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Meeting Notice

Annual Meeting: Awards and Recognitions

This event is our end-of-the-chapter-year meeting. An annual report of our year will be presented. There are so many successes, thanks to the hard work of our members. This celebration focuses on all we have accomplished.

We will recognize the PAO judges, honor the many volunteers who have contributed to chapter achievements, recap the STC conference in Minneapolis, and have a great deal of fun.

Members and nonmembers are invited to attend this casual and informal meeting. It is a wonderful event for networking. As part of our appreciation for the time people spent judging competitions for the PAO, we invite all PAO judges as our guests for dinner.

Save the Date: Thursday, May 24

(Note that our regular meeting date was changed to avoid a conflict with the STC conference)

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

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, May 21.**

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.





**Not what we give,
But what we share,
For the gift
without the giver
Is bare.
—James Russell Lowell**

**I hope you stay
involved with our
chapter. Be sure to
watch your e-mail
box for news about
the Annual Planning
Meeting and
networking dinners
to be held this
summer.**

Letter from the President

Thank YOU

By Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ President

Our chapter had an amazing year. We recently completed a long application for the Community Achievement award, which recognizes a chapter's outstanding accomplishments in achieving the Society's goals through a wide range of activities. We received the Distinguished award in 2005 and 2006 under **Kitty Aughey's** leadership. Let me share some of our numbers from our excellent program year:

- **Nine judges** stepped forward for the 2006-2007 Southwest Regional Publications, Art, and Online (PAO) competitions. **Pat Markey**, a past president of STC-SAZ, conducted judges' training and coordinated the return of entries.
- **Eight issues** of *The Border Line* newsletter were published from April 2006 to March 2007.
- **Eight substantive program meetings** were held between April 2006 and March 2007, including a networking dinner and holiday party.
- **Five speakers** covered topics from DITA to knowledge management.
- Our **third annual canned food drive** was held in support of the Community Food Bank in Tucson.
- **Three initiatives** implemented: choosing a new meeting venue (El Parador) to improve value to members; making the monthly planning meeting more efficient; and aligning our strategic plan with the Society's revised goals.

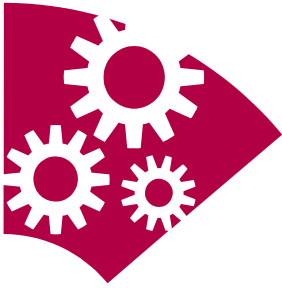
Special Projects

- Past President **Brenda Huettner** recruited four judges from our chapter for the IEEE Student Paper Competition in March 2007. We judged each student's written technical paper and 15-minute oral presentation.
- The STC Southern Arizona Web Team won an award for its Web site in the 2006 Cactus Quill competition, which was sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Tucson.
- *Conduct a program activity with other organizations:* Since 2003, we have joined every year in the annual "Big C: Communications Mixer in Tucson."
- *Publish information about demographics:* I analyzed the demographics of our STC-SAZ community contact list: See <http://www.stc-saz.org/resources.html>.
- *Publish comparative pricing or value of STC events and membership:* Past President **Brenda Huettner** conducted her annual research to compare STC fees with other local associations: See <http://www.stc-saz.org/resources.html>.

Thanks, Everyone!

I am grateful for all our members and supporters. The STC-SAZ Admin Council could not have achieved these things on our own; there's only five of us. Lots of caring people contributed their time and talent to make our chapter successful. In fact, I'll be handing out nearly two dozen certificates of appreciation at our annual awards banquet May 24. I hope you will attend this event, so I can thank you in person.





This article originally appeared in December 2006 issue of *TechniScribe*, the Orange County (Calif.) STC newsletter

Feature Article

Creating a Low-Cost Video Web Seminar

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

While text is still best for presenting many types of reference and procedural information, video can be very effective when illustrating product features, clarifying system configurations, and supplementing complex written procedures. The trick is to merge the two so they complement each other and deliver a dynamic documentation package as either an online or CD-based Web seminar.

Although the multimedia concept has been around for some time, creating a seminar like this traditionally requires a good-sized team of writers, videographers, graphic artists, subject matter experts (SME), and a manager, to keep the team working smoothly. If you already have a large staff or access to graphic professionals, congratulations!

Our staffing situation is totally the opposite. We have to make do with a single writer and a few SMEs. The plus of this situation is that it allows us to deliver the final product faster and less expensively – both important considerations for our cost-conscious management.

We take advantage of our low-cost (but high-quality) video camera and simplified video-editing software to deliver additional visual documentation to our service support team and customers. For us the trick is to look clean and professional while not getting caught producing a Hollywood extravaganza that would demand tons of staff time and weeks of extra work with little extra benefit. Instead of fancy, we make sure our content and delivery is effective both from communications and cost perspectives.

Our final output (on the Web or CD) includes a combination of video, Adobe PDF, and HTML files. Our worldwide service team members all have laptops, so if they can't access the Internet from their work facilities, they can use the CD.

The first step in creating a project efficiently is to understand and plan well. No secret there. We ask what our purpose is:

- Fix a problem
- Document a new process or tool
- Highlight some feature of the product or its servicing

More-specific concerns are:

- What will the project look like?
- Is it important to include a video?
- Will a single video be enough?
- Will the video show live action (with a person or the system)?
- Will we use a screen capture program to demonstrate how the software behaves?
- Are written procedures and reference drawings included?

Usually, we decide on some sort of video and add some text-based procedures in PDF or online help. By adding video, we've improved the comprehension of the written procedures so that the service staff can use the text portion for reference and detailed information.

In my case, my actors are my more knowledgeable engineers or first-tier support engineers. (Oddly enough, some of the normally quiet ones do quite well when you turn the camera on them.) We meet and roughly plan what the content will be and then how we will break it up into manageable chunks.

I try to stick to four to six minutes maximum for each video. (Although it doesn't

always work, that's the goal.) Any longer and most viewers start getting antsy and click away.

Long discussions are often divided into shorter chapters. This also forces us to develop our content more efficiently and not include more than we need to. It's a good bargaining chip with the SMEs, who too often want to explain every nuance of a system while on video. (I offer to let them speak in depth on other video segments—keeping my main one short.)

In past articles in *TechniScribe*, I've talked about scripting and video production. So I'll skip that for now.

In most cases, we use live-action video. Our SMEs usually have a good idea of what they want to say, and I just videotape them while they're performing the procedure they're discussing.

This is all live and often handheld—I try to use a tripod when I can, but often I just try to be very steady as I move along with the expert. I also later shoot some secondary close-up footage (“B” roll, if you want to know the jargon) so I can edit it into the main footage during cuts, narration flubs, or when I don't follow with the camera well enough.

I've gotten good at doing the video with one or two takes. The better experts don't need to memorize their lines if they just speak to the subject matter. Realize that a couple of minor flubs will not hurt you. I suspect they become more human to our audience—and our service team members like to see what the engineer back in Irvine looks like.

While sometimes they drone on, I can use my video editing tools to crop or cut during the final edit. (This is where the “B” roll footage becomes important, to cover abrupt changes.)

So once we have the video shot and in the can (I love that Hollywood talk), I'll edit the video. Yes, you can use the higher priced video-editing software packages if you're familiar with them. If you don't, I recommend you stick with something simpler (and easier to learn) unless your company will pay for training (or you have a co-worker who can help).

I was a former user of Adobe's Premiere Pro, but our department budget allowed for Premiere Elements, which I've been pretty happy with it. I export the final edited video to a high quality .WMV (Windows Media Video) format, which is easily displayed by our Windows-based laptops.

I also use Techsmith's Camtasia to record the installation, configuration, and use of software. It's a wonderfully simple program that captures every on-screen move, and you can narrate while recording, or dub in narration later. This is wonderful for getting programmers involved. (Also, you can edit it to shorten pauses or correct errors.) Adobe's Captivate is a similar program.

Let's skip ahead to where you have collected the finished videos, PDFs of a procedure or two, and maybe some drawings for reference.

Rather than just release a disk with a couple of files on it, I want to offer a more sophisticated media piece. It's not really too difficult. I use a Web-page program (such as FrontPage) to create a very simple HTML home page and have it automatically start when the disk is inserted into the user's drive.

On that first page, I have a menu of links to the videos or other selections. I'll add some photos as clickable links and select fonts that are resident on their computers. (Clickable icons can be created in Photoshop.) I make it look artistically pleasing (mimicking other pages I have in my idea file), and I'm done.

On some feature-packed Web seminars, I've included several layers of Web pages that offer something more like a full Web site. I'll add technical bulletins, original manufacturer manuals, and troubleshooting aids. I also offer links to external sites

and contact e-mails to encourage the user to keep coming back to this CD as a resource.

If I had more space, I would continue about field testing your work, developing a collection of Web-site seminar examples to provide ideas for the graphically challenged (like me), dealing with tough SMEs (and tougher managers) who want a larger (and costlier) seminar, and how to sneak in your first multimedia project when no one wants to give you the opportunity. But that gives me reasons to write more articles.

To sum up, we've developed a solid formula that delivers quality video-based seminars both fast and inexpensively. We get rave reviews from our service staff and customers for their clarity and ease of use. Our major customers love it because they can see the quality of the training and that it's uniformly delivered. My management likes it because we're delivering effective service instruction without hurting our financial bottom line. And if they're happy, I'm happy (and gainfully employed).

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 <mailto:guyball@pacbell.net>.



Chapter News

Southern Arizona Chapter Elections 2007

By Kathleen Aughey, Immediate Past President

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the results of the 2007–2008 STC-SAZ chapter elections. **DeAnn Drottz** will be our president, **Bill Rost** will remain secretary, and **Lisa Renner** will be our new treasurer. The position of vice president has not been filled. If you are interested in this position, please contact Kitty Aughey (<mailto:kaughey@cox.net>).

The online election went well. No paper ballots were requested. We look forward to the new chapter year beginning in September, and we wish the new board well.



Chapter Membership News

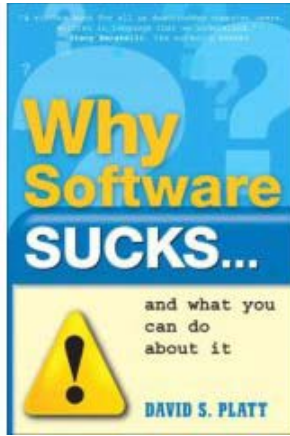
News About Members

By Kathleen Aughey, Membership Committee

Welcome to **Donte Ormsby** and **Bonnibeth Rogers** who recently joined our chapter.

We currently have 45 chapter members.





If programmers understood who their users are, they'd make different, better choices.

Book Review

You Are Not Your User

By Carrie Cooper, STC-SAZ President

Why software sucks ... and what you can do about it.

David S. Platt. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Addison-Wesley, 2007.

[ISBN 0-321-46675-6, 242 pages. \$19.99 (softcover).]

\$12.59 on amazon.com

When's the last time you read a book on computer software design and usability ... that made you laugh out loud?

David S. Platt, who has 20 years' experience as a computer programmer, explains some of the most common faults in software today. He is a technical expert able to explain his topic for a nontechnical audience, assumed to be an everyday person who uses computers. As a QC tester, someone who breaks software for a living, I was understandably eager to read this book. I left it on my desk at work for a few days, and it generated a lot of "boy, is he right" comments. Platt is definitely down on little annoyances, such as cryptic messages, extra confirmation dialogues ("Are you sure you want to delete the file? Are you really sure?") and design errors.

The quote on the cover — "A riotous book for all us downtrodden computer users, written in language that we understand" — nicely sums up Platt's approach to the subject. The fact that this quote is attributed to "Stacy Baratelli, the author's barber" cues you to his sense of humor. Chapter 8 on Microsoft and its influence actually includes several Microsoft jokes.

Platt describes one major problem with software development: Programmers make "complex things possible instead of making simple things simple" (13). As an example, he discusses both stick shift versus automatic transmission and the ways that different telephone companies handle directory assistance. "The percentage of people willing to tolerate the extra effort is almost zero. Programmers value control. Users value ease of use. Your user is not you" (14). Platt wisely points out that the best user interface follows the user's mental model, rather than forcing them to understand how the computer program works.

Chapter 3, "Keep Me Safe," discusses computer security and social engineering. Users are not willing to deal with excess hassle, and "good program design takes that into account" (84). Platt also explains some of hacker Kevin Mitnick's work. Chapter 5 deals with online privacy issues, such as password selection, cookies, and Web-based mail. Privacy issues rank lower than security issues, according to Platt. Installing a firewall and preventing identity theft should outrank concerns about "whether the shoe store site knows you've visited a travel site recently" (147).

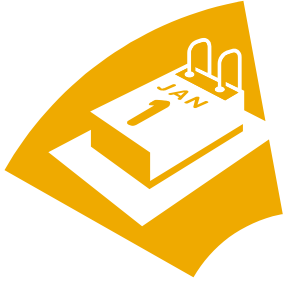
Platt offers five tips at the end of the book for consumers dealing with bad software: Buy better products (vote with your wallet), tell manufacturers when they do something right, ridicule bad products, trust the vendors you obtain software from by doing research before purchase, and organize to work with other users.

This fun, well-written book is a worthwhile addition to any computer user's library.

Additional Resources:

www.whysoftwaresucks.com (book site, with updated links to examples from the text) www.suckbusters.com (Platt's site, self-described as "Humorous Outrage/Outrageous Humor," which contains a discussion forum)





Chapter Activity

SAZ Program Schedule

Programs are held on the **second Thursday** of each month in Tucson, except February in Chandler and May, with is on the fourth Thursday.

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 24, 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.

May 2

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

Presenter: Whitney Quesenbery

Level: Intermediate

There are many usability techniques – different approaches to learning about and from users. From heuristic reviews to remote testing, each has its own advantages and requirements.

Selecting the right usability techniques is critical to a successful project. That first decision affects the resources and budget needed, and can determine whether you can provide useful and effective information to improve a product.

How do you ensure you are choosing the right tool for the job?

This seminar will review different options for usability evaluations and look at how they can be used most effectively:

- Where different usability techniques fit in a user-centered design life cycle
- How the business landscape – team style, business goals and project status – can affect your choice of techniques
- The kinds of questions usability techniques can answer, and their strengths and weaknesses of different situations
- The best techniques for learning about users and their environment
 - Collecting business data
 - Analyzing information and tasks
 - Evaluating designs in progress

The seminar will end with some hints for selling usability by picking the right technique for the job – and showing that you understand the business goals (and constraints) for your usability work.

Whitney has been president of UPA and manages the STC usability Web site. With the UPA Voting and Usability Project, and on a federal advisory committee for the Elections Assistance Commission, she works to ensure the usability of voting systems. She can be reached at www.wqusability.com.



Employment Information

2006 STC Phoenix Survey Results

The Phoenix chapter conducted its yearly Web-based membership survey during February and March 2006. The results have been tabulated and are now available from their Web site at www.stc-phoenix.com.





Networking

STC Phoenix Meeting

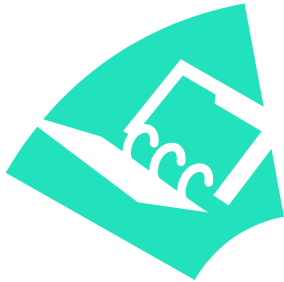
Web-based Document Collaboration

With Philip Bernick

Web-based writing technologies like blogs and wikis are really useful for helping people collaborate and prepare material for publishing on the Internet, but not so useful for collaborating on documents that we might want to print or publish in other mediums. In this talk we'll explore some new technologies that help authors collaborate on the Web to create documents destined for these other mediums. We'll identify some of their strengths (and weaknesses), discuss how we've been using them, and show you how to get them.

Philip Bernick is an assistant professor with the Department of English, and the communication technology advisor to the Center for Nanotechnology and Society at Arizona State University. His work involves finding solutions and technology that help people accomplish their work. He is particularly interested in technologies that facilitate collaborative work.

Join Phoenix members at their meeting **May 8**. For more information, visit the Phoenix Web site, www.stc-phoenix.com.



Editor's Notes

Thanks for Listening

By Pat Markey, Editor

I want to thank you for the pleasure of your company. Although I don't often hear from you, I know you are out there, and hopefully read some of what we have put together. **Judy McCabe** has been an incredible editor. I have never had the luxury to work with a professional editor, and it is a pure delight. By the way, if you have found any mistakes in the issues, as **Richard Cook** did, be assured that they are my mistakes. Sometimes I try to sneak things in after Judy has done her magic.

This is the last issue of this STC year. It is also my last issue after nearly three years as your editor. Thank you all, and a special thanks to Judy.



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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Immediate Past President

Kitty Aughey: kaughey@cox.net

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Election and Nominating Committee

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Committee – Kitty Aughey, Richard House, Brenda Huettner

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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