



Super Script

Volume 13, Issue 5



Jobs, Or Lack Thereof

- Jonathan W. Baker, STC, Director-Sponsor Region 1

Over the years, I've asked and been asked, "Why doesn't STC do more for its members who need jobs?" To which the usual answer has been, "Well, we have chapter and Society job banks, plus chapters often put on resume writing programs, job search programs, and so on." And these are all true. STC provides, through the chapters and SIGs, places to network and to develop leadership skills. And people really do find jobs through STC. I'm certainly one who has.

But I think that this answer misses the point. So try this, "STC is an educational/professional organization. STC is not in the placement business." Still, that doesn't really answer the question either. I think that the real question is, "Can you help me find companies that will buy my services?" And the answer to that question is, probably not. But I am not sure I understand why not.

I talked at length with a recruiter once, when times were good, asking about how they found technical communications positions. In those days, it was easy. The jobs found them, like the jobs found many of us. After further poking and questioning, I did come to understand that most of the placement people had people on staff who did nothing but call into the companies asking if the company had

any opening. Basic cold calling stuff. Over time, the placement firms would develop contacts inside companies, who could provide them with meaningful information about any openings.

I was also informed that, because companies come and go so quickly in high tech, that the contact information gets stale quite quickly. In fact, the contact information could go stale in as little as three months. And remember that most placement firms are local, not national or international. If the local placement companies couldn't keep up even with full-time staff, imagine the difficulty of trying to do this at a national level.

Now, mix in the bad times and the downsizing of most HR departments. All those contacts disappear into the woodwork. People who could be counted on for good information about a company's hiring plans are gone and the company doesn't want to let on that it won't be hiring anyone in the foreseeable future. This scenario makes finding work doubly difficult.

So, now that I have framed the pain, let me ask, because I am trying to help, how can STC support you in your job searches? Do you need lists of local companies who might be potential customers? Would access to online business directories through STC's Web

site be of value? Do you need training that STC could provide, beyond the type a chapter might provide? Would skills development, like marketing and selling skills, help? Do you see some other ways in which STC can add value? Please let me, or any of the other D/Ss, know what we can do in this area that would add value.

You can contact Jonathan at jbaker2525@earthlink.net. 

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INSIDE SUPERSCRIPT

A Word from Our President

- Brian O'Malley, President

Well, now I really am. The President that is. After months of recruiting, begging, and other unseemly grovelling—without success—I agreed to stand for the position, and our Administrative Council graciously confirmed me at the November 18 meeting. I would also like to congratulate and welcome our new Vice President, Laurie Holtby, who was similarly confirmed at the meeting. Laurie is a long-time STC volunteer who found herself in need of a new "hat". Thank you, and welcome back to the team Laurie.

We have several more new faces at the table. Ruth Maryniuk has taken the position of Transformation Coordinator, and will lead the team through the process of creating a new STC Alberta logo, and revising the many documents that will be affected. If you have ideas for images, feelings, ideas, etc., that you would like the new logo to evoke, please contact Ruth immediately.

Please also join me in welcoming:


- Shauna Dobson, who is assuming the duties of Mentorship Coordinator from Kristie Sinclair whose busy young family needs her. Thank you for the great job Kristie!
- Nancy Kirby and Terry Myers, co-chairing the new position of Special Events/AGM Coordinator.
- Margaux Porth, serving as Registration and Hospitality Coordinator.

A few roles remain open (see contact list below or the Web site for information). We always have room for keen volunteers. We also need your ideas and your involvement.

In 2005, we will mark two important milestones: STC Alberta will celebrate its 25th anniversary, and our province will celebrate its centennial. We are seeking meaningful ways to celebrate both events, both as a professional community and as participants in our local communities. To begin, we are scaling up the AGM that will be held on June 4 at the Village Park Inn in Calgary. We have booked the travelling exhibit of international competition winners so you can see what the best-of-the best are delivering. In addition, we plan to present a keynote speaker to inform and entertain, so mark your calendars now!

Your executive would also like to hear your ideas for other ways to celebrate our 2005 milestones. Have a great project in mind that we could execute? Volunteer with another group that could use our expertise? See an opportunity in your community for us to make a difference? Tell us about it. While projects

related to technical communication are ideal, there are no limits on the proposals. Maybe something exciting in a related field, such as tutoring ESL students or helping adult learners with writing skills. We all have so much to share, and to learn while we're doing it. I hope to hear your ideas for engaging the STC community.

Finally, as this is the joint December-January issue of *SuperScript*, I want to extend my best wishes to all of you and your families for a safe, healthy, happy, and memorable holiday season. See you next year! 

STC Alberta will celebrate its 25th anniversary, and our province will celebrate its centennial.

STC Alberta Chapter Administrative Council 2004-2005

Executive	Events	Operations	Communications	Edmonton
President Brian O'Malley <i>president@stc-alberta.org</i>	Programs Linda Robson/Laura Swainson <i>program@stc-alberta.org</i>	Membership Micki Kosman <i>membership@stc-alberta.org</i>	Newsletter Jessie Channey, Team Lead Sandy Gough Deirdre O'Riain Lynda Baxter Rosemary Reed <i>newsletter@stc-alberta.org</i>	Liaisons Danita Haysom Nancy Slawski <i>edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org</i>
Vice President Laurie Holtby <i>v.president@stc-alberta.org</i>	Workshops Ken Schatzke <i>workshops@stc-alberta.org</i>	Mentorship Shauna Dobson <i>mentorship@stc-alberta.org</i>	Webmaster/Jobline Doug Waddell <i>webmaster@stc-alberta.org</i>	Programs Diane Laverty <i>edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org</i>
Treasurer Gary Ten-Hove <i>treasurer@stc-alberta.org</i>	Coffee Nights Vacant <i>coffeenights@stc-alberta.org</i>	Registration/Hospitality Margaux Porth <i>registration@stc-alberta.org</i>	Public Relations Nancy Sequeira, Team Lead Theresa Tremaine Natasha Menezes <i>publicrelations@stc-alberta.org</i>	Education
Secretary Allison Toms <i>secretary@stc-alberta.org</i>	New Heights Seminar Brian O'Malley <i>president@stc-alberta.org</i>	Archivist Dave Krebes <i>archivist@stc-alberta.org</i>	Mount Royal College Glenn Ruhl <i>mrc liaison@stc-alberta.org</i>	Grant MacEwan College Lucille Mazo <i>gmcliaison@stc-alberta.org</i>
Past President Ken Schatzke <i>pastpresident@stc-alberta.org</i>	Special Events/AGM Terry Myers Nancy Kirby <i>events@stc-alberta.org</i>		University of Calgary Tania Smith <i>uofcliaison@stc-alberta.org</i>	

Region 7 D-S Candidate: Rachel

- Rachel A. Jordan Houghton, Candidate

I have been actively involved in the Society since late 1997, before I became a member in 1998. At the regional level, I participated as a key member of the 2001 Region 7 committee, when the Willamette Valley Chapter hosted the 2001 Region 7 Conference. At the chapter level, I have held several offices:

- Chapter President (2003-2004)
- 1st Vice President (2002-2003)
- 2nd Vice President (2001-2002)
- Competition Manager (2001-2002)
- Competition Assistant Manager (2000-2001)
- Publicity Manager (1999-2000)

I received the Distinguished Chapter Service Award in the 1999-2000 program year, and was instrumental in submitting the chapter for several Excellence awards in the Public Relations competition and the Chapter Achievement Award.

I graduated from Portland State University with a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature and a minor in Professional Writing. I have been a technical writer since late 1996.

Job Experience

In my first job as a technical writer, I created my own position and duties as a lone writer. I initiated the use of online help with the company software, oversaw the addition of tutorials for the software product, and investigated trends and technologies for their usefulness to our documentation product. I was the primary editor and writer for all documentation from our department, and often was a copy editor for marketing materials such as application notes.


My most recent job has been working with process documentation in the context of Sarbanes Oxley. That led to my current position, within the same company, of writing a user's guide and troubleshooting manual for the primary system running a distribution center.

Volunteer Experience

I have always volunteered my editing services outside of the technical writing field, including two years as a copy editor for an online "e-zine" and currently as newsletter editor for a craft Web site.

Region 7 Campaign

To the role of Region 7 Director, I bring the knowledge and experience of working with the local chapter in several different roles. This experience has sharpened my job skills in dealing with difficult situations, working as a team member, and leading by example. My time and project management skills will allow me to juggle my work and STC responsibilities without letting either one slack. I love helping to shape ideas and seeing them through to fruition.

To contact Rachel, please visit www.rhoughton.com. 

Region 7 D-S Candidate: John

- John Hedtke, Candidate

John has served at all levels of the Society:

- Chapter President (1997-1998, 2002-2003)
- Emerging Technology SIG manager (1997-2001)
- Advisor on redesigning STC Press (1997-1998)
- STC Nominating Committee (2001-2003)



He speaks at STC chapter meetings and conferences throughout the world.

John became an Associate Fellow in 2001 and a Fellow in 2004.

Job Experience


Since 1983, John has written technical and non-technical documentation for all levels of readers, including 24 books, 100 magazine articles, and hundreds of manuals, help systems, white papers, brochures, and FAQs. John has also managed documentation departments with up to 24 staff and budgets of over \$1M while maintaining a 3% turnover rate. He's frequently been interviewed on radio and by Time, Computerworld, and many newspapers. (A list of books, articles, projects, presentations, and awards can be found at John's Web site, www.hedtke.com.)

John owns and operates a company that provides writing, consulting, and training services to private and government clients. His experiences running a successful business and finding new contracts give him an excellent understanding of the skills and attitudes technical communicators need to be successful in today's business climate.

Region 7 Campaign

"Our biggest challenge today is that technical communicators are losing jobs to layoffs, outsourcing, and closures. The STC can be of greater service by focusing more on the practical side of communication: helping technical communicators to get and retain jobs. To do this, we must increase the STC's visibility with employers through chapter-level job coordination such as job fairs and job banks and help members expand their skill sets through chapter programs and workshops."

We should always ask 'What am I getting for my STC dues?' I think we get a lot for our dues...but there's a lot that we can do that will make the STC even more valuable to technical communicators. As Region 7 Director, I'd like to set up newsletter and chapter speakers bureaus to provide chapters with more external resources, help develop chapter events such as Saturday seminars, workshops, and job fairs, and encourage greater corporate participation. These and other activities will provide more networking and skill-building opportunities for members and will enhance the STC's visibility as the premiere organization for technical communicators.

To contact John, please visit www.hedtke.com. 

Book Review: Career Comeback

- Jennifer Grant, STC Member

Career Comeback: 8 Steps to Getting Back on Your Feet When You're Fired, Laid Off, or Your Business Venture Has Failed—and Finding More Job Satisfaction Than Ever Before



Paperback: 336 pages, \$14.95 (list)
Publisher: Broadway Books; 1st edition (January 6, 2004)
ISBN: 0767915577
by Bradley G. Richardson

Career Comeback is a timely book, meant to capitalize on the dreary job market and high unemployment rate. Like all books of this type, Comeback does not contain a magic formula for instantly securing a new job. Instead, Comeback serves as a motivational pep talk to inject hope into the downtrodden reader.

Chapters 1–6 do not directly relate to job searching. The purpose of these chapters is to help the disheartened (and maybe cynical) job seeker to cope with a sudden situation change. Richardson is not apathetic to the plight of the unemployed. Because he was unemployed for 4 months, he can credibly discuss adjusting to a lower income, getting over vengeance and malice toward former employers, and evaluating important lessons learned at your expired job. Richardson is sensitive to the raging emotional storm within the terminated workers and makes an effort to address each negative emotion with a word of wisdom.

If you feel that you are beyond the initial shock, and you are concerned only with job search strategies, then go immediately to Chapter 7, "Find Your New Job." Again, this chapter does not offer any supernatural insight but does offer some good Web sites and resources. As you read the chapters, you will find that his information is mostly the same as the advice your family and friends offer, but his seems to come with more credibility, like a job counselor. In addition, Richardson mentioned a few tips that I hadn't heard before, so I feel like reading the book put me at an advantage.

My favorite aspect of the book is the collection of quotations that Richardson uses to illustrate his points. They serve as eloquent insights or as humorous spirit-lifters. I couldn't force back a giggle at Woody Allen's "Just because I'm not paranoid doesn't mean that they aren't out to get me."

The bottom line: If you're unemployed, why not give this book a try? You could probably find it at your local library. But don't have unrealistic expectations. This book won't change your life and probably won't be single-handedly responsible for finding you a new job. However, it serves its purpose as a book-length motivational speech, which might just lift your spirits and get you back full force in the job hunt again.

This article is copied with permission from www.stc-dfw.org.

Administrative Council Positions

Just One More To Go!

Many thanks for our recent volunteers who helped to fill many of our vacant positions. There's just one more vacancy to fill!

Coffee Nights Coordinator: Organize the Chapter's Tuesday coffee nights, network with others, share thoughts and ideas in a casual environment.

In most situations, the volunteer commitment for these positions is minimal while the benefits are numerous, including adding experience with a professional organization to your resume, meeting and networking with other technical communicators, and having a say in the Society at a local level. If you would like more information on any of these positions or would be interested in volunteering in other capacities, contact our new President at president@stc-alberta.org.

PUB NIGHT IN CALGARY

LOCATION:

BREWSTERS BREWING COMPANY AND
RESTAURANT (834-11 AVENUE
SW)

DAY AND TIME:

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2003
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M. (OR LATER)

REGISTRATION:

NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

FEE:

WHATEVER YOUR DRINKS COST YOU.
FREE PARKING.



EDMONTON

V

E

- Nancy Slawski, Edmonton Liaison

N

New Heights Seminar Success

Thank you to everyone, especially Brian O'Malley and Ginny Redish, for making the first Edmonton New Heights Seminar on usability such a success. Almost thirty participants with backgrounds in testing, technical writing, and development attended the full-day seminar. For pictures of the event, see [page 7](#).

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Upcoming Events

S

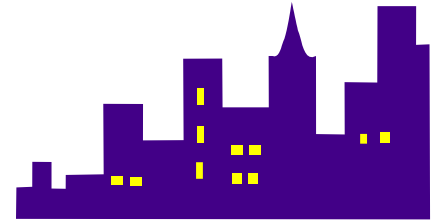
Christmas Party - Wednesday, December 8, 2004

By the time you're reading this, the last Edmonton event for 2004, our annual Christmas party, may have already have taken place. If you weren't able to make it, we hope that we'll see you in the new year at one of our upcoming events. Keep watching this section of *SuperScript* for all of the details.

If you have any suggestions for upcoming events, please forward them to: edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org.

Happy Holidays

Your Edmonton Liaisons and Program Coordinator would like to wish everyone a very happy holiday season. See you in 2005! 



Mentorship Update

- Shauna Dobson, Mentorship Coordinator

I am pleased to announce that I have taken over the position of mentorship coordinator from Kristie Sinclair. I chose to volunteer as the new mentorship coordinator because I believe the mentorship program is an excellent way to grow, and add recognition to the technical communication industry, while helping our fellow technical writers.

I'd like to continue building on the success of the mentorship program by asking for new volunteers. Sharing your experience and knowledge is an excellent and easy way to help out new and transitioning writers. Application forms are under the Mentorship section of the Alberta STC Web site at www.stc-alberta.org.

I'm looking forward to continuing Kristie's diligent work on the mentorship program, as well as adding some fresh, new ideas.

The Mentorship Program Needs YOU!

The program is looking for both mentors and protégés to band together and make this year the most successful year ever.

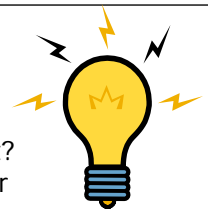
The mentorship relationship can range from a single telephone or e-mail conversation, to a day of job shadowing, to ongoing support and advice.

This is an excellent program that aims to enhance current skill sets as well as broaden networks.

Go online to www.stc-alberta.org and apply today! 

Got a Great Workshop Idea?

Are you an expert in a particular subject? Think you'd be interested in sharing your expertise with fellow STC members at a four-hour workshop? Know someone who might be?



Contact the Workshops Coordinator, at workshops@stc-alberta.org with your workshop ideas.

January Workshop: Cascading Style Sheets

- Ken Schatzke, Past President and Workshops Coordinator

STC Alberta will hold its first workshop of 2005 in January on Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).

CSS is a World Wide Web Consortium recommendation for adding style to Web documents. It is a simple, but powerful and effective, method to help you separate content from layout. Web pages and help systems developed using CSS can use less disk space, load faster, and have easier navigation than those developed using traditional formatting methods.

This one-day workshop will introduce you to CSS and give you the information you need to improve the delivery of your Web pages and help systems.

Topics covered will include:

- What is CSS and why use it?
- CSS fundamentals
- CSS1 and CSS2
- Box formatting and inline formatting
- HTML tables: the good, the bad, and the ugly
- The "cascade" in CSS
- Browser support for CSS
- Common browser bugs affecting layout, and ways to work around them
- Replacing common JavaScript functions with CSS alternatives
- CSS in help systems
- How and why to validate HTML and CSS
- Alternate style sheets for on-screen display and print
- CSS resources
- A gallery of some stunning CSS techniques

Prerequisites

Workshop participants should know basic HTML. You do not need to be an expert, but you will be expected to know common HTML elements like <head>, <h1>, and <p>.

Instructor


Ian Hawkins is a senior member of the STC, and has been president, treasurer, and webmaster for the Alberta Chapter. He is principal of Sundorne Communications (www.sundorne.com) and works as a technical writer, Web developer, and programmer. His Web development projects focus on making sites that are clearly aimed at the needs of the visitors, while being efficient to maintain.

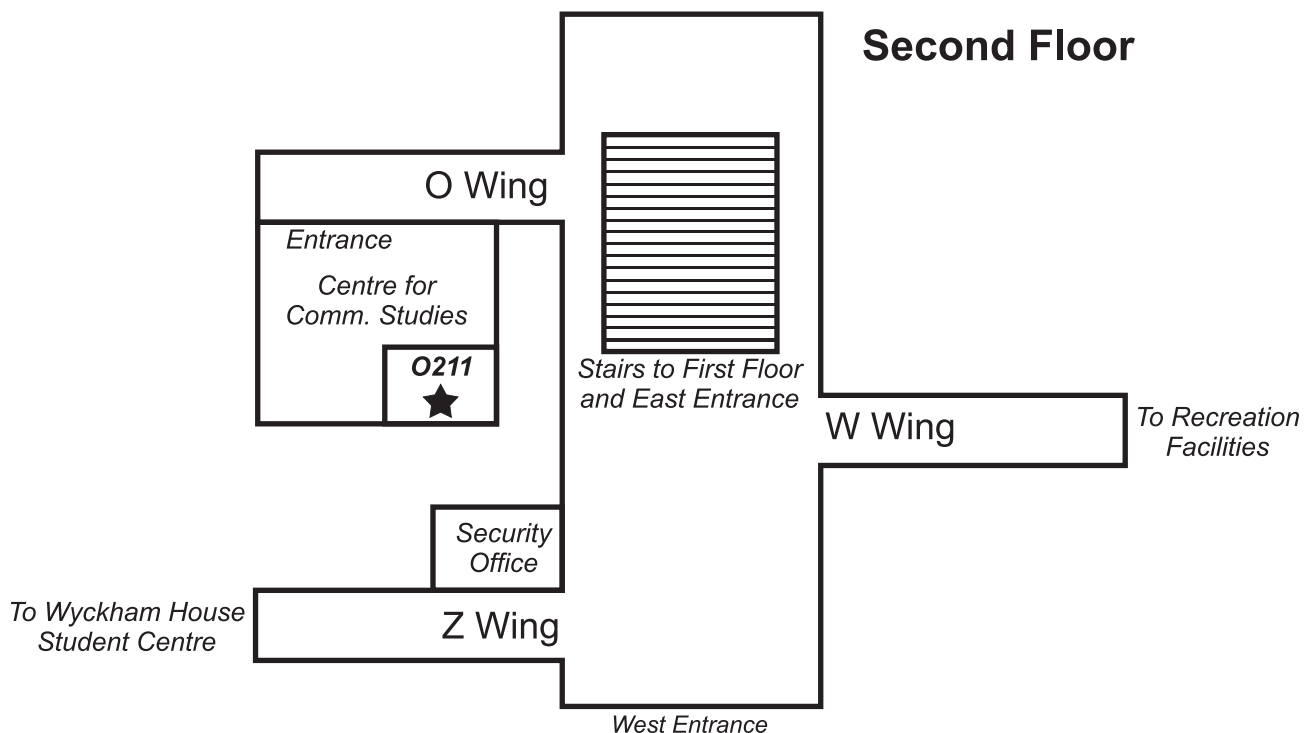
Day, Time, and Location

The workshop will be held on Saturday, January 29, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It will be in room O211 of Mount Royal College (4825 Mount Royal Gate SW, Calgary). Please see the map below for directions to the room.

Fee and Registration

The fee for the workshop is \$50 for members, \$25 for student members, and \$110 for non-members. Lunch and two coffee breaks will be provided.

Please register at least one week before the event by completing our online form at www.stc-alberta.org/Calendar/registration.php. 



New Heights Seminar with Ginny Redish

- Brian O'Malley, President

Building Usability into Your Documentation, Interfaces, and Web Sites

On November 12 in Calgary and November 13 in Edmonton, a total of 70 STC members and non-members attended the New Heights Seminars. The sold-out events were a great success in both cities.



Ginny (on the right) provides feedback on persona research.

Information in hand, the team crafts their user persona.



Teams gather information to create user personas.

EAC Gathering Books for Donation

- Lori Burwash, Editors' Association of Canada

Join members and friends of the Editors' Association of Canada, the Writers Guild of Alberta and The Writers' Union of Canada to share in some holiday cheer!

Tuesday, December 7
7:00 to 10:00 p.m.
Bottlescrew Bill's
140-10 Avenue SW

In the spirit of the season and of our occupations, we will happily accept donations of (unwrapped) children's books, to be donated to the Alberta Children's Hospital. ACH would particularly appreciate black-and-white concept books for babies, craft books and "distraction" books (used during treatments) such as I Spy and Where's Waldo. Books can be for babies to 18-year-olds. ACH will also happily take gently used books, which are used in waiting rooms.

RSVP to eac-calgary@nucleus.com by December 2. 

Membership News

- Micki Kosman, Membership Coordinator



As of October 31, 2004, the Alberta Chapter had 209 members. In October, we gained two new members, reinstated one member, and had one member transfer from another chapter. One member transferred out of the chapter.

New Members

- Julie J.S. Alati-it, Student Member, Calgary
- Alan Tong, Member, Calgary

Reinstated Member

- Lori J. Barclay, Member

Transferred Members

- Jocelyne Pigeon, Senior Member, Transfer to Eastern Ontario Chapter
- John M. Ostrander, Member, Transfer from Eastern Ontario Chapter

Welcome to Our New Members!

Reminder

STC Membership Dues Renewal

Annual STC membership fees are due on February 28, 2005. You have the option of mailing in your dues renewal invoice or renewing online. Renewing online is easy and enables you to pay by credit card on STC's secure Web site.

The Web form asks you for your postal code and membership number. You can find your membership number on the address label of your *Intercom* magazine. It is also the invoice number of your dues renewal invoice. Renew online today at <https://www.stc.org/onlinerenewal/stcLogin.aspx>. (Note: You will need to log in.)

Update Your Contact Information

Keeping your STC member information (including your mailing and e-mail addresses) current ensures that you don't miss out on STC publications and announcements.

STC International

Member information can be updated online on the Society Web site at www.stc.org/formAddressChange.asp. (Note: You will need to log in.)

STC Alberta

To update your information for STC Alberta, send an e-mail to our Membership Coordinator at membership@stc-alberta.org.





Mark Your Calendars!

Programs and Administrative Meetings

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

Location: McDougall Centre
455-6 Street SW, Calgary

Time: Third Thursday of the month
Meeting: 5:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.
Program: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Registration for the program begins at 7:00 p.m.

Registration: **Required.** Registration is required to attend the program. Register by the Monday prior to the program.

Fee: Members \$5.00
Student Members Free
Non-members 10.00
The fee is for the program portion only.

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: **Required.** Register at least 10 days prior to the workshop. Late Registration Fee: One week before event the fees increase by \$10.00. Registration must be cancelled five days in advance of the workshop or the registrant will be billed for workshop fees.

Fee*: Members \$50.00
Student Members 25.00
Non-members 110.00
*Includes lunch and two coffee breaks.

Coffee Nights

Attend coffee nights to meet with your fellow technical communicators and discuss a monthly topic in a casual setting.

Location: Annie's Books (Literary Salon)
912-16 Avenue NW, Calgary
Parking is available behind Tim Hortons.

Time: Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Registration: Not required.

Fee: Free for both members and non-members.

December

Wednesday, 8 Christmas Social, Edmonton (see [page 5](#))

Thursday, 9 Administrative Meeting

Tuesday, 14 Coffee Night, Calgary



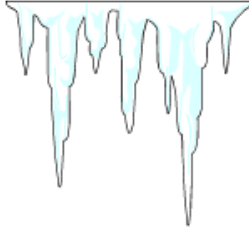
January

Thursday, 13 Administrative Meeting

Tuesday, 18 Coffee Night, Calgary

Thursday, 20 Annual Pub Night, Calgary (see [page 4](#))

Saturday, 29 Workshop, Calgary (see [page 6](#))



Join Us on Coffee Night



You are invited to the Calgary Coffee Night held on the third Tuesday of every month. Join us for some stimulating conversation with fellow technical communicators at the next coffee night on December 14. The coffee is on us! No registration is necessary and non-members are always welcome.

To register...

...for programs and workshops, use our online registration form at www.stc-alberta.org/Calendar/registration.php.

Note: Due to security policies at McDougall Centre, advance online registration is required for Administrative Meetings and Thursday programs.

SuperScript

Contact the Editors:
Jessie Channey, Team Lead
Sandy Gough
Deirdre O'Riain
Lynda Baxter
Rosemary Reed
newsletter@stc-alberta.org

SuperScript is the official newsletter of the Alberta Chapter 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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Distribution: *SuperScript* is distributed to members in Alberta and the Northwest Territories, to all Canadian Chapters, Region 7 Chapters of STC, and to interested companies and individuals upon request. Circulation is 230.

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	

For detailed information on sizes and formats, see www.stc-alberta.org/Newsletter/newsletterAds.php.

To place an advertisement, contact the Editors.