

# STC Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication

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## Letter from the President

### How can STC help you this year?

STC, as a professional organization, works to help its members stay ahead of the career game. That's why I'm so excited about the upcoming year's chapter events!

It is always a good time to polish up your resume and review (or create!) your portfolio. A great resume and portfolio are such important tools for proving your value to potential employers or clients. You can't afford to neglect them.

To help you with this important activity, the chapter is hosting a FREE half-day resume and portfolio workshop at UW-Milwaukee on January 10. Call it our own chapter economic stimulus package!

Bring all your materials and we'll work with you to make your most important documents into clear winners! Space is limited, so register right now at <http://www.stc-wi.org>. If you help us build sufficient interest, this type of workshop can become a regular chapter offering.

In the last few years, our STC chapter has presented several programs investigating the Darwin Information Type Architecture known as DITA.

We continue to see interest in this method of organizing and delivering information (I saw a statistic from Aberdeen Research that 37% of "best in class" companies now use DITA). To address the growing interest, February brings Leigh White and her "DITA in a Day" workshop. We'll get a taste of this at the chapter meeting on February 5, and the full workshop on February 7 at Metavante.

Practical help in career development and information on the latest tools and technologies. These are part of the value your membership in STC affords. If you're engaged in some hard thinking about whether to renew in 2009, take another look at the important connections, useful education, and leading-edge training available from your local and national STC.

See you there!

Mike McCallister  
Milwaukee STC Chapter President ♦

## Start the New Year with a New Portfolio

### For January's meeting, a FREE Workshop!

**January 10:**

Are your technical communication resume and portfolio up to date? In a recent poll, responses to this question were:

**Is your**

**portfolio up**

**to date?**

<b>Of course!</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Sort of</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>What resume?</b>	<b>7%</b>

What was your answer? Could you use some help with your portfolio? Join us on January 10 at UWM, Curtin Hall, 3243 N Downer Ave., Room 127 from 9 am to noon. This is a free workshop! Registration is limited to 20 participants.

If you find yourself looking for a position tomorrow, you will be competing with candidates that have a polished resume and an up to date portfolio. If you are among the 57% of unprepared candidates, use the January portfolio workshop to get ready! We'll spend a full Saturday morning in the computer lab at UWM and everyone will use a blog to create an online presence that can be shared with prospective employers.

To build your online portfolio, bring electronic copies of:

- Your existing resume
- A business photo
- Work samples

Bring descriptions of the projects for which you produced the samples (include a paragraph with the who, what, where, why of the project). What were the requirements for the project? What went well, what would you improve in the future?

The goal of your portfolio is to:

- Demonstrate confidence and appropriate presentation style
- Organize and present work samples in a professional format
- Clarify the purpose and function of each piece
- Demonstrate a range of knowledge and abilities
- Provide a picture of your creativity and professional potential

You will receive instructions for securing a free blog the week before the workshop! ♦

## From the Chicago Manual of Style

The Chicago Manual of Style Web site has just been updated with answers to new questions, including these:

Q. What is the proper treatment for "disease" in "Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Disease"?

Q. Would the phrase "last December" refer to December 2007 or December 2008?

Q. My editor and I disagree about comma placement. Your opinion, please?

To read the answers to these and the rest of this month's questions, go to the Chicago Manual of Style Web site, at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>. ♦

## STC Webinars

Wednesday, January 28  
1:00 – 2:30 pm ET (noon – 1:30 CT)  
Practitioner and Academic Relationships  
Presented by Joel Kline

"Why should we have a relationship with academics?" This was a question posed to me as I researched the attitudes of practitioners towards the academic community in New Zealand. It bears examination because a poor relationship between the academic and practitioner communities hurts our reputation, hinders knowledge transfer, and stifles progress. In this session I will use primary research on academic/practitioner relationships to report the value of membership organizations as a venue of knowledge exchange, question the value of traditional print publications, and champion the current TC Body of Knowledge Project. The report will open a discussion on how to grow our discipline's reputation with more effective cooperation between our academic and practitioner communities.

Joel Kline is an Associate Professor of Business and Digital Communications at Lebanon Valley College, in Annville, Pennsylvania. He is the Director of the Digital Communications program at Lebanon Valley College and teaches classes in Organizational Communications, Business Technology, and New Media. His research and consulting interests are in Knowledge Management, Web 2.0, and Usability. Joel is accredited in PR from Public Relations Society of America and owned a communications firm for 12 years prior to teaching. ♦

## Can Technical Communicators Go Green?

By Betsy Malone, Chapter President, from TechniScribe, Orange County, CA STC Chapter Newsletter

What does it take for technical communicators to go green in the workplace? Going green means that you must be conscious of the actions you take at work and how they can affect the environment. You may be surprised at some of the things you can do to help the environment.

Here are some tips to help you "Go Green" in the workplace:

- Get your company to contract with a recycling service.
- Recycle such printed materials as manuals, books, newspapers, magazines, and catalogs.
- Print only if necessary—read and edit on the screen as much as possible.
- Save paper and print on both sides!
- Turn off your computer at night or if you are away for the day.
- Put your computer into sleep/ hibernate mode if you leave it for more than a half hour. Using the sleep mode will conserve almost as much energy as turning the computer off.
- Use your own mug instead of Styrofoam or paper cups.

Continued on [page 4](#)

### Wisconsin Chapter Contacts



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## Upcoming STC Events

Save these dates!

January 10, UWM  
Portfolio workshop

February 5, Klemmer's  
Chapter meeting

February 7, Metavante  
DITA workshop

March 11, MSOE  
Chapter meeting

April 8, Klemmer's  
Chapter meeting

The next  
newsletter  
deadline is  
February 20

## Upcoming Chapter Events

### January 10 workshop (20 participants maximum)

**Topic:** Work on Your Portfolio

**Time:** 9 am to noon

**Location:** UWM, Curtin Hall, 3243 N Downer Ave., Room 127

**Cost:** FREE

**RSVP:** by noon on Thursday, January 8 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### February 5 meeting

**Topic:** Pay No Attention to the (Wo)man Behind the Curtain

**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, \$5 no dinner

**RSVP:** by noon on Monday, February 2 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### February 7 workshop (16 participants maximum)

**Topic:** Dita-in-a-Day Workshop, presented by Leigh White

**Time:** 9 am to 3 pm

**Location:** Metavante Headquarters, 4900 West Brown Deer Road. Participants must enter at North end of lot. See [map](#), or contact Linda Verwey at 262-498-9265 for help if you can't find it.

**Cost:** \$50 members, \$85 non-members, \$25 student members, \$30 student non-members; cost includes lunch

**RSVP:** by noon on Thursday, February 5 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org) ♦

## Going Green [\(continued from page 3\)](#)

- Recycle your old computers and cell phones. Go to <http://www.staples.com> for information on recycling these items.
- Watch how much paper you use when printing. Reduce the margins, use single spacing, and omit unneeded text (isn't this what we do?) to reduce paper usage.

Paper is biodegradable, but it does not break down in landfills because the trash is so tightly packed that water and oxygen cannot reach it to

assist in the decomposition process.

The quality of paper degrades each time it is recycled because tree fibers become smaller and smaller. After paper is recycled several times, the fibers become too small to make new paper. So if you think that printing large documents and recycling the paper is helping the environment, guess again.

I think I can "Go Green." Want to join me? ♦

## February Chapter Meeting:

### Pay no attention to the (wo)man behind the curtain

**February 5:  
The Wizard  
of All?**

It's no longer enough for a technical communicator to be just a good writer, or even a good editor. Industry trends such as single-sourcing and reuse, topic-based authoring, greater integration of help systems with applications, and increasingly complex tools have raised the bar on the skill set that technical communicators need to have.

Most of us still need to wear the writer hat in addition to all the other hats piled on our heads. This presentation details one technical communicator's journey from "just a writer" to her team's chief technologist and all-purpose geek.

In this presentation, Leigh White outlines some of the skills she has acquired over the years, describes the projects that demanded those skills, and offers brief demonstrations of some of the results of her efforts.

Please join us on February 5 at 5:30 pm at Klemmer's to benefit from this presentation. See below for a valuable workshop in working with DITA (Darwin Information Typing Architecture) also presented by Leigh White

To RSVP for the chapter meeting, please visit [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org). ♦

## DITA-in-a-Day Workshop

### February 7, 9 am to 4 pm, at Metavante (details on [page 4](#))

**February 7:  
The Basics  
of DITA**

DITA...everybody's talking about it, but what is it and what can it do for you?

DITA (the Darwin Information Typing Architecture) is an XML-based framework that information developers can use to both model and author their content using a modular approach. Topics can be assembled into multiple outputs for different product versions or other variations. Although DITA is a standardized model, you can create specialized topics for your needs. A variety of commercial and open source tools are available for creating topics and assembling deliverables.

The DITA In a Day workshop introduces the DITA topic model and provides a hands-on experience. Attendees are writers, editors, content managers—anyone who needs to create modular, reusable, structured documentation.

During this full-day workshop, you learn about the basic DITA model, including topic types, elements and metadata. Instructional segments are followed by an opportunity for you to put the principles you just learned to use. Next, you learn about DITA maps and create some of your own. We also discuss specializing—a DITA methodology for creating new topic types for specific needs. Finally, you see the DITA Open Toolkit in action.

You'll come away from this workshop ready to create DITA content, and you'll be better able to consider the benefits that DITA could bring to your organization.

#### About Leigh White

Leigh White is a technical communicator with over 15 years of experience as a content creator, content manager, and production coordinator. She explores ways that small technical publications groups can improve processes to maximize the reuse of their content and improve their efficiency. To accomplish these goals, Leigh advocates that effective technical communicators need to be more than writers; they need to be part programmer, part designer and part project manager. She is also a devotee of XML and structured documentation and believes that DITA might just save the world! ♦

## Member News



Join our membership manager Verla Gatchell in welcoming the new 2008 members:

Jill Busch  
Karen Claerbaut  
Steven Korinek

### Welcome!!

The following members have attained a new stage in their affiliation with the STC

#### Senior Member

Andrew Maylahn  
Michelle Schoenecker  
Katie Thiel

#### 25-Year Anniversary

Deirdre Murr

#### 10-Year Anniversary

Elizabeth Filippo

### Congratulations!

Thank you all for your staying power, and for giving your best to the Milwaukee STC.

## Chapter President will present at 2009 WritersUA Conference

Mike McCallister will be featured in the spring of 2009 as a presenter at the Seventeenth Annual WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance. This conference, formerly known as WinWriters, features over seventy cutting-edge topics from forty-five experts and project demonstrations from other user assistance developers. The conference takes place between March 29 and April 1 in Seattle, Washington.

What follows is the description of Mike's presentation, Exploring Open Source and Alternative Tools, co-presented by Paul Mueller of UserAid,

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We often only consider the top marquee names when we select tools. Open-source tools and Web services provide valuable alternatives to many of the tools we use today. This session explores how you can develop high-quality user assistance using open-source tools. We will review OpenOffice, LyX document processor, Scribus desktop publisher, Inkscape vector graphics, and The GIMP raster graphics. During this session, we will also explore various tools and Web services that provide consultants and small writing teams with the capabilities of many larger corporations. These solutions include version control, data backup, remote access, Webinar services, online collaboration, email aliases, email forwarding, and conference calling.

— YOU WILL LEARN —

- Which open-source tools and Web services provide the capabilities you need
- Which tools and Web services provide cost-effective solutions for consultants and small teams

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Mike McCallister, President of the Milwaukee STC Chapter, is a consultant with Compuware Corporation. ♦

### 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 Blackburn, Newsletter Editor  
[newsletter@stc-wi.org](mailto: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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