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### LSC Members Review 55<sup>TH</sup> STC Annual Technical Summit, Philly!

Read about the conference experiences that the Lone Star Community members had in Philly! Some went sightseeing with interesting stories; others experienced conference for the first time; and then some of us didn't do so very much! [more](#)

### LSC Receives Community of Distinction Award for 2007-2008

STC recognized LSC on Leadership Day at the STC Conference on June 1 in Philadelphia. LSC was also recognized at the Honors Banquet on June 3. All LSC members attending Leadership Day and the Honors Banquet came forward [more](#)

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### Editor Corner: Touring Philly!

by [Jackie Damrau](#), Managing Editor



I find traveling to cities that I've never visited before to be quite exciting. Before leaving, I always try to find out about the interesting sites to see, any city tours that will show me the historical places and other areas of interest, and then "always, always" look for interesting bookstores or unique shops to visit.

Philly was no different. My adventure pre-conference started with riding the subway from the airport to the conference hotel. Subways are an interesting place to definitely look like a lost soul, ask ridiculous questions, and generally observe the city population. Of course, the inexpensive one-way fare of \$6-7, depending on time of travel, makes it a fun adventure.

After arriving at the hotel and claiming my pre-shipped boxes on Thursday, I ventured out on the streets to see the sites. I didn't venture very far, but did go to a huge shopping mall, The Gallery, that had over 170 stores. In the general downtown area, it seems that the subway feeds into many of the areas, so at almost every turn, you were running into a bevy of people cascading out of doors with the mission in mind of getting to the street. I then walked around to just see what was nearby discovering, of course, the 7-11 to pick up those in-room munchies and the local CVS and Walgreens for other items.

### My Big Bus Sightseeing Adventure

Having done my pre-Philly trip research, I purchased a CityPass which offered me the chance to visit six famous attractions: The Franklin Institute Science Museum, Adventure Aquarium, Phila Trolley Works/Big Bus Co., National Constitution Center, and the Eastern State Penitentiary.

My first selection was to take the 90-minute Big Bus Tour. This was a double-decker bus where the topside is open to the air. Being a somewhat humid day, I decided to ride below and enjoy the tour from there. Everyone else was topside, which made it pleasurable for me to be able to hear the guide. The tour went by 20 historical sites, including the Congressional Hall (pictured at left), beside the ones listed above that I could go back and visit with my CityPass. I definitely recommend this tour. Here's a brief synopsis of the notes (yes, I took notes!) of the 20 historical sites:

- **Stops 1-4:** Independence Visitor Center (home of the Liberty Bell), Betsy Ross House, National Constitution Center, and Chinatown (3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the US)
- **Stops 5-6:** Convention Center Marriott (where I started and ended the tour) and City Hall
- **Stops 7-10:** Basilica of St. Peter & Paul, Rodin Museum, "Rocky Steps" outside the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Eastern State Penitentiary (the movie "12 Monkeys" was filmed there)
- **Stops 11-14:** Philadelphia Museum of Art (3<sup>rd</sup> largest museum in US, structure made out of dolomite from the old city dam), Philadelphia Zoo, Franklin Institute (national monument to Ben Franklin), and Logan Circle (home of City Hall, which is built from rock and concrete—no wood or steel)
- **Stops 15-20:** Academy of Music / The Sound of Philadelphia (street that stretches 14 miles in a "straight" line), Antique Row, South Street/Head House Square (home to The Artful Dodger restaurant), Society Hill Sheraton (located near three buildings built by architect I.M. Pei), Penn's Landing Waterfront, and Old City/Christ Church (built in 1695 and houses the oldest post office that has "never" flown a US flag because it was a post office well before the designing of the American flag)



## Sites I Visited



What sites did I visit? Well, I rode the bus back around to my first love, old churches. The art, stained glass windows, and overall structure of the **Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul** (at right) gives one the sense of love and passion that went into building this structure.

To go from the Basilica to the Science Museum, you had to walk around a gorgeous fountain. I called this the Swan Fountain (below), because on one side it had swans and the other side had turtles spraying water into the middle of the fountain.

### The Franklin

**Institute Science Museum** was my next stop. While a very small museum, I found great fun in learning all about the heart and how it works. I even got to walk through a heart with signs telling you about each portion of the heart. The interesting part of this is that the passages were built as small and restricting as a normal heart is, which makes one appreciate this part of our body. Of course, schoolchildren were running through it as if it were an attraction!



Just a few doors down, I stopped at the **Academy of Natural Sciences** where I spent a large amount of time in the Gregor Mendel "Planting the Seeds of Genetics" exhibit. Mendel, an Augustinian friar, charted the rise of genetics by growing and examining tens of thousands of peas in a garden at The Abbey of St. Thomas. His work inspired others, such as Crick and Watson, in discovering things like the double helix of DNA.

## Journey Ends – Back to Conference Life

As you can see, I had a pretty full day of sightseeing. A much-needed hot soaking bath and lounging was in order for the remainder of the evening before the whirlwind days of conference would start. You can read about the conference festivities in that special section of this newsletter.

I'm now looking forward to planning my next conference city tour for Atlanta, Georgia. STC's 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Technical Summit will be there on May 4-6, 2009.

[Home](#) > Fox Tales**Fox Tales: LSC Receives Community of Distinction Award for 2007-2008**

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



The STC Lone Star Community (LSC) earned the Community of Distinction award for 2007-2008, according to Rachel Houghton, member of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) Community Achievement Award (CAA) Evaluation Committee.

The Community of Distinction award is the highest CAA award. STC named LSC as a Community of Distinction in the size category of 151 to 300 members.

STC recognized LSC on Leadership Day at the STC Conference on June 1 in Philadelphia. LSC was also recognized at the Honors Banquet on June 3. All LSC members attending Leadership Day and the Honors Banquet came forward and received the award together as a team.

**The citation on the LSC Community of Distinction certificate** reads: "For a wide range of activities that provide opportunities for education, leadership, and networking to current and future members."

"I'd like to thank all of the passionate, hard-working LSC officers, committee managers, volunteers and members for working as such a cohesive team and for making this a special year to remember and to celebrate!" said Susie Lynn Fox, LSC President for 2007-2008.

Each year, STC invites communities and special interest groups (SIGs) to submit applications to compete in the CAA competition. CAA recognizes communities and SIGs for their outstanding accomplishments toward reaching the goals of STC. CAA awards are presented only to communities that have distinguished themselves by exceeding ordinary expectations.

"I know how much hard work and passion it takes to be amongst the very best of the best, and you and your chapter members did it!" said Linda L. Oestreich, STC President for 2007-2008. "Please give yourselves and your members my heartiest congratulations." She continued, "Winning this award shows that your chapter is strong, vibrant, and innovative. And, basically, you understand what it takes to provide member value. Please extend my best wishes and appreciation to all who had a part in making Lone Star a stellar performer for this year. I congratulate all of you and wish you the very best."

Cindy Currie, STC Second Vice President for 2007-2008, also sent her congratulations, "Communities like Lone Star represent the best of what STC has to offer in so many ways: leadership opportunities for those who want them; quality services for members; creative thinking in challenging economic times, all the hard work and commitment that goes into running a chapter, and the networking and camaraderie that a vibrant chapter brings to all who have the good fortune to experience it. Bravo, Lone Star!"

**LSC previously received CAA recognition** for the following program years: 1988-1989, 1995-1996, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and now 2007-2008. Also, five of the last six program years garnered CAA Community of Distinction awards.

Communities can complete the CAA application for a community of merit, community of excellence, or community of distinction award. CAA applications require information about the community, initiatives, fundamental activities, chapter of merit award activities, chapter of excellence award activities, chapter of distinction award activities, and supporting materials.

"This year as well as the last few years, Mel Haughton, Immediate Past President for 2007-2008, volunteered to spearhead the CAA application effort, working with the LSC council members to complete the form and to attach related supporting materials. Mel has done an excellent job for our community," said Susie Lynn Fox. "Congratulations to all members of the Lone Star Community for a job well done!"

[Home > Meetings](#)**May Review: Secrets of Training Design (Thiagi)**by [Jim Korth](#), PR Committee member

Why does most instructional design start out with the best intentions, only to fall flat on its face or simply run out of gas, with the audience bored and unmotivated and the materials soon gathering dust as with so many similar programs? The answer is, most audiences are not cognitively engaged at an appropriate intellectual level throughout the program. Most instructional design programs simply do not hold audiences' attention, and cease to be fun because participants' active collaboration is not continually solicited.



**Elisa Miller, 1st VP, with Thiagi**

Sivasailam Thiagarajan, popularly known as Thiagi, was the featured speaker at the May 8th meeting of the LSC, and the title of his program was "Rapid Instructional Design." In his many years in the profession, Thiagi has heard all of the complaints about instructional design. He has provided a new approach based on his CCCC (continuous, creative, concurrent co-design) model that has been used on both hard- and soft-skill training topics.

By actively engaging his audiences and sometimes changing his subject matter on the fly, depending on how the audience is reacting, Thiagi is very unconventional in his approach. As a one-time magician in India (he once sawed a woman in half; she now lives in both Madras and Delhi), Thiagi regularly turns his audience on its ear by introducing

material that is entertaining, engaging and thought-provoking.

Because the process of instructional design consists broadly of first determining the current state of learner understanding before it is possible to define the end goal of instruction, Thiagi knows that he can't be certain of where the instructional design will be going until he gets in front of his audience and begins interacting. For Thiagi, the more money spent up front on training packages, the less effective the program will be.

Thiagi believes in designing activities, not content. Let the activities influence the content, not vice versa. Suggest goals to the audience, engage participants in collaborating and competing with one another, and don't be afraid to change things mid-stream if it may be beneficial. Build the airplane while flying it. Design training while delivering it.

The training environment should reflect the work situation as closely as possible so participants may adapt training material directly to their work activities. Most important, keep all of the participants actively engaged, require them to be creative and motivate them to produce tangible material they can put to use in their daily work. By the end of the evening's program, the LSC was entertained, motivated and fully persuaded by Thiagi's interactive and fun approach to instructional design.

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**Doing the Philadelphia Shuffle**

by [Louellen Coker](#), Senior Member

Just a few weeks ago, I traveled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for the [STC 55th Annual Technical Communication Summit](#). I was excited to learn from the leaders in our industry, catch up with colleagues, and enjoy the venue.

As is my practice, I arrived in Philadelphia a day early to wander around and see the sights. Saturday was a bit rainy and my wanderings were limited to dashing into the shops as I wandered around. I found a great little sandwich shop filled with locals and shared the best Philly Cheese steak I've ever had with a cadre of hair stylists and was enjoyed the chords played on the Macy's organ—the oldest organ in the city—with pipes extending 6 floors.



Sunday was my day to do serious touring. As a marathon runner, a dash up the Philadelphia Museum of Arts steps (aka the Rocky Steps), was a must! I grabbed a cab and off I went. I had to laugh as I discovered that I was not the only one who deemed running the Rocky steps as an important part of any trip to Philly. I ran it once and got my photo at both the top and bottom of the steps. I decided that didn't really prove anything, so I ran it a second time and took a video. Rocky ain't got nothin' on me!

As it was just around the corner, I decided that I needed to meander down Kelly Drive by the famed Boathouse Row along the east bank of the Schuylkill River. Boathouse Row is a series of charming Victorian structures decorated with Christmas lights all year round. I didn't get to see the lights, but I did enjoy a horde of cyclists, joggers, rollerbladers, and dog walkers enjoying a beautiful day. Of course, watching the rowers heading out and prepping for races made it clear that Boathouse Row is the center of athletic activity in Philadelphia.



As I waited for a cab, inspired by a beautiful day, the horde of sports enthusiasts, and a beautiful flag-lined Benjamin Franklin Expressway with fountains spouting water spread along the way; I opted to walk the few miles back to the Convention Center to check in to the summit before heading to historic Philadelphia. I'll admit the walk was a little longer than I expected, but it was a glorious day, and it was quite fun to dip my toes into the cool fountains along the way.

I grabbed my conference materials and grabbed a bit at Reading terminal and made my way to historic Philadelphia and the really cool walking tour that I had downloaded from [The Constitutional](#). I had

intended to walk, but as I had made the walk the day before, and was running a little later than I expected, I grabbed a cab to the first stop on the tour.



I whirled my way to stop one of the tours of my shiny new pink iPod nano and hit play. I excitedly listened to the description of the first stop and the tour, learning that I'd spend the next 75 minutes making my way through the sites nestled in a 3 square mile area (historic Philly is about a mile wide at it widest point). Next stop, the Betsy Ross house... and I was off!

And off I was. I strolled my way from one corner to the other, up and down the narrow streets. Stopped in to the local fire station for a sip of water, directions, and a chat with firemen with accents so thick I could almost cut them. All the while wondering why my "tour guide", Philadelphia Freida, was taking me on such a circuitous route through the historic area, only to bring me back to tell me about a site I had walked past minutes before.

At 90 minutes into my tour, I began to think, "Some of the technical communicators in town this weekend could share a few usability tips with the design of the tour." A few minutes later, just as I was deciding I could be legitimately frustrated with the tour, Frieda's bubbly voice told me, "Next stop, the Betsy Ross House...."

Before I could dig my perky friend out of my pocket, I realized, that I had literally "shuffled" my way through historic Philly. All the difficulties I had with the tour melted away as it dawned that they were due to "user error." (Note to self... the next time I download a walking tour, I'm going to make sure my Ipod has the shuffle setting turned off!)



As I had walked from one end to the other and back again, I took my iPod nano off shuffle and shuffled (and giggled) my way back to the hotel as I listened to the fabulous story my tour company provided me about all the things I had walked by—a few times over. I could've gotten a cab, but I wanted to see the Chinese Gate.

My distance that day? I'm not really sure, but I think it was about 14-15 miles of sights, sounds, and just about everything Philly had to offer.

## What Didn't I Do at Conference?

by [Jackie Damrau](#), Fellow

I attended the general STC Board meeting on Saturday and the four days of conference. Here's a brief synopsis of my adventures at conference:

- Saturday Board of Directors meeting.** I attended the open session to gain a better understanding of where STC is going so that I can be a more effective leader on the committees that I serve: Nominating committee (NomComm) and Leadership Community Resource (LCR). As chair of the LCR, I presented an update about the activities that the LCR had accomplished over the past year, where it needs to go this next year, and where it should be in the future.
- Sunday, Leadership Day.** Sessions centered on leadership activities for incoming community leaders and prospective community leaders. As the LCR chair, I was very involved with the activities of this day. Mainly working with Diana Buttram, STC Director of Community Relations (and Chief Operating Officer), in preparing handout materials and a USB drive with additional materials for distribution (pre-conference work); presenting an "STC Leadership & LCR: The 'WIFM' Effect" session; and presenting awards for LCR Volunteer of the Year, Outstanding LCR Volunteer and Outstanding LCR Mentor awards, as well as LCR Mentor certificates.
- Monday Sessions.** Conference started with an opening keynote by Harold Rheingold, who is credited with inventing the term *virtual communities* as well as author of books like *Tools for Thought* (1985), *The Virtual Community* (1991), and *Smart Mobs* (2002). Following the keynote session, I attended the SIG Managers Meeting as the manager for the Instructional Design & Learning SIG, hosted a table and discussion at the SIG Networking Luncheon, attended a session on employing exceptional listening skills (which Kristin has invited Rich Maggiani to present to LSC this next program year), visited vendors in the EXPO hall, served at the LCR booth in STC Central talking with community leaders or individuals wanting to volunteer to serve on the LCR, and concluding with attending the STC Annual Business Meeting.
- Tuesday Sessions.** The day started very early (7:30am) by attending the IDL SIG business meeting and a mandatory STC Board of Directors meeting, held for all international committee leaders and the NomComm. The rest of the day saw me serving as a panel presenter for the NomComm's "Society Leadership: Smooth Sailing Rough Ride?" session, spending time again at the LCR booth, attending the working session for the NomComm, and attending the "Agile Development: Challenges in Transforming TechComm Departments." The day wasn't over yet, as the Honors Reception and Banquet was that evening. The Honors Banquet was inspiring, seeing so many STC members that I knew receive awards and also being the recipient of Fellow, the highest membership rank in STC. Of course, the evening was definitely completed by the Lone Star Community receiving Community of Distinction again. The LSC members truly ROCK!
- Wednesday Sessions.** A short day for STC activities, yet a long day traveling back to Dallas. My day started in the LCR booth, then I presented "Finding Graphics That Tell a Story" in the IDL SIG Progression, and finished the morning in the NomComm booth before leaving for the airport.



The adventure home was pleasurable as I was able to share that experience with Kristin Kirkham. She is one funny gal! Everyone needs to get to know Kristin since she'll be your 2009-2010 president.

## What Ideas Set You Free in Philadelphia?

by [Susie Lynn Fox](#), 2008-2009 LSC Immediate Past President and Volunteer Wrangler

Ideas, ideals, inspiration, imagination, invention, and innovation exploded like Independence Day fireworks at the STC Conference in Philadelphia from June 1-4. The ideas were so profuse that I'm still trying to tamp down and tame my trip report into a minimalist version that management has time to read. I think I'll save the tome for myself and forward a digest to my manager.

The idea-fest at the 2008 STC Conference naturally reminded me of the independent free-for-all that occurred in Philadelphia in 1776. So I decided to check out the past by trekking to Independence National Historical Park on Saturday evening. As the new and old city streets came and went, block by block by block, I began to wonder how far I still needed to walk, walk, walk.

Suddenly, the cityscape gave way to a surprising clearing of green grass that spanned several blocks in both directions. A smallish building with a familiar spire stood at one end of the green on Chestnut Street. I caught my breath, realizing that the building was Independence Hall.



**The sight of Independence Hall** immediately transported me back into another time. A horse-drawn carriage clattered nearby. The bell in the tower began tolling the late hour. A shiver went up my spine as I imagined the sights and sounds of long ago.

I wondered about the diverse thoughts, ideas, discussions, and debates that finally inspired liberty at this very place. In my mind's eye, I could see all the ordinary and extraordinary people who came together to form this democratic nation in its infancy.

Big ideas were poured into important documentation at Independence Hall. The Declaration of Independence was adopted here. The Constitution of the United States was signed here, too. I would like to have been a fly on

the wall during those "technical review meetings." The resulting evergreen documents continue to live and breathe liberty today and for coming generations.

**Across from Independence Hall**, I was surprised to see another icon of our nation's beginnings. In the gathering dusk, the liberty bell shone through a glass building. I peered at the bell and wondered how it sounded when it first peeled out liberty.

About then, a carriage driver pulled up and told me that the Betsy Ross House was only a short walk away. So I made my way up to Arch and Third Streets, watching the neighborhood melt into a slice of another lifetime. The Betsy Ross home at 239 Arch St. was cute, quaint, and tiny. Her creation of a simple hand-stitched flag became an enduring logo with enough scalability to continue to represent the democratic ideas of a growing nation.

I crossed the street and looked through the open fence at the Christ Church Burial Ground and saw Benjamin Franklin's grave. Franklin, the inventor's inventor, and four other signers of the Declaration of Independence are buried in this cemetery, mere blocks away from the place where their revolutionary ideas launched a new nation into being.

**As I looked again at the Betsy Ross House**, I called my Mom. She asked if I was coming to visit her later. I reminded her that I was in Philadelphia, and she said, "OH MY!" Then I told her that I was standing in front of the Betsy Ross House, and she said, "OH, MY GOODNESS!"



Then she asked if I was walking alone at night. I told her no because I was talking on the phone with her. She laughed! I made it back to my hotel just in time to order a Philly cheese steak sandwich "wit" cheese. This was the perfect end to a perfect evening in Philly!

On Sunday, I enjoyed an inspirational Leadership Day's worth of information and input. On Sunday night and Monday morning, the general conference sessions were informative, entertaining, and insightful. Throughout the week, the technical sessions, exposition booths, networking lunches, Honors Banquet, and conversations in passing all combined into a mighty river of ideas.

**These conference highlights** sparked my imagination and interest:

- Blog in real-time for an event by using ScribbleLive blogging.
- Use hedgehog leadership to successfully focus on core talents.
- Launch big hairy audacious goals (BHAGS) to inspire people and success.
- Get leadership startup help from the STC Leadership Community Resource (LCR).
- Track the status of STC's continued work with the U.S. Department of Labor to upgrade the job description of technical communicator.
- Enjoy the updated infrastructure and member-centric user experience that STC now offers.
- Align community goals with updated STC vision and initiatives.
- Create your own job value by helping management solve business problems.
- Keep up with how technology (the morphing of mobile phones, computers, and the Internet) are changing the ways that humans communicate, conduct business, shape politics, and live their lives.
- Learn how STC is using best practices to design a Web-based body of knowledge (BOK).
- Realize that users don't care whether they get help from traditional documentation or from user-generated help. They just want help.
- Consider use of videos because consumers love them! [*Comment from Mary McWilliams Johnson, copyeditor: Video production requires very special skills and professional equipment, which most technical communicator are not likely to have available or in their budget. And the expense would rarely be justified, especially since most documentation or help files need to frequent updating.*]
- Recognize that the English language is continuing to change at break-neck speed so use what is useful and discard the rest.
- Determine how much your content is worth by researching revenue, costs, support calls, and customer feedback.
- Create a dedicated table of contents (TOC) and more with MadCap Flare.
- Use content publishing standards to unite enterprises across a company.
- Stop using time-wasting technology and start using time-saving technology.
- Create global style guides to reduce translation costs.
- Measure the results of training content by tracking customer behavior changes.
- Use your technical communication skills to help your company, organization, neighborhood, and family prepare for disasters and emergencies.
- Design for the gap of knowledge between a user's current knowledge and their lifetime experiences.

That's all for Philly for now! I hope to see you next year at the STC Conference in Atlanta!

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## 2008 STC Annual Summit

by [Kristin Kirkham](#), Secretary and Incoming 1<sup>st</sup> VP

As a lone writer, the annual STC Summit is the perfect opportunity to see what other writers and companies are doing. I even found a group of lone writers split between their marketing and technical departments, like me!

Although I have seen my share of the U.S., Philadelphia was definitely a new city to me. Luckily, I had an entertaining crew from the Lone Star community to "corrupt" me!



The sessions were long enough to get a good sense of the material and tools, but short enough to let you decide if the information would be helpful for your personal use. Because I am the only writer in our company, it was difficult for me to choose which sessions I wanted to attend, especially when every topic sounded interesting!

Here is a snippet of just a few lessons learned. Although some of the information isn't new, it was a good refresher:

- **Instructional Design = ADDIE: Analyze, Develop, Design, Implement, & Evaluate.** PowerPoint is NOT training. People will generally remember five things in a presentation, so only teach them five things.
- **Become an arbiter for your company.** Don't just *have* a style guide, *use* it. Distribute writing standards throughout the company.
- **Your Web site is a conversation.** Make sure your Web site answers the user's question, "How do I..?" Great example is Amazon.com. Task-oriented procedures.
- **Content Management.** It's not all about re-use. Inventory living content. Customer needs change. Tools: Microsoft SharePoint and Google Docs.
- **Software Misuse.** Use meeting requests to set meetings. Do not send e-mail after e-mail. Tools: Meeting Wizard (it allows the group to come to a consensus on times).
- **Edit documents in real time.** Use one real time meeting rather than multiple e-mails to edit, collaborate, and share documents. Tools: ThinkFree.com

The best decision I made was to attend a SIG lunch every day. By mingling with writers interested in similar fields, I was able to probe them with my questions on which tools they used, processes and procedures for their documentation, and of course, how to maintain sanity.

My favorite session attended would most definitely be the Lone Writer's Progression. I had never attended a progression at an STC conference, but from now on, I will be at every one offered! I was a bit disappointed by the turnout, but because it was on the last day of the conference, the entire convention center was looking a little bare.

After four days of classes, I was ready to get back to work and prove to my company why the conference was such a wise investment. Thank you to all of the speakers and presenters for sharing your golden nuggets of wisdom!

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## Pubs Peeps Take Philly!

by Kristy Nolan, Senior Member

After proclaiming the benefits of attending an STC conference for years, I am proud that my entire workgroup attended this year's conference in Philadelphia. Granted our group consists of only five people, but collectively we were able to attend many more sessions than before. Libby Mazur, manager of our group, said, "It's good to know that no matter the industry or the specific type of writing, we all have the same issues." One of our first-time attendees, Sam Iannuzzi, said, "The contacts and resources made attending the conference extremely valuable."



**Louellen, Kathryn (early mornings, no fun!), Susie**

We did not stay at the conference hotel (found a better deal elsewhere), which meant our five-block walk could be spent discussing what we had just heard or determining who was going to which session. It was fascinating to hear all of the information we picked up. We each had our own areas of interest, from the joys of structured writing to the ever-changing English language. Sarah McDonald, first-time attendee, said, "The STC Conference was well organized and informative. I loved the venue!"

"Overall I thought the conference was well organized, and I enjoyed the session timing (not too long and plenty of time in between with a good long lunch break in the middle), and location (near the Reading Market and within walking distance of a multitude of worthy sights)," said Leah Schooling. Leah even made time to see the Rodin Museum before catching the flight home. All of us were impressed by the number of people walking everywhere.

Sam Iannuzzi said, "Philadelphia was a great host city." As one who grew up in the area, Sam was able to get us a whirlwind tour of the city with his cousin Marian Deal Smith, who runs Alternative Tours. The evening included Benjamin Franklin Parkway and its fabulous museums, Independence Hall, the history of the city plan, and finished with dinner on the river. I know I learned more history in those couple of hours than all through high school!

Upon our return to Dallas, we met formally to discuss our overall impression of the conference and wrote up how each session we attended can benefit us here at Southwest Airlines. This information will help us in our research and provide rationalization for future attendance at the conference.

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## Adventures in the World of Wikis

by Monica Winkelman, Member

From [Wikipedia](#) – A “wiki” is a collection of web pages designed to enable any authorized user to contribute or modify content.

I’ve used a wiki before, as I’m sure most people have, but only in a superficial way. I’ve searched for information in Wikipedia and read the user-generated content, but I’ve never before been interested in contributing to the information stream. Now, I look at wikis in a whole new way, and I really think they are the future of Web collaboration.



While at the annual STC Summit this year, I attended an exciting, enlightening presentation by Rahul Mehrotra on wikis. Rahul presented a case study from his own company about how his 10-person documentation team converted thousands of pages of user guides, WebHelp files, HTML Help files, and a company knowledge base into a wiki.

Due to increases in development production, Rahul and his team had become responsible for updating and publishing 30,000+ pages of documentation multiple times a year. To manage this monster, the documentation team decided they needed not only new tools but an entirely new process, a process that allowed for genuine collaboration. To achieve this end, they started looking at wikis.

After researching several wikis, they decided on [Confluence](#), a commercial wiki engine. This wiki served their particular technical needs enabling them to generate PDF books, WebHelp files, and HTML Help files all from the same wiki articles. Now, anyone in the company can update product information without having to learn complex products like FrameMaker and WebWorks Professional. Developers can input new product information into the wiki, and the documentation team can spend its time refining the developer information and improving the documentation’s usability. They can actually focus on making the help “helpful,” rather than just accurate. And the documentation is never more than one day out of date, since changes are published nightly in an automatic build.

All the technical writers in the room were stunned after Rahul told us this incredible story. Developers voluntarily giving up information? Technical writers given enough time to complete and polish their documentation? An entire company of users generating information that stays current?

After I returned home, I was excited about using a wiki for documentation, a company knowledge base, or both, but I had no idea how to bring it up. Then, at our weekly team meeting, my director asked me to talk a little about my experiences at the Summit. I started talking about the wiki presentation, and people actually got interested in the topic. They asked me questions about wikis and about what they can do. A couple of people even brought up needs they felt could be met by a wiki.

I immediately asked my director if I could start researching wikis for us to use. She agreed and said another department had just started looking at developing a wiki knowledge base. After researching wikis a little bit, I decided not to pursue converting my documentation to a wiki just yet. I think initially we’ll benefit the most from having a company knowledge base. I’ve teamed up with the other department representative to find the best (free) wiki for our all our company’s needs.

So far our best contender is [Deki Wiki](#). We’re a Microsoft shop, and this is one of the best open source wiki engines we could find that’s compatible with .NET. It has flexible customization and the WYSIWYG editor is great; it’s just what we need to get our non-techie employees interested.

Right now, I’m excited that at least a little part of Rahul’s vision is going to make it into our company. Hopefully, we’ll be developing a truly collaborative, living knowledge base that’s easy to access and easy to update. Wish us good luck as we take our first steps toward the future of Web collaboration.

# Conference Photo Gallery

## Leadership Day, June 1



**LSC Ladies  
(Kristen, Susie, Jackie, Elisa)**



**Elisa speaks...LSC listens**



**Jackie speaking about  
"STC Leadership and  
the 'WIFM' Effect"**



**Jackie & Linda King,  
Houston (what were we  
discussing?)**



**Beth on the  
Award Board**

### Honors Banquet, June 3



**Texas Contingent and honorary Texan**  
Back: Kristy, Kristin, Elisa, Linda King (Houston)  
Front: Kathryn, Jackie, George Slaughter (Houston), Rachel Houghton (honorary Texan – Willamette Valley)



**Elisa & Jackie dressed up**  
(with Andrea Ames, Silicon Valley, and W.C. Wiese, Orlando)



**LSC Receives Community of Distinction**  
Back: Kathryn, Jackie, Elisa, Linda O. (Houston, San Diego), Louellen, Cindy Currie (1<sup>st</sup> VP)  
Front: Rob Brown, Kristy, Susie,



**2008 STC Fellows**  
Back Row: **Tommy Barker**, Mary Jo Stark, Jean Gabriel, Mike Hughes (2<sup>nd</sup> VP), Martha Collins, **Hillary Hart** (Director), Linda Gallagher  
Front Row: Thea Teich, **Jackie Damrau**, Suzanna Laurent, Marjorie Davis, Rich Maggiani

### Post-Banquet Dance, June 3



**Beth & Louellen (what did they do?)**



**Elisa Singing with the Band  
(Monday's Open Jam)**



**Kathryn & Marlo,  
new non-feline pet**



**Kathryn's rose  
took her dancing**

Home > LSC News

### LSC News

Read about:

- [LSC News](#)
- LSC Committees
  - [Member Recognition: Are You a Superstar \(Mel Haughton\)](#)
  - [Scholarship Committee: May Prize Winners \(Robert Carr Harris\)](#)
  - [Volunteer Committee: Want to help a little? \(Mel Haughton\)](#)
- [LSC Help Desk](#)
- [LSC SIG News](#)
- [Lone Star Job Bank](#)
- [STC Texas Chapters](#)
- [Educational & Networking Opportunities](#)

### LSC News

- LSC President's Awards: Susie honors the Council and Managers



Kathryn & Susie



Susie & Elisa



Mel & Susie



Kristin & Susie



Susie & Robert Harris

- 2008-2009 LSC Officer Induction



Who are these people?

## LSC Committee Reports

### Member Recognition Committee: Are You a Superstar?

by [Mel Haughton](#), LSC 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](mailto:volunteers@stc-dfw.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

## **Scholarship Committee – Scholarship Recipients and Prize Winners for May**

by Robert Carr Harris, Scholarship Committee Manager



For LSC's final meeting of the program year, the scholarship committee honored the two winners of the Traditional Education Scholarship: Angela Hayes, who is working toward her Master's from Oklahoma State University and Darla-Jean Weatherford, who is working toward her Ph.D. from Texas Tech. Though Ms. Hayes was unable to attend, Ms. Weatherford attended the meeting as a special guest.

Three great sponsors also helped provide wonderful door prizes. The meeting's prize winners included

- **Mary Coleson**, a guest, who won a \$50 gift card from Wal-Mart.
- **Mel Haughton**, a member, who won an STC tote and Tim Ash's book, "Landing Page Optimization," donated by Content Solutions in Denton.
- **Arroxane Ullman**, a member and newly inducted officer, who won a Sony CyberShot 4.1 megapixel digital camera donated by BearCom Wireless in Dallas.

As always, the proceeds from the door prize drawing contribute to LSC's scholarship fund. Everyone who participated this year helped the Scholarship Committee successfully raise funds for our scholarship prizes. On behalf of the Scholarship Committee of the LSC, I would like to personally thank everyone who helped this year to be a great one. For more information on the scholarships the LSC offers, visit the scholarship page on the community Web site at [www.stc-dfw.org](http://www.stc-dfw.org).

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

by Susie Lynn Fox, 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 [susielynfox@gmail.com](mailto:susielynfox@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.

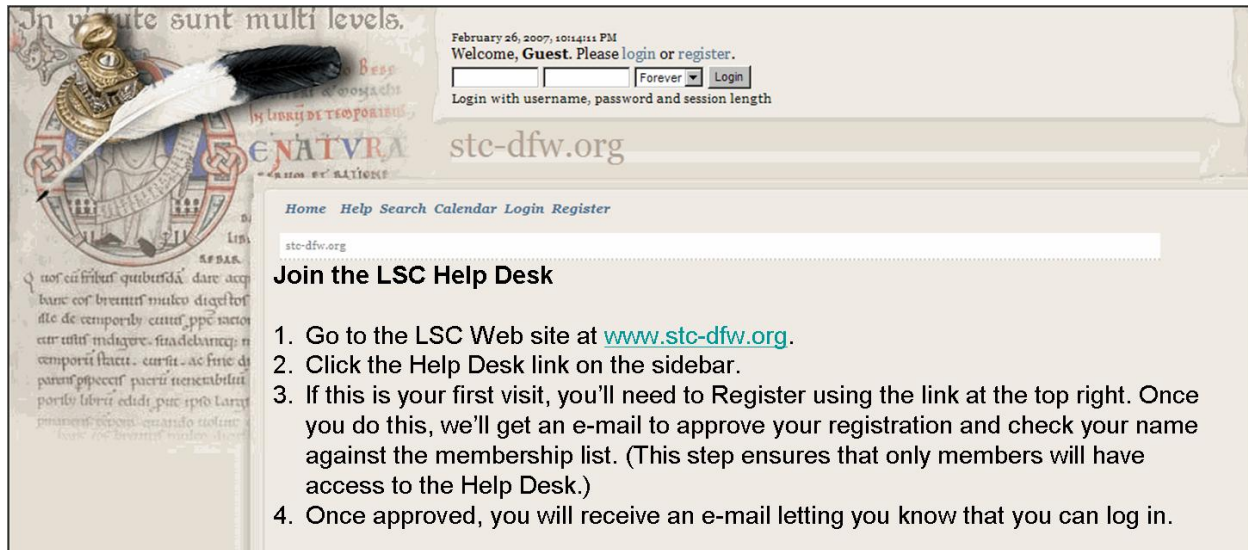
**Mentoring Manager and Assistant Manager:** Help set up programs for LSC mentors and protégées so they can share knowledge, bond with new members in our community, and avoid common mistakes. This job requires about 3 hours of your time every month.

**Competitions Managers:** We're looking for 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](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.

## LSC Help Desk

by [Kathryn Poe](#), Associate Fellow



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

ste-dfw.org

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

ste-dfw.org

### Join the LSC Help Desk

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

## LSC SIG News

### Independents and Networking

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

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

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

## Lone Star Job Bank



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

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

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

## STC Texas Communities

Links to Texas STC resources:

### STC Communities in Texas

[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: <a href="mailto:dfwupa@yahoo.com">dfwupa@yahoo.com</a>	Third Tuesday	varies
Dallas Association of Women in Computing	First Thursday	Crowne Plaza, Addison
North Texas Adobe Captivate User Group E-mail: <a href="#">Walt Stewart</a>	Third Tuesday	varies

## STC Community Events

### October 10–11, 2008

**East Tennessee Chapter** will host its “Practical Conference on Communication” conference to be held at the Chattanooga hotel and conference center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This conference focuses on technical communication in a global economy, offers a great opportunity for honing your presentation skills, and networking with other communications professionals.

For more information, visit <http://stc-etc.org/pcoc.asp>.

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### STC Live Web Seminar Schedule

For more information or to register for this seminar, visit <https://access.stc.org/iMISPublic/Core/Events/Events.aspx>.

Date	Presenter	Topic
July 16	Nicky Bleiel	Cool Tools for Tech Writers for Less Than \$100
July 23	Richard Sikes	How Quality Affects Global Customer Satisfaction
August 13	Nicky Bleiel	Wikis and Knowledge Management
November 5	Naomi Robbins	How to Avoid Common Graphical Mistakes that Technical Communicators Make

Home > Calendar

The Calendar is taking on a new look. You'll find the Legend at the bottom that explains the color-coding. Check here often for new additions to the calendar as special LSC events such as workshops and Competitions begin gearing up.

Send email to [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-dfw.org) if you have event additions you'd like to see on the calendar.

September 2008						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
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28	29	30				

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November						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December						
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28	29	30	31			

January 2009						
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April						
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May						
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Legend:

Council Meeting

Monthly Meeting

Newsletter Article Deadline

STC Annual Technical Summit

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### About TW

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### About *Technically Write*

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

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

### 2008-2009 Submission Deadlines

Issue	Deadline
September	August 10
October	September 7
November	October 5
December	November 2
January	November 30
February	January 4
March	February 1
April	March 8
May	April 5
June	May 17

### Newsletter Design and Layout:

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

## Advertising

- Content must be “camera-ready” in the form of a GIF or JPG file. (**Note:** We do not support animated GIFs or other animation technologies.)
- **Rates:**
  - \$125 one issue
  - \$600 five issues
  - \$900 nine Issues
- **Payment:**
  - Full payment arrangements are due before the ad will appear.
  - Make checks, money orders, or purchase orders payable to:  
Lone Star STC  
PO Box 515065  
Dallas, TX 75251-5065  
Attn: Treasurer, Newsletter Ad
- STC Lone Star community reserves the right to refuse ads.

## Inquiries and Requests

Contact the Managing Editor at e-mail: [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-dfw.org) for more information.

## Reprint/Linking Policy

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

Kindly notify the Managing Editor at [newsletter@stc-dfw.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-dfw.org) 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

## Copyrights and Trademarks

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.

## Submit to *Technically Write*

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

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

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

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

### Contributions to *Technically Write*

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

### Author Guidelines

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

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

## **Technically Write Staff**

Managing Editor: [Jackie Damrau](#)

Editor: **OPEN**

Contributing Editor: **OPEN**

Copyeditors: [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#), [Paula Robertson](#)

Contributors: Robert Carr Harris, [Jo Byrd](#), [Mel Haughton](#), [Jim Korth](#)

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

Photographers: [Dale Erickson](#)

Photo Editor: [Douglas Dow](#)

Graphics: [Mary McWilliams Johnson](#)

Ex-Officio: [Chapter Officers](#)

## **LSC Officers**

President: [Elisa Miller](#)

1st Vice President: [Kristin Kirkham](#)

2nd Vice President: [Arroxane Ullman](#)

Newsletter Editor: [Jackie Damrau](#)

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

## Staff Bios

**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.

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

**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.)

**Kristin Kirkham** is currently the lone writer for BearCom, a wireless solutions company in Garland. A recent graduate of Texas Tech University, Kristin received her B.A. in English, with a specialization in Technical Communication. Kristin is the incoming 1st VP for the Lone Star Community. When she isn't writing, Kristin prefers to be water skiing with her friends and family.

**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.

**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."

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## Technically Wired

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

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

September 1996 October 1996 November 1996

## 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](#)

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