



Ascent

Fall 2006 / Volume 2: Issue 3

Contents

President's Message	1
Chapter Events	1
Education	2
Acknowledgments	2
Tools of the Trade	3
Connections	4
Contacts	4

President's Message

Recognition

Like most creative people, I like to be recognized for my work. Likewise, individual groups like recognition too, for their product or service and for their contribution to society. This year, the technical communication fields, and the STC organization, have garnered some great attention and recognition.

In April 2006, MONEY Magazine published the "Best Jobs in America," according to job growth and average. Technical writer came in 13th. Other jobs of interest to STC members include curriculum developer (18th), editor (19th), and public relations specialist (20th). This sort of recognition helps not only feel better about what we do for a living, but it makes it easier for us to explain what we do to acquaintances.

Then, in June 2006, the International Council for Technical Communication (INTECOM), which is an 'umbrella' organization of technical communication organizations around the world, approved STC's membership at its Annual General Meeting in Guernsey, in the Channel Islands. I was pleased to read that the INTECOM delegates unanimously approved STC's membership. Suzanna Laurent, STC's immediate past president, will serve as INTECOM's vice president this year. She looks forward to telling the powerful story of technical communication and explaining how our professions improve the everyday lives of people worldwide. For more information about INTECOM, visit www.intecom.org.

I bask in this type of recognition for my chosen field and for the STC organization. And I hope you do too. Thank you for being a member of STC and we look forward to seeing you at our development meetings and other events.

— Ann Gordon, STC-IC President & So. Utah Rep

Chapter Events

Professional development meeting

What: "Making Content Powerful—Getting the Most from a Short, Informational Interview"

Where: Salt Lake City Public Library

When: Wednesday, September 20 at 7 p.m.

Why: You need time with your subject matter experts, but you're lucky if they give you 20 minutes. Sound familiar? This interactive workshop will feature both presentation and activities to help you make the most of those short interviews with elusive SMEs. Mark your calendars now and join us at the Salt Lake City Library.

Please RSVP to marjheldard@comcast.net no later than **Friday, September 15**. For details, visit <http://www.intermountain-stc.org/meetings.html>.

Member news

STC grants senior member status upon those who have held membership in STC for five years. The Intermountain Chapter is pleased to announce that the following chapter members have attained the rank of Senior Member:

Karyn M. Crandall
D. Ann Gordon

The officers and committee leaders of our chapter wish to congratulate these members for their contribution to the Intermountain Chapter of STC.

International competition winners

Of the four pieces we sent to the International Technical Publications Competition, three won awards:

Idaho National Laboratory Ten-Year Site Plan
Diana Skoy, Bruce P. King, Shaun C. Eames
Award: Merit; Category: Informational Materials

Bipolar Disorder: The Latest Assessment and Treatment Strategies
Kathi L. Whitman
Award: Excellence; Category: Books

Post-Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorders: The Latest Assessment and Treatment Strategies
Kathi L. Whitman
Award: Best of Show and Distinguished Technical Communication; Category: Books

These are excellent showings for both our chapter and for our judging teams!

— *Marj Hermansen-Eldard, Programs Committee Manager*

Education

USU STC Student Chapter wins international newsletter competition

For the past five years, USU-STC has submitted *Synopsis* in STC's international newsletter competition. According to Nancy O'Rourke, advisor for USU-STC, the dedicated newsletter editors and the staff of *Synopsis* have worked hard toward the goal of claiming the highest award in the competition. This year was it. "We began with an award of Merit (the lowest), advanced to Excellence the next two years, and Excellence—Most Improved one year, and this year Best of Show (the highest)," she said.

Synopsis competed with 22 communities this year, as small as 35 members to as large as 600 members.

USU-STC officers and students write articles, as do technical communicators in the workplace for the five issues of *Synopsis* published during the academic year.

This year's staff included Seth Gurrell, Editor; Abbie Mumford and Kinsey Love, Assistant Editors; Margie Yundt, Copy Editor; and Martin Eisenloeffel, Illustrator.

The Society for Technical Communication states that newsletters play an integral role in communicating news and information about the technical communication profession among members of STC communities and special interest groups (SIGs). Newsletters also help both members and

nonmembers develop interest in Society goals and activities at the community, regional, and Society levels.

The STC newsletter competition honors chapter and SIG newsletter editors who achieve these goals and excel in creating newsletters that exhibit effective design, layout, and editorial qualities. The editors and contributors deserve much praise for their expertise in publishing exceptional STC newsletters.

— *Nancy M. O'Rourke, USU-STC Advisor*

Acknowledgments

Tribute to Nancy O'Rourke

The Intermountain Chapter executive board would like to extend a wholehearted "thank you" to Nancy O'Rourke (M.A., University of Arizona) for her dedicated service as Faculty Advisor to the Utah State University Student Chapter of STC. Nancy served the great young folks at USU for six years.

In addition to her excellent contributions as Intermountain Chapter Public Relations Coordinator, student chapter faculty advisor and mentor, Nancy taught a variety of courses in technical writing, specializing in editing and software documentation at USU. Her enthusiasm for the field transferred to her students, who brought a high level of commitment and dedication to whatever volunteer role they filled...I especially recall the vast number of USU students who helped out when we hosted the STC Region 5 conference in Salt Lake City in the fall of 2004.

"Nancy, YOU are so much a part of us, of the student chapter, of technical communication in Utah."

Besides her membership and involvement in STC, Nancy was a member of the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC), where she presented at a number of conferences.

Nancy recalls that "the Intermountain's yearly request for USU students to serve as on-line judges is testimony to the standards students are held to and the strength of the undergraduate program in Professional and Technical Writing in the English Department."

Nancy, YOU are so much a part of us, of the student chapter, of technical communication in Utah. We will miss you and wish you all the best as you retire. God bless, Nancy. I will always remember you as one of my favorite STC pals!



Nancy O'Rourke, Lindsey Groves, Amanda Wanner, and Marj Hermansen-Eldard

Nancy's influence stretched far beyond the classroom, but it was here, as an instructor, that she made a difference in the life of every student who had the privilege of registering for one of her classes.

— *Marj Hermansen-Eldard, Programs Committee Manager*

Tools of the Trade

Databases: Development and the technical editor

Eight years ago when I began working as a Technical Editor as a contractor for the Air Force, my schooling had armed me with a number of fantastic tools. I remember shocking a couple of the engineers with the amount of corrections made to their documents with my fresh collegiate grammar and technical writing skills. Using these skills is what they pay me for, but having these skills didn't prepare me for the rest of the story: streamlining business practices through Microsoft Access.

The following are three example databases I have created at my current workplace while being employed as a Technical Editor.

As a part of a contractor team for the Air Force, I encounter an amazing amount of acronyms. Our current local acronym database is housing almost 2,000 acronyms alone. With a click of a button I can search, add, or edit acronyms; create an acronym glossary for placement in documents; or print out an entire book of our acronyms. It's an incredible tool

and an easy way to have the information I need at my fingertips and out of the bookshelf.

Tracking my work is important to my job. Tracking numbers need to be assigned and information about a document needs to be stored somewhere. You can have all this information separated out in Word documents, file folders, metadata sheets, and Excel files, or you can bring it all together under one database. This database helps me track a document from initiation to publishing, and it provides me with document statistics on a date range of my choosing.

Deadlines are a part of everyone's job. Unfortunately since the technical publishing world can depend so much on other people's deadlines, at my company we inherited the responsibility of keeping other people's eyes on their deadlines. With a click of a button our writers and managers can see what deadlines they have looming ahead, which also helps keep our group on schedule.

“Not only are MS Access databases fantastic tools for standardization, but they also can make your heavy bookwork as light as a mouse click.”

These are just a few examples. We also have databases for other day-to-day work:

- Company phone directories with employee pictures
- Award certificate creation and tracking
- Task scheduling and associated document information.

If I had known then that I would be using MS Access multiple times during the day now, I would have added the course to my regimen for graduation. Not only are MS Access databases fantastic tools for standardization, but they also can make your heavy bookwork as light as a mouse click.

Many companies hire database technicians to do this work for you, but with leaner times where companies are doing more with less, you may find internal database production being shelved for more urgent tasks. Arming yourself with a little database knowledge and do-it-yourself attitude won't hurt at all. Luckily I had a supportive supervisor and a company that funded some training.

— Tom Purdue, *STC Member*

[Tom Purdue graduated Magna Cum Laude from Weber State University with a major in Communication and a minor in Technical Writing in 1998 and was awarded the honor of Outstanding Public Relations student of the year for 1998. Currently, he works for JT3. When Purdue isn't editing documents for a living, he's writing poetry or music, providing community service through his church, playing online videogames, or helping his wife with raising two children.]

Connections

Update personal information with STC

Sometimes people leave their jobs, move, or change Internet providers and forget to update their personal information with STC. Log in to <http://www.stc.org/>, click **STC Profile**, and check your personal information—particularly your email address. To submit changes, click the **Address/Restriction Change Form** link.

Contacts

2006 Executive Board and Advisory Council

STC-Intermountain Chapter 2006 Executive Board and Advisory Council		
Position	Name	Email
President	D. Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com
Education committee manager	VACANT	
Membership committee manager	VACANT	
PR committee manager	VACANT	
Newsletter editor	Becky Jo McShane	bmcsbane@weber.edu
Programs committee manager	Marj Hermansen-Eldard	marjheldard@comcast.net
Website committee manager	Darren Bell	webmaster@intermountain-stc.org
Northern regional rep	Craig Walker	wal@inel.gov
Southern regional rep	D. Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com