

# SuperScript



## Babel Not: Machine Translation for the Technical Communicator

- Sandra Bologna, Translation Project Manager, WTB Language Group

*Editor's note: This is the third and final part of this article. Part one appeared in the June issue; part two in the July/August issue.*

### Basic Controlled Authoring Methods: Getting Ready for Machine Translation

Have you decided to buy a Machine Translation system, but can't produce good translations from your new purchase? MT requires a controlled authoring writing style. Here are a few points on using MT efficiently.

1. The most important rule for MT writing is: limit sentence length. Sentences longer than 25 words often become ambiguous and too complex for MT to correctly translate. Keeping sentences to a minimum word length will improve the quality of the output.
2. Avoid metaphors, jokes, slang, puns, idiomatic expressions, and regional or national expressions. Since these are often translated literally, they tend to lose their meaning, creating an unintelligible translation. The literal translation of "break a leg", for example, will not make sense to the target reader.  
**Instead of:** You say that your sales will increase by 10 times by the end of this year? Don't count your chickens before they hatch.  
**Use:** You say that your sales will increase by 10 times by the end of the year? Do not be too confident. Wait until you get the final results.  
**Instead of:** Don't get me wrong; I love sports, but I hate basketball.  
**Use:** Do not misunderstand me; I love sports, but I hate basketball.

3. Avoid abbreviations, acronyms, contractions, and common Latin terms (etc., i.e., e.g.) as these do not always have equivalents in different languages. Spell out the entire word instead. Machine Translations do not always recognize abbreviations and will leave them untranslated.  
**Instead of:** Sr, Jr, FDA, TV, etc.  
**Use:** Senior, Junior, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Television, et cetera.
4. Keep pronouns to a minimum. The meaning of pronouns can be lost after translation because different languages use different word orders, and gender-specific languages may use different genders for certain objects. For example, in French "il" could mean "he" or "it", so your subject may be unclear to a French reader. Replace pronouns with nouns wherever possible.  
**Instead of:** He is interesting. It is interesting.  
When translated into French, this becomes: Il est intéressant. Il est intéressant.  
**Use:** Marc is interesting. The book is interesting.  
This avoids ambiguity when translated, becoming: Marc est intéressant. Il est intéressant.
5. Use simple, direct sentences with basic grammatical construction.

Ensure that the sentence structure is grammatically correct and do not omit words.

**Instead of:** Make sure you use grammatically correct sentence structure.

**Use:** Make sure that you use grammatically correct sentence structure.

6. Avoid ambiguity. To produce a clear translation, reduce the number of words and sentences with multiple meanings.

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## A Word From Our President

- Ruth Maryniuk, President

I was having dinner the other day with a friend whom I hadn't seen in some time. I love getting together with old friends. We don't see much of each other these days, but when we do, we just seem to pick up where we left off the last time. We first met through the STC and when we get together, we often talk about family, work, health, gardening, and more, but most often we talk about the STC. I especially love it when we begin to reminisce. She and I were certainly not around when the Alberta chapter's first meeting was held, but I'm sure that there are some of you out there who were, and I think it would be wonderful to hear about your experiences when you first joined the STC.

Our upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will be the perfect opportunity for us to meet and celebrate our successes as an organization and as a province. I hope to see everyone come out and spend an evening with friends. We will be providing you with the perfect vehicle to allow you to do this—a Time Capsule will be opened on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, to which everyone is invited to include past or present memories, photos, and items for those who will be opening the Time Capsule in 2030.

In addition to our 25th Anniversary celebration in September, please mark your calendars for the Coffee Night at Mount Royal College on October 11<sup>th</sup>. We are sponsoring this event so that students can meet and speak with STC members working in the field. Coffee is free and the event is open to everyone. I hope you will plan to come by, meet the students, and share your work experiences. I understand that we may also get a tour of the new facilities at Mount Royal.

The New Heights Seminar is set for November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> for Calgary and Edmonton respectively. I am sure that Bill Gibbons will provide us with an outstanding session on how visualization enhances our abilities to think and to perform our work. I've just put the stamp on my registration today.

**Our . . . 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will be the perfect opportunity for us to meet and celebrate . . .**

These are just a few of the events to start us into the fall. With autumn quickly approaching, I

would like to invite you to not only attend these events but to also consider volunteering some of your time so that the STC Alberta can continue to provide informative and functional programs for all our members. We still have several positions to fill on the Executive, so if you are looking to provide a contribution to this STC community, please let me know. I have positions that require as little as one or two hours per month. By volunteering, you provide a valuable service from which we all can benefit. Perhaps you, too, will make some friends who share the same interests.

I love getting together with friends and my wish is that we can all meet in 2030 when we will open the Time Capsule to see and read our own submissions.

Happy 100<sup>th</sup>, Alberta!

Congratulations STC Alberta on 25 years! 

## STC Alberta Community Administrative Council 2004-2005

### Executive

#### President

Ruth Maryniuk  
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#### Vice President

Vacant  
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#### Treasurer

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#### Past President

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#### Workshops

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#### New Heights Seminar

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#### University of Calgary

Vacant  
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Join us for a

# ∞ Celebration ∞

in honour of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of STC Alberta  
and in conjunction with Alberta's Centennial

Thursday, September 22, 2005  
Starting at 5:30 PM

The Glencoe Club  
636 29 Avenue SW, Calgary

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and first drink

Advance registration is required.  
(Limited to 50 STC Alberta members.)

STC Alberta Members: \$10  
STC Alberta Student Members: \$5

RSVP with name, e-mail address, STC member ID, and payment enclosed  
by September 15, 2005, to:

STC Alberta 25th Anniversary  
PO Box 2947 Station M  
Calgary AB T2P 3C3

Dress: business casual

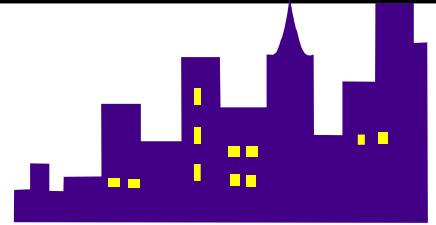
## *Time Capsule*

To celebrate our anniversary, we are compiling a time capsule. We invite you to bring any item, such as a letter to future communicators, photographs, or a memento from the past or present that can be included in the time capsule. The size of the capsule may limit the number of items that we can include. Possible topics for letters include:

- ∞ The software and other technology you use at your job
- ∞ The industries you and your fellow technical communicators work in
- ∞ The number of hours you work in a day or week
- ∞ Your thoughts on the future of our profession

# EDMONTON

# EVENTS



- 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](mailto:edmontonliaison@stc-alberta.org) or [edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org](mailto:edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org).

## September 2005

Another program year in Edmonton kicks off in grand fashion!

**What:** STC Alberta's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Alberta's Centenary Celebration

**When:** Thursday, Sept. 22, 6:00 PM

**Where:** The Creperie

111, 10220-103 Street, Edmonton

Complimentary cuisine and non-alcoholic beverages, courtesy of STC Alberta.

Door prizes!

Space is limited to the first 25 respondents (and you must be an STC Alberta member to attend).

RSVP via e-mail with your name, e-mail address, and STC membership ID to Diane at [edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org](mailto:edmontonprograms@stc-alberta.org) by Thursday September 15, 2005.

You may have also received an invitation to the Calgary celebration on the same night. By all means, if you're in Calgary on that day and are able to attend, please respond to the invitation you received. Otherwise, join your fellow Edmonton and area STC Alberta members at the Creperie for a night of celebration!

Note: Alcoholic beverages will not be covered by the STC at this event. If you do choose to indulge, please do so at your own discretion, and please do not drink and drive.



## October 2005

**What:** Information Design or Structured FrameMaker

Details will follow in next month's newsletter and will also be e-mailed to Edmonton STC members.

**When:** Thursday, October 20, 7:00 PM

**Where:** TBD

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

## Babel Not: Machine Translation

*Continued from page 1.*

**Words:** The word "right" can mean "correct" or "right" in terms of direction (right or left).

**Sentences:** The sentence "They fed her dog biscuits" can be understood as "She was fed dog biscuits by them" or "Her dog was fed biscuits by them".

**Instead of:** "They fed her dog biscuits" to mean "Her dog was fed biscuits by them".

**Use:** They fed biscuits to her dog.

**Instead of:** "They fed her dog biscuits" to mean "She was fed dog biscuits by them".

**Use:** They fed her some dog biscuits.

- Avoid compound verbs as they are often mistranslated. Use a thesaurus to simplify uncommon usages.
- Use the International Standard Date Format for writing dates. Date order varies from country to country, but the standard numerical year-month-day (YYYY-MM-DD) format will eliminate problems arising from translating dates.
- Use the infinitive form of the verb rather than present participles because present participles do not always have equivalents in all languages.  
**Instead of:** Click here for selecting the icons and viewing the images.  
**Use:** Click here to select the icons and to view the images.
- Include a list for the translator of all words that should remain in the source language. These can be anything from proper names and titles to product or company names.
- After completing the source document, run a draft through the MT and back into the source language to see where problems may be occurring.

Following the above points will prevent many common translation problems from occurring.

Machine Translation, though useful in certain cases, is still not, and may never be, the one-size-fits-all solution for translation needs. Any translation used for commercial or professional purposes must be, at the very least, checked and double-checked by human translators, if not translated by human translators altogether. For those other cases where the benefits of using an MT far outweigh the drawbacks, MT may be that key that unlocks the mystery of languages. And so, as the story goes, with a little help from the Fish, architects all across the globe were able to read and understand the secrets of the tower and climb to the top. 🏗️

*Sandra Bologna is a translation project manager with WTB Language Group, a Canadian-based translation company that provides technical manual translation services in over 140 languages. Sandra can be reached by phone at 519.256.8897, ext. 101, or by e-mail at [sandra@wintranslation.com](mailto:sandra@wintranslation.com).*

## STC

### Tommy-Lee / \ Goes to College

*An evening with TC/EPub students at Mount Royal College.*

*Share your experiences with students who are just beginning their careers, network, and **complain brainstorm** about the future.*

*Join us for Coffee Night at MRC on Tuesday, October 11 (following Thanksgiving) for good conversation and **free** Starbucks coffee.*

*Location: Room T-116, Mount Royal College*

*Time: 7:00 - 9:00*

Please e-mail [registration@stc-alberta.ca](mailto:registration@stc-alberta.ca) for more information.



## Membership News

*-Lucille Worone, Membership Coordinator*



As of July 31, 2005, the Alberta Community had 205 members.

## New Members

Lori Allan, Student Member, Calgary

Elizabeth Lind, Edmonton

Sandi J. Roloff-Romanic, Sherwood Park

## Transferring

Phillip Lawrence, Okotoks

In addition, seven members were classified as late renewing.

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

# Visualizing Information

Dr. William Gribbons

STC Associate Fellow

*STC Alberta welcomes Dr. William Gribbons to our province as speaker for the second annual New Heights seminar.*

## S P E A K E R



Dr. Gribbons is Director of the Human Factors and Information Design programs at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts. The Information Design program at Bentley is among the largest and most respected programs of its type in the United

States. Dr. Gribbons is also the founder of Bentley's Design and Usability Center. He is an associate fellow of STC and presented the closing session at the Society's 52nd annual conference in Seattle, Washington, last May.

## T O P I C

Examine how visualization enhances our ability to think. This seminar begins by comparing the visual and verbal worlds, their strengths and limits, and how these media interact with various thinking tasks. Moving from this analysis, the seminar helps you to design a visual-verbal system in which the strengths of one medium support the weakness of the other. This approach more fully integrates the visual and verbal message in a way that dramatically increases the reader's understanding of the information. You examine a range of visualization formats including illustrations, icons, mind maps, decision diagrams, schematics, information maps, and dynamic visualizations. Learn to use these formats to support the complex cognitive tasks of problem solving, analysis, and decision support and learning.

## D A T E S , T I M E S , A N D L O C A T I O N S

Calgary: Friday, November 4  
8:30 AM to 4:00 PM  
Best Western Village Park Inn  
1804 Crowchild Trail NW

Edmonton: Saturday, November 5  
8:30 AM to 4:00 PM  
Delta Edmonton Centre  
10222 102 Street

## F E E A N D R E G I S T R A T I O N

STC Alberta Members:	\$110
STC Alberta Student Members:	\$55
Other STC Members:	\$150
Non-Members:	\$175

The fee includes lunch and refreshments.

Download the registration form from <http://www.stc-alberta.org/newheights>.



## 2005-2006 Administrative Council Positions

We need volunteers to help fill the following positions on the 2005-2006 Administrative Council. These positions are critical for the Alberta Community to be able to continue to offer its events and services to members.

**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 Co-ordinator(s):** Coordinate and manage one Saturday workshop.

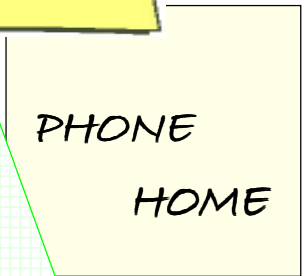
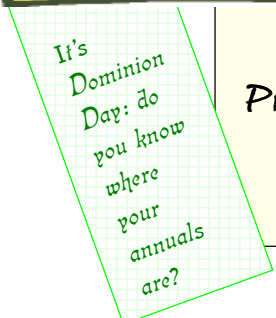
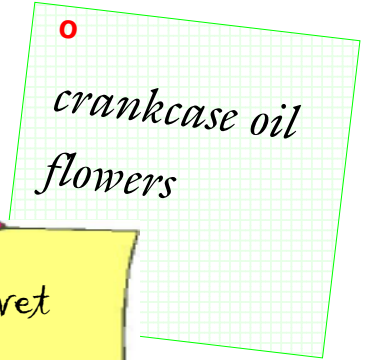
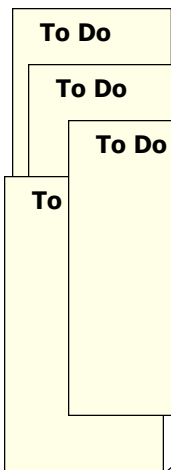
**Jobline Co-ordinator:** Manage the Jobline: receive and post opportunities; delete those which are filled.

**Public Relations Co-ordinator(s):** Manage publicity materials for STC Alberta and coordinate public relations for all events.

**Mentorship Co-ordinator:** Maintain mentorship information for STC Alberta and match mentors to proteges.

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

If you would like more information about any of these positions or are interested in volunteering this year, please contact the president at [president@stc-alberta.org](mailto:president@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

**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, please refer to the "Edmonton Events", page 4.

## September

Thursday 15 Program, speaker TBA

Thursday 22 *Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration*

## October

Tuesday 11 MRC Coffee Night

Thursday 20 Program, speaker TBA

## November

Friday 4 New Heights Seminar, Calgary

*Communicators, this is your opportunity to provide some input. We're looking for some program and guest speaker ideas for the following dates: October 20, November 17, February 16, March 16, and April 20. If you have any ideas or want more information, e-mail [programs@stc-alberta.org](mailto:programs@stc-alberta.org).*

## 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:

Cindy Bond  
Kate Christie  
Sandy Gough  
Deirdre O'Riain  
Rosemary Reed

[newsletter@stc-alberta.org](mailto: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.

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