

April 2007 • Volume 11, No. 8

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STC Mission Statement:

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

Contact the STC at
901 N. Stuart St., Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
Phone: (703) 522-4114
Web site: www.stc.org

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

Options for RoboHelp Users

With Brad Keller

Brad Keller will discuss the past, present, and future of help-authoring and news about RoboHelp, Doc-To-Help, and Microsoft.

What you will take away from this presentation:

- The facts about RoboHelp
- How Microsoft will once again change the industry
- An understanding of the RoboHelp to Doc-To-Help conversion process
- An understanding of how Doc-To-Help works so you can get the most out of a trial version

Brad Keller is a customer representative and technology evangelist for Doc-To-Help. He works closely with users, consultants, and industry experts to plan for emerging trends and new technologies. He currently has meetings scheduled with the Help-authoring community across the nation in order to educate them on recent trends, RoboHelp alternatives, and various aspects of Doc-To-Help.

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

Save the Date: Thursday, April 12

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 Richard Cook (rcook6701@yahoo.com) **by noon, Monday, April 9.**

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.





Full details are available at http://www.stc-saz.org/resources/SAZ_Bylaws.pdf.

Letter from the President

Being Vice President

By Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ President

We're looking for someone to serve the STC-SAZ chapter as vice president. You have to be a member of STC to be eligible. I served in this capacity for two years.

Let me share some details about this position with you. The following information comes from our chapter bylaws and my personal experience:

The STC-SAZ Administrative Council consists of five positions and includes the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and immediate past president. All Administrative Council members, except the immediate past president, are elected by the chapter membership.

The term of membership in the Administrative Council is one year. The term starts after annual elections, generally by June 1, when new officers are installed. Terms end on the date of the next year's installation of officers.

The chapter vice president assumes the duties of the chapter president in the absence of the president. If the president is unable to complete their term, the chapter vice president assumes the presidency for the remainder of the term.

The chapter vice president also:

- Undertakes such duties as the president may direct
- Confers with the president regarding chapter goals, policies, and programs
- Is automatically nominated for president for the next term of council membership
- Attends the monthly planning meeting and has one vote
- Chairs the Program Committee and is in charge of scheduling and planning our monthly programs. We hold regularly scheduled program meetings for the membership (at least five per year).

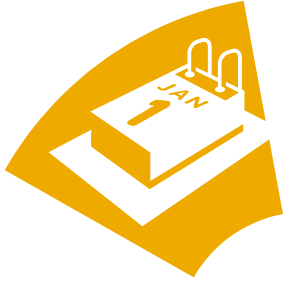
The time commitment is about two to four hours a month, including attending the planning meeting. Being vice president gives you great experience managing and planning events.

In exchange for this service, the chapter pays the vice president's annual STC conference registration fees. The conference takes place near the end of their term of service. The VP attends Leadership Day training at the conference to help them prepare for becoming the chapter president.

I served two years as VP and attended STC conferences in Seattle (2005) and Las Vegas (2006). In May 2007, we are sending current VP DeAnn Drott to Minneapolis.

In 2008, we will send the VP who is elected in April 2007 to the 2008 conference in Philadelphia – it could be you.





Chapter News

Southern Arizona Chapter Elections 2007

By Kathleen Aughey, Immediate Past President

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the preliminary slate of candidates for Southern Arizona chapter offices for fiscal year 2007-2008. We have great candidates. Many thanks to the committee (**Kitty Aughey**, **Brenda Huettner**, and **Rick House**) for their hard work.

Remember that any chapter member can submit a nomination for a chapter member to be added to the ballot. The nomination must be in writing, and must be signed by five voting members of the chapter. Send the nomination to President Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ, P.O. Box 14333, Tucson, AZ 85732 by April 6.

President

DeAnn Drottz

DeAnn Drottz is currently vice president for the Tucson STC chapter. She has previously served as secretary, and is a copy editor for *The Border Line* newsletter. DeAnn is completing a professional writing certificate from Northern Arizona University. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from the University of Minnesota, and an MBA from the University of Arizona's Keller Graduate School of Management. DeAnn is developing a business in freelance writing and plans to make the career transition into technical writing within the near future.

Vice president

****VACANT****

If you are interested in this position, please contact Kitty Aughey at kaughey@cox.net by April 9.

Secretary

Bill Rost

Bill Rost began technical writing in 1983 and has been both contract writer and captive employee since that time. He is currently writing user, system administrative, and release documentation for Retalix, Inc., in Tucson. After 10 years with Misys, formerly Sunquest, he enjoys the smaller organization and opportunities to produce quality documentation for inventory control, pricing, receiving and ordering, and POS software for retail clients, primarily large grocery businesses.

Treasurer

Lisa Renner

Lisa Renner has been a member of STC since 2005, when she attended the 2005 conference in Seattle. For 16 years she has worked for Chamberlain, a manufacturer of garage door openers, gate openers, and telephone access entry systems. She started in the call center where she provided technical support for garage door openers. She was then promoted to trainer, and the last seven years she has been manager of the technical publications department.

Voting Options

People who are members of the Southern Arizona chapter as of March 31, 2007, are eligible to vote in this election. This year there are two ways to vote:

- **Online**
Information to log on and vote will be distributed to members via the listserv on April 7.
- **Paper ballot**
Member must request a paper ballot by contacting Kitty Aughey at her e-mail address:

kaughey@cox.net

Watch for these dates:

April 6 - Deadline for submitting additional nominees.

April 7 - The Election Committee distributes notification of voting to chapter members.

April 23 - Members must vote by April 23.

April 30 - Election day (votes are counted).

May - Deadline for notifying chapter membership of election results, which will appear in the May issue of this newsletter.



Employment Information

WritersUA Salary Survey Results

The results of the WritersUA Salary Survey are now available at www.writersua.com/surveys/salary07/index.html. The survey is specifically designed to collect data about user-assistance-authoring professionals. A total of 803 people participated in the survey this year.



Chapter Membership News

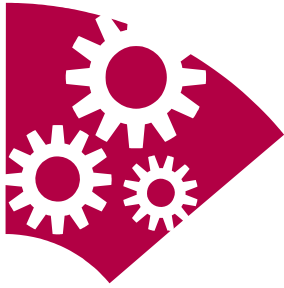
News About Members

By Kathleen Aughey, Membership Committee

Welcome to **Robert W. Holloway** who recently joined our chapter. Robert works for Environmental Systems Products Holdings (ESPH) in Tucson.

We currently have 62 chapter members.





Feature Article

Getting Yourself Hired

By Dalton Hooper, Member Orlando and Suncoast Chapters

Lesson 3: Do You Have Any Questions for Me?

At some point during the job interview, usually near the end, the interviewer will ask, “Do you have any questions for me?” It is a precious gift. Never throw it away. Leveraged to their fullest, the questions you ask can carry more weight than the answers you have given up to that point.

Be Prepared

Before you show up for your next interview, you will no doubt have spent some time preparing your answers to the questions you think will most likely be asked. That is a wise strategy. If the interviewer has also prepared wisely, the questions asked of you will have been purposely selected to reveal your suitability to the position for which you are being interviewed.

Like many interviewers, I long ago developed a standard set of questions to suit my purposes. I generally ask the same questions of each candidate, judging each answer in relation to their competition’s answer to the same question.

Is there one question in my repertoire that I consider to be the most revealing?

Why, yes. There is. The question, “Do you have any questions for me?”

A Defining Moment

In a future lesson within this series, I will talk about the presence of “defining moments” in job interviews and how to manage and create them. For now, let’s concentrate on the opportunity you are handed near the end of your interview, which will allow you to create a defining moment.

I am frequently amazed at job candidates who have persevered through my interview session with them, only to turn down the precious gift I offer them – to ask questions of me! Have you ever been asked by your interviewer if you had any questions for them, only to reply, “No. I think you’ve answered everything I wanted to know.” If you take nothing else away from this article, learn this: **Never, ever pass up the opportunity to ask your interviewer some questions!**

Cracking the Code

Here are some examples of poor question choices:

- Would I be working in a cubicle or an office?
- Do you have casual Fridays here?
- Is there a cafeteria in the building?
- What day is payday here?

Consider, instead, these examples:

- What would be the greatest challenge for someone filling this position?
- Can you walk me through what a typical day would be like in this role?
- How does this position support your company’s objectives?
- After spending this time with me, what would you consider to be my weak points and how would you recommend I improve on them?

I especially like the last example. It not only instantly makes your interviewer become your mentor and advisor (and, logically, your ally) but also gives you a read on how you fared in the interview – no more wondering.

Can you see the obvious difference in the types of questions in the first list versus the second list? In the first list, the questions reveal your interest in what the potential job

could do for **you**. In the second list, the questions indicate a desire on your part to be what the **interviewer** wants you to be. If you were the interviewer (i.e., the decision-maker), which set of questions would be most endearing to you? Exactly.

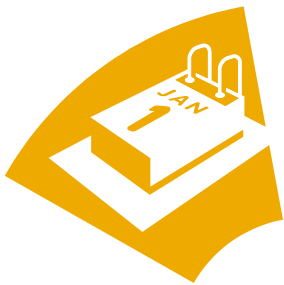
Your Own Repertoire

I mentioned earlier that I have a standard set of questions I use in nearly every interview. You should also develop a standard set of questions that **you** will use whenever an interviewer asks, “**Do you have any questions for me?**” Give your repertoire of questions a lot of thought. Rehearse them so you can ask them without pulling out a piece of paper to read them. You need to ask them as if they were a natural result of your keen interest in the position being discussed. Good luck!

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.



Education

2007 Tech Comm Scholarship

By Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ President

The Society for Technical Communication Southern Arizona chapter (STC-SAZ) is offering a scholarship intended to help individual students who may, after graduation, make contributions to the technical communication profession in the Southern Arizona region.

Technical communicators analyze and understand science and technology, and then find creative ways to convey this information. The field includes technical writer, editor, trainer, or illustrator; Web designer; usability or information developer; documentation specialist, or any of several other job titles. If this is the career path you'd like to pursue, STC has the resources you need to help you move forward.

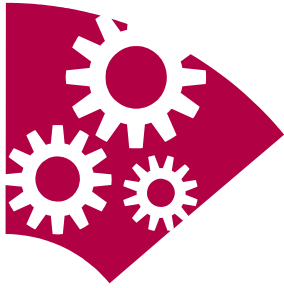
The scholarship is open to all college and university students. Applicants do not have to be STC members, but they must meet the following requirements:

- Be enrolled in two-year, four-year, or graduate programs in colleges and universities in Southern Arizona
- Be taking at least two courses or their equivalent each term
- Be preparing for a career in technical communication
- Provide student ID or proof of enrollment if selected

We have at least \$200 to offer. The scholarship selections committee evaluates applicants on their completed application and their potential for contributing to the profession of technical communication. Materials will not be returned. To receive an application form, e-mail carrie.cooper@acs-inc.com. The deadline is Friday, April 20.

Information about the Society for Technical Communication is available at www.stc-saz.org and about the Southern Arizona chapter at www.stc-saz.org.





This article originally appeared in *TechniScribe*, the Orange County (Calif.) STC newsletter and was later reprinted in *Intercom* magazine.

Feature Article

Creating Multimedia Presentations for Training

By Guy Ball, Senior STC Member, Orange County (Calif.) Chapter

In the past few years, the use of multimedia in instructional documentation has really taken off. Improvements in video and animation tools make it easier for technical communicators to deliver information visually to an audience that, more and more often, prefers not to read.

For writers, that idea might border on the heretical. But the inclusion of media-rich presentations in the world of the printed word falls in line with our common goal of helping users learn the subjects we write about. While I, like many people, prefer books for many purposes, multimedia is often the optimal solution for others.

Creating video and animation components has become simpler and quicker. Writers can create effective multimedia deliverables in less time with less tool training than ever before. And companies benefit even more if these visual presentations--often through video demonstrations--do a better job of explaining the advantages of a product to their users, increasing the perceived value of the product.

Some companies have reduced or eliminated instructor-led training classes in favor of computer-based training (CBT) modules delivered via CD media or online. CBTs can't replace hands-on instructors, with all their personalized training. But in a cost-driven world, a well-designed program can help improve the quality of training while reducing the need for an instructor to only the most difficult or complex lessons.

Your tool choice is wide. A few years ago, Kathy Faircloth and I wrote about setting up a team to produce video training (*TechniScribe*, "Stream of the Future? Producing Digital Video"). While straight video is still relevant, there are many options. For instance, Adobe Flash has become a major player thanks to its user-friendly improvements. Camtasia by TechSmith has evolved into a simple but powerful tool for software demonstrations. A program from Serious Magic called Visual Communicator offers a video solution in a single package. Even Microsoft PowerPoint can be used to create effective presentations--and it's a tool most of us have on our systems already.

Let's look at a couple of the basic steps in creating multimedia CBT.

Planning Your Project

The planning process mirrors your standard document plans. You'll need to choose the focus of your deliverable: Installation? Configuration? Servicing? How many different CBT deliverables will you have? One? Two? More? Or can you offer one deliverable with multiple topics? And what are the major sections within the deliverable?

The complexity grows when you ask how you want to deliver the CBT. This decision will hinge on your skills and available tools. It will also depend on how your company wants to deliver the content. For instance, will it be protected behind a firewall on your intranet? Or delivered on CD or DVD?

Manage your client's expectations. Your client (management) might want the world, but if you can't deliver it (due to workload or skills) or if it will take too much additional time, discuss the additional costs and time with your client. Get client buy-in before you start the project (and confirm it in writing).

Be very clear on who your audience is: Customers? Engineers? Management? How much do you want audience groups to overlap?

What format do you want to create? The format will determine the complexity and impact of your schedule. Want live video? That option will add shooting and editing days. Want a software demo? Your software will need to be complete enough to demonstrate. Need graphic images? Determine whether you can create them yourself, use canned art, or will need to bring in a graphic artist.

Developing Your Content

Developing multimedia content is similar to developing content for a manual. However, it's important to realize that, once you start producing the CBT, it's much tougher and costlier to make changes. You're not just changing text in a Word or help document. Before you start assembling the CBT itself, create whatever content you can—including outlines, scripts, and other breakdowns—and work with some sort of storyboard. Be sure to have the engineering and management groups sign off on the content as you move forward. While there will probably still be changes later on, this sign-off minimizes extra work and resolves conflicts among subject matter experts (SMEs) early in the process.

Creating Your Deliverable

Select your longer tasks and begin with them. If you need to videotape presenters or create animation, start that effort early (when possible). If you need to get photos, drawings, or special graphics, request them early. Don't permanently change any original material—text, artwork, or photos. Save each version because you may need to reuse it. Assume that glitches will cause delays when you can least afford them. Don't immediately agree to project changes that might impact your schedule. (This is critical. Review all requested changes for manpower needs and time.) Do, however, assume that you will have to agree to a few changes toward the end, and try to build some spare time into your schedule. As you create segments of your deliverable, show them to your SMEs and managers so they can see progress and also catch any errors. Try to keep an e-mail approval trail, or send confirmation e-mail messages when your experts approve or offer comments. This initiative helps reduce any confusion over what was said, or not said, as a project develops.

Testing Your Deliverable

Don't get caught up in how beautiful you think your CBT looks. Make sure the content fits your needs: Usability is key. And make sure both content and design meet the needs of your audience. From day one, have access to "regular users" who take a quick look at your mock-ups, early designs, and midterm proofs. Did you use certain colors on a dark background that make text difficult to read? Does the information flow in a way not intuitive to your viewers?

Keep in mind that it's far easier to change an unreadable font or unclear content early in the process than at the end. Keep your ego out of the design and let your users dictate what will help them. Survey several volunteers, and don't prompt them for answers. The more people you ask, the better your input. If you have a user-interface or audience analysis team within your organization, see if it can help you.

Revise or adjust the deliverable when necessary (if that is possible). However, keep your SMEs and management in the loop. Don't surprise them. If your audience analysis points to the need for a change, let the final approvers know what it is and why you will be making it.

Delivering Your Deliverable

With your skills, attention to project details, and a bit of holding the line against last-minute changes, you will deliver on time to the satisfaction of your clients and with the accolades of that person who decides on your next raise or bonus.

As you can well imagine, I've merely scratched the surface here. There is much more

involved in creating multimedia training, including how presentations are designed to be effective, what tools to use, and how to manage the project with multiple participants.

I've included a few links to help you. I would advise paying special attention to any Web seminars or CBTs that you come across. Regardless of their content, sample them to see what works for you. Take notes and print screenshots.

Creating effective training materials *is* a challenge, but helping our users understand their new software or hardware product is the reason we're technical writers. The tools may change, but the goal remains the same.

Related Links

www.adobe.com (Premiere, Flash and Captivate)

www.microsoft.com/Education/PPT2003Tutorial.aspx (creating enhanced multimedia presentations in PowerPoint)

www.seriousmagic.com (Visual Communicator)

www.techsmith.com (Camtasia Studio)

www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EDUC/jdnowlan/home.htm (designing multimedia presentations)

About the Author

Guy D. Ball is a senior technical writer for EADS-North America Defense Test and Services in Irvine, Calif. During the last seven years, he has helped develop more than 80 multimedia presentations. His latest book, *Early Santa Ana*, was published in summer 2006. He lives in Tustin, Calif., and can be contacted at guyball@pacbell.net.



Editor's Notes

New Information on Web Site

By Pat Markey, Editor

We have recently posted some new items to our Web site at www.stc-saz.org:

- Comparison of STC cost with other similar groups (**Brenda Huettner**)
- Demography of our members (**Carrie Cooper**)
- Strategic Plan 2007-2010 (**Kitty Aughey**)
- Scholarship announcement and entry form (**Carrie Cooper**)



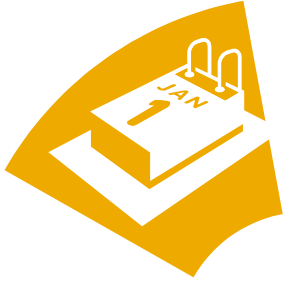
Society News

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.

The election closes at noon, Eastern Daylight Time, April 12.





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.
- **TBD:** 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.

April 11

Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate in Half the Time

Presenter: Kevin Siegel

Level: All Levels

May 2

Choosing the Right Usability Technique (to answer the right question)

Presenter: Whitney Quesenbery



About the Newsletter

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chemist@c2i2.com
Judy McCabe:
caribe966@cox.net

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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.

Copyright Statement

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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. 📧

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Secretary

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Treasurer

Richard Cook: rcook6701@yahoo.com

Immediate Past President

Kitty Aughey: kaughey@cox.net

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Education Outreach Committee

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Election and Nominating Committee

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Committee – Kitty Aughey, Richard House, Brenda Huettner

Membership Committee

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Membership Assistant – Open

Database – Richard Cook: rcook6701@yahoo.com

Employment – Paul Veverka: paul.veverka@misyshealthcare.com

ListServ – Kitty Aughey: kaughey@cox.net

Program Committee

Manager – DeAnn Drottz: chemist@c2i2.com

Facilities – Pat Markey: pat.markey@comcast.net

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