

Ragged Left

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

In this issue

*Celebration Time for Berkeley
STC and Competition Awardees*
on page 1

Authoring in Author-it on
page 3

President's Notes on page 5

*Web Usability: Tolerance and
Feedback* on page 5

Workshop on page 8

Meetings on page 9

STC News on page 12

Events on page 13

*2007-08 Technical Communication
Competition Awards* on page 14



**Volume 21, Number 1
Jan/Feb 2008**

Celebration Time for Berkeley STC and Competition Awardees

Report by Judith Herr.

*Celebrate good times, come on
Let's celebrate
Celebrate good times, come on*

*There's a party goin' on right here
A celebration to last
throughout the years
So bring your good times
and your laughter too
We gonna celebrate your
party with you
—Kool & the Gang*

About 60 technical communica-
tors and guests attended the
annual post-holiday celebration
at the Highlands Country Club
hosted by the STC Berkeley
Chapter for members and
awardees of the Northern Cali-
fornia STC Chapters' Technical
Communication Competition
(Touchstone) on January 9th.

The annual post-holiday party
began with an exhibition of the winning entries, mostly-Brazilian selections
of music from Jim Dexter's collection, and the opportunity to network. Jean
Lundquist, the Berkeley Chapter Hospitality Manager, and her husband Jose
prepared a feast of Brazilian appetizers and buffet, and the no-host bar.



Photos by Susan Becker, past President of San Francisco STC.

Winning entrants received certificates from Patrick Lufkin, Chairman of the
Kenneth Gordon Scholarship Committee. See *2007-08 Technical Communica-
tion Competition Awards* on page 14 for the complete list of awardees.

Continued on page 3

THE RAGGED LEFT IS PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR (EVERY OTHER MONTH).

STC Headquarters

901 N. Stuart Street #904
Arlington VA 22203-1854
(703) 522-4114 / fax 703-522-2075
stc@stc.org

Executive Director: Susan Burton
susan@stc.org

Membership: Mary Kabza
mary@stc.org

STC President

Paula Berger—pres@stc.org

STC Region 8 Director

Beau Cain—ds8@stc.org

Chapter Officers & Volunteers

President: Richard Mateosian
president@stc-berkeley.org

VP Programs: Mary Ann Campbell
and Linda Urban
programs@stc-berkeley.org

VP Membership: Jim Dexter
membership@stc-berkeley.org

Secretary: Susan Jaeger
secretary@stc-berkeley.org

Treasurer: Richard Mateosian,
acting
treasurer@stc.berkeley.org

Past-President: Joe Devney
past-president@stc-berkeley.org

Elections: Richard Mateosian
elections@stc-berkeley.org

Recognition: Jessica Livingston
recognition@stc-berkeley.org

Employment: Caroline Scharf
employment@stc-berkeley.org

Public Relations: Jessica Livingston
publicrelations@stc-berkeley.org

Arrangements: Jean Lundquist

Volunteers: Richard Mateosian
volunteers@stc-berkeley.org

Education: Susan Jaeger
education@stc-berkeley.org

Webmaster: Jim Dexter
internet@stc-berkeley.org

Member-at-large: Patrick Lufkin
memberatlarge@stc-berkeley.org

Ragged Left

P.O. Box 1007, Berkeley CA 94701

Editor: Jennie Abbingsole
newsletter@stc-berkeley.org

Other contacts

Chapter Job List:
employment@stc-berkeley.org

Address, phone, or email changes:
membership@stc-berkeley.org

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

THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (STC) has members worldwide. Its members include writers and editors, artists and illustrators, photographers and audiovisual specialists, managers and supervisors, educators and students, employees and consultants.

STC strives to:

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

MEMBERSHIP Membership is open to everyone. Classic membership is \$145/year with an additional \$15 enrollment fee. STC also offers Limited, E-Membership, and Student Membership options. To receive additional information and an application form, via mail or email.

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

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

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

- Academic
- 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 7 for contacts for these chapters. See page 18 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.



This year, the completion was sponsored by the STC Berkeley, Silicon Valley, East Bay, San Francisco, and North Bay chapters and managed and produced by the Kenneth Gordon Scholarship Committee members Judith M. Herr, Patrick Lufkin, Richard Mateosian, and Joy Montgomery. Judges this year were Melody Brumis, Karen Byers, Ken Delpit, Jim Dexter, Tonie Flores, Guy Haas, Michael Meyer, Nathaniel Lim, Jessica Livingston, Joy Montgomery, Chris Muntzer, Nancy Wilson, Elaine Pendergrast, Mary Rosberg, Marc Smircich, Vince Swanson, Lenore Weiss, Nancy Wilson, and Steve Zegas.

Chapter volunteers were recognized for continuing efforts for members including Chapter President, Richard Mateosian. An ongoing feature of most Berkeley Chapter meetings, the drawing for the generous collection of technical-communicator friendly door prizes rounded out the evening.



Competition award winner Nathaniel Lim celebrates his winning entry at the STC Berkeley Chapter celebration event.

Later in January, Competition Committee Members Joy Montgomery and Judith Herr attended a luncheon hosted by Nathaniel's IMPAC Manager, Kristie Lilje, to recognize his work. The STC Competition Committee offers winners of completion awards this year the opportunity to be recognized at a company event or meeting. Contact Richard

Mateosian for additional information about this opportunity to gain visibility for your entry and your value as a technical communicator.

A member of the STC Berkeley Chapter, reporter Judith Herr is an STC Fellow and a candidate for a Director slot in the upcoming STC Board election. <http://wellchosenwords.info>

Authoring in Author-it

Single-sourcing through a CMS for a Small Writing Team, using Author-it

Presented by Chris Muntzer at the December 12, 2007 meeting.

Notes by Jennie Abbingsole.

Chris Muntzer showed us Author-it in action: creating a new library, importing a document, and adding objects to publish the book. He explained the object-oriented database at the core of the product, which makes it so scalable because each piece--text, image, link, TOC--can be used wherever it is needed, in help or print documents. As a content management system, Author-it helps share common content across projects, which requires carefully-managed security and workflow for the library (database). A larger team, Muntzer suggested, might assign a library architect to design the database and an administrator to set up permissions for each writer's access to the content pieces and manage the release states and change history flow. Writers need to know the library folder structure and object naming conventions in addition to a style guide.

As with all single-source projects, team writers should look to reuse existing content, adding new content where it is missing, and limiting style control so the writer is focused on the content. To that end, more than for independent projects, the writing team needs a strategy for consistent chunking, content-reuse, variable naming and use, and for separating fast-changing content from stable basics. Muntzer recommended using Author-it to create best-practices guidelines



for the group, using content from the library for examples. Then writers can all access the compiled CHM for reference—a resource and a training tool in one.

Of course translation costs are less if the content is streamlined and the same chunks are reused in multiple places. The Author-it Localization Manager module facilitates translation. You can use it to create translation libraries using select content from the primary library (usually English here), and generate XML-format content to send to the translator—just what needs translation and nothing else. After translation, import the XML back into the translation library and compile the outputs you publish. The reduced maintenance of localized versions, Muntzer says, is where the real money-saving occurs.

Author-it also has additional products not covered in the presentation:

- **Program Manager** module that could be useful for large companies.
- **Author-it Live** allows telecommuters and contractors to access the library remotely.
- **Website Manager** allows library content to be put on the web.

Author-it User Group:

<http://Tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/authorit-users/>

Switching to Author-it: One Writer's Tips and Trials

by Karen Winters, Cognex

We decided to switch to Author-it to take advantage of its reuse capabilities and to save money on translation. We were spending a lot of money on translation—the last translation project before AuthorIT was close to a quarter of a million dollars (six languages for help and a few more for UI). We were promised that we would see significant cost savings, which we have, but I can't tell how much was really due to Author-it and how much was due to fewer words to translate. I'll reserve judgement until we've gone through another round of translations using Author-it's Localization Manager. We've only done one translation project with

it, and the cost savings should really kick in on the next one (I hope).

Author-it does have a steep learning curve, so I would highly recommend some training for people making the switch. The Author-it users group (<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/authorit-users/>) is also invaluable. I have learned so much from the people there!

One thing I like about Author-it is that it's smart enough to know that if a topic is not included in the book, then index entries that reference that topic aren't shown in the index. So if you delete a topic but forget to remove its index entries, no big deal.

Author-it does a really good job on reusing text. I'm still learning tricks about how to do that better, and recently figured out that I can use embedded text to reuse even more (basically on a paragraph level). This is particularly useful in procedures that have one or more steps that are the same, or if you have a couple of topics that are the same except for a paragraph or so.

One thing I don't like about Author-it is that it doesn't handle mid-topic jumps (bookmarks within a topic). But you can work around that by breaking up the topic into smaller chunks (using a "no heading" template for the second, third, etc., chunks—that way they're just a continuation of the topic). This is fine, but because our help previously used in-topic jumps, this meant breaking up the topics into multiple files.

Although it's frustrating that Author-it seems to release software before its time, I must say that their tech support is very responsive. It's annoying when I run into problems that need their support on Thursday evenings, because I usually don't get good support until Sunday (Monday for them). I still haven't updated to the latest version (5.0) because I just don't have the time to do their bug testing for them. I'll wait until it gets to a more reliable state.

Now that I've spent so much time with Author-it, I know it better, so I can finally take advantage of its features and create the help I need to ship with our software.

President's Notes

by Richard Mateosian

What a great January party!

Thanks to all of you who worked so hard to make the event a success — especially Jean, of course, but also Linda and Mary Ann for coordinating everything, for thinking of so many of those little touches that matter so much, and for making it all go smoothly. Thanks to Patrick for making and presenting the certificates on such short notice. Thanks to Jim for the music. And thanks to all of you for coming and offering your hospitality to our guests.

And thanks to all of you who wrote such kind words on the card you gave me. I'm truly touched.

~~~~~

STC dues went up this year. Many of us have to watch our expenses, so it's natural to ask if STC is worth the money. I've already voted with my dollars. I renewed as soon as the online renewal facility was available. I hope you will do the same.

For many of us, STC is about our local chapter — networking, programs, friends. We just had our annual post-holiday party, which 58 people attended. They seemed to enjoy each other's company. We have had a number of meaty programs lately, and we have more coming up. We are planning a class on wikis — stay tuned for that. Our chapter also provides a website, a newsletter, and a jobs list. We cosponsor, with the other Bay Area chapters, an annual technical communication competition. From time to time we cosponsor a local conference.

Many of us are only vaguely aware of what STC is doing at the society level. They have a website with various resources, but most of us don't spend much time there. They send us various publications, but we don't always look at them. If we did, we'd know that STC is working hard to advance our profession. As one small example, they are working with the Bureau of Labor Statistics to develop a definition for the position Technical Communicator to replace the existing limited definition of Technical Writer.

STC wants to “tell our powerful story.” Many technical communicators work in environments where they receive little respect and correspondingly low compensation. By getting out the word about our skills and capabilities, STC backs us up when we expect respect and compensation that are commensurate with our knowledge, abilities, and contributions.

As you are wondering how to respond to the STC renewal reminder messages that show up in your inbox, take some time to check out all of the resources that STC provides. And remember, under the new chapter funding system, the sooner you renew, the sooner our chapter receives its share of your dues. We work hard to spend that money wisely to provide the resources you need to find work and to perform at a high level.

---

### Web usability column

## Tolerance and Feedback

by Eric Hughes, Managing Director,  
Simplexity, LLC

In our previous columns, we discussed processes and guidelines for ensuring web development efforts result in a successful project. In this column, we'll detail a couple of tedious (they can take a long time to test), sometimes expensive (no one wants to pay for them), and occasionally marginal (there are way too many people who will argue that they don't make any difference) criteria to plan for — tolerance and feedback. Sounds like fun!

By “tolerance,” we mean a measurement of how flexible and forgiving a web site or application is:

- Does it work on multiple browsers and multiple hardware platforms?
- Can mobile users access and use the information or transactions you provide?
- Can a user undo something done in error?
- Are actions expected actually delivered?



By “feedback,” we mean how an existing application communicates with its users, usually when there is a problem (we are not talking about gathering feedback, for example, via a form or study).

Tolerance and feedback are like guacamole and chips, they go together quite well because intolerant systems tend to require frequent feedback.

In the first decade of the web (1993-2003), it didn't take a genius to find many of the usability problems that existed on typical web sites. Most sites and associated applications were horrible. Audiences were ill-defined, information architecture was ignored, and look & feel typically trumped best practice criteria. Now that organizations have been through multiple iterations of their sites, most of the easy-to-find usability problems have been corrected and in many cases the development process has even driven enhancements and efficiencies in business models. It is interesting now that web development usability is focusing on the same things that have afflicted all software development over the past 30 years: how to make the software “user friendly.” User friendliness is a lot about the details that are in tolerance and feedback planning.

The ease with which the web allows us to produce materials often masks the complexity of a quality production process. Design isn't just about how it looks; it is about how it works. It is always more fun to do something than to plan something. This stuff is just simply not fun. Neither designers nor developers like to admit that their creations will fail. In fact, in most projects, the people paying the bill don't even realize that anything might ever go wrong. It is incredibly tedious to try and test for every failure scenario with all browsers, networks, and hardware permutations. But you need to do it, even if you do it one scenario at a time over a long period. Shoot for the gray area between the white of planning to do nothing and the black of planning to do everything; the first will lose your customers and the latter will drive expenses through the roof.

The recent demise of the Netscape browser reminds us that yes, there are still multiple

browsers out there that need to be accommodated in development efforts and usability testing. The obvious ones are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox, but Safari and Opera, at a minimum, should also be considered. Although the jury is out on how aggressively to test these browsers, there is momentum for some specialty browsers like Flock and Ghostzilla. The bottom line is: know what browsers your audience will be using, and make sure that you test your development efforts on them. There is little more frustrating user experience than clicking on a link to do a transaction and having nothing happen — not a good way to encourage viral marketing!

Here are the most typical tolerance and feedback problems we see on the web:

**Transactional links that work on Internet Explorer, and nothing else:** best not to do that, but if you have to, please say so clearly on the page.

**Pages missing:** the infamous 404 and 401 errors. People will get it if you or others link to pages that don't exist, or if someone has a page bookmarked that no longer exists. The 401 error happens if you try and access a page without the proper login ID. See if your server software will allow you to customize the 404 and 401-page text so that people know what to do when they get it. Google has a fairly good page they present when they know a page isn't available (“Your search xxxxx didn't match any documents...”). Content management systems can help you manage these problems.

**Pages timing out:** the server can't process the request for some reason. This happens a lot if you use popularity sites like Digg. The error messages from these problems can, in many cases, also be customized.

**Data missing:** program the intelligence into your application to signify where there is data that is missing.

**Required form entry that isn't marked as such:** make certain that you clearly mark form fields that are required, and



list them on the feedback page when they are ignored.

**Using your email address as a login:** most applications assume that you use a single machine and a single email address for your logins. For more and more people, that isn't the case. I recently had to login to my Fastrack account to update a credit card, and my login was my email. I hadn't logged in to the fastrack system for at least 2 years. I had no idea which of the five email addresses I maintain I was using 18 months ago. When I got the message that was supposed to help me remember, it only provided a way to change my password. It should have also prompted me with a portion of the email that I was supposed to use. Hmm...perhaps I have too many email addresses...

**Information out of date:** when data accuracy is important, make certain to timestamp it.

**Close a PDF, browser closes:** although there are good arguments for not opening most pages in new windows, PDFs are an exception. The problem is that when you close the PDF window, it also closes the browser session.

**Unhelpful information in auto-replies:** If you provide automated feedback emails, make certain they are complete. Here is an email I recently received from a company about an order that was already three weeks late shipping. It doesn't tell me anything!

Greetings from FooMedical.com! We wanted to let you know that the status of your order has changed.

Details about these changes are shown below. For your information, your complete order status is shown below:

Order #: M6126778

**Pages that are impossible to read on mobile devices:** if this market is important to you, understand the screen real estate limitations and plan for them.

**Help that is no help at all:** if you provide a help link, please plan and manage its content carefully. There is usually a pretty good return on investment with quality online help.

**Avoid unexpected actions:** if a label says, "download here", then I would expect to go to a page where I can download software. I don't want a registration page and I don't want three clicks to get there.

**No link to a form or email address:** a lack of an email address or feedback form shows a lot about your culture. Visitors may assume you don't care. I recently tried to register for a daily play list on a radio station site, and got some sort of server error. There was no place on the site other than the form that wasn't working for me to report it!

**Online forms doing too much:** If an online form is longer than two simple pages, build an application: applications have ways to build and test flexible user interfaces, forms don't.

As they say, the proof is in the pudding. Both tolerance and feedback are commonly ignored until they cause a problem, and sometimes that will be too late.

---

Contact Eric at [eric@simplexity.net](mailto:eric@simplexity.net)

## Other STC chapters in Northern California

East Bay: [www.ebstc.org](http://www.ebstc.org)

North Bay: [www.stc-northbay.org](http://www.stc-northbay.org)

Sacramento: [www.stcsacramento.org](http://www.stcsacramento.org)

San Francisco: [www.stc-sf.org](http://www.stc-sf.org)

Silicon Valley: [www.stc-siliconvalley.org](http://www.stc-siliconvalley.org)



Workshop

## Walking the Wiki Way: Knowledge Management for the People

Hands-on workshop with Stuart Culshaw

*Saturday, March 1, 2008, 10am-4pm*

UC Berkeley Extension, Room 213

1995 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA

### **Program**

Wiki (Hawaiian for “quick”) could be considered as more of a philosophy than a tool. What started out as a simple set of scripts to edit, format and link web pages has evolved into a powerful and affordable new approach to knowledge management. An increasing number of organizations are adopting wikis as an alternative to complex and expensive web content management systems.

If you're looking for an easy-to-learn and simple-to-use content management tool for an upcoming personal or professional project, or if you're just curious to find out more about the technology behind the success of Wikipedia, this workshop will introduce you to wiki's basic principles, walk you through the creation of your own wiki site, and give you the confidence and guidance you need to take your first steps on “the wiki way” (and convince others to join you on the journey).

This is a hands-on session. Please bring a laptop computer with wireless connectivity enabled. Two or more participants can share a machine if necessary.

### **Speaker**

Stuart Culshaw, Web Communications Manager at ILOG, has over 15 years experience as a technical writer and web developer. An Englishman abroad, Stuart has lived and worked in France since graduating in 1993 and is fluent in French, HTML and CSS.

As a freelance web developer and project manager, Stuart has worked with various web content management systems over the years. He discovered wiki on joining ILOG in 2005 and has never looked back. As a member of ILOG's ONE Web Program team, Stuart is helping to redesign ILOG's wiki-based corporate intranet and is charged with evangelizing Web 2.0 technologies throughout the company.

Stuart holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in European Business Studies from the European Business Program (Groupe ESC Bordeaux/University of Humberside) and a professional certificate in technical writing from the American University of Paris. Stuart is a Past President and current Vice President and Webmaster of the STC France Chapter.

### **Fees & Logistics**

Schedule:

10:00 a.m. Workshop begins

12:00 noon (approximately) Lunch

1:00 p.m. Workshop continues

4:00 p.m. End

There is a parking lot under the building. The Saturday rate is \$10 for the day.

Parking on University Avenue is metered. Unmetered parking may be available on local side streets.

*Note: This is an STC Berkeley workshop; it is not affiliated with the UC Berkeley Extension, although we have been able to arrange to use a room at their facility.*

For the workshop and lunch:

Members: \$50

Non-Members: \$75

Special circumstances\*: \$25

\*The \$25.00 rate is for STC members whose circumstances make it difficult for them to pay the full \$50.00.

RSVP using our online storefront. Reserve early: This workshop is limited to 22 participants.





## Meetings

Our chapter holds a dinner meeting the second Wednesday of each month. See *Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions* on page 11.

### Upcoming Meetings

#### Creating Online Help for Eclipse: A Case Study

by Kim Rathbun

*Wednesday, February 13, 2008, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

#### Program

Eclipse, as a platform, is widely adopted for building development environments because it offers a universal platform for tools integration. LeapFrog has adopted Eclipse to develop its software development kits and internal applications. Because the Eclipse platform is a plug-in environment, it presents some additional challenges when developing online help.

This presentation focuses on how LeapFrog has adapted its single sourcing environment using FrameMaker and WebWorks ePublisher to produce online help for Eclipse applications. Kim will explain the process involved in taking HTML topics generated from ePublisher – or any other source – and making them work within an Eclipse online help plug-in. This involves creating a table of contents file, a context sensitive help file, and then testing them within the Eclipse environment.

#### Speaker

Kim Rathbun is currently a senior technical writer at LeapFrog Inc. She has over 25 years experience working in the computer industry as an engineer, trainer, and technical writer. As a writer, she has designed and written user manuals, online help, training materials, and e-learning modules for a variety of industries. At LeapFrog Inc., her current focus is developing user manuals

and online help for their Eclipse-based applications.

You may remember Kim from the RoboHelp class she taught for the Berkeley Chapter.

#### Management Panel: Putting Together the Right Team

Panelists Lis Fraser, Stewart Florsheim, Judy Burkhart, David Jackson moderated by Linda Urban

*Wednesday, March 12, 2008, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

#### Program

This month we are pleased to host a panel of managers and directors of technical communication groups from around the Bay Area. They will provide insight into what it takes to put together – and keep – a strong team.

Join us to learn what these managers value most in their staff, what qualities and expertise they really look for when hiring, what challenges they face, and more.

#### Speakers

**Stewart Florsheim** is the Director of Learning Products at Advent Software, a company in SF that makes software products for money managers. Stewart and his team are responsible for all the documentation and training materials, and Stewart also manages the company's client Web site. Stewart has over 20 years experience in tech pubs management.

**Lis Fraser** has over 20 years experience building and managing documentation teams for both large and small high tech companies. Lis has held long-term management positions at Epic Data and Orbital Sciences in Canada as well as at Hyperion Solutions, Adaptec, and most recently, Tesla Motors in Silicon Valley. She specializes in building highly-productive teams whose skill set and value is recognized throughout an organization.

**Judy Burkhart** is an Information Development Manager for IBM in San Francisco. Judy has been in the tech writing field for 20 years, and her management experience has



included tech support as well as documentation teams. Judy specializes in being acquired -- her fourth and most recent acquisition occurred in 2001 when IBM acquired Informix software.

**David Jackson** is a group manager for Oracle in Pleasanton. David's group creates product guides and online help for various customer relationship management applications. His group is geographically dispersed, with its members spread across seven cities and three countries.

## **Moving from FrameMaker/ WebWorks to XML/DITA and Flare at Salesforce.com**

by Mysti Berry

*Wednesday, April 9, 2008, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

### **Program**

As demands on publications departments to lower costs and provide translated text increases, the push to move from non-structured to structured writing becomes stronger. At Salesforce.com, we moved from FrameMaker source and WebWorks/PDF outputs to XML/DITA source and a combination of Flare and homegrown build scripts to produce PDF and HTML (and for a while, even CHM) outputs, with rich and complex interaction between document sets and complex translation requirements.

This talk will explain how we made that transition, and provide a closer look at the Flare setup required, first as a standalone step and then as an integrated part of the build process. This transition allows us to produce documentation with about five keyboard strokes. I will describe our experience with Flare vs. RoboHelp, and explain how we came to choose Flare as part of our build process.

### **Speaker**

Mysti Berry, M.F.A., is an award-winning technical writer with a B.A. in linguistics from UC Santa Cruz and an M.F.A. in writing from University of San Francisco.

She has more than 17 years of experience designing and developing technical information for companies as diverse as Oracle and 20th Century Fox. Berry currently works for Salesforce.com, a cutting-edge software company in the SaaS (software as a service) space.

## **Avoiding Death by PowerPoint (Why are good presentations so hard to create?)**

by Rick Altman

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

### **Program**

Do you quake when you hear the words "Create a PowerPoint for tomorrow's meeting"? Why? Is it because the software is so difficult? In fact, just the opposite is true. The basics are easy--so easy that most people never take the time to learn PowerPoint properly. Then there is our fear of public speaking. As Jerry Seinfeld put it, people would rather be in the coffin than deliver the eulogy.

This talk will look at the primary factors that make up presentations and offer ideas and practical wisdom on how to break out of the rut in which so many presentation content creators find themselves.

### **Speaker**

Rick Altman is the creative director at betterppt.com, which provides consulting and coaching services to companies and individual professionals who seek better results with their presentation content and delivery. His expertise covers the full range of presentation needs, from message crafting through slide design and software technique. He is known for his common-sense approach and pragmatic advice.

Rick is the author of *Why Most PowerPoint Presentations Suck, and how you can make them better*, published in May 2007.

Rick came to presentations through graphic design, having worked with the Corel



products throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and having hosted the CorelWorld User Conference across three decades.

**Note:** Rick is making a \$35 discount available to Bay Area STC Members who register for one of his PowerPoint Live Seminars, available in April and May around the Bay Area. For details, see special pricing for STC members (<http://www.betterppt.com/training/seminars/discount.php?STC>).

## Meeting/Dinner Prices

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

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

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

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

Special cost notes:

- 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 (\$18 dinner/\$12 without dinner) by midnight on the day before the meeting.

## Meeting Agenda

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

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

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

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

## Berkeley STC Meeting

### Location and Directions

Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive  
Oakland, California

Information at [http://www.stc-berkeley.org/MonthlyMeeting/march2008\\_meeting/calendar.shtml#loc](http://www.stc-berkeley.org/MonthlyMeeting/march2008_meeting/calendar.shtml#loc)

### By Car

#### **From San Francisco**

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



right-hand side of the street.

### ***From Walnut Creek***

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

### ***From I-80 and Berkeley***

Take Ashby Avenue to the Highway 13 exit. Ashby becomes Tunnel Road at the Claremont Hotel. Continue on Tunnel Road (through the split-level section) to the stoplight just before the Highway 24 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](mailto: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.

### **Membership Update**

by Jim Dexter, Membership Manager:

**Total STC Membership** 14,831  
as of September 30, 2007

**Total Chapter Membership** 148  
as of September 30, 2007

Welcome Rex Brooks, Sunah Cherwin, and Theodore Grover to our chapter!

## National STC News

### **2008 STC Conference**

The 55th Annual Technical Communication Summit will be held in Philadelphia June 1-4, 2008. The Philadelphia Metro chapter is eagerly looking forward to hosting this year's conference. From Philadelphia Metro chapter member Al Brown:

"On the whole, I'd rather be in Philadelphia."

We hope you take W.C. Fields' epitaph\* to heart and join us here for the Technical Communication Summit June 1-4. You know what to expect at the Summit itself: news about the latest developments and techniques in our field and the chance to get together with colleagues and friends, old and new. But there are plenty of surprises and unexpected pleasures waiting for you in the City of Brotherly Love.

Just a few examples: you can visit the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where it all began. Or Franklin's Court to see a working replica of Ben Franklin's printing press and find out how things were done before laser printers. Wander out Ben Franklin Parkway to see the Museum of Natural History, the original dinosaur museum; climb aboard a full-size Baldwin locomotive at the Franklin



Institute (almost everything here was founded by or named after Old Ben); or check out the world's largest collection of work by Dadaist master Marcel Duchamp at the Art Museum.

Hop on the SEPTA subway to take in a Philadelphia Phillies (baseball) home game at Citizens Bank Park. (Yep, they are in town May 30th through June 5th.)

Head down the Avenue of the Arts for a musical, theatrical, or dance performance by one of our world-class companies.

Or if you really want to go hard-core Philly, try the Mummer's Museum (2nd Street at Washington Avenue).

In short, there are lots of things to see, do, and eat (not just pretzels and cheese steaks) in William Penn's "Greene Country Towne." Stop by the STC-Philly Metro Chapter's Hospitality Booth and say hello. We'll be glad to suggest something exciting that fits your particular interests.

See you there!

\*Well, it isn't really, but why spoil a good intro?

## Events

### Bay Area PowerPoint Live Seminar Series

Renowned presentations coach Rick Altman (our May meeting presenter) will also be presenting "Do you need an antidote to Death by PowerPoint?" for his Bay Area PowerPoint Live Seminar Series.

"Your livelihood is presentations. Like the one your boss assigned you that is due yesterday, or the 90-slide deck that looks like hell, or the one with more pies than a bakery. Or how about the one for which you need to be at your very best because the stakes have never been higher?

"Organizations are finally making the investment and raising the bar on presentation content. Now it's your turn – give us one day and we'll transform the way you think about your presentations and the way you

work on them. Join us in one of five Bay Area cities this spring and turn a huge corner in your presentation design and delivery skills. Walnut Creek • Milpitas • Burlingame • San Leandro • Palo Alto

**All Bay Area STC members are eligible for a \$35 discount!**

Click here for details: [www.betterppt.com/seminars](http://www.betterppt.com/seminars) or call 925.398.6210.

### APEX 2008 Competition

The 20th Annual APEX Awards for Publication Excellence is accepting entries for APEX 2008 until March 17, 2008). For details see the Nov/Dec 2007 *Ragged Left*.

### 2008 AMWA Pacific Coast Conference

March 30 to April 2, 2008  
Asilomar Conference Grounds  
Pacific Grove, CA

The Pacific Coast Conference is a professional development conference for biomedical communicators and is hosted by the Northern California chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA).

Join us for 3 days of workshops, talks by eminent guest speakers, discussion forums, and provocative conversations with writers, editors, scientists, and other biomedical communicators. Registration will be open through February 25.

This year's keynote speaker is Paul S. Auerbach, MD, Clinical Professor of Surgery, Division of Emergency Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine, and Chief Medical Officer for Healthline Network, who will speak on "Wilderness Medicine: the Great Adventure."

Discussion forums, networking socials, and 8 additional open sessions will be available to all registrants:

- Get More Mileage from Your Material
- Pharmaceutical Services: A Publication Planning Primer
- How to Write Clearly
- Conflict of Interest
- Introduction to Genetics





- Advances in the Etiology and Treatment of Substance Abuse
- Jumping to Inaccurate Conclusions: How Health Care Watchdog Groups are Forcing Physicians to Treat Patients Inappropriately
- Zoonotic Diseases of Significance

AMWA also offers an extensive continuing education program for professionals in the medical and allied scientific communication fields. AMWA workshops cover a range of topics relevant to the biomedical communicator and are tailored for the profession. (For more information, visit [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org).)

Four credit workshops in AMWA's education program will be offered at the Pacific Coast Conference:

**Writing the Final Report of a Clinical Trial**

Lawrence Liberti, Vice President, Thomson Pharmaceutical Services

**The Internet: Where and How to Find the Information You Seek**

Thomas Gegeny, Medical Writer, Envision Pharma

**Writing and Designing Materials for Patient Education**

Edie Stern, Medical Editor (Retired), Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

**Reporting Randomized Trials in Scientific Journals**

Tom Lang, Tom Lang Communications and Training

To get more information, see the full program, or download registration materials, visit <http://www.amwancal.org/pcc>, or contact Naomi Ruff at [pcc@amwancal.org](mailto:pcc@amwancal.org)

Naomi L. Ruff, PhD, ELS  
Registrar and Facilities Coordinator  
2008 AMWA Pacific Coast Conference  
[www.amwancal.org/pcc](http://www.amwancal.org/pcc)

## 2007-08 Technical Communication Competition Awards

The five Bay Area chapters sponsored a 2007-08 STC technical communication competition to benefit the STC Kenneth Gordon Scholarship. The following sections list the award winners at each of the three award levels recognized in STC competitions. Each section begins with the official criteria for that level of award.

### Distinguished

The entry is clearly superior in all areas. It contains no major flaws, and few, if any, minor flaws. It applies the principles of technical communication in an outstanding way, particularly in the way it anticipates and fulfills the needs of its audience.

The competition forwards Distinguished entries to the Society level competitions.

### iDVD '08 Help

Dana Beatty, Apple  
Mei Wang, Apple  
Sue Leasure, Apple

### iWork '08 Instructional Suite

Karen Thomas, Apple  
Frances Segal, Apple  
Lissy Abraham, Apple  
Frances Segal, Apple  
Ann Walker, Apple

### Molecular Connection

Harold Bradley, Elsevier MDL  
Karen Byers, Elsevier MDL  
Anne DeLaFigniere, Elsevier MDL

### My Palm Treo Smartphone Tutorials

Caroline Bressler, Palm  
Arthur Manzi, Palm  
Josh Noble



## Excellence

The entry consistently meets high standards in all areas. It might contain a single major flaw or a few minor flaws. The entry clearly (if slightly imperfectly) demonstrates an exceptional understanding of technical communication principles.

### **Airport Extreme Setup Guide**

Clifford Hunt, Apple  
Sara Donahue, Apple  
Charlotte Clark, Apple

### **Audio Unit Programming Guide**

Murray Jason, Apple  
David Arrigoni, Apple  
Jeanne Woodward, Apple

### **Core Audio Overview**

Jun Suzuki, Apple  
Jeanne Woodward, Apple  
David Arrigoni, Apple

### **iMovie '08 Help**

Usha Alexander, Apple  
Sara Donahue, Apple  
Ann Walker, Apple

### **iPhone User's Guide**

Stefan Smith, Apple  
Garet Igarashi, Apple  
Gary Miller, Apple

### **iPod Shuffle Quick Start**

Ginny Gelczis, Apple  
Stefan Smith, Apple  
Garet Igarashi, Apple  
Jason Cabassi, Apple

### **Opti-Trace CMS Craft Management Software — Installation and User Guide**

Elizabeth Labine, Aurora Networks  
Ed Perry, Aurora Networks

### **Autodesk LocationLogic XML Web Services Developer's Guide**

John Wilkinson, Rollingwood Solutions  
Abby Breedt, Autodesk

### **Autodesk MapGuide Studio User's Guide**

Annette McGovern, Autodesk  
Andrew Vernon, Autodesk

### **Autodesk MapGuide Studio Getting Started Guide**

Andrew Vernon, Autodesk  
Laura Wade, Autodesk

### **Biocare Website**

Crystal Stevenson, Biocare  
John Steel, Biocare

### **GigaSpaces Wiki Documentation Portal**

Gilad David Maayan, GigaSpaces  
Michael Mitrani, GigaSpaces  
Shlomo Pariente Cohen, GigaSpaces  
Limor Maayan, GigaSpaces

### **Migrating from Cisco IOS to Cisco IOS XR Software on the Cisco XR 12000 Series Router**

Pamela Taylor, Cisco Systems  
Bronya Feldmann, Cisco Systems  
Elizabeth Tinker, Cisco Systems

### **NorthStar Process Customization Guide**

Jackie Wheeler, NorthStar

### **Oracle Database 2 Day Developer's Guide**

Roza Leyderman, Oracle Corporation



## **Palm GPS Navigator Car Kit Setup**

Cathi Skyles  
Kwong Liew  
Jane Faraola, Palm

## **Palm Treo 680 Read This First**

Midyne Spear  
Kwong Liew  
Arthur Manzi, Palm

## **Now You Know Treo 680 Smartphone**

Kristin Schwarz, Palm  
Cathi Skyles  
Patrick Ames

## **Sonoma Medicine**

Steve Osborn, Redwood Health Services  
Steve Graydon  
Nan Perrott

## **Stoke SSX-3000 Hardware Quick Start**

Greg McMillan  
Clyde Higaki  
David R. Gardner  
Robert Hastings  
Charles Tan  
Wing F. Ko  
Bill Evans  
Kevin Delgadillo  
Peter Wexler

## **Merit**

The entry consistently meets high standards in most areas. It might contain a small number of major or minor flaws but it still applies technical communication principles in a highly proficient manner.

## **Designing Airport Networks Using Airport Utility**

Clifford Hunt, Apple  
Sara Donahue, Apple  
Charlotte Clark, Apple

## **Mac OS X Security Configuration Guide**

Kay Burnett, Apple  
Danny Wong, Apple  
Christine Franco, Apple

## **Mac OS X Server Security Configuration Guide**

Kay Burnett, Apple  
Danny Wong, Apple  
Christine Franco, Apple

## **Xserve Diagnostics User's Guide**

Jeff Wong, Apple  
Christine Franco, Apple  
Tom Llewellyn, Apple

## **Aurora Platform — Solutions for Headends and Hubs**

Ed Perry, Aurora Networks  
Dave Sell, Aurora Networks  
Melissa Hicks, Mosaic Marketing

## **AT3300G 1 GHz Analog Transmitters — Installation and Activation Guide**

Vince Swanson, Aurora Networks  
Ed Perry, Aurora Networks

## **AT3550 1550 nm Broadcast Transmitters — Installation and Activation Guide**

Vince Swanson, Aurora Networks  
Ed Perry, Aurora Networks

## **AutoCAD 2008 New Features Guide**

Dieter Schlaepfer, Autodesk  
Mike Fisher, Autodesk  
Allen Lowe, Autodesk



## **AutoCAD Map 3D 2008 Geospatial Developer's Guide**

Ian Hawkins, Autodesk  
Philip Sharman, Autodesk  
Bill Crawford, Autodesk

## **Autodesk Map 3D Help 2008**

Melanie Allen, Autodesk  
Alison Keller, Autodesk  
Andrew Vernon, Autodesk  
Marcy Telles, Autodesk

## **Cisco 7201 Installation and Configuration Guide**

Charmaine Moyer, Cisco  
Steve Stover  
Mark Tandowsky, Cisco

## **IBM IMS Newsletter**

Sandy Sherrill, IBM  
Robert Lee, IBM  
Glenn Galler, IBM

## **Scalability Revolution White Paper**

Gilad David Maayan, GigaSpaces  
Nati Shalom, GigaSpaces

## **NorthStar Help**

Jackie Wheeler, NorthStar

## **Oracle Database SQL Language Reference 11g**

Diana Lorentz, Oracle Corporation

## **Oracle Database 2 Day + Security Guide**

Patricia Huey, Oracle Corporation

## **OSIsoft RtReports Documentation Set**

Tonie Flores, OSIsoft

## **Palm Treo 755p Smartphone Quick Reference**

Joe Sadusky  
Cathi Skyles  
Jane Faraola, Palm

## **Précis-Central Training Guides I & II**

Nathaniel Lim, IMPAC Medical Systems  
Jim Black-Downes

## **Using Geneva**

Chris Garner  
Rachel Gorski  
Tom Metz

## **VMware Fusion Quickstart Guide**

Elliott Stewart, VMware  
Teresa Velasco, VMware

## **VMware Infrastructure 3 Documentation Set**

Amy Waller, VMware  
Kelli Lidwell, VMware  
Wendy Shaffer, VMware  
Douglas Stuart, VMware  
Louise Galindo, VMware  
Rebekah Cook, VMware  
Rena Leith, VMware  
Svetlana Voskoboinikova, VMware

## **VMware Workstation User's Manual**

Caroline Arakelian, VMware  
Elliott Stewart, VMware  
Sandra Farkas, VMware  
Louise Galindo, VMware

## **Judges**

The following volunteers judged the entries:

Melody Brumis, Karen Byers, Ken Delpit,  
Jim Dexter, Tonie Flores, Guy Haas,  
Michael Meyer, Nathaniel Lim, Jessica  
Livingston, Joy Montgomery, Chris  
Muntzer, Nancy Wilson, Elaine Pender-  
grast, Mary Rosberg, Marc Smircich, Vince



---

Swanson, Lenore Weiss, Nancy Wilson,  
Steve Zegas

## Management

The following members of the Kenneth  
Gordon Scholarship Committee produced  
and managed the competition:

**Judith M. Herr, Patrick Lufkin, Richard  
Mateosian, Joy Montgomery**

## Other Organizations

**American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) of Northern  
California.** Meets periodically at various Bay Area  
locations. [www.amwancal.org](http://www.amwancal.org)

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

**American Society of Indexers, Golden Gate Chapter.**  
[www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden](http://www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden)

**Association for Women in Computing, San Francisco Bay Area  
chapter** — [www.awc-sf.org/](http://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](http://www.nwu.org)

**Northern California Science Writers' Association.** Quarterly  
meetings & other events.  
[www.ncswa.org](http://www.ncswa.org)