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Tools of the Trade

Choosing Help Authoring Tools: What Factors Affect Your Decision?

By Char James-Tanny

Editor's Note: Part 1 of this article, [Choosing Help Authoring Tools: What Are Your Choices?](#), appeared in the November/December issue of the Boston Broadside. It outlined features of different Help authoring tools.

Your Users' Environment

While the other factors play a part in your decision, it's all for naught if your users cannot access what you produce. Consider the following environment issues:

- **Platform.** Are your users working with Windows, Mac OS, or some flavor of UNIX? Windows allows for the greatest flexibility when determining an output, as all outputs listed work on Windows. However, Windows-only solutions will not work with Mac OS and UNIX. (Although it is possible to use a Windows emulator with Mac OS or UNIX systems, all users must have installed the emulator.)
- **Operating system.** What flavor of Windows do your users have? Depending on the output you choose, you may need to know.
- **Available browsers.** Do your users have Internet Explorer or Netscape? Do they use Opera, Mozilla, K-Meleon, or Lynx? Each browser has its pros and cons, and different browser versions mean that you have to consider multiple scenarios. If the company has standardized on Netscape, then Internet Explorer may not even be available (which rules out some outputs).
- **Online access.** If you're going to deliver a 'Net-based solution, you may have to consider whether users have 56K modems, T1 lines, or something in the middle.
- **Security.** If your users request that nothing additional is downloaded (such as Java applets or ActiveX controls), then you'll need a pure HTML solution.

Your Development Environment

Before considering which output to produce, consider your development environment. Do you already work in Word, FrameMaker, or HTML, or are you planning to switch? Do you use or want to move to a database-driven tool? Are you wondering what else is available?

The following tools use Microsoft Word as their development environment:

- Doc-To-Help
- Microsoft's Help Compiler Workshop (HCW)
- RoboHelp for WinHelp (standalone or as part of RoboHelp Office)
- WebWorks Publisher WordHelp

If you use FrameMaker, then you can convert the FrameMaker files to an online output with Mif2Go or WebWorks Publisher. In addition, AuthorIT and RoboHelp HTML let you import .mif files. You can design a process where you import the .mif files each time, or you can move from FrameMaker to either of these tools.

To develop in HTML, you can use:

- Dreamweaver + Deva Tools (or just Dreamweaver)
- FAR (with an HTML editor)
- Microsoft's HTML Help Workshop (HHW, with an HTML editor)
- The HyperText Studio
- RoboHelp for HTML Help (standalone or as part of RoboHelp Office)



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To use a database-driven authoring tool with a built-in word processor, consider:

- AuthorIT
- Sevensteps

Output Features

If you need a special feature that overrides all others, then you may need to search a little further. I've listed some features that tend to be requested most often, and, where possible, the tools that support them.

Pure HTML is output that does not use or require Java, JavaScript, or ActiveX. AuthorIT provides pure HTML navigation by default. Other tools, such as WebWorks Publisher and RoboHelp HTML, can be forced to output pure HTML.

Valid XHTML is HTML that meets the requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) when analyzed by the W3C HTML Validator. At the very least, to produce valid HTML or XHTML, topic files must include both a valid DOCTYPE and CHARSET statement. None of the tools provide valid HTML "out of the box" (except for Dreamweaver MX). While it is possible to change the output files so that they validate, it means that a) you must know how to code valid HTML/XHTML and b) you must modify the resulting files every time you generate. You must also learn how your tool codes the HTML. For example, RoboHelp HTML uses proprietary Kadov tags, while WordHelp and AuthorIT apply CSS classes to all styles.

Full-text search lets users type words that they think exist in the output. Full-text search can use Java, JavaScript, or CGI. Most tools on this list use JavaScript for full-text search. However, by default, AuthorIT does not include a search tab, although the Help file does include instructions for hooking up a free CGI search.

Natural language query lets users type questions instead of just words (for example, "How do I format a paragraph?" instead of "format paragraph. "). None of the tools listed include natural language query, although it is possible to add it with an external tool (such as WexTech's AnswerWorks), or you can use RoboHelp Enterprise to add natural language query to its HTML-based output.

Cost

When it comes to Help Authoring Tools (HATs), you can spend as much or as little as you like. Prices range from free, to inexpensive (less than \$300), to mid-range (less than \$700), to high-end (more than \$700). For the most part, prices do not include support or upgrades, although that varies by vendor.

Note that prices change, which is why I haven't listed them here. You can get more information from the vendor sites. See the URLs in Part 1 of this article, *Choosing Help Authoring Tools: What Are Your Choices?*, in the November/December issue of the *Boston Broadside*.

Tools from different vendors that have the same terminology (such as "Enterprise") don't always include the same functionality. For example, AuthorIT's Enterprise Edition uses a SQL Server database, while RoboHelp's Enterprise Edition lets you create server-based WebHelp with natural language query and user reports.

Free tools include Microsoft's Help Compiler Workshop (HCW) and Microsoft's HTML Help Workshop (HHW). Jeremy Griffith of Omni Systems, makers of Mif2Go, has offered a free personal copy of Mif2Go to anyone who is laid off or to any underemployed consultants, with free e-mail tech support and upgrades for life. Visit the Omni Systems Web site at <http://www.omsys.com/> for more information.

Inexpensive tools include AuthorIT's Desktop Edition, Deva Tools, FAR, HyperText Studio (Standard and Professional Editions), Mif2Go, and Sevensteps Light.

Mid-range tools include AuthorIT Workgroup and Fixed Enterprise Editions, HyperText Studio Enterprise Edition, Sevensteps Standard, and WebWorks Publisher WordHelp.

High-end tools include AuthorIT's Floating Enterprise Edition, Doc-To-Help, RoboHelp Office, RoboHelp Enterprise, RoboInfo Enterprise, SevenSteps Professional, and WebWorks Publisher.

Support

Typically, the more expensive the tool, the more expensive the support costs, although this isn't always the case. Be aware that tool vendors can change their support policies! At this time, most vendors implement some of the following support plans:

- None
- Free (e-mail only or e-mail and phone)
- Pay per call
- Annual

- Subscription plans that include upgrades

Most tools also have related user groups, where peer-to-peer support is available around the clock. News servers and forums are also available.

One of the most popular user groups is **HATT** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HATT/>). With almost 2500 members, this lightly moderated e-mail list provides answers to questions for all tools, although most of the questions relate to RoboHelp.

The following list includes the URLs where you can join the appropriate group.

- AuthorIT. **User group** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/authorit-users/>)
- Deva Tools. **User group** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Helpweavers/>)
- Dreamweaver. **Support Center** (<http://www.macromedia.com/support/dreamweaver/>)
- Doc-To-Help. **Help Center** (<http://www.componentone.com/d2hhhelp/index.asp>)
- FAR. **E-mail support** for registered users. **Newsletter** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HelpwareFAR/>)
- HCW. No support offered by Microsoft. Ask questions at **HATT**.
- HDK. **User group** (<http://www.nullarbor.com.au/hdkug/>).
- HHW. No support offered by Microsoft. Ask questions at **HATT**.
- The HyperText Studio. (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hypertextstudio/>)
- Mif2Go. **Free e-mail** technical support for one year (<http://www.omsys.com/dcl/techsup.htm>)
- RoboHelp. **Help Community** (<http://www.helpcommunity.ehelp.com/>); **HATT**; and RoboChat, formerly Parametrica (e-mail only, mimailsrv@sfnovelist.com in the body, type *subscribe robochat Your email address*).
- Sevensteps. E-mail (support@sevensteps.com).
- WebWorks Publisher. **User group** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wwp-users/>). **Forums** (<http://www.webworks.com/forums>).
- WebWorks Publisher WordHelp. User group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wordhelp/>). **Forums** (<http://www.webworks.com/forums>).

Extras

Some Help developers are looking for additional features in a HAT. For example, if you want to single-source (not repurpose), then you need a tool that supports conditional text.

Multi-authoring support means that more than one developer can access the project at the same time, without having to worry about overwriting someone else's data and without using another tool to help track usage. AuthorIT, The HyperText Studio, and FrameMaker all provide multi-authoring support.

Conditional text lets you mark any amount of text and control which output it is published in. This lets you flag anything from a character to a paragraph and specify if it should be included in the online or printed output. AuthorIT, Doc-To-Help, FrameMaker, The HyperText Studio, WebWorks Publisher, and WebWorks Publisher WordHelp all provide conditional text.

Translation means that you can use the tool to produce your output in multiple languages. You have to design a process that works for you, which typically includes getting the source files or data to a translator and then importing the new information into a new project, but the process depends on the tool.

- With AuthorIT, your translators can work in the same library to translate the topics. Currently, double-byte languages are not allowed.
- You can use RoboHelp for single-byte languages, such as French, Spanish, German and Italian, and purchase an Asian Edition for Japanese, Korean, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese.
- FrameMaker, Sevensteps, WebWorks Publisher, and WebWorks Publisher WordHelp provide for many languages (single- and double-byte).

Work force proficiency and experience are important if you need to hire someone, either permanently or on a consultancy basis. While there are developers proficient in all tools, typically RoboHelp Office and FrameMaker have the greatest number of experienced users.

Management lets you keep an eye on the project as a whole. AuthorIT and Sevensteps include optional project management modules that you can install. AuthorIT also includes built-in content management functionality, letting you use version control or track the history of any object.

Combining Tools

Back in the mid-90s, developers never used just one tool to create output. They used whatever tool was right for the job. Then, as the tools matured, many developers started to use only one tool. Current tools offer different functionality. By combining tools, you can play to their strengths and use each tool for what it does best. For example, use:

- AuthorIT for multi-authoring and reusable content with RoboInfo or RoboHelp Enterprise for

- feature-rich server-based output
- Any tool with HHW for the latest features from Microsoft
- Any tool with FAR for added development functionality

Learning Tips

Learning a particular HAT is easier if you already have some basis in the underlying technology. For example, learning Deva Tools will be easier if you already know Dreamweaver. Learning Doc-To-Help and AuthorIT will be easier if you already know how to structure documents and use consistent styles. Learning WebWorks Publisher will be easier if you know Frame.

Once you learn one tool, you can usually transfer your skills and knowledge to another. However, if you switch from a Word-based tool to a non-Word tool, be sure to focus! Otherwise, you'll try to use Word functionality where it doesn't exist.

Conclusion

Choosing a HAT is not an easy task. Work your way through the list of factors, ruling out those that don't apply. Compare those that remain and you'll soon have a short list of tools to consider. Then you'll be well on your way to selecting the right tool for you.

Char James-Tanny has more than 20 years of experience as a technical writer and is well known in the Help community for her knowledge of online Help tools and concepts. Author of two books, she speaks frequently at conferences around the world. Char is a senior member of STC's Boston Chapter and a 2003 WinHelp Microsoft MVP. You can reach her at CharJT@helpstuff.com.

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President's Message

Happy New Year!

So What Are You Doing With It?

By Taryn Light

"Think like a person of action and act like a person of thought."

The STC Boston Chapter Council wishes you a very Happy New Year! We hope that your holidays were wonderful.

Did you make a New Year's resolution such as, "I'll help one person get a job this year!" or "I'll help my company save money this year" or "I'm going to get a job this year!" Well, whatever your New Year's resolution, focus on it and work hard to make it happen!

To help you out, [Jim Lidington](#) and his Programs Committee have some excellent programs planned for your professional growth. Mark your calendar and come to them all. In addition, bring a non-member friend to a program and win a prize! Let me give you a preview of our upcoming programs January through June.

- At the January 22 program, **Mike Paciello** will talk about "Accessibility and Section 508 Compliance." Mike will tailor his presentation to introduce this topic to folks who may not be aware of this important compliance issue that most software and hardware technical publications groups will soon be facing, if they aren't already.
- In February, our program is all about winning! Last fall we held Technical Publications, Online, and Art Competitions. **Ellen Lidington** and her Competitions Committee planned The STACIEs Competitions 2002 Awards Banquet for Wednesday, February 26. Come get the inside scoop about what makes a winning entry as the top winners and their judges share their perspectives with you.
- With the world literally at our fingertips via the Web, our March 19 program proudly presents **Hans Fenstermacher** starring in "Global Schmoba! What's in It for Me?" Hans will provide tips on what it means to think globally and on how you can reduce the word count in your communications to help your company save money (and possibly your job!)
- Come to the April 16 program and learn what **Chris Boucher** has to say about "New Ways of Developing Help." Chris will focus on help systems architecture in the J2EE environment using the latest JSP, Titles, and Struts technology.
- The May 14 program will delve into "Usability for Technical Writers." Check out the [Programs page](#) for more details.
- We are also planning our June end-of-year bash. If you have any ideas for a great location, please send them to me.

I would like to personally invite you to attend all our STC programs, not just for the fabulous knowledge that you will gain, but also to enjoy getting together with fellow STCers once a month. Networking is very important, whether or not you have a job. But friendships are even more important than professional networking; they last a lifetime.

Taryn Light, President of the STC Boston Chapter, is the Content Solutions Manager at ArchiText in Methuen, MA. You can reach her at taryn.light@verizon.net.

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STC@50

A Sock Hop???

By Marguerite Krupp

That's right! To raise money to create the Helen Loeb Scholarship, the Boston Chapter held a fifties-style sock hop in the fall of 1987 at Hillcrest Hall in Waltham. No poodle skirts were in evidence, and we didn't make much money, but everyone had a good time. Mercifully, the chapter found other ways of funding this annual scholarship!



Learning a new step raises the question of whether technical writers can *follow* directions as well as *write* them.



Now these are *real* dancers . . . and some of them are even wearing socks!

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Our Sock-Hop DJ, with turntables and real vinyl records. We understand that the shoes in front of the table did NOT belong to him.

Marguerite Krupp is an Associate Fellow of STC and a member of STC@50, the Society-level committee working on the STC's Golden Anniversary Celebration.

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Membership

These Are My Reasons, What Are Yours?

By **Mike Murray**

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in [Memo to Members](#), the newsletter of the Orlando chapter of the STC.

When I spoke recently about why it's so important to renew your STC membership, and especially important during tough economic times, little did I know that the very next day the Society office would distribute e-mail invitations to begin renewing online right away!

Renewing was easy for my co-worker and me. Throughout the year, we mention STC and how it benefits what we do at our jobs. When it came time to renew, it was just a matter of confirming the obvious. A brief e-mail to our supervisor resulted in an immediate "Yes!"

It really doesn't take much thought to realize why, regardless of how good or bad the economic conditions, severing your ties with STC is a very bad move. If, for some reason, my employer had been unwilling to pay my \$125 renewal, I would have done whatever it took to renew it myself—*whatever it took!* Why?

Lifeline

I think of STC as my lifeline to the technical communications profession. If not for the connections that come from mailing lists, meetings, and publications, I would feel like I'm on a desert island, wondering what wonderful new things were developing in the world around me. I couldn't *stand* that! I pride myself on delivering the best possible products and services to my customers, and if I'm not keeping in touch, I can never be sure if I'm doing that. I owe a *lot* more to my customers and myself!

Networking

I don't know that I ever really valued networking quite as much as I do since joining STC. I've found out again and again just how small this world is as I've met people with similar interests who have energized me and changed my life in so many ways. I've seen time and time again members who have persistently networked and found technical communications jobs that make them excited to get up in the morning and start their workday. You can see it in their eyes in the chapter meetings. It's extremely fulfilling, and I want more!

Friendships

While I certainly expected to develop new friendships in STC, I never ever expected that the friendships I would make in STC would become the best and richest I would have *anywhere*. The next time you see me, I invite you to look into my eyes and ask me about the friendships that I've made in STC, and you'll know that I'm not exaggerating in the slightest. I want to hang around these people for a long time, so you can be sure I'll always renew my membership.

Well, those are my reasons. What are yours? Is it the high-quality publications? I literally read *Intercom* cover-to-cover every month. What a great magazine! Is it the Annual Conference? I think I've been to seven or eight, but who's counting? Is it our chapter meetings with the quality content that you've asked for? Is it the chapter members themselves who are so energetic and who seemingly would do anything in the world they could to help you? Whatever the reason, it doesn't take much thought to know that renewing your STC membership as soon as possible is a "no-brainer."

Whatever it takes . . .

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Editor's Note: You can renew your membership at the [Members Only](#) section of the STC Website.

Mike Murray is President of the Orlando STC Chapter. You can reach him at mike.murray@lmco.com.

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Web Site Review

Internet Resources for Technical Communicators (IRTC)

<http://www.soltys.ca/techcomm.html>

By Arifa Ghani Rahman

*Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the November/December 2002 issue of the *Nor'easter*, the newsletter of the Northern New England Chapter of the STC.*

Keith Soltys's Web site, featuring a wide range of Internet resources for technical communicators, is a rich haven for people in our field. Soltys, a technical writer for fifteen years from Canada, says that he began this site after a presentation on Internet sources at the STC Toronto Chapter in 1994. Since then, the site has continued to grow and provide a variety of resources for technical communicators.

The IRTC site contains myriad items to which technical communicators need almost daily access, including:

- Articles
- Bibliography of technical writing resources
- Book reviews
- Software reviews
- Language references
- Copyright information
- Information about html, SGML and XML
- Listings of different technical writing organizations including STC
- Career resources,
- Information on usability, Online help and documentation, World Wide Web publishing, and desktop publishing.

Articles for these sections have been written either by Soltys himself or submitted by other people in the field.

Simple and easy to navigate, with no loud colors or fancy graphics, this site provides links to all manner of information related to technical communication. The section on Desktop Publishing and Graphics, for instance, contains information on DTP; clipart; icons and images; tools used in DTP such as FrameMaker, MS Word, Paint Shop Pro and Photoshop; and links to sites with typography and font selections. Soltys marks particularly useful sites with a red 'Recommended' sign, so people do not have to hunt for the good sites. However, it would be in the audience's best interest to explore the wide variety of links that the IRTC site has to offer.

One recommendation for Soltys would be to include a short biography on the site so that users know this has been put together by a professional in the field, and is therefore quite reliable.

This site is highly recommended for both beginner and expert technical communicators and is also an excellent resource for IT professionals.

Arifa Ghani Rahman is the Managing Editor of the *Nor'easter*, the newsletter of the Northern New England Chapter of the STC. She can be reached at rahman_arifa@hotmail.com.

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Project Management

Planning Successful Projects

By Mike Corrigan and Steven Greffenius

"Once burned, twice careful," they say, or something close to that. Often folks feel that they have ended up with something they didn't expect or want after they hire someone to develop a technical document. We have discovered a strategy that helps avoid this sense of grim disappointment. Writers can create a well-defined set of expectations, and develop sound plans to realize a project's goals. These early-stage activities contribute materially to successful completion of a project later on.

Our work assignments are most successful when we follow a well-established development procedure. At the outset, we divide the work into several phases that require different kinds of collaboration. This method increases interaction between us and the other key individuals that are involved in the project. Most importantly, it gives those individuals plenty of opportunity to guide our efforts. The completion of each phase becomes a milestone in the project, where both the project manager and the writer can measure progress toward the initial set of goals.

The plan must encompass all three of the major phases in a documentation project: research, writing, and publication. A couple of factors, though, make development of a good plan something of a challenge. First, the boundaries between the major phases aren't terribly well defined. Moreover, each phase has unique activities and sub-phases. The project plan has to develop along with the project itself in order to take these uncertainties and complications into account. That requires participation from everyone on the project team.

Editor's Note: Part II of this article explains how plans help move a project from one phase or activity to the next. It will appear in the March/April issue of the Boston Broadside.

Mike Corrigan is an embedded systems engineer, and president of MHC Enterprises in Wilmington, MA. He can be reached at MikeCorrigan@compumhc.com.

Steven Greffenius is CEO of Techniscribe, Inc., a technical publishing company in Dedham, MA. He can be reached at sgrefenius@techniscribe.com.

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Workplace Strategies

Knowledge as Power: Managing Knowledge in Your Organization

By Teri Noonan

Editor's Note: *This article originally appeared in the November 2002 issue of the [San Diego Signature](#), the newsletter of the San Diego chapter of the STC.*

For those of us faced with the daily challenge of identifying and mapping information, we tap into the business practice of knowledge management (KM). Various books deal with the issue of content management and delivery, such as *Content Management for Dynamic Web Delivery* by Joann T. Hackos. Because of an increasing need to share knowledge within organizations, more technical communication professionals are applying the science of knowledge management to their discipline.

Since its inception and growth in management science at MIT and Stanford University, KM has provided the framework for technologies such as artificial intelligence, computer translation, and other systems. The strategies for aiding human cognition, usability, and in managing tacit knowledge are emerging technologies for technical communication professionals.

A best-practices guideline, knowledge management assists companies in preserving their intellectual capital. Hypertext and the application of XML technology are examples of available and easily useable knowledge that your company may already use, including tools to store and retrieve data, online resources, including Help desk technology, and Web-based training.

Patrick Morrissey, Director of Knowledge Management for Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDC), a privately owned company in Carlsbad, California, implemented KM to meet the increasing demands of IDC's client base. Morrissey currently oversees the management of all technical documentation, training materials, and shared access to knowledge across various departments. He says the function of technical communicator as gatekeeper fits into KM like a well-sized glove.

"Fifty percent of your company's knowledge goes home every night," Morrissey says. "What are you going to do when it doesn't come back in the morning?" He points to a statement by the Gartner Group. He says "according to a September 2002 Gartner Group report, a major component of many companies' competitive strategy is managing their intellectual capital. According to the report, those companies that successfully harness their knowledge assets are the ones that are expected to thrive in today's new information market."

As an example, Morrissey practices what he preaches; he implements knowledge base technology and holds activities that foster good communication and leverages knowledge both within and outside the organization. Morrissey says the technology must be balanced with the content delivery. A database by itself, for example, may not be useful. But by applying the concept of "communities of practice," groups and individuals can work together toward successful KM. Validating information is a critical part of the KM process, Morrissey says.

Information must be leveraged in practical ways. Morrissey cites Liam Fahey, an adjunct professor at Babson College in Wellesley, Mass. Fahey asserts in *ComputerWorld*, "Just moving data around may or may not add value to anyone in the enterprise. Until you've affected someone's understanding of their current or future world, it's not knowledge."

Johanna Ambrosio, in her article "Knowledge Management Mistakes," emphasizes that as technical communication professionals, one mistake is to assume that someone else will lead the charge. "They won't. Change needs a champion, and you're it," she says.

For more information about KM, the Federal Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council provides a compendium of Knowledge Management resources at <http://www.fgipc.org/>. More resources on KM are also available at the Knowledge Management Resource Center, located at http://www.kmresource.com/exp_professnorgs.htm.

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Teri Noonan, a knowledge engineer, can be reached at Teri.Noonan@idc-mcs.com.

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Program Report

Going Independent: Is it for You?

Well, "It Depends"

By Ilana Sztainberg

Is it better to gather together to celebrate the 50th Birthday of the STC or to learn about working as an independent contractor? I am sure that Neil Perlin would agree that "It depends!"

Luckily, those in attendance at October's Program did not have to choose. They had the opportunity to learn some STC Trivia, sing Happy Birthday, and enjoy some cake, as well as hear about the challenges and rewards of going independent.

Can you tolerate being the eternal stranger? Are you willing to make mistakes? Are you self motivated... disciplined...sensible? If so, you have the personal temperament needed to go independent! Going independent will not give you control, but it will give you autonomy.

If you do decide you are ready for this "chaotic form of living" take some advice from Neil...

- Live by the standard "I will not follow up" ...if you do fix it for free.
- Never lie to a client... if you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say "I don't know, but I will research the answer and get back to you."
- Schedule vacations and mental health days into your calendar...IN PEN
- Name your company
 - **Caution:** Do not be too creative for your own good. A cute name does not tell potential employers what services you offer. Make your company name simple and clear.
 - **Warning:** Do not name your company "Your Name Associates". This kind of name implies that you are working out of your garage
 - "The good old days of long-term stable jobs are gone." In this market, we all need to take charge of our careers whether we are truly independent, in between jobs, or working for a company. In this program, sponsored by sponsored by Northeastern University, Neil gave many interesting suggestions that all writers can use, whether they are employed full -time or they work contractors.

Ilana Sztainberg, a graduate of Bentley College, is currently a Technical Writer at ADS/Acusonic Technologies in Falmouth Massachusetts. She can be reached at ilanasztainberg@yahoo.com.

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Calling All Photographers!

Contribute Boston Photos to the Chapter

By Rich Feitelberg

The STC Boston chapter is looking for skyline photos of Boston for its chapter Web site. Each photo must be an original, unpublished work taken by the person who sends the picture to the Boston chapter. Commercial photos and previously published photos will not be accepted. Photos with a landscape orientation are preferred. All approved photos will be published on the Web site with a credit line for the photographer and will become the property of the Boston chapter.

So come join the fun and send your Web-ready photos or any questions to the chapter Webmaster at webmaster@stc-boston.org.

To view the photos that are submitted, visit the [Photo Gallery](#).

Rich Feitelberg is the Webmaster for the STC Boston chapter.

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Competitions

Come to the STACIs

By Ellen Lidington



Ed Marshall, Carol MacBain, and Andrew Hawley discuss the merits of the documents that they judged.

Photo by Marguerite Krupp

Now it is time for you to join this energetic and committed group of people in celebrating the results of this annual competition. Come and see the winners and talk to the entrants about how they created the entry. Ask the judges about what they took away from this experience and how you might benefit.

We will ensure that you leave the event with valuable information and insights that you can take home to improve the projects that you are developing. You can see the award winning entries. We will have special events that surround the top winners in each competition.

The STACIs are happening on February 26th at the Lexington Sheraton. This is one program that you must attend! You will spend the evening surrounded by excellent examples of the work that we all do, and you can talk to the people who create them.



Who are the judges for the entries that you have submitted to the Boston and Northern New England chapters' annual competitions? By day, these people are fellow writers, editors, and other technical communication professionals. On a special day in November, they become the exceptional people who care enough about you and our profession to donate their time and evaluate the entries in the competitions.

These people take a set of criteria and mix it with years of experience in the field. They then mold a platform upon which they intently discuss each entry and use their best technical communication skills to describe their thoughts and suggestions to you. What made this entry exceptional; how could it be better?



Steven Murphy, Christine Monteiro, and Pam Drucker compare notes on a poster document.

Photo by Marguerite Krupp

Meanwhile, check out the pictures of the people who participated in the Publications Competition Consensus Day. We hope to see you there next November.

Check the [Programs page](#) for updates, as the date for the STACIs gets closer.

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Competitions Coordinator Ellen Lidington, trainer and judge Steve Jong, and judge Craig Austen enjoy refreshments after an intense morning of judging.

Photo by Marguerite Krupp

Ellen Lidington, Competitions Coordinator, can be reached at ejlid@rcn.com.

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Society Highlights

STC's 2003 Elections Are Nearing; *About STC* Brochure Is Sure to Inform

By Amy M. Anson

Renew Early To Vote Early

The annual STC election will be held in early 2003, and only those members who have paid their dues by the February 28, 2003, deadline are eligible to vote.

Ballots for the STC election are mailed in two phases. For those who have paid their dues early (by early February), ballots will be mailed around February 15. Those who pay their dues between February 15 and February 28 will have their ballots mailed to them around March 10. The election closes April 15, 2003, so renew early and vote early!

Preliminary Slate of Candidates for Society Office, 2003:

- President: * Thea Teich
- First Vice President: * Andrea L. Ames
- Second Vice President: * Sandra W. Harner, Deborah F. Sauer
- Treasurer: Mary Jo Stark (unopposed)

Director-Sponsors (one to be elected from each region listed, each for a three-year term):

- Region 2: Victoria Koster-Lenhardt, Doreen A. Mannion
- Region 3: Hary-Janos Bottka, Beth Tanner

Nominating Committee (Two to be elected, each for a two-year term):**

- Kathleen B. Aughey, Rita B. Johnson, Christopher Juillet, John O. Shipman

* STC Bylaws specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and the president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected.

** Members of this year's nominating committee are Michelle Ratcliffe (manager), M. Katherine Brown, Nan J. Fritz, John V. Hedtke, Deirdre A. Murr.

The Benefits of Membership, Explained in *About STC*

If you've been looking for information that clearly explains what the STC is, what benefits it offers, and how you can become more involved, then a new brochure, *About STC*, will point you in the right direction.

With its details on the numerous benefits that an STC membership provides, the eight-page brochure, which you can either print out or download from www.stc.org, is a great tool for drawing in prospective members and may even serve as a refresher for recent and long-time members.

About STC identifies the types of technical communicators that comprise the STC membership, such as Web designers, technical translators, and usability specialists. The brochure also describes the organizational structure of the STC at the chapter, regional, and society levels.

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It also provides an overview of membership basics, ranging from grades of membership (student, member, senior member) to issues of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*, to offerings on the newly relaunched STC Web site.

By reading the brochure, you'll get ideas on how to increase your involvement with STC. You may decide to join a Special Interest Group, volunteer with Competitions, or attend the STC annual conference.

And you'll also realize how much the STC has to offer, no matter what your current professional or personal focus is—as employment resources, scholarships, research grants, and networking opportunities abound.

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

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Chapter Membership Reports

Compiled by Zohra I. Mutabanna

September 2002 Membership Report

Total STC Members: 20,537
Total Boston Members: 1,030

New Members: 7	Reinstated Members: 3	Members Transferring In: 2
Lisa M. Caten	Christine M. Hannula	Bruce A. Sesnovich
Michael J. Colantoni	Carol L. Pennewill	Elizabeth A. Johnson
Karen L. Dawson	Melba G. Wood	
Ashley Doran		
George R. Johnston		
Brad J. Mampe		
Susan Tropeano		

October 2002 Membership Report

Total STC Members: 21,055
Total Boston Members: 1,044

New Members: 11	Reinstated Members: 2	Members Transferring In: 5
Joanne D. Bangs	Mariellen M. Sheridan	Jennifer C. Pixley
Robert I. Carr III	Diane T. Wilson	Eddie McHam
David M. Commyn		Catherine D. Aillon
William Germino		Andrew L. Smith
R. Gray		Amanda M. Barker
Carolyn M. Henry		
Jennifer Hrazdill		
Barbara R. Materna		
Deganit R. Ruben		
Bette L. Sidio		
Lee S. Tabor		

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Boston Broadside Staff

Managing Editor

Daphna Edgar (bostonbroadside@yahoo.com)

Associate Editors

Audrey Borus (aborus@rcn.com)
 Christine Jacobs (christine.jacobs@oracle.com)
 David Levitt (dlevitt@erols.com)
 Patricia McLaughlin (PMclaughlin@mccrackenfs.com)
 Leonard Rizzy

Society Highlights Editor

Amy Anson (grovest@earthlink.net)

Membership Coordinator

Daphna Edgar (bostonbroadside@yahoo.com)

HTML Producers

Lisa Cordeiro (cordeiro@rcn.com)
 Darlene Doehrmann (broadsidewebmaster@yahoo.com)
 Margie Gooding (broadsidewebmaster@yahoo.com)
 Christina Rothwell (crothwell15@yahoo.com)

Chapter Webmaster

Rich Feitelberg (webmaster@stc-boston.org)

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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?

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

Thank you and come again soon.

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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 Daphna Edgar at bostonbroadside@yahoo.com.

Article submission deadlines are as follows:

- August 5 (for September/October issue)
- October 5 (for November/December issue)
- December 1 (for January/February issue)
- February 5 (for March/April issue)
- April 5 (for May/June issue)
- June 5 (for July August issue)

For information about advertising rates and procedures, contact Anne Louiselle at alouiselle@attbi.com.

Advertising submission deadlines are as follows:

- August 21 (for September/October issue)
- October 21 (for November/December issue)
- December 18 (for January/February issue)
- February 21 (for March/April issue)
- April 21 (for May/June issue)
- June 21 (for July August issue)

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STC@50

And the Answer Is...



Web Poll #44 asks about the first academic program for technical communication in the Boston area.

According to our archives (STW Bulletin, Vol. 3, #9), Simmons College instituted a **program** for woman technical writers in 1956. The courses included Differential Calculus, Inorganic Chemistry, Electricity and Magnetism, Publishing, and Edition.

In the winter of 1962, Edmund L. Stoddard (later an STC Fellow) of the Education Committee of Northeastern University taught a two-credit survey course in technical communication in the evening division of Northeastern University. This was the first **course** explicitly in technical communication in the Boston area.

Marguerite Krupp is an Associate Fellow of STC and a member of STC@50, the Society-level committee working on the STC's Golden Anniversary Celebration.

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