

STC Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication

January 2008
Volume 8, Issue 1



February 16 Networking Workshop (1/2 day)

By Mollye Barrett

Mark your calendars!

On Saturday, Feb. 16, your STC Wisconsin Chapter sponsors a half-day workshop. Location will be announced at a later date.

The featured speaker is Scott Abel, a founding member of Content Management Professionals (CM Pros). Scott previously served as Executive Director of the organization.

Topics

Networking; what does it mean, how to do it, and what to expect.

During his sessions, Scott will give away free tickets to the following events:

DocTrain West Conference (value \$999)

DocTrain Life Sciences Conference (value \$1299)

DocTrain East Conference (value \$999)

About the Speaker:

Scott Abel is a content management strategist whose strength lies in helping organizations improve the way they author, maintain, and deliver their information assets. Scott's website, TheContentWrangler.com, is a popular resource for professional communicators who value content as a business asset, worthy of being managed.

Scott currently serves as program manager for the Documentation and Training Conference Series (www.doctrain.com): these include DocTrain West, May 6-9, 2008 in Vancouver, BC; DocTrain Life Sciences, June 23-26, 2008 in Indianapolis; and Web Content, June 17-18, 2008 (www.webcontent2008.com) in Chicago. ♦

More information about the workshop topics will be available at our January 9, 2008 meeting.

Workshop Details

Cost for the ½ day workshop to be announced.

NOTE: Students must have evidence they carry 9 credits or more.

Registration

You must pre-register to guarantee your spot!

To register for the workshop and prepay with PayPal, go to <http://www.stc-wi.org/>

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To get the latest updates on the Chicago Manual of Style, subscribe at <https://subfill.uchicago.edu/CMS/Email.aspx>

January Chapter Meeting: Anatomy of an XML-based Structured Writing System

Managers face a difficult challenge in implementing XML-based writing systems.

Join us on Wednesday, January 9 at Klemmer's where Brian Buehling will present an overview of the architecture of a typical XML-based structured writing system. From document creation and workflow control to data storage and online distribution, Brian will analyze each system component.

As more companies develop comprehensive structured writing strategies for their organizations, it becomes important to understand the common characteristics of successful XML-based publishing systems. Vendors may target their products and services at portions of the structured writing architecture such as authoring or web delivery. However, since system priorities vary greatly by company and industry, no turnkey solution exists that will handle the demands of every organization. This means that managers face a difficult challenge in designing and implementing a structured writing system for their company.

Three basic areas have to be considered when designing publishing systems that support structured writing. First, content creation: building a single interface which can handle multiple authoring tools for authors, editors, and reviewers. Second, content management: storing document components, separating their content and structure from any formatting information to optimize re-use and facilitate dynamic distribution. And third, content distribution: developing multiple channels to deliver content to users. Content may take the form of high-quality printed pages, wireless devices, electronic web pages, and syndication engines. ♦

Consider the creation, the management, and the distribution of content.

Brian Buehling is currently the Managing Director for Dakota Systems, a consulting firm specializing in publishing technology. Over the course of the past several years, his papers on XML and publishing have been presented at XML Europe, AUGI, Web Services One, AIIM, and XML.com. He has earned an M.B.A. with concentrations in Finance and Strategy from the University of Chicago and an M.S. in Systems Science and Mathematics from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

Networking begins at 5:30; dinner at 6; and the presentation begins at 7. Klemmer's is located at 10401 West Oklahoma Avenue in West Allis. Free parking is available behind the building.

To RSVP and prepay, visit www.stc-wi.org. ♦

Quality on the Couch

By Klaus C. Hofer

Applying Psychology to Technical Communication

When planes crash, wrong legs are amputated, or millions of dollars are lost, bad communication is often cited as the cause. Then even professional, well motivated specialists get caught in classic "my word against yours" scenarios:

I thought you meant... – No, I meant...; That's not obvious – But it's in the manual!

Such miscommunication illustrates precisely what is normal about being human: Confusion, misunderstanding, overlooking signals, getting lost. These normal behaviors can occur while configuring a cardiopulmonary bypass machine or while calibrating the engine of an airliner. We can measure the consequences of bad communication (wrong leg amputated), but we don't know how to measure good communication. Who says what is good? What are the parameters?

[Continued, page 5](#)

PayPal used for Chapter Events

People wishing to register for the monthly chapter meetings must now provide payment at the time of registration. Payment for the meeting is now accomplished as part of the online registration process. The payments are processed using PayPal.

PayPal provides several benefits for our chapter. These benefits include:

- secure online registration
- acceptance of all major credit and debit cards
- printable receipts after transaction
- not having to bring cash or checks to the meeting
- automatic confirmation via email
- online refunds for cancellations (provided cancellation is received by deadline date)
- electronic check option for those who prefer to pay by check (see PayPal site for details)

Earlier this year there was a trial of the PayPal system. At the November meeting, people had the option of pre-paying using PayPal. It met with such success that using PayPal is now required for all future meetings.

Many people probably already have a PayPal account. If you do not have a PayPal account, it only takes a short time to complete the registration process. It does not cost anything to open a PayPal account.

If you don't want to get a PayPal account, you don't have to. You will still be able to register for our meetings. You will have to supply a valid credit card as part of the registration process. The transaction is still handled by PayPal, but you do not have to have a PayPal account. For more information about PayPal, please visit www.PayPal.com.

Some features of the PayPal registration system on our website are still in development, so more information is still to come. The March issue will feature instructions for using PayPal for different options, such as registering for multiple events at one time and registering several attendees (or guests) with a single account. ♦

Our Members in the News

Mollye Barrett presented "Content Analysis: The Key to Reuse" at the Middle Tennessee Chapter on January 3rd. Details are at <http://www.stcmidtenn.org/RSVP/2008-1-3-contentanalysis.htm>.

Mollye will also be the featured speaker at the Four Lake Chapter meeting on January 18th. Members of our chapter are welcome! Details are at <http://stc4lakes.wordpress.com/2007/12/07/next-chapter-meeting-friday-january-18th-1130-to-100/>.

Mollye is our chapter's Immediate Past President, and the Chair of our Mentoring committee. Over the years, she has contributed many hours and her valuable talents to our chapter. ♦

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STC Webinars

All Web seminars are held from 1 – 2 pm Eastern unless otherwise noted.

January 30

eDiscovery, The Law and You: Expanding Your Sphere of Influence

STC Members \$ 79
Nonmembers \$149

February 13

Converting *Captive* Demonstrations into Simulations

STC Members \$ 79
Nonmembers \$149

[Register for a Web seminar here](#), or for more information, contact [Elreatha Matthews](#).

Upcoming Chapter Events

January 9

Topic: “Anatomy of an XML-based Structured Writing System” presented by Brian Buehling, Managing Director for Dakota Systems, a consulting firm specializing in publishing technology.

Time: 5:30 networking; 6 dinner; 7-8 presentation.

Location: Klemmer’s Banquet Center, 10401 West Oklahoma Avenue, West Allis, WI 53227 [MapQuest Map](#)

Cost: \$15 members; \$20 non-members; \$10 students; \$5 no dinner.

NOTE: Pre-payment is required to secure your dinner reservation.

RSVP and prepay: by noon on Tuesday, January 8 at www.stc-wi.org.

February 12

Topic: “Web 2.0” presented by Scott Abel. A founding member of Content Management Professionals (CM Pros), Scott previously served as Executive Director of the organization.

Time: 5:30 networking; 6 dinner; 7-8 presentation.

Location: MSOE Alumni Partnership Center, 1120 North Broadway

Cost: To be announced.

NOTE: Pre-payment is required to secure your dinner reservation.

RSVP: by noon on Friday, February 8 at www.stc-wi.org.

February 16

Topic: Workshop on Networking presented by Scott Abel.

Save this date! Still working on details, more information to come.

March 12

Robert Kimm (Medtronics), Implementing DITA: Case Study

Save this date! Still working on details, more information to come.

April 10 and 12 (meeting and workshop)

Topic: Effective Online Editing, presented by Geoff Hart

Meeting Time: 5:30 networking; 6 dinner; 7-8 presentation.

Location: MSOE Alumni Partnership Center, 1120 North Broadway

Cost: To be announced.

NOTE: Pre-payment is required to secure your dinner reservation.

RSVP: by noon on Monday, April 8 at www.stc-wi.org.

Workshop Time: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., break at noon for lunch

Workshop participants will receive a digital copy of Mr. Hart’s book (\$20 value). More information to come, as available. ♦

Learning and Teaching Opportunities

By Mike McCallister, Vice President

Explore Drupal CMS at
DrupalCampWI January 19

Mollye Barrett and Mike McCallister will present a session of particular interest to technical communicators. Other sessions will cover everything from Drupal basics to "Druplash and Druplex: Content Managed Flash/Flex using Drupal."

Interested? Sign up at
<http://barcamp.org/DrupalCampWI>

Registration for DrupalCamp Wisconsin begins at 9 am January 19, with sessions running from 10 am to 10 pm. Come when you can; stay all day. This education, networking opportunity, and the chance to polish your own presentation skills come absolutely free. ♦

DRUPAL CAMP Wisconsin

Are you looking for easier ways of building websites for your consulting business? Do you want to build skills and learn new technologies? Here's a chance to do both, and it's free!

DrupalCamp Wisconsin is a free one-day "un-conference" Saturday, January 19, 2008 at the Milwaukee School of Engineering Multipurpose Room, 1025 N. Broadway St.

Let's define our terms:

Drupal: *Drupal is a free software package that allows an individual or a community of users to easily publish, manage and organize a wide variety of content on a website. Tens of thousands of people and organizations have used Drupal to power scores of different websites.* –Drupal.org.

Un-Conference: Everyone is encouraged to participate in some way, from presenting sessions to working the registration desk.

Camp: Want to learn something in particular? Post your idea on the conference wiki site, and people with associated expertise will sign up to share that knowledge. Have something to share? Post your proposed session and people can sign up to attend. For more general information about BarCamps, visit www.barcamp.org. ♦

Quality on the Couch, continued

For example, how do you measure:

- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Confusion
- Understanding

In short, the customer wants something good, and technical communicators don't know how to measure it. If it's bad (whatever that is), the customer complains. Behavioral science can help.

Behavioral science has, over more than fifty years, given us measurements of the behaviors that impact user performance. With these measurements, we can tailor our documentation to best fit our users. The technical communicator is the tailor, and the measurements come from modern psychology.

We may not be able to measure whether an unseen audience understands our message, but we can measure whether we have met the minimum criteria of cognition.

The 20th century was a time of engineering and development. But now, as over 96% of all industrial accidents can be traced to communication errors, consumers want change.

Thus, the 21st century must be a time that serves the humans that use these technologies. Technical communicators have a ringside seat on user behavior, and they can make a huge contribution if they work to standards that fit within known user criteria. ♦

*How do we
measure good
communication?*

The next
newsletter
deadline is
February 20

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Member News



Join our membership manager Verla Gatchell in welcoming the newest 2007 members:

Melissa Buckmaster
Rondi Bystrom
Wendy Frausto
Stephanie Reister
Strom Snyder

Welcome!!

That brings us to a total of 29 new members for the year. Congratulations, and keep telling others about our organization! ♦

November Chapter Meeting Recap – Argumentation Strategies

By Paul Lindem

Hurry! Read this recap. If you don't, you'll miss the information passed on by Dr. Klaus Hofer and your day will be kaput. Seventeen members of the Wisconsin Chapter now know what Klaus espoused, and are already putting their new-found knowledge to work. And after you read this recap, you'll be able to supply Judith with more newsletter articles than she'll ever need.

The paragraph above is an example of writing using "Argumentation Strategies", the topic of Dr. Klaus Hofer's presentation at the Wednesday, November 14th, meeting.

Like Abraham Maslow's pyramid of human needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization), a similar pyramid of argumentation strategies can be identified. The strategies include a quality strategy (Type I) at the pinnacle of the pyramid, a social strategy (Type II) in the mid-section, and a safety strategy (Type III) at the base of the pyramid.

Type III strategies answer the question "What happens if you don't follow my suggestion?" Type II strategies answer the question "What experiences prove this works?" Type I strategies answer the question "What are the added values?"

So, the next time you need to give a presentation, put together a proposal, or write a newsletter article, remember your argumentation strategies and you'll be assured of a persuasive communication. ♦

Call for Articles

Members, this is your newsletter! Use it to learn something and, perhaps, to teach something.

Please submit the articles, opinions, announcements, book reviews, upcoming events, job changes, and promotions that you want to share with your fellow chapter members.

Judith Blackbourn, Newsletter Editor
newsletter@stc-wi.org ♦

STC Lakeshore Connection is published six times a year for members of the Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication. Permission is not needed to reprint articles from *Lakeshore Connection*; you can simply credit the author and the newsletter. As a courtesy, please send a copy of the publication to our editor.

We welcome articles from all members. The next deadline is February 20. Feature articles and articles of general interest should be about 300-400 words. Articles should be submitted as an MS Word file attached to an e-mail. Please include your name, title, and company.

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