



SuperScript- STC Alberta News and Updates

Home

About STC Alberta
Awards/Scholarships
Edmonton
Contacts
Competitions
E-mail lists
Event Calendar
Jobline
Membership
New Heights
Newsletter
Publications
STC Web Seminars

SuperScript is the official newsletter of the Alberta chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. We welcome your articles, feedback and questions to our [editor](#). The submission deadline for our next edition is **Friday, April 30, 2010**. >>[Previous editions](#).

February-March 2010

President's Message

Jessie Channey, STC Alberta President



With recent changes in membership dues, it is likely that you (and many others), have considered the worth of your membership with STC. In keeping up with numerous other STC discussion lists, I can tell you that the common theme is that renewing your membership for 2010 is going to be more of a personal choice than it has been before.

So what do STC and STC Alberta offer you? I will address the concerns that I have read and heard about from other members across the global society and will provide a local perspective as both an STC member, and as a fellow technical communicator. For many of the items, I've listed our dedicated volunteers right here in Alberta who are helping to keep our services going.

Educational Opportunities

The webinars offered via STC.org are a popular benefit and they recently expanded their offering to include online certification courses. As a member, you have access to all these things at discounted rates. Locally, we have our monthly educational programs being managed by Rosalinda Hernandez; winning the New Volunteer of the Year award in 2007, she's now going into her third year bringing us great monthly programs. In 2009, we had a variety of topics ranging from financial planning, contracting, digital media, hardware technology, and many others.

Social Events

The perfect venue for networking! We've increased our social events from one a year to two or three. In response to member requests, our AGM has become a more casual gathering rather than the sit-down-dinner event it used to be years ago. In Edmonton, Deanne Wilson gets our members together for Coffee Nights, whereas Calgary members didn't attend Coffee Nights and they were discontinued years ago. 2010 is also STC Alberta's 30th Anniversary and we'll be holding a special social event in celebration of this milestone.

We plan our events (whether educational or social) based on feedback we get from event attendees; most of our attendees are STC members, but we do get some non-members too. At the end of our events, attendees fill in a survey of what they are interested in learning. We also do online surveys via Survey Monkey: Mellissa Ruryk, our New Heights Manager for 2009 and 2010, ran one in early 2009, and in November 2009, Annette Wierstra, our Grant MacEwan University Liaison ran another. These surveys provide a feedback opportunity to those members who didn't/couldn't fill out the survey in person.

New Heights

Our annual New Heights program brings in a renowned speaker to teach an all day course; this

event requires months of planning and volunteer effort and is always sold out despite being our most expensive local offering; the program is usually around \$300 (with earlybird incentives for members) and draws Edmonton and area members to Calgary. Non-members pay more to attend, but they do still attend because of the value. However, preference is always given to our members when seating is limited. Mellissa Ruryk is staying on for a second year to organize another successful day-long event.

STC Publications

Both the Intercom magazine and Technical Communication Journal are going to be delivered online. You can still choose to get hardcopies when you renew your membership. It will cost more to get the print out, but now you can choose one or both publications. The local newsletter, *SuperScript*, remains free to our members.

SuperScript

In the past year, we've made great strides in putting more information in our newsletter regarding member benefits. I wrote an article in the last issue of *SuperScript* regarding my personal experience with STC. See the Member Spotlight article in the Fall issue here: <http://www.stc-alberta.org/Newsletter/newsletter09.php>. Our Newsletter Team Lead, Alex Kelly, is training up two new Editors: Jennifer Burgess and Cheryl Mudge (who was 2009's winner of the STC Scholarship Award at Mount Royal).

Email Lists

Our email lists received some unwanted attention this year due to a technical glitch. But we've resolved that problem. Our announcement list is the most active one and it is used to keep members in the loop about upcoming events. Most recently, we added a Jobline notification email as an extra perk for those members who are subscribed to the list. Welcome to Raylene Hawrysh, our new Membership Manager who is being trained to take over the management of these lists.

Jobline

Our active jobline has been a good source of job leads for many of our members. Not only do employers and recruiters get to advertise for free, but our members get full access to the job postings by way of password protected webpages. Many thanks to Ian Hawkins who continues on in his fifth year managing this service.

Salary Survey

The annual members-only Salary Survey is a key benefit which captures actual earnings of our peers which are generally different from the rest of Canada or American markets. Having local market information is priceless when negotiating salary. Our Edmonton Liaison, Deanne Wilson, is going to be managing the survey for 2010. Sitting on the Canadian STC Presidents Committee, I'm proud to report that our Alberta survey is going to be the basis for a future Canada-wide salary survey that all Canadian STC members can participate in. We hope to implement this in 2010, so stay tuned!

Scholarships

STC Alberta has created scholarships and awards for students of technical communication at both Mount Royal University and Grant MacEwan University. As education becomes a more expensive endeavor, STC Alberta is there to help the future leaders of our profession stay focused on their studies.

A Diverse Offering

As you can see, we have a diverse offering for our members. We have adapted to the needs of our members. We have been fortunate to maintain a good level of volunteerism which has allowed us to freshen our perspective while continuing to serve our members better as the years go on. If you have any specific changes you'd like to see, there are probably other members thinking the same thing too. So, please do share your ideas with us.

Those are many of the main benefits of membership from a local perspective. For more on benefits, see <http://www.stc.org/membership/>

Cost of Membership

Yes, the cost of membership has increased.

This was a discussion that started just before the summer and I've written about it in the previous

issues of *SuperScript*. Initially, STC forecasted raising rates to \$300 to match the cost of servicing a member. We've discussed the impact of increased costs not only at society level, but at chapter level, and at a personal level. We are all "people buying a service" first, and whether our employer pays for our membership or we pay for it ourselves, we don't like to see our rates increasing. But as the STC offering has increased (as has the cost of doing business), the new rates of basic membership at \$215 + 25 for a chapter are in line with other similar societies.

On a personal note, when I initially heard about membership costs going up, I researched other groups because I, too, felt that the cost was going up too much. The closest group I managed to find was IEEE's Professional Communication Society. I presented my research on IEEE to the Canadian STC Presidents Committee so that all presidents would be aware of what the alternatives to STC might be. Once the costs and offerings were compared, it was easy to see where the real benefit was. I value having a local chapter, and IEEE doesn't offer this (despite an additional charge to join the communication society), so for me, that was the deciding factor, and I accept that my membership is going to cost me \$240. On a positive note, with our dollar doing so well, membership this year will cost me nearly the same as last year. My classic membership last year (190 USD) turned out to 237 CAD. Some STC members also revealed costs associated with other professional memberships they hold. From IABC to ASTD and a variety of lesser known associations, the costs were all fairly equal, but with noticeably fewer benefits. (Contact me if you want to see the actual research.)

Ultimately, staying with STC, or not, is a personal decision based on how well STC has served you, your career, and your profession as a whole. As I wrote in the Fall issue's Member Spotlight, STC has served me well for the past 10 years, and for that reason, I will maintain my membership with the society. To renew your membership, visit <http://stc.org/membership/renew-your-stc-membership.asp>. To discuss further, or to help make the Alberta Chapter better, please contact me directly at president@stc-alberta.org.

2010 Technical Communication Summit

SuperScript Editors

STC's Technical Communication Summit 2010 is getting closer! It will be held 2–5 May 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion, in Dallas, TX. There's still time to get the early bird rate! For general information, please contact Lloyd Tucker, Director of Education and Membership, at lloyd.tucker@stc.org or via telephone at (571) 366-1904.

Upcoming Events

New Heights

New Heights Coordinator

The New Heights seminar is STC-Alberta's premier educational event of each year. We bring in a noted speaker for a day-long (usually intensive) workshop on a topic of interest to our broad Alberta audience and provide attendees with materials, lunch & snacks, and a first-class educational experience. The seminar is held on a working day, normally a Friday (about 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), in April or May.

You will come away from the seminar with a good appreciation of a tool or concept you always wanted to know more about, or a deeper feel for something you already work with.

You Gave Us Your Feedback

Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent survey on topic and location for New Heights 2010. Your input was invaluable! Nearly 35% of STC-Alberta members took the time to respond and make their voices heard.

Topic

Our topic for New Heights is Instructional Design. Frequently, technical writing is intended to teach or to be used by instructors to teach. Learn effective techniques to identify what you want learners to learn, develop content (scope and sequence), and establish how instructional effectiveness can be evaluated.

Venue

While Red Deer showed strongly as a possible venue, Calgary won out and New Heights 2010 will be held there. A specific location has yet to be determined.

Presenter

Can you recommend a presenter for our seminar (on the topic noted above)? We are looking for the right combination of experience and enthusiasm in a presenter who will deliver an engaging educational experience (how's that for assonance??). Email newheights@stc-alberta.org if you have any tips for us.

Coming Soon: Pricing, venue and date...

MadCap Software Roadshow

SuperScript Editors

MadCap Software will be traveling across the US, Canada and Europe throughout 2010, visiting dozens of cities to provide an intensive, one-day technical writing seminar. Designed by Mike Hamilton, VP of Product Management, the seminar will provide you with valuable information on how to gain the most out of your technical writing and publishing tools in a challenging market environment.

Whether you are managing a team of technical writers or managing your own content authoring, the Roadshow seminar will focus on authoring and technical communication best-practices. Get the most out of your MadCap Software products and take advantage of this fantastic opportunity.

Date: March 15, 2010

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Location: Calgary Technologies Inc. (aka Alastair Ross Technology Centre)
3553-31 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta

Cost*: \$149.00 (lunch is included)

Capacity: Attendance is limited to 24, so sign up soon!

Registration/More information: [MadCap Roadshow Information](#)

Did you know? Part of the money used to sign up for this seminar can be used towards a new MadCap software purchase or renewal in the future (\$99 towards new purchases, \$50 towards training or renewal maintenance).

STC Alberta's 30th Anniversary

This year celebrates our 30th year representing Alberta technical communicators. Stay tuned for more info on our 30th anniversary celebrations!

STC Alberta Salary Survey

Deanne Wilson, *Salary Survey Manager*

It's that time of year again... no, not the time for spring snowstorms that bring down your flowering trees and make you wish you'd left your winter tires on for another month. It's time for the STC Alberta Salary Survey.

Data collected in the 2010 survey can be compared year-on-year with the results from the previous years' surveys.

The survey takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Please click the link below to go to the survey, hosted on SurveyMonkey.com. Responses need to be submitted by April 9, 2010. The results will be shared at events in Calgary and Edmonton in May, and posted in SuperScript.

[Click here](#) to take survey

Thanks for your support in making the STC Alberta Chapter a vibrant and informed community!

Writers UA User Assistance Survey

Submitted by [Jessie Channey](#), *President, STC Alberta Chapter*

There is no question that the software development world offers a lot of excitement and challenging work. In the area of software user assistance we are particularly challenged by having to master a wide range of disciplines. From foundation skills like writing and editing—to the coding of content—to usability testing and user interface design, we find ourselves in a profession that is difficult to define. What is it that we really do?

The objective of this survey is to take a snapshot of our collective professional life in an attempt to identify what we value in our daily work as user assistance professionals:

- What emphasis do we place on writing and editing—versus coding and design skills?
- What platforms do we support?
- Which technologies are most important to our UA systems?

The results of this survey may help us to better manage our career path and to improve the quality of our work.

For more information, click <http://www.writersua.com/surveys/skillstech09/index.html>

STC Alberta Needs You!

[Jessie Channey](#), *President, STC Alberta Chapter*

Our chapter depends on the contributions of its volunteers. Several positions are available now and offer the opportunity to contribute to your profession, develop new skills and add volunteer experience to your resume. The following is a short description of available roles. [Click here](#) for full details.

President

The president is responsible for exercising general supervision and management of Chapter business:

- Receive the guidance of the past president throughout your term
- Chair general and administrative meetings
- Submit a bimonthly article for the newsletter
- Act as an ex-officio member of all volunteer teams

As president, you'll learn to work with a variety of business functions, participate in collaborative work, set the direction for the Chapter, implement new ideas, help make spending decisions, and, in a role that represents the Chapter to the world, you have access to experienced leaders at the STC international office. A privilege of the president is to attend all programs to meet attendees.

Treasurer

As Treasurer, you don't need an accounting or financial background. If you can balance a cheque book and have some basic experience with spreadsheet programs, you can manage the Chapter's finances:

- Receive the guidance of the outgoing treasurer
- Receive and manage all monies paid to the Chapter
- Maintain books and records so they are available to the Administrative Council
- Prepare annual financial reports for submission to STC and STC Alberta's AGM

Secretary

The Administrative Council requires complete and accurate minutes of its meetings to ensure decisions have been recorded and tasks delegated. The secretary is responsible for compiling these minutes and, therefore, is vital to the council's success:

- Record and maintain the minutes of all general and administrative meetings
- Distribute minutes to the Administrative Council via email

If you're interested in any of these positions or would like more information, e-mail our President, Jessie Channey, at president@stc-alberta.org.

Interview with STC Summit "Consultant's Corner" Participant Neil Perlin

Submitted by [Jessie Channey](#), *President, STC Alberta Chapter*
Originally published in STC's Notebook

STC is once again offering exhibit space for consultants at the Summit in Dallas, TX. Check out the [Consultant's Corner section](#) of the conference website for all the details and the contract.

Your Friendly Neighborhood Blogger chatted with the first person to sign up for this returning venture, and I captured our conversation below. Enjoy!

Name?

Neil Perlin

Company/title?

President, Hyper/Word Services

How did you first hear about the Consultant's Corner?

I proposed a similar idea in 1999 to Mark Hanigan, 2000-2001 STC president, who implemented it for several years in the early 2000s before that "consultants' corner" was replaced by the tote bag insert program. After the tote bag insert program lapsed, I proposed the "consultants' corner" idea again, this time to Alan Houser, who forwarded the idea to Lloyd Tucker. Between them they implemented the idea. So I suppose I'm partly responsible for creating the Consultant's Corner. It's based on my perception of the need for a marketing venue at the conference that's suitable for individual consultants, in ways that an exhibition hall booth is not. I first saw it on the conference website.

What makes it worthwhile to you?

I always found the conference to be a great place to network and market services, but the need to take out a booth in order to market services isn't appropriate for an individual consultant. The Consultant's Corner lets me market my services in a way that's appropriate, convenient, and affordable.

What do you expect to accomplish by having a presence on the Consultant's Corner?

Simple: raise awareness of the services that I offer.

What types of consulting do you do?

Training, consulting, and development on help authoring concepts, authoring tools such as Flare, RoboHelp, Captivate, and others, structured authoring, single sourcing, and conversion of old WinHelp projects to up-to-date formats like HTML or XHTML.

Are you also attending Summit?

Yes, and giving and/or moderating a workshop and several presentations

What are you looking forward to most of all at Summit?

Getting a sense of the state of the profession, reconnecting with friends and acquaintances, and meeting new people.

Any last thoughts?

I'm been attending, and speaking at, the conference since DC in 1995. Between meeting people and getting a sense of the state of the profession, I've always found the experience to be worthwhile.

Did you know Neil Perlin presented at New Heights in 2009? For more information on this year's New Heights, see the New Heights section of this newsletter

Submitting to SuperScript

We love including articles and ideas from chapter members in *SuperScript*. Submit comments, articles and questions to newsletter@stc-alberta.org.

Past Events

MRU Portfolio Show

Jessie Channey, *President, STC Alberta Chapter*

On December 3, Mount Royal University held its annual Portfolio Show.

This year, held at the Hyatt, the event proved to be yet another successful showing

of students' experiences thoughtfully presented in nicely prepared portfolios. The show featured a fun video created by the students. With live jazz in the background, it was an enjoyable opportunity to mix with faculty, employers, and students. STC Alberta was represented by President Jessie Channey who learned that next year is Mount Royal's 100th Anniversary. This perfectly coincides with STC Alberta's own anniversary event that celebrates our 30th year representing Alberta technical communicators. Stay tuned for more info on our 30th Anniversary!



Alberta Chapter AGM

Rosalinda Hernandez, *Programs Manager*

The STC Alberta AGM was held on January 21 at Brewsters downtown. A fun, informal evening saw lots of interesting discussion, as members reconnected or connected for the first time. Awards were given out for volunteer recognition and for long-time STC members.



New Members

Raylene Hawrysh, *Membership Manager*

We saw five new members join our chapter, which brings our total membership to 181. Welcome!

Janine Gilmour, Sherwood Park, AB.
John Kudjo Awere, Irvington, NJ
John Barker, Delta, BC
Collin M. Semenoff, Calgary, AB
Rhonda Lee Skinner, Edmonton, AB

If you would like to recommend a friend or colleague to the benefits of STC, encourage them to review our website, particularly our profile under [About STC Alberta](#). Better yet – pass along this edition of *SuperScript* for their reading pleasure, and invite them to join you at our next [program night!](#)

Bitter Ink

[Jeremy Schroeder](#), *Guest Contributor*
Used with permission.



About the Author:

Jeremy Schroeder created *Bitter Ink* way back in 1999 for STC Alberta as a favor for a friend, Jessie Channey. He created strips off and on for about four years before he ran out of ideas... or just got lazy... He can't remember which. For more laughs (and commiseration), please visit his [new website](#).

"Technical Writer" Officially a Distinct Profession per the US Government!

Stacey Rodgers-O'Donnell, *STC Membership Development Manager*

The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its newest Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) in December and, as STC announced in April, "Technical Writer" has its own chapter for the very first time.

"This is a breakthrough achievement for STC and for the profession of technical communication," said STC President Cynthia C. Currie. "It is the result of a long-standing relationship with economist Richard O'Sullivan and our vision that technical writers (and all technical communicators) be recognized as the special breed of communicator they are."

O'Sullivan, principal of Change Management Solutions, is an association economist who has been advising BLS for 25 years and assisted STC in this endeavor. "To go from where we were in late 2006 when STC approached OMB to having a new category of technical writer in 2010 is amazing," said O'Sullivan. "Usually, putting through changes like this can take up to a decade. But our argument was compelling and the differences STC focused on were clearly apparent and hard for

OMB to argue against. We had our proof in the marketplace.”

STC responded to a request from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to update the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOCs), the classification system used by all US and state government agencies when collecting and publishing information on employment, wages, and salaries. The Occupational Outlook Handbook is one of the Department of Labor’s most popular programs and an essential tool for the human resource management profession. The reference details the latest changes in the 820 different occupations tracked by the BLS each year.

“Having the US Bureau of Labor Statistics recognize technical writers as a profession distinct from all other writing professions independently confirms STC’s claim that not all writers can do technical writing,” explained STC Immediate Past President Mark Clifford, who was STC President at the time of the initial announcement. “We’re very pleased to have this distinction made in an important reference tool that is so well respected by the human resource community.”

The OOH presents some good news in its inaugural Technical Writer chapter as well. It states that technical writers held close to 50,000 jobs in 2008, and more importantly, employment is expected to grow 18 percent—“faster than average,” and nearly twice the rate projected for the nation’s workforce in total—from 2008 to 2018. The chapter also calculates a median salary of \$61,620 as of May 2008, with further breakdowns for specific industries. (For a comparison, “Writers and Authors” had a median salary of \$53,070 at the same time, while “Editors” checked in at \$49,990. And job growth for the positions is expected to be over two percentages below the rate for the entire workforce from 2008 to 2018.)

The OOH description of the position clearly differentiates it from similar jobs. As significant points, it lists the following:

- “Most jobs in this occupation require a college degree—preferably in communications, journalism, or English—but a degree in a technical subject may be useful.
- Job prospects for most technical writing jobs are expected to be good, particularly for those with Web or multimedia experience.
- Excellent communications skills, curiosity, and attention to detail are highly desired traits.”

Overall, the inclusion of the position and the information provided are good news for STC members and the profession. “The OOH is the most important reference tool used by HR professionals,” said O’Sullivan. “To have this distinction being made by the DOL in this document is important for the profession. It supports STC’s position before employers and HR departments and provides an unbiased and respected voice backing what STC has been saying for years.”

To access the new section, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos319.htm> .

From the President: STC’s Future Already Looking Brighter in 2010

Cindy Currie, *2009-10 STC President*
Originally published in STC’s Notebook

As we end 2009, I am extremely pleased to be able to deliver some GOOD news: STC has weathered the first and most severe crisis—that of a fourth quarter cash deficit. I want to express my sincere thanks to the chapters and SIGs for their support and partnership (as painful as it has been), and to the tireless efforts of the committees, the Board, and the staff in making almost \$1M USD in expense cuts and cost savings.

In the last year, members have heard from the STC Board of Directors and staff more than 50 times . . . probably more than you wanted, considering some of our messages, but it was information you need to have. The impact to STC’s finances was unprecedented and affected all of us. Like my predecessor, I insisted that the Board’s actions and discussions be as open as possible and to involve community leaders and members.

STC is stronger and better positioned for 2010 and the future:

- Our remaining reserves are conservatively invested and year-to-date activity

reflects a net change in investment earnings of approximately \$86,000. We hope to begin rebuilding our reserves by 2011.

- Dues have been restructured to cover the true basic costs of supporting the membership. And, all members can now configure their memberships the way they want them.
- Our new Gold Membership offers an extraordinary package of services at an extraordinary savings, and I'm thrilled to see a lot more members have chosen this category than expected. (I chose it too!)
- We offered up to 400 Recovery Packages to help members most impacted by the recession to remain members.
- We have increased our educational offerings in the form of online certificate courses and monthly webinars, which will help to prepare members for the challenges of the current and evolving future workplace,
- We have a conservative, balanced budget for 2010!

This is a solid way to begin the New Year. I am grateful to all of you for your continued loyalty to STC, your dedication to improving the profession, and the Herculean efforts of our volunteers. I am proud to be STC president and I am looking forward to continued forward motion for STC as we climb out of the financial crisis for good and get on with the business of promoting the professional of technical communication, supporting our current members in relevant ways, and scouting for new members and others who will benefit from STC.

The future is bright indeed!

Quotes & Quips

SuperScript Editors

"The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself."-Albert Camus

"Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers."-T.S. Eliot

"Using adverbs is a mortal sin."-Elmore Leonard

"You see more sitting still than chasing after."- Jonathan Franzen

Interesting Links and Articles – A Compilation

The following is an assortment of information of broad interest. Please feel free to send more great finds to newsletter@stc-alberta.org. Thanks!

Technical Communication

[Trends in Technical Communication](#)

[A Creative Way to Become a Technical Writer](#)

[If No One Reads the Manual, That's Okay](#)

[Writers UA Review of Screen Capture Tools](#)

Other Professional

[How to Write a Business Proposal](#)

[Book Review: Managing Writers by Richard L. Hamilton](#)

[Writers UA Salary Survey](#)

[Reuters on Google Buzz](#)

[How to Write a Great Web Link](#)

[Getting Clients: Approaching the Company](#)

[Towson U., National Federation of the Blind Re-Invent CAPTCHA](#)

[Critical Chain Project Management](#)

[Speed Bumps and Detours: Navigating Resistance to Change](#)

[The Usability Week 2010 Conference](#)

[TechCom Manager Social Networking Poll](#)

STC

[The STC Certification Task Force](#)

[Technical Communication ranked in the Top 100 at Ingenta.com](#)

[SIG Spotlight: Technical Editing SIG](#)

The STC Certification Task Force

Fun

[Funny Infographics: Lunchbreath's Flickr Photostream](#)

[Fake AP Stylebook on Twitter](#)

[Great Recycling Bins: Avinash Kaushik's Flickr Image](#)

[The UUX Book Club](#)

[Oxford Word of the Year 2009: Unfriend](#)

[Top 50 Most Creative Google Logos](#)

[The Chicago Manual of Style on Facebook!](#)

[How to Use an Apostrophe](#)

[Animator vs Animation](#)

[Pranav Mistry: The Thrilling Potential of SixthSense technology](#)



Society for
Technical
Communication

Last updated: March 17, 2010