Ragged Left

The newsletter for the Berkeley Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

In this issue

Volume 20, Number 3
May/June 2007

Meeting Notes

Practical Advice for API Writers Implementing an Automation Tool
by Caroline Scharf

Monique Semp, principal of Write Quick, Inc., was the speaker at the April 11th, 2007 meeting of the STC Berkeley chapter where she spoke on the topic of automating API documentation. Her presentation, titled "Automating API documentation, and a DoxyS Case Study," focused on how to write an API reference and what to include in it, the role of an API writer, and the pros and cons of automation tools and how to choose one. She used DoxyS as a case study to illustrate how to generate an HTML API reference. She also spent time addressing individual questions from the audience and providing useful tips and real-world examples. All in all, Monique Semp imparted a great deal of valuable information, using the meeting time to its fullest extent.

After polling the meeting attendees and learning that roughly half the audience had experience with API documentation, Semp defined the audience of an API reference saying that engineers, either internal or external, are the primary audience. She also noted that sales may use the API reference as a marketing tool to illustrate how full-featured and well-documented the product is.

Semp was then quick to describe what an API reference is not. She said it is not a programming or installation guide, it does not contain lengthy code examples or describe how functions are used together, and it should not contain fancy graphics and fonts. She stressed that an API reference contains a "concise" description of each public function, a list of its parameters and attributes, and a short code example. This is important for engineers who use the API reference to quickly obtain answers.

Once the audience was versed on what an API reference is and for whom it's written, Semp described the pros and cons of manually generating an API reference versus automatically generating one. She maintained that the main distinction between the two methods is that automated output is always in-sync with the code and is easy to maintain, whereas an API reference created in FrameMaker or Word can easily become out-of-sync with the code and is difficult to maintain. Despite the fact that the writer may lose some formatting control and output options using an automation tool, Semp said the HTML output has a standard look that engineers recognize and any other limitations, such as the inability to spell-check, are not reason enough to manually generate the reference.

Semp also spent time describing the roles an API writer fulfills, including project manager, code reviewer, writer, editor, and even programmer in the sense that the writer uses the same tools and is involved in the build process just like an engineer. She maintained that the API writer often discovers coding inconsistencies, such as inconsistent naming, functions that don't return a status, and even when there is a disconnect in how product management envisions a feature and what is actually implemented. She said one

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.

THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (STC) has members worldwide. Its members include writers and editors, artists and illustrators, photographers and audiovisual specialists, managers and supervisors, educators and 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. Classic membership is $145/year with an additional $15 enrollment fee. STC also offers Limited, E-Membership, and Student Membership options. To receive additional information and an application form, via mail or email.

• Send email to membership@stc-berkeley.org
• Send mail to Berkeley STC, PO Box 1007, Berkeley CA 94701-1007

INSURANCE Members of STC can apply for health, disability, and other insurance at STC group rates. For more information, contact STC office at stc@stc.org or (703) 522-4114.

WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES STC's annual conference brings together more than 2,000 technical communicators from around the world for educational programs, seminars, and workshops conducted by experts in the field. Upcoming annual conference: Minneapolis, May 13-16, 2007. In addition the STC sponsors many regional conferences, which feature the same sorts of programs, seminars, and workshops on a more intimate scale. STC sponsors international and regional competitions in all aspects of technical communication. STC Special Interest Groups (SIGs) bring together members with common experiences and interests to share their skills and knowledge. STC SIGs include:

• Academic	• Lone Writer
• AccessAbility	• Management
• Canadian Issues	• Marketing Communication
• Consulting and Independent Contracting	• Online
• Emerging Technologies	• Policies and Procedures
• Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication	• Quality and Process Improvement
• Illustrators and Visual Designers	• Scientific Communication
• Information Design and Architecture	• Single Sourcing
• Instructional Design & Learning	• Technical Editing
• International Technical Communication	• Usability & User Experience

STC sponsors research grants and scholarships in technical communication.

STC publishes the quarterly journal *Technical Communication*, the newsletter *Intercom*, and other periodicals, reference materials, manuals, anthologies, standards, and booklets.

Formed in 1953, STC has today become the largest professional society in the world dedicated to advancing the theory and practice of technical communication.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES The six northern California chapters of STC conduct a variety of individual and joint activities. See page 7 for contacts for these chapters. See page 8 for a list of other local organizations in which STC members may be interested.

SUBSCRIPTIONS This newsletter is free to members of the Berkeley chapter.

ADVERTISING RATES The *Ragged Left* is not accepting advertising at this time.

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 talk with the editor for details of how to submit articles and illustrations.

The deadline for unsolicited submissions is the last Friday of the odd months.

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doesn't need to be an engineer to notice these types of issues, using the example that a writer can identify a poorly coded function when a lengthy description is required to cover all that the function attempts to do.

Throughout her presentation, Semp answered specific audience-member questions, most notably about code examples. When asked if she writes code examples herself, she replied that while she is capable of doing so, it's not a good use of her skills and time as a writer. She recommended QA and training as sources who often have code examples the writer can borrow. When asked how long code examples should be, she was firm about them being a "small snippet" that does not cover all attributes. When several functions rely on one another, she recommended using the same example for each function to illustrate them as a group.

Semp also answered questions about the available automation tools and how to choose one. She said the programming language and delivery format (e.g., PDF or HTML) determine which automation tool to use. For example, Javadoc is the main tool for Java and Doxygen and DoxyS for C/C++. She also said that organizational processes play a role in choosing a tool, including the engineering build process and development platform. She suggested Wikipedia as a source of information about the available automation tools, some of which cost money or are open source. When asked how much setup time is needed to move from manual to automatic API generation, she said DoxyS did not require much time at all and actually saves time in the long run.

Another area of audience interest was how to work with engineering and garner support for an automation tool. Semp admitted that the writer may encounter resistance at first, because the writer requires access to the code to write and edit function descriptions. However, once this hurdle is overcome, the writer becomes part of the engineering team using the same tools and following the same build and release processes. This, Semp says, fosters communication and builds trust between the writer and engineering. Semp

also views the API writer as an "impetus for process improvement," using the example that specifications lacking detail require more engineering time to answer writer questions. By helping identify and bring attention to such process issues, the writer further cements their role as "programmer" and valuable member of the engineering team.

As the meeting time wound to a close, Semp briefly touched on what to document in which types of code files, showing sample code and DoxyS output files. She stressed the importance of style issues, such as following code comment guidelines (e.g., using /*! and */ to open and close comments) and being consistent in function naming and descriptions (e.g., full sentence versus fragment). She also touched on the review process, and mentioned that tags can be used to flag "todo" items and questions for reviewers.

Overall, Semp clearly described the role of an API writer and what issues they face when choosing and implementing an automation tool. Her presentation was well-received and the attendees left with valuable information in their heads and notebooks.

Monique Semp has more than 15 years of documentation and software experience. She began her career as a software engineer after attaining a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Virginia Tech. After moving to the Bay Area during the dot.com era and working in the internet audio space, Semp officially became a full-time API writer then started Write Quick, Inc. She currently resides in Petaluma and provides an array of documentation services, including technical writing, indexing, and grant writing. For more information, visit her web site at www.writequickinc.com.

Caroline Scharf is a freelance technical writer and editor based in Oakland, CA. She has more than 10 years experience in various industries from education to government, and specializes in writing online help systems, user and administration manuals, installation guides, and corporate communications. For more information, visit her web site at www.carolinescharf.com.

Mashups and Wikis and Blogs! Oh My!

What Does Web 2.0 Mean for Technical Communications?

May 9, 2007 meeting notes
by Kathryn Munn

At the June 9, 2007 meeting, Tim Bombosch, Technical Communications Consultant with Lasselle-Ramsay in Mountain View gave an intriguing presentation on the brave new world of the Internet, Web 2.0. Bombosch is an outgoing President of the San Francisco STC chapter and on the board of the STC Management SIG. He has a background in project management and sales and marketing communications and a passionate interest in Web 2.0. His presentation offered a review of the definitions, technologies, business impact, and implications for technical communication professionals as Web 2.0 is more widely adopted.

Using a nifty application called Mindjet, Bombosch visually presented a complex tree of information describing the characteristics and technologies of Web 2.0, and reviewed examples of Web 2.0 implementations.

What is Web 2.0?

Bombosch began by engaging the audience in reporting their own use of Web-based communities and hosted services designed to facilitate collaboration and sharing among Web users such as gmail, Google maps, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, blogging, podcasting, and others. He characterized these Web 2.0 applications as user-generated content by typically passionate adopters, highly customizable applications, open source technologies, and mashups—web application hybrids that integrate content from more than one source. He went on to present a dizzying list of open source technologies that are used with Web 2.0. The significance of these technologies is their low cost of access, short development and implementation cycles, and simple integration using open standards.

Web 2.0 Examples

Bombosch described the burgeoning growth of Web 2.0 applications including rich Internet applications such as Basecamp, Writely, gmail, Google docs; mashups such as Craig's List with Google Maps; social networking and sharing such as MySpace, YouTube, Flickr; communities of knowledge such as Wikipedia, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; information consolidators such as Technorati, Digg; blogging and podcasting; and "infrastructure and punditry" such as Ruby on Rails.

Web 2.0 is proving how mass collaboration changes everything through the concept of Wikinomics. To illustrate this concept, Bombosch provided the examples of the Human Genome Project, involving the mass collaboration of hundreds of research sites, and the business examples of Goldcorp, Proctor & Gamble, and Boeing, companies that engaged in an open development and user collaboration efforts to significantly improve their success in the marketplace. The key values of these ventures included user participation and mass collaboration, open sharing of information, fostering a global perspective, and turning consumers into prosumers.

Bombosch summarized the lessons learned from these successful ventures as:
- There is more intelligence outside the firewall than inside the firewall.
- Business must open up their firewall and share information and invite collaboration.
- Knowledge may be commodified, but collaboration is not.
- Information needs to be treated as a social medium.

To Learn More About Web 2.0

For additional information Bombosch recommended articles written by Tim O'Reilly who coined the term in 2003 and presented in conferences to describe a fundamental change in the usage of the World Wide Web by businesses and their customers. Bombosch reviewed the key values and principles defined by O'Reilly

and summarized in a 9/30/2005 article ("What is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software") as the "core competencies" of Web 2.0 companies:

- Services, not packaged software, with cost-effective scalability.
- Control over unique, hard-to-recreate data sources that get richer as more people use them.
- Trusting users as co-developers.
- Harnessing collective intelligence.
- Leveraging the long tail through customer self-service.
- Software above the level of a single device.
- Lightweight user interfaces, development models, AND business models."

What Does This Mean for Technical Writers?

In the world of Web 2.0, Bombosch believes that the impact on technical communication will be broadly defined. The traditional process of knowledge transfer involving gathering information, publishing discreet deliverables to an audience with which the writer does not interact will not be nimble enough to survive. With additional pressure to cut costs there will be an increased emphasis on subject matter experts as core to the operation and outsourcing the rest of the effort.

In the brave new world of Web 2.0, Bombosch describes Docs 2.0 as:
- Social documentation – capturing and sharing knowledge with a community of users outside the organization.
- A new publishing paradigm – the more public presence if wikis, blogs, podcasts, and RSS feeds.
- Knowledge bases instead of documents – information will be chunked for easier searching and compiling, incorporating the values of community input and folksonomies.
- Cross-functional – integrated information from support, marketing, training and project or product management.

His recommendations for technical writers is to keep current with these new technologies and best practices, get involved in cross-functional, public facing roles, and extend skills into project or product management, Marcomm, and writing for both tech support and services.

President's Notes

We decided at the last leadership meeting to try the Highlands Country Club for the rest of the year. If you have suggestions of transit-accessible locations please let me know!

Our May meeting was lively, interesting, and informative—and another financial success. We had 23 in attendance, counting our speaker. (For those of you interested, we spend $150 for the room and $85 for the food).

Thanks especially to Caroline for taking over for Jean on short notice, and thanks to everybody for making the meeting a success.

Award of Excellence

May 13, 2007: Reporting from the STC 54th Annual Conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minnesota, our esteemed President Richard Mateosian has received the Society for Technical Communication's **Chapter Award of Excellence for our Berkeley Chapter** during the Sunday Leadership Day activities.

Congratulations to our Chapter's Public Relations Manager **Jessica Livingston** for leading the effort to apply for the award, working throughout the latter part of 2006 and all of 2007 to assist our Chapter's leadership in this effort.

Other Northern California Chapters receiving awards are the Silicon Valley Chapter (Award of Excellence) and the East Bay Chapter (Award of Merit).

The Berkeley Chapter of STC has awarded a **Distinguished Chapter Service Award** to one of our former Presidents, **Kathryn Munn**.

—Jim Dexter

Web Usability: Simplicity

by Eric Hughes, Managing Director
Simplexity, LLC

In our previous columns, we identified best practice criteria to consider when building usable web sites and applications. We discussed the importance of identifying and analyzing audiences, and defined the impact and a process for ensuring quality organization and navigation of the information and transactions on a web site. In this column, we'll discuss a quite complex topic: simplicity on the web.

There are a couple of things about the web that will never change, and one of them has to do with the broad categories of people who use it. I argue that, simply, there are only two types: seekers and wanderers. Seekers know what they are looking for and need to find it fast. They have some other process going on that their research on the web will support. Wanderers are a patient group, they don't mind getting lost for a while before they stumble upon what they need. In fact, sometimes they prefer that route. Wanderers have little sense of urgency around what they do or discover. Business people tend to be seekers; teenagers are wanderers. Moms and baseball fans can be either, depending on what they are looking for. What is simple to a wanderer is probably not simple to a seeker—how many business people do you know who use MySpace or friendster? They are way too complex and take too much time and effort to master (LinkedIn notwithstanding).

It is important to remember that business people come to web sites to accomplish tasks, not to try and figure out how to accomplish tasks. The distinction is very important, as it helps define what simplicity on the web is all about—finding what you need and getting it done quickly. Albert Einstein said: "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." That is the challenge of developing a communications channel where there are very few restrictions about what you can say and how you say it.

So how can you determine whether what you are planning to build will be just simple enough? Here are some tips:

- It can't possibly be said enough: **know your audience and what they want**. Understand what they need, and provide them just enough information to get it done. Be careful not to try to do too much for too many audiences. You can't do everything for everybody on the web. If you try, you will at best do a mediocre job.
- **Develop measurable, achievable objectives for your project**. When you are done achieving, measure and report! Know when you are successful and when you fall short so that you can make appropriate changes.
- You may think FLASH presentations are cool and make you or your firm look hip, but your audiences probably hate them. **Save your money for building interactive applications that engage your audience.** Anytime you see: "click here to skip intro," you are on a site where simplicity has not been considered.
- **Refine your message**. Use writers and editors who know what they are doing. Create a style guide and negotiate and articulate the simplest message you want your visitors to take away from their visit. Make sure they know who you are and what you do without having to go anywhere but your home page.
- **Don't get too caught up in the culture of your site**. "You know you have achieved perfection in design, not when you have something more to add, but when you have nothing more to take away." (Antoine de Saint Exupéry)
- **Write for the educational level of your audience**.
- **Use language and labels consistently** throughout your site. Don't make your visitors guess at what you mean.
- **Don't duplicate navigational items** on a page. Plan your navigation carefully.
- Make certain your **search results are accurate**, and don't display information that no longer should exist.
- Don't provide generic administrative interfaces to all your editors and publishers. Give them just what they need. They probably don't use your content management system often enough to

remember what features are relevant to their tasks.

In the May 21, 2007, Computerworld, it was noted that Forrester Research recently reviewed "more than 200 Web sites and found that a mere 2% pass its usability tests." That is four of 200 sites. No matter what the criteria are for the Forrester usability tests, that is a pretty poor passing rate. In many cases, sites are unusable because they try to accomplish way too much.

Here are some pretty good sites for you to take a look at, and to try and determine whether they are appropriately simple:

http://www.sears.com
Try to buy a claw hammer. I think you will find that task quite simple.

http://www.intel.com
Note how the content is organized on the page. I think that works well.

http://www.walmart.com
Consider how they have done their navigation. It works pretty well for a store that has hundreds of thousands of items. Notice, too, how they let you control the FLASH pictures at the top. Putting the visitor in control is good.

How do these sites work for both seekers and wanderers? Do they meet both group's needs? As always, I would love to see examples of sites that you think are great examples of simplicity and effectiveness on the web. *Email eric@simplexity.net.*

**Other STC chapters
in Northern California**

Getting Yourself Hired

Lesson 4: "Past the Expiration Date"

by Dalton Hooper, STC Member
Orlando & Suncoast chapters

If you could find a copy of someone's personal résumé from 30 years ago, you would be both amazed and bewildered by the information it contained.

Evolution

Not long ago, I was cleaning out the garage and came across a résumé my wife had written in the mid 1970s. I was intrigued by how much has changed in the look, feel, and content found in my wife's résumé —which was perfectly fine in its day — versus the résumés of today.

Appearance

Since it is in your best interest to keep up with what's in and what's out, let's begin with a comparison of the overall look and feel of the résumés from "back in the day." Even if all the information contained on my wife's résumé from 1974 were still correct, she would have virtually no chance of being taken seriously if she were to submit that same résumé today.

First of all, it was composed using a typewriter! While a typewritten résumé would certainly be better than a handwritten one, today's abundance of word processors and high-quality printers make them accessible to all. As a matter of fact, anyone can now go to their local public library and use their word processor and printer for little or no cost. Consequently, to submit a typewritten résumé in today's environment would make you come off as sloppy or lazy.

Content

Over the years, much information commonly found on résumés is no longer appropriate or even legal. As time moves along, more information will cease to be relevant on your résumé, while new information

will take its place. Although commonplace in the past, you should never include information on your résumé such as marital status, age, gender, number of dependants, religion, health concerns, or physical limitations. You shouldn't include this information for two reasons:

1. It is illegal for an employer to use any of this type of information to make a determination of whether to hire you.

2. Most employers are diligent about adhering to the legal hiring guidelines and once you have exposed them to any "illegal" information about yourself, you have in effect, "tainted" their ability to disregard it. An employer may discard your résumé, not because they think you aren't qualified, but because they can no longer be impartial. The hiring manager can't "un-ring" that bell.

Are there other items that you should no longer include on your résumé, even though it may be legal? Absolutely! What is considered essential information and what is considered to be superfluous is always evolving with the business culture, technology, and other norms. Here are a few items I recommend you no longer include on your résumé:

- **Objective statement**. Objective statements serve no purpose in today's world. They waste valuable space on your résumé stating the obvious ("...seeking a job to...match my goals…blah, blah, blah…). It is obvious that you are sending the résumé because your are looking for employment. To say so on your résumé is unnecessary. If you really feel you must include this information, it should be a part of your cover letter verbiage.

- **References available on request**. Don't put this statement on your résumé. This is also something that is assumed in today's environment. You should always have references ready and available if I want to see them. If it is assumed, then you don't need to state it on the résumé. By the way, never put your list of references on the résumé itself. If I want them, I will ask for them – and you had better have them ready.

- **Hobbies or interests**. Unless it is a hobby

or interest that is absolutely relevant to the position you are seeking and has contributed to your skills and expertise in the field, who cares? Keep this information off your résumé, also.

- **Your High School academic information**. In today's environment, it is assumed you graduated from high school and whether you made straight As or barely passed, it is only relevant to your college admissions board. Even listing the name of your high school on your résumé makes it appear as if you are desperate for verbiage.

From time to time, you should browse the Internet, looking at the résumés of other professionals in your field to see how the norms are evolving. In a future lesson, I will talk about information that we didn't put on our résumés in years past, but should include now. Good luck!

Dalton Hooper works for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Information Technology as a Project Technical Specialist. Dalton was the documentation project manager for over five years, directing a team of technical writers responsible for providing all relevant technical documentation during the development and support of internal business systems for Disney parks and resorts worldwide. Dalton also retired from AT&T in 1998 after 32 years in various leadership positions. Dalton is available to speak to your group on various topics. For more details, visit his website at www.wordsandwit.com.

Other Organizations

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) of Northern California. Meets periodically at various Bay Area locations. www.amwancal.org

American Society for Training and Development, **Mount Diablo Chapter.** Meets monthly in Danville. http://mtdiabloastd.org/.

American Society of Indexers, Golden Gate Chapter. www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden

Association for Women in Computing, San Francisco Bay Area chapter — www.awc-sf.org/

International Association of Business Communicators, San Francisco chapter. A network of professionals committed to improving the effectiveness of organizations through strategic interactive and integrated business communication management — http://sf.iabc.com/

National Writers Union (UAW). A labor union for freelance writers of all genres. — www.nwu.org

Northern California Science Writers' Association. Quarterly meetings & other events. www.ncswa.org

Meetings

Our chapter holds a dinner meeting the second Wednesday of each month. See *Meeting/Dinner Prices* on page 10 and *Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions* on page 10.

Human Factors for Technical Communicators

by Andrea Ames

Wednesday, June 13, 2007, 6-9:30pm
Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

The mind is a mysterious thing, but you can improve your documentation by leveraging what we do know about human cognition and the ways people process information through perception, learning, problem solving, and memory. Join Andrea Ames for a fast-paced, fun trip through the four key human factors affecting human information processing. She will introduce the factors and lead you on an interactive discovery of how knowledge of basic problem solving and memory can change your approach to information architecture, design, and development.

Speaker

Andrea joined IBM in 2001 as an information architect for the Information Management division of IBM Software Group, where she is currently an information experience strategist and architect, responsible for driving broad initiatives to improve the total information experience.

With nearly 25 years of experience in technical communication, Andrea is a Fellow and past President of STC. She designed, coordinates, and teaches in the University of California Extension, Santa Cruz, certificate program in technical writing and communication. She has published more than 50 papers and articles, as well as the award-winning technical trade book, The VRML Sourcebook. She is a sought-after interna-

tional speaker for technical communication and information development conferences and professional organization meetings.

Upcoming Meetings

Everything you ever wanted to know about Resumes and Portfolios
by Andrew Davis

Wednesday, July 11, 2007, 6-9:30pm
Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

Andrew Davis will explain how to optimize your resume and make best use of your portfolio, covering in detail what works, why, and how to get the results you want.

This is the age of black-hole electronic job applications, keyword search tools, and anonymous recruiting generalists. Knowing what hiring managers want from you -- let alone how to present your credentials and work samples to best effect -- has never been more challenging. Andrew will help you parse the job description and accentuate aspects of your resume and portfolio accordingly. He will explain how to make hiring managers eager to speak with you.

If time permits, Andrew will explain how to handle uncomfortable inquiries into your employment history, compensation expectations, telecommuting preferences, and other issues.

Andrew will give a brief formal presentation, to leave time for a lively and candid Q&A. To make the most of this meeting, go to www.synergistech.com/resumes.shtml and www.synergistech.com/portfolios.shtml beforehand to review the resume- and portfolio-related articles there. Bring your specific questions for Andrew to answer.

Speaker

Andrew Davis runs Synergistech Communications, a local recruiting firm for staff and contract technical communicators. Andrew is a former writer of system administration and software developer documentation for

companies such as Oracle (documenting relational databases on minicomputers), IBM (UNIX hypertext authoring tools), Informix (Windows database tools), Network Equipment Technologies (PBXs and routers), and Verity (enterprise text search tools). He is well connected in Silicon Valley's software and telecommunication documentation communities. He also recruits technical trainers, instructional designers, medical writers, and user experience (UX) professionals on both coasts.

Meeting/Dinner Prices

STC Members Meeting and Dinner
$21.00 per person at door
$18.00 if reserved on our Chapter's Website by the day before the meeting

Students Meeting and Dinner
$18.00 per person at door
$15.00 if reserved on our Chapter's Website by the day before the meeting

Non-STC Member Meeting and Dinner
$24.00 per person at door
$21.00 if reserved on our Chapter's Website by the day before the meeting

Meeting-only prices (reserved and at door are the same):
STC Member $12.00
Student $10.00
Non-STC Member $15.00

Special cost notes:
• All members of the San Francisco Chapter of the IABC are welcome to register for Berkeley STC General Meetings at the member price ($18 dinner/$12 without dinner) by midnight on the day before the meeting.
• Nonmembers are always welcome to STC meetings at the non-member rates.

Meeting Agenda

6:00   Check-in, networking, and conversation.
6:30   Dinner.
7:15   Chapter business and announcements. Anyone can announce jobs that they know about.*
7:30   Formal program. Usually we have a speaker or panel of speakers on a topic related to the business or technology of technical communication.
8:30   Conversation, offline questions for the speaker, follow-up on job announcements
9:00   Clear the room. Move conversations to the sidewalk.

* **Attendees**, please announce open positions, and bring job listings for distribution.

Recruiters are welcome to attend meetings, place literature on a designated table, and talk with attendees one-on-one during the informal parts of the meeting. We ask them not to announce specific jobs during the formal announcement period, but they are free to stand up and identify themselves.

Similarly, we ask anyone else with commercial announcements to confine themselves to calling attention to the availability of literature on the designated table.

Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions

Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive
Oakland, California
Information at http://www.stc-berkeley.org/MonthlyMeeting/june2007_meeting/calendar.shtml#loc

By Car

From San Francisco

Cross the Bay Bridge to I-580 Eastbound. Remain in the right lane, until Highway 24 Eastbound (toward Berkeley and Walnut Creek). Continue eastbound until the Tunnel Road off-ramp. Exit will loop around to the west, crossing back over Highway 24. Turn left at the stop sign. Follow Tunnel Road/Caldecott Lane to traffic signal. Veer to the right, and follow Hiller Drive halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

From Walnut Creek

Take Highway 24 Westbound through the Caldecott Tunnel. Stay in the right-hand lane, taking the first exit after the tunnel ends, the Tunnel Road exit, going towards Berkeley. Follow Tunnel Road to the complex intersection and stop light, at Tunnel Drive, Hiller Drive, and Highway 13. Veer to the right, and continue halfway up the hill on Hiller Drive. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

From I-80 and Berkeley

Take Ashby Avenue to the Highway 13 exit. Ashby becomes Tunnel Road at the Claremont Hotel. Continue on Tunnel Road (through the split-level section) to the stoplight just before the Highway 24 over-crossing. Remain in the left lane and make a sharp left U-turn around the Firestorm Memorial Garden, on to Hiller Drive. Continue halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

From Hayward

Take I-580 Westbound to Highway 13 north. Continue on Highway 13 past the over-crossing of Highway 24. At the stoplight, turn right, then left, onto Hiller Drive. Continue halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

Parking

Please park on the street. The club's parking lot is for members only.

STC News

Chapter News

Leadership Positions Available

We are looking to fill several leadership positions! Contact Richard Mateosian if you are interested.

Membership Update
by Jim Dexter

The May 2007 report continues an artificial downward trend in numbers (starting in March 2007) based on a purge of the database of members who have not yet renewed. There will be significant rises in membership in the next couple of months, based on members who will renew. If you are one of those who have not renewed yet, please do!:

Total STC Membership 13,804
(up 385 since April 2007)

Total Chapter Membership 140

Welcome to Lisa A. DePass-Stulgaitis, Katie Kelly, Michael S. Thompson, and Elizabeth Harris!

Networking Opportunities

Volunteers needed for the 2007 Bay Area Networking Guide (BANG)

What

The Bay Area Networking Guide (BANG) is a directory of local companies that need the services of technical communicators. Several previous editions of this guide were published by the San Francisco chapter of STC, but the last one appeared in 1994. At a

minimum, the next edition should contain the following information:

a. the company's name, physical address, switchboard telephone and main fax numbers, main and employment-related URLs, and a brief description of its products and/or services
b. whether there's a formal in-house technical publications, training, or marketing communications service (and if not, is there a need for a contract solution)
c. the titles, contact information, and key responsibilities of any technical communications department managers
d. which tools are in use in technical communications department(s)
e. whether the company creates content for a global audience
f. the credentials the company typically seeks in its candidates

Why

Now that the tech economy is back on track and many of our former employers have disappeared or moved their technical communications activities offshore, a new BANG will let us find out who's still hiring in the Bay Area, which skills they need, and where we fit.

In short, San Francisco Bay Area technical communicators need another edition of the Networking Guide to help them focus their quest for meaningful work. Just as significantly, STC headquarters has dramatically reduced its funding for individual chapters' operations, so those chapters must augment their revenue. Networking Guide sales could substantially benefit their budgets.

Finally, such a project requires a talented, committed project manager and dedicated researchers.

How

The BANG Coordinator's primary role is to marshall and train researchers, then help them be productive as they fact-check and augment data.

Essentially, the BANG is the ultimate team effort. Many hundreds of phone calls and emails, followed by plenty of data entry,

coalesce into a document that lists invaluable details about Bay Area employers of technical communicators. The BANG:

• Lets employers educate would-be employees and contractors about their needs, corporate infrastructure, and marketplace
• Helps job seekers focus their search and avoid the HR black hole, and
• Generates revenue for STC through sales of the completed document.

Specifically, to make another BANG come together, the following tasks need to be accomplished:

1. Gather the data. As indicated below, Synergistech will provide as much raw data as is needed.
2. Recruit volunteers through STC chapter meetings and newsletters. With 20-30 volunteers each contributing five (5) hours/week, the project should come together quickly.
3. Train volunteers on a phone script and role-playing scenarios. Synergistech will supply the MySQL database for data entry.
4. Supervise volunteers, answering their questions as they gather the information listed under 'What' (above).
5. Publish.

Synergistech's role and incentive (truth in advertising)

Synergistech needs help validating and fleshing out a huge amount of data we've gathered recently about local technology industry employers. We would supply all the raw material for volunteer researchers, including:

• company name
• physical address
• main phone and fax
• main URL
• employment URL (if one exists), and
• (usually) a description of what the company does

Synergistech's legal relationship with the BANG 2007 project is to a) supply the raw data, b) pay for the design and hosting of the target database, and c) underwrite an initial print run should STC decide to distribute in

this way. In return, Synergistech will own the resulting data and lease it to STC for free for one 'edition' as well as making it available for further research (on the same terms) at STC's option.

Everyone else's incentive

Volunteers participating in this project get first access to fresh data. As such, the project is attractive to students and those who are out of work, and less appealing to those who work full-time or are unavailable during working hours. At STC's option, volunteers who complete a given number of records might be able to acquire a free or discounted copy of the completed publication.

The Coordinator gets to orchestrate something truly worthwhile and relevant, as well as of substantial economic value to STC.

Employers get free publicity with a motivated workforce as well as the chance to specify the kinds of talent they seek.

And local STC chapters benefit by publicizing their own existence and generating revenue to continue funding valuable chapter operations.

What now?

If you are interested in the role of BANG Project Coordinator, or just want to help with the research effort, please get in touch with Andrew Davis at Synergistech by email <andrew@synergistech.com> with the Subject *Interested in participating in the 2007 Bay Area Networking Guide project*.