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## Web 2.0: Hype or Hope?

By Brian McCaleb, STC Associate Fellow

Web 2.0 is not a system you can log on to and use. It's not an international standard for markup, programming, or protocols. Neither is it a certification. You cannot buy a computer with "Web 2.0 Inside." Discussing Web 2.0 at Internet industry events generates controversy and may provoke an argument. Tim O'Reilly, publisher of those computer books with odd animals on the covers, thinks Web 2.0 is the next big thing. *PC Magazine* columnist John Dvorak calls Web 2.0 "baloney."

### What Is Web 2.0 and Why Should I Care?

Web 2.0 is a concept first described at an industry conference in 2004. The concept is based on seven principles derived from analyzing successful web-based applications and businesses. Analysts asked, "What do successful web businesses and applications have in common?" This question led to the compiled list that became the seven principles of Web 2.0.

These seven principles (I will discuss them later) can be applied by anyone developing content or applications for delivery via the Web. They are general in nature and prescriptive instead of descriptive. They provide goals for developers but do not provide standards, procedures, examples, or checklists. Because Web 2.0 is a conceptual framework, it can be interpreted in various ways and even hijacked by marketers intent on lending credibility to their own hype.

The controversial and misunderstood collection of principles at the core of Web 2.0 is important to technical communicators because as these principles are adopted and find their way onto the Web, the terminology we use to describe electronic commerce, digital communications, and even information dissemination will change. The ideas we take for granted about collecting, reviewing, and publishing information, protecting copyrights, and obtaining user feedback are likely to be made obsolete by Web 2.0. Finally, you as a technical communicator can begin using Web 2.0 principles today to improve the quality, timeliness, and usability of your publications.

### The Seven Principles of Web 2.0

The Web 2.0 concept has been organized into seven governing principles. A web site or application need not embody all of these principles to be called "Web 2.0," but the more principles put to work, the greater the expected benefit.

## Publication Policies

*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. *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 (jmarchant@adelphia.net) five weeks prior to the date it will be published.

### Editorial Staff

*Managing Editor* .....Suzanne Madison  
*Copyeditor and Proofreader*.....Rosemary Hulce  
*Copyeditor* .....Anne Stratford  
*Copyeditor* .....Barbara Young  
*Proofreader* .....Steve Blossom  
*Proofreader* .....Jennifer Gardelle  
*Web Version*.....Jeff Randolph

### Monthly Advertising Rates

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1/2 page .....\$60  
Full page .....\$80

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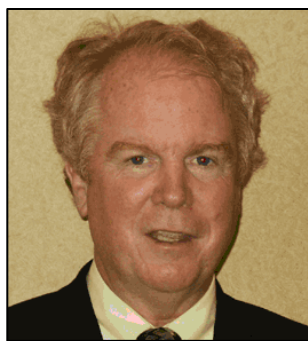
\$10/year to members of other STC chapters

### Printer

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## President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



As we enter a new year, we are poised for growth opportunities. Yes, membership has declined, but in the past three years, we did not miss a chapter meeting, and we never missed a newsletter. In our strong focus on offering a good, quality set of chapter

services and staying watchful of our expenses, we improved our financial picture to the extent we can invest in some additional services and experiment with some new initiatives. Our emphasis on improving the quality of the meetings and continuing to deliver top services is paying off. Here are some membership figures as of the end of April.

### STC

2005: 14,233      2006: 13,370 (Down 6 percent)

### Orange County STC

2005: 253      2006: 244 (Down 3.6 percent)

### SoCal Chapters

(OC, LA, San Diego, Inland Empire, San Gabriel Valley, San Fernando Valley, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo)

2005: 796      2006: 728 (Down 8.6 percent)

SIG membership (especially the major SIGs like Contracting and Independent Consulting, Lone Writer, Management, Policies and Procedures, and Usability) continues to increase.

We will continue to invest in a print newsletter. We will be working to move the delivery date so we can beat the end-of-month rush at the Santa Ana Post Office. We continue to invest in a printed newsletter because it provides something tangible for new and prospective members. In addition, it appears that many of us do not register for the chapter meeting until we receive the newsletter in the mail.

We have our Information Architecture class facilitated by Bill Darnall and Brian McCaleb. Mary Ann Howell is working on an education class in concert with our July 2006 speaker on DITA. We are looking into infrastructure, including webcast and phone conference software to further expand educational opportunities.

— ♦ —

On a sad note, Carolyn Romano, Orange County STC member since 1994, and policy and procedure writer at Boeing for many years, passed away shortly before Easter weekend in April 2006. Carolyn and I

Continued on Page 7 >

## Next Meeting

### Topic: Information Architecture: A Workshop

Speaker Bill Darnall  
When: Tuesday, June 20, 2006, 6-9 p.m.  
Where: DoubleTree Club Hotel  
Hutton Centre Drive  
Santa Ana, CA 92702  
714.751.2400

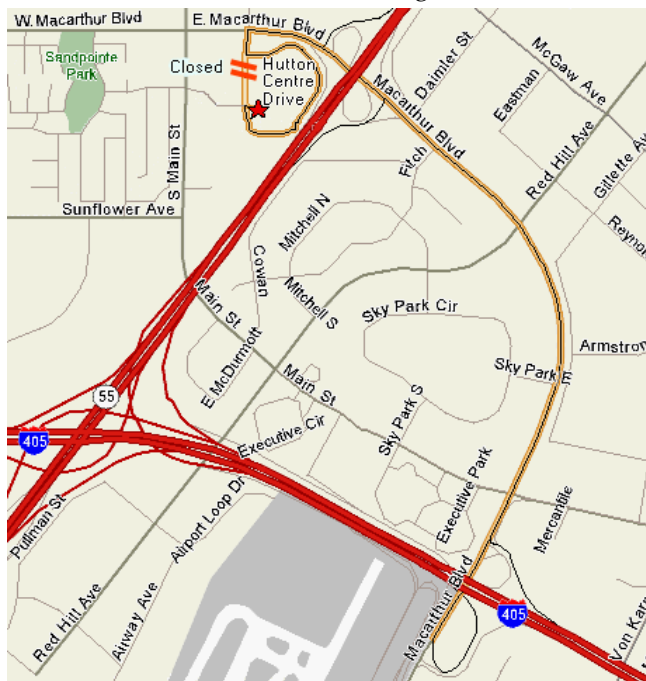
Cost: Members with reservations ..... \$22  
Students with reservations ..... \$16  
Nonmembers with reservations ..... \$27  
Walk-ins or those registering after  
the deadline ..... \$31  
No-shows billed ..... \$22

Reservations:  
Due by midnight, Friday, June 16, 2006

Registration:  
Online at: <http://www.ocstc.org/dinres.asp>

### Map to the Doubletree Club Hotel

Map of the I-405 and SR-55 area. The red star below indicates the hotel location. Parking is free.



### Colophon

*TechniScribe* is produced using Microsoft Word 2002 SP3 for PC. Arial and Palatino Linotype are used for heading and text fonts.

PDFs are produced using Adobe Acrobat Standard version 6.0.5.

## Editor's Desk

By Suzanne Madison, *TechniScribe* Managing Editor

Being the Managing Editor of the *TechniScribe* has been a very rewarding experience for me. I have



gotten to know many of you, had contact with other editors around the country, and learned to work with an editing team. This will be my last issue as editor. As I told you last month, Jim Marchant will be our new Managing Editor. This issue represents a transition—Jim

and I have worked together along with the entire *TechniScribe* team to bring it to you. You may notice some subtle changes. Jim has many years of experience in the newspaper business and brings with him some excellent ideas for improving the newsletter. He is also looking forward to working with you and hearing your ideas for changes.

Although being Managing Editor is an important job, the *TechniScribe* would never get published without the help of an editorial team and our many contributors. I'd like to recognize and thank all who have made this an award-winning newsletter during the past year.

### 2005-2006 *TechniScribe* Team

First, I'd like to thank the editorial team members who have worked so hard to make this a quality newsletter:

Steve Blossom – Proofreader, Writer  
Jennifer Gardelle – Proofreader, Writer  
Rosemary Hulce – Copyeditor, Proofreader, Writer  
Jeff Randolph – Writer, Webmaster, Distributor  
Anne Stratford – Copyeditor, Writer  
Barbara Young – Copyeditor, Writer

### 2005-2006 *TechniScribe* Contributors

I also want to thank everyone who contributed to the *TechniScribe* in the past year. Your articles make it *our* newsletter. After more than two years of monthly articles, two of our regular contributors, Mary Ann Howell (FrameMaker Tips) and Vivian Carroll (“Words” of Wisdom) will be passing along the opportunity to write these monthly columns. If you are interested in taking on this task (or writing about any other software), please let Jim know.

In addition to those I already mentioned, thank you to these contributors:

Bernard Aschwanden	Pamela Armstead
Terri Avizienis	Jane Baker
Guy Ball	Merrick Becchini
Carrie Cooper	Victory Crayne
Carrie Damschroder	Bill Darnall

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## Web 2.0: Hype or Hope?

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### 1. The Web as Platform

The availability of advanced tools and methods (some proprietary, many open-source) allow today's developers to treat the Web as a powerful computing platform capable of delivering content and functionality in ways formerly available only through dedicated applications running on your computer. The platform serves web applications directly to you, reducing reliance on proprietary operating systems and potentially eliminating the need to buy, install, learn, maintain, and upgrade costly application software.

Example: Not long ago, if you wanted to convert a document to a PDF file, you had to purchase a copy of *Adobe Acrobat*, install it, learn how to use it, and upgrade it when it became obsolete. Today, you can upload your document to a web site ([pdfonline.com](http://pdfonline.com)) and in a few minutes receive a PDF file—and it's free! This web site uses the web-as-platform approach to provide value and eliminates the need to buy and run *Acrobat* on your PC.

### 2. Harnessing Collective Intelligence

Today's Web permits users to harness the power of collective intelligence. From simple applications such as newsgroups, listservs, and online forums in which users can post questions and seek help from others in the community to larger scale applications such as *Amazon* encouraging users to post book and product reviews, this Web 2.0 principle recognizes that a two-way exchange of information between web site and user is the new paradigm. The days of static "electronic brochure" web sites that merely display information are coming to an end. Interactivity and dialogue with your audience is the new idea; the webpage is dead, long live the Wiki! The notion here is that the collective wisdom of a community has value and, with the tools and methods now available, web sites can now be lively conversations and not boring monologues.

Example: Most blogs are designed to establish and effortlessly maintain a multiparty conversation among readers and the blog author. Blog software, often free, encourages two-way communication, often leading to discourse in the "comments" section that is more interesting than the posted entry that started the conversation. Five years ago, before the advent of blogs, you could publish a personal web page and solicit reader comments by e-mail; a slow process that discouraged lively conversations and made reader-to-reader communication almost impossible.

Technical communicators can apply this principle by creating online documents and help applications that go far beyond e-mail lists, FAQs, knowledge bases, and other one-way information distribution. By creating and nurturing a community of product users,

and fostering their ongoing conversation, you can harness the combined brainpower of that community and improve the quality of your company's products and documentation. Think about converting webpage-based help sites to active blogs or newsgroups organized by products or problems. Combine this with Real Simple Syndication (RSS), a syndication format (whereby your users are notified instantly when information of interest to them is published on your site), and you can put your customers' collective intelligence to work for you.

### 3. Data is the Next "Intel Inside"

One of the keys to a successful Internet business has been ownership and maintenance of a specialized database. Think about the database of street addresses that is the heart of *Mapquest*, or the enormous database of books in print at the core of *Amazon*. Management of these databases is one of the most critical elements of success in a Web 2.0 world.

The lesson for technical communicators is that content is still king! All the high-tech presentation methods, *Flash* animation, hyperlinking, embedded applets, and other eye-popping features of the modern Web won't deliver users unless there is valuable content.

### 4. End of the Software Release Cycle

Web 2.0 applications are constantly in a state of development and improvement. This has been called "perpetual beta," meaning that every online application and webpage is considered to be in beta test. Beta testing assumes that users will find problems with the application. Effective beta testing provides a mechanism for users to notify the developers that a problem exists. The best testing efforts establish dialogues between developers and users, as applications are patched and new beta releases are distributed while testing continues.

This method differs from the current practice of collecting lots of fixes, adding new features (and some would say adding new bugs), rewriting the documentation, and then announcing a new release of the product every year or two.

Technical communicators can employ this principle in several ways. Begin by assuming that your company's products and your documentation have defects. Plan for users to discover these defects and have a mechanism in place for collecting "bug reports" for communicating with users (even if only to say thank you), fixing problems, and for distributing new documents quickly. Online documentation in the Web 2.0 world anticipates a conversation with users and recognizes that user opinions have value.

### 5. Lightweight Programming Models

This principle recommends that web-based applications be broken into simple, lightweight tasks

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## Web 2.0: Hype or Hope?

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and functions that can be loosely coupled to produce powerful online applications. This is the programmers' equivalent of "chunking," a concept familiar to most technical communicators. By creating several simple tools and connecting them to produce the desired result, you are building a toolkit that can be reused for other applications.

This Web 2.0 principle closely relates to the principles of single-sourcing, by which authors create content that is tagged and organized in a manner permitting it to be reused or seamlessly displayed in multiple ways.

Example: A document describing the history of your company can be created in a single-sourcing application such as *Author-IT*. By appropriate chunking, XML-tagging, and linking, the paragraphs, sentences, or even single phrases from the source document can be displayed on a company webpage, incorporated into the annual report, and inserted into a press release. Changes need only be made to the source document—they instantly propagate through the system to the target documents each time one is printed or displayed.

The essential idea from Web 2.0 is to design your documents for reusability and make it *easy* for users to take your work apart, modify, reorganize, and reuse it in ways that serve their needs.

### 6. Software above the Level of a Single Device

Related to Principle 1, this principle suggests that it is no longer useful to develop applications that are limited to the PC platform. The ever-growing ranks of web-connected devices such as pocket and tablet computers, cell phones, *iPods*, *Blackberry* PDAs, automobile display systems, and even *TiVo* make it necessary to consider the various ways users may wish to access your content and application. Applications (and documents) that have a future in this world will actively embrace these alternative methods of access and display.

If you are creating an online help system for your company's products, you know what it looks like on *Internet Explorer*. Does it still work on a PDA? On a cell phone? On a television screen or in a car? You need to know, and if you adopt Principle No. 2 and carry on a conversation with your users, they will tell you.

### 7. Rich User Experiences

Modern programming tools and techniques have made it possible to create web applications that are "rich experiences" for the user. This has come to mean providing the experience ordinarily delivered by an operating system (such as *MS Windows*) and an application (such as *MS Excel* or *MS Access*) on a web page that looks and feels like a genuine graphic user

interface (GUI). There is now an effort to reimplement PC applications as web applications. If this effort succeeds, the days of the *Microsoft Office* suite may be numbered.

Technical communicators can apply this principle by using the available tools to create that same rich user experience for readers. Instead of displaying captured screen shots, imagine recreating a program screen as part of your web-based online help application. Buttons that click to produce realistic responses, sliders that slide, real data displayed in fields—data that the user can change! Instead of static screen-shots with callouts and footnotes, imagine being able to walk your user through an online simulation of the program. This would be a collaborative effort among web programmers and technical communicators, and the possibilities are endless.

### Hype or Hope?

The answer seems to be a little of both. The prescriptive nature of Web 2.0 tells you what you should do but doesn't tell you how to go about it. Because there is no Web 2.0 standard and no certification, almost anyone can slap together some whiz-bang web applets and call himself Web 2.0-compliant. There is certainly going to be more than enough of that. On the other hand, if you look at Web 2.0 in the way the originators intended, as design objectives and business models for the next generation of applications, there is enough guidance here in a coherent form that will likely result in improved products, happier users, and more money in the pockets of those who get it right.

Because the Internet and the Web are so big and fundamentally connected to our work as technical communicators, the architecture and organizing principles of the Web overlap into our daily work, so the seven principles of Web 2.0 have meaning for us, as well. As the boundaries between text and data blur, as usability, content organization, and presentation methods such as XML, DITA, and single-sourcing overlap into both the web world and the world of technical communicators, we can all profit by employing principles that assure the most efficient and the highest quality experience for our users.

*Brian is an Associate Fellow of the STC and a member of the Orange County chapter. He is a Senior Consultant at Consulting Professionals United. His non-Web 2.0-compliant web site can be found at <http://www.cpu.orange.ca.us> ♦T5♦*

*"Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity."*

Hanlon's Razor

## Chapter Contacts

OCSTC

P.O. Box 28751

Santa Ana, CA 92799-8751

Chapter Fax: 949.830.7585

Web site: <http://www.ocstc.org>

### Administrative Council

**Jeff Randolph**, President  
[erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com)

**Don Pierstorff**, Immediate Past President  
[english@juno.com](mailto:english@juno.com)

**Mary Ann Howell**, 1st Vice President, Programs  
[maryann@hikaripub.com](mailto:maryann@hikaripub.com)

**Betsy Malone**, 2nd Vice President, Membership  
[betsybythebeach@adelphia.net](mailto:betsybythebeach@adelphia.net)

**Michael Opsteegh**, Treasurer  
[mopsteeg@csulb.edu](mailto:mopsteeg@csulb.edu)

**Linda Phillips**, Secretary  
[lindaphillips@fmtinv.com](mailto:lindaphillips@fmtinv.com)

**Suzanne Madison**, *TechniScribe* Managing Editor  
[suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com](mailto:suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com)

**Elaine Randolph**, Public Relations  
[writetrack@compuserve.com](mailto:writetrack@compuserve.com)

**Bill Darnall**, Education  
[mesawriter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mesawriter@sbcglobal.net)

**Brian McCaleb**, Education  
[mccalebb@acm.org](mailto:mccalebb@acm.org)

**Betsy Malone**, Nominating Committee Chair  
[betsybythebeach@adelphia.net](mailto:betsybythebeach@adelphia.net)

**Bruce Alexander**, Nominating Committee  
[xtorero@msn.com](mailto:xtorero@msn.com)

**Jane Baker**, Nominating Committee  
[purplerose50@hotmail.com](mailto:purplerose50@hotmail.com)

**Steve Blossom**, Nominating Committee  
[steveblossom@juno.com](mailto:steveblossom@juno.com)

**Carrie Damschroder**, Nominating Committee  
[carried@hotmail.com](mailto:carried@hotmail.com)

**Kathay Schuster**, Scholarships  
[wwwords@mindspring.com](mailto:wwwords@mindspring.com)

**Jeff Randolph**, Webmaster  
[erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com)

**Betsy Malone**, Employment Manager  
[betsybythebeach@adelphia.net](mailto:betsybythebeach@adelphia.net)

**Beau Cain**, Region 8 Director  
[ds8@stc.org](mailto:ds8@stc.org)

## Recollections...

### How I Became a Professional Writer

*By Bill Darnall, Senior Member, OCSTC*

Non-fiction writing was always my favorite genre. The writing process was often painful and emotionally draining. Then one day I learned a trick. I discovered how to put information into the context of a story. But this approach came after a long time.

Before I was a professional writer, I wrote original state-of-the-art technical articles and delivered presentations. It was rewarding. I got to see my name in print and I got to travel the world. Occasionally I prepared my own illustrations, but more often, this task was delegated to a staff artist or illustrator.

In the late 1970s, I was working as a project manager. I *lived* at a small customer-funded product development company in Orange County. Eight-bit microprocessors had become relatively inexpensive and most projects were simple enough that you could design the logic circuits and also write the code. Under contract, we developed many products: A family of automatic postal scales, an underwater decompression diving computer, several video editing systems, a large circumferential welding machine, and numerous techno-business applications. All of these products had common requirements—a user's guide and a maintenance manual.

At the time, most companies were willing to pay a sizable percentage of the product development cost simply to get manuals produced in a timely manner. Computers were still new enough that many people actually read the manuals.

I discovered I could make more money writing manuals than I could as a product development engineer. I also discovered that customers were willing to pay really big bucks for nicely formatted documents. Inexpensive word processors were not available in 1978.

I realized if I could get my hands on a phototypesetter, I could produce manuals looking as though they came from a major design firm. So, I mortgaged our house and ordered \$25,000 worth of typesetting and film processing equipment. I could almost taste sweet success as I waited for delivery. Only two weeks to go. Then it happened.

The two principals in the company where I was working decided to dismantle their partnership. Subsequently, the doors were locked and I had no place to put my equipment, which was somewhere in transit. Just as well. In addition, there was no continuing income to pay the new mortgage.

*To be continued in the July, 2006 issue ...*

*Bill is a professional freelance writer, trainer and author or co-author of five published books and many technical articles. E-mail Bill at [mesawriter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mesawriter@sbcglobal.net) ♦T5♦*

# EduNotes from B&B ...Think Differently

By Bill Darnall, Senior Member OCSTC

I suppose we would all like to be creative and inventive. Some of us, however, need inspiration to do things differently. We have been told, and perhaps have suggested to others, *Why change something that works? Why fix it if it isn't broken?* We are all familiar with these excuses for not doing things differently. Of course, if we had responded *Why not?*, we might have made some progress. *Let's try it!*

For starters, did you know most patents are simply incremental improvements (changes) to things that already work? It follows that if there were no changes, there would be fewer patents. Imagine that.

OK. That is sort of an introduction to what I am about to suggest. One day I decided to do things differently. I tried walking backwards and discovered I bumped into a lot of things. Then, I did something creative. I used my browser in an entirely different way (for me). I learned there are thousands of pictures on the Web about what I had assumed were only words or groups of words.

Here is one example of something different. Go to Google and click Images. Now, enter "technical writing" and press Search Images. You will be presented with thumbnails of thousands of images related to technical writing. You can use many of these small images to stimulate your thinking about your chosen field. If you are really interested, you can usually enlarge the thumbnails. And you can link to sites you might never have arrived at otherwise.

Here's my observation: I have found this approach to be very useful when I have to write about something and need inspiration. You, of course, are free to enter something other than "technical writer." As they say, "Think differently."

Bill co-chairs the OCSTC Education Committee with Brian McCaleb. Contact Bill at [mesawriter@SBCGlobal.net](mailto:mesawriter@SBCGlobal.net) or Brian at [mcaleb@amc.org](mailto:mcaleb@amc.org) ♦T5♦

## President's Message

< Continued from Page 2

joined STC around the same time. We were both trying to break into the technical writing profession; we were both teachers at the time. Shortly after joining, she was elected Secretary for OCSTC in 1994-1995.

Winner of the STC Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 1997, Carolyn handled facilities arrangements for the chapter meetings for many years. Carolyn worked closely with the hotels, as well as our speakers. I remember that, month in and month out, she would always ask what entrée people preferred, and she generally gave us a choice. She watched how we were being treated by the hotel and, if things didn't work out, would recommend a move.

Carolyn handled facilities for the 1996 Region 8 Conference and made original contacts for the 2001 Region 8 Conferences held here in Orange County.

Carolyn graciously offered her home for new member orientation in 1999, and for "mailing parties" for the Region 7-8 Pan-Pacific Conference in 2000.

We will miss her greatly. Carolyn is survived by her husband Lou, son Lou Jr., and her daughter Victoria (Vickie).

To share your thoughts with Jeff, e-mail him at [erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com) ♦T5♦



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# May Meeting Review

By Jane Baker, OCSTC Senior Member

Leah Guren presented *It May be GUI, But it Doesn't Have to be Messy* at the May OCSTC meeting.

Just exactly what is a GUI? A GUI is a graphical user interface or the means by which a user *experiences* or uses an application. Users want to spend as little time as possible learning an application, she pointed out.

Our job is to keep learning time to a minimum. The greater the learning curve, the greater the potential for *cognitive friction* which includes inconsistencies in wording, design, layout and interaction—a result of GUIs designed for developers rather than users.

Cognitive friction can be viewed in terms of the bottom line: The less cognitive friction, the fewer calls and lower cost of tech support. Bottom-line issues are those management best understands.

Familiarize yourself with GUI guidelines such as style guides available for Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and UNIX operating systems.

Tech writers must learn to write effective labels. Title capitalization is a visual cue that alerts the user to a label. Labels include button names, icons, menu names, and menu commands. Good labels reduce cognitive friction.

Consistent labels also improve the user's experience, speeding access to functionality. Incorporating ToolTips, grouping related features together, using a

font large enough for the over-40 set, and leaving space for translation also improve labels. Clarity also helps with localization (translation).

System and error messages are a source of fear and frustration for users, interfering with the ability to make rational decisions.

Error messages indicate there is a problem. If an error message is really needed, provide one that states what the problem is, its cause, and a solution. Use complete sentences with proper punctuation, consistent vocabulary, simple terms, and do not exaggerate. If the material is complex, provide a way to reach an expert resource. Make sure there is enough information to resolve the problem. You don't want to make users feel stupid!

Whether you work with software development engineers or another pocket of technical communication, don't define yourself too narrowly. Call yourself an *information designer* or *documentation specialist*. Push yourself beyond your comfort zone. Explore new technologies and skills. Work to sell your value to your company. Volunteer to take on some of the more tedious tasks. Advertise yourself as being user-centric. As you patiently and gradually prove your worth to your co-workers, you will become an invaluable member of your team. ♦TS♦

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# Meeting Survey Results

By Mary Ann Howell, OCSTC Senior Member

All of us owe thanks to the 34 of you who took the time to answer the online OCSTC chapter meeting survey last winter. You are the ones who have helped in our search for topics and speakers.

Here are the top-ranked topics:

Rank	Topic	Total Points
1	Latest Tools and Technology	47
2	Editing	36
3	Tie: Information Design; Layout	33
4	Writing	32
5	Tie: Content Management; Project Management	29
6	Tie: Document Usability; Career Development	25
7	Online Help	21
8	Consulting and Contracting	20
9	Tie: Marketing Material; Indexing	12
10	Tie: Policies and Procedures; Other	9

“Other” write-in suggestions:

- Signing up Mike Hamilton to speak
- Writing for a global audience/globalization standards
- VBA for Word
- XML (free or low cost training)
- SharePoint, Online Libraries
- Javascript, VB, Word templates, toolbars, macros
- Programming: Java Script, VBA

Each person who responded to the questionnaire chose five topics, and was allowed to assign 1 to 5 points to each. (Each responder had one 5 choice, one 4 choice, one 3 choice, and so on.) This method may seem complicated, but it provided some statistically significant numbers. It also gave us another way of looking at the choices. A topic with a lot of 5-weighted choices constituted a hot topic, even if its total score was less than another topic with fewer 5-weighted choices.

And we’ve listened to you. Guided by the survey results, so far this year we’ve set up these topics:

**January:** Mike Hamilton MadCap Software MadCap® Flare™, XML-based authoring tool

**February:** Joe Welinske, WritersUA: Trends, tools, and technologies for online help

**March:** Dan Beall, Doc-To-Help: The one-click RoboHelp replacement

**April:** Mary Ann Howell, Using Dreamweaver to build a document track-and-search web application

**May:** Leah Guren, good software GUI design

**June:** Bill Darnall, information design

**July:** Bernard Aschwanden, a gentle introduction to DITA

**August:** Sean Glumace, graphic design and layout basics

We asked you how ponderous you wanted your

presentations to be, and here are the results:

- 14 votes for meetings that vary in weight
- 13 votes for not so light, with lots of nuts (and bolts)
- 1 vote for inspirational topics
- 1 for lightweight topics

And four write-in entries:

- Informative meetings
- Practical meetings
- Organized meetings that end earlier (ouch!)
- Inspirational meetings

We asked, “Should the speakers always be polished, professional-level speakers”? Or was it OK if the speaker was “sometimes a little nerdy and shy as long as the information imparted was important and relevant?” Eleven wanted polished speakers, and 20 said they were comfortable with the unpolished variety, if information was important.

Thanks again to all of you who helped select our meeting topics. If you would like a copy of the survey results, go to the OCSTC meetings page, [www.ocstc.org/meeting.asp](http://www.ocstc.org/meeting.asp).

Mary Ann is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and Acrobat 6. E-mail her at [maryann@hikaripub.com](mailto:maryann@hikaripub.com) or check out her web site at <http://www.hikaripub.com>.

◆T5◆

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# Society Pages



## 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 13,000 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

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1822

703.522.4114 (voice); <http://www.stc.org>

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If you would like to receive e-mail notification about upcoming OCSTC meetings, visit [http://www.ocstc.org/list\\_redirect.asp](http://www.ocstc.org/list_redirect.asp).

Click **Join**. This list broadcasts only meeting notices and STC announcements

## OCSTC Employment Information

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

### Staff Jobs

<http://www.ocstc.org/employme.asp>

### Contract Jobs

<http://www.ocstc.org/contractme.asp>

If you have an inquiry or a job to post, e-mail Jeff Randolph at [erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto: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 <http://www.stc.org/jobsdatabase.asp>.

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# Annual Treasurer's Report ...Your Vested Interest

By Michael Opsteegh, OCSTC Chapter Treasurer

As Treasurer, having the Audit Committee breathing down my neck isn't the most pleasant experience, especially when they shine that bright light in my eyes and give me 10 lashes for every decimal that's out of place. But seriously—as an OCSTC member—I am glad they are there, watching, waiting, and counting. I believe it is important for the chapter to have levels of oversight. To oversee chapter procedures promotes accountability and ensures that the council manages your money in the most responsible manner. I say *your* money, because, as members, you and I fund the chapter through our dues and our meeting attendance. Furthermore, the chapter is here to support our professional growth and promote the field of technical communication, which means we have a vested interest in the successful operation of our Orange County Chapter.

You can rest assured that my fellow council members and I have done our best to spend your money wisely. However, if you feel the chapter could improve in any way, speak to us. The council meets on the first Tuesday of every month, and any member is welcome to attend and both register concerns and make recommendations. Your involvement is essential to the successful operation of the chapter. I now climb down off my soapbox to give you our chapter finances. This year we have been very fortunate in two ways. First, one of our members has made a substantial personal donation to the chapter through his employer's association with the United Way. His modesty won't allow me to name names—but if you want to thank him, his initials are J.R. Second, STC unexpectedly decided to fund the chapters according to a June 2004 head count. Since membership dipped slightly in 2005, this decision effectively allocated an additional \$600 to our chapter. Due to these windfalls and the continued fiscal prudence on the part of our council, our chapter's finances have never looked so good.

Break out your calculators. Here come the numbers. Let's look at the particulars of the chapter accounts between July 1, 2005 and April 30, 2006. The table below shows the chapter's assets.

Account Balance (as of 04/30/06)	
Checking account balance, excluding allocations and outstanding checks:	\$16,435.91
Certificate of Deposit	\$3,405.89
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$19,841.80</b>

We have nearly reached our goal of three years' reserves. Reserves are necessary in case STC decides to reduce or cut funding for chapters. In such an unfortunate event, we would be able to continue to operate in our present fashion for three years. This is important to all Orange County members because we

are still uncertain how STC's ongoing transformation will affect chapter funding. Our reserves will ensure that you will not experience a disruption in the services received from OCSTC. Reserves also allow the chapter to invest in educational opportunities for its members.

The table below breaks down the income and expenses of major chapter services from July 1, 2005 to April 30, 2006:

	Expenditures	Income
Newsletter	\$2,315.00 (includes printing, postage, and labels)	\$881.75 (includes advertising revenue and receivables)
Chapter Meetings	\$8,593.35 (includes hotel, speaker expenses and taxes)	\$8,658.00 (includes no-show fees collected)
<b>Total Chapter</b>	<b>\$11,185.82</b> (as reported by monthly account statements, includes outstanding checks)	<b>\$15,996.85</b> (as reported by monthly account statements)

If you compare this table with last year's report (*TechniScribe*, June 2005), you will notice that the council has made good progress toward the goal of establishing sufficient reserves. Notable accomplishments include an increase in *TechniScribe* advertising revenue and a closer balance between meeting costs and income.

It has been my pleasure serving you as Treasurer for the last two years. I am now retiring my calculator and handing the books over to Betsy Malone, who will be assuming the duties of Treasurer for the next year. If you have any questions regarding this information, contact me at [mopsteeg@csulb.edu](mailto:mopsteeg@csulb.edu). ♦TJ♦

## Editor's Desk

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Teresita del Sol	Dave Fonseca
Rita Garcia	Bruce Giddens
Richard Leatherman	Jim Lowerre
Betsy Malone	Jim Marchant
Brian McCaleb	Michael Opsteegh
Elaine Randolph	Bruce Tepley
Karen Todd	Andrea Wenger

Finally, I'd like to thank the Orange County chapter for giving me the opportunity to be Managing Editor of our newsletter. I hope you will give Jim the same support you have given me. Please send your articles or ideas to Jim at [jmarchant@adelphia.net](mailto:jmarchant@adelphia.net). ♦TJ♦



# Calendar of Events

June 6	OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6 p.m., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine
June 13	Los Angeles STC Chapter Dinner Meeting, 6 p.m. Embassy Suites Hotel, El Segundo
June 14	San Diego STC Chapter Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Marriott Courtyard, Kearny Mesa
June 15	Inland Empire STC Chapter Meeting, Peking Chinese Restaurant, Riverside
June 20	OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6 p.m., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana

## June Meeting Topic

### Information Architecture: A Workshop



The speaker for our June 20, 2006 meeting is Bill Darnall, Senior Member, OCSTC.

What better way to learn a concept than to do it? May's chapter meeting features a one-hour workshop on information architecture, a system design methodology. First we learn the basics of information design and content management systems, and then Bill shows us how to apply these concepts to solve typical technical writing problems.

The workshop example is simple and non-confrontational, yet practical. After we are comfortable with our worksheets and glossary of terms, we will individually and collectively solve a sample problem. Finally, we'll discuss a collective solution. By the end of the workshop, we'll have a new set of skills we can apply the next day at our jobs.

Bill Darnall owns his own business, Darcom, Inc., and works throughout Southern California as a freelance writer and trainer. Bill is the co-creator and co-instructor of the OCSTC online course, "Information Architecture and Content Management for Technical Writers." This course has 180 students registered from around the world. Bill has lent his gentlemanly grace and dignity to the OCSTC for many years. He is presently a co-chair of the Educational Committee, works on the Audit Committee, and has served in the past in such roles as Employment Manager, Facilities Manager, and Treasurer.

OCSTC Mailing Address  
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