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STC Mission Statement:

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.
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Southern Arizona Chapter Mission Statement:

To increase public awareness of the technical communication profession and to serve as a resource to STC-SAZ members.
 Web site: www.stc-saz.org

Meeting Notice

ATLAS: A Knowledge System for Intuit’s Sales Center

With Steve Lawley

In 2006 the Intuit team developed and deployed a new intranet site for use by sales agents. It takes advantage of database technology to house modules of information that can be displayed dynamically. The design for users follows the sales workflow, to make it easier to find information that is most pertinent to what the user needs based on what they are doing with their customer. The presentation is a case study of how learnings from the legacy system were applied to the new design, how current technologies in Web development were leveraged, and how the new system is performing for users.

Steve Lawley is an intranet developer and member of the infrastructure team supporting the Small Business Division at Intuit. Steve is a graduate of the University of Southern California and a U.S. Navy submarine veteran.

Special door prize: TurboTax Premier (+ 1 state). \$75 value.

Scholarship donation matching offer: STC-SAZ will match any donations made to the scholarship fund.

Save the Date: Thursday, March 8

Place: El Parador located at 2744 East Broadway (south side, between Country Club and Tucson Blvd). Parking at adjacent businesses is OK after 5:30.

Time: Registration from 5:30 to 6 p.m.
 Dinner from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Program from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Menu: Order on site from a select menu. Dinners are served with soft drinks, iced tea and coffee.

Cost: Dinner and meeting: \$20 STC members; \$25 nonmembers; \$15 students
 Meeting only (no dinner): \$5 STC members and students; \$10 nonmembers

RSVP: To reserve your spot, send an e-mail message to Pat Markey (pat.markey@comcast.net) **by noon, Monday, March 5.**

Walk-ins are welcome. No-shows will be billed.

NOTE: You must be a member of the Southern Arizona Chapter to qualify as a member for the purpose of meeting costs. To join our chapter, use the form on the STC Web site, www.stc.org/PDF_Files/membershipChangeForm.pdf.





About Erik Levitch:

Erik is currently the lone Webmaster for the JACMET Web site. According to Erik, "JACMET is a joint consortium between the three state universities and their mission is to educate those already in the technical work force. Companies such as Raytheon, Intel, and Motorola train some of their new and current employees through JACMET's certificate programs." In explaining about the JACMET Web site, he says, "I created it, coded it, and programmed some of the back end."

If you want to know more about JACMET, view the [PDF brochure](#). Please note that the file is quite large.

From the President

Interview with a Technical Writer

By Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ President

Erik Levitch, a student at Arizona State University - Polytechnic majoring in graphic information technology, recently contacted our chapter. He is taking a technical communications course (TWC 401) to obtain a better understanding of how to write concise technical documents. Erik was required to interview a professional in the field of technical communications "to acquire a general idea on how a professional in the field writes technical documents in comparison with those in academia."

I answered Erik's questions via e-mail. The interview is reproduced here, and I hope you find it interesting. If you would like to provide feedback on your work processes, we would be happy to print them in a future issue of the newsletter.

Erik, for some of these questions, I've quoted from some of the reference sources I use a lot. They may be older, but I feel their advice is still good.

1. Which part of the process of creating a document do you see as causing the most bottlenecks? How do you get around them?

The hardest part of creating a document is when you start with a blank page. When you don't know the "blocks" or parts that should be included, it is difficult to begin. Writing an outline helps, as does using a template. I find it most helpful to start with a list of the sections that should be included; once the sections are in place, it is easier to flesh them out.

2. In thinking about your current work, how does document cycling work? In other words, whose hands does the document pass through, and what do they do with it before the document is considered complete or finished?

It depends on the type of document. A document for use inside the company only can be as informal as a memo to file, written by one person with no approvals required.

At my employer, a technical writer in the publications department creates the end-user documentation. The writer reads the project description, which is created by a product manager and a developer. The writer confers with the developer as needed to draft the documentation. The writer passes the draft document to the QC person who tested the project for review. The QC tester gives content suggestions and approval. A peer reviewer (another technical writer) may check the document for adherence to internal formatting and style guides. The final approval for the finished document comes from the product manager.

3. Do you find that electronic resources, such as Web sites, have less credibility than print documents? Have you found that audiences are more responsive to your document when there is a wide array of resources?

It depends on the Web site and its reputation. For example, [newyorktimes.com](#) is going to have more credibility than someone's individual blog for their hobby or [myspace page](#). Web sites are certainly some of the fastest sources to access.

I am a big believer in citing sources, even for personal documents. I think your document has the most credibility if you can cite a variety of relevant sources, including Web sites, books, and articles. Of course, it is better to include at least some sources that are current (published within the last five years), if possible.

It is important to cite authoritative sources for statements used in documents, including specific facts, opinions, definitions, and exact quotations (Turabian 26). Documentation is required when you quote directly from a source, paraphrase or summarize information from a source, and when you cite or borrow facts and ideas from a source. A simple rule is "When in doubt, cite the source" (Hacker 213, 216).

4. Do you work with a team in editing and revising? If yes, how do you manage document version control?

In the past, I did work with a team to edit and revise in a regulated environment that required document control. We used a simple method: a hard copy of the document (such as a standard operating procedure) was printed with the revision date in the footer. This print-out was given to an editor, who marked up the document with a red-ink pen. The edits were then incorporated into the electronic file, the date was revised, and a note about the scope of the changes was added to the document's revision history. The final version was signed off by

responsible personnel. New copies were distributed, old copies were pulled, and the original version with signatures was filed with the older versions of the document. We kept a hard copy of each document version filed together, so that you could physically see the changes during its lifecycle.

5. Do you write most of your documents for internal (your company) or external (contracted clients, publishers, etc.) audiences? How does each audience affect your choices made while creating your document?

I write now mostly for an internal audience, but I review documents for external audiences. Internal audiences can handle more abbreviations. External audiences might need to have acronyms spelled out and instructions made more explicit. For example, an internal audience can be told to simply open a report. An external audience might have to be told to launch the app, log in, open the reporting function, and then select the report for opening.

6. What experience has had the most profound impact on how you approach technical writing?

Teaching users to perform lab functions based on standard operating procedures. It became clear immediately that people want to spend time doing their work, not reading documents. It helped me focus my writing: One mantra I use when composing documents is “clear, concise, and complete.” I’m a big fan of the “one minute message”: If your written message takes more than one minute of your reader’s time, you are unlikely to hold your reader’s attention, according to Write to the Point. I strive to keep memos and letters within the one-page range and e-mail messages limited to one screen long, about 25 lines.

7. If you could go back to when you were in school, what would you have done more frequently in order to prepare for your job? What would you have done less often?

The most helpful thing I did was take a journalism class that forced us to write tightly. While my tech writing courses encouraged verbosity, the journalism class emphasized pithiness. For example, we had to read an article and write a 15-word summary of the article. Any word over 15 — and any usage error — caused a full drop in letter grade. This was amazing training for a marketing communications job where I had to describe the features of a new piece of engineering equipment without using bullet points.

I can tell you that I have only done a formal audience analysis exercise as part of a tech writing course. Creating user personas for documentation just doesn’t seem to happen in the real world.

8. Technical documents often have elaborate informational graphics. Do you collaborate and speak with those who design the graphics for your documents? Do you design the graphics yourself?

Most of our graphics are screenshots of the software my company produces. We have a technical writer on staff who can create more elaborate graphics if needed (Visio diagrams, etc.) for the team. And yes, we would collaborate with anyone who designs graphics for our documents. They would need to know our requirements for file type (JPG, BMP), image size, color usage, and final output (print or online).

9. What methods do you use to overcome writer’s block? How often does writer’s block impede on the writing process?

I do not draft with a pen and notebook: I prefer to open a template on the computer and type in what will be the final form. I use these four methods to overcome writer’s block, which does not happen often:

1. Determine your purpose and choose a suitable format: What does this communication aim to accomplish? Outline the message. Order the topics (group the details). Summarize the message in two or three sentences. Develop the first draft based on the outline.
2. Write first, edit later. Concentrate on the logical flow of ideas without stopping to edit.
3. Put the message first. The functional MADE format recommended by Dianna Booher is excellent, even for memos:
 - *Message*: Summary of one to three sentences.
 - *Action*: What action do you plan to take or want the reader to take?
 - *Details*: Elaborate on who, when, where, why, how and how much.
 - *Evidence*: Mention any materials you think will make the message clearer or the action easier to take.
4. If I’m really blocked, I also try to write conversationally: How would I explain this topic to a patient friend? According to the Creating Passionate Users blog, “One of the theories on why speaking directly to the user is more effective than a more formal lecture tone is that the user’s brain thinks it’s in a conversation and, therefore, has to pay more attention to hold up its end!” See

10. In your experience reading, writing, and editing technical documents, what is the most common problem you've encountered with the documents?

Bloated, sloppy documentation is my pet peeve, and it frequently has these symptoms: unclear, ambiguous language; pompous writing or trying too hard to be technical; poor organizational structure with ideas that are out of order; and a lack of editing for careless errors.

Academic journals are especially prone with writing to impress, not to communicate. Owner's manuals are frequently hard to follow because of poor writing: The technical writers who create these manuals should have to read their work aloud and try to follow their own instructions! You can create written pieces that are both technically accurate and easy to read.

Sources:

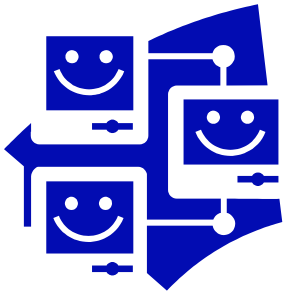
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Networking

IABC Competition

The Tucson chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) has announced its 2007 Cactus Quill Call-for-Entries.

The Cactus Quill competition is open to communications professionals working in Arizona and to Arizona students. Entries must be original communication programs and projects that fit one of the categories listed in IABC's Cactus Quill brochure.

Entry Deadline: March 30, 2007

Early Bird: March 23, 2007

Awards Luncheon: June 7, 2007

For entry forms and more information, visit www.iabctucson.com.

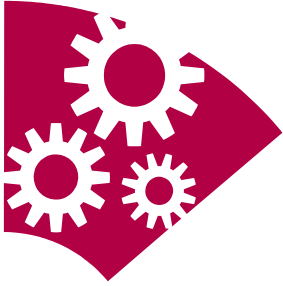


Employment Information

WritersUA Salary Survey

The WritersUA Salary Survey is now in progress. To complete the survey, visit www.writersua.com/surveys/salary_origform.htm. The survey is specifically designed to collect data about user assistance authoring professionals. Results will be available later this month.





This article first appeared in the January 2007 issue of the STC Orlando chapter newsletter, *Memos to Members*.

Feature Article

Getting Yourself Hired

By Dalton Hooper, Member Orlando and Suncoast Chapters

Lesson 2: A Game of Inches

As much as we would like to believe we are hired based strictly on our skills and experience relevant to the position, it is almost never the case. It is more often the accumulation of many “little” things, not directly related to the content of our résumé that puts us out in front of the other candidate.

Life Isn't Fair — and Neither Is the Hiring Process

There are plenty of things that are absolutely beyond your control during the hiring process, such as:

- the quality of the other candidates
- the quantity of other candidates
- the competency of the interviewer
- the quality of the job ad

Although these things can affect whether you will be the successful candidate, don't waste valuable time and energy obsessing over them. Although extremely unfair, just move on to the things over which you *can* exert influence — which is not to say that the things over which you *do* have influence are fair, either. They are simply things over which you have influence.

Fair and Unfair Advantages

Obviously, there are many things that can figure into the hiring manager's decision over which you have direct control. Some are fair advantages. Some are not. For the sake of this discussion, I define a “fair” advantage as being an aspect of the hiring process that should rightfully enter into the hiring manager's decision about you. I define an “unfair” advantage as being an aspect of the hiring process that, in an *ideal* world, would not affect the outcome, but in the *real* world does anyway.

- Some “fair” advantages include:
 - the GPA you earned in college
 - the amount of your relevant job experience
 - the quality of your writing samples
 - active membership(s) in relevant professional organizations
- Some “unfair” advantages may include:
 - the way you dress for the interview
 - whether you are on time for the interview
 - your demeanor, including:
 - o Do you smile?
 - o Do you appear more interested in what you can do for the prospective company or what it can do for you?
 - o Do you appear to be specifically interested in acquiring this particular job or appear to be just looking for a job — any job?
 - o Do you appear over or underconfident?
 - o Were you rude to the receptionist?
 - a friend or relative, who works for the company, put in a “good word” for you
 - you exploited a common interest you share with the interviewer (golf, children of the same age, etc.)
 - whether you send a thank you message after the interview

While you may or may not agree that these “unfair” advantages should enter into the final hiring decision, the fact is they nearly always do! In fact, it is quite possible that you may actually have a lesser list of “fair” advantages than a competing candidate, but end up being the one selected, based on your accumulation of “unfair” advantages!

Yes, it is true that it may actually be illegal to hire a lesser qualified candidate for certain positions, but rarely is a hiring manager going to admit, or even believe, that they should have selected someone else. It is perfectly acceptable, in most cases, for a hiring manager to take into consideration factors beyond the strictest evaluation of relevant skills and experience. The hiring manager is allowed to evaluate how they perceive you will fit into the work group or team; whether you are a creative “out of the box” thinker or a traditionalist (either may be optimal for their environment).

As the time-worn analogy goes, “If two people applied for the same job, each having equal skills, knowledge, and experience, and each did equally well in the interview. The only difference is that one dressed better than the other. Who would get the job?”

The hiring process is a game of inches. Gather all you can.

About the Author

Dalton Hooper is currently the documentation project manager for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Information Technology. Dalton directs a team of technical writers responsible for providing all relevant technical documentation during the development and support of internal business systems for Disney parks and resorts worldwide.

He can be reached at dalton.hooper@disney.com.



Competition Opportunities

IEEE Student Paper Competition

The Tucson section of the IEEE is sponsoring a student paper competition for members of their student chapter. The competition is designed to evaluate both the written and oral communication skills of the students, and offers some cash prizes as incentive (\$300 for first prize, \$150 for second prize, and \$75 for third prize). If you know any students at the University who are members of the IEEE student chapter, pass the word along! If you'd like to help out as a judge for either the written or oral components of this competition, contact Brenda Huettner at bphuettner@ieee.org.



Editor's Notes

Bring Colleagues and Friends

By Pat Markey, Editor

If you enjoy the networking and programs we present each month, don't you think others you know who are interested in technical communication would enjoy it also? I encourage you to invite co-workers, managers, colleagues and friends, because new ideas are the backbone of growth. This is not to ignore the other basic truth: The more, the merrier. I hope to see more of us soon.





Society News

STC Elections

In mid-January, information about candidates for Society-level office was posted to the [STC Web site](#). As in past elections, the information includes candidates' responses to questions posed by the STC Nominating Committee and summaries of their STC service and professional experience.

An online form allows members to submit questions to candidates and view their responses. Questions submitted by members are automatically forwarded to all of the candidates running for a particular office. Each candidate decides whether to respond to a question; responses are not required.

The election opens in early March and closes at noon, Eastern Daylight Time, on April 12, 2007. Please note that the closing date allows winning candidates time to prepare for their first Board meeting at STC's 54th Annual Conference in Minneapolis.

Only members who have paid their dues by Feb. 28, 2007, will be eligible to vote. All eligible members will receive voting instructions in early March.



Networking

STC Phoenix Meeting

Meeting Today's Content Globalization Challenges

With Hans Fenstermacher

In the age of e-information, the need to produce content ready for all world markets is greater than ever. But so are skyrocketing localization and translation costs. Much attention is focused on localization methodologies, tools like Translation Memories, and content management systems, but the single biggest factor in the quality and cost of all content is – and always has been – the size and quality of the source material itself. This presentation provides technical writers and content developers with valuable information about how to streamline their content and anticipate localization requirements. The session also includes a business case for improving content development and reducing word counts, as well as an interactive exercise with the audience.

Hans is president and founder of ArchiText, a division of language service provider Translations.com (part of the TransPerfect Global Group). ArchiText provides comprehensive translation, localization, and content globalization services to Global 2000 companies. Born in Germany, Hans speaks six languages fluently and holds degrees from Princeton University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Hans is an associate fellow of the Society for Technical Communication, as well as past president of the Boston chapter. In 2002, Hans founded the Globalization And Localization Association (GALA) and served as its first chairman.

Please remember to bring your résumé, and be certain to introduce yourself if you are looking for a job.

For more information, visit the Phoenix Web site, www.stc-phoenix.com.





Chapter Activity

SAZ Program Schedule

Programs are held on the **second Thursday** of each month in Tucson, except February in Chandler.

New meeting location effective September 2006: El Parador, 2744 East Broadway (south side between Country Club and Tucson Blvd.), www.elparadortucson.com

- **September 14, 2006:** Network and Nibble.
- **October 12, 2006:** Avon Murphy
- **November 9, 2006:** DITA with Tom Escobedo, IBM..
- **December 14, 2006:** Holiday party.
- **January 11, 2007:** Casual networking dinner (no program). City Grill.
- **February 15, 2007:** Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director (U. of Phoenix, Chandler, Ariz.)
- **March 8, 2007:** Knowledge Management at Intuit and fund-raiser for scholarship
- **April 12, 2007:** Brad Keller will be present to discuss the past, present, and future of Help authoring and news about Robohelp, Doc-To-Help, and Microsoft.
- **May 10, 2007:** Annual Meeting: Awards and Recognitions.

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

SAZ Planning Schedule

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

August 22, 2006	December 19 2006	April 24, 2007
September 26, 2006	January 23, 2007	
October 24, 2006	February 27, 2007	
November 28, (e-mail)	March 27, 2007	

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.

Committee Openings

Publicity and Public Relations

This is a fun, very visible job that is critical for the communication efforts of our chapter. Two to four people would make an ideal team. For more information, contact Brenda Huettner at bphuettner@aol.com.

Education Outreach

This group would be our liaison with the Tucson academic communities, both for higher education and secondary schools.

Scholarship Committee

This person solicits and processes applications for our annual scholarship award from the college communities in Tucson.





Educational Opportunities

STC Remote Seminars

With all seminars, the cost is per site, not per person. Note that registration closes 24 hours before the seminar. For more information, visit the STC Web site, www.stc.org/seminars.asp.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask

Delving into content management (CM) is entering an unfamiliar and sometimes confusing world. It's not unusual for a well-meaning IT group of a corporation to install a well-respected, but inappropriate for technical publishing, content management application and expect the technical documentation department to start churning out documentation using the new system — and what about that return on investment they expect to see after a few months? Knowing the basics of CM is more than a protection mechanism; it's a way of preparing for the next big trend in documentation production.

This seminar provides the groundwork for understanding what a content management system is and what it does, the differences between various types of CM systems, some circumstances under which CM can be beneficial, and techniques for determining system suitability. The seminar will also demystify the industry vocabulary, thereby eliminating some of the barriers that can slow down the investigative process.

Some of the points covered are:

- Where does structured authoring and XML content management fit in the larger content management industry, and why is it important to understand the difference?
- What are the components of a CM system for technical publishing?
- What are the “must have” characteristics you want to look for in CMS, and why?
- What are organization-dependent variables?
- What are some of the most frequent risk factors that threaten project success, and how can you mitigate those risks in your project?
- How do you balance the immediate need for ROI with the need to fit into the corporate strategic plan?

Rahel Anne Bailie is a content management consultant helping organizations analyze their business requirements and spectrum of content to get the right content management fit. Coming from a technical communication and usability background, she understands the complexities of structured authoring and user-centered design. She is principal of Intentional Design Inc, a consultancy focusing on performance improvement for communication products, and a managing partner with the multidisciplinary Strategy A Consulting Group in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

- **Presenter:** Rahel Bailie
- **Date:** Wednesday, March 14 | 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time
- **Seminar Level:** Beginner



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. **Content is due the fourth Tuesday of every month.** Your text may be edited to conform to style guidelines and space restrictions of the newsletter.

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Reprint Policies

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Distribution

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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

2004-2006 – Kitty Aughey