

Tieline

The Society Leaders' Newsletter

Hands-On Training at Leadership Day

By Judith L. Glick-Smith, Fellow, and Manager, Leadership Community Resource

Editor's note: STC strongly encourages community leaders to attend Leadership Day. Please RSVP to Peg Cottrell at peg@stc.org.

Are you a 2006–2007 community leader? Are you looking for leadership training and resources? Are you a past community or Society leader who would like to stay involved by helping other leaders be successful? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you need to attend Leadership Day on May 7 at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This year’s Leadership Day will be sponsored and delivered by STC’s Leadership Community Resource (LCR). The LCR is a new initiative designed to provide more consistent, high-quality sponsorship and support to STC’s communities. The LCR will provide

mentors and coaches in specialized areas to community leaders who need assistance.

This year, Leadership Day will provide two types of training:

1. General leadership training for STC’s community leaders
2. Training for the LCR’s mentors and triage coaches

Leadership Day will start with an overview of the LCR and keynote by interim executive director Rob Moran, whose address is titled “Creating the STC Community of the Future.” Suzanna Laurent will give a recap of her year as STC president, and first vice president Paula Berger will present her vision and her plan for the 2006–2007 year. This will be followed by the presentation of the community achievement awards of Merit and Excellence by second vice president Linda Oestreich. And, as manager of the LCR and assistant to the president for leadership, I will have the pleasure of presenting the first annual LCR volunteer of the year award.

The rest of the morning, from 10 AM to 12 PM, community leaders will participate in a progression that will include “Recruiting Volunteers,” “Training Volunteers,” “What It Means to Be a Leader,” “Public Relations,” “Using Technology: Web Sites, Etc.,” “Running a Conference,” “How to Run an Administrative Council Meeting,” and “How to Work with the STC Office.”

During this same time slot, the LCR will provide training to leaders who want to be LCR mentors and triage coaches.

After lunch (on your own), we will return for breakout sessions. From 1:00 to 1:45 PM you’ll have the option of attending one of the following sessions:

- ❖ The AccessAbility SIG: Anatomy of a Successful Community
- ❖ Community Public Relations Best Practices Forum
- ❖ Organizing Profitable Community Events
- ❖ Treasurer’s Workshop

The following sessions are scheduled for 2:00 to 2:45 PM:

- ❖ Do-It-Yourself Programs on a Shoestring: New Turnkey Power Tools for Your Community Toolkit
- ❖ Marathon of Community Leadership
- ❖ Creating the STC Community of the Future
- ❖ LCR Mentor’s Workshop

The people conducting the progression and the breakout sessions are seasoned leaders, many of them members of the LCR planning team. Please join us for the best Leadership Day ever! ♦

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Editor

Ed Rutkowski

Tieline is published for STC leaders. The purpose of *Tieline* is to improve communication and serve as a link between STC communities, volunteer leaders, and the Society office. Distribution to other community leaders is encouraged. Reprints from *Tieline* are permitted if credit is given and a copy sent to the editor. Electronic copy is available at the Web site noted below.

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Advance Conference Registration Deadline: April 21

Please remind your members that the last day to register for STC's 53rd Annual Conference at the advance rates is April 21. Online registration is available at www.stc.org/53rdConf/register/registration.general.asp. Conference rates appear below.

	Advance	Onsite (after April 21)
Member	\$545	\$620
Nonmember	705	780
Student Member	120	175
Retired Member	170	225
Member, One-Day	305	380
Nonmember, One-Day	385	460
Student Member, One-Day	120	175
Retired Member, One-Day	170	225 ♦

Conference Hotels: Reserve Rooms by April 10

STC has arranged for special rates for this year's conference attendees at the Bally's Las Vegas Hotel (\$139 for a single/double room) and the Paris Las Vegas Hotel (\$169 for a single/double room). To take advantage of these rates, attendees must make their reservations by April 10.

Bally's and Paris will host all conference events and technical sessions. The hotels are conveniently located next to each other and are connected by a large shopping area.

Members can access the online reservation forms for both hotels from www.stc.org/53rdConf/travel/lodging.asp. ♦

Moving? File Change of Address with STC

Please remind members who are changing residences to send their new address to the STC office to avoid an interruption to deliveries of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. Some members assume that informing the post office of their new address is enough to ensure that all of their mail is forwarded. However, the United States Postal Service forwards only first class mail; magazines such as *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* are not forwarded.

To file a change of address with STC and ensure continuous delivery of Society publications, members can use the online form at www.stc.org/formAddressChange.asp. ♦

Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates for Society-Level Positions in 2007

Would you like to be a part of leading STC to ensure that it remains a vital organization? You—and other members whom you know and respect—could have the chance by being a candidate for a Society-level position in 2007.

Do you have experience directing the implementation of new ideas? Could you help coordinate programs beneficial to our profession? Are you open to change and making it happen? If your answers are “yes,” tell the STC nominating committee that you would be interested in running for office. If you know another member who should be considered for a position on our international board, please add that person’s name, too.

The nominating committee will consider all recommendations as it draws up the 2007 slate of candidates. Part of the committee’s process involves contacting potential candidates to confirm that they are interested in running for STC office.

The members of this year’s nominating committee are Victoria Koster-Lenhardt, manager (vk_l_stc@yahoo.com), of Vienna, Austria; Michelle A. Didier (mdidier@polaris.umuc.edu) of Springfield, Virginia; Martha K. Sippel (azuwrite@comcast.net) of Lone Tree, Colorado; and two others to be determined in this year’s election. Please feel free to discuss your ideas with any of these people.

Open Positions and Qualifications

In the STC year ahead, the nominating committee will be developing a slate of candidates for the following positions:

- ❖ Second vice president
- ❖ Treasurer
- ❖ Director (three positions)
- ❖ Nominating committee member (two positions)

Experienced Society leaders and business professionals are essential to create a proactive, highly functioning board. All candidates should be senior members and be able to think strategically and make decisions collaboratively. They should have Society-level leadership experience as well as professional skills in managing people, projects, budgets, and change. Additionally, candidates should have the following characteristics:

- ❖ Candidates for second vice president must be passionate about our industry, have in-depth knowledge of Society-level processes and practices, and be experienced in implementing large business, policy, or educational initiatives outside of STC.
- ❖ Candidates for treasurer should be detail-oriented and have strong budgeting and related financial skills.

- ❖ Candidates for director should have some STC community-level experience and a background in one of the following areas: marketing, governance, finance, education.
- ❖ Candidates for the nominating committee should have excellent judgment about people and wide acquaintance with members at all levels of the Society.

The nominating committee welcomes your suggestions about potential candidates for the positions listed here. If you think that you or someone you know should be considered, please fill out the accompanying form and return it to STC by August 1, 2006.

Alternatively, members attending STC’s 53rd Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, May 7–10, may turn in their forms at the program booth. ♦

Candidates for Society Office

Check the appropriate box below and provide the necessary information.

- I would like to be considered for the office listed below.
- I would like to recommend the person listed in the following section for the office listed below.

Office: _____

If you would like to be considered for office—or would like to recommend another member—please enter the appropriate information below.

Potential candidate’s name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Filling out this form is only a preliminary step in the nomination process. Additional information will be sent to you or the person you recommend. Please remember that, when STC members consent to be candidates, they do not automatically become candidates.

Please return a copy of this form by August 1, 2006, to the following address:

Society for Technical Communication
Attn: Nominating Committee
901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
Fax: (703) 522-2075
stc@stc.org

Adding a Blog to Your Chapter Web Site

By Tom H. Johnson, Suncoast Chapter

I recently tried an experiment with our static, boring chapter Web site that no one seemed to visit: I turned it into a collaborative, interactive Weblog on which members could publish content, comment on others' posts, and subscribe to feeds. With high hopes, I picked the perfect design, defined engaging topic categories, and added user-friendly content about publishing. The result? Not what I expected. The site did not become a hub of interaction, as I thought it might. It has, however, provided an intriguing introduction to content management.

Evolution of Blogs

First, a brief explanation of blogs. Blogs did not start out fashionable. The idea of publishing online diaries of the mundane aspects of one's personal life clouded the initial potential of this medium. But if you left the blogging conversation back then, you have some catching up to do.

Blogs have since become topic-oriented and highly fashionable. For example, it is not uncommon for companies to have their own blogs—take a look at googleblog.blogspot.com/ or the Stonyfield Yogurt site (www.stonyfield.com/weblog/BovineBugle/index.html). Now some companies are using blogs as internal communication tools, with Sun Microsystems (www.sun.com/aboutsun/media/blogs/) at the forefront. Each Sun employee can start a blog about whatever he or she wants, and there are now 2,000 employee blogs. Blogging has morphed into group blogging—the only real way to sustain interesting and frequently updated content.

Advantages of Chapter Blogs

The many advantages of blogs make the medium too attractive to pass up. The content is XML-based and each post is formatted in an RSS feed. RSS feeds allow your content to be automatically syndicated across hundreds of sites and newsreaders. Readers can subscribe to your site's feed and receive the content in their newsreader (some examples of newsreaders are Bloglines, Google Reader, NewsGator, and FeedDemon). This capability allows you to bring the site to your readers, rather than waiting for them to come to you.

Blogs are also interactive. They allow each member to post content and comment on others' posts. For chapters whose participation at monthly meetings is low, an online interactive medium can supplement member mingling and involvement.

Blogs also offer ease of site management. You can get your site up and running in five minutes, change its design on the fly, publish content in seconds from any computer, and delegate ownership of pages to specific members. When you need to

update a page, you navigate to it and click an **Edit** button, which appears only to you. In literally two clicks you can update and republish the content.

Disadvantages of Chapter Blogs

Unfortunately, many people think RSS feeds are only for tech geeks, and even fewer use newsreaders. Even worse, members rarely publish content. For example, how many voluntary submissions come in each month for your newsletter? Expect the same with your blog, which can double as a newsletter. (In fact, I think traditional newsletters are on the way out—with RSS feeds, readers can get content as soon as it is published.)

Another disadvantage is that, while the skins or themes (which determine the color, layout, and style of the site) have infinite variety, you'll want to customize your theme to fit your chapter's needs. This requires some tweaking of PHP code, which is not always immediately intuitive. PHP is also unforgiving: forgetting the closing tag of a bulleted list, for example, can completely disorient your site's layout. Or, if one PHP include is out of place, the site may not appear at all.

You can get a handle on the technical issues easily enough (support forums and instruction are plentiful). What's hard is generating interesting content on a regular basis—the key factor for any successful blog. It's easy to run out of both time and ideas. Group bloggers can often sustain the site's need for continual feeding, but if you're all alone, this may be a heavy burden to bear.

What I Learned

While our Suncoast chapter blog (see Figure 1 for a screenshot of stc-suncoast.org) hasn't exactly ignited, I've found the content management aspects of blogging software to be a more efficient, appealing way to maintain a chapter Web site. It's much easier to publish and update content through the blog's admin console rather than FTP-ing individual HTML pages. When it's time to change the look and feel of the site, the blog's includes, style sheets, and themes make it simple to change.

After using blogging software, traditional HTML sites seem old-fashioned to me. Blogging software provides content management systems "for the masses," as Tim Carter (see the December 2005 *Intercom*) and others have said. Now that I've converted my blog into a mini-CMS, I'm not heartbroken if no one posts. I know that I've saved myself a lot of time and made site maintenance novel. I feel that I'm on the edge of how Web sites will be created and maintained in the future.

Blog, continued on page 5

Implementing Your Own Blog

Most likely you're not eager to drop your entire site and convert it to a CMS blog as I did. But if you want to experiment with a blog, you can add it as a link to your site. Here's a three-step process for doing that:

1. Go to **WordPress.com** and click **Get a WordPress Blog now**. Register and get your log-in information for your site. There are other blog options—TypePad, Blogger, LiveJournal, Drupal, Pmachine—but if your Web host uses cPanel (an administrative tool), you can use the Fantastico feature to easily install WordPress's database onto your host.)
2. Add a link to your blog on your Web site's home page.
3. Start posting content.

Of course, you'll want to define categories, change images, customize headings, alter colors, pick themes, create static pages, and adjust other details to customize your blog. WordPress provides copious, albeit scattered, instructions. From the home page at WordPress.org, click the **Docs** link to see instructions on the basics of site configuration, the **Extend** link to peruse different designs, and the **Support** link to ask questions.

I've found the Connections theme to be the easiest to work with, and I've taken a few notes on how to customize it (see stc-suncoast.org/customizing-connections).

Suppose you don't want to merely link to your blog, but actually display the posts on your Web site's home page, which is written in HTML? You can do this. Just create your blog, get your feed's URL, and then follow these steps:

1. Go to www.feddigest.com and sign up for a free account. This site will convert your RSS feed into a format that can appear on your Web site's HTML page.
2. In FeedDigest, generate your feed's output in HTML and copy the JavaScript code. (The site walks you through this process.)



Figure 1. The new home page for the Suncoast chapter Web site.

3. Paste the JavaScript code into Notepad to strip away any hidden formatting, and then copy and paste from Notepad into your home page. The loading time of the blog may not be very fast on your site, though.

There are certainly other tools to convert RSS to HTML (such as feedforall.com), but this is a starting point. I must add that I haven't experimented much with the latter method. I used cPanel's Fantastico and installed the database directly on our host.

Future of RSS

RSS is not a passing phenomenon. It's here to stay. For example, take a look at www.nytimes.com and click the XML button at the bottom. You can see how feeds are separated by topic. STC also offers a general news feed to which you can subscribe. And the new STC Forum (stcforum.org) allows you to subscribe to specific feed categories (click the **RSS Feeds** link at the top for details).

I plan to continue blogging on our chapter site. Sooner or later it will catch on. And as the Web transforms into a more collaborative, interactive space (the transformation known as "Web 2.0"), getting involved in a site's content will be natural, even if you're only reading it for the first time. ♦

Open Jam 2006

Musically inclined technical communicators won't want to miss the fifth annual Open Jam at STC's 53rd Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. All STC singers and musicians are welcome to showcase their talents at this informal gathering at 8 PM on Monday, May 8. (Check the conference *Program* for the location.) Music lovers are welcome to cheer on their STC peers as they enjoy the show. For more information or to sign up, visit the STC conference Web site at www.stc.org/53rdConf/extras/open.jam.asp. ♦

Distinguished Chapter Service Award Winners for 2006

The Society for Technical Communication has long recognized the importance of the hard work and commitment of its chapter members. Without their energy and enthusiasm, the Society would cease to be the largest, most effective, and most prestigious organization of technical communicators in the world.

In 1988, the Society initiated the distinguished chapter service award (DCSA) to recognize exemplary dedication to the chapter and its activities. The first awards were presented in 1989. Following is a list of DCSA winners for 2006. (Some chapters have requested that their DCSA recipients not be publicized until after the chapters hold their awards banquets. Winners for these chapters are not listed below.)

Region 1 Chapters

Philadelphia Metro
Donn R. DeBoard
Marc Green

Southwestern Ontario
Sherry L. McMenemy

Region 2 Chapters

Carolina
Elizabeth L. Kent

United Kingdom
Elizabeth M. Hale

Region 3 Chapters

Middle Tennessee
Rita B. Johnson

Orlando
Mark Hanigan
Dan Jones

South Carolina Midlands
Karen L. Baranich

Region 4 Chapters

Northeast Ohio
Beth A. Williams

Southeastern Michigan
Mary Jo David

Region 5 Chapters

Lone Star
Robert D. Brown
Elisa K. Miller
Lauren E. Womack

Phoenix
Chanda A. Child
Timothy R. Eull

Southern Arizona
Helen A. Marty

Region 6 Chapters

India
Frederick R. Menezes
Tharun K. Unni

Twin Cities
Preeti Mathur

Region 7 Chapters

Mid-Valley
Kimberly A. Bixby

Rocky Mountain
Martha K. Sippel

Region 8 Chapters

Australia
Jill Nicholson

Berkeley
David P. Alt

San Francisco
Marc Smircich
Lottie B. Applewhite

Silicon Valley
Jackie E. Athey
Laura M. Bayer
Harlo Lenning
Fred Sampson
Wallace N. Sueyoshi
Rebecca Thomson ◆

LCR Needs Success Stories

By Jackie A. Damrau, Manager, LCR Training, Planning and Development Committee

LCR Training Planning and Development Committee is looking for leadership stories that we can include (we'll remove the names) for use in our leadership training modules. Tell us how you took a bad situation and turned it around, how you took over the reins and made it work, or any other leadership story within your STC community. Send your stories to jdamrau3@airmail.net. ◆

Distinguished SIG Service Award Winners for 2006

In 2002, the Society initiated a formal awards program to recognize the commitment and hard work of members of its special interest groups (SIGs). The distinguished SIG service award (DSSA) recognizes length of SIG membership, consistency of service over the duration of membership, and variety of service.

Following are the winners of the 2006 distinguished SIG service award:

AccessAbility

Fabien Vais

Consulting and Independent Contracting

Thomas Barker
Jodie M. Gilmore
Richard P. Maggiani

Indexing

William L. Collins

Instructional Design and Learning

Jackie A. Damrau
Sylvia A. Miller

Management

Michael P. Markley

Online

Lou Quillio

Policies and Procedures

Lois E. Marsh

Usability and User Experience

Susan L. Duncan ♦

New Sigma Tau Chi Members Named

The STC board of directors recently elected eleven new members of Sigma Tau Chi (STX), the honorary society for students of technical communication. STX recognizes students enrolled in a baccalaureate or graduate technical communication program who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or above, have exemplary participation in STC, and demonstrate a potential for significant contribution to the profession. The new members are as follows:

Undergraduate Members

Peter S. Bird
Clarkson University

Laura A. Castle
Cedarville University

Lisa A. Ferrara
Utah State University

John W. McFarland
*New Mexico Institute of Mining
and Technology*

Laurel A. Verhagen
University of Wisconsin-Stout

Graduate Members

Alexandra L. Bartell
University of Washington

Peggy G. Bivins
University of Central Florida

Heather J. Brautman
North Carolina State

Linda Chadwick
Missouri State University

Candice D. McKee
Oklahoma State University

Andrea L. Zachery
Oklahoma State University

For more information on STX, please
contact the STC office at stc@stc.org. ♦

Distinguished Service Award for Students

In 2005, the Society introduced a special awards program, the distinguished service award for students (DSAS), designed to recognize exemplary dedication to student chapters and their activities. Only student members who are currently attending school on a full-time basis are eligible for this award. The winners of the 2006 DSAS are listed below. (Some chapters have requested that their DSAS recipients not be publicized until after the chapters hold their awards banquets. Winners for these chapters do not appear below.)

Orlando Chapter

Alex R. Garcia

Texas Tech University Student Chapter

Linda L. Rothman

Oklahoma State University Student Chapter

Andrea L. Zachary

University of Wisconsin-Stout Student Community

Katie M. Thiel
Laurel A. Verhagen ♦

Society Events

April 6–7, 2006

The Manitoba Chapter STC and Red River College will hold their annual conference, **Technology and People: The/Write/Connection**, at the Princess Street Campus of Red River College in Winnipeg, Canada. For more information, please contact:

Henry Shorr
(204) 945-7298
hshorr@mts.net

April 12, 2006

William Horton will present an STC Web seminar, **Software Simulations: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices**, from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. Participants will learn how software simulations can enliven the learning experience by engaging users and adding interactivity. Register at stc.webex.com.

May 7–10, 2006

STC's **53rd Annual Conference** will be held at Bally's Las Vegas Hotel and Paris Las Vegas Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Post-conference sessions will be held on Thursday, May 11. For more information, please visit www.stc.org/53rdConf/.

May 24, 2006

Neil Perlin will present an STC Web seminar, **Life After RoboHelp—How We Got Here and Where To Next**, from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. Perlin will summarize the history of Help authoring

tools, discuss the major RoboHelp replacement tools, and examine how a move to XML-based authoring tools affects documentation development. Register at stc.webex.com.

June 14, 2006

Paul Prescod will present an STC Web seminar, **Introduction to DITA**, from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will bridge the gap between the high-level hype about DITA (Darwin Information Typing Architecture) and the many detailed technical articles about how DITA works. Register at stc.webex.com.

October 13–14, 2006

STC's Region 2 Conference, **Making Cents of Making Sense: The Business of Technical Writing**, will be held in London, England. The audience for the conference includes anyone involved in the business or production of technical documentation, including writers, editors, documentation managers, translators, technical illustrators, and publishers. For more information, please visit www.stcuk.org/R2conf.

Send announcements of your community or regional events to tieline@stc.org. ♦

For Membership Managers: The STC Membership Cycle

Many community membership managers may soon notice a drop in the community member counts they receive from the STC office. Don't worry: This happens every year as part of the annual cycle of STC membership.

In March of every year, the STC office removes from active membership all members who have not yet paid their dues. The drop in membership is reflected in both the community membership counts and the membership counts for the entire Society. However, between now and June 30 (the end of the fiscal year), membership will continue to increase as late renewers pay their dues and new members join the Society.

In March, those members who did not pay their dues by the February 28 deadline received an e-mail notice informing them that no further issues of *Intercom* will be forthcoming without renewal of their STC membership. You might also use community meetings and newsletter articles to remind members to renew if they have not yet done so. ♦

Membership Pins Available

STC leaders seeking to recognize helpful volunteers or chapter members attaining new status may wish to purchase STC membership pins through the Society specialty gifts program. These stylish lapel pins feature the STC logo and are color-coded to membership grade. An order form for these and other STC specialty gifts is available in the *STC Merchandise* brochure, which can be downloaded from www.stc.org/pubs/brochures01.asp. ♦

Mailings from the STC Office

- In March, the STC office began mailing press releases about the Society's new fellows and associate fellows to media outlets in their respective areas.
- Lists of senior members were mailed to chapter presidents at the end of March.
- March monthly reports will be mailed to chapter membership managers in early April.
- In early April, chapter presidents will receive a chapter roster listing members who have *not* renewed as of March 31, 2006. To obtain a roster of members who have renewed for 2006, contact the STC membership department at membership@stc.org.
- In mid-April, all student chapter faculty advisors will receive a reminder to complete and return a chapter financial report form to the Society treasurer by May 31, 2006.

Community Leaders' Monthly Reminders

April

- Please remind members who have not yet paid their dues to send payment as soon as possible. *Intercom* will no longer be mailed to those with unpaid membership dues. Their last issue will be the April 2006 issue.
- Send a list of incoming officers to the STC office via fax at (703) 522-2075 or e-mail at membership@stc.org. STC tracks the following positions: president, first vice president, treasurer, membership manager, employment manager, newsletter editor, and webmaster.
- Ask the chapter tellers committee to announce the names of new chapter officers at the meeting for the installation of officers.
- See that all chapter committee records are promptly turned over to the new administration.
- Make certain the treasurer knows that the term in office extends until the financial report is filed.
- Begin thinking about the upcoming year for your community. Make preliminary notes and draw up goals.
- Register for STC's 53rd Annual Conference on or before April 21, 2006, to take advantage of advance registration rates.
- Post information or updates about community scholarships on your community Web site.
- SIG managers: Plan for the SIG meeting at the annual conference. Prepare extra SIG brochures and other handouts. If you are unable to attend the conference, have another SIG member lead your SIG's meeting and coordinate with you afterward on the items discussed.

Membership at a Glance

As of April 3, 2006:

Total members:	18,412
Members residing in the U.S.:	15,649
Members residing in Canada:	1,619
Members residing elsewhere:	1,144
Total communities*:	158

*Includes 109 professional chapters, 29 student chapters, and 20 SIGs



Leadership Links

Leaders' Reference Guide: www.stc.org/PDF_Files/ChapterLeadersGuide_0510.pdf

Chapter Handbook: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chResources01.asp

Tieline Knowledge Base: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineKb01.asp

Chapter finances: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chFinances01.asp

Tieline archives: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineArchive01.asp