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## Sure Cure for Dysfunctional Specs

By Andrew Warren

It's true that all software specs are abysmally bad. But that's just because they're written by engineers, not necessarily because they're written in the absence of a working product.

It's also true that specs are usually out-of-date and don't match the product, and most of them are incomplete and have inconsistent, inappropriate levels of detail. That makes life difficult for the tech writer who has to turn the spec into a user's manual, but it's a disaster for many others as well. Without accurate, complete specs:

- Developers don't know what to work on,
- Managers can't accurately schedule anyone's time,
- Testers don't know what to test,
- Marketing can't prepare promotional literature,
- Tech Support can't prepare training materials.

And no one knows when the product is finished! Very few development projects *begin* with a spec that says "We'll just start working, and we'll continue until some arbitrary date in the future, and then we'll ship whatever the hell we've created, with a haphazard manual that was written at the very last minute." Unfortunately, *lots* of projects *end* that way.

So how can all that be avoided? Think about an ideal situation: The software conforms exactly to a well-written, easy-to-understand spec, with exactly the right amount of detail. I'm talking about functional specs here, so that means a complete and accurate description of *what* the thing does without saying *how* it does it—for example, there are no unnecessary implementation details. Because the spec matches the software, a user's manual can be written by referring only to the spec. And because the spec is well-written, writing the user's manual requires practically no effort.

I'm not a professional technical writer. I've written fewer than a dozen FrameMaker documents, and only one of them was over a hundred pages. But I did work a long time as a freelance consulting engineer, and I found a foolproof way to get my clients to write good functional specs that nearly matched the ideal I just described:

Write the User Manual *first*.

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## Publication Policies

*TechniScribe* is published 12 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 permission is obtained from the author, 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](mailto:jmarchant@adelphia.net)) five weeks before the date it will be published.

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*Managing Editor* .....Jim Marchant  
*Copyeditor* .....Teresita del Sol  
*Copyeditor* .....Anne Stratford  
*Copyeditor* .....Barbara Young  
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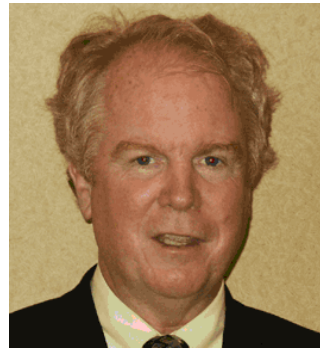
\$10/year to members of other STC chapters

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## President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



As I was checking Amazon.com on the availability of *Winning*, by Jack Welch with Suzy Welch, I noticed that this work is now available in audio format. So, if you don't have time to read, you can pop in the CD and listen while you are

commuting to work or otherwise occupied.

As I read the book, some of these topics related to our business of operating Orange County STC, while others applied to relationships where we work. Other topics could be applied to events in our personal lives, such as job searching.

In the first section of *Winning*, "Underneath It All," the author explores the core elements for success of people and companies. In the chapter, "Mission and Values—So Much Hot Air About Something Real," he explores the elements of an effective mission statement for businesses: What the statement should capture and what it should avoid. "A good mission statement addresses the question: *How do we intend to win at this business?*" At the corporate level, you begin to focus on those areas where you excel, compared to areas where you are not the best.

A mission should not be delegated. While all input is welcome, it is the responsibility of top management, for they are the ones who are ultimately accountable. If a mission statement is framed well enough, lower levels of the organization can adopt mission statements that draw from the larger mission.

Core values, also described as "behaviors," should be marching orders for fulfilling the mission, supporting how you intend to *win!* Mission statements are higher-level; core values have broad rank-and-file input and are more fluid than the mission.

Several years ago, I introduced an OCSTC mission statement that focuses on our energy: *Influencing, expanding, supporting, and serving the technical communication profession from our geographic base in Orange County.*

I also offered a set of core values. This was to be the basis for our rechartering. The chapter's direction in the past three years has been toward this mission and

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## Next Meeting

### Topic: Communicating With Joe and Jane Consumer

Speaker Karen Bergen

When: Tuesday, September 19, 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:

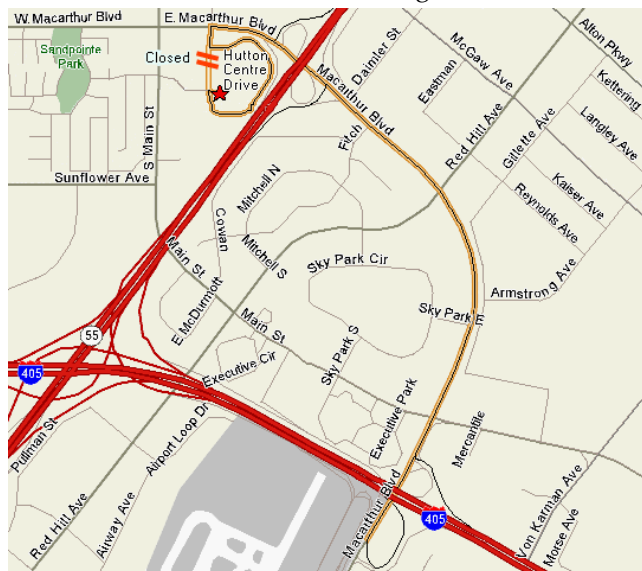
Due by midnight, Friday, September 15, 2006

#### Registration:

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

### Directions to the Doubletree Club Hotel

Map of the I-405 and SR-55 Area. The star below indicates the hotel location. Parking is FREE.



### Colophon

TechniScribe is produced using Microsoft Word 2003 SP2 for PC. Arial and Palatino Linotype are used for heading and text fonts.

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## Editor's Desk

By Jim Marchant, TechniScribe Managing Editor



We conclude the TechniScribe series on freshman English composition in this month's issue with a defense of the Texas Tech program by a Cal State Fullerton graduate who received her PhD at Texas Tech. Despite the Texas orientation of these articles, we do have SoCal tie-ins, and

it's also important to follow what's happening with writing education, as we too often see the results from SMEs, programmers, and engineers that didn't get enough.

A special notice will be sent to the Texas STC chapters, offering them an opportunity to reprint these reports.



Contest season is upon us:

- The Spotlight Awards are looking for entries
- The New Mexico Kachina Chapter wants entries for a regional competition (as noted in the August TechniScribe)
- Entries in the national STC newsletter competition are due soon.

It's time to look over your best work and see if you can garner some recognition for it. These competitions are open to all technical communication professionals; you do not have to be a member of STC to participate. See <http://stc.org/comp/>



In this issue, you'll find the results from the July *TechniScribe TechniQuery*, our informal survey taken at meetings. The question, "What do you think would be a good topic for the next TechniQuery" was considered for the August meeting, but it did not come to fruition. However, if you have any suggestions of a subject on which most everyone has an opinion, and curiosity about the other guy's opinion, please pass your idea on to me. ◆TS◆

*"Logic: n. The art of thinking and reasoning in strict accordance with the limitations and incapacities of the human misunderstanding."*

Ambrose Bierce

# Texas Tech's Troublesome Technology

## A Rebuttal

By Pat Tyrer, Assistant Professor and Director of Writing Programs at West Texas A&M University

### The Case for the Prosecution:



Trudy Hernandez's article, "In Search of Better Writing Instruction: The Conflict of the Academic and the Writer," in the July and August issues of *TechniScribe*, presented a fairly dreary picture of Texas Tech's Interactive Composition Online (ICON) program.

Without much elaboration,

Hernandez argues that students enrolled in the program are being victimized by a brutal system "geared to ease enrollment," with little to no concern for their fragile psyches. Quoting Elbow and Bartholomae in articles nearly three decades old, Hernandez condemns Tech's program by suggesting that teachers do little more than "chart patterns of error" in a "current-traditional approach" in which students "are not given enough time to implement strategies for revision." Outrageous, you say? Egregious! Medieval! Un-Elbowian!

If it were true, I would dig out my old protest signs, do a little re-lettering, and lead the march on Lubbock. But alas, what Fred Kemp and company have done for students at Texas Tech is figured out a way to place the locus of learning with students and to return writing to the composition classroom (albeit the virtual classroom), replacing "lecture and collective activity" (Kemp).

Hernandez's case rests on several premises. Briefly, she asserts that Texas Tech's ICON program:

- Is "geared to ease enrollment pressures"
- Is "brutal for thousands who come to college not quite prepared to engage in college writing"
- Uses an "unconventional process" for assignments and grading
- "Threatens the traditional student-teacher relationship"
- "Parallels the current-traditional approach" to composition
- Reduces face-to-face time, thereby preventing "students from fully discovering and developing rewrite strategies"
- Removes "teacher authority and autonomy"
- Requires students to "negotiate through an obscure rhetorical process where graders are

disguised, revision is stunted, and authority, at best, is murky and diluted"

- Is of interest only to those like-minded folk more "interested in easing enrollment pressures (as they seek to provide access to students) than in improving performance"

Whew! And as any good prosecutor would do, Hernandez has overstated her case, or as the bard would utter, "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (*Hamlet* III, ii).

Hernandez's argument rests on her charge that Texas Tech has, in essence, implemented a "current traditional approach" to teaching writing using an electronic assembly-line to fast-track ever-increasing numbers of under-prepared students.

She begins her case by suggesting, correctly, that more and more students are entering college unprepared for college-level writing. She also correctly asserts that theorists and practitioners are at odds about how to instruct these students. On these two points, Hernandez and I agree: Large numbers of students enter college under-prepared, and no one knows quite what to do about it!

But where Hernandez suggests that we can possibly understand the "ongoing debate in writing instruction," by looking at Texas Tech's innovative approach, which she argues will "demonstrate how one writing program is brutal for thousands who come to college," is where we part company.

### The Case for the Defense:

When I left Texas Tech, doctorate in hand, and headed out to find a "teaching job," I didn't think I would be called upon, at various points throughout my career, to come to the defense of technology, yet that is precisely where I repeatedly find myself. As a member of the Computer-Assisted Writing Research Project, under the guidance of Fred Kemp, who was then the Director of Composition, my fellow graduate students and I investigated various methods of improving writing instruction utilizing technology, including teaching in computer classrooms, building MOOs,<sup>1</sup> establishing online chats, and creating web pages by writing code.

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<sup>1</sup> "Multi-Object Orientation," An environment which allows more than one person to talk at one time, often also allowing display of emotions [emoticons] and object manipulation in a given environment.

## Texas Tech's Troublesome Technology

< *Continued From Page 4*

We were graduate students, but we were also researchers—and as researchers, we were determined to build a better “mouse trap.” I couldn’t swear that we did, but I do know that students in our technology-enhanced classrooms wrote more and wrote more often. And I believe now, as I did then, that the more students write, the better they become at writing. In all the studies done by theorists and practitioners, no one, to date, has yet proven that any single method of writing instruction produces better writers.

However, there has been a paradigm shift in the field of composition studies—and, in part, technology’s to blame. As with any shift, feelings of discomfort and fear of the unknown are common—as well as occasional accusations of heresy!

Maxine Hairston, in describing paradigm shifts, explains that “when enough anomalies accumulate [in an accepted system] to make ... scientists in the field question whether the traditional paradigm can solve many ... problems that face them, a few innovative thinkers will devise a new model” (College Composition and Communication, 1982). This innovative “new model” is precisely what is occurring with Texas Tech’s ICON.

Typically, writing instructors have three roles. They present material in class, consult one-on-one with individual students, and evaluate student writing. What the program at Texas Tech does is distribute these roles to classroom instructors and document instructors.

Classroom instructors meet with students, further explain assignments, answer questions, and direct one-on-one mentoring. Document instructors respond to student texts, using specific assignment criteria, and assign numerical grades. (ICON) Both are “considered instructors and have equal instructional value in the students’ learning process” (Kemp).

Students benefit from both the on-site and the online experience by receiving objective feedback on all essay drafts by a minimum of two instructors, as well as by peer reviewers for all but the final draft, using “peer-interactive process instruction’ pedagogy” (Kemp). Basically, this means students at Texas Tech are writing *a lot* and receiving *a lot* of feedback every step of the way!



But is this high-volume process brutal, threatening, and obscure? Does this systematic approach to writing, revision, and feedback thwart student development? Hernandez argues that it does.

So, to be completely clear, I propose to respond to Hernandez’s claims beginning with her assertion that the process is “geared to ease enrollment pressures.” Although Texas Tech’s enrollment figures have gone up, Tech is by no means in the business of grinding up students or grinding out degrees. In fact, easing enrollment in composition courses is a fairly easy process and one upon which many institutions rely—the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exam.

As most writing instructors know, CLEP tests (or any variety of single-setting writing examinations), do not ensure that a student is ready for the challenges of academic writing, but they are used quite often to fulfill required hours for first-year writing at many universities. Due to their ability to manage student writing through the use of ICON, Texas Tech has been able to eliminate CLEP exemptions, “giving more students the valuable intensive writing experience that they need to succeed in college and later in their professional lives” (Kemp).

Hernandez also terms the process “unconventional” and the treatment of unprepared students as “brutal,” yet Tech’s program is really quite conventional in its promotion of process and self-reflexive writing.

Where it is unconventional is in its use of the Web as a publishing medium for student work so that student writing can be read as something more than a formal performance. It can be read not only by teachers who have “had years of reading student work,” and may read against the “perfect” student essay in their heads, but also read by other students in “ways that much more closely approximate real-world reading” (ICON).

By reading other students’ work, students discover the techniques of effective writing—and, according to Kemp, “the critical interpretive skills that such critiquing engenders are heightened by the need to articulate the result of the critiquing to a writer, usually in writing itself. The tacit knowledge that effective writers bring to bear on their writing tasks is thus made explicit and part of a consciously

*Continued on Page 6 >*

## Texas Tech's Troublesome Technology

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applied set of critiquing and revising tools.

"Revising is the key to good writing, and a practiced critical consciousness (a set of critiquing tools) is the key to good revising" (ICON).



Thus, Hernandez's claims—that students are prevented "from fully discovering and developing rewrite strategies" and that "revision is stunted"—are refuted. Document instructors at Texas Tech have more information at their fingertips when they read a student's draft for grading purposes than a traditional classroom instructor could cope with on paper.

Typically, the "document response page," used for responding and grading a student draft, includes:

- A copy of the assignment.
- A clearly articulated list of evaluation criteria for that particular assignment.
- The student's text to be graded.
- Text boxes for entering comments and a numerical grade.
- Two or three pull-down menus of syntactical, structural, or assignment-specific URLs for hyperlinking comments to extended descriptions.
- A series of additional links to the student's previous drafts, previous comments on that essay cycle, peer reviewers' comments, the student's accumulated problem log, and other supporting help menus (ICON).

With a student's process work and self-reflective logs readily available, instructors are in a unique position to assess a student's drafting, revision, and editing processes and to offer useful feedback—the proverbial "teachable moment."

Hernandez's argument that reduced face-to-face time prevents students from developing rewrite strategies is predicated on the belief that learning only occurs from the top down, as do two of her other claims in which she suggests that Tech's program "threatens the traditional student-teacher relationship" and obscures and "dilutes" classroom authority.

I'm not entirely sure what the traditional student-teacher relationship is, but if it is the relationship that produces the "thousands who come to college not quite prepared to engage in college writing," (Hernandez), then perhaps that relationship *should* be dismantled and a student-centered pedagogy installed in its stead.

Probably the most damning of Hernandez's claims is that Texas Tech's program relies on "current-traditional" rhetoric with its "content-laden, industrialized writing process."

I'm inclined to scoff, "Does not!" with a virtual sneer and a well-structured paragraph of support, but I will desist and rely on the words of Mike Edwards, on his erudite blog, *Vitia*. He declares that the "term 'current traditional' has become a stick with which to beat ideas you don't like" (2003).

Clearly, Texas Tech's ICON program is far removed from current traditional rhetoric, which requires regimented structure and adherence to the maxim of "good writing is correct writing." Alexander Bain does indeed cast a long shadow as Elizabeth Hayes argued at the 2003 Modern Language Association convention, but his shadow does not extend to Texas Tech's program.

The benefits of ICON greatly outweigh the admonitions of its critics:

- Anonymous grading ensures that the criteria of effective writing is the same criteria taught in the classroom
- "The assessment of patterns of grading and commentary provide productive feedback mechanisms for improving assignments, criteria, and instruction" (Kemp)
- The increased volume of student writing, revision, peer critique, and reflection encourages improvement in both a student's ability to write and to read and respond critically to text.

Finally, I disagree with Hernandez's closing argument that "good writing instruction should not aim to solve pedagogical conflicts." Good writing instruction can only evolve from a system which constantly reviews and amends itself in an effort to solve those pedagogical conflicts among rhetoricians. Texas Tech's Interactive Composition Online program does just that!



*Pat Tyrer received her BA and MA in English from California State University, Fullerton and her PhD in English from Texas Tech University. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Director of Writing Programs at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, TX, where she recently created an 18-hour certificate program in Technical Communication. ♦T5♦*

## Sure Cure for Dysfunctional Specs

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The thing is, you have to write the damn thing anyway. Writing it first —making *it* your functional spec—solves all the problems that development teams and technical writers traditionally have with formal specs:

1. Because it's a user manual, it includes all the functional description while neatly avoiding the common problem of specifying too much implementation detail.
2. Because it necessarily must include the *entire* functional description, it forces the spec authors to really think about what they're defining: The user-manual format makes it very difficult to gloss over areas where they haven't thought things through.
3. Because it's a user manual, it's easier to read than a big formal "engineering spec," which means that it's much easier for the authors and reviewers to spot awkwardness in the interface, internal inconsistencies, missing or unneeded features, etc. A formal spec can be reviewed by engineers, but a user manual can be reviewed by *anybody*—even the product's intended customers, no matter how non-technical they might be—so the spec can incorporate their suggestions before a single line of code has been written.
4. Because the user manual specifies every function completely, it makes scheduling easier. Wait, that's wrong. What I mean is, it makes *reality-based* scheduling possible. Scheduling is still hard, but without a functional spec written to the high quality level that'll be achieved by writing the user manual first, schedules can only be based on wishful thinking and hand-waving, and will never be believed by anyone but your company's dumbest salesperson.
5. Since user manuals are written by technical writers rather than engineers, they'll be involved at the earliest stages of the product's development, so *their* valuable input gets considered up front in the design.
6. Because the user manual has already been written and reviewed, when the product finally *is* ready, it can ship immediately with full documentation. If an emergency occurs and you must ship an early, unfinished version of the product, it's easy to snip from the complete manual the

descriptions of unimplemented features, so even that early version can ship with very good documentation.

For any reasonably complex product, someone will, of course, have to write an implementation spec, but that one *should* be written by the engineers who'll be developing from the functional spec / user's manual. Therefore, it can be in whatever format they like. Ideally, engineers will write the implementation spec before they start working on the software, but even if they just make it up as they go along, having a user manual from the start ensures that they'll always have a clear, definitive guide to keep them from going off track.

*This post was originally published by InFocus (www.techwr-l.com/techwhirl/) on the TECHWR-L e-mail list. Reprinted with permission of the author and publisher. Andrew can be contacted at [awarren@synaptics.com](mailto:awarren@synaptics.com) ♦T5♦*

## Favorite Home Pages

*By Jim Marchant, TechniScribe Managing Editor*

Of the "typical" choices for browser home pages asked in July's TechQuery mini-survey, Google received the most votes, but it took second place to "other."

Google is preferred by **Kelly Anderson, Terri Avizienis, Colleen Brown, Bill Darnall, and Laura Sala.**

Its rival, Yahoo, came in last in the balloting with only two votes, from **Sondra Nash** and **Alexandra Piacenza.**

Those who demonstrate their loyalty by starting up at their employer's home page are **Ashley Bryant, Diane Fidyke, Jack Molisani, and Susan Montepio.**

In the "other" category, one anonymous vote was for America Online. **Jim Lowerre** starts at MSN.com, **T. Kinsman** at MSNBC, and **Bill Wood** at Dell.

Starting at her e-mail login page speeds up the day for **Suzanne Madison.**

And **Steve Blossom** points his browser to Cox Cable, but at work his browser launches at Mozilla's default home page, which includes Google's search startup.

Watch for the *TechniScribe* TechniQuery survey form at your table at the September 19 meeting. ♦T5♦



## 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

President, **Jeff Randolph**

[erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com)

Past President, **Don Pierstorff**

[english@juno.com](mailto:english@juno.com)

1st Vice President, Programs, **Bruce Tepley**

[writer\\_a\\_2\\_z@netzero.com](mailto:writer_a_2_z@netzero.com)

2nd Vice President, Membership,

**Michael Opsteegh**, [octechwriter@yahoo.com](mailto:octechwriter@yahoo.com).

Treasurer, **Betsy Malone**

[betsybythebeach@adelphia.net](mailto:betsybythebeach@adelphia.net)

Secretary, **Colleen Brown**

[cmbrown14@yahoo.com](mailto:cmbrown14@yahoo.com)

### Appointees

*TechniScribe* Managing Editor, **Jim Marchant**

[jmarchant@adelphia.net](mailto:jmarchant@adelphia.net)

Public Relations, **Elaine Randolph**

[writetrack@compuserve.com](mailto:writetrack@compuserve.com)

Education, **Bill Darnall**,

[mesawriter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mesawriter@sbcglobal.net)

Education, **Brian McCaleb**,

[mccalebb@acm.org](mailto:mccalebb@acm.org)

Scholarships, **Kathey Schuster**,

[wwwords@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wwwords@sbcglobal.net)

Webmaster, **Jeff Randolph**

[erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com)

Employment Manager, **Betsy Malone**

[betsybythebeach@adelphia.net](mailto:betsybythebeach@adelphia.net)

### Region

Region 8 Director, **Beau Cain**

[ds8@stc.org](mailto:ds8@stc.org)

### Committees

Nominating Committee :

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

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

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

**Suzanne Madison**,

[suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com](mailto:suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com)

## August Meeting Review

By *Barbara Young*, *TechniScribe Copyeditor*

We think we're design-savvy, but knowing the latest graphics software is only part of it. Writers depend on designers and enjoy a great relationship with them because we know they have something we don't, and, as desktop publishing continues to shape our world and these two roles become more intertwined, educating ourselves about graphic design is essential. Presenter Sean Glumace—who has done design work for Disney, Harley-Davidson, and the annual Emmy Awards—inspired my colleague to say, "Even though I'm a technical writer, of all of the meeting presentations, this is the first one I've understood *completely*." Clearly in his element, Sean packed in information ranging from Web design to managing projects to graphic design principles. He has served as a digital arts instructor at Golden West College and Learning Tree University, teaching students how to master Adobe InDesign, QuarkXPress and many other Macintosh titles.

Sean discussed what designers need from us—things that affect the *business of art* for writers, artists and project management—and shared behind-the-scenes knowledge. Yet the first words out of his mouth were, "Content is king" (after which he could do no wrong), understanding that the content *always* dictates design. Dubbed the "Thumbnail Nazi" by his students, he'll often create 300 thumbnail sketches for a single project. We learned about \$1 stock photography available with a quick Internet search. When it comes to color standardization and printing, designers prefer CMYK because RGB requires an additional step of conversion to CMYK anyway, often causing color shifting.

Other important points:

- When supplying images to a designer, they should be high resolution—a minimum of 300 dpi, if not 600 dpi.
- Hold down the shift key when sizing photos to avoid skewing the image.
- Never use more than two fonts in a single layout. InDesign, which he uses as a paste-up board, is still best for multiple-page layout because each page is not required to be a separate file.

Many would like to invite Sean back for *more* cutting-edge information on Web and graphic design! ♦TJ♦





# Four New Members at July Meeting

Four new members were welcomed upon joining or re-joining the OCSTC ranks at the July meeting. They are Ashley Bryant, Peter Dallman, Alexandra Piacenza, and Sima Staav.



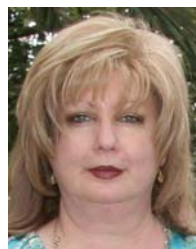
**Ashley Bryant** is currently pursuing a certificate in technical writing through Sacramento State University's College of Continuing Education and holds a BA from Marshall University. In her current customer support role with ECONZ Wireless, Ashley is responsible for creating product documentation to assist customers in implementing the company's mobile workforce management solutions. Prior experience with Reynolds and Reynolds includes training programmers to maintain auto dealership F&I software and creating documentation on the department's intranet.

**Peter Dallman**, who has been involved with technical writing for 20 years, works on Mary Ann Howell's team at Orthodyne Electronics. He started out as a product designer and engineer. As a freelance writer he writes about topics "from missiles to car manuals, gas masks to printers." He also worked as a scriptwriter for both Hollywood and training films. His other interests include making prop weapons for films, fly fishing, and the martial arts. "One of my hobbies is historical technical manuals. I like to compare ancient styles to the way we present material today. You cannot really compare chariot manuals to car manuals, but you can in some topics like the martial arts. Some medical manuals endure unchanged for very long periods of time, despite

technology changes, like Gray's Anatomy, published in 1918."



A graduate of Wellesley College, **Alexandra Piacenza** is vice president of planning at New Century Mortgage Corporation in Irvine, where she has been on the corporate staff for more than nine years. Prior to managing strategic planning processes, she was responsible for creating and maintaining the company's online policy and procedures program while leading Corporate Training, Business Continuity Services, and a variety of special projects. She has also served as a consultant and manager with such firms as Union Bank, Crocker Bank, American Honda, and Westcorp.



**Sima Staav** is a returning STC member last active in 2002. Her technical writing career began as a Business / Systems Analyst for an aerospace company, shortly after graduating with a BA degree in Management Information Systems from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). In the early 1990s, after the collapse of the aerospace industry, she became a freelance writer and business consultant, and returned to CSUF to complete a technical writing certificate. She completed large projects for Countrywide, Motorola, and Southern California Edison. In early 2006, she started *The Write Image Solution*, a technical communication company, and has recently completed children's poetry to be published in 2007. ♦TS♦

## President's Message

< Continued From Page 2

statement of values. You can read those core principles in my presentation, "State of OCSTC and STC Changes"

(<http://www.ocstc.org/pdf/StateofOCSTC.pdf>) or on page 6 of the October 2003 issue of TechniScribe ("President's Message,"

<http://www.ocstc.org/pdf/ts102003.pdf>).

Just as businesses and organizations have mission statements, we all need a mission statement and some core values in our professional and personal lives.

On a personal level (which he introduces later in the book), Welch says you will begin to discover a number of items.

To what extent do your objectives agree or complement the mission of the company you work for? When they *are* compatible, you'll find great excitement and energy.

Next month, we'll explore the remaining items in the "Underneath It All" section. ♦TS♦



# 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 14,000 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>

## 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

[www.ocstc.org/contractme.asp](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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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

## 2006 Spotlight Awards

The nine Southern California STC chapters are sponsoring a Spotlight Awards technical communication competition. For feedback about your publications, and recognition, enter your work! Categories are online communications, technical publications, and technical art.

The due date for entries is Sept. 15. Fees start at \$75 for STC members and \$100 for non-members, with discounts for multiple entries. Enter today at [www.ocstc.org/competition.asp](http://www.ocstc.org/competition.asp), where you can find more information.

Judges and volunteers for the competition are still needed. Judges see some of the best work in technical communication, help to set standards for excellence, and add prestigious experience to their résumés. This year the Atlanta STC chapter judges our entries and we judge theirs. Contact Karen Bergen at [kbergen@comcast.net](mailto:kbergen@comcast.net) if you are interested, or if you have questions about entering the competition. ♦TS♦

Orange Juice:

## Membership News

By Michael Opsteegh, OCSTC 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Membership

**OCSTC Members: 260**

**STC Members: 14,686**



One of the greatest benefits of joining STC's Orange County Chapter is the opportunity to meet people and network with colleagues. The more contacts you have, the more valuable you are as an employee, manager, or business owner. Your network helps you solve problems and fill positions

more quickly because you have more resources at your disposal.

A wide-reaching social and professional network also acts as a safety net; if you are laid off or forced to relocate, you can tap into your network to land a job quickly. Everybody knows somebody who is looking to fill an open position.

How can STC help you expand your network? STC is the most recognizable organization promoting technical communication. Your membership is an international passport to speak with any other member. "Hi, I'm also a member of STC," is a welcome way to introduce yourself.

The Society holds conferences and seminars, which

are great places to meet people just like yourself. Additionally, STC maintains an international membership directory. People you meet at conferences and seminars can look you up by name to contact you (provided you have not elected to restrict your information).

How can OCSTC help you expand your network? OCSTC affords you the opportunity to meet fellow technical communicators from Orange and surrounding counties by holding monthly meetings. There are a lot of familiar faces at the monthly chapter meetings, but the new faces we see each month make the meetings exciting. The chapter meetings attract a diverse crowd.

The meetings are widely attended by nonmembers, nontechnical communicators, managers, recruiters, and consultants. It is important to know and be known by such a diverse group of people.

For membership information, please e-mail Michael Opsteegh at [octechwriter@yahoo.com](mailto:octechwriter@yahoo.com).

◆TS◆



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# Calendar of Events

- September 5 OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6 p.m., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine
- September 7 Los Angeles STC Chapter Lunchtime Forum, Embassy Suites Hotel, El Segundo
- September 19 OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6 p.m., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana
- September 20 San Diego STC Chapter Meeting, 6 p.m., Marriott Courtyard in Kearny Mesa.
- September 21 Inland Empire STC Chapter Meeting, Peking Chinese Restaurant, Riverside

## September Meeting Topic

### Communicating with Joe and Jane Consumer



Our September meeting features authoritative tips and insights about a talent that nearly every employer treasures—communication with the general consumer. Karen Bergen brings an abundance of qualifications to her presentation, including:

- Publishing multiple articles on writing for consumers in STC Proceedings
- Producing, since 1993, a wide variety of manuals for user-friendly PC hardware and software documents for Epson America.
- Pioneering in Epson America’s “Out of the Box Experience” documents for consumers

In addition, Karen has held numerous responsibilities in STC, such as:

- Mentor Program Coordinator for the Los Angeles chapter of STC (LASTC)
- President of LASTC
- General Manager of the recent Southern California Spotlight Awards for excellence in technical writing

Clearly, Karen has a record of stellar success working on consumer documentation, as well as working for us, the STC membership.

The message from Karen’s experience is to “stop writing documentation and start working for your users.”

Find out how from the expert, at our meeting Tuesday, Sept. 19, at 6 p.m. ♦T♦

OCSTC Mailing Address  
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