



Super Script

Volume 14, Issue 5



Get Off the Mountain and Start "Visualizing Information"

- Nicole Nowak, STC Student Member

One morning, exactly at sunrise, a Buddhist monk began to climb a tall mountain. The narrow path, no more than a foot or two wide, spiralled around the mountain to a glittering temple at the summit.

The monk ascended the path at varying rates of speed, stopping many times along the way to rest and to eat the dried fruit he carried with him. He reached the temple shortly before sunset.

After several days of fasting and meditation, he began the journey back along the same path, starting at sunrise again walking at variable speeds with many pauses along the way. His average speed descending was, of course, greater than his average climbing speed.

Prove that there is a single spot along the path the monk will occupy on both trips at precisely the same time of the day.

This was the first exercise that Dr. William Gribbons asked the group attending the New Heights seminar to solve. The seminar, "Visualizing Information", was held November 5, 2005, at the Best Western Village Park Inn. The task seemed daunting, but with a guide like Dr. Gribbons, the Director of the Human Factors and Information Design program at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, the solution was accessible. His simple advice: Get off


the mountain and choose the information that is relevant to the problem.

Dr. Gribbons provided an effective seminar through an informative lecture and various exercises that gave the attendees the ability to "exploit the perceptual power of the visual display". He emphasized the power of visuals to "motivate" and "to reduce the cognitive burden" on the viewer. His examples of how successful visual information can communicate important information included high-profile court cases and historical graphs from William Playfair.

Throughout the day, Dr. Gribbons emphasized the power of useful visuals and the need for the integration of text and visuals for strong and effective communication. He gave the group exercises such as "How to jump start your car", which asked them to provide a list of instructions in a very limited amount of time. These exercises reinforced the idea that there are situations that require well-presented visuals to communicate the information.

Another important idea brought up by Dr. Gribbons is how important it is to use the correct visual with the information. For example, raw data that is translated into a visual structure must occupy a relevant form to be effective; some data will work better in a linear form such as a flow chart and some will be more appropriate for a matrix such as a table. It is up to the communicator to make sure the correct choice is made

and the information is interacting with the viewer in the intended manner.

Dr. Gribbons concluded the seminar with a discussion about the goals of visualization, which include discovery, decision making, explanation, and connections. This discussion offered a reflection on the group's experiences during the seminar's exercises and the use of visuals in their professions. After attending this seminar, many of the attendees seemed to have a different outlook on how and when to use visuals. 

See Pages 4 and 5 for seminar photos and a solution to the "monk on the mountain" question.

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INSIDE SUPERScript

A Word From Our President

- Ruth Maryniuk, President

It's hard to believe that 2005 is almost over. This was a noteworthy year for STC Alberta as well as for our province. As an STC organization, we have accomplished so much in the last 25 years. At the end of this term, we will be sealing our 2005 Time Capsule until 2030. I would like to send out a last reminder to all members to please feel free to send in your contributions. All members of the Executive will be including letters to their 2030 counterparts, and I hope that you as members will do so as well. If you have something that you would like to contribute, please send me an e-mail at president@stc-alberta.org. I am sure that STC members in 2030 will appreciate our words and mementos.

Looking back to September, it appears, too, that this year's STC Executive has accomplished so much. In September, we held our 25th Anniversary Celebrations, both in Calgary and in Edmonton. In October, our members attended a Mount Royal-sponsored presentation by David Sless, followed up in November with our New Heights Annual Conference, which brought Dr. Bill Gribbons to Calgary and Edmonton. We have held one Webinar and one monthly program, which were both well-attended. Milena Radzikowska from MRC provided us with a tremendous amount of information for creating portfolios. Thank you, Milena.

If you didn't make it to any of these events, let me assure you that you missed out!

You have one more chance to take in a program this year. Please watch your e-mail for announcements for the Webinar in early December.

In 2006, we will start the new year off with our annual Pub Night. As always, this is the perfect venue to meet fellow STC members, network, and meet new friends. I hope you make it a point to attend. Please check the Web site for the date, time,

and location. We will be sending out reminders to everyone, and there is no need to RSVP.

In the meantime, I'm looking forward to the holiday season. I hope to spend some time relaxing and taking a break from the everyday stresses of work, spend some time with family, and most of all, spend some quality "me" time.

We will be sealing our 2005 Time Capsule.... STC members in 2030 will appreciate our words and mementos.

And as in every other year, I will be making some

New Year's resolutions. One of my resolutions for the coming year—I resolve to learn something new at least every month. According to a survey done by one Web site, one of the top ten resolutions is to "learn something new". Learning is one of the easiest, most motivating New Year's resolutions to keep. I hope you plan to add this as one of your New Year's resolutions, as well. As a member of STC Alberta, you have many opportunities to learn—some as simple as attending one of our programs or Webinars. Challenge your mind in the coming year, and your horizons will expand. I hope to see you at one of our next programs in 2006.

I must say a special thank you to the Executive Council members, who all helped make these programs and events possible. Without volunteers, we would not be able to provide these learning opportunities for our members.

I would like to wish you all a very happy and joyous holiday season. I hope 2006 brings you health, happiness, and prosperity.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



STC Alberta Community Administrative Council 2004-2005

Executive

President

Ruth Maryniuk
president@stc-alberta.org

Vice President

Vacant
v.president@stc-alberta.org

Treasurer

Nancy Kirby
treasurer@stc-alberta.org

Secretary

Vacant
secretary@stc-alberta.org

Past President

Brian O'Malley
pastpresident@stc-alberta.org

Events

Programs

Linda Robson
program@stc-alberta.org

Workshops

Vacant
workshops@stc-alberta.org

Webinars

Laurie Holtby
webinar@stc-alberta.org

New Heights Seminar

Ken Schatzke
president@stc-alberta.org

Special Events/AGM

Nancy Kirby
events@stc-alberta.org

Operations

Membership

Lucille Worone
membership@stc-alberta.org

Mentorship

Vacant
mentorship@stc-alberta.org

Registration/Hospitality

Margaux Porth
registration@stc-alberta.org

Archivist

Dave Krebes
archivist@stc-alberta.org

Communications

Newsletter

Kate Christie
Deirdre O'Riain
Rosemary Reed
newsletter@stc-alberta.org

Webmaster

Terry Myers
webmaster@stc-alberta.org

Jobline

Ian Hawkins
jobline@stc-alberta.org

Public Relations

Natashia Menezes
publicrelations@stc-alberta.org

Edmonton

Liaison

Rick Paisley
edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org

Programs

Diane Laverty
edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org

Education

Mount Royal College

Glenn Ruhl
mrcliaison@stc-alberta.org

Grant MacEwan College

Lucille Mazo
gmcliaison@stc-alberta.org

University of Calgary

Vacant
uofcliaison@stc-alberta.org

STC Alberta's Redesigned Scholarship Program

- Brian O'Malley, Associate Fellow

STC Alberta has a proud record of supporting student education and training in technical communication. Many of our members may not be aware of how the scholarship programs came about, and so in this article I provide a little history. I am also happy to report that we have completed a major redesign of our scholarship program, so read on for the news!

Program Past

We created the STC Alberta Awards in 1997 for what was then the relatively new degree program at Mount Royal College in Calgary. There are four awards. Each is a free student membership in STC for the full-time student in each year of the program who attains the highest GPA in the fall term. In recognition of that action and many others, in 1998 Alberta received the Chapter Pacesetter Award from the Society for "significant contributions to the development of the Technical Communication four-year degree program at Mount Royal College". It appeared we were on the right track!

In 1998, we decided to expand our support through creation of the STC Alberta Scholarship, for a student in the second year of the program. We voted to donate \$3,000.00 to create an endowment fund to operate the scholarship, and successfully applied for \$3,000.00 in matching funds from the Society. (That matching-fund program no longer exists.) The first scholarship was awarded in February 1999. The award criteria combine academic achievement, financial need, and demonstrated leadership qualities.

For many years, STC Alberta provided small thank-you gifts to volunteers at the AGM. In 2001, the Council revisited this practice. Our volunteers made it very clear that they did not contribute their time to obtain thank-you gifts, and generously voted to redirect funds toward increasing the endowment of the scholarship at MRC, and set an annual contribution of \$1,000.00. That endowment now amounts to almost \$10,000.00. Only net investment returns, not the principal, are used to pay the scholarship, and so the endowment generates an annual award that varies, but is always less than \$500.00.

In 2004, Council voted to create comparable STC Alberta Awards for the Bachelor of Applied Communication – Professional Writing program at MacEwan College in Edmonton. The first awards were presented, amid fanfare and excitement, at a celebration in February 2005. (See the [February and March](#) issues for lists and pictures of the most recent winners.) That takes us to the program present.


Program Future

It is my pleasure to announce that Council has voted unanimously to expand STC Alberta's scholarship program with creation of the STC Alberta Scholarship for the second year of the MacEwan College program. And, we managed to do it without increasing our annual cash contribution to the overall program, which remains at \$1,000. Here is the new structure:

- The new annual scholarship at MacEwan College uses the same criteria as the MRC award, and is valued at \$500.00.

We will pay this amount annually rather than endowing the scholarship. The first award will be presented in early 2006.

- The scholarship at MRC is now set to a fixed value of \$500.00 instead of fluctuating with investment returns. Each year, STC Alberta will "top up" any funds required to make the award \$500.00.
- Any funds remaining from our annual \$1,000 commitment to promoting technical communication education and scholarship will be directed to the scholarship endowment at MRC.

I want to thank our members for supporting STC Alberta's scholarship programs. They are an important tool to help develop our profession in Canada, with a variety of positive spin-offs for all members. Our STC community is a leader in this area, and our members can be proud of our achievements. 

Membership News

-Lucille Worone, Membership Coordinator

The Alberta Community now has 221 members.



New Members

Robert Gray, Calgary

Danielle Kiss, Calgary

Vanessa Michaud, Student Member, Edmonton

Alana Mikkelsen, Houston

Transferring

Kelly Deley transferred from the Toronto community

The Alberta STC Community welcomes our new and transferring members, and looks forward to meeting them personally at upcoming events.

2006 Membership Renewal

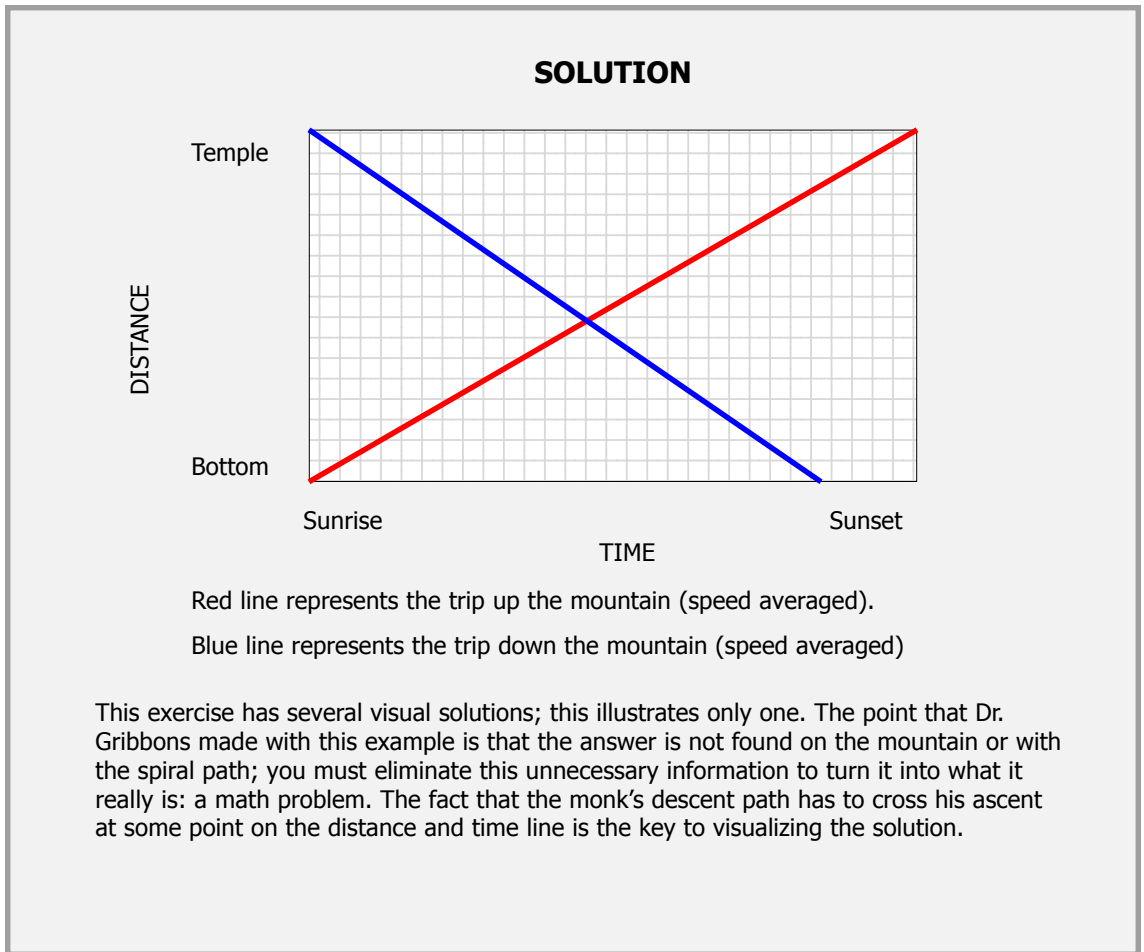
The 2006 Annual Dues notices were recently distributed by e-mail. To renew on line, please go to <http://www.stc.org/duesrenewal/>

Renewing on line is fast and easy—all you'll need is your membership number, password, and credit card. If you've forgotten your password, go to www.stc.org and select "password reminder".

If you prefer to renew by mail, renewal packages will be mailed in December.

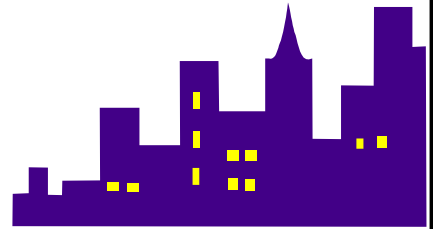


Far right, Dr. Gribbons,
right, Ken Schatzke,
unidentified, Dr.
Gribbons; below, Tim
Klassen, Kathy Legg.



EDMONTON

VENTS



- Rick Paisley, Edmonton Liaison

In early November, Dr. William Gribbons presented "Visualizing Information", this year's New Heights seminar. It was an excellent way to spend a Saturday. Dr. Gribbons' engaging presentation made the day speed by. If you ever have an opportunity to attend a presentation by Dr. Gribbons, I suggest you do. Well worth it.


The STC Edmonton Christmas Social is scheduled for December 1st at "Death by Chocolate". With any luck, none of us will have overindulged to the point of expiration.

Merry Christmas to all from us STC members up, waaaaaay up (no, not that far), in Edmonton. Happiest of holidays. Oh, and a wee bit more turkey, please.

As always, if you have any questions about the events, or have any suggestions, please send us a note at edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org or edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org.

For further details or to contribute your expertise to this or other Edmonton events, contact Diane Laverty at edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org.



If you do not receive the e-mailed program details and updates from Diane, please e-mail her and she'll update the distribution list. 


STC Web Seminars

Thank you to Wind River and Schlumberger for hosting the November 9th and December 7th telephone/Web seminars in Calgary. The seminars are a low-cost way to keep informed of current trends in technical communication.

We are always looking for new hosts for the seminars in Calgary, Edmonton, or elsewhere. If you would like to host or attend a seminar of interest to you, visit the Web Seminars page on our Web site, or watch for announcements on our e-mail list.

Laurie Holtby, Web seminars coordinator

webinar@stc-alberta.org

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<p>. . . filling information gaps</p>	<p>www.techlet.ca (403) 605-4019</p>





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

Time: Third Thursday of the month.
Registration for the program begins at 6:30 p.m.
Program: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Registration: Registration is **required** to attend the program. Register by completing the form on the registration page. 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.

December

No further meetings, programs, or events are scheduled.

January

January 12 Administrative meeting

January 19 Pub Night

February

February 16 Lee Easton
Instructional Multimedia

March

March 16 Trina Rodas-Reyes
Editing is Not Evil!



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.



Contact the Editors:

Kate Christie
Deirdre O'Riain
Rosemary Reed

newsletter@stc-alberta.org

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Half page	\$100.00	Business card	\$20.00

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

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