

# Super Script

October 1999



society for technical communication



## Alberta Chapter Launches Listserv

- by Leila Meyer, President, 1999-2000

The members of the Alberta chapter of the STC are geographically diverse, and we're introducing a way to bring everybody together — a listserv.

The listserv is an online community for members of STC Alberta to communicate with each other about technical communication and the STC.

There are differences between our listserv and those such as TECHWR-L. First, we are smaller, so you won't be bombarded

with as many e-mail messages. Second, the topics will have a uniquely Alberta perspective. Third, posting to our listserv should be less intimidating because there are fewer members, and you probably even know some of them.

STC\_ALBERTA is a private, un-moderated list. Only members of STC Alberta may subscribe. Any messages you post will automatically be sent to everybody belonging to the list, and they may respond to your messages. Messages must be about techni-

cal communication or the STC. This forum is for professional discussion. When you subscribe, you will receive a message that includes posting rules.

To subscribe, send a blank e-mail message to [join-stc\\_alberta@lists.stc.org](mailto:join-stc_alberta@lists.stc.org) (hyphen between "join" and "STC"; underscore between "stc" and "alberta"). The list administrator will verify your membership and add you to the list. This process normally occurs within 24 hours. Talk to you online! 📧

## Calgary's Wine & Cheese a Success!

- by Leila Meyer, President, 1999-2000

On September 30, while Calgarians slipped and slid along the ice-covered streets, 37 technical communicators were gathered in the basement of the historic Memorial Park Library for a wine and cheese. There was a large turnout of STC members and other technical communicators new to STC. Everybody enjoyed wine, cheese, and lively conversation throughout the evening.

The mingling was interrupted for a few words about STC and Mount Royal College. Since there were numerous people new to STC at the event, Leila Meyer talked about the variety of programs, services, and publications available to members.

Fena Maucieri introduced the new mentorship program — which is taking off very well. Quite a few people are already registered. If you are interested in participating either as a mentor or to be mentored, please contact Fena Maucieri, or visit our chapter web site (<http://stc.org/region7/alb>) for more information and application forms.

Glenn Ruhl, a technical writing instructor at Mount Royal College, spoke about MRC's ongoing commitment to providing educational opportunities to Calgary's technical communicators. The college offers a variety of programs in technical writing for people new to the



Schmoozin' at the Wine & Cheese

career. They also have plans to offer professional development opportunities for technical communicators already working in the career.

It was a pleasure to see so many faces, both familiar and new, at the wine and cheese. It was a great way to kick off the chapter's new year! 📧

## Competition Update!

We're out of the gate. The competition activity is heating up as we approach the deadline for entries. To date we have 5 confirmed judges with more to come. On October 1 we received our first (of hopefully many) entries: a Yo-Yo for the first entry is winging its way to Fena Maucieri. The planet rejoices!

By the time you read this we will be cataloging our entries and preparing to judge the West Coast entries. Stay tuned!

# A Word from our Director-Sponsor

- by Ellen Fenwick, Region 7 Director-Sponsor

What does a Director-Sponsor do? And what has that to do with me?

I will focus part of this first article as your new Director-Sponsor on the answers to those questions. Some background first. STC is split into eight regions throughout the world. Region 7 has approximately 2800 members, and is composed of chapters in three countries: Japan (one chapter), Canada (three chapters in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta), and the United States (15 chapters in the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado).

Laura Ramsey, your Director-Sponsor for the previous three years, has told me that the Director-Sponsor position is the best job in STC. I have heard that echoed by Director-Sponsors from the other seven regions. What it boils down to is that I am your voice on STC's Board of Directors. I represent your interests as "sponsor," and channel information in both directions. And I help shape the activities and direction of STC through my representative participation on the Board—that's the "director" part.

A revelation, that's what participating on the Board is like. It's absolutely amazing how much behind-the-scenes work goes on in STC that advances the profession. You don't always hear much about this work at the chapter level. Like the Special Needs Committee, which is helping members with special needs achieve their potential by making available to them information about products

and services that can assist them in career activities. And the Practical Communication Committee, which is reaching out to community teachers. And the International Interests Committee, which is exploring issues of specific interest to overseas chapters and members. And the PR Resources Committee, which is working towards building STC's image in the corporate world. And the Standards Council, which participates with other professional associations in developing international technical standards that affect technical communication.

An organizational chart in your membership directory shows these varied committees. There's a short description of each committee's function a few pages later. If any of these areas interests you, I'm certain that the volunteer in charge would be pleased to hear from you. If you'd like to investigate opportunities for which committees are currently recruiting, a Volunteer Placement Committee can help find a match for your particular interests (headed by Yvonne DeGraw—[yvonne@silcom.com](mailto:yvonne@silcom.com), 805-683-5784).

Even if volunteering isn't your thing or if you just don't have time at this point in your life, you make much possible just by belonging to STC. Give yourself credit for that. Without the fundamental support of your membership, STC could not provide services or publications for members or continue to advance the profession of technical communication at large.

On another note . . . I hope to see you at the Region 7 conference in Bellevue, Washington, on October 14-17: "Still Writing After All These Years: Redefining the Core Competencies of Technical Communication." The Puget Sound chapter, this year's host, expects record attendance. The chapter will be celebrating its 40th anniversary. With over 70 seminars to choose from, the program is sure to have something for you! I am hosting a leadership workshop on Sunday morning (October 17) from 8:30 a.m. to noon (breakfast included). Mark Hanigan, STC's current

First Vice President (and therefore President next year) will be on hand to demonstrate his unique brand of leadership. The workshop is open to anyone who would like to know more about STC activities at the chapter or international level or about leadership in professional, personal, and volunteer arenas. For information about the conference, visit the Puget Sound website at <http://www.stc-psc.org/>.

If you can't make it to this year's Region 7 conference, start planning for the joint Region 7/Region 8 Pan-Pacific Conference to be held in October 2000 in Honolulu, Hawaii, and hosted by the Aloha chapter. Contact Grant Hogarth of the Intermountain chapter (Region 7 deputy chair, [rowan@lgcy.com](mailto:rowan@lgcy.com)) or Garret Romaine of the Willamette Valley chapter (program chair, [garret.h.romaine@tek.com](mailto:garret.h.romaine@tek.com)) if you're interested in helping. 📧

*"I represent your interests as "sponsor," and channel information in both directions."  
— Ellen Fenwick, Region 7 Director-Sponsor*

## Alberta STC Executive Council — 1999-2000

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# Mark Your Calendars!

## Executive Meeting

Oct. 18, 5:30 p.m.

**NEW VENUE!**

#1400, 505 3 St SW

All members are welcome.

> > >

**Phone the Hospitality Coordinator at 230-6072** to register for Courses and Programs.

> > >

## Coffee Nights

Annie's Books, 7 p.m.

912 16 Ave. NW. Free.

**Tuesday, Nov. 9**

## Contracts and Consulting

This discussion will investigate the business and fine art of writing contracts that accurately reflect your skills and the needs of the client. We'll also explore the business of consulting and try to determine the traits of a successful consultant.

> > # >

## Programs

Oct 21

Contracting vs.

Employment

A panel of local experienced technical writers will discuss the pros and cons of contracting and full-time employment.

**Nov 18**

*Web Pages: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*

Join us for this program to get tips on how to improve your web page.

See "Program Notes" for more information on these programs.

## Edmonton's September Coffee Meeting a Hit !

- by Rachel Milner

Edmonton members of the STC are trying a new format for their meetings. At each meeting, one lucky volunteer gets to lead a discussion on a topic of their choice, at a location of their choice. I was the lucky volunteer for the month of September, and so the meeting was located in Taps Pub and Brewery — beer always facilitates discussion. Our meeting is now held on Thursdays and I hadn't taken into account how noisy pubs can be on a Thursday evening, but with a bit of yelling we got along fine.

Earlier in the year I purchased a book about presentation games, which is filled with ideas for games that can liven up a boring presentation. (Not, of course, that I admit publicly to making boring presentations.) I thought it would be fun to test some of these games on unsuspecting members of the STC. We started with a fairly typical "get-to-know-you" ice-breaker, and got to know each other a little better. Then we tried a game which uses the rou-

tine task of putting a jacket on to demonstrate how difficult it is for us to do things differently. After this, it was time to discuss whether 99.9% is good enough. The exercise clearly shows that it is not, which made us picky technical writers very happy! Later, I tried a game which is supposed to demonstrate the presenter's powers of ESP. It worked, and I "read" Joanne's mind, but the audience was too analytical and cynical to truly believe in my powers. Lastly, Marcia and Angela volunteered for an exercise which emphasizes the importance of *showing* trainees how to do things. Marcia gave step-by-step instructions describing how to put on a jacket, and Angela tried to follow the instructions. And it's true — a demo would have been more effective.

Overall, we had some fun and it was nice to meet again after the summer break. Now we are looking forward to the October 14th coffee night.. Your turn, Perry. 📧

## Calgary's Coffee Meetings Off to a Great Start !

- by Darren Tenor

Our first event of the 1999-2000 year went off to a great start with lively discussion on the fundamentals of our profession. Armed with a cup of coffee, a couple cookies and lots of opinions, our group began to explore our four topics.

In two hours we discussed the pros and cons of the Mount Royal College Technical Writing program, the fine art of pricing and writing contracts, the rewards and pitfalls that employers face when interview potential communicators, and the challenge of being a consultant in our field.

We had a good cross section of communicators, from the seasoned veterans and members of the executive to new members and nonmembers just exploring the field, the discussion was interesting and informative.

If you were unable to attend the September Coffee Night but would like more information on the profession of Technical Communication, send me an email at Tenor@nucleus.com and I can give you a list of sites that focus on the fundamentals of our profession. 📧

## Program Notes – Upcoming Seminars

- by Sue Scott, Programs Coordinator

### Contracting versus employment: what are the benefits? - October 21

A panel of local experienced technical writers will discuss the pros and cons of contracting and full-time employment.

Many technical writers prefer contracting, while others prefer to be an employee of one company for many years. If you are an employee and are considering making the switch to contracting, this discussion may

help you make your decision. If you are a contractor and want to hear how other contractors do their bookkeeping, marketing, and work estimates, you will enjoy this as well.

### Web pages: the good, the bad, and the ugly - November 18

Presenter: Todd Kuipers, Merak

Join us for this program to get tips on how to improve your web page. This is not a web page design course, but a discussion of the basic principles of web design. The discussion will also include:

- Some design ideas that can improve the look of your web page.
- How a good web page can benefit your company.

(Continued on page 4)

# STC Alberta's Year-At-A-Glance

(Dates and locations subject to change)

|             |         |   |
|-------------|---------|---|
| October 18  | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| October 21  | (Thurs) | Program (topic: Contracting vs. Employment) *** |
| November 9  | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| November 15 | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| November 18 | (Thurs) | Program (topic: Web Pages) ***                  |
| December 14 | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| December 20 | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| January 17  | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| January 20  | (Thurs) | Pub night *****                                 |
| February 8  | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| February 17 | (Thurs) | Program (topic: Indexing Tips) ***              |
| February 19 | (Sat)   | RoboHelp course at MRC                          |
| February 28 | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| March 14    | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| March 16    | (Thurs) | Program (topic: Project Management) ***         |
| March 20    | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| April 11    | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| April 17    | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| April 20    | (Thurs) | Program ***                                     |
| May 9       | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| May 13      | (Sat)   | Advanced RoboHelp course at MRC                 |
| May 15      | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| May 18      | (Thurs) | Program ***                                     |
| June 13     | (Tues)  | Coffee night *                                  |
| June 19     | (Mon)   | Executive meeting **                            |
| June 24     | (Sat)   | Annual General Meeting. (Not confirmed.)        |

## Locations and details

\* 7 pm at Annie's Books, 912 - 16 Avenue NW in the literary salon. Parking behind Tim Horton's.

\*\* 5:30 pm at 1400, 505 - 3 Street SW. Parking on the street and is free after 6:00 p.m.

\*\*\* 7 pm at MacDougall Center, 455 - 6 Street SW.

\*\*\*\* 9 am to 4 pm at Mount Royal College main campus, lab E141, with coffee and lunch provided. Advance registration is required. Visitor parking is available through the security desk at the west gate of the campus.

\*\*\*\*\* The Pub Night (January 20) is at 7:00 p.m. at the Rose and Crown Pub, 1503 - 4 Street SW. Parking is available in the pub's lot and on the street. 🍷

## Do you teach technical writing?

If so, a group of us are meeting Monday, October 18th at The University of Calgary, Social Sciences 311 from 19:30 to 21:00.

We hope to start a discussion group for teachers of technical writing in Calgary. If you can join us, please reply to Deanne Morrow (286-3434) [dmorrow@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmorrow@ucalgary.ca) or Jo-Anne Andre (220-7429) [andre@ucalgary.ca](mailto:andre@ucalgary.ca).

Stay tuned for dates, times, and locations of future discussion groups!

## Program Notes

(Continued from page 3)

- Some neat tools to use to add features to your web page, such as animation, and how to access these neat tools.

**Fees:** Members \$7, Student Members \$5, Non-members \$10. Pay at the door with cash or cheque; no credit cards please.

**Registration:** leave a message on the STC phone line for the hospitality coordinator. *When space is limited, preference is given to active STC members.*

**When:** Programs (unless otherwise stated) start at 7:00pm (doors open at 6:45 p.m.) at the MacDougall Center, 455, 6 Street S.W., Calgary. 📍

## SuperScript Needs You!

Stories, technical tips, book reviews, comments can be sent to one of the SuperScript editors. All submissions must be received by the first day of each month for inclusion in the current newsletter. Articles may be edited for size.

## New STC Members

STC Alberta welcomes the following new members:



Todd Davis  
Deanne Morrow  
Victoria Parsons

## Congratulations!

Leslie Chapman  
Julie Lockhart  
Lisa Vant

For achieving senior member status!

## Did you know that...

...if you would like the STC Alberta chapter to offer an advanced FrameMaker course, please let us know.

If there are more than 15 people interested in taking this course, we will offer it in the spring of 2000. If you are interested, please leave a message on the phone line for the program coordinator, or email [suescott@telusplanet.net](mailto:suescott@telusplanet.net).

## SuperScript

*SuperScript* is the official newsletter of the Alberta Chapter of STC, the Society for Technical Communication, and is published 10 times annually, including double issues in July-August, and December-January.

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**Submissions:** The Editors invite readers to submit articles, news, reviews, and other items of interest. Articles may be edited for size.

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**Rates:** Full page \$160.00      Quarter page \$50.00  
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To place an advertisement: Send your cheque, payable in advance to *Society of Technical Communication, Alberta Chapter*, Attn: Treasurer, at:

**STC Alberta Chapter**  
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