

SuperScript



Putting Theory into Practice: Portfolio Design for the Communications Professional

- Ken d'Albenas, STC member

Do you ever grind your teeth trying to keep your résumé under the two-page limit? Do you ever wish it could just say everything you want it to say, and with pictures and samples too, page limits be darned?

Then Milena Radzikowska has a solution for you: do both.

And the second one shall be called a portfolio.

For our November program, the Mount Royal College instructor in Electronic Publishing presented a "Coles Notes" of portfolio tips for technical writers. In a content-rich, two-and-a-half-hour presentation, she covered the who, what, why, when, where, and how of portfolios. The audience ranged from people who said they had nothing they could put in a portfolio to people wanting to update their portfolios and get new ideas. Milena had much for everyone.

If you're not a recent Mount Royal College student or graduate, and you thought the subject of portfolios had died a quick death in the mid-'90s, well, it didn't. It's part of the curriculum at MRC. So if you don't have a portfolio and don't plan to start one, then at least prepare an answer in case an interviewer or potential customer asks to see it.

Milena advises everyone to have a portfolio—even nurses, teachers, engineers—in short, anyone who looks for work. Here's why.

Imagine yourself at the opening of an art exhibition. Everyone there has a reason for being there, but not all have the same reasons. There are reviewers. There are socialites. There are true art cognoscenti. Milena said nearly everyone comes from one of these two contexts: "sushi and socializers" who dabble and sample the artwork while part of their mind is elsewhere, and "concentrators" who stand in front of a single piece and soak it up. The smart exhibitor has something for them all, because they're all going to leave with an impression of some kind.

Likewise, Milena said emphatically, a portfolio has to offer something for people who look at it from either of these contexts!

Let's assume now that you do have a portfolio, or are at least warming up to the idea. Do you have to make like an artist and haul around a big leather portfolio? Do you have to hand out a CD at every interview? Are there trends and fashions in portfolios, and if so, what are they?

Milena advises people to first meditate on this definition of a portfolio:

"A collection of your work that is purposeful, not random."

You start with all your "stuff", drop everything except the highlights and the connections, and turn what's left into "something that *someone else* can interact with at some level. Something that allows opportunity for personal reflection. And discussion."

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A Word From Our President

- Ruth Maryniuk, President

Happy New Year, STCers! Welcome 2006.

STC Alberta's many volunteers, both past and present, have worked very hard to help make STC Alberta the success that it is today. I would like to thank all the members who have contributed to growing this chapter and invested their time in a worthwhile cause.

This year, we have many dedicated individuals who have worked unselfishly to set up the programs, events, and workshops that we have sponsored. We often don't realize how much work goes into the events that we attend. The speaker has been booked and announcements sent out. Come the day of the program, the doors are open, the receipts ready, and the refreshments waiting. No, it's not magic. It's because we have a team of volunteers willing to devote their time so that, as members, we can take part in an educational and informative program, network with fellow STCers, and enjoy the benefits of our membership. I would like to say a special thank you to this year's volunteers, who have worked to set up the New Heights seminar, programs, and Webinars, and to all the other volunteers who indirectly supported these events. Without your enthusiasm, we would not have been able to reap the rewards of attending these events.

I would like to welcome some new volunteers to our executive. **Carol Mumey**, who has moved here from the USA, has taken on the position of Secretary. **Jeanne Gonnason**, a long-time member, will be coordinating the competitions for 2006-07, and **Sherry Willetts** has taken on Mentorship. **Paula Tannahill**, who has recently graduated from the MRC Technical Writing program, will be coordinating our Public Relations along with **Natashia Menezes**. They have already done a terrific job reworking our PR brochures. I would also like to extend a special thank you to **Kate Christie** for stepping up to the *SuperScript* Editor's position. She joined the team last spring


and has recently agreed to act as Editor for the remaining year. On a sad note, our archivist, **Dave Krebs** has resigned. Thank you, Dave, for your past work and we wish you well in your future.

I hope that I can encourage you to think about volunteering a little of your time. The benefits are enormous. It helps your interpersonal skills, such as understanding people better, motivating others, and dealing with difficult situations. It is

an opportunity to acquire job-related skills and improve job opportunities. You will gain knowledge, communication skills, and other skills that you can apply directly to your job.

If you would like to volunteer a little or a lot of your time, we may have the position for you. Currently, we are in need of some volunteers to help to set up the Annual General Meeting which is scheduled for Thursday, June 8. Please watch for announcements in the next *SuperScript*. We are also looking for volunteers to fill the few vacant positions on the Executive: Vice President, Archivist, and Volunteers Coordinator. We will also be recruiting for new volunteers to fill positions on the 2006-07 Executive. So, if you are interested in any of the vacant positions or next year's Executive positions, please contact me at president@stc-alberta.org for more details.

Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others.

Danny Thomas, (1914-1991). Comedian, actor, and supporter of St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. 

STC Alberta Community Administrative Council 2005-2006

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Programs for 2006

The STC Alberta is pleased to offer programs about instructional multimedia, editing, the importance of handouts, and improving your content tone.

On February 16, **Lee Easton** will present **"Teaching Multimedia to Play: What Popular Culture Can Teach Us About Digital Learning"**. This presentation looks at the burgeoning field of video games as well as other forms of popular culture (comic books, online games) to see what lessons we can draw from their experience and practices. What can the technical writer learn from video game design? What can comic books teach about the relationship between text and image? How do we incorporate these lessons into our own practice? These are some of the questions that this presentation will explore. Lee Easton received his Ph.D. in curriculum from the University of Toronto in 2002. He is an instructor at Mount Royal College in the Department of English and the Centre for Communication Studies, where he teaches courses in multimedia design and communication theory. Dr. Easton's current research focuses on the intersection of media, representation, and

On March 16, **Trina Rodes-Reyes** will present **"Editing is Not Evil"**. Trina developed this program and delivered it to a group at EnCana Corporation. It is meant to guide editors, and those who have their work edited, through a positive experience of editing rather than seeing it as criticism. Trina has been a writer and editor for more than two decades. She started her writing career as a staff writer on a small tourist paper in Hawaii in 1982. Over the years, she has worked in many industries including newspaper, radio, television, software, military, and oil and gas, doing all kinds of writing from radio commercials to multi-million-dollar bids for new business. For the past eight years, she has worked as a consultant, primarily as a technical writer and quality control editor.

On April 20, **Kathy Legg** will present **"Handouts Make a Difference"**. Handouts are an integral part of your seminar and should not be a last-minute mouse-click as you race to the conference room. This program looks at handouts as a valuable, informative, and professional resource for your audience, providing a positive reminder of you and your idea. Kathy Legg is the president of LittleBrownMouse.Com and a senior member of the STC. She has more than 20 years' experience in the technical writing, computer, and training industries. An avid public speaker, Kathy has made an art of creating professional seminar and training material, targeting a wide variety of audiences.

On May 18, **Nancy Sequeira** will present **"Content Tone"**. This presentation is based on an original session on Content Tone given by Anne Taussig at last year's STC International Conference in Seattle. It defines content tone and how it is achieved in technical writing. Nancy will explore Microsoft's writing samples and survey results to reveal how content tone may affect documentation and 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 the Calgary Technologies Inc. (Alastair Ross Building), 3553-31 Street NW, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. To register for programs, e-mail registration@stc-alberta.org. For more information about programs, e-mail program@stc-alberta.org or check programs on the STC Web site at www.stc-alberta.org.

Choosing a Corporate Font

- Kate Christie, SuperScript Editor

Organizations and their employees often have strong feelings about the fonts used in their communications. There can also be a bewildering array of fonts used within one organization, according to individual preference and the nature of the communication. This was the case at the small petroleum industry organization where I began working as the lone technical writer eight months ago.

As I began writing and editing some of the organization's documents, I soon realized how disjointed our communications appeared. We desperately needed to choose a corporate font for our communications and to use it consistently. Fortunately, the executive director agreed with me, and we undertook the exercise of choosing the best font for our needs.

How did we approach this decision? In a series of staff meetings, we

began by thinking about our communication vehicles and our audiences. The organization produced many different types of communication materials, including standard business letters and memos, as well as newsletters, Web pages, promotional and safety materials, minutes, and formal reports. Our audiences also included a broad range of people—from highly educated safety professionals to rig hands with much less formal education.

After taking these elements into consideration, we decided that accessibility, corporate branding, and readability were our most important goals in selecting a corporate font. Our audiences had to be able to easily access our font electronically, identify a particular font with our corporate image, and read what we had written in that font.

Accessibility

First of all, our font choice had to be one that was electronically available to our audiences because many (if not the majority) of our communications are viewed as electronic documents (e.g., e-mailed documents, electronic newsletters, presentations, Web pages).

Therefore, we wanted to avoid using fonts that entailed any licensing or technical issues. Otherwise, if our audiences did not have our chosen font installed on their computers, they would not be able to view any of our electronic materials in the desired format. Instead, an unknown font would be substituted.

As a result, we decided it would be best to select from the standard TrueType fonts—those installed with Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office. Research indicated that the most commonly available TrueType fonts are Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana, and Georgia.

Branding

After narrowing our choices to the most accessible fonts, we thought about corporate branding. What kind of visual identity did we want to project with our font? We recognized that the right font would create a powerful message to express the image and values of our organization.

We considered the two broad categories of font—serif and sans serif—each one with its own personality.

Serif fonts are those that have little “feet” (finishing strokes) extending from the ends of a character. They are considered to have a traditional, serious, scholarly, corporate, or business-like appearance. The TrueType serif fonts installed on most computers are Times New Roman and Georgia.

Sans serif fonts are simply those “without feet.” They are thought to have a modern, clean, or understated personality. The TrueType sans serif fonts installed on most computers are Arial and Verdana.

Once we chose a font that projected our desired corporate image, we concluded that it would be best to use that same font across *all* our communications—both print and online. Using a different font for different types of communications could create a confusing corporate image, and could work against corporate branding and identification.

Readability

To make the best font selection for our communications, we also had to be aware of the readability of each font in *all* our communications—whether for print or screen.

Typically, in traditional print materials, serif fonts have been used for body text because the serifs (i.e., feet) are considered helpful in guiding the eye along the line. However, serif fonts are not the best choice for presentations, Web pages, and on-screen reading. Some of the thinner strokes often break up or disappear in these media, especially at small sizes. Therefore, many people now prefer sans serif fonts for on-screen materials because they are easier to read.

Moreover, current research shows that readers of all ages generally prefer to read materials of any kind in a sans serif font (e.g., Arial and Verdana), rather than a serif font (e.g., Times New Roman and Georgia). This is a change from past decades when serif fonts were considered more readable.

The most accessible sans serif fonts are the following TrueType fonts: Arial and Verdana. These fonts are available on all computers with a Windows 95 or later operating system installed.

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We desperately needed to choose a corporate font ... and to use it consistently.

Choosing a Corporate Font

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Arial is the older of the two fonts, originating in the days of electronic typewriters. Verdana, which has a larger x-height than Arial, was designed specifically for reading on computer monitors. Of these two fonts, studies have shown that Verdana is considered more readable than Arial, particularly in font sizes below 12 points.

To confirm these findings, we conducted a short readability survey with all staff members. The survey results indicated that the majority of staff found sans serif fonts more readable than serif fonts. The majority also considered Verdana more readable than Arial.

In the end, we decided that Verdana was the best overall font choice for all our communications. Not only was it readily available on the computers of most onscreen readers, research indicated it was generally the most preferred and most readable font. It also projected a clean, modern, and accessible corporate personality—one which presented a positive image for our organization. 



Editors' Association of Canada Workshop

Introduction to Proofreading

Date: Tuesday, February 21
Time: 9.00 a.m. to noon
Location: Mount Royal College, Room Y316
Fee: EAC Members: \$60 (+ GST) = \$ 64.20
Non EAC Members: \$80 (+ GST) = \$ 85.60

Whether you're working on a book, Web content, or a five-word ad, proofreading is critical. It's the last chance to catch those embarrassing—and often costly—mistakes that seem determined to slip through. In this introduction, you'll learn the standards for proofing, resources, tips and strategies, and some common mistakes to be on the lookout for. In-class exercises will help you put your learning to use. Come discover how to make the most of your proofreading.

Seminar leader Lori Burwash is a freelance editor who's been editing and proofreading for more than 15 years. Her clients span the country and include book and magazine publishers, non-profit organizations, and communications agencies. For more information, visit www.loriburwash.com.

To attend the proofreading seminar, e-mail your name and contact information to kathe@kathelimon.com and send a cheque to Käthe Lemon, 2 317 21 Ave SW, Calgary AB T2S 0G7. Make the cheque payable to EAC-PPB. Include your contact information, including your e-mail address, with the cheque. Receipts will be provided at the workshop. Enrolment is limited.

Help Wanted

Writers, reporters, and editors needed to:

- Write short, lively reports about meetings and workshops
- Interview speakers and write about upcoming events
- Write about a process used to improve technical communication
- Review books on relevant topics
- Write about adventures in technical communication
- Report on successful job-hunting strategies
- Write about the value of technical communication to your company or clients
- Explain new technology or research
- Submit ideas for relevant stories
- Copy-edit, do layout, take photos....

If you would like to be a newsletter volunteer, or if you have an idea for a story that you would like us to write, please send a message to the editors at newsletter@stc-alberta.org.

Coming Soon

The annual Salary Survey will be taken this spring, and volunteers are needed to help with it.

If you can help, please e-mail Lucille Worone at membership@stc-alberta.org.

Looking further ahead, the Annual General Meeting will be in early June. People will be needed for the planning and preparation and to work at the event. If you can help with the AGM, please e-mail Nancy Kirby at events@stc-alberta.org.

What Do You Think?

We at *SuperScript* would like to know if we are delivering the newsletter you would like to have. Let us know if the program reports are informative, the imported stories interesting and useful, the format pleasing, or anything else you think we should know. We'd appreciate it.

The *SuperScript* team

newsletter@stc-alberta.org

Pub Night

Here are some pictures from our Annual Pub Night, held January 19 at the traditional venue, Brewsters, 834-11 Avenue SW. We drank, ate, chatted, and cheered the Flames when they scored.



Left, Ruth Maryniuk, Pia Kerber

Below right, Karen Lowe, Ken Schatzke, Kate Christie

Below left, Ian Hawkins, Brian O'Malley, Lucille Worone



Portfolio Design

Continued from page 1.

In her past, Milena said, "I needed a portfolio every step of the way. It never occurred to me that other people didn't. Nurses, teachers, technical writers, they all need ways to demonstrate what they can do, what they know. Even if not to someone else, then at least to themselves!"

That's right, even if you put together a portfolio that never sees the light of day or laser, Milena convinced her listeners that the process itself is worth the time and effort. It's not only a chance to be creative and showcase your abilities, it's a way to organize your story. To research *yourself*, as well as industry expectations. And to reflect.

For reasons like that, Milena talked about the many purposes of portfolios before getting into the content of them. Purpose and context influence your choice of content. What's your story? What is it that you were wishing you could show or tell, but couldn't squeeze into a stuffy old résumé? Do you leave a copy behind? Who'll be paying attention to what?

Her second-strongest message was that the evening's presentation was just an appetizer—a distillation of many fine books written on the subject of portfolios. To anyone serious about a portfolio, she said, Read The Books.

After expertly laying out the pros and cons, benefits and requirements of digital and print media, Milena walked the audience through the basic process of designing a portfolio—from meditating on that definition, to choosing samples of our creations/artefacts, to stitching them together, to final implementation.

The design process begins, she said, with research and reflection. Slow the world down.

Give yourself permission to be as thorough, methodical, or random-abstract as you want. Synthesize your achievements, your goals, and the state, standards, and expectations of the industries you're interested in. Keep an eye on core competencies—for example, the article in the August 2005 issue of *Technical Communication*. Brainstorm to develop a job description, using the National Occupational Classification Web site and ads in job sites and newspapers for technical writers, technical communicators and editors, and the like.

Then digitize everything you've ever created, being sure to store it in a format and on a medium that won't be unretrievable or obsolete next year. Start reviewing these artefacts. Slice them and dice them in different ways, and select pieces that can tell your story. Write a clear description of each. If you have confidential material that you can show but not leave behind, then prepare something smaller that you *can* leave behind. A nice brochure, for example.


Now think about your "identity" and your curb appeal. The portfolio process has helped you clarify the image you want to project on first and second impressions. Do you want to create or change your corporate logo now? Create a showcase Web site? Buy an Internet domain? Feel free to hire a

specialist to help you in these areas, as long as the results truly reflect you, not the hired hand.

Milena pitched the talent of students at Mount Royal College who are skilled and would like to use skills such as these to develop their own careers.

Finally, implementation. Whether WWW or acetate sleeves, don't skimp on quality. But don't over-complicate either. One of the first rules you learned in technical communication was to avoid run-amok "ransom note" formatting. The same spirit applies to hard-copy portfolios and Web interfaces. Remember, you're a technical communicator, a self-proclaimed specialist in getting messages across succinctly, accurately, and clearly. She urged those of us who fancy ourselves usability specialists, to make sure the electronic or hard-copy portfolio not only talks the talk, but walks the walk.

And, at some point before springing a portfolio on the world, just as with any other documentation, get someone else to proofread it.

The people who went to Milena's presentation came away thinking and talking about it. Her education and industrial experience in digital communication, design, and visual communication were all in evidence in the very organized and accessible design of the presentation itself. 

What's your story?

Membership News

STC Alberta continues to grow, and we now have 229 members. We extend a warm welcome to these new members. Except where noted, all reside in Calgary.



New Members

Brian Brandon	Pia Kerber
Carol Claiborne-Mumey	Paula Tannahill
Fred Ledoux	Lori Trudgeon
Louise Blank	Diana Kelly
Terra McRae (Ft. McMurray)	

Transferring

We also welcome a transferred member:

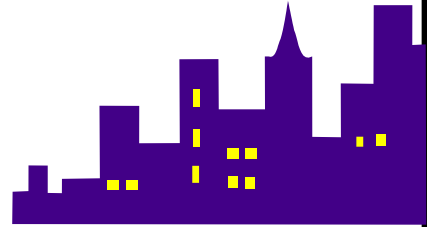
Robert B. Gray (Regina)

2006 Membership Renewal

By now you should have received your 2006 renewal forms by mail. You may also renew your membership online at www.stc.org by clicking on the "Renew Dues" button on the main page.

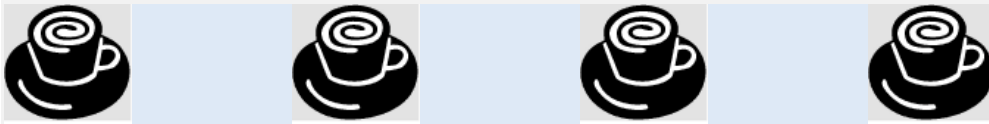
EDMONTON

EVENTS




- Rick Paisley, Edmonton Liaison

There will be a coffee night on February 16 at Block 1912 on Whyte Avenue (next to "Death by Chocolate") at 7:00 p.m.



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

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



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).
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.

February

Thursday 9 Administrative Meeting

Thursday 16 Lee Easton
Teaching Multimedia to Play: What Popular Culture Can Teach Us About Digital Learning

March

Thursday 16 Trina Rodas-Reyes
Editing is Not Evil!

April

Thursday 20 Kathy Legg
Handouts Make a Difference

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.



Contact the Editors:

Kate Christie
Deirdre O'Riain
Rosemary Reed

newsletter@stc-alberta.org

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.

Reprints: Original articles appearing in *SuperScript* may be freely reprinted, provided that the author and source are acknowledged, and a copy of the reprint is promptly sent to the Editors. Reprints may not be edited for content, or used for commercial or morally repugnant purposes.

Distribution: *SuperScript* is distributed to members in Alberta and the Northwest Territories, to all Canadian Communities, Region 7 contacts of STC, Newsletter editors of STC, and to interested companies and individuals upon request. Circulation is approximately 180.

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.

To place an advertisement, contact the Editors.