Newsbrief

The newsletter of the Mid-South Chapter of STC
Volume 25 • Issue 3 • October 2007

In This Issue

STC
SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

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

From Our Chapter President

by Anna Acerra

As a discipline, technical communication has grown exponentially over the past few decades and continues to gain respect and validity in the workforce. But we are not yet where we need to be.

Of course, determining value and quality of a discipline and its services are difficult to measure, but having a strong base in the community can only strengthen others' perceptions of our chosen profession. Which is why I am asking you now to please contribute something—anything—to the Mid-South Chapter of STC to ensure our continued presence in the community and our continued recognition in the industry.

Anna Acerra
Mid-South Chapter President

I am sorry to say that, because we don't have enough volunteers this year, we have been forced to sacrifice the number of content-oriented meetings. We simply do not have the manpower to plan and execute meetings featuring panels, progressions, and workshops.

I would like volunteers for official positions, bit I really just want you to get involved. If you would like to plan one meeting, we can help you. If you would like to write up one of our meetings for the newsletter, we would love to have your contribution. I know everyone is very busy, but we have several small tasks that will fit into your schedule—we just need help.

By volunteering, if only for one small job, you can help the chapter reach its potential and attain our goals of promoting technical communication, providing continuing education, and supporting future technical communicators. If we can build this chapter into an effective outlet for these goals, we will continue to grow as a discipline as well as secure our place in the workforce as a valued and respected profession.

Please contact me at anna.acerra@gmail.com to volunteer and help this chapter.

From the Editor

by Kelly Schrank

Summer has passed and we are all well into Fall. Fall is a traditional time to think about going back to school, even if you have been out of school for a while. So, in the spirit of Fall and in keeping with the educational slant I have been pursuing in my feature articles, this quarter's article is about online degree programs. If you recall, last quarter I talked about STC's annual conference and the quarter before that, I offered a listing of online certificate programs. This quarter, I will list associates and bachelors degree programs. My last issue of the year, which will actually come out in January, will cover masters and doctoral degree programs.

Please, enjoy the latest newsletter! I look forward to your feedback at future meetings and via email at kelly@stc-midsouth.com.

Membership Drive

October is the beginning of the 2008 STC Membership Drive. New members who join in October will get three months free (October, November, and December); new members who join in November get two months free (November and December); and new members who join in December, get one month free. Existing members are encouraged to renew before the first of the year.

Category	Included Components	Cost
Classic Membership	• Printed publications • Online publications • Choice between the following: one chapter + one SIG or up to three SIGs	$175
E-Membership	• Online publications • Choice between the following: one chapter + one SIG or up to three SIGs	$165
Student	Online publications, one student chapter, one regular chapter & up to three SIGs	$60

Extra chapters are $25 each. Extra SIGs are $10 each.

Officers

President
Anna Acerra
anna@stc-midsouth.org

Vice President
Open

Secretary
Open

Treasurer
Sarah Beth Larson
treasurer@stc-midsouth.org

Past President
Ginny Yeager

Managers

Academic Liaison
Loel Kim

Employment
Paige Marshall
employment@stc-midsouth.org

Hospitality
John Forbes
hospitality@stc-midsouth.org

Scholarship
Susan Popham
scholarship@stc-midsouth.org

Webmaster
Glenn Sanders
webmaster@stc-midsouth.org

Future Mid-South Chapter Meetings

November 2007

Topic: Software Progression

Speakers: Kelly Brother (Photoshop and Illustrator), Neil Matthiessen (InDesign)

Date: November 14, 2007

Time: 5:30–6 pm networking
       6–7 pm panel discussion and Q&A

Location: Central Branch of the Memphis Public Library (Meeting Room A), 3030 Poplar Ave.

Admission: FREE

December 2007

Topic: Networking Luncheon

Date: December 14, 2007

Time: 11 am - 12 pm

Location: Boscos Squared, Overton Park, 2120 Madison Ave

Admission: Purchase of your own lunch

August Meeting Notes

by Kelly Schrank

August's monthly meeting was another networking luncheon. We met at Owen Brennan's in East Memphis. Fifteen people attended, 5 of which were current members. The theme of this networking lunch was "back to school", and we had some interesting discussions on people's educational backgrounds. Leanne Logan discussed the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the process for becoming a certified Project Management Professional (PMP); everyone had good questions for her and everyone gawked at the book you have to memorize to pass the test.

After a tasty lunch and some good conversation, Anna Acerra, our Chapter President, thanked us for coming and we all went back to work!

Member Spotlight

Susan Popham

How long have you been a member of STC? On and off, for a couple of years.

Have you ever held a position in STC? Nationally, no. Locally, I'm the chair of the Mid-South STC scholarship, which means that I oversee and help evaluate the applications and arrange for the disbursements of funds.

Are you a member of any STC SIGs (Special Interest Groups)? No.

Why are you involved with STC? Because it helps me connect with what my technical writing students are doing and will be doing in their careers. And it helps me find new things to teach.

What is your current position? Associate Professor of Composition and Professional Writing, English Department, University of Memphis.

What do you do on a daily basis? Teach, research, and read and respond to emails.

What do you enjoy most about the field? Its versatility. It seems like almost everything I do—as a teacher, as a researcher, as an e-mail writer and reader, and a technological user—is impacted in some way by the field of technical writing. It's everywhere and in almost every sector of society. Further, I like that it is always on the front wave of innovation and technology.

What would you consider an educational or career highlight? The best highlight is that my students come back to tell me that they've learned new ways of communicating that have real benefits for their lives; they have received promotions, new jobs, raises, etc. from some of the skills they've learned in my class. Another highlight is that one of my published articles, "Forms as Boundary Genres in Medicine, Business, and Science", Journal of Business and Technical Communication 19.3 (July 2005): 279-303, was nominated for a national award for "Best Article Reporting Textual Analysis in Technical Writing," from the Association for Teachers of Technical Writing.

What advice do you have for new technical communicators? Stay up to date with new trends, behaviors, and technologies. Even if these trends are not happening in your work place, find workshops, seminars, lectures, or even trial programs that allow you to stay ahead of your workplace.

How did you get into technical communications as a career? My graduate degree is in Rhetoric and Composition, which means that I expected to teach Freshmen Composition and other writing classes for my career. But as I thought more about the need for writing in workplaces and the need for students to learn writing skills that were directly applicable to their careers, I started to move closer to the field of technical writing teaching and research; even so, my teaching is still directed more at writing skills than other kinds of technical communication skills, like html programming.

What's been your biggest challenge as a technical communicator? Trying to keep myself up-to-date with new trends in technologies. I stay pretty busy as a teacher and researcher, so it's very hard to find the time to try out new programs and hardware. ⬤

September Meeting Notes

by Sarah Beth Larson

One of the professions which works most closely with technical communicators is technical illustration. The September Mid-South Chapter meeting was a chance for us to glimpse through the wall dividing writers and artists to see what work life is like on the other side. The topic, Creating and Integrating Graphics Into Technical Documents, was a popular one, with around two dozen in attendance, and ran past the time allotted as members watched Gary Phillips' demonstration of 3-D illustration software.

Andie Blevins started out the evening with some background on biomedical graphics and forensic illustration and how it is utilized in publications as well as the field. Her history of biomedical illustration stressed the influence of Galen, DaVinci, and others on realistic renderings of the human form and mechanical devices. Andie herself started out as a graphic artist, but does much of her illustration by hand, though she most often uses Freehand by Adobe for computer illustration.

Next, Gary showed the audience what sorts of graphics and animation he had created in the past for companies both large and small. He shared some of his favorite software tricks and made the creation process seem quite simple by his demonstration of Amapi. Gary also shared a trade secret: A free download of the 6.1 version of Amapi is available online at SoftSea now that the new version is selling for around $1,000! (Here's the link to that free Amapi 3D software: http://files.polyloop.net/amapi/Amapi6.1PC_US-FR_polyloop.net.ip)

Our evening seeing into the world of technical illustration was a refreshing look for a lot of tech writers. However, there were many recognizable parallels, in the sense that the creation process follows a similar path. Evaluation of the client needs and research into what has been done before is also familiar for both technical illustrators and writers. Both artists agreed that sometimes the medium used is determined by the needs of a client. For example, for an illustration to be printed in a report or textbook, it would be better to draw it in a graphics program instead of freehand, to allow for a printable level of quality. ○

Mid-South Chapter Scholarship Awarded

Each year, the Mid-South Chapter offers a $1,000 scholarship to eligible full-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students and part-time graduate students in the Professional Writing program in the Department of English at the University of Memphis.

Ashley Graham, an undergraduate student at U of M, won the award this year. She was granted $1,000 to be used toward school tuition and expenses for the 2007-2008 school year. Ashley describes herself here: "My name is Ashley Graham. I was born and raised in Memphis, Tn and grew up with three little brothers and my mom and dad. I graduated from Macon Road Baptist School where I played varsity softball and was a member of the Honor Society. As a Junior at the University of Memphis, I am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in professional writing. Ideally, I'd like to become an editor and upon having children, I'd like to do freelance editing. In my spare time, I enjoy journaling, reading, and watching old movies. I also enjoy spending time with my husband, my family, and my friends." ○

Online Degree Programs

by Kelly Schrank

In my third installment on education, I have gathered information on online degree programs. There are many completely online Associates and Bachelors degree programs in Technical Communication from colleges and universities across the country. (I am saving Masters and Doctoral programs for my last newsletter of 2007, set for release in January).

A couple of things to ask about with any school's online program:
1) Will I be charged in-state or out-of-state tuition? Schools with all-online programs sometimes offer in-state tuition, which can drop your costs considerably.
2) Are all core courses for the general education credits available online? At some schools, not all of the general education credits will be available online, so it may be beneficial to take general education credits at a local school then transfer them to the institution with the degree you want.

STC has revamped the Academic Database on its website since the last time I used it (to bring you the online certificate programs in the April issue). It's easier to use, the programs are broken down by type of degree, and there is a button to only see programs offering online classes. Because schools enter themselves in the database, I did find that some programs listed when you press the online button offered both online and onsite, and some may require some classes on-site, so I eliminated those programs fron my list when I found them.

DISCLAIMER: The information in this article has been gathered from the STC website's database of academic programs, then verified through the institution's website and listed contact. This listing is not meant to act as a review, but only as a helpful guide to what is out there. It is by no means exhaustive.

Associates Degree Programs

School: Austin Community College
Name of Program: Technical Communications Program
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 58-66
Approximate Cost: $293 per credit hour
Length of Program: 2 years
Website: http://www2.austin.cc.tx.us/tcm/tcmenroll.html
Notes: "The Associate of Applied Science in the Technical Communications Specialization provide preparation essential for careers in technical communications. Courses include developing print and online materials, online helps, web sites, and graphics; working within the documentation process as writers, editors, reviewers, designers, and coordinators; exploring industry developments involving single sourcing, content management, and document control; using software applications most in demand by employers to develop portfolio-quality documents; and, most importantly, practicing clear succinct direct writing that is carefully adapted to its intended audience."
Contact Name: David McMurrey
Contact Email: davidm@austincc.edu

September ASTD Conference Notes

by Sarah Beth Larson

The Memphis chapter (http://www.astdmemphis.org/) of the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) held the South Area Conference, titled "Facilitating Training in a Changing Workforce," on Friday, September 21, 2007 at the Hilton Hotel, Memphis. This day-long event consisted of a morning keynote and breakout session, then an afternoon keynote and breakout session.

The conference theme was addressed through a wide variety of presentations on handling diversity—cultural, generational, and otherwise—to improve performance. Each of these sessions could be valuable additions to any company's training. As an instructional designer, my work requires not only developing content in a purposeful manner, with a clear understanding of the goals of the program; it also also requires a deeper analysis, firm understanding of the process of implementation, as well as design and evaluation (and sometimes even training delivery).

Tony Bingham, President & CEO, ASTD, Keynote Speaker
 "Why CEOs Hate Training & Development"

Tony's address was a fast-paced and energetic excursion into the world of the CEO, as he addressed the *Fast Company* cover story "Why We Hate HR" (Issue 97, 2005) as it relates to training. As key business performance and leadership development players, learning professionals need to be aware of why they do not function as partners in business. His message: constant awareness of the bottom line, selling your program's ROI potential, and using the language of chief executives will get you farthest along the path to partnership with executives and having an impact on the success of your organization.

Tony Bingham's Recommendations for Trainers in Partnering with Executives

1. Speak their language
2. Understand organizational strategy
3. Focus on growth
4. Link learning to executive goals and metrics
5. Measure ROI
6. Communicate your results

Knowing that execs want to grow future leaders, Tony says "there's never been a better time to be in learning" than right now. Fewer than 8% of companies are successfully measuring their return on investment (ROI) for training.

Barbara Richman and Mike Stavropoulous, HR Mpact.
"Influencing Workplace Respect & Civility"

This dialogue around civility and its toll on productivity (e.g. the bottom line) centered on understanding its triggers, as well as the reasons they become grievances. Our group discussed the spectrum of uncivilized behaviors, from sarcasm (low-end) to insubordination (mid-level) to threats (high-end) and possible solutions for preventing these behaviors. Three areas for focus are respecting others' time, space, and places. For example, Barbara encouraged the group to consider how staff and co-workers prefer to receive communication; avoid invading employees' personal space; and choose the proper forums for discussions, idea-sharing, etc.

Local Events for Technical Communicators

November 2007
Topic: Project Leadership Across Cultures
Speakers: Marco Chan
Organization: Project Management Institute - Memphis
Date: 11/6/2007
Time: 6 - 8 pm
Location: Crescent Club, 6075 Poplar Avenue, Ninth Floor
Cost: $35
For more information, go to http://www.pmimemphis.org

November 2007
Topic: Surviving E-Mail: Tips for E-Mail Etiquette
Speaker: Barbara Richman, Senior Consultant, MPACT Human Resource Consulting
Organization: American Society for Training & Development - Memphis
Date: 11/13/07
Time: 11:30 am - 1 pm
Location: Doubletree Hotel, 5069 Sanderlin Avenue
Admission: $20
For more information, go to http://www.astdmemphis.org

November 2007
Topic: PMI Tour of Christian Brothers University
Organization: Project Management Institute - Memphis
Date: 11/14/07
Time: 6 - 7 pm
Location: Christian Brothers University, 650 E. Parkway South
Admission: $15
For more information, go to http://www.pmimemphis.org

November 2007
Topic: Polls as Research, Rhetoric and Ratings: How Candidates, PR Firms and Media Use and Should Use Polls
Speaker: Barbara Richman, Senior Consultant, MPACT Human Resource Consulting
Organization: Memphis Chapter, Public Relations Society of America
Date: 11/14/07
Time: 11:45 am - 1 pm
Location: Holiday Inn - University of Memphis, 3700 Central Avenue, 3rd floor

Admission: $25
For more information, go to http://www.prsamemphis.org

December 2007
Topic: Holiday Social and ASTD Bucks Auction
Organization: American Society for Training & Development - Memphis
Date: 12/11/07
Time: 11:30 am - 1 pm
Location: Doubletree Hotel, 5069 Sanderlin Avenue
Admission: $20
For more information, go to http://www.astdmemphis.org

Check out this Website!

by Kelly Schrank
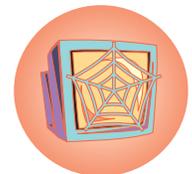
I am so glad that all of you read our Mid-South Chapter newsletter! But I wanted to let you know about all the other great newsletters out there from other chapters and Special Interest Groups (SIGs). You can access them all at the following website: www.stc-annex.com/Newsletters/NLsOfSTC.htm.

September PMI Meeting Notes

by Sarah Beth Larson

On Tuesday, September 11, 2007, I attended the Project Management Institute's September Memphis Chapter Meeting at Crescent Club in Memphis. The topic was "Corporate Program Management from the Trenches" with Senior Manager Chris Patteson.

Chris Patteson of FedEx is a program manager who comes from a strong Project Management background. Since the focus for his presentation was differences in project and program management, his opening question to the audience was simple: What is the distinction in program management and project management?

Several ideas offered up were that the difference lies in time span or goal of the projects, in that programs are longer (up to two years); or that a program is a collection of projects; and even that the two are separated mainly by semantics. The ultimate answer given was that programs have strategic aims related to executive initiatives.

It wasn't surprising that there were some similarities in the two, but the difference in approach and function required of a program manager versus a project manager was remarkable. For example, Chris stressed that a program manager must be aware of political and financial ramifications of multiple projects synonymously. Dealing with executive-level staff is an essential part of managing large programs.

Chris also offered an incisive and sometimes humorous view of program management in this short talk. Most of the attendees were new and seasoned project managers from various departments of companies, about a quarter of whom were attending their first PMI meeting.

Attendees can receive one PDU toward PMP certification from PMI by attending the monthly meetings. ●

Web Seminar on STC's New Salary Database

As many of you know, one of STC's new initiatives is a new salary database, based on data collected from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment Survey (OES), to replace the previous Salary Survey. It is hoped that this new data will be more reliable, provide better coverage, and provide better detail than the previous salary survey, which was self-reported by members. STC believes this information is more credible because the data is reported by employers rather than employees, and HR departments may distrust employee-reported salary data.

A registration form will be posted in early November for those interested in attending. Everyone who registers will get a copy of the full PDF version of the Salary Database. ●

December 2007
Topic: STC's New Salary Database
Speakers: Rick O'Sullivan
Date: December 5, 2007
Time: 1–2:30 p.m. (EST)
Cost: $99 for STC members

School: Gateway Technical College
Name of Program: Technical Communications
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 67
Approximate Cost: $92.05 per credit hour plus $10 fee for each online course
Length of Program: 2 years
Website: http://cws.gateway.tec.wi.us/programs/techcomm/index.html
Notes: "Gateway's Technical Communication program leads to an Associate of Applied Science Degree. This program prepares graduates to research, write, illustrate, layout, edit, and electronically publish such products as instructional literature, service literature, catalog literature, promotional literature, journalistic literature, grant proposals, video programs, and corporate procedures. The technical communicator must be skilled in publishing these products to paper, to electronic media, and to the Internet. These technical communication skills are in high demand because the business, industrial, medical, social, governmental, and service fields must meet the constant challenges that the informational/electronic/ Internet age presents to them. The Technical Communication program is portfolio driven, both electronic and paper. Each course will add to your portfolio and will be evaluated each semester. Once a year, your portfolio will be evaluated by a technical communication employer. At program completion, you will be able to demonstrate clearly and completely your technical communication skill sets to potential employers. Gateway has been told consistently by employers that our students are highly successful at job interviews because their skills are clearly demonstrated in their portfolios."
Contact Name: Richard Gage
Contact Email: gaged@gtc.edu

Bachelors Degree Programs

School: Drexel University
Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in Communication and Applied Technology
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 180 quarter credits
Approximate Cost: $550 per credit hour
Length of Program: Varies
Website: http://www.drexel.com/online-degrees/bachelors-degrees/bs-cat/index.aspx
Contact Email: info@drexel.com

School: Kaplan University
Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in Communication/Technical Writing
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 180 quarter credits
Approximate Cost: $320 per quarter credit plus $100 technology fee per term
Length of Program: 4 years
Website: http://www.kaplan.edu/ku/schools/artsandsciences/bsc/default.aspx?School=Art&MainTab=Program&loc=0&ProgramID=33644
Notes: "BS in Communication with emphasis areas in technical writing and organizational communication. Kaplan University offers the Advanced Start Bachelor of Science in Communication degree option for students who have earned an AAS ,AS, AA, BA, or BS degree from a regionally or nationally accredited college. The advanced start degree option is an innovative program that combines the career-oriented focus of a two-year degree with the academic curriculum of a four-year program."
Contact Name: Carolyn Stevenson
Contact Email: cstevenson@kaplan.edu

The simple mantra of appreciating others and investing in our relation-ships at work can help create functional working relationships. Barbara and Mike suggested putting yourself under a microscope to check for these behaviors, and understanding that conflict will inevitably arise in the workplace. The twofold strategy they suggested is limiting an environ-ment's favorability for disrespectful behaviors and listening to the mes-sage behind the incivility:

> **Pertinent Quote from Aristotle**:
> It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.

·   Agree to disagree without being disagreeable.
·   Earn respect through first giving it.

P. K. Potter, President, Yeiser Training for the Financial Industry, Keynote Speaker
"Listening to Your Voice"

The voice is one of the tools training professionals most rely upon and are least aware of. PK's discussion of the voice focused on using your breath, consonants, and rate of speed to the most advantage. She encouraged the group to do "common things in life in an uncommon way" (as G.W. Carver famously said) and led the assembled conferees in several activities to help improve posture, tone, and enunciation—all of which affect the voice.

We may spend hours developing, researching, building, and delivering training, both in webinars or classroom set-tings, and focus almost exclusively on the content. Our presentations can suffer even more in real-time web environ-ments than in the classroom, since body language cannot be relied upon to emphasize certain points. This presen-tation was a much-needed reminder to always be aware of how you sound, as well as what you are saying, and to speak with clarity, purpose, and deliberation.

Bill Burtch
"Coaching Skills for Training & Development Professionals"
Bill Burtch's session was full to overflowing, because word has gotten around town about his coaching skills. I really enjoyed his viewpoint on executive coaching, and I gathered a lot of ideas for coaching at the managerial level.

Bill's two-hour presentation was a condensed version of a 2-day class he has on executive coaching. The "coach approach" is flexible, focused on the individual, and meant to create accountability and personal drive toward goals. It focuses on seeing obstacles with the end view of achieving personal change. The coaching atmosphere depends on an environment of trust, and opportunities only come when someone is ready to be coached; they cannot be made to shift their thinking otherwise. Coaching isn't about what the coach teaches, but what the "coachee" discovers, since it's focused on the dynamic process of growth.

> **Bill Burtch's Recommended Websites**
> www.CoachVille.com
> www.CoachFederation.org
> www.CertifiedCoach.org
>
> For more information, contact Bill through his website: www.Harmonycc.net.

School: Minnesota State University, Mankato
Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in English, Technical Communication Option
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 37 in Technical Communication plus additional credits in a "Technical Minor"
Approximate Cost: $243.01per credit hour
Length of Program: 4 years
Website: http://english.mnsu.edu/techcomm/
Notes: "The undergraduate major in technical communication prepares students to be professional information developers, technical writers, and editors who are skilled at using the written and spoken word, along with visuals, to effectively inform and instruct a wide range of audiences."
Contact Name: Dr. Roland Nord
Contact Email: roland.nord@mnsu.edu

School: Northeastern University
Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in Technical Communications
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 160 quarter credits
Approximate Cost: $292 per quarter credit hour
Length of Program: 4 years
Website: http://www.spcs.neu.edu/bs_techcomm
Notes: "The Technical Communications Bachelor of Science degree provides students with the skills to begin or advance careers as writers, editors, or communications managers."
Contact Name: Eric Kupferberg
Contact Email: E.Kupferberg@neu.edu

School: University of Wisconsin - Stout
Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in Technical Communication
Number of Credits Needed for Degree: 124 credit hours
Approximate Cost: $254.70 per credit hour
Length of Program: 4 years
Website: http://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bstc/index.html
Notes: "To accommodate the needs of both working professionals and students who live outside western Wisconsin and the Twin Cities area, the BS degree in Technical Communication is available online. All major courses are taught both in the classroom and through online delivery, allowing students both onsite and remote not only to receive instruction but also to participate in group projects and hands-on applied learning. The requirements for the online program are the same as the in-person program."
Contact Name: Matthew Livesey, Program Director
Contact Email: liveseym@uwstout.edu

The "Notes" in the above listings were taken from the STC website listing, which was initially provided by the school itself. Notes may have been truncated or information about other degrees or certificates not covered in this article may have been eliminated. Cost estimates do not include application fees where applicable, textbooks when necessary, or any costs you may incur personally to get the required software or internet connections; please see the institution's requirements for computer hardware, software, and internet connections. Costs per credit hour did include student fees where they were plainly published. ◉