Ragged Left

Berkeley

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Job Contracting: What It Is and Why It Has to Get Better

Do you know the *Contract Worker's Bill of Rights*? If you don't, it could be costing you money, advancement of your career, and, ultimately, the flexibility you need to make a living.

November's STC-Berkeley speaker, James R. Ziegler, Ph.D., makes his living as an advocate for contract employees. His online resource for contractors, *The Contract Employee's Handbook* (*www.cehandbook.com*) offers links to over 250 employment Web sites. Last year Ziegler introduced *The Contract Worker's Bill of Rights* (*www.cehandbook.com/cehandbook/cwbor.html*), which explains specifically how the "standard practices of typical recruiting firms harm the careers of technical and professional contractors."

Ziegler has spent the past year and a half actively growing the Professional Association of Contract Employees (PACE), serving as the organization's Executive Director (*www.pacepros.com*).

PACE is a payroll management firm, a benefits administrator, and an employer of record for independent professionals. PACE provides contractors with the financial advantages of one-person corporations and the tax status of W-2 employees.

Last winter Ziegler wrote the lead article for *Contract Professional* magazine's *Annual Guide to Contracting*, eagerly ruffling the feathers of that publication's major advertisers—large recruiting firms.

Links to the "offensive" editorials and articles can be found at *www.pacepros.com/pace_html/pace_inthenews.html*.

On November 12–13 Ziegler will deliver the keynote address and preside over several breakout sessions at a conference sponsored by the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers, *www.washtech.org*, in Seattle, WA.

This presentation to STC-Berkeley promises to be of substantial value to our members. Come see Dr. Ziegler on November 10, as he offers a glimpse into the secret world of recruiters and agency bigwigs—and what you can do with the knowledge he imparts.

Fix Your Résumé

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

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

Résumés for review must be received the Friday before the monthly meeting (November 5). Send résumés to *employment@berkeley-stc.com*. Arrangements will be made to meet at the monthly meeting and to discuss the suggestions.

Editor's Notes: Pay Your Dues

BY ANDREW BEARMAN

Looking over a recent copy of *Tieline*, an STC publication, I noticed some interesting tidbits. Did you know, for example, that our STC-Berkeley chapter is growing in membership faster (9.4%) than any other chapter in its category (150 to 300 members)? Or, that our Region 8 includes both the largest chapter in the STC world (Silicon Valley, 1300 members) and the smallest (China, 8 members)? Fascinating stuff.

Speaking of membership, dues renewal invoices will be mailed in late November. Fees are up: year 2000 regular members will need to pay $110 and students $45. Payments are due January 1.

You can deduct your STC dues. Subtract the "tangible asset" values of the quarterly journal and *Intercom* magazine ($15 each) from the cost of membership ($110) to get the amount you can claim as a charitable contribution ($80). Employees and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense. Remember to pay your dues before January 1, so that you can add the deduction to your 1999 tax return.

Since there will be no chapter meeting in December, join us November 10, the last chapter meeting of the year. Pay your dues and stick around for Y2K.

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

STC has more than 20,000 members and 144 chapters worldwide. Its members include writers, editors, artists, illustrators, photographers, audiovisual specialists, managers, supervisors, educators, students, employees, and consultants.

STC strives to:

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

Membership

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

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

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

Local Activities

The six northern California chapters of STC conduct a variety of individual and joint activities. See *"Bay Area Meetings of Interest"* on page 7, a summary of this month's technical communication activities.

Subscriptions

This newsletter is free to members of the Berkeley chapter. STC members can subscribe for $12/year, non-members for $16/year. Send a check, made out to STC-Berkeley, to STC-Berkeley, P.O. Box 1007, Berkeley CA 94701-1007.

Advertising Rates

Page $70, 2/3 page $50, 1/2 page $40, 1/3 page $30, 1/6 page $20, business card $10. STC members receive 20% off. Further discounts are available for ads run in several consecutive issues. Ad deadlines must be received by the fifteenth of the month prior to publication.

Submissions

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

Deadline for unsolicited submissions is the fifteenth of the month preceding publication.

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

Ten Reasons to Attend Region 8 Conference

BY CHRISTINE STEVENS

By now, you should have received the preliminary program for the upcoming Region 8 conference, "Driving Forces in Technical Communication," which is being sponsored by the Los Angeles chapter and is to be held November 11–14 at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel.

Why should you go? The conference is being held in California, is reasonably priced ($200 for STC members for the entire conference!), and is a great place to network.

Not enough? Here are some other great reasons for you to attend:

Informative conference sessions: We've designed a very rich program for this year's conference, with a total of 6 preconference workshops and 47 sessions from which to choose. We're also offering in-depth, hands-on preconference workshop versions of several of our finest sessions. This gives you the flexibility to choose the breadth of learning that fits your needs best, whether it's a conceptual overview or a concentrated dose of real-world practical skill development.

Cool keynote speech: In a rare West Coast appearance, Mary Wise, STC president, will present the keynote address. Wise is senior manager of education services at Manugistics, Inc. and has more than 20 years' experience in technical communication, including stints as a word processor, technical writer, instructional designer, and manager. Mary's background as a circus clown prepared her well for both her corporate and STC jobs.

Exhibit hall: Learn about the latest tools and technology available for our profession. The exhibit hall features:

- Winning entries of STC's international technical communication competitions
- Résumé/portfolio review booth
- Food service
- Information booth staffed by volunteers who can answer your questions about the 2000 Region 8 Conference, to be held in Hawaii

Résumé/portfolio review service: In addition to dozens of informative sessions, this year's conference offers a résumé/portfolio review service, located in the exhibit hall and coordinated by Jim Desmond of Technical Stan

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Conference...

dards. If you're working on your résumé and have decided you need professional help, this is the answer. Appointments are taken on a first-come, first-served basis, so indicate your preferred time and date on the registration form.

Ride-share program: Take advantage of our carpool coordination service. Call Esther Spachner at 310 207-6902 and tell her your location, whether you prefer to drive or ride, and how many passengers you can accommodate. You and your carmates decide on a pickup time and place and who controls the air conditioning.

Lively social program: Tour one of three local attractions: the Queen Mary, Aquarium of the Pacific, or Rancho Los Alamitos. Dance the night away at the Friday night dinner/dance, which features a full dinner, dancing, and door prizes. The Saturday networking lunch provides the perfect venue to network and hear first-hand how your peers are handling the same professional challenges. You might even win a raffle prize!

See you in Long Beach!

Christine Stevens is a technical editor at Hughes Space and Communications in El Segundo. She is also the 1999 STC Region 8 Conference chairperson.

No Chapter Meeting in December

There will not be an STC-Berkeley chapter meeting in December. We will meet again January 12, 2000.

The December *Ragged Left* will be published. Deadline for submissions and advertisements is November 27.

Contact *newsletter@stc-berkeley.org* for advertising information.

New Chapter Web Managers Named

After over a year of upgrading and managing the STC-Berkeley Web site, Linda Schmidt has passed the Net torch to two volunteers, David Alt and Jennifer Jasper. David and Jennifer will build on Linda's framework and work to make the chapter site more valuable to members.

David Alt brings five years of experience in both development and documentation to his role as STC-Berkeley Internet Co-Manager. David is also an accomplished musician.

As a software engineer and technical writer, David has significant and varied experience with Fortune 100 companies, including database integration for the Eaton Corporation, and design and implementation of a VPN for Kelly Services.

As a musician, David has performed internationally and currently leads and performs with several bands in the Bay Area.

Currently, David lives in San Francisco and telecommutes to his Ohio-based client, Bell+Howell Publication Systems Company, as a consultant for the Information Control Corporation, also based in Cleveland, Ohio.

We'll describe Jennifer Jasper's credentials and professional experience in next month's *Ragged Left.*

In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact our new Web managers at the next meeting or via email at *internet@stc-berkeley.org.*

Visit the chapter Web site at *www.stc-berkeley.org.*

BIOTECH SIG MEETING

Understanding Document Design

BY KATHLEEN REHAK

The biotech SIG's October meeting featured Andrew Bearman presenting an overview of the visual design principles that inform the work of technical writers, regardless of their areas of specialization.

The presentation was an opportunity for me to review, in capsule form, what I learned in a visual design class, and confirm that the classroom lessons were indeed the conventions and accepted wisdom of real-world professionals.

Bearman began with a bit about his own background; he's a senior production editor at Siebel Systems in Emeryville, where he works with a group of writers and other editors producing documentation for Siebel's software products.

Next, Bearman defined document design as "the act of bringing together prose, graphics, and typography for the purpose of instructing, informing, or persuading." Savvy technical writers use graphics, typography, and page layout to amplify their text, as well as to communicate tone and ethos.

He passed around Robin Williams' book, *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (Peachpit Press, Berkeley, 1994), an excellent introduction to basic visual design principles, with particular emphasis on typography and layout.

Bearman amplified Williams' four interconnected principles of design, around which her book is built:

- **Contrast** The overall guideline: *be bold!* For instance, mix two very different typefaces, font sizes, and weights in the same document to effectively contrast headings with text.

- **Repetition** Repeated elements provide unity that connects a document's parts, and cues the reader that individual sections are parts of a whole.

- **Alignment** Every element should have some visual connection with another element on the page; nothing is placed arbitrarily.

- **Proximity** Group elements by placing related items closely together to organize the information visually and reduce clutter and confusion.

Excellent examples of these four principles, all working to heighten and amplify the textual message, can be found in the page layout and design of *The Non-Designer's Design Book* itself. And best of all is Williams' message that even those of us who are not trained graphic designers can learn how to make good design choices.

Another resource book passed around was *Dynamics in Document Design: Creating Texts for Readers* by Karen Wiley, (Wiley Computer Publishing, New York, 1997). In it, Wiley examines the forces that have shaped and changed document design.

She sites the "plain language" movement, personal computers and inexpensive printers, and the ubiquity of the Internet as elements driving new and different document design.

Bearman amplified Wiley's theses with examples of the increased array of design choices now available to technical communicators. He pointed out that the increased options demand very great attention to the design process, and suggested using as a touchstone these imperatives:

- Start with a main focus point
- Group your information
- Create strong alignments
- Repeat elements
- Add contrast
- Take some risk. *Be bold.*

At the conclusion of the presentation I scanned the posters and memos on the meeting-room wall with a newly critical eye. Within each document that I considered, I was able to identify violations of, or adherence to, one or another of the principles that Bearman had just finished illuminating.

I expect my own documents will reflect some increased awareness that words alone—even words in strong, clear prose—cannot communicate as effectively as can good writing combined with sound principles of visual design.

Welcome New STC-Berkeley Members

Current membership totals about 250. These folks have joined our chapter in the past few months.

Doris Barreto

Robert Brown

Shauna Brand

Tennille Christensen

Jonathon Eros

Kimberley Rathbun

Brian South

Sharon Tellyer

Sydney Thornton

Robert Wazeka

Marty Westby

Peter Weinstein

John Wright

Yvonne Young

Members transferring into our chapter

Nancy Adams

Ronald Brown

Judy Burkhart

Ann Farmer

Tamera Fields

David Gamon

Margot Guenzel

Anne Mikolajcik

Janice Redish

Marta Tanrikulu

Members transferring out of our chapter

Athena Chiladakis, Palo Alto

Ellen Lief

Kathleen Otis

Karen Nakakihara, British Columbia

Ron Rothbart

Timothy Sammon, Pacifica

Reinstating members

Joseph Chew

Gary Foltz

Ellen Lockett

Frederick Mead

Eric Renger

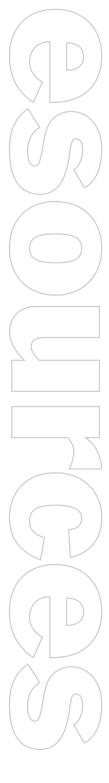Anna Sears

Patrick Stephens

Gert Weil

You Be the Judge

The Northern California Technical Communication Competition needs judges.

Visit the Web site at *www.touchstone99.org* to see the schedule of judging activities.

If you wish to be a judge, please send email to the judging coordinator, Joanna R Baisden, at *drs.baisden@juno.com*

Networking and Job Searching

STC-Berkeley Chapter Meeting Details

Café de la Paz serves STC-Berkeley members delicious South American food. The meeting begins at 6 P.M. with networking, conversation, and a no-host bar, followed by the buffet at 6:30 P.M. Chapter business and announcements are made around 7:15 P.M., followed by the speaker.

If you want to eat dinner, reservations are required and *must* be received no later than 12:00 noon the Monday before the meeting (November 8). Reservations are necessary so that we can order the right amount of food. Do *not* contact the restaurant. Send checks to Bill Kritzberg, 401 Melrose Avenue, Alameda, CA 94502.

We are working on a process allowing credit card payments via the chapter Web site, *www.stc-berkeley.org* Look for more information on the site soon.

Payments may be made at the door. With a reservation, the meeting fee with food for members is $15, for student members is $12, and for nonmembers is $18; if you come for the program only, starting at 7:30 P.M., the fee is $10 ($8 for student members).

Meeting fee with food without a reservation for members is $18, and for nonmembers is $20. *Next meeting*: Wednesday, November 10.

Note: There is no chapter meeting in December, see you in Y2K.

Touchstone 99 Update

Sacramento STC hosts the annual awards banquet of Touchstone 99, the Northern California Technical Publications Competition, at Red Lions Sacramento Inn.

Save the date: Saturday, February 26, 2000.

Our featured speaker will be Jared Spool. Anyone who's ever heard Jared Spool at an International STC conference knows what an incredible presenter he is—outstanding content that's great fun to listen to.

Upcoming Biotech/Medical SIG Presentations

Wednesday, December 1st: Wren Withers will give an overview of biopharmadocumentation, then discuss how a small document management project heralded big changes at Chiron Corporation.

Biotech/Medical SIG Meeting Format:

7:00 - 7:30 P.M. Introductions and Networking

7:30 - 8:30 P.M. Speaker's Presentation

8:30 - 9:00 P.M. Questions and Wrap-up

For directions to the Chiron cafe contact Wynette Weaver at *wynette22@yahoo.com* or 510-524-2459

STC Job Search Resources

See our Web site for details at:

www.stc-berkeley.org

If you'd like to receive job listings by email, prepare email with the following two lines:

subscribe stcjobsba-L end

and send it to *majordomo@stc.org*.

Sarah Lee Hauslinger, *president@stc-berkeley.org* is the STCJobsBA-L list owner.

Biowriters Email List

Joyce Wermot has created a Biowriters email list. It focuses on any issue related to technical writing in the biotech industry. The list is not moderated and an open subscription. To join, send a message to

majordomo @lists.sonic.net

In the body of the message, type:

subscribe biowriters

(leave the subject line empty) and send the message. You will automatically be subscribed to the list.

Free for Freelancers

Some resources for would-be entrepreneurs and freelancers.

Alumni Resources in San Francisco A non-profit organization with workshops, coaching, support groups and library for career development. *www.ar.org* or phone 415-274-4747.

American Medical Writers Association Conducts workshops on the business of freelance writing. *www.amwa.org* for the national organization, and *www.amwancal.org* for the Northern California chapter.

American Society of Journalists and Authors Features a service which lets authors know about the contract terms for most popular magazines. *asja.org/cw/cwpage.htm*

East Bay Editor's Guild A support and information group. Email to *kristin@barenedit.com.*

Help for Med Writers

Web sites for medical writing opportunities and information:

genomejobs.com

biospace.com

fda.gov

bioview.com

Bay Area Meetings of Interest

AMERICAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION (AMWA) OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA Meets periodically at various Bay Area locations. Contact Maggie George, 650-326-4636 or *maggie@amwancal.org.*

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT, NORTH BAY CHAPTER Meets monthly in the Petaluma area. Contact Henry Kaku, 707-778-8895.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS, GOLDEN GATE CHAPTER Meetings provide tips, pointers, basic information about indexing. Contact Karen Apland, 408-847-8234, *andrea621@aol.com,* or *www.well.com/user/asi.*

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN COMPUTING (AWC) First Wednesdays, 5:30 P.M., location in transition. Contact AWC at 415-979-8450.

EAST BAY STC Second Thursdays, 5:30 P.M. Reserve meal choice by noon the Tuesday prior to the meeting. At Tony Roma's in Danville, $18 with reservation—ph. 925-443-4514—or $22 at the door.

EAST BAY STC CONSULTANTS AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS PIC Fourth Wednesdays, 6:30 P.M. The group has been meeting at the Pleasanton library but plans to move its location soon. Contact Lori Cooke, 925-426-9755, for information about the next meeting and its location.

EAST BAY STC ONLINE Fourth week of month. Contact Melody Brumis, 925-464-5944, for dates and location.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURIAL COUNCIL Second Wednesdays, 6:30 P.M., at the Lakeview Club, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland. Call 510-339-3895.

NATIONAL WRITERS UNION (UAW) A labor union for freelance writers of all genres. Contact Mike Bradley, 510-482-1712, or the NWU Tech Writers Job Hotline, 415-979-5522.

NORTH BAY STC Third Thursdays, 6:30 P.M., at Parker Compumotor, 5500 Labath Drive, Rohnert Park.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SGML USERS GROUP Meets quarterly at various Bay Area locations, generally on Wednesdays 9:00 am to 12:30 P.M. (breakfast provided). Contact 415-522-9769.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMPUTER EDUCATORS (PACE) Serves the technical training community in the Bay Area. Most meetings are the morning of the second thursday in San Francisco. See *www.pacenetwork.org.*

SACRAMENTO STC First Wednesdays, 6:30 P.M., at Coco's Restaurant at Madison & Sunrise. Contact 916-658-9602.

SAN FRANCISCO STC Third Wednesdays, 6:00 P.M., at the London Wine Bar, 415 Sansome. Contact 415-561-9204, or *stc.org/region8/sfc/www/.*

SILICON VALLEY STC Fourth Thursdays, at Four Points Hotel, Sunnyvale. Contact Gwen Johnson, *gwenejohn@aol.com,* for reservations and details.

SILICON VALLEY STC CONSULTING AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTING SIG First Tuesdays, 6:00 P.M., at Vesuvio's, 3044 El Camino Real, Santa Clara. Contact Roger Steciak, 408-280-7136, or Jim Bowman, 510-657-7961. No meetings January or July.

SILICON VALLEY STC GRAFSIG A resource for STC members who have an interest in visual communications. Meets monthly; date and time vary. Contact Marek Buckiewicz, 408-395-2957, or *marek@mxb.com.*

SILICON VALLEY STC ONLINE AND INTERACTIVE INFORMATION SIG Third Tuesdays, 6:30 P.M., at Software Publishing Corporation, Bldg. 3, 3165 Kifer Road, Sunnyvale. Contact Charlie Rhoades, 408-379-7000, x1414, or *charly@hal.com.*

SILICON VALLEY STC PRODUCTION SIG Expert Support, 201 San Antonio Circle, Suite B115, Mountain View. Contact Susan Koehler, 408-248-0336.

SILICON VALLEY STC STUDENT SIG Fourth Tuesdays. Contact Pali Bain, 408-286-1100. Does not meet during the summer.
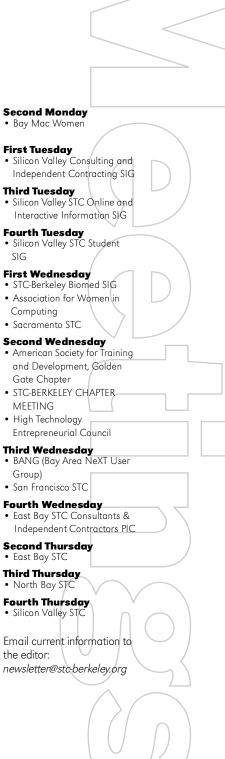
SILICON VALLEY STC WRITING/EDITING SIG Last Mondays, 6:00 P.M., at Wyse Technology, 3471 N. First Street, Bldg. 3, San Jose. Contact Stephen Peliotis at *stevep@synopsys.com.*

MON

TUE

WED

THU

Second Monday
• Bay Mac Women

First Tuesday
• Silicon Valley Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG

Third Tuesday
• Silicon Valley STC Online and Interactive Information SIG

Fourth Tuesday
• Silicon Valley STC Student SIG

First Wednesday
• STC-Berkeley Biomed SIG
• Association for Women in Computing
• Sacramento STC

Second Wednesday
• American Society for Training and Development, Golden Gate Chapter
• STC-BERKELEY CHAPTER MEETING
• High Technology Entrepreneurial Council

Third Wednesday
• BANG (Bay Area NeXT User Group)
• San Francisco STC

Fourth Wednesday
• East Bay STC Consultants & Independent Contractors PIC

Second Thursday
• East Bay STC

Third Thursday
• North Bay STC

Fourth Thursday
• Silicon Valley STC

Email current information to the editor:
newsletter@stc-berkeley.org

Ragged Left

Next Meeting:

Wednesday
November 10

Job Contracting: What It Is and Why It Has to Get Better

With James R. Ziegler, Ph.D.

Meal reservations required by Monday, November 8.

See page 6 for costs and meeting details.

Café de la Paz: 1600 Shattuck Avenue (at Cedar)
Buffet and No-host Bar   6:30 - 7:30
Announcements and Program   7:30 - 9:00

STC-BERKELEY MEETING LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS

By BART: Exit the Berkeley station (Richmond line) at Center and proceed north six blocks up Shattuck Ave. to 1600 Shattuck at Cedar.

From north of Berkeley: From I-80, take the University Avenue exit. Go east (towards UCal) to Shattuck Ave. Turn left (north) on Shattuck and go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From south of Berkeley: Take I-880 north from San Jose through Oakland. Follow the highway as it curves sharply to the right (where traffic merges) and becomes I-980. Continue on I-980 to Highway 24 (toward Berkeley/Walnut Creek). Take the first exit from 24 (Martin Luther King Jr./51st). Turn right on 51st St. and make first left onto Shattuck Ave. Proceed north on Shattuck to downtown Berkeley. Turn left on University Ave., then right again at first light (north) onto Shattuck. Go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From San Francisco: Take the Bay Bridge towards Oakland (I-80 East). At the end of the bridge, stay in the left-hand lanes and head towards Berkeley and Sacramento. Proceed two miles and exit onto University Avenue (on the exit ramp, stay in left lane of split). Go east (towards UCal) to Shattuck Ave. Turn left (north) on Shattuck and go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From far East Bay: Take Highway 24 west through Caldecott Tunnel, exit Ashby Avenue. West on Ashby to Shattuck Ave. Right on Shattuck to downtown Berkeley. Turn left (west) on University Ave., then right again at first light (north) onto Shattuck for seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

North

Shattuck Avenue

Cafe de la Paz
1600 Shattuck Ave.

Cedar Street

North Berkeley
BART Station

Hearst Avenue

University Avenue

UC Berkeley

6 blocks

To I-80
I-580

Berkeley BART Station

Downtown Berkeley