

Technically speaking ...

STC

A publication of the STC@NC State

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Local Mission

To introduce and orient incoming students, both graduate and undergraduate, to the field of technical communication, the Society for Technical Communication, and the professional writing and technical communication programs at NC State, and to provide academic and professional networking opportunities.



STC Mission

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

Contact Information

Student chapter website:
http://www.ncsu.edu/stud_orgs/stc

Carolina chapter website:
<http://www.stc-carolina.org>

International STC website:
<http://www.stc.org>

STC Phone Seminars— Worth the Money? Worth the Time?

by: Anna Weaver

A 2001 graduate of the MS program, Anna Weaver is an editor/writer at RTI, an independent scientific research institute in Research Triangle Park.

My supervisor enrolled in STC's recent telephone seminar, *Creating Effective Documentation Plans*, presented by John Hedtke. Seven other editors and I listened over speaker phone in our conference room. Seminar enrollment is a flat rate per location; an unlimited number of staff could have attended the seminar. The seminar lasted 1 hour, with 20-30 minutes for questions. Asking questions, however, involved getting in a telephone queue and did not seem worth the trouble.

Hedtke was frank about the political purposes of creating a documentation plan, including the need to protect oneself, particularly when freelancing. A plan will guard against scope creep and ensure that you are not holding the proverbial bag if the failings of others make the document late, inaccurate, or otherwise unacceptable.

The documentation plan concept was not new to me. I took 518 like all other MS students, and Hedtke even recommended Hackos' *Managing Your Documentation Projects*. He offered a few juicy tips:

- The running footer on your plan should always read "draft only--not final"
- Have as many reviewers as you can, but minimize the number of final signoff authorities.
- Always list reviewers and approval authorities in alpha order. Attempting to list them in order of hierarchical importance may offend someone.
- Do not put too much detail in the schedule. It will inevitably slip, forcing you to spend time revising the plan and getting those revisions okayed.

Bottom line: It was worth my time and I would do it again, especially if the company is paying. If the topic were not one I had learned in the MS program, I would even pay for it myself.

Congratulations

Anna Weaver and Jill Miller-Denning, 2001 graduates of the MS program, received an Award of Excellence from the Society for Technical Communication Chicago Chapter for their work on the RTI Newsletter.

Anna Weaver also received an Award of Excellence for her work on the Technical Marketing Brochure for Statistical Analysis Software for RTI.



STC @ Brueggers

In March, join us on either Wednesday March 20 or Thursday, March 21 to cast your vote for next year's officers.

Join us for the end of the year event and new officer training on Wednesday, April 24 or Thursday, April 25. The location will be announced on the listserv.

Feature Articles

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Worth the Money? Worth
the Time?

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Welcome Europe!

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Your Resume

President's Corner

Thanks to everyone who has worked with STC@NC State this year. An organization is only as good as the contributions of the members and our members have been contributing greatly! We have held numerous programs from Publishing in Technical Communication to Dreamweaver and Fireworks workshops. I appreciate everyone who has given their time for our programs.

STC@NC State provides an opportunity to get some hands-on experience with the Technical Communication industry. Through our programs, newsletter, ties to the Carolina Chapter and website, we show you what it is like in the 'real world.'

An exciting program coming up is our participation in Service Raleigh Day. Service Raleigh, coordinated by NCSU's Student Government and the Park Scholars, is a one-day event with the goal of contributing 11,000 hours of community service to organizations in Wake County. The April 6 event starts at 9:00 and goes until 3:00. There is more information about the event on the website (www.ncsu.edu/serviceraleigh), or you can ask Caroline Brooks about it. Please join us for a day of camaraderie and fun!

Ann Roy
President
STC@NC State

Editor's Column

by: Myra Day

Special thanks to our alumni who have contributed to this newsletter!

Since many of you may be looking for summer jobs, we are focusing on training and job sites on page three of this newsletter instead of the usual topics.

We have decided to publish a fifth newsletter this year, so the "From the Trenches" and "Review" sections will be back in May's newsletter. I realize that the deadline for May's newsletter will come when we will all be busy with exams, final projects, and papers. Therefore, please submit your articles as early as possible.

To submit an article, or other information for the newsletter, please send it to me as a Word attachment. The deadline for the next newsletter is April 26.

Excerpts from "Region 2 Realigns; Welcome Europe!"

by Chris Benz, Region 2 Director-Sponsor

On January 1, 2002, STC realigned its eight regions to enable the eight regional Director-Sponsors (D-Ss) to help chapters more efficiently. Overall, 14 chapters were directly affected. As a result of this realignment, the seven STC chapters in Europe all became part of Region 2. Prior to this, these chapters had been spread across four regions:

- France, Sweden (now Nordic), and the United Kingdom had been in Region 1,
- Belgium and Israel had been in Region 2,
- Transalpine (covering Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Switzerland) had been in Region 3, and
- the Netherlands had been in Region 4.

In turn, three chapters that had been in Region 2 moved to other regions:

- New Jersey and Philadelphia Metro joined Region 1
- Pittsburgh joined Region 4.

Why This Change? Why Now?

A major responsibility of STC's Second Vice President (Thea Teich has the honor this year) is to review how STC's regions are organized, and to realign as necessary so that D-Ss can serve the chapters better. Officially, this review can happen at any time. In reality, however, it has happened only periodically, and there was a fairly long gap since the last time the regions were reviewed. During that gap, a significant number of chapters had formed, including several in Europe. Thus, Thea had a fairly large task, not only for Europe, but for the western US and Pacific Rim as well.

The primary purpose of these realignments is to improve D-S efficiency. The realignments strive to balance the workload equitably among D-Ss, and to improve communications between each region's chapters and their D-Ss, as well as among a region's chapters. Also, chapters within a specific geographic area tend to share certain common concerns, and each D-S can better specialize in addressing those regional concerns. As a result we can expect to see closer cooperation among STC's European chapters, and between European and US chapters. By joining hands with our friends and colleagues around the world, we each gain more knowledge, strength, and wisdom than we could ever have realized on our own.

Note: For complete Director-Sponsor articles by Chris, please visit <http://www.stcregion.org/region2/chair.shtml>. 2

Job/Training Resources

LTS Workshops – Polish Your Resume

by: *Loanna Overcash*

One of the biggest complaints I have heard from students in the MS Technical Communications program is that it is hard to pick up the software skills that technical writers need. While it is true that the program is geared toward providing an academic foundation for technical communications skills and cannot possibly provide specific software training in all areas, there is a resource here at NC State dedicated to helping students, faculty and staff gain important skills in web development.

The Learning Technology Service of NC State, offers courses to help you learn web design and graphics software skills. Their philosophy, “the bare bones solution” is to help people get information published on the web as quickly as possible using the minimum amount of training required. Courses are designed as building blocks, usually in 2.5-hour increments, to guide you through the basics of Dreamweaver and Fireworks, as well as other web development programs. All classes are held in the ITTC labs, located on the 2nd floor of the East Wing of D.H. Hill library.

To register go the web-site at <http://lts.ncsu.edu> and complete the online registration form. You can also sign up for the list-serve (under resources>workshops) and receive weekly class notices and last minute seat availability. Even if you cannot physically go and take a class, then check out the online courses that walk you through the same steps as the class. If you get stuck, the LTS staff is readily available to answer your questions.

Take advantage of this great resource and learn some important web publishing and graphics skills!

Here are some of the classes being offered in March:

- Elements of Good Design: A Hands-On Experience – March 7th 9-11:30 am
- Using Dreamweaver to Create a Basic Web Page – March 11th 1-3:30 pm
- Using Acrobat 5.0 – March 14th – 1-3 pm
- Using Fireworks with Dreamweaver to Create and Enhance Web Sites – March 15th 9-11:30 am

Resume/Interview Skills

- NCSU Career Center - Tips on job search skills, putting your resume online, etc. <http://www.ncsu.edu/career/>
- Online Career Manual - provides sample resumes and letters. You can pick up a free hard copy in Pullen Hall. <http://ncsu.placementmanual.com/>
- Career Center workshops - Get tips about your resume and interviewing skills <http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/workshops.htm>

Job Search

- The Council of Science Editors - good site to see the various types of writing positions available nationwide:
<http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/cgi-bin/jobssee.cgi>
- SAS - Check out the summer internships
<http://www.sas.com/jobs/index.html>
- Carolina STC Chapter jobsite http://www.stc-carolina.org/www/cc_joblisting.shtml

Training News

Bright Path Solutions, an Adobe Solution Sales Provider (SSP) and WebWorks University site, has the following classes and events scheduled:

Adobe Acrobat Hands-on Training + PDF Workshop
Research Triangle Park, NC
March 11-13
<http://www.travelthepath.com/training/acrobat.shtml>

Applied Indexing (methodology...not tool specific)
Research Triangle Park, NC
March 21-22
<http://www.travelthepath.com/training/applix.shtml>

Additional courses and their full 2002 schedule are available on their Web site.

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Upcoming Events

Online Communication SIG Meetings - For complete details, visit www.stc-carolina.org/www/PICs/online/OnEvent.shtml

- Wed. Mar. 13, 6:00 - 8:00 Awards Banquet
- Wed. Mar 20, 6:00 - 8:00 "Back to the Basics: Minimalistic, Topic-Based Writing"
- Wed. Apr. 17, 6:00 - 8:00 "Online Help for Beginners"

For more information, visit the Carolina Chapter calendar at <http://www.stc-carolina.org/calendar/index.shtml>

TRIDOC 2002

The STC Carolina Chapter Triangle Conference on Documentation will be held April 26-27, 2002 from 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn RDU in RTP. For details, visit <http://www.stc-carolina.org/conference/>.

STC Telephone Seminars

Two STC telephone seminars will be offered in March 2002.

- March 6, Pamela Selker Rak, "Communicating Clarity: Make Your Technical Marketing Matter"
- March 20, Whitney Quesenbery, "Creating Usability Goals: Understanding What Usability Means to Your Users"

To register, or for more information, visit www.stc.org/seminars.html.

Comm Union Conference

This year's conference will be held April 1 from 8:00-5:00 in the Talley Student Center. Submissions are due before March 15. Visit <http://ncsu.edu/lpe/crs/> for complete information.

Chapter Meeting Report

February Meeting

On February 20, the STC@NCState met at Bruegger's to discuss the service project for this semester, which will be Service Raleigh on April 6, 2002 from 8:45-3:00. Contact Caroline Brooks for more information. The upcoming elections for STC officers were also discussed. Please contact Ann Roy or Sarah Egan if you would like more information, or would like to run for an office.

February Program

"Publishing in Technical Communication"- Feb 21. Dr. Brad Mehlenbacher shared some tips and ideas about how to get published. If you are interested in the handouts, please contact Sarah Egan sarah_egan@hotmail.com.

Note: The complete minutes are posted to the STC listserv after each meeting. Contact Ann Roy if you need information about the listserv.

Technically Speaking.. is the newsletter of STC@NC State, which is published four times yearly.

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Reprint Policy

You may reprint original material from this newsletter as long as you acknowledge the author and the source.

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