



CAPITAL LETTER

Washington, DC, Chapter A Capital Chapter
Spring 2007

It's Not About Winning: Reflections on the 2006 STC WDC Competitions

By Marylyn G. King, Senior Member

I had no idea what I've missed all these years by not participating in the STC chapter competitions or attending the awards banquet. This year, I spoke with people involved from several perspectives so that I could get a panoramic view of the process and its crowning banquet. In the following paraphrases of our conversations, I hope you can sense the enthusiasm and dedication of the participants and be inspired by them.



Competition awards banquet, February 10, 2007, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Washington, DC. Whitney Quesenbery, Keynote Speaker and Workshop Facilitator, is shown at right.

Interviews with Best-of-Show Winners

Alisa Zapp Machalek was project leader and contributing writer for the Best-of-Show Technical Publications entry, *Inside the Cell*. You can view the online version at <http://publications.nigms.nih.gov/insidethecell/index.html> and you can order a free copy at http://publications.nigms.nih.gov/order/index.htm#inside_the_cell.

Sandra Misiaszek was project creator for the Best of Show Online Communication entry, *Sexual Abuse Prevention*. You can view the program on her Web site at http://www.triometrics.com/samples/elearning/SAP/TAC_SexualAbusePrevention.html.

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Capital Letter is published quarterly by the Washington, DC, chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC WDC). The newsletter informs chapter members about events, business meetings, special events, and regular chapter and Society activities. It also features articles, essays, and book reviews that are relevant to the field of technical communication.

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By submitting an article, the writer implicitly grants permission to publish the article in this newsletter. The writer also grants permission to print the article in other STC publications without permission. The writer holds the copyright.

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From the Editor: New Stories and New Initiatives

By Eddie VanArsdall, Senior Member and Managing Editor



Hello, and thank you for reading the Spring 2007 edition of *Capital Letter*. Since our chapter is now implementing more online information-sharing tools (read about our new blog on page 15), this publication is transitioning to a quarterly publishing schedule. Although we are publishing well after the official beginning of spring, nature decided to extend winter into mid-April, so at least we're in time for the spring thaw!

For this issue, regular columnist Marylyn King (*The Manager's Files*, p. 8) not only reviewed all of our winter 2007 monthly events (pp. 10 and 11), but she also wrote our cover story about this year's competitions. Since most of the activity for the competitions begins in summer and lasts through winter of the following year, Marylyn proposed the idea of giving the competitions some extra press by interviewing winners, judges, and committee members who participated during our 2006-2007 season. I loved the idea, because I feel that the competitions deserve year-round attention. I also contributed my own perspectives on being a judge. Whether you enter your own work, serve as a judge, or volunteer for the Competitions Committee, I hope that our story convinces you to participate in future competitions.

As usual during this time of year, we're looking for new volunteers to staff our chapter's administrative council. Chapter President Kristen Sweet makes a call for volunteers in her column. She also describes each position and directs you to online resources where you can learn more. Please consider volunteering for our chapter. It's an exciting and changing time as we adapt to the changing needs of our growing Washington Metro community.

Other highlights of this issue include *The Technical Editor*, in which Justin Baker discusses the obsolescence of the terms *paper-based documentation* and *online documentation*. We also have two stellar book reviews by newly elected Associate Fellow David Dick and chapter member Steve Whitney.

Since we do discuss the new STC WDC blog, I also want to mention our Chapter Forum, which is part of the larger STC Forum, an online discussion board for STC members. If you haven't yet joined the Forum, I encourage you to register from the international STC site (<http://www.stc.org>). The home page currently has a prominent left-side link to the Forum with a button labeled "Enter the Discussion." Click the button, then click the **Register** link. Enter your regular STC membership number and password. You will then receive e-mailed instructions for setting up a separate login account for the Forum. Once you are able to log in and browse the Forum topics, you'll find our chapter's Forum under *STC Communities*.

I hope you enjoy our Spring 2007 edition. I extend thanks to my co-editors, John Curry and Bobbie Dofflemyer, and to all of our chapter officers and committee managers. If you have feedback for us, please write us at news@stc.org, or better yet, consider posting on our blog at this address: <http://stcfdc.org/wdcblog/index.php/category/capital-letter/>. ♦

From the President: Call for Volunteers

By Kristen Sweet, President, STC WDC



STC WDC needs your help. Chapter elections are rapidly approaching, and we need our chapter members to step up and run for office. We are currently searching for President, First Vice President/Events Committee Manager, Second Vice President/Competition Committee Manager, Treasurer, and Secretary.

As chapter members, you may not realize this, but your membership, attendance, and participation in chapter activities is the main reason our chapter continues to be successful and active. Without your help and support, we will cease to exist.

If you enjoy attending monthly chapter events, and if you enjoy participating in the annual competitions as a judge or entrant, we need your help. I know it is a huge commitment to make, but the chapter is in jeopardy of not being able to continue holding monthly chapter events and our annual competitions.

On average, our officers spend anywhere from 5 to ten 10 hours per week on chapter activities. If you are elected to office, you can recruit other volunteers and delegate chapter tasks to a small or large committee, depending on how many people you need to help you. It is a myth that you are left alone to complete tasks on your own. Many past officers are still around and willing to help out as needed.

Volunteering for the chapter will enable you to

- increase your value by demonstrating leadership ability to potential employers;
- expand your professional and personal contacts;
- gain professional experience by further developing your skills as a technical communicator;
- increase your visibility in the Society;
- make a difference by adding your creative ideas, which increases the overall value of the chapter; and
- tackle and solve problems, which adds value in your professional and personal life.

The following is some general information about STC WDC Administrative Council positions. This information is also currently available in our Chapter Bylaws, which you can view and download from http://www.stcwwdc.org/PDF/Bylaws_6may04.pdf.

STC WDC Administrative Council positions are a one-year commitment. An exception is the treasurer's term, which extends from the officers' induction at the last meeting of the program year to next year's induction. The outgoing treasurer's term overlaps the incoming treasurer's term until the outgoing treasurer prepares and submits the annual financial report to the Society.

(Continued on next page)

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(From the President: Continued from previous page)

The **president** exercises general supervision over the affairs of the chapter; presides at meetings of the chapter, the administrative council, or the extended council; appoints heads of chapter committees (subject to council approval); authorizes expenditures approved by the council; and serves as an *ex officio* member of all chapter committees.

The **first vice president** assumes the duties of the president in the absence of the president and performs such other duties as the president or council may assign. In particular, the first vice president is responsible for the functioning of a major committee such as the Events Committee. A major committee is defined as one that consists of several members and enables the first vice president to learn people and task management skills.

The **second vice president** presides at meetings of the chapter, the administrative council, or the extended council in the absence of the president and first vice president. The person in this position also performs other duties as assigned by the president or council. In particular, the second vice president is responsible for the functioning of a major committee such as the Competitions Committee. A major committee is defined as one that consists of several members and enables the second vice president to learn people and task management skills.

The **secretary** prepares and distributes the minutes of all administrative council and extended council meetings; drafts official correspondence; maintains lists of officers and committees (including mailing addresses and

telephone numbers) so that they are available at any time to the president or council; maintains the Chapter Bylaws when required; and performs such other duties as the president or council may assign.

The **treasurer** receives and disburses chapter funds (as authorized by the administrative council); submits a monthly financial report to the administrative council; submits budgets as required by the president or council, including the annual financial report for submittal to the Society's treasurer; and maintains books and records so that they can be audited at any time by the administrative council or an independent auditor named by the administrative council.

The **immediate past president**, the last person to have completed a term as president, advises the administrative council and chapter as required, and performs other duties that the president or administrative council may assign. This is not an elected position. The outgoing president from the previous year automatically receives this designation.

It is time for me to pass the torch to new officers. If you are interested in being an officer, please contact me at president@stcwdc.org. I hope you will consider running for office. It is a rewarding experience that will add tremendous value to your own personal and professional life. You can read more about the administrative council positions at http://www.stcwdc.org/admin_council_roles.shtml. ♦

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Technical Publications Competition Co-manager Annette Reilly with Alisa Zapp Machalek and Judith Stoffer, Best of Show winners for *Inside the Cell*

What made you decide to enter the competition?

Alisa: We were so proud of our booklet! We thought it was wonderful, just like we think our kids are wonderful. And we wanted to get a nonbiased view.

Sandra: I thought the course was quite good and hoped for at least a merit award. Since I work in a vacuum and see so little of what else is out there, I didn't know my competition. I figured I'd give it a try. If I had had an inkling of the quality of the other entries, I would probably never have been so presumptuous as to enter.

Did you have to persuade your employer to participate? If so, how?

Alisa: At the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), one of the missions of our office is to educate the public. As I requested permission to participate, I explained how the competition provides visibility to our work and therefore helps accomplish that mission. We have submitted entries in previous years (and won awards), and the NIGMS has always supported us.

Sandra: No, because I'm the employer. My partner, Adam Crutchfield, and the client, John McGee of the Family Relations Program, supported my decision to submit the piece.

Describe the project.

Alisa: I planned the booklet, *Inside the Cell*, as one in our science education series. I supervised the team of three writers: myself (an NIGMS employee) and two contractors (Kirstie Saltsman and Alison Davis). Each of us wrote two chapters. I edited the complete

work, ensuring consistency and adding my background knowledge where needed. I also coordinated relations with the outside graphical design vendor.

Sandra: In my previous career, I was a family therapist. I had worked with the Family Relations Program for many years, counseling families and children who were victims of sexual abuse. Since changing to a career in programming and technical communication, I have always wanted to apply my new skills in a way that would help the Family Relations Program. Finally, my partner and I had a brief gap in other commitments, so we used the time to make good on that dream as a *pro bono* project. I designed the course, authored it, and programmed the underlying scripts. Adam, my partner, chose the graphics, incorporated the Flash elements, and recorded and integrated the audio portion. His fiancée (now his wife) lent her voice talent to the project.

...the booklet uses sensory imagery effectively to draw readers into the cell, scaling their perspective down to the size of a cell. (Alisa Zapp Machalak, Winner)

What do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your competition entry?

Alisa: I would say it's how the booklet invites readers to think about their bodies in a new way. I think the booklet uses sensory imagery effectively to draw readers into the cell, scaling their perspective down to the size of a cell. It makes the cells come alive with a real organic excitement. Oh, and do you see that photo of hands holding a baby's feet (on the cover and in Chapter 5 in the section *Apoptosis and Mitosis: Life in Balance*)? Those are my hands and my new baby's feet! My husband took the photo.

Sandra: The subject matter, and the fact that the target audience was narrowly defined as children ages six to nine. The only other thing that really set it apart was that it was almost embarrassingly simple. As a *pro bono* project, we couldn't afford recording studios and high-tech visual effects.

What feedback did you receive from the judges that is particularly meaningful to you and why?

Alisa: We were glad to see that they liked the scattered cartoon illustrations. Whether to use them had been the subject of much discussion among our team.

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Sandra: They have been so over-the-top encouraging about the entry, with one of them pointing out that I was focusing on too narrow an audience for such an important and effective piece. Consequently, I have launched a campaign (admittedly a one-person campaign) to try and get the material into schools where it would be useful to more children. Of course it helps my campaign to be able to present it as a Best-of-Show winner in a communication competition. If I can make even the smallest dent in the horrifying sexual abuse statistics in this country, all my efforts would be worth it.

Pursue your topic with the tenacity of a pit bull terrier, refusing to let go of it until you're convinced ... that your audience will learn. (Sandra Misiaszek, Winner)

Is there anything you learned from the process that you'd like to share with others who may consider entering the competition in the future?

Alisa: I would encourage obtaining a copy of the judge's evaluation form so you can learn what they're looking for. It not only helps you decide whether to submit an entry, but also provides some good general guidelines for document development.

Sandra: By all means, give it a shot. It's not about the bells and whistles. It's about effectively conveying what you're commissioned to convey. I reworked the storyboard probably 15 times. I kept editing the writing, boiling it down to its essence, staying clearly focused on my goals, and targeting every sentence to my intended audience. My original draft was about two and one-half times longer than the final. Pursue your topic with the tenacity of a pit bull terrier, refusing to let go of it until you're convinced (which is way beyond hoping) that your audience will learn.

Interviews with Judges

Judges are grouped into several teams of three, and the competition entries are divided evenly among the teams. Eddie VanArsdall served on one of the Technical Publications teams, and Leda Farbstein on an Online Communications team. They have given us an inside view of what it's like.

Describe the variety of content you saw in entries.

Eddie: I've judged in the past, and this year seemed to have more variety than in my previous years. No longer do we receive a predominance of software user guides and hardware installation guides. A physics lab

submitted a brochure about space stations that included a cut-out model. One extraordinary book described how missile defense technology has been transferred to other technologies for daily use; it was complemented by a fold-out timeline of technological developments that put everything into perspective. Other entries included



Andy Lakritz, Online Technical Communications Competition Manager, with Best of Show winners Sandra Misiaszek and John McGee

a policy paper on North Korea, a series of brochures on state-provided social services, and a manual for DVR equipment.

Leda: We saw tremendous variety in audiences, subject matter, and format. The target audiences ranged from children to city officials, to realtors, to end users of software products. The subject matter covered topics as diverse as sexual abuse prevention and the real estate market. The presentation formats included videos, interactive documentation, and even a 3-D "shopping bag" of items, including printed materials and a video on CD. The shopping bag made us really want to see what was inside.

Describe the range of quality you saw in entries.

Eddie: For the most part, the quality was high, but certainly not even. Some entries received no award and others won Distinguished (highest award). In all cases, the judging goal is to be as constructive as possible. Even when we offer no award, we still point out strengths as well as areas that need improvement. Since entrants provide

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background on the project, we know that sometimes they submit the piece not to win an award but to learn from the peer review.

Leda: The range of quality was broad, from Best of Show to some entries that did not qualify for any award, and several in between.

We saw tremendous variety in audiences, subject matter, and format. (Leda Farbstein, Judge)

What authoring skill level did the entries demonstrate?

Eddie: Writing styles were from A-Z, some demonstrating a lot of polish and others not so polished.

Leda: Some entries demonstrated highly skilled writing, while others were weaker on the writing. The technical expertise in the media also varied: some entries were low-tech (not necessarily a bad thing), while others had a multitude of unusual features.

What features of the Distinguished award-winning entries helped them to win?

Eddie: Our team did not review the Best-of-Show winning entry, but the missile defense technology book won a Distinguished award. It demonstrates polished writing and sophisticated graphics. But beyond that, it really draws in the reader. In fact, I couldn't put it down. The timeline theme punctuated by the comprehensive foldout recurs throughout the book, too, in the footer of every page. As a reader, you always know where you are in history and what else was going on at the time the technology under discussion was being developed.

Leda: The program on sexual abuse prevention is well organized and appropriate to its intended audience—children. The message itself is so important, and the piece effectively communicates that message.

How would you rate the experience of participating as a judge?

Eddie: I love judging, and I worked with a great team this year. It's enjoyable as long as you start out early and spread out the work throughout the month. You're able to see so many examples to learn from—good and bad. Having to write an evaluation is educational, too. Judging has proven to be a good opportunity for professional relationship building. You have to make your case about why you rate something as you do, and build a consensus with your team members. I can't say enough good stuff about judging. I couldn't wait to get back to it after my hiatus while I was chapter president.

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Leda: It's a good experience overall, although I wish we had more time to spend on the process. The exposure to novel approaches in communication is quite valuable, and I learned from discussions with my peer judges.

Closing Thoughts from the Competition Committee Chair, Ann Ray

You were so busy chairing the committee. Did you get a chance yet to look at the winning entries?

Ann: Oh, yes, I always love to look at them. We put all entries that won any award on display at the banquet, and that's definitely one of the banquet highlights. I get a lot of ideas and inspiration from them. The quality was so good that in just the Publications category we confidently sent 13 entries on to the international competition.

A large percentage of entries won an award. Why is that?

Ann: Our purpose is not to criticize the work, but to encourage quality. We have criteria for each level of achievement, and all entries that meet the criteria are awarded accordingly. I still remember when I was new to technical writing. My boss submitted a user guide that I wrote. I hadn't even heard of STC at that time. Well, it won an award and I was so proud. I carry that feeling with me today, and we want to perpetuate that kind of encouragement among our professionals.

What would you like to say about the awards banquet?

Ann: We want to give all the winners recognition for their accomplishments, and they really enjoy their moment in the limelight. We had entrants attending from Georgia and Washington state. Some winners even bring along their colleagues and clients to see them receive their award. It's a real celebration! ♦

Since 1983, Marylyn King has demonstrated the value of innovation as a technical writer, a manager, and a director. You can reach Marylyn at MarylynGK@aol.com.

The Manager's Files: Getting Your Department in Order

By Marylyn G. King, Senior Member



When you become manager of a department, whether as an external hire or an internal promotion, you must establish your position as a leader quickly, fairly, and effectively. I use the term “leader” judiciously, not the term “boss.” A leader has willing followers, and all

are moving in the same direction—the leader’s direction. So a very important question is, what initial steps do you take to define that direction and get your staff to follow?

There’s always a fair amount of anxiety among staff when a new manager arrives. Although you can’t know them all immediately, they can start to know you immediately. Start off by holding an introductory meeting. This is a very focused, purposeful meeting—not an aimless “Hello, nice to meet you” meeting. Use the occasion to communicate your leadership philosophy. (See my article on that subject in the November/December 2006 issue of *Capital Letter*.) This lets them know important things about you: how you operate, what they can expect of you, and what you will expect of them. Briefly, present a rough plan for how you’ll set the department’s strategy and tactics. You don’t know yet what the specifics are, but you can let them know what your approach to the job will be and that you do, in fact, plan to do something. Express an open-door policy, and mean it. And finally, outline the next steps.

After your introductory meeting, it’s the staff’s turn to introduce themselves to you in depth. Schedule one-on-one meetings with each staff member. Give them a little time to prepare, because it will be like a job interview. You need to assess their strengths and weaknesses, and determine their interests and desires for future activities. Discuss their developmental needs. You begin building your team as you identify who can do what best, and see where the gaps lie. Ask them to give you an overview of their current projects, including description, status, dependencies, and team dynamics. You will get an education on the company’s projects, people, processes, and how your staff members relate to those elements of work.

After you have established mutual trust, seek your staff members’ critiques of the department and the company. But be careful. Define these critiques as constructive criticisms with no personal attacks allowed. A manager

needs to understand and deal with issues that staffers think are problems, and leverage the aspects of work that staffers find positive. Ask for their few top suggestions. Let them know you are listening to them, but that you will evaluate their input before you act on it. They can serve as advisors, but you are the leader.

A leader has willing followers, and all are moving in the same direction—the leader’s direction.

You can only figure out what needs to be done by listening, and listening all around you. It’s obvious that you’ll listen to your own supervisor to learn what that person expects of you. And if you keep that open door policy active, you’ll be listening to your staff quite a bit. Don’t overlook other sources of valuable information. Listen to your peers in other departments, and find out what their issues, approaches, and responsibilities are. You can learn a lot about the corporate culture from them, discern what you can and cannot do in that culture, and discover who might be an obstacle to you and who might be your supporter. Find out what they think of your department, and work to promote your department where necessary. Seek out communication from upper management, whether directly or indirectly. Learn what the company’s goals are so you can align your department’s goals with them. As you listen from all these directions, work at conceptualizing your role in the organization. Everyone around you has different priorities and concerns. They all have different expectations of you. Define yourself in their midst and communicate who you are relative to them.

To keep your head from swimming during your first 100 days in office (at least), keep a notebook of everything you hear: issues, suggestions, problems, tips, and so on. Review your notebook frequently, and you’ll see some overall messages emerge. As they do, you’ll have a clear understanding of what your real priorities are. In my first 100 days as manager, I filled up three steno-pads. At first the items were overwhelming, and it relieved me to just write things down and move on. As I reviewed and reflected on the items, however, I realized that about 90 to 95 percent of them fell into three categories. Those categories became my top three goals to accomplish during

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The Technical Editor: What's in a Name?

By Justin Baker, Senior Member

What's in a name? A lot. As technical editors, we know the importance of ensuring that the text we edit is clear. If we are performing developmental editing or copy (language) editing, we know that concepts must be expressed in such a way that the reader does not have to stop and figure out what is being said. We know that the more times a reader has to stop in a text to figure something out, the less the chance that the reader will leave the text with a solid understanding.

There are many elements to look for when editing a text at the development level or language level. One of these elements is terminology. The precise use of terminology is important. The more precise the terms, the more economical and efficient the text (Strunk and White, anyone?). The precise use of terms keeps text uncluttered and makes language more interesting to read and, in some cases, more valuable: the precise use of terms can make a text pregnant with meaning.

All of this, of course, applies to technical terms as well. Sometimes technical terms are misused. Other times a concept or model outgrows the original terms that were used to describe it. This is the case with the terms *paper-based documentation* and *online documentation*. These terms have been established in the technical-communication lexicon for years. The logic of their meaning was clear at the time that they emerged in the 1980s and early 90s: in addition to the centuries-old paper document, we also now had documentation on a computer (online). But these terms came into existence before the World Wide Web became dominant and hypertext became the norm for online documents, therefore eschewing the traditional linear, narrative structure.

Is it online documentation if it is a document designed for print but posted to a Web site as a PDF document?

In the days when text-based interfaces still existed, online documentation was much like paper-based documentation: it had a linear, narrative structure with traditional cross-references that did not lead a reader off on an entirely different path from the original text. At the time, it made sense to use the terms *paper-based documentation* and *online documentation*, because the only difference between the two was in their output: one was on paper, and the other was on a computer.

In the 1990s, the World Wide Web became a huge presence in the world of documentation. Because of hyperlinks, the term *online documentation* began to primarily mean a document that was not necessarily read in linear fashion. The term began to refer to the structure of a document, rather than the medium in which it was published. But the newer, predominant definition of *online documentation* conflicted with the older definition, which still existed.

These conflicting definitions have opened up a can of worms. Is it online documentation only if it has a hyperlinked structure? Is it online documentation if it is a document designed for print but posted to a Web site as a PDF document? Then there's the quandary of whether a Web site that is printed out on paper is paper-based documentation or still online documentation.

From this confusion emerges the idea that perhaps it is not best to define a document by its published form. Perhaps it would be better to define a document by its structure—linear documentation or Web-based documentation. If you publish a traditional report on paper or post it to a Web site as a PDF document, it still has a linear structure. Even if you print an HTML document published on a Web site, that document still has a Web structure with hyperlinks, and the author's intention is that readers will carve out their own narrative (logical) path. One could argue that the Web-based structure of the document is no longer present once it has been printed on paper, since you can't click a hyperlink on a piece of paper. This is why I have included the author's intention as part of the definition; if the author intends for readers to carve out their own narrative path, then the document still possesses a Web-based structure. And I argue that this contrasts with a traditional text that has many footnotes. The author of such a text intends for the reader to read in a primarily linear fashion, even if that reader skips ahead to other chapters. The text is still linear.

As technical editors and as members of a technical communication society, we may never be able to turn the tide of usage in the general business community. However, we should strive to use the most accurate terminology, at least within our own profession and communities. Electrical engineers strive to use the most precise terms in their field because it makes their communication more

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Rants and Raves

Objective and Not-So-Objective Reviews of Events and Books

Reviews of Winter 2007 Chapter Events

By Marylyn G. King, Senior Member

Progression on Multimedia and Software Testing (January 10, 2007)

Our January chapter event packed in two for the price of one using a progression format. First, Mary Wise, an STC fellow and an instructional designer at Fannie Mae, showed us how she creates multimedia web-based seminars. Then Doreen A. Mannion, an STC fellow and a manager of software testers and technical writers, enlightened us about how much the two professions have in common.

Adapting Presentational Training Content for the Web

Ms. Wise uses a PowerPoint plug-in called Articulate Presenter to easily convert PowerPoint presentations used in instructor-led training to Flash webinars. With the webinars, Fannie Mae employees can schedule individual training at their own convenience rather than wait for a class to be offered. The conversion includes recording the voiceover, which Ms. Wise stresses is something to pay particular attention to. “You must write your script for speaking, and then practice, practice, practice it.” Integrating voiceover into Articulate Presenter is easy. In fact, the tool makes many tasks easy: it allows you to add special touches such as a playlist for background music, nested topics for custom navigation, links to external files, and options for automatic or user-directed slide progression.

An additional plug-in, Articulate Quizmaker, enables you to enhance your webinar with interactive quizzes, learning games, and surveys. You can download Ms. Wise’s presentation at http://www.stcfdc.org/speaker_handouts.shtml. To learn more about Articulate software, go to <http://www.articulate.com>.

Making the Move to Software Testing

If you’re a technical communicator looking for a new line of work, Ms. Mannion offered a suggestion: look into becoming a software tester. The job requirements are nearly identical: communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, ability to work independently and on a team, knowledge of the full software development life cycle, proficiency in MS Office tools, and so on. Becoming a software tester does not automatically give you more recogni-

tion or respect in a company, however—the lack of which is a common, painful point for technical communicators. As a software tester, you still have to earn recognition and respect by proving your worth. One way to do that is to become certified (see <http://www.asq.org/certification>). Ms. Mannion admits that the pressures are the same and the challenges are similar between the two professions, but a notable difference is that software testers generally earn 12 to 35 percent more than technical communicators. ♦

Workshop and Keynote Address on Usability (February 10, 2007)

This review was written with the help of Carolyn Kelley Klinger and Allen Rotz, Senior Members.

At our Competition Awards banquet in February, our chapter provided something for everyone to enjoy and learn from, regardless of whether they were involved in the competition.

In the morning, Whitney Quesenbery conducted a two-hour workshop, “Choosing the Right Usability Technique.” The workshop provided an excellent introduction to various formal (in a usability lab) and informal (not in a lab) methods of performing usability testing: heuristics, expert reviews, personas, user interviews, contextual inquiry, requirements gathering, task analysis, focus groups, competitive benchmarking, remote usability testing, eye-tracking, accessibility reviews, card sorting, surveys, and Web metrics. Ms. Quesenbery combined a lecture approach with substantial audience participation, encouraging attendees to share their case studies and glean lessons learned from their experiences. Participants also performed worksheet exercises and benefited from Whitney’s valuable list of resources for further study.

Later in the day, Ms. Quesenbery delivered the awards banquet keynote address, “Writing (and Designing) for Diverse Audiences: Content, Culture, and Usability.” Her speech posed the following question: How do you create a Web site when its intended audiences are significantly

[\(Continued on next page\)](#)

(Workshop and Keynote Address: Continued from previous page)

diverse? The case that Quesenbery described—a site for the Open University (OU), a distance learning institution in the UK—presented the ultimate challenge in meeting audience needs while keeping the design simple and unified. The solution wasn't obvious at first. The audience for the OU site “ranges from teens just leaving secondary school, adults considering updating their professional qualifications, people with some university experience trying to complete their degrees, to older adults often pursuing a personal interest in a subject. It also includes people for whom English is a second language, as well as people with a wide range of disabilities who are attracted by the flexibility of study at the Open University.”

Whitney and her team conducted usability tests on the existing OU Web site to identify the main problems. Then they researched what other experts had to say about the Web habits of these various audiences. Surprisingly, these audiences demonstrate more commonalities than differences. Whitney's team implemented universal usability principles. It's worth noting that “No one turned to us and said that they were finding these pages too easy to read or too simplistic.”

To learn more about Whitney Quesenbery, check her corporate Web site, WQusability, at <http://www.wqusability.com>. ♦

Five-Session Progression (March 10, 2007)

This review was written with the help of Jennifer Reed and Allen Rotz, Senior Members.

To call it a progression event is an understatement. What awaited those of us who made the trek out to AOL on a Saturday in March was nothing short of a local conference. Our event coordinator, Jennifer Reed, orchestrated a stunning lineup of top-notch presenters on relevant and current topics: writing proposals, writing for the Web, transitioning to biomedical writing, writing for worldwide readers, and working with Web 2.0 technologies. Welcomed by a tasty continental breakfast, we settled in to any one of the five concurrent sessions, rotated into others throughout the day, and visited with colleagues over a good lunch—all for about \$25!

Writing Proposals

Proposal pro Joe Nocerino drove home the message that a successful proposal must *sell* its solution to the client's problem. Keep in mind that all of the competition may meet the technical requirements. To win, you must distinguish yourself as not only meeting the requirements, but

being the best at meeting them for the best price (most value for the money). Joe provided lots of specifics on how to make your proposal stand out from others in a good way. Here are a few:

- Boast in a theme statement up front.
- Make the theme relevant to the subject of the proposal.
- Back up the boast with facts.
- Continue with a theme statement at the beginning of each section, making your reader want to go on.

Writing for the Web

Web expert Merry Bruns outlined six important steps to successful Web content:

- Focus on the reader.
- Communicate—don't just broadcast information.
- Avoid complexity.
- Write less text.
- Be interactive.
- Let your blog speak for you.

Bruns enriched her presentation with plenty of good and bad examples.

Transitioning to Biomedical Writing

Medical writer Lili Fox Vélez, Ph.D., discussed how to apply general technical communication skills to the fields of medicine and science. She provided customized suggestions to the attendees based on their backgrounds and interests. She advised that writers not be intimidated by job descriptions that ask for a Ph.D., because often that criterion is waived. Attendees left with a useful list of sources for further information.

Writing for Worldwide Readers

Judith Shenouda, a recognized communicator, writer, and educator, emphasized the importance of writing good, clear English. As the source material that is eventually translated or read by non-native English speakers, writing must be unambiguous. Shenouda illustrated her point with before-and-after examples of text that had proven problematic, and she provided a list of further reading.

Working with Web 2.0 Technologies

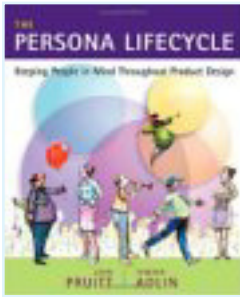
Technology guru Greg Walsh burst with enthusiasm about all the leading-edge capabilities you can implement with Web 2.0 technologies like wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, and podcasting. He gave us plenty of how-to information and

(Continued on page 18)

Rants and Raves: Book Reviews

The Persona Lifecycle: Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design

By David Dick, Associate Fellow



If you are involved in designing and developing products and services for people, you know the importance of keeping users (people) in mind throughout the product design. Designing for users without actually involving them in the design is pointless. If, however, you cannot involve users, you can

imagine them and create a personality for each one.

Welcome to the next frontier for user-centered design: *personas*. If you want how to create and use personas to design products that people will love, I encourage you to read *The Persona Lifecycle* by John Pruitt and Tamara Adlin.

The Persona Lifecycle describes the value of personas, and it offers detailed techniques and tools to conceive, create, communicate, and use personas to create great product designs. John Pruitt and Tamara Adlin provide examples, samples, and illustrations for persona practitioners to imitate and model. It is important to emphasize that the development of personas is a method that complements other user-centered design techniques, including user testing, scenario-based design, and cognitive walk-throughs.

Personas are not always successful as a design solution, as the authors readily admit. That is why Pruitt and Adlin wrote *The Persona Lifecycle*: to provide solutions to some of the common problems practitioners have experienced when trying to create and use personas. The book begins with an introduction to personas (Chapter 1), followed by an overview of the persona lifecycle (Chapter 2), and five core chapters (Chapters 3 through 7) that cover the phases of the persona lifecycle.

In addition, the leading usability, human-computer interaction, and customer experience experts have contributed the following chapters to this book:

- Larry Constantine: “Users, Roles, and Personas” introduces user roles in the context of usage-centered design and explores the relationships between user roles and personas. I found this chapter of particular interest, because I am learning how to create use cases as a method of identifying system requirements. Giving the actors (users) personalities makes the use cases and tasks (roles) more meaningful.

- Whitney Quesenbery: “Storytelling and Narrative” provides guidelines to create a story, the elements of a good story, and the techniques to craft a story. A well-crafted story helps the design team to establish a situation or context, illustrate a problem or a positive experience, and propose a new solution for personas.
- Tamara Adlin and Holly Jamesen Carr: “Reality and Design Maps” describes how to create artifacts that help the design team to understand and communicate information about the ways that people achieve their goals and the ways that they could achieve their goals with new tools.
- Jonathon Grudin: “Why Personas Work: The Psychological Evidence” describes the relationship of personas to the practice of marketing. It explains how to get the most from personas that you have created to inform product design by looking for ways they can contribute to marketing.
- Bob Barlow-Busch: “Marketing Versus Design Personas” compares and contrasts the use of personas in marketing and design. Simply stated, a marketing persona tells the story of someone deciding to purchase a product, and a design persona tells the story of someone using it: one is a customer and the other is a user. The main purpose of a marketing persona is to understand the factors that influence a customer’s decision to purchase a specific product.

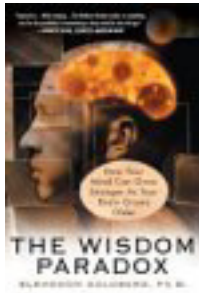
Each chapter is supported by testimonials from corporate presidents, as well as important reminders, useful definitions, and a running case study that connects all of the lifecycle phases. Chapters conclude with a summary that revisits key topics to prepare the reader for the next phase of persona development.

What I appreciate about this book is that it is wholly dedicated to the personas. Pruitt and Adlin have been researching and using personas, leading workshops, and teaching courses at professional conferences and universities. They developed the Persona Lifecycle model to communicate the value and practical application of personas to product design and development professionals. Their work became the inspiration for this book. I should mention that since the publication of this book in April 2006, Steve Mulder and Ziv Yaar have published *The User Is Always Right: A Practical Guide to Creating and Using Personas for the Web (VOICES)*.

[\(Continued on page 18\)](#)

Embracing the Anxiety of Learning: Why It's Good for Your Health

By Steve Whitney, Senior Member



Lofty enthusiasm for lifetime learning can seem irritatingly simplistic after you've just gone through a genuinely steep learning curve. But people in our profession routinely endure the trials of mastering new material and keep coming back for more.

Elkhonon Goldberg, the Russian-born, baby boomer neuropsychologist and author of *The Wisdom Paradox: How Your Mind Can Grow Stronger as Your Brain Grows Older*, wrote this remarkable overview of cognitive neurology to share conclusions about how he and his cohorts, who are past their peak in terms of quantitative cerebral capacity, can still get good mileage from their brains. In so doing, he explains why information age professionals are not really masochistic at all, but instead are just demonstrating important principles of cognitive fitness. The book is both fascinating and an excellent example of scientific writing for the general public.

First, a brief overview and a couple of the key points: The paradox referred to in the title—that people often show remarkable mastery in advanced years in spite of generally diminished brain capacity—is really just a launching point to expound and reflect on how the mind functions in general and how its characteristic modes of operation shift through the years.

One of the book's most important assertions, supported by substantial recent research, is that the right brain hemisphere is in charge of managing novel situations foremost, and that it processes experiences which cannot be distilled to match existing cognitive patterns. Children heavily exercise the right side of the brain when they use language (to the extent that it is novel), and right brain damage leads to significant loss of language capabilities in children. But not so for adults, in whom such damage results in little effect on language skills, which have migrated to the pattern-based left side of the brain. What do adults lose with right brain damage instead? They lose cognitive skills that remain linked to the right side throughout life. These include appreciation and understanding of humor, because it requires comprehension of multiple but conflicting points of view and frustrates pattern-based processing. Empathy is another loss. The "intuitive" ability to appropriately respond to a host of multiple, subtle clues relies heavily on right brain capabilities.

A somewhat disturbing finding of recent research is that brain erosion operates on a "last-in first-out" principle. Some of the last-in functions are the very valuable executive capabilities hosted in the prefrontal lobes, which manage planning, context-appropriate behavior, and a host of other insight-related skills that tend to mature in years of early adulthood (as late as the mid-20s in many people.) These are particularly vulnerable to the aging process.

Fortunately, Goldberg is a practical man as well as an astonishingly articulate writer, and he peppers each chapter with helpful advice about how to keep the mind in good shape. The book can be quite demanding in places but is never in the least bit tedious or dull, largely because of the takeaway value of this advice.

The rest of this review is a bulleted list of some items that I found especially interesting:

- Quantity of blood flow to the brain may be a key indicator of a person's ability to mentally perform. The brain is affected by the overall health of the vascular system, including the buildup of plaque.
- Brain physiology changes in response to how it is used (called brain plasticity). Pianists have abnormally high numbers of neurons in the part of the brain that supports control of the fingers. London cab drivers have exceptionally developed areas where visual-spatial processing takes place. Two principles to remember: (1) use it or lose it, and (2) to increase your capacity, increase your need.
- Salutary changes in brain neurology are possible throughout a person's life. The body generates new neurons throughout life. Goldberg has created an experimental "mental fitness club" in New York City for elderly people seeking help with diminished cognitive powers. Provided with proper exercises, clients as old as 85 have achieved very positive results.
- A supportive, collegial atmosphere appears to contribute to brain fitness.
- Right hemisphere activity (addressing novelty and non-pattern-based phenomena) is closely associated with brain chemistry that produces feelings of anxiety and unpleasantness. Seriousness and some discomfort can be normal aspects of the learning process. The association of anxiety or fear with the right brain is consistent with its function in dealing with novelty and the unknown. Ever feel impatient or irritated while trying to get your arms around a new subject?

[\(Continued on page 18\)](#)



Chapter

SPOTLIGHT



Our Members

STC WDC welcomes members who have recently joined our chapter or who have transferred from other chapters. We also recognize those who have recently achieved the status of senior member, associate fellow, or fellow.

New Members

The following new members joined our chapter between December 1, 2006, and February 28, 2007.

Gina Abruzzese
Joseph Ambrogne
Lynn Anslow
Elisabeth Baker
Eileen Baumann
Merry Blount
Virginia Canil
Renee Casimir
Helen Chang
David Cherry
Judith Coffman
Amanda Collins
Annick Conis
Lori Duncan
Thomas Durst II
Pamela Fassett
Leslie Fisher
Carol Gillis
Dan Glover
Jessica Goger
Gina Gustin
Carolyn Harris
Michelle Beissel Heath
Judith Hughes
Ian Jobling
Kelly Keck
Flick Kelley
Candice Kramer
Lorna LaVerne
Cheryl Lilie
Deborah Limback
Sarah Longworth
Greg Macheak
Meghan Mahar

Christine Mastrian-Avallone
Mark Meschter
Chrystal Mincey
Sieglinga Moody
Larry Norton
Lesley Nowell
Terry Norwood Sr.
Sherry Pebworth
Ellen Dyer Raguette
Harry Robinson III
Chris Scanlon
Cynthia Sears
Richard Shrout
David Siecker
Elizabeth Strange
Frank Tam Jr.
Jan Timmons
Alan Tolerton
Patrick Trate
Lindsay Williams
Sarah Wolters
Jean Zurface

New Transfers

The following members transferred to our chapter between December 1, 2006, and February 28, 2007.

Kaushiki Maitra Bagchi
Leon Brown
Chris Copits
Michelle Eden
Katherine Ferguson
Cynthia Hargett
Neysa Narena
Ellen Shourd
Alice Tung (from Metro Baltimore)
Lorna Wallick

New Senior Members

STC members become senior members after five years of Society membership. Congratulations to the following people who have recently become senior members.

Ugur Akinci
Mary E. Boyd
Thomas P. Cooper
Ellen R. Feerst
Bethann Gallagher
Wendy J. Germain
Ronnie M. Good
Shirley E. Gunderson
Connie Inukai
Marcus J. Jessup
Starla J. King
John W. Koran
Zinah M. Mansy
Renelle E. Motos
Elizabeth D. Murphy
Heather M. Neumann
Augustine Papali
Cathy L. Rigsby
Karen L. Stierman
Megan C. Trimberger
Eric F. Wise

Capital Letter thanks **Carolyn Kelley Klinger**, Membership Manager of STC WDC, who communicates with new members and who provides us with member names and membership totals.

Current Member Totals

Total STC members: 12,767
Total STC WDC members: 423

Please send questions to
membership@stcwdc.org

C H A P T E R S P O T L I G H T

Our New Fellow and Associate Fellow

STC WDC congratulates two of our members who have recently been elected fellow and associate fellow.

Thomas Edward Pinelli, STC Fellow



Thomas Edward Pinelli became an STC fellow this year, after having been elected Associate Fellow in 1999. A senior member of STC and a member of STC WDC, Thom has distinguished himself in the areas of usability, scientific communication, management, user needs,

product development, quality and process improvement, and research. He is also a senior member of several organizations and societies and has received numerous honors for his research and study of the technical communications practices of engineers and scientists.

In 2002, Thom received an Emmy Award® for his work in producing children's educational television. He served as the Associate Editor for Research of Technical Communication for almost a decade. Thom has been a manager at the NASA Langley Research Center for more than 30 years, and has authored and co-authored more than 300 journal articles, technical reports, conference and meeting papers, newsletter articles, and book reviews.

David J. Dick, Associate Fellow



David Dick has been recognized for his extensive, enduring commitment to STC communities and for developing the careers of technical communicators in many countries.

David has been the STC WDC liaison to local World Usability Day events, secretary and judge for the STC newsletter competition, contributing writer and editor for *Capital Letter*, judge for the France chapter's technical publications competition, and co-founder and first president of the Belgium chapter. He currently serves as Usability SIG manager for STC WDC and is an active member of the Usability community.

As editor of *Usability Interface*, newsletter of the Usability and User Experience community, David has also provided many members with an opportunity to acquire the credentials of a published author, thereby enhancing their prestige in the profession and their careers. He published two joint newsletters, the first ever done

at both the chapter and SIG level. In 2002, he received the Distinguished SIG Service Award for leadership as managing editor of *Usability Interface*.

As a volunteer for the University of Ghent, David provided the perspective of a native English speaker and business professional to students of a business writing course. ♦

Our Finances

The following summary shows our chapter's financial status as of March 31, 2007.

Assets	\$24,491.32
Cash and Bank Accounts	\$23,641.17
Inventory (Estimated)	\$850.15
Liabilities	\$952.23
Current Liabilities	\$952.23
Long-Term Liabilities	\$0.00
Net Worth	\$23,539.09

Please send questions to our treasurer, E.C. Eklund, at treasurer@stcwc.org.

Our New Blog

Thanks to Webmaster Cynthia Lockley and Past President Carolyn Kelley Klinger, our chapter now has a blog. Decorated with beautiful photos of cherry blossoms and other local themes, Carolyn says that our blog pages are designed to become a "living, organic thing with daily new content in many categories." STC WDC is looking for people with opinions and news to help write this content.

Already, President Kristen Sweet is posting her weekly announcement content on the blog. We also have a category for this newsletter and will publish our announcements there.

You can subscribe to the chapter blog to make it easy to remember to check out the latest posts. Maybe you would even like to announce something. For example, maybe you would like to meet other chapter members for lunch one day, or maybe you would like to know who has dinner plans at the 2007 STC Annual Conference.

If you would like a login for the blog, send Carolyn an e-mail at carolyn.klinger@verizon.net. Meanwhile, check out our new blog at <http://www.stcwc.org/wdcblog>. ♦

C H A P T E R S P O T L I G H T

Capital Letter Contributors

Justin Baker
 John Curry
 David Dick
 Bobbie Dofflemyer
 E.C. Eklund
 Marylyn King
 Carolyn Kelley Klinger
 Cynthia Lockley
 Jennifer Reed
 Kristen Sweet
 Eddie VanArsdall
 Steve Whitney

Upcoming Events

STC's 54th Annual Conference

Make the Technical Communication Summit—STC's annual conference—your primary source of learning about technical communication. Whether you're a novice or senior practitioner, manager or researcher, the Summit caters to your need for education and professional growth with

- Workshops
- Educational sessions
- Keynote speakers

DATE: Monday, May 13 - Wednesday, May 16, 2007
 LOCATION: Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, MN
<http://www.minneapolisconventioncenter.com/>
 COST: <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/register/rates.asp>
 MORE INFORMATION: <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/index.asp>
 or call the STC office at 703-522-4114
 REGISTRATION: <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/register/index.asp>
 QUESTIONS: stc@stc.org

Conference Recap and Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

Come enjoy a meal to celebrate this year's accomplishments. We'll open the floor to anyone who attended this year's STC Annual Conference and wants to share some highlights. We'll honor the volunteers from the past year, because we couldn't have done it without you. And finally, we'll officially welcome the new STC WDC Administrative Council.

DATE: Saturday, June 2, 2007
 TIME: 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 LOCATION: Guapos
 8130 Wisconsin Avenue
 Bethesda, MD 20814
 Phone: 301-656-0888
 COST: \$15
 MORE INFORMATION: http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_jun07.shtml
 REGISTRATION: http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_resrv_jun07.shtml
 QUESTIONS: events@stcfdc.org

Looking for employment? Visit our chapter's Employment Resources page at <http://www.stcfdc.org/employ.shtml>.

C H A P T E R S P O T L I G H T

Upcoming Events

Living On Words: Get Inspired, Get Writing... Get Published! Washington Independent Writers Presents Its 28th Washington Writers Conference

This annual conference offers 14 different sessions throughout the day, covering everything from the practical aspects of writing to the creative process. You'll have the opportunity to meet with agents (both fiction and non-fiction). You'll also have the opportunity to network with other writers and learn more about Washington Independent Writers, the outstanding organization that supports writers in the greater Washington, DC, area.

The plenary speaker is **Peter Bowerman**, author and self-publisher, who is known for his books *The Well-Fed Writer* and *The Well-Fed Editor*. In addition to his opening speech, Peter will lead a workshop based on his books and will provide practical steps and tips on marketing and selling your writing.

The keynote speaker is **Francine Prose**, award-winning author of 11 novels, including *Blue Angel*, a finalist for the National Book Award. Her latest book is *Reading Like A Writer*. She has also written four children's books and has co-translated three volumes of fiction. Prose is a contributing editor of *Harper's Magazine*, and she writes regularly about art for *The Wall Street Journal*.

DATE:	Saturday, June 9, 2007
SCHEDULE:	7:30 a.m. – 8 a.m. Breakfast and Registration
	8 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Plenary Speech: Peter Bowerman
	10 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Conference Sessions
	11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Conference Sessions
	1 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Lunch and Keynote Address: Francine Prose
	2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Conference Sessions
	4 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. Conference Sessions
	5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. Author Book Signings and Reception
LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS:	Cafritz Conference Center The George Washington University 800 21st Street, NW Washington, DC 20052 http://cafritz.gwu.edu
REGISTRATION AND PRICING:	https://washwriter.org/forms/form_conference.html
MORE INFORMATION:	http://washwriter.org/
DIRECTIONS:	http://cafritz.gwu.edu/Directions
QUESTIONS:	E-mail: info@washwriter.org Phone: 202-775-5150

Successful Networking Strategies

When you work for yourself, your network is your most reliable source of new clients. Can you rely on yours? Come learn from two local freelance writers, Gabe Goldberg and Kristen King (<http://inkthinker.blogspot.com/>), as they share ways in which you can network effectively and meet the people who want to purchase your services.

- Learn how networking fits into an overall marketing strategy.
- Come and share your own ideas about successful networking strategies.

Note: Details for this event are not yet finalized. For updated meeting information, see our events calendar on the chapter Web site at <http://www.stcwc.org/calendar.shtml>.

Continued Stories

[\(The Manager's Files: Continued from page 8\)](#)

my first year on the job. The payoff, as we accomplished them, was an enormous drop in day-to-day distractions and a big boost in our department's reputation throughout the company.

Once when I took on a new management job, my daughter (ten years old at the time) said, "You mean you don't have to do any work yourself? You just have to make sure other people do?" I just laughed, and said, "That's right." But of course, doing that is a lot of work. And as always, communication is key. Let people know who you are, and find out who they are. Then you can accomplish substantial things through others, which is the mark of an effective leader. ♦

Since 1983, Marylyn King has demonstrated the value of innovation as a technical writer, a manager, and a director. You can reach Marylyn at MarylynGK@aol.com.

[\(The Technical Editor: Continued from page 9\)](#)

efficient. As technical editors and communicators, we must ensure that such precise language is used in all disciplines in which our work is based.

It is time to change the terms used to describe the different models of documentation. No more *paper-based* and *online*. It's time for *linear documentation* and *Web-based documentation*. We as technical editors with our proverbial red pens have the power to help steer this change. ♦

Justin Baker has been a technical writer and editor for nine years. You can reach him at bakerjustin@earthlink.net.

[\(Five-Session Progression: Continued from page 11\)](#)

plenty of inspiration—so much that our own member, Carolyn Kelley Klinger, went home that night and created a prototype blog that will soon be integrated into our chapter Web site.

For more information about the presenters and how to contact them, visit the following page on our chapter Web site: http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_mar07.shtml#DSCR.

♦

Since 1983, Marylyn G. King has demonstrated the value of innovation as a technical writer, a manager, and a director. You can reach Marylyn at MarylynGK@aol.com.

[\(The Persona Lifecycle: Continued from page 12\)](#)

If you want to learn the techniques to inject accurate information about real users into the chaotic world of product development, you will find *The Persona Lifecycle* essential reading and a must have for your library. ♦

David Dick is manager of the STC WDC Usability SIG. You can reach David at davidjdick2000@yahoo.com.

[\(The Wisdom Paradox: Continued from page 13\)](#)

- A person's cognitive development parallels the general shift in a person's emotional life, from right-centered (restlessness in dealing with novelty) during youth to left-centered (positive and satisfied with a collection of proven routines) in later years.
- Success often requires activity of both sides of the brain. "Been there, done that" characterizes the mindset of a person handling a task primarily with patterns stored in the left hemisphere. However, when lacking openness to novel aspects that are perceived by the right hemisphere, confidence can turn to arrogance and superficiality. ♦

Steve Whitney is an aging baby boomer who works as an independent consultant in IT system planning and concept development for the Food and Drug Administration. Out of the office, he manages inner city literacy projects for early learners, with special emphasis on contextual learning and thinking skills. He brings many lessons learned back to work. You can reach Steve at swhitney@cres.com.