



Ascent

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President's message Special Interest Groups

In December, I renewed my membership again, which I have done for over six years now. When I renewed this year, I examined how much I've learned from the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) I joined.

In the CIC (Consulting & Independent Contracting) SIG, I get to communicate with fellow independent contractors. This means a lot to me because working as an independent contractor can be lonely. For instance, not only do I work as a contractor who often works short contracts, I am often the lone writer at the client company, like I am now. As a result, any communication I have with other independent writers is most welcome. From my participation in this SIG, I have gained new writing friends, even though some of them live far away. I have also written two chapters for their online book, "Getting Started in Consulting & Independent Contracting."

Through my membership in the IDL (Instructional Design & Learning) SIG, I receive IDL emails through a listserv. Some people may find this troublesome, to have listserv emails in their Inbox, but the flow is slow enough to keep up with and certainly informative enough to make reading them worthwhile. In the last few months, I have learned about new technologies for Web-based training, how to find valuable shortcuts for a multimedia program, how to bid a training project, and where to apply for ID positions.

Through my participation in this SIG I have had my own questions answered and have met lots of talented folks who also develop online training.

If you haven't participated in any of STC's Special Interest Groups, I suggest that you give them a try. To see a list of all available SIGs, go to <http://www.STC.org>, move your mouse over **Membership**, slide down to **STC SIGs**, and open the **List of SIGs** page.

Hello to all new members—thank you for joining our Chapter! I hope you also become involved with Special Interest Groups soon!

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

Chapter Events

Professional development meeting

What: "XML: A Brief Tutorial"

Where: Weber State University, Davis Campus in Layton, 2750 N. University Park Boulevard, Room 103. For directions, go to <http://weber.edu/AboutWSU/DavisCampus.html>

When: Thursday, February 15, at 7:00 p.m.

Who: Becky Jo McShane, Associate Professor at Weber State University

Why: One of the most common languages used in single sourcing, content management, and structured authoring is Extensible Markup Language or XML. The beauty of XML is its flexibility: the tags are extensible. In other words, you create your own markup language in a text-based format. Because of XML's text-appeal I believe that XML is a logical place for technical communicators to locate themselves as experts.

For details, visit <http://www.intermountain-stc.org/meetings.html>.

Please RSVP to marjheldard@comcast.net no later than **Thursday, February 8**, if you plan to attend.

Competition award winners

STC's technical communication competitions offer opportunities to make new industry contacts and receive recognition for your work. Our four teams of expert judges have completed their review of this year's entries. As the competitions committee, we are pleased to announce the winners of the local 2006-2007 Technical Publications, Online, and Art competitions.

Publications competition

Excellence	Care Process Model Suite
Excellence	State of Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Service Application for Services
Excellence	National Renewable Energy Laboratory 2005 Research Review
Excellence	Plinkit Training Manual for Oregon Library Plinkit Website Editors
Excellence	Heart Care Handbook
Excellence	Living Well: A Diabetes Care Handbook
Excellence	Dell XPS M2010 Owner's Manual
Merit	DISH Network Installation Reference Handbook
Merit	Dell XPS 600 Renegade Owner's Manual
Merit	COBE 2991 Operator's Manual
Merit	ViP622 DVR User's Guide
Merit	CAES Business Plan

Online competition

Excellence	Corps Values: Successfully Managing Money
Excellence	Energy Matters
Merit	How Do I Set Up a Wireless Network?
Merit	What is the Air Temperature Sensor on My Dell Desktop Computer?
Merit	How Do I Determine if My SCSI Drive Needs a Firmware Update?

Art competition

Excellence	INL Overview Packet Promotional Materials Design
Excellence	Office of Nuclear Energy Exhibit Promotional Materials Design
Merit	AMX Utility End User Documentation Title Page Cover Design

Several of the judges remarked that as technical communicators, it is always fun to learn by looking at others' good work. Though small, our competition is proving increasingly popular with companies each year and is an excellent (and very cost-effective!) way to receive professional and in-depth feedback about the quality of your technical documentation. Comments and criticisms from the 3-judge panels that examine each entry are always constructive and the whole competition offers a great learning

experience for everyone involved. Don't miss the opportunity to view all the award winning entries at our awards event. Also, start thinking now about participating in next year's competition.

I would personally like to take this opportunity to thank our expert judges for their dedicated attention to detail and their helpful comments to each of our submitters. All the award winners and each of our judges will be honored at the Awards and Judges Recognition Reception on Friday, March 16th, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Salt Lake Community College, South City Campus, 1575 South State Street.

Hope you'll join us!

— *Marj Hermansen-Eldard, Programs Committee Manager*

Education

Bringing service home: Document Design at Weber State

After teaching "Document Design" for several semesters, I noticed that students had developed a pattern of choosing clients who did not necessarily place any "real world" demands on them. Past clients included family businesses, students' own businesses, or large corporations, which already had documents in place. As a result, these clients did not demand specifications for their documents. I realized that my Professional & Technical Writing students were not gaining as much "real-world" experience as they could from a student-client relationship.

So in the fall semester of 2006, I paired students in my document design students with clients from the University community and asked the students to create cohesive document sets to meet the needs of the clients' organizations. This student/client interaction afforded the class an opportunity to experience the challenges technical writers face as they draft documents and revise them to meet client specifications.

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The clients represented a broad range of University hierarchy and spanned several disciplines:

- Dr. Forrest Crawford is the assistant to the president for diversity. WSU is hosting the International Society for Teacher Educators (ISTE) in summer 2009. He wanted materials for this event.
- Dr. Frank Guliuzza is chair of the Political Science and Philosophy department. He requested promotional materials for WSU's Mock Trial group and for the Institute for Democracy.
- Dr. Brenda Kowalewski, a professor of sociology, is also director of the newly-founded Community-Based and Experiential Learning Office. She asked for informational documents and promotional materials.
- Dr. Leah Murray is an assistant professor of political science, and she is in charge of the Washington, DC, internship program. She requested materials publicizing this program.
- Dr. Becky Jo McShane is an associate professor in WSU's professional and technical writing program. She wanted updated information for our program.

Many activities and groups on the WSU campus produce documents to advertise their program or event. Many of these documents use the standard clip art, text that is exclusively centered on the page, and Times New Roman as the font. This collaboration provided students with a specific client-centered experience and required them to create documents to meet each client's specific needs.

Furthermore, this experience helped connect a largely commuter-based student population with the University community and helped them engage this particular discourse community.

— *Shelley Thomas, Assistant Professor at Weber State University*

Connections

54th Annual STC Conference in May

The annual STC conference will be held May 7-10 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition to demonstrations, mini-workshops, discussions, and progressions, the Technical Communication Summit includes two new sessions: the case study and the research report. The printed preliminary program will be mailed with the February issue of *Intercom*.

If you register early (by February 28th) you receive a \$250 discount off the walk-in rate. For conference and registration information, visit <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/index.asp>.

— *Becky Jo McShane, Education Committee Manager & Newsletter Editor*

Member News

Education committee manager

As of fall 2006, Becky Jo McShane has assumed the role of education committee manager for IM-STC. If you have any educational programs you'd like to see us sponsor or opportunities you'd like the chapter to support, please contact her at bmcshane@weber.edu.

Contacts

2007 Executive Board and Advisory Council

STC-Intermountain Chapter 2006 Executive Board and Advisory Council		
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President	D. Ann Gordon	gordoncomputer@yahoo.com
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