

SuperScript

June/July/August 1999



society for technical communication



Alberta Chapter's 1999 Annual General Meeting caps successful year

- by Mai-Ann Sprung

As a newbie to the STC, I had little idea of what to expect at our chapter AGM, held June 19 in Calgary, but I was very pleasantly surprised.

I was greeted at the door with a personalized seminar package and goodie bag, then invited to wander the tables of winning entries in the STC International Technical Competition road show and mingle with the other attendees.

The room was already set up for the evening's festivities, complete with meeting agendas posted at each table, and everyone seemed to be looking forward to the seminars and the evening events. Although I attended only two of the six seminars offered, the consensus was that each presentation was well-crafted and informative, and especially beneficial for those writers who work alone. Thanks to some superb planning on the part of the AGM Organizing Committee, and excellent instruction by the seminar leaders, the event was a huge success.

Praise for Executive Council

Outgoing President, Marie Frison Klassen, opened the evening's agenda, and thanked her executive and coordinators for a busy, but successful year. Marie shared one of her personal high points for the year when she described the team's dedication and commitment when the chapter found itself temporarily



The 1998-99 Alberta Chapter executive council members were all smiles after a successful year. Front row (l-r) Fena Maucieri, Fei Min Lorente, Marie Frison Klassen, Jane Maduke, Loreto Doyle, Gordon Douglas, Michelle Whitten. Back row: Margie Daikew, Ian Hawkins, Darren Tenor, Sue Scott, Brian O'Malley. Missing are Linda Bligh, Jessica Albers, Paul Stastny, Lisa Brent, Gillian Ward, Eileen Stan, Theresa Abad, Janet Huggett and Richard

strapped for funds right before Gordon Ross's February presentation on Disability Insurance. The team pulled together and contributed what they could from their own resources. Between Fena's and Darren's baking, and Ian shopping for pop from Costco, the event went off without a hitch.

Later in the evening, Michelle (Delarue) Whitten presented Marie with thanks from the executive for her hard work and dedication to the chapter over the last year.

As a thank-you to all SuperScript contributors, a competition was held for the best newsletter article submission of the past year. Incoming Treasurer Ian Hawkins announced that

David Worsick won for his article, "Certification of Technical Writers," printed in the August/September SuperScript issue. This article received high marks from all of the judges for its well-written, detailed argument on one of the most controversial topics facing technical communicators today.

Incoming chapter President Leila Meyer introduced the new executive council, and expressed her excitement at helping guide our chapter this year. With planning already underway for programs, workshops and conferences, the 1999-2000 year looks to be a busy, but highly satisfying one for the fast-growing Alberta STC chapter.

Leila told attendees that she's prepared to continue the hard work and dedication of our Past Presidents and executives (for more information see the President's Address, page 2).

One past president was singled out during the evening for his outstanding commitment to the chapter. Brian O'Malley has continually held hard-to-fill positions, sometimes beyond their actual office terms, and is always a voice of reason and respect on the executive. Dedicated to the profession of technical writing and the promotion of its members, Brian has repeatedly led by example, providing support and wisdom for new executives.

Outgoing treasurer Michelle (Delarue) Whitten gave a brief overview of the year's finances for the chapter. Workshops, pro-

(Continued on page 2)

Thanks to the following people who helped make this year's AGM a huge success:

- Laurie Holtby
- Marie Frison Klassen
- Caroline Kutschke
- Fena Maucieri
- Suzanne Scott
- Nancy Sequeira
- Darren Tenor



A Word from our New President...Leila Meyer

Our chapter is looking forward to a great year ahead. Thank you to the outgoing executive for their tremendous work. Because of their dedication, we enjoyed record-setting membership growth. They introduced the very popular Coffee Nights, which will continue in the upcoming year, and the Annual General Meeting and Professional Development Day was a great success.

Many members of last year's executive are continuing on with us, and the chapter will benefit from their experience. Additionally, we have numerous new members of the executive, and they will infuse our chapter with new energy and ideas.

Here are a few of our plans for the upcoming year:

- Coffee Nights resume in September. They take place on the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 p.m., at Annie's Books at 912 16 Avenue NW
- Chapter executive meetings take place on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. The next meeting is on August 16 at the McDougall Centre.
- On Saturday, October 16, Philip Sharman will be teaching his FrameMaker course. Space is limited and fills up quickly, so sign up early.
- We will be holding chapter-level competitions in two categories: online documentation and printed publications. The deadline is in October. This is a great opportunity to gain recognition for your hard work.
- We will be preparing for Smart 2000 — an international conference on technology to be held in Calgary, October 23-26, 2000. We will have an exhibit booth

at the conference where we will be promoting STC and the technical communication profession to people in technology industries.

- Our new mentorship program will pair senior technical communicators with people who are new to the career. The mentorship may take place by means of telephone calls, lunch meetings, or job shadowing depending on the new technical communicator's needs and the mentor's availability. If you're a senior technical communicator who is interested in being a mentor, please contact Fena Maucieri.

Again, these are just a few of the plans, and there is much more to come during the year. For further details about chapter activities, please watch upcoming newsletters, the chapter web site (<http://stc.org/region7/alb/>), or the chapter phone line (403-230-6072).

We are looking for volunteers to help our coordinators with their chapter duties. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact a member of the chapter executive, or attend our next executive meeting on August 16, 5:30 p.m., at the McDougall Centre. Chapter members are always welcome at meetings.

1999 Annual General Meeting (continued from page 1)

grams, and membership fees generated enough income to cover annual expenses, and to provide a \$3000 donation (matched by Arlington) to set up the STC Alberta Chapter Scholarship fund at Mount Royal College. This donation was made completely from this year's revenue, and did not require input from the chapter's savings. This relatively sizable donation represents a very successful year for the chapter, and raises hopes that the continued growth and support of its activities will see an increase and broadening of the services and programs the chapter can offer its membership.

The membership was the next issue on the agenda, of which Brian O'Malley spoke. Brian has taken on the task of putting together the Alberta Chapter Membership Directory this year, and urged members to send in their membership information. The Directory is a convenient (and free!) advertising tool for Alberta writers, and is sent out to

every company that posts a job on the STC Jobline. With detailed information about members' experience, knowledge and skills, it is also a terrific resource for writers who work alone or in small teams.

One of the most exciting events planned for this year is our chapter's first Publications and Online competition. Coordinated by Laura Harvie of S.I. Writes, it will be held in October, and judged in conjunction with the West Coast Chapter's competition. The two chapters have agreed to judge each other's entries, allowing for more objective and fair judging. It is also, informally, a chance to compete against the chapter that has been neck-and-neck with us for the fastest growing chapter of its size. Laura's goal is to get 30 entries for our first competition, and to make a name for our chapter internationally, both through our contributions and our judging standards. We want the Alberta STC competition to be THE competition to

Alberta STC Executive Council — 1999-2000

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Mark Your Calendars!

First Executive Meeting –
Aug. 16, 5:30 p.m.,
McDougall Centre,
455 – 6 St. SW.

All members are welcome.

£ £ £
Coffee Night – Sept. 14

Topic: Getting started in
Technical Writing

Facilitator: Darren Tenor

What do you need to get started in the profession? The discussion will address the following: What core concepts do students need to learn? What do consultants need to establish their business? How can professionals get employment as technical communicators? How can new employers determine they are hiring the right communicator for the job?

7 p.m. at Annie's Books
(formerly Bob's Books),
912 16 Ave. NW. Free.

£ £ £
Executive Meeting –
Sept. 20, 5:30 p.m.,

Location to be announced.

All members are welcome.

£ £ £
Coffee Night – Oct. 12

Topic: Tales of the Mad
Archivist!

Facilitator: Darren Tenor

Discussion topic: Gasp! Can it be? In the Halloween spirit, we'll explore technical writing horror stories of gut-wrenching madness that will chill you to the bone, and rattle your sanity! Attend if you dare!

7 p.m. at Annie's Books
(formerly Bob's Books),
912 16 Ave. NW. Free.

£ £ £
The Alberta Chapter of the STC presents a Wine & Cheese Social. This event is for MRC technical and professional writing students, as well as for all STC members. Don't miss this chance to meet old friends and make new ones!
Date and location T.B.A.
Watch the STC web site for more information.

Alberta STC honours Brian O'Malley for distinguished service

The Alberta Chapter honoured one of its own at the AGM on June 19, presenting Past President Brian O'Malley with the Distinguished Chapter Service Award.

Brian, a longtime STC member who has made valuable contributions to the Alberta Chapter, was presented with a plaque by President Marie Frison Klassen.

In a speech to AGM attendees, Marie called Brian her mentor, and praised his leadership, commitment to the STC, and support of the technical writing profession.

"Over the years, he has been in just about every position on the executive," she said. "He stepped in as president and filled the role for 18 months to keep the Chapter going. His commitment to the STC and his support of the profession in the community is exemplary."

Brian also sits on the advisory board for the technical writing program at Mount Royal College, and this year he donated the Polaris



Marie Frison Klassen presented the Distinguished Chapter Service Award to Brian O'Malley.

□ □ □

Marie also presented Walter Bruno with a framed cover of the June issue of *Intercom*. Walter, who presented the *10 Grammar Tips* seminar at the AGM, was not only published in the June issue, he made the cover story!

Edmonton Proofreading Workshop provides useful tips

- by Angela Wiens

Have you ever reviewed your published document and wondered how you could have missed that glaring typo? I'm sure we've all felt the pressure, at one time or another, to release a document we weren't comfortable with; however, there are proofreading tips we can use to help ensure a quality product.

Did you know that you should do warm-up exercises before proofreading? That doesn't mean stretching your arms and legs (although that wouldn't hurt); it means exercising your eyes to help sharpen your visual skills. Warm-up exercises involve finding errors in short patterns of characters. For example, the fourth pair of letters is incorrect in the exercise *bp bp bp hp bp bp bp bp bp bp*. Exercises help your eyes get ready for the intense, detailed work of proofreading.

Another important tip is to proofread slowly with an even rhythm. Don't speed up or skim over words or paragraphs. Try to see the document as individual characters, punctuation, and spaces. Remember, proofreading and reading are two different things.

A common proofreading error is omitting to

check certain sections of the text. It's usual to proofread the main body of text, but don't forget the headings, headers, footers, table of contents, and cover. This may seem obvious, but these sections are often missed because we hurry to correct errors in the body text. Don't assume any part is correct: proofread it.

When you proofread, ensure that spelling and formatting are consistent. For example, make a decision to use either *color* or *colour* and stick with it. If you're not sure which one is "correct," check with the author. Formatting consists of many elements such as alignment, typeface, capitalization, and spacing. Ensure the same types of things are done the same way throughout the document. Consistency makes it easier for the reader to read and comprehend the information.

These are just some of the tips I learned from Kathy Garnsworthy, instructor of a proofreading course sponsored by the Editors' Association of Canada - Prairie Provinces Branch. The course was held in Edmonton on March 27, 1999. Thanks, Kathy, for helping us to sharpen our proofreading skills.

If you are interested in reading more about proofreading, there are two recommended books: Peggy Smith, *Mark My Words*, third edition (Alexandria, VA: EEI Press, 1997), and

1999 STC International Conference proves informative and entertaining Cincinnati event draws 2000 members from around the world

- by Leila Meyer

When I learned that the 1999 STC international conference would be held in Cincinnati, I had no idea what to expect. Once I arrived, I was pleasantly surprised by the beauty of the city and the exceptional conference hosted by the local chapters.

For those of you who have not yet visited Cincinnati, let me describe it for you. It is remarkably green, at least in May. As the airplane descended into the local airport, the view was like looking at a well-groomed golf course extending to the horizon. Dozens of mini forests jigsawed the lush green grass. The city itself is not flat, as I had assumed it to be. The very wide Ohio River divides the metropolis of Covington, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio. Small glacier-carved mountains blanketed in densely packed broccoli-style trees surround the river valley. The locals refer to these as mountains, but as an Albertan I considered them large hills. Many beautiful old buildings, refurbished tenement houses, and even the occasional cobblestone street adorn the city. It is also home to a bridge that was the prototype for New York's

Brooklyn Bridge. For more about the history and attractions of the city, please refer to Amy M. Hess's article from the April 1999 issue of SuperScript.

The conference itself was well organized and boasted many distinguished speakers and approximately 2000 technical communicators from around the world. I attended sessions on single-sourcing, developing training materials, graphics, search interfaces, usability, and much more. Speakers included JoAnn Hackos, Ann Rockley, Jared Spool, and Karen Schriver, to name only a

few. The quality and variety of sessions was excellent, and I heard many attendees comment that they were the best of any STC conference to date.

The name of this year's conference was "River of Communication." The welcome reception on Sunday evening had an old-time riverboat theme. We were entertained by a live riverboat band, local chapter members in Gone with the Wind-style costumes, and more food than anybody

could hope to eat. A hilarious comedian/card magician helped the introverts among us look less like wallflowers as he dazzled us with his jokes, card tricks, and jokes about his card tricks. All secrets were revealed.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday offered networking luncheons. I met some fabulous people, learned a few new technical communication tidbits, and even introduced some lone writers to

listservs as a method of staying in contact with other technical communicators. The networking luncheons are one of the best places

to meet people at the conference. The Regional Receptions took place on Monday evening. Region 7 hosted a great reception this year. Laura Ramsay passed the torch onto our new Regional Director-Sponsor, Ellen Fenwick. Laura Ramsay is known for her hats, and Ellen Fenwick presented her with a new one. Each chapter adorned it with a pin. Ours was a wild rose to represent Alberta. By the end of the evening, Laura had a spectacular

looking hat festooned with pins, ribbons, and other adornments. Afterwards, the members of Region 7 enjoyed a buffet table, open bar, and great conversation well into the evening.

Tuesday evening was the Honors Reception and Banquet. This was the most formal shindig of the conference where fellowships, associate fellowships, and chapter awards were presented. It was the priciest social event of the conference, but well worth it. The food was great, and there were many distinguished technical communicators to talk to. Plus, it was a great party on the last night of the conference.

If you haven't already, I hope that you will have the opportunity to attend an annual STC conference in the coming years. You'll visit places and meet people that you might not have otherwise. You'll learn a little bit, get some new ideas, and have a lot of fun. I hope to see you next year in Orlando!

"The quality and variety of sessions was excellent, and I heard many attendees comment that they were the best of any STC conference to date."

New Team Takes Over SuperScript Editing Duties

This year's STC Annual General Meeting marked the end of a great year for the Alberta Chapter, and some new and not-so-new faces are filling some the roles required to ensure the Chapter's continued success. One of these roles is the development of *SuperScript*, the monthly newsletter. Loreto Doyle and Gordon Douglas have completed their duties as newsletter editors, and recently passed the baton to a team of four individuals who look forward to assembling a newsletter that's informative and entertaining.

The new *SuperScript* editors are a team in more ways than one: Mai-Ann Sprung, Alyssa Thys, Mike Trumper and Don Harman also form the technical writing team at Merak Projects Ltd. In addition to their primary roles of writing on-line help and other documentation for all of Merak's petroleum software products, each of these volunteers brings something unique to the meeting room table:

- Mai-Ann has been a technical writer for six years, and has worked on projects for software, survey construction, training/education, marketing, and promotional materials. She is currently Merak's documentation team leader.
- Don has worked as a writer, desktop publisher and editor for more than 12 years, including five years in technical writing. He is currently writing the on-line help for Merak's PetroDesk application.
- Alyssa has 11 years' experience in petroleum, agricultural, and software communications. Her experience includes corporate donations, corporate and internal communications, and the development of educational material, user manuals, and on-line help.
- Mike has eight years of experience as a communications consultant specializing in technical writing on government projects, and has also worked for non-profit and charitable organizations, as well as in the private sector. Currently, Mike is writing the on-line help for Merak's Portfolio and Volts applications.

What a Wonderful Ride It's Been Marie looks back on an eventful year

In May 1998, Brian O'Malley called and asked if I wanted to be president of the Alberta chapter for the following year. I said no, but Brian put the bug in my ear, and when he phoned back about week later, I enthusiastically said yes – I want to take on this challenge! I don't know if this is more of an example of Brian's tenacity or my naïveté, but it proved to be a great experience. Now it's all just one more entry into the archives – Marie Frison Klassen, President of the Alberta Chapter, 1998-1999.

Brian told me in the presidential hand-off that he had stacked the executive with a bunch of go-getters, and he wasn't kidding! There was no shortage of great ideas and volunteers willing to slip into whatever role they could. I would like to attribute this all to my cute looks and charisma, and this group would probably indulge me (they've

been incredible at indulging a pregnant woman!) but my role as administrator and facilitator was supported, augmented, and confronted when needed by some of the best people I have had the pleasure to work with.



**Outgoing President
Marie Frison Klassen**

I can't thank everyone enough, but I would like to thank them all one last time:

Fei Min Lorente, Vice-president: Fei Min was one of our voices of reason. She fielded all phone requests for information, and was a pillar of support.

Fena Maucieri, Secretary: Fena had never been on the executive before, and brought her marketing background to the table. Fena was also unofficially responsible for our

continued growth this year, pitching the STC in all her continuing education classes at Mount Royal College.

Michelle (Delarue) Whitten, Treasurer: Michelle was one of our highly efficient and organized volunteers. She not only kept the books in order, but came to the executive council meeting a week before her wedding!

Loreto Doyle and Gord Douglas, SuperScript Co-editors: Loreto and Gord took on one of the most demanding and time-consuming positions on the executive. They filled 10 issues with some excellent and thought-provoking content, and kept it relevant to our profession.

Darren Tenor and Jane Maduke, Program Coordinators: Darren and Jane took on one of the other demanding positions. They had to come up with ideas months in advance, arrange speakers, book facilities, and handle all the details. Darren and Jane arranged some very successful workshops and speakers, and the coffee nights have become an entity in themselves.

Jane was also our archivist, and I want to thank her for taking on two positions, especially because she has traveled all over the continent in her current job, and still handily fulfilled her volunteer commitments!

Lisa Brent, Membership Coordinator: Lisa has the membership list down to a science. Our returns for incorrect addresses have been reduced to one or two a month, out of a membership of over 180! Lisa also extended her position to that of ambassador to all the new members.

Ian Hawkins, Hospitality Coordinator: Ian has been the right-hand man to Jane and Darren's events. He has consistently provided receipts, refreshments, and excellent cooperation with Darren and Jane.

Paul Stastny, Jobline Coordinator: Paul managed to keep the Jobline going in the midst of a hectic year.

Linda Bligh, Public Relations Coordinator: Linda came up with the idea and implementation of the Chapter Communication Plan, which can act as a blueprint for the Chapter in the years to come. Linda also arranged to have ads in the paper for our monthly meetings, and got us an "in" for Smart2000, coming in October, 2000.

Gillian Ward, Webmaster: Gillian stepped forward as the webmaster this winter, and has proposed some great changes to the website.

Suzanne Scott, Volunteer Coordinator: Sue also started this winter in the new role of volunteer coordinator. Sue arranged the AGM committee and responded to all our offers for help from new volunteers.

Margie Daikaw: Margie routed all the chapter email this year to the appropriate people – an invaluable service that was handled so well.

Jessica Albers, Membership Directory Coordinator: Jessica put together our membership directory last year.

Janet Hugget, Edmonton Liaison and Richard Blitz, Red Deer Liaison: Janet and Richard helped to extend the STC presence in their respective regions.

Theresa Abad, Mount Royal Liaison: Theresa helped to keep us in touch with MRC's activities, and extended our presence there, too.

Brian O'Malley, Canadian Issues Committee and Past President: Brian has been my mentor this year - a great source of wisdom, encouragement, and comfort, for which I can't say thanks enough.



A busy schedule of STC programs and events planned for this year

Social events, workshops and programs on tap for the 1999-2000 season

The Calgary Chapter of the STC will host a wide variety of program events in the upcoming year. We'll start off with a Wine and Cheese social event in September. And we will continue to hold the very popular and successful monthly Coffee Nights at Annie's Books on 16th Ave. NW. We'll kick off the new millennium on a high note with our annual January pub night at the Rose and Crown, which is always a great opportunity to meet other STC members.

Thursday night monthly programs will be held throughout the year, as will some tools workshops on Saturdays. The topics for this year's programs are being selected based on the feedback we received from members last year. For specific program schedules, look in the Mark Your Calendars section in upcoming newsletters or on the Alberta Chapter website, or listen to the program schedule on the phone line.

How effective is your Web site? This is your chance to find out!

Receive a free version of Smart Site 2.5, the latest Web site maintenance software in exchange for a few hours of Beta testing

Technical writers are branching into the field of Web site creation and maintenance. Smart Site 2.5 helps you ensure that your message is presented within a technically credible, error-free Web site.

Smart Site 2.5 is the latest Web site maintenance tool for Web authors, writers, developers, and executives. It helps eliminate broken links, orphaned files, spelling mistakes, and slow-to-download files. View your site in a variety of formats, analyze your site visitors, and generate reports with the click of a mouse.

Big Pictures Technologies Inc. requires Beta Testers in August and September to help test its software *off-site* and provide structured, written feedback regarding the functionality and interface of Smart Site 2.5. All testers will be compensated with one free version of Smart Site 2.5 upon completion of simple scripts and a questionnaire.

Testers must have a strong knowledge of Windows environments, and a background in, or understanding of, Web site creation and/or maintenance. Understanding Web site design issues would also be an asset. Testers can work from home or their offices. For more information, call Tim Tomanik, Product Coordinator, Big Pictures Technologies Inc., 1700, 734 7 Ave. SW, Calgary, T2P 3P8, or call (403) 265-8018.



SuperScript gets new look for 1999-2000!

The STC Alberta Chapter's newsletter is taking on a new look! Thanks to a donation from Merak Projects Ltd., the newsletter received a makeover from a Calgary graphic designer. The new look makes the newsletter easy to read, thanks to bold headings, graphics, hair-lines and shading. In addition, you can look forward to regular features such as a message from the president, upcoming events, and much more.

If you've got a story, technical tip, book review or a comment for the rest of us to hear, send it to one of the SuperScript editors - we'd love to publish it for the rest of the Chapter, too. Please submit all entries for publication by the first day of each month, for inclusion in the current newsletter. The editors reserve the right, however, to withhold submissions for publication in later issues due to space considerations. 📧

The STC Alberta Jobline can work for you

I guess it would be nice if every job we wanted would fall in our laps; however, since that isn't the case there's the good ol' STC Jobline. Here are a few refreshers/pointers for those of you using the service.

Jobline Contact Info


Call 230-6072
(Calgary).

Press '3' at the start of
the STC message, then
enter the 4-digit code.

The Jobline is a service provided to STC members, and is intended as a clearinghouse service, not an employment agency. That said, if you're looking for work or just tracking what's out there, the Jobline can be a great place to start. To access the Jobline just dial 230-6072 (a Calgary #) from a touch-tone phone. Press 3 at the beginning of the STC message and enter the 4-digit access code.

If you are an STC member and don't have the access code contact Blair McNaughton (see information below). The line will be updated on a weekly (at least) basis, so check frequently to stay on top of changes. As is the case with most STC services, the Jobline is a volunteer effort. Not surprising, the more input we get from members, the more effective it will become. If you know of potential jobs or employers please forward them to me, Blair McNaughton, at (403) 281-3299 or final.draft@home.com. With your help the Jobline will continue to be a helpful resource for all STC members.

- Blair McNaughton, Jobline Coordinator



New STC Members

The Alberta Chapter would like to welcome the following new members:

Sherry Card, Calgary
Shirley Kachur, Calgary
Roger Legge, Calgary
Dan MacLean, Calgary
W. Grant Sorensen, Calgary
Cheryl Wold, Edmonton
Dawn Wright, Edmonton

Student Members

Shauna Dobson, Calgary
Colin Ferguson, Canmore

Add your name to the hot list!

Call for STC Membership Directory entries:

The STC Alberta Chapter is accepting entries for its 1999-2000 Membership Directory until Friday, Aug. 13. It's a great way for members who work on contract to distribute their names to potential employers.

Send your entry by email to omalley@nucleus.com, or on PC diskette to the Chapter mailbox at STC Alberta, P.O. Box 2947, Station M, Calgary, AB, T2P 3C3. Entries should be in Word, rtf or txt formats, and only electronic submissions are accepted. Call Brian O'Malley at 282-4399 (before 9 p.m.) for more information. 📧



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Half page \$100.00 Business card \$20.00.

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

STC Alberta Chapter
Box 2947, Station M
Calgary AB T2P 3C3

Website: <http://stc.org/region7/alb>
E-mail: albwww@stc.org