

# TechniScribe

Orange County STC

## Next Meeting

**When:**  
 Tuesday December 19, 2000  
 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**Where:**  
 Wyndham Garden Hotel  
 3350 Avenue of the Arts  
 Costa Mesa, CA  
 Phone: (714) 751-5100  
 See directions on page 3

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## Designing Your Web Site for the Blind

by *Guy Ball*  
 Senior Member, OCSTC

You might wonder about the logic of designing a Web site for the blind and visually impaired. After all, Web designers seem to be moving toward visually rich sites that often embrace some sort of flash and dazzle to keep viewers interested – or at least to point them in the direction that they need on the site.

Yet, those of us who are fully sighted forget that as we make the Web our main information vehicle, we may be cutting out millions of customers or potential customers. And these millions (5 to 10 million in the U.S. alone, by some estimates) have every moral and legal right to have access to that information.

For instance, Unisys has support sites where we post our latest documentation. We have scores of sales and marketing sites with information on our latest products.

Are these sites accessible to an audience (blind or visually impaired) that cannot actually see the site but can only “read” it through the use of special software?

Obviously, the implication is even greater for consumer sites like Amazon.com or Buy.com. Are they ready to ignore a few hundred thousand customers who would use their site – but can’t because of poor or incomplete design? If these companies would change their site design, even slightly, they may gain 50,000, maybe 100,000, new customers: all because their site design *encouraged* rather than *discouraged* viewers with impairments. And many of these impaired viewers stay loyal once they find a site that works well for them.

A recent article in *PC World* magazine (September 2000) compared two sites using screen-reader software. The first, Hewlett-Packard, did well. All links worked properly and were easily recognizable (Investor Information, Drivers, HP Store, for example). Then the writer visited the Gap Online. Many of the links sounded like programming gibberish (Link, shorts\_men.asp?wdid=300, Map: wdid=301, Map:gapstore/cs\_returns.asp). One would suspect that the Gap has lost a large number of potential customers who will never return to the site.

### The Problems

The blind and visually impaired use what are called screen readers to navigate the Web. These software programs look at the HTML file that creates a Web page on a computer. Then they synthetically speak exactly what that file tells them. The better readers will ignore or “understand”

(See *Designing for the Blind* continued on page 6)

## Publication Information

OCSTC publishes the *TechniScribe* 11 times a year. Articles published in this newsletter may be reprinted in other STC publications if credit is properly given and one copy of the reprint is sent to the *TechniScribe* editor.

Rights to articles appearing in the *TechniScribe* revert to the author upon publication. Reprinting articles in non-STC publications is subject to author approval.

The deadline for submission is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication. The editor reserves the right to deny publication of any material. Submissions may be edited for clarity, length, and appropriateness.

Remember:

- Include a 25-word biography about yourself when submitting articles.
- Send articles to:  
**ryan\_pesicka@hotmail.com**
- Please save in Word 97/98 format, RTF (Rich-Text Format), or ASCII. You can also send your article in the body of an e-mail message.

Subscriptions are available for \$10 per year to members of other chapters.

### Monthly Advertising Rates

1/4 page \$40    1/2 page \$60  
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## Chapter Chat

by Mark Bloom, OCSTC Chapter President

Last weekend, I traveled down to scenic Carlsbad on my trusty scooter to meet with and help train many of the judges for the 2000 Southern California Regional Technical Publications Competition. It was both an honor and a duty for me.

Actually, Bonni Graham of San Diego STC (and Competition Chair last year) led the initial training; I am merely acting as the online judging coordinator this year. Bonni did a wonderful job with the training, as usual, but something she said got me thinking and led to the theme for this article.

She said, "Judging a competition is one of the most important things you can do in the Society."

It's really true, when you think about it. If you are an experienced technical communicator, how do you influence the entire industry? Well, you can get involved in the Society, at the chapter, regional, or international level, but that level of involvement is not for everyone for a variety of reasons.

If you are really interested in furthering the state of technical communication, you can make your own work an example for others, you can mentor a junior writer, and you can even write newsletter articles. But these avenues of influence are limited in scope. To really reach out, you need a bigger audience.

One of the best ways to really make a difference is by volunteering your time to judge a competition. As a judge, you use your experience to critique another's work. You interact with other judges, sharing knowledge, preferences, and philosophies that grew from your years of experience. You have a say in which entry wins the coveted Best of Show award. In short, you are setting the standard for the future of technical communication.

It's an awesome responsibility and terrific opportunity. Being a judge can also help you forward your own career and experience. It puts you on the front lines of the industry. It exposes you to the latest technologies, the latest techniques, and the latest trends. It's a bonafide big deal.

Ask anyone who has ever entered the competition and won an award.

Because the competition is such a big deal, it's an important path to those in the trenches searching for ideas, hungry for feedback. No other avenue allows an experienced technical communicator to so closely influence not only the many entrants, but the Society as well. Entries given a Distinguished Award move on to the International Technical Publications Competition.

With so many reasons for being a judge, all of you experienced enough to qualify should consider it seriously. It's a win-win situation for all involved. I'd like to personally thank all the Orange County STC members who have got involved in the current year's competition. I'd like to encourage everyone else to sign up next year.

**CALL FOR RESUMES:** Be another success story! We can post your resume in PDF format on our Web site. You can even include a 75-word intro trumpeting your expertise! Prospective employers do scan our Web site, and other OCSTC members have received job offers through this service. If you are seeking a job or looking for a better job (it's no sin), you owe it to yourself to post your resume. For more information, point your browser to [www.ocstc.org/resumes.htm#Policies](http://www.ocstc.org/resumes.htm#Policies).

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your OCSTC Administrative Council!

# December Meeting Preview: Creating Positive Team Dynamics

By Mary Ann Stacy

The December 19th meeting will be held at the Wyndham Garden Hotel. Our esteemed guest, Suzanna Laurent, STC Director-Sponsor of Region 5, will give us tips on how to get along with each other, just in time for the stressful holiday season.



Do your colleagues at work repeatedly frustrate you? Do they disappoint you by not following through on commitments or upset you with insensitive comments? If so, you're not alone. Creating positive team dynamics within a group of diverse people poses a significant challenge in today's workplace.

Norms provide guidelines for how people treat each other. Team norms help team members know what is expected of them and how they can best work together. They also establish an acceptable code of conduct, or the way team members prefer to work together. When individual values match team norms, productivity and performance almost always increase!

Learn what makes a winning team, how to develop motivation and commitment, and how to create positive team dynamics as you join with others to succeed in the team environment!

Suzanna Laurent has used the steps in her presentation to rescue many teams. She has presented sessions at over 20 conferences across the country on such topics as goal setting, interpersonal skills, and leadership.

Presently she serves STC as the Director-Sponsor of Region 5.

She has filled every chapter office of the Oklahoma STC, and managed most of the chapter committees. Her chapter presidency culminated with the 1996 Chapter Achievement Award.

She was selected by the American Business Women's Association in 1997 from 100,000 members as one of their Top Ten Business Women in the nation, in recognition of her outstanding career achievement.

## When:

Tuesday, December 19, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

## Where:

Wyndham Garden Hotel  
3350 Avenue of the Arts  
Costa Mesa, CA  
(714) 751-5100

## Cost:

- ◆ Members with reservations, **\$20**
- ◆ Students with reservations, **\$15**
- ◆ Non-members with reservations, **\$22**
- ◆ Walk-ins or those registering after the deadline, **\$30**
- ◆ No-shows billed **\$10**

## Reservations:

Reservations are due by 5:00 p.m., Friday, October 13. If you call later, you will be billed the walk-in fee, so make your reservation early.

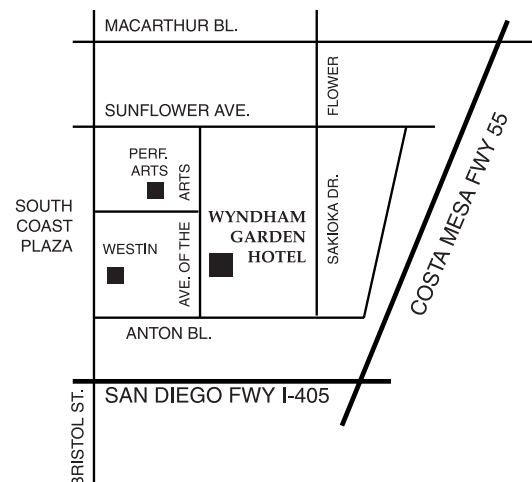
You can register by any of the following methods:

- ◆ Register online at [www.ocstc.org/dinres.asp](http://www.ocstc.org/dinres.asp)
- ◆ Send e-mail to Jeff Randolph at [erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com).
- ◆ Call the OCSTC Hotline at (949) 863-7666
- ◆ Call Carolyn Romano at (714) 894-9221. Leave your name, membership status, and phone number.

## Directions to the Wyndham Garden

From the 405 Freeway: Exit at Bristol. Go north to Anton Boulevard and turn right. Turn left onto Avenue of the Arts (the second signal). The Wyndham Garden Hotel is about one block ahead on the right. Turn into the driveway, and turn left into the parking structure. Parking is free.

From the 55 Freeway: Exit at MacArthur Boulevard, turn left on Flower, then right on Sunflower. Turn left on Avenue of the Arts and proceed one block south. The hotel will be on your left.



## November Meeting Recap: An Evening with JoAnn Hackos

By Julie Dotson

Our November guest speaker was JoAnn Hackos. If you were unable to attend, be sure to mark your calendar and make every effort not to miss her next visit. JoAnn is internationally recognized as an expert on information design and management and in high demand. At this time I can't say when she will be a guest at the OCSTC meeting again, but I am looking forward to it.

As a relatively new member to OCSTC this was the first meeting I had attended that was sold out. Almost every seat was filled, and, as I soon found out, filled for good reason. And our Chapter President, Mark Bloom, was actually wearing a tie!

The potential for single source documentation is incredible. The advancement in technology is progressing so quickly that a seemingly idealistic dream may be coming to fruition sooner than we thought possible.

One roadblock will be the human element. Writers are historically rather possessive of their work, and with good reason. No one likes to see others receive credit where credit is not due. As technical writers, we are relatively accustomed to receiving no credit when credit is due; we should be able to overcome that issue rather quickly, for most of us rarely see our name in print on the manuals and documents we produce anyway!

Single sourcing means delivering the right information at the right time, using the best media targets. JoAnn shared excellent examples and situations showing the increased cost effectiveness in information development; decreased time to market; increased consistency of information; decreased cost of translation and localization; and increased accessibility, timeliness, and customizing information for end users.

She explained one of the most crucial problems with single sourcing is that our processes tend to convert structures, instead of both structure and function. She clarified the potential functional conversion and discussed the differences between the structural and functional features we want to "reinterpret" by single sourcing.

I want to learn more and am going shopping! Books authored or co-authored by JoAnn include *Managing Your Documentation Projects*; *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design*; *Standards for Online Communication: Publishing Information for the Internet/World Wide Web/Help Systems/Corporate Intranets*, and *Designing and Writing Online Documentation-Hypermedia for Self-Supporting Products: Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests*, *Managing your Documentation Projects*, *The Art of Indexing*.

## Education Committee News

By Sheila Vaughnn

Our education effort is underway with many thanks to Anne Stratford and Jim Hohlfeld of the Orange County Computer Services group. Mary Ann Stacy will be reprising her popular FrameMaker classes and our chapter president Mark Bloom will expand your thinking by showing the relevance Zen has to online help.

While we continue to develop the Web site, we are seeking facilities for the seminars that don't require computers. We're also seeking instructors for popular subjects like RoboHELP, HTML, XML, and Acrobat.

If you can help, please contact the Education Chair, Sheila Vaughnn, at 949-888-7979 or [Sheila@vaughnn.com](mailto:Sheila@vaughnn.com). We want to hear your ideas and contributions so we can help you reach your professional goals.

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## Meeting News

By Carolyn Romano

The year is coming to a close, and we are anticipating some slight changes in our meetings next year.

The most obvious change will be our meeting location. After our December meeting at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, we will be moving our meetings to the Irvine Marriott for our 2001 schedule. The Marriott will better accommodate our ever-increasing meeting attendance.

Networking, job opportunities, and SIGs will meet at 6:00 p.m. Buffet dinner will be served at 6:30. The meeting will follow, with additional networking, if required, at the meeting's end at approximately 9:00 p.m. A slightly different format, but we think it will work well.

Occasionally the question comes up as to whether the cost of dinner can be optional. There are several reasons for our policy that dinner is part of the meeting. Most people come directly from work and do not have time for dinner before the meeting. If we did not have the food catered by the hotel, there would be a substantial fee for usage of the room anyway. A meeting with dinner included reinforces our philosophy that technical communicators are indeed professionals. And, from a logistics standpoint, keeping track of how many do and do not eat would be a nightmare. It's just not feasible.

We're going to have some great meetings next year. But first, it's Holiday Time!

## Membership News

By Dennis Hanrahan

I'm writing this column with a heavy heart. As I write, my dear friend, Sandi Giles, lies in the hospital suffering from the effects of a massive stroke. My first reaction to the news was disbelief. Then came the puzzlement. Why did this happen to such a vibrant, charming, gracious lady who has done so much for our profession, our chapter, and many of us individually? My next thought was, "Why do I whine about little things that don't mean so much in the long run?" So at this holiday season, let's count our blessings and say a prayer for Sandi's complete recovery.

On a much happier note, I salute Denise Fifer for putting together our very successful new member dinner held at Dave & Buster's in October. Although the attendance at this one was modest, we hope to make this an annual event, and I'm sure it will grow year by year.

More good membership news: we added 20 new members in October, and at the end of the month, our membership count stood at 453. In case you're wondering, that's 10 more than last year at this time. So, keep bringing your nonmember friends to the monthly meetings and we'll keep this healthy growth going. The overall Society count is also up...it now stands at 23,004.

Our new members for October are: **Karen L. Baldwin, John H. Bewley, Carol A. Bullard, Lisa M. Burnett, Gladys E. Cortez, Brian Day, Dan A. Eash, Rebecca L. Haberstroh, Martha L. Hursh, Anita Karanjia, Allison McMillan-Lee, Anna Perez-Craycroft, Gene C. Ren, William L. Savastano, Bettijeane Schilling, Florita T. Sheldon, Mike W. Soo, Lisa L. Sweatt, Eamon M. Wentzel, and Suzanne K.M. Young.** Transferring in was **Tammi J. Greenup.** Welcome, all...now, please get involved!

Before I get into this month's profile, I want to get in a quick plug for member Guy Ball's new book, *Santa Ana in Vintage Postcards*, which is part of Arcadia Publishing's "Postcard History Series." It's due for release next month at a price of \$19 (soft cover). It should be available on Amazon.com and at many Santa Ana area bookstores. However, if you order it through the Santa Ana Historical Society for \$22 (including tax and postage), the proceeds will benefit the Society and you'll get an autographed copy. For further information, contact Guy Ball or visit the Web site [www.SantaAnaHistory.com](http://www.SantaAnaHistory.com).

If any other members have published books, changed jobs, received promotions, or anything else of general interest, send me the information by e-mail and we'll get the information into next month's issue.

Now, at last, it's profile time!



**Tim Heaslet** joined us in December 1999. For the past year, he's been working at Mitsubishi Digital Electronics America (MDEA) in the Irvine Spectrum. As a technical writer, he is responsible for the design and creation of Owners Guides for MDEA's cutting-edge digital bigscreen televisions, as well as writing ISO procedures for their Irvine facility, creative design for their engineering intranet Web site, and "future-casting" tomorrow's digital technology for a team of world-renowned engineers and inventors.

Tim is convinced that he has the best job around. He actually got it through his acquaintance with OCSTC member Denise Fifer, who was a tech writer for MDEA prior to Tim. She subsequently convinced him to join STC. Previously, he spent many years at Pitney Bowes, and was their top sales executive in the western region.

What he likes best about tech writing is the joy of expression as a form of employment, plus his very supportive team of coworkers.

Tim was born in Riverside, and he developed a love of designing with tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Quark, PageMaker, Corel Draw, or "any other hot programs I could get my hands on." He also enjoys spending time with his wife and children.

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## Society Level Job Listings

The Society maintains job listings on the Internet. You can download these listings from the STC Web site at [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org).

## Orange County Job Listings

Looking for a job?

Our job listing is entirely online at the OCSTC Web site and is updated weekly. Look for the latest postings every Thursday. For convenience, bookmark [www.ocstc.org/jobline.htm](http://www.ocstc.org/jobline.htm)

If you have an inquiry or a job to post, send an e-mail message to Jeff Randolph at [erandolp@ix.netcom.com](mailto:erandolp@ix.netcom.com)

A limited number of printed copies of the Web site listings are available at monthly chapter meetings.

## (Designing for the Blind *continued from page 1*)

specialized HTML codes and speak the content that a sighted Web viewer would see. The result is content as accessible to a blind person as to a fully-sighted one.

At least that is the desired result.

Some of the problems occur when the Web designer includes graphics. If the navigation bar has the text link "software downloads," the screen reader will speak those words. But if the navigation bar uses graphic buttons with no "alt text" description, the reader will ignore it or just speak the word "graphic." If that's the case, the visitor is now lost on the page and will not know where to go next.

In other situations, poor or incomplete HTML formatting will confuse the reading software, causing it to skip content and links. Animation will cause the screen reader to jump around within text on a page, pulling words from different parts of the page and making nonsensical sentences.

## The Law

We're starting to see the impact of three laws: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act. More on these laws and their impact can be found at the Microsoft.com site (among others), but they are important for us all - especially when we deal with the federal government (Section 508, particu-

larly). Companies such as AOL, H&R Block, Intuit (Quicken), and Bank of America have already been subject to government and legal action.

## Are Ugly, Text-Only Sites the Answer?

No, and neither is a duplicate page with no graphics. There are some very easy things that we, as Web designers, can do to make a graphics page work for the blind. Most include using the tools we already have to add some alternate text. Others are just a change in habits, with us doing something a bit different. With a little re-training, we can produce an accessible page with little additional work.

## How to Fix it

Here are a few quick tips. I don't have the space in this article to give details or specific examples for each tip, so I recommend that you check out the sites listed under Additional Information.

- Images and animation. Use the alt text or alt attribute function to clearly describe the function of each visual.
- Image maps. Use client-side Map and use alt text for hotspots.
- Multimedia. Provide a text description of video content.
- Page organization. Use consistent structure and cascading style sheets (CSS) for layout and style when possible. This allows users to modify their browser at one time to affect their entire visit on the site.
- Formatting options. Use heading tags with font attributes rather than calling out specific fonts in each usage. This allows visually-impaired viewers to modify styles and font sizes to meet their needs.
- JavaScript, applets, and animation. Provide alternative content in case the active features are not accessible through the screen reading software.
- Check your work! Try using the validation tools, checklists, and guidelines available at sites like <http://www.w3c.org/TR/WCAG/>

## Additional information

The following sites offer quite a wealth of information, as well as good examples and tips:

- IBM Accessibility Center (with downloadable trial version of their Home Page Reader), <http://www-3.ibm.com/able/overview.html/>
- SSB Technologies (Web Site Accessibility), <http://www.ssbtechnologies.com/accessibility.php/>



## STC Mission Statement

*The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.*

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest organization for technical communicators. Its more than 20,000 members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, photographers, educators, and students.

Dues are \$115 per year, plus a one-time enrollment fee. Membership is open to anyone engaged in some phase of technical communication, interested in the arts and sciences of technical communication, and in allied arts and sciences.

STC headquarters contact information:

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- Adobe Access for People with Visual Disabilities (and information on PDF accessibility), <http://access.adobe.com/>
- Microsoft Accessibility (Web Guidelines), <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/dev/web/default.htm/>
- Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) offering Bobby, a free program to check your site's HTML code, <http://www.cast.org/bobby/>
- Designing More Usable Web Sites (from the University of Wisconsin at Madison), <http://trace.wisc.edu/world/web/>
- Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C). <http://www.w3.org/WAI/EO/Drafts/WAI-homeA.html/>

*Guy is a senior technical writer and information engineer with Unisys in Mission Viejo, CA. When he isn't hard at work writing Unisys hardware documentation, Guy has been writing on Web accessibility for CityLine and enablelink.com. He is working on an expanded version of this story for the STC publication, Intercom. He is the webmaster for [www.SantaAnaHistory.com/](http://www.SantaAnaHistory.com/) which is "Bobby approved." Guy has also just completed his third book, Santa Ana in Vintage Postcards, to be published by Arcadia in January 2001. He can be reached at [mrcalc@usa.net](mailto:mrcalc@usa.net).*

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## Editor's Corner

By Ryan Pesicka

It has been my pleasure to layout this month's *TechniScribe* with the help of Jeff and Elaine Randolph. I look forward to the opportunity to continue working on our monthly newsletter. I graduated from California State University, Long Beach in May of 1999 with a Bachelor's degree in English and a certificate in Technical and Professional Writing. Working as a Technical Writer for the past year and a half, I have come to value the resource that is OCSTC more than ever before. To remain cognizant of the latest trends in our field is vital to the growth and ultimate success of a career in technical communication.



This month's *TechniScribe* includes a very interesting look at the subject of Web navigation for blind and visually impaired individuals. In our feature article, Guy Ball discusses some of the current problems with software that is intended to read and synthetically speak the HTML file of a Web page. He also includes tips on how to make your Web site as user-friendly as possible to those of us who are blind or visually impaired. Thanks, Guy!

Don't miss Mary Ann Stacy's preview of the December meeting, Jay Mead's recap of the Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii, and Alison Gemmell's thank you to all those who continue to volunteer their time and energy to prepare for the 2000-2001 SoCal Regional Competition.

Also, special thanks to our entire publication staff—credits are listed on page 2.

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## Adios, OCSTC

By Mel Friedlander

About two months ago my wife and I decided to move to the Temecula, California area. The prime reason was to expand my Forensic engineering business in a booming area for this type of work. Recently, we closed escrow on a home in Sun City, California and, shortly thereafter, sold our home in Huntington Beach.

The distance from Sun City to OCSTC meeting places is about 85 miles. This distance and the travel time required during high volume freeway hours precludes on time arrival at general and other OCSTC meetings. Hence, I will be leaving OCSTC at the end of November and joining the Inland Empire STC. IESTC meetings are only 25 miles from Sun City.

I leave with sadness and regret. I met some wonderful and inspiring people during the short time period that I

was a member and the still shorter time period that I was editor of the *TechniScribe*. I want to offer my sincere thanks to all of the members who helped me edit and publish the *TechniScribe*. In particular, I want to thank Jeff Randolph who was always there to steer me in the right direction both during normal and abnormal evening hours. I also want to thank Julie Dotson for her support in providing newsworthy articles and Pamela Armstead for putting it altogether for publication. Finally, I want to thank Don Pierstorff for convincing me to join OCSTC. I have never regretted the decision to join. It's been a wonderful experience.

So, farewell and good luck to all of you in your technical communication careers.

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## Financial Industry SIG Forming

Steven Marshall of the San Gabriel Valley chapter is interested in forming a Financial Industry SIG for members involved in banking, real estate, mortgage, or finance. Interested parties should contact him at [steven\\_marshall@indymac.com](mailto:steven_marshall@indymac.com).

*This information is reprinted from Tieline, the monthly newsletter to serve as a link between chapters.*

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## Thank You, Publications Competition Volunteers!

by Alison S. Gemmell

We are well under way with our 2000-2001 SoCal Regional Competition and I'd like to thank all the volunteers that have stepped in and helped out in many ways.

### Our Fearless Leader

Terri Avizienis, our fearless competition leader from the Los Angeles STC chapter has charged ahead and rallied many of us to the cause. She has donated endless hours of time, energy, and gasoline to keep the chapters informed and enthusiastic about entries and judging. I think Terri is actually six volunteers all rolled into one, operating from the same address! If you have any questions about the competition or would like to lend a helping hand for our final entries work and upcoming banquet, please contact Terri at [terri123@gateway.net](mailto:terri123@gateway.net) or (323) 666-3053. Thank you, Terri, for helping us out with timely answers, humorous anecdotes, and hands-on support for all of our committees.

### OCSTC's Entries Committee

Many volunteers from the Orange County chapter donated a Saturday afternoon and additional hours to open competition packages, check paperwork for accuracy, and prepare the entries for judging committees. Volunteers also commented on early drafts of the entry forms. We were up to our necks in entries; 136 in all, and each entry took an average half hour to process. It was difficult to keep our minds on task; we all wanted to take a good look at each entry, maybe read each one for just a minute—or twenty. A huge thank you to Mike Gemmell, Susan Peck MacDonald, Michael Vance, Terri Avizienis, and members of Alison Gemmell's immediate family for their hard work. Thank you, Terri, for getting everything sorted, bagged, and distributed to the 46 judges.

### There's Still Time to Get Involved

Toward the beginning of January, 2001, the entries committee will need more help distributing judge evaluation forms to competition entrants. If you're interested in helping with this, please contact Alison Gemmell at [agemmell@cadence.com](mailto:agemmell@cadence.com) or (949) 790-7054.

### Volunteering as We Speak

Our chapter is not only providing help on the competition entries committee, but is also helping out with judging and judge team training. Mark Bloom, an online competition judge last year, helped train the online judges for this year's competition. Many Orange County members are also judging this year, including several

judges that did double duty as entries committee volunteers. The judges are reviewing entries as we speak and will continue their hard work through the end of the year.

### We Are Not Alone

Thank you to the following volunteers from other chapters that have helped in significant ways:

- LeeAnne Kryder, publicity, Santa Barbara Chapter
- Charlene Dewbre, competition website and awards banquet, Inland Empire Chapter
- Bonni Graham, advisor and finance committee, San Diego Chapter
- Don Rasky, Tech pubs committee chair, San Diego Chapter
- Kris Oden, judge training hostess, San Diego Chapter
- Kathy Broman, awards, San Gabriel Valley Chapter
- Competition judges (we'll keep the names to ourselves for now), LASTC, OCSTC, IESTC, San Diego STC

### Competition Timeline

The competition is about an eight-month volunteer effort:

- Late Summer 2000—publicity and competition paperwork are prepared
- October 14, 2000—entries deadline
- End of 2000—judge evaluation forms due
- January 15, 2001—International entries deadline (highest regional award winners are automatically entered)
- Spring 2001—awards banquet

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## Technical Literacy Web Site Goes Live

By Rosalind Rogoff, President of East Bay STC

I am very proud to announce that the new Technical Literacy Web site is up and online. Congratulations to Lenore Weiss, the driving force behind this project, for getting it up and running so quickly. The Technical Literacy project, which is funded by a grant from STC, is a joint effort of our East Bay Chapter and Oakland schools. Two eighth-grade students from Montera Middle School helped design the site. You can view it at [http://stc.org/region8/ebc/www/TL\\_Front.htm](http://stc.org/region8/ebc/www/TL_Front.htm).

## Worst Manual Contest

Just a reminder for the holiday season, when all else fails, read the manual.

Have you ever been so frustrated with a manual or set of instructions that you cursed the author and wished you had never bought the product? Do you remember the last time you used Help on your computer and every click of the mouse led to a new set of decisions?

Does this sound familiar? How about \$500 for your frustration? Technical Standards, Inc. (TSI), a Southern California documentation services company, is offering \$500 for the winning entry in their "Worst Manual Contest."

Send a manual or set of instructions that is hard to understand, poorly written, or just plain wrong. Send it if it has bad grammar, too much legalese, is poorly translated, or has missing steps. If it is the worst entry, you will win \$500.

"We thought we would have fun with this contest. Everyone has had trouble with a manual," says Michelle Wier, Director of Operations of Technical Standards, Inc. "That's why we started our company. People like products they understand how to use, and good technical documentation reduces the need for technical support. That's why good manuals are so important."

You don't have to send the whole manual; excerpts of the worst parts are okay. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2001, so check those holiday gifts for potential entries. Entries must be in English. For complete contest rules see the TSI Web site at [www.tecstandards.com](http://www.tecstandards.com).

Technical Standards, Inc. specializes in contract technical writing projects, technical writer staffing, and training. Since 1993, TSI has provided writers and editors to the high-tech community who produce printed documents, online Help, and Internet documentation. Technical Standards, Inc. is located in San Marcos, CA.

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## Colophon

The pre-press proof of the *TechniScribe* was produced using Adobe PageMaker 6.52 for Windows. Final proofing, editing, and conversion for Brea Printing were completed using PageMaker 6.52 for Macintosh. Palatino, Avant Grade, Helvetica, and Times from the Adobe Type Library were used for all text and headline fonts.

All original artwork was created or enhanced using Adobe Illustrator 8.0.1 for Windows, and Adobe Photoshop 5.5 and Illustrator 8.0.1 for Macintosh.

The PDF on the OCSTC Web site was distilled from raw Postscript using Adobe Acrobat Distiller 3.01 for Macintosh and Exchange 3.01 for Macintosh.

## Calling All Contractors and "Wanna Be" Contractors...

By Suzanne Madison

OCSTC members interested in learning more about working as technical communicators on a contract basis, or in sharing experiences while doing this type of work, are invited to join the chapter's Contractors Special Interest Group (C-SIG). The group meets monthly, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., before the chapter meeting.

In November, the group discussed the differences and advantages/disadvantages of working as a W-2 employee or on a 1099 basis. The topic of discussion at the December meeting will be the best type of resume to use when seeking contract work.

For more information or to be included on the e-mail list, contact Suzanne Madison, [madisons@pacbell.net](mailto:madisons@pacbell.net).

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## Corrections and Clarifications

By Jeff Randolph

In the November 2000 issue of the *TechniScribe*, we regret the following corrections:

- in the caption of the volunteer group photo appearing on page 11, Laura Vasquez's last name was misspelled.
- in the same caption, Carolyn Romano's name was omitted. She appears seventh from the left in the second row.
- the URL of the OCSTC listserve shown on page 12 is incorrect. The correct URL is:  
<http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcocc-l>

Starting in the November issue, you will note that in the upper-right corner on page 1, there is a volume number and an issue number. STC Newsletter Competition guidelines for 2000-2001 required this element. In addition, this element will allow greater flexibility to accept articles from other sources and is a prerequisite for possible ISSN registration.

Why did we assign the volume/issue number you see? The November issue was the 10th issue published in the year 2000, and this year is OCSTC's 39th year as an STC chapter.

Beginning in the November issue, you will also note that on page 6, you will find the STC Mission Statement. The mission statement is another required element for the STC Newsletter Competition and brings OCSTC in line with STC branding.

## Region 7/8 Pan-Pacific Conference a Hit in Hawaii

By Jay Mead

From October 19–22, over 500 technical communicators from STC Regions 7 and 8 attended the first-ever Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii. The conference was full of superlatives: the largest regional conference ever, the most sessions, the first to invite all of our STC Pacific Rim colleagues—and possibly the only STC conference to feature a luau! Attendees hailed from nearly every country represented in the two regions, and from every region in the STC.

Tropical breezes and bright sunshine lured attendees to the beach, but nearly all showed their dedication by filling the session rooms at the Ilikai, our Conference hotel. The Conference led off with a festive welcome reception at which Hawaii State Senator Norman Sakamoto presented a proclamation by Hawaii Governor Benjamin J. Cayetano naming October 15–21 “Technical Communication Week” in Hawaii.

The next morning, keynote speaker, Martha Baer, senior contributing editor at *Wired* magazine, regaled attendees with a remarkable tale from the trenches, and showed how the power of compelling narrative can inform our own communication.

With that, attendees were off to sessions—nearly 100 to choose from. Especially popular themes included single-sourcing and content management, with remarkable presentations about the technology and organization that can make those important techniques a reality. Sessions on XML and its coming impact on every aspect of our profession were also packed, as well as sessions on Web content design, global communication, project management, and independent contracting. A number of the most heavily attended sessions were repeated by popular demand. And as with other regional conferences, attendees could choose from a series of pre- and post-conference workshops, for in-depth instruction from some of the best practitioners in our field.

Other conference features included a networking luncheon attended by nearly all participants; over a dozen exhibitors offering everything from Help systems to a career change; a luau, complete with kalua pig and poi; and a closing dinner cruise across Waikiki to Diamond Head, with the lights of Honolulu twinkling in the background.

Praise for the success of the conference has poured in from both sides of the Pacific. Said one participant, “Congratulations to you and your committee for a truly wonderful conference. What a pleasure to be there! I learned incredible amounts, made good contacts, and had a fabulous time.” And another thoughtful attendee wrote, “I was able to learn more about topics of special

interest to me from professionals in the field. I appreciated the high caliber of the presenters I met in sessions. I also thoroughly enjoyed the keynote address, and...met my goals of expanding my professional connections. Your networking activities helped me to meet many people with whom I would like to work and collaborate with on professional research projects....”

There’s talk of another Pan-Pacific conference sometime soon, but in the meantime, enjoy next year’s regional conferences. And if you weren’t able to attend the year 2000 Pan-Pacific conference, you can visit the conference Web site at [www.pan-pacific.org](http://www.pan-pacific.org) and still enjoy the presentations—without the sunburn!

Aloha!

*Jay Mead is past-president of the STC Rocky Mountain Chapter, and PR chair for the Pan-Pacific Conference.*

The following OCSTC Members spoke at the Pan-Pacific Conference:

- Mark Bloom
- Marcia Couey
- Margaret Packman
- Connie Sanders
- Melissa Sweet

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## ***Calendar of Events***

- December 4** Administrative Council meeting at AOL, 6:30 p.m.  
**December 19** OCSTC Chapter meeting, 6:00 p.m., Wyndham Garden Hotel.  
Speaker: Region 5 Director-Sponsor Suzanna Laurent.
- January 8** Administrative Council meeting at AOL, 6:30 p.m.  
**January 16** OCSTC Chapter meeting, 6:00 p.m., Irvine Marriott Hotel.  
Speaker: STC Executive Director & Counsel Bill Stolgitis.
- February 5** Administrative Council meeting at AOL, 6:30 p.m.  
**February 20** OCSTC Chapter meeting, 6:00 p.m., Irvine Marriott Hotel.  
Speaker: Senior Member Jeff Randolph

### **Visit These Sites...**

**OCSTC Chapter Listserve at:**  
<http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcocc-1>

**OCSTC Training Schedule at**  
<http://members.home.net/vaughnn/start.html>

**IESTC Chapter Web site at: [www.iestc.org](http://www.iestc.org).**  
**LASTC Chapter Web site at: [www.lastc.org](http://www.lastc.org)**

### **FUTURE CONFERENCES**

**March 4-8, 2001 "WinWriters Online Help Conference" - Santa Clara, CA**  
**(Note: This event is not affiliated with STC or sponsored by STC)**

**May 13-16, 2001 STC 48th Annual Conference - Chicago, IL**

# **TechniScribe**

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