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STC Region 5 Conference Experience

By Bruce Giddens, OCSTC Senior Member

On November 10-11, 2005, I was fortunate to attend the Region 5 STC Conference in Mesa, Arizona. I sat in on eight sessions and would like to share with you the following summary of each of these.

Keynote Address: Making Nonfiction Fun—More Than Just the Facts

Conrad Storad, Director of the Office of Research Publications at Arizona State University, is an award-winning children's author, editor, science writer, and a founding editor of *Chain Reaction*, a magazine for young readers about science, learning, and creative activity.

Reducing scientific concepts to grade school levels can be done—and with panache—but it requires a *lot* of work. Imagine explaining the circulatory system in 1,500 words to 2nd and 3rd grade students.

Here are some tips from Mr. Storad.

- Make it rhyme to make it fun.
- Go heavy on illustrations (publishers can help you find artists).
- Move detailed information to the end for the teachers.

Riding the Harmonic Convergence of Instructional Design, Training, and Technical Communication

Mark Hanigan is a past STC President, a journalist, technical communicator, trainer, and consultant.

Harmonic convergence is an overlapping and consequential defocusing of the "lines of demarcation" that have existed between professions once considered distinct from each other. Today, one qualified person can fulfill two or more of these functions. Content reuse via a unified content management strategy offers budgetary savings and schedule reduction. Hanigan advises us to inform our employer or client about the benefits of our fulfilling multiple roles. Unified content management strategy provides a greater degree of accuracy and consistency. Content reuse saves project budgets and can shorten schedules by using one person to create multiple deliverables.

A technical communicator has duties that include a mix of writing, training, instructional design, business analysis, and project

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Publication Policies

The *TechniScribe* is published 11 times a year as a benefit to the members of the Orange County Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. The goal of the publication is to reflect the interests, needs, and objectives of OCSTC members. The *TechniScribe* strives to be an advocate for, and an inspiration to, technical communicators by keeping them connected to each other and to opportunities for professional growth.

Articles published in this newsletter may be reprinted in other STC publications if credit is properly given and one copy of the reprint is sent to the *TechniScribe* managing editor.

Submission Information

The editorial team retains and exercises the right to edit submitted and requested material for clarity, length, and appropriateness.

When submitting material, please remember to

- Include a 25-word biography about yourself.
- Send articles in Word format, RTF (Rich-Text Format), ASCII, or in the body of an e-mail message.
- Send material to the managing editor (suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com) five weeks prior to the date it will be published.

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Copyeditor & Proofreader Rosemary Hulce
Copyeditor Anne Stratford
Copyeditor Barbara Young
Proofreader Steve Blossom
Web Version Jeff Randolph

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President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



It's time to consider giving back—to your fellow members, the chapter, and STC—by running for a chapter office. Is there a new initiative the chapter has not yet undertaken that you'd like to see through to fruition? Do you have a vision of where we should be in

one, two, or five years? Do you want to bring your expertise into play or do you want to gain experience in a particular area? What leadership perspective gained from serving another organization could you bring to the table? After a number of years of taking in meetings and reading the newsletters and other literature, you probably have a lot to offer. Chapter offices available are

- President
- 1st Vice President of Programs
- 2nd Vice President of Membership
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Nominating Committee (2)

There are also non-elected positions available. Don't see yourself as a leader? Ken Blanchard, author of *The One-Minute Manager*, said that by serving you *are* leading. You also work as part of a team. So if you've ever read any of Patrick Lencioni's books (*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *Death by Meeting*, or *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*), you can put those principles into practice. Or you might work for a company where your career path will require management skills but, ironically, you have no way of showing that set of skills *within* the company.

If you're interested, please check the OCSTC web site for more details, including the notice from this year's Nominating Committee. You can also check with one of the current council members about what their jobs require. Betsy Malone is chairing the Nominating Committee for this year's election. Contact her at betsybythebeach@adelphia.net.

You can give back to the chapter in many ways. One is our *rechartering effort*, which is essentially coming up with a strategic plan for the future of our chapter. Steve Blossom and I have written many articles on this topic in the past and have briefly mentioned the effort at chapter meetings. Another is the *OCSTC web site redesign project*. Some of you have expressed interest. You can help even if it's simply offering ideas for new

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Next Meeting

Topic: An Evening with Mike Hamilton of MadCap Software

Speaker: Mike Hamilton

When: Tuesday, January 17, 2005, 6:00–9:00 P.M.

Where: Doubletree Club Hotel
7 Hutton Centre Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92702
714.751.2400

Cost: Members with reservations **\$22**
Students with reservations **\$16**
Nonmembers with reservations **\$27**
Walk-ins or those registering after the deadline **\$31**
No-shows billed **\$22**

Reservations:

Reservations are due by 12:00 P.M., Friday, January 13, 2005.

Registration:

Register online at www.ocstc.org/dinres.asp.

Directions to the Doubletree Club Hotel



From the North 405

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right. Continue on MacArthur Blvd., passing over the 405 Freeway, and later passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the South 405

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right. Continue on MacArthur Blvd., passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the North 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn left, passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the South 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right and then move quickly into the left lane. At the first traffic light, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance. ♦TS♦

Editor's Desk

By Suzanne Madison, TechniScribe Managing Editor



Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday and are ready to begin the new year with renewed enthusiasm.

In this issue, our President, Jeff, is encouraging you to get more involved with our chapter and to consider running for an

office in the upcoming election, while Betsy gives a round of thanks to those who *have* been involved. Bruce shares his experience at a regional STC Conference and Bill, Brian, Vivian, Rosemary, and Mary Ann present opportunities for learning new skills. Michael offers an idea for your entertainment.

I would like to add my two cents, and ask you to consider getting involved with the *TechniScribe* in the coming year. So many opportunities, so little time. We need copyeditors, proofreaders, meeting reporters, writers, and the most rewarding job of all (I'm only a little prejudiced!), a managing editor. Our *TechniScribe* is an award-winning newsletter that is read by STC members all over the world. Wouldn't you like to be a part of that team?

Helping with the *TechniScribe* is only one way to become involved. Look at the long list of chapter contacts on page 6 and you'll see just how many volunteers it takes to make our chapter a success. When everyone does his or her fair share, no one is over-burdened and each of us benefits.

What do you see for yourself in the coming year? What are your new year's resolutions? Won't you consider making 2006 the year you make OCSTC *your* chapter?

Send your ideas for articles or letters to the editor to me at suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com. I look forward to hearing from you soon, and to seeing you at a chapter meeting in 2006. ♦TS♦

Happy New Year!

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content, or how to re-work what we already have. In both cases, my involvement will be solely as a SME in terms of historical perspective for rechartering and infrastructure of the web site. In either case, please contact Steve Blossom for additional information at steveblossom@juno.com.

Next month, I'll return to the series I started last fall on motivational books, in particular *The Psychology of Winning*, by Dr. Denis Waitley.

To share your thoughts with Jeff, e-mail him at erandolp@ix.netcom.com. ♦TS♦

management. Our job titles include

- Technical Writers
- Instructional Designers
- Business Analysts
- Technical Trainers
- Project Managers
- Team or Department Managers
- Methodologists
- Marketers
- Contract Negotiators
- Database Coordinators
- Help Desk Specialists
- Editors
- Students
- Telecommuters
- Consultants
- Illustrators/Graphic Artists
- WBT/CBT Developers

We deliver

- User Guides
- Training Guides
- Support Presentations (of any type)
- Installation and Assembly Guides
- Requirements Documents
- Design Documents
- Communication Strategies
- Technical Support Documents
- Troubleshooting Guides
- Interface Control Documents
- Help Desk Support Files
- Computer Based/Web Based Training
- CBTs and WBTs (and other online "movies")
- WebHelp and WinHelp Files
- Hardware Support Manuals
- Marketing Materials
- Web Pages
- Graphic and Multimedia Information Presentations
- Job Aids
- Standard Operating Procedures

Thinking Outside the Book: Making Learning Fun and Engaging

Lance Gelein is a past President of STC, an international speaker, and a technical communicator extraordinaire.

Books, says Lance, are dead! Costs and resistance are high and use is low. R.I.P. Today, there is a wide

variety of other media for presenting information and training.

- Giant quick reference cards (posters) in call centers
- Software simulations (by Captivate)
- Pod-casting for audio and video presentations (learning in your car!)
- Dynamic online help for call centers (As calls come in, they are first categorized, then routed to the appropriate technical staff. High traffic categories work their way to the top, thereby reducing the "time on call" figures. Java programming required.)
- Dynamic databases for FAQs, with the most frequently asked questions at the top of the list
- Bluetooth PDA networks
- Dial-in certification testing
- Broadcast e-mail
- Online videos, newsletters, and tips
- Launch parties to showcase all your products

Enlivening Your Technical Communications with Sound, Video, and Animation

David Trousdale is Manager of Technical Communications at Cisco.

Various media are available to add sound, video, and animation to your technical communication with varying levels of effort required. Planning and storyboarding are critical to success.

Building Instructional Diagrams with Visio

Beau Cain is STC's current Director of Region 8.

Beau described helpful tips for training. He discussed eight modalities of learning: linguistic/language, logical/mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. Without the space to discuss each one here, I suggest you "Google" each one to learn more!

He presented a helpful tip for Visio: Did you know Visio has wizards that can be saved as web pages with hyperlinks?

He then shared positive reasons for using graphics.

- Illuminate words
- Convey ideas more succinctly than words
- Engage the brain differently than words
- Accelerate learning

Creating Software Simulations and CBT Using Captivate

Neil Perlin is a Captivate software instructor.

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Neil demonstrated how to create a software simulation movie using Captivate. Features included

- Screen capture, manual and automatic
- Screen captioning, explanatory and instructional
- Screen highlights
- Rollovers
- Inserting graphics
- Animated titles
- Interactivity
- Text entry boxes
- Quizzes and eLearning with sample quiz frames
- Timing control, movie effects, pointer control, audio recording and application, scaling, and output options
- Management suggestions
- General workflow

He made it look so easy. He told me later that his two-day class accelerates learning exponentially.

Magical Numbers: The Seven-Plus-or-Minus-Two Myth

Jean-luc Doumont is an engineer, professor of applied physics, and a highly regarded technical communications consultant.

This was a very high-energy, fast-paced "wowie-shazaam" presentation. How many items presented together are too many? General rules are

- We can process and remember items randomly as long as we can see at a glance how many there are (without counting).
- To make a long list easier to process, we can group items into lower-level lists.
- The list groupings must be logical.
- Small, multidimensional structures match our mental patterns better than long, single-dimensional ones.
- A sequence of choices can be more easily remembered than a long chain of items.

Online Learning with Flash 8

Thomas Toth is a Macromedia Certified Developer, author, and President of dWeb Studios.

Thomas gave us not one, but two demos that were very well done. I picked up these main points:

- Flash can create highly compressed web sites, animated or not.
- Animation takes a lot of time and effort.
- Flash 8 has built-in shortcuts and wizards for building training.
- F8 can compile test results and can interface with learning managements systems.

This conference was very well organized. The two years of planning efforts by many volunteers made everything run smoothly. For me, deciding which eight sessions to attend out of the 32 offered was the most difficult decision. If you're unable to attend the annual, international STC Conferences, I can highly recommend checking out a regional one.

Bruce is a technical writer and help author currently on contract to Toyota Financial Services in Torrance. You can contact him at brucegiddens@cox.net. ♦TS♦



EduNotes from B&B

By Bill Darnall and Brian McCaleb, OCSTC Senior Members

Information Architecture and Content Management Is Here

This month the Education Committee will begin an online course in Information Architecture (IA) and Content Management (CM). The course is open to everyone with an interest in information. All are invited to join in the intellectual journey as we progress from data to information to knowledge, focusing on the organization, presentation, and management of information. This course will help anyone who writes or edits hardcopy or online documentation.

Information and knowledge are intellectual assets. Intelligent content management enables reuse of these valuable intellectual assets. After completing the first lesson, you'll have an understanding of the IA/CM framework and core terminology. Subsequent lessons will build on this framework.

Look for a sign-up opportunity in your e-mail around mid-January. Later, members and non-members will be able to enroll at ocstc.org. Lessons will be sent automatically to all who enroll.

Bill and Brian co-chair the OCSTC Education Committee. E-mail your comments and suggestions about education to Bill at mesawriter@sbcglobal.net or to Brian at mccaleb@acm.org. ♦TS♦

Think like a wise man, but communicate in the language of the people.

William Butler Yeats

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"Words" of Wisdom

Hints on the Use of Microsoft Word 2000 - 2003

By Vivian Carroll, OCSTC Member

This month's topic is Form Basics.

In Word, a form is created by inserting form fields (where the user will type information) and by protecting the form.

Inserting Form Fields and Protecting the Form

Let's create a very simple form. First, turn on the **Forms** toolbar (**View | Toolbars**, then click **Forms**). Type *Initials*: and then click the **Text Form Field** button (first button). Press **Enter**, type *Like chocolate?* and click the **Check Box Form Field** button (second button). Press **Enter**, type *Eye color*: and click the **Drop-Down Form Field** button (third button). Press **Enter**, type *Date*: and click the **Text Form Field** button. In order to make this form usable, click the **Protect Form** button (last button). Now type information into the form fields (press **Tab** to move from field to field). Notice that that you can't access any of the words in front of the form fields and that there are no choices for eye color.

Setting Field Options

Now let's improve the form. Click the **Protect Form** button to unlock the form. Double-click the field after *Initials* to open the **Text Form Field Options** dialog box. Change the **Maximum Length** to 3 and the **Text Format** to **Uppercase**. Click **OK**.

Double-click the field after *Eye color*. Type *Blue* and click **Add**. Type *Brown* and click **Add**. Click **OK**.

Double-click the field after *Date*. Under **Type** select **Date**. Under **Date Format** select a format you like. Click **OK**.

Click the **Protect Form** button to lock the form again. Now type information in the fields and you'll see how the options that you selected for the fields affect the results of what you type.

Unprotect the form and click the **Reset Form Field** button (next to last button) to remove the information that you typed. (*In Word 2000, unprotect and then re-protect the form.*) Notice that the *Eye color* field defaults to *blue*. To make the default blank, unprotect the document, double-click the *Eye color* field, press the space bar five times, and click **Add**. Click the arrow above **Move** twice to move the spaces above *Blue*. Click **OK**. Re-protect the form.

Although the form fields appear shaded on the screen, the shading does not print. You can turn off the on-screen shading by clicking the **Form Field Shading** button.

See next month's issue for information on creating a form as a table and protecting only selected portions of the form.

Vivian is a Certified Microsoft Office Specialist, Master. STC members are welcome to contact Vivian at vcvc@aol.com or 714.996.1409. ♦TS♦

Getting It Write

By TechniScribe Editorial Staff

House Style

We, the editorial staff for the *TechniScribe*, have enjoyed recommending various style guides, grammar books, and usage gurus to you in this column (and its predecessor, "Grammar Tips") because we find these resources—dare we say—fascinating and know that you, as technical communicators, will need to turn to at least one or two of them when you have questions about your own writing.

You or your department might uphold *Chicago (The Chicago Manual of Style)*, the *Microsoft Manual of Style*, or even one of the academic style guides (APA, MLA) as the company style bible. But whether you're a lone writer or a drone in a large hive, you will certainly need to make exceptions to the designated style on occasion, or hunt further for answers you cannot find in the revered (or maligned) reference. Then there are those terms so specific to your technical field that *no one* is sure of the correct style or usage and no written edict is to be found.

For these reasons, house style necessarily emerges. Whether it's a single sheet of one-line reminders, a smartly produced tome, or directives available on the company intranet, you'll need a house style guide: customized rules for writing that, when applied, ensure consistency throughout company documentation. Perhaps it falls to you to create or regularly revise your house style. What does that entail? *Easy*: recording the answers to your most common and persistent style questions. Start by keeping a list of the questions that have arisen repeatedly or have been difficult to answer.

Controversies

We all know about the serial comma. Whether or not to place a comma before the "and" or the "or" in a list stands as the best-known example of how differing practices are not necessarily correct or incorrect; they simply point out the need for guidelines to ensure consistency.

However, it is not the serial comma (in technical communication we almost always use the comma), so much as hyphenation that causes the most inconsistency in professional documentation. This is because usage varies widely and is in constant flux. Will your documentation hyphenate "well words" (well considered, well trained, well tightened)? Will you hyphenate them only when they precede the noun they modify, when they follow the noun, or in both cases? What about prefixes (non, anti, over)? In the grand scheme of things, these issues may not matter. But to produce clear, smart documentation and prevent unnecessary dismissal by nitpicking rivals or (worse) confused customers, style guidelines are a must.

And then there's the Internet. In terms of Web site/website, Internet/internet, e-mail/email, is your company on the leading edge, quickly (hastily?) assimilating new words and practices in the interest of staying current, or does it maintain a more conservative, classic aura of respectability? Following either approach is more professional than inconsistency, even though your policies on these issues are likely to change over time.

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You'll come across other controversies like these. Does your documentation allow colons to interrupt grammatical clauses? When do you use italics or quotation marks and when don't you? Most of these issues *are* addressed in the published style guides, but they reflect the areas in which you are most likely to want to make exceptions. They are also complicated questions for which you can provide simple, straightforward answers—and reduce time spent searching and interpreting the reference books or debating with colleagues.

Format

Your house style guide is the tool that ensures consistency and informs newcomers about how such features as headings, lists, tables, page numbers, headers, and footers are to be presented. It might not be necessary to repeat formatting that is automatically applied by your templates, but if you've been in the field for any length of time, you'll recognize the apparently infinite capacity of creative people to come up with variations. (A useful number to remember is three: if you find yourself with more than three table styles, three types of vertical list, or three heading levels below the chapter heading, you can usually—but not always—simplify.)

Your house style should address the standard use of different fonts, boldface type, indentation, and capitalization for list items, et cetera, et cetera (what *about* those Latin words and abbreviations?). Guidelines will expand and change with time, providing your documentation with the unfussiness of a professional publication.

Legal Issues

The value of getting your company name and product names correct is obvious. But you won't have to look far to find inconsistencies creeping in, partly because the marketing department keeps changing the names—or doesn't acknowledge the details that you know are important, such as the use of hyphens and colons in proper names. And making mistakes with *other* companies' names can invite legal challenges. So, starting with your legal consultant and your marketing or image-design authority, make sure that you or your writers have an accessible list of correctly formatted names, with clear instructions on the use of trademark symbols.

There's more, of course. There always is. But the fact that you've thought of several burning issues not covered in this article demonstrates the importance of creating and maintaining a house style guide to support consistency—even if you are the only writer.

♦TS♦

Now Hear This . . .

By Michael Opsteegh, OCSTC Chapter Treasurer

Call me crazy, but it's my belief that when you wrestle with words, dabble in discourse, and engineer information all day, you grow to enjoy wit, wacky definitions, and puns (even bad ones). In the April 2005 issue of *TechniScribe*, I suggested the *Chicago Manual of Style* web site as a source for entertaining and informative reading. In the same spirit, I'd like to make another suggestion, but this time I recommend you give your eyes a rest and delight your ears.

Since you have an insatiable love of language and are a fan of factoids, you should turn your radio dial to *Says You!*, a weekly, half-hour radio quiz program of "words and whimsy, bluff and bluster." Two panels of contestants try to outwit and out-stump each other, often "at Webster's expense."

Says You! is reminiscent of the quiz shows of the 1950s in that the game is wholesome and lighthearted, and where even the wackiest answer has a chance of being correct. Hosted by Richard Sher, *Says You!* speeds through four rounds in half an hour, each providing a different challenge to the panelists. While the challenges vary greatly, three of the most popular are the *Says You Bluffing Round*, *Odd Man Out*, and *Definitions and Derivations*.

The *Says You Bluffing Round* begins with the host reading an obscure word aloud. The three panelists of one team are each given a card, only one of which has the actual definition, the other two cards instruct the panelists to make up a definition. After a moment, the panelists each read their definitions aloud, and the members of the other team must decide who is reading the true definition. The definitions incite uproarious laughter because most involve a pun, rhyme, or alliteration as a device to befuddle the other team.

Odd Man Out involves the host reading lists of four or five items, which can be words, numbers, names, dates, anything. The teams take turns trying to determine which one of the items is not like the others. Usually, the answer is obscure, hidden behind double entendres and historical background. Most of the time, the panelists are able to reason through even the most arcane facts to find the correct answer.

Definitions and Derivations is exactly what it sounds like. Alternating between teams, the host reads a word aloud and asks the panelists to give a fairly accurate definition and origin of the word. If the team cannot give the correct answer, the word is given to the other team. Often, points are given for partially correct answers or outrageously clever guesses.

Ever wonder where the word *stogie* comes from, what the word *skinker* means, or who coined the phrase

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FrameMaker Tips

By Mary Ann Howell, OCSTC Senior Member

Calming Jumpy Pages

Symptom: you're jumping or scrolling to a page. As soon as you're there—zap!—the view jumps back to the page where your insertion point resides. Arghhhh!

Fix: Change the runaround properties of the graphic on the jumpy page.

The FrameMaker setting that lets text run around a graphic has a "special feature" that causes jumpy page syndrome, usually with graphics of a large file size. Unfortunately, the runaround setting is the default setting assigned to an imported graphic.

To change the runaround properties of a graphic:

1. Sneak up on the page the best you can and click on it quickly, in order to pin it down with your insertion point.
2. Right-click the graphic, and from the drop-down menu that appears, select **Runaround Properties**.
3. Click **Don't Run Around** (good advice any time).
4. Click **Set**.
5. Repeat these steps for any other graphics on the page.

To change the runaround properties for a lot of graphics in a document:

1. Read the May 2005 *TechniScribe* "FrameMaker Tips" column about MIF documents.
2. Search and replace <RunaroundType Contour> with <RunaroundType None>.

To change the default runaround setting to *None* for future graphic imports:

Buy and install Bruce Foster's excellent FrameMaker plug-in ImpGraph (\$25): <http://home.comcast.net/~bruce.foster/ImpGraph.htm>.

This utility also lets you choose other default settings for imported graphics.

Mary Ann is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and Acrobat 6. E-mail her at maryann@hikaripub.com or check out her web site at www.hikaripub.com. ♦rs♦

Colophon

The *TechniScribe* is produced using Adobe PageMaker 7.0 for PC. Arial and Palatino are used for heading and text fonts.

The PDF on the OCSTC web site is distilled from an EPS using Adobe Acrobat Distiller 5.0.5.

[<Now Hear This... from page 8](#)

"man is the measure of all things"? Tune in to *Says You!* to find out.

Says You! can be heard locally Tuesday evenings at 7:30 on 89.9 FM. For more information, visit <http://www.saysyou.org>.

Michael is our chapter's treasurer. If you know of any entertaining and informative programs, books, or web sites involving language or communication, please share with him by e-mail at octechwriter@yahoo.com. ♦rs♦



December Meeting Review

By Jim Marchant, OCSTC Member

"The Book Is Dead!" declared Lance Gelein in his presentation entitled "Thinking Outside the Book: Making Learning Fun and Engaging" at our October meeting. He bolstered his assertion with humorous, but wistful, stories of weighty printed documents from which the cellophane was never removed, as he presented a smorgasbord of media and techniques that can improve the effectiveness of training.

Gelein pointed out that communication is devolving to "pictographs" as the bulk of many documents turn people off and more audiences are non-native English speakers, as well as less likely to read at all.

"Outside the Book" products Gelein recommends are often cheaper to produce than books, what with the rising cost of paper, binding, packaging, and the higher expectations of audiences for color and glossy stock—and they can be more effective. He has used:

Pod-casts: A way to deliver audio or video by downloading to a portable format that can be used anywhere. He found it effective for salespersons, who could use it in cars or airplanes where they spend much of their time.

Gaming: Gelein said this will appeal to the younger audiences, and should be designed for variable learning rates, experimentation, and play. Evaluation is important to monitor its effectiveness. This resembles...

Dynamic Online Help: This also speaks to variable and self-paced learning. Gelein described a "continuous self-improvement model," whereby such material is never the same twice as it adjusts in real time based on help calls and knowledge-base entries. He demonstrated a sample context-sensitive help screen that included a dynamic panel of current calls.

continued on page 11>



STC Mission Statement

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

Positioning Statement

STC helps you design effective communication for a technical world through information sharing and industry leadership.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest organization for technical communicators. Its more than 16,000 members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, photographers, educators, and students.

Dues are \$125–140 per year. Membership is open to anyone engaged in some phase of technical communication, interested in the arts and sciences of technical communication, and in allied arts and sciences.

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Staff Jobs

www.ocstc.org/employme.asp

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www.ocstc.org/contractme.asp

If you have an inquiry or a job to post, e-mail Jeff Randolph at erandolp@ix.netcom.com.

A limited number of printed copies of the OCSTC web site listings are available at monthly chapter meetings.

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Orange Juice: Membership News

By Betsy Malone, OCSTC 2nd VP Membership

OCSTC Members: 301

STC Members: 16,976

Welcome our newest OCSTC members:

Anne Lechleiter Jeff Lowe Elizabeth Yandell

It's hard to believe that year 2005 has come and gone so quickly! Maybe year 2005 met you with joy, inspiration, or enthusiasm? Was it a memorable year? Did 2005 greet you with a new family member? A new car? A new job?

Whenever we begin a new year, it's always time to reflect and give thanks to those who have helped us through the past year. I'd personally like to thank the OCSTC Council for being such an enjoyable, hardworking team! Thank you to...

Jeff Randolph for his insight, guidance, and leadership. He is the "go to" guy and resident OCSTC and STC historian. His drive and hard work keep the OCSTC strong and vibrant.

Michael Opsteegh for "doing the math" and keeping us on budget. His savvy accounting skills and attention to detail keep the chapter financially sound.

Mary Ann Howell for keeping us up-to-date with the latest and greatest industry topics and trends. Her time, dedication, and hard work brought exciting, informative monthly speakers to the OCSTC.

Linda Phillips for patiently taking council meeting minutes, sending us "really cool" formatted minutes, and for sending me council meeting reminders.

Bill Darnell for revving up OCSTC educational programs and for graciously assisting in speaker presentation setup. Bill and team have a lot in store for 2006, so stay tuned for exciting educational news.

Suzanne Madison for gently, yet firmly, keeping the *TechniScribe* contributors on schedule and for producing a terrific chapter newsletter. Additional thanks to Suzanne and the fantastic editorial staff that make this production seem effortless (when we all know it's not!).

And, a big thank you especially to all the OCSTC members for making 2005 a memorable year. May the new year bring you health and happiness...and bring you to an OCSTC meeting! Cheers!

For membership information, e-mail Betsy at betsybythebeach@adelphia.net. ♦TS♦

[<December Meeting Review, from page 9](#)

It employed an instant messaging panel, with Gelein emphasizing that a call agent can handle 10 message streams in the time required to take a single voice call.

FAQs: Online reference material can be driven by a knowledge base, but we need to be able to achieve a 5-7 second response time or it will not be used.

Web-Based Training: For verification, testing is needed. Integrated Voice Response (IVR) is one way to perform this essential step and assess effectiveness.

Doing the Unexpected: Splicing fun and possibly startling elements into a presentation. Whimsical or humorous segments set a lighter tone for the subject matter, engaging the audience and improving their alertness, Gelein said.

Newsletters, reference cards, tip sheets, posters and launch parties were also mentioned.

Gelein summed up his approach with these general principles: There are many ways to engage people, don't be afraid to try something new, and make learning fun. ♦TS♦



STC 's 53rd Annual Conference

May 7-10, 2006 in Las Vegas, Nevada

The world's largest gathering of technical communicators will be held this spring at the Bally's and Paris hotels in Las Vegas. The conference will provide opportunities to learn new job skills, network with other professionals, enjoy demonstrations of new products useful to your work, and just have some fun.

If you've never attended one of these conferences, this is your chance to do so without major travel expenses. Last month, in his "President's Message," Jeff gave you some ideas how to save money on travel and lodging. Check out that article. Negotiate with your employer—perhaps you can each pay half the costs.

You'll be able to register for the conference on STC's web site starting in early 2006. A printed registration form will be included in the conference's Preliminary Program, which will be mailed with the February 2006 issue of *Intercom*, STC's magazine.

Mark your calendar now, and be sure to sign up before April 21 to get the reduced registration price. ♦TS♦

Calendar of Events

- January 3 OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine
January 5 Los Angeles STC Chapter Lunchtime Forum, Embassy Suites Hotel, El Segundo
January 17 OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana
January 18 San Diego STC Chapter Meeting, 5:30 P.M., Marriott Courtyard, Kearny Mesa
January 19 Inland Empire STC Chapter Meeting, Peking Chinese Restaurant, Riverside

January Meeting Topic

An Evening with Mike Hamilton of MadCap Software



So, what happened to RoboHelp? What will happen to us, the loyal RoboHelp users? Attend January's meeting and get the insider scoop on the whole saga. We are pleased to announce that Mike Hamilton, former Product Manager of RoboHelp, and now the Vice President of Product Management at MadCap Software, will be our speaker for January's OCSTC chapter meeting.

Mike covers three main topics in his presentation, "An Introduction to Flare—or—The RoboHelp Saga: What Actually Happened?" First, what *really* happened with RoboHelp in its journey from Blue Sky Software to eHelp to Macromedia? And after 14 years of success, what is the fate of RoboHelp? Mike shares exact dates and occurrences to put the rumors to rest. Then he'll explore what happened to the core talent that created and nurtured RoboHelp. Where have they gone? What are they doing now?

Lastly, he will discuss future directions in help authoring, including technologies such as Microsoft's new Vista Help and a new tool from MadCap Software called Flare. Flare is an XML-based authoring tool that allows you to compose content in XML format without requiring any knowledge of the XML language. MadCap Flare features a unique visual editor that allows users to compose content similar to the way they would using Microsoft Word. Mike will discuss the capabilities of Flare and then do a live demonstration that includes the import and conversion of existing RoboHelp content.

Mike Hamilton is the Vice President of Product Management at MadCap Software, where he works on the next-generation authoring tool, Flare. Before joining MadCap Software, Mike was the Product Manager for RoboHelp during the eras of Blue Sky Software, eHelp, and Macromedia. He has over ten years of experience in training, technical communication, multimedia development, and software development at several organizations including Cymer, National Steel & Shipbuilding, and the US Navy. ♦TS♦

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