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## Trends in Technical Communication

**Join us on Thursday, October 9** as we kick off the 16th annual Arizona Technical Communication Week with a panel discussion on trends in technical communication. Governor Janet Napolitano has officially proclaimed October 12 – 18 as Technical Communication Week 2003 in recognition of technical communication professionals, who serve as the “...bridge between those who create technology and those who use it.” Celebrate with us and learn what the future may hold for our profession. (See page 5 for more information about Technical Communication Week 2003.)

### Save the Date: Thursday, October 9

**Where:** Tucson Courtyard by Marriott, 201 S. Williams Blvd. (in the Williams Centre near Broadway and Craycroft).

**Registration:** 5:30 to 6 p.m.

**Dinner (optional):** 6 to 7 p.m. Caesar salad with grilled beef or chicken, baked potatoes with sour cream and chives, pasta salad with a selection of fresh toppings, garlic bread, and mozzarella sticks. Includes tea, soft drinks, and dessert.\*

**Program:** 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**Pricing:**

- **Program only:** free to members, \$5 for nonmembers.
- **Program plus dinner:** \$15 for members and \$20 for nonmembers.
- Never attended a Southern Arizona Chapter meeting before? Use the **\$5 Off Coupon** on page 3!

**RSVP:** Send an e-mail message to [Helen Marty](#) by 4 p.m. on Monday, October 6 with your choice (dinner or program-only). No-shows will be billed. Walk-ins are always welcome, but we cannot guarantee a meal (see below).

\* Please make your dinner reservations by the 4 p.m. Monday deadline. Our hotel requires a final headcount 72 hours in advance to ensure ample food and good service for all of us. Thank you for your cooperation!

**Mission statement for  
STC's Southern  
Arizona Chapter:**

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

Clip and Save:

## **STC Planned Program Schedule**

### **Southern Arizona Chapter – 2003/2004**

**October 9:**

Trends in Technical Communication (see previous page)

**November 13:**

Getting User Input While Building Online Help – **Brenda Huettner**

**December 11:**

Holiday Party with speaker **Cynthia Scribner**

**January 23:**

National STC Board Meeting and dinner at La Fuente Restaurant

**February 12:**

Whine & Cheese – Instructional Design Progressions

**March 11:**

Intuit's Knowledge Management Implementation – **Sally Fowler**

**April 8:**

Avoid Clichés Like the Plague: A Lighthearted Safari through the Jungle of the English Language – **Dave Carlson and Victoria Yuki**

**May 20:**

Recognition party and awards

**June through August:**

Summer sabbatical

Unless otherwise noted, programs are held on the second Thursday of each month at the Courtyard by Marriott, 201 S. Williams Blvd. (in the Williams Centre near Broadway and Craycroft, in Tucson, Arizona). Program schedule is subject to change without notice; for up-to-date meeting information, visit [www.stc-saz.org](http://www.stc-saz.org).

# Opening Success!

A review of last month's program by Kitty Aughey, Program Manager

The September "Network and Nibble" kickoff program was a great success! There were 25 attendees who introduced themselves and presented their job descriptions and STC experiences. This was followed by STC committees describing their functions and asking for volunteers.

We "nibbled," talked, and listened as Pat Markey, Chapter President, led us through a lively agenda which included resume and portfolio sharing, job hunting skills, and a look into some of the companies that make up the Tucson technical communication scene.



This casual meeting resulted in 14 evaluations, with an overall score of 3.54 points out of a possible 4. Comments from attendees include:

- Very helpful/informative
- LOVED having the food in the room (can we explore this for future meetings?)
- Great to have 9 new people attend
- Lots of enthusiasm and new faces. Great way to start off the season!
- Great turnout - need to get the word out earlier
- Great to hear what each person had to say about themselves and STC
- Best N+N EVER! ■

***Don't belong to the STC yet? Want to just check out our chapter? Clip this coupon to save \$5.***

**STC, Southern Arizona Chapter**

**Nonmember \$5 Off Coupon**

**Save \$5 at Your First Meeting**

We encourage nonmembers to attend a chapter program to learn about the STC and the Southern Arizona Chapter. Bring this completed coupon to the first chapter program you attend, and you'll save \$5 off the cost of admission.

**Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of program:** \_\_\_\_\_



## President's Corner:

# Participate to Improve Your Career Health

Pat Markey, Chapter President

***We are not just technical writers. We are TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS.***

***We all know what this means, but we may not think about it when we try to explain to someone else what we do...***

***The more I participate in our activities, the more I understand about how what I do fits into the larger framework of technical communication.***

We just had a great September program. Network & Nibble was the first one of the year. Its focus was job-hunting. We met many new people with diverse backgrounds and skills. Our treasurer, Richard Cook, who attended the meeting, then sent an e-mail message to Paul Veverka, who maintains our Jobs Database, about job opportunities at Richard's company, Intuit. The jobs were not strictly for technical writing, but related areas such as training and project management. For this and other reasons, Paul believes that they are not appropriate to post in our Job Bank on our Web site.

As I reflect on this program and the exchange about the jobs, I remembered that we all have many diverse experiences and talents. When we look for jobs, we may focus on specific technical writing skills. However, we are not just technical writers. We are TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS. We all know what this means, but we may not think about it when we try to explain to someone else what we do, or more importantly, can do. Think about it. Have you ever had to control a project or some part of it, act as a translator between a subject-matter expert and your audience, determine the best way to present the information, determine which information to present when, coordinate your presentation with other parts of the company, review and purchase tools and systems to improve your productivity, prepare training materials and sometimes present the materials, because you have since become a subject-matter expert, and on and on? All of this has happened to me.

So why do I have such a hard time remembering these things I do and can do? One reason may be that I don't think about it often and have only recently played with a new presentation format for my resume, because I wanted to have something to review at the Network and Nibble. Another reason is that I have only been regularly participating in our local STC chapter for the last three years. The more I participate in our activities, the more I understand about how what I do fits into the larger framework of technical communication.

With nudging and encouragement from other members, I found myself offering to help more often and participating more. Now I can say that I have participated in judging technical communication competitions, managed committees, reviewed books, written articles for our newsletter and done surveys. My career health is looking better and better.

But I am not the only one who has benefited from our chapter. Everyone who only attends our meetings or workshops benefits from our work. Everyone who participates has had similar experiences. Even the negative experiences are helpful, such as when I organized the holiday party last year. The more members who participate, the better work we do and the more we benefit the entire membership. Come and work with us, and we all benefit.

You can participate at any level you like, or you can just attend our planning meetings (at 6 p.m., fourth Tuesday of the month at the Barnes & Noble cafe on Broadway). We need you. We can help you improve your career health, and you can help us improve our chapter. Contact me to find out more: Pat Markey at 733-5720 or [pat.markey@prodigy.net](mailto:pat.markey@prodigy.net). I hope to hear from you soon. ■



# Arizona Technical Communication Week 2003

Dirk J. Arnold, Webmaster

***The booklet that comes with your refrigerator, the manual that comes with your new computer, and the information that you get when you press a Help button on your cellular telephone are all designed and created by technical communicators.***

Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano has officially proclaimed October 12 - 18 Arizona Technical Communication Week 2003. Professional technical communicators can be technical writers, editors, graphic designers, Help developers, user interface specialists, multimedia developers, or usability engineers. They produce a wide variety of printed and online materials, including manuals, reference guides, tutorials, newsletters, white papers, policies and procedures, online Help, Web content, demonstrations, and much more. The booklet that comes with your refrigerator, the manual that comes with your new computer, and the information that you get when you press a Help button on your cellular telephone are all designed and created by technical communicators. Arizona Technical Communication Week 2003 recognizes the value of technical communication and also raises public awareness of the profession.

Locally, technical communicators work in almost every sector, according to Pat Markey, president of the Southern Arizona Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). "We have members who work in information technology, optics, aerospace, mining, and environmental services."

The STC is an international organization devoted to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. Here in Tucson, we sponsor monthly program presentations and technical workshops. This year the Southern Arizona Chapter is managing the Southwest Regional Technical Publications, Art, and Online Competitions. Winners of the regional competitions are sent on to compete at the international level.

Although Arizona was the first state to recognize the profession with a formal proclamation, many other states have since followed suit. This year marks the 16th annual celebration of technical communication in Arizona.

Companies celebrate Technical Communication Week in various ways. Some have a special luncheon or put up posters. Technical communication departments make an effort to show off what they've accomplished in the last year. In many companies, the event allows recognition for a profession that often does not receive the attention it deserves.

"We welcome the community to help us celebrate," said Markey. "The public is always welcome to come to our program meetings to learn about the technical communication professions. Our October 9 meeting [see page 1] is a panel discussion of trends in technical communication and a great way to be introduced to the people in our profession." ■



## Letter from Linda

Linda Oestreich, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

While I was at the Portland, OR, STC Board Meeting, the Willamette Valley STC Chapter hosted a well-attended, interesting meeting. Rahel Bailie wrote this synopsis of that meeting. She did a great job and I felt I couldn't improve on it! Please do take these lessons to heart and take a look at Andrea Ames' slides on the WMV Chapter Web site [www.stcwvc.org](http://www.stcwvc.org). It looks as if it's time we all learned these valuable lessons. I welcome comments and suggestions from you all. Please send them to me at [lloriter@ev1.net](mailto:lloriter@ev1.net). Thanks and God bless each of you!

### **What Color Is Your Future Job: Commodity Writer or Strategic Communicator?**

—by Rahel Anne Bailie, STC Region 7 Director/Sponsor

"This month, I found myself in Portland, Oregon, for the STC board meeting and the Willamette Valley's season kick-off meeting, which the chapter organized to coincide with the board meeting. The topic was the future of technical communication, a panel discussion that included a workforce analyst, two STC board members, and two local technical communicators who weathered the downturn in the economy and embody the characteristics of career survivors.

"As context for the panel discussion, it happens to be that Oregon is the hardest hit state of all of the US. Many software development jobs have been sent offshore, and the technical communication jobs that accompanied those jobs dried up as well. Even in companies retaining their North American-based staff, the continual effort to trim 'waste' continues to erode jobs in departments seen as cost centers.

"Commodity writing is the type of technical communication characterized as the creation of formulaic 'documentation on demand,' and is closely tied to writing code. Companies are increasingly comfortable outsourcing both of these tasks. Those are the jobs being sent offshore, as evidenced by the surge in job openings on STC job boards in the Asia-Pacific countries.

"Increasingly, the jobs that remain are for 'strategic contributors,' technical communicators who can be entrusted to look beyond the pages of their manuals, beyond the screens of documentation, beyond the department of documentation, and even beyond the GUI. These strategic contributors look at the product from a business point of view and ensure they contribute to the bottom line through their contributions to the company's product. The actual contribution may be content, user-centered design, or specific communications products, but the content arises from a perspective of problem-solving. The successful strategic contributor is recognized by management as a valuable part of the team, and may be part of the management team. (See Andrea Ames' presentation slides at [www.stcwvc.org](http://www.stcwvc.org).)

"What impressed me were the remaining panelists who embodied the principles of strategic contribution. Sheila Reitz, a contractor for an Oregon power company, made a conscious choice to move from commodity work to strategic contribution. Using a performance-based résumé—coincidentally, I discuss these techniques in 'Using a Résumé to Showcase Your Talents' in the September/October 2003 issue of *Intercom*—Reitz demonstrated her ability to contribute her analytical and communication skills documenting workflow processes. As a result, her first phone call to user-test the new résumé format resulted in landing a dream contract, when her tester exclaimed, 'We need you!'

"The landscape for technical communication is changed, and will continue to change. Whether you are a technical communicator outside of North America who is benefiting from the windfall of technical writing jobs coming to your area, or a technical communicator called upon to stretch your imagination, the quest is the same one posed by Dick Bolles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*: Which of my skills fills the changing needs in the local market, and how can I market myself to meet those needs?" ■



## Chapter Announcements

### **New E-Mail List Service (ListServ)**

We now have a new way of sending you information about chapter activities. After trying several different methods to reach out to members and other interested individuals, we have decided to use a service provided by our society. This announcement ListServ is for anyone who wants to receive information about our activities, including this newsletter, *The Border Line*.

You maintain your own participation in the ListServ. You can add, delete, or change the e-mail address to which you want chapter announcements sent. (If you currently receive *The Border Line* via e-mail, then you have already been added to the ListServ.) To control your participation in the ListServ, please visit [www.stc-saz.org](http://www.stc-saz.org) and click "Join our e-mail announcements list."

### **Fred Sapio Earns Senior Membership**

After five years of STC membership, **Fred Sapio** attained the status of senior STC member. Congratulations, Fred!

### **21st Annual C4IST Exhibition and Job Fair**

The Southern Arizona Chapter of the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association (AFCEA) announces its 21st Annual Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence Systems Technology (C4IST) Exhibition and Job Fair. This FREE event is open to the public and starts at 9 a.m. October 8 and 9 at Barnes Field House in Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

You are not required to preregister or register to attend this event. Come and join in the fun with daily exhibitor demonstrations, a television drawing for active duty soldiers, over 130 exhibits to view and much, much more. For more information, visit [www.laser-options.com](http://www.laser-options.com) or call (520) 292-5652.

### **Microsoft PowerPoint Live User Conference**

The PowerPoint Live User Conference will be held at the Radisson Tucson City Center (181 W. Broadway) October 12 - 15. Learn from the experts with more than 40 seminars and workshops, all focused on how you can become more productive and efficient. For complete conference information, please visit [www.pptlive.com](http://www.pptlive.com).

### **"Re-invent Your Writing" Workshop**

The Tucson chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) will sponsor a writer's workshop at the Arizona Inn on Tuesday, October 28, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. This workshop, entitled "Re-invent Your Writing," and is led by Ken O'Quinn. The fee is \$65 per person and includes lunch. For more information, please visit [www.prsatucson.com](http://www.prsatucson.com) or contact [Susan Guerrero](mailto:Susan.Guerrero@prsa.org). ■



## STC Announcements

### Web and Telephone Seminars **Adobe Acrobat 6.0**

This 90-minute seminar (starting at 1 p.m. Eastern time on October 8) will teach you how to use Adobe Acrobat 6.0 to save time and money, improve workflows, eliminate paper-based processes, and reduce errors in your business document exchange. A de-facto standard trusted by enterprises, governments, and small businesses worldwide, Adobe PDF preserves the integrity of the source document, including fonts, colors, formatting, and graphics, regardless of the application and platform used to create or view it.

Brian Wood is an Adobe Acrobat specialist working for Adobe Systems. An Adobe Certified Expert (ACE) in Acrobat, GoLive and InDesign, and coauthor of the Acrobat 6 ACE exam, Brian also runs eVolve, a rapidly growing freelance business for which he acts as principal, computer graphics consultant, trainer, and ePro.

Sign up today at [www.stc.org/seminars.asp](http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp)!

### **Establishing a Baseline of Performance**

This 90-minute seminar (starting at 1 p.m. Eastern time on November 5) presents a baseline of performance for technical communication departments.

Specifically, this presentation reviews effectiveness and productivity metrics in technical communication and discusses a survey of "portfolios" of work (collections of projects, people, and physical resources) supervised by technical communication managers. A related telephone seminar to be held January 13, 2004, presents a methodology for tracking data on the effectiveness of technical communication products and services.

Saul Carliner is an assistant professor of educational technology at Concordia University in Montreal. A two-time winner of the Best of Show award in the Frank R. Smith outstanding article competition, Saul is also a fellow and past president of STC.

Sign up today at [www.stc.org/seminars.asp](http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp)! ■



## Odds 'n Ends

### **Managing Your Documentation Projects**

JoAnn Hackos and Seminars in Usable Design announce the Managing Your Documentation Projects seminar in Phoenix, Arizona on October 16 and 17, taught by William Hackos.

Organizations benefit when projects get done on time and on budget, but everyone benefits when the same projects get done well. This seminar gives your project managers the insight they need to know what to do and when to do it. This seminar gives you the tools to succeed.

Learn the project management process, including information and training planning, estimating project resources and costs, scheduling, tracking, and responding to changes that often threaten to derail your project before it is finished. Recognize that project estimating requires scoping as well as risk assessment so that your estimates represent reality rather than wishful thinking. This workshop is customizable to focus on information development, online information, and interactive multimedia projects. For more information on this seminar, visit our Web site [www.usabledesign.com](http://www.usabledesign.com).

## **STC St. Louis: Ready for a Little Competition?**

If you missed our Southwest Regional competitions, there is still time to submit technical publications or online entries to the St. Louis Chapter competition. All entries must be postmarked by Friday, October 17, 2003.

Winners will be recognized at the chapter's awards meeting in April 2004 and will have their name and winning category posted on the St. Louis STC chapter's Web site. Additionally, Distinguished Technical Communication winners become eligible for the STC International Competition to be held in January 2004. For complete rules and entry forms, please visit [www.stc-stlouis.org](http://www.stc-stlouis.org).

## **Harmonious Indexer/Publisher Relationships**

This October 18 workshop is presented by the Southern California Chapter of the American Society of Indexers and runs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the University Club, California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

Maria Coughlin is the founder of [Coughlin Indexing Services](#) and during the past 20 years has become one of the leading medical indexers in the United States. She is an officer in the national American Society of Indexers and is one of their most dynamic and sought-after speakers and teachers. For registration details, send an e-mail message to [Debbie Lindblom](#) before October 13.

## **Internet Forum for Technical Communicators**

TECHWR-L (that's "tech-whirl") is the Internet-based community and resource for technical communicators worldwide.

The TECHWR-L site serves more than two million page views per month and provides a unique combination of articles, features, and services unrivaled by any other Internet-based technical writing resource. The TECHWR-L discussion ListServ has more than 5,000 direct subscribers and an estimated daily readership of more than 10,000 people worldwide.

Visit the TECHWR-L Web site at [www.raycomm.com/techwhirl](http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl). ■

## Newsletter Staff

### Editor

Jutta Holzhaus: [jutta\\_holzhaus@intuit.com](mailto:jutta_holzhaus@intuit.com)

### Copy Editor

Beth Kane: [kanes-tucson@comcast.net](mailto:kanes-tucson@comcast.net)

## About the Newsletter

*The Border Line* is the official publication of the Southern Arizona chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC-SAZ). Issues are published monthly from September to May. The design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2003.

## Submissions

Contributions, book and product reviews, letters, and articles are welcome. We prefer items on topics that are relevant to the field of technical communication. Your text may be edited to conform to style guidelines and space restrictions of the newsletter. The deadline for submissions is the last Friday of each month.

Send submissions by e-mail (Word file or RTF) to the **Editor**. Include your name and telephone number. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and you permit other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Unless otherwise noted, authors retain copyright.

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## Distribution

*The Border Line* is distributed via e-mail. To subscribe, join the ListServ from our Web site at [www.stc-saz.org](http://www.stc-saz.org).

## About the STC

### Our Mission...Designing the future of technical communication

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest professional association for anyone whose job involves communicating technical information. Contact the STC at 901 N. Stuart St., Ste. 904, Arlington, VA 22203-1822. Phone: (703) 522-4114; Web: [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)

# Chapter Contact Info

## Administrative Council

### President

Pat Markey: [pat.markey@prodigy.net](mailto:pat.markey@prodigy.net)

### Vice President

Kitty Aughey: [kaughey@cox.net](mailto:kaughey@cox.net)

### Secretary

Beth Kane: [kanes-tucson@comcast.net](mailto:kanes-tucson@comcast.net)

### Treasurer

Richard Cook: [rcook6701@yahoo.com](mailto:rcook6701@yahoo.com)

### Immediate Past President

Helen Marty: [martyh46@msn.com](mailto:martyh46@msn.com)

## Committee Contacts

### By-Laws Committee:

Chair: Carrie Cooper: [carrie.cooper@acs-inc.com](mailto:carrie.cooper@acs-inc.com)

### Communications Committee

Chair: Brenda Huettner: [bphuettner@aol.com](mailto:bphuettner@aol.com)

Community Outreach: Brenda Huettner: [bphuettner@aol.com](mailto:bphuettner@aol.com)

Publicity: Sally Adams: [sallya@theriver.com](mailto:sallya@theriver.com)

Newsletter: Jutta Holzhaus: [jutta\\_holzhaus@intuit.com](mailto:jutta_holzhaus@intuit.com)

Web site: Dirk J. Arnold: [nospam@spreck.com](mailto:nospam@spreck.com)

Competitions: Brenda Huettner: [bphuettner@aol.com](mailto:bphuettner@aol.com)

### Nominating Committee

Chair: Helen Marty: [martyh46@msn.com](mailto:martyh46@msn.com)

### Membership Committee

Employment: Paul Veverka: [paul.veverka@misyshealthcare.com](mailto:paul.veverka@misyshealthcare.com)

Membership: Judy McCabe: [caribe966@aol.com](mailto:caribe966@aol.com)

Database: Larry Hammer: [larry.hammer@misyshealthcare.com](mailto:larry.hammer@misyshealthcare.com)

### Program Committee

Chair: Kitty Aughey: [kaughey@cox.net](mailto:kaughey@cox.net)

Facilities: Helen Marty: [martyh46@msn.com](mailto:martyh46@msn.com)