

Can STC really help me find a job?

Oh yeah! I got my current job, which I absolutely love, through STC. I was at a summer Meet-n-Greet, and the speaker and her boss hired me three days later. All I did was sell myself and set up an interview! STC offers a great way to see what other companies are doing. And if it just so happens that the speaker who's presenting works for a company YOU would like to work for, there's nothing wrong with approaching him or her! It's a great way to make contacts!

LSC Help Desk

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



The screenshot shows the STC DFW website interface. At the top left, there is a decorative image of a quill pen and a seal. The main content area features a navigation menu with links for Home, Help, Search, Calendar, Login, and Register. Below the menu, there is a search bar and a section titled "Join the LSC Help Desk". This section contains a numbered list of four steps for joining the help desk.

February 26, 2007, 10:14:11 PM
Welcome, Guest. Please [login](#) or [register](#).
 Forever
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.
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 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.



Dear Paul Holland,

[Who are we](#)

[What is the Lone Star
Community Job Bank?](#)

**Want to reach qualified
candidates for FREE?**

Are you seeking a large pool of qualified
Technical Writers, Content Developers,
Editors, Usability Specialists, Informational
Architects, Web Developers, User-Interface
Designers, Technical Illustrators, Instructional
Designers, and Translators?

Consider posting your jobs on the job bank of
the Lone Star Community of the Society for
Technical Communication.

**You'll reach technical communication
professionals in the entire DFW area,
and it's FREE!**

[Visit us at www.stc-dfw.org](http://www.stc-dfw.org)

STC Texas Communities

Links to Texas STC resources:

STC Communities in Texas

[Alamo](#)

[Austin](#)

[Houston](#)

[Alamo Tech Line](#)

[Austin Newsletter/Blog](#)

[Dateline Houston](#)

STC Student Communities in Texas

[College Station \(TAMU\)](#)

[Texas Tech University \(TTU\)](#)

[Events](#)

Educational and Networking Opportunities

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

Home > STC News

STC News

Read about:

- [STC 2008 Elections Closing Soon – Have You Voted!](#)
- [STC 2008 Elections: Candidate Slate](#)
- [STC Technical Communication Summit – Early Bird Registration Extended](#)
- [STC Community Events](#)



STC 2008 Elections Closing Soon – Have You Voted!

Have you voted yet for the international STC 2008 officers, Board of Directors, and Nominating Committee! If not, you still have time. You can cast your votes until **noon Eastern on April 14th**. One day before tax day and it doesn't cost you anything. You have two ways of voting:

- Electronic, if you selected this option when you joined or renewed your membership in STC (Electronic voting requires your STC member number and a password. You should have received your password in an e-mail. If not, send an e-mail to ed@stc.org requesting a password.)
- Paper ballot, which you should have received in the postal mail

STC 2008 Elections: Candidate Slate

The election is important to STC's future since these leaders will be guiding the organization. Voting instructions and ballots will be sent to members in March, and the election will be held in March and April, closing on **April 14**. This closing date allows winning candidates more time to plan for the conference and prepare for their first Board meeting.

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



Registered, yet, please do...

The Technical Communication Summit 2008 early-bird registration deadline has been extended to April 15, 2008. You can save \$200 (USD) making a total member price of \$695 (USD). To take advantage of this extended deadline, register at <https://access.stc.org/iMISPublic/Core/Events/Events.aspx>

Highlights of the Technical Communication Summit 2008 include:

- **130+ Education Sessions** covering a broad range of issues affecting technical communication
- **6 Certificate Programs** in the topic areas of Master Writers, Management, TechComm 101, Usability and Accessibility, Adobe Boot Camp, and Design and Development
- **5 Institutes** designed by experts for members seeking more advanced content in Instructional Design, Business Development, Microsoft Content Publishing, Globalization, and Content Management

The conference attendees and exhibitors are encouraged to make hotel reservations at the STC's official conference, the **Philadelphia Marriott Downtown**, conveniently connected to the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Single room is \$218 (USD) per day plus tax; double room is \$228 (USD) per day plus tax; additional people in the room are \$20 (USD) each. Call 800-266-9432 or go online to www.stc.org/55thConf/hotel/index.asp.

Visit STC's Conference Web site at <http://www.stc.org/55thConf/index.asp> for the latest program information.

Other STC Community Events

April 2, 2008

Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC) SIG will present a Web seminar on setting up and optimizing your small business.

For more information, visit www.stcsig.org/cic/pages/webinarreq.htm.

April 5, 2008

Boston Chapter STC will host a series of workshops on job search skills and techniques, expanding into market communications, and structured authoring pros and cons.

For more information, contact Pam Sarantos at 1stvp@stcboston.org or visit www.stcboston.org.

April 7, 2008

Instructional Design & Learning (IDL) SIG will present a Web seminar relating to advanced applications for Captivate and other movie-related tools.

For more information, visit www.stcidlsig.org/jmla.

April 11, 2008

Alberta Chapter STC will host an information design workshop at the Hotel Arts in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

For more information, visit www.stc-alberta.org/newheights/newheights.php.

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 or visit www.stcmanitoba.org.

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/.

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.



There's a lot we **don't** offer you in 4 days.

- ~~Sales people presenting pitches~~
- ~~Vendors selling to you in a session~~
- ~~Untried, vague, first-time presenters~~
- ~~High costs while your budget tightens~~

We know that regardless of how hyped, how well spoken, or how rich it is, you don't want bull. Our conference provides access to real users, experts, and answers.



You deserve *udderly* clear answers to your technical communication questions!

The Bright Path Solutions DITA and technical communication conference has sessions on:

- ✓ Understanding XML
- ✓ Working with and developing for DITA
- ✓ Deciding on a CMS
- ✓ Case studies on XML, DITA and CMS tools
- ✓ Developing FO
- ✓ Creating XSLT
- ✓ Content reuse
- ✓ Tech comm tools:
- ✓ FrameMaker
- ✓ Acrobat
- ✓ RoboHelp
- ✓ Captivate
- ✓ InDesign
- ✓ XMetaL
- ✓ WebWorks
- ✓ much more...

November 3–6, 2008

McKimmon Conference Center
Raleigh, NC, USA

For more details or to register online:
www.brightpathsolutions.com/nobull

Enter the promo code LoneStar to save up to US\$100!



Home > Calendar

April 2008

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|
| | |  <p>1</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>3</p> <p>6:15pm LSC Council</p> | <p>4</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>5</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p>6</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>7</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>8</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>9</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>10</p> <p>5:45pm LSC Meeting</p> | <p>11</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>12</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p>13</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>14</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |  <p>15</p> | <p>16</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>17</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>18</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>19</p> <p>Newsletter Articles due</p> |
| <p>20</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>21</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>22</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>23</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>24</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>25</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>26</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p>27</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>28</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>29</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p>30</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | | | |

May 2008

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

June 2008

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | | | | <p style="text-align: right;">5</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">6</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">8</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">9</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">10</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">11</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">12</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">13</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">14</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">15</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">16</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">17</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">18</p> <p>Newsletter Articles due</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">19</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">20</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">21</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">22</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">23</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">24</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">25</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">26</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">27</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">28</p> <p>Time: Event</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">29</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">30</p> <p>Time: Event</p> | | | | | |

Home > About TW

About TW

Read about:

- [About *Technically Write*](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [© and ™ Statements](#)
- [Submit to *Technically Write*](#)
- [2007-2008 Deadlines](#)
- [LSC Officers](#)
- [Technically Write Staff](#)
- [Staff Bios](#)
- [STC Mission Statement](#)

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. 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 for more information.

Copyright and Trademark

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

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

Newsletter Design and Layout:

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

Submit to *Technically Write*

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

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

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

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

Contributions to *Technically Write*

- Must be submitted no later than the deadlines listed below.
E-mail: 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 |
| May | April 16 |
| June | May 14 |

Technically Write Staff

Managing Editor: [Jackie Damrau](#)

Editor: **OPEN**

Contributing Editor: **OPEN**

Copyeditors: [Jeanne Foster](#)

[Alan Oak](#)

[Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

[Paula Robertson](#)

Contributors: Steven C. Oppenheimer, Robert Carr Harris, [Ann Balaban](#), [Jo Byrd](#), [Jeanne Foster](#), [Mel Haughton](#), [Mike Hiatt](#), [Paul Holland](#), [Jim Korth](#), [Elisa Miller](#)

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

Photographers: [Dale Erickson](#)

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.

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."

[Home](#) > [Back Issues](#)**Back Issues****HTML**

- Volume 24, 2007-2008
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
 - Summer
- Volume 23, 2006-2007
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
 - [Summer](#)
- Volume 22, 2005-2006
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
- Volume 21, 2004-2005
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
- Volume 20, 2003-2004
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
 - [Summer](#)
- Volume 19, 2002-2003
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
 - [Summer](#)
- Volume 18, 2001-2002
 - [September](#)
 - [October](#)
 - [November](#)
 - [December](#)
 - [January](#)
 - [February](#)
 - [March](#)
 - [April](#)
 - [May](#)
 - [Summer](#)

PDF

- Volume 17, 2000-2001

[January](#)[March](#)[May](#)[February](#)[April](#)

- Volume 16, 1999-2000

[January](#)[March](#)[May](#)[February](#)[April](#)**Technically Wired**

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

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

September 1996 October 1996 November 1996

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:

[Society for Technical Communication](#)

901 N. Stuart Street

Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1854