



SuperScript

Volume 15, Issue 7 | March 2007

SuperScript is the official newsletter of the Alberta Community of the Society for Technical Communication and is published 10 times a year. The editors welcome submissions and advertising that will be of interest to our members. If you have an idea for an article or if you have an advertising enquiry, please contact us.



President's Message

March is one of my favourite months of the year because it brings the first signs of Spring. It is hard to believe that this term is almost up and we will be very soon organizing the Annual General Meeting. We have already set the date for June 14 and I hope you will attend this year's meeting and provide the next executive with the encouragement and support that they need for the next term. [More ...](#)

Volunteers Needed

We are winding down activities for the year and need a few good members to help out with several tasks including an April Program Coordinator to organize the April Program and AGM volunteers to help out with the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June. [More ...](#)

Edmonton Hosts Downtown Business Lunch

On Thursday, March 1, some Edmonton STC members gathered during the business day at L'Azia in the downtown core to enjoy a leisurely lunch and networking session. As always, the discussion was lively and informative. We learned about Win's web development business and some of the challenges and pleasures of being an entrepreneur.

Jenny, who has been active with the Edmonton group for many years, told us about her relatively new position at a software company. Angela told us about the writing classes she is teaching and Melissa, reported on her new internship at a software company. After we had ordered, Elaine, the Edmonton Liaison, spoke about upcoming events, the need for volunteers and new ideas and reported on what we have accomplished so far this year. [More ...](#)

The 10 most common mistakes writers make when looking for work

Kisses were flying through the air at our evening program on November 23 in the Calgary Technologies conference room. Hershey Kisses, that is. Whenever the guest speaker posed a question and someone answered, a tasty chocolate reward swiftly zinged across the table. Was it a workshop with a behavioral psychologist? Yes--and no. [More ...](#)

Superscript - Call for Submissions!

This is an open call to all our members to submit articles for the April edition of the new and improved Superscript!

Are you an STC Member who yearns to have your voice heard...here is your opportunity. As Spring will be fast upon us, the editorial team at Superscript is asking for submissions that reflect the coming of the season. The theme of next month's issue is: **Spring - What Brings You Out of Hibernation?** Articles should be related to your life/work as a technical writer. How do you dust the cobwebs off after a long winter?

The next issue will hopefully be the first of a series of "themed" issues of Superscript. Please send your submissions to newsletter@stc-alberta.org. Submission deadline is Friday, March 30, 2007.

Upcoming Events

March 15 - [Getting the Next Job -- Marketing for Technical Writers](#). Presenter James McCormick will discuss marketing from a technical writer's perspective, focusing on three common marketing scenarios.

March 22 - [Calgary Coffee Night](#). Our March coffee night features a new twist: table progressions. It's an opportunity to share your technical communication experiences with other members!

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The Alberta Chapter newsletter, *SuperScript*, is published ten times a year, with double issues in December/January and July/August. *SuperScript* presents feature articles from inside the Chapter and out, program and events calendar, profiles, tips and tricks to improve your skills, and important contact information. [Contact our SuperScript Editors](#), with any comments, stories, technical tips, book reviews, advertisements, or questions. >> [Previous editions](#).

STC Alberta News and Updates — March 2007

President's Message

Ruth Maryniuk, President, STC Alberta

March is one of my favorite months of the year because it brings the first signs of Spring. It's hard to believe that this term is almost up and we will be very soon organizing the Annual General Meeting. We have already set the date for June 14 and I hope you will attend this year's meeting and provide the next executive with the encouragement and support that they need for the next term. I would also like to encourage you to volunteer for any one of the positions that we have on the board. I know that a few will be staying on for the next term to ensure that we have continuity in the organization.

Why volunteer?

Volunteering is a great way to network with fellow technical communicators. Volunteering provides many opportunities to develop relationships that can translate into jobs or friendships or both. Volunteering provides opportunities to acquire new skills, such as managerial, supervisory or team leadership, and most importantly, volunteers are the leaders in their professions. I encourage you to become a leader in this profession. You will have the support of an energetic and enthusiastic team. The rewards are measureless.

March Events

[March is a busy month](#) for STC events. Please show your support for STC Alberta by attending the [Program](#) on March 15. James McCormick is providing information on Marketing for the Technical Writer. We also have a [Coffee Night](#) planned for March 22 at Mount Royal College. The evening is organized as a progression where students will have the opportunity to hear members speak about specific topics and ask questions. I hope to see you at both events this month.

Volunteers Needed

We are winding down activities for the year and need a few good members to help out with several tasks.

April Program Coordinator

We need a coordinator to organize the April Program. If you're interested in setting up a program, we'd appreciate your help. The task requires approximately 2-3 hours of your time in addition to being available on April 19.

AGM Volunteers

We also need a few volunteers to help out with the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Specifically, we need a volunteer to take minutes at the meeting. If you plan on attending the 2007 AGM and are available to take minutes, please [contact us](#). We also need volunteers to help with registration and elections.

The 10 most common mistakes writers make when looking for work (Nov. 2006 Program Review)

Ken d'Albenas, Senior Member, STC Alberta

Kisses were flying through the air at our evening program on November 23 in the Calgary Technologies conference room. Hershey Kisses, that is. Whenever the guest speaker posed a question and someone answered, a tasty chocolate reward swiftly zinged across the table.

Was it a workshop with a behavioral psychologist? Yes--and no. It was Jack Molisani, professional recruiter and founder of Lavacon, giving his widely acclaimed talk about the ten most common mistakes writers make when looking for work. Attendees were treated to an inside look at job applications from a recruiter's perspective.

Jack wanted a lively audience, so he introduced his talk with humour, energy, and some "ground rules."

"The first ground rule is group participation. So, just to help you along," he announced as he produced a large bag of the foil-wrapped chocolates, "anyone who answers a question or contributes a comment gets one of these."

What would have been a simple lecture became a lively exchange of experiences and anecdotes. And the kisses flew.

"The biggest single mistake that writers make when looking for a job," Jack said, "the one I most want you to come away with tonight, is: **Not summarizing how your skills match the job requirements.**"

"Recruiters can get tens to hundreds of résumés a day," he said. "Most recruiters aren't technical writers. Do you really want someone else to struggle to connect-the-dots to decide if you're the right person for the job? List the skills you have that meet the posted job requirements. Help them do their job, and they'll love you."

As Geoff Hart wrote in the [December Intercom article](#), Finding Work in Tough Times, "Don't forget that nobody is going to hire you because of your skills--they'll hire you because of your ability to solve their problems."

The cover letter is a good place for this summary. You can introduce it as simply and directly as, "Here is a summary of how my qualifications match your job requirements. My résumé is attached. You can reach me at..."

Use sales skills. If they want XYZ experience and you don't have it, but you do have ABC and it's similar, then say so. But if you've never heard of XYZ, don't say you've never heard of it; look it up! Search engines are your friends.

That reminded Jack of two other common mistakes--not in his Top Ten, but worth knowing if you e-mail your application:

- Don't attach the cover letter and the résumé in two separate files. Chances are the cover letter will get overlooked or lost. Instead, either make your cover letter the first page of the résumé file, or type the letter in the body of the e-mail.
- Use a respectable e-mail address. If you were a recruiter, how seriously would you take an e-mail from nocakeforyou@aol.com, reallycranky@yahoo.com, amazingclutterman@gmail.com, or wordwhore@hotmail.com?

The following are the other nine mistakes from Jack's Top Ten. The first two are related to the "biggest" one above.

Applying When You Are Not Even Remotely Qualified

Unless the wolves are at your door, don't waste other people's time with a mismatched job application. Pay attention to the "must-haves" vs. "nice-to-haves". There's a difference between making a bit of a stretch and not even being in the ballpark.

Misnaming Your Résumé (electronic file name)

Again, put yourself in the recruiter's shoes. "Resume5.doc" might be fine for your own computer, but the typical recipient is going to save it with dozens of other resume docs, perhaps for several different positions. Demonstrate your communication skills with a descriptive file name. For example: "resume.Smith.trainer-techwriter.doc".

Not Following Submission Directions

Whether you're replying to a job ad or posting your résumé on a web site, read and follow the instructions, because you know what people say about first impressions. The instructions might even be a "weeder", and applications that don't conform go into the bit bucket. Your own livelihood is built around getting people to follow instructions. so walk the walk.

If you must break their rules, explain why, apologetically. For example. if an ad says, "Don't call us, we'll call you--if we're interested," and you wait a long time with no response, call. Try to reach the documentation manager. Apologize that you're calling anyway but you want to check that they got your résumé. You never know.

How do you find out who the documentation manager is? Try your network, try search engines. If being stonewalled, try the company's Investor Relations department. They always answer the phone!

Not Building Personal Relationships

If you're job hunting through recruiters, develop a personal side to your professional relationships with them. When a cool job comes in, whom do you think they will call first?

Bad Manners

Imagine receiving this e-mail:

"Dear recruiter or manager or whoever wrote the ad. After reading your ad for the technical writing position, its clear that you desperately need to hire me. How did that mess of verbal diarrhea get out the door, LOL. Clearly you need someone like me who didn't sleep through basic grammar class in school. And trust me, I'm more than qualified to write the instruction manuals for anything you need written. Expecially compared to anyone you seem to have on staff right now. Don't phone me if you talk as bad as you write. Just e-mail me at this address to arrange an interview."

Companies actually do get e-mail like that sometimes. Jack regaled the audience with example after example of dumb and dumber.

"Good manners" means what it has always meant, plus netiquette. For example, don't spam several dozen recruiters with a single e-mail and an overpopulated "To" field. Invest the time to make each recipient feel special. Send one e-mail per person.

Poorly Written or Formatted Résumé

Again, first impressions endure. Walk the walk.

Don't indent paragraphs with multiple spaces unless you count them all to make sure they're the same in every instance. Don't indent one bullet with spaces and another with a tab. Jack entertained the audience with examples of documents that looked a little uneven at first glance, and a dog's breakfast when the recipient turned on the formatting-marks display.

"The single most common mistake I see is mixed en-dashes and hyphens. Have someone else proofread for you before you send," he cautioned.

Mis-evaluating Importances

Identify the most important requirements of the job you're applying for, and the most important things in your résumé that you want the reader to notice, and put them near the beginning. Put less relevant experience near the end.

Not Anticipating and Answering Questions

If you're applying for a permanent position after doing contracts for a long time, anticipate the recruiter's possible concern that you won't last in a long-term relationship when you realize you'll be dealing with the same games and power plays every day without an end in sight. Be proactive and answer the concern before it's spoken.

If you're applying for a job far from where you live, relocation is going to be an issue. Anticipate the question, or at least be prepared for it.

Not Keeping Your Skills Current

Don't wait for the on-the-job training that might never be offered. Keep abreast of tools and current practices by taking training, or even just joining e-mail lists or forums. Attend chapter meetings such as this one. Take advantage of the chapter mentorship program. Attend a regional conference--or an international one such as STC and Lavacon.

Jack Molisani concluded his presentation by giving the audience a URL for the outline

of his presentation and other job-hunting resources on his company's Web site (www.prospring.net). He also invited anyone who wants to find a good writer, or who wants to report their successes in doing so, to e-mail him at info@ProspringStaffing.com.

And he saved his best reward for last: a draw for a free pass to the next Lavacon, the annual conference Jack produces for advanced tech. comm. professionals www.lavacon.org. Congratulations to Carmen Wyatt, the lucky winner!

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Edmonton Hosts Downtown Business Lunch

by Elaine Elrod

On Thursday, March 1, some Edmonton STC members gathered during the business day at L'Azia in the downtown core to enjoy a leisurely lunch and networking session. As always, the discussion was lively and informative. We learned about Win's web development business and some of the challenges and pleasures of being an entrepreneur.

Jenny, who has been active with the Edmonton group for many years, told us about her relatively new position at a software company. Angela told us about the writing classes she is teaching and Melissa, reported on her new internship at a software company. After we had ordered, Elaine, the Edmonton Liaison, spoke about upcoming events, the need for volunteers and new ideas and reported on what we have accomplished so far this year.

We discussed who might be able to play host for connecting to the Calgary AGM via Skype video conferencing on June 14. Last year Diane provided the space, Internet connection, notebook computer, speakers, microphone, projector and a screen in her company board room. (Incidentally, Diane was also the lucky person at last year's AGM who won the iPod Nano door prize.) Two members volunteered to look into space and equipment in their offices.

Over the next few months, we expect to gather again several times:

- Diane contacted the Editor's Association of Canada (EAC) about having another joint workshop. Last year's joint workshop was on proofreading skills. This year it may be about fundamentals of publishing, copy editing or structural and stylistic editing.
- Rick plans to organize our second annual mini-golf tournament.
- Rick may also host an end-of-year gathering at his home.
- We plan to network in via Skype to the STC Alberta AGM on June 14 in the evening, so mark your calendars if you are interested in attending.

Please visit this page in April to get details on our next event.

Research Panel

When: Tuesday, March. 13, 2007

Time: TBA

Where: TBA

RSVP: Please rsvp Mary Anne Gorman at magorman@shaw.ca if you plan on

attending.

Strong research is one foundation for excellent writing and editing. If you're interested in learning more about the important connection between research and writing, join our panel discussion on Tuesday, March 13. Practitioners from a variety of research perspectives will provide a range of strategies and tools useful to the writer and editor. Time, location and other details will be announced in early March.



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STC Alberta Calendar of Events

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STC Alberta Activities

Check out our [Programs](#), [Workshops](#), [Coffee Nights](#), [Administrative Meetings](#), and [Social Events](#) for an opportunity to meet & greet, learn a tool or skill, or further develop your technical and writing expertise.

The calendar shown below outlines upcoming Alberta Chapter events. These events, unless otherwise stated, are held in Calgary. Please see our [Edmonton](#) page for a listing of "Upcoming Events" in that city.

2007 Upcoming Events

Stay tuned! This schedule will be updated with new events after they've been confirmed.

March 22	Calgary Coffee Night , 6:30p.m. at the Mount Royal College, Fireside Room, Room T126. Our March coffee night features a new twist: table progressions. It's an opportunity to share your technical communication experiences with other members!
March 27	University of Phoenix Speaker Series: Employee Engagement and Development — Strategic Talent Management and Succession Planning, 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. The Westin, Calgary. For more information, contact Amaney Salem at (403) 538-2187
April 18-23	DocTrain UX : Documentation&Training: The User Experience, April 18-23, Vancouver, BC
April 19	Program: Strategies for effective communication in the workplace. Presenter: Narmin Ismail-Teja
May 13-16	STC International 54th Annual Conference , May 13–16, Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA)
May 17	Program: Choosing XML DITA content to create embedded online help. Presenter, Karen Lowe
June 14	AGM, stay tuned for details
	Year-end dinner/social

Throughout the year, STC Alberta presents a wide variety of opportunities to learn, share and to become involved in the field of technical communication. Through workshops, social events and regular meetings we endeavour to:

- Present the latest information regarding theory and practice of technical communication
- Provide opportunities to learn and experiment with new tools and techniques
- Open up opportunities to network by meeting and exchanging ideas with fellow STC members
- Provide on-the-job training and opportunities to share your skills through our mentoring program.

Register in advance for all Programs and Workshops through our [online registration page](#).

Note: When space is limited, preference is given to current STC members.



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April 19 Program — Strategies for effective communication in the workplace

Who said Communication is easy? Not in today's changing workplace!

Differences in age, race, family responsibilities, gender, sexual orientation, and disabilities make today's workforce more diverse than ever before. Learn best communication strategies for effective communication, and for creating inclusive workplaces where people are valued for the skills and competencies they bring and do their best work.

This experiential workshop will begin with and expand on your personal awareness in workforce diversity and effective communication with people who are different. You will sharpen your communications skills to effectively communicate with all stakeholders respecting their differences.

Presenter Narmin Ismail-Teja

Narmin has been a Diversity Facilitator, trainer and consultant specializing in workforce diversity for sixteen years. Now a principal in impact@work inc, Narmin brings a package of commitment, motivation and skills in creating highly effective training and consulting with a depth of experience working across the non-profit, public and corporate sectors. Her creative style and commitment to working in learner-centered facilitation creates an inclusive, challenging learning environment where participants engage in discussions leading to transformative learning. Narmin brings Robert Hayle's "head, heart, hands" approach to learning environments, that ensures participants take their knowledge and commitment and transform these into practical strategies in work practice.

When:	April 19, 2007
Time:	Doors Open: 6:30 p.m. Program: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Where:	Calgary Technologies Inc. (CTI) (aka Alastair Ross Technology Centre), 3553 - 31 Street NW Calgary, AB.
Directions:	CTI is located in University Research Park. Parking is free anytime after 5:00 p.m. and there are plenty of spots. Visitor parking is marked, and is close to the front door. If you're taking the LRT, get off at the Brentwood station; the CTI is across the parking lot.

May 17 Program — Choosing XML DITA content to create embedded online help

Stay tuned for details!

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Program Fees

- STC Alberta Members \$5.00
- Other STC Members* \$7.00
- Student Members Free
- Non-members \$10.00

*Other STC Members include those STC members with either Limited Membership or other categories of membership where they do not belong to the STC Alberta Community.

Contact and Registration

- For more information on programs, e-mail the [program coordinator](#).
- E-mail registration@stc-alberta.org or [register online](#).



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Coffee Nights

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Open to Students, Members and Others

The STC Alberta Coffee Night is an opportunity for people interested in technical communication to get together to discuss a topic relevant to our field in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. There is no presenter and new faces are always welcome.

Calgary — Thursday, March 22, 2007



Our March coffee night will feature a new twist: table progressions. At each table, a technical communicator experienced in a particular aspect of the profession will present a five-minute overview of that specialty, followed by a five-minute question and answer session. After the ten-minutes are up, you proceed to another table that interests you. This small group format encourages discussion and allows you to focus on learning about only those specialties that interest you. There will also be some time after the table progressions for "free-format" networking. This is a great opportunity to learn about the types of technical communication opportunities here in Calgary.

Would you like to share your technical communication experiences with other members? We still have a few spots left for table leaders! Please contact Lucille Worone at v.president@stc-alberta.org

When:	Thursday, March 22, 2007 6:30 p.m Registration, mix and mingle 7:00 p.m Table progressions 7:45 p.m Free-format networking
Where:	Mount Royal College, Fireside Room, Room T126. Location and parking details.
Cost:	FREE
RSVP:	RSVP by e-mail to registration@stc-alberta.org or register online by March 20, 2007

Location details

[Where to park](#) (Lot V2 is the closest).

- Parking rates: \$3.00 for the evening.
- To get to Room T126 from lot V2:
 - Enter the main building through the West Entrance door.
 - Take the stairs downstairs.
 - You are now on level 1 [[level 1 map](#)]
 - Entrance to the "T" wing is on your left near the bottom of the stairs.

- Walk down the hall past a set of entrance doors and stairs.
- Room T126 is on the right. It has large glass windows alongside the hallway.



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