

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

Jessie Channey, President

In February, we held a well-attended Dr.Explain demonstration for those who were interested in learning about this alternate help authoring tool. Many thanks to Craig Pritchard, an STC Alberta member, who explained the tool's features.

New Heights is here at last, with only a few spaces left - [register by](#)

[April 10](#) to ensure your place at the workshop! And remember, if you're not in Calgary, all out-of-towners get 20% off. See our [New Heights page](#) for more information, or email our [New Heights Manager](#) directly.

Gaming seems to be a hot topic these days and it's often been referred to as a "recession-proof" industry. The Calgary Council for Advanced Technology (CCAT) and Digital Alberta, in conjunction with the University of Calgary, held a gathering on the future of gaming. STC Alberta also hosted Dr. Lee Easton for our own discussion on the gamer generation and how they interact in the workplace.

New Heights: Countdown... to April 17

Melissa Ruryk, New Heights Manager

Neil Perlin is almost here with flair – MadCap Flare! There are **only five seats left** at New Heights 2009, which takes place at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel in Calgary. If you're from out of town, you can save 20% on your registration. See our [New Heights page](#) for full event details.

April Program – To Be or Not To Be... Independent?

Rosalinda Hernandez, Program Manager

Intrigued by the thought of going independent, controlling your destiny and schedule with no more commuting? It sounds good, and it can be. But what's really involved in becoming independent? Do you have the psychology for it, the discipline and drive? Many people don't, and try to go independent when they shouldn't. [Read more ...](#)

Poll: Action to Avoid Layoffs

[Article](#) from *TechCom Manager*

TechCom Manager's readers were asked to select one action they would be willing to take to help employers "avoid" layoffs. These are the results of that poll.

Most people would agree to simply freeze their pay for a year. Very few would select a pay cut,

although many would forego bonuses. Clearly, no one wants to take less in benefits, and unpaid leave didn't fare too popular, either. [Read more ...](#)

RoboHelp 8, A First Look at New Features

Article from Matthew Ellison, WritersUA

Matthew Ellison offers a first look at the latest release of [RoboHelp, version 8](#). The article describes the new features and examines how well they fulfill their goals and improve Help authoring.

Creating an Online Survey with SurveyMonkey

Article from David Farbey, Senior Member, UK Chapter

Surveys have always been a great way to gauge user opinion and reactions about new and existing products and services. With SurveyMonkey, an online survey software program, creating a survey has become a quick and easy way to create useful surveys for a multitude of needs. In this [reprint of David Farbey's article](#), originally published in the January 2006 edition of Forward, the newsletter of the UK Chapter, Farbey gives a step-by-step guide on creating a survey with SurveyMonkey.

Watch for an STC-AB survey coming soon to help select the Fall 2009 Seminar topic.

What's New in Captivate 4?

Article from Scott DeLoach, WritersUA

Following the very successful and highly-regarded Captivate 3, Captivate 4 is yet another strong release from Adobe. [In this review](#), Scott DeLoach describes the new features of Captivate 4.

Cloud Computing: a New Communication Tool for Entrepreneurs

Article from The Business Link E-News!

Cloud computing is an Internet [cloud] development that uses computer technology [computing]; the cloud refers to the Internet its hidden infrastructure. You will be hearing lots about this in 2009, especially from suppliers such as Google and Amazon.

This style of computing provides users with access to technology-enabled services from the Internet without knowledge of, or control over, the technology infrastructure that supports them. Information is permanently stored in servers on the Internet and cached temporarily on clients' computers, entertainment centers and other electronic devices.

Cloud computing is a general concept that incorporates Software as a Service (SaaS), Web 2.0 and other recent technology trends which use the Internet to provide products for computer users.

The technology is still in its early development stages and will undoubtedly be upgraded frequently as new features and services are offered.

It can provide the not-so-tech-savvy entrepreneur with new opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and communication with customers. It is an important option in these economic times.

For more detailed information visit [Info World](#).

Edmonton STC Spring Social

Serena Beck, STC Alberta Member

On Monday, March 16, nine Edmonton STC members met at a downtown coffee house for a spring social. Deanne, Jan, John, Hugh, Rick, Elaine, Roy, Janelle and Serena discussed various topics such as company restructuring, communication changes with social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, adjusting to using Microsoft Word 2007 from 2003 and much more.



Janelle & Deanne with their spring faces

As the discussion continued, it was observed that company “restructuring” was oft-interpreted as “layoffs”. And the opinion was expressed that technology has shortened our attention spans with the long hours many spend on-screen daily.

Hugh pointed out, “It was great – we all said goodbye to our computers for one night, so we could network in person. We discussed various applications such as Facebook and Twitter and the amount of personal information that people reveal online.” These tools have changed both the “how” and the “what” (language and words) used to communicate.

About 25% of those attending are now either using Word 2007 or transitioning to it. The new interface prompted discussion around the change.

“We discussed how different equipment, like exercise balls and ergonomic keyboards, is making its way into our offices,” Rick said. He gives both his hands a workout by having a mouse on both sides of his work station, which prompted Deanne to label him “ambimouserous.” Also discussed was the amount of physiotherapy and massages many technical communicators receive to prevent the slouched shoulders caused by lengthy computer work.

Three \$25.00 gift certificates to Chapters were won by John, Rick and Hugh. Thanks to the Edmonton STC liaison, Deanne, for organizing this event.

Quotes & Quips

“Easy reading is damn hard writing.” — Nathaniel Hawthorne

“Nothing's a better cure for writer's block than to eat ice cream right out of the carton.” — Don Roff

“The scariest moment is always just before you start.” — Stephen King (On Writing)

Dear “Ab-stc” (Abby)

Alex Kelly, Editor

Dear Ab-stc,

I read this fabulous TC article yesterday and thought it might appeal to a broader STC Alberta audience. How can I get this published in the next *SuperScript*? And when's the deadline??

Curiously yours,
Mystery Member

Dear MM,

I'm glad you asked! We welcome **your submissions for the next edition by Friday, May 1** to newsletter@stc-alberta.org. We always appreciate those who have sent along articles for the current edition.

Please send us your passionate, interesting or even just plain-old solidly informative technical communication-related articles, links, pictures and quotes!

I look forward to collaborating with you on the next *SuperScript*.

Sincerely,
Ab-stc

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[Home](#)[About STC
Alberta](#)[Awards/
Scholarships](#)[Edmonton](#)[Chapter
Resources](#)[Contacts](#)[Competitions](#)[E-mail lists](#)[Event Calendar](#)[Event
Registration](#)[Jobline](#)[Links](#)[Membership](#)[Mentorship](#)[New Heights](#)[Newsletter](#)[Other Events](#)[Programs](#)[Publications](#)[STC Web
Seminars](#)

Seminar Topic : Using Flare to Single Source Help... Maybe Using DITA... Maybe as A CMS... [\[How to Register\]](#)

MadCap Flare is the newest entry in the help authoring tool market, but its latest features take it beyond traditional online help and documentation authoring to make it:

- a complete authoring environment that supports text-based authoring plus visual authoring, project analysis, user feedback and other useful support features;
- a DITA authoring tool that lets you work in DITA from a familiar environment, without the disruption of having to adopt and learn a new tool, a new format and new ways to work; and
- a CMS “prototyper” that lets you create a make-believe CMS to test how well a real CMS will fit into your company’s workflow, technology and culture.



Workshop Synopsis

In this busy, full day hands-on workshop. You will:

- receive a quick overview of Flare in general and create a little project from scratch;
- look at Flare’s major single sourcing features - conditionality, variables, snippets, variables-in-snippets, conditionalized snippets, and more;
- look at what DITA is, how to use Flare to create material in DITA, **and** how to use Flare to abandon DITA if that’s your preference; and
- look at the features making up a “typical” content management system, see how those features are manifested in Flare and how to use Flare to create a prototype CMS you can use to analyze the impact of adopting a CMS before actually buying one. You may even find that you can use Flare as your real CMS.

B.Y.O. Laptop, & Configuration

Since this is a hands-on workshop, please bring your preconfigured laptop:

- If you have Flare, you’re already 95% of the way there.
- If not, download a trial version from the [MadCap website](#).
Note: don’t download the trial version too early as it expires in 30 days!
- You’ll receive full configuration instructions about a week before the seminar.

Configuration aside, there are no other prerequisites.

About the Presenter

Neil Perlin is the owner and principal consultant of Hyper/Word Services of Tewksbury, Massachusetts. He entered technical writing in 1979, began creating online material in 1985 and is now an internationally recognized expert in online help and documentation design and development. He has provided online documentation training and consulting services for 19 years, is a popular speaker at various technical communication groups and conferences, organized and ran the "Beyond the Bleeding Edge" stem at the STC annual conference from 1999 to 2006, and is a columnist for the STC and IEEE/PCS. Neil is a certified instructor for MadCap Flare and Mimic, and Adobe RoboHelp and Captivate.

New Heights is **Friday April 17, 2009** at the Sheraton Cavalier hotel (32nd Ave. NE & Barlow Trail in Calgary). **Registration closes April 10 – don't miss your chance to attend!**

Topic	Information Design
Date	Friday, April 17, 2009
Registration Options	<p>Rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$300 non-STC members • \$275 STC Members • \$250 STC-AB Members • \$225 Student STC-AB Members <p>Register and pay online via PayPal</p> <p>REGISTER ONLINE AND PAY BY PHONE OR CHEQUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out our online registration form • E-mail the Registration Coordinator for payment instructions <p><small>*To be eligible for member prices, you must have paid your 2009 STC membership dues and have chosen STC Alberta as your geographical community (chapter).</small></p> <p>The 2009 New Heights seminar will be held only in Calgary. STC members who live more than 100 km from Calgary will receive a 20% registration discount. Please pay the full amount and e-mail the Registration Coordinator to request a refund of the difference.</p>
Cancellation Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancellations received in writing before or on March 21 (three weeks before the seminar) will be refunded the registration fee paid less a \$25 administration fee. • Cancellations received between March 22 and April 4 will be refunded the registration fee paid less a \$50 administration fee • Cancellations will not be accepted after April 4. • Substitutions are permitted, however, if the substitute is not the same membership and geographical category as the original

registrant, the difference in cost must be paid

For more information contact [Melissa Ruryk](#).



Last updated: March 18, 2009

Our evening programs offer STC members the opportunity to learn the latest information regarding the theory and practice of technical communication. Take in seminars on topics such as communications theory, Web design, project management, and single-source documentation, led by technical communications experts from our own local community.

Programs are usually in a one to two -hour presentation format. We begin registration at 6:45 PM. Programs run from 7:00 to 8:00 or 9:00 PM.

Confirmed program dates are listed on our [Calendar](#). Please note that advance registration is required for our programs and workshops. To register for a program or workshop, use the [online registration form](#).

April 15 Program: So you want to be a contractor? Here are some things to consider...

Intrigued by the thought of going independent? In controlling your destiny and schedule? No more office politics, and no more commuting (maybe). It sounds good, and can be-- but what is involved in becoming a contractor? Do you have the psychology for it? The discipline and drive? This presentation discusses key attributes of deciding whether to go independent and how to make it work. Presented by a Technical Communications Entrepreneur with thirty years of experience, this presentation covers:

- **Defining yourself** - How to determine whether you have the qualities needed to work independently and your strategic definition.
- **Selling yourself** - How to market and brand yourself, and what not to do.
- **Managing yourself** - How to manage your operational direction when there is no one to talk to— issues such as sounding boards, family support, and goal setting.
- **Psychologically preparing yourself** - How becoming independent can eliminate the fear of losing your job.
- **Extending yourself** - How to keep up in a field that is constantly changing.
- **Keeping yourself sane** - How to not become overwhelmed by work.

About the Presenter

Neil Perlin has 30 years experience in technical communication, which includes over 20 years in training, consulting, and development for various online formats and tools including WinHelp, JavaHelp, WebHelp, RoboHelp, Flare, and many more. He is a columnist and frequent speaker for the STC, IEEE PCS, and other groups. He is also a member of the STC Boston chapter, the creator and manager of the Beyond the Bleeding Edge stem at STC's annual conference (1999 - 2006), and an Associate Fellow of the STC.

In addition, Neil is Madcap certified for Flare and Mimic and Adobe certified for RoboHelp and Captivate. He provides training, consulting, and development for online help and documentation, Flare, RoboHelp, Captivate, Mimic, XML, single-sourcing, and structured authoring through Hyper/Word Services of Tewksbury, MA. He can be reached at nperlin@concentric.net, or visit his website at www.hyperword.com

Date:	Wednesday April 15, 2009
Time:	Doors open at 6:30, Program from 7:00-9:00 pm
Location:	Calgary Technologies Inc. (CTI) (aka Alastair Ross Technology Center), 3553- 31 Street NW Calgary Alberta 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.
RSVP:	Register online or e-mail registration@stc-alberta.org

Program Fees:

- STC Alberta Members: \$10.00
- Student Members: Free
- Non-members: \$15.00

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

Contact

- For more information on programs, e-mail the program coordinator at program@stc-alberta.org

Home

About STC
Alberta

Awards/
Scholarships

Edmonton

Chapter
Resources

Contacts

Competitions

E-mail lists

Event Calendar

Event
Registration

Jobline

Links

Membership

Mentorship

New Heights

Newsletter

Other Events

Programs

Publications

STC Web
Seminars

STC Alberta Activities

Check out our [Programs](#), [Workshops](#), [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.

2009 Upcoming Events

April 15	Program: So you want to be a contractor? Here are some things to consider... Intrigued by the thought of going independent? In controlling your destiny and schedule? No more office politics, and no more commuting (maybe). It sounds good, and can be-- but what is involved in becoming a contractor? Do you have the psychology for it? The discipline and drive? This presentation discusses key attributes of deciding whether to go independent and how to make it work. Learn more ...
April 17	Using Madcap Flare as a Content Management test bed while learning about topic-based, structured writing for single sourcing. Speaker: Neil Perlin Learn more ...

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](#).