

LAKE SHORE CONNECTION

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1, SEPTEMBER 2000

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *The LakeShore Connection* for the 2000-2001 program year. I thank all contributors to this issue, including all our Chapter Board Members.

I extend a special word of thanks to Bill Van Pelt of UW-Milwaukee and to five students from his Spring 2000 Technical Communication course for submitting articles to the newsletter for consideration. As we did last fall, we are publishing one of these articles in this issue. I am pleased to publish Ulrike Müller's "How to Write for an International Audience."

And what subjects do students in our field address when their professor asks them to write an article for

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submission to an STC chapter newsletter? Two students chose to write about the challenges of addressing an international audience. The other three students addressed style, online vs. print documentation, and common gateway interfaces.

As for other newsletter features, last program year the newsletter featured two article series: "Going Modular"

Upcoming Events

Chapter Meetings

September 14, 2000 (Thursday)

6:00 pm Networking and hors d'oeuvres

6:30 pm Meeting

Italian Community Center

Chapter 2000-2001 Kick-off Meeting

To kick off the new program year, our first Chapter meeting will include networking and brief presentations by your Board Members, including a look at what lies ahead.

\$10.00 for members, \$15.00 for non-members

October 10, 2000 (Tuesday)

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

"The Business of Independent Contracting"

This program is a panel discussion featuring members of the Independent Contractor SIG.

November 14, 2000 (Tuesday)

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

"Creating a Corporate Extranet"

Presenters: Janelle Bleske and Susanne Tess, eFunds ♦

and "To Be a Technical Communicator." We will continue to bring you installments of these series beginning with the November issue.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or comments, or if you wish to contribute ideas or articles for future issues.

Finally, a special word of thanks to Paula-Joy Trencaroff for her help and support!

Ann M. Greenseth, Editor ♦

10th Annual STC Region 6 Conference: "Patterns of Communication"

September 24-27, 2000

Kansas City, Missouri

Embassy Suites Hotel

The conference will feature presentations on writing and editing, education and training, information design, marketing, professional development, and more. In addition, the conference will feature STC Immediate Past President Mary Wise as the keynote speaker.

For further information, see:

<http://www.stc.org/region6/conf.htm>

or contact:

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From the President

by *Catie Lukas*

Have you noticed that more and more organizations are starting to take on e-initiatives? Strategists state that “ecommerce will hit the business world like a tidal wave” and that “it will reshape company cultures and infrastructures” (Ecnow.com). As technical communicators, we have the opportunity to help drive those initiatives and have a significant impact in the organizations where we work.

Over the past few years, we’ve seen our skill sets broaden through specialties in information design and development, instructional design, and knowledge management.

We’re learning how to use new tools. We’re developing our own user interfaces using HTML or Javascript. Some of us are even thinking about or are dabbling in XML as we begin to single-source our documents. Our work is starting to be recognized in new areas within our organizations.

Whether we work in consulting, manufacturing, computers, insurance or finance, our projects extend far beyond what we once thought was the norm. We can begin to take credit for the design and usability of our company’s internets, intranets, or extranets. We’re getting involved in improving corporate policies, procedures, and promoting the importance of usability testing.

This year the Wisconsin Chapter is making an effort to capitalize on sharing the information and knowledge we have used to help advance

and demonstrate impact in our organizations.

- We plan to take a look at the consulting industry and learn more about this growing trend, particularly from the point of view of independent contractors.
- We plan to focus on some of the ecommerce projects we’re designing on internets, intranets or extranets.
- We’ll discuss the ethical implications our work has on the Web. For example, where do we draw the line on who owns the information we’re designing? What are the copyright and trademark issues we should know about?
- Finally, as we grow our profession in size and skill set, we want to learn from, and prepare ourselves for, the changes that are we going to continue face.

Each one of us has made a contribution to our profession. We want to hear what you are doing within your organization to be a success. Think about sharing your knowledge at one of our program meetings, in our newsletter, or on our Website. We have so much to share and so much to learn. The information we provide to you as members is for your benefit. We want to make sure that you’re finding our resources helpful. And, a lot of that information comes from you or people you know.

Our chapter is fortunate to have lots of valuable talent, skills, and knowledge. Help us build upon one another as one source of our lifelong learning.

Feel free to contact me, or any of the great Board members that are representing our chapter this year. These individuals are the people responsi-

ble for implementing your comments and suggestions.

Please note that the names and titles of the 2000-2001 Chapter Officers are listed on page 5 of this issue. This list also includes the officers’ e-mail addresses.

This is a thrilling time for us. I’m excited about the different opportunities we can bring to our programs, and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming meetings. ♦



Attention! Competition Winners!

We need your help!

If your work has won awards or recognition in competitions hosted by other chapters, please let us know so that we can recognize your accomplishment! Chapters hosting competitions do not always know to notify us when our members win competitions. Therefore, help us to give you the recognition you deserve!

If you have such information, contact Catie Lukas at: catherine.lukas@na.manpower.com

♦

Student Article

Following is an article submitted by Ulrike Müller, who was a student in Bill Van Pelt's technical communication class at UWM last spring. I thank Ulrike for submitting this article. Our Chapter encourages technical communication students in their scholastic endeavors and I welcome submissions from other students who are taking classes in the technical communications field.

How to Write for an International Audience

by Ulrike Müller

As a technical communicator you have surely heard about International Technical Communication (ITC), which has become a catch phrase in the past 10 years. Technical communicators need to be current with international developments. Preparing documents for an international audience is one facet of ITC. In an international context, you can take three different approaches to the "export of information" (Hoft, 1). They are localization, internationalization, and globalization.

- "Localization" can be defined as the "process of creating or adapting an information product for the use in a specific target country or specific target market." (Hoft, 11).
- "Internationalization" refers to the process of re-engineering an information product so that it can be easily localized for export to any country in the world. An internationalized information product consists of two components: core information and inter-

national variables. Core information is invariant information that can be reused in various local contexts.

- Globalization is the process of creating a product that can be used successfully in many cultural contexts without modification.

To prepare documents for international use, it will help to keep certain guidelines in mind. The following tips cover the areas of terminology, time and date, punctuation, and cultural factors.

Terminology

Terminology causes a lot of confusion and misunderstanding when a document is exported to a different culture.

Guidelines:

- Choose words with one or few meanings. Avoid verbs such as: "make," "have."
- Use the simplest verb forms. Example: "use" instead of "utilize."
- Use indicative mood and active voice. Example: "you do" instead of "you would do."
- Define all special terms in a glossary.
- Choose words that are easy to pronounce. Most of your readers will subvocalize; thus difficult words will slow them down.
- Avoid wordy expressions for time, place, and relationship. Example: Use "now" instead of "at this point in time."
- Avoid nominalizations. Example: Use "conclude" instead of "reach a conclusion."

Time and Date

The time and date become crucial when making arrangements for an appointment with a business partner from a foreign culture. In Germany, for example, the date sequence is DD/MM/YY, whereas in the United States it is MM/DD/YY. To avoid misunderstandings, follow these guidelines:

- Use the date/time format of your target audience.
- Spell out the names of the months.
- Inform your reader what system you are using.
- Use a 24-hour system if possible.
- Use multiple formats such as "1:00 p.m./13:00."

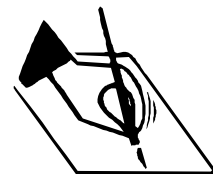
Punctuation

Punctuation is crucial in written documents. Different cultures, however, have different styles of punctuation.

Guidelines:

- Use the preferences of your native language when writing for a general audience.
- Do research on the use of specific usages in your target culture. If necessary, explain how you used a certain punctuation mark.

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- Have a native speaker read the final copy.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors play a role in addition to the linguistic features mentioned. Since there are so many, only a few can be discussed here.

- **Color:** Different cultures have different color associations. Example: Green. In many countries green is considered to represent something environmentally sound or safe. Natives of Thailand, however, consider green to be unattractive.
- **Historic Events:** Certain historic events might only be known in particular cultures. Therefore, you need to be sensitive when it comes to the historic events of your target audience.
- **Geographic References:** When dealing with an international audience, use geographic references with care. They might not mean the same to everybody.
- **Hand Gestures:** Gestures also have different meanings in various cultures. Example: North Americans and most Europeans recognize the “thumbs up” gesture as a positive signal meaning “everything is OK.” However, Australians consider it rude.

Guidelines:

- Be informed about your target audience.
- Have a native speaker proofread cultural aspects.
- Avoid cultural factors (e.g., colors, historic events) that might cause a problem.

Conclusion

Following these guidelines will help you to treat your international audience with the necessary cultural sensitivity. Keeping these simple tips in mind, you show respect toward your readers and your readers will receive your documents with a positive attitude.

References

- Andrews, Deborah. *Technical Communication in the Global Community*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998.
- Hoft, Nancy. *International Technical Communication - How to export Information about High Technology*. New York: Wiley & Sons, 1995.

Author’s Personal Web Page:
<http://www.uwm.edu/~ulrikem> ♦

What’s In It for You?

by *Thea Teich, Director Sponsor, Region 4*

I don’t know when you’ll see this article, but I am writing it in mid-August on a Friday evening, as my husband and a friend play pool, with a jazz CD playing. I think their discussion is revolving around home “improvement.”

Maybe you’ve already come to the conclusion that I am having a hard time realizing that September is only a few days away, along with the kick-off to a new STC year.

What to do to kick off the year with a charge that gets everyone going in the direction that leads to the greatest return in terms of your professional development, learning, empowerment, and chapter vigor?

Guess what, folks? Based upon some highly informal “surveys,” the best

way to get the most from your STC chapter is to do something to help it provide professional development, learning, and so forth for the other members. In other words, the people who get the most from chapter activities are the people who help put them on.

Now, before you start thinking that your chapter leaders are self-serving, please remember that they are always willing to share their advantages with their fellow members. The price? A little assistance, a little involvement, a little expression of interest in becoming a chapter leader yourself.

It’s not difficult to get started, and the rewards are unlimited.

Bottom line, can you give an hour a week to help support your chapter?

You find the meetings useful, you find the networking useful, maybe some of you have found jobs and freelance projects through the people you know in your chapter.

I really don’t want to sound like your local Public Broadcasting Station, but I don’t know another way to put it. Can you give your chapter an hour a week? Or maybe, an hour every two weeks? Or maybe two hours once a month? There are a lot of jobs you can do for your chapter that take just that long.

What’s in it for you? Well, there’s the fact that you’re helping to ensure that the chapter keeps going. The chapters that fall apart often do so because just a few people try to do everything. They burn out, they throw up their hands, and walk away—all because no one else would help send out the meeting notices.

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There's the fact that you're giving something back to the chapter in return for all you've gotten out of it.

Plus, there's the chance to do something you may have never had the opportunity to do otherwise, to prove to yourself you can do it. Want to try your hand at organizing a project start to finish—something they still aren't ready to let you do at work? Your chapter needs you.

Want to try marketing writing, when all you do in the office is documentation and help? Your chapter needs you.

Want to have a little decision-making authority along with all that responsibility? Step right up. Your chapter really needs **YOU**.

Just help out on a committee. May I tell you a personal story? I started out with competitions. I also served on the professional development committee of the Southwestern Ohio Chapter along with John, who worked at the time for a software developer. After I started my own business, a co-worker of John's wanted to outsource the writing of a technical marketing booklet on a product. She got my name from someone she knew at another software developer. However, this potential client did not know anything about me directly; all she had was her former co-worker's recommendation.

She called me, and after I gave my spiel, I said, "do you know John, who works at your company? John has known me for years and we worked together on a committee for STC."

Wouldn't you know it? She got off the phone with me and went straight to John, who vouched for me and my

promise to meet her deadlines. So. There's quantitative, as well as qualitative reasons for volunteering in your STC chapter.

But the most important reason is just that: It's **YOUR** Chapter.

Please talk to your chapter officers or committee managers soon. And, have a great STC year. ♦

New Members! Senior Members!

provided by Verla R. Gatchell and Catie Lukas

We recognize the following Chapter members who have joined or were reinstated since last spring:

- Michael P. Anello, member
- Mary Alyce Appleby, member
- Mary Ann Berry, member (MGIC)
- Matthew L. Burczyk, member
- Diane M. Bushie, member (Northwestern Mutual)
- Michelle Christensen, member (GE Marquette Medical)
- Daniel J. Cleary, member
- Laurie Deblitz Fagan, member (Metavante)
- Melissa Farrell-Lasko, member
- David W. Greeley, member
- Judith A. Jablonski, member
- Bridget Lynn, member (Guaranty Bank)
- Andrew S. McIntyre, member (Compuware)
- Beth Peter, member (GE Marquette Medical)
- Michael Prausa, transferred member
- Kimberly A. Schafer, member
- Laurie K. Thrasher, member

- Derek N. Umnus, member
- Donna M. Voltner, member

In addition, we recognize the following Chapter members who recently achieved Senior Member status in the STC:

- Lauri Gerlach
- Robyn Grover
- Susan Hawkins
- Gail McArdle
- Kathy McIntyre
- Roberta Miller
- Janet Scotney
- Steven Wiese

Welcome to new and transferred members! Congratulations to new Senior Members! ♦

2000-2001 Chapter Officers

President, Catie Lukas
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Vice President, Louis Costanzo
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Secretary & Job Exchange, Sigrid Schoepel
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Web Chair, Open

Webmaster, Open

Board Bio

Verla R. Gatchell

Verla is a Product Documentation Leader at eFunds Corporation in Glendale (formerly Deluxe Data Systems), where she has worked for the past ten years. She has been in the technical communication field for 17 years.

Her responsibilities at eFunds Corporation include the following: managing a team of two writers, estimating and tracking, facilitating projects, coordinating phases of projects, scheduling, and document design.

As Membership Chair for this program year, Verla hopes to accom-

plish a number of goals. One of her primary objectives is to increase our Chapter's membership. She will be following up with any individuals who express interest in our organization.

In addition, Verla will be responsible for providing new members with information about our Chapter and the Society.

Verla also plans to get to know our current membership, and to work closely with the other Board members to retain members and accomplish these membership goals.

Prior to becoming Membership Chair of our STC Chapter, Verla served as WORDS Treasurer, Vice President, and Program Committee member. ♦

September 2000 Newsletter Contributors

Ann Greenseth, Editor

Michele Berkes

Verla Gatchell

Catie Lukas

Ulrike Müller

Paula-Joy Trencaroff

Jan Wefler

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

The Editor also thanks the following students for submitting articles for consideration: Barb Bartelak, Maria Cristina Bernacchi, Matthew Burczyk, Kristin Kowalewski. ♦



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