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What is XML?

By Bernard Aschwanden, Senior Member and VP, Toronto STC

NOTE: Bernard Aschwanden has helped hundreds of companies implement successful publishing solutions. He focuses on publishing better, faster, and smarter. Bernard will be in Orange County to speak at our July meeting and to deliver a two-day workshop on XML and DITA. OCSTC will be hosting the workshop—stay tuned for the date, fees, and registration info!

XML is a basic text format. Originally designed to meet the challenges of electronic publishing, XML is playing an increasingly important role in the exchange of data. The appearance of an XML document is very similar to that of an HTML web page when viewed as source code. A simple XML document may appear as:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1" ?>
<memo author="Bernard" date="20060123">
<to>You</to>
<re>Reminder</re>
<body>Do some searches on Google to find more XML
information.</body>
</memo>
```

Elements (such as memo, to, re, and body) are basically objects in the XML file. Any element has a start tag (for example, <to>) and a close tag (for example, </to>). Elements may also have attributes, such as the "author" and the "date" attributes in the memo element. These elements can be defined using a set of rules stored in a schema or document type definition (DTD). The schema or DTD is a document that contains rules about the order and frequency of elements. This allows control over which elements are inserted, where, and how.

By using XML, the structure of a document can be defined and compared against a common set of rules in the form of a schema or a DTD for validity. If the content adheres to the rules, then the XML is valid. Since XML and rules can be shared, there is a common way to exchange files with the knowledge that the same rules are followed. Once the same rules are followed, a set of application-specific rules can be implemented to open the XML file in almost any XML-enabled software tool.

Benefits of XML

Since XML files can share a common set of rules and XML is composed of nothing more than plain text, data exchange is simple. Data can be exchanged between software tools, vendors, service

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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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President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



The Southern California STC chapters are teeming with activity. If you missed Leah Guren last year in Orange County or Los Angeles, you'll have a chance to see her this year. Her talk, *It Might Be GUI, But It Doesn't Have to Be Messy*, is consistent with our recent series of

online-related topics. If you have trouble making the chapter meetings because they are on Tuesday, we've got you covered on that one, too! Leah will be speaking to us on Monday, May 15.

The OCSTC chapter meetings continue to include announcements of jobs that are being filled by people attending the meetings. You've had your choice of full-time or contract, high-tech, or policies and procedures. While we're on the subject of contract jobs, did you contractors catch John Hedtke's presentation in Los Angeles, on determining the right rate for estimating projects?

When was the last time you updated your résumé—especially your contact information? Have you updated your contact information with STC? One employer who recently attended a meeting commented that "nearly half of the résumés had missing or incorrect contact information," suggesting I unilaterally take down the résumés. Those who have their contact information up-to-date will continue to get the first crack at jobs. Some of you have not updated your résumé in more than five years. Those who report the most success follow Brian McCaleb's guidelines in "Your Résumé is Not Your Tombstone" (available on the OCSTC web site meeting archive) by continually updating their résumé.

Consider signing up for our online course, "Information Architecture and Content Management for Technical Communicators (IACM201)," a free class offered by our OCSTC Education Division. This six-lesson course is intended as a continuing education experience for practicing technical writers. For more information, go to the [OCSTC web site](#) and locate the link for the class on the home page.

Mark your calendars now! William Horton will be speaking at the San Gabriel Valley STC Chapter on Thursday, June 8, prior to his three-day appearance at the Training Director's Forum in Palm Springs. If you missed his appearance at San Diego STC in January 2005, now's your chance. As you know, he is

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Next Meeting

Topic: It May Be GUI, but It Doesn't
Have to Be Messy!

Speaker: Leah Guren


When: Monday, May 15, 2006, 6:00–9:00 P.M.
NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING DAY

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, May 12, 2006

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

Directions to the Doubletree Club Hotel 
(during construction detours)

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 third traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Main Street. At the first traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.) turn left and go past the traffic light at Hutton Center Drive, then straight into the hotel lot.

From the South 405

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right. Continue on MacArthur Blvd., passing under the 55 Freeway. At the third traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Main Street. At the first traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.) turn left and go past the traffic light at Hutton Center Drive, then straight into the hotel lot.

From the North 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn left, passing under the 55 Freeway. At the third traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Main Street. At the first traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.) turn left and go past the traffic light at Hutton Center Drive, then straight into the hotel lot.

From the South 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right, then move to the left lane. At the second traffic light, turn left onto Main Street. At the first traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.) turn left and go past the traffic light at Hutton Center Drive, then straight into the hotel lot. ♦TS♦

Editor's Desk

By Suzanne Madison, TechniScribe Managing Editor



Another year of OCSTC activities is drawing to a close. You have elected new leaders to guide us through the coming year. As they learn about their new duties and responsibilities and take office, a new editorial team is learning how to publish the *TechniScribe*. Jim Marchant

has graciously accepted the position of Managing Editor. Jim has a great deal of experience with newsletters and is looking forward to working with the *TechniScribe*. I'll let him tell you all about himself in his first "Editor's Desk" column. As for the rest of the new team, Teresita del Sol will join Barbara Young and Anne Stratford as copyeditors, and Jennifer Gardelle will do the proofreading. I hope you offer them the same support in their efforts as you have given me.

There's a lot to learn in this issue. Our feature article, "What is XML?," written by Bernard Aschwanden of the Toronto STC chapter, goes hand-in-hand with Mary Ann's "FrameMaker Tips." Both explain the relationship between a familiar tool, XML, and a new one, DITA. Stay tuned—Bernard will be speaking to our chapter in July.

Bill and Brian give us some thoughts on ways to further our careers, while Vivian continues teaching us about using tables in Word and Rosemary gives us a grammar issue to think about. And last, but not least, Betsy offers her usual supply of entertaining "facts."

Next month, I'll remind you about all the folks who have helped to make this past year's newsletter a success. If you'd like to see your name in print, both in a byline and on my list of contributors, be sure to send your article before the end of the month to suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com. ♦TS♦

TechniScribe

< [President's Message from page 2](#)

one of the icons of our profession as well as a dynamic speaker, and you should never pass up an opportunity to hear him when he's speaking in the area. Check the San Gabriel Valley STC web site for more details when his presentation topic is finalized.

We have speakers lined up through August 2006, and we are beginning to plan for the following year. Don't miss out!

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

EduNotes from B&B

By Bill Darnall, OCSTC Senior Member and
Brian McCaleb, STC Associate Fellow

Education vs. Training for Tech Writers

Does your company have a Training or an Education Department? In industry, most company-sponsored learning is called training and is facilitated by employees called trainers. By contrast, when you were in high school, state or county employees who were called teachers or educators facilitated your education.

Trainers train. Educators educate. Simple enough, right? The end goals of training and educating, however, are sometimes lost in the industrial world. The loss occurs because the two terms are frequently confused.

Much of today's corporate training is skill-based—for example, classes that help you learn to use RoboHelp, FrameMaker, or Acrobat. As a learner, you can become proficient in the use of one or more of these tools. But if a particular tool becomes obsolete, your training is no longer very valuable.

By contrast, most education endures beyond training. A class in grammar, for instance, helps you learn to use your language in a proper manner and is a knowledge-based learning experience. As a foundational learner, you acquire the ability to apply knowledge to a range of problems.

What Does This Have to Do With Technical Writing?

Software vendors' seemingly incessant revision of documentation tools requires us to constantly upgrade our own skills. Consequently, we may be spending an inordinate amount of our time in training classes or doing self-study courses. However, major reliance on skill-based training classes puts us at risk of professional obsolescence!

If we spend *all* of our learning resources on training, we miss out on the other end of the learning spectrum. In addition to upgrading our skills, we must also maintain and upgrade our foundational knowledge. However, acquiring foundational knowledge can be more demanding than acquiring tool-based skills. A few areas of evolving foundational knowledge are information architecture, usability, content management, knowledge management, structured analysis, taxonomies, and ontologies.

The Bottom Line

As in other segments of life, balance is the key to well being. Training and education are equally important learning pursuits for technical writers. We must be proficient in the use of those tools we employ to document ever-more complex systems and process

environments. We must also be proficient in the application of foundational concepts, of which grammar is the most basic. Foundational concepts allow us to solve general problems. Once we can understand structure, we can accurately explain the systems and process environments we are documenting.

The most successful technical writers will always balance their learning experiences between skill-based training and foundation-based education.

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



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"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."

Dolly Parton



"Words" of Wisdom

Hints on the Use of Microsoft Word 2000 - 2003

[< What is XML? from page 1](#)

This month's topic is working with text in cells of a table.

Paragraph Formatting within a Cell

Text within a cell of a table is just like text in a regular paragraph. Text can be formatted using paragraph formatting features, such as those that appear in the *Paragraph* dialog box accessed by selecting **Format | Paragraph**. However, there is one exception: to insert a Tab in a cell, press **Ctrl+Tab** instead of just **Tab**.

Vertical and Horizontal Alignment within a Cell

On the **Tables and Borders** toolbar is an **Align** button. (It looks like a piece of paper with three lines on it.) When you click the dropdown arrow on the right side of this button, it expands to nine buttons from which you can select **Align Top Left**, **Align Center Left**, etc.

If you want the words to be closer or farther from the borders of the cell, you can change the cell margins. To do this, highlight the cell (or many cells, rows, or columns, or even the entire table). Select **Table | Table Properties**, click the **Cell** tab, and then click the **Options** button. In the *Cell Options* dialog box, deselect **Same as the whole table** and then set the top, bottom, left, and right cell margins to the size you want.

In the *Cell Options* dialog box, check **Fit Text** if you want Word to automatically reduce the size of the words in the cell so that they all fit on one line.

Copying Text Cell to Cell

If you want to copy just the words (but not the paragraph formatting) from one cell to another, highlight only the words (not the cell itself) before you copy. To be sure you are highlighting only the words, turn on the **Show/Hide** button, and then highlight and copy the words but not the "end of cell" marker (which looks like a square star). When you are ready to paste the text into the second cell, click where you want the words to be added (or highlight the words in the second cell that you want to replace), and then paste.

If you want to copy the words *and* paragraph formatting from one cell to another, highlight and copy the entire first cell (this time including the "end of cell" marker). When you paste into the second cell, the words and formatting from the first cell will replace the words and formatting in the second cell. This total replacement will happen regardless of whether you highlight the entire second cell before pasting or just place the cursor in the cell.

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

providers, authors, and more. XML data can be shared, repurposed, modified, distributed, and edited. This now allows you to be independent of particular software tools and use the best tool for any specific job.

Why Should You Care?

Consider this example: A publishing and XML-enabled tool is used by authors to write and edit content. Content is then applied to a layout and XML-enabled tool for marketing. Web and XML-enabled tools are used to create output for a web site. Files are passed to a vendor that has a translation- and XML-enabled tool that manages the conversion to 12 languages. All the translated content is returned and opened using a help development and XML-enabled tool and online help files are delivered with an application. At no point does one person have to do all the work, but even a lone writer can now use the files with the best tool or provide content to service providers without fear that the message is lost.

Best of all, the files are archived and, through uniquely identified elements, a delta is created for release 2.0 and only the modified content is sent through the writing, marketing, translation, and help workflow.

If content is easily shared and a common set of rules is followed, then writing content is faster, reuse is easier, translation is less costly, and the overall work-flow of a writing project can be streamlined. Reductions in cost and time-to-market result in improved profits and less stress for everyone involved in the project.

What is DITA?

The Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) is an XML-based, end-to-end architecture for authoring, producing, and delivering technical information. This architecture consists of a set of design principles for creating "information-typed" modules at a topic level and for using that content in delivery modes such as online help and product support portals on the Web.

At the heart of DITA, representing the generic building block of topic-oriented information architecture, XML document type definition (DTD) is called "the topic DTD." The extensible architecture, however, is the defining part of this design for technical information; the topic DTD, or any schema based on it, is just an instantiation of the design principles of the architecture. You can find more information at <http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/xml/library/x-dita1>.

Bernard, an Adobe Certified Technical Trainer and author of many publications on publishing and single sourcing, is the founder of Publishing Smarter, www.publishing-smarter.com/pages/about/index.html. ♦TS♦

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April Meeting Review

By Bruce Tepley, OCSTC Member

The speaker for the April meeting was Mary Ann Howell, a Technical Publications Supervisor at Orthodyne Electronics and a Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and Acrobat 6. She spoke on "Designing a Document Project Management Web Application with Dreamweaver and PHP." The talk was based on a year of her experience introducing a document tracking and management system to her employer.

Mary Ann's system was developed at home on her own time, then linked to her workplace server. When management realized "they couldn't live without it," they allowed her to install it at work. Mary Ann used a live demonstration and a PowerPoint presentation to describe the design principles and self-education behind her easy-to-use, versatile tracking system.

The first principle, as with all technical writing, is: "know your audience." To that, she added four fundamental principles for introducing database tools to a company:

- Develop in your own sandbox. Make sure that development proceeds in an area that will never risk company resources.
- Make sure all tools for the system are installed properly. Mary Ann particularly recommends open source tools, because they are free, well tested, and platform-independent.
- Design the database carefully.
- Find someone else (preferably a database expert) to review your proposed database structure.

Demonstrating the input side of the system, Mary Ann created a new input form on-the-fly, in less than 10 minutes. The output side of the system provided a convenient browser interface that allows users to query a database for a broad variety of management and documentation summary information. Query results can be output to reports customized for various audiences. All of this was performed with very few mouse clicks and almost no typing.

Due to time constraints, the demonstration only included an overview of system features. For those interested in more detail, Mary Ann provided a handout of her own all-important database structure. She referred us to her web site (www.hikaripub.com) for her PowerPoint presentation and the handout and to a favorite book by David Powers, entitled "Foundation PHP for Dreamweaver 8."

Mary Ann concluded with the following three principles underlying her project, urging us to put them into practice in our own endeavors:

- Stretch: it's good for you, feels good, keeps life interesting, and keeps you young.
- Open-source tools can be used to tailor-fit a solution, at a fraction of the cost of the Big Behemoth.
- STC: what you put in, you get back... and way more.

◆TS◆

Getting It Write

By Rosemary Hulce, TechniScribe Copyeditor and Proofreader

As a freelancer, most of my copyediting work recently has been in two very different areas (oncology and business), and one of the style preferences that both clients are firm about is the elimination, whenever possible, of *there is/there are* and *it is*. Yet I recently skimmed five popular style books and found this topic elusive.

I've made three observations regarding these usages:

- Technical communicators appear to be almost equally divided between those of you who are now thinking, "Yes, we all know about this preference. Tell me something new," and those who had no idea that it was an issue: "What is wrong with *there are* and *it is*?"
- Many believe that the preference is one of those English-teacher bugaboos that we can safely ignore, like not ending sentences with prepositions or not beginning them with conjunctions.
- If you were to take the last two days' documentation work to cross your screen and run a search for the term *there are*, you'd be surprised—even shocked—at the number of instances you'd see.

The reason for this high occurrence is that the *there is* construction reflects a familiar speech pattern, and most technical communication currently employs a more or less conversational tone: "There are three steps in this procedure." The phrase *it is* tends to arise when a writer is uncomfortable about using the first person—a bygone taboo: "It is advisable to reformat your hard drive before installing your operating system" rather than "We advise you to reformat..." Both usages are extremely common. Agreement about whether they constitute poor style in printed English is much harder to find.

The concerns, of course, are wordiness and its close

relation, vagueness. Technical communicators generally aim for precision and avoid the extraneous. A phrase like *it is* or *there are* creates a grammatical subject that is not the material subject of the sentence and introduces at least two unnecessary words. A writer or editor interested in streamlining the language can easily fix the two sentences above to "This procedure includes three steps," and "Reformat your hard drive before installing your operating system" or, perhaps, "MacroFirm recommends that you reformat..." No translator, human or virtual, will spend time searching in vain for the location of *there* or the antecedent for *it* when reading these revised sentences.

Useful words for adjusting *there is/there are* sentences include *exist*, *emerge*, *include*, and *is evident*. For example, "There is strong evidence linking cause A with outcome Z" becomes "Strong evidence exists linking cause A with outcome Z." But be careful. Such words are not always necessary. What's wrong with "Strong evidence links..."?

Worth watching for? Certainly. In *The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White lump these constructions together with the passive voice, which makes sense because both usages tend to obscure the subject of a phrase. Technical communicators should have a complete set of prose-paring tools at hand, and if you have forgotten or rejected this one, I recommend practicing with it this month to see how it enhances your craft.

Mandatory? I don't think so. Patterns in language don't emerge without some value, and the occasional *there are* or *it is* is more likely to go unnoticed than one too many *exists* or company names introduced to fix the problem. As with changing the passive voice to active, if you can't find a fix less intrusive than the original wording, don't mess with it. ♦TS♦



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FrameMaker Tips

By Mary Ann Howell, OCSTC Senior Member

Report from the DITA 2006 Conference

In March I went to the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) 2006 Conference held in Raleigh, NC to learn about how and why DITA is used, to determine whether DITA might be useful to my company, to learn how it is implemented, and to see how I might use DITA and FrameMaker together.

I wanted to see if DITA could provide the answers to challenges we have now, and some that may come up in the future. *So, what is DITA?* Read on and I'll work up to that.

Structured Writing in FrameMaker

Since release 7.0, FrameMaker has shipped with the capability for structured authoring. Structured authoring means writing within a strictly defined structure that dictates what information is to be included and in what order.

Text is enclosed within tags, as in HTML. Unlike HTML, however, the tags describe what type of content the text constitutes, rather than how to format it. All formatting is taken out of the hands of the author. Most companies that have switched to structured authoring have found that:

- Authors write much faster when no time is spent on formatting.
- Documents are more complete when writers are reminded to include such things as introductions to procedures.
- Information is organized correctly.
- Style guides are enforced, resulting in consistent and professional documentation and saving editing time (for example, an author cannot use a one-bullet list).

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Once you've decided to try structured writing, you need to choose a structure.

XML and DITA

XML contains plain text surrounded by tags marking the information type—for example: overview, steps, or definition. XML also uses tags with metadata, which earmark such things as the author, edit date, who has permission to read the information, or to what products the information applies.

DITA is a type of XML schema, or document type definition (DTD), that provides structure for XML. A schema is a list of rules about what type of tags should be in an XML document and in what order. DITA is different from other XML schemas in that it is designed for technical data that is organized at the topic level.

DITA Basics

DITA was designed by IBM specifically for technical writing. IBM has released ownership of DITA, so anyone may use it. DITA is now an open-source tool managed by OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards). This means DITA is free and future upgrades are free.

Content in DITA is organized at the topic level, for reuse in multiple documents. The basic topic types are concept, procedure, and reference. And you can develop more specific topic types from these three if you need them. That's called specialization.

DITA uses map files (these are also in XML) to build documents out of topics. The map file lists the topics to include, structures their order and hierarchy, and points to their file location. You use a map file to first design and later publish a document.

Advantages of DITA and XML

- If information is common to many documents, the same topic is used by all of those documents. When the text is updated, all documents are updated at the same time.
- When the same topic is shared by multiple documents, the potential for errors is reduced and the information users read is consistent.
- DITA topics are designed to handle conditional versions of information. Documents that share information but include some details that differ can still use the same topic.
- Content stored in XML keeps documentation creation and dissemination options open, since you aren't tied to a proprietary tool.
- Text in XML can be instantly formatted for

unique purposes, such as web page content, documents read on cell phones, and documents that display on eBook readers.

- All information in XML (since it is text) can be searched word-by-word with simple search engines.
- DITA has open-source tools for producing online help for software.
- DITA is well tested. IBM has been using DITA to publish thousands of documents for several years.

FrameMaker Drawbacks

Right now, big bucks are required to fully implement the DITA dream. That's because the content management system (CMS) tools that can build documents from DITA maps are expensive.

Until FrameMaker has a low-cost tool to automatically build books seamlessly from a DITA map, I don't think it can be considered a true DITA tool. But I have faith in all the third-party FrameMaker tool developers; I think it is only a matter of time before affordable tools are out there. Or maybe I'll design my own tool. At any rate, I intend to start a pilot project. Our writing team will give structured writing a try, and we might as well use DITA for the structure. We'll start with documents built with hard-wired DITA topics for now.

For more information about DITA, see: www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=dita.

♦TS♦



OCSTC Election Results

The votes are counted. Congratulations to our chapter's newly elected administrative council for 2006-2007. We thank them for volunteering and wish them success in shaping our chapter's future.

- President: Jeff Randolph
- 1st VP - Programs: Bruce Tepley
- 2nd VP - Membership: Michael Opsteegh
- Treasurer: Betsy Malone
- Secretary: Colleen Brown
- Nominating Committee (exp. 2008): Carrie Damschroder and Suzanne Madison

If you would like to get involved and learn more about the OCSTC Administrative Council, we invite you to attend a Council meeting on the first Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. For more details, please e-mail betsybythebeach@adelphia.net. ♦rs♦



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 18,000 members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, photographers, educators, and students.

Dues are \$55–150 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.

Society for Technical Communication

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If you do not already receive e-mail announcements of upcoming meetings, visit <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcocc-L> and click **Join**. This list is not spam and will only send out monthly meeting and other STC-related announcements.

OCSTC Employment Information

Our job listing is entirely online at the OCSTC web site; pages are updated as jobs are submitted.

Staff Jobs

www.ocstc.org/employe.asp

Contract Jobs

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.

Society-Level Job Listings

STC maintains job listings on the Internet. You can download the listings from the STC web site at

www.stc.org/jobsdatabase.asp. ♦rs♦

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Orange Juice: Membership News

By Betsy Malone, OCSTC 2nd VP Membership

OCSTC Members: 331

STC Members: 18,412

Welcome to our newest OCSTC members:

- Donna Clifton
- Joy Daludado
- Arleigh Rogers
- Robert Schneider
- Michal Swartz
- Diane Watson

Did You Know May Is

The Unofficial OCSTC Membership Drive Month

If you've been thinking about joining STC and the Orange County chapter, this is the month to do it! Come to the May meeting and hear an exciting presentation by guru Leah Guren! You'll be sure to network and meet many new friends! See www.ocstc.org for more information.

National Bike Month

The League of American Bicyclists is promoting Bike-to-Work Week from May 15-19 and Bike-to-Work Day on Friday, May 19. See www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth for more information.

National Military Appreciation Month

National Military Appreciation Month (May) includes Loyalty Day (1st), VE Day (8th), Military Spouse Day (6th), Armed Forces Day (20th), and Memorial Day (29th). This very important month honors, remembers, recognizes, and appreciates all military personnel—those men and women who have served throughout our history and all who now serve in uniform and their families, as well as those Americans who have given their lives in defense of the freedoms we all enjoy today.

It recognizes those on active duty in all branches of the services, the National Guard and Reserves, plus retirees, veterans, and all of their families—well over 90 million Americans and more than 230 years of our nation's history. See www.nmam.org for more information.

May Also Includes. . .

National Teacher Day

Thousands of communities will take time out on Tuesday, May 9, 2006, to honor their local educators and acknowledge the contributions they make to our lives.

While it does take a lot of people to make a school succeed, National Teacher Day focuses on the teachers who work to make public schools great places for

students to succeed in life. This day was chosen specifically to honor teachers and recognize the lasting contributions they make to our lives.

It is celebrated on the Tuesday of the first full week of May, so the actual date varies each year. See www.nea.org/teacherday/index.html for more information.

Be Kind to Animals Week, May 7 to 13, 2006

The American Humane Association created *Be Kind to Animals Week* in 1915 to celebrate the unique bond between humans and animals. Every year, animal shelters throughout the country hold special events during this special week to raise awareness about being kind to animals, and to teach people about the amazing role animals play in our lives. *Be Kind to Animals Week* is a great time to promote our nation's animal welfare organizations and to encourage everyone to get involved to make a difference for animals. See www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ev_public_bkaw for more information.

Cinco de Mayo (May 5) celebrates a battle fought by Mexico in 1862 as well as Mexico's rich culture.

Kentucky Derby is May 6, 2006. See www.kentuckyderby.com/2006 for more information.

Astronomy Day is May 6, 2006. See www.astroleague.org/lal/astroday/astroday.html for more information.

Mother's Day is May 14, 2006.

Buckle up America Week is May 24 to 31, 2006. See www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/buckleplan/BUA_WEBSITE for more information.

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

Colophon

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Calendar of Events

- May 2 OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine
May 4 LASTC Chapter Meeting, Embassy Suites, El Segundo.
May 15 OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana
May 16 San Diego STC Chapter Meeting, 5:30 P.M. , Marriott Courtyard in Kearny Mesa
May 18 Inland Empire STC Chapter Meeting, Peking Chinese Restaurant, Riverside

May Meeting Topic

It May Be GUI, but It Doesn't Have to Be Messy!

Important! Note that we will meet on the third Monday (instead of Tuesday) this month.

Ever get frustrated trying to document illogical and confusing software interfaces? Do you feel you've spent too much time "perfuming the pig" (using documentation to try to explain a bad user interface)? Are you tired of seeing careless typos and inconsistencies in the graphical user interface (GUI)? Then this presentation's for you!

Learn what every technical communicator needs to know about GUIs and user interfaces (UIs). Our May speaker, Leah Guren, will help you understand the role of the GUI in the user experience. She will discuss GUI text basics such as MS, Mac, and UNIX style guide rules (title vs. sentence caps); grouping for logic and functionality; naming and labeling for clarity; and translating from developer jargon to correct end-user terminology.



She will also cover error messages—what they are and how users react to them, as well as the key elements of an effective message, writing for clarity and effectiveness, and leveraging your position as a technical communicator.

Leah Guren is the Director of Training at In Other WORDS. She has been active in the field of technical communication since 1980 as a writer, manager, and consultant. She now devotes her time to consulting and teaching courses and seminars in technical communication, primarily in Israel and Europe. Leah is an internationally recognized speaker in the field of technical communication. She appears regularly at the Society for Technical Communication world conference and other international technical communication conferences and conventions. ♦ts♦

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