



# Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication Volume 6, Issue 6 December 2005/January 2006



**Mission:** Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

## Peter Meyer to discuss Customizing the XML Authoring Environment at our February Meeting

Peter Meyer is Managing Director of Elkera Pty Limited, XML content management software developers and consultants located in Sydney, Australia. Peter is a former lawyer who has worked with SGML & XML document markup and publishing applications for over 10 years. Peter's company has developed XML authoring and publishing software for use in single source publishing applications. Peter is a regular presenter at XML conferences in Australia. He is an active member of the OASIS LegalXML eContracts Technical Committee.

The production of technical and knowledge management documentation increasingly requires the use of specialized tools that support single source publishing requirements. More and more enterprises are finding that XML is the core

technology in documentation systems. Content authors need to use XML editing applications to create content in a structured form that is self describing and separated from presentation.

In his presentation, Peter Meyer will discuss the issues involved in customizing XML editors to achieve high levels of usability for content authors. Usability is based on DTD design as well as editor configuration. The presentation will compare standard, out-of-the-box applications with carefully tailored applications using the Blast Radius XMetal Author to show the levels of usability that can be achieved.

**Where:**  
MSOE Alumni Partnership Center, 1120 N. Broadway, Milwaukee  
(See [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org) for map)

**When:**  
Tuesday, February 7th  
**\*NOTE - Date changed from February 14th!**

**Schedule:**  
Networking  
5:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Dinner and Brief Announcements  
6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.

Presentation  
7:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

**Members:**  
Watch your email for RSVP information. You may also RSVP at: [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### In this issue:

February Meeting.....	1
Help Shape Your Chapter..	2
Consultants & Contractors	2
November Recap.....	3
December Recap.....	3
Chapter Contacts.....	4
Meeting Schedule.....	4
Member Feature.....	4

## Help Shape the Future of Our Chapter

Might you be willing to contribute a handful of hours to help shape the future of our STC chapter? If so, please join our “rechartering” team, which will begin its existence early this year.

As part of the STC transformation, communities such as chapters and SIGs must recharter with the organization. If you haven’t been following the transformation exercise within STC as a whole, visit the transformation website (<http://stc.org/transformation/>) to get an idea of what has been accomplished thus far.

Chapter rechartering consists of a group of Chapter members getting together to review why the Chapter exists, who its members are, and how best to serve the

needs of those members. Specifically, the group needs to reply to a series of eight questions (see below) and to obtain the STC Board’s approval of the document. The Board must approve the application for the chapter to obtain funding for its activities in the future.

Our Wisconsin Chapter plans to complete the rechartering process early in 2006. We are looking for current Chapter members to join our Immediate Past President, Kathie Gorski, in a series of two or three meetings to discuss and answer the rechartering questions. We’re hoping for a mix of new, long-standing, and student members to join the discussion. One part of the process is likely to be a survey to the full Chapter membership.

meetings have a guest speaker. Examples: for the first meeting of 2005, members of the group shared with each other some of the resources they use to better market themselves. For the second meeting (upcoming), an invited guest will be speaking on trends in technology of interest to the independent. For more information or to join, contact Kathie Gorski at [kgorski@execpc.com](mailto:kgorski@execpc.com) or 262-628-1672. ♦

If you are willing to become involved in shaping the future of the Wisconsin chapter, contact Kathie Gorski at [kgorski@execpc.com](mailto:kgorski@execpc.com). We’ll decide, based on the composition of the group, whether to meet over lunch, in the evening, or on a couple of Saturday mornings/afternoons.

Rechartering questions:

1. What is the current name of your Chapter or SIG?
2. What will be the name of your new community?
3. What is the mission statement of your community?
4. What are the goals of your community? (list 5 to 10)
5. What strategies will your community strive to implement to achieve your goals? (list 1-3 for each goal)
6. What programs and activities will your community offer to implement your strategies? (list at least one for each strategy)
7. Describe the members whom you hope to attract to your new community.
8. How will your community provide value to the larger STC community and further the overall goals of the Society? ♦

## Consultants & Independent Contractors!

If you’re a consultant or independent contractor and have not yet joined our local Special Interest Group (SIG), why not do so now?

Members of the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG meet every other month over dinner at Heinemann’s Restaurant in Wauwatosa (intersection of Mayfair and Center Rds). The SIG has as its goal to help new and seasoned consultants alike to practice their trade more effectively. Most but not all

## November Meeting Recap

The November STC Chapter meeting was held on November 9<sup>th</sup> at the Best Western Midway Hotel in Brookfield. The meeting featured Ron Sova, usability engineer and information design specialist.

Ron gave us three major reasons for why usability is so important. First, usability reduces support, training, and documentation costs, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Second, usability decreases engineering, development, and product cost, leading to increased usage and productivity. Finally, usability shortens the quality assurance process so direct sales can be realized more quickly.

Ron gave five basic tips for technical communicators who want to incorporate usability into their documentation and support products:

1. Use more than color to convey meaning.
2. Keep terminology consistent.
3. Avoid technical jargon.
4. Become an end-user advocate on design teams.
5. Become an end-user yourself.

Ron is the President and Senior Principal Consultant of Sova Consulting Group. He is a user interface designer, usability specialist, and graphic designer. ♦

## December Meeting Recap

The December STC Chapter meeting was held on December 13<sup>th</sup> at the MSOE Alumni Partnership Center. The meeting featured Ms. Kay Chitwood, Director of Learning Innovations & Director of the Wisc-Online Resource Center at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Ms. Chitwood's presentation focused on the Wisc-Online Resource Center, a digital library of web-based teaching, learning and assessment resources available to instructors when they are designing and revising courses. The library contains more than 2000

searchable "learning objects," defined as small chunks of self-contained, multimedia information designed to engage and enhance the learning experience.

"Learning objects" are small enough to be embedded into a learning lesson, unit, or course. Since "learning objects" are portable and adaptable, they may be used in multiple learning environments and across many disciplines.

To interact more fully with "learning objects," visit: [www.wisc-online.org](http://www.wisc-online.org) ♦

## Chapter Officers and Contact Information



[www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### President:

Mollye Barrett  
414-331-1378  
[president@stc-wi.org](mailto:president@stc-wi.org)

### Immediate Past President:

Kathie Gorski  
262-628-1339  
[pastpresident@stc-wi.org](mailto:pastpresident@stc-wi.org)

### Vice President:

Susan Duncan  
414-961-7279  
[vicepresident@stc-wi.org](mailto:vicepresident@stc-wi.org)

### Membership Manager:

Christine White  
920-893-9705  
[membership@stc-wi.org](mailto:membership@stc-wi.org)

### Newsletter Editor

Jesse Kieck  
262-544-1796  
[newsletter@stc-wi.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-wi.org)

### Secretary:

Robert Graw  
262-894-7662  
[secretary@stc-wi.org](mailto:secretary@stc-wi.org)

### Treasurer:

Philomena Sucharda  
262-681-9666  
[treasurer@stc-wi.org](mailto:treasurer@stc-wi.org)

### Website & Mentoring:

Dave Clark  
414-229-2643  
[mentoring@stc-wi.org](mailto:mentoring@stc-wi.org)

Date	Location
Tuesday, February 7th, 2006	MSOE, 1120 N. Broadway, Milwaukee * <b>NOTE</b> - Date changed from February 14th!
Wednesday, March 15th, 2006	Midway Hotel, 1005 S. Moreland Rd., Brookfield
Tuesday, April 11th, 2006	MSOE, 1120 N. Broadway, Milwaukee
Tuesday, May 2nd, 2006	MSOE, 1120 N. Broadway, Milwaukee * <b>NOTE</b> - Date changed from May 9th!
Wednesday, June 14th, 2006	Midway Hotel, 1005 S. Moreland Rd., Brookfield

## Member Feature: How Are You Networking?

*By Bob Graw,  
Secretary,  
Wisconsin Chapter STC*

We've all heard the riddle about the half-glass of water; is it half-full or half-empty? In today's ever-changing business climate, the word "networking" has become a similar riddle. Who should practice networking more, the employed or unemployed?

Networking is defined as "to interact or engage in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support." And too many of us overlook the value of networking until we find ourselves in the unemployed ranks. The gainfully employed are already preoccupied at least

40 hours per week networking with co-workers and clients, so how could they benefit from more networking?

All of us have our reasons for belonging to an STC chapter but networking should be our primary reason. Whether employed or unemployed, our chapter serves as a network for all of us who have chosen technical communication as our profession. When we gather for a few hours each month, we do so "to interact or engage in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support."

As monthly meetings continue, consider the value of networking and how the chapter's officers are

working hard to find speakers and topics to support your continued development as technical communicators. Meeting attendance encourages the interaction that the new officers need to better support your needs. Since communication is our supposed strength, let's "practice what we preach" and support each other! ♦

### Member News!

Christine White,  
Membership Manger,  
reports these New Senior members:

Howard Ellis  
Jeff Jenson  
Arthur Orchel  
Jill Wesolowski

**Congratulations!**

*Lakeshore Connection* is published six times per year (February, April, June, August, October and December) for members of the Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication. Permission is not needed to reprint articles from *Lakeshore Connection* as long as the author and the newsletter are given credit. Please send a copy of the reprinted article to the editor.

We welcome articles from members. Feature articles and articles of general interest should be about 300-400 words. Articles should be submitted as a Word file attached to an email. Please include your name, title, and company.

**Mailing address:** Lakeshore Connection - STC Wisconsin,  
Attention: Jesse Kieck, 421 North Moreland Boulevard #1, Waukesha, WI 53188