

The Willamette Galley

Willamette Valley Chapter
Society for Technical Communication


Chapter Meeting

May 19—Rachel Houghton, Sarah Leritz-Higgins, and Maralee Sautter, “2011 Summit Highlights”

Wanfu Chinese Restaurant in Lake Oswego was the location for good food, networking, and a discussion about the STC Summit 2011 highlights. Thank you to WVC 1st Vice President Karen O’Keefe for making the arrangements for this meeting.

The guest panelists were STC Secretary Rachel Houghton, WVC Web Manager Maralee Sautter, and WVC President Sarah Leritz-Higgins. In the post-meeting survey, one respondent wrote that that the meeting topics “focused mainly on STC-related information, such as certification and ideas for improving” the WVC and some conference highlights.

According to the survey, members attended this chapter meeting to: (1) “hear what I missed at the conference”; (2) to learn “what the main [conference] topics” were; and (3) to hear “what people learned” at the Summit. One member felt the meeting “topic would have been more interesting had it contained more conference session highlights and less STC politics and governance.” Another member commented that “the single table allowed for some great conversations and networking.” The Summit attendees distributed a number of souvenirs gleaned from the exhibitors, for which a survey respondent expressed thanks: “loved the SWAG and the way it was handled.”

For the March and April chapter meeting summaries, see “March and April Chapter Meetings” on [page 9](#). 

Calendar of Events

Currently, the WVC Administrative Council is planning the 2011–2012 program year. Most chapter meetings are on the third Thursday of the month, including the following dates:

Sept. 22: “Getting to Know You—and Your Favorite App,” networking at the Lucky Lab Beer Hall (1945 NW Quimby, Portland), 6:00 PM–8:30 PM

Oct. 20: Chapter meeting topic, location, and time TBD

Nov. 17: Chapter meeting topic, location, and time TBD

The most up-to-date meeting details are found on the [WVC website homepage](#).

Inside This Issue

Welcome

Message From the President 2

Features

Toward a Documentation Strategy
by Dick Miller 4

STC News—My STC Network
Goes Online 8

March and April Chapter
Meetings 9

Columns

Op-Ed: Volunteer—Help Yourself
2nd When You Help Someone
Else 1st
by Valerie M. Ball 3

Chapter Interest

Chapter Meeting 1

Calendar of Events 1

Letter from the Co-Editors 2

Follow the WVC 7

STC Puget Sound 7

Contact STC/WVC 8

WVC Mission Statement 8

STC Mid-Valley 10

Upcoming Conferences 10

WVC Activities 10

WVC Employment News 10

WVC Membership 10

Networking Opportunities 11

Educational Opportunities 12

Submissions to *The Galley* 13

Copyright STC 2011–2012



STC Mission Statement

STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media so that both businesses and customers benefit from safe, appropriate, and effective use of products, information, and services.

The Willamette Galley

The Willamette Galley is published bimonthly in even-numbered months.

Contributors hold the copyright on all submitted materials, either written or graphic, in *The Willamette Galley* unless otherwise indicated.

Anyone interested in reprints, reproductions, or reuse must contact the contributor for permission.

Willamette Galley Staff

Co-Editors

[Valerie M. Ball](#)
[Carol L. Larson](#)

Layout Designer

[Shawn Mershon](#)

Web Manager/Social Media Columnist

[Maralee Sautter](#)

Email all *Galley* contributions to the co-editors or mail the contributions to:

The Willamette Galley
STC Willamette Valley Chapter
PO Box 765
Portland, OR 97207-0765

President's Message

New Developments in Leadership Positions in STC-WVC

Member volunteers lead local STC chapters. During the spring, the WVC leadership team typically "passes the baton" to the new leadership team at the Volunteer Celebration. As with STC International, the roles of president and 1st vice president (VP) are successional; that is, the 1st VP automatically becomes the president, and the 2nd VP automatically becomes the 1st VP. However, this past year, the 2nd VP position remained open, so there is no one to assume the role of 1st VP. Also, our 1st VP, Karen O'Keefe, has decided to step down and will not be filling the role of president. So, we are faced with a conundrum of sorts: no one to fill the president, the 1st VP, or the 2nd VP roles for the upcoming year has been elected.

However, an election is in our future! The upcoming election will have a candidate for president and 1st VP, but not for 2nd VP. The current WVC leadership team

leadership is proposing that we change the WVC bylaws to allow student members to vote in chapter elections. If you are a member of the WVC chapter, please vote in the upcoming election for new officers for the 2011–2012 program year, and stay tuned for more information about the proposed bylaws change to allow student members to vote and the subsequent ballot.

These leadership changes make the chapter more focused on delivering the kinds of programming you're interested in and expand the networking opportunities that the chapter provides.

Regards,
Sarah,
2010–2011 WVC President

Editors' Note—The results of the elections are: Carol L. Larson, president; Maralee Sautter, 1st vice president; Dave Thompson, secretary; and Kate Lonborg, treasurer.

Letter from the Co-Editors

The field of technical communication and its media constantly change with each new technology and tool, so the 2010–2011 *Galley* foci are "Changes in Technical Communication." In this combined issue, we explore a managerial perspective for creating a documentation strategy:

- ◆ Dick Miller offers insights toward a documentation strategy.

- ◆ Based upon the analysis of a French political philosopher, Valerie M. Ball's Op-Ed relates the origins of today's volunteering to frontier America.
- ◆ STC proudly introduces the My STC network.

Enjoy!
Valerie and Carol

Op-Ed: Volunteer—Help Yourself 2nd When You Help Someone Else 1st

By Valerie M. Ball, Co-editor, *The Willamette Galley*

In these times of economic and employment uncertainty and change, many of us may feel that drawing inward protects individual interests and safeguards vulnerabilities. The same atmosphere of uncertainty and change also contributes to an apprehensive sense of being uncontrollably busier but accomplishing far less and feeling that time is always an accelerating clock, collapsing deadlines and never allowing any respite.

Perhaps such uncertainty and change need a more historical perspective for reassurance.

The French Viewpoint

The historical reassurance comes from the early nineteenth century, a time in which printing was the main technical form of mass communication. Printing relied upon channels of movable type that were set to be readable in a mirror, strips of lead that divided those channels of printed words, and the rich scent of ink that hung heavily as individual sheets of paper were laid flat upon the type and leading, then literally “pressed” to create printed materials.

At the time, the United States was a very young nation, experimenting with democracy as a defiant, willful offspring of the laws and cultures of England and Europe, combined with the political thinking of the Age of Enlightenment.

The American experiment drew observers and reviewers, among them a young French political philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville. As an outsider and a non-participant in the then-recent American Revolution, he may have had a more neutral eye to assess the character of the Americans who pursued happiness while they simultaneously built and practiced theories of government

that educated Europeans could only ponder.

Among the many characteristics of the residents of the United States, de Tocqueville especially noted a willing trait that was not part of Europe and may owe its existence and nurturing to the establishment of a nation on the outskirts of unexplored wilderness.

That characteristic is volunteerism, and this stepping forward to help others with no thought of recompense is a peculiarly American behavior that de Tocqueville analyzes in his two-volume political treatise, *Democracy in America*, published in 1835 and 1840. Even today, his summary in this often-quoted statement—“I have seen Americans make great and real sacrifices to the public welfare; and have noticed a hundred instances in which they hardly ever failed to lend faithful support to one another”—is a hallmark of many non-profit and charitable organizations in the US to the present day.

Had to Volunteer Then

De Tocqueville also noticed and discussed how the small numbers of colonists meant that the members of a community had to be versatile and able to fulfill multiple roles to maintain even their existence. The attitude was that of a neighbor helping a neighbor, and those acts of assistance strengthened the self-reliance of individuals and the community as a whole.

Volunteering Now

Volunteerism is still part of the American society and culture today, and it continues to have a recompense that involves more value for the spirit than the bank balance. For technical communicators who associate with the WVC, volunteer possibilities are numerous and worthy.

For example, even though senior member Sue Kloster has already served WVC in a variety of roles for several years, she has agreed to manage the WVC competition again. Many volunteers have enjoyed working under Sue's guidance, so some may wish to contribute their skills in familiar or new areas of the competition. Moreover, the event often needs another pair of hands, another offering of fresh insight, or another proofreader of the program or the spelling of the names. As with many volunteer efforts, the more, the merrier!

The recompense of volunteerism is not measured in dollars, but in the appreciation of those who benefit from the effort and results or those who work with the volunteer. Sharing skills, knowledge, and insights is a way to increase the number of colleagues who may later acknowledge the volunteer's qualities with employment referrals, recommendations, or assistance for another project.

Perhaps the greatest recompense, though, is the feeling of satisfaction from helping someone else. And that time spent **first** in helping someone else increases the volunteer's self-worth and returns a sense of control, so the **second** beneficiary is the volunteer.

Therefore, help yourself second when you help someone else first.



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 and affiliates.

Toward a Documentation Strategy

By Dick Miller, STC Associate Fellow

[Editors' Note—Previously published as: Miller, Dick. 2011. *Designing a Documentation Strategy*. Intercom. April: 24–28.]

There's an old joke that goes like this:

Passenger: "Where are we going?"
Driver: "I don't know, but we're making great time!"

Have you ever felt that way? That things were humming along, but you had this



nagging thought that there had to be more to it than this? As a senior technical documentation specialist and manager, I certainly have, and I wouldn't be surprised if you have also. There is more to it. This article attempts to explore where we're going and why.

The answers to the following questions are components of a documentation strategy:

1. What is a strategy?
2. Which documentation are we talking about?
3. Why have a documentation strategy?
4. What are the basic components of a documentation strategy?
5. How will you know when you're finished with the strategy?
6. How do you get executive support for a documentation strategy?

7. After you've answered these questions, what do you do next?

If you're a leader of a documentation organization, thinking about these issues and answering these questions is most appropriate to your role. You may have answers to several of the questions already.

What Is a Strategy?

According to Wikipedia, "Strategy, a word of military origin, refers to a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. In military usage strategy is distinct from tactics, which are concerned with the conduct of an engagement, while strategy is concerned with how different engagements are linked. How a battle is fought is a matter of tactics: the terms and conditions that it is fought on and whether it should be fought at all is a matter of strategy, which is part of the four levels of warfare: political goals or grand strategy, strategy, operations, and tactics."

Those of us who have engaged in battles over documentation may resonate with the military implications, but, for our purposes, let's define strategy as the plans we make to achieve our documentation goals, while tactics are the things we do in implementing the plans.

Be careful, however, about using the word "strategy." Because of its overuse in trendy business exercises in the past, some people may associate a certain amount of emotional baggage with the word. If that's the case in your situation, use "context," "metaplan," or some other term that conveys your meaning.

Which Documentation?

Technical communicators may be responsible for many different kinds of documentation. For the purpose of this article, we'll use a



rather inclusive definition. Documentation includes all artifacts in any medium that are used to enhance and

facilitate use, sale, or support of an organization's products or services. This may include documentation for end users of the products, for people who support those end users, for potential or existing customers, or for internal use.

Realize that the kind of documentation on which you focus may be very much determined by where the company is in its life cycle. A startup may find that sales and marketing collateral is most important, while a more mature company may consider documentation that can help manage expenses to increase profitability as more important. You'll have to adjust your immediate focus to reflect the situation in your own organization.

This documentation may be delivered in a variety of formats, such as printed manuals, embedded help, web content, marketing collateral, social media posts, or many others; it doesn't matter. Those choices are tactical, and we won't be discussing them here.

Why a Documentation Strategy?

In *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, the internationally recognized guru of instructional design, Dr. Robert F. Mager, says, "...if you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else." The main purpose of developing a documentation strategy is to answer the question, "Where are we going with our documentation?" Having a clear end

Strategy, cont'd on page 5

point in mind and communicating it well to the interested parties helps focus everyone's eyes on the prize. As Dr. Steven Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, put it, "Begin with the end in mind."

If we look back at our Wikipedia definition, it refers to both "grand strategy" and "strategy." The grand strategy is analogous to your organization's corporate strategy, and the strategy is analogous to your documentation strategy. The documentation strategy needs to be consistent with, informed by, and supportive of the corporate strategy. For this reason, those who are responsible for developing a documentation strategy should be at the table when corporate strategy is discussed.

A documentation strategy must be valuable for the business. It can be a tool for decreasing expenses, increasing revenue, or increasing operational efficiency or effectiveness.

Documentation Strategy Basics

Now that we're clear on what we mean by documentation strategy and why we should have one, we need to look at what needs to be done to build one.

Where Are You Now?

Begin with an audit of how much you already know about three of the most critical foundations of a documentation strategy:

- ♦ Corporate needs
- ♦ User characteristics
- ♦ User needs

The following sections examine these three critical foundations.

What Are Your Organization's Goals for the Documentation?

Your organization wouldn't be supplying documentation without reasons. Some of these reasons are fairly obvious, some less so.

Reasons may include:

- ♦ Users need to know how to install the product.
- ♦ Users need to have a reference to detailed information about the product.
- ♦ Company support people need to have a reference to help deal with troubleshooting user issues.
- ♦ Company sales and marketing people need to use documentation as a sales tool.
- ♦ Product development people need to understand about aspects of the product outside their own areas of interest.



- ♦ The company needs to provide documentation because all their competitors do.
- ♦ The company's technical instructors need to use it as instructional materials so the company can sell training as an additional source of revenue.
- ♦ The company sees their excellent product documentation as a competitive advantage.
- ♦ The company can use awards for their documentation in company press releases.

There are undoubtedly many other goals, and some of them may not be easy to determine. However, it's worthwhile to discover as many of these goals as you can because it's important for your documentation strategy to be addressing the

right problems. It's also helpful to identify any champions of specific goals. They can be your allies in moving the strategy forward.

Who Are the Users of the Documentation?

If you don't already have a comprehensive user population description in place, you can tap a number of resources to create one. These may include:

- ♦ Product developers
- ♦ Training designers and developers
- ♦ Technical instructors
- ♦ Marketing people
- ♦ User experience and usability people
- ♦ Support desk specialists
- ♦ Field engineers
- ♦ Actual users

Much of the information you need to know may be available, but in diverse locations and formats. Don't overlook sources such as:

- ♦ Marketing requirements documents
- ♦ Product requirements documents
- ♦ Marketing plans
- ♦ Product development plans and forecasts
- ♦ Product usage scenarios
- ♦ User personas and profiles
- ♦ Field engineering reports
- ♦ Training evaluations by users
- ♦ Training design documents
- ♦ Corporate customer surveys
- ♦ Independent industry surveys

Needless to say, a strategy directed toward the wrong audience won't work.

Keep in mind that the strategy should be aware of potential future users so that it can be modified, if needed, when the audience changes.

What Are the Users' Goals for the Documentation?

Always remember this: no matter how much you think you understand the users, empathize with them, feel their pain, or wish you could make it all better for them, you are not a typical user. You need facts, not feelings. The best way to get those facts, of course, is to ask the users themselves. More than once I have been the bearer of sad tidings to developers, marketers, and others who thought they knew what users needed or wanted when I revealed the results of some direct user research.

If you're unable to obtain first-person information, ask those people who have it. This might include field-service people, help-desk people, instructors, market researchers, user-experience specialists, and others who have direct contact with users.



Keep in mind, too, that user goals may sometimes conflict with company goals. You then have the difficult task of finding a direction for the documentation strategy that might be suboptimal for one or the other or both interested parties, but at least is acceptable to both.

How Will You Know When You're Done?

You're not. As the organization's needs and strategy change, the characteristics of the user populations change, and the user's needs change, you'll need to modify your original strategy to accommodate those changes.

If the changes are dramatic, those modifications can be extensive.

Dramatic changes might include:

- ◆ Your company decides to pursue a new line of products or a new market.
- ◆ Your company's product changes to include a new population of users.
- ◆ Your user population changes its preferred delivery medium for documentation. While this is largely a tactical issue, you should examine your strategy to make sure it's consistent with the new delivery method.

Any change to any of the three basic considerations requires that you reexamine your answers and make appropriate changes. In this sense, a documentation strategy is truly a living document. As such, be sure to communicate those changes to all stakeholders and to reinforce behaviors that are consistent with the new documentation strategy.

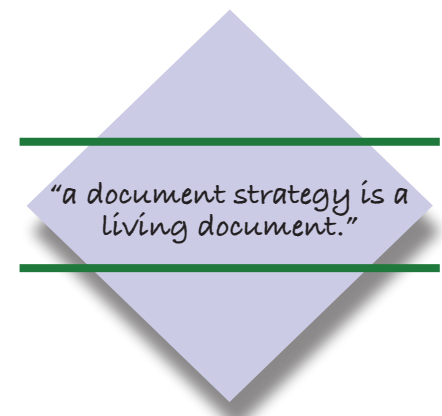
It doesn't hurt to make sure you're close to being done and that you've done a good job. Involve the members of the documentation team in the process. If you're a one-person organization, involve some of the internal customers of your documentation.

How Do You Get Executive Support?

You get executive support by helping the management team understand how a document strategy is going to increase the probability of success for the business. Without that you'll have

very little chance for adoption because there will be other things that will take precedence.

It's most likely that you won't be the decider about whether the documentation strategy is adopted. Some executive will have to approve it. You therefore need to demonstrate convincingly that your informed recommendations are the way to go. Begin by documenting all the findings you made in answering the critical questions. Next, summarize those findings in a one-page or one-slide presentation that makes the case for implementing the strategy. Finally, determine whose authority you need and make your pitch.



One of the best ways to get executive support is to show how implementing your documentation strategy is going to be good for the company's bottom line, market share, or reputation. If you key your one-page summary to those results, chances are good that the executive will want to know more. Have the supporting information available in supplementary slides or a complete report if it's needed.

Be prepared for the ideas in your pitch to be declined. Even the most reasoned and attractive idea may be passed over for reasons beyond your control. If that's the case, determine which elements

of the strategy are in your sphere of control and which you can implement without violating any constraints of time or resources. Put in place those elements you can and prepare to gather data that shows the bottom-line improvements that they made. You'll then be further prepared to make another pitch in the future when business conditions change.

Even if you're not able to get executive-level support for publishing and implementing a formal documentation strategy, you've already won a consolation prize. You've gained some killer insights into your target audience, examined your delivery methods, and shone light on other aspects of the way you do your job that can only help in improving the quality of what you do.

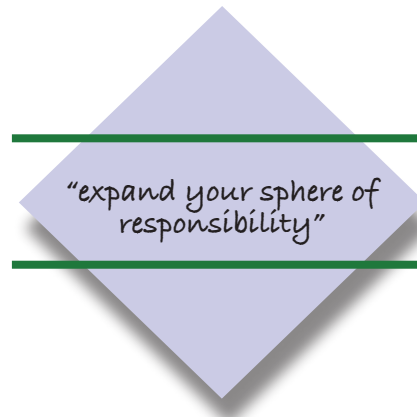
What's Next?

This is obviously not a comprehensive discussion of the topic. The next step is to find out what it means for you. Engaging in dialogs with like-minded professionals is probably the best way to do this.

There are many ways to initiate those dialogs. For example:

- ◆ Meet a colleague over coffee to get things started.
- ◆ Blog on the subject.
- ◆ Chat with colleagues at your next STC chapter meeting.
- ◆ Offer to make a presentation to a technical writing class at your local college or university.
- ◆ Gather your thoughts and request a half hour with one of your company executives who might serve as a champion for your ideas at company strategy meetings.
- ◆ Put together a panel discussion on the subject for a meeting of your local STC chapter or another local professional society.

- ◆ Request an informational interview with someone who has developed and implemented a strategy, not necessarily for documentation.



- ◆ Propose a follow-up article for *Intercom*. In addition to helping to inform further development of your documentation strategy, these discussions could serve as a foundation for a proposal to expand your sphere of responsibility into collaborating with those responsible for user experience, website content management, or marketing collateral.

I hope this article has provided you with some food for thought as you move toward developing your own documentation strategy. 📌

Dick Miller has spent decades helping people do their jobs more effectively and efficiently through technical documentation, instructional design, work process analysis, and user experience analysis.

Thanks to Bob Fordham, Steve Frison, Jeff Gansberg, Luke Kanies, Patti Loverink, Garret Romaine, John Stark, Dick Thomas, Phyllis Thompson, and Joanne Wakeland for sharing their thoughts on this topic.

STC Puget Sound

The Puget Sound Chapter holds its monthly chapter/program meetings from 6:00 PM–8:15 PM on the third Tuesday of the month. No events are scheduled for June, July, August, and December.

[STC-Puget Sound](#) also hosts informal roundtables to discuss a variety of topics and to network. Roundtables are held in a various locations in the Seattle area.

The STC Puget Sound “Upcoming Events” page lists information about the chapter meetings, roundtables, and other events.

If interested, WVC members can subscribe to Puget Sound’s event mailings on the STC-Puget Sound website.

The next chapter meeting is:

Sept. 20: Gloria Campbell, “Get Creative and Get Published”

Follow the WVC

For the latest chapter news and event information, follow the WVC on:



@stcwvc



WVC LinkedIn group

STC News—My STC Network Goes Online

[Editors' Note—STC announced the My STC Network in News and Notes, May 2011, and via email to STC members on May 12, 2011.]

The [STC.org My STC Network](#) will change the way technical communicators (TCs) interact online. Combining the knowledge-sharing capabilities of a professional network with the interactivity and user experience of a social network, My STC is an important platform for networking, collaboration, communication, community management, and more.

STC ensured the My STC website is simple enough to be intuitive while still incorporating the tools and resources that will provide the greatest value possible. STC involved community leaders from STC chapters and SIGs in the pre-release site testing, and their feedback helped refine the interface and determine which features are top priorities for STC members.

STC Members

To log in, STC members enter their existing STC usernames and passwords. From the STC.org homepage, members click on the “Log In/Log Out” link at the top right-hand side of the page or by clicking on the “My STC” tab on the navigation bar.

Once logged in, members can personalize their user experience by editing their profiles, adding personal information, uploading images or videos, creating or viewing events, and participating in discussions. Members of STC chapters or SIGs will be added automatically to the corresponding discussion groups after they sign in. If STC members do not belong to an STC community, they can participate in open discussion groups or start their own groups.

STC.org Visitors

With this new platform, STC also can invite any STC.org visitor to register for the [My STC website](#), providing the opportunity for nonmembers to purchase education offerings, publications, and other STC services. These accounts also allow nonmembers to gain limited access to the My STC Network, where they will be able to participate in designated nonmember groups and view or join open-community groups. (A group's status as “open” or “private” is determined by the administrator; in the case of STC communities, usually the president or manager.) If members invite nonmember technical communicators to join STC, My STC is an excellent opportunity to involve prospective members.

STC.org Overview

STC prepared a video tutorial that explains the new features of STC.org. If members prefer a walkthrough before signing in or need some help finding their way around, members can view the instructional video, “[STC Website Demo for Communities](#).”

Feedback

STC took great care to make this new platform as user-friendly as possible. If STC.org users should encounter any problems, they can leave feedback using the “Feedback” tab on every page of the website. Users are directed to Get Satisfaction (separate log in required), a tool STC uses to aggregate and address site issues and suggestions.

STC hopes these new web tools enhance collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among technical communication professionals. 

Contact STC/WVC

STC

Society for Technical
Communication
9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300
Fairfax, VA 22031-1803
703-522-4114 EDT

[STC Website](#)

[STC Email](#)

STC President: [Hillary Hart](#)

WVC

STC Willamette Valley Chapter
PO Box 765
Portland, OR 97207-0765

[WVC Website](#)

WVC Officers 2011–2012

President

[Carol L. Larson](#)

1st Vice President

[Maralee Sautter](#)

2nd Vice President

Position Open

Secretary

[Dave Thompson](#)

Treasurer

[Kate Lonborg](#)

WVC Mission Statement

Our local chapter will serve the interests of technical communicators in the Willamette Valley/Portland-Vancouver metro area by providing opportunities to:

- ♦ Network with other professionals in the community
- ♦ Promote best practices in technical communications
- ♦ Offer educational opportunities to encourage and support professional growth and career development

March and April Chapter Meetings

March 17—Rosalind Raddiya Lorey, “Ten Tips for Greater Happiness”

On a rain- and wind-swept evening of raised drawbridges over the Willamette, WVC 1st Vice President Karen O’Keefe opened the March meeting. A leader with an Irish name at a meeting on St. Patrick’s Day was augmented with the idea that anyone could be Irish that day by preceding an existing surname with “O’,” such as O’Davis, O’Lonberg, O’Lee.

Frivolity was equally appropriate for the meeting title of “Ten Tips for Greater Happiness,” presented by Rosalind Raddiya Lorey, who has studied inner peace and happiness for more than 40 years. Attendance was small enough that the presentation became a networking and question/answer opportunity coupled with Rosalind’s debunking of numerous truisms about what succeeds in happiness and counseling.

Door prizes were awarded: 3 tickets to the MadCap Roadshow, a purple luggage tag, and a red faux alligator business card wallet (tags intact).

Attendees were happily engaged until 9:10 PM at the McLoughlin Boulevard Round Table Pizza, thus extending their enjoyable evening.

April 21—Mabel Lee, Toni Mantych, and Sarah Leritz-Higgins, “Tech Talk”


DiNicola’s Italian Dining was the location for this panel discussion about technical communication tools. Many thanks go to WVC 1st Vice President Karen O’Keefe for planning the meeting arrangements and to DiNicola’s for their excellent food and service.

Mabel Lee, NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) Senior Technical Writer, discussed the

advantages/disadvantages of using MadCap Flare. Last autumn, NWEA converted from single sourcing with Microsoft Word to MadCap Flare to publish online help and quick reference guides. Mabel described Flare as “an amazing tool for changing variable names, using tables of contents to create documents,” and providing good document outputs. The primary disadvantages of Flare are the additional amount of time and effort to cross-reference information when changing mediums and the need to create different tables of contents for online and print documents.

Toni Mantych, ADP (Automatic Data Processing) Information Architect/Technology Consultant II, explained that ADP is converting from RoboHelp and FrameMaker to XML/DITA for conditional publishing. ADP needs products that support different user roles, multiple languages, and products with dissimilar user interfaces. The guidelines for the CMS (content management system)-driven changes are to make users’ jobs easier and prevent overwhelming users with information. The conversion plan is: (1) develop an information architecture based on DITA; (2) train writers in structural writing; and (3) move information to XML/DITA.

Sarah Leritz-Higgins, Mentor Graphics Technical Writer, feels that it’s easy to forget users’ needs when using publishing tools. By using FrameMaker, the Mentor writing team is “winning back customers one customer at a time.” The team keeps an open dialogue with users through a feedback button. The feedback form: (1) captures the document name and version; (2) asks users if they prefer to speak with a technical writer about the problem/complaint; and (3) gives technical writers the opportunity to speak directly with individual users. Sarah concluded, “The feedback button is a tool to open a dialogue with users and challenges [the writers’] assumptions.”

The evening ended at 8:30 PM with books and t-shirts given as door prizes, donated by Rachel Houghton and John Hedtke. Thank you, Rachel and John. 



2800
~~2,200~~ MySTC Members
(and counting)

They are networking, collaborating, connecting.
Why aren't you? Join Today!

Click Here

WVC Activities

The [Willamette Valley Chapter](#) (WVC) offers local opportunities for STC members and non-members to learn about new tools and technologies, network with other TCs, and receive recognition from colleagues. Program meetings are from 6:15 PM to 8:30 PM on the third Thursday of each month, except July and August. Currently, the Administrative Council is planning the program for 2011–2012. The WVC website will have the latest information about program topics, times, and locations.

Other chapter activities include workshops, WVC competitions, competition-award and volunteer-recognition banquets, and networking events. Details will be published on the WVC website.

All WVC members are welcome to attend the WVC Administrative Council meetings on the fourth

Thursday of each month, except July, when there is no meeting. Meetings begin at 6:30 PM; locations vary monthly. Contact [Carol L. Larson](#) if you'd like to attend a meeting.

WVC needs a new Contractors' SIG manager. Bill Harrison, the current SIG manager, plans to resign soon, so the WVC Administrative Council is looking for a new manager for the group. Until a new manager is found, contact [Bill Harrison](#) to add your name to the SIG mailing list or volunteer for the SIG manager position.

Upcoming WVC activities include:

Sept. 22 (Thurs.): "Getting to Know You—Your Favorite App," networking at the Lucky Lab Beer Pub (1945 NW Quimby, Portland), 6:00 PM–8:30 PM

Oct. 20 (Thurs.): Topic, location and time, TBD

Upcoming Conferences

This column lists conferences and events that may interest STC-WVC members.

Sept. 5–9: International Society of Logistics (SOLE); [46th Annual International Logistics Conference and Exhibition](#), "Logistics Chain Resiliency"; Dallas, TX

Sept. 14: Mediabistro; [Semantic Web Media Summit](#); New York City, NY

Sept. 19–23: Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES); [55th Annual Meeting](#); Las Vegas, NV

Oct. 7–12: American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T); [Annual Meeting](#), "Bridging the Gulf: Communication and Information in Society"; New Orleans, LA

Oct. 11–12: American Society for Training and Development-Cascadia (ASTD-Cascadia); [2011 Regional Conference](#), "Innovate! Create the Best, Inspire the Rest"; Salem, OR

Oct. 17–19: Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) Professional Communication Society (PCS); [2011 Professional Communication Conference](#), "Communication Sustainability"; Cincinnati, OH


Oct. 20–22: American Medical Writers Association (AMWA); [71st Annual Conference](#), "Writing Our Future"; Jacksonville, FL

Nov. 13–16: [LavaCon Conference 2011](#); Austin, TX

Disclaimer: Please regard the preceding information only as a guide; the WVC and The Willamette Valley cannot guarantee accuracy.

WVC Employment News

Maralee Sautter, the WVC employment information manager, posts job openings weekly to the WVC jobs list, WVCJOBS-L. Email Maralee at employment@stcwvc.org with questions.

The jobs list is a subscription-only list. WVC members subscribe for free, while non-members subscribe for a \$75 annual fee. To subscribe, go to the [WVC Website](#) and follow the link to the "Signup for Updates" page (Employment>Signup for Updates). 

Mid-Valley Chapter

The Mid-Valley Chapter currently is inactive. Contact [David Anderson](#) by email or telephone him at 541-758-7602 for the latest Mid-Valley information.



WVC Membership

WVC's membership numbers are decreasing. As of May 31, the WVC has 92 members, which is down from 115 members on February 28, 2011.

[Editors' Note—Membership totals provided by STC International.]

Networking Opportunities

Local opportunities for meeting and connecting with other technical communicators are numerous. Before and after WVC program meetings, members have the opportunity to network with other WVC members. Chapter program meetings are the third Thursday of most months. No program meetings are held in July and August. Time and location details are on the [WVC website](#).

Currently, the WVC Contractors' SIG is inactive while the WVC Admin Council searches for a new SIG manager. Until a new manager is found, [Bill Harrison](#) will add names to the SIG mailing list and accept volunteers for the SIG manager position.

Other professional networking possibilities for WVC members include American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Computer-Human Interface Forum of Oregon (CHIFOO), Developers Group NW (DevGroup NW), International Association of Self-Employed Creative Professionals (IASECP), and Software Association of Oregon (SAO).

ASTD

The Cascadia Chapter of the [American Society for Training and Development](#) offers a variety of program, special interest group, and networking meetings. The ASTD-Cascadia Chapter website contains the latest information about programs, times, and location details.

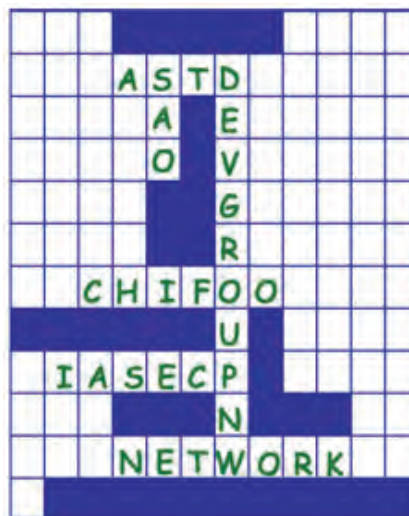
Local and regional events include:

Oct. 11–12: 2011 Regional Conference, “Innovate! Create the Best, Inspire the Rest,” Salem Conference Center (200 Commercial St. SE, Salem)

CHIFOO

The 2011 [Computer-Human Interaction Forum of Oregon](#) program focus is “Emerging Perspectives in User Experience.” Programs range from design topics to the latest research and testing techniques to animation.

CHIFOO program meetings are the first Wednesday of the month. The evening begins at 5:00 PM with CHIFOOd at various locations in Portland, followed by registration and networking at 6:30 PM and the program at 7:00 PM at the University of Oregon White Stag Building (70 NW Couch St., Portland) in Old Town.



Upcoming program meetings are:

Sept. 7: Stephen P. Anderson, “In Defense of Eye Candy”

Oct. 5: Thomas S. Tullis, “Why It’s Time to Move Beyond the Usability Lab”

DevGroup NW

[DevGroup NW](#) provides opportunities for members to network, share knowledge, and learn about new technologies in the web, multimedia, and interactive world. DevGroup NW posts information about upcoming events and meetings on its website.

IASECP

The [International Association of Self-Employed Communication Professionals](#) offers webinars to provide more members access to meetings. IASECP also schedules other events; details are on the IASECP website.

SAO

The [Software Association of Oregon](#) is the largest group of software and technical professionals in Oregon and SW Washington. SAO offers many opportunities for networking and learning.

Additional information about SAO events is on the SAO website and includes:

Sept. 15: Developers Forum—SAO’s TechIgnite!, McMenamin’s Mission Theater (1624 NW Glisan St., Portland), 5:30 PM–9:00 PM

Sept. 22: Developers Forum—Darin Glatt, “High-end Throughput with Commodity Hardware: A Case Study Using Cassandra,” Kell’s Irish Restaurant (112 SW 2nd Ave., Portland), 11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Educational Opportunities

Learning opportunities come in many forms: STC live seminars, STC free archived seminars, and STC certification courses as well as onsite and online training classes.

STC Live Web Seminars

[STC live web seminars](#) are for members and non-members. Generally, webinars are presented on Wednesdays from 1:00 PM–2:00 PM EDT. The cost for webinars is:

- ◆ Members—\$79
- ◆ Not yet members—\$149
- ◆ Student members—\$29

Complete information about future live webinars is on the “Live Web Seminars” web page.

STC Free Archived Seminars

STC offers free [archived seminars](#) for members only. Members must log in with their usernames and passwords. Complete information about the free seminars is on the “Free Archived Seminars” web page.

STC Certification

[STC online certification courses](#) provide enrolled class participants (members or non-members) the opportunity to earn STC certifications for an in-depth study of areas in technical communication. Courses are five to eight sessions in duration, taught by STC experts, and cost:

- ◆ Members—\$595
- ◆ Not yet members—\$995
- ◆ Student members—\$295

More information is available on the STC certification web page.

Classes

Classes to refresh or learn skills are available either as onsite or online courses from local colleges and universities or private vendors.

Onsite Classes

Many local universities and colleges hold classes of interest to technical communicators (TCs). For example, TCs can choose to take courses from several Portland State University departments. The [Portland State University Department of English](#) offers courses in tools—RoboHelp, FrameMaker, Creative Suite, and trends in technical communication.

The [Graduate School of Education Continuing Education \(CEED\)](#) provides classes in Training and Development. The [Professional Development Center \(PDC\)](#) offers programs in several areas including human resource management, multimedia, and information technology.

Local colleges and universities include:

- ◆ [Portland State University](#)
- ◆ [Portland Community College](#)
- ◆ [Oregon Institute of Technology](#)
- ◆ [Washington State University](#)
- ◆ [Clark College](#)
- ◆ [Chemeketa Community College](#)

Other Local Training

Local vendors providing tools and training classes include:

- ◆ [New Horizons](#)
- ◆ [Kinetic Technology Solutions](#)

Online Training

Online-based vendors offer a wide variety of classes of interest to TCs. Three vendors to try are:

- ◆ [Lynda.com](#)
- ◆ [Online-Learning.com](#)
- ◆ [W3 Schools](#)

Upcoming Classes

Dates	Class/Webinar	Title	Day/Time
Sept. 6–Oct. 4	STC Certification	Undiscovered Country: Master Writer	Tu/10:30 AM–12:00 PM EDT
Sept. 7	STC Webinar	Make It Snappy—Web-Based Reference Guides	W/1:00 PM–2:00 PM EDT
Sept. 8–Oct. 7	STC Certification	DITA from Legacy to the Future	ThF/10:30 AM–12:00 PM EDT
Sept. 14	PSU PDC	Online Collaboration Tools	W/8:30 AM–4:30 PM
Sept. 26–Dec. 10	PSU English/Writing	Technical Report Writing	Web
Sept. 26–Dec. 10	PSU English/Writing	FrameMaker	M/5:30 PM–9:10 PM
Sept. 26–Dec. 10	PSU English/Writing	Document Design	Web
Sept. 27–Dec. 8	PSU PDC	XHTML and CSS	Web
Oct. 3–Nov. 28	PSU PDC	Business Strategies for New Media	M/6:00 PM–9:00 PM
Nov. 9	STC Webinar	Evaluating Open-Source Content Management Systems	W/1:00 PM–2:00 PM EST

Disclaimer: The STC-WVC and The Willamette Galley staff are not responsible for the schedules, contents, or results of courses in this column. —Editors

Submissions to *The Galley*

Policies

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

The Galley co-editors also obey copyright laws. Contributors must cite quotations according to the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*; but contributors must apply for copyright permissions from the source for lengthy passages of text, illustrations, charts, photographs, or related materials. Please let the editors know if this article has run elsewhere and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Deadlines

Contributors send submissions to *The Galley* co-editors, [Valerie](#) or [Carol](#). Deadlines are:

- ♦ 10th day of the month that precedes the publishing month: Op-Ed articles (one *Galley* page); 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 (50–75 words)

Other Topics

Although we have a focus for each issue, we welcome contributions about technical topics that relate to our audience. Please share your ideas for articles with us as well as unsolicited pieces that meet our criteria.

Letters to *The Galley* Co-Editors

We welcome all letters to the co-editors that meet the following:

- ♦ Length: 150 words or less
- ♦ Deadline: 15th of month preceding publication (Jan., Mar., May, July, Sept., Nov.)

Publication depends upon adherence to *Galley* policies. Please email letters to [Valerie](#) or [Carol](#).

Foci for 2010–2011

The field of technical communication (TC) and its media constantly change with each new technology and tool, so the 2010–2011 *Galley* foci are “Changes in Technical Communication.” We encourage our readers to become our writers by contributing feature articles about these and related, writer-suggested topics:

Issue	Focus
August 2010	<i>WVC and STC International competitions</i> : Changes in classification, organization, and evaluation format from 2009–2010 to 2010–2011.
October 2010	<i>Metrics</i> : How do technical communicators (TCs) quantify their value? How do tech-pubs managers and other decision-makers in organizations quantify the value of TCs?
December 2010	<i>Electronic media, part 1</i> : How have DITA and other content management systems (CMS) changed technical publications? Is XML dead? Consider how CMS affects the following: writing; delivery; staff quantity/quality; media (from print to interactive e-communications); standardization of styles, language, reading levels, graphics.
February 2011	<i>Electronic media, part 2</i> : How do e-communication and Web 2.0 affect the delivery of documentation and other types of technical communications? What is the future of print? What is the future of other media deliverables?
April 2011	<i>Training</i> : Do trainers in a live, bricks-and-mortar classroom continue to be viable? What are the substitutes? Is online training as effective as classroom training? Is online training generally more effective in technical topics and settings than live classroom settings? If not, when is a live classroom more effective?
June 2011	<i>Perspective of technical publications managers</i> : Review policies, procedures, and technologies of 1) the past, 2) in current use, and 3) future plans or changes. Will the future require more or fewer TCs? Will TCs need more general or specialized skills? How should TCs position themselves to evolve with the profession?
August 2011	STC 2011 Summit