

northbay news

The monthly newsletter of the NorthBay Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

Volume 7, Number 3, March 2000

In This Issue

- ✿ *Our February Meeting*
- ✿ *Editorial by our President-Elect*
- ✿ *This Month's Meeting*
- ✿ *Branding is Serious Fun*
- ✿ *Touchstone Competition Awards*
- ✿ *Sonoma State Extended School of Education's First Tech Com Course*
- ✿ *Coming Soon*
- ✿ *Employment Opportunities*

Last Month's Meeting and Elections

John Dibs
president elect

At February's chapter meeting, we held elections, and filled every one of the open officer positions for the year 00/01! The new slate of officers follows:

- President: John Dibs
- Vice Presidents: Barbara Herbert and Kurt Huget
- Treasurer: Carolyn Gibson
- Web Site: Shelley Hoose
- Newsletter: Ken Delpit
- Membership: Amy Forlan
- Hospitality: Gabrielle de Serres and Michael Simoni



The elections evidenced a good deal of enthusiasm, as noted by one of our guests. As it turns out, we held elections earlier than typical for other chapters. Officer turnover will not

Continues on page 3 ➔

Editorial

John Dibs
president elect

Our North Bay chapter has experienced tremendous growth in the past year. A growth rate of over 24% (24.07, to be exact) puts us second only to the Oklahoma City chapter (at 24.24%) for chapters with 41 to 75 members.

Welcome to all of our newest members! In addition to satiating the interests of those contemplating entering the technical communications field, it will be our challenge in the coming year to offer a balanced set of chapter programs that will attract the interest of experienced members.

Speaking of experienced members, I can't do justice to the amount of work our current president, Michael Meyer, has done for the North Bay chapter over the past several years. We've all benefited from a first rate, regularly published newsletter, and an up-to-date



Talk about explosive growth!

Continues on page 5 ➔

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and committee chairs**

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submitting articles and ads

We welcome articles, advertising, and news about meetings, workshops, and courses that pertain to technical communication. Please email simple text to the editor at mmeyer@sonic.net. For our current advertising rates, please email or phone the editor.

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STC Mission Statement

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

This Month's Meeting

Programming Concepts and Terminology for Technical Communicators

offered by Andrea L. Ames

Fact: Programmers need documentation, too.

Fact: Technical communicators developing documentation for programmers may be in greater demand than those writing less technical material.

Fact: Technical communicators developing documentation for programmers may be better paid.

Fact: You do not need a degree in computer science to write for a programming audience.

Given these facts, Andrea L. Ames will briefly present some key terminology and concepts that technical communicators writing for programmer audiences should know, including:

- The software development cycle
- The differences between scripting and programming languages
- Programming for the Web and the differences between applets and applications
- Basic functional/traditional programming terminology and concepts
- Basic object-oriented terminology and concepts
- Tips for developing this technology as part of your career plan

This presentation is geared toward intermediate to advanced technical communicators experienced with designing and writing documentation for non-technical audiences and interested in an introduction to the programming audience's terminology and concepts.

The Presenter

Andrea L. Ames has more than 15 years experience in technical communication. She owns her freelance writing and technical communication consulting firm, verbal imagery www.verbal-imagery.com, in Redwood City, CA, and she's a principal technical writer at Vertical Networks, www.vertical.com, Inc., in Sunnyvale, CA. She's written two award-winning technical trade books, and she's a contributing editor for *Web Techniques* magazine.

Andrea is the director-sponsor of STC's Region 8 for the years 1998-2001. She is a senior member of STC, and has been a member since 1987.

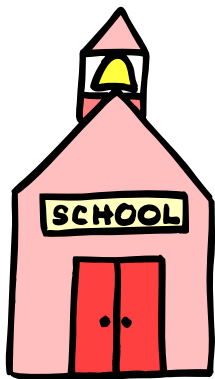
Last Month*Continued from page 1*

officially occur until the end of June, though newsletter volunteers will assume their duties sooner.

Opportunities to Learn

Following elections, we heard presentations from representatives of UC Berkeley Extension and Sonoma State University School of Extended Education. Velma Parness, Continuing Education Specialist for UC Berkeley Extension's Continuing Education in Engineering Department, shared information about the courses for the Certificate and Professional Sequence programs in Technical Communications.

To be approved, courses must go through a rigorous academic process to ensure they meet university standards. Those completing the Certificate program



can boast of an accomplishment whose value is universally recognized. UC Berkeley Extension offers courses at the Berkeley campus, in San Francisco, and at other Bay Area locations. Despite the distance, many from the North Bay continue to take and benefit from these courses. For more information and a list of course offerings, visit www.unex.berkeley.edu.eng.

Terry Wall of Next Level Communications and Mark Weddle of Cisco Systems spoke about their interest in

developing a technical communications program closer to home. Terry has been actively developing a curriculum for Sonoma State University School of Extended Education, and Mark will be teaching the first course, *Introduction to Technical Writing*. Be sure to see the announcement in this newsletter, and pass on information about the new course to others. Carol Tremmel, program manager for Sonoma State's School of Extended Education, described hopes for the future of the program, including partnering with technical industries to offer internships. Many thanks to each of these individuals for their dedication to educating professional technical writers and communicators.

The Telecom Series

Following these presentations, we held a brief debriefing of the November telecom seminar, "Telecommunications: The Technology, Market, and Regulation (Past, Present, and Future)," hosted by Golden Gate University's Rohnert Park campus and presented by John McNaught of Alcatel USA. We heard several critical comments, yet overall a definite consensus emerged for continuing a series on telecommunications technology, and what it means for us. Eunice Malley shared the results of a proposal to secure speakers from Next Level Communications. At least two volunteers have offered to make presentations from Next Level

Following the discussion, Steve Ross of True Time, Inc. shared a fantastic list of web sites relating to telecommunications. Steve is taking an introductory online course on telecommunications at Santa Rosa Junior College, and eagerly shared some of his findings. You can contact him at steve_ross@worldnet.att.net to request a copy of the web site list. Whitney Parker closed the evening's program with some words about Adobe's GoLive program.



Sonoma State's School of Extended Education Offers First Technical Communications Course

Sonoma State University's School of Extended Education has announced its first course offering in the technical communications field.

The course, *Introduction to Technical Writing*, will be a full day workshop held on Saturday, April 8, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost is \$73. To sign up for this course, visit the course description on the web at www.sonoma.edu/exed/Text/Spring/tc.html. This course is geared for those who are considering employment in technical communications and those already in the field seeking a broader understanding of their profession. Topics include:

- Overview of the technical documentation process
- Types of documentation
- Audience and project analysis
- Gathering information
- Organization, design and layout of information
- Writing and editing
- Writing for electronic and print media
- Testing the usability of documentation
- Documentation production and distribution
- Tools of the technical communicator
- Ethical and legal issues
- Employment trends and career opportunities
- Professional organizations



Continues on page 5 ➤

Serious Branding is Serious Fun

by Mary Wise
STC President

The Society for Technical Communication. STC. Who are we? What do we do?

We are many. We do lots.
I'd like a better definition.

Last May, I explained that one of my goals as President of STC was to better define who STC is and what STC does as a professional society of technical communicators. Now, I'd like to fill you in on our progress in that area: the STC Branding Project.

No, we're not burning the STC logo into our hides with a hot iron! We are going through a process to discover and develop the STC brand.

"So, Mary," I hear you cry, "what's a brand? Isn't it the logo?"

Actually, integrated branding is much more than just a logo, or mission statement, or public relations plan.

According to *Integrated Branding*, by F. Joseph LePla and Lynn M. Parker: "integrated branding is an organizational strategy used to drive company and product direction – where all actions and messages are based on the value the company brings to its line of business." To put it more succinctly, integrated branding is the promise you keep.

So how do we go about figuring out this so-called brand?

First, I realized that this process was not going to be quick and easy. To do this right, we had to involve the board and the membership during the whole process.

Second, I knew that we could not do it by ourselves; we needed professional assistance.

Finally, I decided that we needed to take this year to define the brand, and leave

the rest of the work until next year. Believe me, that's hard for an STC president to do!

So what have we been doing?

Actually, integrated branding is much more than just a logo, or mission statement, or public relations plan.... integrated branding is the promise you keep.

Last summer, our Corporate Identity committee, headed by Donna Sakson, developed and released a Request for Proposals to several firms that we knew were experts at integrated branding. We were very pleased to receive a proposal from Parker LePla, and we selected them to help us uncover the STC brand.

Uncover the brand?

Believe it or not, our brand already exists. This process helps us discover that brand and explicitly define it. When we do that, we can then make decisions for the Society based on the brand.

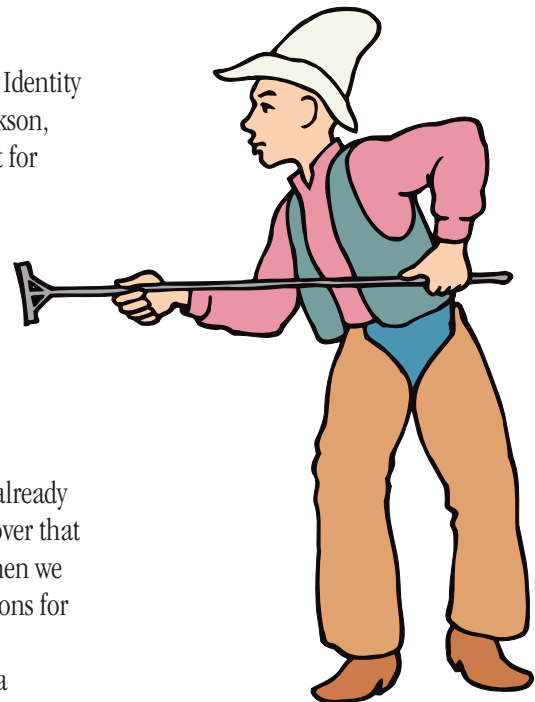
During the fall, Parker LePla conducted a series of interviews with board members, STC members, non-renewing members, prospective

members, and office staff. We also formed the brand team, a group of 12 STC members who are charged with defining our brand. At the winter board meeting, the board participated in a workshop so that we could learn what branding was about and to learn some of the early results of the interviews.

What's next?

In mid-March, the brand team will meet to analyze the data and define the brand: our mission, our values, our associations, and our personality. I'm confident that the result will be a stronger, more visible STC – a Society with a promise to its members; a Society that will keep that promise.

I welcome your comments and questions on this important project. Please feel free to write me; my email address is: mwise@manu.com



Sonoma State*Continued from page 3*

The course's instructor, Mark Weddle, is a technical writer for Cisco Systems in Petaluma. Over the past 13 years he has written technical documentation for Bay Area companies including Autodesk, Symantec, Tesseract Corporation, and Crum & Forster.

As announced at our February chapter meeting by Carol Tremmel, this course will be repeated in the summer, and plans are in the works for several individual elective courses in technical communications topics. The School of Extended Education gives continuing education units (CEUs) for attendance at their courses. These are not the same as academic units at Sonoma State University; check with the School of Education for details.

Thanks to Carol Tremmel, Terry Wall, and Mark Weddle for their efforts in putting this course together, and best

*A technical
communications
course for \$73!
Spread out over a
year, that's only 20
cents a day!*

wishes for a successful course and ongoing program. Check out Sonoma State's web site and our STC newsletter and chapter meetings for announcements of upcoming courses.

**Award Winners!**

Two North Bay entries won awards in the Touchstone '99 Northern California Technical Communication Competition.

Congratulations goes to Chris Cummings, Eunice Malley, and Lauren May for a Merit Award for *N³ ADSL ETHERset Quick Start Guide*, a publication that instructs users how to connect this high-speed Internet device to a PC right away.

Congratulations also to Scott Baddley, Craig Gilchrist, and Stacia Topping at ABT Corporation who won an Achievement Award for the *ABT Results Management Suite 5 Overview*.

In addition to the chance to win an award in this distinguished competition, entries receive critical comments from judges in several entry categories. Winners in the Distinguished category move on to the STC International Competition. Consider submitting an entry on behalf of your organization in next year's competition. You can't lose!

Editorial*Continued from page one*

chapter web site due directly to his efforts. Now it's time for others to step in and take over these responsibilities.

But beyond the many hours and weekends Michael has given to the chapter and to the STC, I'd like to express thanks on behalf of the newer members and writers for his encouragement to many of us over the years. It has made a big difference and has shown him as a role model. No doubt Michael will continue encouraging those seeking to improve themselves in the technical communications arena as he shares his experience both informally and formally.

Our speaker for March will be Andrea Ames, director-sponsor for STC Region 8. Andrea has visited our chapter in the past,

and maintains a demanding travel schedule with numerous visits and presentations at chapters throughout the

*Thank you
Michael Meyer
for his many
years of
leadership and
newsletter/
website editing,
design, and
maintenance.*

region. Region 8 includes chapters in California, Nevada, New Zealand, Singapore, and the Republic of China. Read about Andrea's timely presentation topic in this newsletter.

Those wishing to contribute to the newsletter can contact one of the newsletter volunteers. We welcome write ups of chapter meeting presentations, profiles of chapter members (including yourself!), critical reviews of books, web sites, or tools, announcements of workshops and educational opportunities, as well as job openings. As our programs get off the ground for the year, be thinking of topics you would like to hear about or speakers you would like to see, and pass on suggestions to one of the new vice presidents. Last year we discussed having the chapter sponsor or partially subsidize a half-day seminar or workshop on a topic of mutual interest. Perhaps this year we can bring this idea to fruition. It all happens through volunteers dedicated to common interests and goals, so even if you're not an officer this year, please contribute your talent.



Coming Soon!

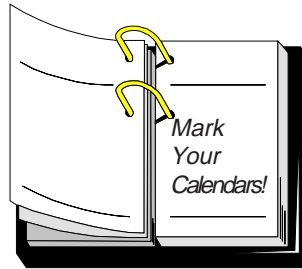
March

The American Society of Indexers-Golden Gate Chapter Conference

March 18th

Come attend our annual full-day program on March 18, 2000. This year we are excited to have Seth Maislin, sole proprietor of Focus Information Services and directory manager at Lycos Inc., come from Massachusetts to present his workshop: *Indexing Electronic Media*.

For information, contact Naomi Linzer, Treasurer ASI-GG at jinlizer@saber.net or (707) 923-4361.



April

“Breaking into Technical Writing”

Saturday, April 8, 2000

A hands-on one-day seminar sponsored by the National Writers Union, a union for all writers in cooperation with the City of Oakland, Community & Economic Development Agency. From 10am - 4pm at Nile Hall, 1233 Preservation Park Way, Oakland. For more information, call 510-839-1248.

Biotech Medical SIG

Wednesday, April 5th

The Biotech Medical SIG group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 PM at the Chiron Cafe in Emeryville. It is a casual meeting, with no dues or reservations required. We want to extend our invitation to all writers and interested parties to attend. The Biotech Medical SIG is an excellent way to learn more about writing in the biotech field. The San Francisco Bay Area is home to the largest concentration of biotechnology companies in the world.

Starts at 6pm at the Cafe LaPaz. For more info, contact Wynette Weaver, Biotech Medical SIG chair at (510) 524-2459.

May

The Society for Technical Communication 47th Annual Conference

May 21-24, 2000

The conference will feature more than 250 technical sessions covering technical writing, editing, management, Web design, multimedia, and other subjects of interest to technical communicators. Information on the conference is available on the STC office Web site at <http://www.stc-va.org>. A copy of the conference Preliminary Program, including a registration form, can be obtained by calling (703) 522-4114 ext. 200.

October

STC Regions 7 and 8 Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii

For the latest information, see www.pan-pacific.org, and Jack Molisani's articles there.

Employment Opportunities

Technical Writer

A-Frame Software in Sebastopol seeks a tech writer to document the technical architecture of its applications. The firm is willing to teach the technical aspects of the position to the right candidate.

Documentation areas include data mapping, entity relationship diagrams, structure diagrams, processing flowcharts, business rule documentation and eventually Java code documentation (Javadoc). We use various languages and tools, so experience in these areas are also a plus: SQL, Microsoft SQL Server 6.5/7.0, Java, Visual Cafe, JavaDoc, Internet Explorer, Visio. Requirements include: Office, DocToHelp/RoboHelp, Web Publishing, HTML, 2+ years tech writing experience, preferably in a software-development environment. As we're building a new department, pro-active employees with focused attention on building good processes desired!

To learn more about A-Frame, visit us at www.a-frame.com. Contact Robert Beckett, Client Manager, at Rbeckett@a-frame.com or call (707) 823-4083, ext. 13.



We meet on the third
Thursday of each month

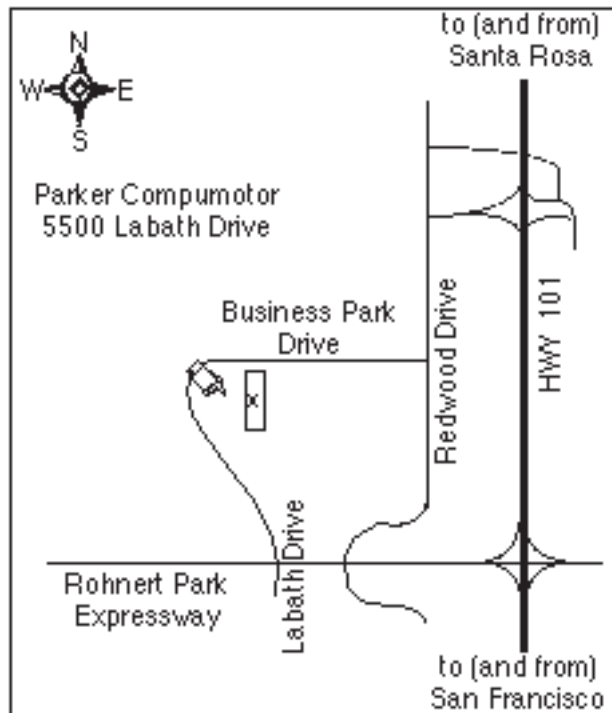
Our April meeting

April 20, 2000

Program topic to be announced

Parker Compumotor
5500 Labath Drive
Rohnert Park

stc.org/region8/nbc/www/



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