



Boston Broadside

The Boston Chapter Newsletter

May/June 2009

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President's Message



Pondering Over the Last Year

By Pamela Sarantos

We are approaching the end of our 2008-2009 program year, which ends with our June program. I would like to take this time to review some of our Council's accomplishments.

I had support from a team who was extremely passionate about offering benefits and programs that more closely met the needs of our members. We made it a point to reach out to you, our members, more often by periodically sending surveys to learn more about your program preferences and professional needs.

We enjoyed meeting so many people, and the programs offered a variety of for-

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Document Accessibility with Adobe PDF

By Paul Carlotto

Who knew that Adobe had a dedicated group that deals with document accessibility for all of the Adobe products? I didn't. This is just one of the many facts I learned at the March Technical Editing SIG program, hosted by Andrew Kirkpatrick, senior product manager at Adobe Systems.

Andrew's team not only works on accessibility issues for the entire Adobe product line, but also participates in Section 508 and W3C accessibility committees. He and his team also work with customers and standards groups.

Accessibility Standards

Andrew reviewed the standards of document accessibility that determine how people with disabilities, such as limited sight, deafness, and other physical limitations can access electronic information. A host of international, federal, and state regulations govern the accessibility standards, including the following:

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG v1.0 and 2.0), a W3C international standard
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in the United States
- Mandate 376 for the countries in the European Common Market
- In Japan, JIS X 8341-3

Andrew pointed out that Adobe products conform to all these standards. A properly generated PDF allows the user to hear the text using a text reader such as JAWS or Window Eyes. Acrobat Reader also supports the reflow functionality, which merges two-column documents into a single column for those who have difficulty scrolling.

Microsoft Word and Accessibility

Since Microsoft Word is the predominate word processing application, the Adobe group has produced some great documents that outline how to best compose Word documents that are accessible to people using Adobe Reader.

Some of the tips Andrew mentioned were:

- Design your source document with accessibility in mind. Use styles rather than character formats for headings and lists.
- Add alternative text descriptions to graphics.
- Use the Word column command and not tables to create multi-column documents.

Andrew also pointed out that Acrobat couldn't see the entire document map on Word documents produced on a MAC system.

For more information, check out the *Creating Accessible PDFs from Microsoft Word Documents* publication found at the Adobe Web site: <http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/training.html>.



Accessibility, continued on page 2

mats, such as panel discussions and speed tooling, a program in which five vendors and participants rotated to different tool stations in 20-minute segments.

Earlier this year, the Program Committee, led by Arun Jain, immediately refocused their plans to provide assistance to members who had lost their jobs. Through an arrangement with Northeastern University, we hosted a free program on job searching tips, which included a discussion on the job outlook and companies' needs. Program survey responses indicated that participants left feeling more positive than when they arrived. We also hosted a workshop by Karen Given-ter: *Turning Your Job Search into a Job Offer*.

Kevin McCauley spent numerous hours searching for SIG presenters. He also had to manage our challenge of finding a new SIG venue, and he continues to work toward finding flexible venue solutions.

Rebecca Hopkins, our Public Relations Manager, set up a Constant Contact Account and started a process in which flash messages are sent to our database of over 600 names to announce Chapter programs and programs of other organizations. She also included brief information about various other topics that may be of interest to our members.

With the help of a Middlesex Community College (MCC) student, Katie Lesesne, we were able to bring back a Student Outreach Program. In our first year, Katie arranged for Council members to speak at high school career days and to the students at MCC's Technical Writing Certificate Program. We also started a practice interview program in which documentation managers/senior writers interview graduating students to help them become familiar with interviewing for their first technical writing position.

Ellen Lidington continued to serve as Webmaster and was responsible for our entire Web publishing and Web maintenance needs. Barbara Casaly continued to help on Web projects, such as program posting and managing the job bank.

With Ellen's help, we made arrangements with a Web vendor who started work on enhancements to the Chapter's site. The Web changes will be done in phases; however, our plans are to complete the first phase for our next registration season in August.

Ed Marshall continued to lead the Tools and
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Creating Accessible PDF Documents

If you have followed the guidelines for creating Microsoft Word documents, then the PDF creation process will supply the accessibility features for your PDF document. However, you will need to be sure you properly define the PDF conversion settings.

If you are generating the PDF directly from Word, select the "Change Conversion Settings" option from the Adobe PDF in your Word toolbar. In the Settings tab, select the "Enable Accessibility and Reflow with Tagged Adobe PDF" checkbox. In the Security tab, be sure the "Enable Text Access for Screen Reader Devices for the Visually Impaired" is set as the default. You can find more detailed instructions in *Creating Accessible PDFs from Microsoft Word Documents*.

If you have a PDF document that was not produced as an accessible document, you can use Acrobat 9 Pro to make the necessary repairs through a series of document evaluation steps.

Adobe Resources

Andrew's group maintains a host of resources on the Adobe Web site. To access these resources go to <http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/>. Also, check out the accessibility blog (<http://blogs.adobe.com/accessibility/>). Here you will find a copy of the "Accessible PDF Creation from Word" reference card (<http://blogs.adobe.com/accessibility/pdf>) to which Andrew referred during the presentation.

Shareware Reviews

By Bill Dubie and David Sciuto

Miro, Miro

Since the demise of TV Tonic (rest in peace), we've searched for alternate sources of downloading and viewing our beloved Web videos, including DiggNation, The Onion, Rocketboom, and GeekBrief TV. Miro 2.0 fills that need nicely. We could import our RSS feeds and download our favorite programs in the background. Miro also suggested videos that piqued our interests, of which we wouldn't have been aware, including videos in HD.

Miro also acts as a video player that can play Quicktime, MPG, Xvid, AVI, and nearly every other format, including podcasts. Keep track of your streaming shows from Hulu and CBS with Miro—ensuring that you can view your favorite programs even when you're offline.

A bonus is that Miro, an open-source project, also acts as a BitTorrent client, simplifying the process of downloading torrent files and keeping the files in a single location. Do you create Web videos? Use Miro to publish your files as an RSS feed! Miro includes an online guide to what you need to get up and running.

Version 2.0 now includes widgets that facilitate subscribing to feeds and other sources. The well-documented Web site contains videos, guides, and FAQs to walk you through the setup and to verify that you're using all available features.

When it comes to viewing our online videos, we're Miro mortals.

Where to Get It: <http://www.getmiro.com/blog/2009/02/miro-20-is-here/>

Price: Free

Requirements: Any computer with an Internet connection (See site for further requirements.)

Technology SIG and presented a couple of programs. He continues to speak all over the country about various tools and in support of the STC and STC-Boston Chapter. Ed also stepped in as acting Chapter Secretary until we find a replacement in the next elections.

Rick Lippincott stepped in as acting Treasurer and Second Vice President. He also started the Chapter's social networking accounts on Twitter and Facebook. These groups are a good way of connecting with Chapter members from all over the country.

Sharon Popovsky jumped into taking over the tasks for developing the Chapter's newsletter, the Broadside. She has done a great job in managing and publishing the newsletter. Fortunately for us, she enjoys doing this and will continue as our Broadside editor.

Considering that a Treasurer's term is two years, you can imagine how difficult it must be to keep consistent financial records and have one place for managing the numerous files that accompany finances for a nonprofit organization, especially for a chapter as large as ours. Thanks to Cindy Cookson, our paid accountant, we are ensured that our finances are handled correctly and our current and historic records are in order.

In addition to the tasks involved in Cindy's paid position, Cindy volunteered her time to the Chapter and worked as our registration administrator. She also was our primary contact at the Hilton and worked with them to be sure our programs and dinner experiences were always positive.

Mark Decker led the Competitions Program, and with the support of Patty Morin, Mike Nelson, and Ellen Lidington, we ran a successful Competitions year. We also are thankful to have met Christine Shirey, who took over running the STACIES event.

We can never say this enough—please consider volunteering your time to the Chapter, whether serving on Council or volunteering on a Chapter committee. At programs or through e-mails, we heard from you with great ideas on new activities or other benefits we may consider offering to our members. It makes it easier for us to follow through with new benefits if our volunteer pool increases with different ideas from more people.

On June 17, please join us for our annual end-of-year celebration. This is the night we award the volunteers who helped us through-

President's Message, continued on page 4

A Snap to Capture

In the exciting world of technical documentation, and as inveterate travelers in that domain, we're always looking for good utilities to help us write high-quality documentation. And it doesn't hurt if those utilities are free.

WinSnap, from NTWind Software, is a neat little screen-capture utility that adds a bit of pizzazz to your documents when you need to insert an image of a computer desktop or simply an application window. It's the first we've seen with a simple interface that allowed us to place various shadows and other enhancements around a captured image. It also adds functionality to the old "Alt+Print Scrn" combination by popping up when you press those keys.

WinSnap can save screen captures in myriad formats, including PNGs, BMPs, GIFs, and TIFFs, so you're covered if you're documenting procedures for online or hardcopy. For a free utility, its options are impressive. You can choose the color of the surrounding border or shadow—and even its width (or you can use none at all). You can also choose a watermark to insert in your image, lending a bit of professionalism to your handiwork.

This utility also comes in handy if, for example, you need to send a screen capture of an error message to technical support.

Where to Get it: <http://www.ntwind.com/>

Price: Free for private use

Requirements: Any computer with Windows XP or Windows Vista

In Search of the Best Technical Document in the World

By Steven Jong

On Saturday, March 28, I served as a consensus judge at STC's International Technical Publications, Online, and Art Competition, in search of the best technical documents in the world. I've participated before, but this year was different—and not just because it was a 15-minute drive away.

As an experiment in cost cutting, the Society asked the Boston and Northern New England (NNE) Chapters, renowned for holding one of the strongest local competitions, not only to host the judging but also to provide the bulk of the judges. STC-Boston/NNE rose to the challenge, and many of the judges who came to the Nashua Crowne Plaza were local members with international judging experience, including:

- Alanna Blinn Casey (NNE)
- Cindy Clifford-Currie (NNE, Society First Vice President)
- Bill Gruener (Boston)
- Marguerite Krupp (Boston)
- Taryn Light (Boston)
- Steve Murphy (NNE)
- Neil Perlin (Boston)
- Wendy Yurick Wing (NNE president)

The Publications, Online, and Art Competition is one of the major events of the Society's year. Winners of Awards of Excellence or Distinction at chapter competitions are eligible for the International Competition. Winners of Awards of Distinction in each of the three categories in the International Competition are eligible for the Best of Show awards.

In Search of, continued on page 4

out the year. This year we asked the members for assistance in choosing an activity for this last program. This year's end-of-year awards celebration includes a wine tasting presentation. More details will follow by mid-May.

I appreciate the support I received from my Council members and the assistance we received from many other people who supported our Chapter this year. I am most fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a very committed team.

It has been a pleasure serving as President of the Chapter. I am ending my term feeling that serving on Council has enhanced my skills by learning from others' experiences and ideas. In addition, I have met many new friends and increased my networking pool.

I look forward to another active year on Council, serving as the Immediate Past President under the management of our next Chapter President, Arun Jain. Let's all show our support to Arun and our Chapter. Especially during this tough job market environment, it is a networking group like ours that helps us get through these times more easily. In addition, through STC and Chapter networking, we have a better chance of finding that one lead that can help us land a job or move into a new position.

I look forward to seeing you at the June 17 program.

Thank you,
Pamela Sarantos

Newton Community Education Offers Affordable Computer Courses

Want to learn more about Web graphics and multimedia? Programming? PC troubleshooting? New software applications?

Now's your chance! Newton Community Education (NCE) offers a wide range of highly interactive courses that you can take entirely over the Internet. All courses include expert instructors, many of whom are nationally known authors. NCE's online courses are affordable, fun, fast, convenient, and geared just for you.

Ready to explore?

Courses, continued on page 5

In the Publications Competition, entries are judged in one of six categories. Each category has slightly different criteria, but broadly speaking we looked at writing and organization, copyediting, and visual design and production, corresponding roughly to the work products of writers, editors, and illustrators. The criteria aren't rocket science, but highly practical considerations, such as how concise the writing is, whether there are copyediting mistakes, whether graphics are crisp and clear, and whether the work product is free from defects. We're not awarding prizes for the longest, most colorful, or most expensively printed entries, but to the best designed, best executed, and most effective entries.

My workload was ten entries, including annual reports, magazines, quick-reference job aids, training materials, and software manuals. As always, I learned new things from each entry and, like the other judges, I took pains to critique each entry as objectively, thoroughly, and constructively as possible, as if the entrant were a colleague asking for my opinion. It took several hours to review each entry and another hour or two to complete each judging form. So, it's a significant commitment of time, but one I can recommend.

The value to entrants at both the local and international levels is multifold. It's great to be recognized by your peers with an award, and it's good publicity for your employer or client. But there's also the value of feedback. How else can you get at least three—more if you're lucky!—professional technical communicators to closely examine your technical document and provide thorough feedback, and for a good price at that?

A comment on the best-of-show process: It's hard enough to compare a quick reference card with a 300-page software reference guide, but try picking the best-of-show winner! It's like comparing apples, bonsai, and chocolate cakes. I didn't participate in the final judging, but I can tell you that the process can be long and arduous. Sometimes though, the winner jumps out at you as being obviously superior to the other entries—distinguished winners, all!

Oh—and what about this year's best technical document in the world? Come to the Summit in Atlanta in May, and see it on display!

Steven Jong is a member of both the STC-Boston and STC-NNE Chapters and is also an STC Director-at-Large.

Out of Work? Looking for Ways to Network with Potential Employers?

By Mark Decker

Remember that time you heard about a great job that got filled without ever being advertised? And then you found out it was “someone-who-knew-someone” who got the job? You never even had a chance. Maybe you thought, “Some people have all the luck.” It was probably more about networking than luck. You have to network to be the “someone-who-knew-someone” in the hidden job market.

Networking is one of the top benefits you get when you volunteer to help one of our Chapter's Technical Communications Competition committees. You'll meet and work with people who can help put you on the inside track. People like to recommend people they know, and you get to show them why they should recommend you when that next unadvertised position opens up.

Right now, the Boston and Northern New England Chapters need people to organize and staff the 2009 Technical Communications Competitions. To meet people and demonstrate your skills, volunteer to lead or staff one of the competition committees. There are tasks to fit practically any schedule. Contact me today for complete information: Mark Decker, General Competitions Committee Chair, Boston/Northern New England STC, msdhusker@comcast.net, 603-566-0331.

Click here to view an online course catalogue: <https://www.ed2go.com/cgi-bin/oic3/newcourses.cgi?name=newtoncomed>.

Editor's Note: Submitted by Lauren MacArthur, C.P.C., Winter, Wyman & Co., lmac-arthur@winterwyman.com.

Consultants and Contractors: Tips for Entering the STC Competitions

By Bill Gruener and Karen Giventer

The process of entering STC competitions can be a great learning experience for technical writers. However, consultants and contractors may face some specific challenges when entering competitions—particularly when they seek permission from their clients to enter a project into the competitions. The following advice may be helpful as consultants and contractors approach their clients with the idea of entering the competitions.

Understanding the Advantages

- **Award-winning documentation supports the product.** If the documentation wins an award, salespeople, sales brochures, and all marketing collateral can boast the fact that product is backed up with award-winning documentation.
- **Award-winning samples enhance your portfolio.** Prospects view a winner! Without boasting, your prospects see that you're top talent.
- **Award-winning writers work for this client.** When recruiting other writers, an award-winning documentation team can be used to induce talented candidates to apply.
- **Award-winning documentation makes a statement about quality.** The feedback from the judges can be used to improve the next iteration of the documentation.
- **Award-winning documentation enhances performance reviews.** These awards will be a strong part of performance reviews. Other managers and individual contributors who were part of the documentation effort can be included in the awards.

Election Results: STC-Boston Chapter 2009–2010 Council

By Arun Jain

The election for the 2009–2010 Council took place in April. Following are the newly elected members:

Arun Jain, President

Rick Lippincott, First Vice President

Paul Carlotto, Treasurer

John Baker, councillor-at-large

Greg Bartlett, councillor-at-large

Linda Fritz, councillor-at-large

Bill Gruener, councillor-at-large



Continuing from the previous year is Ed Marshall as councillor-at-large. Pam Sarantos, our current President, moves to the position of Immediate Past President. We are still searching for a second vice president, a secretary, and one more councillor-at-large.

We are excited to have some very senior members with a history of service for the Boston Chapter. We hope to continue and build on the excellent work of the 2008–2009 Council. In the upcoming months, we will communicate to you the goals, agenda, and plans for 2009–2010 Council.

Please join me in welcoming our new Council. I encourage you to take every opportunity to get to know them better and to share your ideas and thoughts with them.

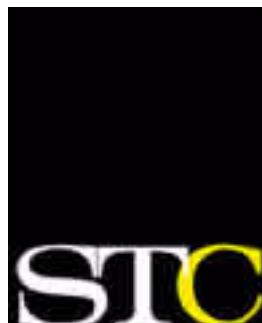
STC-Boston LinkedIn Group

By Richard Surko

LinkedIn is an online network of more than 30 million experienced professionals from around the world, representing 150 industries. Through the STC-Boston LinkedIn Group, you can network with other technical communication professionals in the greater Boston area and beyond. Through the Discussions and News sections of the group, you can discuss the latest developments and best practices related to Technical communication. You can also find help and advice, as well as access to specialized services and events. Join the group at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=97548>.

The STC-Northern New England Chapter also has a LinkedIn group. For more information about their LinkedIn group and the Chapter refer to <http://www.stc-nne.org>.

Note that you do not need to be a member of the STC to join either LinkedIn group. You will, however, need a LinkedIn profile.



Getting Started

- Decide which technical communication creations you will enter.
- Determine whether the submission can be entered as is or needs altering.
- Check with Marketing.
- Check with Legal. **Important:** Check with both groups!

Selling the STC Competitions

You may encounter resistance from the client because of concerns about the permission needed, loss of confidentiality, and lack of understanding about the Competitions.

Here are some ideas for selling the Competitions to your client:

- 1) Start immediately: At the outset of the project, talk with your client about the possibility of submitting the project to Competitions. Tell your client you intend to create deliverables that will be worthy of awards.
- 2) Specify the advantages of the Competitions.
- 3) Build STC credibility. Show your client the STC-Boston Web site and the society-level Web site. Let your client know that STC is a respected international organization.
- 4) Explain the approval process.
- 5) Offer to handle the logistics. Let your client know that you will take care of all the entry requirements; there will be no extra work for others.
- 6) Handle confidentiality concerns. If confidentiality is an issue, suggest ways that you can disguise the confidential items. For example, if the documentation is about an internally used system, show how you can alter screen shots so that confidential information is not shown.

Ask the following:

- 1) What concerns do Marketing and Legal have, and what explanations do they want?
- 2) What are the organization's policies regarding logos, branding, statements about the organization, dissemination, and disclosure of information?
- 3) What do they need to know about STC and the Competitions?

Push, but be prepared to live with the "No!" and get your work done.

Indexing Society of Canada Conference

By Cheryl Landes

June 3–4, 2009
St. Michael's College
University of Toronto

This year's ISC/SCI Conference and Annual General Meeting sessions feature some of the top indexing experts from Canada and the United States:

- *Public Policy Indexing* (Enid Zafran)
- *Networking: How Do I Get Business?* (Elizabeth Macafie)
- *Cross-References* (Ruth Pincoe)
- *Indexing Niches* (Sylvia Coates)
- *Cindex Workshop* (Frances Lennie)
- *Marketing Panel* (Noeline Bridge, Carol Harrison, Clive Pyne, and Yvonne van Ruskenvend; moderated by Mary Newberry)

Ruth Pincoe will also facilitate a peer review during the conference.

Several networking activities are scheduled before, during, and after the conference. If you come early, join us for a tour of the Joseph Pope Rare Book Room in the Library of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies (PIMS) on June 2. Following the tour, Gabrielle Earnshaw, Curator of Special Collections and Archivist of the Henri Nouwen Archive and Research Collection, will give a presentation on the highlights of the book and archival collection at the Kelly Library. We will also have a pre-conference dinner at Foxes Den Bar and Grill (cost not included in the registration fee).

On June 3, the annual Conference Dinner and Show-and-Sell will be held at 5th Elementt, across the street from St. Michael's College. Enjoy award-winning fusion food, emphasizing Indian and Italian cuisines, and browse and purchase crafts made by fellow indexers!

On June 4, after the conference, another gathering will be scheduled. The location will be announced.

For more details about the conference and to check for updates, see <http://www.indexers.ca/conf2009.html>, or contact Cheryl Landes, Conference Committee volunteer for ISC at clandes407@aol.com

The Value of Technical Communication



With increasing demand for technical products, the technical communication field has grown. What used to be the strict discipline of creating and editing policies and manuals has now exploded into a rich field of communicating in many media as well as performing user analysis, applying usability methods, creating e-learning, and much more.

Technical communicators have become an asset to many companies with their understanding of technical processes, as well as their ability to communicate information in a clear and usable way to different groups, from consumers to end users. Technical communicators have the crucial job to plan, design, organize, write, edit, and test information. That information may be safety-critical, keeping consumers and employees from harming them

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The Broadside Staff

The *Boston Broadside* is published six times throughout the calendar year and would not be possible without the hard work of dedicated volunteers. Many thanks to the following people for their contributions:

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David Sciuto

Richard Surko

Thank you, everyone!

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Write for the Broadside

The *Boston Broadside* encourages Chapter members to share their skills, thoughts, and ideas with other professionals in the Chapter.

If you would like to write for an upcoming issue of the *Boston Broadside*, send e-mail to: boston.broadside@gmail.com

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. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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selves and others by unintentionally misusing products. That information may also be what makes consumers and employees productive and happy by showing them how to perform their tasks quickly and easily.

Some examples of people within the technical communication field are: content developers, documentation specialists, indexers, information architects, information designers, instructional designers, researchers, teachers, technical illustrators, technical writers and editors, translators, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, and Web designers and developers.

To learn more about technical communication, check out the following links:

- [Are you looking to learn more about technical communication?](#)
- [What's the difference between technical writer and technical communicator?](#)
- [Are you a manager considering hiring a technical communicator, or debating if you need a technical communicator?](#)
- [Are you a technical communicator who wants to keep up to date with industry news, trends, and best practices?](#)

Source: STC Web Site

About the Society for Technical Communication

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

For more information, visit us online at:

Society for Technical Communication

www.stc.org

STC-Boston Chapter

www.stcboston.org