

Super Script

Volume 14, Issue 4



Information Design: The Art, Science, and Craft of Getting it Right

- Rosemary Reed, STC Senior Member

See the photographs of this event on page 3.

Mount Royal College received a distinguished guest on Thursday, October 13th, David Sless, Director of the Communication Research Institute of Australia (CRIA) was in Calgary to speak at the Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium, and our Mount Royal liaison, Glenn Ruhl, was able to arrange for him to speak at a public lecture. The event was jointly sponsored by the Department of Undergraduate Nursing Studies and the Centre for Communication Studies. Refreshments were provided by the STC Alberta Community.

Professor Sless spoke in the Leacock Theatre, which was nearly full. It took Hilary Elliott, Director of the Centre for Communication Studies, some time to introduce him—he's an eminent and busy teacher and researcher. Then Professor Sless came to the podium and, beaming out at us, confided that he is "an addict for audiences". That, he added, is just as well, since his job is to persuade people that the work his institute does is important.

Information design is not new. It is about making information usable for ordinary people. Professor Sless gave us some historical and conceptual highlights of its development, starting with a 40,000-year-old bone fragment inscribed with groups of notches—an early example of chunking.

There are those who cannot conceive that such ordinary—virtually invisible—

things as insurance forms, telephone bills, and patent medicine labels have to be designed. People embedded in the institutions that produce these artifacts often have difficulty putting themselves in the shoes of others who are not familiar with the subject matter.

The CRIA's most recent research is in the area of benchmarking, reflecting the increasing importance of being able to measure the effectiveness of information design. The emphasis has shifted from content to performance—from "how can we better impart the information?" to "what do we want people to [be able to] do with it?"

Looking from this perspective, the CRIA can test artifacts and obtain quantifiable results. Can insurance agents collect the information their company needs? Can telephone company customers tell which amount they are to pay? Can purchasers of Panadol find the best-before date on the label? A design can be tested with a group of people representative of intended users and then the results can be tabulated.


The CRIA staff and their clients have confirmation that improvements are occurring with the iterations of the design/test cycle, and also have a definite indication of which parts of the design need refining.

Professor Sless ran through several case studies that illustrate how a systematic design method that includes benchmarking can be valuable for both

users and companies. The case studies are detailed on the CRIA website: <http://www.communication.org.au/>.

In conclusion, Professor Sless said that information design without evidence is a hollow practice.

At the end of his talk, Professor Sless invited us to ask questions in the lobby, and answered patiently, even though he had been cornered near the theatre and far away from the refreshments.

David Sless is a man who is fascinated and absorbed by his subject, and who is able to communicate that to his audience. Such enthusiasm is a delight to encounter, and thanks are due Glenn Ruhl for making this possible. 

Information Design.....1	INSIDE SUPERSCRIPT
President's Message.....2	
November Program.....3	
Council Positions.....3	
Edmonton Events.....4	
Membership News.....5	
Upcoming Programs.....5	
STC Remote Seminar.....5	
Mark Your Calendars.....6	

A Word From Our President

- Ruth Maryniuk, President

I've just finished cleaning up my garden and putting my plants to bed for the winter. Thinking about their need to take time to recharge for next spring makes me realize that I, too, need to take some time to recharge. We all have different ideas about the best way to accomplish this. Some like to get more sleep. Others like to get more exercise. However, my favourite way to recharge involves getting more knowledge. With the long, dark winter evenings ahead, I'm planning to read at least one non-fiction book, preferably by a fireplace, or take in at least one educational seminar or course. As a technical communicator, it's important to keep yourself current. Membership in the Alberta STC community allows us to do just that—in several different ways.

When you read this issue of SuperScript, we will have concluded our second annual New Heights seminar. This series brings world-class technical communication speakers to our province. For last year's inaugural seminar, Ginny Redish visited Calgary and Edmonton to speak to our members about usability. This year, we welcomed Dr. William Gibbons, whose topic was "Visualizing Information". Dr. Gibbons is the director of the Human Factors and Information Design programs at Bentley College. If you missed out on this opportunity, make plans now to attend next year.


In addition this year we are trying to schedule several lunch-time **Webinars** at various locations throughout Calgary and Edmonton. Our first session is set up for November 9th and will be hosted by WindRiver. Thank you to our corporate friends for inviting us to use their facilities. Laurie Holtby, our Webinar Coordinator, is planning at least two more sessions.

Why not "brown-bag" it and take in at least one of these top-notch Webinars for the cost of a small lunch?

Linda Robson, our Programs coordinator, has almost a full slate of **programs** set up. For our first program, on November 17th, Milena Radzikowska from Mount Royal College will be delivering a session about "Developing your Portfolio". These evening programs usually run on the third Thursday of the month, starting at 6:45 p.m. Please check [page 5](#) of this newsletter for details of the locations, times, and other topics planned. Remember, students get in free at all our evening programs!

These are just a few of the events that we have planned for the coming cold winter months. So, how about taking advantage of your membership in STC Alberta and making plans to recharge yourself this winter? Your mind and your career will thank you for it.

Turning to other STC business, Jessie Channey has had to resign as our treasurer. I would like to thank her for her many years as SuperScript Editor, and also for the few months that she served us as Treasurer. We will miss her on the Administrative Council, and we hope that she will be able to return soon. The Council members have elected Nancy Kirby in her place. Thank you, Nancy, for stepping in where you are needed.

Finally, I would like to remind all members of our community that we are still looking for volunteers to fill several vacant positions for this term. If you are interested in checking us out, or would like more information about any of the vacant positions, feel free to attend one of our regular monthly meetings, which are open to all members. Please e-mail me at president@stc-alberta.org to confirm the date and time 

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
newheights@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

Webmaster

Terry Myers
webmaster@stc-alberta.org

Jobline

Vacant
jobline@stc-alberta.org

Public Relations

Vacant
publicrelations@stc-alberta.org

Newsletter

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

Edmonton

Liaison

Rick Paisley
edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org

Programs

Diane Lavery
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

Information Design at MRC

See the write-up of this event on page 1.



Wine and cheese and chat after the David Sless lecture 

2005-2006 Administrative Council

We need volunteers to help fill the following positions.

Vice President: Assist the President and other Council members; learn new management skills; network with others in the profession.

Secretary: Record the minutes of meetings; connect with your peers; develop your business communication skills.


Workshops Coordinator(s): Coordinate and manage one Saturday workshop.

Public Relations Coordinator(s): Manage publicity materials for STC Alberta and coordinate public relations for all events.

Jobline Coordinator: Manage the Jobline: receive and post opportunities; delete those which are filled.

Mentorship Coordinator(s): Maintain mentorship information for STC Alberta and match mentors to protégés.

University of Calgary Liaison: Liaise between the University and STC Alberta.

If you would like more information about any of these positions, please contact the President at president@stc-alberta.org. 

Putting Theory into Practice: Portfolio Design for the Communications Professional

Milena Radzikowska

Thursday, November 17, 2005, 7:00 p.m.

Calgary Technologies Inc., 3553-31st Street NW

STC Alberta welcomes Milena Radzikowska, an instructor in Electronic Publishing at Mount Royal College, as the first presenter in the STC Calgary Thursday Night Programs for 2005-2006.

Milena's current and past research activities include applying visual communication design methods to online computing issues: women and computer use, task-based and information-based Web sites, formation and maintenance of on-line communities, content paradigm analysis for Web design, the role of visual communication design in interface research, and the role of the user in the creation and dissemination of electronic information. In addition, she is also interested in performance-based measures of information access and use, both in print and online.

Milena graduated with a Bachelor of Design Honours (BDes) in Visual Communication, Major in Digital Communication from NSCAD University, and a Masters in Design (MDes) from the University of Alberta. Professionally, she has worked as an interface designer for the web and interactive television, and as a visual communication designer for print-based projects.

Milena Radzikowska is a Licentiate (LDGC) Member of the Graphic Designers of Canada; a member of the Association for Computers and the Humanities and the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing (ACH/ALLC); and a member of the Calgary User Experience Group.

For more information on Milena's program, e-mail program@stc-alberta.org.

To register for this program, e-mail registration@stc-alberta.org. 

EDMONTON

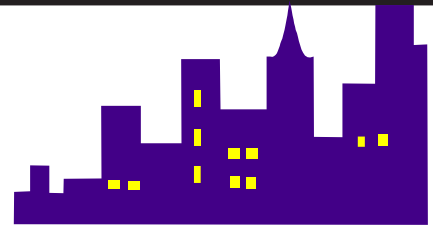
V

E

N

T

S



- Rick Paisley, Edmonton Liaison

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.

On October 20th, we gathered at the Bogani Cafe for a group discussion on the future of technical writing and how to prepare for it. We used the August edition of the STC journal, *Technical Communication*, as the catalyst for discussion. Several points were raised, and, in general, we agreed that a broad skill set is required, including those skills listed in one of the several articles. It was also agreed that we have to, as technical communicators, advocate for ourselves and our profession, that we are sometimes undervalued and, for that matter, work in a profession that is not necessarily well understood. We also discussed the value we can bring to organizations beyond technical writing—in terms of leveraging off our communication abilities and what we produce.

In September, 13 Edmonton and area STC members gathered at Le Creperie to celebrate STC Alberta's 25th anniversary and Alberta's centenary. Hugh Read, put on the spot, kindly provided a history of the Edmonton group. (And the food was fantastic.) Attended by a good mix of newer and more established members, it was a congenial way to start a new STC season.



STC members at La Creperie in September

If you do not receive the e-mailed program details and updates, contact Diane Laverty at edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org. 📧

STC Remote Seminar in Calgary

- Laurie Holtby, Webinar Coordinator

We are happy to announce that we have a venue for the November 9th STC Web/telephone seminar in Calgary. Thank you to Wind River for hosting this event.

Speaker: Neil Perlin

Topic: **FlashHelp, WebHelp, Web Help... Help!**

Location: Wind River, Suite 180, 6815 - 8th Street NE, Calgary

Date: Wednesday, November 9th

Time: 10:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Costs (payable at the door)

STC Alberta members: \$10.00

Other STC members: \$15.00

Student members: \$ 5.00

Non-members: \$20.00


To register: Send a message to webinar@stc-alberta.org by Thursday, November 3rd. Please include your name, e-mail address, daytime phone number, and STC member number.

About the seminar and speaker:

Confused about the differences between sound-alike technologies like WebHelp and Web Help or HTML Help and HTML help? Not sure what newer technologies like XHTML and SVG are, and how they may affect your authoring tool selection and development? These uncertainties can make it difficult to select technologies and tools for creating online help or documentation and increase the risk of misunderstandings. This seminar will demystify these options and others to help you select the most appropriate formats and tools. It will also increase your awareness of the technical and business aspects of new technologies.

Neil Perlin has 26 years' experience in technical communication. Through his company, Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com), Neil has spent 20 years providing training, consulting, and development for various types of online documentation, tools, and techniques, including WinHelp, HTML Help, CE Help, JavaHelp, RoboHelp, RoboDemo, Captivate, XML, and single-sourcing. He is a frequent speaker for STC and other professional groups, an associate fellow of STC's Boston Community, and the creator and manager of the Beyond the Bleeding Edge stem at the STC's annual conference. He can be reached at nperlin@concentric.net.

For more information on telephone/Web seminars: Visit the STC Web site at <http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp>.

Please note: Since we have a minimum and maximum number of participants for the seminar, we must have a firm commitment for this event—no tentative registrations. 

Membership News

-Lucille Worone, Membership Coordinator



STC Alberta continues to grow.

In September, these 4 members joined our geographical community, raising our total membership to 216:

Rovie Calderon, Calgary

Larry Couronne, Joffre

Marjorie Kowbel, Edmonton


Anders Svensson, Calgary

Welcome to our newest STC members!

STC sends a fond farewell to Shauna Dobson, who moved to the United States. Shauna has contributed to our community in many ways during her years with STC Alberta, most recently as the Mentorship Coordinator. We wish her all the best in her new home and her new STC community.

2006 Membership Renewal

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

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

Upcoming Programs

- Linda Robson, Program Coordinator

Thursday Night Programs for 2005-2006

November 17 Milena Radzikowska "Putting Theory into Practice: Portfolio Design for the Communications Professional" (see page 3)

February 16 Lee Easton "Instructional Multimedia"

March 16 Trina Rodas-Reyes "Editing is Not Evil!"

April 20 TBA

Location: Calgary Technologies Inc.
3553-31st Street NW

Time: 6:45-9:00 p.m.

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

For more information, e-mail program@stc-alberta.org.

To register, e-mail registration@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.
3553-31st 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.

Fees:

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.

Fees*:

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 ([page 4](#)).

November

Thursday 10 Administrative meeting

Thursday 17 Program: Milena Radzikowska ([see page 3](#))
Putting Theory into Practice—Portfolio Design for the Communications Professional

December

No meetings or programs in December

January 2006

January 12 Administrative meeting

January 19 Pub night



Administrative Meetings

All members of the Society are welcome to attend.

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

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

SuperScript

Contact the Editors:
Kate Christie
Sandy Gough
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.