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Transformation and Rechartering, Part II

By Steve Blossom, OCSTC Senior Member

In the July 2005 issue of the *TechniScribe*, I summarized the Society for Technical Communication's Transformation Initiative. Here I'll briefly discuss the rechartering process, which is the level of transformation that must be planned and implemented by each chapter or special interest group (SIG).

NOTE: *Community* is STC's new term for a chapter or SIG. A chapter is now called a geographic community, and a SIG is now called a community of practice. I'll mostly use the old, familiar terms *chapter* and *SIG*.

Why Chapters (and SIGs) Need to Recharter

There are several reasons why each STC chapter (and special interest group) needs to recharter:

- It is a necessary response to the Society's transformation and its continued reduction in the funding of chapters. It might even become a requirement for receiving the dues rebate.
- STC now has a flexible membership model, in which chapter membership is optional. (Conversely, a member can now join multiple chapters.) As a result, each chapter must clearly demonstrate the value it provides to its members.
- Many of the problems identified at the Society level, such as decline in membership and financial difficulties, also exist at the chapter level.
- Each chapter has its own unique issues and concerns.

What a Community Needs to Prosper

The "STC's Transformation: Communities" presentation, available on the STC Transformation web site at www.stc.org/transformation/, gives the following summary of what a community needs to prosper:

- A clear definition of itself as a community
- A clear statement of its purpose (a mission statement)
- A clear statement of why the community should exist

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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.

Editorial Staff

Managing Editor Suzanne Madison
Copyeditor & Proofreader Rosemary Hulce
Copyeditor Anne Stratford
Copyeditor Barbara Young
Proofreader Steve Blossom
Web Version Jeff Randolph

Monthly Advertising Rates

- ¼ page \$40
- 1/3 page \$45
- ½ page \$60
- Full page \$80

Subscriptions

\$10/year to members of other STC chapters

Printer

PrintWorks, Irvine, CA

President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



As we head into the fall season, our employers will ask us for commitments to medical, 401(k), other savings, and charitable donations through programs such as the United Way. In the past few years, of the \$145-plus you pay in STC

membership dues, approximately \$20 of those dues was returned to the chapter to support you. When I joined STC and became involved, STC returned approximately \$35 to the chapter (when the dues were around \$115).

At a recent Inland Empire STC meeting, STC Director Beau Cain said that in future years, STC has indicated that we must request money from the Society in order to serve you and your needs. STC calls it "zero-based budgeting." That is, we must submit a detailed accounting of what we want to do and the funds it will take, following which STC will decide if it wants to provide us with any of your money. This funding is what I would call the "Amtrak Funding Model;" never knowing from one year to the next how much we'll get; real planning is virtually nonexistent.

Instead of relying on STC to do what they think is best for us, we can control our own destiny. We are on the road to self-sufficiency. You can help by setting up charitable contributions to Orange County STC. As a nonprofit charitable organization—sometimes referred to as a 501(c)(3) organization—donating to our chapter provides a number of tax benefits, which I have outlined many times before.

A further advantage of our 501(c)(3) status is that we can utilize the services of organizations like the United Way to donate through ordinary payroll deductions. The process works something like this:

1. When you receive a notice that your employer is engaging in a United Way campaign, complete the requisite application, either in paper form or online.
2. During the application process, you will be required to state the amount of your contribution and the timing of the deductions. You can see a sample of this portion of the application at the United Way's web site:

<http://national.unitedway.org/eway/OnlinePledging/index.cfm>

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Next Meeting

Topic: Policies & Procedures
Communication 101

Speaker: Raymond Urgo

When: Tuesday, September 20, 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 **\$21**
Students with reservations **\$16**
Nonmembers with reservations **\$23**
Walk-ins or those registering after the
deadline **\$31**
No-shows billed **\$21**

Reservations:

Reservations are due by 12:00 A.M., Sunday,
September 18, 2005.

Registration:

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

Directions to 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



STC membership means different things to different people. For me, it has given me many good friends, an ability to keep informed about the latest trends in our industry, and the opportunity to learn and practice new skills.

Through networking at our chapter meetings and following up on chapter job postings, I have found both full-time, captive as well as contract work. The greatest benefit I derive from my membership in STC, however, is a sense of professionalism—a sense that what I do for a living takes training and skill and is not something that just anyone could do.

I believe it would be interesting to other members, and perhaps inspire prospective members to join our chapter, if they could read about what STC means to you. To that end, I would like to begin a new column in the *TechniScribe* next month devoted to what STC membership means to you. I'm not looking for the story of your life—just a paragraph or two. Won't you please share your STC experience with others? E-mail your thoughts to me at suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com. I'd really like to hear from you, and so would other STC members.



On a completely different topic, here's a tip I came across recently, that I believe is worth sharing:

In case of emergency—ICE!

Paramedics will turn to a victim's cell phone for clues to that person's identity. You can make their job much easier with a simple idea that they are trying to get everyone to adopt: ICE.

ICE stands for In Case of Emergency. If you add an entry in the contacts list in your cell phone under ICE, with the name and phone number of the person that the emergency services should call on your behalf, you can save them a lot of time and have your loved ones contacted quickly. It only takes a few moments of your time to do. Paramedics know what ICE means and they look for it immediately.

ICE your cell phone now! ♦TS♦

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- Financial support and fiscal responsibility
- Recognition of its leaders and volunteers

Although this presentation was created by a group of SIG managers who were seeking greater support from the STC board, the general principles apply to both SIGs and chapters.

The Rechartering Pilot Program

Several SIGs and chapters participated in a pilot program for community rechartering. After reading the available information about this pilot program, it seemed to me that no one devoted the necessary effort to this important task and that the STC board approved any half-hearted attempt. I'll continue researching the results of more recent rechartering efforts to see if some useful advice becomes available.

STC's Community Rechartering Process

STC's process for community rechartering is simple: fill out a form and submit it to the STC board for approval. The "STC Community Rechartering" form includes the following questions:

- Do you want to change the name of your chapter (geographic community) or SIG (community of interest)?
- What is the mission statement of your community?
- What are the goals of your community? List at least three but no more than seven.
- What strategies will your community strive to implement to achieve your goals? List one to three strategies for each goal.
- What programs and activities will your community offer to implement your strategies? List at least one program or activity for each strategy.
- What has been your average annual cost of operating your community over the last three years?
- Describe the members whom you hope to attract to your new community.
- How will your community provide value to the larger STC community and further the overall goals of the Society?
- List names of community members who took part in this rechartering process.

Of course, the results a community achieves with its new charter depend on the effort invested in answering these questions.

That's all for now. In future parts of this series, I'll

discuss specific issues and ideas for our chapter's rechartering.

Steve Blossom is a member of the OCSTC Nominating Committee and TechniScribe proofreader. You may contact him at steveblossom@juno.com. ♦TS♦



2005 Spotlight Awards: Call for Entries and Judges

By Carrie Damschroder, OCSTC Senior Member

Southern California Technical Communication Competition

For the second year in a row, the nine Southern California STC chapters are sponsoring a Spotlight Awards Technical Communication Competition that provides you with an opportunity to showcase your talent as a technical communicator. If you are interested in receiving valuable feedback on your recent publications and in gaining recognition for your hard work, enter this year's competition! You can enter publications in any of these categories:

- Online Communications
- Technical Publications
- Technical Art

The due date for all entries is September 13, 2005. Entry fees start at \$75 for STC members and \$100 for nonmembers. There is a price incentive for entering multiple entries at the same time, so gather all your stellar documentation and enter it today at www.ocstc.org/competition.asp. This web site also contains additional information about the competition.

Judges and other volunteers for the competition are still needed. As a judge, you'll see some of the best work in technical communication, help to set the standards for excellence in our profession, and add prestigious experience to your résumé. This year we will be trading entries with the Houston STC chapter (i.e., they will judge our entries and we will judge theirs). Contact Karen Bergen at kbergen@comcast.net if you are interested in judging or volunteering, or if you have any questions about entering the competition.

Get in the Spotlight today!

Carrie is Public Relations Manager for this year's Spotlight Awards. You can contact her at carried@hotmail.com. ♦TS♦

July Meeting Review

By Terri Avizienis, OCSTC Senior Member

P&P Diseases and Their Remedies

At our July meeting, Ken Brod, from our sister chapter IESTC, gave an entertaining and informative talk about the mistakes (“diseases”) we all make (but maybe don’t want to admit to) when writing policies and procedures.

Allergens are things we probably should be allergic to such as incorrect spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors. Remedies include dictionaries, thesauri, style guides, and grammar books.

Psydocsis is the state of having a “psycho” document. This can be caused by lack of logical flow, use of policy statements as procedures (or vice versa), lack of parallelism, inconsistent syntax, or inconsistent terminology. Remedies include mind mapping to achieve logical flow and consistency.

Subjectitis is the incorrect use of subjects. This can be caused by absent or unclear subjects or personal names or lack of subject-verb agreement. Remedies include changing the passive voice to the active voice and using the subject-verb-object formula.

Verbitis is the incorrect use of verbs. This can be caused by lack of subject-verb agreement or use of the passive voice, future tense, and unnecessary verb phrases. Remedies include finding future tense verbs, such as will and shall, and changing the verb phrases to simple present tense verbs.

Sentenitis is the incorrect use of sentences. This can be caused by incomplete sentences, wordiness, long or run-on sentences, or complex or difficult-to-understand sentences. Remedies include counting all verbs, gerunds, infinitives, and participles in a sentence and limiting yourself to two or three of each of these words.

Mysteriosis is the overuse of “mystery” words. This can be caused by use of jargon, slang, or specialized language, or undefined abbreviations and acronyms. Remedies include using the whole word or noun phrase followed by the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses.

Formatosis is poor formatting. This can be caused by inconsistent page layout, font styles, or cross-references, as well as lack of sufficient white space, “orphans” and “widows,” faulty document navigation, or inadequate “chunking.” Remedies include designing a template with well-defined styles.

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3. You will be asked the organizations to which you want to contribute. The default is 100% to the United Way (an affiliate of the American Red Cross). You can designate a portion to go to its “partner charities” (Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, and American Lung Association for example), or to other 501(c)(3) organizations *you* designate.
4. If you want your contribution to go to our chapter, list “Orange County STC” as the organization to which you want to contribute. When you designate OCSTC, you will need to attach a copy of the STC Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, which are available from the STC web site at http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/Ad-01-05.pdf. When I completed my application, I also attached a copy of the OCSTC Bylaws, available from the OCSTC web site at <http://www.ocstc.org/pdf/bylaws2001.pdf>.

Once you have set up the donation program, you will see a deduction every pay period as “United Way.” United Way is the trustee of the funds, and payments are made to organizations quarterly. If your employer is a United Way corporate partner, your company might also match a portion of your contributions.

If you are a contractor, or if your employer does not participate in United Way, you can still donate directly to Orange County STC as a charitable contribution. When you donate, whatever amount, you will receive a letter stating the amount of your donation and the date you made your payment.

Your donations may be tax deductible. By following the preceding steps, each of us can legally benefit OCSTC, regardless of what funding our chapter receives from STC.

If you have questions or comments about this donation process, contact me at erandolp@ix.netcom.com. ♦TS♦

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.

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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

Don Pierstorff, Immediate Past President
english@juno.com

Mary Ann Howell, 1st VP Programs
maryann@hikaripub.com

Betsy Malone-Furlong, 2nd VP Membership
betsybythebeach@adelphia.net

Michael Opsteegh, Treasurer
mopsteeg@csulb.edu

Linda Phillips, Secretary
lindaphillips@fmtinv.com

Suzanne Madison, *TechniScribe* Editor
suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com

Elaine Randolph, Public Relations
writetrack@compuserve.com

Bill Darnall, Education
darnall@sbcglobal.net

Brian McCaleb, Education
mccalebb@acm.org

Julie Dotson, Nominating Committee Chair
j.dotson@wanderingworker.com

Bruce Alexander, Nominating Committee
xtorero@msn.com

Jane Baker, Nominating Committee
purplerose50@hotmail.com

Steve Blossom, Nominating Committee
steveblossom@juno.com

Carrie Damschroder, Nominating Committee
carried@hotmail.com

Kathey Schuster, Scholarships
wwwords@mindspring.com

Jeff Randolph, Webmaster
erandolp@ix.netcom.com

Betsy Malone-Furlong, Employment Manager
betsybythebeach@adelphia.net

Beau Cain, Region 8 Director
ds8@stc.org

"Words" of Wisdom

Hints on the Use of Microsoft Word 2000 - 2003

By Vivian Carroll, OCSTC Member

This month's topics are **Word's Replace feature** and **Searching for Symbols**. *Before you read any further, be sure you understand Word's Find feature (the topic of the July 2005 article).*

Replace Feature

Edit | Replace and **Ctrl+H** both open the *Find and Replace* dialog box with the *Replace* tab selected. You can also add a Replace button to a toolbar.

On the *Replace* tab, enter the word you want to find in the *Find What* field and enter the word you want to replace it with in the *Replace With* field. Then click **Find Next**. When the word is found, click **Replace** to replace it or click **Find Next** to ignore that occurrence of the word and find the next one. You can also click **Replace All** to have Word replace all occurrences with the new word. *Caution: Use Replace All carefully. One time I used it to replace "car" with "truck" and it changed my last name from "Carroll" to "Truckroll!" (I should have specified "Find Whole Words Only.")*

You can undo your replacements by clicking **Edit | Undo** immediately after the replacement.

You can use the Replace feature to remove words or nonprinting characters. For example, to remove all returns, enter a paragraph mark in the *Find What* field (in the *Find and Replace* dialog box, click **More**, click **Special**, then select **Paragraph Mark**) and leave the *Replace With* field blank. Click **Replace All**.

Searching for Symbols

NOTE: This method works with the more common symbols available from the text fonts but not with the symbols from decorative fonts such as Symbol and Wingdings.

To search for a symbol within a document, copy an occurrence of the symbol from the text and then use **CTRL+V** to paste, not type, the symbol in the *Find What* field in the *Find and Replace* dialog box.

To replace one symbol with another, copy and paste both symbols. Let's say that you want to replace ½ with ¼ everywhere in your document: 1) In your document, insert ½ and ¼ next to each other. 2) Select and copy both symbols. 3) Select **Edit | Replace**. 4) In the *Find What* field, use **CTRL+V** to paste, then delete the ¼ symbol (and any extra spaces). 5) In the *Replace With* field, use **CTRL+V** to paste, then delete the ½ symbol (and any extra spaces). 6) Finally, click **Find Next** or **Replace All** as desired.

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

Learn to Communicate in Your Own Personal Style

By *Teresita del Sol*, OCSTC Senior Member

Toastmasters International (TI) was established in 1924 to help men and women learn the art of speaking, listening, and thinking—all necessary abilities for promoting self-development, acquiring leadership skills, growing in human understanding, and contributing to the betterment of our world. By participating in the various Toastmasters programs, you can become an effective oral communicator.

Toastmasters International's core values are integrity, dedication to excellence, service to its members, and respect for the individual. Toastmasters International uses time-tested programs that allow members to develop skills at their own pace.

The TI program is based on two types of communication: prepared speeches and impromptu speaking. You will learn to prepare and give a five-to-seven minute speech as well as to stand up and speak on a variety of subjects without preparation. Impromptu speaking develops your thinking skills and helps you organize and deliver your thoughts quickly and efficiently in two to three minutes. You will learn to give an introduction, develop a topic, and draw a conclusion in that time. This is perhaps the biggest challenge for most people, but trust me, it is a skill you can acquire, as I have done over the many years I have been a member of Toastmasters.

The Competent Toastmaster (CTM) program includes 10 speeches that cover various communication skills such as voice, body language, organization skills for verbal delivery, posture, and breathing. Your first speech is about yourself and it lasts 4-6 minutes. Most people find that they can speak about themselves well beyond the time allotted. During this speech you speak about a subject you know very well—you. You tell club members what you want them to know; they are your captive audience, and you enjoy telling them what you want to share about yourself.

You will develop your speaking skills in a friendly environment, with a supportive audience you will come to know well and who will encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and speak to entertain, to inform, to motivate. Soon you will find yourself involved in leadership opportunities as you learn how much fun and how rewarding it is to see others blossom into self-confident, poised, and accomplished speakers.

As you improve your oral communication skills, you will gain recognition from your co-workers, your personal visibility will increase, and promotions will follow. I have experienced this firsthand.

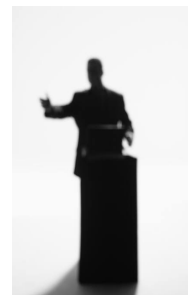
The TI program is cost effective, and most companies pay for your dues because it is an enrichment

program. Membership in Toastmasters also looks good on a résumé and can be a jumping-off point to a successful job interview.

Come join Highways to Success, Toastmasters club number 7278. We meet every Wednesday from 12 to 1 P.M. at the ConAgra building at 3353 Michelson Drive in Irvine. If you have any questions, please contact Teresita del Sol, VP of Membership, at 949.477.8810.

Give yourself the gift of becoming a great communicator not only in the written word but also in your speech.

Teresita is a bilingual (Spanish) technical writer. Currently, she is a project manager at Aames Home Loans. ♦TS♦



Chapter Meeting Topics

By *MaryAnn Howell*, OCSTC Senior Member

We OCSTC members owe Betsy Malone a big thank you for the great speakers she lined up for us last year. As one OCSTC member put it in an e-mail, "I would like to thank you for the roster of speakers this year. It has been outstanding." Betsy still has a hand in arranging the meetings; she has kindly volunteered to continue taking care of the hotel contract and to continue serving as our liaison with the hotel staff.

This fall and winter our OCSTC meetings will enlighten you with topics such as:

- What is happening with the STC reorganization
- Latest tools and technology for technical communication
- Best practices for our careers

Check out www.ocstc.org for details.

NOTE: We want to present the topics you are interested in at our monthly meetings. Please help us by filling out a quick questionnaire at the OCSTC.org web site (go to Meetings for the link).

MaryAnn is our chapter's VP for Programs. Send your ideas for meeting topics and/or speakers to her at maryann@hikaripub.com. ♦TS♦

Chris, the Creative Tech Writer, Part II

By Bill Darnall, OCSTC Senior Member

From Part I in the July Issue of TechniScribe

As the sole tech writer at an engineering meeting, Chris was asked to take notes during a brainstorming session. Meeting personnel included an inexperienced engineering manager and a young development team. However, using a little creativity, Chris got the team talking about brainstorming, established a set of four rules, and recruited the most energetic team member to lead the session. The rules were posted where everyone in the room could see them: (1) No criticism of ideas. (2) Go for large quantities of ideas. (3) Build on each other's ideas. (4) Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas. Then it was show time. Chris continues:

Brainstorming in Action

I asked the engineering manager to restate the problem we were going to brainstorm for solutions. He said the problem was that the project looked as if it were going to be late. He said he wanted to know how it might be possible to get it back on schedule. I agreed that improvement in delivery was the goal and offered the suggestion that delivery delays might be a symptom of an underlying problem. Everyone agreed that semantics notwithstanding, the project was in trouble.

I was to record each idea on a flip chart. Kelly Smart had previously agreed to lead the session. I explained to Kelly how I would write each idea that surfaced. To give me time to write, I asked her to summarize and repeat each idea. I suggested to the team members that they might want to keep notes about their own ideas. We did not want to lose their ideas just because I was busy writing.

Kelly, who was well liked, opened the session by challenging her teammates: "Keep it simple but make it creative." Her enthusiasm was contagious. Besides, everyone had ideas about how to improve the project.

The first suggestion came from a senior programmer: "Eliminate all documentation." Next came "Hire a consultant." Someone said, "Authorize more overtime." As Kelly encouraged the team, more ideas followed:

- Simplify the specification
- Negotiate a new contract
- Identify the requirements
- Offer financial incentives
- Schedule work for two shifts
- Add more personnel
- Cancel the project

- Study the competition's product
- Make a game of it
- Talk with the customer
- Add some recreation

The ideas continued to flow for almost fifteen minutes. Then they dried up. It was time to call an end to the brainstorming and begin organizing the ideas. The job of documenting the results fell on my shoulders. I thought this was a great idea, as I wanted to demonstrate how valuable and flexible tech writers can be.

I was assigned the task of analyzing and organizing the ideas. I had until the end of the day to make sense of the list, and I was scheduled to meet with the manager the following morning. We scheduled a team meeting for 1:15 to review and discuss the results.

I decided to use mind mapping techniques to help put the ideas into a graphical format. For the past two weeks I had been learning to use a trial version of a new mind mapping software program. The program was able to export outlines to Microsoft Word and Project. This project assignment was just what I needed to justify the purchase of the mind mapping program.

I left the room with several sheets of paper from the flip chart and headed to my cubicle. (*To be continued*)

Bill is a professional freelance writer, trainer, and author or coauthor of five published books and many technical articles. You can e-mail him at darnall@stcglobal.net. ♦TS♦

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For most of these diseases, you can use spelling and grammar checkers, but use them with caution! They are not infallible.

For a complete list of remedies and some great examples, see Ken's presentation slides at ocstc.org/meeting_archive.asp.

Finally, we were given **Doc Brod's Elixir**:

- Conduct user testing; have someone who doesn't know the subject matter read the document and then explain the policy or perform the task.
- Rewrite, set aside, review, and repeat as often as needed (or as time permits).
- Have and use a good editor.

Terri is a member of both OCSTC and LASTC. She earned a Distinguished Chapter Service Award with LASTC in 2004. You can contact her at tavizienis@aol.com. ♦TS♦

FrameMaker Tips

By Mary Ann Howell, OCSTC Senior Member

Customizing Your Local Template Folder

This article is the second in a series of four about the template folder. In the July 2005 column (available at ocstc.org/newsltr.asp) I defined templates and explained how to open a template from the template folder.

Contents of the Default Template Folder

The template folder that ships with FrameMaker contains subfolders with many templates from which to choose. These templates include a book with 7.5 by 9-inch pages, an "online" template with no HTML mapping tables, and a newsletter with wandering graphics and one text flow. Personally, I have never had the occasion to choose one of these curious items, so I pulled them out and replaced them with templates that are useful to me.

To replace the contents of the template folder:

1. Navigate to where your FrameMaker program is installed.

If your FrameMaker program is installed on Windows XP using the standard installation, go to **C: | Program Files | Adobe | FrameMaker7.0 | Template** and open the *Template* folder.
2. Delete any documents or folders you don't need.
3. Copy the templates you want to keep into the folder.

Accessing the New Contents of the Template Folder

You can access your new templates the same way you have always accessed templates:

From the *File* menu, select **New | Document**.

The *New* dialog box displays the folders and loose templates you added to the template folder.

Tip: Place a copy of your organization's official template folder on a network drive, so each member of the writing team can replace his or her default template folder with a copy of the official one.

Read my columns in the next two issues of *TechniScribe* to learn how a team can link to a template folder that lives on a network drive.

Mary Ann is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and Acrobat 6. You can e-mail her at maryann@hikaripub.com or find more tips on her web site at www.hikaripub.com. ♦ts♦

Make Your Home Computer Last

By Bruce Tepley, OCSTC Member

This series of articles is about getting the most use from your Windows operating-system computers at home, based on experience and research that looks beyond what the computer vendors tell you. The surefire way that a computer vendor support staffer will tell you to fix an ailing machine is to run your disk image restore disk and then reinstall and reconfigure everything, every time your computer misbehaves!

Of course, we all have better things to do than to stay up late every weeknight for weeks restoring, then rebuilding and reconfiguring our computers. The vendors presumably are hoping that you will "solve" this problem by regularly buying the newest, most powerful, and most costly computer they can sell you.

The June article in this series described reviving a vintage 1998 computer without rebuilding the entire system. The most dramatic improvement came after rebuilding just four small files, having cleaned the computer from spy ware and viruses.

The trick is to shortcut the time-consuming rebuild of your system. The most convenient way to do this with a Windows 98 operating system is to run a handy utility in Windows called System File Checker (SFC.exe), which will either repair corrupted system files or replace them from an operating system installation disk that you must supply. Since corrupted system files were the culprits crippling my old computer, System File Checker renewed its performance in a few minutes.

Windows 98 is a lot more susceptible to system file corruption than later Windows versions, so System File Checker is a key repair and performance utility for older Windows machines. It comes with Windows, and you can look up how to run it in the Windows Help system. It only takes a couple of intuitive mouse clicks to run it. I run SFC whenever my old Windows 98 machine suddenly loses a lot of performance or "hangs," which happens roughly once a year.

Nevertheless, the complete rebuild approach is more effective for fixing a wider variety of software corruption problems. Complete rebuilding is the essential tool to use when you don't have an operating system installation disk, which is usually the case with Windows 2000 or later operating systems.

In a future *TechniScribe* article, I will describe how to completely rebuild your operating system in a fraction of the time the vendor support method takes.

Bruce combines a background in technical writing for computer software products with 10+ years experience working as a systems analyst in telecommunications and geographic information systems. ♦ts♦



STC Mission Statement

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

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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 15,000 members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, photographers, educators, and students.

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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 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. ♦TS♦

Orange Juice: Membership News

By Betsy Malone, OCSTC 2nd VP Membership

OCSTC Members: 289

STC Members: 15,990

Our membership drive is on! Now's your opportunity to take action and get involved in OCSTC! We need Membership Committee volunteers to help develop membership campaigns and incentives. If you've been afraid to volunteer, or perhaps you're shy, have no fear, as this will be a rewarding, educational, and fun experience. (You can even mention the experience on your résumé!) If you have ideas to share and a little time to spare, please e-mail me for more details.

Be sure to say hello to our new members at the next chapter meeting. A big welcome goes out to our new members: **Jim Marchant**, **Sarah Kern**, and **Michelle Teng**. We are also happy to welcome back two renewing members: **Craig Hunt** and **Jennifer Jones**.

After more than 30 years in the newspaper business, originally as an editor but most of the time in systems support, new member Jim Marchant recently started a second career in technical writing at Connect3 Systems, Inc. in Cerritos. As the (mostly) lone writer there, he produces and maintains manuals, reference materials, and Microsoft HTML Help for the company's application suite, which facilitates advertising, marketing, and promotion workflow for large retailers.

In newspaper systems, Jim stayed involved in writing and editing as he produced manuals, guides, and training material for writers and editors, so technical writing was a natural transition and is proving to be rewarding as a central focus. The hectic stampede of meeting a software release deadline resembles the daily and hourly mad dashes of daily newspaper production, so he feels right at home.

Extensive scouring of the Web for background on this new vocation quickly brought STC and the Orange County chapter to Jim's attention. From his very first meeting, he experienced a friendly, enthusiastic, birds-of-a-feather group with remarkably on-target, professional speakers. He was encouraged that he was headed in the right direction. He greatly appreciated access to OCSTC's job postings, even as a nonmember.

When not scowling over his computer trying to wrestle programmer-speak into English, Jim likes holding a fishing pole over the ocean or beside a mountain stream. Welcome to OCSTC, Jim!

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

Grammar Tips

By Anne Stratford, OCSTC Senior Member

Call it the Darwinization of technical writing. Or even the eternal struggle between the classical, Apollonian standard and the Dionysian impulse to trash tradition. The fact remains that with words and language, the survival of the fittest—the hardier, most-used, more commonly selected version of a word—ultimately prevails. And, over time, a previously correct standard will be discarded or reconfigured for a new audience. As an example, take *E-mail*, *e-mail*, and *email*.

Among the dozens of references on my brick and mortar bookshelves is a well-thumbed copy of *Lapsing Into a Comma: A Curmudgeon's Guide to the Many Things That Can Go Wrong in Print—and How to Avoid Them* by Bill Walsh. He's a stickler for what he thinks is right, and though I don't always agree with him, he's possessed of a wickedly funny sense of humor along with his stoutly maintained preferences. In this book, first published in 2000, Walsh states:

"The techies who brought us the point-and-click wonderland of the Internet are brilliant people, but they're not the ones we should be looking to for language instruction."

He gives as an example:

When the shortened form of electronic mail first began appearing in print, the question was whether it should be e-mail or E-mail; the lower case has clearly prevailed.... [and now] The predominant spelling among the general public has become email, which is an abomination.

As the copy desk chief of the Washington Post Business Desk, Walsh is regularly confronted with such grammatical, lexicographical, and stylistic challenges. He feels ignorance is largely to blame for *email* taking over *e-mail* in print usage by a ratio of two to one. There are holdouts, of course: *The New Yorker* magazine continues to use *e-mail*, as does *Technical Communication*, *Intercom*, and our own *TechniScribe*.

For myself, I suspect that laziness and ease of reproduction are the culprits, and when even such a reputable publication as *The Wall Street Journal* has adopted the one-word spelling, the end may be near for the hyphenated version. It may be survival of the dumbest, but *email* is winning.

Anne Stratford is a copyeditor for the *TechniScribe*. ♦TS♦

Calendar of Events

- September 6 OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine
September 13 Entry deadline for Spotlight Awards Technical Communication Competition
September 20 OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana

September Meeting Topic

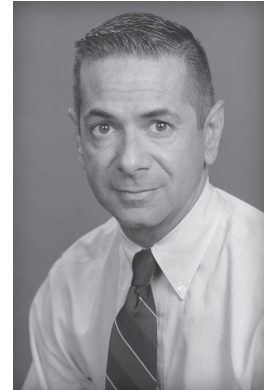
Policies & Procedures Communication 101

To cap off our series on policies and procedures (P&P), we are fortunate to have Raymond Urgo, an internationally renowned consultant on best practices for writing P&P. Raymond has advised major corporations such as Taco Bell, Kinko's, Pacific Life, Northrop Grumman, Kaiser Permanente, and Toshiba America, probably for substantially more money than it will cost you to attend the September meeting. Here's your chance to get a real deal.

In "Policies & Procedures Communication 101," Raymond introduces the latest research on effective communication. Topics include:

- Developing, communicating, and managing P&P information
- Benefits and values of P&P to users and their organizations
- Roles and opportunities for the P&P writer
- Evolving trends and available resources

Raymond Urgo owns Los Angeles-based Urgo & Associates and is a management consultant specializing in policies and procedures communication. He is an educator, author, and coach in this specialty. Raymond is an Associate Fellow of STC. Don't miss this presentation by STC's foremost leader in the P&P discipline!



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