

# STC Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication

February 2007  
Volume 7, Issue 2



## March Workshop: Applied Psychology for Technical Writers

By Rebekka Andersen, Program Committee Chair

Mark your calendars! On Friday, March 16th and Saturday, March 17th, the STC Wisconsin Chapter will host its main event of the year – Dr. Klaus Hofer of Communications And Training international (CAT-i) will present an interactive workshop on Applied Psychology for Technical Writers.

The workshop will be conducted twice to provide options for busy schedules.

Dr. Hofer will also present a one-hour, high-impact presentation at our March 14 Chapter meeting. These events promise to be unique, energy-packed opportunities for learning new strategies and methods for enabling effective communication.

### Workshop Details

The workshop will be hosted by Metavante.

- Friday, March 16, 8:30-5 p.m.
- Saturday, March 17, 8:30-5 p.m.

Cost for the 1-day workshop:

- \$60, STC members
- \$75, non-STC members
- \$25, Students

RSVP through the Wisconsin Chapter STC website (<http://www.stc-wi.org>).

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## Status of the Tech Writing Market

By Susan Park, Newsletter Editor

Recently, one of the members of the STC Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG started a thread about the state of the tech writing market.

Judging by the responses, the market for the majority of technical writers in the United States and Canada is robust—at least, it's keeping many of the members of the SIG very busy.

Writers who responded to the thread are seeing lots of openings for full-time, "permanent" work in addition to contract work. One writer says, "Things have really picked up." Another writes, "I'm turning down work every month." One writer is even hiring subcontractors because she can't keep up with the demand for her services.

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## February Chapter Meeting: Instructional Design and Technical Writers

**“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”**

*Mark Twain*

Join us on Tuesday, February 13 at MSOE, where Dr. David Howell and Charlene Benjamin will discuss how instruction design influences non-instructional designers.

This interactive presentation will be based on the shared experiences of the audience.

Attendees will look at how they have been affected by various

design models. By the end of the presentation, participants will draw conclusions regarding (1) how to work effectively with instructional designers and (2) how they might be able to implement instructional design strategies in their jobs.

Dr. Howell is an assistant professor at MSOE and the Program Director for the Technical Communication degree program.

Ms. Benjamin manages the North American Service Training team at Johnson Controls' Learning & Development group.

Networking begins at 5:30; dinner at 6; and the presentation begins at 7 p.m. The MSOE Alumni Partnership Center is located at 1120 North Broadway.

To RSVP, visit [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org). ♦

## Member Spotlights

I am delighted to be your new membership manager. It's a pleasure to have the chance to meet you and welcome new members to our organization. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues or questions concerning membership—I look forward to hearing from you.

STC Wisconsin chapter members add value and support the successes of area businesses and community organizations. The next issue of the Lakeshore Connection will introduce a column showcasing the accomplishments of local members. We'll highlight special skills, talents, and achievements.

If you have a story or accomplishment you would like to share, please send an email to me at the address below. Thank you.

*Anne Nault, Membership Manager, 2006-2007*  
[membership@stc-wi.org](mailto:membership@stc-wi.org) ♦

## State of Tech Writing, continued

Outsourcing of technical communications seems to be rare for most of the respondents. One Denver resident notes that she's "never worked so hard in all my life—'06 was my best year ever."

On the other side of the spectrum, a resident of Florence, South Carolina is having difficulty finding enough contract work to keep her going. She must travel to the Research Triangle (Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina), which means living away from home for weeks on end.

Respondents living in major metropolitan areas seem to be having no trouble finding work, which is good news for contractors in the Milwaukee/Chicago area. ♦

## March Workshop, continued

### Workshop Topics:

Psychological Sets—How can we resolve misunderstandings in communication?

Whole Brain Communications—Right/left brain information processing and how it relates to technical communication.

Reading Behavior—A discussion of eye-tracking, repeated reading, and difficulties readers encounter.

Communication for Human Consumption—Gestalt, Memory, Learning

Navigating Through Books and Websites—Mandatory redundancies and connections.

Question and Answer Patterns

Interviews and Listening

Storyboards and Checklists

### Applied Psychology for Technical Writers—An Overview from Dr. Hofer

Training humans to use an application compares to customizing humans for a product. Success in tomorrow's industries demands it be the other way around. The product must be custom tailored for human consumption. The measurements are available. Modern Psychology gave them to us.

We know how our memory systems work and how to overload them. The performance and limits of the short-term and working-memories teach us story boarding and product design. The mechanics of long-term memory storage guide training, marketing, and brainstorming techniques.

Research in Gestalt-, Cognitive-, and Behavioral Psychology shows us how to design help-products, wizards, GUIs, or handbooks for optimal results. Successful product designs are customized for user consumption. To do so requires understanding the user's psychological needs and limits.

Dr. Hofer has a PhD in Organizational Psychology and has taught at universities in North America and Europe. He is a researcher, consultant, and trainer, working through CAT-i (Vienna/Ottawa) and Aracane Ltd. of Geneva and PECON Company Communications of Zurich. For details, see <http://www.klaushofer.ca>. ♦

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## STC Webinars

### February 21

Working in Global Teams

### March 14

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Content Management But Were Afraid to Ask

### March 28

Visible: The New Valuable

### April 11

Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate in Half the Time

### May 2

Choosing The Right Usability Technique To Answer the Right Question

For details about local webinar sites, contact the program manager at [programmanager@stc-wi.org](mailto:programmanager@stc-wi.org).

## Upcoming Chapter Events

### February 13

**Topic:** "Instructional Design" presented by Dr. David Howell, Director of the Technical Communication Program at MSOE and Charlene Benjamin, Manager of the Service Learning & Development Team at Johnson Controls, Inc.

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

**Location:** MSOE Alumni Partnership Center, 1120 North Broadway

**Cost:** \$10 members; \$15 non-members; \$7.50 students.

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

### March 14

**Topic:** "Applied Psychology For Technical Communicators" presented by Dr. Klaus Hofer.

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

**Location:** Klemmer's Williamsburg Inn, 10401 W. Oklahoma Avenue

**Cost:** \$15 members; \$20 non-members; \$10 students.

**RSVP:** by noon on Friday, March 9 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org).

### March 16 and 17

**Topic:** Workshop: Applied Psychology for Technical Writers (same workshop each day) presented by Dr. Klaus Hofer

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Location:** Metavante Corporation, BDOC CAPE location, 49900 W. Brown Deer Road

**Cost:** \$60 members; \$75 non-members; \$25 students.

**RSVP:** by noon on Friday, March 9 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org).

## 2007 STC National Elections

The 2007 STC election will open in early March. Mollye Barrett, the Wisconsin STC Chapter's immediate past-president, is on the ballot, running for the position of Director. To read her biography and statement, visit <http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>.

## Meet Your Board Members

**Jean Tikusis**, this season's Public Relations chair, has over 15 years of experience in the communications industry. Born and raised in Chicago, Jean attended Northern Illinois University and studied English.

Her career began in the journalism field as a news writer, assistant editor, and magazine writer for local newspapers in the Milwaukee area and Rochester, Minnesota. Returning to Wisconsin, she joined Gander Mountain as a catalog copywriter and corporate newsletter editor.

In 2003, she was recognized by the Association for Women in Communication with a First Place Wisconsin Communicator Award for a direct mail piece. She currently works as the marketing manager at Ken Cook Company.

**Trina Grieshaber**, a member of the STC Program Committee, began her STC membership as a student at UW-M. There, she served as treasurer of UW-M's student technical writing organization, the Professional Writing Network.

She traces her interest in technical writing to the revelation that, as a science major, she found writing the lab reports easier than doing the experiments. Trina is interested in international technical communication and recently earned a Master's degree from UW-M. She is a member of STC's Quality & Process Improvement and Environmental Health & Safety Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

When not writing procedures for equipment or quality and regulatory policies at the Blood Center of Wisconsin, Trina enjoys bicycling. She also enjoys cooking and baking in her solar oven. ♦

## STC Offers Tech Comm Certificates

STC's Annual Conference—the "Technical Communication Summit"—will be held May 13-16 in Minneapolis, MN.

From May 12 through 14, you can participate in one of the following certificate program workshops:

- TechComm 101
- Master Writers
- Usability
- Content Management
- Team Management

Certificate programs let you explore a subject in-depth over the course of the conference.

Participants who complete a program earn a certificate of attendance. To earn the certificate, you must first participate in a two-day pre-conference seminar. Then—during the three days of the conference—attend four designated conference sessions in the same subject area. This combination of seminars and sessions is intended to help you develop skills and expose you to the broad range of thinking in the subject area.

Each certificate program costs \$600. Or, you can register for both a certificate and the conference for \$1,295. ♦

## Member News



Anne Nault, chapter membership manager, reports the following membership changes:

### Senior members:

Laurie Adameak  
Jeffrey Cole  
Matthias Jonas  
Jesse Kieck  
Amii LaPointe  
Dawn Loy  
Cynthia Walker

### 10-Year Anniversaries:

Jennifer Bauernfeind  
Catherine Deschamps-Potter  
James Frakes  
Kathleen Gorski  
Steven Iverson  
Amy Janczy  
Robert Kotowski  
Kristine Kucera  
Joan Marino  
Katie McCarthy  
Tasha Miller  
Ann Navin  
Diane Newbury  
Mary Reichertz  
Karla Tobola  
Paula Joy Trencaroff  
Toni Vick  
Katherine Wikoff

### 15-Year Anniversaries:

Denise Allan  
Michele Davis Berkes  
Barb Hermans  
Julie O'Neill  
Ella Ozier  
Debbie Wagner

**Congratulations!!**

## November Meeting—Focus on Retirement

By Susan Archer

We all want to have enough money to enjoy retirement. At our November chapter meeting, two retirement consultants, Christopher Doughty and Craig Pluta, from Ziegler Investment Services Group, provided insights on how to prepare financially for a happy retirement.

Christopher and Craig explained that the amount of time spent in retirement is growing all the time. When Social Security was started in the 1930s, people lived to an average age of 63. Today, we may spend up to 30 years in retirement.

For those who are in the early years of their careers, Craig noted that putting just a small amount away on a regular basis will put you on track.

Christopher and Craig also touted the benefits of estate planning. If you're planning to leave anything to your heirs, plan now in order to avoid taxes by federal and state governments.

## Local Events for Writers

### Wednesday, February 21—WORDS Meeting

Topic: Five Ways to build Profits presented by Daryl Schure of Action International. The workshop will focus on marketing your skills to build profits and cash flow.

**Date:** 2/21/07

**Time:** 8:00-10:00 a.m. (continental breakfast)

**Location:** Alverno College, 3400 S. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Liberal Arts Building, Room 308

**Fee:** Free to WORDS members; \$5 for non-members

For more details, visit the WORDS Yahoo Group:

[http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/WI\\_WORDS/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/WI_WORDS/)

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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 e-mail. Please include your name, title, and company.

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