

The Willamette Galley

Willamette Valley Chapter
Society for Technical Communication

PROGRAM MEETINGS

APRIL 21—“THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX”

Networking and a light dinner began at 6:00 p.m. at the Mallory Hotel in Portland. After welcoming members, President Maralee Sautter introduced the chapter officers, past presidents, and managers. Garret Romaine introduced the guest speaker, Lance Gelein, an STC past president who’s presented at WVC program meetings several times.

Lance Gelein illustrated that imaginative methods captivate audiences: he offered a choice between a heavy book and chocolate candy. He advised that technical communicators assess the quantity of required information, drawing the user into a “journey of discovery” and practicing the “less is best” theory. Ways to think outside the norm include: do the unexpected, make training relevant to daily tasks and environment, involve the end-user in the development of materials, and “make the complex simple—really simple.”

Near the end of the presentation, members at each table developed and presented a training strategy; the winners received prizes.

Lance’s final words of wisdom were: “Don’t be afraid to try something new. Remember, make learning fun and engaging for success.”

MAY 19—“USABILITY AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT”

Building 38 at Tektronix was the setting for Maralee Sautter’s last presiding meeting for the WVC membership, an event which she opened after a light dinner and networking session. She introduced the chapter officers, past presidents, and managers. She also urged members to attend the Volunteer Recognition Dinner on Thursday, June 23.

Mark Barnett then introduced George Reiswig and David Stubbs, principal consultants and usability architects, for their program “Usability and Product Development.” Earlier in the month, the two presented a longer version of this program at the 52nd Annual STC Conference in Seattle.

George and David began with the “spaghetti navigation” of a Web site of an STC SIG. The humor about a frustration created by fellow members segued to the value of technical communicators as they assist with conceptual model design, user-interface (UI) design, and UI evaluation.

Technical communicators contribute to the strategic ROI (return on investment), which is more valuable than the cash ROI, for the strategic ROI publicizes products. Technical communicators can make such contributions through their knowledge of users and their application of usability principles.

Maralee concluded the evening by a drawing for door prizes, many of which were souvenirs from the 52nd Annual STC Conference.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July: No chapter meeting

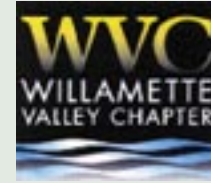
August: No chapter meeting

September 15: “How to Make a Six-Figure Income as a Technical Communicator” with Jack Molisani

Topics for succeeding meetings to be determined



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION



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STC Mission Statement

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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREETINGS FROM YOUR NEW CHAPTER PREZ!

Welcome to the new WVC-STC year. What would you like WVC-STC to achieve in 2005-2006? What would you like to hear at next year's volunteer banquet as the chapter's accomplishments for the year?

Please share your opinions by filling out and returning the chapter survey that you should receive later this summer.

Whatever we achieve, it will be largely the doing of Maralee Sautter's superb team of volunteers. Let's all thank those who will help publish the newsletter, update the Web site, send out the jobs list, maintain the membership list, put on and publicize meetings and workshops, take minutes, balance books, recruit new volunteers, and other tasks needed throughout the year. I hope we retain as many of the volunteers as possible!

One goal of mine is for our chapter to offer us all opportunities to hear the most enlightening technical communications speakers on the planet. Towards this end, our chapter has tentatively lined up the energetic Jack Molisani to kick off the September meeting with his talk titled: "How to Make a Six-Figure Income as a Technical Communicator." Later, we plan to schedule a return engagement by the dynamic John Hedtke, Eugene author extraordinaire, and an STC Director. We are negotiating to bring to the Willamette Valley other top-notch local and international speakers. Details will be forthcoming!

I hope this year the WVC-STC can help bring you success in technical communications and in life.

Best regards,

Mark Barnett

WVC-STC President, 2005-2006

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LETTER FROM THE CO-EDITORS

Originally, this issue focused on interviewing as the final segment in *The Galley's* three-part series on job hunting. To that end, we share John Hedtke's 10 helpful interviewing tips and Carol L. Larson's discussion on types of interviews.

But in May, more than weeds and lawns grew: we had a Jack-and-the-Beanstalk explosion of articles. First, Valerie Ball's Op-Ed explains how *The Galley* "hired" three interns from PSU's Advanced Technical Editing class. Sarah Romero, Priscilla Hochhalter, and Yasmeen Sands evaluated STC chapter newsletters, including *The Galley*, and share their views in three insightful articles. Another article explains how to "hire" interns from PSU.

Second, the Annual Conference exceeded our expectations: we hope you enjoy Rachel Houghton's photos, Mark Barnett's article about trends in technical communication, and the concluding survey of WVC member presenters in *The Galley's* three-part series on session-giving.

Third, still more surveys: "WVC Attendees at the STC Annual Conference" and "Why Not Make a Conference Proposal?" Valerie surveyed the 2005 Conference Program committee and stem managers about writing successful proposals.

Fourth, looking for a challenge? Garret Romaine discusses PhD programs, including a new online offering through Texas Tech.

Fifth, we're hoping that you'll find an artful layout design transition from Debbie Layton to Maryanne Stebbins.

And, finally, please join *The Galley* staff in welcoming and congratulating the new WVC officers and managers for 2005-2006. All the best to everyone!

Warmest regards,

Carol and Valerie

OP-ED: "HIRE" A PSU INTERN FOR A WIN-WIN PROJECT



By Valerie M. Ball

Sometimes, the loveliest opportunities arrive at mid-morning, gift-wrapped as email.

The Galley's opportunity began with Garret Romaine's query for another community sponsor for the spring term 2005 class of Advanced Technical Editing at Portland State University.

Students usually take this required editing course early in their program to earn a bachelor's or master's degree in technical writing. Often, the community sponsors are businesses, non-profits, or other organizations in which staff members mentor the students in a project that requires technical editing and writing.

"GIFT-BACK" TIME

I regarded Garret's query as a "gift-back" to my own days as a master's candidate in the same program—yes, I'd get involved.

Ah, but what could I ask interns to do for *The Galley*? We were between issues with little to edit... hmmm... I had 3–4 hours of writing (and inevitable editing) to finish *The Galley Style Guide*, but not enough to occupy interns...

My brain was running like a rodent in a wheel, spinning and ejecting ideas, until I realized that I could ask a team of interns to work on my pet project: use STC contest evaluations to analyze *The Galley* and other STC newsletters. Such an analysis would help improve *The Galley*, thus serving the WVC membership better as well as shaping *The Galley* for the annual STC Chapter Newsletter Competition.

Lovely opportunity for win-win.

THE GALLEY'S "3 GRACES"

Fortunately, *Galley* co-editor Carol L. Larson is a good sport who cheerfully entered into the sponsorship. Both of us were delighted with the enthusiasm of our interns: Priscilla Hochhalter, Sarah Romero, and Yasmeen Sands. We even nicknamed our team the "3 Graces"

before we realized how their charitable work would give us faith in future technical communicators as well as hope for *The Galley* as a competitive newsletter.

With three interns, we set up part of their project as a mini-STC judging contest. Each intern selected three newsletters to evaluate individually, and each intern selected a newsletter in which she was the leader of a judging team comprised of all three interns.

We used the STC contest forms as editing guidelines; we initially reviewed a newsletter from a large chapter (over 600 members) and a small chapter (less than 100 members). We discussed our evaluations so that the interns could become familiar with editing to standards. The 3 Graces also used the same criteria to review *The Galley*, but they held their first effort as a rough draft to revise later.

We added networking: the interns emailed the editors of their selected newsletters. The interns "asked" which issues would be best for review, along with a promise to share reviews only with their PSU instructor, Carol and me as their community sponsor, and the editor of the selected newsletter.

Our meeting as judging teams was lively, and Carol and I were impressed with the growing confidence and heightened skills of the 3 Graces. Strangers at the beginning, they rapidly became a tight team that compensated for each other's minor weaknesses and drew upon each other's considerable strengths.

After all of this editing experience, each intern re-evaluated *The Galley*, now from a trained professional viewpoint, thus fulfilling our hope for a thorough analysis.

ARTICLES OF THE 3 GRACES

We also wanted the 3 Graces to shine individually, so each intern

wrote an article for *The Galley*. We interpreted this assignment loosely, and we had another lively meeting in a "round-robin" edit.

We had originally told the 3 Graces that we'd print their articles in *The Galley* so that they'd have portfolio pieces and we'd have three articles.

But we received far more than articles from the 3 Graces, for they demonstrate skills and insights that

"each enriches all of us and our profession"

none of us expected at the beginning. Thus, we're

proud to print their articles for a variety of reasons: 1) each retains an individual voice; 2) each shares valuable professional observations about writing and editing; 3) each enriches all of us and our profession.

But, enough about *The Galley's* loveliest opportunities for a win-win project! Read—and learn—from the articles of the 3 Graces. Sarah Romero captures the project's fun and summarizes the findings, Priscilla Hochhalter politely chides for improvements and extols excellence, and Yasmeen Sands looks outside to find truths inside.

Enjoy!

For a similar opportunity to finish an editing project and support future technical communicators, see "Be a Community Sponsor: 'Hire' a PSU Intern" on page 5.

(The views in this article are those of co-editor V.M. Ball and do not represent her employer or the WVC STC and its members or affiliates.)



Sarah, Valerie, Carol, Priscilla, and Yasmeen

ADVENTURES IN TECHNICAL EDITING

By Sarah Romero



I walked into the Park Avenue Café and looked to the back, toward “our” table. The first person I spotted was Valerie, who was wearing a colorful hat with gold starfish on the front. Yasmeeen and Priscilla arrived shortly, Carol banished her husband to another table, and we began the team portion of our newsletter evaluation project.

OUR MISSION, SHOULD WE CHOOSE TO ACCEPT

Yasmeeen Sands, Priscilla Hochalter, and I are currently taking Technical Editing, a graduate-level course offered by Portland State University. The instructor is STC Associate Fellow Garret Romaine, but since it is a community-based course, our projects were assigned by our internship supervisors, *The Galley’s* co-editors, Valerie M. Ball and Carol L. Larson.

To assist us in learning editing techniques and standards, Valerie and Carol asked us to evaluate STC chapter newsletters according to the rules of the STC Newsletter Judging Competition, working first as a team and then individually.

Our interaction was lively as Priscilla, Yasmeeen, and I discussed our findings. We chose newsletters from different chapters, and we acted as team leader when discussing our selection. Carol and Valerie gave us a time limit of 25 minutes per publication, and they listened to our analyses, helping us by clarifying the STC rules and, occasionally, expressing amusement at our dialogue.

We each had certain things that we consistently liked and disliked

about formatting, visual display, and overall quality, and we expanded our viewpoints from listening to each other. I learned several printing terms from Yasmeeen, who has a journalism background, and I discovered that I am not as meticulous as I always thought after Priscilla’s sharp eye caught many elements I missed.

OUR FINDINGS

We evaluated *Ragged Left*, published by the STC-Berkeley; *SoundOff!*, by STC-Puget Sound; and *TechniScribe*, by STC-Orange County. While we differed on some of the finer points of the official STC judging form, we agreed on the overall qualities of each and gave a Merit award to each newsletter.

Ragged Left has excellent article content, with its extensive discussion of emerging technologies and a range of technical topics.

SoundOff! has a user-friendly format, being an HTML-based publication with continuous articles, rather than a PDF format with articles jumping to subsequent pages.

TechniScribe is aesthetically pleasing, with a professional-looking layout and good graphic elements.

We also discussed some areas for improvement, such as *SoundOff!’s* lack of visual appeal and *Ragged Left’s* need for more coverage of local chapter affairs.

ON TO THE INDIVIDUAL PROJECT!

For this phase, Valerie and Carol told us to choose three more newsletters from different regions and evaluate them using the same STC competition criteria. By this point, we had plenty of practice and a more experienced understanding of the competition requirements, so we were ready to work on our own.

I chose the newsletters from the Huntsville/Northern Alabama, Boston, and Alberta chapters. I enjoyed each of my selections for different reasons.

The Huntsville *Pen & Brush* is exceptional in its coverage of local chapter activity and society issues. The graphics used are primarily photographs of members, which gives the newsletter a local feel that I find appealing. The visual layout is the newsletter’s weakest point. The pages have a small, close typeface with wide outer margins. Smaller margins with more internal white space would increase readability.

The *Boston Broadside* has a variety of article topics and a professional appearance. I like its use of rules and textboxes for visual interest. However, it is short on information specific to the chapter, and it is difficult to navigate. In the issues I evaluated, some of the articles jump to subsequent pages more than once. Greater continuity of individual pieces would make it a more usable document.

Now, even though Valerie and Carol told us that STC judging does not include a specific ranking of entries, I must confess that the Alberta

SuperScript is my favorite selection. It has the most thorough inclusion of STC’s required and recommended elements (although none of my choices had all of them). The header on this newsletter is very attractive, and the layout is clean with solid, consistency between issues. I like the content, and I appreciate the extensive notices of seminars and networking opportunities. As with the *Broadside*, *SuperScript* could use more chapter-specific content.

THE FINAL TASK

Valerie and Carol’s final assignment was to evaluate three recent issues of *The Galley*. I tried to be fair, despite wanting to stay on the good side of the co-editors. I like *The Galley’s* content, particularly the local meetings, chapter news, and member profiles. The article content is varied and interesting. However, this newsletter sometimes gets caught up in themes.

“Adventures” cont’d on page 5

“Carol banished her husband to another table”

“STC judging does not include a specific ranking of entries”

“Our interaction was lively as Priscilla, Yasmeeen, and I discussed our findings.”

“Adventures” cont’d from page 4

Article writers for the Halloween and Thanksgiving issues neglect technical content, instead offering humorous, but not informative, pieces. I would like to see more balance between these two areas. In addition, *The Galley* uses excessive clip art on its pages.

WRAPPING IT UP

I enjoyed this project immensely. Yasmeen and Priscilla were great to work with, and our editing and evaluation styles seemed to complement each other. Valerie and Carol offered constructive comments, and they were always encouraging. Sometimes I was confused as to whether they were our supervisors or our personal cheerleading squad.

As someone new to writing, I was pleased to learn more about the field, and about how I might find my way in it. I look forward to participating in Willamette Valley Chapter activities in the future.

Sarah Romero, STC member since March 2005, is enrolled in the MS program in Technical Writing at Portland State University. Her background includes an MS in chemistry. She currently works in a laboratory, but hopes to leave that environment soon for a more fulfilling career in technical communication.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Some summer classes at PCC and STC Webinars (Web and telephone remote seminars) are given in the table below.

For PCC classes, go to www.ed2go.com/portlandcc.

BE A COMMUNITY SPONSOR: “HIRE” A PSU INTERN

By Valerie M. Ball

Anyone within the vicinity of Portland State University can have the same win-win opportunity as *The Galley* to “hire” interns from PSU’s Advanced Technical Editing class.

Since its inception as part of the bachelor’s and master’s degree program in technical writing, this required course has paired students with community sponsors who mentor students in projects that demonstrate the realities and rewards of technical editing and writing. Some of the community sponsors include Intel, Tektronix, Nautilus, ADP Dealer Services, Kryptiq, Serena, CH2Mhill, The Beehive, and Independent Living Resources. Businesses, non-profits, professional associations, and individual contractors are welcome to apply as community sponsors.

The size or “brand-name” of a community sponsor is less important than the mentoring heart of the individual who works with the interns. And the enrichment for the sponsor far outweighs the sponsor’s investment of time.

So, interested in becoming a community sponsor? It’s easy!

TO BE A SPONSOR

Follow these guidelines:

1. Decide upon a project that can be completed by a 2–4 student team within 7–8 weeks. The project can be a review of documents, a comparison of different documents, an update of a style guide, maybe even the creation of a style guide.
2. Develop a rough schedule of meetings, goals, and deadlines. Determine how much of the work can be done on-site and electronically.
3. Contact the PSU English Department at www.english.pdx.edu regarding possible projects and schedules. The class is usually held only in spring term, so contact the English Department by February.
4. Present the proposed project to the Advanced Technical Editing class during an evening class early in the term.
5. Expect that the workload, goals, and schedules may need adjustment during the term; usually, the students accomplish more than is expected.
6. At the end of the period, report the results to the instructor. This report is very informal, often 2–4 sentences in an email.

During the last class meeting at PSU, all members of each intern team give an oral presentation about their experiences. These summaries of insights benefit all of the students in the class.

Find more information about STC Webinars at <http://stc.webex.com>. For STC members, the base fee is \$99; for non-members, \$149. One site is

allowed one telephone connection and one computer connection. Additional telephone and computer connections are \$150 each.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Date	What	Title	Time
July 13	STC Webinar	Upgrading Your PowerPoint Presentations: Basics of Organization and Illustration	1:00–2:30 EDT
July 20	PCC Online	Résumé Writing Workshop	6 weeks
July 20	PCC Online	Fundamentals of Technical Writing	6 weeks
July 20	PCC Online	Writing Great Technical Documents	6 weeks
July 20	PCC Online	The Keys to Effective Editing	6 weeks
July 20	PCC Online	Business and Marketing Writing	6 weeks
August 10	STC Webinar	Visual Fluency	1:00–2:30 EDT

COMPARISON OF STC CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS

By Priscilla Hochhalter



I've been an entrant and a judge in STC competitions, so when Val and Carol assigned Yasmeen Sands, Sarah Romero, and me to evaluate STC newsletters for an article in *The Galley*, I thought, "How hard could it be?"

Well, harder than I thought.

By the end of the project, I found that I was much more of a perfectionist than I realized. Knowing that my results would be printed for others to see, I expected perfection of myself in reading the newsletters thoroughly and evaluating them fairly. Of course, a perfect evaluation is impossible, but I still struggled.

I chose my newsletters by surveying www.stc.org. Some newsletters were in languages I don't know. Others had been discontinued due to lack of resources (human or material). However, I finally found a good sampling of newsletters, in English, from various parts of the United States.

I evaluated *The Willamette Galley* and six other newsletters, some chosen by Yasmeen and Sarah, listed in numeric order in table below. This article focuses on some strengths and weaknesses of each newsletter.

PHILADELPHIA METRO, PA

NEWS & VIEWS

This newsletter excels in its inviting look and feel. The kite in the newsletter's title reminds me of rising to new heights, and the harmonious blues are soothing to the eye. This newsletter also goes against convention by using a sans-serif font for text and a serif font for headings; but because the fonts are carefully chosen, this choice works well. To strengthen the content, news about

employment and educational opportunities—missing from all three issues—could be added. Also, as with most of the other newsletters, pages of solid text could be broken up with more graphics. And, as always, watch those typos.

SE MICHIGAN, MI

TECHCOMMENTS

This newsletter is the strongest of the group in its use of bigger, better photographs. Skillfully combined with pull quotes and other design elements, the photos break up the text and make

it much more accessible.

Regular features such as "Networking and Learning Opportunities" and "A Matter of Degrees"—as well as member profiles—cover those areas very well.

To improve the content, news about employment and chapter activities could be added, and, again, editing for typos could be more thorough.

OKLAHOMA, OK

DIALOG

Of all the newsletters I evaluated, this one has noticeably fewer typos; it is obviously edited with skill and care. It is also quite strong on articles about STC (both regionally and nationally) and contains all of the fundamental elements that STC requires in STC newsletter competitions—one of only two newsletters in the group to achieve that feat.

Graphic interest could be greatly improved with more photos, art, or design elements; page design could be more varied, although it appears to have been designed for online viewing. The tables of contents could be more

consistent, and jumps could be made easier to follow.

PUGET SOUND, WA

SOUND OFF!

This is the only HTML newsletter that I evaluated. It excels in simplicity and offers articles on a wide range of topics of interest, including Sarbanes-Oxley, XML, nanotechnology, changes in the business and the job market, tips for talking to artists, member profiles, and Microsoft's "Crabby Office Lady."

As with the other newsletters, more graphics and more news about employment and about STC activities would be welcome.

WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OR

THE WILLAMETTE GALLEY

This is the newsletter for my local STC chapter. Its "Ask the Chancellor" column covers a wide range of questions about educational opportunities in the local area. Each issue focuses on a selected topic, creating cohesion throughout the issue, and larger themes are developed across consecutive issues to allow more in-depth coverage. In addition, it includes an occasional humorous bit to lighten things up.

Graphics could be improved with more photos and less clip art, and content could be improved by including as many required and recommended STC elements as possible. Increasing the point size of the headings over the jumps could improve navigation

"Comparison" cont'd on page 7

STC NEWSLETTERS EVALUATED BY PRISCILLA

Region	Chapter	Newsletter	Chosen by
1	Philadelphia Metro, PA	<i>News & Views</i>	Priscilla
4	Southeastern Michigan, MI	<i>TECHcomments</i>	Priscilla
5	Oklahoma, OK	<i>Dialog</i>	Priscilla
7	Puget Sound, WA	<i>Sound Off!</i>	Yasmeen
7	Willamette Valley, OR	<i>The Willamette Galley</i>	Val & Carol
8	Berkeley, CA	<i>Ragged Left</i>	Sarah
8	Orange County, CA	<i>TechniScribe</i>	Priscilla

“Comparison” cont’d from page 6

BERKELEY, CA

RAGGED LEFT

This newsletter is especially rich in articles on emerging technologies (a real boon for resource value). It is an excellent example of how to use smart looking page designs to compensate for lack of color. It also has the most innovative masthead, which includes all of the “business information”—about STC, chapter leaders, newsletter staff, publication information, and much more—grouped together on page 2.

However, there are many typos, and, again, using a larger point size for the headings over the jumps could be helpful.

ORANGE COUNTY, CA

TECHNISCRIBE

This newsletter contains fewer typos than some of the others, and it is another excellent example of how to use crisp page layouts and design elements to compensate for a lack of color. It has regular columns on key topics such as FrameMaker, Word, and grammar, all of which are very clean and easy to follow. This and the Oklahoma *Dialog* are the only two newsletters in which I found all of the fundamental elements required by STC.

Like some of the other newsletters, *TechniScribe* could use bigger headings over the jumps. Also, publication policies, copyright information, and editorial contact information—currently appearing on three separate pages—could all be grouped in the masthead.

OUR CONCLUSIONS

By the end of this exercise, Yasmeen, Sarah and I were able to evaluate our likes and dislikes in the newsletters we surveyed.

Overall, we noted too many elements missing from the mastheads and too many typographical errors for a group of professional writers. We also agreed that disruptive “jumps” from one page to another should be used judiciously; however, if they are

used, they should be clearly marked to aid the reader’s navigation.

To improve their chances in STC competitions, all STC editorial teams should evaluate their newsletters against STC guidelines to identify weaknesses that can be fixed.

Above all, most of the newsletters need graphics, graphics, and more graphics.

For me, this assignment became a meticulous comparison of the ways that different people approach the same project—an STC newsletter. Since I write and design our client newsletter at work, I was interested to see all of the variations in elements such as mastheads, tables of contents, page designs, font choices, and use of color.

I also wondered if I miss as many typos as I found in others’ work!

Overall, there’s nothing like looking at other professional newsletters—especially while comparing notes with

“Overall, there’s nothing like looking at other professional newsletters ...”

other technical communicators like Val, Carol, Yasmeen, and Sarah—to raise one’s awareness of pitfalls to avoid and models to follow. I am definitely looking at my own work in a different way after this exercise.

Priscilla’s desire to score all entries generously earned her the nickname “High Points Hochhalter” from her fellow interns. She writes client communications, marketing materials, and documentation for Fiserv EFT in Portland, Oregon, where she has been a technical writer for five years. She has a BA in Writing and Literature and is working on her MS in Writing from Portland State University. She joined STC in 2000. Her email is priscilla.hochhalter@fiserv.com.



GIVE US WORDS/ART

August, the catch-up, catch-all summer month, is a laid-back issue for *The Galley*.

The content focus is whatever text or art our readers wish to publish. Well, within reason...but here are some guidelines:

- 250–1000 words
- Topic related to technology or to tech communication
- Can be lighthearted, such as “How Technology Ruined/ Saved/ Ended/ _____ My Summer Vacation”
- Graphics or photos welcome
- Due by July 18th

Questions or submissions to either Carol (carol@laron-tech.com) or Valerie (vmball@rockwellcollins.com).

Make our summer complete—give us words and art.

ON THE TRAIL OF OLD TECH

As technical communicators, we often think that we “invented” technology. Actually, technology has been part of the human condition for a very long time.

To find out how long, take any of our fine Oregon trails to any of our fine Oregon museums:

ASTORIA

- Columbia River Maritime Museum. Can technology ever overcome the mouth of the Columbia River as the “Graveyard of the Pacific”?
- Firefighters Museum, AND
- Uppertown Firefighters Museum. You’ll have to go there to see why Astoria has two firefighter museums.

MYRTLE POINT

- Coos County Logging Museum. Some of this technology shows why logging was—and still is—so dangerous.

This list is not complete; go to <http://www.worldantiques.com/Oregon.html> for more info.

Please drop us a note about your special site for old tech, and we’ll include it in a future issue of *The Galley*.

THE BENEFITS OF BECOMING A “JUDGMENTAL READER”

By Yasmeen Sands



Informally evaluating newsletters using STC forms can improve the quality of your own.

As technical communicators, we realize the benefits of periodically evaluating the products we create. But we also understand the cost and time involved in such endeavors. So how do we evaluate the effectiveness of our products when we are short on money and time, as is so often the case? And what if we manage products like company newsletters, where audience feedback is critical, but ever so elusive?

In this article, I describe and recommend an inexpensive and easy process that transforms you into a “judgmental reader.” By informally reviewing other newsletters using STC judging forms, we can begin to look at our own publications in a new light.

A FRAMEWORK BASED ON FORMS

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) uses two forms—“Newsletter Competition Judging and Evaluation Form” and “Publications Evaluation”—to guide the work of its judges in formal newsletter competitions. I discovered the usefulness of these judging forms to guide what I refer to as “judgmental reading” while interning with *Galley* co-editors Valerie M. Ball and Carol L. Larson this spring.

As part of my internship, I reviewed and unofficially judged three consecutive issues of six newsletters. I also surveyed 11 different newsletters online. (*For a complete listing of the newsletters I reviewed, judged, and surveyed, please refer to the end of the article.*) I used the two forms, which provide the criteria “real” STC judges employ to evaluate newsletters, to direct my evaluations.

Both of the STC judging forms evaluate newsletters using four criteria—fundamental elements, content and organization, editorial quality, and design and delivery. The “Newsletter Competition Judging and Evaluation Form” does this evaluation in a very quantitative way, using a numeric scale to indicate the presence or quality of elements. The “Publications Evaluation” form, on the other hand, measures using the four criteria very qualitatively, requiring judges to use sets of textual parameters to indicate the presence and quality of various newsletter elements. When completed, the forms provide a comprehensive and measurable assessment of the newsletter being judged.

WHAT MY JUDGMENTAL READING REVEALED

Objectively evaluating other newsletters is a revealing process, to say the least. Before completing these evaluations, I thought I had a firm grasp on the newsletter qualities that were important to me as a reader. I also thought I had made a point of reflecting these qualities in my own newsletter. The process of evaluating some 20 newsletter issues proved me wrong.

As a judgmental reader, I became aware of elements that made reading newsletters difficult and, sometimes, downright impossible. I found, for example, that I have a very short attention span with page jumps. In fact, even as a judge, I avoided following their frustrating, circuitous path, especially when they piled up doubly or—forbid—triply.

As a judgmental reader, I also found that I am highly critical of the relationship between graphics and text. I mercilessly docked newsletters whose graphics existed solely to fill space. If graphics aren’t supplementary or complementary, they might as well go. Harsh, I know.

Layout was another aspect I criticized. My ease of reading a newsletter on screen was inversely related to the number of columns. Two-column layouts made repeated scrolling and clicking a must; three-column layouts made reading a chore. One-column layouts were, literally, a sight for sore eyes. I found myself resistant to a newsletter’s content, no matter how good, when I had to work so hard to get at it.

My judgmental reading revelations were not all negative, however. I was inspired by and applauded *TransAlpiner*, the Transalpine chapter’s newsletter, which cleverly uses its sidebars as a dynamic graphic element. On some pages, the sidebar is simply a shaded box that balances the page; on others, it is the place to quickly find Web links, a biographical sketch of the author, or further information.

I also found that some newsletters work wonders without the luxury of expensive graphics. Several of the newsletters I evaluated, such as *Ragged*

Left (Berkeley, California, chapter), do not use photos or graphics but, nevertheless, create a satisfying and elegant design through the skillful blend of color, typography, and white space.

What is most interesting about my judgmental reading revelations is that many of the characteristics I docked newsletters for—such as jumps and multi-column layouts—are present in my own electronic newsletter. Apparently, as managing editor, I saw no problem with breaking up my text

“...I never put myself in the position of a judgmental newsletter reader.”

into columns or inserting a hyperlink jump (or two) when a story continued on another page. And perhaps I had no reason to be bothered by it, since I never put myself in the position of a judgmental newsletter reader.

“Benefits” cont’d on page 9

“Benefits” cont’d from page 8

Although I recently had the benefit of conducting a formal audience feedback survey that revealed my readers’ frustration with many of these same elements (and have since done a complete overhaul of my newsletter), I like to think that if I had not, this process of judgmental reading would have been eye-opening. Instead, judgmental reading confirmed what I had found through a formal feedback study.

BECOMING A “JUDGMENTAL READER”

Both STC forms (as well as detailed judging information) are available online via STC’s Web site (<http://www.stc.org>). Print them and keep them handy. Start by evaluating other chapters’ newsletters or copies of newsletters similar to your own. Then, after you have evaluated a few, look for trends in your assessments. Do you tend to score critically in some areas more than others? What do you value as a reader?

The most important step in the judgmental reading process is transferring what you have learned to your own newsletter. If you found yourself critical of jumps (as I did), for example, review the organizational devices in your newsletter. Do you use jumps? You might be surprised by what you find. And remember to take advantage of the comments sections in the forms; the suggestions you provide for improvement might be applicable to your own newsletter.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is probably fair to say that we all would conduct a formal evaluation of our publications if we had the chance. Unfortunately, the opportunity does not present itself often enough.

I hope my experience with the judgmental reading process described in this article inspires you to try it out for yourself. Step back from your publication and evaluate products similar to your own as a critical reader using STC’s two judging forms. You might be surprised by what you discover about both your preferences and your products.


Using STC’s forms to guide you also gives you the opportunity to learn more about the Society and the judging process. The experience may inspire you to enter one of your own publications in a future STC competition. And,

who knows, your publication may end up being the inspiration for the next intern’s *Galley* article!

NEWSLETTERS JUDGED AND EVALUATED

The Willamette Galley
Techtalk
Indus
Dialogue
TransAlpiner
Border Line

Alaska Connection
Blue Pencil
Print Queue
Techniques
SoundOff!
Chesapeake Bayline
Connection
Technically Speaking
Pacific Communicator
Write Up
The Quill

Yasmeen Sands is a graduate student in Portland State University’s Professional/Technical Writing program. She also is a writer with a government natural resources agency in Portland, where she manages an electronic employee newsletter, among other tasks. Her interests include usability testing, science writing, and corporate communication. 

INTERVIEWING TIPS

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You’ve read a zillion articles about finding the right job opening, résumé preparation, and all the rest. I’m not going to tell you much about that because I figure you’re probably okay in those areas.

Instead, I’m going to give you some tips about how to be dazzling in an interview and stand a good chance of getting the job you want. (If you want more information on a specific topic, I encourage you to dig into STC archives and the Web for something more detailed; this is just a roadmap.)

PREPARATION

Prior to going to the interview, you need to do some prep work.

1. Find out as much as you can about the position.

Start by looking at the job posting (assuming there is one) and read it carefully a few times. If you can do so gracefully, phone the hiring manager (HR if you must, but they’re never going to know as much as the hiring manager) and ask her/him questions about the position to make sure you understand what the hiring manager wants in a potential candidate. It saves time if you can find out what hiring managers want may not be the job you want. Conversely, if you have a better idea of what hiring managers are looking for, you can pitch your strengths to them more effectively. If you can’t talk with anyone at the company, see what you can glean from other folks in the industry.

2. Prep your résumé and cover letter.

If necessary, adjust your résumé and cover letter to bring out the skills and expertise that best match the employer’s needs. Send ’em out. (While you’re at it, do any necessary work on your portfolio, too.)

“Interviewing” cont’d on page 10

INTERVIEW

Besides getting there on time, dressing appropriately, and so on, here are some tips on effective interviewing.

3. **Identify the problem.**

Every hiring manager is trying to solve a problem, even if that problem is only “I need another person here!” Figure out what they want and how you can be the answer to that problem. Remember: you’re a solution to a problem, a commodity, a product. This may be alarming to some folks, but it’s true. (If you have trouble with this, repeat this 1000 times: “I’m unique, just like everybody else.”)

4. **Be relevant.**

Keep your answers and information relevant to the job. Don’t meander.

5. **Be yourself...**

If you’re stiff and uptight and overly formal, you may be hired and then your boss will be disappointed with the daily “you.” (Besides which, being stiff is not becoming.) Worse, if you get rejected because they were looking for someone more relaxed, you’ll feel really dumb.

6. **...but not too much.**

People don’t need to know your religious preferences, your hobbies (except where they can be relevant), your vacation plans, or the movies you like. Oversharing or too much

information can be damaging and even make you look like a gossip.

7. **Have fun.**

Somewhere in all of this, try to have fun. The person interviewing you may feel uncomfortable herself/himself. Many managers don’t interview often enough to enjoy the process. If you’re relaxed and confident, you can put the interviewer at ease, too, and that may make all the difference.

FOLLOW-UP

Once the interview is over, there are still a few things left to do.

8. **Thank-you email/notes.**

Few interviews have a long-term time frame that would make a mailed thank you (TY) note a good idea, but TY emails are okay. Mind you, as a hiring manager, I’m pleased to see people show a sense of the niceties and who work at making me happy, but the time delay is probably just too long. If you do send a mailed note, make it short, handwritten, and be sure to spell the interviewer’s name right. For multiple interviewers, send a TY note to each and make them different. Mail your TY notes as you’re driving home from the interview, preferably in the same zip code.

9. **Follow up for news.**

In a few days to a week, phone and ask if there is news and

query your status in the process. Make it brief and pleasant.

10. **Getting the job, or not.**

If you do all of this, you’ll buff your halo to a soft sheen and look really sharp. You may get the job or you may not. If you don’t, figure that you weren’t the solution to the employer’s problem and that in all likelihood it isn’t anything personal. Do look at how you presented yourself, what you might have done better or differently, and consider if you want to change anything about how you package and present yourself in the future.

SUMMARY

All of this advice is my opinion (and consequently, it’s Very True). But I’d be remiss if I didn’t quote McIntyre’s Law here: “Under the right circumstances, anything I tell you may be wrong.” I’ve broken most or all of these rules at one time or another and gotten the job anyway... or sometimes because I did something unusual. If you think you’d be better doing something different, do it, and if it succeeds, tell me what you did and how. You could get me to change my opinion, too.

John Hedtke is an STC Fellow and an author of 24 books, including Firefox & Thunderbird Garage. He can be reached through his Web site, www.hedtke.com.



EMPLOYMENT NEWS OR WVC JOBS-L

Barbara Bryant, the WVC employment manager, posts job openings to the WVC jobs list, WVCJOBS-L, weekly. Email Barbara at employment@stcwc.org with questions. If you wish to submit a job opening, go to the WVC Web site (www.stcwc.org) and follow the links to the “Submit a Job” page (Employment> Submit for Posting>Submit a Job).

The jobs list is a subscription-only list. WVC members subscribe for free, while non-members subscribe for

a \$50 annual fee. To subscribe, go to the WVC Web site and follow the links to the “Signup for Updates” page (Employment>Signup for Updates).



WVC MEMBERSHIP

As of April 30, the WVC has 271 members.

	March	April
New Members	7	12
Transferring	4	1
Total Members	252	271

WVC NETWORKING

Before chapter program meetings, WVC members can network from 6:00–6:45 p.m. Program meetings are held the third Thursday of each month, excluding July when there is no program meeting.

Other networking possibilities for WVC members are CHIFOO, Software Association of Oregon, and Internet Professionals Northwest. For links to these and other communication-related organizations, go to http://www.stcwc.org/resources_local_national_links.html.



ASK THE CHANCELLOR

By Garret Romaine, Willamette Valley Chancellor of Education



Dear Chancellor:

Are there any good online PhD programs for technical communications?

Signed,
Too Many Masters

Dear Too Many Masters:

The short answer is “Yes,” but barely. After snooping around the annual STC Conference in Seattle in May, your Chancellor is now able to answer this excellent question in full.

First, the entire pool of doctorate degrees in our field is limited. By my research, conducted mostly by taking advantage of the Education database at the main STC Web site (<http://www.stc.org/academicDatabase.asp>), here are some of the leading PhD programs in technical communication, English, rhetoric, or other closely related programs:

As you can see, the clear choice would be Texas Tech, located in Lubbock, Texas. At the Seattle conference, I spoke briefly with the school’s Technical Communication and Rhetoric Department Chairman Dr. Tom Barker. (He said it was okay to call him “Tommy” but I found it difficult.) As you may know, Dr. Barker was the one of the recipients of STC’s 2005 Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication. His program, just getting underway, is currently the “center of the universe” when it comes to the online education of technical communication.

First, here’s the blurb from Dr. Barker’s Web site (<http://www.english.ttu.edu/tc/OnlinePhD/>):

“The PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric (TCR) is the first online doctoral program in the field. The Texas Tech TCR program

is very strong in technology, production, rhetorical theory, rhetorical analysis, rhetoric of science, visual rhetoric, gender studies, and research methods—strengths intersecting with studies in composition, technical communication, and rhetoric. Our faculty are leaders in the profession and in scholarship, active in organizations such as CPTSC, STC, ACM, and IEEE. Just like our on-site program, the online PhD can be tailored to fit your interests.

“The program provides a broad approach to technical communication, offering classes in areas such as editing, design, rhetorical theory, online documentation, publications management, and usability testing. You’ll learn and practice the methodologies for conducting research in technical communication and rhetoric, as well as gain experience creating online and on-page documents using visual and written communication. Classes meet online weekly in a synchronous meeting space. Between class meetings, you’ll communicate with faculty and other students through e-mail, asynchronous discussion spaces, and video and audio chat. Courses are conducted in three regular academic terms (fall, spring, and summer).

“In addition, we hold an intensive two-week summer seminar on-site, where you can meet fellow students, network, and concentrate

“...you can meet fellow students, network, and concentrate on research projects.”

on research projects. Future academics and professionals in fields like technical communication, human resources, consulting, software design, graphic design, engineering, and management will find the online TCR PhD invaluable in advancing their careers.”

Second, if you’re wondering if this is the equivalent of a degree in Holistic Proctology from the back of some matchbook cover, consider these bullets lifted directly from Dr. Barker’s brochure:

“Texas Tech offers

- A well-established degree program and faculty in technical communication
- A classification as the representative M.A. program nationwide in *Education in Scientific and Technical Communication: Academic Programs That Work*, ed. Michael L. Keene (Society for Technical Communication, 1997). Chapter 3
- National leadership in computers and writing pedagogy
- A record of student achievement and job placement
- A program “culture” that emphasizes personal attention
- An award-winning chapter of the Society for Technical Communication”

“Chancellor” cont’d on page 12

PHD PROGRAMS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

School	Note
Carnegie-Mellon	Web site is down
Clemson	Good information design
East Carolina	Also has online Master’s
Illinois Institute of Tech	84 credits
Iowa State	72 credits
Oklahoma State	Must read 2 languages
Rensselaer	Also has online Master’s
Texas Tech	Yes! New Online PhD
UCF (Central Florida)	PhD takes 3 years at full time
University of Illinois	Must read one foreign language
U Washington	126 credits
Wisconsin-Milwaukee	New in 2004
Utah State	New in 2005

“Chancellor” cont’d from page 11

So, it’s “for real.” Dr. Barker told me that there were about 30 candidates for the program in the last academic year, of which 12 were accepted. There is an excellent FAQ on the Texas Tech site, but here are some key answers:

- How much does it cost? “Typical out-of-state doctoral students will spend approximately \$1852 per class, depending on how many classes they take per semester”
- Is everything online? Not exactly. “We will require all online doctoral students to attend an intensive 2-week session held each summer on the Texas Tech campus; this experience gives you daily exposure to ongoing scholarship, as well as steady communication with faculty advisors as you begin to craft (and eventually finish) your dissertation.”
- So, if you’re the type that needs a few more letters after your name, and you’re bored with racking up master’s degrees, this could be the ticket.

If you have a question topic pertaining to education and technical communications, contact The Chancellor at gromaine3@comast.net.

EDITORIAL POLICIES

The Willamette Galley co-editors, Valerie M. Ball and Carol L. Larson, read and review textual and visual submissions and publish those which, to the knowledge of *The Galley* staff, do not violate laws regarding libel, slander, pornography, or civil rights. Copyright laws are strictly observed.

GALLEY FOCI FOR 2005–2006

The Galley staff goal for 2005–2006 is to concentrate on areas to build/refresh skills to increase the versatility of WVC members, which makes them more marketable and more promotable.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Send submissions to *The Galley* co-editors—Valerie (yvball@rockwellcollins.com) or Carol (carol@larson-tech.com).

Deadlines are:

- 10th day of the month that precedes the publishing month: Op-Ed articles (750–1,000 words); Book/software reviews (500–750 words)
- 15th day of the month that precedes the publishing month: Feature articles (750–1,000 words); Letters to the Editor (<150 words); Bios (50–90 words)

GALLEY FOCI

Issue	Focus
August	“Catch all” articles of interest to technical communicators, but didn’t fit the focus of 2004–2005 newsletters
October	Fonts/typography for writers and grammar/punctuation for designers and illustrators
December	Illustrations/charts/photos for writers and sentences/paragraphs for designers and illustrators
February	Layout/design for writers and document planning/organization for designers and illustrators
April	Delivery of documents (online, print, translation, multimedia, whatever)
June	Application of new skills and knowledge to new positions, promotions, career adjustment/development

CONTACT STC/WVC

STC

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REGION 7 DIRECTOR-SPONSOR

John Hedtke represents Region 7 on the international STC Board of Directors and is from the Mid-Valley Chapter.

Send questions or comments to John at dir7@stc.org.



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WRITERS AND ARTISTS WANTED!

See “Give Us Words/Art” on page 7 for more details.



TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

By Carol L. Larson

Years ago, primarily two types of interviews were conducted: 1) the traditional one-on-one interview and 2) the panel interview.

Today, job applicants are faced with a smorgasbord of interview types. In the corporate world, it's rare to be hired after only one interview. Applicants must be prepared to face a variety of interviews, where each interview is of equal importance.

Telephone interviews are usually short (15–20 minutes), fact-finding contacts to determine whether applicants will be called for in-person interviews. Interviewers ask about applicants' work experience, skills, and anything pertinent for the job.

Traditional, or structured, interviews are the most common type of interview. This in-depth interview generally takes one to two hours with applicants being asked in detail about their past work experiences, roles and responsibilities, and leadership abilities.

Panel, or group, interviews typically include three to ten interviewers with each person asking questions from specific areas. The panel works as a team to find the most appropriate applicant for the job.

Behavioral interviews look at applicants' past work performance to determine how they will respond to problematic situations in the future. Hiring managers seek specific behaviors: leadership, teamwork, organization, and flexibility, to name a few. During the interview, managers ask open-ended questions that trigger memories about applicants' previous job performances, such as "Have you ever worked with a colleague who didn't meet his/her deadlines?" Applicants explain how they handled the problem. This type of interview is gaining popularity with hiring managers.

Serial interviews involve several individual, back-to-back interviews with members of a work group. This type of interview often lasts several hours with applicants spending 30–60 minutes with each interviewer. At the end of the session, the work group meets to discuss each applicant.

Stress, or aggressive, interviews test how applicants respond to pressure situations. Common questions include "Why do you think you're qualified for this job?" or "Why should we hire you?"

Case-based interviews look at the problem-solving skills of applicants. Interviewers describe industry-related problems to applicants, who then respond with ways that they would handle the situation. Applicants must be prepared to defend their responses. Usually, this type of interview is directed at executive, high-level managerial, and consultant positions.

Second and third interviews narrow the choice of applicants. Applicants should respond to their second or third interviews as if the interview were the first. Often, interviewers don't pass on information about applicants to other interviewers.

Finally, **off-the-wall interviews** just defy categorization. The book, *monster Careers* [Jeff Taylor with Doug Hardy. 2004. *monster Careers*. New York: Penquin Books, p 323.],

discusses this type of interview based on examples from monster.com users. One applicant, who was interviewing for a public relations position, was asked "what he would do if the company's president committed suicide." One interviewer dumped coffee on an applicant and, then, stepped on the applicant's foot. When the applicant began laughing, the interviewer offered her a job.

With so many types of interviews, applicants must be prepared for a

"One interviewer dumped coffee on an applicant..."

variety of questions. At times, interviewers will ask a mix of questions from different interview types.

The best advice for applicants: do research, prepare for any question, act confident, be professional.

For more information about interviewing, see "Community Resources" on page 23 in this issue.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES WEB SITES

Don't limit yourself to the following Web sites. Often, there are links from one Web site to other helpful sites.

WORKSHOP AND CLASSES

OREGON

- Capital Career Center: www.workforceallianceonline.org/capcenter
- Workforce Connections: www.workforce-connections.org
- One Stop Resource Center: <http://depts.clackamas.edu/workforce>

WASHINGTON

- WorkSource Washington: www.wa.gov/esd/vancouver.htm

BOOKSTORES

- Amazon and Borders: www.amazon.com
- Barnes and Noble: www.barnesandnoble.com
- Powell's: www.powells.com

ONLINE HELP

- Career InfoNet Career Resource Library: www.acinet.org/acinet/library.asp?category=2.1
- monster.com: <http://interview.monster.com>
- MSN Careers: <http://msn.careerbuilder.com>
- Quintessential Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html>
- Yahoo! hotjobs: <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com>
- WetFeet: www.wetfeet.com/advice/interviewing.asp

LOOKING FORWARD

FUTURE TRENDS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS, AS HEARD AT THE 2005 STC CONFERENCE

By Mark Barnett, Willamette Valley Chapter President



"The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed." (Attributed to William Gibson of Neuromancer fame)

"The real act of discovery is not in finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes." (Marcel Proust)

What is happening in technical communications? I listened for the answer in several sessions at this year's STC Conference, particularly the superb panel discussion "Planning for Tomorrow: Trends, Technologies, and Skill Sets" led by Paula Berger.

For a copy of the session materials, go to: www.stc.org/52ndConf/sessionMaterial/dataShow.asp?ID=162.

Discussion points included:

- RoboHelp is disappearing.
- Firefox is appearing.
- Longhorn is coming, as are, XML-based authoring tools, digital video editing, and interactive media (rich Internet application).

The fall of RoboHelp as we know it is related to the emergence of XML and non-linear thinking.

Interactive media is now frequently developed by ad agencies but will be more of a technical communications activity in the future.

USABILITY

Watch what readers do—as opposed to what they say they want.

"I don't know how we can do our job if we don't know our readers."

Story telling is a trend. Scenario-based communications will be more and more important. Make it a story. User-scenarios are important. Blogs and wikis will move more and more into the corporate world. (Wikis are documents created by end users.)

Technical writers should continue to be more and more proficient in speaking the audience's language. This proficiency will increasingly become a core professional skill. Technical communicators should focus more on higher education in the task domain they are writing about than on higher education in technical communications.

There will be more of a convergence between technical communications and instructional design.

See an example for using simulations in instructional design is at:

<http://www.colorado.edu/physics/phet/simulations-base.html>.

Interface design and documentation departments are merging.

Usability and more accessible information for the handicapped will become of greater importance.

Search tools will become a primary navigation tool.

Personas and storytelling will become more important. Now, once again, documentation is becoming a sales factor. The customer evaluates two products, one of which has much more helpful documentation. The more helpful documentation will help ensure the sale. For example, using a Palm PDA is not that difficult. The emerging thing, the prototrend, is how to make use of a Palm.

The issue will become "how to" documentation versus "why do it" documentation. Technical communications will continue to move from process to why-based answers. The future-oriented writer will see beyond a career of writing step-by-step instructions.

Users are creating documentation about how to use a product with Wikis and Amazon-type reviews.

LOCALIZATION

The gap between translations and technical communications will shrink. In other words, the translation firms

themselves will do more of the original authoring.

The cost of translations will decline as improved automated tools handle more translation tasks. In the next 3 to 5 years, instead of machines supporting human translators, the humans will support the machine translators.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Be more assertive. Technical communicators will need to learn to do a better job at being assertive and pushing back. At the same time, they will need to constantly jump in and out of multiple projects, work projects, and styles.

Use more agile project management. Quick, extreme writing will emerge and, in many cases, replace the traditional waterfall model, just as extreme programming has emerged in software development. With this model, writers will learn to look over the shoulders of the development engineers and document as the engineers design and develop the product, even if there are no prototypes or engineering specs available.

Jen Linton, introduced by JoAnn Hackos, described how the "new Six Sigma" methodology can be applied in the technical documentation

field and how this methodology supports the Information Process Maturity Model. (www.stc.org/52ndConf/sessionMaterial/dataShow.asp?ID=73)

Six Sigma provides techniques for continuous improvement. A key to this improvement is to develop measurable requirements for success at the start of the project. Five phases are: define, measure, analyze, improve, control. This approach blends improving processes, enhancing employee skills, better supporting customer needs, and providing quality deliverables to the customers.

"Looking" cont'd on page 15

“Looking” cont’d from page 14

One idea is to chunk deliverables into 60-day increments. Writers will be more motivated with these than with 1- or 2-year deliverables.

CLOSE

I heard speakers at the 2005 STC Conference describe trends in usability, localization, and project management. They all assume that the future will require technical communicators to go to the next level. The current level is not good enough.

Mark Barnett is the 2005–2006 WVC-STC president. He is a senior technical writer at Tektronix. Before life in technical communications, he worked in IT, marketing, and engineering. He has an MBA, an MS in Computer Science, and, most recently, an MS in Applied Information Management. He is fluent in both tech-comm-esse and biz-speak.



MID-VALLEY CHAPTER NEWS

The Mid-Valley Chapter, WVC’s southern STC chapter neighbor, includes 50 members from Salem to Oregon’s southern border. Members work in “a wide range of environments from lumber mills to ECAD R&D facilities.”

Generally, the Chapter’s program meetings rotate between Eugene and Corvallis. For more information about the Mid-Valley Chapter and news, visit www.mid-valleystc.org.

Mid-Valley is the home chapter for John Hedtke, the Region 7 Director-Sponsor.

WRITERS AND ARTISTS WANTED!



See “Give Us Words/Art” on page 7 for more details.

2005 STC ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

By Valerie M. Ball

The 52nd Annual STC Conference provided these “commendables”:

- The Honors Banquet at which WVC member Garret Romaine was officially designated as an STC Associate Fellow
- 200 sessions that addressed management; professional development and STC-related activities; theory, research, education, and training; tools and technology; usability and information design; writing and editing
- More than 10 sessions presented by WVC members: in other words, WVC’s membership (< 2 percent of total STC membership) presented > 5 percent of the sessions
- Networking luncheons by region, by SIG, by interest group
- Attendance by > 30 WVC members
- Awesome opening and closing sessions, plus a special presentation about the vision of photography
- Many magnificent memories
- Latest information about the 53rd Annual STC Conference, to be held in Las Vegas, May 7–10, 2006

Got travel plans for 2006?

HONORS BANQUET

For individual events, the Honors Banquet was WVC’s largest gathering of members at the Conference. The official recognition of Garret Romaine as an STC Associate Fellow was a formal event, but WVC members relaxed and enjoyed each other’s company, erupting into loud cheers and whistles at Garret’s appearance on the dais.

THE SESSIONS

Sessions materials are at http://www.stc.org/52ndConf/session_materials.asp.

However, accounts of presentations at sessions by WVC members can be read in “Presentation Evaluation” on page 18 in this issue. This article is the third in The Galley’s series about the experiences in giving a session at the



Annual Conference. More details and observations of WVC members are available on page 16.

WVC ATTENDEES

The Galley staff couldn’t cover the entire Conference, but we could survey the WVC attendees. Thus, read “STC Annual Conference Draws WVC Members” in this issue, see WVC Attendees at the STC Annual Conference on page 16. Individual survey answers are available at http://www.stcwwc.org/galley/062005_doc_attach/2005-06AttendeeRespFinal.pdf.

LAS VEGAS, MAY 2006

Has a flare, doesn’t it?

For more details, go to <http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>.

How about a proposal for 2006? Not marriage but Conference. For tips on preparing a proposal, we offer the article “Why Not Make a Conference Proposal?” in this issue. We gleaned suggestions and received mentoring from the 2006 Conference Program Manager and some of the stem managers. Individual responses are available at http://www.stcwwc.org/galley/062005_doc_attach/2005-06MakePropRespFinal.pdf.

For more personal observations about the entire process of presenting a session, read *The Galley* series in this issue and the February and April issues.

Year 2006—something about Las Vegas sounds lucky, doesn’t it?

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS



WVC ATTENDEES AT THE STC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Carol L. Larson

The 52nd Annual STC Conference was held from May 8–11, 2005, in Seattle. More than 30 WVC members attended the conference, including several individuals and teams making presentations.

The Willamette Galley staff sent surveys to the attending WVC members, asking about their experiences at and impressions of the conference. Fifteen respondents generously shared their comments; two respondents wish to remain anonymous. For a compilation of the surveys, see “Conference Attendee Experiences: The Responses” at http://www.stcwvc.org/galley/062005_doc_attach/2005-06AttendeeRespFinal.pdf.

NOVICE OR EXPERIENCED

The Seattle conference was the first STC annual conference for 8 of our respondents. The other 7 respondents have attended annual conferences, including Garret Romaine who’s attended 6.

Most of our WVC respondents have attended STC regional and a variety of other professional conferences.

REASONS FOR ATTENDING

By and large, most attendees went to the conference to learn about: opportunities and emerging technologies; possible solutions for addressing such topics as outsourcing, layoffs, and career development; the latest technologies and techniques from vendors; and what other technical communicators are doing. Nina Junco wanted to learn how to develop resources. Krystn McCaleb

wanted to “discuss common issues with other professionals to learn alternate solutions or approaches to coping.”

Networking, meeting new or “old” friends from other regions, and gaining professional affirmation were also important reasons for attending the conference.

Seven Galley respondents had an additional reason to attend: they participated in paper, workshop, panel, and presentation sessions. For their comments, see “Presentation Evaluation” on page 18 in this issue.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

Attendees felt the conference was valuable. Wyn Bowler expressed that all but one session “had something of value for me. Even when the session didn’t match what I thought



Patrick Whitney, Keynote Speaker

the published summary said, it was worthwhile.”

One of our anonymous attendees said the conference “gave me the time away from work to reflect on future directions and opportunities for my department.”

Nina Junco felt that the “workshops were timely and the networking was great.”

Valerie M. Ball felt the conference was valuable because she “was able to meet so many different people and to learn about recent developments in technical communication.”

FAVORITE SESSIONS/EVENTS

The conference offered 200 sessions. All attendees had at least one favorite session. The range was as varied as the WVC attendees, but Toni Mantych commented that it’s “hard to say—many good presentations.”

Favorite events were the Honors Banquet and the networking luncheons, followed by the opening and closing sessions. Krystn McCaleb felt the “opening session speaker [design expert Patrick Whitney] was excellent, thought provoking.” Jennifer Key enjoyed the networking luncheons where she sat and talked “with some great people.”

The Honors Banquet was special for two reasons: 1) technical communicators cheering for each other and 2) Garret Romaine being honored as an STC Associate Fellow.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

WVC attendees’ suggestions for improvement to the Conference include:

- Add one or two days to spread out the sessions (Anne Lieder)

“Attendees” cont’d on page 17

REASONS FOR ATTENDING THE STC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Number of Responses	Reason for Attending the 52 nd Annual Conference
13	Attend sessions to learn about opportunities and emerging technologies in technical communication
9	Network
10	Gain affirmation of profession
14	See what other technical communicators are doing
12	Get possible solutions to address a variety of issues (i.e., outsourcing, layoffs, career development)
12	Visit vendors to see the latest technology and techniques
7	Give a presentation
6	Seek employment
10	Meet old friends/make new friends from other regions
11	My employer paid for it
2	Other (please specify)
	1) “Discuss common issues with other professionals and learn alternate solutions or approaches to coping.”
	2) “Develop resources.”

“Attendees” cont’d from page 16

- Add sessions about writing help for speech systems (Jim Larson)
- Require that presenters post their session materials to the STC Web site (Anne Lieder)
- Provide a better distribution/visibility of handouts in sessions (David Shank)
- Write better session descriptions (Anonymous1)
- Set up [more] tables in the registration and other common areas (Jennifer Key)

- Set up theme (content management, tools, translation/localization, etc.) tables in a common area (Krystn McCaleb)
- Survey the attendees to find out what sessions the attendees would like to attend (Sarah Leritz-Higgins)
- Keep the exhibition area, bookstore, and employment booth open through the end of the conference (Anonymous2)
- Estimate attendance in sessions better so everyone can attend the session (Valerie M. Ball)

LAS VEGAS?

The 53rd Annual STC Conference will be held in Las Vegas next May. A majority of *The Galley* respondents are considering proposals for next year’s conference. Their reading includes *The Galley’s* series of proposal/presentation articles. 📄



Suzanna Laurent and Garret Romaine



Valerie M. Ball, Jim Larson, Carol L. Larson



Rachel Houghton and Garret Romaine



Garret Romaine and Mark Ace



Garret Romaine and Valerie M. Ball

CONFERENCE PHOTOS

Thanks to Rachel Houghton for contributing the Conference photos



John Hedtke and Rahel Bailey



Nicole Elario, Nina Junco, Julie Marshall, Maryanne Stebbins, Denise Ledet



Maralee Sautte and Rahel Bailey



Valerie M. Ball, Darinda Flash, Patt Heuser, Pat Kusch



Garret Romaine and Maralee Sautter

PRESENTATION EVALUATION

By Carol L. Larson

The 52nd Annual STC Conference has come and gone. *The Willamette Galley* staff has followed the WVC member presenters, who have willingly shared their knowledge, experiences, and recommendations, from their proposal acceptances through their conference presentations.

This is the third article of a three-part series:

- “Proposal Acceptance” for the February 2005 issue (online publication at <http://www.stcwvc.org/galley/2005FebruaryGalley2.pdf>)
- “Proposal Preparation” for the April 2005 issue (online publication at <http://www.stcwvc.org/galley/2005AprilGalley1.pdf>)
- “Presentation Evaluation” for this issue

THE SURVEY

The Galley staff sent 12 surveys and received 8 responses. If we couldn't contact all team members, we asked one member of the team to forward surveys to the other team members. One respondent wishes to remain anonymous.

Survey subject areas include session preparation, expectations and reality, the presentation, back-to-normal, and recommendations.

Read responses from the presenters at http://stcwvc.org/galley/062005_doc_attach/2005-06PresentEvalRespFinal.pdf.

SESSION PREPARATION

Preparing for sessions takes time.

Combined, presenters spent 13–15 hours planning sessions, 16–19 hours doing additional research, 36–38 hours building the presentation, 20 hours creating session materials, and 23–25 hours rehearsing or practicing their presentations.

Not all sessions had handouts, but most of our presenters posted session materials—presentations and/or handouts—on the conference Web site. Nina Junco's team posted not only

their PowerPoint presentation but also several sample documents.

EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Audiences both surprised and disappointed WVC presenters. For many sessions, audiences were large (standing-room only), while sparse audiences populated other sessions.

The audience diversity pleasantly surprised Darinda LaFlash, who commented that she “had a good mix of Web people, usability people, managers, writers, and a few who do most or all related tasks.”

On the other hand, for her “Sentence Diagramming” session, Valerie M. Ball commented that she and her teammate “were surprised at having to ‘back-track’ some of our initial explanations... Our session was directed toward an advanced level....”

THE PRESENTATION

For the session presentation, several respondents wanted more time to work on their papers, handouts, and other session materials. Darinda LaFlash commented that she should have “set more deadlines” for herself.

Many respondents used PowerPoint presentations. Only Darinda LaFlash had technical problems during her presentation, so in the future she plans to “...prepare MORE extensive screen shots as a backup for a demo.”

The anonymous respondent would use PowerPoint for future presentations because “...it would flow better and be more professional.”

Garret Romaine replied that he was glad that his team didn't have handouts because they would have “ended up with several extra dead trees.”

Several respondents felt they would change the exercise content in some way. Nina Junco would include “more examples, results...”

Presenters would make some changes in their presentations, whether adding more details, practicing more, keeping on schedule,

or shortening exercises. Darinda LaFlash would like to do the exercises differently to engage her audience more so they share more ideas.

Most respondents felt they didn't have enough time to practice due to heavy workloads and deadlines.

Jennifer Key wished that she'd practiced more because she wasn't “relaxed enough and was too serious....”

Most presenters would change something about their sessions. However, alteration of Valerie M. Ball's “Transformation” session was beyond her control: “... the moderator and her two panelists could not attend the Conference, and an errata sheet...said that the session was cancelled.” Another errata sheet revived the session, and Valerie felt that these sudden reversals “gave all of us a sense of freedom that none of us had anticipated, so we had FUN!”

All respondents received positive feedback in compliments, requests for handouts, or attendee retention. Darinda LaFlash commented, “Body language also provides feedback. For example, one guy frowned through the entire session. However, he didn't leave.”

Since returning from the conference, several WVC presenters have received comments or requests for exercises and handouts.

LESSONS LEARNED

All WVC presenters learned something by participating in their sessions. Nina Junco feels the session “was a wonderful experience for the team—great personal development.”

“Presentation” cont'd on Page 19



Sadie, the practice audience, survived and is sleeping it off.

“Audiences both surprised and disappointed WVC presenters.”

“Preparing for sessions takes time.”

description than one might expect,” so she “would take future presentations up a notch to challenge the audience a bit.” While Garret Romaine stated simply, “It was worth it;” our anonymous presenter said, “It was more fun than I expected.”

Respondents dealt with unexpected changes in their sessions by being

“STC members are generous in helping each other”

spontaneous. Valerie M. Ball learned what she already knew instinctively: “STC members are generous in helping each other. Fred O’Hara didn’t need to speak on such a spur-of-the-moment basis... Dan Wise exuded confidence that our session would

be fine...last-minute changes can often call forth unexpected creativity to meet challenges.”

BACK-TO-NORMAL

Participants returned home to the real world: trip/expense reports, résumé updates, plans for the future.

Whether writing an expense report or debriefing their departments, most respondents will write or give some type of report for their manager and/or work group.

When adding to their résumés, WVC presenters will place their sessions in special sections such as “Accomplishments,” “List of Publications,” “STC Activities and Honors,” and “Professional Organizations.”

Most plan to submit proposals to the 53rd Annual STC Conference, even though some haven’t decided what the topic will be. However, Nina Junco replied, “...there is the usual question about workload, budget, and ability to continue to convince upper management about the necessity of involvement...it is always a matter of making a business case.”

The motivation for our respondents hasn’t changed—they want to share ideas, build their résumés, and network. Darinda LaFlash feels that it’s almost “an obligation to spread our knowledge to our peers...”

“The motivation for our respondents hasn’t changed...”

All presenters recommend that others give presentations at a conference. Nina Junco states, “giving presentations provides a wonderful way to learn your own detail and then share it with others. It opens avenues to expand as you participate and learn from audience members.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our respondents recommend:

- Pass on knowledge by submitting a conference proposal
- Allow plenty of time to write a paper, prepare presentation materials, and practice
- Anticipate the unexpected
- Enjoy the experience

When asked about what additional information our presenters would pass on, most didn’t respond. However, Garret Romaine states practically, “I hope some day when I present I won’t be all nervous beforehand, losing sleep, and fretting about what could go wrong.” Valerie M. Ball is philosophical: “...it may be wiser to recall this adage: ‘I don’t regret anything I’ve done, only what I haven’t done.’ Would I regret NOT presenting this session? Yes, I would very much regret not presenting it. And yes, I would do it all over again.”

And, finally, *The Willamette Galley* staff wishes to extend its appreciation to our WVC members who so graciously answered our questions for this series of articles.

Thank you!



DESIGN TRANSITION

By Carol L. Larson and Valerie M. Ball

DEEPEST APPRECIATION

We asked Debbie Layton to help revamp the design and layout for the August 2004 issue of *The Willamette Galley*—“please, Debbie, help us get started. At least the first issue...”

Fortunately for us, Debbie didn’t count the number of issues after the first one, and no one wants to count the number of hours spent designing and redesigning *The Galley* so that it reads and looks more professional.

Unfortunately for us, other claims upon Debbie’s time rose from a murmur to a clamor, and Debbie needed to answer the call of those other projects. We are sad to see her leave, and we’ll miss Debbie’s knowledge and creative talents.

But we may miss her humor even more: when we praised Debbie as our “Layout Wizard,” she responded that “Wayout Lizard” fit better.


Thanks, Debbie! You go, Wayout Lizard!

WARMEST WELCOME

WVC members are helpful, but we didn’t expect the speedy response that we received from Maryanne Stebbins to replace Debbie Layton. (In fact, Maryanne was so enthusiastic that we re-checked our email to see if we’d inadvertently offered a paying job.)

Maryanne is very well qualified—probably over-qualified—to be a member of *The Galley* staff. As a catalog specialist who has worked for A-dec, Inc., in Newberg for 5 years, Maryanne writes, designs, and lays out catalogs. She also works on projects to mesh text and illustrations into one document. She thinks it will be “fun” to work on *The Galley*, especially with the opportunities for being creative.

We hope that Maryanne will continue the evolution of *The Galley* into a newsletter of even greater excellence and distinction.

Welcome, welcome, welcome, Maryanne! Now, let’s see about a nickname... 

WHY NOT MAKE A CONFERENCE PROPOSAL?

By Valerie M. Ball

The Galley staff is now in the curious position of the Roman god Janus, the patron of beginnings and endings, for we are at the end of our three-part series on the progress of WVC members who presented sessions at the 52nd Annual STC Conference.

Yet, we feel that we are still at the beginning: one of our objectives was to offer suggestions on how to prepare an acceptable STC Conference proposal. Our three-part series is like a large jigsaw puzzle, with individual pieces placed appropriately by our surveyed WVC members—but we are missing that very important and initial piece about preparing a successful conference proposal.

Moreover, co-editor Carol L. Larson and I felt that we disappointed our readers because neither of us could attend the 2005 Conference session “Submitting a Good STC Conference Proposal.”

TURN TO THE EXPERTS

The obvious solution was to survey the experts—2006 Conference Program Manager Pam Ecker and Deputy Program Manager Phylise Banner. Together, they presented the session about proposals. In addition, we queried the stem managers for the 2005 Conference.

Within 24 hours, the responses were overwhelming and also humbling: we belong to a professional organization that walks its talk about creating and supporting a forum for its members.

Brenda Heuttner, 2005 stem manager for management sessions, tempers her statements with a qualifier:

“I’m the outgoing stem manager, so I cannot necessarily speak for next year’s team. However, these answers are based on my experience of being stem manager twice, and I don’t think they’ll conflict with anything that the incoming folks are doing.”

For more details on proposals and the stem managers for the 2006 Conference in Las Vegas, click on



“conference program committee” (5th bullet) at <http://www.stc.org/Proposals/>. The official STC Web site is the best source of information, but this article “Why Not Make a Conference Proposal” and The Galley’s other articles related to the 2005 Conference can provide useful preliminary information.

WHAT THEY ADVISE FIRST

Searching for a topic was our first survey question, and we received multiple answers with the same

“... topics should be vital, timely, and useful.”

message: topics should be vital, timely, and useful. Whitney Quesenbery, 2005

stem manager for usability and information design, advises:

“Presentations don’t have to be brilliant, fantastic, unusual or bleeding edge, but they do have to have something to share that your colleagues will find valuable. Have you come up with a good technique that helps you do your job better? ... Do you have mentoring advice that others have found valuable?”

Roger Grice, 2005 stem manager for professional development, looks for “a proposal that promises to deliver interesting and useful information to a group of people attending the conference. The proposer needs to have knowledge and passion (or at least interest) in the subject.”

Roger also thinks that the phrase “it depends” tempers many of the answers to queries about preparing a successful proposal, an attitude

“Send the final version, not a statement of good intentions and pipe dreams.”

supported by Brenda, who advises, “Good topics put a new spin on things, or show a new or better way of doing

something, or help solve a common problem.”

Geoff Hart, 2005 stem manager for the writing and editing sessions and an editor for *Intercom*, exhorts potential applicants:

“Send the final version, not a statement of good intentions and pipe dreams. I want to see what you’re actually going to tell us at the conference ... go far beyond platitudes and beginner information.”

AND NOW FOR THE PARTICULARS

For this article, I consolidated the preceding views as well as a telephone conversation with Pam Ecker. As the 2006 Conference Program Manager, Pam welcomed the opportunity to clarify any misperceptions and to encourage *Galley* readers to consider making a proposal to the 53rd Annual Conference. Any errors or inaccuracies in the following procedures and advice are my fault, most definitely not the fault of Pam or the stem managers

THE TOPIC

Pam reiterates that the “quality of the proposal is what counts.” The “Proposal” cont’d on page 21

“Proposal” cont’d from page 20

topic must provide “information that is worth sharing: is it both interesting and educational?” Pam even suggests that perplexed applicants contact the appropriate stem manager prior to the deadline, not with the intention of having the stem manager read the proposal before submission but to help clarify ideas and to answer questions.

THE SUBMISSION FORM

Pam urges that applicants precisely follow the directions in the online form, available with links that start at <http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>. The deadline for the 53rd Annual Conference is August 15, 2005. The submission materials are similar to those for the 52nd Conference with an application (or information) form and a template for supporting materials.

Whitney gives specific procedures for the two parts of the 2005 proposal:

“In the info form, the two critical pieces of information are the session title and the abstract. There are word counts given for both of these. ... As for the supporting materials, they should be 1–2 pages: enough to clearly indicate not just the general topic, but a high-level summary.”

Pam adds that new fields on the 2006 submission form are equally important. The session description has been expanded, and the submitter needs to specify “key learning outcomes.” Every proposed speaker needs to provide biographical information in the template for supporting materials.

For the best results, Pam advises reviewing all forms before submission, emphasized by one general direction: “carefully read the checklist and comply.”

As technical communicators, we expect others to follow our procedures accurately, so perhaps the 2006 Conference proposal can test our abilities to follow procedures.

REVIEWERS OF PROPOSALS

Pam shared criteria for the selection of the proposal reviewers, thus

including information which we did not ask in the survey.

Each stem manager oversees a committee comprised of 6–20+ reviewers; the size of the committee depends upon the number of proposals received for each stem. Every proposal is evaluated by 3 reviewers, in addition to the stem manager. Reviewers are experienced in the topic of their stems, such as management or writing and editing, and have attended at least one Conference.

DECISION-MAKING

Stem managers are asked to give their reviewers a proposal evaluation checklist to weigh and measure the variety of factors in each proposal. Some stem managers also use numeric values with the checklist, or they provide their review committee with other quantitative or qualitative

measurements. These additional methods are at the discretion of the individual stem managers.

The stem managers also read and review all proposals for their stems. Acceptances are based upon a consensus of the reviewers, who generally communicate via email with the stem manager. The stem managers are responsible for final decisions.

Pam and the stem managers emphasize that the quality of the proposal is far more important than the education, experience, or STC status of the individual or team who makes the proposal. Applicants do not have to study new disciplines; instead, they should build upon their existing professional skills and knowledge.

Ultimately, the proposal itself must convince the stem manager and reviewers. For 2005, 400+ proposals were pared to 200 sessions, but some of those sessions combined related paper proposals.

The audience is also a very important factor. Almost one-half of the attendees at conferences are first-timers, but they may not be entry-level professionals. In common with returning attendees, they may expect updated versions and advanced

applications about topics from a previous year.

WHICH FORMAT?

Sessions are offered in a variety of formats, so Roger’s and Brenda’s earlier advice of “it depends” continues to be valid. Brenda thinks that “the progression format is the best for first-time speakers. It’s a smaller audience with a more casual approach. The best way to get involved in these is to work through the SIGs that promote them.”

Whitney agrees with Brenda about the progression format, and she recommends panel discussions with a caveat of having a “clear point of view..., not just a general idea of a topic.” Whitney cautions that workshops are more difficult unless the applicant is “already a good trainer, or very familiar” with the material “and used to teaching.”

Although the WVC SIGs are no longer as active as in previous years, perhaps proposal team-building will rejuvenate interest.

If WVC SIGs do not wish to make a proposal for a team effort, Pam recommends that interested individuals contact the society-level SIG manager and ask if anyone “is

... the quality of the proposal is far more important than the education, experience, or STC status...”

coordinating a progression proposal.” Often, such a coordinator or moderator “is eager to hear from those outside their

own geographic region.”

GOT STAGE FRIGHT?

Taking speech classes, joining Toastmasters, participating in community theater: these activities can help to fend off stage fright.

But Brenda suggests more direct activity: giving the presentation at “program meetings, regional conferences, or even local events put on by other organizations. They’ll usually give you the feedback from their audiences, and you can learn and improve your speaking skills if you listen openly to that feedback.”

Whitney offers an alternative: “if you are not comfortable speaking in front of an audience, perhaps this is

“Proposal” cont’d on page 22

“Proposal” cont’d from page 21

not the right format for you. Why not write an article for *Intercom* or one of the other publications, instead.”

INDIVIDUAL OR TEAM?

Once again, Brenda advances her sound reasoning: “It depends on the topic and on the expertise of the team.”

Whitney gives both pros and cons: “Case studies presented by a whole team are always good, since so many of our projects require a multitude of talents. It can take time to prepare together, so that you make a well-rehearsed, coherent presentation.”

Yes, it depends...

THE CONTENT

The content is the heart of the proposal; both Pam and Geoff advise providing enough detail so that the reviewers will “have confidence” in the applicant. Geoff also advises not to “give the same old same old that I’ve already heard a dozen times before.”

Brenda seconds

Geoff: “if the topic looks like it might be overdone (i.e., you’ve published the same article in 10 different newsletters and presented the same topic at every single regional event for the past couple of years), then you might be hurting your chances of acceptance unless you are building on the existing work.”

Pam offers some specific advice for the content: a finished paper is preferred over an outline; precise details are “mandatory” for workshop activities and exercises. She also cautions about sending graphics-heavy files, such as PowerPoint presentations, because of the 40-K limit for proposals and for the ease of email distributions of proposals among reviewers. Instead, that space potentially taken by graphics can be used for details, details, details—and the bullet points for the PowerPoint presentation can also be given within the proposal.

THE COMMITMENT

As part of the proposal submission, STC expects a professional commitment: accepted applicants guarantee their presentation (or a substitute) at the 2006 Conference.

Geoff draws a vivid portrait of both this commitment and the meaning of teamwork:

“If you’re organizing a progression or other joint (multi-author) presentation, sign up all participants now. Don’t say ‘me and five other people to be defined at a later date.’ I want all six names and their presentation titles—now. And give me details on each part of the presentation; this convinces me that each of your colleagues is prepared. Don’t give me a name and title if you haven’t confirmed that the person will be attending the conference and presenting on that topic.”

Pam stresses that this level of commitment is very important to STC. Yes, family emergencies, illnesses,

other unforeseen events occur, and STC is understanding about such circumstances. But, lack of preparation and shirking have negative

consequences on future proposals, no matter how well qualified the proposals are. Pam warns:

“... if your proposal is accepted and you don’t show up, don’t send a substitute, and don’t have a valid reason for being absent, your next year’s proposal is unlikely to be accepted.”

These consequences are serious, but other WVC members who attend the Conference may be able to substitute. A substitute gives the original, accepted version of the proposal, and STC audiences are very understanding toward substitutes. The fear of such an unlikely event should not deter anyone

“details, details, details”

from making a 2006 Conference proposal. (Likewise, the fear of being asked to be a substitute should not deter anyone from planning to attend the 2006 Conference.)

THE WHY OF THE PROPOSAL

Why, then, make a proposal?

A successful proposal is challenging, disciplined work that leads to hours of preparation for a session.

But Brenda gives the “why”:

“[D]o it because you are interested in the topic. Do it because you need to find out the answers to questions you have. Do it because you want to learn more. That interest level, that passion, will show through and ... recognition, fame, proposal acceptance ... follow naturally.”

So—is this the beginning of the why or the ending of the why not?

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

With the resources of this article and The Galley’s series on WVC members at the 52nd Annual Conference, all of us can understand the Roman god Janus, with beginnings and endings flowing into each other. Perhaps Geoff Hart sums up our current situation:

“I want to know that you’re going to challenge me. ... One of the things everyone seemed to like about this past conference was that we were very tough on proposals and that we challenged presenters to make us sweat a bit.”
Hey—let’s make ‘em sweat.

Geoff Hart:
“I want to know that you’re going to challenge me.”

[Editor’s Note: The written responses from the stem managers are available at http://www.stcwc.org/galley/062005_doc_attach/2005-06MakePropRespFinal.pdf; the PowerPoint presentation from Pam Ecker’s and Phylise Banner’s Conference session is available at <http://www.stc.org/52ndConf/session.materials.asp>. This “Session Materials” link on the STC Web site is a trove of 250+ documents that give an inside view of handouts, PowerPoint slides, and other materials that supported the sessions at the 52nd Conference.

And the 53rd Annual Conference in Las Vegas in May 2006—
<http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES: INTERVIEWING

By Carol L. Larson

Disclaimer: As with the WVC, we “do not endorse, guarantee, or attest to the quality of the information presented by any service, product, information, individual, or organization mentioned in the following linked resources.”

You’ve written your résumé and cover letter, created your portfolio, and applied for a job; now you’re just waiting for a telephone call telling you when, where, and with whom you can interview. Now what?

You shouldn’t “just wait” for the telephone call. Now is the time to prepare for the interview. For a successful interview, review your research of the company, anticipate questions—both those you’ll be asked and those you want to ask, and practice the content and delivery of your answers.

Available resources are numerous and varied in content.

WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Interviewing workshops are offered throughout the Portland/Vancouver metro area. Be sure to telephone or check the Web sites for up-to-date information.

OREGON

- The Capitol Career Center (18624 NW Walker Rd, Beaverton, 503-533-2713) offers the following workshops: “Improving Your Interview Skills,” “Informational Interviews,” and “Interview Strategies.”
- Workforce Connections located at Mt. Hood Community College (4510 NE 102nd, Portland, 503-252-0758) offers “Interview Workshop.”
- The One Stop Resource Center (506 High St, Oregon City, 503-657-2071 x2473) offers: “Learn to Interview,” “Interviewing,” and “Mock Interviews.”

WASHINGTON

- WorkSource Washington (Town Plaza, 5411 E Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 15, Vancouver, 360-735-5010) has an “Interviewing Techniques” workshop.

BOOKS

There’s a plethora of books about interviewing, so head to your library or bookstore. Many books are for specific career fields (executive, nursing, engineering), and most follow a similar format. You should be able to find a book that closely suits your needs. The following are worth at least a scan:

- John Adams. 2001. *The Everything Job Interview Book*. Avon, MA: Adams Media Corp. This book has some truly interesting stress interview questions, including: “When was the last time you really put your foot in your mouth?” and “Tell about one of your projects that failed.”
- Joyce Lain Kennedy. 1996. *Job Interviews for Dummies*. Forest City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc. Yes, this is an “old” book, but it has a wonderful chapter about interviewer personality types, including: “Bossus Potentialus” and “Fuzzius Warmus.”
- Jeff Taylor with Doug Hardy. 2004. *monster Careers: How to Land the Job of Your Life*. New York: Penguin Books. I’ve mentioned this book before, but this time it comes with a recommendation. About six weeks ago, I loaned *monster Careers* to a friend who’s been looking for a job for several months. She read the book from cover-to-cover and followed the authors’ advice. She began her new job two weeks ago and feels the advice she received in this book gave her the confidence to land her new job.
- Martin Yate. 2004. *Knock ‘em Dead: The Ultimate Job Seeker’s Guide*. Avon, MA: Adams Media. This is a good all-purpose book. One chapter discusses interviews in “strange” places, such as a car or a noisy hotel lobby.

ONLINE HELP

Employment and job seeking Web sites often offer links to career services, including interviewing techniques and practice sessions. These sites include but certainly are not limited to:

- Career InfoNet’s Career Resource Library contains links to many interviewing articles from a variety of sources.
- monster.com’s “Interview Center” has links to a multitude of articles with advice about interviewing. There’s also a link to a practice interview question generator.
- MSN Careers contains links to “Advice & Resources,” which, in turn, has links to many articles with advice about interviewing in general, as well as special situations.
- The Quintessential Careers site contains links to numerous resources for all types of interviews and techniques for interviewing.
- Yahoo! Hotjobs’ “Career Tools” has links to numerous articles about interview questions and types of interviews.
- WetFeet has many links to articles and advice about interviewing.

SUMMARY

A wealth of information about interviewing is available. Learn about all types of interviews and the questions asked for each type. Anticipate questions that may be asked and practice your delivery, so you’ll be prepared for the interview. You may not be asked the exact questions you anticipated, but you will go to the interview more prepared and confident.

You know the skills and abilities you want to emphasize; you know the questions you want to ask.

Go for it!



[Links to Web sites in this article are on page 13.]