



THE BORDER LINE

News from the SOUTHERN ARIZONA CHAPTER



October 2004 • Volume 9, No. 2

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STC Mission Statement:

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession 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., Suite 904,
Arlington, VA 22203-1822.
Phone: (703) 522-4114;
Web site: www.stc.org.

Chapter Meeting: A Night at the Round Table

Career Perspectives 2004

Join us for A Night at the Round Table, dedicated to a variety of career perspectives. Our table moderators will conduct discussions about various phases of technical communication careers.

A Night at the Round Table is our new name for the classic Whine and Cheese format meeting. For those of you who haven't attended this type of session before, you'll find it is unlike our normal program meetings. We'll have several concurrent speakers, each talking about a separate but related area. Choose a topic, participate in the discussion, whine if you want. After 30 minutes or so, we'll ring a bell and you can move to one of the other tables and do it all over again. This is one of our most popular formats: casual, interactive, and fun.

Save the Date: Thursday, October 14, 2004

Place: Courtyard by Marriott, 201 S. Williams Blvd, in the Williams Centre near Broadway and Craycroft in Tucson

Time: Registration, 5:30 to 6 p.m.
Dinner and networking, 6 to 7 p.m.
Program, 7 to 8:30 p.m. (three 20-minute sessions with four topics)

Menu: Caesar salads and assorted beverages (tea, coffee, and soft drinks)

Cost: STC members \$18; Non-members \$20

*(Non-members: Never attended a Southern Arizona chapter meeting?
Use the \$5 Off Non-Member Coupon on page 8)*

RSVP: To reserve your spot, send an e-mail message to Pat Markey (pat.markey@comcast.net) by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, October 12.

No-shows will be billed. Walk-ins are always welcome, but we cannot guarantee a meal. ■

Keep Your STC Information Current

Did you move, change your name, or get a new e-mail address? If so, let us know. Send an e-mail to www.membership@stc.org or a letter to:

STC/Membership Department
901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1822 ■



President's Message

STC for Me and You!

By Kitty Aughey, Associate Fellow

The September meeting was well received, generated positive feedback, and was fun for everyone! It was a nice beginning to our meeting season and wonderful to see new people and students in attendance. After the meeting, I wrote down some of the things that make STC a positive experience for me and I hope for you.

I have been a member of STC since 1984, each year something changes in my career and I look to the organization for the best and newest information on my new needs. Starting as a technical writer, I moved into supervising the writers, then becoming the writers' manager, and now I am an independent contractor. Each step was a dramatic change but the networking and that wonderful reference www.stc.org kept me up to date. "Change is good" is an overworked expression but it really is good when you have such a dependable resource.

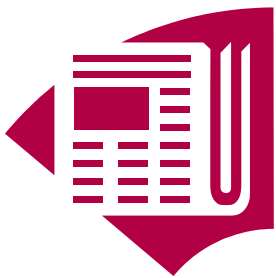
Becoming active in your local STC chapter is one of the best ways to network and learn about the technical communication industry in the area. You might hear about your next job at a chapter meeting, find a solution to a current problem, or meet your next coworker. Membership is the beginning of a wonderful professional relationship. For me it led to involvement at the regional and society levels. All endeavors have made me feel I was and continue to be in the right professional arena.

I recently moved from New York to Arizona and while the boxes were still being unpacked, I attended the local chapter meeting. The Southern Arizona chapter and the local Web site www.stc-saz.org have provided me with valuable area information and many new friends. I have started an independent consulting group and Tucson has become the "greatest" place on the planet for me.

I have overworked the use of first person in this article. That is because STC has been so very important in my life. I hope you can find some of the same first person values in STC that I have.

Enjoy the 'being' of who you are and all of those fascinating and intriguing people in your life this month!

Cheers,
Kitty 🍷



Membership News

New Business in Town

After starting one of the first consulting firms in business and technical communication in Chicago in 1978, **Christine Abbott** has returned to consulting.

Dr. Abbott's company, ABC – Abbott Business Communication, offers workshops in business and technical writing and oral presentations, editing, consulting, writing, and the Executive Writing Profile™. An STC fellow and professor emerita of Northern Illinois University, she is based out of Tucson and Chicago. Her clients have included many Fortune 500 companies.



2005 Membership Options

Judy McCabe, Membership

New categories will appear on dues renewal forms (to be mailed in November) and on new member applications for 2005.

Classic Membership

Classic members are entitled to the paper versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* and access to the online versions; full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site; and a choice between one chapter and one SIG (Special Interest Group), or three SIGs.

Annual dues: \$145

Classic members may join additional SIGs for \$5 per SIG and additional chapters for \$10 per chapter.

E-Membership

E-members are entitled to online versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* (no paper copies); full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site; and a choice between one chapter and one SIG, or three SIGs.

Annual dues: \$135

E-members may join additional SIGs for \$5 per SIG and additional chapters for \$10 per chapter.

Limited Membership

This category includes subscriptions to the paper versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* and full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site. Limited membership does not include membership in chapters or SIGs.

Annual dues: \$125

Student Membership

Student members are entitled to online versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* (no paper copies) and full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site, but have no voting rights. Student members may join up to two chapters and an unlimited number of SIGs.

Annual dues: \$50

Allowing student members to join an unlimited number of SIGs gives them the chance to test various areas of expertise and gain knowledge in their beginning years of interest in technical communication. Student members may join additional chapters for \$10 per chapter. ■



Clip and Save

Chapter Program Schedule

Programs are held on the second Thursday of each month in Tucson, AZ.

October 14 is the our final meeting at the Courtyard by Marriott. The Marriott is discontinuing their evening meal service, and they will not provide catering.

- **October 14, 2004:** Career perspectives from new writer to seasoned vet. See meeting announcement on page 1.
- **November 11, 2004:** Lin Surasky, FrameMaker Tips and Tricks. **New location:** Varsity Clubs Of America Suites Hotel, 3855 E Speedway Blvd.
- **December 9, 2004:** Janina Latack, Stress Management, plus our annual Holiday Party and Silent Auction. **New location:** Varsity Clubs Of America Suites Hotel, 3855 E Speedway Blvd.
- **January 13, 2005:** NEW! Casual networking dinner (no program). Restaurant location TBD.
- **February 10, 2005:** Avon Murphy, What new technical communication books tell us about our profession. Location TBD.
- **March 10, 2005:** NEW! Christine Abbott, CYA for Tech Writers. Location TBD.
- **April 14, 2005:** Content Management. Location TBD.
- **May 19, 2005:** Awards and Recognitions. Location TBD.

The program schedule is subject to change without notice; for up-to-date meeting information, visit www.stc-saz.org.

Chapter Planning Meeting Schedule

All chapter members are invited to join us at the monthly planning meetings. Come participate in the way the chapter is run! You'll meet the executive council, the committee heads, and have an opportunity to express your opinion and learn about the inner workings of our chapter.

October 26, 2004	February 22, 2005	Saturday, June 4, 2005
November 23, 2004	March 22, 2005	(for 2005-2006)
December 28, 2004	April 26, 2005	Location TBD
January 25, 2005	May 24, 2005	

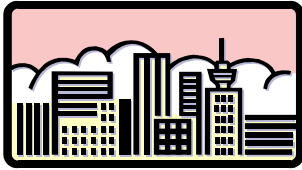
Regular planning meetings are held in the café at Barnes and Noble on Broadway (east of Swan) at 6 p.m. on the **fourth Tuesday** of the month. 🍷



Let's Talk Tech Comm!

Phoenix Chapter Meeting

Join Phoenix chapter members on **Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2004** for a lively discussion of issues near and dear to technical communicators: favorite (and not so favorite) tools, work challenges, project management, and more. Using a round-table progression, attendees will have the opportunity to explore three different topics, sharing common insights, learning valuable tips, and developing innovative solutions for everyday problems. Come prepared to mix, mingle, and have a great time as we learn from each other. For more information, see the Phoenix Web site, www.stc-phoenix.com. 🍷



Top Ten Reasons to Attend an STC Regional Conference

Brenda Huettner, Associate Fellow

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

—Thomas Edison

1. Save \$\$\$! For a fraction of the cost of the annual conference, you'll get the wisdom and advice of many of the same experienced technical communication professionals who present at the STC Annual Conference and other conferences around the country and around the world. For less than the cost of a single course at a local university, you'll get professional guidance in a wide variety of subject areas. Compare STC Regional conference costs (typically under \$200) to those of for-profit conferences – you'll agree, the regional conferences offer the biggest bang for the buck you'll get all year!
2. Fun, fun, fun! You get to meet and hang out with other people who understand exactly what you do! Share war stories, exchanges tips and tricks, and compare techniques and environments.
3. Learn something new. You'll find out about the latest techniques and processes in the field, and ways that technical communicators are making an impact in new areas.
4. Solve your current technical communication quagmires – or at least get some options you may not have thought of before! Even if you don't find a session that specifically addresses your current challenges, you're bound to find someone who can help.
5. Looking for work? Looking to hire? Most regional conferences have job-related areas. Many include résumé books, interview areas, and other resources. I've even seen interviews conducted on the spot!
6. The smaller scale of the regional conferences lets you get to know the other attendees and the presenters on a more personal level than you would at larger events.
7. Because it is a regional conference, it is likely to be closer to your home than other events. This not only reduces your travel expenses, it also means it'll be easier to follow up with all the new contacts you'll make.
8. Meet the STC leadership, from your own region and often from other regions as well. Your director is your link to the STC Board, and they want to hear what you have to say.
9. Product demonstrations allow you to easily compare vendor products. Because there are fewer attendees than at the big annual conference, you'll get more time with exhibitors to really try out the products and ask questions.
10. Expand your horizons by visiting a new city. As a bonus, the conference comes with built-in hosts from the local chapter, who can tell you exactly where to find the best cup of coffee in the morning, the perfect after-dinner drink, or anything in between. 🍷



Program Review

Review: Network & Nibble 2004

Carrie Cooper, Vice President

Attendees seemed to feel the meeting was a good value. On the meeting evaluation forms, no score was lower than 3 (good). Using a scale of 1 (poor) to 4 (wow!), scores from 16 attendees were as follows:

Speaker: 3.3
Topic: 3.2
Value: 3.4
Overall: 3.3

Twenty-three people gathered at our program meeting on Sept. 9, which I had the pleasure of moderating. It was a lot of fun and received high scores from participants. As expected, we brought together a wide range of people to exchange information and ideas. Several technical recruiters and job placement firms were also present.

In the past, our annual Network & Nibble has been unstructured. In contrast, I planned several group activities this year and prepared handouts to give attendees good information. I really wanted attendees to get value at the meeting – from the people they met, from our activities, and from the handouts, which all had resources for further reading and Web sites to visit.

The evening started with registration and informal networking. We then played Networking Bingo. Similar to regular Bingo, this game required players to collect five names in a row, either across, down, or diagonally. Each box on the game card contained an identifying statement that could apply to several people at the meeting, such as “Attended Society conference” or “Business card has Web site or e-mail.” A person could sign only one box for someone else. **Christine Abbott** won a ticket to tour Kartchner Caverns.

After the game, people helped themselves to the deli buffet and filled out “kudos cards.” These were index cards that instructed people to write down a positive event in their lives from the past week. It could have been either a small accomplishment or something really special and more substantial. Throughout the evening, we drew these kudos cards at random to award door prizes. An unexpected effect was that the person whose card was read got a spontaneous round of applause.

I then handed out a take-home worksheet: the Blue Ribbon exercise. I reassured people that these were not graded! In this exercise, you write down a few of the large and small accomplishments for which you deserve a blue ribbon. In turn, these blue ribbon achievements can be transformed into success stories for a job interview. Interview questions such as “tell me about a time when” or “give me an example of” are effective because they require you to provide specific, real-life anecdotes about past performance. It takes one minute to deliver 100 to 125 spoken words; the challenge is to keep your success stories in the 30-word range (15 seconds).

Attendees were also surprised when I asked them to change seats. We probably could have done this at least one more time during the meeting. One attendee listed this simple activity – moving to another table – as one of the most valuable aspects of the meeting.

The main exercise of the evening was Strategy Shuffle, an activity designed to tap into the power of the network. (For more information, see [Worksheet Results](#) on page 7.)

At the end of the program, we distributed two handouts: “Nonstop Networking Tips” with advice from Andrea Nierenberg and “Client Touch Points” from Kendall SummerHawk. Andrea’s advice can be summed up as “Focus on building mutually beneficial relationships, not just passing around business cards.” Kendall, a local marketing expert, reminded us to “Think caring and curious, not pestering and pushy” and gave key times to stay in contact. These handouts can be found on our Web site, www.stc-saz.org/resources.html. ■

Worksheet Results – Strategy Shuffle

From our Network & Nibble 2004 meeting

In this exercise, participants briefly write down a challenging situation or problem they have been coping with. They list one way they have already tried to handle the issue. Strategy Shuffle worksheets were then circulated throughout the group, and people suggested practical alternatives to the situation. At the end of the activity, each worksheet had five new strategies from five different people. Some groups got really creative with this exercise, brainstorming together to generate solutions. Worksheets were completed anonymously, but many people asked if anyone would be willing to share their results. Here are three situations the group worked on solving.

Situation #1: Difficult communications between members of a development team. There is little organization, and no one respects others' time challenges.

My Strategy: Made friends and used personal, face-to-face communication with all members of the staff.

Group alternatives:

- Brown bag lunch sessions.
- Hire a consultant.
- Make a clear agenda.
- Brainstorm together to get a variety of ideas.
- Draw up a group contract to solve problems.

Situation #2: Dealing with a difficult coworker (argumentative, confrontational, "know-it-all").

My Strategy: Attempt to talk with person calmly and directly. Get input from other coworkers.

Group alternatives:

- Avoidance when possible; deep cleansing breaths at all other times.
- Communicate primarily by e-mail or in writing, which eliminates confrontational emotion and gives you a paper trail.
- Be difficult in return. Don't let them argue. Insist they listen to your side for at least a minute.
- Don't react or let them "bait" you. I had this exact situation, and when I stopped reacting, the person gave up and backed off.

Situation #3: Loud, noisy "next-door" coworker (submitted more than once).

My Strategy: Headphones (which my boss doesn't like).

Group alternatives:

- Find a temporary space to move to for work requiring concentration.
- Ignore the coworker.
- Explain to coworker that the noise carries to your area. Maybe your coworker just doesn't realize it.
- Put up the Dilbert cartoon where the lady engineer stands outside her cubicle and tells the noisy party to "Shut up!"
- Address the issue and how it affects your work. Use "I" statements, avoid judgmental or personal "attack" statements. 🍷



Linda Oestreich

Director's News

Region 5 Conference

Linda Oestreich, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

"Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb."

– Sir Winston Churchill

Our theme, "Ascending the Summit," and this quote from Sir Winston Churchill, invite each of us to excel in this technical communication expedition.

STC Intermountain invites you to the Wasatch Mountains in Salt Lake City, Utah! Here at the foot of the Wasatch Range, we will spend **Oct. 21 to 23, 2004**, ascending the summit – tackling technical communication challenges, renewing both friendships and work relationships, and enriching our skill sets.

In addition to great keynoters and a closing session focused on Transformation, you'll have a chance to network, to enrich your career, and to give your heart and mind an invigorating treat to the beauty of Salt Lake City! And don't forget the leadership workshop on Sunday morning to round out the experience, recap your knowledge, and have some informal, intimate discussions with other STC leaders. At last count, four directors of the Society will be there!

See our conference Web site, www.stcregion5conf2004.org, for registration and conference schedule information. 📌



Welcome to Our Chapter!

New members of the Southern Arizona chapter:

- **Robert Lane**
- **Polly Wise**

Three members recently transferred to our chapter:

- **Erin Cizina** hails from the Sacramento chapter
- **Carol Claton** joins us from the Rocky Mountain chapter
- **Milinda Sciaraffa** returns to SAZ from the New York Metro chapter

We hope to see you at our next chapter meeting! 📌

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

STC Southern Arizona Chapter

Non-Member Coupon

Save \$5 at Your First Meeting: We encourage non-members 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: _____



Arizona governor
Janet Napolitano

State News

Arizona Technical Communication Week

Tom Barnett, Tech Comm Week Manager, Phoenix chapter

The governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, has honored us again and proclaimed the week of October 17 to 23 as Technical Communication Week 2004.

Each year we recognize and celebrate the important contributions made by technical communicators and information designers to the understanding and usability of technology. That celebration is embodied in Technical Communication Week.

Tech Comm Week is a special time of year in which STC members and others not only celebrate the value of technical communications, but also raise the awareness of our profession, our professionalism, and the ethics and creativity we bring to our work.

Technical communicators in the early 1980s had the inspiration to create Arizona's first celebration of our great endeavor. Today over a dozen other states celebrate the work we do.

The 19th annual celebration is once again sponsored by the STC Phoenix chapter. A copy of the governor's proclamation, a list of tips for celebrating Tech Comm Week, and a calendar of events is available at www.stc-phoenix.com.

Companies celebrate Technical Communication Week in different ways. Some have a special luncheon. Some put up signs. For many companies, the event allows recognition for a profession that often does not receive the attention it deserves. 🍀



Seth Maislin

Upcoming STC Seminar

A Brief, Comprehensive Indexing Primer

Presenter: Seth Maislin

Have you experienced the rite of passage of receiving your AARP membership card – because you are 50 or older? Know someone who has? How many people in the audiences for which you write are 50 or older? As the Web-using population ages, more people in your audiences may be older than you realize. Take part in this seminar to hear about research on how older people use the Web and the issues they have with language, information architecture, visual design and formatting, and content.

- Seminar Type: Web-Telephone
- Seminar Cost: \$99 STC Members; \$149 Non-members
- Wednesday, October 20, 2004 | 1:00-2:30 p.m. EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)

With all seminars, the cost is per site, not per person. For more information, see the STC's Web site, www.stc.org/seminars.asp. 🍀



Society News

Intercom Online

The new Intercom Online is now available at www.stc.org/intercom. It contains links to the entire article index for the current issue. Previously, the STC Web site contained links to feature articles only. Intercom Online also features a full-text search utility that allows precise searches of all back issues from 1999 to the present. Some articles from the current issue will be available as "teasers" to non-members, but most of the articles will be reserved for members only. 🍀

About the Newsletter

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Publication Policies

We welcome contributions, book and product reviews, letters, and articles that are relevant to the field of technical communication. **The submission deadline for the next (November) newsletter is Tuesday, Oct. 26.** Your text may be edited to conform to style guidelines and space restrictions of the newsletter.

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Past Presidents of the Southern Arizona Chapter

1998-1999 – Dirk Arnold

1999-2000 – Debra Parker (Crawford)

2000-2001 – Barbara Fraps

2001-2002 – Brenda Huettner

2002-2003 – Helen Marty

2003-2004 – Patricia Markey