

ROUGH DRAFT

The newsletter of the STC Phoenix Chapter

February 2007

Meeting Information	1
Chapter Food Drive	2
Membership Matters	2
STC Phoenix Chapter Needs You!	3
Tooling Around	4
On the Job	5
Writing While You Sleep	7
“Getting Yourself Hired”	9
Snippets from listservs & miscellany	12
Educational Opportunities.....	13
Editorial Blithers	10
Grammar Anyone?.....	11
January 2007 Meeting Evaluations .	14
Help Wanted.....	15

Rough Draft is the official newsletter of the Society for Technical Communication, Phoenix Chapter community. The newsletter provides news about chapter events, members, and publishes members' opinions about technical communication topics.

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Submitting Content

We invite readers to submit articles, columns, photos, and other material on subjects of interest to Chapter and Society members. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month prior to publication.

We accept articles submitted as e-mail, or files in Microsoft Word® or FrameMaker® format. We prefer GIF, PNG or JPEG graphics. Please include your e-mail address and your phone number. If you want to send material by fax, first call the Managing Editor, Karen Zorn, at 408-354-0537.

The Rough Draft staff reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length and to reject submissions judged unfit for publication. We try to review substantive editing of feature articles with the author before pub-

Meeting Information

Town Hall Meeting Afternoon (3-5 pm)

Where Is STC Going? – Susan Burton

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mark your calendars! Our February meeting will be on *Thursday, February 15, 2007* instead of our usual second Tuesday. Why? Because STC's new executive director, Susan Burton, will be visiting our chapter for the day.

Starting at **3 pm**, Susan will address questions, concerns, and comments in a Town Hall style meeting. If you cannot be there but would like to ask Susan a question, send an email to: questions@stc-phoenix.com.

At **5 pm** we will start our traditional networking followed by dinner and Susan's presentation, "Where is STC Going?"

Susan Burton, STC's new Executive Director and an ASAE Certified Association Executive, will talk about the latest efforts by the Board of Directors and office staff to move the Society into the future. STC has identified six strategic objectives, and a small army of volunteers has stepped forward to help us reach those objectives. Find out what these efforts will mean to you!

Where: University of Phoenix - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda

Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) [Map](#)

Menu:

- Rigatoni a la Nicholas - tube shaped pasta with strips of roasted chicken, fresh vegetables and tomatoes
- Eggplant Involtni (vegetarian) - rolled, stuffed slices of fresh eggplant, ricotta cheese and mozzarella cheese in a tomato sauce
- Garden Salad
- Grilled Vegetables
- Homemade Breadsticks and Focaccia Bread
- Dessert

Cost: Dinner price includes tax, tip, and program.
\$20 members
\$25 nonmembers
\$15 student members
\$10 program only, includes dessert & beverage.

- Pay by check or cash at the door.
- Pay by credit card using PayPal (online registration form).

Note: \$5 charge for

lication. Our style guide is *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Newsletter Mailing Address

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Phoenix Chapter Mission Statement

As a world-class educational and informational forum, we discuss cutting-edge concepts and technology, encourage sharing information among members, and sponsor top-quality seminars and conferences.

We give our members the opportunity to grow professionally and be creative; to develop leadership, management, and other skills; to be recognized for their outstanding skills and service; to be the most sought-after employees in our field; and to attain international status as Society-level leaders.

We provide a fun and friendly, high-energy environment that fosters associations and friendships. We promote the value of technical communication and communication in general.

Phoenix Community Contacts

President: Dana Osborne, danaosborne@cox.net

Vice President: Karen L. Zorn, k.zorn@zorntech.com

Secretary: Karen Pasley, k_pasley@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Karen Forrester, kforres@cox.net

Immediate Past President: Lisa Ford, lisafor-tsgl@cox.net

Programs: Maggie Haenel, mhaenel@earthlink.com

Membership Manager: Debra Duane, dkduane@cox.net

Society for Technical Communication
<http://stc.org/>

late dinner reservations. **NO SHOWS WILL BE BILLED.**

- **Register:** RSVP no later than noon **Sunday, February 10,**

Chapter Food Drive

March & April, 2007 Meetings

Giving back to the community is an on-going pledge of the Committee Managers and Administrative Council (CMAC). At the February and March meetings, we will be collecting money for area food banks.

Yes, food banks do well during the December holiday season, but for the remainder of the year they are mostly forgotten. Unfortunately, the number of people dependent on our area food banks is growing, not decreasing. United Food Bank serves 8,000 people monthly in four different counties. This agency also provides meals for children, food boxes for seniors and college students at very low (~\$12) cost.

Membership Matters

Debra Duane, Membership Manager

Here is the membership activity as of December:

STC Phoenix membership: 193 (1.5% increase from November)

We welcome three community members:

New - Miachelle DePiano and Barbara Randall

Transferring - Tammy Preble

STC International membership: 15980 (1.5% increase from November)

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The Early Membership Renewal drawing (\$50 Borders gift cards) will be held at the Febuary meeting. Members who renewed by January 1,

2007. Register online at www.stc-phoenix.com, e-mail Deb Duane at stcphoenix@yahoo.com, or call Norm Haskett at 480-963-8102.

We will not be collecting food donations. Why?

- Food banks have great purchasing power. They can take \$1 and turn it into \$13 and purchase what they need.
- Money is easier for the organizers to handle than cans and boxes.
- If you write a check, the food bank responds with a letter you can use for your 2007 taxes.

Help make a difference in someone's life. Contribute to the Food Bank drive at the February and March membership meetings.

STC Phoenix Chapter Needs You!

Chapter Elections Coming

By Tim Eull, Nominations Committee Manager

“A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.” Henrik Ibsen, poet and playwright

The STC Phoenix Chapter is a community looking for members to take the helm. Do you have ideas about the direction we should take in the future? Does a member you know have ideas you like? If so, consider running for office or nominating another member to run.

Becoming an STC officer gives you the opportunity to share skills you have developed with the community of people in our field, work with other forward-thinking individuals, develop great friendships, and have some fun. If you're not quite prepared to take the helm, consider volunteering for a committee position.

This month, the Phoenix chapter begins putting together a slate of candidates for the April 6 election of new officers. If you want to run for office or nominate another member for office, please contact me at teull@cox.net. Nominations must be written, signed by at least five members of the chapter, and submitted by February 16.

The following describes the responsibilities and activities of each office. All require attendance at meetings.

President

Responsible for all operations of the chapter (an ex officio member of all committees); exercises general supervision over the affairs of the chapter, appoints managers of committees, and reports to the Society director. You write newsletter articles, respond to nonmember inquiries, keep in touch with other officers and committee members, and prepare the chapter's activity report for the Society Board. This position gives you the opportunity for your ideas and philosophies to have an impact on the chapter.

Vice President

Responsible for external chapter programs and communication; advises the president on policies and

programs, and assumes the president's duties when necessary. You organize and manage special projects assigned by the president and motivate others. Although not required, it is desirable for the vice president to run for president the following year.

Program Manager

Responsible for planning, scheduling, and coordinating programs for chapter meetings. You coordinate programs with the Education Committee Manager; coordinate and communicate with the Arrangements Manager (meeting requirements, menu, and meeting feedback collection and reporting), Newsletter Editor, and the Web team; and contribute newsletter articles about meetings.

Membership Manager

Responsible for organizing and directing an active membership recruiting campaign to increase the membership of the chapter. You maintain a list of prospective members, manage the membership address files from Society, welcome new members, create and distribute packets of information and an application to prospective members, and publish monthly membership information through the chapter newsletter.

Secretary

Responsible for recording minutes of board meetings and distributing them to board members, committee managers, and other interested parties. You maintain the chapter stationery supplies.

Treasurer

Responsible for the chapter finances. You prepare the chapter budget, maintain the checking account, deposit chapter funds, pay invoices, monitor and keep records of chapter expenses, collect dinner payments at the monthly meetings, provide financial reports to the board, maintain paper and electronic files of all financial information, and prepare for a year-end audit.

Tooling Around

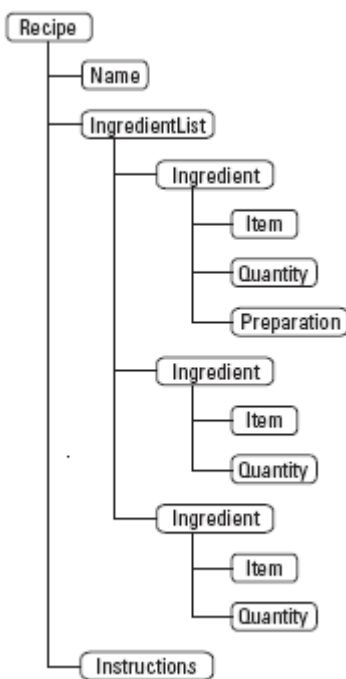
XML Editors - Easy and Affordable?

by Gloria McConnell

If you are new to the world of structured authoring, you may have heard discussions about the high costs and steep learning curves associated with moving into this world. According to a Writers UA article by Antonio DaSilva, though, inexpensive and easy-to-use tools are now entering the marketplace.

DaSilva writes: “Lately, things are getting easier, and many of the newest structured authoring tools take much of the complexity out of setting up the authoring environment. Some even provide a word processor-like interface that de-emphasizes markup, and enables writers to concentrate on content.”

XML Basics



If abbreviations such as *XML*, *DTD*, and *XSL* are still Greek to you, following are a few very basic definitions:

Structured authoring: A publishing workflow in which rules are established and enforced for the consistent organization of information in printed or online documents. Whereas traditional publishing follows a style guide that emphasizes the format of the document, structured authoring is based on content rules. Following are examples of some very simple rules for a cookbook:

- A recipe must include a name, ingredient list, and instructions.
- For each ingredient, item, quantity must be included.
- Optionally, ingredient preparation may be included.

XML: EXtensible Markup Language. XML is a markup language much like HTML (Hypertext Markup Language). Its purpose is to describe data and to focus on what data is (the type of information). HTML, by contrast, was designed to display data and to focus on how data looks (the format).

XML tags are not predefined; you must define them, based on the types of information that will exist in the documents being created.

DTD: Document Type Definition. The purpose of a DTD is to define the legal building blocks of an XML document. It defines the document structure with a list of legal elements. (Refer to the figure depicting the cookbook elements.)

XSL: EXtensible Stylesheet Language. A language for expressing style sheets. Similar to a CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) for HTML documents, an XSL style sheet is a file that describes how to display an XML document of a given type. An XSL style sheet adds functionality and features not possible with CSS.

The Review

As mentioned before, Writers UA provides a thorough review of one affordable and easy-to-use tool, *XMLmind* (also known as “XXE”). The author (DaSilva) based his evaluation on the following criteria:

- Ease of installation
- Performance
- Ease of use
- Documentation and Support
- Value for the Money

Rather than repeat DaSilva’s comments here, I’ll provide a link: [Review of XMLmind XML Editor 3.5](#). The bottom line is that he is very impressed with this product. His high words of praise: “Once you use it, you’ll appreciate the thoughtful and elegant approach XXE’s developers took in creating a product robust enough for experienced authors, yet simple enough to provide a gentle entry for those of us new to structured authoring.”

XML Editors - Other Tools

For a list of XML editors, see [O’Reilly’s xml.com](#). This list identifies free and trial versions of XML authoring software.

Another list can be found at UserLand’s [Scripting News](#). This list is a bit dated, but it identifies the products and includes links to product sites.

On the Job

That's a Good Question!

Asking Questions that Reveal Richer Answers

By Kathy Graden, *Rough Draft* Contributing Editor

For both reporters and technical writers, success depends more on knowing the right questions to ask than on expert knowledge of topics. Reporters writing about a corporate scandal today may be asked to cover a forest fire tomorrow. Similarly, technical writers move between projects or even industries frequently, so subject matter expertise gained on one job often doesn't transfer to another.

The quality of the questions you ask SMEs and sources strongly influence results. And the quality of answers you get sometimes depends on both what you're asking and how you ask. Flawed or weak questions (or questions not asked):

- Produce scanty or faulty information
- Leave information gaps
- Yield more useless information and less of the information you want

Strong questions, on the other hand:

- Yield richer information because they force SMEs to brainstorm about the subject, draw more on their knowledge, or both
- Support your information gathering goals
- Often lead to a new question or line of questions that unearth more knowledge and ideas
- Encourage problem solving
- Encourage SMEs to focus on future issues as well as the here and now

Knowing how to ask strong questions makes you more versatile and more valuable as a writer, because you can apply the ability to ask thoughtful, intelligent questions on a wider range of projects.

Preparing Your Questions

Never schedule an interview with a SME or send an email requesting information without preparing questions in advance. You can dash over to a developer's cube with impromptu questions once in awhile; he or she usually won't mind. But if you need to talk with a SME for more than 15 minutes or you're sending an email that contains a long list of questions, take time to define your questions first. Doing this enables you to craft stronger questions and ensure that they will produce thorough, detailed

information. Advance preparation also communicates to SMEs that you respect their busy schedules.

Technical people like to respond to interesting, thoughtful, problem-solving questions. They think simple or naïve questions reflect the writer's laziness or failure to learn about the subject. So before developing questions for SMEs, look for answers from the Web, hands-on practice, reading manuals or FAQs, etc. Save your questions for information you can't find yourself. And be sure to let the SMEs know you've done your homework and you've learned something from it.

For example, a question such as "What's a database dimension?" indicates that the questioner has made no effort to learn the basics of database management. The question "Is the Customer dimension role-playing in this fact table?" demonstrates that the writer has done some research.

If you need to ask "basic" questions because you're new to the subject matter, SMEs will display more patience if you try to frame the questions in ways that the SMEs may not have heard before. Instead of asking "Who uses this product?" for example, you might say, "I know that the product is intended for zookeepers. But would game wardens also be able to use it in the wild?"

You'll certainly base questions on what the audience needs to know. But use different types of questions to elicit different types of information:

- Factual questions - Use them when there is only one correct answer.
- Interpretive questions - Use them when a question has multiple answers, but you need supporting evidence for each answer. Interpretive questions often build upon each other. They're also good for stimulating discussions involving you and the SMEs. Preparing questions in advance sometimes leads to better spontaneous questions.
- Evaluative questions - Use them to draw out a SME and keep him or her talking. Evaluative questions have no right or wrong answers because they're based on individuals' points of view, opinions, or beliefs.

Open-ended questions capture more information than "yes" or "no" questions. An open question invites opinions

and thoughts, encourages participation; establishes rapport; and stimulates discussion.

Questions can be informal, but be precise. Clearly and carefully describe the information you want. Be explicit about the type and level of information you're seeking, so that SMEs can focus on giving you what you need with a minimum of their effort and time. Use probing questions to obtain more details.

As you compose questions, try to anticipate questions the SME will ask in return. If your question is about a problem, describe its symptoms, not your guesses about what the symptoms may mean. If you're asking about a procedure, describe the goal of the procedure and what its desired result is. This enables the SME to recommend other tools or methods (if they exist) that will do the job better.

Asking Questions in Interviews

Now that you've drafted your questions, where do you direct them? Do all you can to find out who has the most knowledge on the topic. If necessary, ask other SMEs to point you to him or her. Sometimes, though, it pays to submit a question to an entire group of SMEs. Any question you ask of one SME may yield an answer that's valuable to the whole group. In addition, if the primary SME for a topic is too busy to reply to your questions, asking questions of the group distributes load and gets you answers faster.

During interviews with SMEs, maintain high levels of energy and enthusiasm. If one of your good questions catches the SME's interest, that may lead to more questions and more information for you. Don't squelch enthusiasm, but stay aware of time limits and other constraints.

It's good when SMEs digress from the main topic when you bring up something that's important to them. Don't steer them back to the main topic right away; ask the SMEs to clarify why their new subject is important, to determine if it also will be important for your audience.

Establish that you want to find answers on your own if someone gives you direction. Ask for SMEs' help instead of telling them what you need. For instance, "Can someone provide a pointer?" and "What's wrong in my example?" are better questions than "Tell me the exact procedure I should use."

Confirm with SMEs that you're asking the right questions. Ask if you should address other questions. Also request examples and analogies that will help your audience understand. And find out if there are alternate references or sources of information.

While recording SMEs' responses to your questions, if possible try to include maps or diagrams in your notes. The visuals will give you an integrated view of how what you're hearing ties together, and they will show SMEs that you're paying attention and synthesizing their information.

Asking Questions through Email

Email can be an effective tool for asking questions; if you're working on a virtual team, email and the telephone may be the only ways you can contact your SMEs. If you're unsure who should receive emailed questions, state in your message that you tried but couldn't find the proper mailing list or SME. Say also that you don't object to having your message forwarded to other people.

Don't give questioning emails titles such as "HELP!!" SMEs find this annoying, so they may ignore your question or delay answering it. Give an email a title that provides some information about your subject or the information you're looking for, such as "Snowflaking: How Do You Avoid it?"

Use clear writing, correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. in your messages to demonstrate that you're a professional communicating with other professionals, and you take questions and their answers seriously.

Following Up

Communication with SMEs shouldn't stop after they've answered all your questions. Be courteous and thankful. When you have the information you need, call or send email to the SME to thank him or her. If SMEs have been especially helpful, forward your message to the SMEs' leader or manager. Include a few words about how the information they've provided will help you and your audience; for example "Thanks, Will and Ben, for letting me interview you yesterday. I learned a lot, and what you told me will make the chapter on surrogate keys easier for users to understand."

Writing While You Sleep

2006 STC National Conference, Bangalore

by Jill Ginsburg

If you work at a technical writing job or contract from 8 to 5? (8 to 6? 8 to 7), you may not think too often about the technical writers who work while you sleep. After all, they're 12,000 miles away. But there's a lot is going on . . .

This year, there were 600, not 450 like last year, and many more than the year before that. They listened, took lots of notes and asked lots of questions, shared techniques and tales, speculated on industry trends and their own careers, kidded each other, competed with each other, and made plans for tomorrow and next year.

The time was December 7-9, 2006, the occasion was the 8th Annual STC India Conference (2006), and the place was Bangalore, major technology center and capital of the southern state of Karnataka.

Getting to Bangalore

In May of last year, I was lucky enough to read STC past president Andrea Ames' May 2006 STC Intercom article about her experiences at the December 2005 STC India National Conference in Hyderabad. At the time, I was planning a trip to India's southern states for December 2006, and a little light went on.

My inquiries about the 2006 conference arrived in the capable hands of Saravanan Manoharan, a technical writer from Delhi and a moving force behind technical writing education and conferences in India; Gururaj "Guru" B.S., then president of STC India; Anupama A., the conference registration manager (and STC India president for 2007); and Rajdeep Gupta, who moderates the 477-member (at last count) Bangalore Technical Writers Meetup group at <http://techwriter.meetup.com/2/>. I learned that the 2006 conference would be held in Bangalore.

Phoenix STC member Larry Samson put me in touch with Kala Lakshmanan and Anamika Mukherjee, two Bangalore members of the Intel documentation team he was then working with. I registered in advance with a bank draft in rupees, parked my luggage at the hotel that Anamika had located, and chose a yellow-and-black auto-rickshaw for the short ride to the Grand Ashok Hotel, where I found my badge waiting at the registration table. I'm saving it.

Learning and trends: From single sourcing to RSS

Business hotel rates in India are quite high (in both rupees and dollars), and many delegates were from Bangalore,

where technical writing opportunities in India are well represented. The opening presentation, by Dr. Naresh Gupta, Adobe senior vice president and head of Adobe's research and development centers in India, focused on FrameMaker and companion publishing products, which have a substantial piece of the Indian market.

Subsequent presentations addressed Microsoft Word security issues, RSS feeds (receiving and generating), single sourcing, open-source documentation, developing documentation in an Agile development environment, content management systems, DITA scalability, and translation issues. Dr. Kiran Thakur, director of the first technical writing certification program in India, at the University of Pune near Delhi, announced that the English department is set to expand the current course offerings to a two-year and then possibly a four-year degree.

Throughout the conference, career development was an important focus. In his keynote speech, Geoff Hart from Pointe-Clair, Quebec, an STC Associate Fellow and a respected editor and writer well known on techwr-l, urged technical writers not to be rabbits, hiding in the shadow of the nearest fence or cubicle, but to use their creative and technical skills to demonstrate their expertise to co-workers at all levels. Dr. S. Pradeep, associate professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, gave an elegant presentation on the hand-in-hand relationship of technical communication to design and scientific advancement, using as a model the design of a fighter plane.

Planned for participation

The conference sessions were held in two large halls, just across from each other on the park-like hotel grounds, with gathering places for small groups outside. In each presentation hall was a complete sound system and two large projection screens, along with a podium and table in the center for panel discussions, so it was very easy to hear and see all of the presentations. The planners' foresight ensured that everything was ready, in the right place at the right time, from music at the awards presentations to microphones rushed to audience members during question-and-answer sessions. The detailed schedules posted on easels outside each presentation hall were updated regularly, so I could always tell what was going on. There were plenty of seats, even though the attendance was greater than expected.

The 2006 conference was underwritten by broad-based support from technology companies, among them Citec, Adobe, BEA Systems, Oracle, LSI Logic, and Symphony Services. While these companies were recognized in the conference materials, they kept a low profile overall and seemed to me to have made a serious commitment to the success of the conference. The exhibitors' area included several recruiting booths; the technical writing job market in India is good now, and several people I spoke with had improved their careers within the past year or two by taking new jobs.

Between the sessions . . . talking with Indian writers

One surprise for me was learning about some similarities between the IT work environment in Bangalore and in the US. Contrary to what I'd thought, many IT professionals work a regular five-day schedule, and some can telecommute - a sharp contrast to the schedules of other Indian office workers (many call center employees, for example, work 12-hour shifts, six days a week). It was evident too that writers at many companies are taking advantage of the career options available to them, and there is a growing and diversified freelance technical writing community. Phone services throughout India are excellent and seem fairly priced. Salaries, however, remain pegged to the Indian economy, although international firms are presumed to pay higher salaries.

The conference event that caused the most excitement -- and had the best cheerleaders -- was the annual technical writing quiz, with questions prepared by STC India quizmeister Frederic Menezes (Pune, near Delhi). Writers were asked to compete in teams of three, whether colleagues or people they'd just met, to answer questions about technical writing and language. For the playoffs, there were just three champion teams on one of the conference stages, and the questions were posted on the projection screens so that everyone in the audience had a chance to try to outguess or support their favorite team. Correct answers to some very difficult grammar questions finally earned one team the grand prize.

As a visitor, I was welcomed to meet with Indian technical writers and to join in their social experiences at the conference. There were excellent buffet lunches each day with wonderful desserts, and a banquet and dance on Friday night. Coffee, tea, and cookies were available all day in a courtyard area between the two main conference buildings.

Sarees were much in evidence, but some women wore jeans and cotton shirts and athletic shoes instead of the more traditional sandals. Most men chose sports shirts and slacks or jeans. Another common dress for women was the salwar khameez, a two-piece suit, often cotton or another lightweight fabric, with a long top that has slit sides and fits over a pair of loose pants. This is one item that I'd like to bring back to Phoenix, as it is ideal business dress for our hot summers and stylish as well.

The main thing I've brought back though is the enthusiasm and commitment to professional growth and achievement that I found among our fellow writers in India.

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Note: Many of the conference presentations are available on the STC India website, at <http://www.stc-india.org/conferences/2006/Presentations>.

Want to find out more about technical writing in India?

<http://stc-india.org/> Web site of the India chapter

<http://stc-india.org/indus/index.htm> Home page of the chapter newsletter, *Indus*

<http://twin-india.org/portal/> -- Home page of the TWIN portal and list, a key resource for India's writers

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Jill Ginsburg is a technical writer and a senior member of the Phoenix STC chapter. Until recently, she worked at JDA Software in Scottsdale, Ariz., and is now editing technical and educational publications through her own company, WritePro, Inc. You can contact her at sun_edit@yahoo.com.

"Getting Yourself Hired"

Lesson 1: Providing a Sample of your Work

by Dalton Hooper, STC Member, Orlando & Suncoast



Do you bring examples of your writing with you on job interviews? Hopefully, you answered in the affirmative. But, did you know that someone sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled?

writing before your interview was even scheduled?

The most important writing sample

Would you expect a candidate applying for a job as a tailor to show up at the interview wearing a suit that did not fit well? Would you expect a candidate for an auto mechanic's job to pull into the parking lot in a car that was knocking loudly and spewing black smoke? Then why would you, as a technical communicator, send a résumé to a prospective employer that was not an example of your very best documentation work?

As a technical communicator you are unique, in that, you are able to get the interviewer to see a sample of your work without having to wait for an interview. The person who sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled was -- YOU! If you haven't caught on by now, your résumé IS an example of your work! The question is: Is it an excellent example?

What would make your résumé excellent?

Let's think about this for a moment. What is the value that we, as technical communicators, typically bring to the creation of documentation to make it excellent? Some examples include:

- Identifying the intended audience. (*the interviewer*)
- Assessing the needs of the intended audience.
 - What is the interviewer looking for?
 - How can you meet the interviewer's needs?
- Understanding how the documentation will be used. (*as an aid in deciding who to interview*)

- Determining the optimal method by which to transform the source information into understanding for the intended audience. (*Creating a resume with the right information, in the right amount, and in the right layout*)

It is appropriate to think of your résumé as a type of job aid, with the interviewer being the user and the objective being to assist in the decision whether to pursue you further (i.e., interview). Consequently, an excellent résumé would be one that convinces the reader that you should be interviewed.

The right information

Your résumé should contain information supporting your assertion that it is in the company's best interest to pursue you further. Your résumé should only address what you can do for the company - not what the company can do for you. In too many instances, résumés waste valuable space (not to mention the reader's time!) in relating what a position with Acme Widgets would mean to the candidate's career, livelihood, and self-esteem. Frankly, companies are not in business to serve the needs of their employees, but to serve the needs of the owners (stockholders) of those companies. Filling the needs of the employees is simply a fortuitous by-product.

The right amount

Your résumé should contain enough information to convince the reader you should be interviewed. No more - no less. That is, after all, the objective of a résumé - to get you the interview!

The right layout

This is very important: Your résumé should be easy to skim, with liberal use of white space. The first thing the reader sees when viewing your résumé for the first time is not the content -- but the layout! The layout sets the tone in the reader's mind before they have even read the first line. If your layout is very busy, with small point type (less than 10 pt), narrative form (i.e., little or no bulleted lists), and goes on for too many pages, the reader will dread the upcoming reading, rather than be enticed by it. The more you give the reader a feeling that they will be able to easily glean the information they need from your résumé, the more likely it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The write stuff

Even if you followed all the advice mentioned above, if your résumé contains a misspelling, grammatical error, non-parallel construction, or any other violation of documentation standards recognized by technical communication professionals, it will rightly go on the “reject” pile. After all, when deciding which writing samples to bring to an interview, you wouldn’t dream of including an example that had not been spell-checked, grammar-checked, proofread, and critiqued, would you? Why hold your résumé to a lesser standard? It is, after all,

what determines whether there will even be an interview in which to show off those writing samples.

=====

Dalton Hooper is currently the Documentation Project Manager for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Information Technology. Dalton directs a team of technical writers responsible for providing all relevant technical documentation during the development and support of internal business systems for Disney parks and resorts worldwide.

He can be reached at dalton.hooper@disney.com.

Editorial Blithers

Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen

Karen L. Zorn, Managing Editor

Some months Rough Draft comes together immediately after the previous month’s deadline, some months it is painful. February was a painful month, so I apologize for the lateness. I hope the content makes up for the lateness.

A volunteer organization only succeeds and grows through the dedication and efforts of its members. STC Phoenix is such an organization. For months now we have been asking for your help in the following positions:

- **Volunteer Manager:** recruit volunteers for positions within the chapter, maintain list of volunteers.
- **Arrangements Manager:** contact caterers and plan meals for monthly program meetings. This manager works with the President and a review committee.
- **Education committee members:** help plan and organize seminars and workshops for the upcoming year.

Yes, the arrangements are getting done, you have a meeting room and some pretty good eats *because* a CMAC member picked up the Arrangements task. No one is keeping track of volunteers, the result of which is volunteers may not be recognized at the June meeting. That’s sad because volunteers deserve to be recognized by CMAC *and the membership they serve*. As for educational programs, no manager = no programs. You won’t have the opportunity to learn about FrameMaker, Captivate, MS Word, eLearning basics, or any of the other topics the membership asks for in the annual survey.

How big are these tasks in manhours? Well, the old standby answer, “it depends.” It depends on how much energy the Committee Manager puts into the job. Of these three, Arrangements is an on-going monthly task. But who’s to say that menus can’t be planned months in advance? Some efforts are little time chunks on a monthly basis. Others are little or nothing with a big push towards completion. Then there are the “big” positions that require a substantial time commitment.

What happens if members don’t volunteer? We will not be able to:

- mentor and nurture future chapter leaders
- provide leadership for revenue making activities: Publications, Art, and Online Competition (PAO), regional conference
- offer reduced cost educational programs
- continue community service programs: CARSEF

Roberta Davidson volunteered for the *Rough Draft* Associate Editor position and I thank her. Her assistance will relieve some of my Managing Editor work load. Now to find the time to get together! Without a volunteer Managing Editor and editorial team, you would not get *Rough Draft* every month.

It takes a lot of people to manage all the activities and services STC Phoenix provides its members. How can you help, even if it is just a few hours a month?

Grammar Anyone?

Noun Strings

by Ms. Grammar



At one time or another, most of you have probably stumbled across, or perhaps written, a sentence such as:

System administration center office equipment maintenance is performed weekly.

This sentence presents a **noun string**, which occurs when one or more nouns are used to modify another noun. Although sometimes concise, this type of writing is usually confusing, because the noun that is being modified is so buried among the other nouns that it is hard to determine the modifiers from the modified.

Writing for Localization

Nearly all localization experts agree that noun strings should be avoided. One very good article on writing for localization is “Think Globally, Write Locally,” presented in the April 2006 edition of [TechCom Manager](#). Author Kristen Giovanis writes:

“Avoid ‘modifier strings’ (also known as noun strings, stacked modifiers, etc.). Example: ‘plastic tip fastener clips.’ Modifier strings make up the most common form of grammatical ambiguity. Break these long uninterrupted strings of nouns and adjectives into smaller pieces.”

Correcting Noun Strings

For short noun strings, judicious use of hyphens may solve the problem. For example, “Control loop dynamics will be used” is clearer if a hyphen is used: “Control-loop dynamics will be used.”

The Great Grammar Challenge, published by EEI Press, offers the following three guidelines for breaking noun strings into more manageable pieces:

- To understand the meaning of the sentence, start at the end of a noun string and work backwards.
- Create short prepositional phrases. Words such as “of,” “for,” “about,” “in,” and the possessive form (as in “world’s”) are connecting words that show how the nouns relate to one another.
- Change nouns into verbals or verbs.

Test Yourself

Following are sentences containing noun strings. Can you improve them?

1. The report defines our department research innovation expansion plan.
2. The training department development project newsletter deadline was extended one week.
3. The business investment deduction carry-forward limitation provision has expired.
4. The system valve chatter reduction benefit outweighs the increased cost.

Possible Answers

1. The report defines our department’s plan for expanding research innovation.
2. The deadline for the newsletter produced for the training department’s development project was extended one week.
3. The limitation on carrying forward deductions for business investments has expired.
4. The reduced valve chatter in the system is a benefit that outweighs the increased cost.

Snippets from listservs & miscellany

The IDL SIG Scholarship team announces a \$500 scholarship to assist students of all ages who are pursuing an undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or certificate in the area of *Instructional Design*. This award is wholly funded by the IDL SIG. All winners and honorable mentions will be published in the IDL SIG quarterly newsletter. **The deadline for submission is March 15, 2007.** Winners will be notified by April 15, 2007. For more details and all necessary forms, go to <http://www.stcidlsig.org/cms/> and click on Scholarships.

WritersUA Skills & Technology Survey <http://www.writersua.com/surveys/skillstech06/index.html>

The latest issue of Brian Costello and Fred Langa's Windows secrets newsletter is out: <http://WindowsSecrets.com/comp/070201>

Two topics of note are an explanation of **Windows Vista** pricing and ways to upgrade painlessly, plus a detailed explanation of how to research and root out spyware that is both interesting and a good way to research your own problems in the future.

Geoff Hart ghart@videotron.ca

Interested in pursuing an ePortfolio? Check out *Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators* (<http://vig.prenhall.com/catalog/academic/product/0,1144,0131704583,00.html>). Chapters include: Understanding Professional Portfolios: An Overview; Creating a Portfolio Identity; Portfolio Contents, Design, and Structure; Revising for Portfolio Quality; The Electronic Portfolio; Legal and Ethical Issues Affecting Portfolios; Getting Feedback: Responding To and Revising Portfolios; Portfolios and the Job Search--Getting Prepared; and Using Portfolios During Interviews.

For those of you producing PDFs, Adobe's announcement today that they are turning over PDF to ISO should be very good news. No longer will Adobe be the one deciding what goes into the PDF specification, but a standards body will. The situation with PDF will be like other standards, such as TIFF and JPEG. Right now Adobe owns PDF but publishes the specification.

The bad news is ISO moves more slowly than Adobe, so we are likely to see changes much more slowly than in the past.

Note: Adobe is not turning Acrobat and Reader over to ISO, just the PDF file format. Adobe will sit on the ISO committee and ask that it begin by accepting the current 1.7 specification, but after that it is up to the ISO committee to define PDF and its subsets, such as PDF/A.

The blog entries cited below have links to all the official documents.

<http://www.acrobatusers.com/blogs/leonardr/>

http://blogs.adobe.com/shebanation/2007/01/a_new_door_opens_for_pdf.html

http://blogs.adobe.com/loridefurio/2007/01/pdf_spec_releas.html

<http://www.acrobatusers.com/blogs/leonardr/history-of-pdf-openness/>

If you respond to any of these blog entries, please let them know Carl Young sent you. That helps me keep up my relationship with Adobe.

In this exclusive interview with TheContentWrangler.com, Michael Boses, Chief Technology Officer for Invision Research Corporation, introduces his firm's new suite of DITA authoring and productivity tools designed to help technical communicators to author DITA content naturally in Microsoft Word without struggling with an XML editing environment.

Read the interview: www.thecontentwrangler.com

Educational Opportunities

AZISPI "What's New, What's Hot with Human Performance?!?", Roger Addison, ISPI Senior Director of Human Performance Technology

DATE: Thursday, February 22, 2007

TIME: 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. Light Refreshments

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. Program

COST: Free for members, \$10 non-members

RSVP: Eva Martony at President@AZISPI.ORG

NEW LOCATION: AZ State Retirement System
3300 N Central Avenue, 10th Floor
Phoenix, AZ

Roger M. Addison, CPT, EdD, is an internationally respected practitioner of human performance technology and performance consulting. He is the senior director of human performance technology for the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI). Roger was vice president and manager at Wells Fargo Bank. His responsibilities included executive coaching and education, change management, and partnering with line managers to improve performance. He earned his doctorate in educational psychology from Baylor University. Roger is a past president of ISPI, and in 1998 he received ISPI's highest award, member for life. Roger is the current president of the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO). Roger has worked and presented in North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

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STC Scholarship, Mary Norby Scholarship

Scholarship applications for the 2007-2008 academic year are due by February 15, 2007. Information about the scholarships, and application forms can be found online at:

http://www.stc.org/edu/scholarshipInfo01_maryNorby.asp

http://www.stc.org/edu/scholarshipInfo01_national.asp

The Mary Norby Scholarship will be offered for the first time. Mary Norby Scholarship applicants must be women working in the federal government, full or part-time as a secretary or administrative assistant.

Questions? Scott DeLoach, scott@userfirst.net or 404-522-0003.

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Documentation and Training - The User Experience - April 18-21, 2007 (Vancouver!)

The 8th Annual Documentation and Training Conference held for the first time in Vancouver, BC. The conference focus is on the increasing importance of the user experience in our work as technical communication and training professionals. New tools and emerging technologies including: structured blogging, wikis, user-generated content, podcasting, hosted content management, YouTube, AJAX, Flex, the Semantic Web, DITA, S1000D, experience design, information architecture, and XML syndication.

Registration price includes FREE pre- and post-conference half-day workshops (Adobe Captivate, the Darwin Information Typing Architecture, Information Architecture, Taxonomy Development, and Managing and Delivering Dynamic, Personalized Content).

Check out the schedule: <http://www.doctrain.com>

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Upcoming STC Web Seminars

Full information at: stc.webex.com

February 21, 2007

Working in Global Teams
Presenter(s): Melanie Doulton and Makarand Pandit
Level: All Levels

March 14, 2007

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask
Presenter(s): Rahel Bailie
Level: Beginner

March 28, 2007

Visible: The New Valuable
Presenter(s): Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger
Level: Intermediate

April 11, 2007

Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate-in Half the Time
Presenter(s): Kevin Siegel
Level: All Levels

May 2, 2007

Choosing the Right Usability Technique (to answer the right question)
Presenter(s): Whitney Quesenbery
Level: Intermediate

January 2007 Meeting Evaluations

Speaker Name/Topic: Rebecca Joy/Being Your Own Hero

Total number of evaluation sheets completed: 8 (34.7%)

Total attendees: 23

1. Your overall impressions.

	Disappointing	Acceptable	Good	Very Good	Outstanding
Speaker(s)	2	1	5		
Topic	1	3	3	1	
Geographic Location		3		3	2
Meal Options		1	1	3	1
Networking Opportunity			3	4	1
Price		1	4	3	

2. The content you found most useful:

- When she finally got around to it, the gist of her talk was-Engage Brain Before Opening Mouth (or before taking action.) I'm not too sure of her underlying motives but her concept is neat. The hard part is implementing it. I did do some seat squirming when she discussed spiritual healing.
- Not applicable to career
- Rebecca reminded me of some important principles that apply both to my personal and professional life. Taking time to Breath, Ask, Listen, and Choose helps eliminate a lot of the stress and missteps that can result from having to react to unreasonable expectations.
- I felt talking to people about their past work history & hearing about the job openings people know about around the valley was very useful.
- The reminder to take a moment and think before implementing an action.

3. What motivated you to attend this month's meeting?

- Food & Proximity-But the best is the chance to talk to other communicators and trainers.
- Location - less than 20 minutes from home (and my next place of work) and the opportunity to network with fellow professionals.
- I was interested in networking with people who have a similar technical background.

4. How far did you travel to attend this meeting? (Circle mileage or note the zip code from which you traveled)

0 - 5 miles	6-10 miles	11-15 miles	15+ miles	Zip Code
		3	4	85383
				85251
				85225
				85205

5. How do you prefer to learn about upcoming meeting topics and locations? Rank your selections if marking more than one. (1-5, most-least preferred)

1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	
1		1	STC-Phoenix Chapter Web site
	1	1	Rough Draft
5	1		Email notification
			Other mode (please note preference details)
			Other professional organization announcement

6. General comment or suggestions:

- Thank all of you guys for all your hard work!!
- The speaker had a marvelous sense of self-motivation. I can foresee as she polishes her speaking skills and her mission statement and life purpose that she will be a very elegant and powerful agent for "simple awareness."

- I felt the speaker did a good job at trying to put each of us in her shoes of the tragedy she witnesses everyday on her job but being my first time I guess I found it weird that this was the feature presentation at an STC chapter meeting.
- I like the organization that STC has allowing people to network and eat for an hour before listening to the presenter.
- I thought Rebecca was a very sweet lady and her message a valuable one although not new. I was disappointed that she didn't seem very prepared;

her talk wasn't focused and seemed to ramble, often without a point. Her title, *Be the Hero in Your Own Life*, didn't seem connected to the topic at all.

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Editor's Note: *Rough Draft* is committed to publishing the meeting evaluations for the 2006-2007 program year. Feedback, positive or negative, is valuable to CMAC in planning program offerings. We're open to suggestions, comments, and solutions.

Help Wanted

Your STC Phoenix chapter needs volunteers in many areas. There are current opportunities as well as ones for the upcoming 2006-2007 program year.

Why should you volunteer?

- You can practice or enhance existing skills or learn new ones.
- You'll meet new people and expand your network.
- You'll have fun!
- You can add your volunteer position to your resume or portfolio.

We are currently seeking volunteers in the following areas:

- **Volunteer Manager:** recruit volunteers for positions within the chapter, maintain list of volunteers.
- **Arrangements Manager:** contact caterers and plan meals for monthly program meetings. This manager works with the President and a review committee.

- **Program committee members:** help plan and organize programs for the upcoming year.
- **Education committee members:** help plan and organize seminars and workshops for the upcoming year.
- **Newsletter contributors:** help keep our members informed with news regarding our profession, community and SIG activities.
- **CARSEF Judges:** Join the STC CARSEF team for one fun and rewarding day - Tuesday, March 20th - to judge student reports. A fun and rewarding day! See the chapter website for details: <http://www.stc-phoenix.com/carsef.htm>.

To volunteer or to get more information: contact Tim Eull or any one of the **Phoenix Community Contacts** members.

Have skills in an area not mentioned above? Not sure of what you want to do or how you can help? LET US KNOW! We'll find a place for you!

Phoenix Chapter 2006-07 Calendar

Here's the calendar for the 2006-2007 program. As you'll notice, we have several open dates for programs. If you know presenters whose topics would be of interest or a topic idea for the program, please contact Maggie Haenel mhaenel@earthlink.com.

This is *your* chapter. The Committee Managers and Administrative Council (CMAC) want to present programs of interest to you. As always, members are welcome to attend CMAC meetings. We try to arrive by 5:30 to order dinner, the business meeting starts at 6 p.m. Locations will be posted as soon as they are available.

Date	Purpose/Subject	Location
Tuesday, October 3, 2006	CMAC meeting	Old Chicago - 530 W Broadway, Tempe AZ Map
Tuesday, October 10, 2006	Program meeting: Blogging, Podcasting, and VLogging - Matt Moran	University of Phoenix - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) Map
Tuesday, November 7, 2006	CMAC meeting	Havana Café-Ahwatukee, 4232 E Chandler Blvd, 480-704-2600. For meal - arrive at 5:30 pm. Meeting begins promptly at 6:00 pm
Tuesday, November 14, 2006	Program meeting: Project Management for E-Learning: Avoiding the Pitfalls - Jane Smith	University of Phoenix - Northwest Campus - 15601 North 28th Avenue (Just west of I-17, north of Greenway Rd.) Map
Tuesday, December 5, 2006	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Tuesday, December 12, 2006	Program meeting: Using Your Technical Communication Skills for Other Areas (Culinary Writing) - Jim Morgan	UoP - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) Map
Tuesday, January 2, 2007	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Tuesday, January 9, 2007	Program meeting: How to Be the Hero in Your Own Life - Rebecca Joy	UoP - Northwest Campus - 15601 North 28th Ave. (Just west of I-17, north of Greenway Rd.) Map
Tuesday, February 6, 2007	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Thursday, February 15, 2007	Program meeting: An Evening with Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director	UoP - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) Map
Tuesday, March 6, 2007	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Tuesday, March 13, 2007	Program meeting: Localization - Hans Fenstermacher	UoP - Northwest Campus - 15601 North 28th Ave. (Just west of I-17, north of Greenway Rd.) Map
Tuesday, March 20, 2007	CARSEF	Mesa Convention Center, 263 N. Center Street (near University Drive on Center Street).
Tuesday, April 3, 2007	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Tuesday, April 10, 2007	Program meeting: Topic TBD	UoP - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) Map
Tuesday, May 1, 2007	CMAC meeting	Keegan's Tavern & Grill, 32nd & Camelback, Phoenix
Tuesday, May 8, 2007	Program meeting: Wikis and Such, Scott Abel "The Content Wrangler"	UoP - Northwest Campus - 15601 North 28th Ave. (Just west of I-17, north of Greenway Rd.) Map
May 13-17, 2007	STC International Conference	Minneapolis, MN
Tuesday, June 5, 2007	CMAC - Turnover	TBD
Tuesday, June 12, 2007	Program meeting: Preview the new Phoenix web site, Awards	UoP - Chandler Campus - 2975 W. Linda Lane (Off Price-Loop 101 and Ray Road) Map