



Ascent

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President's Message

STC Forums

Greetings, chapter members! In the last newsletter I wrote about the rewards we can glean from membership and participation in STC Special Interest Groups (SIGs). Because I have learned a lot from the SIG forums, I have often recommended these groups and forums to others. In the forums, STC members generously share what they have learned in their work, including software tips and tricks.

Last month I received an inquiry from a chapter member who wanted to know how to get more writing and editing tips from STC members without participation in a SIG. Well, STC offers this benefit as well through the forums available from their main website at <http://www.stc.org>. Just click on the **Enter Discussion** button under **STC Forum** and peruse the long list of categories. In one forum you can introduce yourself; others invite you to make suggestions and ask questions. Or, you can just read the postings, which are conveniently categorized.

The discussion strings in the "Writing and Editing" forum date back to January 2006. For instance, the discussion titled, "Developing a profile and performance criteria for 'technical writer'" contains 16 comments and has been viewed 2,554 times! So, when you get a minute, check out these STC Member Forums—I think you'll be glad you did.

Hope to see some of you at the conference in May.

—Ann Gordon, President & Southern Utah Rep

Chapter Events

Professional development meeting

What: "The Relationship Between the Technical and Art...or How I Got to the Poem as a Technical Writer"

Where: Utah Valley State College, Rm. #LA 116 (new Liberal Arts building, east of the McKay Events Center, and south of the Sorensen Student Center)

When: Tuesday May 22nd at 7:00 pm

Who: Scott Hatch, Associate Professor of English & Literature, UVSC

Why: Scott has recently published his first book: *Mapping the Bones of the World*, a book-length poetry collection from [Signature Books](#), 2007. Scott will share his unique perspective on the technical communication world. He will address the relationship between textual and visual rhetorics, read a poem or two, and discuss his progression from technical writer to poet.

Utah Valley State College is located in Orem, Utah just off I-15 at 800 West University Parkway in Orem. Parking is available at the north end of campus (lot "L"). This lot is adjacent to the Liberal Arts Bldg. For driving directions and further details, visit <http://www.intermountain-stc.org/meetings.html>.

Please RSVP to marjheldard@comcast.net no later than **Thursday, May 17th**, if you plan to attend.

Connections

STC Elections

STC recently held its 2007 elections, which ended at noon EST on April 12th, 2007. A total of **1,549 votes** were cast using Votenet Solution's SAS70-certified system, eBallot, which members can access during elections with their STC member number and password. Suzanna Laurent, STC Nominating Committee Chairman, sent an email with election results on Tuesday, April 24, 2007. The election results will be included in the upcoming May/June

issue of *Tieline* and the June issue of *Intercom*.
(Election results are listed below as well.)

As a heads-up for next year, STC elections are held during the first part of the year, with voting generally beginning in March, and lasting approximately one month. You should receive various emails from the Society office (unless you have requested otherwise) regarding candidates, voting procedure, etc., starting around January. If you're curious about the electronic voting system that STC uses, you can get a sneak peak at the program by accessing votenet.com. On the homepage there is a link to eballot, with an option to view a demo. And now...the winners are...

President, Linda Oestreich (unopposed)	
For	(1,415 votes) -- Elected
Against	(50 votes)
First Vice President, Mark Clifford (unopposed)	
For	(1,411 votes) -- Elected
Against	(36 votes)
Second Vice President	
M. Katherine (Kit) Brown	(707 votes)
Cynthia C. Currie	(710 votes) -- Elected
At-large Directors (3 positions)	
Jonathan Baker	(622 votes)
Mollye Barrett	(521 votes)
Nicoletta A. Bleiel	(660 votes) -- Elected
Leah Guren	(886 votes) -- Elected
Steven Jong	(820 votes) -- Elected
Robert Young	(501 votes)
Treasurer, William C. (W.C.) Wiese (unopposed)	
For	(1407 votes) -- Elected
Against	(33 votes)
Nominating Committee (2 positions)	
Jackie A. Damrau	(1251 votes) -- Elected
Rachel A. Jordan Houghton	(1146 votes) -- Elected
Director (Region 5), Paul Mueller (unopposed)	
For	(172 votes) -- Elected
Against	(5 votes)

—Melissa Jessop, Immediate Past President

54th Annual STC Conference in May

It's not too late to attend the STC Summit! The annual conference will be held May 7-10 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For conference and registration information, visit <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/index.asp>.

—Becky Jo McShane, Education Committee Manager & Newsletter Editor

Member News

Senior members

As per the STC Bylaws, the Society grants senior member status upon those who have held membership in STC for five years. We are pleased to announce that the following members of our chapter have attained the rank of senior member:

Darren Bell (our webmaster)
Kevin D. Burnett
Rick Dame
Trudi L. Jackson
Kevin R. Jacobson
Julie A. Johns
Rebecca K. Jorgensen
Colleen D. Mewing
Thomas D. Purdue
Susan L. Reynolds
Richard Valentine
Kathryn D. Zepeda

Education

Tour of ISPI at BYU's Center for Instructional Design and Usability Lab

On Friday, April 20, I participated in [ISPI Utah's](#) scheduled visit to the Brigham Young University's [Center for Instructional Design](#) (CID). Larry Seawright, Assistant to the Director and in charge of evaluation for the center, presented a brief overview of the center's most recent projects and activities. He then led us on a tour of the usability lab and CID. Larry spent some time discussing ways they had done usability testing before implementing the Usability Test Lab.

As a technical communicator who longs for the opportunity to implement even the most spartan of usability programs, I was more than a little overwhelmed by the level of technology, number of staff, and the high level of "buy-in" with which the BYU Center is blessed.



The center, which was organized in 1999, operates under the mandate to "improve teaching and learning." They help faculty create and sustain university-level independent study courses and assist faculty to appropriately utilize the available instructional technology. The instructional

technology support system includes a content management system, in-class response units for instructors/students, and assessment and survey tools.

In addition to these support systems, CID has created/produced approximately 350 university courses in every discipline (from A, Accounting, to T, actually TMA: Theatre and Media Arts, not Z—zoology is not included!). They have produced courses for the General Education Program; they have created simulations, such as the Virtual Audiometer. BYU currently has the only Virtual Chem Lab (where, Larry insists students can “blow things up harmlessly!”) in the world. Prentice Hall Publishers cooperated with the BYU CID to produce this lab “class” and enjoys at least a portion of the notoriety for being the “only one of its kind in the world.”

The center has even created a sequenced instruction for the marching band: the students receive a CD-ROM with practice materials on it before they ever arrive at school. That way, when the band members all get together for their initial practices at the beginning of the school year, the students have already practiced their formation sequences and are ready to “put it all together on the football field” for the opening of the college football season.

My, how education has changed since I went to college!

Coming away from this session/tour just caused me to shake my head and think, “My, how education has changed since I went to college!” Students now participate in interactive classrooms; use a blackboard-type program to download their assignments; register their test and quiz scores, and even their attendance, using “clickers,” take surveys, exams, and use other assessment tools from the comforts of their dorm or apartment bedrooms; as well as attend live, 4-wall classroom activities. I s’pose when all is said and done, colleges and universities are as competitive...perhaps even more so...with what is happening in the corporate world! It was great to see the amazing level of technology being enjoyed at the university level. Hummm. I wonder if UVSC (now that WE’RE going to be a university!) will one day enjoy such luxury! I’d better get busy and “get caught up” on all this available “magic!”

—Marj Hermansen-Eldard, Programs Committee Chair

Technology

Content and convergence: Another move away from content silos

When technical communicators think of content management, our minds naturally go to the world of structured authoring and XML content management. If someone were to map out the direction of structured authoring over the last couple of decades, it would be a relatively simple path, from DocBook SGML to DocBook XML to DITA XML, with a few detours along the way for specialized DTDs (such as S1000D, used for aircraft maintenance).

It’s probably surprising, then, to realize that in the content management world, this type of content management is considered a niche market so specialized that industry pundits haven’t even bestowed on it a sexy acronym, and are just now starting to look for a common vocabulary to talk about it. There’s a current attempt to call this “component content management” but whether the term will stick—well as the term is being coined from outside the industry that remains to be seen. So far, single sourcing has been the most persistent terminology used, but even that only addresses a relatively small aspect of this type of content management, which is known by terms such as structured authoring, and XML content management (SAXCM is a bit of a racy acronym, but after all, SAX sells!).

Where the action is, both in terms of market size and in movement, is on the Web side. Web content management systems (WCMS) are used not only for Web sites but intranets, extranets, and portals—a fancy name for a site where some content is password protected, and sometimes different content is served up, depending on the role of the person coming to the site or logging in. Variants of these Web systems are also used for e-learning, knowledge management, collaboration, e-commerce, and a host of related applications—but let me not get distracted from my premise.

The systems used for marketing purposes have their own entourage to support their functions. There are Digital Asset Management (DAM) apps to handle all the still and moving images in low- and high-resolution, thumbnails, and print-quality downloads. To go with that, Digital Rights Management (DRM) apps are needed to control access and usage of the digital assets. Also part of the entourage is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) software that helps drive

traffic to the site, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) software that syndicates content from the site.

Where this all becomes interesting is in the convergence of these two worlds, in the intersection of the worlds structured authoring and WCMS. We came from a world of content silos, and progressed to a world of content management silos: SAXCM and WCM. But, many would say, what about Enterprise Content Management Systems (ECMS)? Doesn't that remove silos and let an organization share and re-use content across the entire enterprise? Well—and you probably won't be surprised at the answer—yes and no.

If you consider an organization a closed system, you very well might look at ECM as a solution to getting content out of CMS silos. However, as the saying goes, “the devil is in the details” and the actual execution to get everyone’s content across the enterprise readied for ultimate shareability does take a concerted, corporate-wide, executively-sponsored project to guarantee success. And yet, aren't we rapidly bypassing the ECM stage? Now, we are entering a new phase where collaboration tools, social networking tools, and tools barely entering the market are ready to change the landscape yet again.

The DITA standard allows content to travel, even boomerang, and be as usable when it arrives as when it left its author.

The technical communication world is preparing for this world of convergence and integration with

DITA, where topic-based content can be re-used within a document or a department, or shared with the rest of the organization or with partner organizations. The DITA standard allows content to travel, even boomerang, and be as usable when it arrives as when it left its author. In the Web world, similar standards have emerged and continue to emerge in the forms of everything from [microformats](#) to entire mark-up languages as a way of making content transportable.

The next few years will hold some interesting developments for technical communicators. The convergence of content types will have far-reaching implications and any predictions would need to change as user reactions to new technologies effect user expectations—the way that [del.icio.us](#) and [digg](#) have effected searching for information. It's certainly a time when we need to keep ourselves aware of industry trends and align ourselves more closely with other content developers who touch our work.

—*Rahel Bailie, Principal of [Intentional Design Inc.](#) & Content Management Consultant in [Strategy A Consulting Group](#), which is holding a conference in Vancouver on November 8-10, 2007, on the theme of “Convergence and Integration: Changing the Content Management Landscape.”*



Contacts

2007 Executive Board and Advisory Council

STC-Intermountain Chapter 2006 Executive Board and Advisory Council		
Position	Name	Email
President	D. Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com
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Membership committee manager	VACANT	temporary contact: Ann Gordon
PR committee manager	VACANT	
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