

# STC Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication

March 2008  
Volume 8, Issue 2



## Letter from the President

Every month, I am impressed with the professional connections made at our chapter meetings. The weather has challenged us, but we've learned that even on those ice-biting winter evenings, members still seek opportunities to meet new people and share ideas.

What drives us? For those of us serving on the 2007/08 chapter council, it's a desire to help our chapter succeed; to keep growing. We value the chapter's charter and want to contribute. Your council has taken responsibility for ensuring that chapter meetings occur regularly. They have demonstrated their commitment to keeping the chapter growing and vibrant, to supporting our professional development in a world of ever-changing technology.

So, I'm writing this month to ask you to join me in saying "Thank you" to all those who have served the chapter well in this 2007/08 season. Because of your active participation, your officers continue to be inspired, your officers are inspired to provide relevant chapter meetings and workshops.

Please thank the following officers for their support and leadership:

Mike McCallister, *Incoming President*

Joann Berg, *Secretary*

Jason Hancock, *Treasurer*

Verla Gatchell, *Membership Manager*

Judith Blackburn, *Newsletter Editor*

Trina Grieshaber, *Program Manager*

Jeff Ward, *Publicity*

Mollye Barrett, *Mentoring Program*

Dave Clark, *Website*

With the right attitude, we can find time in our full lives to keep up with industry trends. As a result, we stimulate our careers in exciting new ways and grow personally.

I encourage you to consider your role as a member and how you might influence the direction and growth of our chapter. The rewards are many.

Will you fill your craving for new knowledge and professional engagement through active participation on the program committee? Could you help maintain the website with your .php expertise? Could you welcome potential members by making a phone call or sending a follow up letter?

Your council members are in the process of identifying candidates for the April election. Please contact us with your nominations or let us know if you are ready to compete for a seat. Let's approach the new year with a focus on opportunities for building our professional relationships and our careers.

With warm regards,

Linda Verwey, President, STC Wisconsin Chapter ♦

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## April Chapter Meeting: Effective Outlining

**April:  
Geoff  
Hart**

Everyone knows the importance of creating an outline before beginning to write anything complicated, but under deadline pressure, many writers feel that the time required to develop an effective outline simply can't be justified.

In practice, this isn't the case: time invested in developing an effective

outline can actually save considerable time later in the writing process.

In this presentation, STC Fellow Geoff Hart will review the principles of creating an effective outline, along with a few new tips and tricks you might not have considered before.

Geoff has also written a book on effective online editing. If you would like

to know how to improve your online editing, go to [page 3](#) for details of the **Effective Onscreen Editing** workshop on April 12 that Geoff will lead. G

For more information on Geoff Hart please visit his Web site [www.geoff-hart.com](http://www.geoff-hart.com)

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

Go to [page 4](#) for details on cost, time, and locations of the April and May events.

## May Chapter Meeting: Podcasting

**May:  
Keith  
Hoffman**

Keith Hoffman is the Marketing and Communications Manager at CDW Berbee in Madison, Wisconsin. He has led several company-wide initiatives to establish a podcast channel for CDW Berbee customers. In addition, he hosts the Fanstar411 Podcast during the NFL football season, which can be found at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/fanstar411>. Keith is the Immediate Past President of the STC Four Lakes Chapter and is a Senior Member.

Every day, hundreds of thousands of people are engaging in conversation on the Internet. As mobile audio and video have risen to prominence, the opportunity to connect to your audience over these channels has never been greater. This presentation will cover:

- Podcast overview/history
- Podcast demonstration
- Podcast revenue streams

Additionally, during dinner chapter member Trina Grieshaber will present a preview of her presentation for the STC Conference in June, "Communicating and Creating Training for Disasters and Emergencies."

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

## February Meeting Recap

Fifteen brave souls ventured out to attend the February chapter meeting on a blustery evening. Technical Communication practitioners James Green, Mike McCallister, and Mike Starr gave summaries of the software tools they use, explained features of the tools, described the advantages / disadvantages of the tools. They also explained how they came to use a particular tool.

The meeting was truly valuable in illustrating the leading-edge technology that we may all have to master in the near future.

Thank you, James, Mike M, and Mike S. ♦

## April 12 Workshop: Effective Onscreen Editing

Date: April 12, 2008  
Time: 9 am-3 pm CDT  
Venue: UW Milwaukee  
Address: Curtin Hall, Room 127  
North Downer Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211

[View Map](#)

### Registration

**You must pre-register to guarantee your spot!** Registration at the door begins at 8:30 am, and space is not guaranteed.

The registration fee includes lunch and a free copy of Geoff's book, plus an opportunity to ask Geoff about any specific problems you're having with onscreen editing.

### Workshop description

Whether you already edit most of your material on the screen or haven't yet found the time to learn how to do so efficiently, you can't afford to miss this workshop.

STC Fellow Geoff Hart, who wrote *Effective Onscreen Editing*, (<http://www.geoff-hart.com/home/onscreen-book.htm>), will teach you how to get up to speed quickly, and how to dramatically improve your editing productivity.

In this workshop, you'll learn how to:

- Personalize your existing software to support the way you want to work
- Move around the document and select text efficiently
- Use revision tracking to communicate effectively with authors and increase the efficiency of reviewing your edits
- Use the search tools (find and replace) combined with style sheets to dramatically improve consistency
- Automate the more time-consuming aspects of editing
- Edit files you never imagined you could edit (Web pages and other markup languages, databases, spreadsheets) using your word processor
- Implement onscreen editing in your workplace.

Computers will be provided so you can practice the workshop lessons. Bring your own computer and you can take home an improved editing environment with a personalized set of settings and macros and other automations developed during the workshop. The workshop will focus on using Microsoft Word (up to Word 2003, not 2007) to illustrate how the overall principles work, but the lessons can easily be transferred to other programs.

For a small commitment of time and money, you'll discover key tips and tricks that will quickly repay your investment in terms of future time savings, while improving the quality of your editing. ♦

### Wisconsin Chapter Contacts



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## 2008 Meeting Schedule

April 10 MSOE

May 6 West

June 10 MSOE

("West" is Klemmer's Inn)

**Save these dates!**

The next  
newsletter  
deadline is  
April 20

## Upcoming Chapter Events

### Thursday, April 10

**Topic:** Effective Outlining: Designing Workable Blueprints for Writing, presented by Geoff Hart

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

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

**Cost:** \$15 members, \$20 non-members, \$10 students, \$5 no dinner

**RSVP:** by noon on Friday, April 4 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### Saturday, April 12

#### **Effective Onscreen Editing Workshop**

**Time:** 9 am – 3 pm, break at noon for lunch.

**Location:** UW-Milwaukee, Curtin Hall, Room 127, North Downer Ave

**Cost:** Including book and lunch: \$50 members, \$80 non-members. Students may contact the Program Manager for discount opportunities.

**RSVP:** by noon on Friday, April 4 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### Tuesday, May 6

**Topic:** Podcasting Conversations presented by Keith Hoffman

**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 Tuesday, April 29 at [www.stc-wi.org](http://www.stc-wi.org)

### Workshop in May

Web 2.0 and Networking presented by Scott Abel

**More information to come. Watch the Wisconsin STC website!** ◆

## Chicago Manual of Style – New Q&As

**Q.** One of our books scheduled for fall 2007 was changed to spring 2008. The author's preface is dated 2007. Should this be changed to reflect the new publication year?

**Q.** The author insists on using the word "aforementioned," which I tell him is strictly lawyers' jargon. He says that he will abide by CMOS's arbitration.

**Q.** When I reference an author within the body of my text, do I then repeat the author's name in the footnote?

**Q.** Which is CMOS's position on the use of the word "irregardless"?

**Q.** Lie vs. lay-I'm just not getting it.

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

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## January Meeting Recap

*In fair SML, where we lay our scene*

By Rachel Ellerman

I wasn't expecting the "rose by any other name" quote in Brian Buehling's presentation on XML structured authoring. Frankly, I never thought of Willy Shakespeare as the manual reading type. But, ignoring the personality conflicts, my next thought was that Willy seems out of place in any presentation about a twenty-first century acronym and structuring theory. He dropped syllables, played with puns, and generally rebelled. I can't even use contractions in my manuals.

But, visions of high school iambic pentameter papers and college dénouement debates reminded me that if Willy was anything, he was a man of structure. He worked in a world defined by a set number of syllables, predictable dips and peaks of emphasis, and formal dramatic structure. Yet that very framework explains the addictive music of his work and guarantees that we get to know characters before we cheer for them or root against them in the end. And that framework gave birth to masterpieces of amazing depth, wonder, and feeling. Maybe structure is getting a bad wrap.

Back in 2008, one brave person admitted to using some form of XML/structured authoring, while thirty-nine "cheery optimistic" people expressed interest or plans to move to that type of environment. Of those thirty-nine, none were certain where they were in the conversion process. Brian admits that this is one big problem. Most folks know they want the reuse and money savings of XML and structured authoring, but are not sure what it is or how to make it happen. Where is Puck's magic when you need it?

Brian, an experienced CMS contractor for Dakota Systems, presented an intermediate level view of XML and structured authoring. No matter what you call it, says Brian, the issues are the same. At a basic level, this type of authoring reassembles interchangeable chunks of information and produces output in various formats. To make XML structured authoring work, you need a system (to enforce the structure and layout of the chunks), repository (to store the chunks), and deployment plan (to create output).

As if to make conversion to structured authoring even harder, each part of the system typically requires a separate set of tools. Brian warns that most vendors are experts in one area of the architecture, but may try to convince you that they are a single solution to your single sourcing needs. But, he also assured us that tools can be customized and combined in various ways, so you should not stress about finding the "perfect" tool.

Now that you know about the chunks, how to store them, and that you need to deploy them, the next problem is the script for getting there. Brian stresses that there is a "natural evolution" when moving to an XML-based structured authoring environment, and you have to "go through the pain" before you can enjoy the benefits. For some, conversion fails because teams attempt to jump to the final act before they are ready.

The first steps include examining your content and finding a structure that you would like to enforce. Structure defines where content appears in an information chunk. For example, structure may require you to have an introductory sentence before a series of bullets. Brian says that you "need a structure before your XML system can enforce it." Beyond consistent structure, your content must also be written in such a way that you can reuse it in various combinations. These preparation steps can be done with your current tools.

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"Maybe structure is getting a bad wrap"

"You need structure before your XML system can enforce it"

## Member News



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

Brad Bethke  
Julie Frey  
Lisa Jacobsen  
Benjamin Jefferson III  
Mark Lattery  
Christopher Modzelewski  
Peder Nelson  
Susan Partin  
Matt Richter

### Transferring members

Bill Denning  
Elizabeth Dupee  
Gabiella Eichimof  
Laurel Gault Jaeke  
Karl Jacobs  
Linda Kelsey  
Keri Klug  
Erin Nitka  
Jill Sasse

### Welcome!

#### ----- Anniversaries -----

#### Senior Member

Gary Kuebler

#### 10 Year Anniversary

Carrie Durkee  
Gabiella Echimof  
Keri Klug  
Dana Michaels  
Linda Samens  
Jill Sasse

#### 15-Year Anniversary

Mollye Barrett

#### 25-Year Anniversary

Ingrid Gillmeier

**Congratulations and thank you! ♦**

## January Chapter Recap, continued

The most dramatic benefits of an XML-based structured environment are reuse and money-savings, says Brian. And, the latter is a direct result of the former. Brian presents four types of reuse and stresses that you should take care to use the appropriate type for your needs. The four types are conditional text (changing words or phrases everywhere with one click, similar to a variable in FrameMaker), repurposing (using the same content in multiple places), profiling (deploying different content based on audience type), and dynamic (allowing users to assemble content any way they like).

Once you have a plan for structure and reuse, Brian says you should use your current tools to deploy the same content in various formats. For example, find the best way to author with the goal of producing both HTML Help and pdf output from the same content. Next, Brian suggests you should be able to deploy different content based on your audience. Only after these two steps are possible should you move to a system, repository, and deployment plan with new tools and a CMS.

Finally, Brian warns about the pitfalls of a conversion. First, you should expect job descriptions to change and funding to be a problem. Brian recommends you carefully explain the benefits of the conversion, get support early, and provide monetary estimates of savings for the accountants to consider. Be wary of the bias in vendors, consultants, your own IT team, and your own documentation team. Brian warns that technical communicators can expect too much from the tool, resists the changes inherent in the conversion, and try to capture all parts of their workflow in a system that may not be capable of automating everything.

Presentations like Brian's should take some of the mystery out of XML structured environments. Maybe a document born from this new type of environment can be even sweeter? Given Willy's success, I think I'm willing to give it a try.

Thanks, Brian! ♦

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### 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](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 April 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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