

# SuperScript



## Content management technologies: picking through the alphabet soup

- Rahel Anne Bailie, STC Associate Fellow, Senior Member, STC Canada West Coast

Managing content takes many forms. In fact, you could serve up a veritable alphabet soup of acronyms that vary on the content management theme: the basic CM (content management), WCM (Web content management), ECM (enterprise content management), DMS (document management), DAM (digital asset management), KM (knowledge management), LM (learning management), PIM (product information management), RM (records management or rights management), and CRM (customer relationship management). These terms refer to different types of content, with specific business requirements and processes that drive the feature set of the particular technologies.

Not surprisingly, none of the technologies mentioned so far supports the production of content for technical documentation. That is a specific type of content management system that has specialized functions for technical communicators doing multi-channel publishing, yet it hasn't spun off its own specific acronym. Sometimes called structured content management with XML—personally, I think XSCM would make a fine acronym for XML content management—it refers to what I hear many writers still do with "FrameMaker and an Excel spreadsheet": facilitate re-use of content across multiple output channels such as print, PDF, online

help, and customer support knowledge base.

So, when confronted with this jungle of acronyms, how can you tell what's what? Borrowing heavily from the glossary compiled by CM Professionals at [www.cmsglossary.com](http://www.cmsglossary.com), here is a quick tour.

**... confronted with this jungle of acronyms, how can you tell what's what?**

All Content Management systems support the creation, approval, storage, retrieval, versioning, re-use, and delivery of content objects. The differences involve the type of content that is being managed and the features that manipulate the content in specific ways for different purposes.

Web Content Management, usually referred to by the generic term "content management", is a system for handling content on one or more Web sites. WCM can range from an extraordinarily simple application, such as a blog, to feature-rich applications that run portals delivering personalized content, such as a "My Yahoo" page. Some WCM applications are known for their specializations, such as the handling of localized content.

XML Structured Content Management has functions that allow authors to produce technical documentation and

publish that content to multiple channels. These systems usually have more functions, such as the ability to generate PDFs and online help as well as Web pages, and have features that generate authorities (table of contents, index, glossary) and let authors view their content in a familiar split-pane "table of contents" format common in help-authoring tools. Of the 2,000-plus commercial CM systems, only a dozen or so are intended for the power-publishing done by technical communicators.

Enterprise Content Management does WCM and XSCM and more. Each ECM system has its own unique combination of modules that handle content

*Continued on page 7.*

Content Management.....1	INSIDE SUPERSCRIPT
President's Message.....2	
Editor's Message.....3	
Editing is Not Evil!.....4	
Membership News.....4	
Edmonton Events.....5	
MRC Coffee Night.....6	
Mark Your Calendars..... 8	

## A Word from Our President

- Ruth Maryniuk, President

As announced in last month's *SuperScript*, we are in the planning stages for the Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be free to all members. I hope that you will make it a priority to attend at least one meeting this year and consider letting your name stand for any of the elected or volunteer positions.

I hope that as a member, you will consider joining next year's council to help continue the services and benefits that our community offers. As we all know, organizations such as ours rely on the work of volunteers to provide and enhance the professional development events offered to our members. Most positions require only a few hours of time. Yes, volunteering does require time—a precious commodity these days—but one well worth investing!

While all of our current volunteers have been extremely busy these last few months, work is going on to coordinate future activities. Please check the Web site for upcoming events in April. If you would like to host a Webinar for April, please contact Laurie Holtby ([webinar@stc-alberta.org](mailto:webinar@stc-alberta.org)) to make arrangements. We began hosting Webinars last year as an alternative to our evening programs and in lieu of Coffee Nights, which were no longer drawing attendance. This is just one of the new ways that our Chapter has been addressing our members' interests and needs for professional development. If you have any ideas that STC Alberta should be offering, please let me know. I am always open to new ideas for events and activities that we should be sponsoring.


While we are still organizing events for this term, a few of our members are planning for fall events. Our Competitions Coordinator is very busy making plans for the 2006-07 competitions. If you would like more information about this

event or would like to volunteer to help out, please contact Jeanne Gonnason ([competitions@stc-alberta.org](mailto:competitions@stc-alberta.org)).

Ken Schatzke, our New Heights Coordinator, has been busy reviewing proposals for the 2006 New Heights Seminar and is very close to selecting a speaker for New Heights 2006. Ken has told me that he would like to hand off the position, so if you are interested in managing New Heights, please let me ([president@stc-alberta.org](mailto:president@stc-alberta.org)) or Ken ([newheights@stc-alberta.org](mailto:newheights@stc-alberta.org)) know.

I am also recruiting for one other position that may be of interest. The Archivist position is available. This position in the past was to coordinate and find a home for our historical documents. However, when our last Archivist resigned, it was suggested that we find a more permanent home for our archives. I have been in contact with the Provincial Archives and the Glenbow Museum, which are both interested in obtaining our documents for their archives. There are some questions that need to be asked and issues to be resolved before we can make this happen. If you would be interested in spearheading this activity and working with the Provincial liaison, please let me know. As a finale to our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it would be fitting to have our historical documents permanently stored with the Alberta Provincial Archives.

One final note: If you have not renewed your membership for this year, you will receive your last copy of Intercom in April and, most likely, you will lose your access to the member areas of the STC Web sites. So please make it a point to renew your membership.

I hope that we see sunny skies this April and warm spring days. I hope to see you at our next STC event. 

## STC Alberta Community Administrative Council 2005-2006

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## Editor's Message

- Kate Christie, SuperScript Editor

As a newcomer to the role of *SuperScript* Editor, I look back on the past year with STC Alberta and contemplate my journey here with some amazement. You see, I'm not only new to the role of Editor, I'm also relatively new to STC Alberta and to the province of Alberta.

When I arrived in Calgary in January 2005, I was looking for work, and, just as I had heard, there seemed to be a lot of opportunities for technical writers in this province. This had not been the case in Ontario before I left, so I was grateful to find work here so quickly. Having transferred my membership to STC Alberta, I was fortunate in finding first a contract position, then a full-time position through the STC Alberta Jobline.

My next step was only natural. I was starting from ground zero in terms of contacts, so I was going to find some ways to network with other technical writers and editors. I attended the STC Alberta Annual General Meeting last June and met Jessie Channey, who was then *SuperScript* Editor. She convinced me to join the volunteer *SuperScript* team and make a contribution to my professional association.

The newsletter team has consisted of a fluctuating group of volunteers, who produce the ten yearly issues of the newsletter. Team members attend events, write or solicit articles, coordinate executive member submissions, lay out the content in PageMaker, copyedit the content, and arrange for it to be uploaded to the Web site and a link e-mailed to members. For some team members, this process has proven too demanding, and since last June, we have lost some of our team. However, as we prepare to move the newsletter to an HTML format in the next month or so, we are looking forward to an easier and more efficient production process.


Almost a year later, I have to admit that it has sometimes been difficult to find the few hours a month to work on the newsletter, and to attend meetings and other events. I'm sure the same is true for all the volunteers working on the newsletter team and the executive. And yet, I also have to say that the cliché is true—I feel that both my personal and working lives have been greatly enriched by the experience.

As a newsletter team member and also an executive member, I have met and worked closely with some extremely knowledgeable and experienced technical communicators. Along with them, I have been involved in making important decisions about the direction of the newsletter and the Chapter as a whole.

In addition, through events such as the Communications Awards Presentations and the Coffee Night at Mount Royal College, I have had the opportunity to meet with some of the estimable faculty and future professionals in the Technical Communication program. I've even been able to offer the

students some of my insights into the profession, and share their opinions of their proposed profession.

As an active STC member and volunteer, I have also attended informative and entertaining presentations by professionals who are experts in their field—people like Trina Rodes-Reyes, who led the "Editing is not Evil!" program evening this past month; Lee Easton, who told us why technical communication should take pop culture into consideration; and Milena Radzikowska, who explained how we should approach the preparation of a contemporary portfolio. And since these events are also attended by STC members who may not currently be serving as volunteers, I have also had an opportunity to meet and interact with a broader range of technical communicators.

In short, my original goal to make some new contacts and to network with other technical communicators has been amply fulfilled. I've also learned a lot about current practices and about the local working environment. Finally, it's been a surprisingly fulfilling experience to know that I am making a small contribution to my professional association through my work on the newsletter and on the executive. I'm looking forward to continuing my role as an active member of this community. 

**it's been a surprisingly fulfilling experience to know that I am making a small contribution**



### Upcoming Programs

The program for April 20 is still to be determined. Please check out the STC Alberta Web site at [www.stc-alberta.org](http://www.stc-alberta.org) for more information.

On May 18, **Nancy Sequeira** will present "**Content Tone**". This presentation is based on an original session about content tone given by Anne Taussig at last year's STC International conference in Seattle. It defines content tone and how to achieve it in technical writing. We'll explore writing samples and survey results to reveal how content tone affects documentation, the image of a company, and its writers. Hopefully you'll discover how to use content tone to improve your style guide, documentation templates, and processes.

Programs are held at Calgary Technologies Inc. (Alastair Ross Building), 3553-31 Street NW, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

## Editing is Not Evil!

- Wendy Ogden, STC Member

This article is a review of the program entitled "Editing is Not Evil!" held on March 16th.

If you've ever thought editing is, dare I say, a little dry, and talking about it quite boring, Trina Rodes-Reyes has proven you wrong. Through interactive games, anecdotes, illustrations, and discussions she painted a picture of the editor as a supportive helper to the writer. Her dynamic style made the evening an enjoyable time.


Trina's perfect editor keeps his ego in check and spends time doing public relations work, along with structuring content, working on quality control, enforcing company regulations, and generally improving quality.

Trina spoke about the editor's reputation for being evil, making random changes, and insulting the writer's intelligence. She said this idea can be overturned when the editor makes the writer look good. Helping her meet her deadline and saving time and money works well. Preserving the writer's ego is also important, according to Trina. She reminded the group that sometimes the editor is wrong! Gasp!

Specific points for the editor to keep in mind include empathy for deadlines and careful commenting, along with discernment and directness. Trina also said being interested, informed, and invested will help the editor manage the job well. Tolerating other writing styles is also necessary. Basically, the editor should spend time communicating with the writer and building the relationship.

While keeping the editor's clients happy means not being too strict or too sloppy, Trina says there are times for the editor to stand his ground. When there might be a safety hazard, loss of revenue, degradation of corporate integrity, or if contractual obligations won't be met, this is the time to stand strong. While compromises are often necessary, she warns that the editor should ensure he knows all the facts before jumping to a compromise under pressure. Sometimes a small error can be big trouble.

The writer knows a lot about her project, and part of the editor's job is to communicate with the writer to get details, especially things outside the actual document, such as situational politics. This can improve product quality. Trina reminded attendees that the editor himself is the most important part of his toolkit, and appropriate behaviour is his best asset.

Trina emphasized that nobody can edit his or her own work, and that egos destroy quality. Let it go! 

## Membership News

- Lucille Worone, Membership Coordinator



Membership in the Alberta Chapter continued to grow in the first months of 2006.

These new members joined in January and February:

Debbie Barry, Calgary  
Kathy Boutin, Pompano Beach, Florida  
Jacquelyn Dobson, Edmonton  
Stephanie Ferguson, Calgary  
Vira Hughes, Edmonton  
Deborah Kaplan, Calgary  
Cheri Komar, Lethbridge  
Serge Larocque, Edmonton  
Mary Nasi, Calgary  
Rachel Nuytten, Calgary  
Karen Roberts, Calgary  
Lori Robertson, Calgary  
Tracey Stewart, Edmonton  
Carmen Wyatt, Calgary  
Jane Usher, Calgary

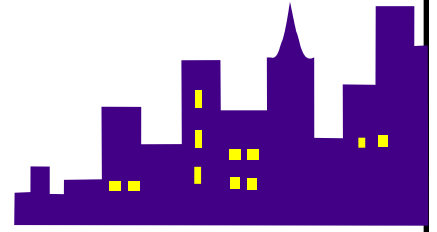
These members transferred to the Alberta Chapter:

Cheri Buswell, Bloomington, MN  
Winnifred Day, Edmonton  
Fena Maurcieri Alameda, CA  
Diane O'Brien, Almonte, Ontario  
Katherine Prairie, Calgary  
Sherri Richards, Okotoks  
Mala Rupnarain, Vancouver

The Alberta Chapter currently has 251 members, an increase of 27.7% since June 2005. In fact, of the seventeen communities in Size Category 3 (151 to 300 members), Alberta ranked second in percentage growth!

# EDMONTON

# EVENTS



## **We're coordinating with the Editors' Association of Canada for a Proofreading Workshop.**

Proofreading is one of the core areas that will be tested on EAC's upcoming certification exams. It's also one of the fundamental skills of every editor. Whether you're a veteran editor or a novice in the profession, this workshop will give your skills a boost. This event is being jointly sponsored by the Editors' Association of Canada - Prairie Provinces Branch and the Edmonton branch of the Society for Technical Communication, Alberta Chapter.

### **Time and Fees**

Time:	Saturday, May 6, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, May 7, 9:00 a.m. to noon
Location:	TBA
Fee:	EAC and STC Members: \$140 (+ GST) = \$ 149.80 Non-Members: \$195 (+ GST) = \$ 208.65

Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

### **The Seminar**

At this one-and-a-half-day course, we'll review markup symbols and proofreading methods in the digital world; discuss the place of proofreading in the publishing process and review the proofreader's role and responsibilities; focus on specific standards for proofreading knowledge, both verbal and visual; and discuss productivity issues. We'll also look at a range of tools and resources to make the job easier. All discussion will be supported by fun real-life exercises and supplemented by relevant takeaway readings.

### **The Facilitator**

Leslie Vermeer has been working as a writer and editor for nearly twenty years. She is the former managing editor of the University of Alberta Press and currently teaches in the Professional Writing program at Grant MacEwan College. Her experience ranges from writing for small non-profit organizations to editing national bestsellers, from proofreading three-line ads to grooming 500-page monographs. She holds master's degrees in English and the sociology of education. When she is not working, Leslie can be found reading, gardening, hiking, or rock climbing.

### **To Register**

E-mail your name and contact information to Diane Lavery at [edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org](mailto:edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org) (and cc Rick Paisley at [edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org](mailto:edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org)). Payment is by cheque, payable to STC Alberta. Receipts will be provided at the workshop. Enrolment is limited: please register without delay.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Registration fee (less 20% for administration costs) will be refunded if notice of cancellation is received two weeks prior to the day of the seminar.



## Coffee and Conversation at MRC

- Kate Christie, SuperScript Editor

On the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>, a group of students and STC Alberta members met in the Fireside Room at Mount Royal College for a discussion about technical communication. The event, with coffee and cookies supplied, provided an opportunity for students in the College's Technical Communication program to find out more about the profession from some experienced technical communicators.

"How did you get started in technical writing?" was a question that drew a variety of interesting responses from the STC members who were present. Another question was "Which skills do you consider to be the most important for a technical communicator?" Although various skills were mentioned, most of the experienced technical writers considered interpersonal skills to be the most important.

On hand to suggest questions and topics for discussion were Glenn Ruhl, Chair of the Technical Communication program, and Brian Traynor, a Technical Communication instructor. About eight STC Alberta members were present, including President Ruth Maryniuk. Since some of these members are graduates of the Mount Royal College program, they were able to offer insights into the value of their education in the working world.

For the last hour of the two-hour event, students and STC members chatted together informally in small groups and one on one. Students who attended the coffee night received a coupon for a free STC Alberta program evening event.

A selection of photos from the event is provided below. 📷



*Robert Gray, Lucille Worone*



*Jennifer Kaban, Jessie Channey*



*Brian Traynor, MRC Communications instructor, with a new STC member*



*Glenn Ruhl, Chair of the MRC Technical Communication Program, with Diana Kelly*

## Coffee and Conversation at MRC

*Continued from page 6.*



*Jeanne Gonnason, Diana Kelly*

## Content Management Technologies

*Continued from page 1.*

that ranges from unstructured content, such as e-mail, to records, documents, and product information for e-commerce sites—in fact, any or all of the types of content mentioned here. These are usually massive, expensive systems that often get semi-implemented. (The words “SAP implementation” and “ECM implementation” often cause the same type of hysterical laughter from staff who have survived such projects.)

Document Management is a way of controlling native-format documents (such as Word or Excel) through their creation, storage, retrieval, and versioning. A document management system does not support the re-use of content chunks within the documents. From a technical communication point of view, a writer manipulates content objects in an XSCM system and generates a document, which is then managed through a document management system. Some XSCM systems include basic DM functions with their systems, but these are often not robust enough to meet the specialized needs of an organization.

Digital Asset Management is a system for handling rich media, which may include still graphics such as photos, video clips, sound files, and other types of multimedia. It is used by libraries, museums, and media outlets such as television stations to deliver content, and handles such challenges as categorizing hundreds of photos of a painting called “Untitled 1” and encoding video with metadata.


Knowledge Management essentially uses content management technology for the purpose of gathering information to help with business processes, best practices, expert systems, and other information that can lead to better business intelligence. This affects the way the content is searched and retrieved.

Learning Management manages content for online courses, along with supplemental information such as student information and test scores. Many LM systems use SCORM (Sharable Content Objective Reference Model) standards that specify ways to catalogue, launch, and track course objects.

Product Information Management, sometimes called Product Data Management, handles content for online catalogues and e-commerce systems. The content includes product names, images, and descriptions, part numbers, quantities and corresponding prices, and perhaps language variants. Some PIM applications are connected to “configurators” that calculate the various ways that a product can be sold. For example, a piece of equipment might come with attachment A in blue or red, or two of attachment B, one each of red and blue or both red or both blue, and a slightly different price depending on the options chosen.

Records Management handles data that becomes aggregated into a record and can be sorted in various ways. For example, all the information that makes up personnel records would be handled in a records management system. Controlling access to these records is handled by rights management.

Customer Relationship Management is a variant on records management, handling information about customers to help companies better understand customer needs. CRM resembles knowledge management in that it uses CM technology with a view to supporting certain business goals.

When sorting through the various types of content management systems, an important consideration is determining the business needs, and then matching the system to those needs. Becoming familiar with the various types of CM can open up a world of possibilities. Some organizations use multiple content management systems, connecting the databases, in order to serve diverse business needs, while others go the ECM route to have a single system to fill the needs of multiple groups. There is no perfect system—and no perfect project—so the more familiar you become with the alphabet soup, the more prepared you’ll be to converse using the CM vocabulary. 

**About the author:** Rahel Anne Bailie operates Intentional Design Inc. ([www.intentionaldesign.ca](http://www.intentionaldesign.ca)), a Vancouver, BC, consultancy focused on content management, content development, and user experience

services. Bailie has many years as both line staff and management in technical communication and usability environments, and her perspectives, both about content use and staff management, are informed by her experience and studies. A self-identified geek, she is drawn to technology like a moth to flame, and works hard to stay current with the technical side of content management. Bailie is also a partner in Strategy A, a management consulting firm. You can reach her via e-mail at [rabailie@intentionaldesign.ca](mailto:rabailie@intentionaldesign.ca).





# Mark Your Calendars!

## Programs

Attend programs to discover the ideas and technologies that affect today's technical communicators.

**Location:** Calgary Technologies Inc.  
3553-31 Street NW, Calgary

**Day:** Third Thursday of the month.

**Time:** *Doors open at 6:30 p.m.*  
Program: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**Registration:** Register by e-mail ([registration@stc-alberta.org](mailto:registration@stc-alberta.org)).  
Sign up quickly as space is limited.

**Fee:**

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

## Workshops

Attend workshops to gain in-depth knowledge and skill through instruction and hands-on activities.

**Location:** Mount Royal College (Room O211)  
4825 Mount Royal Gate SW, Calgary  
*Please bring \$3.00 in change for weekend parking at Mount Royal College.*

**Time:** Scheduled Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

**Registration:** **Required.** Register at least 10 days prior to the workshop. Late Registration Fee: \$10.00.  
All registrants must pay in full by the Tuesday before the event. Cancellations must be received not later than five days before the workshop or the registrant will be billed for the fees.

**Fee\*:**

STC Alberta Members	\$50.00
Student Members	\$25.00
Other STC Members	\$75.00
Non-members	\$110.00

\*Includes lunch and two coffee breaks.

**Payment Options:** Cash, cheque, Visa, or MasterCard.  
Non-members must pay in advance by credit card.

This section is for Calgary events only. Edmonton members, see the Edmonton Events page.

## April

Wednesday 12 Administrative Meeting  
Thursday 20 TBA

## May

Thursday 18 Nancy Sequeira  
Content Tone

## June

Thursday 8 Annual General Meeting

## Administrative Meetings

All members of the Society are welcome to attend.

**Location:** Calgary Technologies Inc. (CTI)  
(a.k.a. Alastair Ross Technology Centre)  
3553-31 Street NW, Calgary

**Time:** Meeting: 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

# SuperScript

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*SuperScript* is the official newsletter of the Alberta Community of the Society for Technical Communication and is published 10 times annually, including double issues in July-August, and December-January.

**Submissions:** The Editors invite readers to submit articles, news, reviews, and other items of interest. Articles may be edited for size. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to *SuperScript* to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editors know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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**Advertising:** *SuperScript* accepts advertising of interest to our readership, and which furthers professional development. We reserve the right to limit or refuse advertising.

### Rates:

Full page	\$160.00	Quarter page	\$50.00
Half page	\$100.00	Business card	\$20.00

Volume discounts available.

For detailed information on sizes and formats, see [www.stc-alberta.org/Newsletter/newsletterAds.php](http://www.stc-alberta.org/Newsletter/newsletterAds.php).

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