

SuperScript



Technical Writing—a Security Risk?

- Dana Cline
Reprinted from Rocky Mountain Chapter's "Technicalities" - March/April 2001

Printed manuals have never been considered a security risk (perhaps because nobody reads them anyway). Windows Help files had the potential to become security risks, but only at the hands of rogue Help authors who understood WinHelp and DLLs. However, HTML Help, and the Internet in general, set the stage for any hacker to use the Help system to do malicious things to any PC.

In WinHelp, a macro called ExecFile runs PDF viewers, plays video files, and links to Web pages. When moving to HTML Help, ForeFront produced an ActiveX control to do the same thing, figuring that people would ship the control with their compiled HTML Help systems.

What they didn't know, or didn't say, was that once the ActiveX control is installed and properly registered on your box, any Web page can use it to run programs on your computer (yes, even "format c:").

ForeFront is not the only offender—other authoring tools offer similar functionality, and even Microsoft's HTML Help

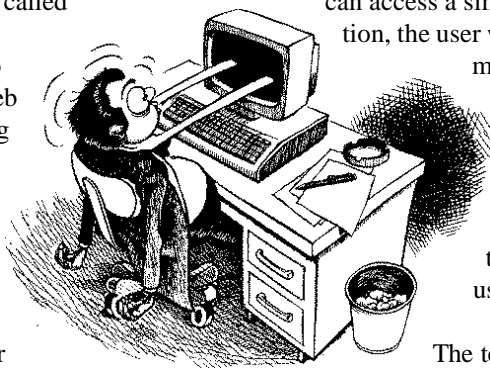
ActiveX control will let you trigger programs, although only from local CHM (compiled HTML Help) files. But even this can be worked around: as Tom Loya, a technical writer in England, has proven, it is possible to send CHM files to a user's machine without their knowing it.

One of the drawbacks of running HTML Help files over a network is that the entire CHM file must download before the user can access a single topic. In addition, the user will always get the message asking if they want to save the file locally or just run it. Tom Loya has come up with a way to make this transparent to the user.

The technique involves placing the CHM file inside of a CAB file (Microsoft's equivalent of a ZIP, but with more brains). HTML code in a Web page can cause this CAB file to be downloaded without asking the user, and then decompressed. At this point, the Web page can trigger the CHM file, which is inherently insecure. The CHM file could then wreak all sorts of havoc, with the user powerless to prevent it.

So...even though Help authors are generally a benign group, the tools available allow us to be security risks. You could, of course, blame this all on Microsoft, as it is its software that's at fault, but that doesn't remove the risks.

In the meantime, Tom's hack does solve a problem—that of providing good help for Web applications. You can learn more by downloading CHMINCAB.ZIP and looking at Tom's explanation of how it was done, and why. This file is available on the HATT list, as well as at www.logicsmith.com, located in the Files section.



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A Word from our ^{New} President

- Ian Hawkins

Welcome

September marks the end of summer and a time to charge into the fall refreshed and full of energy. It's also the start of a new year of events for our Chapter. This year, we have a lot planned for you. I hope that all our members will be able to participate in at least some of the activities. You should find it interesting, educational, and enjoyable. I'll describe some of the highlights below. More highlights and more details will follow in future issues of *SuperScript*.

Competition

By now, you have all received notice of our annual competition. I would strongly encourage everyone to enter. Those of you who have not entered before may not be aware of one crucial point about the competition—entries are not divided into “winners” and “losers”. Every entry is measured against a standard of excellence, and not against the other entries in the competition.

The competition provides a wonderful way to receive unbiased, anonymous feedback on the quality of your work. Regardless of the number of years of experience you may have, you should be able to learn something useful.

If you do not have any work ready for the competition, consider volunteering as a judge. You might be astonished at how the process of judging another person's work can revitalize your own. Far too infrequently do we allow ourselves time to consider all aspects of our work; the deadlines can be relentless. Judging is a good way to bring this perspective back to your craft.

Free coffee

Once again, we're hosting our monthly coffee nights at Annie's Books. Same location, same time, same format as before. What's new is the free coffee for participants. For a trial period, from September to December, the chapter will be picking up the tab. If this experiment is successful, we will consider extending the benefit to the rest of the year. Time and location details can be found on the Mark Your Calendars page.

Wine and cheese

For the third year in a row, we will be hosting a Wine and Cheese reception. It coincides with the start of the academic year at Mount Royal College, so we make a special effort to include students in the Technical Writing stream of the Bachelor of Applied Communications program. It's also for our members, new and old, past and future. Invite some friends who want to learn more about our chapter and what it can offer. The \$5.00 cost is the same for members and non-members. Please register in advance so we have some idea how many people will attend.

Volunteer opportunities

Think about volunteering with the Chapter. You will probably find that the rewards far outweigh the commitment. In my years volunteering for the Alberta Chapter, I have consistently been amazed at the high levels of enthusiasm and professionalism shown by the rest of the team. I consider it a privilege to be able to work with these people. If you would like to experience what it's like to be a part of a dedicated and effective team, contact me. The first job up for grabs is a Volunteers Coordinator, whose responsibility is to ferret out new volunteers and match them with appropriate tasks for the Chapter.

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A Few Good Reads...

- Robin Etherington, Senior STC Member

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway

By Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.

New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1987

ISBN 0-449-90292-7

Take Time for Your Life

By Cheryl Richardson

New York: Broadway Books, 1999

ISBN 0-7679-0207-6

I was recently laid off from Nortel Networks, along with 30,000 other colleagues globally. First and foremost, I want to thank all of you who sent me job leads and best wishes. Second, the event afforded me an opportunity to review my priorities, set new goals, and read.

In the throes of this process, I was introduced to two books that provided me with insights and tools to look at my next career advancement with optimism and joy. They are: *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* by S. Jeffers, and *Take Time for Your Life* by C. Richardson. Regardless of whether we face a career or life change by choice or by circumstances beyond our immediate control, it is good for us to step back, take a deep breath, and review our path and goals.

These two books are a wonderful read, are motivational, and give us ideas and examples as food for thought. They also tell

us that we are not alone and that it is great to review our life and career on a regular basis and be proactive in setting our direction.



Feel the Fear presents five basic principles, which I'll summarize as "fear is a constant and the only way to manage it is by action—get out there and do something." Action is very powerful. By the act of doing, we overcome our fear (whether it is making a presentation, learning a new software application, asking for a raise, going for a job interview, or bungy jumping). Also, each time we do something that we fear, we expand our comfort zone and our network.

Use strong words, a power vocabulary. For example, instead of saying "I hope", say "I know", or instead of "what will I do?", say "I know I can handle it".

There are no wrong choices. Rather each choice leads us to different opportunities and learning experiences.

Lighten up—whatever happens as a result of our decision(s), we'll handle it.

Take Time for Your Life encourages us to take time for ourselves in all aspects of our life—career, family, health, and spirituality—so that we have more to give to our careers,

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SUPERSCRIPT NEEDS YOU!

Last year, *SuperScript* won awards for Excellence and Most Improved (for chapters with 151 to 300 members). As a new year begins, we would like to thank all of you who have submitted articles. Your submissions make our newsletter more informative and fun to read. As technical communicators, each of us has information, skills, and ideas that can be shared with and be of benefit to other technical communicators. Please continue to contribute stories, technical tips, feature articles, comments, as well as book, tool, and event reviews to the *SuperScript* editors.

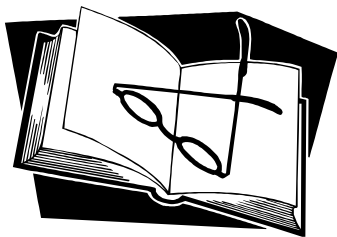
Helen and Jessie have stayed on as editors for another year, but would like to welcome our new editors too: Rosemary Reed, Jean Bauer, and our "Edmonton correspondent" Lorraine Gorman.

The Editors

STRUT YOUR STUFF!

Alberta's third annual Online Communications and Technical Publications competitions are now accepting entries, and we are also searching for 30 or more judges to adjudicate entries from our exchange chapter, St. Louis. Show us your pride in your work, and your pride in your Chapter! It doesn't work without **your** participation.

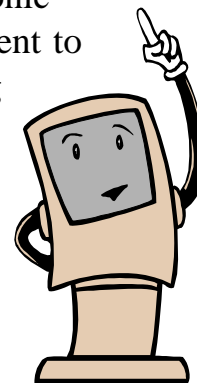
Please visit the Web site for more information and forms, or contact Brian O'Malley at competitions@stc-alberta.org. The deadline for submissions and judge applications is Friday, October 5.



Something New!

Now that our Chapter has its own Web domain, we have newly created e-mail addresses for each position. This will make it easier for you to contact the Executive Council for programs, events, and other Chapter activities.

All of our Chapter electronic correspondence can be sent to our new @stc-alberta.org addresses. Check out the new Executive Council listing on page 2.



Book Review (cont'd)

Continued from Page 3

families, and communities. Richardson calls it "extreme self-care." The premise is that we can "create" a life that we'll love; that is, the life we really want and dream about. However, to create the dream life, we need to dedicate courage, commitment, and hard work. By practicing extreme self-care, we connect to our inner selves and intuition about events and people. Also, we start using healthier sources of energy, such as good friends, fun, and exercise, and we start surrounding ourselves with high-quality relationships.

Once we start this process, we start to "attract our best life". That is, we prioritize what is important in our lives and surround ourselves with the energy and resources to achieve or gain those priorities. They start happening.


Thinking becomes intent becomes action. So we need to be aware of what we think, and consciously direct our thinking in a positive and proactive way. If we think that definitely we'll

get a job or a contract or be successful at something, then the positive thoughts inform our actions and interrelationships with people that in turn facilitate it to happen.

There are no wrong choices. Rather, each choice leads us to different opportunities and learning experiences.

This book has a number of exercises that guide us to work through all aspects of our life toward our "best life". What is important is that we think positively, take risks, have fun, practice extreme self-care, and do something we've always wanted to do.

As I said, the books are straightforward and easy to read. Mind you, if you decide to do the exercises, then it may take you some time to complete the books. And if you decide to revisit the theory and philosophy and continually reapply them to your ever-changing situation, then I suppose you will be taking a lifetime to "read" them.

Look for more book reviews by Robin Etherington in upcoming issues of SuperScript. Thanks, Robin, for your ongoing submissions! 

President's Message (cont'd)

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Newsletter contributions

Last year, our newsletter won an Award of Excellence and Most Improved in the STC Newsletter Competition. This year, we're fortunate to have two of the same editors, with the addition of some new blood. We should be able to maintain or improve on the standards from last year.

However, the newsletter is a product of more than just the editors. They need material to work with, and they're always searching for articles. If you have anything to share with the rest of the members, whether it is horror stories, successes, new experiences, or personal reflections, write it up and submit it to the editors. We can all gain from sharing our knowledge.

Regional conference

The STC Region 7 Conference is coming up from October 4 to 6 in Portland, Oregon. There are some excellent sessions available on a wide variety of topics. I would encourage you to look at the details available at <http://www.region7conference.com>. If anyone is planning to attend, please let me know. Our Region 7

Director-Sponsor, Ellen Fenwick, is hosting a breakfast, and I would like to send a representative from our Chapter.

Other suggestions?

If you have any other ideas for the Chapter, feel free to e-mail me at president@stc-alberta.com. Or contact any of the other members of the Executive Council. Or attend one of the meetings or program events. Our Chapter exists solely to serve the needs of its members. Let us know what is working, but above all, let us know what we can do to improve.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of the other people who have volunteered to help out this year. Thanks to them, we can look forward to another successful year, and continued success into the future. See you at the Wine and Cheese on September 19!

Ian Hawkins, President of the Alberta Chapter, has worked in various sordid industries, doing everything from developing software to peddling literature. Technical communication allows him to combine his passion for the written language with his compulsion to tinker with new products. 🖊️

"Let us know what is working, but above all, let us know what we can do to improve."

Bitter Ink.

Sorry Rand, despite your glowing performance review, we can't give you a raise.



What?! After all I've done in this past year?!



No one could have done what I did!



How can you NOT give me a raise?!!



Well, we can't pay you the same as the programmers. ANYONE can write....



Can "anyone" do your job?

No no, you're not evil enough for that yet....



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Alberta Chapter STC's Annual

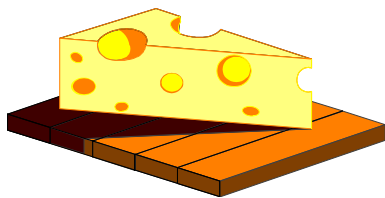
Wine & Cheese



Kick off the year with an opportunity to meet and greet your fellow technical communicators.

Meet the new executive and make some new friends. We'll supply the food—just don't be late!

Confirm by Monday, September 17 (e-mail registration@stc-alberta.org) to have your name included in the draw for door prizes!



Wednesday, September 19th

7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Memorial Park Library

1221-2 St. SW, Calgary

Cost: \$5 per person

Of Interest to Technical Writers....

For September

The Editors' Association of Canada (Prairie Provinces Branch) presents Indexing Basics, with Fena Maucieri, September 18, 7:00 pm at MacDougall Centre, Media Room, 455-6 St. SW. (Street parking is free after 6:00 pm.)

This practical, hands-on seminar on basic indexing practices will give you an appreciation for the art of indexing. If you wish to attend, e-mail eac-calgary@cadvision.com (\$5 drop-in fee for non-members).

For October

The Editors' Association of Canada (Prairie Provinces Branch) welcomes one and all to a very informal pub night, October 15, 5:30 pm at Molly Malone's, 1153 Kensington Crescent NW. Join like-minded word people for some good cheer and good conversation. If you wish to attend, e-mail eac-calgary@cadvision.com.



Membership News

Six members joined the Alberta Chapter in July 2001.

Welcome to the STC, new members!

David Alexander, Edmonton

Diana Kelly, Calgary (student)

Kimberly Reschenthaler, Edmonton

Kevin Slywka, Edmonton

John Switzer, Calgary

Veniece Tedeschini, Calgary



Mark Your Calendars!

Programs

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

Location: MacDougall Centre
455-6 Street SW, Calgary

Time: Third Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Please arrive by 6:30 pm for registration.

Registration: **Recommended.** Register by the Monday prior to the program.

Fee:	Registered	Drop-in
Members	\$5.00	\$10.00
Student Members	Free	8.00
Non-members	10.00	13.00

Workshops

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

Location: Mount Royal College (Room E141)
4825 Richard Road SW, Calgary
\$8.00 parking passes can be purchased from the parking office located by the West Gate.

Time: Scheduled Saturdays, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Registration: **Required.** Register at least 10 days prior to the workshop.
Registration must be cancelled one week in advance of the workshop or the registrant will be billed for workshop fees.

Fee:	Members	\$75.00
	Student Members	50.00
	Non-members	110.00

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: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Registration: Not required.

Fee: Free for both members and non-members.

Executive Meetings

Location: Merak Building
600, 322-11 Avenue SW, Calgary

Time: Third Monday of the month, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Building doors are locked after 5:30 pm.

September 2001

Tuesday, 11 **Technical Writer or Technical Communicator?**
Coffee Night*

Monday, 17 Executive Meeting

Wednesday, 19 Wine and Cheese Reception

October 2001

Tuesday, 9 **Technical Writing Horror Stories**
Coffee Night*

Monday, 15 Executive Meeting

Thursday, 18 **TBA**
Program

November 2001

Saturday, 10 **HTML Basics by Murray Nicholson**
Workshop

Thursday, 15 **TBA**
Program

Monday, 19 Executive Meeting

Tuesday, 27 **Java Night**
Coffee Night*

December 2001

Monday, 10 Executive Meeting

Tuesday, 11 **Technical Writing Books and Resources**
Coffee Night*

*STC will pay for your refreshments at Coffee Nights held in September to December.

To register...

To register for programs and workshops, e-mail Andrea Hogg, our Registration and Hospitality Coordinator, at registration@stc-alberta.org, indicating your name and the program or workshop you want to attend.

SuperScript

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SuperScript is the official newsletter of the Society for Technical Communication Alberta Chapter 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. Note: 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.

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

Rates:

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

To place an advertisement: send your cheque, payable in advance, to Society for Technical Communication, Alberta Chapter, Attn: Treasurer, at:

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