

Ragged Left

MARCH 2001

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THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

BERKELEY CHAPTER

Rescheduled From February

Zen and the Art of Online Help

You wanted—or were forced—to write online help, so you learned how to use a help-authoring tool. That's like learning how to write poetry by reading a Microsoft Word manual.

Now you are ready to learn a new way to approach online help development. Mark Bloom will teach you a working knowledge of Zen and how it applies to technical communication. He will present techniques that will reshape how you think about online help. He will provide help options you might have missed. He will leave you with a sense of well-being and optimism. He will do all this without leaving his body.

His presentation is not hands-on, and it's not platform-specific or product-specific. Still, in a Zen-like way that makes the ordinary extraordinary. Mark employs samples and stories, sprinkled with wit and wisdom, that have implications to all facets of technical communication. He introduces, for example, the concepts of information exchange, information transfer, and knowledge engineering.

And of course there is his advice for online help.

Mark addresses the problems of most online help systems. He discusses the theory behind how people learn and how online help fits that model. He focuses on the theoretical skills and intrinsic knowledge that help authors need to produce a help system that meets the needs of its users. Mark's goal is to make help authors

aware of their many options, their many challenges, and the enormous impact they can have on their product and their company.

Using the Zen concepts Mark teaches, you will learn how to overcome the limitations implicit in online help to develop truly useful and creatively effective online help. Insights will emerge. Light bulbs will begin to flicker. You might even experience an epiphany.

Mark H. Bloom is an award-winning technical communicator and an acknowledged guru of online help development. Mark currently manages a Creative Services team for America Online, Inc. An active member of the Society for Technical Communication, he has presented at international events and is serving his second term as President of the Orange County chapter.

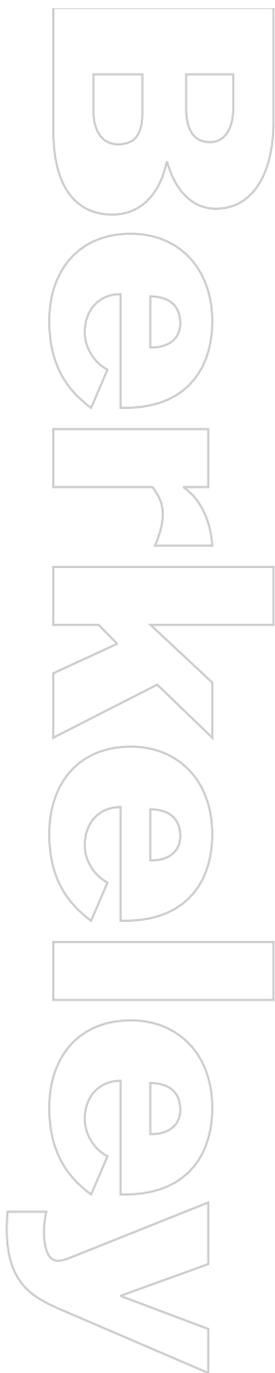
Join us on Wednesday, March 14th for this lively presentation. Meeting details appear on page 2 and you can make reservations online at www.stc-berkeley.org.

February Cancellation Leads to New Meeting Location

The Berkeley STC Chapter Board would like to extend our profoundest apologies to our members for the cancellation of the February chapter meeting. Essentially, we

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Ragged Left

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About the STC

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION is the bridge between those who create ideas and those who use them. Conveying scientific and technical information clearly, precisely, and accurately is an essential occupation in all sectors of business and government.



STC has more than 20,000 members and 144 chapters worldwide. Its members include writers, editors, artists, illustrators, photographers, audiovisual specialists,

managers, supervisors, educators, students, employees, and consultants.

STC strives to:

- Advance the theory and practice of technical communication.
- Promote awareness of trends and technology in technical communication.
- Aid the educational and professional development of its members.

Membership

Membership is open to everyone. Regular membership is \$110/year, with an additional \$15 enrollment fee the first year. Student membership is \$45/year.

To receive additional information and an application form, via mail or email:

- Call our chapter voicemail number 510-466-5464 and leave a message.
- Send email to bkymbrs@stc.org.
- Send mail to STC-Berkeley, PO Box 1007, Berkeley CA 94701-1007.

Advertising Rates

Page \$70, 2/3 page \$50, 1/2 page \$40, 1/3 page \$30, 1/6 page \$20, business card \$10. STC members receive 20% off. Ad deadline is the fifteenth of the month prior to publication.

Submissions

Ragged Left publishes original articles and illustrations. We edit them to meet our needs. You retain copyright but grant every STC publication royalty-free permission to reproduce the article or illustration in print or any other medium. Please contact the editor for details of how to submit articles and illustrations.

Deadline for unsolicited submissions is the 21st of the month preceding publication. Other STC publications are hereby granted permission to reprint articles from *Ragged Left*, provided such reprints credit the author and the specific *Ragged Left* issue, and a copy of any publication containing such a reprint is sent to the *Ragged Left* editor.

STC-Berkeley Chapter Meeting Details

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 14.

The Silver Dragon Restaurant serves STC-Berkeley members delicious Chinese food. The meeting begins at 6 P.M. with networking, conversation, and a no-host bar, followed by the buffet at 6:30 P.M. Chapter business and announcements are made around 7:15 P.M., followed by the speaker.

If you want to eat dinner, reservations are required and *must* be received (by Ruth) no later than 12:00 NOON the Monday before the meeting (March 12). Reservations are necessary so that we can order the right amount of food. Do *not* contact the restaurant.

Send checks to Ruth Wright, 586 Vernon Street, Oakland, CA 94610.



RSVP online: Use your credit card to order meeting reservations via the chapter Web site, www.stc-berkeley.org.

With a reservation, the meeting fee with food for members is \$20, for student members is \$17, and for nonmembers is \$23; if you come for the program only, starting at 7:30 P.M., the fee is \$12 for members and non-members (\$10 for students). If you are not eating, payments may be made at the door.

Fix Your Résumé

STC-Berkeley offers free résumé reviews to all comers, whether they are members or not. If you know someone who is a technical writer and would like some help with his or her résumé, we offer résumé reviews by people who have experience making hiring decisions.

With the average employer taking less than a minute to look at your résumé, another pair of eyes can help present your qualifications in the best light, *and* get you hired.

Résumés for review must be received the Friday before the monthly meeting (March 9). Send résumés to employment@stc-berkeley.org. Arrangements will be made to meet at the monthly

were put in a very difficult situation. Even though our chapter had put down a deposit on our usual meeting room 30 days in advance, we suddenly received an e-mail message canceling our reservation less than 2 weeks before the date of our meeting. Cafe de la Paz had decided to use their banquet room for a Valentine's Day dinner event. They were suddenly unwilling to honor their standing commitment to make their banquet room available to us on the second Wednesday of each month for our regularly scheduled chapter meeting, as they had done for nearly 3 years. We had no alternative but to cancel the meeting—with little or no time to find an alternate location, especially given the fact that Valentine's Day is one of the two busiest restaurant evenings of the year.

Our response to this behavior—which (to put it VERY diplomatically) we consider egregious, not to mention highly unethical—has been twofold. First, we have located a new meeting location at the Silver Dragon Chinese restaurant in Oakland, and secondly, we have resolved to “vote with our wallets” by choosing other Berkeley restaurants when making personal dining choices. We encourage all STC members who are unhappy with Cafe de la Paz's treatment of our chapter to do the same

Time To Vote...Again

BY SARAH LEE HAUSLINGER

Yes, it's spring and it's that time again....chapter elections time!

Chapter officers decide the direction our chapter takes for the coming year: speakers, meeting locations, and how we spend our money.

The officer positions are:

President: Leads chapter and board meetings, represents us to other parts of STC, inspires volunteers to become active, and makes many day-to-day decisions about chapter operations. Approximate time commitment: 25 hours per month.

V.P for Membership: Responds to requests for STC information, answers questions and accepts applications from potential chapter members, interviews new members for newsletter articles, calls members who don't renew, and generally works to make every member feel a valuable part of the chapter. A good job for a people person. Approximate time commitment: 12 hours per month.

V.P for Programs: Finds speakers and other programs for chapter meetings, makes arrangements for audiovisual equipment, oversees PR for meetings, welcomes and introduces speakers. A great job for making lots of valuable contacts. Approximate time commitment: 20 hours per month.

Treasurer: Receives chapter income, pays bills, keeps accurate financial records, reports to the membership about the financial health of the chapter, and advises the board about the feasibility of proposed chapter expenditures. Somebody has to be the grown-up, and you're it. A great way to learn how to manage finances for those who are interested in starting their own technical writing business. Approximate time commitment: 15 hours per month.

Secretary: Creates and distributes minutes of board meetings, answers chapter voice mail, corresponds with other STC groups, and helps with board activities as needed. A great job for someone who is just starting out as a technical writer: you attend meetings, document what goes on, and write a summary that you then distribute to the Board members and post on the chapter Web site each month. Approximate time commitment: 10 hours per month.

Any Berkeley STC member in good standing can run for any office. You have until March 22 to declare your candidacy. Ballots, candidate statements, and instructions for voting will appear in the April Ragged Left and on the chapter Web site; votes will be counted at the May chapter meeting.

It's fun, and it's rewarding. Even if you don't win, you'll be first in line for important appointed positions.

To throw your hat into the ring, send e-mail stating your name and the position you wish to run for to the election committee chair elections@stc-berkeley.org.

Send your candidate statement via email to Ragged Left editor Jessica Livingston at newsletter@stc-berkeley.org. Statements are approximately one hundred words in length. Jessica edits them as she sees fit.

To date, the following candidates have come forward: President—Kathryn Munn; Treasurer—Susan Marchionna; VP of Programs—Ruth Wright; VP of Membership —Paul Sinasohn.

Indexing Conference In San Francisco

The American Society of Indexers-Golden Gate Chapter is holding a full-day conference on April 28, 2001 at the Firehouse at Fort Mason in San Francisco. The topic of this year's program is Dedicated Indexing Software and Voice Recognition Software. Speakers include Frances Lennie of CINDEX, Gale Rhoades of MACREX, and Kamm Schreiner of SKY Index.

A buffet lunch by Green's, San Francisco's premier vegetarian restaurant, will be included. For more information and registration forms visit <http://home.pacbell.net/nansu/asi.htm> or contact J. Naomi Linzer, jnlinzer@saber.net or phone (707) 923-4361.

Berkeley Biotech SIG Breaks

by Ruth A. Wright

The Berkeley Biotech SIG has served STC members since 1997. Formed by members who were looking for information about documentation methodology that wasn't then easily available, meetings were held in members' homes and information about documentation formats and product development processes was shared. Membership over the past twelve months has wavered between eight and two, with too many meetings drawing only two attendees. After discussion with the Board of Directors, it was decided that, for the present at least, maybe the Biotech SIG had outlived its useful life. At some point in the future, with a larger core group of attendees, we can easily envision the group being reactivated.

To all who were former members and have inquired recently about where the SIG went, I hope this answers your questions. To Sue Estey, the last intrepid member who turned out the lights when she left, many thanks. I am a newcomer to the field and to STC and Sue was helpful, gracious, informative and frank.

Please feel free to peruse the archival articles on the Biotech page at the STC Berkeley web site. The information is still current and pertinent to the field. If you would like to e-mail me for any reason, I can be reached at programs@stc-berkeley.org.

Editors Guild Explores the Current Market

MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2001

7:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

ROCKRIDGE LIBRARY, 5366 COLLEGE AVENUE (AT MANILA), OAKLAND

Guest speaker: Alice Gallagher, director of Editcetera.

Alice will discuss the current market for Bay Area editors: which skills are in demand, what local editors are charging, and how to keep your skills and rates current.

Alice has been working in and around the field of editing in the Bay Area since 1987, as a technical editor (Vestek Systems, Electronics for Imaging [EFI], and Farallon/Netopia) and as a technical publications recruiter. In 1999 she joined Editcetera as its director and now works to place Editcetera members in contract editorial positions with local and national clients. She is also active in the Society for Technical Communication, the International Association of Business Communicators, and the Silicon Valley Association of Software Entrepreneurs.

About Editcetera: Editcetera was founded in 1971 as a member-directed association of freelance editors,

writers, production coordinators, indexers, and proofreaders. The organization's principal mission is to match its members with publishers, corporations, and individuals who are seeking independent contractors. Editcetera also offers workshops and correspondence courses. For more information, visit www.editcetera.com.

San Francisco STC Offers Single-Sourcing Demo

STC SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21ST, 2001

6:00 P.M.: NETWORKING AND SELF-SERVE HORS D'OEUVRES

7:00 P.M.: PROGRAM

Single-source publishing is the only way to produce multiple formats efficiently. "Write once, publish anywhere" is a model that not only serves as a philosophy of efficiency but also acts as a method to universally control content revisions and preserve look and feel. In this session, we will introduce WebWorks Publisher Professional and all of its new features, as well as focus on single-source publishing technical documentation from FrameMaker 6.0 to output print, Internet, and numerous online Help formats, using WebWorks Publisher Professional 6.0.

Andrew VanConas, director of consulting for Quadralay Corporation, has implemented numerous HTML-Based Help and online documentation systems for companies such as Raytheon, QAD, Agilent, Compaq, and Dell, handling extremely challenging and complex large-scale projects such as a single-source system with over 25 FrameMaker books that had to be published to print, PDF format, an intranet, and a Web site, as well as incorporated into an online help system using WebWorks Help.

Meeting Location: London Wine Bar, downstairs

415 Sansome Street, Downtown San Francisco

STC members: \$10; Non-members: \$12; Students: \$8

Details: <http://www.stc-sf.org>

Berkeley Education Initiative Offers Framemaker Classes

STC Berkeley is kicking off its Education Initiative Program this month by offering its first class—Introduction to Adobe FrameMaker 6.0. The 2-day class filled up quickly, with a waiting list sufficient to fill another class session. The STC-Berkeley Education Initiative and trainers are scurrying to assemble another class to meet current demands.

Members interested in future classes should visit our Website www.stc-berkeley.org for upcoming class announcements throughout the year. Plans for classes on additional software tools are currently being considered for later in 2001.

Yet More Elections!

In case you haven't had enough talk about elections, two candidates running for STC Second Vice President have offered candidate statements. Due to space limitations visit www.stc-berkeley.org for the full text.

Andrea L. Ames

STC Region 8 Director-Sponsor (1998-2001)

If elected, I will work for the next four years to raise our strategic value—both as individuals and as an industry—to the organizations for which we work.

My vision for the industry is one in which our main goal is to ensure users' success—NOT to write documentation. We design and develop information to enable users to use products—NOT to fill in for the deficiencies in product design.

In other words, we will no longer define ourselves by the information products (manuals, help, etc.) we deliver—nor the tools we use to develop them. Instead, our employers will recognize the value we bring to the products and information we design and develop. Think about it: The real value we bring is not the documents we develop but the user's increased success! My goal is to work to help the organizations in and with which we work understand this and help enable them to get the most value from us.

If you have any questions about me or my candidacy, feel free to contact me at andrea@verbal-imagery.com. You can also visit www.verbal-imagery.com for postings of recent chapter-meeting presentations.

Thea Teich

Senior Member, Southwestern Ohio Chapter.

First, I bring a “can-do,” implementation-focused orientation. Moving ideas and plans from “ought” to “action” is one of my strengths. Determining the optimal way, which may not necessarily be the fastest or the cheapest way, to transform projects from plans to production—and then doing it—is how I've earned my living for many years.

Second, I believe that to make good decisions, input from people who don't think exactly as I do or who have different priorities is necessary. I listen. I believe consensus leads to decisions that respond best to the issues.

Third, I bring a breadth of experience to the office. Technical communicators work in varied situations—and I've been through most of them. Independent, corporate, nonprofit, educational, downsized, upsized, overwhelmed—I've been there. As a result, I think I have more than an inkling of what many STC members face every day.

For more information about me, please visit www.TeichTMC.com. You may also contact me at Thea@TeichTMC.com.

March 2001 Director Sponsor's Column

Report from the STC Board of Directors Winter Meeting

STC Region 8 Director Sponsor Andrea L. Ames is back from the Winter 2001 Board meeting in San Diego, where the STC Board of Directors.3(r)78(rec(ct)-3(c(ct)-3(r3(p)3ov1(o)-88

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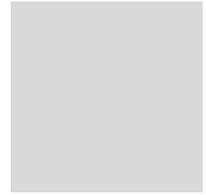
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94701

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Next Meeting-New Locale: Wednesday March 14

Zen and the Art of Online Help with Mark Bloom

Meal reservations required by Monday, March 12.
See page 2 for costs and meeting details. **RSVP online:**
Credit cards accepted at www.stc-berkeley.org.
Please do *not* call the restaurant!

Silver Dragon Chinese Restaurant: 835 Webster Street (at
8th) in Oakland
Buffet and No-Host Bar 6:30 - 7:30
Announcements and Program 7:30 - 9:00

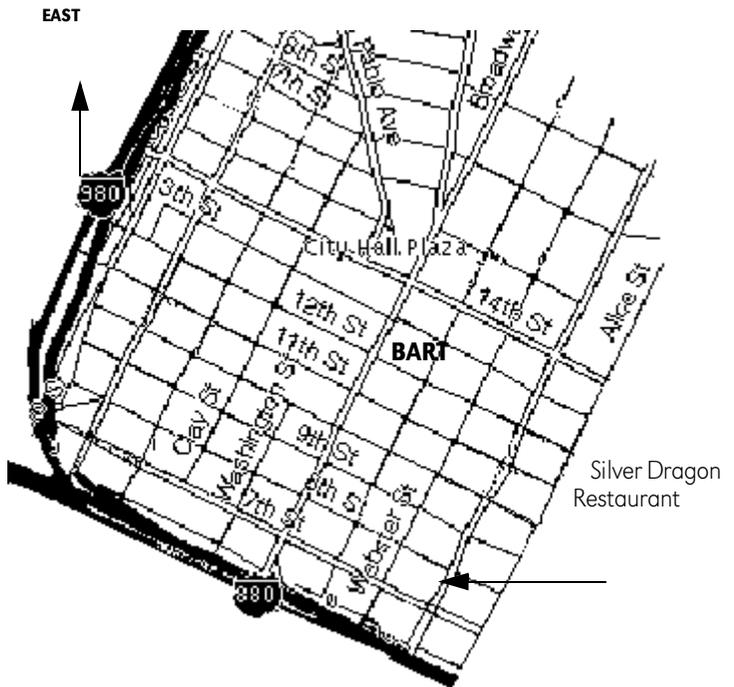
STC-BERKELEY MEETING DIRECTION

From north of Oakland: Take the I-880 North. Merge onto the I-580 East ramp towards downtown Oakland. Merge onto I-980 W. Take the 18th street exit towards 14th street. Merge onto Brush St. Turn left onto 17th St. Turn right onto San Pablo Ave. Turn slight right onto City Hall Plaza. Turn left onto 14th St/International Dr. Turn right onto Webster St. and proceed to 8th & Webster.

From south of Oakland: Take I-880 north from San Jose through Oakland. Take the Oak Street exit towards Lakeside Dr. Turn right onto Oak St. Turn left onto 8th St. Turn right onto Harrison St. Turn left onto 10th St. Turn left onto Webster St.

From San Francisco: Take the Bay Bridge towards Oakland (I-80 East). At the end of the bridge, take the I-580 East ramp towards downtown Oakland (CA-24)/Hayward-Stockton. Merge onto I-580 E. Take I-980 West ramp towards downtown Oakland. Merge onto I-980 W. Take the 18th street exit towards 14th street. Merge onto Brush St. Turn left onto 17th St. Turn right onto San Pablo Ave. Turn slight right onto City Hall Plaza. Turn left onto 14th St/International Dr. Turn right onto Webster St.

From far East Bay: Take Highway 24 west through Caldecott Tunnel. Highway 24 west becomes I-980 west. Take the 18th street exit towards 14th street. Merge onto Brush St. Turn left onto 17th St. Turn right onto San Pablo Ave. Turn slight right onto City Hall Plaza. Turn left onto 14th St/International Dr. Turn right onto Webster St. and proceed to 8th & Webster.



Join us in our New Meeting Location in Oakland

By BART: Exit the 12th Street Oakland station. Walk south for two blocks, to Webster St. Turn right and walk west to 835 Webster St.