



General Information and Competition Rules

Rules for all Entries

Entries in all categories must:

- Contain sufficient technical, scientific, medical, or similar content to qualify as technical communication.
- Have been produced or substantially revised within 24 months preceding September 1 of the current year.
- Have been originally prepared (and accepted) for publication by a client, employer, or publisher.

The competition organizers reserve the right to reject any entry for any reason and refund the entry fee.

Entries must be suitable for public display. Entries that contain classified or proprietary information or that violate copyright laws are not acceptable. It is the responsibility of the submitter, and not of STC, to determine that entries do not contain classified or proprietary information and to obtain permission for submission of the entry from the holder of all copyrights. Neither STC nor anyone associated with the competitions can be held responsible for loss of or damage to an entry.

Materials prepared for STC purposes are not eligible for entry in the competition. Examples of these materials include STC Publications books; articles for Intercom, Tieline, and Technical Communication; and chapter and Special Interest Group (SIG) Web sites, brochures, and newsletters. Chapter and SIG publicity materials are entered in the STC Public Relations Competition. Chapter and SIG newsletters are entered in the STC Newsletter Competition.

Multilingual entries are acceptable with prior approval from the competition manager.

An entry must not have been entered in a previous STC competition and may be entered in only one suite of local or regional competitions. **Duplicate entries are disqualified.**

Entries can be made only within a single local or regional competition. For example, if an entry is made to the Boston/Northern New England regional competitions, it cannot be entered in the South Carolina competition. However, within a local or regional competition an entry can be entered in multiple areas. For example, a manual could be entered in the Technical Publications competition and the cover for the same manual could be entered in the Technical Art competition. If this is done, the entrant must submit an entry fee, three copies of the entry, and the appropriate forms for each category entered. (Using the example above, the entrant would submit separate forms for both the Technical Publications competition and the Technical Art competition, pay two entry fees, and supply a total of six copies of the entry—three with each of the two entries.)

A single entry can be entered in only one category within a competition. For example, a piece of technical art could not be entered into both the Packaging Design category and the Promotional Materials Design category of the Technical Art competition. **Duplicate entries are disqualified.**

Within a single category, only one entry from the same contributors and from the same parent organization may be submitted, except when the entries are on significantly different topics. Entries that substantially duplicate other entries are not eligible. This rule does not necessarily eliminate online communication entries about the same product or topic on different hardware platforms.

The submitter (often a manager in the contributors' organization) must certify that the entry represents the actual work of the contributors named on the entry form and that the entry has been cleared for submission. The submitter must also certify that the copyright holder permits the submission of the entry.

The submitter receives all official correspondence relating to the entry. The submitter is responsible for all communication with the contributors about the entry and for distributing any awards.

Credit for Entries

Entries created by employees on official time are considered to be the property of the employing firm or agency, which may decide who will be credited. A person who performed substantive work on an entry entered by the employing firm or agency or by another person without credit to the first person has no ground for dispute with STC, but, with the permission of the copyright holder, may enter the same piece with credit to himself or herself. If either entry wins an award, the other entry will receive the same award.

Categories for the International Competitions

The international competitions, which take place after the regional competitions, use the following categories for judging and awards. Regional competitions may use a shortened list, depending on the variety of entries that they anticipate.

NOTES for online entries in either the Online Communication or Technical Art competitions

- The platform (such as Web, Windows, or Macintosh) is not a consideration in determining the category.
- Entries that run on other platforms or require special equipment will be accepted, as long as the entrants provide such specialized hardware or software to the judging location at their own expense.
- If the entry is provided on a 3.5" diskette, CD, or DVD, specify the format (PC or Mac) on both the submission form and the diskette itself.
- If you send compressed files, they must be self-extracting.
- An entry on the Web is judged as it exists on the day of judging.
- Demonstration of the entry to the judges is forbidden.
- Entries must install correctly, be virus-free, and not take an unreasonable amount of time to install.
- If the entry uses any software other than Firefox 2.0, Adobe Reader 7.0, or Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0, you must also provide three copies of the software with the entry.

Online Communication

Valid entries for the Online Communication competition include forms of communication that depend on a computer or other electronic media for delivery. The entries must be primarily intended for viewing on a computer or similar device, not on paper. Therefore, computer-based training, online documentation, help systems, online demonstration programs, simple text-retrieval systems, multimedia information systems, and Web pages can be judged in the online competition.

The online communication competition is not limited to online documents that support computer products. Entries can include online encyclopedias, road maps, foreign language instruction, medical handbooks, and more.

At the international level, the online communication competition has the four categories listed below.

NOTE: The Books category has been eliminated from this competition. Entries in this category in previous years were primarily Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) files, distributed in this format as a cost-saving measure. They did not fully use the capabilities of the format; they were basically hardcopy documents distributed electronically and were meant to be printed by users. As such, Adobe Acrobat intended to be printed by the user are accepted in the Technical Publications competition.

1. **Help.** Online information that has a primary purpose of providing immediate assistance to individuals while they use a product. It provides information appropriate to the task on an as-needed or as-requested basis. This category includes and is not limited to general help, procedural help, cue cards, examples, performance support, and integrated user assistance.
2. **Promotional.** This category includes two types of entries:
 - Interactive online information that has a primary purpose of demonstrating or describing the main features of a product or product line with user interaction or feedback. This type of online material motivates people to buy or use a product, or informs them of the features or benefits of products. Besides demonstrations of products, this category also includes guided tours and marketing material designed for dynamic user interaction.
 - Static, non-interactive online information that has a primary purpose of describing or defining the main features of a product or product line. This type of online material motivates people to buy or use a product, or informs them of the features or benefits of products. This category includes and is not limited to online brochures, catalogs, and marketing materials that are designed to remain static. Most corporate Web pages belong in this category.
3. **Tutorials/Training.** Online information that has a primary purpose of teaching the techniques for using the main features and capabilities of a product, or of assisting in the process of teaching. This category includes and is not limited to computer-based training applications, tutorials, online lesson books, and training aids.
4. **Reference.** This category includes two types of online information:
 - Documents that have the primary purpose of defining or explaining structure, results, words, problems, or parameters. These documents are typically published in a reference work format, similar to a dictionary or encyclopedia. This category includes and is not limited to online dictionaries, glossaries, function or object descriptions, data structure definitions, encyclopedias, and directories.

- Documents that have the primary purpose of assisting the user to complete a set of tasks or solve a set of problems. This includes troubleshooting tools, wizards or wizard-like task completion tools, quick start guides, and automated support tools.

If an entry is an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file that is primarily intended to be viewed online or has interactive features, such as linked tutorials, supporting Web sites, interactive forms, etc., it may be appropriate to enter it in the Reference category. Review the description for the Reference category to determine whether the entry fits in it.

Technical Art

The Technical Art competition accepts *physical media* and *online*. Physical media includes products that are mounted for viewing or included in a paper-based publication, while online includes art in products that depend on an electronic medium for delivery.

Physical media entries should be quality reproductions. Original artwork will not be accepted. Entries requiring mounting should be on standard-sized foam core or mat board. If such entries are not mounted, they will not be accepted or returned.

Online art entries must be integrated into a viewer application, not dependent on the design package used to create them. For example, a piece of art included in a help file or HTML page is acceptable. A file saved from a design or graphics application is not acceptable.

At the international level, the technical art competition has the categories listed below.

1. **Mechanical Illustration, Line & Tone.** Mechanical illustrations (line and tone) are composed entirely of lines, dots, and solid areas of black and white and color or composed of shading that graduates from one color (or shade of gray) to another. The artwork requires precise depiction of the subject, including the proportions or relationships of objects depicted or represented and subject matter is not open to interpretation. Entries may include exploded views, cutaways, orthographic or isometric projections, schematics, diagrams, graphs, charts, and tables. Each copy of the entry must be accompanied by a sample of the illustration's publication or an example of its use. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.
2. **Interpretative Illustration, Line and Tone.** Interpretative illustrations are composed entirely of lines, dots, and solid areas and are color or black and white, while tonal illustrations are composed of continuous tones that graduate from one color (or shades of gray) to another. While the subject is technical in nature, intended use permits artistic interpretation of features or physical arrangements. The image includes illustrative views depicting arrangement or general configuration, cartoons, and conceptual visualizations (as in technical proposals). Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted. The entry must be accompanied by a sample of the illustration's publication or an example of its use.
3. **Photography.** Photographic entries contain technical content that demonstrates mastery of light and of the medium (film or digital). Photographs may contain innovative lighting, multiple exposures, or other effects and may be black and white or color. Physical media entries must be mounted. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up entry and send in a tube.
4. **Manual /book and Cover designs.** This category includes user and reference manuals designed for technical

products, services, or organizations; and books on technical subjects, published covers, software product splash screens, and World Wide Web home pages. The design should support the flow of information and the ease with which the reader can locate and identify specific information. Cover design considers integration and placement of visual images and accompanying text. Note: Covers must be mounted; front and back views are preferred.

5. **Annual Report Design.** Annual reports summarize the activities or financial position of a corporation, governmental agency, or nonprofit community organization. The design should support the focus and projected image of the entity, and present financial and technical information in a visual manner.
6. **Catalog Design.** Catalogs may be used to deliver information about technical products and services. Catalogs should present large amounts of data in a readable format and provide information on ordering the product or service while being visually pleasing.
7. **Magazine Design.** This category includes regularly scheduled publications in a magazine format, with a feature treatment including photographs and art, about an organization, technology, industry, or scientific field. The intended audience may be either internal or external, special-interest, or the general public. Submit three consecutive issues as a single entry.
8. **Promotional and Informational Poster Design.** Promotional posters support or market an employee campaign, a technical product, an organization, or an event. The entry description should include information about the poster use. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.

Informational posters communicate educational information (as opposed to marketing) about a technical or scientific subject, service, or organization. The audience may be technical or the general public. The entry description should include information on how and where the poster was used. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.
9. **Packaging Design.** This category includes packaging for hardware, software, multimedia, end-user merchandise, and boxes containing two or more manuals. If the package includes software, do not include software media.
10. **Promotional and Informational Materials Design.** Promotional materials include flyers, advertisements, product data sheets, single-unit promotional handouts, and multiple-page publications that market a technical product, service, or organization. Corporate and program identity materials (folders, stationery, logos, etc.) are acceptable if they communicate technical information or images. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted..
11. **Quick Reference Design.** This category includes materials that provide concise reference to essential features of a technical product, service, or subject. This includes graphical devices, data reference tools, and other job aids. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.
12. **Display.** This category includes large-scale presentations such as trade show booths, exhibits, and billboards. Because of the size and space requirements

of the original, photographs, illustrations, or other representative material is accepted in lieu of the display. The presentation material is not judged in and of itself, but is used to provide information about the display. Presentation material must be appropriately mounted or bound. An explanation of the actual display must be provided. Do not mount entries larger than 11 x 17. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.

Technical Publications

The Technical Publications competition is intended for publications typically published in physical media (hardcopy). If your publication is distributed exclusively in Adobe Acrobat format, it would likely be more suited to the Online Communication competition. You are required to submit three production (printed and bound) copies of the publication.

The binding should be simple, but sturdy, such as a three-ring binder or report folder. If the publication is rather large and cumbersome, you may also submit electronic copies, but only if it will enable judges to more easily navigate through the publication. However, keep in mind that printed media is what ultimately is judged; electronic versions do not play into judges' assessments.

At the international level, the technical publications competition has the following six categories.

1. Reports:

Annual Reports are publications that summarize the activities or financial position of corporations, government agencies, or nonprofit community organizations. "Annual Reports" includes reports that comply with the regulations of government agencies, such as the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as reports of unregulated, nonprofit organizations.

Technical Reports report on scientific or technical efforts, usually aimed at the professional community or a contracting agency.

2. Books:

Includes bound, printed matter usually sold to the public through a bookseller. For this competition, a book is defined as a lengthy document covering one technical subject that is intended for sale to the public.

3. Reference Materials:

Includes training materials, documentation sets, all manuals, quick reference guides, and organizational manuals.

Training materials include student guides, tutorials, workbooks, and instructor guides, or sets of these pieces. Some other considerations are:

- Good use of motivational techniques (cartoon characters, themes, human interest stories, color, and so forth)
- Layout or content that readily pulls readers in and keeps them interested in using the materials
- Student participation, such as exercises
- Mechanisms for learners to check their knowledge, such as quizzes and tests

Documentation sets are intended to be a single unit, and are typically packaged together. Examples include, but are not limited to, software documentation sets, multivolume reference materials.

Manuals include:

- Software Guide
- Hardware/Software Combination Guides
- Computer Hardware Guide
- Non-computer Equipment Guides

Quick reference guides provide ready reference to features and functions about a product or service. The emphasis is on presenting essential information concisely and in a way that it is quick and easy to find. They often contain graphic devices and other job aids to help fulfill their purpose.

Organizational manual tone and content are usually dictated by a company. Organizational manuals include, but are not limited to employee manuals, policy and procedure manuals, and style guides.

- 4. Periodicals** Includes magazines, newsletters, and scholarly and professional journals. Three consecutive issues of periodicals must be submitted.

Magazines appear as serial publications that are covered and bound. Magazines have features and regular columns in an established format that people recognize. Advertising may or may not be included. They are controlled by identifiable publishers or owners and served by editorial staff. Magazines can contain news and information about an organization, technology, industry, or scientific field. They can serve either an internal, external, special interest, or general public audience.

Newsletters are regularly scheduled publications with brief articles and a flexible format. They generally have lower budgets and fewer pages than magazines, and may or may not have photographs and illustrations. Newsletters are generally about a company's employees or products, and they may be intended for an internal or external audience. Their primary purpose is to deliver information that, at the same time, will interest the reader and promote the interests of the sponsor.

Scholarly/professional journals appear as serial publications that are covered and bound, with features and regular columns in established formats that people recognize. Advertising may or may not be included. They are controlled by identifiable publishers and served by editorial staff. Writing style may tend to be relatively formal, and design creativity may be limited, in keeping with standards defined by expectations of the profession. Journals are usually targeted for a limited and specialized audience and typically contain information about research and developments in a particular discipline or profession.

- 5. Articles:** Includes scholarly articles, professional articles, and trade or news articles.

Scholarly/professional articles are single articles appearing in academic or professional journals or in a scholarly book as an original contribution of knowledge.

Trade/news articles are single articles appearing in trade journals or general interest periodicals and are not original contributions of knowledge.

- 6. Technical Marketing Support:** Includes informational materials and promotional materials.

Informational materials are designed to attract potential buyers while providing information about a technical or scientific subject, product, service, or organization. The materials must persuade the audience favorably toward the subject or sponsor. Visual design, including production, is very important. So, too, is editing, because errors are very obvious.

Promotional materials market a technical product, service, or organization. They include advertisements, flyers, brochures, catalogs, and other presales literature. The materials must persuade the audience

to some action, using integrated text and figures. Visual design, including production, is very important. So, too, is editing, because errors are very obvious.

Frequently Asked Questions

For the Online Communication competition and for online entries in the Technical Art competition, what equipment and software will the judges use?

Entries will be judged with at least a 1 GHz Pentium IV processor (or equivalent) running Windows 2000 or Windows XP with an 800 x 600 color monitor, or the approximate Macintosh equivalent running System 9.1 and any required software supplied with the entry. All machines in each platform will have a CD-ROM drive, sound card, and speakers. For Web-based entries, Firefox 2.0 and Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0 are the standard judging platforms.

On the entry form, should I list my company's name or the name of the individuals who worked on the project? If I list individuals, how many of the people who contributed to the project can I include?

The goal of STC's competitions is to give credit and recognition to individuals rather than departments or organizations; hence, STC prefers that individuals be named as contributors. However, because works of technical communication are often produced by teams, it is acceptable to cite a department or organization as a contributor.

While local and regional competitions determine the number of contributors they will allow per entry, no more than three contributors can be listed for an entry that goes on to the international level.

How will entries be judged?

A panel of judges selects winners in the competition categories. The judges have the right to reject an entry and refund the entry fee.

- **Technical Publications** entries are rated on four factors: writing, graphics, copyediting, and overall integration. All factors are judged in the context of the purpose, content, and organization of the document.
- **Technical Art** entries are judged on how well they visually communicate a technical message. Judges evaluate the visual appeal, technical execution, and presentation of each entry to determine awards based on the entry's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Online Communication** entries are judged in the context of the entry's stated purpose and audience. Judges evaluate the content, structure, and design of each entry, and determine awards based on the individual entry's strengths and weaknesses and how well it fulfilled its purpose.

How will I be notified?

All entries are acknowledged. Whether you win an award or not, you will receive the local judges' evaluations of your entry.

Winners in the international competitions will be notified before the STC annual conference. At the conference, winning entries will be displayed, and the Best of Show awards will be presented.

What happens to my entry after the competition?

Your entry will not be returned from the local or regional competition unless you make special arrangements with the competition manager and provide adequate and prepaid packaging. If your entry wins an award of Distinguished Technical Communication at the local or regional level, it will be returned only if you notify the local or regional competition manager that you do not want your entry to compete in the international competition. No entries are returned from the international competition.