



# Ascent

Spring 2006 / Volume 2: Issue 2

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## President's message

### Invitation to members to get involved

Greetings from the STC Intermountain Chapter (STC-IC) executive council and board.

This is my first President's message for the newsletter. What a great opportunity – I am pleased to serve our chapter in this capacity. This year, I will continue to serve as the southern Utah representative also.

Thank you to all who voted in this year's election. Darren, our webmaster, reports that our online voting system worked just great. Thank you, Darren.

I hope you had the opportunity to attend the Awards Banquet on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Board members passed out the awards for this year's technical documentation competition, which is always a fun thing. But this year we handed out awards to two of our board members. Melissa received a desk clock and plaque as a token of appreciation for her years of service as the chapter president, and Marj received a gift certificate and flowers as a token of gratitude for her tireless service to the chapter as program committee manager.

This year, we all cordially invite you play an active role in the Intermountain Chapter, to be involved in helping to mold and define our chapter.

**"Thank you for being a part of our chapter!"**

If you are willing to serve on the council or on the board, or as a member of a committee, please let us know. For information about open positions, visit <http://www.intermountain-stc.org/volunteer.html>, or access the chapter website and select Volunteer Opportunities from the menu on the left.

Thank you for being a part of our chapter!

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

## Connections

### 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual STC Conference in May

Mark your calendars now for the annual STC conference, which will be held May 7-10, 2006, in Las Vegas, Nevada. What a great opportunity to attend an STC Annual Conference so close to home.

STC Annual Conferences boast the world's largest gathering of technical communicators. At the conference, you can learn new job skills, watch product demonstrations, and network with other professionals. A showcase will display the winning entries from STC competitions. Over 200 technical sessions will be offered this year.

Conference registration costs and programs are posted online. The printed Preliminary Program was mailed with the February issue of *Intercom*.

For more information about this year's conference, visit <http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>. For specific questions, you may also contact Buffy Bennett at [buffy@stc.org](mailto:buffy@stc.org).

We hope to see you there!

—Buffy M. Bennett, Special Projects Director

## Chapter events

### Competition award winners

For a complete list of award levels, entry titles, and judges' names, please visit [http://intermountain-stc.org/competitions/2005award\\_winners.pdf](http://intermountain-stc.org/competitions/2005award_winners.pdf)

#### Art competition

David L. Combs, Lou Riepl, Kathy Simpson, INL  
David L. Combs, Lou Riepl, Teri Ehresman, INL  
Stuart Hall, CWI  
Richard Jackman, Helius, Inc.

#### Online competition

Connie Bates CWI  
Susan McLain & Mat Bone Helius, Inc.  
Connie Bates CWI  
Connie Bates CWI

#### Publications competition

Tiffany Zachry, Concurrent Technologies  
Kathi Whitman, InCredible English, Inc.  
Kathi Whitman, InCredible English, Inc.  
Diana Skoy, INL  
Richard Wright, Penny Simon, Myrtle Siefken, INL  
Jan K. Wright, E. Louise Judy, Douglas G. Hall, INL  
Pat Tucker, Shaun Eames, CWI  
Stuart Hall, CWI  
LauraLee Gourley, Vivian Schultz, Stuart Hall, CWI  
Lynda M. Nelson, Stuart Hall, Ina Moore, CWI  
R. Brad Holder, Stuart Hall, CWI  
Melinda Hamilton, Quinn Grover, Allen Haroldsen, INL  
Harold Blackman, Nancy Carlson, Christine White, INL  
Pamela Liburn, Connie Bates, Mark Verdoorn, CWI  
Chris Frank, Catherine Hibbard, McKinnon-Mulherin  
Nicole McNiven, Gail Olson, Don Koeppen, CWI  
Nicole McNiven, Ina Moore, Peggy Jessmore, CWI  
Tasha Taylor, Stuart Hall, Ina Moore, CWI  
Susan McLain, Helius, Inc.  
Nicolle Eberhard, Teri Olsen, University of Utah  
Michele Mills, University Health Care



Ann, Marj, and Melissa at the Awards Banquet

## Member news

Kudos to Intermountain chapter members Shauna Bona and Kathleen Reddy, founders of McKinnon-Mulherin, a Utah-based company providing a variety of communication services including technical writing, learning solutions, and business communication. Bona and Reddy recently received the 2006 Entrepreneurial Success Award from the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce. This is not the first time they've been honored. In 2005, Reddy received the Unsung Hero award from the National Association of Women Business Owners. In 2004, Diversity Business.com named McKinnon-Mulherin as one of Utah's top minority-owned businesses. And in 2001, Utah Business Magazine listed Bona as one of 30 "Women to Watch." Congratulations and best wishes!

— Melissa Jessop

## Workplace news

### Best Jobs in America

On April 12, 2006, MONEY Magazine published the "Best Jobs in America," according to job growth and average pay (rankings by Salary.com). Topping the list was software engineer, but college professor came in 2<sup>nd</sup> and technical writer came in 13<sup>th</sup>. Other jobs of interest to STC members include curriculum developer (18<sup>th</sup>), editor (19<sup>th</sup>), and public relations specialist (20<sup>th</sup>). For the complete list see <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/bestjobs/top50/index.html>.

**According to MONEY Magazine, technical writing is one of the best jobs in America.**

## Education

### Technical and Professional Writing at BYU - STC

The STC student chapter at BYU was organized in June 1993; it was the first student chapter in Utah. In 1994 the National STC organization awarded BYU-STC a Chapter Pacesetter Award. In 1995 the Intermountain Chapter of STC awarded them a Distinguished Technical Communications Award for the BYU technical communication journal, *Impact*.

BYU offers the following courses in Technical and Professional Writing:

- English 316 Technical Writing
- English 415R Professional Writing Workshop
- English 418 Document Design & Portfolio
- English 399R Academic Internship
- English 426 History of Rhetoric I and II
- English 428R Studies in Rhetoric & Composition
- English 495 Senior Course
- English 516 Advanced Technical Writing

Emily Metheny, a graduate student in English, is the current president of the BYU student chapter of STC. BYU-STC monthly meetings give members the opportunity to network with professionals and to be exposed to numerous fields of technical communication. Over the past six months, technical communicators from NACT Telecommunications, McKinnon-Mulherin, and Stone Mantel have spoken at our meetings on preparation for a career in technical communication, developing marketable skills, and polishing resumes.

Members of the BYU student chapter hope to further their education in technical communication by attending the STC National Conference in Las Vegas this May. For additional information about the BYU-STC student chapter, email Beverly Zimmerman at [beverly\\_zimmerman@byu.edu](mailto:beverly_zimmerman@byu.edu).

— Kristin Baldwin, *BYU-STC Student Chapter*

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## *Tools of the Trade*

### Books of the Trade

#### **A Mixed Bag**

In my current instructional design contract, I work in a large room with seven other Web designers and technical writers. We not only range in age from 24 to 59, but we differ widely in writing and designing strengths and weaknesses. Some of us know HTML well; others just know how to spell it. Some are accomplished technical writers and editors; others prefer to communicate with graphics and code.

#### **Passion for Technical Manuals**

One thing we all have in common is our passion for computers and technical communication, whether through websites, online training, email, graphic arts, or software documentation. And, as you could expect, each one of us has a personal library of technical books we have either read or hope to read in order to hone our craft. Technical manuals, of one kind or another, grace our desks.

Personally, I have ardently sought that one *great* HTML / JavaScript / Website Design book, one that could be quickly read and then easily referenced whether on the job or at home. I never found the *one* book for the job, but I do own over a dozen website books, some more useful than others.

**“Personally, I have ardently sought that one *great* HTML / JavaScript / Website Design book.”**

#### **All Manuals are not Created Equal**

Today I parted with one of the truly good books in my collection. Letting it go felt almost like selling one of my children. I’ve had that book for years. One of the contractors working with me said she needed to learn HTML for her next contract. When she asked my opinion about the best HTML book to buy, I loaned her one I knew would fit the bill for her, and then offered to let her have it for half price.

Actually, I sold her that book to save her from some of the over-hyped and over-valued HTML books on the market – I didn’t know if she would be able to find this one and I knew it would not disappoint.

Just like creative writers talk about their favorite fiction writers, technical communicators talk about and even share their beloved manuals.

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

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## *Education*

### Professional and technical writing at Utah State University

Located in scenic Logan, UT, the technical and professional writing program at Utah State University now offers three degrees in professional and technical writing:

- BA or BS in Professional and Technical Writing
- MA or MS in Technical Writing (online)
- PhD in the Theory and Practice of Professional Communication

#### **PhD in the Theory and Practice of Professional Communication**

Utah State University is pleased to announce its new doctoral program in Theory & Practice of Professional Communication (TPPC), which began Fall 2005. The TPPC program offers an opportunity

to study the communicative practices, technology, and culture of organizations and the professions in a department with a long history of expertise and achievement in writing and technology. The defining features of this new program include opportunities to study and work with advanced communication technologies, to engage in extended fieldwork research experiences, and to follow a flexible program of study that can largely be tailored to complement students' research interests within the field of professional communication.

Our understanding of what professional communication encompasses is broad, embracing a diversity of rhetorical contexts and situations. Areas of study range from the everyday writing of the workplace to writing pedagogy of the nineteenth century, from the implications of new media on communicative practices to the theory and design of online learning, and from oral presentations to the production of CD-ROMs and websites.

The TPPC program prepares graduates for careers as university-level instructors/researchers or as consultants, corporate researchers, and communication specialists outside higher education. More information on the program is available at <http://tppc.usu.edu>.

#### **MA or MS in Technical Writing (online)**

The technical communication masters' program became the first online English program in the country in 1997. From its beginning, the program was designed to provide postgraduate education to working, professional writers who wish to enhance their professional knowledge. Being online, the program is available worldwide and has enrolled students from most states and a number of countries including Canada, Uzbekistan, Bermuda, Israel, England, and Thailand. The program maintains an enrollment of approximately 40 students and has graduated 51 students since 2001. In addition to professional writers, head writers, and department managers, our graduates have included corporate presidents, vice-presidents, and directors.

Students in the online Masters program complete 33 hours of coursework, and courses may be taken in any sequence. Because professional communication is one area where theory and technology evolve exceptionally rapidly, the courses in the online masters program are structured to teach at the cutting edge of knowledge. In online classes, students

examine topics so new that several of them have been able to publish articles based on course material gleaned from the classes. For example, three of Utah State's masters' students published articles in *Intercom*, the Society for Professional Communication's professional magazine, in 2005.

#### **BA or BS in Professional and Technical Writing**

Utah State University's Professional and Technical Writing undergraduate program is nationally recognized as the largest undergraduate program of its kind west of the Mississippi and the fifth largest program in the nation. As the emphasis has grown in size, its students have added to its overall reputation by winning five regional and national STC awards in the past four years.

To complete the undergraduate degree, undergraduates take 49 credit hours of coursework in English and professional and technical writing. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for work in a variety of positions, such as technical writer, technical editor, content developer, publication manager, product documentation specialist, proposal or grant writer, game developer, and usability specialist.

Classes are taught in both traditional and computer classrooms, and students are required to use a variety of technologies and media for planning, developing, and implementing their course projects. In addition to coursework, students are encouraged to engage in multiple internship opportunities, where they can apply lessons from their coursework in actual organizations.

Contact Mark Zachry, [mzachry@english.usu.edu](mailto:mzachry@english.usu.edu), for more information about the graduate programs, or Kelli Cargile Cook, [kcargilecook@english.usu.edu](mailto:kcargilecook@english.usu.edu), for more information about the undergraduate program.

— Kelli Cargile Cook & Mark Zachry, *USU Faculty*

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## **Acknowledgments**

### **Newsletter Editor**

This newsletter is a combination effort between Ann Gordon and Becky Jo McShane. Becky has agreed to take over responsibilities for the newsletter this year. If you have any submissions or suggestions, please contact Becky at [bmcsbane@weber.edu](mailto:bmcsbane@weber.edu).

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## Contacts

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