

LAKE SHORE CONNECTION

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2, NOVEMBER 2000

From the President

by *Catie Lukas*

Traditionally, this time of year represents change for many people. For me, there's something about it that I love. Maybe it's the smell of crisp air, the color of the changing trees, my visits to the pumpkin farms, or just an excuse to eat caramel apples—who knows. What I do know is that I always try to enjoy this season as much as I can because our usual Wisconsin Winter and holiday rush is lurking around the corner.

On a different note, this is also the time of year when I have to start looking ahead at some of the not-so-fun tasks of being a manager, such as preparing my department's bud-

get and making sure that my department completes the projects we promised by the end of the year.

As a new STC President, I'm also learning that this time of year represents a busy time for STC. As a chapter, we're also in the process of evaluating our budget and finalizing our programs. But it's also a time to recognize people in our chapter who've made significant contributions to our profession.

- **Do you know an outstanding teacher in your area who deserves to receive the Jay R. Gould Award?** The Jay R. Gould Award of Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication was so designated because Jay R. Gould's career is an outstanding example of long-term commitment, innovation, and excellence in teaching. If you would like more information about the criteria or would like to nominate a teacher, please contact me directly via email or phone at (414) 906-6261.

- **Are there members in our chapter whom you would like to acknowledge for their hard work and commitment to the chapter and its activities?** Why not nominate them for a distinguished chapter service

award? You can download the Guidelines for the Distinguished Chapter Service Award from the Society Web site (www.stc-va.org).

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Upcoming Events

Chapter Meetings

November 14, 2000

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, Italian Community Center

"Creating a Corporate Extranet"

Presenters: Janelle Bleske and Susanne Tess, eFunds

\$10.00 for members,

\$15.00 for non-members

December 12, 2000

Special Holiday Dinner/Show

Brumder Mansion

"A Christmas Survival Guide"

Watch your mail and our chapter web site for more information on this special Holiday Event!

January 9, 2001

"CBTs to Web and CD-ROM Publishing"

Presenter: Ron Kurtus

Note: See the "To Be a Technical Communicator" article series to learn more about Ron and his work!

February 2001

To Be Announced ♦

- **Do you know any students who might be interested in applying for an STC scholarship?** The Society recently announced its 2001-2002 STC scholarship program to assist students who are pursuing established degree programs in some area of technical communication. Fourteen awards of \$2,500 will be granted toward school tuition and expenses. Contact your college or university or contact me at (414) 906-6261.
- **Have you recently completed an outstanding project that you'd like to submit to a competition?** There are several chapters holding publications, art, and online competitions. If you're interested in submitting your work to competition, now is the time to send in your submissions. Please see the Society Web site at www.stc-va.org for an updated list of those chapters holding competitions and their deadlines. If you do submit your work, please let us know. We've been fortunate to have some outstanding contributions to our profession right from our chapter.

I encourage you to take part in some of the opportunities the Society offers to all its members. We've had a great year and set many goals for ourselves for 2001. Let's end 2000 on an exciting and positive note with some truly outstanding accomplishments. ♦



To Be A Technical Communicator

This is the third in a series of articles exploring who we are as technical communicators and what we do.

Spotlight on Ron Kurtus

by Susan Duncan

Ron Kurtus, owner of Kurtus Technologies, exemplifies the fact that technical communicators do more than write. Ron develops web-based and computer-based training courses as well as technical documentation.

His background is in engineering, and he has done extensive writing and research in the Los Angeles defense and aerospace industry. He has also worked as an instructor at the University of Missouri, MATC, and for the US Air Force. Ron moved to Milwaukee in 1992 and decided to combine his interests—technology, writing, and education—into Kurtus Technologies, where he specializes in e-learning.

Ron's educational background is in mathematics and physics. He found that he enjoyed writing so much, however, that he made it a focus of his work, along with working with technical subject matter experts.

One of the challenges that he faces is interpreting the material submitted by SMEs and editing it or rewriting it so that readers can understand it. Not only does this task require diplomacy and tact, it also demands patience and the ability to be productive in spite of frustration.

As far as tools go, Ron uses most of the popular industry-standard ones, including MS Word, FrameMaker, RoboHelp, FrontPage, Dreamweaver, Flash, and PaintShop Pro. He tries to discourage his clients from using applications that may disappear in a few years. "Technical communicators are always having to become experts in tools and even programmers, as well as good writers," says Ron. Currently, he's looking into working with ColdFusion, InterDev, and UltraDev, all of which can be used for entering Web content through a database. As he notes, "Some newspapers and e-zines update their pages through copy entered into a database." Asked about any trends he sees in our profession, Ron stated that he views "the future is wide open for technical communicators, with the emphasis on education and Web-based documentation."

Ron has a non-profit educational website with lessons on various topics, including one on technical writing. (Web site: www.school-for-champions.com/writing.htm) He'd be glad to publish short articles about writing or other topics by our STC members. If you're interested in seeing your byline and bio on the web, contact Ron at ron@ronkurtus.com.

Editor's Note: Ron will be the featured speaker at our January 2001 Chapter meeting. ♦

Mentoring Program Committee

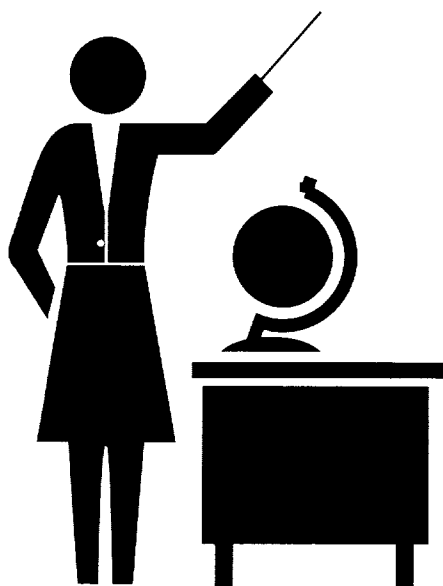
The Wisconsin Chapter's Mentoring Program pairs new technical communicators with senior communicators to discuss personnel issues, technical problems, or career direction. Protégés gain new insights and strategies for how to create solutions and propel their careers. Mentors develop valuable skills that can further their personal and professional development. Both parties learn when ideas and experiences are shared.

Become an active member of the Mentoring Committee as we evaluate, improve, and strengthen the Mentoring Program.

Interested? Contact Mollye Barrett (Mentoring Program Manager) at:

Phone: 414-271-1144 x21

Email: mollye@iversonlang.com ♦



STC Mentoring Program Workshop

Writing Proposals

We're frequently asked to write materials other than manuals and online help. That's when some people are outside their comfort zone. Use the information from this workshop to expand your repertoire, win a contract, or simply better understand the types of proposals and how they are developed and used.

Speaker:

Erik A. Thelen, Ph.D.,
Executive Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs,
Marquette University

Date:

November 11, 2000

8:30 A.M. Registration

9:00 A.M. to 11:00 AM

Location:

Marquette University,
Alumni Memorial Union, Room 227
1442 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53201

For directions and guest parking, see <http://www.mu.edu/places/tour.html>

Parking:

Available in structure at 749 N. 16th Street

Cost:

\$20 Members, \$10 Students, \$25 Non-Members

RSVP:

Call 414-299-0048 or write to Mollye Barrett at mollye@iversonlang.com

About the Speaker:

Erik Thelen is the Executive Director of Marquette University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. He has more than seven years of experience managing proposal development teams, writing proposals, and coaching content experts in such areas as industrial engineering, biomedical engineering, electrical and computer engineering, civil and environmental engineering, management, and the health professions.

For the past three years, he has also taught business writing for Marquette's Executive MBA program. Prior to his work at Marquette, Thelen taught business and technical communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for six years, where he earned his Ph.D. in English. He has contributed to the widely-used St. Martin's Press *Business Writer's Handbook and Handbook of Technical Writing*, and served as consulting reader for the instructor's guides to these handbooks. He has also reviewed technical writing texts and manuscripts for HarperCollins Publishers, St. Martin's Press, and Simon and Schuster.

Thelen is a member of STC, WORDS, the Association for Business Communication, and the National Council of University Research Administrators. ♦

STC Teaching Fellowship

STC Fellowship Helps Practicing Technical Communicators Get a Taste of Teaching

from the Society

Practicing technical communicators can try their hand at teaching—with a little help from STC’s teaching fellowship program.

Under the program, STC will award stipends to technical communicators so that they can take on short-term teaching assignments. The goals of this program are to promote positive academe and industry connections, and to enable practitioners to help in the education and training of future technical communicators.

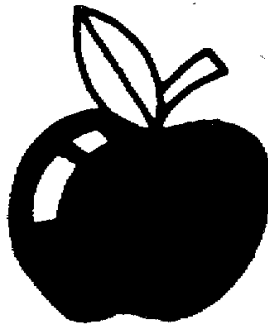
Fellowships last a minimum of one academic quarter or semester. Two teaching fellowships of \$2,000 each are available for award. The stipend is paid directly to the practitioner in installments—one at the midpoint of the fellowship, and one after the fellowship has been completed and a final report submitted by the practitioner.

Deadlines for applying for the fellowship are November 1 (for the spring semester) and April 1 (for the fall semester).

To see more information about the fellowship program—including contact information and deadlines for applying—please visit the STC office Web site at www.stc-va.org. From the main page, select “Guides/Brochures,” then scroll to “Guide-

lines for the Teaching Fellowship for Practicing Professionals.”

The Society for Technical Communication is the world’s largest professional organization serving the technical communication profession. STC has more than 23,000 members and 149 chapters worldwide. For more information, please visit www.stc-va.org. ♦



Board Bio

Ann Greenseth

As an undergraduate student, Ann Greenseth was convinced she was going to go to California to become the next Meryl Streep. It struck her as ironic, if not amusing, that it was on graduation day, just after she was awarded her undergraduate degree in Theatre, when she realized Meryl Streep wasn’t done being Meryl Streep yet.

Fortunately, many years before Ann was “bit by the acting bug” she had developed a passion for words and became fascinated by the process of putting those words together and

building text that was both creative and accessible.

These passions led her to pursue a career in the field of writing. After being a technical communicator for several years, she attended graduate school. In November of 1996, she began work at Compuware Corporation as a technical communication consultant in the Information Management and Delivery line of business.

Consulting has provided Ann with the variety and creativity she was seeking. She has performed a range of communication development projects, from paper documentation, to design, development, and maintenance of online help, to web authoring, to single sourcing using SGML/XML.

Ann admits that the training in acting has come in handy on more than one occasion. Actors spend a good deal of time building a role and rehearsing before performing the part in front of an audience. That process is much like the investigation a writer performs and the drafts the writer develops before presenting a readable draft to the team or client. The goal in both cases is the same—to present a polished product that is still fresh and innovative.

In her spare time, Ann is involved with STC. Last program year, Ann and Paula-Joy Trencaroff served as Co-editors for *The LakeShore Connection*. This year, Ann decided to continue in her role as Editor.

In addition, she reads a great deal and continues to work on her avocation—writing fiction. And acting? Ann goes to movies whenever she can. And, yes, Meryl Streep is still her favorite actor. ♦

Competition Winners

submitted by Catie Lukas

In our September issue, we included a note asking all of you to notify us when you receive an award from a competition hosted by another STC Chapter. In response to that call, we received the following information.

Congratulations to these competition winners!

Debbie Wagner

Debbie Wagner, GE Medical Systems Information Technologies, entered the "MAC 5000 resting ECG analysis system operator's manual" in the "Software Guides" category in three different 1999-2000 chapter Technical Publications competitions.

She entered the manual in three different competitions because the design was radically different from what was done in the past. The new design resulted in some very dramatic outcomes:

- 72% reduction in words to be translated
- 55% reduction of material costs
- 76% reduction in page count
- Positive informal user testing results.

Debbie received similar feedback and comments identified by the judges in all the competitions, which proved very valuable. (Note: Debbie received permission from each competition head to compete in the other chapter competitions.)

Her work resulted in the following awards:

- Award of Distinguished from the Southern California Unified Chapter Competition
- Award of Distinguished from the Washington DC Chapter
- Award of Excellence from the Chicago Chapter
- Award of Merit from the Southwestern Ontario and Toronto Chapters Competition
- Award of Merit from the International Competition

Renee Brown, Mary Mullins, and Eric Seeger

Renee Brown, Mary Mullins, and Eric Seeger received an Award of Merit from the Northeastern Ohio chapter of STC in their October 1999 competition.

The award-winning document was the online help for Metavante Corporation's Information Desktop Scheduler, Version 1.0.

All Chapter Members!

Please continue to keep us informed of your competition awards! ♦



New Members!

provided by Verla R. Gatchell

We recognize the following Chapter members who joined or transferred to our Chapter since the last issue of the newsletter:

New Member

- Maureen E. Lippert

Transferred Members

- Jessamine Clemente
- Philip Taterczynski

We welcome you to the Wisconsin Chapter of STC! ♦

2000-2001 Chapter Officers

President, Catie Lukas
email: catherine.lukas@na.manpower.com

Vice President, Louis Costanzo
email: lccostanzo@juno.com

Secretary & Job Exchange, Sigrid Schoepel
email: schoepel@net-email.com

Treasurer, Open

Membership, Verla R. Gatchell
email: verla_r_gatchell@efunds.com

Programs, Jan Wefler
email: jan.wefler@compuware.com

Public Relations, Linda Verwey
email: linda.verwey@midata.com

Newsletter, Ann M. Greenseth
email: edit4stc@hotmail.com

Mentoring, Mollye Barrett
email: mbarrett@execpc.com

Web Chair, Open

Webmaster, Open

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of the *LakeShore Connection* for this program year. I thank all our contributors to this issue, including all our Chapter Board members. I especially wish to extend my thanks to Susan Duncan for providing us with the next installment of our "To Be a Technical Communicator" series, and to Ron Kurtus for agreeing to be interviewed for the article.

We've had a very successful beginning to our program year. The Board was pleased to see so many members at the Chapter's September kick-off meeting. We all came away from that meeting feeling great about the Chapter and this program year.

Furthermore, one need only take a look at the Chapter meetings that have been scheduled, the mentoring programs Mollye Barrett is putting together, and the other programs and workshops that the Board is working diligently to arrange to see that we have an interesting, educational, and fun year ahead of us.

For example, how about that Holiday program (see "Upcoming Events" on page 1)? It sounds like fun! You'll be reading more about that in the near future.

In addition, Board members are attempting to coordinate several special programs and seminars. As soon as we have the arrangements confirmed, you'll be hearing from us.

As always, please feel free to contact any of the Board members if you

have an idea for a program or an article for your newsletter.

Ann M. Greenseth, Editor ♦

November 2000 Newsletter Contributors

Ann Greenseth, Editor

Mollye Barrett

Susan Duncan

Verla Gatchell

Catie Lukas

Paula-Joy Trencaroff

Jan Wefler

Please contact the Editor at edit4stc@hotmail.com if you would like to contribute to future issues. ♦



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