

**Contents**

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

**End of the Year Banquet***By Gigi Vert*

Members enjoy an evening of dinner, commendations, and a rousing rendition of "R-E-S-P-E-C-T."

**Letter from the Editor***By Margaret Garcia-Nokes*

Let your voice be heard.

**Birth of Boston-IA***By Steve Greffenius*

Interview with the founder of a budding information architecture and Internet accessibility organization.

**The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less***By Debbie Swanson*

The Well-Fed Writer gives tips and techniques to establishing and maintaining a freelance writing business.

**Macromedia Products Deliver***By Peter Bates*

FreeHand and Studio MX are powerful Web design and development tools.

**Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators***By Matthew Nankin*

Hollywood has turned its back on some of technical communicators' most important professional principles.

**Society Highlights***By Amy Anson*

Chapters create past chapter presidents club and an STC University, national chapter seeks Fellow recommendations by October deadline.

Which format of the Boston Broadside do you prefer?

Mark your calendar with competition dates and deadlines.

**What the Competitions are About***By Joan Wotkowicz*

Learn more about how to enter or judge in this year's competitions.

**The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!***By Carol Hobday*

Plan of action for you and your company.

**PDF Files and the STC Competitions***By Denise Dennett*

STC-INFO survey responses supporting the decision to not introduce PDF-specific judging criteria this year.

**"What, Me Judge?"***By Charlie Burzalow*

Kick back and show off your skills.

**Announcements and Activities**

Chapter and professional activities.

**Chapter Membership Reports***By Zohra I. Mutabanna*

Members who joined, were reinstated, or transferred in.

**Broadside Online Survey**

Let us know what you like and dislike about the Boston Broadside Online.

**Broadside Staff***By Margaret Garcia-Nokes*

The STC members who bring you the Boston Broadside.

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly TOC](#)

Where can you find Information Design programs focused on you?

Find out @ [bentley.edu](http://bentley.edu)  
**BENTLEY COLLEGE**  
 The Business School for the Information Age

**Resources**

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Program Report

### STC Boston Chapter is Poised for Continued Success

#### *End of the Year Banquet*

*By Gigi Vert*

There is just one word to describe this year's Boston Chapter STC End of the Year Banquet—inspiring. About 80 people were present to celebrate the past year's accomplishments and hear about the chapter's future goals. Attendees included incoming and outgoing Boston STC council presidents, members and officers, Regional Director-Sponsor Jon Baker, several past presidents, members of various committees, many STC members, and family and friends.

The hostess of the evening, outgoing president Taryn Light, acknowledged the presence of distinguished guests. Nan Fritz, founder and chairperson of nSight, the evening's corporate sponsor and an exhibitor, brought with her Phil Sullivan, VP of Recruitment and Placement; Jason Crea, Business Development Manager; and Dan Cote, Director of Marketing. STC Fellow Marguerite Krupp was also introduced.

After enjoying an excellent meal in the lush surroundings of The Hartwell House in Lexington, the attendees heard an insightful speech from guest speaker Dr. Carole Cowan, President of Middlesex Community College. Dr. Cowan spoke of the challenges facing the public higher education community in its attempts to develop a diverse workforce.



Middlesex Community College President Dr. Carole Cowan addresses STC members.

Next, awards were presented to members and other supporters for their outstanding contributions to the STC Boston Chapter. Taryn and immediate past president Hans Fenstermacher presented "thank you" gifts to the outgoing 2002-2003 Council, and others who support the Boston Chapter. Certificate awards were given to managers of the following committees: SIGs, the Membership, Programs, and Competitions.

Special awards were presented to Barbara Casaly, who received the Carol A. Landers Award of Volunteering; and Cheryl Magadieu, who was this year's Distinguished Chapter Service Award winner. Both members were

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

lauded for their dedication to the Boston chapter.

Taryn announced the chapter was awarded the titles of "Chapter of Excellence" and "Chapter of Distinction"—the latter for the second year in a row! Click [here](#) to see a complete list of past and present [award winners](#).



Outgoing Chapter President Taryn Light passes the gavel of leadership to incoming President Jim Lidington.

With a fond farewell speech in which she told attendees, "When you get involved, you realize how much there is to do," Taryn introduced incoming president Jim Lidington. Jim accepted the "official" president's gavel saying he was enthusiastic about serving as president. Jim presented the new council, who pledged to "give more to get more" by working together to grow services in order to provide more value to memberships.

The evening concluded with lively entertainment from The Boss Tunes, direct from the Dallas conference. Everyone enjoyed the group's rousing rendition of "R-E-S-P-E-C-T."



Anna Pratt, Taryn Light, Hans Fenstermacher, and Steve Jong of the "The Boss Tunes" in action.

The 2003 Boston Chapter STC End of the Year Banquet was a success because it celebrated the chapter's notable accomplishments and provided attendees with the opportunity to share an evening of laughter and inspiration. One member summed it up best when she said, "there are tremendous opportunities to get involved."

***Gigi Vert is a professional in the IT industry.***

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Letter from the Editor

### The Boston Broadside is Changing

*By Margaret Garcia-Nokes*

The next edition of the *Boston Broadside* will have a different look and feel, to ease production efforts and hopefully increase readability and readership. If you'd like to have a voice in this process, first vote on which format of the Broadside you prefer to read: the HTML or the PDF version? [Vote online](#), and send additional comments or suggestions to me at [bostonbroadside@yahoo.com](mailto:bostonbroadside@yahoo.com).

Do you know FrameMaker? Have you worked in layout, graphic design, or converted documents to PDF or HTML? The *Broadside* would love to hear from you in the next few weeks.

## In this Issue

Take a peek at the content of this issue, where you will find program articles summarizing June events (End of the Year Banquet and Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process). Link to competition information and encourage your workplace to enter. Read book, tool, and movie reviews on *The Well-Fed Writer*, Macromedia products, and Seabiscuit.

Look to the *Broadside* recurring columns to learn more about chapter, society and other local organizations' happenings in the Society Highlights and Announcements and Activities columns.

***Margaret Garcia-Nokes is an instructional designer and managing editor of the Boston Broadside. You can reach her at [bostonbroadside@yahoo.com](mailto:bostonbroadside@yahoo.com).***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Program Report

### Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process

*By Carol Macbain*

Steve Maguire's book *Debugging the Development Process* was the topic for June's Idea Watch SIG meeting, led by Colleen Strahs. Maguire's many years of experience as a project lead at Microsoft convinced him that software development teams can write high quality code while sticking to the development schedule—a realistic schedule, that is.

#### Improving the Product Comes First

One of Maguire's key principles is that a developer's primary goal must be to improve the product. This means eliminating, as much as possible, the small daily interruptions that keep team members from writing code. Number one on his list of things to avoid is meetings, which not only take up valuable time, but can also demoralize the team if they focus on things that have not been done. Maguire says email messages can effectively keep people up to date on what has been accomplished.

For necessary meetings, Maguire says:

- Know the purpose of the meeting and make sure to accomplish it.
- Schedule meetings so they don't cut up a block of prime work time (i.e. before or after lunch or at the beginning or end of the day).

Email and reports also distract developers from their work. Maguire suggests checking email at fixed times, up to three times a day, and acting on or deleting each item on the spot. He says reports are usually not worth the time it takes to write them, especially when the information has already been communicated orally.

#### Where Do We Fit In?

As technical writers, we certainly understand the distractions of email and meetings when trying to focus on a project. But we hope it is not our documentation reviews and our email requests for clarification that are being "ruthlessly" eliminated from the developer's daily grind. Maguire does include a quick mention of documentation as one of the things that indirectly improves the product, but members felt that Maguire's focus, totally on the developer, was a little out of date. Now, companies are increasing the role of writers in the development process by integrating them into the team.

Given that writers could be dumped into the category of unwelcome interruptions, we need to respect the developers' time and do everything we can to make it easy for them to give us the information we need to do a good job.

#### Work Smarter, Not Longer

Maguire is not a fan of the 80-hour workweek. He prefers to analyze the situation when the schedule starts to slip, find ways to solve the problem, and adjust the schedule to reflect reality. He shows how—after time for lunch, dinner, a little down-time, and a few personal errands or tasks—the twelve-hour day looks more like the usual eight or nine hours. He strongly warns against expecting longer hours to fix a project that's slipping. We can all attest to the fact that people deserve to have a personal life, and it's gratifying to know that a good product can be released on time without undue stress on developers and writers

Team flexibility is also something Maguire values. When training new team members, he makes sure they work

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

on a variety of projects. He even recommends getting rid of your best programmer in order to let him or her move on to more challenging projects. Other members of the team will improve their skills and fill in the gap. The company as a whole benefits from more people with varied skills and less mental stagnation.

### **Develop Systems**

Another key technique that contributes to a good product delivered on time is to always develop systems that will improve the development process. With software, this translates into fixing bugs immediately and requiring the person who wrote the messy code to debug it. Not only does this reward the more efficient programmers who can move on to new features, but it makes the schedule more accurate by avoiding a lot of unplanned work at the end.

Improving the process by planning ahead to avoid pitfalls and developing systems with positive feedback loops is worthwhile for software development, documentation, and almost anything you set out to do. Steve Maguire's book, published in 1994, still has useful tips for project management of any type.

### **What's Up Next**

The Idea Watch SIG is starting up again in September with a new list of books on business, usability, project management, and other topics of interest to technical writers. Please share your book suggestions with Colleen, and join us next month.

***Carol Macbain is a technical writer and Idea Watch member. You can contact her at [CJMacbain@aol.com](mailto:CJMacbain@aol.com).***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Professional Organizations

### Birth of Boston-IA

*By Steve Greffenius*

Boston-IA ([www.boston-ia.org](http://www.boston-ia.org)) is a new organization bringing together information architecture and Internet accessibility. Designed for information architects, information designers, technical communicators, and other professionals concerned about the usability and accessibility of electronic information, this organization has grown from conception to reality in only a few short months.

I spoke recently with P.J. Gardner, Boston-IA founder and STC member, about what accounts for the group's rapid growth.

**Steve:** How did Boston-IA come about?

**P.J.:** Last winter, I was enrolled in a graduate certificate program at Northeastern University called Accessible Web Design. It's the first program I know of that focuses completely on accessibility. The final project for the first course, Communications and Interactive Media, was to build an accessible web site. As I planned the project, I invented an organization that I would want to belong to, and I developed a site for it. Before I knew it, professor Michael Salvo, and my fellow students had joined the organization!

In March, I had an informational interview with Bill Buchholz, chairman of the Information Design and Corporate Communication department at Bentley College. I told him about my imaginary organization, and he said, "Make it real." He offered to help, and I took him up on it. I planned the kickoff event, to be held at Bentley in June, enhanced the web site, and enrolled people in my personal network as founding members. Both Bill and Neil Duane, the instructor for our second course in the Accessible Web Design program, agreed to talk. Bentley arranged for the space, and I publicized the kickoff meeting on the mailing lists I subscribed to. Soon word got around, and we had lots of people registering, even beyond the initial mailing lists.

**Steve:** Tell me about the kickoff event. What did the speakers talk about?

**P.J.:** We had an excellent evening. The kickoff event was held in Bentley's beautiful academic technology building and its Design and Usability Testing Center. We only had space for 50 people, so, unfortunately, we ended up with a long waiting list. I had no idea that so many people would be interested. We will definitely arrange a larger space for our next event!

The speakers for the evening were Bill Buchholz and Neil Duane, and I moderated. Bill Buchholz teaches information design at Bentley College. He provided a definition of information architecture and talked about how there would always be a need for the tasks of information architecture, even if the exact job title is something else. Neil Duane is an expert in Internet accessibility. His remarks focused on why accessible web sites are good business. He spoke eloquently about why people need accessible web sites and provided a wealth of information about people with disabilities that was new to many of the people attending.

**Steve:** What do you think accounts for the fast start?

**P.J.:** Virtually everyone who attended the meeting became a member, and many people have joined through the Web site and e-mail since then. I think the focus of this organization is unique. People are eager to hear more about making their information accessible to a wider audience.

In web site design, an information architect in charge of the user interface has a huge impact, not only on usability but also on the accessibility of the design. That's the individual who sees to it that the web site meets the needs of

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

all its users. I think Boston-IA is taking off so quickly because it fills a need for information about making information accessible that people need right now.

Accessible web sites address the needs of many groups: people who are blind or have low vision, people who are Deaf or have hearing loss, those who have impaired mobility, people with learning or cognitive difficulties, and computer users as they age. Interestingly, the same techniques that work for disabled people result in more usable sites for all people. Everyone wants clean pages and sites where information is easy to find. Every visitor to a web site wants good content. Visitors also want to find the needed information easily. The information architect is the right person to design a site that meets these standards.

**Steve:** What other activities is Boston-IA involved in?

We arranged a visit to the Adaptive Technology for Information and Computing (ATIC) lab at MIT shortly before the June kickoff event. One of the interesting technologies on display there was JAWS, a screen reader for people who are blind. JAWS goes through the HTML used to create a web page and converts it to spoken words. A skilled web developer, following accessibility guidelines, can create HTML that is especially adapted for screen readers, and a skilled user of JAWS can parse and listen to the contents of a web page quickly.

We were also active in promoting and participating in a breakfast presentation by Northeastern's University College at the end of July, called "Accessible Web Design Is Good Business." The students in the Accessible Web Design program helped determine the winner of the first annual award for Outstanding Accessible Web Design, which was presented to Wells Fargo and Company by University College. The meeting was followed by an optional tour of Northeastern's adaptive technology facilities in the Snell Library.

**Steve:** What are the member benefits of Boston-IA?

**P.J.:** We provide resources on our web site to help people learn about accessibility, we allow our members to post personal profiles to help them promote their services or to help find jobs, and we have a members-only discussion group that allows members to share ideas. I am sure we will add lots more benefits as the organization grows. Membership provides discounts at meetings— although our fees are relatively low— and e-mail messages about opportunities to learn more about information architecture, usability, and Internet accessibility.

We will be holding events quarterly, the next one in late September, and we hope to offer workshops on various topics, as well.

**Steve:** What plans do you have for Boston-IA in the future?

**P.J.:** I have three focuses in mind:

- We can advocate for accessibility in design. We want to make people aware of the need for accessible web sites.
- We also want to teach people how to create accessible web sites and other information designs, so they're able to incorporate good practices in their work.
- Finally, we want to make connections with people who are concerned about usability for *all* users.

Boston-IA's next meeting, on September 30 at Bentley College, will feature Joel Sklar talking about creating accessible web sites. For information, visit [www.Boston-IA.org](http://www.Boston-IA.org)

**Steven Greffenius, principal of TechWrite Publishing, is a writer and publisher in Westwood, Massachusetts. Contact him at 781-223-1396 or [steveng@TechWritePublishing.com](mailto:steveng@TechWritePublishing.com).**



# Boston BROADSIDE

September/October 2003

Vol. 61, No. 1

Newsletter of the Boston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Book Review

### The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less

By *Debbie Swanson*

*Author: Peter Bowerman. Copyright 2000 by Fanove Publishing. \$19.95 US paperback, 282 pages. ISBN: 0-967-05984-4. <http://www.wellfedwriter.com/>*

If you have ever contemplated freelance writing, Peter Bowerman's *The Well-Fed Writer* is well worth reading. Whether you are considering branching off as a technical writer, or have been toying with more creative pursuits, the book provides a practical roadmap for getting started on your own. The information is geared not at a specific type of writing, but addresses the overall business of establishing and maintaining a freelance writing business.

Bowerman describes the freelance lifestyle as "enviable" for many obvious reasons: flexible schedules, being your own boss, high income potential, and tax benefits. Along with these positive points, however, Bowerman details many of the common pitfalls and less glamorous aspects, particularly for those coming from the nine to five corporate world. The first five chapters focus primarily on the early, practical considerations to address before making the leap to freelance.

The remainder of the book provides information on how to get your career going and keep it profitable. The text is thought invoking, asking "what if" questions and making suggestions. Bowerman gives ideas for networking, tapping into your own background and personal interests, and finding new directions and sources for work. He outlines solutions to common obstacles, such as how to build up a portfolio from scratch or how to make a cold sales call. These chapters provide fresh perspectives and ideas for the novice and seasoned freelancer.

A good portion of the book addresses how to seek work, using conventional and non-conventional methods. Bowerman stresses the importance of constant marketing, and suggests establishing "systems" to streamline the process. For example, he promotes spending time early on developing a set of backbone resources—such as form letters, a work sample packet, and other standard tools that you will routinely draw upon and alter as needed for each new prospect. The appendices include samples of these as well as marketing materials.

Chapter 13, "Do's, Don'ts and Don't Forget's," is one of the more useful for the new freelancer. It lists tips on basic work etiquette and maintaining your reputation as an independent businessperson.

If you are thinking of shifting your writing focus to a non-technical venue, Chapter 14, "What Will You Be Writing?" previews many profitable areas of writing, such as marketing brochures, scripting, speeches, ad copy, and others.

Filled with inspiring tips for the freelance writer, Bowerman balances encouraging information with practical checks and balances to keep readers grounded. The end result is a positive outlook for the freelance writer.

***Debbie Swanson is a freelance technical and business writer. She can be reached at [debbie@swansonwriting.com](mailto:debbie@swansonwriting.com).***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

**Contents**

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

Copyright © STC Boston 2003

**Competitions 2003—2004**
**What the Competitions are About**
*By Joan Wotkowicz*

Each year, the Boston and Northern New England chapters of the Society for Technical Communications (STC) hold competitions for technical communicators. You can enter your work or judge in one or more of three competitions:

Competition	Type of Documentation
Technical Publications	Physical media (printed documentation)
Online Communication	Online media (electronic documentation such as Online Help and Web sites)
Technical Art	Physical media or online technical art products.

The competitions accept entries in a wide range of categories, including hardware and software user documentation, training materials, marketing materials, reference guides, magazine design, technical illustrations, quick reference cards, annual reports, and more.

**Judging in the Competitions**

Judges in each competition attend a Judges Orientation session in October. During Orientation, you will learn about the consensus judging process, review the criteria for evaluating entries, and spend time practice judging.

All judges attend consensus judging sessions in early November. Judges work in teams to review their assigned entries, discuss their evaluations, agree on an award level, and fill out feedback forms for the entrants.

In some cases, you will be able to review your assigned entries prior to consensus judging day. Judges in the Technical Publications competition receive their entries to review in the weeks preceding consensus judging. In addition, judges in the Online Communication competition who elect to judge Web entries will be able to review their assigned entries via URL until consensus judging day. However, all judges attend consensus day to complete their evaluation with their judging team members.

For more detailed information about judging in the competitions, go to the [Judges Overview](#) page. When you are ready to register to judge in one or more competitions, fill out the [electronic registration form](#).

**Entering the Competitions**

To enter your work, you must register online and make your entry available for consensus judging in early November. For more detailed information about entering the competitions, go to the [Entrants Overview](#) page.

You need not be an STC member to enter the competitions, and you can submit more than one entry. Your peers judge your entries, and you will receive detailed feedback from judges experienced in technical writing and art.

When you are ready to enter your work, fill out the [electronic registration form](#).

**Awards**
**Resources**

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

Some entries earn an award from the STC, which represent levels of accomplishment based on STC standards. Three levels of awards are given, as follows:

- **Merit** — Consistently meets high standards in most areas. There may be a number of major or minor flaws, but the entry still exemplifies proficient technical communication.
- **Excellence** — Consistently meets high standards in all areas. There may be a single major flaw and a few minor flaws. The entry clearly, though slightly imperfectly, exemplifies an exceptional understanding of technical communication principles.
- **Distinguished** — Clearly superior in all areas. There are no major flaws, and few, if any, minor flaws. It is an outstanding example of technical communication principles.

#### **STC International Competition**

Entries that receive a Distinguished award at the local level are automatically entered into the STC International Competition and compete with entries from around the world.

*Joan Wotkowicz is a member of the Boston STC and is a Principal in Sebring Design, a technical communications design and development firm.*

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Competitions 2003-2004

### The Competitions Are Fast Approaching—Always!

*By Carol Hobday*

"I really meant to enter this year... I wanted to, but suddenly, the deadline for entering is here and I'm not ready."

Is this you? If so, here are some suggestions to consider as you develop a plan of action to be ready for next year! Integrate the competitions into your planning process. Consider these questions:

- **What's done?** — Most projects include a wrap-up session. Add a discussion of competition-worthiness to the agenda. If you decide that a print document is headed to the competition, now is a good time to make sure you have three copies to enter. Plus, you involve the whole project team, not just the writers, in the discussion.
- **What's old?** — At the end of the year (fiscal, calendar, or otherwise), take a look back at what you've done. What was the best? What was new? What could benefit from professional feedback?
- **What's new?** — As you look ahead, particularly if your company has a formal evaluation process, be sure to include entering the competition as one of your goals. What new projects are coming your way? Knowing they're headed for the competition will add that extra something to your planning—and boost next year's evaluation!
- **What's hot?** — What does marketing think is cool? No doubt you put extra effort into that product's documentation. Don't forget to let marketing know when you receive an award!
- **What's not?** — Remember that you can enter each document only once, so if you entered User Guide version 3.0 in the competition last year, you won't be able to enter User Guide version 3.2 this year. Maybe this is a good time to reconsider the doc set. What's missing? What could (or should!) be reworked or created—and what would make a great competition entry?

Once you evaluate the situation you will see—you DO have stuff to enter!

See you at the competitions! And don't forget to sign up to be a judge and gather even more ideas on entering!

*Carol Hobday is the co-chair of the online competition committee and is a Localization Program Manager at Polycom in North Andover.*

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Competitions 2003-2004

### PDF Files and the STC Competitions

*By Denise Dennett*

A quote from last year's competition:

"My company delivers documentation as PDF files; they no longer print hard copy. So I printed out the PDF files, went to Staples, and got them bound as inexpensively as possible there. I wrote a note in the entry form explaining this, but I still got comments from the judges about the poor quality of the binding. Our 3 books all won Merit awards, but I know they would have done better if the production issues had not lowered our scores."

Recently, the STC Boston/NNE Technical Publications Competitions Committee has been discussing whether or not we should change how we evaluate PDF entries. For the past several years, entrants could enter a PDF document into the Online Communications or Technical Publications competitions. The entrant would choose which competition to enter based on how the end user was expected to use the document. PDF files entered into the online competition were judged using the online communication criteria; PDF files entered in the Technical Publications competition were judged using the guidelines for printed entries.

PDF documents, though, are a hybrid. PDF files need to be optimized for print so that the end user can print out either the entire document or individual pages. But they may also be read online, if only to find the pages the user wants to print, so the PDF file needs some online functionality. The Technical Publications competition required three printed copies, and the judges never saw the PDF files online. Any online functionality was lost. If the document was printed in black and white, all color features that made the online version usable became hindrances in the printed version.

Recently, I sent a survey to the STC-INFO mailing list. Before the Technical Publications Competition Committee determines how we should judge PDF files, we wanted the opinions of the Technical Communications community.

#### Survey Results

I received 52 responses, and would like to share a compiled summary of the survey. Not all of the responders answered all of the questions, some gave several answers to individual questions, and most of the answers were free form. This was not a scientific survey, but a tool to solicit opinions and information from our peers.

All of the responders indicated that their company delivers documentation as PDF files. These companies ranged from huge multinational corporations to year old startups. The majority of responders had been delivering PDF files between three and five years (22 responses), and a few had just started. One brave pioneer has worked with PDF documentation for 10 years.

#### Why use PDF

Cost was the most popular reason to deliver PDF documentation (24 responses); second was the ability to provide timely, frequent, and easy updates (9 responses).

Additional reasons cited were ease of distribution (8 responses) and customer preferred or requested (5 responses). One responder required the security of password-protected PDFs to prevent file edits. Responses also pointed to single sourcing as an objective.

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

Some companies duplicated all of their documents in PDF and hard copy (3 responses); others deliver all of their documentation only in PDF (12 responses); and most companies had a mix of methods, heavily weighted toward PDF delivery.

The types of documents that are still being printed included:

- Installation Guides (11 responses)
- User Guides (6 responses)
- Quick Reference/Quick Start Guides (5 responses)
- Read this First/Release Notes (5 responses)
- Administration Guides (5 responses)

### ***Customer Feedback***

The following questions asked why responders deliver PDF documentation, and what choices they make to support PDF over hard copy formats.

The survey included a question about what type of feedback the responders received from their customers. "Positive" and "none/no complaints/unknown" were the largest responses, both with 15. Other feedback with one or two responses included: like both PDF and hard copy, don't like restrictions, prefer print, like ability to print more than one. It appears that customer acceptance of PDF documentation is split right down the middle.

When asked if they redesigned any part of their documentation to support PDF delivery, 27 responded that they did not. Others answered they included symmetrical pagination, additional bookmarks and links for items not generated automatically, and added navigation options. A few indicated they had all H1 and H2 headings start at top of page; had their entire system redesigned; provided additional print-friendly version; or removed all interactivity to optimize for print.

What assumptions were used about how users would print the PDF? Most answered that no assumptions were made, or that users would have access to a black and white laser printer. Many indicated users would print selectively, 3 responders said users would print the entire book.

### ***PDF Entries in STC Competitions***

The survey then asked if the responder had entered a PDF file in the STC Competitions. Most did not answer, while six entered the printed version of the doc, and four had never entered either a PDF file or a hard copy document. No one indicated that they had ever entered a PDF file, although as the Coordinator, I know that we have received PDF files as entries before, and some have won awards.

Reasons why people had not entered seemed to be general and not specific to PDF files. The responses will help all competition committees better facilitate entries. Publications usually were not entered because people did not think they had a chance of winning, or that their products weren't good enough, and the competition was too tough. People were also too busy with deadlines during the entry period.

### ***Judging Criteria***

When asked, most (24 responses) thought PDF files should not have different judging criteria for the Technical Publications competition, though many commented there should be criteria for readability/navigation (13 responses). Although the competitions committee agrees that readability and navigation improve the usability of PDFs, we have no way to judge these facets because we require printed documents.

Based on the results of this survey and our lengthy discussions on the subject, we have decided that we, the Technical Publications Committee, will not introduce PDF-specific judging criteria this year.

### ***Value of STC Competitions***

The STC Competitions provides more value than just awards. Three trained judges who return comments back to the entrant evaluate each entry. These comments point to what is done right, and usually provide suggestions for improvement. People who think their work is not competition ready just might be surprised at how good their documents really are. Last year, two of the three Best of Show winners were first-time entrants. Winners of distinguished awards vary from companies with huge departments and resources to lone writers.

Please consider entering this year's STC Competitions. We expect to start registering entries in early August.

***Denise Dennett is a Contract Technical Writer, currently at Terason, a Division of Teratech in Burlington, MA. Denise is also the STC Boston/NNE Chapters Coordinator for the Technical Publications Competition. She can be reached at [dennettd@aol.com](mailto:dennettd@aol.com).***



## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Competitions 2003—2004

### "What, Me Judge?"

*By Charlie Burzalow*

"What, me—a judge?" For many technical communicators, that is the first reaction when a colleague suggests participating in the STC competitions. It was my reaction when an STC friend and long-time judge broached the idea. But, I took a chance last year, and now I'm hooked.

Judging is a tremendous experience. Like stepping off a lifeboat on to a tropical island, you encounter a rich landscape of unexpected benefits. Is there a new technology that you've been aching to try? It's here. Want to have a little fun with your skills? Got that, too. Need to shake off the cobwebs and expand your horizons? Be our guest.

Never judged before? No problem. The STC Competitions team has developed a user-friendly environment. Come to the orientation session. The senior judges walk you through judging day, the process of evaluation, reaching consensus, and recording results. You receive a packet to take home and peruse at your leisure. It has sample forms, and lays out the criteria and goals of the competition.

Judging day is the best part. Come early, and kick back with coffee and doughnuts. It's a great time to do a little networking. The senior judges outline the process once more, and then the group splits into small teams to review the entries. Each team has a senior judge to provide guidance, but before long, everyone gets into the act. Judges try out each entry, draft comments and suggestions, and almost as an afterthought, assign a score. There is a break for lunch and a little more networking. In the afternoon, you judge more entries, then get together as a group to review results and determine which entries advance to the international competition. You are home in time for supper.

What did you gain from your day? You demonstrated your skills in a congenial atmosphere of skilled professionals. You contributed your insight and experience to fellow technical communicators. You experienced the best and latest products of your colleagues.

There are three competitions, held in the autumn: hard-copy (Technical Publications), electronic (Online Communication), and art—technical, of course (Technical Art). Each experience is a little different. You might try them all. As it turns out, putting on the competitions is quite a big deal. The organizing committees are fun, and have room for you as well. Information is available at <http://www.stc-boston.org/competitions/index.shtml>. Enjoy.

***Charlie Burzalow is a senior technical writer, an STC member, and a new judge. He lives in northern Massachusetts.***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

**Contents**

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

**Tool Reviews****Macromedia Products Deliver***By Peter Bates***FreeHand MX**

For years, erasing vector objects done in a draw program like Adobe Illustrator® or CorelDRAW® wasn't so easy. You had to cover them with stroke-less white objects to give the illusion of obliteration. Now Macromedia FreeHand MX® has an elegant solution for this problem. An eraser whose "erasing tip" can be programmed, just like the one in Adobe Photoshop®. It may not sound like much, but it's a big step.

There are more tool enhancements in this release of FreeHand MX, which was delayed from the Macromedia MX suite release a few months back. The gradient tool has grown up. Not only can you specify a gradient fill, but you can also manipulate its shape, making it rectangular or conical, for example.

The gradient handles that control the expanse and direction are easy to use. The trace tool is a powerful component, allowing you to specify its sensitivity in picking up adjacent colors or sections of a bitmap; however, the more complex the bitmap (such as a photograph), the more complicated the tracing becomes. I suggest using the tool at first with simple graphics of only a few colors. You can now add a host of effects, fills, and strokes to one selected object. For example, an object can have a 3-pt stroke and a bevel effect, all branched under the same Object Properties box. This powerful product is now integrated into the MX family, which means they all have the same look and feel. You can also import the files into Flash and Fireworks (but not Dreamweaver).

**Studio MX**

If you have been working with Dreamweaver® 4.0 or if you're considering doing so, this is the package for you. Unlike Photoshop® 7.0, it is a major upgrade to the Dreamweaver, Fireworks®, and Flash® programs. For Dreamweaver, the upgrade provides a spiffier interface. No longer do you have to switch back and forth between viewing the HTML file editing panel and the file list panel. You can display them both on the same screen; however, I would only recommend this feat if your screen is set to at least 1024 x 768 resolution. Otherwise, I would use the tab-clicking feature to hide one panel. Another feature: you can turn on grids and rulers to determine where you are on the screen. An improved CSS design panel now has a tree structure that makes it easier to distinguish locally defined styles from global ones.

Dreamweaver MX® integrates seamlessly with Fireworks, the MX web graphics component, and Flash, the animation component. Like Adobe Photoshop's ImageReady component, Fireworks allows you to slice up a graphic and create hotspots and buttons. This designer's dream helps you avoid that boxy HTML code look that many amateurish web sites have these days. When you are done designing the graphic, you can then save it as an HTML file that you can call up in Dreamweaver. An HTML table delineates the components of the Fireworks graphic. Select the table, click Edit in the Properties box, and you are back in Fireworks, where you can hone your graphic even more. If you've never used Flash before, run the excellent tutorial because this product has a fairly steep (but rewarding) learning curve. You are in effect editing a film, whose components involve time segments rather than graphic or textual ones, although you can edit these other two components within the program. Flash too has greatly improved from its previous incarnation. Within its powerful Timeline, you can resize and cut multiple frames. Flash now locates many common functions within the Properties panel rather than in multiple windows, panels and boxes. There are many other enhancements that make this a premier product suite (like the FreeHand® vector graphics program and ColdFusion®), but space limitations prevent me from talking about them further. Try Macromedia Studio MX® yourself! It gets the work done.

**Resources**

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

Visit [www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com) to learn more about FreeHand and Studio MX.

***Peter Bates runs Bates Communications, a publication, promotion, and Web design company. He can be reached at [pbates@batescommunications.net](mailto:pbates@batescommunications.net) or [www.batescommunications.net](http://www.batescommunications.net).***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Movie Review

### Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators

*By Matthew Nankin*

One of the more noteworthy movies this summer is "Seabiscuit," the story of an unlikely underdog in the form of a 1930's racehorse that brought together a down and out, depression-era country. Unfortunately for technical communicators, the story is another sad example of how Hollywood has turned its back on some of our most important professional principles.

One of the first characters we meet is Johnny "Red" Pollard (Tobey Maguire) who must leave his Irish immigrant family to earn money at his one natural talent—horseracing. In spite of his innate abilities, we never witness "Red" take any courses, read any journals, or join any professional organizations that would undoubtedly make him a better jockey. Although he improves to become of the sport's best and most widely known talents, we are never provided with any details of how he excels. Instead, we are left with typical movie anecdotes about overcoming personal adversity in a world with few friends and no family. Red's lack of academic skills soon becomes very important.

In 1938, Seabiscuit's owner, Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), challenges the owner of Triple Crown winner War Admiral in a match race to determine which is the better horse. Shortly before the race, Red, the only jockey Seabiscuit has ever known, is severely injured and is unable to ride his most important race. From his hospital bed, Red recalls to his replacement everything he has learned about riding the world's most beloved racehorse. Sadly, at no point has Red taken the time to document precisely how to handle Seabiscuit.

The replacement jockey, George "The Iceman" Woolf (real life Hall of Fame jockey Gary Stevens in his motion picture debut), follows the same sorry path. George never bothers to record or write down any of the valuable information Red provides to him. Instead, he just listens as his subject matter expert describes years of experience. As technical writers, we are painfully aware that George will in no way be able to recall and use all the information. However, the filmmakers lead the general audience to conclude that the proper application of this information is the difference between victory and defeat in Seabiscuit's most important race.

In the film's most poignant moment, Charles Howard asks his injured jockey, "What are you so mad about?" We can only hope that Red finally realizes that an opportunity to showcase the value of technical communicators has been sacrificed for a horseracing legend.

***Matthew Nankin is a senior member of the STC and movie critic. You can reach him at [mgnankin@yahoo.com](mailto:mgnankin@yahoo.com).***

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Society Highlights

### One Chapter Begins A Past Presidents Club; Another Returns To School With STC-U

*By Amy M. Anson*

As another year begins for STC chapters, many new leaders are adjusting to their roles. As they learn the ropes, they may be in need of advice, especially from previous leaders. One chapter is developing a new way in which the experiences, observations, and advice of its former chapter presidents can serve as a resource. In December 2002, the Houston chapter STC approved a proposal for initiating a past presidents club. The idea was proposed a few years ago when the chapter was considering how to keep former members involved in chapter activities. Under this concept, former leaders remain involved and can offer historical perspective when difficult decisions arise.

Houston chapter members who have served as a chapter president in any STC chapter are automatically members of the club. The only exception is a former president serving on the administrative council. Those members cannot participate until after their council commitment ends. The primary purpose of the club is social, with occasional opportunities provided for "like minds" to share memories and ideas and to stay in touch.

The immediate past president acts as a chapter liaison for these members, carrying suggestions and information between the former presidents and the current president. Confidentiality is a key aspect of the club. The current chapter president can rest assured that any concerns will remain with members of the club.

The Houston chapter anticipates that one major benefit of its new club will be motivating other members. With past presidents sharing their experiences and knowledge, Houston members may be inspired to run for office and gain the experience required to become a future chapter president.

For more information on the Houston chapter's past presidents club, contact Deborah Long at [dlong@bigcity.net](mailto:dlong@bigcity.net).

Deborah M. Long, a past president of the Houston chapter, is president and owner of Long Communications, a technical writing and editing consulting firm in Houston, Texas. She has been active in the technical communication field for 22 years.

*Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the February 2003 issue of Dateline Houston, the Houston chapter STC newsletter. It also appeared in the May/June 2003 issue of Tieline with changes. It appears in the Boston Broadside also with changes.*

### Heading Back To School Via STC-U

STC chapters consist of technical communicators with wide ranges of experience, from entry to senior level. Most members are eager for opportunities to sharpen existing or to learn new skills. The past few years the Willamette Valley chapter has offered an educational program called STC-U (STC University) to address members' various interests.

STC-U was launched in 1997 by the late Margot Beutler, a past president of the Willamette Valley chapter. It began with a series of hands-on HTML classes targeted to working professionals. Classes grew to include other topics such as Java-Script, training, and online writing. At least two workshops are offered each year and are conducted by experts such as JoAnn Hackos, Ginny Redish, and Lance Gelein. The topics range from project management to e-learning.

In addition to their teaching duties, STC-U instructors serve a large role in the organization. Instructors propose

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

classes to the administrative council and present a schedule to help coordinate publicity efforts. Once the instructor receives approval, he or she takes care of facility arrangements, announcements via the chapter's Web site and mailing list, and registrations by email or on the day of the event at the door.

While the STC-U classes provide affordable education to members, they also bring a profit to the Willamette Valley chapter. Tuition is based on a minimum class size of eight students. Expenses include a modest hourly rate for the instructor, cost for facilities, and workbook printing. Both STC members and nonmembers are welcome to enroll in STC-U, and STC members pay a reduced rate.

While the pace of STC-U has shifted over the years (some years there is a greater focus on workshops than classes, and vice versa), the Willamette Valley chapter feels that its university continues to support members who seek to learn, grow, and explore technical communication.

#### **Committee Seeks Associate Fellow Recommendations**

The rank of associate fellow is recognition a member's achievements in the field of technical communication and/or in the work of STC. Each fall, the associate fellows nominating committee asks chapters and members to recommend STC members for the rank of associate fellow.

Any voting member of the Society may make a recommendation. The associate fellows nominating committee receives the recommendations and forwards the names of selected candidates to the STC board of directors for approval. Candidates must have been active in the field of technical communication for at least 15 years and members of the Society for at least 10 years.

Nominating guidelines and information describing the nominating process can be found on the society's web site at [www.stc.org/afellows\\_nominating.asp](http://www.stc.org/afellows_nominating.asp).

There is a new form that lets chapters and individuals nominate candidates online. This form also contains guidelines to help you assemble a complete nomination package.

New associate fellows will be elected by the STC board of directors in January 2004 and will be recognized at STC's 51st Annual Conference in Baltimore. Completed nomination packages must be returned to the Society office no later than October 17, 2003. Contact Larry Kunz at [lkunz@veritas.com](mailto:lkunz@veritas.com) for more information.

#### **Updated Administrative Directory Available Soon**

In July, an updated Administrative Directory was posted to [www.stc.org/directory/directory.asp](http://www.stc.org/directory/directory.asp). Please review your information in the directory and advise the Society office of any changes.

#### **Membership at A Glance: As of June 2003**

- Total members: 19,015
- Members residing in the US: 16,270
- Members residing in Canada: 1,711
- Members residing elsewhere: 1,034
- Total chapters\*: 153

\* Includes 35 student chapters.

***Amy Anson, a past Boston Broadside managing editor, is a senior editor at Forrester Research in Cambridge, MA.***



# Boston BROADSIDE

September/October 2003

Vol. 61, No. 1

Newsletter of the Boston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Announcements and Activities

Register to enter, judge, or participate in the **STC competitions**. Check out <http://www.stc-boston.org/competitions/index.shtml> and spread the word.

Come to an **upcoming program or workshop**. Watch for upcoming events at <http://www.stc-boston.org/programs/chapterevents.shtml>.

Looking to hire somebody? Check out the **Member Profile** page at <http://www.stc-boston.org/resumes/profilelist.shtml>. Looking for a job? Submit a profile and browse current openings on the **Job Bank** page at <http://www.stc-boston.org/jobbank/bank.shtml>. You will need your STC member id and password to log in.

**Get involved** in the Chapter's activities at <http://www.stc-boston.org/chapter-info/jobs/volunteers.shtml>.

### Boston Chapter Happenings

**Thursday, September 18:** The Online Information Special Interest Group will host Neil Perlin, one of STC-Boston's most accomplished and active presenters, who will talk about XML tools for Word. To register for the meeting in advance, go to <http://www.stc-boston.org/sigs/edoc.shtml>.

**Friday, September 19:** Registration for entries in the Publications competition closes.

**Friday, October 3:** Registration for entries in the Art and Online competitions close.

**Monday, October 6:** The Idea Watch Special Interest Group will hold a program on Single-sourcing. Visit <http://www.stc-boston.org/sigs/ideawatch.shtml> to register for the event and link to the reading material. For more information about this SIG, visit <http://www.ideawatch.org/>.

**Tuesday, October 7:** The Consulting and Independent Contractor Special Interest Group will conduct an open forum to discuss rates, making job contacts, self-employment concerns, marketing techniques, agents vs. working independently, and exchanging job leads and referral sources. See <http://www.stc-boston.org/sigs/contractors.shtml> for more information.

**Wednesday, October 15:** 50th Birthday Party, STC to the Movies. Learn more and register at <http://www.stc-boston.org/programs/programs.shtml>.

### Other Upcoming Events

**September 30:** Boston IA has a program on "Using Style Sheets for Web Accessibility." Visit <http://www.boston-ia.org/meetings.html> for further details.

**October 1:** WITI (Women in Technology International) has a program coming titled "Women Leading Reinvention and Innovation." Visit <http://www.witi.com/boston/meeting.php?id=1613> for more information.

**October 6-7:** The Documentation & Training 2003 conference will be held at Boston University. The cost for the

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

two-day conference is \$599, and includes 32 sessions, 2 keynotes, food/reception, and materials. Visit <http://www.doctrain.com> or <http://www.doctrain.com/pdf/doctrain2003.pdf>.

**October 8:** The Central Massachusetts chapter of ASTD will have a program on "Needs Assessment: Are you meeting the training needs of your clients?" at the Holy Cross College in Worcester. Visit <http://www.cmastd.org/Meetings.htm>.

**October 14:** ISPI will hold a program on "Coaching: Real Life Stories." See <http://www.mass-isp.org/> for more information.

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

**Contents**

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

**Chapter Membership Reports**

*Compiled by Zohra I. Mutabanna*

**July 2003 Membership Report**

Total STC Members: 19,015

Total Boston Members: 926

<b>New Members: 10</b>	<b>Reinstated Members: 7</b>	<b>Members Transferring In: 4</b>
A. Brigid Cassidy	Jon Bove	Rajini Prakash
Susan R. Cockrell	J. P. Brown	Jorana E. Till
Maia M. Daly	Helen Gallagher	Mark R. Courtney
Allen W. Dean	Shala K. Howell	Helen Lenane
Cecilia L. Doucette	Maria C. Muia	
Amal Gupta	Jennifer S. Mullen	
Kevin Medeiros	Donna B. Norman	
Lois E. Mitchell		
Brian J. Pienta		
Jonathan Winsor		

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

**Resources**

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

Copyright © STC Boston 2003

## Boston Broadside Staff

### Managing Editor

Margaret Garcia-Nokes ([bostonbroadside@yahoo.com](mailto:bostonbroadside@yahoo.com))

### Associate Editors

Rich Folger ([folja@yahoo.com](mailto:folja@yahoo.com))  
 Christine Jacobs ([christine\\_d\\_jacobs@hotmail.com](mailto:christine_d_jacobs@hotmail.com))  
 Bernice Jordan ([giordana\\_01@yahoo.com](mailto:giordana_01@yahoo.com))  
 Patricia McLaughlin ([PMcloughlin@mccrackenf.com](mailto:PMcloughlin@mccrackenf.com))  
 Beverly Surette ([BAS815@adelphia.net](mailto:BAS815@adelphia.net))

### Society Highlights Editor

Amy Anson ([grovest@earthlink.net](mailto:grovest@earthlink.net))

### Membership Coordinator

Zohra I. Mutabanna ([zo@mutabanna.com](mailto:zo@mutabanna.com))

### HTML Producers

Lisa Cordeiro ([cordeiro@rcn.com](mailto:cordeiro@rcn.com))  
 Margie Gooding ([mgooding@margiegooding.com](mailto:mgooding@margiegooding.com))  
 Jennifer Hrazdil ([jhrazdil@lynx.dac.neu.edu](mailto:jhrazdil@lynx.dac.neu.edu))

### Broadside Webmaster

Christina Rothwell ([broadside@stc-boston.org](mailto:broadside@stc-boston.org))

### Web Content Reviewers

Anna Volynskaya ([anyatver@hotmail.com](mailto:anyatver@hotmail.com))  
 Sheila Falcey ([sheila.falcey@verizon.net](mailto:sheila.falcey@verizon.net))

### Chapter Webmaster

Rich Feitelberg ([webmaster@stc-boston.org](mailto:webmaster@stc-boston.org))

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

## Contents

- ▶ [Cover Page](#)
- ▶ [End of the Year Banquet](#)
- ▶ [Letter from the Editor](#)
- ▶ [Idea Watch SIG Examines the Development Process](#)
- ▶ [Birth of Boston IA](#)
- ▶ [The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency as a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less](#)
- ▶ [What the Competitions are About](#)
- ▶ [The Competitions Are Fast Approaching - Always!](#)
- ▶ [PDF Files and the STC Competitions](#)
- ▶ ["What, Me Judge?"](#)
- ▶ [Macromedia Products Deliver](#)
- ▶ [Seabiscuit Disappoints Technical Communicators](#)
- ▶ [Society Highlights](#)
- ▶ [Announcements and Activities](#)
- ▶ [Chapter Membership Report](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Survey](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Staff](#)
- ▶ [Broadside Policy](#)

## Boston Broadside Policy

The *Boston Broadside* is the newsletter of the Boston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. The newsletter is published at <http://www.stc-boston.org/broadside> six times per year for the benefit of STC members. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. Any opinions expressed in the Boston Broadside are the opinion of the authors and not necessarily the STC or the Boston Chapter.

We welcome articles, advertising, and news about meetings, workshops, and courses that pertain to technical communication. When you submit an article, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Please send article ideas and articles to Margaret Garcia-Nokes at [bostonbroadside@yahoo.com](mailto:bostonbroadside@yahoo.com).

Article submission deadlines are as follows:

- October 1 (for November/December issue)
- December 1 (for January/February issue)
- February 1 (for March/April issue)
- April 1 (for May/June issue)
- June 1 (for July August issue)
- August 1 (for September/October issue)

For information about advertising rates and procedures, contact Anne Louiselle at [alouiselle@attbi.com](mailto:alouiselle@attbi.com).

Advertising submission deadlines are as follows:

- October 14 (for November/December 2003 issue)
- December 10 (for January/February 2004 issue)
- February 15 (for March/April 2004 issue)
- April 15 (for May/June 2004 issue)
- June 17 (for July/August 2004 issue)
- August 19 (for September/October 2004 issue)

[Broadside in PDF](#) | [Print-friendly Article](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)



# Boston BROADSIDE

Newsletter of the Boston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

[Job Bank](#) | [Programs](#) | [Resumes](#) | [SIGs](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Workshops](#)

## Resources

- ▶ [Search Broadside Online](#)
- ▶ [Index of past issues](#)
- ▶ [Boston Broadside Sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Society for Technical Communication, Inc.](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Web Site](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Chapter Contacts](#)
- ▶ [STC Boston Calendar](#)

Copyright © STC Boston 2002

## Boston Broadside Feedback Form

The Broadside staff is working very hard to provide the best newsletter possible. We would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete this form. Your feedback will go to improve the site and help us provide the service possible. Thanks.

First Name (optional)

Last Name (optional)

E-mail Address

What type of articles would you like to see more of?

Please enter any additional types of articles you'd like to see:

Please rate the usefulness of the newsletter.

If you answered "not useful" to the above question, please tell us how we can improve the newsletter:

Please rate the length of the articles.

Average number of articles read per issue:

Indicate the newsletter format you prefer:

Suggestions for future article topics:

What do you like about the newsletter?

What do you dislike?

What feature would you like to see?

Would you like to be contacted about writing an article for Broadside?      Yes      No

Thank you and come again soon.

To start again, press:

To send form, press: