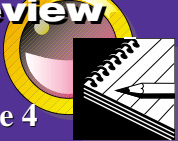


## President's Corner



page 3

## Product Review



page 4

## International STC News



page 5

## Honors & Awards



page 6

## Chapter News



page 8

## Feature Articles



page 7

## RMC 2000 - 2001 Election Results

by Kim Weathersby

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the election results for the 2000-2001 STC RMC Council:

- ▶ **President:** Linda Gallagher
- ▶ **Vice-President:** David Garrett
- ▶ **Secretary:** Molly Malsam
- ▶ **Treasurer:** Mary Jo Stark
- ▶ **Nominating Committee:** Judy Murdoch and Shirley Teter

This group has a wide variety of experiences in technical communication and in STC and will be able to guide our chapter through another successful year.

Linda Gallagher, owner of TechCom Plus, has provided leadership in the past as the manager of the Contracting and Independent Consulting special interest group and is currently serving as chapter vice-president. When she was a member of the St. Louis chapter, Linda served as secretary / treasurer and vice-president-membership. Her broad perspective of technical communication and the STC should serve the RMC chapter well when she takes the helm. "I think we have a great slate of officers for next year, and I'm looking forward to working with them to server the needs of our chapter members," says Linda.

David Garrett is owner and president of Zoa Techmedia, Incorporated. David is a senior member and has been a technical communicator for 13 years. He also served as chapter President in 1996-1997, so he has the requisite experience to get the job done.



[\(Details on page 7\)](#)

Molly Malsam played a vital role in producing the salary survey, which was in the last newsletter. "As part of the extremely successful salary survey committee, Molly has done a fantastic job and we're looking forward to her continued superior efforts as our chapter's secretary," says current chapter president, Larry Prado.

Mary Jo Stark is a senior member of STC and has served the chapter in several capacities, including being treasurer for the past 3 years. We will again have an experienced leader in this critical position.

On the Nominating Committee this coming year will be Judy Murdoch and Shirley Teter. "Shirley has worked for the chapter in a variety of positions and has a lot of experience. Judy is new to our chapter but she's got a lot of energy and enthusiasm," says Larry.

Please congratulate the new council members the next time you see them and be sure to share any ideas you may have for the chapter. Also, let them know if you would like to volunteer—there are a variety of interesting jobs to be done with varying time commitments.

**MARCH & APRIL MEETINGS ANNOUNCEMENT**

[page 5](#)

[\(See back cover for dates\)](#)



**ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

[RMC Seminar Survey Results \(pg. 6\)](#)

[Scholarship 2000 Information \(pg. 6\)](#)

# Technicalities

## EDITORIAL

Editorial & Art Director Jerry Skaw  
Article Editors Susan Kendall  
Jay Mead  
Graphic Contributions Deb Braun

*Technicalities* is published bi-monthly by the Rocky Mountain Chapter (RMC) of the Society for Technical Communications (STC) and is distributed to chapter members, editors of other STC newsletters, and officers of the society. It is available on request to anyone interested in technical communication. Other STC chapters and publications may reprint material if credit is given.

Readers are encouraged to submit material on subjects of interest to society and chapter members. Please credit repeated material and send a copy of the original material to the editor, Victoria Thomas, First Trust Corp., 717 17th St., Ste. 2600, Denver, CO 80202.

The editor may be reached during the day at 303.293.2223 x2920, via fax at 303.294.5743, and by email at [news@stcrmc.org](mailto:news@stcrmc.org). Please submit electronic files in ASCII text format and include a telephone number where you may be reached. To fax articles or artwork, please call the editor.

The *Technicalities* staff reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length; substantive editing of feature articles, however, always will be reviewed with the author prior to publication.

## RMC 1999-2000 OFFICERS

President Larry Prado  
Vice President Linda Gallagher  
Treasurer Mary Jo Stark  
Secretary (open)  
Nominating Committee Jane Bender, Kim Weathersby  
Region 7 Director-Sponsor Ellen Fenwick  
Past President Jay Mead

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Membership Carol Claton  
New Member Orientation Jacquie Huhta  
Programs Melissa East, Hugh Gallagher  
Seminars Lynette Reveling  
Worldwide Web Jason Cox  
Jobs/Professionalism David Garrett  
Education Don Zimmerman  
Volunteers (open)  
Publicity Ed Hanson

## COMPETITIONS

Art Deb Braun  
Publications Leslie Priest, Amanda Jervis  
Online Kathy Ramsey

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Online Kathy Ramsey  
Independent Contractors Lolita Mannik  
Multimedia Jerry Day, Cindy Stone  
Northern Colorado Sandra Lieb  
Western Slope Helen Salter

## SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

### GENERAL CHAPTER BUSINESS

Rocky Mountain Chapter  
Society for Technical Communication  
1999 Broadway, Suite 1900  
Denver, CO 80202  
303.244.1701  
303.672.1900 FAX  
[info@stcrmc.org](mailto:info@stcrmc.org)

### TO LIST JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

303.771.0222  
Send email to: [jobs@stcrmc.org](mailto:jobs@stcrmc.org)  
Job listings are posted on the chapter web site.

### CHAPTER WEB ADDRESS

[www.stcrmc.org](http://www.stcrmc.org)

### STC RMC COUNCIL CONTACTS

President [president@stcrmc.org](mailto:president@stcrmc.org)  
Membership [membership@stcrmc.org](mailto:membership@stcrmc.org)  
Newsletter [news@stcrmc.org](mailto:news@stcrmc.org)



Rocky Mountain Chapter

## See You in September

This issue brings our publishing year to a close. It's been a good run. Our little newsletter has seen quite a bit of change since the Fall and it's been exciting. I am proud to announce that we won an award of Excellence in the national STC newsletter competition. (For details of this award, [see the article by Jay Mead on page 7.](#)) This is very rewarding for me and all those who have been involved in producing this publication. I would like to thank the entire newsletter staff and those who have contributed articles, artwork, photography, and time. It's been a pleasure working with everyone, and a real learning experience.

As we head into summer and take a short break from this task, we have the opportunity to reflect on the past year's efforts and accomplishments. What was especially good about the newsletter? What wasn't? What worked and what didn't? How can it still be better? What can we do to win the Best of Show award next year? (grin)

Not one to rest on my laurels, I have already begun this thought process and have some ideas. I would like to see columns from regular contributors that would be consistent from issue to issue. These columns could cover topics such as the state of the profession, the Denver market for technical communicators, online communications, and graphics 101 (for adding visual flair to your publications), to name but a few.

Then we need more contributions of feature articles ... the insightful thought-provoking kind of writing that makes you go "hmm ...". I would also like to see more contributions in the way of artwork and photography to spice up the newsletter and accentuate articles.

These are my ideas. *What are yours?* We are close to seven hundred in number ... imagine what we could come up with if we put our heads together! (That would be something to see!) This is, after all, YOUR newsletter. Get involved and make your mark!

One year ago, few in the organization knew my name. A year later, I have a network of professionals in our field that I can rely on for information, assistance, and reference for prospective employers. I also have an award-winning newsletter to stick in my portfolio. I have obtained new freelance customers as a result of my contribution to this publication, and I believe that it has even helped me advance at work.

By volunteering my time and efforts to this newsletter, I have bettered myself and my career. I feel empowered.

I urge each of you to consider doing the same. Give of yourself to this organization and then watch how it gives back to you. (Isn't this why we joined in the first place?)

Be part of a winning team ... email me ([jskaw@colorado.cirrus.com](mailto:jskaw@colorado.cirrus.com)) or Jay Mead [jay\\_mead@jdedwards.com](mailto:jay_mead@jdedwards.com) today!



## Editor's Note

The March/April newsletter incorrectly reported that Molly Malsam lived in Chicago most of her life and is renovating an old house. We extend our apologies to Molly who actually grew up in Watertown, SD and just moved into a new house that requires no renovations.

## STC International Office

901 N. Stuart St., Suite 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1822  
(703) 522-4114  
[stc@stc-va.org](mailto:stc@stc-va.org)  
[www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org)  
[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org) (chapter and regional information)



## Maybe in the Next Year or So ...

by Larry Prado

**M**y time in the presidential hot seat is just about over. I've had fun and it's been a great experience for me. Just when I would start feeling burned out, someone would come along and ask for my help and I'd get a second wind. I feel lucky in that I've met many, many great people during my term in office.

I want to thank all of you who have written to me or told me personally that you've enjoyed the things I've written in this column and in the email messages I've sent.

And before it gets too late, I want especially to thank everyone on the chapter Council and all the other kind volunteers for their hard work in keeping this chapter going—you folks are the greatest!

If these people weren't there, we'd have to cut back on some of the activities in our chapter. Won't you dear reader—yes, I'M TALKING TO YOU—please join us next year and keep this chapter active and exciting?

We've got some big plans for next year and I could write about some of the things currently in the works, but I think I'd better leave something for Linda to do (...he said with sort of a Cheshire grin). In typical Larry fashion, I couldn't help but jump way ahead.

However, I'm also determined to write something more focused about our profession. As technical communicators, who is going to be added to our audience in the next 20-30 years and what will that look like? What will it take to do what we do? With the rapid proliferation of computers and other electronic devices, we technical communicators, in the past five years alone, have had to expand the scope of our audience from first-time users like our parents to the generation that went directly from the pacifier to the Internet.



Larry Prado

We must be pretty good to have kept up (insert back-patting sound here)!

What if suddenly part of our world included those who live on other planets or exist in other realms? How would we communicate with each other?

Well, I guess we'd start with an audience analysis. Our chances of getting to the client site might be pretty slim, so we'd probably have to work at home. (I wonder if IRS home-office deduction guidelines would have to change for this?)

Who would be on the review team? Who would be our subject matter experts? What software would we use, or would there be any required? Could we just dump everything in a help file and avoid hard copy? What style guide would we use? Would we have compatible interstellar Web browsers? Adobe PIF (Portable Interrealm Format)?

Regardless of all the technical and logistical clutter, what might be the content—the meaning of life? Finding our true purpose? Relating our world to their world? The similarities and connections among all of us despite where we live? The effects of our acts and the effects of their acts? How the never-ending supply of love is really the glue that holds everyone and everything together?

But no matter how you cut it, the need for clear and consistent writing would be paramount. Maybe our special communication skills and purpose in the universal scheme of things is much greater than we think—perhaps one day we'll know.

But in the meantime, I wish each and every one of you a happy and meaningful life. **RMC**

## Dearest John, Dearest Jane

by Larry Prado

**T**his has been on my mind for a long, long time now and I haven't been quite sure how to tell you but I can't go on any longer. It all started off pretty innocently and well, you seemed so far away, so distant ...

I have dreamed of telling you this in so many different ways just so that I wouldn't hurt your feelings because what's really important is that you know that I care about you. You may not even be aware of this but ...

I've sent you at least one e-mail a month, about one week before our chapter meetings, which are always held the third Thursday of every month. I write to let you know about our membership meetings and other important chapter events and news.

We have over 700650 members in our chapter and each time I send out an e-mail message to everyone, I get at least 50 messages kicked back to me of these replies: message undeliverable.

If you haven't been hearing from me via email, it's because you need to let the International office know that your e-mail address or other contact information has changed. I am not authorized by STC to do this ... they will only take the change information from you.

So please, contact the International office at [www.stc-va.org/fmbr\\_menu.htm](http://www.stc-va.org/fmbr_menu.htm), or call them at 703-522-4114, or send them a fax at 703-522-2075 or write them at STC, 901 North Stuart St., Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203-1822. **RMC**



# Apple iMac DV Special Edition ... a REAL Mac!

by Jerry Skaw

If you know me as a graphics professional, then you would probably not be surprised to learn that I am also a Mac bigot. However, it might surprise you to learn that when my PowerMac died recently, I considered replacing it with a PC..

Let's face it ... the PC has come a long way since the days of Windows 3.1, when trying to work with graphics files meant wrestling with inadequate software programs and regular Windows GFP errors (General Fault Protection, if I recall correctly—translates into “it ain't happening”). But Windows 95 and WinNT put an end to all this, and Adobe has ported all my favorite programs to this platform. All this makes the PC a more than adequate tool (and more affordable) to do my job. And if you've ever found yourself driving desperately from one computer superstore to another on a Sunday afternoon, looking for a piece of upgrade hardware (I have), you know that while there's plenty for a PC, you're out of luck if you own a Mac. That is—unless you own one of those cutesy, colorful, little iMacs ... and it's not a REAL Mac, right? Wrong.

### As it Turns Out ...

I bought an iMac. I have way too many archived customer projects that were created on the Mac, so I knew I couldn't completely cut the cord just yet. I decided, instead, to buy “just enough” Mac to allow me to work from archived project files, figuring I would later buy a PC for new projects. This way, I mused, I could ease into the PC world.

I soon learned that the iMac DV Special Edition is very reasonably priced (\$1499.00 through most of the catalog dealers) and features the following:

- ▶ 400MHz G3 processor
- ▶ 512KB L2 cache
- ▶ 128MB SDRAM memory (expandable to 512MB)
- ▶ ATI Rage Graphics 2D/3D graphics controller w/8MB SDRAM (video memory—great for gamers)
- ▶ 13GB Ultra ATA hard disk drive
- ▶ 100MHz system bus
- ▶ Integrated 56K (V.90 ready) modem
- ▶ Slot-loading 4X DVD-ROM
- ▶ Built-in Harmon Kardon audio system w/ stereo speakers
- ▶ Dual FireWire ports
- ▶ Dual USB ports (supports USB devices such as key board, mouse, printer, storage devices and USB hubs)
- ▶ Built-in autoswitching 10/100BaseT Ethernet

As it turns out, the iMac DV Special Edition is a real Mac for real graphics professionals.

### Out of the Box

I have to say that I don't think that I have ever purchased **anything** that was so easily installed and setup. Apple is so confident in the ease of installation of the iMac, that they don't even include written hardware installation instructions! Instead (as I recall), a simple six-panel reference card, featuring six photo installation steps, is included. And it really was that easy.

Upon powering on the system, I was greeted by an interactive Apple multimedia presentation that walked me through configuration of the system for accessing the Internet. That's it—that's all she wrote. Fini.

Apple scored big with me here, because this system arrived just days after Christmas and I was burned-out on “some assembly required” and poor assembly instructions (that's a whole other article!).

### The Proof of the Pudding

Of course, none of this matters if the system proves inadequate for the job-at-hand. It didn't.

One of my chief concerns prior to buying this system, was the monitor. I was previously working with a 17" monitor. The iMac's integrated monitor is only 15" with an actual 13.8" diagonal viewable image size. However, it features a .28 dot pitch, and supports millions of colors at up to 1024 x 768 resolution (24-bit) at 75Hz. Video games and DVD movies are surprisingly stunning on this small monitor. Oh yeah ... PhotoShop images look good too.

Together, the system processor, hard drive, memory and system bus provide a speedy platform that allows me to multi-task between PhotoShop, Illustrator and PageMaker with no appreciable delays. The 4X DVD-ROM drive plays CDs at up to 24X and audio CDs sound quite nice through the stereo speaker speakers. (This is important.)

I could go on, space permitting, but all-in-all I found the iMac DV Special Edition a surprisingly good purchase and very suitable for desktop publishers, Web designers, graphic designers, as well as just for families.

### Having Said This ...

The iMac DV Special Edition comes only in the graphite color. This doesn't bother me much since my home office doesn't feature any tangerine, blueberry, or lime decor.

There are some annoyances, however. The completely round hockey-puck mouse takes some adjusting.

The diminished keyboard was obviously designed for Oompa-Loompas and not larger hands such as mine.

Be prepared to buy a USB Zip Drive (or similar device) if you must transfer files in any other manner than email ... though a kit can be ordered, a floppy disk drive is not integral to the system.

Good thing I won't be buying that PC ... how would I move files over to my Mac?! **RMC**



## The Year 2000 Pan-Pacific Conference A great time at a great price!

by Jay Mead

A conference in Hawaii—sounds like paradise, right? It will be, if you think a beautiful setting on the beach, three days of great presentations, a nationally recognized keynote presenter, and the chance to meet hundreds of fellow professionals sounds idyllic. It should be on your calendar by now: October 19–21, Honolulu, Hawaii, and you'll be there, of course!

But paradise is expensive, isn't it? If you are lucky, your company—or your rich uncle—will send you to the conference, but most likely you will pay your own way. Fortunately, the conference is very affordable. You can attend the conference for no more than you would spend to attend a conference in the mainland U.S.

### Airfare — a Bargain!

You might expect airfare to be the largest cost for you to attend the conference—not true!

The conference organizers have arranged discount group fares from major departure cities. If you take advantage of these you'll find the airfare little more than you would spend to go from your home city to, say, Chicago or Orlando. Here are some representative airfares, per person round trip (prices are subject to change and do not include tax):

- ▶ From Los Angeles \$298 United Airlines group fare
- ▶ From San Francisco \$298 United Airlines group fare
- ▶ From Seattle \$298 United Airlines group fare
- ▶ From Salt Lake City \$640 Delta Airlines (includes United mileage if desired)
- ▶ From Vancouver, B.C. \$425 Canadian Pacific Airlines
- ▶ From Denver \$532 United Airlines group fare

The group fares are for a Tuesday, October 17, departure and a Sunday, October 22, return, and must be booked through the conference agency, Seawind Tours and Travel. Other flights and fares are available.

**Note:** Book your flights early! The group airfares must be purchased by August 1 and are based on availability. Contact Lori or Derek at Seawind by phone: 800-424-3324, or email Derek at [dhiyane@seawindtours.com](mailto:dhiyane@seawindtours.com).

### Conference Hotel — a Bargain!

The conference is being held at the Ilikai Hotel, a fabulous hotel in Waikiki Beach, Honolulu. For an enticing preview, have a look at the hotel web site: [www.ilikaihotel.com](http://www.ilikaihotel.com).

While normal room rates for waterfront hotels in Hawaii are often quite high, we have negotiated very affordable room rates:

- ▶ \$115 city view (that's only \$57.50 per person double occupancy!)
- ▶ \$135 city view with a kitchenette
- ▶ \$135 ocean view
- ▶ \$155 ocean view with a kitchenette

These rates are for a double room, per night, and, like the airfares, must be booked through Seawind Tours and Travel.

### Conference Cost — Another Bargain!

While the conference preliminary program will not be mailed until the first week in May, the session and workshop speakers form a "Who's Who" of the technical writing industry. (See the conference web site for the preliminary list of speakers and sessions.)

Though the program will be stellar, the conference fees are modest. The sooner you register, the lower the cost:

#### Register by... Pay only...

- ▶ July 31 \$190
- ▶ August 31 \$250
- ▶ October 19, or walk-in \$325

Non-members of STC, add \$115 to each price. Student members (full-time) pay 50% of each price. One-day prices are also available.

Visit [www.pan-pacific.org](http://www.pan-pacific.org) for more information and to download the conference registration form. Payment can be made by check or credit card.

### Other Costs — As Much or as Little as You Want

Once you're there, Hawaii can be a surprisingly inexpensive vacation. Rental cars are reasonable, and hotels in all price ranges are found throughout the islands. Food at the finest restaurants can be pricey, but Honolulu and other locations offer superb dining in every price range. Seawind Tours and Travel has off-island tours and packages, so call them to make a vacation of your stay.

### The Total Experience

Traveling in Hawaii is an unforgettable experience—at any price—and the conference committee has ensured that the conference will be both enriching and affordable.

For more information about any aspect of the conference, see the conference Web site [www.pan-pacific.org](http://www.pan-pacific.org), or contact Jack Molisani, [jackm@ClarityTechnical.com](mailto:jackm@ClarityTechnical.com).

See you in Waikiki!

**RMC**

*About the author: Jay Mead is past-president of the STC Rocky Mountain Chapter, and PR chair for the Pan-Pacific Conference.*



# **RMC Members Receive Distinguished Chapter Service Award**

*by Larry Prado*

**T**hree members of the Rocky Mountain Chapter, Laurie Lamar, Laurence Hoess, and Jay Mead, have been nominated and approved by the STC as recipients of the Distinguished Chapter Service Award.

The Distinguished Chapter Service Award acknowledges the work of chapter members who provide exemplary service to the chapter and its activities. If you are lucky enough to know our honored recipients, you'll know why they have been chosen to receive this award.

### **Laurie Lamar**

In 1995, Laurie Lamar served on the Nominating Committee with Jay Mead, launched our chapter's Web site with Barb Miller and Mark Sullivan, and started our chapter's discussion mailing list (techcomm-discuss, currently managed by Alana Cote). Since then, Laurie has continued as a volunteer on the Web team and a judge and team member for the online competition (1998-2000).

Laurie is an independent web designer specializing in technical and business-to-business audiences. In addition to designing and implementing Web site front ends, she provides information architecture consulting. Laurie's diverse background includes biology, computer science, cognitive psychology, and technical communication. She describes herself as "a profligate user of bulleted lists, since the days of disco." Boogie down, girl!

### **Laurence Hoess**

Laurence is a senior member of our chapter and replaced long-time program manager Al Kemp, a tough act to follow. As the program manager from 1997 through 1999, Laurence scouted and helped establish our current meeting locations. Ever wonder where we got the directional signs

to our meeting? Thank Laurence! He wrote many of the newsletter articles about the meetings, and ensured that food, speakers, and equipment all reached each meeting.

Laurence graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1993 with a BA in Professional Writing. After graduation, Laurence worked briefly for a software development company in the banking industry, and then moved to Colorado in 1995. He started writing software and hardware documentation for Spectra Logic, a data storage provider. Currently Laurence works for US West as a Web developer and writer.

### **Jay Mead**

Jay Mead, our current past president, has been an STC RMC member 12 years.

Jay has been a very active Council member, serving on the Nominating Committee in 1995, as vice president in 1998, and as president in 1999. He assisted with organizing the 1998 Region 7 conference; he is also a member of our award-winning newsletter staff, helped conduct the salary survey, and has been on the Professionalism committee. Along with another past president, Frank Tagader, Jay is assisting with the Region 7/8 Pan-Pacific conference organization (public relations committee). He has been published in Technical Communication (August 1998), and has worked for IBM, Galileo International, and, currently, J.D. Edwards. As if all of this weren't enough, Jay also teaches in the UCD Technical Communication Masters program.

If you get a moment and these hard-working folks slow down, please congratulate our deserving award winners - we're proud to have you in our chapter!



## **More Award Winners!**

*by Larry Prado*

**E**ach year, we seem to witness an outstanding effort by some of our chapter volunteers or acts of great generosity by companies in our community.

Beginning this year, I am starting two new recognition programs to honor some of our super-human volunteers and those organizations whose efforts make a huge difference in our STC lives.

The first award, *Friend of the Chapter*, recognizes those organizations who have donated products or employees' time or other services to RMC.

This year, I am pleased to announce the following recipients and their contributions.

- ▶ **Zoa Techmedia:** use of their offices for our annual art, publications and online competitions as well as the awards reception.
- ▶ **Microsoft Corporation:** donating Front Page and Office 2000 to our chapter to help us manage our Web site and perform other desktop publishing tasks.
- ▶ **Adobe Systems:** donating Acrobat 4.0 to help us create the online version of our newsletters.
- ▶ **JD Edwards and Company:** use of their offices and providing hospitality and funds to pay for food and beverages at our chapter meetings.

[See "Awards" on page 7.](#)

## President's Award for Service and Achievement (AWARDS continued from Page 6)

▶ **StorageTek:** use of their offices and providing hospitality and funds to pay for food and beverages at our chapter meetings.

A second award, *The Chapter President's Award for Service and Achievement*, honors and recognizes an individual's efforts during year. This year, I am proud to present the award to these talented and hard-working chapter members.

▶ **Jerry Skaw:** designing our award-winning newsletter, managing the editorial functions and, staying up way too late to get the newsletter off to the printer.

▶ **Karen Miller:** creating a database to manage member information and annual competitions entry information. One of our chapter's initiatives this year was to have Karen create a database to help us manage not only chapter member information but perhaps more importantly, the entry and entrant information for our annual art, publications, and online competitions (this mission was most successfully accomplished).

Recently, I sent a copy of our database to the STC office in Virginia. Two days later, I received a call from the Executive Director, Bill Stolgitis, and he said that they want to slightly modify the competitions database Karen created and use it for all of STC. I believe that there's also a good chance that the member database Karen created will

also be modified and used by the International office to manage the member information for ALL of STC.

▶ **Jacquie Huhta:** Since 1998, Jacquie has conducted the new member orientation and helped publish *The Rocky Mountain Chapter Guide*. In addition, Jacquie has been a publications and online competition judge for many years and served on the Nominating Committee.

▶ **Mary Jo Stark:** Mary Jo has long been one of our most active volunteers (as if it wouldn't be obvious from this huge list of her service and achievements). She co-founded the Metro Student Chapter with Martha Sippel and was inducted into Sigma Tau Chi in 1994 (Sigma Tau Chi is STC's honor society). Mary Jo has held these positions in our chapter: president of the student chapter, 1994; Community Involvement Chair, 1995; Nominating Committee, 1996; International STC Chapter and Regional Conference Committee 1997-1998; Treasurer 1997-2000; Co-Chair of the Awards Reception, 1997-1998; Chair of volunteer picnic 1998 and Hostess (it was at her home) in 1999; speaker at the Toronto and Orlando International Conferences. If this weren't enough, she has also served on the Mentoring Committee and has been a judge for the art and publications competitions.

Please everyone, find a moment to thank each and every one of these individuals and companies for their valuable contribution to our chapter and community! **RMC**

---

## Technicalities Wins Award of Excellence

by Jay Mead

**T**echnicalities, the newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Chapter, has won an award of Excellence in the 1999-2000 STC newsletter competition.

"You should be very proud of this honor because it recognizes [the Rocky Mountain Chapter's] dedication to publishing an exceptional STC newsletter," said Helen Black, STC Newsletter Competition Manager.

This is the second year in a row our newsletter has won an Excellence award. "This streak exemplifies the skill and commitment of RMC members," said Larry Prado, RMC president. "We really owe a big debt of thanks to editor Victoria Thomas, editor and artist Jerry Skaw, and the other chapter members who have worked so hard to bring us an exceptional newsletter."

In recent months the newsletter has been edited and laid out by artist Jerry Skaw, who has spearheaded this year's graphic redesign effort. The issues that garnered the Excellence award were edited by Victoria Thomas, who took the lead in bringing a new look and fresh approach to our newsletter. Also assisting Jerry and Victoria have been Susan Kendall, Jay Mead, and a host of writers.

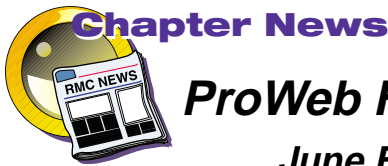
There were 52 entries in the competition from STC chapters, special interest groups (SIGs), and student chapters. Three levels of awards were presented: Distinguished, Excellence and Merit. In our size category,

only Chicago and Boston also won at the Excellence or Distinguished levels. Conference attendees this year should note that all award-winning newsletters will be on display during the STC's 47th Annual Conference, May 21-24 in Orlando, Florida.

A team of four judges evaluated three issues (Sept/Oct 99, Nov/Dec 99, and Jan/Feb 00) of the newsletter in the categories of Essential Elements, Recommended Topics, Editorial Quality and Design and Delivery. Technicalities scored as follows:

- ▶ Essential Elements (60 possible): 52
- ▶ Recommended Topics (60 possible): 60
- ▶ Editorial Quality (90 possible): 70.5
- ▶ Design and Delivery (90 possible): 83.5

Current editor Jerry Skaw emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong, consistent effort for next year. "We need to expand our staff with regular writers on a variety of topics, including tools, the state of the profession, writing and editing skills, Society news and activities, and Denver employment trends. We're also looking for photographers and artists." RMC members who would like to assist with any aspect of newsletter production, should contact Jerry at [jskaw@colorado.cirrus.com](mailto:jskaw@colorado.cirrus.com), or Jay Mead at [jay\\_mead@jdedwards.com](mailto:jay_mead@jdedwards.com). **RMC**



## ProWeb Hosts Round Tables at May Meeting

### June Features Web Graphics 101

by Gail S. Bernstein

The May meeting offers a unique opportunity to share ideas with colleagues from other ProWeb organizations. Members of the ProWeb network are the Association for Quality and Participation, American Society for Training and Development, Colorado Issues Network, Colorado Organizational Development Network, Employee Assistance Professionals Association, International Society for Performance Improvement, Information Systems Trainers, and the Society for Technical Communication.

Each of the three half-hour round table sessions will offer several tables with diverse discussion topics, with tables hosted by representatives from ProWeb member organizations. Topics to be addressed include: The Idea Bazaar, Executive Coaching, Complexity Theory, Strategies for Navigating Change, Tools for Thinking Creatively, Violence that Impacts the Workplace, Including Usability Methods and Research into your Projects, Appreciate Inquiry, Sustaining Organizational Change, Working as an Independent Consultant, Creating a User Interface Design for a Web-based, Database-Driven Application, Instructional Systems Design, Learn How You Can Introduce Usability Into Your Organization, Web Portals: Gateways to Corporate Knowledge, Download or Delete, Translation Problems Facing Technical Writers, and Constructive Conflict Resolution In The Workplace.

**Important:** To ensure that you'll have a seat at the May meeting, RSVP by May 12 to Janice McBride via email at ([jmmcbride@minesandassociates.com](mailto:jmmcbride@minesandassociates.com)) or by telephone at 303-832-1068). Arrive early and catch the meeting of the Online Special Interest Group!

Come to the June meeting to learn many useful hands-on techniques for creating Web graphics. Jerry Day's presentation, Web Graphics 101, will introduce us to general principles, Web graphic file formats, and a display primer for Web graphics. We'll learn how to produce transparent graphics, scan images, optimize graphics, and use slicing. Jerry will also teach us to produce screen captures, backgrounds, buttons and banners, web animations, and rollovers. Then we'll finish the program off with a discussion of tools for producing Web graphics and Web graphics resources.

Jerry Day is Technical Publications Manager at Xilinx in Boulder. Prior to coming to Xilinx, Jerry worked for Hewlett-Packard for 12 years as senior technical writer and technical publications project manager for HP scanners and CD writers.

When you mark your calendar for the June meeting, don't forget the Consulting and Independent Contractors SIG meets just before the regular program. **RMC**

---

## CIC SIG Updates Web Pages

by Lolita Mannik

The Contracting and Independent Consulting (CIC) special interest group (SIG) has expanded its presence on the STC RMC website. The CIC SIG has improved and added links to resources that can be of help to independents or those thinking about taking the big step. The new Freelance Resources pages include:

- ▶ An update to the popular FAQ about Independent Technical Communication
- ▶ Links to notes from past CIC meetings
- ▶ A list of employment agencies that place technical communicators

- ▶ News about upcoming CIC meetings
- ▶ A list of STC independent technical communicators

The list of independent technical communicators was last updated in February 1999. If you would like to be added or removed from the list, or to update your information, please email me (Lolita Mannik) at [fourwinds@mannik.com](mailto:fourwinds@mannik.com). Also, many thanks to Gail Bernstein and Steve Wertzbaugher for compiling our new list of employment agencies.

Check out the new pages on the chapter Web site at [www.stcrmc.org/jobs\\_freelance/freelance.htm](http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance/freelance.htm) and let me know what you think! **RMC**

---

## Upcoming STCRMC Seminars/Workshops

- ▶ May 19, 2000 - Advanced HTML 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Facilitator: Annie Hughes.
- ▶ September 15, 2000 - Web Graphics. Facilitator: Jerry Day

Please check our STCRMC Web site for more details. [http://stcrmc.org/resources/resource\\_seminars.htm](http://stcrmc.org/resources/resource_seminars.htm)



## Branding

by Mary Wise

**T**he Society for Technical Communication. STC. Who are we? What do we do? We are many. We do lots. I'd like a better definition.

Last May, I explained that one of my goals as President of STC was to better define who STC is and what STC does as a professional society of technical communicators. Now, I'd like to fill you in on our progress in that area: the STC Branding Project.

No, we're not burning the STC logo into our hides with a hot iron! We are going through a process to discover and develop the STC brand.

"So, Mary," I hear you cry, "what's a brand? Isn't it the logo?" Actually, integrated branding is much more than just a logo, or mission statement, or public relations plan. According to *Integrated Branding*, by F. Joseph LePla and Lynn M. Parker: "integrated branding is an organizational strategy used to drive company and product direction—where all actions and messages are based on the value the company brings to its line of business." To put it more succinctly, integrated branding is the promise you keep.

So how do we go about figuring out this so-called brand? First, I realized that this process was not going to be quick and easy. To do this right, we had to involve the board and the membership during the whole process. Second, I knew that we could not do it by ourselves; we needed professional assistance. Finally, I decided that we needed to take this year to define the brand, and leave the rest of the work until next year. Believe me, that's hard for

an STC president to do!

So what have we been doing? Last summer, our Corporate Identity committee, headed by Donna Sakson, developed and released a Request for Proposals to several firms that we knew were experts at integrated branding. We were very pleased to receive a proposal from Parker LePla, and we selected them to help us uncover the STC brand.

Uncover the brand? Believe it or not, our brand already exists. This process helps us discover that brand and explicitly define it. When we do that, we can then make decisions for the Society based on the brand.

During the fall, Parker LePla conducted a series of interviews with board members, STC members, non-renewing members, prospective members, and office. We also formed the brand team, a group of 12 STC members who are charged with defining our brand. At the winter board meeting, the board participated in a workshop so that we could learn what branding was about and to learn some of the early results of the interviews.

What's next? In mid-March, the brand team will meet to analyze the data and define the brand: our mission, our values, our associations, and our personality. I'm confident that the result will be a stronger, more visible STC—a Society with a promise to its members; a Society that will keep that promise.

I welcome your comments and questions on this important project. Please feel free to write me; my email address is: [mwise@manu.com](mailto:mwise@manu.com). Believe me, it's some serious fun!

---

## Saving Articles

Copyright© 1996, 2000. by John Hedtke

**S**ome years ago, Carole Thomme Thiel, then Senior Editor for *Infosystems* magazine, wrote an excellent editorial entitled "Are You in the Top 5%?" In this article, Ms. Thiel stated that if you read a single book about your career topic each month for a year, you'll be doing more to develop your professional skills than 95% of your colleagues.

If you don't think you have the time for a book a month, consider saving articles. A well-written article can have as much as a book because it's short and to the point. Moreover, because of the difference in the time it takes to publish a magazine versus a book, articles are likely to be more current.

Here's how:

▶ Read or skim as many professional magazines as you can. Your company probably already receives half a dozen of these. Many magazines are also available free to qualifying companies just for filling out a subscription info card.

- ▶ Develop a list of article topics you're interested in. You won't know exactly what articles you'll want to save at first. Just start clipping articles and see what topics they fall into, and then look for more like it. This list will probably change as time passes and your interests change. Keep a tally of the type and number of articles you are saving. You may be surprised at where some of your interests lie.
- ▶ Tear out or copy interesting articles. Make sure the magazine's name and issue date appear on the article, even if you have to write it in yourself. It's very frustrating to have half of a good article and not know where to look to find the other half. Save articles for **yourself**. Don't save them because your boss reads them or you think that the article is something you "should" be interested in. If you aren't interested in an article, it's just so much sludge.

*See "Articles" on page 11.*

# Infatuated With Style Guides

Copyright© 1999. by Jason Langkamer-Smith

*No art is easy, least of all the art of letters. ...is it to be wondered at that the art of style is eternally elusive, and that the attempt to reduce it to rule is the forlorn hope of academic infatuation?*

— Sir Walter Raleigh, *Style*

**Y**ou might say I've been afflicted by an "academic infatuation" with style, or more precisely, style guides. I first discovered style guides last year during an academic research project. Today, I feel I've just begun to scratch the surface. Each new day presents another nugget of wisdom. I'm pleased to share my observations in the modest hope that you, too, might learn something new. I've organized this article into the following five sections:

- ▶ Understanding style guides
- ▶ Researching and organizing
- ▶ Evaluating project feasibility
- ▶ Developing content
- ▶ Encouraging usage

## Understanding Style Guides

You can define a style guide many different ways. Here's one of my favorites: "A style guide sets consistency, writing style, and format goals for all types of documents, without restricting creativity," according to Larry Prado, president of The Veridus® Company, Inc. ([www.veridus.com](http://www.veridus.com)).

Not all style guides are created equal. Organizations classify their style standards on a continuum of comprehensiveness. Some need very few standards, so their style guides are less comprehensive. Others sell exhaustive style guides on the mass market to people like you and me.

At my employer, style standards fall somewhere between informal and project-specific. Our style guide deals with the mechanics of putting together user's guides. We supplement it with commercially available grammar and usage references. Some popular ones for technical writers, particularly software documentation writers, include the Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications, and *A Style Guide for the Computer Industry* by Sun Microsystems.

## Researching and Organizing

Once you understand what a style guide is, you might want to begin researching and organizing your own. The STC publications index ([www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org)) includes more than twenty entries about style guides. You might start your research by reading a few relevant articles.

For example, if you are particularly interested in setting standards for the proper use of your organization's graphic elements, you might read Donald Le Vie's *Graphic Considerations for a Corporate Style Guide*.

Other style guide articles investigate custom templates, user attitudes, and financial savings.

## Evaluating project feasibility

With such a wealth of valuable published information about style guides, you need to find a clear jumping-off point. Bill Sullivan offers the following no-nonsense advice: "Your style guide should address the problems you see. It's as simple as that," he writes in *How Do I Develop a Style Guide*.

But which problems should your style guide address? To me, at least initially, deciding which issues to leave out of our style guide was more challenging than deciding which ones to put in. Unless you see a clear need for your style guide, you might get overwhelmed thinking about all the possible ways you can put it to use. Style guides can grow into training documents or policy manuals. They can focus exclusively on corporate visual identity. They can serve as orientation tools to educate new writers.

I think a style guide project is most feasible when it focuses on very specific needs in a timely fashion. My company needed a style guide because (1) we employ five technical writers who work in the United States and India, and (2) we are attempting for the first time to write nine software manuals and three help systems, all of which must have the same look and feel. The need was apparent and the timing right.

"Find out how much work is involved and whether there is enough need," James Curtis writes in *Considering a Corporate Style Guide*.

If you pay attention to your needs, the effort and time put into a style guide project will pay off. Like most writers, we struggled to find time to write and update our style guide. We wrote a good first draft. But it will undergo various revisions as our software documentation project efforts progress. We believe time spent now to improve the guide will return financial savings down the road as the project gains momentum. If our style guide will help us shorten writing time, we can consider it a money-making tool, assuming time is money.

"A corporate style guide saves time and is an economical quality control tool, both of which add up to making money—the goal of any corporation," Paul Allen writes in *Save Money with a Corporate Style Guide*.

Even though a style guide can save money, you might decide the payoff is just not there. A formal style guide

[See "Style Guides" on page 11.](#)

project might present too little reward for the perceived effort. Maybe you are a publications manager who can spare only a single writer for the project. Or maybe you are part of a writing team that simply does not have time for an extra project.

"Writers in the corporate world just don't have much time to write, produce, and update a style guide," says Larry Prado.

In that case, consider collecting informal or unwritten style standards into a series of checklists. Chances are you can gather a lot of information in a short amount of time. Or you can contact a firm such as The Veridus® Company that sells online style guides that are easy to maintain, and customized to meet your needs.

### Developing content

In its current form, our project-specific style guide contains about 50 pages. We designed the style guide to look like our published software manuals; it uses the same layout, size, fonts, etc. The guide is trimmed to 7.5" by 9", bound with a comb, and printed in black and white except for the color cover and back. The table of contents includes the following headings:

#### Part 1: Format

- Chapter 1: Setting Up the User's Guide
- Chapter 2: A Description of the User's Guide Template
- Chapter 3: Shared Text Samples

#### Part 2: Content

- Chapter 4: Writing Chapter Explanations
- Chapter 5: Using Microsoft Style Guidelines
- Chapter 6: Editing
- Chapter 7: Preparing an Index as You Write

#### Part 3: Production

- Chapter 8: Using a Commercial Printer

We gave extra consideration to indexing. None of our writers claim special indexing skills, so we searched for clear, basic guidelines. Incidentally, STC Indexing SIG members are tabulating information about how corporate style guides handle indexing standards. More information

is available from Beth Hamilton, [kbhamilton@sprynet.com](mailto:kbhamilton@sprynet.com).

### Encouraging Style Guide Use

To encourage style guide use, I try to bring the guide to every writers' meeting. Our team regularly meets to discuss project goals. We try to keep the meetings short because they usually involve an expensive conference call to India. Our style guide can help us save a few cents by quickly resolving usage questions such as "Is 'gearbox' one word or two?" (it's one, by the way). The more often we use the guide as a group, the more likely we are to refer to it while working individually.

When individual writers refer to our style guide, I think it is important for them to know they are part of a team, not cut off or creatively restricted. The style guide should promote inventiveness through teambuilding. Any team—writers or otherwise—will fall apart unless all members clearly understand their common purpose. You can use a style guide to reinforce shared project expectations with team members.

Writers are more likely to use and help update a style guide if they feel empowered by it. When I say empowered, I mean that writers should have both the responsibility and the authority to achieve the goal of using a style guide. According to Whitney Quesenbery, vice president of design services for New Jersey-based Cognetics Corporation ([www.cognetics.com](http://www.cognetics.com)): "Writers should be encouraged to not only give quality feedback initially, but also submit their own hints, tips, and sample text to share with others long after the style guide has been published."

So writers should not only use a style guide, but submit their own content as well. At that point, the style guide can inspire writers to take their craft more seriously, and to elevate their writing's professional quality. The style guide can also provoke healthy questioning, which leads to debate, and ultimately learning. Now we're back where we started—with an invitation to learn something new. I hope you did.

#### About the Author:

Jason Langkamer-Smith is a technical writer for QuestOne Decision Sciences ([www.questone.com](http://www.questone.com)) in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Contact him at [jlangkamer\\_smith@questone.com](mailto:jlangkamer_smith@questone.com).

---

## A Good Article is a Valuable Resource (ARTICLES continued from Page 10)

- ▶ Store articles so you can find them again easily. Use manila folders or 3-ring binders with notebook dividers to separate articles into topics. Keep the fun stuff separate from the rest of the articles (the "fun stuff" category will grow fastest). When you get 20 or 30 articles in a category, subdivide the category into several more-specific topics or create a table of contents for the category.
- ▶ Once you develop a library of articles, use it. A good article file is a valuable resource. You can use articles

toback up a report or proposal. Circulate copies of your favorites.

By saving articles, you rapidly develop a sense of where an industry is going, and what is about to happen. People are impressed with someone who has always has just the right article at hand. Best of all, you'll have the largest cartoon file in the office.

## Upcoming STC RMC Chapter Meetings

**When:** Thursday, March 16, 2000  
**Where:** Zoa Techmedia  
2401 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300, Denver  
**Admission:** Members \$5  
Non-members \$8  
**Agenda:** 5:30 - 8:00 P.M. Awards Reception

**When:** Thursday, April 20, 2000  
**Where:** Storage Technologies Corp.  
Check [www.stcrmc.org](http://www.stcrmc.org) for map and details  
**Admission:** Members \$5  
Non-members \$8  
Students free  
**Agenda:** 5:45 - 6:45 P.M. Multimedia Special Interest Group  
5:45 - 7:15 P.M. Networking and snacks  
7:15 - 9:00 P.M. Announcements and program

### To Zoa Techmedia

From I-25, take the 23rd Ave exit (23rd is the exit just south of Speer).

Turn east onto 23rd Ave. Follow 23rd Ave past Ocean Journey and the old Forney museum. Once you pass the Forney museum, 23rd Ave turns into Platte.

The first stop light on Platte is 15th Street. Zoa Techmedia is located on the third floor of the A.H. Root building at 15th and Platte, above the Armadillo restaurant.

The main entrance is located on Platte, about 1/2 block south of 15th.

## New and Transferring RMC Members

Plan to attend the new member meeting which is held at 5:45 p.m preceding the regular chapter meeting. We look forward to getting acquainted with you soon!

Kim Adams	Emily J. Fix	Elizabeth M. Minyard	RuthAnn Ritter	Jack R. Tomson
Melanie A. Arndt	Karen L. Godshalk	Donna E. Nabel	Janice I. Robnett	Indira R. Walia
Brian D. Bennett	Stephanie S. Griffin	Paul A. Neale	Claire D. Schram	Margot A. Warren
Dennis A. Braan	Susan L. Helton	Jeffrey D. Newsom	Jeremy D. Schultz	Nicole Wertz
Stephanie L. Brown	Chris M. Henrichs	John R. Orr	Kate G. Smith	Craig K. Wise
Scott M. Brumfield	Cynthia L. Herr	Anesa M. Parker	Deborah E. Sowder	Justine M. Wogsland
David R. Craw	Harl Hoppler	Steven Peliotis	Terese M. St. Jacques	Karen A. Yakubisin
Jo-Nell I. Drennan	Trish A. Joyce	Chalyce Petersen	Eileen M. Thournie	Peggy L. Zimmerman
Megan Eck	James O.B. Keener	Therese A. Pocrnick	Michael J. Tolinski	

# Technicalities

Rocky Mountain Chapter  
Society for Technical Communication  
1999 Broadway, Suite 1900  
Denver, CO 80202

**NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION**  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Denver, Colorado  
Permit No. 2137