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June 2003
Volume 17 No. 3

The Monthly Newsletter for the Berkeley Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

In this issue

Next Meeting

Designing for People: Human Factors for Technical Communicators. Andrea L. Ames, Senior Information Developer at IBM and new first vice president of STC, will be our speaker for the June meeting. Mark your calendar for June 11 to learn about this important topic from one of the leaders in our industry.

News & Reviews

Single sourcing with Framemaker may be the future of our industry. In April Karl Matthews presented Adobe FrameMaker 7.0 and XML: Responding to New Trends in Technical Publishing. William Abernathy provides a detailed recap of that presentation. Feeling the pressure of these turbulent times? The May meeting focused on reducing your stress. Marc Branco fills us in on in the monthly wrap.

New chapter members, Treasurer's report, elections results, membership fee hike, and the Region 8 conference next month. Catch up with the latest news and trends in the Chapter, Society and industry with our News section.

Looking for the ultimate guide to documentating architecture and project management? Guest writer Mike Tarrani reviews *Documenting Software Architectures: Views and Beyond*, described as, "The only technical documentation book you'll need."

Volunteer

Want your be part of an award winning publication? The Ragged Left is always looking for articles and reviews related to our industry. Visit our editorial section for submission guidelines. We've also got some open positions on the Executive Committee, which departing President Kathryn Munn discusses in her last column.

Resources

For the latest trends and resources in single sourcing and online help, Ron Rothbart offers a detailed recap of the WinWriters conference in Seattle.

Monthly Meeting

speakers resources
networking resume review Vo's

Next Meeting: Wednesday June 11, 2003

This month Andrea Aames, STC's 2nd vice president, will be our honored guest and presenter. Andrea has long worked on the cutting edge in technical communication and you will not want to miss her special presentation. Andrea will also present a 2003 Distinguished Chapter Service Award to one of our deserving members.

Designing for People: Human Factors for Technical Communicators

What are "human factors?" Those characteristics of our users that influence or affect their experiences while using our products—the way they think, solve problems, and learn, as well as their background, past experiences, and attitudes. Why should technical communicators care? Information **is** part of the product, and many technical communicators are woefully out of touch with their users. Technical communicators developing online information, like Help and Websites are, strictly speaking, designing interactive interfaces. And many communicators are moving away from developing only traditional documentation deliverables—some are designing product user interfaces.

If this sounds like you, join Andrea L. Ames as she discusses human factors from a technical communicators perspective. She'll provide a basic overview of human factors, demonstrate the impact of two important factors on information design and architecture, and describe how you can become a more knowledgeable technical communicator in this area.

About Andrea Andrea L. Ames, M.S., is a technical communicator specializing in user-centered product interface and online information architecture and design, interaction design, and usability. She has more than 19 years of experience designing, developing, and producing usable technical and scientific information for products, software user interfaces, multimedia and online information systems, and print documentation.

Andrea is a Senior Information Developer at IBM Corporation, where she leads information development for a large data management product. She is an Associate Fellow and a member of the STC international Board of Directors (she will be President in 2004-05); coordinator for two University of California Extension technical communication certificates; and a published author and freelance writer. She teaches at the university level and speaks internationally at professional conferences.

STC-Berkeley Chapter Meeting Details

Vo's Restaurant in downtown Oakland, is within easy walking distance to BART, is wheelchair accessible, and has both street and nearby garage parking.

Networking and conversation start at 6:00 p.m., and dinner at 6:30 p.m. If you want to eat dinner, reservations are required and must be received no later than 12:00 noon the Monday before the meeting.

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Monthly Wrap

guest writers *meetings*
presentations
resources speakers

Each month rotating guest writers offer a review of the monthly meeting program. This month William Abernathy offers a recap of the April meeting.

Adobe FrameMaker 7.0 and XML: Responding to New Trends in Technical Publishing
By William Abernathy

For the April meeting, the STC's Berkeley chapter hosted Karl Matthews, the Group Product Manager for FrameMaker. In a presentation on Adobe FrameMaker 7.0 and XML: Responding to New Trends in Technical Publishing Karl charted Adobe's view of the future, outlined the company's responses, and showed off some of the new features of the newest release of the Tech Writer's Best Friend.

Current Trends
As the FrameMaker Product Manager, Matthews enjoys a unique vantage point on technical communication trends, and what he's found is no surprise: the big movement in documentation is towards single-sourcing of technical writing for dissemination over an ever-widening array of channels. Further, he noted, consumer expectations of documentation are changing from a "post-purchase experience" to a more honored position as a pre-purchase decision tool (supplanting not-always-trustworthy marcomm materials in many skeptical buyers' eyes). As such, he observed, technical publication is slowly moving away from its perennial location in the corporate cost center doghouse to a more starring role.

Getting documentation to customers and other stakeholders is increasingly requiring multi-channel publication, with documentation reaching the reader via Acrobat, print, CD-ROM, and HTML primarily, but as technology advances, via an increasing varied constellation of media. Traditional presentation methods simply cannot scale to meet the demand for multi-channel, multi-format presentation.

While these trends are clear to most of us in the trenches, only 20% of respondents to a WinWriters survey indicated that they single-source exclusively and 23% said they do so regularly. Matthews concluded that single-sourcing remains "cutting edge stuff." Looking ahead, though, the trend is clearly towards more single-sourcing, more multi-channel publishing, and more XML as the tool that makes it all possible.

Adobe's Response
Thanks to this explosion of new and different media, documentation design can no longer limit itself solely to existing presentation formats, but must also be robust and flexible enough to accommodate as-yet-uninvented new media still over the horizon. In order to meet the challenge posed by these trends (not to mention that of a certain large competitor with a stated interest in XML-based publishing), Adobe has moved forward with a significant restructuring of the

Financial Report

budget treasurer *income*
fiscal summary   cash

In spite of a decrease in membership, the financial situation of the Berkeley Chapter of the STC is stable. By converting the *Ragged Left* to an online format, we've eliminated the largest expense to the chapter— the monthly printing and mailing of the newsletter. In this fiscal year, the Berkeley Chapter is acting as treasury for the ongoing series of Leadership Conferences, and of the general Region Eight Conference in Las Vegas in July of 2003.

Chapter Treasurer Ben Lukas is preparing a budget to guide the activities of the STC for the next fiscal year, starting in July, 2003. He and the executive board welcome the input of any Berkeley Chapter member who may wish to contribute constructive ideas. To share any ideas or questions, email Ben.

Summary of Income, Expenses, Cash, and Liabilities
For Fiscal Year 2002-2003 through April 2003

INCOME

Meeting Fees	2787
Rebate from National STC	5760
Regional Conference in Las Vegas	2074
Regional Leadership Conference	2500
Total Income	**$13,121**

EXPENSES

Awards for members	371
Board Meetings	691
Credit Card Fees	765
Entertainment	150
Gifts for volunteers	150
Meals and entertainment	102
Monthly meeting expenses	3382
Office supplies	49
Postage	252
Printing	35

News

region 8
Chapter News
updates
industry
stc

June 2003

Catch up on the latest news from the Chapter, Society, and industry. For more information about STC, the Chapter, and contact information for our officers, visit our directory section.

Chapter News

Chapter Financial Report

Chapter Treasurer Ben Lukas delivers an updated look at the Chapter's financial status.

2003-2004 Chapter Elections

by Kathyrn Munn

At the May 14, 2003 chapter meeting, elections were held for 2003-2004 chapter officers. We are pleased to announce the results as follows:

STC Berkeley Chapter Officers	2003-2004
President	Joe Devney
Vice President-Programs	David Alt
Vice President-Membership	Rob Peterson
Treasurer	Ben Lukas
Secretary	David McCoard

Want to support the services and programs of the Chapter while adding something impressive to your resume? How about serving as a STC-Berkeley Chapter manager? We are currently recruiting for the positions of Webmaster and Education Manager. If you are interested in serving on the Executive Committee in one of these positions or if you have a great idea for a program the chapter should consider implementing, contact Kathryn Munn. Make STC-Berkeley effective and relevant for all our members.

New Chapter Members

by Rob Peterson, VP of Membership

Please welcome two new Berkeley members, Tom Dambly and Moya Melody. Tom is a documentation and training consultant who has been working exclusively in the professional audio industry for more than five years. His clients have included Digidesign, Meyer Sound Laboratories, and Sonic Solutions. He has also worked for the University of California at Berkeley, Adobe Systems, Novell, and Berkeley

Book Review

read write opportunity resources STC share

Book Review
By Mike Tarrani

Documenting Software Architectures: Views and Beyond
by Paul Clements (Editor), Felix Bachmann, Len Bass, David Garlan, James Ivers,
Reed Little, Robert Nord, Judith Stafford
Addison Wesley Professional; 1st edition (September 26, 2002), Hardcover: 560
pages, ISBN 0201703726, $54.99

Since reading a fascinating document titled *CMU/SEI-2001-TN-010 - Documenting Software Architectures: Organization of Documentation Package* a year ago and discovering that the approximately 20-page document was the basis for a book I have patiently waited, and am delighted with how the book turned out.

First, this book stands out as one of the clearest descriptions of how to not only document architectures, but how to manage the documentation project. Second, this is not a dogmatic prescription for how to document, but instead gives a set of techniques and views that can be used singularly or in combination to produce documentation that meets the needs of all technical and business stakeholders.

When I read the brief predecessor to this book I liked the way different view types and styles were introduced, but was left to my own imagination and creativity to employ them based on scant descriptions. This book rectifies those gaps by providing comprehensive guidance on how to create each view type and when it's most appropriate for inclusion into the documentation project. I was also intrigued by the earlier document because it discussed 'information chunking', which is the basis for a technique in which I'm trained and certified called Information Mapping©. The book expands on the earlier work, and it turns out that the material is not only consistent with Information Mapping© at a high level, but also shares many core principles. To me this is another plus because it will introduce readers who have not benefited from formal Information Mapping© training to powerful and effective document design and development techniques.

Another strong point about this book is the attention paid to managing the documentation process— it's one thing to write clear documentation and quite another to manage a process where many writers contribute to the documentation. I also liked the illustration examples, which epitomize how to effectively portray technical detail, and the discussion of other methods of documenting architecture.

In my opinion this book should become the standard for developing and managing documentation. It

Editorial

information   publication   write   copyright   reprints

June 2003

It's an exciting time to be part of the Berkeley Chapter. Thanks to the driving force of our President Kathryn Munn, who is stepping down after two years, our new President Joe Devney inherits a chapter that is going to keep him very busy. We just won a Chapter of Excellence award from STC, and a Merit Award in the international newsletter competition.

Neither award could be possible without the time and talent of the many volunteers and guest writers. We really appreciate the efforts of each and every one of you who has contributed to our chapter's success. This year we're striving for even higher awards, and hope more of you will volunteer. I'm kicking off the new leadership year with a fresh redesign of the *Ragged Left*, and welcome your comments.

As always, I'm in need of articles for our monthly columns to keep us on top, so browse the list below to see if any of our needs match your skills. We'd like to expand the *Ragged Left* staff with more volunteers. If you're interested in contributing to our industry as part of an award-winning publication, while expanding your portfolio, contact me.

See you at Vo's,

Jessica Livingston
Ragged Left Editor

Ragged Left Topic Needs
Below is a list of the articles we are most often searching for.

Monthly Recap
Each month we look for a volunteer to write a recap of the speaker's presentation at our monthly meeting. The length of that article should be around 350 words, although if it was a particularly engaging topic we can run a longer article. Attendance at the meeting would be necessary.

Resource Column
Every month we run a monthly resource column. Suggested topics include a review of software; new, new version, or related: a Website or other online resource related to our industry: books or other tools you found useful: a process, language, or class that was beneficial. To insure that your topic has not been recently covered, please clear the topic in advance with the editor. Suggested length: 375-750 words.

Feature Articles
We're open to articles on unsolicited topics.

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President's Message

STC Berkeley *update* chapter
Executive Committee

June 2003

Greetings STC-Berkeley chapter members and friends! The month of June marks the end of my term of service as your president. The past two years have been challenging, fulfilling, and a great learning experience. It has been a privilege to work with the talented and energetic members of the Executive Committee who have brought you the programs, newsletter, and website of the chapter. Thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the chapter.

At our June 11, 2003 meeting Andrea Ames, STC 2nd Vice President, will be our honored guest and presenter. Andrea has long worked on the cutting edge in technical communication and you will not want to miss her special presentation. Andrea will also present a 2003 Distinguished Chapter Service Award to one of our deserving members. Make your reservation online now.

As always we want to hear about what the Chapter can do to support you in your professional goals as a technical communicator. Email me with your ideas, suggestions, and especially any ways you might be willing to contribute your own talent and time.

See you at the June 11, 2003 meeting!

Kathryn Munn
President

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TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Conference Report
STC Berkeley senior member Ron Rothbart shares his experience at the recent WinWriters conference in Seattle.

Single-Sourcing and Online Help: A Report from the WinWriters Conference
By Ron Rothbart

In February, I joined about 420 other technical writers at the eleventh annual WinWriters Online Help Conference in Seattle. This was my second WinWriters conference. My last one was 1996 when Microsoft announced HTML Help.
A good number of the conference sessions were about single-sourcing and related topics, and a good number of exhibitors touted their single-sourcing capabilities. Three main approaches to single-sourcing were represented: 1) using XML, 2) using a conversion tool like WebWorks, and 3) database publishing.

At least four sessions covered or touched on XML. Tony Self presented a comprehensive introduction to *The XML Revolution*, and I attended three other XML-related sessions of interest.

XML at Microsoft
XML came up tangentially in Cheryl Lockett Zubak's session, *Microsoft Help Update*, when she told the audience that Microsoft is developing its own internal XML-based content management system. The aim is to enable content re-use at Microsoft. While she made it clear that this is for internal use only, she speculated that it may influence the external help platform that will accompany Microsoft's next operating system, due sometime in the next 2-3 years. (This upcoming help system should not be confused with Help 2.0, which Microsoft has decided not to release as a general help platform.)

Zubak said that Microsoft is using a variant of DocBook as the DTD for its new XML-based system. This is interesting because some single-sourcing advocates have cast doubt on DocBook's suitability for online help. DocBook was designed before the big shift to online documentation, and it is sometimes seen as too book-oriented. A team at IBM has proposed a topic-oriented alternative called DITA, which it argues is more flexible. Since Microsoft tends to set the standard for much of the software industry, it is noteworthy that they have chosen DocBook.

Home Grown System
In *A Case Study of XML Authoring*, Christopher Green presented a home grown, XML-based authoring system that he created with the help of a couple of developers at the company where he works. Chris acknowledged that when he started on the project, he knew almost nothing about XML. In my view, this shows in the system that he created.

Networking

resources meetings workshops seminars classes

STC Chapter Meetings and related groups in Northern California

Visiting other chapter meetings is a great way to expand your knowledge and networking circle. Click the chapter links below for more information on the program, times, and directions for each meeting.

Note: Some chapters rearrange meetings over the summer, so check the website for specific information.

STC Sacramento Chapter meets the first Wednesday of every month at the Sacramento Hilton.

STC East Bay Chapter meets the first Thursday at the Crow Canyon Country Club in Danville.

STC San Francisco Chapter meets the third Wednesday of every month in downtown San Francisco.

STC North Bay Chapter meets the fourth Thursday of each month in Santa Rosa.

STC Silicon Valley Chapter Meets the fourth Thursday of every month at the Four Points Sheraton in Sunnyvale.

Bay Area Editors' Forum Meets at Borders Books in Union Square, San Francisco. The meeting date varies, so visit their website for the most up-to-date information.

East Bay Editor's Guild

Tuesday, June 3 at the Rockridge Branch of the Oakland Public Library, 5366 College Avenue, Oakland, 7p.m. For more detailed information, contact Co-Program Director Alana Laurence Inugau.

Editcetera Workshops

This spring Editcetera is offering workshops. Visit their website for more detailed information. Still time to get in for the last of the series:

The Business of Freelancing
Saturday, June 14, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Location: Fort Mason Center Gatehouse, San Francisco