



Ascent

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President's message

Hello all, and happy fall! The STC Intermountain chapter board is excited to announce that we are going to hold chapter elections for the 2006-2007 chapter administrative council, which will take office June 1, 2006. It's been a while since our chapter has done this, so the process may be new to some. However, we're going to keep things as simple as possible. All we need is you! Please take this opportunity to step up and participate in the chapter leadership, and/or to voice your opinion. We need candidates, voters, and nominating committee members.

Within the next few weeks you will receive a follow-up e-newsletter with election details, dates, and voting procedures. Elected positions include president, vice-president, and secretary/treasurer. (Note: other board positions, such as website committee manager and newsletter editor, are appointed.) If you've ever considered running for office--or even if you haven't--now is the time to act! If you have any questions, please email anyone on the board (see contact information on page 4). Thank you!

—Melissa Jessop, STC-IC President

Competitions

Call for Chapter Competition Judges

This year's Intermountain **STC Technical Communications Competition** categories include:

- Online Communication
- Technical Art
- Technical Publications

Submissions have already been received, but we have openings for competition judges. Judging is a great way to view, evaluate, and assign awards to local entries.

If you would like to be a judge, download a judging application form from our STC-IC website. For more information, contact either Ann Gordon (gordoncomputer@yahoo.com) or Marj Hermansen-Eldard (marjheldard@comcast.net).

Call for Potential International Competition Judges

STC is looking for judges for its upcoming international competitions, which will be held Saturday, March 11, 2006, in Arlington, Virginia. Judging in the international competitions provides you with an opportunity to review the entries and to network with interesting people.

You may apply to participate as either an on-site judge or an off-site judge. Off-site judges make the decision on awards in a telephone conference call held no later than February 26, 2006.

Qualifications for international judges and applications to serve as an STC judge need to be received at the Society office by November 30, 2005. Applications available on the STC website at: www.stc.org/internationalCompetitions_JAF.asp

Online Competition Traveling Exhibit

The first week in November, the Intermountain chapter is hosting the Traveling Exhibit of International Online Competition winners from 2004-2005. Entries to the online competition include websites, online help systems, Web-based and computer-based training, etc. Only the Distinguished and Excellence winning entries are included in the Traveling Exhibits.

We are excited to bring this exhibit to our area. Because the online competition entries need to be viewed with computers, Marj has reserved a computer lab at UVSC for this occasion.

Visiting this exhibit gives all of us a chance to review and analyze what entries are successful, so that we can improve our own work. Also, this will give us a chance to improve our analysis of competition entries. Set aside time to attend this exhibit!

Date: Saturday, November 5, 2005
Time: 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. (open house)
Location: UVSC, Orem Campus, LA029
(downstairs, new Liberal Arts Building)

List of winning entries: http://www.stc.org/internationalCompetitions_winners_IOCC.asp

Region 5 - STC Houston

STC members helping victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Cindy Pao, president of STC Houston, sent a letter regarding the chapter's efforts to help the hurricane victims. I have condensed her letter for our newsletter:

I am happy to report that there is a Web page available where hurricane evacuees and victims can sign up for assistance. This page offers information about how to get help along with links to three Web forms: One form for STC members seeking assistance, one form for non-members requesting resume assistance, and another form for STC members to volunteer to help.

Visit the Web page at:
<http://www.stc.org/formDisasterAid01.asp>

The assistance available for STC members includes resume assistance, clothing, hardware, and job search. Non-members can get resume assistance.

Our committee is dedicated to helping all those who need help as a results of either Hurricane Katrina or Rita.

Regarding Cindy's group, Linda Oestreich said, "This is an example of STC at its best."

—Donna Ann Gordon, *STC-IC Newsletter Editor*

Workplace

Usability and Accessibility: Subjects for the First World Usability Day

The first-ever World Usability Day is scheduled for November 3, 2005. This worldwide series of events is designed to promote awareness of the benefits of usability engineering and user-centered design. It will be presented "Earth Day" style.

Events have been planned in more than 70 cities in 35 countries, including:

- Hands-on usability testing exhibits for children at the Boston Museum of Science, planned to coincide with the opening of the new "Star Wars" exhibit at the museum.
- Talk in Bremen by Ben Shneiderman, "Leonardo's Laptop: Human Needs and the New Computing Technologies"
- Online conferences with well-known accessibility experts
- Events that focus on advances in usability will be offered in several cities in India
- A conference at Dartmouth College designed to help people understand how principles of usability can be applied to benefit all kinds of learners.
- Participation by cabinet-level leaders and other government officials around the world.

Elizabeth Rosenzweig chairs the World Usability Day committee. Human Factors International, Inc. is the Title Sponsor of the worldwide initiative. For more information, visit: www.WorldUsabilityDay.org

Tools of the Trade

Backstage at Intermountain-STC.org: A conversation with Darren, the chapter webmaster

Chances are you have received e-mails about job opportunities and followed the link to the chapter website. Maybe you've even taken time to explore other pages of the website while you were there. We thought it might be interesting for you to visit with the site webmaster, Darren Bell, and see what more we could learn about our chapter website.

Ascent: The site looks good. It must take a lot of effort to keep it up.

Webmaster: Maintaining the pages is fairly easy. The basic page design is like a template with distinct divisions between banner and navigation, body content, and footer. Most content changes are made in the body. Getting the design right in the first place took some effort.

Ascent: Why was the design so challenging?

Webmaster: It started out as an experiment, really. I wanted to learn what it would take to create a site using strict HTML 4.01 and CSS2 that would comply with W3C WAI and WCAG standards.

Ascent: Whoa! That's a lot of alphabet soup for those of us who just learned to spell HTML.

Webmaster: Sorry. W3C is the World Wide Web Consortium, the group that creates standards for Web content. Concerned with the number of difficult-to-use Web pages, they developed guidelines for making pages more accessible: WAI is the Web Accessibility Initiative, and WCAG is Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Ascent: What do you mean by "accessible"?

Webmaster: The primary intent is to create Web content that can be used by people with disabilities. People with poor vision, for example, may need to use a voice browser that converts text to speech. Sites with frames, complex table-based layouts, and flashing graphics cause problems for such assistive technologies. But accessibility also includes making pages available to the widest range of browsers and Web readers, not just Internet Explorer with Macromedia plug-ins.

A nice side-effect of accessible pages is that, in theory, accessible pages can be readily used by

mobile phones, handheld devices, or even other technologies yet to be developed.

Ascent: So what makes the pages of our website accessible?

Webmaster: In addition to some of the things I've already mentioned, the pages avoid any browser-specific mark-up or scripting; they also use strict HTML 4.01, the latest HTML standard. The general layout is accomplished with cascading style sheets, rather than with tables. Even though the pages look like a typical table layout, tables are only used for table data. This makes the pages very readable, even when viewed in a text-only browser.

Ascent: You mean that the pages look good even without the colors, fonts, and graphics?

Webmaster: That's the idea. You can try it out easily if you use a Mozilla browser like Firefox or Netscape. Just choose View > Page Style > No Style.

Webmaster: If you use Internet Explorer, you can get the same effect by saving the page to file. IE will likely also download the .css style sheet, so just move the file you saved to another directory before you open it so that it cannot find the style sheet.

Ascent: But you don't expect people to view pages without styles, do you?

Webmaster: They can if they want. That's the point of accessibility! But you're right, most of us are partial to the page design with the styles. It's amazing what you can do with cascading style sheets. If you're interested in CSS, you should check out CSS Zen Garden at www.csszengarden.com. Even if you are not interested in CSS, but enjoy great graphic design, it's worth a look. Some of the designs shown are jaw-dropping. Be sure to dig into the archive.

Ascent: Sounds nice. Any other resources you would recommend to learn about Web design?

Webmaster: Of course the authoritative source for anything Web is the W3C site, www.w3.org. The Web Style Guide at www.webstyleguide.com is another popular and very usable resource. If you are just starting out, or if you want to learn more advanced technologies, W3Schools.com (www.w3schools.com) has free tutorials on everything from HTML to XML to WAP.

—Darren Bell, STC-IC Webmaster

Connections

2006 – 2007 Scholarships

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication. Four awards of \$1,500 each will be granted for academic year 2006-2007.

Application deadline is February 15, 2006.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office. For information and forms, you can write to:

Society for Technical Communication
Attn: Scholarships
901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822

Or, you can access scholarship information and forms on the STC website: <http://www.stc.org/>

Click the Education link and select:
Grants & Loans > Scholarship Info

Completed application forms must reach the following address by February 15:

Scott DeLoach
834 C Dekalb Ave NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

After you read the scholarship information document and the application form, direct any questions you have to Scott DeLoach by email (scott@userfirst.net) or by phone (404-522-0003).

Membership renewal

We invite all of you to renew your membership for another year to ensure your continued access to the benefits provided by the STC organization. STC is committed to bringing you the best speakers, writers, scholars, and practitioners in the technical communication field, whether at one of our development meetings, conferences, or seminars, or through the pages of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*.

We anticipate that 2006 will be a memorable and exciting year for us all. We value your membership in STC. It is easy to renew online, just go to <https://www.stc.org/duesrenewal/> Thank you!

Acknowledgments

Newsletter Editor

We thank Jennifer Gibbs for creating our newsletters this past year. We wish her luck in her endeavors!

Donna Ann Gordon is now the editor for the Intermountain chapter newsletter. If you have any submissions or suggestions, please contact Ann at gordoncomputer@yahoo.com.

Board Meeting Conference Line

STC-IC thanks Idea Integration for allowing us to use one of their conference lines for our executive board meetings. Idea Integration is a branch of MPS Group. Learn more about Idea at: <http://www.idea.com>

Contacts

2005 Executive Board and Advisory Council

STC-Intermountain Chapter 2005 Executive Board		
Position	Name	Email
President	Melissa Jessop	mel_n_sam@yahoo.com
Education committee manager		
Membership committee manager		
Newsletter editor	Donna Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com
Programs committee manager	Marj Hermannsen-Eldard	marjheldard@comcast.net
Website committee manager	Darren Bell	webmaster@intermountain-stc.org
Northern regional rep	Craig Walker	wal@inel.gov
Southern regional rep	Donna Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com