

A Chilly Affair: New Member Happy Hour

by Athena Thomas

The Washington, DC Chapter's year had its official kickoff in a cool room with a warm atmosphere. The New Member Happy Hour was quite a success. It was held at Capitol City Brewing Company at Union Station on 25 September. Because of unexpectedly cool weather outside, the room was a bit chilly but the 31 attendees found that this did not put a damper on the event.

The food at the event was colorful and inviting. Guests enjoyed a Pale Ale Chili and Nacho Bar with red, black, and regular corn tortilla chips. Don't worry—the black and red chips taste just like the regular chips, very tasty. They also enjoyed vegetable cornucopia quesadillas. The fresh vegetable and cheese crudité's were just right for those looking for something on the light side and the Congressional chicken fingers were delightful. I highly recommend the chicken fingers if you ever visit the Capitol City Brewing Company.

New members, transferring members, and existing members who shared information about themselves, their careers, and their aspirations attended the event. Following are sketches of just a couple of the people who attended:

Ken Keiser has been a member since 1978. He is currently a professor at University of Maryland teaching technology majors about writing. When asked about the challenge before him he stated that his students are "very analytical people" and that "they should realize that writing is much like engineering, taking words apart and putting them back together."

Allen Rotz has been a member since February. He is currently making a transition into the technical communication field from engineering. He is studying Technical Writing at the USDA Graduate School. He hopes to make some initial contacts to jump-start his new career path. Allen will be quite an asset as part of a technical communication team because of his experience as an engineer.

Chapter president **Carolyn Kelley Klinger** showed off the chapter display board highlighting chapter events and programs, which she created with **Connie Kiernan**, Mentoring Committee Manager, and **Betty Montgomery**, Austin T. Brown Technical Communication Scholarship Competition manager. The display also included chapter literature and news about upcoming events. Carolyn was a gracious host and she and **Shelly Ambrose**, Hospitality

Continued on page 3

On the Agenda December Program: Whine and Dine

Date: Thursday, 6 December 2001.

About the program: As technical communicators, we have unique workplace issues and concerns. At times, we internalize our complaints. But in the spirit of giving to yourself at this holiday time, you are invited to come to this event and whine to your heart's content. Hear how other people deal with the same challenges in a fun, informal setting over a delicious meal. Each table will be provided a list of possible topics.

Don't forget your business cards for networking and books for the book drive! Books are donated to local charities.

Schedule: Registration and dinner: 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Food: Light cut prime rib (9 oz.) or grilled marinated chicken breast or vegetarian plate (fresh seasonal vegetables served with rice pilaf); tossed salad with creamy ranch dressing on the side; chef's choice of potato or vegetable of the day; fresh baked bread; coffee, tea, or iced tea; cheesecake or grasshopper pie (fluffy mint chocolate cream pie).

Cost: Students with advance reservations: \$12.50; Administrative Council members: \$12.50; chapter members: \$25; nonmember guests: \$30; program only: not available.

Reservations: Advance reservations are **required** and must be received by **Thursday, 29 November**. No-shows will be billed. To reserve, complete the online reservation form at http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_resrv_dec01.shtml and send a check payable to **STC Washington DC Chapter** to Laurel Rosinger, 13325 Foxhole Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033.

Place: JR's Stockyards Inn, 8130 Watson Street, McLean, VA 22102; phone: 703-821-0545.

Directions: From the Beltway: Take the Route 123 South/Chain Bridge Road exit, number 46A, towards Tysons Corner/Vienna. At the second light, turn left onto International Drive. Turn right on Fletcher Street. JR's Stockyards Inn is across from Tysons Corner Center. **Or** take the Route 7/Leesburg Pike exit. Pass Tysons Corner Center and make a right on International Drive. At the next light, make a left onto Fletcher Street. There is a Silver Diner on the corner. JR's Stockyards Inn is on the right. **From I-66:** Take the Route 7 West/Leesburg Pike)

Continued on page 3



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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Washington, DC Chapter *Capital Letter*

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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. Material for publication should be submitted to

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Tuesday 13 November

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Thursday 13 December

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Chapter Website <http://www.stcwdc.org>

Looking for a Job?

If you need job listings, you may

- ◆ Visit our website at http://www.stcwdc.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.stcwdc.org/jobs_listings.shtml.
To request a list by e-mail, send mail as follows:
To: webmaster@stcwdc.com Subject: WDC jobs list1
To: webmaster@stcwdc.com Subject: WDC jobs list2
To: webmaster@stcwdc.com Subject: WDC jobs list3
- ◆ Call Ann Ray, Employment Committee Manager, at 301-918-0341, and ask her to send you a hard copy. ✉

Chapter Mailing Lists

The chapter provides two mailing lists to improve communications with and among members. The Announcements list (STCWDC-ANNC) is a forum for chapter leaders to communicate information about chapter programs and related events in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. STCWDC-ANNC is not a discussion list, but it is open to members and nonmembers alike. The Chat list (STCWDC-CHAT) is a discussion list that chapter members can use for questions relating to technical communication. This is a moderated STC members-only list. The list owner and moderator is Daree Allen-Woodard at daree76@hotmail.com. All postings to this list should follow the chat posting guidelines at http://www.stcwdc.org/list_chat_guidelines.shtml. If you are new to using discussion lists, please review the mailing list etiquette at http://www.stcwdc.org/list_etiquette.shtml collected from experienced users of discussion lists.

Commands may be sent to STCWDC-ANNC by e-mail or by using the web page at <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcwdc-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 stcwdc-annc *your name*

Commands may be sent to STCWDC-CHAT by e-mail or by using the web page at <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcwdc-chat>. 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 stcwdc-chat *your name*

To post a message to STCWDC-CHAT, send an e-mail message to stcwdc-chat@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.stcwdc.org/list.shtml>. ✉

A Chilly Affair: New Member Happy Hour, continued from page 1

Committee member, set the tone of the event with their friendly, warm greetings to all of the members and guests.

The highlight of the evening occurred when the five door prizes were awarded. Free program certificates were awarded to **Ed Magin** and **Connie Kiernan**. In true mentor fashion, Connie gave her certificate to prospective member **Chauntika Broggin**, who was a guest at the event. **Grace Lewis** won a discount certificate to enter the Technical Publications, Technical Art, or Online Communication competition. **E.C. Eklund** won the fourth door prize, which was *Making Money in Technical Writing*, by Peter Kent. Mr. Eklund already owned this excellent book so he switched prizes with Ed Megin. **Alyssa Slotkin**, Membership Committee manager, won the grand prize, which was *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* by Edward R. Tufte.

Janette Walters received a special surprise when Carolyn presented her with a certificate of recognition for her hard work and dedication in helping to coordinate chapter programs. Kudos to Janette.

People gradually departed but the warm atmosphere encouraged many to stay behind to network and socialize. As a new member of STC and a first time attendee, I really enjoyed the event and the company of the other members. I look forward to attending many more.

I encourage all new members to get involved in the chapter and attend its programs. You are sure to benefit from interacting with this wonderful group of professionals.

Athena Thomas is a freelance writer and student. She has published several articles online and continues to pursue her dream of publishing her first book. You may e-mail her at aptenterprise@yahoo.com. ✍

On the Agenda: December Program: Whine and Dine, continued from page 1

exit towards Tysons Corner. Pass Tysons Corner Center and make a right on International Drive. At the next light, make a left onto Fletcher Street. There is a Silver Diner on the corner. JR's Stockyards Inn is on the right. **From the Dulles Toll Road:** Take the Tysons Corner exit (Route 7 East/Leesburg Pike). There is a \$0.25 toll charge. Merge left onto Route 7 East. Pass under Route 123. Stay in far left lane. At next major intersection, turn left on International Drive. Turn left at next light onto Fletcher Street. There is a Silver Diner on the corner. JR's Stockyards Inn is on the right.

Questions? For more information, contact Laurel at 703-227-6075 or lrosinger@hotmail.com. ✍

Competition Judging Begins!

by Melissa Brown

The Technical Publications, Online, and Art competitions are under way with over 45 judges currently evaluating entries. Thanks to all judges and committee members who participated in the Judges' Training and Pickup Day on Saturday, 3 November, where judges received guidance on how to evaluate entries and provide constructive feedback. A multitude of entries were received this year, including entries from as far away as Israel, Germany, and Korea.

The competition web pages have been updated with judging information and the current judging schedule. I encourage judges to check it out at <http://www.stcfdc.org/judcall.shtml#SCHEM>. It contains maps and directions for the consensus meeting on Saturday, 1 December, at EEI in Silver Spring, MD. Also added is information about the awards banquet on 7 February 2002.

Snafu fixed:

For those of you who submitted judge applications over the web and had to resubmit them, I apologize. The chapter's website experienced problems with the CGI script that handled the judge's application form in late September. Thanks to Cynthia Lockley, our web guru, who quickly identified and fixed the problem.

Special thanks to

Laura Jackel, Judging Manager. Laura hosted the Judges' Training and Pickup Day and updated and revised the evaluation materials for judges. In addition, she single-handedly recruited judges (both members and nonmembers) to participate in the competitions.

Annette Reilly, Entries Manager. Annette calmly and quietly handled the busiest day of the competitions year, which was 13 October, the entry deadline. It's not easy to be bombarded with entries for all three competitions, but Annette handled it with aplomb.

Cynthia Lockley, Web Diva and Publications Coordinator. For the lady who does two jobs at once! Cynthia has continually updated the competition web pages, fixed web form problems, and handled all publications for the competition.

All Competition Managers. Thanks for fielding those inevitable questions from entrants and others! I look forward to seeing you at the Consensus Day on Saturday 1 December. ✍

What Does the Hospitality Committee Do?

by Laurel Rosinger

The next time you attend one of the STC Washington, DC Chapter's monthly programs, chances are that your first contact will be with someone from the Hospitality Committee. As one of the chapter's newly formed groups, the Hospitality Committee works closely with other committee members and officers in making the chapter's monthly programs personally and professionally rewarding for members and guests alike.

Before each program, the Hospitality Committee keeps track of reservations and payment information. Committee members also print name tags and generate a roster of those who plan to attend.

At the programs, you'll find one or more Hospitality Committee members at the registration desk, greeting attendees, introducing guests and new members to officers and other members, encouraging networking activities, and answering questions about the chapter. You may also notice that new members and guests are given specially marked name tags. This makes it easier for the Hospitality Committee to know who may be seeking additional information about the chapter's activities and professional development opportunities.

The Hospitality Committee works with the Membership Committee to ensure that STC information packets are available at programs for those who want them. In addition, the Hospitality Committee is in charge of the chapter's job announcement board, and helps obtain items to raffle or provide as door prizes. These items may include popular professional books, software, or other items of interest. When you attend a chapter program, you'll have a chance to win one of these wonderful prizes!

Here are a couple of additional tips from the Hospitality Committee:

- Do you know of a job opening that you would like to have posted on the STC WDC job announcement board, which is on display at many of the chapter's monthly programs? If so, then turn in a copy of the job opening at the registration desk, or post it directly on the job announcement board that will be stationed nearby. Please provide the following information about the job opening: position title; reference code (if applicable); company; location or address; whom to contact—including phone/e-mail/fax number; description of responsibilities; desired skills/knowledge; and whether the position is full time, part time, or consulting only. Include a salary range, if desired. To receive a blank job announcement form, send a request via e-mail to lrosinger@hotmail.com. Blank forms will also be available at most meetings. Job announcement forms are also available from our website at http://www.stcfdc.org/PDF/job_announce_form.pdf.

- Are you are interested in contributing a few hours of your time, talent, and expertise to the chapter? If so, pick up a list of open volunteer positions, available at the registration desk. You can also go directly to <http://www.stcfdc.org/committee.shtml> for information about open positions, to find out how to contact the Volunteer Committee Manager, or to fill out a volunteer sign-up form.

Oh—and about the luscious chocolate you'll find at many of the programs. Enjoy a piece, or share some with the person sitting next to you. Chances are that you'll meet someone new, and maybe make a new friend. Meeting others in our profession is a wonderful side benefit of attending the monthly programs. All of us who are currently on the Hospitality Committee look forward to seeing you soon! ✍

Online Help Conference in February

The 10th Annual WinWriters Online Help Conference will be held 10-13 February in Seattle, Washington. With over 60 sessions dedicated to software user assistance, you'll get the latest on Help for websites and web applications, cross-platform Help, Management, Windows Help, information design, content development, usability, single-sourcing, dynamic server-based Help, and authoring tools. You'll learn and benefit from exciting keynote speakers, in-depth seminars and a comprehensive exhibition of products and services. Check out the details and register at <http://www.winwriters.com/ohc>. ✍

An @ by Any Other Name

In the U.S., @ is known only as the "at sign." But around the world, @ enjoys more glamorous appellations. Linguist Karen Steffen Chung tracks them. According to her research, Germans call @ a Klammeraffe, or clinging monkey. In Mandarin Chinese, @'s a little mouse; in Greek, a duckling. In eerie post-Cold War opposition, the Russians call @ a puppy—the Polish, a kitten. In great Britain, France, Israel, and Korea, @ is often known as a snail, even though it's a key element in the opposite of snail mail. ✍

Section 508: Web Accessibility Seminar

by Athena Thomas

Business owners and government agencies remember when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) went into effect. The Act requires every industry to revamp their services to match the way businesses and their facilities must comply with accessibility laws.

ADA has now caught up with information technology. Section 508 is part of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The Access Board, an independent federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities (<http://www.access-board.gov>), published standards to ensure full access to electronic and information technology. The standards apply to many information-dissemination methods including computers, software, and electronic office equipment. The criteria spell out what needs to be done to make information technology accessible to people with a variety of disabilities, including, but not limited to, vision, hearing, and mobility impairments. "Specific criteria cover software applications and operating systems, Web-based information or applications, telecommunications functions, video or multi-media products, self contained, closed products such as information kiosks and transaction machines, and computers."¹

The law applies to all federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Many believe it is only a matter of time before the trickle-down effect will start. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) already implements its own standards called the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium (WAI). They are not as rigorous as the Section 508 standards but some believe there may be collaboration between the two down the road resulting in one standard.

Until then, government webmasters must comply with the law and make all their websites accessible. This one-day seminar was designed to introduce Section 508 Web accessibility standards to Capital PC User Group (CPCUG) members and guests. Most of the attendees were either government webmasters or contractors. At least four Society for Technical Communication (STC) members attended.

Walt Houser, a Veterans Administration webmaster, hosted the seminar. He did an excellent job breaking down the standards to the group in terms that were easy to follow. He provided a wealth of information and everyone left with a stack of handouts to further their education on the topic. If you are interested in learning more about the standards, you may access the following websites:

<http://www.va.gov/oirm/training/section508>

<http://www.section508.gov>

<http://www.access-board.gov>

<http://www.access.adobe.com>

We received a live demonstration of an Assistive Technology (or accessibility aid) program called JAWS (Job Access With Speech), from Henter-Joyce, Inc. JAWS

is a program that works with the operating system of your computer and reads back the information a seeing person would see on the screen. Not only does it read web page content, it also works with other programs and the desktop. This program has a high learning curve and is not user-friendly, as demonstrated by Mr. Houser, who experienced some difficulty getting certain functions to work even though he uses the product on a regular basis. There are other types of accessibility aids such as Home Page Reader by IBM, which is a talking browser and much easier to use.

Is Section 508 an annoyance or a necessity? To the disabled person it is quite necessary, but to many government webmasters it may be cumbersome to implement. Webmasters are at the mercy of software developers who are not creating options fast enough. Webmasters may come up with a fix to certain problems but cannot implement them because of the lack of unified support in software. In my opinion, the disabled are entitled to enjoy the Internet as much as I do, and it should be mandated that software developers come up with programs that will work across the board.

As a designer, I like to design graphically rich websites, but I still want that same information to be available to the visually impaired. As a business owner, I want people with mobility disabilities to still be able to order from my website. The Internet is one of our most important information tools, and we are well behind the game in making it accessible and implementing equal design and development standards. So to answer the question, Is Section 508 necessary, I say yes. I also believe that all web design and development professionals should learn and implement the Section 508 standards as good practice for what is to come.

The seminar closed with the awarding of the door prizes, which were trial versions of JAWS, IBM's Home Page Reader, and Hi Software's FrontPage Plug-in. One of our new chapter members, **Cara Massey**, won the FrontPage Plug-in. Congratulations, Cara!

Athena Thomas is a freelance writer and student. She has published several articles online and continues to pursue her dream of publishing her first book. ✍

¹ Standards. Veterans Administration.

<http://www.va.gov/oirm/training/section508/>. 7/24/2001. 10/06/2001.

Calling All Writers

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. The writer holds copyright. 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. ✍

Report on the September 2001 Board of Directors Meeting

by Chris Benz, Region 2 Director-Sponsor

Following the terrorist acts of 11 September, the September 2001 STC Board of Directors meeting was held by teleconference—instead of face-to-face in Atlanta, Georgia, as originally planned—on 21 September 2001.

As usual, this board meeting consisted of three *passes*:

- An *action* pass, during which motions are brought forth to the board. For each motion, the board either approves it (with or without modifications), rejects it, or requests that the motion be restated and brought forth at a later date. Also during this pass, actions taken by the Executive Council since the last board meeting are announced.
- A *discussion* pass, during which various topics are brought forth for board consideration and discussion. Many discussion items result in action items for board and/or committee members, generally with the expectation that a motion or further information will be brought forth at an upcoming board meeting.
- An *information* pass, during which board members provide information not covered in the reports they provided to the rest of the board prior to the meeting. This is also the time for board members to ask for clarification on information presented in other members' reports.

This article reports on results of the action pass. During that pass, the board approved

- The final budget for Fiscal Year 2002.
- The dues structure effective 1 January 2002.
- The following new mission statement for the Society-level Technical Editing Special Interest Group (SIG): "The Technical Editing SIG provides opportunities for members to expand their editing and proofreading expertise by serving as a forum for information exchange, professional support, and interaction among the SIG, STC, and the editing community at large."
- The dissolution of the following chapters:
 - Fitchburg State student
 - Eagle (Denton, Texas) student
 - Saskatchewan
- The following merit grants:
 - \$3,000 to the Northern New England chapter for a scholarship program at the University of Massachusetts. This scholarship will honor Millie McGuire, founder of the chapter.
 - \$2,000 to the Atlanta chapter to create a new résumé database.

\$1,235 to the Central Ohio chapter to support its new High School Learning Program.

- The following loans:
 - \$3,000 to the Southeastern Michigan chapter for the Region 4 conference.
 - \$3,000 to the Canada West Coast chapter to host the Region 7 Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in November 2002, subject to formal approval of the conference budget.
- A financial recovery/special need grant of \$715 to the Netherlands chapter to cover past-due costs incurred for the March 2001 membership meeting and ensure the future of the chapter.
- An increase of the stipend for the Industry Fellowship for Faculty and for the Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals to \$4,000 each.
- Julie Bommarito as the Program Manager for the 2004 STC Annual Conference to be held in Baltimore, Maryland.
- Rhonda Stanton for a Journal Editor Fellowship.

The Executive Council approved the following since the May 2001 board meeting:

- Pacesetter Awards for the Orlando chapter and the Mercer University student chapter. (This was a pro forma vote to acknowledge awards granted at the STC Annual Conference in Chicago in May 2001.)
- Formation of the University of Wisconsin-Stout student chapter with a \$150 start-up grant.
- Formation of the Single Sourcing SIG with a proposed first-year budget of \$1,400.

If you would like to learn more about decisions made during this or any other board meeting, or if you would like to have a motion or discussion item brought forward, please contact your Director-Sponsor. For items you want addressed at the January 2002 meeting, please alert your Director-Sponsor by early December.

Note: For Chris's previous Director-Sponsor articles, please visit <http://www.stcregion.org/region2/chair.shtml>. You can reach Chris by e-mail at cjbenez@unforgettable.com or by telephone at 919-479-4891. ✉

Scholarship Applications Available

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Fourteen awards of \$2,000 each will be granted for academic year 2002-2003.

The application deadline is 15 February 2002.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office at 901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203-1822; 703-522-4114; <http://www.stc.org>. ✉

Toot Your Horn

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. ✉

- Master's degree or higher in technical communication, graphic arts or design, or a related field.
- Teaching experience in technical communication, graphic arts or design, or related field (five years full-time or seven years adjunct or part-time).
- Seven years experience in the technical communication, graphic arts or design, or related field (art judges must have experience in the visual aspects of technical communication).
- Strong publishing background (for publications: 5 articles or 1 book; for art: published graphic art or document design work).
- Winner of an STC or other communication, graphic arts, or graphic design competition award.
- Certification by a communication-related professional organization (for example, in the art competition, certification by or association with a graphic arts or design organization).
- Senior membership or higher in STC.

To apply to be an ITPC or ITAC judge, contact Kit Brown (publications competition) or Patricia McDaniels (art competition) by 15 December 2001. You will be notified of your judging status in January, and will have approximately one month to complete your evaluations before the consensus judging meeting.

Judges for the IOCC may participate on either an onsite or offsite team. Onsite teams will convene at a Houston-area hotel on 5-6 April 2002. Offsite teams will discuss the entries via a telephone conference call on those days.

As an onsite judge, you travel to the onsite judging in Houston, Texas. There you and your teammates make the initial and final decision on awards for your entries. A hotel room, paid for by STC, will be reserved for Friday and Saturday, 5-6 April 2002. You will be reimbursed for transportation to Houston.

As a telephone conferencing judge, you and your teammates make the initial and final decision on awards for your entries in a three-way telephone conference call on the day of judging. You mail the entries, completed evaluation forms, and list of awards to the Society office by Thursday, 16 April 2002.

To apply to be an IOCC judge, contact Alicia Fellure for an application and send it to her to arrive by 7 December 2001. You will be notified of the results of your application by 31 January 2002. If you are accepted as a judge, more information regarding judging policies and reimbursement process will be forthcoming.

Kit Brown, P.O. Box 140092; Boise, ID 83714; (w) 208-321-4483; (fax) 208-321-4490; (h) 208-376-0224; silverwnd1@aol.com; kit_brown@lionbridge.com.

Patricia Clark McDaniels; The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture; Marketing and Communications Services; P.O. Box 1071; Knoxville, TN 37901-1071; (w) 865-974-7141; (fax) 865-974-9433; pclark@utk.edu.

Alicia Fellure, 427 Knightswood Drive, Apopka, FL, 32712; 407-814-9340; aliciacpi@cfl.rr.com. ✉

Judges Sought for International Competition

The 2001-2002 Society for Technical Communication (STC) international publications and art competitions are just around the corner. The Society is looking for experienced technical communicators and online and visual design experts who would like to participate in the international judging for the International Online Communications Competition (IOCC), International Technical Publications Competition (ITPC), and International Technical Art Competition (ITAC). Judging in the competitions is a great way to get a sneak preview on what your colleagues are doing and to network with interesting people in a relaxed, fun atmosphere. You might even learn something new!

The judges for each team are responsible for evaluating the entries and for providing each participant with constructive feedback. Awards are given to deserving entries based on the consensus of the judging team. STC will provide transportation and lodging expenses for judges to attend the consensus judging meeting in Houston, Texas, 5-6 April 2002. The IOCC, ITPC, and ITAC judge coordinators are currently recruiting both new and experienced international judges. In addition, we want to have at least one judge from each region. To be considered for a judge position, you must meet *at least two* of the following criteria:

Writers Divide on Old, New Usages

(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 soon.)

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

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

Both web site (18 percent) and Web site (31 percent) have dropped slightly since 1998, but website (50 percent) has climbed steadily, going from 32 percent in 1998 and 43 percent 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, i.e., "Each child should bring his or her/their/his homework to class." Although the differences are small, their gained higher approval (24 percent) than ever before and the dominating his or her less (61 percent).

In contrast, whom (59 percent) 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 percent) over veteran who is disabled (34 percent) and rejected both handicapped (4 percent) and physically challenged (5 percent). African-American woman (43 percent) and black (28 percent) received more support than African American (23 percent) and Black (4 percent). Chair (53 percent) won over chairperson (22 percent), chairman and chairwoman (14 percent), and chairman (9 percent). Most (77 percent) approved splitting an infinitive.

Pesky problems. Respondents came closest to consensus (88 percent) 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 percent) or around the clock all week (51 percent); 703-623-2329 (38 percent) or (703) 643-2329 (43 percent); E.B. White (50 percent) or E. B. White (49 percent); "I won't use your cell phone any more (48 percent)/ anymore (51 percent)."

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

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/wtw_articles.htm/. ✍

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. ✍

From the President

Rising to the Occasion

by Carolyn Kelley Klinger

Are leaders born, bred, or followers who rise to the occasion? In my case with STC it was definitely the latter.

Maybe I was too good a follower. People can generally count on me to help out in a pinch. But I didn't join STC to become chapter president. I didn't conceive my strategy back in 1994 when I attended my first STC Annual Conference here in Washington, DC. I didn't chart my course, planning how I would rise up through the ranks in an expedient manner. In short, there was no lack in my life that I was trying to fill by becoming an STC leader. It just happened. It could happen to you!

All of us have opportunities to practice leadership in our daily lives. Maybe we're leaders now and don't even know it. Leaders are parents, soccer coaches, and teachers. For the past fifteen years I have led or co-led a church folk group. Yet even with that leadership background I did not think I was prepared to lead anything that had to do with my profession. After these four years of chapter leadership, however, I realize that I have been prepared all along. All I needed was my commitment to the Society's mission, which I have made my own professional mission, and the desire to share that mission with others. In short, I cared. When it comes down to it, aren't all leadership positions dependent on a deeply felt sense of purpose?

My STC leadership started when a member of the Washington, DC Chapter's Administrative Council asked me if I would consider becoming the chapter's secretary. My first reaction was that I did not have enough time. But you know what they say—when you want something done, ask a busy person. I have always been able to manage my time. Maybe I don't always prioritize it in the way most beneficial for me, but I get the job done. As you might remember from my September article (you can access it at http://www.stcwdc.org/PDF/newsletter_sep01.pdf), technical communication was by this time my second career. It was exciting and fun for me and I was doing my best to stake a claim in it, just as I had in the field of geography by pursuing my Master's degree. So my second reaction was "why not?" What could be more professionally rewarding than joining my personal identification with my profession's most visible symbol? How better to nourish my own professional growth?

STC's mission is "defining the future of technical communication." Do you see yourself as a participant in this mission? Even if you are not given the opportunity to try the latest technologies and methods at your job, don't you want to stay on top of them so that you can—someday? If so, I advise you to make a personal assessment, as I did. Are you proud of your profession and your role in it? Are you ready to help others become the future of technical communication that you envision for yourself?

My other advice is this: stretch yourself. Don't rely on what you have always done or a limited view of what you *think* you can accomplish. Fill your time with activities that make you feel good, and feel good about helping others. Volunteering for your chapter and becoming one of its leaders are just two of these activities. If you join your professional mission with the Society's mission, you *will* make a difference.

The chapter's open volunteer positions are listed at http://www.stcwdc.org/volunteer_openings.shtml. ✍



CAPITAL LETTER

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In This Issue

- A Chilly Affair: New Member Happy Hour 1
- On the Agenda: December Program: Whine and Dine 1
 - Looking for a Job? 2
 - Chapter Mailing Lists 2
 - Competition Judging Begins! 3
- What Does the Hospitality Committee Do? 4
 - An @ by Any Other Name 4
 - Online Help Conference in February 4
- Section 508: Web Accessibility Seminar 5
 - Calling All Writers 5
- Report on the September 2001 Board of Directors Meeting 6
 - Scholarship Applications Available 6
 - Toot Your Horn 7
- Judges Sought for International Competition 7
 - Writers Divide on Old, New Usages 8
 - Where Are You? 8
- From the President 9