

Ragged Left

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

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**Volume 22, Number 2
March/April 2009**

Kudos

DCSA to Ben Lukas

The STC Board has approved the Distinguished Chapter Service Award for **Ben Lukas**. Congratulations, Ben!

Patrick Lufkin's Article Reprinted

The Usability SIG reprinted Patrick's article "Luke Wroblewski on Best Practices for Content Page Design" in the February 2009 issue of *Usability Interface*: <http://www.stcsig.org/usability/newsletter/0902-Content.html>

Free Open Source Instructional Design Workshop 5/14

Nathan Eckel

What could happen if more executives, managers, and other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) were familiar with basic Instructional Design and eLearning principles? Most trainers, instructional designers, and other learning professionals want to be able to work more effectively with their SMEs. How much easier could your job be?

In *Open Source Instructional Design: Successfully Mentoring Subject Experts*, I explain what many of us know – coaching SMEs in the basics of ADDIE can reduce frustrating communication and production bottlenecks. If you're like me, you prefer to educate your colleagues rather than compete with them!

"Open Source ID" has generated some buzz since I began presenting on it back in 2007. Since then the book has come out, and I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on the concept. As a board member for Greater Philadelphia's ASTD chapter, I've polled my audiences to consistently identify this as an area for improvement – so let's talk about it!

I'm inviting you to a FREE virtual lunchtime learning event on **Thursday, May 14 at 12pm** PST in anticipation of my trip to northern California the following week. I'll explain the premise and would also like to get your input regarding these concepts. The sign-up link is <http://tinyurl.com/OpenSourceID>. Another link to the virtual room wizard will be sent to you within 24 hours for you to setup your computer.

The next week, I would be interested in meeting you, any chapter members and colleagues to discuss how empowering SMEs and stakeholders with the basics of sound Instructional Design can reduce frustration and production bottlenecks for everyone who produces learning products – saving time, money, and energy for you and your stakeholders.

The first five people who register and show up for the face to face meet-up will receive a FREE copy of my book, as well as updates about future lunchtime learning events and resources.

I will be at the Vacaville, CA Panera Bread from 4:30-6:30 on **Wednesday**,

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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
-

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. Annual conference: Atlanta, May 3-6, 2009. 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
- AccessAbility
- Canadian Issues
- Consulting and Independent Contracting
- Emerging Technologies
- Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication
- Illustrators and Visual Designers
- Information Design and Architecture
- Instructional Design & Learning
- International Technical Communication
- Lone Writer
- Management
- Marketing Communication
- Online
- Policies and Procedures
- Quality and Process Improvement
- Scientific Communication
- Single Sourcing
- Technical Editing
- 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 8 for contacts for these chapters. See page 13 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 odd-numbered months.

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.



May 20. If you know of others who may be interested in a meet-up in their city, feel free to mention it when you sign up.

I hope to see you at Thursday's lunchtime learning session! <http://tinyurl.com/Open-SourceID>

Nathan Eckel
VP of Operations, ALT
610-616-4182
Author, "Open Source Instructional Design"
Adjunct Professor, LaSalle University
President-Elect, ASTD-PHL

President's Notes

by Richard Mateosian

Thanks to all of you who renewed your membership in the Berkeley Chapter. Of the 121 members we had in 2008, 89 have renewed for 2009. In addition, 5 members have joined this year for a total of 94. These are hard times. I appreciate your commitment.

STC saw fewer sign-ups for the annual conference than in prior years. This year's **annual STC conference (May 3-6) is in Atlanta**, which makes it more difficult for those of us on the west coast to attend. On the other hand, I have heard that there are airline bargains to be had and that Atlanta is a great place to visit.

STC extended the early-bird rate of \$795.00 until April 21, and offered 250 scholarships of \$400 each to unemployed or underemployed members, bringing the rate down to \$395.00.

STC has asked chapters to provide additional assistance to members who need financial help to attend. Our chapter leadership decided to provide stipends of \$500.00 to up to six chapter members who attend the annual conference and stay at the conference hotel. Send me email at xrm@pacbell.net if you wish to apply for one of these stipends. If more than six people apply, we will give preference to present or past chapter volunteers.

March 11, 2009 Meeting Notes

Word Wizard

Presentation by Steve Zegas
Notes by Jennie Abbingsole
with help from Sheena Chen

Every audience appreciates a well-formatted document, and no one knows that better than Steven Zegas. With a background in graphic design and 15+ years experience in the technical writing arena, Zegas has been making award-winning Microsoft Word templates for years. By creating templates with defined character and paragraph styles, Zegas automates the process of creating consistent documents quickly and easily. His expertise is helping technical writers structure even the most unorganized content into aesthetically pleasing, readable documents.

The concept seems simple, but implementing it requires a lot of experience. During the March STC meeting of the Berkeley chapter, Zegas drew the largest meeting audience in recent months by sharing his personal observations on problems and solutions associated with making and using Word templates. He then offered some tips on how to design a template and customize its various aspects, through a demonstration using Microsoft Word 2003.

Zegas started the evening's presentation with a small showcase of his past and current projects. Ranging from small to large-scale user manuals, the documents clearly benefited from the application of a well-designed template. According to Zegas, he has used templates to efficiently create manuals for clients in notable software firms such as OS/soft. Steve started his presentation by telling us the benefits of using a template and cited examples where they made a difference.

The goal is always to use styles and never do manual formatting, so the template needs to have a style pre-defined for every use an author might need.

Perhaps Steve's approach is best described as providing a complete boilerplate docu-



ment, which may not have content in place (though it's helpful to illustrate how users should format their content) but has all the styles defined – and even limits which styles users can use. Steve's boilerplates include formatting restrictions that strip out any formatting that is not a paragraph or character style. A boilerplate document serves as a starting point for trained or untrained users.

Dot-dot files let you borrow styles and macros from that file into other documents, but the link could get broken between the source .dot file and the document, so it's best to avoid the .dot all together.

Steve explained that the default template is the Normal template, with the default style as Normal. He suggests avoiding both, and not to get tangled in using a .dot (template) file. Also, because by default most styles are based on Normal – and renegade users are most likely to manually modify formatting on a Normal style paragraph – it's best to avoid using the Normal style in your boilerplate/template.

Using examples from his own projects, he identified problems, named some solutions, and showed us many tips along the way. He demonstrated how to record and use macros to simplify the steps for creating – or cleaning up – a document.

TIP: If your document does not use the Normal paragraph style, and you want to remove any instances of it, you can change the Normal style to be green and centered, and then you'll know that text needs to have a proper style applied.

You can create macros that launch a popup reminder every time the document is opened to remind users to modify the document properties, for example. Or you could create toolbars for every style created, with drop-down menus users can choose from. Macros can show hidden text, show the Styles formatting menu as a toolbox, and can be run from custom buttons.

In addition to untrained users making ad hoc formatting changes to document content, another obstacle to a clean Word document (only using pre-defined styles) is pasting

content from elsewhere. Unless users use Paste-Special, pasting content imports the style along with the content, and it takes a dedicated sleuth to turn up all the instances of inconsistent style use in a document – and a very patient editor to clean them all up.

Whether it is in a separate document or in the boilerplate, you should provide a formatting guide for your template. Steve recommends using the Word Heading 1, Heading 2, and Heading 3 styles (and formatting them to your requirements) because they are universal and extremely handy for creating a TOC.

TIP: To copy the formatting of a paragraph, you must select the paragraph marker as well, not just the characters of text.

Which styles to display? Good question! The various options are unclear and even Steve isn't exactly sure what are the differences between some of the views. **Custom** lets you choose to display only the styles you want to see (or you want your users to see!) by checking items on the list of all the styles in the document plus Normal.dot. That's a good option for the boilerplate. If you are trying to clean up a document, then you would need to see **Formatting in use** as well, so you can find the errant formatting and correct it.

TIP: There's a table style in addition to paragraph style and char style. Use the little button below the main scroll arrows to browse by tables, headline, etc.

Cleaning up a document

1. Clean up tables.
Use a macro to select table, apply table style to it, then apply table text 1, left arrow, select row, table heading 1, end. Then assign a key combo to the macro to use as you scroll through the document.
TIP: If a whole table is selected, THE left arrow places THE cursor at the beginning of the top left cell.
2. Clean up graphics.
3. Look at other styles where you can clean up multiple instances at once (choose



styles with fewer instances because if there are many, many instances, probably they'll need some individualized treatment).

- Samples of worst-case scenarios in formatting
- Sample of a formatting guide that shows users how to apply styles

Adding a function to your toolbar

1. Click anywhere on toolbar and select Customize.
2. Under commands, click styles, and drag styles up to the toolbar.
 - You can create a new toolbar.
 - **Begin a group** puts a line between groups of items.
 - You can copy a button image from any option with an image and paste that button image onto yours.
 - You can also edit button images; copy a picture to clipboard and paste in for toolbar button icon.
 - Add a New menu which creates a drop-down list, then add items on there (Word picks up icons for existing items).

TIP: Word will print Styles (select instead of Document in the Print dialog.)

Summary

Problems and challenges with Word users:

- Inconsistent formats across different documents when users are different
- Untrained users applying ad hoc formatting
- Formatting lost during conversions to and from Word

Solutions

- Create a boilerplate document with defined character/paragraph styles
- Avoid attaching *.dot files to your original source document (because Normal.dot is such a strong default)
- Combine macros and custom styles to format your document quickly
- Create easy-to-use templates with formatting restrictions to prevent users from modifying styles

Take-aways from the presentation:

- Tips on best practices
- How to educate your users on the importance and application of styles

The alternate title for this talk, *Word Whisperer*, is appropriate. During his presentation, Zegas showed the audience some worst-case scenarios in formatting, along with ways he offered to resolve them. After applying a consistent format and aesthetic sense to text, the results are significantly noticeable. Says Programs Chair Tonie Flores, "I can attest that [his] template is not just a pretty face – it is also easy to use and has made a great difference in the productivity of our team."

Jennie Abbingsole is a Principal Technical Writer at Global 360, Inc. in their Alameda office, and the editor of the *Ragged Left* since 2006. She thanks Tonie Flores, Sheena Chen, Richard Mateosian, and Steve Zegas for their help with this article.

Web usability column

Springing Into Usability

by Eric Hughes, Managing Director, Simplexity, LLC

The weather has been splendid this Spring in Northern California. The days are stretching, the roses are blooming, and I'm about to begin my annual ritual of repairing and replacing the various items I need to make my yard look like the cover of *Sunset* magazine.

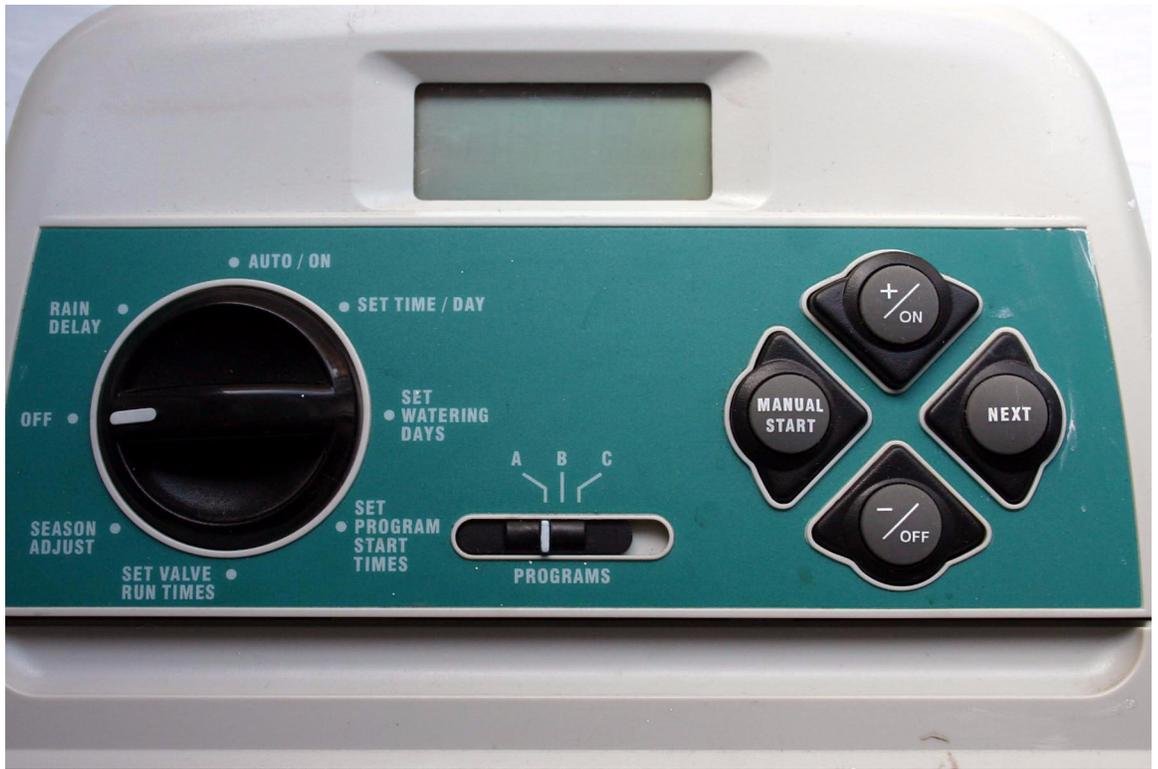
The first thing I needed to do was to reconfigure (the vendor calls that reprogramming) my sprinkler system. Two years ago, the sprinklers in front stopped working, and so I somehow figured out how to turn them off, while letting the working ones in the back continue to run. I didn't fix them last year, ostensibly because I was "saving water during the drought," but my secret was that I didn't want to re-visit the instruction manual that came with my original auto-

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matic timer (see picture 1).

Picture 1



Picture 2



March/April
2009

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So this year I made my March coupons-in-my-pocket-plant-buying trek to Home Depot and accidentally ran into sprinkler timers on display inside the entrance. I never

came close to mastering the old one, so I figured that in the 6 years since my original system installation, significant advances had probably been made. And maybe, just

Continued on next page



maybe, replacing the timer would magically fix my front sprinklers. I bought the updated model of the old one, because it seemed likely that I could avoid electrical connection challenges by doing so. I also checked my "Shop Savvy" application on my G-1 (I love this program) and found that the unit was competitively priced, especially with my coupon.

The new timer looks so much more 2009. It is sleek, black and silver, with icons and colors in addition to textual labels (see picture 2).

Other than the fact I can't see the symbols on the buttons without a flashlight (you can see that I've added my own labels under the buttons), and the puzzling reversal of the "-" and "+" buttons, my first impression is positive. The removal of the old unit, and installation of the new one, is simple and takes less than an hour.

Power on! How do I configure this thing? Where is that manual? Got it. Uh oh, no definitions. No drawings. There are stations, programs, zones, and valves that I need to understand. They are clearly all inter-related, but the manual sometimes implies synonyms, and sometimes implies distinction. I can set valve run times, I get that, because I can see and hold a valve, but is there one valve per station, per zone, or per station or per zone per program? Wait, a station must be a sprinkler! Except there aren't always sprinklers – sometimes there are just drippers. And neither the manual nor the timer uses the term 'sprinkler' or 'dripper,' even though that is really the only thing I care about.

I go to the web and search "stations, programs, zones, and valves," and this is the best I can find:

What do station, valve and zone mean?

Before we talk about how to enter a program, let's discuss some terminology used when discussing timers. 'Station', 'valve' and 'zone' are terms commonly used with these systems. And while they are closely related, they do refer to different things. A 'station' is a term often used by many controllers to indicate what valve it is controlling. A 'valve'

is the device that accepts the signal from the timer to open and allow the water to flow. A 'zone' is the area of the yard (or groups of plants) that is watered by a valve. Let's use all three words in a sentence... "At the programmed time the controller gets a message to turn on a station and sends a signal through the wires to open the corresponding valve to let the water flow through the pipes to irrigate the zone that it controls."

Do I just not get it? Does everybody else just wake up in the morning and understand this stuff? Is there a sprinkler-timer lobby that ensures these things never get resolved? It would seem that I can have multiple sprinklers per valve and per zone. But are there multiple valves or stations per zone per program, or do I not care?

I find a drawing the contractor gave me when she installed the system, hidden behind some cans of paint. I see that I have four zones. Each zone is represented by a different color wire that is attached to the timer. I imagine that each wire controls a valve, but I really don't know how many valves there are per station or per zone – and where are the sprinklers? And why do I need programs?

I start configuring it. I reminisce about the days when I built model airplanes and found pride in the fact that I never read the instructions. Of course, there were always parts left over.

The configuration steps are:

3. Set the watering days
4. Set the start times
5. Set the zone times

It kind of makes sense, but I'm not convinced I've done it correctly. There is no mention of stations or valves or programs in the steps.

So I grok that I can set start times, how long a zone is on, and on what days... Wait a minute, if I set the program (A, B, or C) in each of these steps, then set the zone (1, 2, 3, or 4), this should work. But wait, there is no zone setting on the LCD, only station and program. So why do they keep talking about zones, and why does the dial say zone when the LCD doesn't?

Continued on next page



I go through the steps as best I can, and use start times when I'll either be awake, home, or both.

The drip system is supposed to start at 10AM and go for five minutes. Hmm...the sprinkler in the front of the house is on, but no drip system. So I go through the entire configuration cycle again and discover that, on the LCD display, the '1' label refers to not only which of the three times (huh?) you can configure any program's zone for, but the station number and the zone as well. Now how was I supposed to know that? The problem is that you can only configure the station you want to start during the auxiliary step of setting the zone times. What you are really doing is just setting the zone time per program. Wow.

I finally figure out the relationships among stations, programs, valves, and zones. A station is the same as a zone. On the function dial, when you set the zone time, the station number shows up on the LCD screen, so even though I don't want to believe that, I do.

The problems here are:

1. The manual tells me what to do with certain features and components, but doesn't tell me what they are or help me differentiate them.
2. Both the manual and the timer use different labels to mean the same thing.
3. Since there are no written definitions, there is no good way for the product development team to get in synch.
4. Please – give me a drawing! Show me what the difference is among the components so that I understand. My contractor's drawing would have been great if it also listed valves and stations, or if it used labels I care about like sprinklers and drippers.

OK, it seems to be working now. I sure hope I never have to reconfigure, er...reprogram, it again. And replacing the timer did fix my front sprinklers – or valves – or stations – or zones!

Now its time to put new filament in my string trimmer.

Do you have usability nightmares with

every-day things? Send them to me!

Eric Hughes has been an STC member since 2004. Things that don't work the way they should drive him crazy. You can reach him at eric@simplexity.net or hugheseathur@gmail.com

Other STC chapters in Northern California

East Bay: www.ebstc.org

North Bay: www.stc-northbay.org

Sacramento: www.stcsacramento.org

San Francisco: www.stc-sf.org

Silicon Valley: www.stc-siliconvalley.org

Meetings

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

Upcoming Meetings

Hard Times, Smart Choices

by Meryl Natchez

Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 6-9:30pm

Highlands Country Club

110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

Times are tough; jobs are scarce; rates are decreasing. The economic crisis touches every aspect of business and every person who works. What can you do to survive and thrive in this environment? Meryl Natchez, an international speaker and founder of Bay Area-based consulting company TechProse, has survived three previous recessions and will discuss strategies for consultants, employees, managers, and business owners to navigate this downturn. Don't miss this rare local appearance by Natchez, a longtime technical communicator and entrepreneur who has endured recessions and emerged stronger each time.



Speaker



Meryl Natchez has been CEO of TechProse since 1982. Natchez developed TechProse from a single person operation to a corporation with over 75 employees. TechProse places technical writers, instructional designers, communications professionals, and project managers on a contract basis. TechProse also provides turnkey solutions to clients for entire projects.

Natchez has received numerous awards for business development and community service. She is a co-founder of OPTIC, now Opportunity Junction, a nonprofit organization that provides low-income Contra Costa, Calif. residents with technology, literacy, and life skills to become economically self-sufficient. She has spoken to business audiences across the US, Europe, and Japan.

MythBusters: I'm Working So Hard It Hurts!

by Erik Anderson, Tim Brent, and Tonie Flores

Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 6-9:30pm
Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

Tim Brent & Erik Andersen will discuss computing health.

Bring your questions about office workstations and accessories.

Speaker

Erik Anderson, Vice President of Customer & Partner Relations at Remedy Interactive, focuses on maintaining strong relationships with Remedy Interactive customers and partners. He is also responsible for the

RSIGuard software product line, including relationships with ergonomics consultants and therapists who use RSIGuard to prevent and manage injuries.

Erik is in his sixth year at Remedy Interactive, and prior to that he spent 13 years at in business development and supply chain management at PeopleSoft, HP, and FedEx. Erik earned his Bachelor of Science from UC Davis and his MBA from Vanderbilt University.

Tim Brent is an ergonomic consultant. For the past 20 years Tim has devoted himself to graduate education, specialized training, and professional practice in the field of ergonomics. He is especially noted for the personalized and innovative solutions he brings to the ergonomic process.

Tim is a Certified Ergonomic Evaluation Specialist, has completed advanced training in movement education from both the Feldenkrais and Egoscue methods of corrective exercise, and holds an M.Ed. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Ohio University. He has worked with book publishers, writers, and a wide array of other office-based occupational groups. Tim is comfortable addressing issues of injury prevention, as well as intervening when an injury has occurred and ergonomic solutions are needed.

Tonie Flores, Senior Technical Writer at OSISOFT, recently developed a repetitive stress injury while working on a project with an aggressive timeline. Tonie will share what she learned from her painful experience about how to prevent future injuries.

Meeting/Dinner Prices

Special Recession Pricing

Reserve in advance

First timers:

Meeting only or dinner free

STC members and students:

Meeting only free, dinner \$5.00

Non-members:

Meeting only \$10.00, dinner \$18.00.



No advance reservation

STC members and students:

Meeting only \$5.00

Dinner (if available) \$10.00

Non-members:

Meeting only \$15.00

Dinner (if available) \$21.00

Special cost notes:

- Nonmembers are always welcome to STC meetings at the non-member rates.
- All members of the San Francisco Chapter of the IABC are welcome to register for Berkeley STC General Meetings at the member price by midnight on the day before the meeting.

Meeting Agenda

6-7pm Check-in, networking, conversation, and dinner.

7:00 - Chapter business, announcements,

7:15pm and introductions. Anyone can announce jobs that they know about.*

7:15 - 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/directions.shtml>

View from the Highlands Country Club



Photo courtesy of Rhonda Bracey

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 is 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 overcrossing. 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 overcrossing 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.

Public Transit

Prefer to take BART? The Rockridge station is closest. Send email to president@stc-berkeley.org to ask about transportation from BART to the meeting.

AC Transit bus E from SF via MacArthur then Rockridge takes you as far as Tunnel Road & Roble Road, with a half mile walk uphill on Hiller Drive to the Hillside Country Club.

STC News

Chapter News

Leadership Positions Available

We are looking to fill several leadership positions! Contact Richard Mateosian if you are interested. See <http://www.stc-berkeley.org/VolunteerOpportunities/volunteer.shtml> for a list of open positions.

Continuing Education

UC Berkeley Extension Open House

UC Berkeley Extension will offer an open house and information session about the technical communication program on Thursday, May 28. Prospective students, program alumni, and instructors will be there to discuss the program. The technical communication program at UC Berkeley Extension has served the field since 1998.

There is no charge, but registration is appreciated.

<http://www.unex.berkeley.edu/cat/course2008.html>

Date: Thursday, May 28

Time: 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

UC Berkeley Extension Downtown Center
425 Market Street (at Fremont), Room 805
San Francisco

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Book reviews and beyond

Our chapter president, Richard Mateosian, has a blog of the past 14 years of his articles for IEEE here:

<http://xrmcontent.blogspot.com/>

Miscellany

Do print and online versions need to be the same?

Amy Gahran says print and online documents should contain the same information but the words need not be the same.

A simple example: The print text gives the URL; the online text embeds a link. If the



document gives a company policy, the policy number and wording of the text should be identical, but the headings may be different.

What's obvious in a print document when the reader sees a series of heads on a page is not obvious online when the reader sees a link.

The key question for print and online versions is: Who's using it? Sometimes the only reason for a print version is that certain groups need to be able to carry it into the field or into meetings. If only certain groups -- such as sales or quality assurance staff -- will use print, prepare the print version(s) to meet their special needs.

Gahran warns that the legal department may object to multiple versions of any document.

Source: Amy Gahran, writer, editor, trainer and consultant, Boulder, CO; amy@gahran.com; <http://www.gahran.com>.

Use Informative Subheads

A one-word, general subhead doesn't work anymore, Jane Watson says. Today you need "talking heads," which she defines as newspaper headlines but accurate. These boldface subheads pinpoint information and run from seven words to two lines.

Although she makes no rule about how often to use subheads, she suggests about every five paragraphs, with a minimum of one on every two pages. Subheads not only show readers the key points but also break up the text, making it more visually appealing and allowing the eyes to rest.

Watson prefers a serif typeface for the body and a sans serif for the subheads.

Source: Jane Watson, business communication consultant and trainer, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; <http://www.jwatsonassociates.com>.

Twitter privacy? No problem.

You don't have to worry about privacy on Twitter if you don't post anything that you would want the entire world to see. If you do need to send a confidential message, use Twitter's direct reply option so it will go only to the business contacts you want to reach.

Source: Tracey Gould, director of marketing, Baskervill, <http://www.baskervill.com>.

Useful fact-checking websites

Here are stellar sites that Don MacLeod recommends using when searching for facts.

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.refdesk.com>

<http://www.lii.org>

<http://www.reference.com>

Reference portals help you find facts. Always assume that someone else has already gathered the ones you need and look for these on the Web.

One of the best reference portals is <http://www.refdesk.com>. As the name indicates, it functions much like a reference desk at the library, drawing facts from numerous sources, including dozens of general and specialized encyclopedias. Site owner Bob Drudge has done a good job of vetting the links.

MacLeod also recommends the Library Index to the Internet, <http://www.lii.org>, which has an excellent collection of links to databases, and <http://www.reference.com>.

A particularly useful site for writers is <http://www.yourdictionary.com>.

Its links take you to dictionaries in approximately 300 languages, grammars for more than 100, numerous specialized dictionaries and several style books.

Source: Don MacLeod, law librarian and editor-in-chief, Internet Law Researcher and Internet Connection, Glasser LegalWorks.



Three ways to protect your content

1. Copyright your Web site content and post a terms-of-use statement. Among other things, spell out what can be copied from the site and how that material may be used. If you write your own statement, ask a lawyer to review it.
2. Copy-protect images with such techniques as digital watermarking. Weingarten also recommends taking a cue from the entertainment industry. "Some overzealous publicists don't want fan sites to use photos from certain events. But that can be counterproductive." Top fan sites offer a gallery of photos for copying. "It's a way to regain control."
3. A weekly Web search by a low-cost service like Google Alert should find unauthorized use of your Web site content.

High-profile organizations, or those with vulnerable proprietary content, may benefit from more advanced services, such as those offered by Bacon's Information or BurrellesLuce. Request a search for company, executive and brand names. Be sure to update your search terms to include new names or phrases associated with recent company or industry developments.

Source: Rachel Weingarten, president, GTK Marketing Group, Brooklyn, NY; <http://www.gtkgroup.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://mtdiablostd.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