

carolina

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Summer Conference 2000

A successful investment in skills!

Contributed by **Kay Ethier** and **Emily Toone**

August 11th dawned bright and sunny—what a beautiful day for a conference. And what better conference to attend than the STC Carolina Chapter's 8th Annual Summer Conference!

Over 100 technical communicators attended the two-day conference, which offered something for everyone. Friday provided three training sessions:

- "Editing for Usability" presented by **Judy Tarutz**
- "Franklin Covey: The Four Roles of Leadership" by **Gary Jewkes**
- "Designing Communications as though Thinking and Feeling Really Matter" by **Karen Schriver**

"I've used her book for years as my guide and reference for technical editing. This workshop went beyond the information provided in the book and provided practical information for people editing in various disciplines."

Anne Tice, Technical Editing SIG Chair

Saturday included presentations by more than 18 speakers! A Saturday crowd pleaser was "Negotiating 101: Negotiation Skills for Technical Communicators" presented by EMC2's **Michael Harvey** (our very own chapter Treasurer). Presenting to a standing-room-only audience, Michael discussed the intricacies of crafting a win-win negotiation. "I learned how to approach a situation to negotiate a win-win outcome—a real plus in my everyday life!" said **Amanda Worthington** (Cisco Systems).

For those attendees fascinated by the bleeding edge of the industry, ePublishing's **Karie Cook** and Extensibility's **Ismail Suayah** presented XML information. Karie's session provided valuable insight into just what's needed for the all-important transition to XML.

As if the workshops and sessions weren't enough to capture the attendees' attention, there were exhibits by vendors throughout the two-day conference. Vendors, too, found the conference beneficial. **Rick Bradley** of TPS said, "It provided an excellent opportunity to network with the writers and managers that our company serves." All this would not have been possible without the volunteer Conference Committee, which has been working full swing since last October! Co-chairs **Annie Janis** and **Michelle Corbin**—working with **Hilary Harris**, **Leatta Welch**, and **Kay Ethier**—arranged the top-of-the-line facility (The Friday Center), excellent refreshments, vendor setups, and speaker enlistment.

Conference information has been posted to the Chapter Web site at www.stc-carolina.org/www/conference/present.shtml. This data includes speaker presentations in PowerPoint and PDF. If you were unable to attend this year, please do peruse these presentations. We hope that you will find them useful and that they will whet your appetite to attend next year! ❖❖❖

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Carolina Chapter Leaders

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Emily Toone
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Vice President

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Viola Suddaby
(467-8635)

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Frances Wirth

Summer Conference 2001 Manager

Annie Janis
(981-0972 ext. 26)

Related Organizations

Liaison
Bill Albing

A listing of other committee managers, with their contact information, is on the Carolina Chapter's Web site at www.stc-carolina.org.

My First Leadership Meeting

New friends, new opportunities

Contributed by *David King*

July's monthly Leadership Meeting, a business meeting, was hardly "business as usual." As 11 people, mostly from different companies, sat around the conference table at EMC2 in Research Triangle Park, one got the feeling of being in a gathering of long-time friends rather than business associates or competitors. And, as it turned out, they were. Not that the two are necessarily incompatible, but in this age of fierce competition it seemed a rare sight indeed to see such lightheartedness amongst business competitors.

I arrived at 5:30. As I walked into the room, I introduced myself and was greeted by Chapter President, **Emily Toone** (TPS). A quick introduction to STC leadership seated around the table and I took my seat. Within seconds, **Bill Albing** (Make Systems) had one of his business cards in my hand. Chapter Treasurer **Michael Harvey** (EMC2) jokingly said, "He's going to do a report on the meeting." At first, I laughed and shrugged his comment off. Then, later, I wondered if it might be a good idea ...

Emily opened the meeting and spoke about Vision Day, which had been rescheduled for July 15. She urged everyone to attend, especially those with information and experience to share.

Budget was main item

The main item on the agenda was this year's preliminary budget. Michael went over it emphasizing that all was not set in stone (he had taken the numbers from the year before and projected them onto the coming year). There was, however, a difference in this year's budget: it didn't have as many categories as last year's budget. This created more flexibility for each program and allowed for a cleaner preliminary budget for the 2000-2001 year.

The meeting continued at a fast clip with plenty of humor and information. **Chris Benz** (e-Publishing), STC's new Region 2 Director-Sponsor, talked about the organization and how it functioned. He introduced **Kim Flint**, STC Web site Coordinator, and praised the excellent job she did with STC's site.

Also present among STC Leadership members were:

Michelle Corbin (Tivoli)

Cindy Richardson-Decker (Advanced Concepts)

Suzanne Norris-Thomas (Advanced Concepts)

Frances Wirth (whiz-ID Instructional Design)

Catherine Goodfellow (TPS)

Amanda Worthington (Cisco)

Cheri Taylor (independent contractor)

Highlights

Question and answer session

A question and answer session followed the Leadership Meeting. Highlights were:

- Find a mentor in the room, someone you have talked with in STC who will be able to help you. Ask that person if he or she would like to help you. People like to be asked.
- Common sense is often in short supply in business. With communication rifts between executives and "propeller heads" ("techies"), there is a great need for communications within companies.
- Technology skills are not a substitute for good writing. This topic was discussed extensively in the meeting. (Yes, you need technical skills to be hired; a lot of companies don't want to take the time to train you—they needed somebody yesterday for your position.)
- STC leadership is exploring ways to make tools such as FrameMaker and RoboHELP accessible at reduced rates for members.
- Companies today are using a very small pool of contractors (writers) to do their documentation. They want someone who can come in and hit the ground running.
- Make sure when you learn a tool that you continue to use it daily. The old adage, "If you don't use it, you lose it" applies here.
- "The market for technical writers is crazy right now. There are technical writers with only two years of experience making \$30.00 an hour." — Emily Toone (owner of TPS, a staffing company for technical communicators)
- Not everyone in the room had a BA in English!
- Getting involved with STC in some way is a great way to get started.

Director-Sponsor's Message

"The best job in STC"

Contributed by **Chris Benz**, the tallest STC board member EVER

When I was invited to run for Region 2 Director-Sponsor, the position was described to me as "The Best Job in STC." Was this a sales pitch, I asked myself, or just a delusion? After all, the job consumes a lot of personal time, requires about a dozen trips a year, and pays a salary of exactly ... nothing.

But it's true; this *is* a great job. Why? Well, while it certainly cuts into my personal time, it also gives me a great deal of satisfaction knowing that I'm helping improve our profession. Plus, I love the almost constant opportunities I now have to exchange ideas with the hundreds of STC members I meet.

So what does a Director-Sponsor *do*? Some background first: STC is split into eight regions throughout the world. Region 2 currently has over 2,300 members. It includes 15 chapters in three countries—Belgium (one professional chapter), Israel (one professional chapter), and the United States (10 professional and three student chapters in Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, DC, and West Virginia)—ranging in size from under 10 members to over 600.

Director-Sponsors play two roles

As the title implies, Director-Sponsors (D-Ss) play two roles:

As a *Director*, I serve as a voting member of the STC Board, along with the Immediate Past President, President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, and my seven fellow D-Ss. The board meets three times a year to pass budgets; approve the formation and, when necessary, dissolution of chapters; award grants and loans; share information about activities throughout STC; and so on. My primary job is to represent the members of Region 2, and that's why the second role, the role of *Sponsor*, is so important.

As a *Sponsor*, I serve as an information conduit between our region and the Board, between our region and STC's seven other regions, and among our own region's chapters. I do this by writing articles such as this, visiting chapters, surveying

chapters both to find out what help they might need and to gather great ideas that they've had so I can pass those ideas on to other chapters. I stay in regular contact with chapter leaders, reminding and encouraging them to hold chapter-level competitions and participate in Society-level ones, submit candidates for honors such as Associate Fellow, identify candidates for Society-level positions, cooperate with nearby chapters, submit applications for loans and grants, and participate in training sessions that help them become even better leaders. Most importantly, I serve as an information source and sounding board for all Region 2 members. These interactions are critical to my effectively serving as the region's representative to the board.

Contact me if you have a question or concern

So, if you have an STC-related question or concern—whether you're a chapter leader, a volunteer, a member, or simply a prospective member—please let me know. You can reach me by e-mail at **Chris.Benz@e-pubcorp.com** or by telephone at (919) 226-0060 (day) or (919) 479-4891 (evening).

I look forward to hearing from you!

Note: For previous Director-Sponsor articles by Chris and past Region 2 Director-Sponsors, please visit **www.stc.org/region2/www/chair.shtml**. ❖❖❖

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A time to talk with friends

After 45 minutes, we broke for refreshments and members paired off to catch up on news. After reconnecting with **Chris Benz**, I got into a conversation with **David Heath** (IBM) and **Bill Albing**, and learned from Bill that the editors and writers at his company were swamped. He encouraged me to send my résumé and said he would see to it that it got into the right hands. Then, David and I got into a long conversation about his 31-year career at IBM.

Over the hour, more people had trickled in—a mix of young and old, experienced and inexperienced. For such a small number (maybe 50), the group was very diverse. Attendance, **Jay Joiner** (Interfax) assured me, would be even better in the fall.

I left the meeting feeling that a career in technical writing was not only possible, but was right around the corner. I will look forward to the next meeting, and to saying hello to all my new friends. ❖❖❖

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Carolina Resources

STC Carolina Web site:
www.stc-carolina.org

Meeting Telephone Message:
(919) 406-6600

Online Newsletter:
www.stc-carolina.org/pubs/communique/index.html

STC Metrolina (Charlotte)
Web site:
www.stc.org/region2/mnc/

STC Piedmont (Greensboro)
Web site:
www.stc.org/region2/pd/

Monthly meeting announcement

September 14, 2000

What: Membership Picnic
Where: Crabtree Valley Park
Details: Go to the Carolina Chapter Monthly Programs page at www.stc-carolina.org/www/upcoming.shtml.

Other meeting announcements

STC Leadership Meeting

Date: First Wednesday of every month
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Where: EMC2 (formerly Data General), Maple Conference Room
Details: The members of the Administrative Council and Chapter Leadership meet to discuss the chapter's goals and direction. Everyone is welcome, so please join us!
Directions: EMC2 is located at 62 T.W. Alexander Drive in RTP, just past the intersection of Alexander and E. Cornwallis Road.

STC Technical Editing SIG

Date: Third Thursday of every month
Time: 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.
Where: EMC2, Research Triangle Park
Details: Contact Anne Tice (tice@dg-rtp.dg.com) or Sue Kocher (Sue.Kocher@sas.com) or go to www.stc-carolina.org/www/PICs/teched/index.shtml.

Newsletter deadlines

Articles for publication in our newsletters are due by 3 p.m. on the 7th of every month. Articles—on chapter business—will be published in our print-based newsletter. Please submit them to **David Heath** at heathd@us.ibm.com.

All other articles will be published in our Web-based newsletter. Please submit them to **Mark Hoskins** at mhoskins@cisco.com.

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