



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

CAPITAL LETTER

Washington, DC Chapter

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Second Annual Progression Meeting

by Stacy L. Smith, JMU STC Public Relations Manager

In March, over 75 STC members from the Washington, DC Chapter and the James Madison University (JMU) Student Chapter convened in Herndon, VA, for our second annual joint progression meeting. The meeting, which took place at Cisco's Millennium Conference Center, offered attendees the opportunity to network with members from both chapters and to explore the latest trends in the technical communication field. Carolyn Kelley Klinger, first vice-president of the Washington, DC Chapter, commented on the overall success of the event. "I think this was a fabulous location to hold the progression," Klinger said, "and there was a lot of interest at all of the tables."

At the meeting, members participated in three round-table discussions, each lasting one half-hour. During this time, table hosts introduced a variety of topics including distance learning, ethics, web design, technical translation, self-employment, networking, portfolios, and job negotiation. Attendees were then given the chance to discuss the topics and pose questions. During the third table rotation, onsite recruiters from TechPlacement, HireStrategy.com, and webMethods reviewed résumés and suggested tips for résumé content, design, and format. JMU Student Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Steven Landry found the résumé review service particularly helpful. "My résumé had been reviewed before, but I was interested to see what a recruiter looking for technical writers might desire in a candidate, and that's what I was able to find out," he said.

Attendees also expressed their satisfaction with extremely well organized and knowledgeable table hosts. JMU Student Chapter President Amanda Wegrzyn described STC Region 2 Director-Sponsor Chris Benz's ability to convey information clearly from two perspectives. "Benz's table truly left me feeling better prepared to get out there and interview. It was especially beneficial because he was able to relay his experience not only as an interviewer but as an interviewee as well," said Wegrzyn.

This year, members of the JMU Student Chapter were surprised to find more table topics specifically targeting their interests and concerns as students. "A major improvement between last year's meeting and this year's meeting was that more topics were geared toward students...I was able to chose workshops that were

On the Agenda

June Program: Chapter Service Recognition Luncheon and "Meet the Fellows"

Date: Saturday, June 9, 2001.

About the program: Join the leaders of the Washington, DC Chapter as we recognize the outstanding contributions our volunteers have made to the chapter this year. The agenda of this last program of the 2000-2001 chapter year (September through June) includes a presentation of Distinguished Chapter Service Awards, the introduction of new Administrative Council members, and some good old-fashioned networking. This is a great program to attend if you are interested in contributing to the chapter during the next program year or if you just have some suggestions for the new leadership. Local Washington, DC Chapter members who have been elevated to the position of Fellow, the highest honor STC bestows upon its members, will also be on hand. Find out from them what it takes to excel in our profession and enjoy a delicious French country lunch as well! Don't forget your business cards for networking and books for the book drive!

Schedule: Lunch and networking: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; recognition program: 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Food: Fresh fruit compote; avocado stuffed with seafood salad (baby shrimp, bay scallops, and crabmeat tossed in a remoulade sauce and garnished with fresh vegetables), or marinated chicken tarragon salad (chicken marinated in a tarragon dressing on top of a bed of lettuce and garnished with green beans and Swiss cheese), or cheese tortellini Alfredo with wild mushrooms and sundried tomatoes; golden hot popovers with fresh preserves; chocolate mousse; soft drinks, coffee, and tea.

Cost: With advance reservations: \$10 for Administrative Council members, \$10 for students, and \$20 for members. Nonmembers and walk-ins: \$25.

Reservations: Advance reservations are required and must be received by Friday, 1 June. No-shows will be billed. See the Reservation and Cancellation Policies for more information. To reserve, complete the online reservation form at http://www.stcwc.org/mtg_reserve_jun01.shtml and send a check payable to STC Washington, DC Chapter to Carolyn Kelley Klinger, 18221 Paladin Drive, Olney, MD 20832.



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The Capital Letter is published ten times per year by the Washington, DC Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. Its purpose is to inform chapter members about special functions and regular activities of the chapter and society, as well as to provide articles and essays in the field of technical communication.

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Looking for a Job?

If you need job listings, you may

- Visit our website at http://www.stcwc.org/jobs_1.shtml. If you don't have access to the web, try your local library for web access. More and more libraries are providing some type of Internet access.
- You can download a text file of the job announcement lists or get a textfile by e-mail from http://www.stcwc.org/jobs_listings.shtml.

To request a list by e-mail, send mail as follows:

To: lockley@lockley.net Subject: WDC jobs list1

To: lockley@lockley.net Subject: WDC jobs list2

To: lockley@lockley.net Subject: WDC jobs list3

- Call Ann Ray at 301-918-0341 and ask her to send you a hard copy. ✍

Chapter Mailing Lists

The Chapter provides two mailing lists: Announcements (ANNC) and Public Relations (PR). We set up these mailing lists because we want to improve communications to our members about chapter events and also reduce the cost for mailing announcements and reminders to the over 760 members in our chapter. The ANNC mailing list is sent out monthly (with occasional late breaking news updates). It provides the details about the chapter's monthly programs and events. The PR mailing list was a tool for the Public Relations Committee to provide publicity about events of the chapter and related organizations. This is essentially inactive this year. The following information applies to both lists with the exception of the list name. Commands may be sent by e-mail or by using the Web page at <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcwc-annc>.

To subscribe by e-mail, send an e-mail message to lyris@lists.stc.org. Put nothing or a dummy word in the subject line, and only the following words in the body of the message (anything else will confuse the program):

subscribe stcwc-annc *your name*

To unsubscribe by e-mail, send an e-mail message to lyris@lists.stc.org. Put nothing or a dummy word in the subject line, and only the following words in the body of the message (anything else will confuse the program)

unsubscribe stcwc-annc *youruserid@youraddress*

To post a message, send an e-mail message to stcwc-annc@lists.stc.org. (Do Not include graphic or document attachments—these are binary items and they get converted to unreadable code.)

More details are provided at

<http://www.stcwc.org/listserv-annc.shtml>

and

<http://www.stcwc.org/listserv-pr.shtml>. ✍

Where Are You?

If you change your address or phone number, please let STC headquarters know by sending an e-mail message to membership@stc.org. Keeping this information up to date helps keep down our mailing costs. ✍

relevant to my current needs, such as planning a portfolio or negotiating a salary,” stated JMU Student Chapter Member Susan Rilee.

With the participation of members from the Washington, DC Chapter and the JMU Student Chapter, this year’s progression meeting proved to be a success. Thanks to all members who organized, gave presentations, and attended the event! ✍

On the Agenda: June Program: Chapter Service Recognition Luncheon and “Meet the Fellows,” continued from page 1

Place: Normandie Farm, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac, MD 20854; 301-983-8838.

Directions:

From the Beltway: Take Exit 39/River Road west towards Potomac. Drive 3.5 miles on River Road and then turn right on Falls Road. Drive one mile. Restaurant is on the left at the bend in the road across from the Bullis School.

From I-270: Take Exit 5/Falls Road, south towards Potomac for 4 miles. Restaurant is on the right at the bend in the road after Falls Road Golf Course. ✍

Questions? For more information, contact Carolyn Kelley Klinger, Program Committee Manager, at carolyn.klinger@mindspring.com or leave a message at 301-570-1256 (home). ✍

Copyright and You

The *Capital Letter* invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. Note: by submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to the *Capital Letter* to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications. ✍

We Welcome New Senior Members

According to the STC Bylaws, the grade of senior member is conferred upon those who have held the grade of member in STC for 5 years.

The following members of the Washington, DC Chapter have achieved senior member status:

Elizabeth B. Campai
Robert L. Church
Neil F. Covey
Pat McNees
Carl A. Pedersen
Amy K. Poos
Lissa W. Roberts
Robert G. Wicks
Kenneth A. Wolfe ✍

How to Prepare Winning Competitive Proposals

On May 23, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., the Loudoun County Small Business Development Center (LCSBDC), a partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration, presents “How to Prepare Winning Competitive Proposals.” The presenter is Joseph T. Nocerino, the CEO of Century Planning Associates, Inc., a Vienna, VA-based firm that specializes in corporate strategic and tactical business development. He and his company are particularly well known in the Metropolitan Washington area business community for leadership and support services in producing winning competitive proposals. Some highlights of the seminar include

- the anatomy of a winning proposal;
- how to make good bid/no bid decisions and position for winning;
- typical proposal team composition and other resource requirements;
- overview of ProposalPerfect™, a systematic process for technical and management proposal preparation, from pre-kickoff to submission, and related tools;
- prewriting, dynamic writing, and review; and
- overview of post-submission activities.

The seminar will be held at the Eastern Loudoun Regional Library, Cascades, 21030 Whitfield Place, Sterling, VA. There is no fee for the seminar; however, pre-registration is required: please call 703-430-7222 or e-mail to sbdc@loudounsbd.org.

The LCSBDC is funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, the Northern Virginia Small Business Development Center at George Mason University, the County of Loudoun, and the Town of Leesburg. The support given by the U.S. Small Business Administration through Cooperative Agreement Number 00-7620-0053-11 does not constitute an express or implied endorsement of the cosponsors’ or participants’ opinions, products, or services. All of the SBDC’s programs and services are offered to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Persons requiring special accommodations in order to attend this seminar should call Natasha Shovar at 703-430-7222. ✍

How Do You Want Your Newsletter?

Please go to the chapter home page (<http://www.stcwc.org>) and let us know which way you prefer to get future newsletters:

1. hard copy in the U.S. mail,
2. PDF file on the Web, or
3. PDF file in e-mail. ✍

Why Be a Chapter Volunteer?

by Chris Benz, the tallest STC board member ever

As we begin to wrap up another STC program year, it's time for chapters and members alike to reflect on our achievements during the past year, and start thinking about what we want to accomplish in the coming year.

While STC's Region 2 chapters range widely in size from under 20 members to over 750, most chapters would cease to exist were it not for the efforts of a relatively small number of volunteers. These small teams of "worker bees" deliver the bulk of each chapter's offerings—newsletters, monthly membership and special interest group (SIG) meetings, competitions, Web sites, e-mailings, workshops, and so on.

While those who volunteer are generally glad to do it (to see why, keep reading), a small group of volunteers means that your chapter can't offer as much as it could with a larger volunteer base.

Volunteering for your chapter can take many forms. You can serve in a relatively demanding leadership role such as newsletter editor or program coordinator, or one that requires less time but still allows you to be in the center of activity, such as secretary. You can serve in a long-term support role, such as a writer for the newsletter or a Web assistant, or you can fill a short-term role, such as a coordinator of a chapter workshop or a competition judge. You can also identify a need and propose a role to address it; chapter leaders are generally open to anything that improves their fellow members' professional lives or the community at large.

While time is short for most if not all of us, volunteering for your chapter is richly rewarding. Here are some of the benefits:

You will gain influence over what the chapter offers, making sure that these offerings meet **your** professional needs. Plus, the more volunteers your chapter has, the more it can offer, and the higher quality (and possibly lower cost) those offerings can be.

You will establish contacts with other technical communication professionals who can give you advice and help when you need it. Looking for new ideas for improving online help or your Web site? Wondering how to position yourself for that promotion? Having trouble extracting information from programmers? Someone in your chapter has the answer—or at least knows how to help you find the answer.

You will be able to try new things and establish new skills without fear of reprisal for faltering. Volunteers are a very forgiving group because we've all been there, and you certainly won't lose your paying job!

You will demonstrate to your employer and to future employers that you take your profession seriously. How do you suppose *that* will look at your next review or interview?

And finally, this from a recent Washington, DC Chapter e-mailing: "A ten-year study of 2,700 people by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center found that those who volunteer on a regular basis dramatically increase their life expectancy. Remember, the greatest benefits of STC belong to those who participate. The long life part is just a bonus." Well said!

If you think you can find the time to enhance your career, your chapter, **and** your life, volunteer!

Note: For previous Director-Sponsor articles by Chris and past Region 2 Director-Sponsors, please visit <http://www.stc.org/region2/www/chair.shtml>. You can reach Chris by e-mail at Chris.Benz@e-pubcorp.com or by telephone at 919-226-0060 (day) or 919-479-4891 (evening). ✍

Developing a Single-Source Strategy for XML Authoring, Content Management, and Dynamic Web Delivery

On May 22 through 24, JoAnn Hackos of Comtech Services and XyEnterprise will present a joint single-sourcing seminar. The seminar will be held at XyEnterprise headquarters in Boston, MA.

During the program, you will

- examine the benefits of single sourcing,
- progress through the ten-step methodology, and
- work in the lab on a hands-on project.

You'll get the benefits of the full single-sourcing workshop along with the opportunity to try out a sample project using the XyEnterprise Content@XML authoring tool. You'll use the computer laboratory with access to an XML editor, the content repository, and the publishing (output) system. You'll create components, assign metadata to them, and build compound documents.

For cost information and registration, visit <http://www.usabledesign.com/03register/03register.htm>. ✍

Breakthrough Breakfast for Women Entrepreneurs

On May 22, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., the Women Presidents' Educational Organization will hold a networking event titled "Building Your Business." Women entrepreneurs are invited to join representatives from major corporations, including Schwab, Unisys, PEPCO, Lucent, and CHASE, who are eager to do business with women business owners. Bring brochures and business cards and be prepared for one-on-one discussions. The event will be at the Hotel Washington, Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC, and the cost of \$25 includes breakfast. For more information, contact Ellyn McKay at 301-986-1487 or ellynmckay@erols.com. ✍

Intellectual Property and Contracting Considerations

On July 10, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts presents a seminar on issues surrounding intellectual property and contracting.

Topics for this session include

- Copyright Protection for Websites, Music, Graphics, Articles, and Art in the Digital Domain
- We're Online! Is the Band Name a Trademark?
- Rights of Publicity
- Software and Business Method Patents
- Databases - Sony v. Connectix and the Gamers' Revenge
- Content Licensing Agreements for the Digital World
- Website Development Agreements
- Software Development Agreements
- Website Hosting Agreements.

The event, which costs \$70, will be held at Piper Marbury Rudnick & Wolfe, 1200 Nineteenth St., NW, Seventh Floor, Washington, DC.

For more information, contact Maureen Cohen Harrington at 202-393-2826 or mharrington@thewala.org. ✉

Writers Divide on Old, New Usages

submitted by Cynthia Lockley

(Note: To read this article in html, go to http://www.writingthatworks.com/news_surv10intro.htm)

Mouses or mice? Email or e-mail or E-mail? Who or whom? Data is or data are? If I was or if I were?

Writers from around the United States and Canada gave their opinions on these and 25 other questions in the 10th annual writing usage survey sponsored by *Writing That Works*, a national monthly subscription covering business writing and communications. As in earlier surveys, the respondents didn't reach consensus on anything, but they indicated some trends and, possibly, some slowing of trends.

The survey contained three sections: computer-related usages, controversies from earlier surveys, and pesky problems. Highlights for each appear below. (Note: Full results broken down by style manual and selected respondents' comments will be posted on the Web soon.)

Computer-related usages. Responses revealed some ambivalence about accepting new usages. While a solid majority (58%) chose *mouses* over *mice*, slightly more (60%) favored *business-to-business* site over *B2B* (33%) or *B-2-B* (6%).

The trend toward combining words and dropping hyphens appears to continue but at a slower pace than in earlier surveys. Most accept *online* (79%) but stick with *home page* (68%). Writers still prefer *e-mail* (71%) to *email* (27%), much as respondents did two years earlier.

Both *web site* (18%) and *Web site* (31%) have dropped slightly since 1998, but *website* (50%) has climbed steadily, going from 32% in 1998 and 43% in 1999.

Controversies from earlier surveys. Since 1993, the most hotly debated issue has been whether to accept their as a substitute for a singular pronoun, e.g., "Each child should bring *his* or *her/their/his* homework to class." Although the differences are small, *their* gained higher approval (24%) than ever before and *his* or *her* received less (61%).

In contrast, *whom* (59%) regained ground against *who* in "Who/m do you want to represent you?" Respondents split down the middle on several issues, including *data is/are*, *media is/are* and "None of these quotes *makes/make* any sense."

In the post-political correctness period, writers avoid offending but differ in choosing vocabulary. Respondents chose *disabled veteran* (56%) over *veteran who is disabled* (34%) and rejected both *handicapped* (4%) and *physically challenged* (5%). *African-American* woman (43%) and *black* (28%) received more support than *African American* (23%) and *Black* (4%). *Chair* (53%) won over *chairperson* (22%), *chairman* and *chairwoman* (14%) and *chairman* (9%). Most (77%) approved splitting an infinitive.

Pesky problems. Respondents came closest to consensus (88%) on the last question, supporting the use of a traditional subjunctive ("If I *were/was* president").

They divided evenly on four other problems: 24-7 (44%) or around the clock all week (51%); 703-555-1212 (38%) or (703) 555-1212 (43%); E.B. White (50%) or E. B. White (49%); "I won't use your cell phone any more [48%]/ anymore [51%]."

Solid majorities favored *french fries & chicken kiev* (78%) over *French fries & chicken Kiev* (21%) and *collectibles* (80%) over *collectables* (19%).

To view the survey results sorted by question, with selected comments from respondents, see <http://www.writingthatworks.com/survey10/final/tally.htm>.

To see the difference in respondents' views depending on which style manual they use, see <http://www.writingthatworks.com/survey10/final/bymanu.htm>.

To view the original survey, see <http://www.writingthatworks.com/survey10/>. The survey is no longer "live" but you may print it out and use it as a staff exercise.

To view the two previous usage surveys, see <http://www.writingthatworks.com/news.htm/>.

To see selected articles from Writing That Works, see http://www.writingthatworks.com/wwt_articles.htm/. ✉

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I am a new member of the Washington, DC Chapter. I am looking for a mapping users group in the Washington, DC area. Is there one? If not, is anyone interested in starting one? You can reach me at jaynryan@yahoo.com.

Thank you,

James Ryan

To the Editor:

I wanted to let you know I think the chapter newsletter is wonderful. I find the reports (from meetings that I did not attend) most informative, and invariably I take out at least one new idea or an improvement point for my use, or to show my employers.

I work for a software development company, and it seems they forget people are going to use the product. Luckily for me, they appreciate my human touch and my input.

Thanks,

Rutie Eckdish ✍

Advertising Rates

Wouldn't you love to get some publicity and help your chapter at the same time? Why don't you consider advertising in the *Capital Letter*? You can place an ad for your company or you can take out an ad featuring your own special skills and talents.

Please send e-mail to Doreen Mannion at damannion@yahoo.com.

Rates are

Full page:	\$140
Half page:	\$75
Quarter page:	\$40
Business card:	\$25

We give discounts if you run an ad in 2 or more issues within 6 months. ✍

A Poem for Our Time

A poll conducted among INFOCUS magazine readers had established waka as the proper pronunciation for the angle-bracket characters < or >.

The following poem appeared recently in INFOCUS magazine. The original authors were Fred Bremmer and Steve Kroese of Calvin College and Seminary of Grand Rapids, MI.

The text of the poem follows:

```
<> !*''#  
^''$$_  
!*=@$_  
%*<> ~#4  
&[]../  
|{,,SYSTEM HALTED
```

The poem can only be appreciated by reading it aloud, to wit:

Waka waka bang splat tick tick hash,
Caret quote back-tick dollar dollar dash,
Bang splat equal at dollar under-score,
Percent splat waka waka tilde number four,
Ampersand bracket bracket dot dot slash,
Vertical-bar curly-bracket comma comma CRASH

The sheet music is available from

<http://www.roundsing.org/music/waka-waka.gif>. ✍

Mentoring Program

Go to <http://www.stcwwdc.org/mentors.shtml> to read about the chapter's new Mentoring Program. A fill-in form is provided for Senior Members who are interested in signing up as mentors. For more information, contact Connie Kiernan at connie.kiernan@att.net or phone her at 301-352-4336. ✍

A Point To Ponder

With the continual, unrelenting advancement of computer technology, pretty soon even our fingers will be digital. ✍

From the President

Writing Tools

by Cynthia A. Lockley

The Internet is a terrific resource for writers and editors. If you're stumped for a word, the correct grammar, or ideas to solve your writer's block, check out the following links.

Citing Sources

Citation Style Guides: <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/journalism/cite.html>.

Columbia Guide to Online Style: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/idx_basic.html.

Composition and Writing Guides

To avoid using jargon in scientific and technical writing:

http://www.stcwdc.org/avoid_jargon.shtml.

Common Errors in English: <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/errors/errors.html>.

Elements of Style: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>.

Info Zone: Research Skills Area: <http://www.assd.winnipeg.mb.ca/infozone/index.htm>.

Purdue's Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

Writing Argumentative Essays: <http://www.powa.org/argufrms.htm>.

Writing Abstracts: http://www.library.miami.edu/writing/wg_annotate.html.

Dictionaries and Thesauri

Acronyms and Abbreviations: <http://www.ucc.ie/info/net/acronyms/index.html>.

Dictionary of Symbolism: <http://www.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html>.

OneLook Dictionaries: <http://www.onelook.com/>.

Reverse Dictionary: <http://www.c3.lanl.gov/revdict/>.

Semantic Rhyming Dictionary: <http://www.rhymezone.com/>.

Virtual Libraries: <http://www.clpgh.org/CLP/Libraries/virtual.html>.

Visual Thesaurus: <http://visualthesaurus.com/>.

Wordsmyth English Dictionary-Thesaurus: <http://www.wordsmyth.net/>.

These and more are available on our chapter Website at
http://www.stcwdc.org/communicate_stc.shtml. ✍



CAPITAL LETTER

Alyssa Slotkin, Membership Manager | 4624 Knox Road, Apt. 5 | College Park, MD 20740

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