



Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

Spring 2005

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TECHNICAL
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Technicalities

This site is best viewed with Internet Explorer 5x or newer.

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Technicalities is published bi-monthly by the Rocky Mountain Chapter (RMC) of the Society for Technical Communication (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.

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication.

Note: *By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.*

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: news@stcrmc.org.

The editor can be reached during the day at 303.405.8122, by e-mail at news@stcrmc.org, and by postal mail at 820 S. Monaco Pkwy. #286, Denver, CO 80224. Please submit electronic files in ASCII text format and include a telephone number where you can be reached. If you need to mail or fax articles and/or artwork, please contact the editor for a mailing address and fax number. The deadline for article submission is one month prior to issue release (first of the month, every other month).

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

STC RMC 2004-2005 Officers

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Treasurer: [Lynnette Reveling](#), 303.768.1253
Past President: [Frank Tagader](#), 303.758.2285

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Education: Donald Zimmerman
Jobs/Professionalism: Anne Halsey
List Server: Currently vacant
Membership: Helen Tuttle
Mentoring: Deb Lockwood
Nominating Committee: [Cathy Barnes](#), [Eileen Thornir](#)
Programs: Michael Livsey
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Information Design and Usability: Laurie Lamar
Northern Colorado: Ralph Towers
Online and Multimedia: Marella Colyvas and Kathy Ramsey
Western Slope: Victoria Thomas

Society for Technical Communication, Rocky Mountain Chapter

General Chapter Business

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Denver, CO 80224

info@stcrmc.org

Job Postings

Send job postings to jobs@stcrmc.org

Jobs are posted on the chapter website (http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance.jobs.htm), and are emailed to the techcomm-discuss mailing list.

Chapter website

<http://www.stcrmc.org>

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901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
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Chapter News

How many STCRMC'ers does it take to...

It will soon be time to elect chapter officers again, and no one has yet stepped up to the plate to run for the office of treasurer for next year. If you have the ability to manage our chapter's finances and would like to run for treasurer, please contact [Cathy Barnes](#) or [Eileen Thornir](#).

International Elections

You should have already received your ballot by email or regular mail for this year's international elections. An election guide is available at: http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/2005.election.information.pdf. Just in case you didn't know, the STCRMC's own Martha Sippel is running for nominating committee.

Welcome Our New and Returning Members

New and returning members for the months of November, December, and January:

November 2004

- Constance Fabian-Isaacs
- Kristina Jensen

December 2004

- Elizabeth Callahan
- Jolie Gallagher
- Michelle Mach
- Catherine Strange
- Thanhnguyet Vo

January 2005

- Jeff DeMent
- Cathi Ebling
- Stacey Ennis
- Cynthia Manseau
- Anita Rae
- Kathleen Reid
- Shelly Ruspakka
- Lauren Walters
- Bonnie Weaver
- Stephen Wertzbaugher
- Emily Yagai



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Solutions, Inc.

by [Ron Arner](#)

Some recent tips, how-to's, and advice from the Rocky Mountain Chapter Listserve:

Thread #1: Converting an inherited hunk o' junk:

I have an OLH project created either in RoboHelp or RoboDemo - I don't know which - which needs to be backed out into a book. And, if it is RoboHelp, I am not sure what flavor it is -webhelp, flashhelp, etc. Right now, I have a zip file for this project and when I view the contents of the zip file, I see the following types of files: .gifs, htm, and .swf (shockwave flash object. Does anybody know of way/can provide any information about how to "back out" this help system into a book? I am under the understanding (perhaps patently false) that this is possible, even if I don't see .doc files in this project.

It's sounding a bit like RoboDemo, given the file extensions. Is there a .rd file, by any chance? If yes, someone with RoboDemo (hmmm, like me) could open it. From RD, you can export to Word, then bring content into FrameMaker. Ugly, but doable.

If you have just a series of HTML files, WebWorks Import Utility can bring the content into FrameMaker.

No matter what, it will need lots of cleanup, but either of these methods, depending on exactly what you have, would be better than manually copying and pasting text from each individual file.

Check with your client/ co-workers that there isn't an .rd file. (RoboDemo creates project files with an .rd extension which you then generate into an .exe or .swf for the actual deliverable.)

Otherwise, you may have a pure Flash project. Check with your client/ co-

workers that there isn't a .fla file (Flash's project file that you generate into a .swf). The files you have sound like "output" files not the "source" files. The htm just launches the .swf and the .gif files are the related images that probably display on the htm page.

Do you have access to Macromedia's Flash program? There may be something within it that could help.

Otherwise, Google "decompile a .swf file" - you'll see a lot of links to tools that decompile the .swf to a .fla. Once you have the .fla, you could at least get to images and text.

Thread #2: International symbols as graphic files:

Does anyone know of a source for getting international symbols as graphic files? I've searched and found fonts, but that's not what I want.

I want graphics files, like .tif or .eps, for various international symbols including the CE mark, hot surface, caution, fuse, signal input, signal output, earth (ground), etc. Just plain black and white would be fine. I keep needing more different symbols for a hardware client.

Try this:

<http://www.4yeo.com/pagelements/icons/signs/index.htm>

Check out the files in the clipart directory of your Frame install directory.

Adobe hasn't upgraded this clipart for many years, but sometimes you can find what you want in one of the files.

Try the ISO site

<http://www.iso.org/iso/en/CatalogueListPage.CatalogueList?COMMID=4768&scopel>

Also, Bill Horton's Icon Book...

About a bazillion years ago I purchased a set of 17 CDs plus a manual entitled "Holy Cow! 250,000 Graphics" for \$30 or so. I have gotten more use out of that purchase than I ever imagined. It has all of the international symbols. I searched and can't find it sold anywhere now (someone on Amazon is selling it uses for \$250!) But you might find a copy with a little more searching. Published in 1997 by Macmillan Digital Publishing, ISBN 0-672-31209-3P.

I believe that the above product can be purchased from Nova; it's now called Art Explosion:

<http://www.novadevelopment.com/Products/Clipart.aspx>

Thread #3: Grammar question:

One of my pet peeves, which I have begun to see more and more of late, is the the expression that something is X "times less" or "times fewer" than something else.

For example, a certain brand of margarine has "two times less" cholesterol than another brand, or the duration of a certain surgical procedure is "three times shorter" than another technique.

Is this grammatically correct? And if so, what in the heck does it mean???

Logically this stuff is risky even if it is grammatical. But if you're working on a marketing piece, you might be stuck with it.

"Three times" something means "3 x" something, so you multiply by three.

Unfortunately, marketers write "three times more" when then mean "300% of" or "triple" the original value. "Three times more" technically means 3x the original *added* to the original, or 400% of the original. The word "more" always means you start with the original and add — uh — more to it. You can't have "more" without having an original quantity at the start. On the other hand, you can have "3 times the original value" and hit 300% quite nicely.

Marketers use a larger number to mean "better" because their audience is accustomed to the belief that bigger or more is better. So they say "three times less cholesterol" rather than "one-third the cholesterol of our Heartclencher competitor." The only way to square content and form in this case is to interpret the factor as (1/whatever), where whatever is the number that precedes "times."

The same principle that leads marketers to write "three times less" gets more dangerous in the hands of many journalists. When living in another state (of the U.S.) a few years ago, I read an article in the local paper that identified a "115% reduction in the caseload" at a state agency.

Well, that implies that the caseload hit zero and then went the other way. It's like saying you reduced your car speed by 115%. First you put on the brake until you came to a halt, eliminating 100% of your speed. Then you shifted to reverse and accelerated backward to 15% of your original forward speed. For most people in reverse, that's really moving. Keep me outta that parking lot.

I don't have a problem with a "115 percent reduction." Maybe I've been around too many managers who want a "110 percent effort."

As far as marketing and advertising language, I don't think you can ever hope for other than mangled syntax, grammar, punctuation, and terminology. These are the folks who use "creative" as a noun.

I just read a promo for a program that asks decision-makers to "register into the program..." I always thought you registered "for" something, not "into" something.



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Tips from the Trenches

by [Deb Lockwood](#)

This is the second in a series of articles about practical shortcuts and tips for common software applications. The last article focused on Adobe FrameMaker. In this article we look at Microsoft Word.

The section "Word Shortcuts," below, lists shortcuts for navigating a Word document, applying styles, selecting text, cutting and pasting, formatting text, and aligning paragraphs.

In "Viewing Microsoft Documents," you will find links to Microsoft viewer application downloads. These viewers let you view a document created using an Office application without actually having that software application on your PC.

Word Shortcuts

Following is a list of shortcuts you can use to perform common functions in Word.

Navigation Shortcuts

Press these keys...	To go to ...
Ctrl+Home	Beginning of document
Ctrl+End	End of document
Ctrl+PageUp	Top of window
Ctrl+PageDown	Bottom of window
Alt+Ctrl+PageDown	Next page
Alt+Ctrl+PageUp	Previous page
Ctrl+Down	Next paragraph
Ctrl+Up	Previous paragraph

Home	Beginning of the line
End	End of the line
Ctrl+Left	Left one word
Ctrl+Right	Right one word

Style Shortcuts

Press these keys...	For this style ...
Ctrl+Shift+N	Normal style
Alt+Ctrl+1	Heading 1
Alt+Ctrl+2	Heading 2
Alt+Ctrl+3	Heading 3
Ctrl+Shift+L	List

Text Selection Shortcuts

Press these keys...	To select ...
Ctrl+A	Entire document
Ctrl+Shift+Home	To beginning of document
Ctrl+Shift+End	To end of document
Ctrl+Shift+PageUp	To top of window
Ctrl+Shift+PageDown	To bottom of window
Shift+PageDown	Down one page
Shift+PageUp	Up one page
Ctrl+Shift+Down	Down one paragraph
Ctrl+Shift+Up	Up one paragraph
Shift+Home	To beginning of line
Shift+End	To end of line
Ctrl+Shift+Left	Left one word
Ctrl+Shift+Right	Right one word
F8, F8	Current word
F8, F8, F8	Current sentence
F8, F8, F8, F8	Current paragraph

Cutting and Pasting Shortcuts

Press these keys...	To do this ...
Ctrl+X	Cut
Ctrl+C	Copy
Ctrl+V	Paste

Text Formatting Shortcuts

Press these keys...	To make the text ...
Ctrl+B	Bold
Ctrl+I	Italics
Ctrl+U	Underlined
Ctrl+Shift+W	Underlined (words, but not the spaces)
Ctrl+Shift+D	Double underlined
Ctrl+Shift+A	All caps
Ctrl+Shift+K	Small caps
Shift+F3	Toggles capitalization

Paragraph Alignment Shortcuts

Press these keys...	To do this ...
Ctrl+L	Align left
Ctrl+E	Center
Ctrl+R	Align right
Ctrl+J	Justify

Viewing Microsoft Documents

Microsoft has made available several freeware applications that you can use to view documents created using Office applications, including viewers for Word, Excel, Visio, PowerPoint, and Access. These can be useful both for reading files for which you don't own the application itself, and for your clients who may not own an application you use to create documents.

- Word 2003, 2002, and 2000
office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HA011496951033.aspx
- Visio 2003
www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=3FB3BD5C-FED1-46CF-BD53-DA23635AB2DF&displaylang=en

- Excel 2003, 2002, 2000, and 97
office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HA011620741033.aspx
- PowerPoint 2003
www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=428D5727-43AB-4F24-90B7-A94784AF71A4&displaylang=en
- Snapshot Viewer for Access 2003, 2002, 2000, and 97
www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=B73DF33F-6D74-423D-8274-8B7E6313EDFB&displaylang=en



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On the Relevance of Geography

 by [Marc Lee](#), STCRMC President

Is geography relevant in today's cyber world? Has the advent of space-spanning technologies, virtual teams, and outsourcing made the concept of physical proximity irrelevant? These are some of the issues now facing us as a Society—even as we, the RMC chapter, continue to wrestle with the issues of geography in our own backyard. Should we have one central location for all meetings or continue to move meeting places around, for the convenience of members in different parts of the metro area?

At a Society level, the leadership has attempted to reduce 'geographical determinism' (my term) by: 1) allowing people to become members of the society without belonging to a local chapter, 2) campaigning for direct election of the board, rather than having members vote for a regional member.

Part of this makes sense, particularly for people in areas outside large metropolitan markets like Denver-Boulder, Dallas, Los Angeles, and San Jose. If you live in Cheyenne, does it make sense to automatically be assigned to a chapter whose meetings are always somewhere around the Denver metro area? Probably not.

My personal view, however, is that for the vast majority of RMC members, having your membership in the Society structured through a local chapter and a region makes perfect sense.

One of the reasons I joined the RMC chapter all those years ago (about 15) was to physically be in the presence of people with whom I shared professional experiences and professional woes. It was a chance to experience a communication on a personal level, get a facial expression or two from them, and see the body language. That meant something.

This physical connection was, and is, the essence of STC to me. It may not be to others, but I think we can take this cyber paradigm too far. There's something to be said for sitting next to someone as he or she discusses the problem of getting timely reviews of a manual, \ SME input, or management buy-in. Since most of our professional life these days is so electronic and virtual, maybe just one role of the Society—and the chapter—is to be a bit contrarian: let's lift a glass to plain old geography.

Back to Local Issues

On a less philosophical plane, we have some important local issues to deal with:

1. By Laws

A chapter by-laws update is currently available for your review and approval at: www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=37865838833 I urge you to go there, review the material (there's a link to the recommended new text), and vote for these important housekeeping details in the affirmative.

2. Elected Officials

We are still hoping to find volunteers to run for chapter office in May. Specifically, the office of Treasurer still has no candidate. Our nominating committee of Cathy Barnes and Eileen Thornir has worked hard to fill this need, but are still looking. What does a chapter treasurer do? Mainly it's keeping the chapter books (Quick Books), filing the annual report, and maintaining the chapter bank accounts. It's an important job and one with a lot of responsibility. Fortunately, our finances are in good shape and the new treasurer will have a lot of experienced help from the council to rely on. If you have a feel for finances and are interested, contact me, Cathy, or Eileen.

3. Upcoming Seminars

Also in May we are looking forward to the visit of Jane Smith. Jane, from Arizona, will be speaking to the chapter on 'Performance Technology—Beyond Documentation and Training.' She will also present two one-day seminars May 20 and 21 on instructional design and e-learning. Those who, like me, have attended Jane's seminars are enthusiastic supporters. She shows in easy-to-understand activities how to transform your existing technical content (say, in a manual) into meaningful training—not an obvious transformation until you learn how to do it. Watch for one-day seminar prices and details, coming soon.

Let me have your comments on the above and on any other chapter matters.



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The Big6™

by [Ron Arner](#)

I recently attended an all-day inservice as part of my job with Denver Public Schools. The inservice was all about the latest and greatest in information literacy, otherwise known as the Big6. I'd heard of the Big6 before, but seeing it presented by one of its original creators shed a new light on a subject I'd previously dismissed as interesting but unimportant to me as a technical communicator.

What is the Big6? If you don't already know, here's a clue:

- Task Definition
- Information Seeking Strategies
- Location and Access
- Use of Information
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Now do you know what the Big6 is? First of all, the Big6 is actually a Big 1—one process model of how people of all ages solve an information problem¹.

The Big6 was created by Michael Eisenberg and Robert Berkowitz in 1987, then two professors at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies. In a nutshell, the Big6 is Eisenberg and Berkowitz's solution to the problem of information overload. Instead of overload, what will result from using the Big6 (and one of the hottest buzzwords in educational technology today) is information literacy.

What does information literacy have to do with technical communication? The two are intimately related. One possible way to explain what technical communicators do is that they facilitate information literacy. Whether in print or online, technical communicators make it easier for their audience to separate good information from bad. The Big6 helps shed light on what one's audience will be looking for, and how they will go about looking for it. What's more, it's a lot cheaper than usability testing!

With this in mind, here are the six skills of the Big6 in more detail:

1. Task Definition
 - o Define the information problem
 - o Identify information needed to complete the task
2. Information Seeking Strategies
 - o Determine the range of possible sources (brainstorm)
 - o Evaluate the different possible sources to determine priorities
3. Location and Access
 - o Locate sources
 - o Find information within sources
4. Use of Information
 - o Engage the information in a source
 - o Extract relevant information from a source
5. Synthesis
 - o Organize information from multiple sources
 - o Present the information
6. Evaluation
 - o Judge the product
 - o Judge the information problem-solving program

Sources Cited

1. ***The Definitive Big6™ Workshop Handbook***

Michael B. Eisenberg and Robert E. Berkowitz. 1999. Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing, Inc. [ISBN: 1-58683-153-6. 228 pages.] <http://www.big6.org>

2. *ibid*



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STC Conference Provides Unique Opportunities

by [Suzanna Laurent](#), STC First Vice President, Associate Fellow, Oklahoma Chapter

How long has it been since you updated the knowledge and skills you use to perform your work? If you lost your job right now, would your present skills be sufficient to land a new one? What have you learned recently about the emerging trends in technical communication? Plan now to attend the world's largest gathering of technical communicators in Seattle, May 8-11, to take advantage of the opportunities STC provides to learn new job skills, network with other professionals, and enjoy demonstrations of new products useful to your work. As STC members, we receive these and other benefits in a variety of ways, but it is up to us to take advantage of the many opportunities offered. You may be one of those members whose employer still pays for training at a conference such as this, but I've only experienced that a couple of times in my almost 20 years in the profession. Nevertheless, because I know the importance of keeping my knowledge and skills up-to-date, attending the annual conference is an investment I make in myself every year. I believe it helps to ensure my future!

The annual conference helps members further their education and expand their network of contacts. More than 200 technical sessions offer technical communicators—from entry level to senior management—opportunities to improve their technical skills and enhance their personal development. Session topics are categorized under Usability and Information Design; Management; Professional Development; Theory, Research, Education and Training; Tools and Technology; and Writing and Editing.

There are many other opportunities at the conference as well. You can meet new friends, renew old acquaintances, learn about technological advances, review employment opportunities around the world, and try the latest software solutions to your work-related problems. You can hear motivational speakers and view the international competition award-winning work. A special event is the Honors banquet where you can meet STC Fellows and Associate Fellows, and learn which communities won the coveted Achievement and Pacesetter awards for outstanding achievement. Optional events include post-conference tutorials and workshops, and a variety of SIG meetings and networking luncheons. Sample Seattle's hospitality by taking one of the special tours available. And, don't forget to leave time to visit the STC Bookstore. In all, there are four days of educational presentations,

vendor exhibits, and social events, including a full day of leadership training. You receive a copy of the conference Proceedings as well. I often refer to my copies of past proceedings when seeking information on a particular topic.

When you divide the number of educational sessions you can attend into the registration cost, you will find it is an inexpensive way to further your education, yet it is tax deductible. Continuing your education shows employers that you are interested in improving yourself and that you are not content to just do your job without taking the initiative to learn more and stay up-to-date with the emerging trends.

Plan the sessions you want to attend well in advance, mixing personal and professional development topics with other seminars that relate directly to your interests to get the most "bang for your buck." Delivered with the March 2005 issue of Intercom was a comprehensive conference program guide. It is a great source of pre-conference information. Also available at www.stc.org/52ndConf is more information on sessions, tours, and events for the annual conference.

If you would like help getting support from your employer to attend this conference, visit the www.stc.org/52ndConf/PDF/getting.support.pdf to read some great tips. No matter how you get there, you will return with information and ideas that will contribute to your growth and advancement as a technical communicator. Start planning now to take advantage of this marvelous opportunity offered by STC at its annual conference!

Reduced rates are available to participants who register on or before April 22nd via the Web, mail, or fax. The rates listed on the registration form are in U.S. dollars. Participants may also register on site at the conference at a more expensive rate.

For me, this will be an especially memorable conference as I will be installed at the annual business meeting on Tuesday, May 10, as the Society's 2005-2006 president. This is a goal I've worked toward for many years, and I hope you will be there to cheer me on as I take over the leadership of our international organization that provides unique educational and networking opportunities. I guarantee you that I can see some exciting things in STC's future!



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Web design and Alternative Markets for Technical Communicators: November, 2004, and January, 2005, Chapter Meeting Reviews

by [Ron Arner](#)

November Chapter Meeting Review: Website Design and Implementation

The November (2004) Chapter Meeting of the STCRMCM was held on November 18, 2004, at the Tivoli Student Center on the Auraria Campus. The November meeting was also the annual membership drive, so a large crowd and numerous door prizes made for a very enjoyable evening.

In addition, Anita Larson (www.thewebmuse.com) and Victoria Munro Block (make-it-fly.com) gave a wonderful presentation on the basics of Web design and development.

Anita Larson, who happened upon Web design as a way to promote her custom sewing business, shared some new tips on how to "satisfy hungry search engines." Victoria Munro Block fascinated those in attendance with her British accent and provided further tips on Web design (citing color as the most powerful influencer).

January Chapter Meeting Review: Alternative Markets for Technical Communicators

The January Chapter Meeting of the STCRMCM was held on January 20th at the Mile High Inn and Suites in Lakewood. Attendees were treated to an interesting variety of Alternative Markets for Technical Communicators, which included:

- Marketing (Phil Nugent)
- Medical/Pharmaceutical writing (Emmy Ford)
- Financial/Securities (Deb Lockwood)
- Military/D.O.D. (McDowell Graham)
- Tradebooks (Peter Kent)

In addition, Gordon Gray, a career consultant, led a roundtable on how to make career choices.

Those in attendance were so fascinated by the speakers that the meeting went much longer than usual, and many people had a hard time choosing which three of the presentations they wanted to attend!



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Creating Multimedia Presentations for Training

by [Guy Ball](#), OCSTC Senior Member

Originally printed in TechniScribe, the Orange County (CA) STC Newsletter

In the last few years, the use of multimedia in instructional documentation has really taken off. Improvements in video and animation tools make it easier for technical "writers" to deliver information visually to an audience that, more and more, often prefers not to read.

For writers that idea might border on the heretical. But the inclusion of media-rich presentations in the world of the printed word falls in line with our common goal of helping users learn the subjects we write about. While I, like many people, prefer books for many purposes, multimedia is often the optimal solution for others.

Creating video and animation components has become simpler and quicker. Writers can create effective multimedia deliverables in less time with less tool training than before. And companies benefit even more if these visual presentations do a better job of explaining the advantages of a product to their users—often through video demonstrations—increasing the perceived value of the product.

In some cases, companies have reduced or eliminated instructor-led training classes in favor of computer-based training (CBT) modules delivered via CD media or online. CBTs can't replace hands-on instructors with all of their personalized training. But in a cost-driven world, a well-designed program can help improve the quality of training while reducing the need for an instructor to only the most difficult or complex lessons.

Your tool choice is wide. Almost three years ago, Kathy Faircloth and I wrote about setting up a team to produce video training (*TechniScribe*, March 2002, "Stream of the Future? Producing Digital Video"). While straight video is still relevant, there are many options. For instance, Macromedia Flash has become a major player due to its user-friendly improvements. Camtasia by TechSmith has evolved into a simple but powerful tool for software demonstrations. A program called Visual Communicator offers a video solution in a single package. Even Microsoft PowerPoint can be used to create an effective presentation—and it's a tool most of us have on our systems already.

Let's look at a couple of the basic steps in creating multimedia CBT.

Planning your Project

This process mirrors your standard document plans. You'll need to choose what the focus of your deliverable is—installation? Configuration? Servicing? How many different CBT deliverables will you have—one? Two? More? Or can you offer one deliverable with multiple topics? And what are the major sections within the deliverable?

The complexity grows when you ask how you want to deliver the CBT. This decision will hinge on your skills and available tools. It will also depend on how your company wants to deliver the content. For instance, will it be protected behind a firewall on your Intranet? Or delivered on CD or DVD?

Manage your client's expectations. Management (your client) might want the world, but if you can't deliver it—or it will take additional time—discuss the additional costs and time with your client. Get their buy-in before you start the project (and confirm it in writing).

Be very clear on who your audience is—customers? Engineers? Management? How much do you want to overlap?

What format do you want to create? The format will determine the complexity and impact of your schedule. Want live video? That will add shooting and editing days. Want a software demo? Your software will need to be complete enough to demonstrate. Need graphic images? Determine whether you can create them yourself, use canned art, or if you'll need to bring in a graphic artist.

Developing your Content

This step is similar to developing content for a book. However, realize that once you start producing the CBT, it's much tougher and costlier to make changes. You're not just changing text in a Word or help document. Before you start assembling the CBT itself, create whatever content you can—including outlines, scripts, and other breakdowns—and work with some sort of a storyboard. Be sure to have the engineering and management groups sign off on it. While there will probably still be changes later on, this minimizes extra work and resolves conflicts between subject matter experts (SMEs) early in the process.

Creating your eLearning Deliverable

Take your longer tasks and begin them first. If you need to videotape presenters or create animation, start that effort early (when possible). If you need to get photos, drawings, or special graphics, request them early. Don't permanently change any original material—text, artwork, or photos. Save each version because you may need to reuse it. Assume that glitches will cause delays when you can least afford them. Don't immediately agree to project changes that might impact your schedule. However, assume that you will have to agree to a few changes towards the end and try to build some

spare time in your schedule. As you create segments of your deliverable, show them to your SMEs and managers so they can see progress and also catch any errors. Try to keep an e-mail approval trail-or send confirmation e-mail messages when your experts approve or offer comments. This helps reduce any confusion over what was said, or not, as a project develops.

Testing your Deliverable

Don't get caught up in how beautiful you think your CBT looks. Make sure the content fits your needs: usability is key. Make sure both content and design meets the needs of your audience. From day one, have access to "regular users" who take a quick look at your mock-ups, early designs, and mid-term proofs. Did you use certain colors on a dark background that make text difficult to read? Does the information flow in a way not intuitive to your viewers?

Keep in mind that it's far easier to change an unreadable font or unclear content early in the process than at the end. Keep your ego out of the design and let your users dictate what will help them. Survey several volunteers and don't prompt them for answers. The more people you ask, the better your input. If you have a user-interface or audience analysis team within your organization, see if it can help you.

Revise or adjust the deliverable when necessary and possible. However, keep your SMEs and management in the loop. Don't surprise them. If your audience analysis points to a change, let the final approvers know what it is and why you will be making it.

Delivering your Deliverable

With your skills, attention to the project details, and a bit of holding the line against last-minute changes, you will deliver on time to the satisfaction of your clients and with the accolades of whomever decides on your next raise or bonus.

As you can well imagine, I've merely scratched the surface here. There is much more involved in creating multimedia training, including how presentations are designed to be effective, what tools to use, and how to manage the project with multiple participants.

I've included a few links to help you. I would advise paying special attention to any future Web seminars or CBTs that you come across. Regardless of their content, sample them and see what works for you and doesn't. Take notes and print screenshots.

Creating effective training materials *is* a challenge, but helping our users understand their new software or hardware product is why we're technical writers. The tools may change, but the goal remains the same.

www.adobe.com (Premiere and AfterEffects)

www.macromedia.com (Flash and Captivate)

www.techsmith.com (Camtasia Studio)

www.seriousmagic.com (Visual Communicator)
www.microsoft.com/Education/PPT2003Tutorial.aspx (creating enhanced multimedia presentations in PowerPoint)
www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EDUC/jdnowlan/home.htm (designing multimedia presentations)

Guy Ball is a senior technical writer and developer of training material. He has helped develop over 70 multimedia presentations. Guy lives in Tustin, CA and can be contacted at guyball@pacbell.net.



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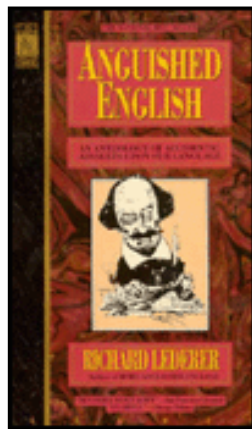
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Book Review: *Anguished English: An Anthology of Accidental Assaults Upon Our Language*

by [Deb Lockwood](#)



Anguished English: An Anthology of Accidental Assaults Upon Our Language

Richard Lederer. 1987. New York: Dell Publishing. [ISBN: 0-440-20352-X. 177 pages. \$7.50 (paperback).] <http://www.verbivore.com/rlbooks.htm>

The English language is a ripe target for bloopers, and Richard Lederer is the acknowledged expert in its foibles. Lederer has made a prolific career of documenting the humorous side of the English language, first as a high school English teacher, and now as an author and speaker.

Lederer defines his audience as "verbivores." His verbivore Web site (www.verbivore.com) contains the following definition: "Welcome to the Web site woven for wordaholics, logolepts, and verbivores. Carnivores eat meat; herbivores eat plants and vegetables; verbivores devour words."

Anguished English, his first book, is divided into four major parts and various sections:

I. Schoolishness

- Student Bloopers Win Pullet Surprises
- The World According to Student Bloopers
- Excuses, Excuses

II. The Blunderful World of Bloopers

- Disorder in the Court!
- Accidental Bloopers
- It's an Ad, Ad, Ad, Ad World
- Signs of the Times

- Welfare Bloopers Fare Well
- Stop the Presses!
- Two-Headed Headlines

III. Inspired Gibberish

- Modern Day Malapropisms
- Mixed-Up Metaphors
- An Irish Bull Is Always Pregnant
- Goldwynisms and Berraisms
- Lost in Translation

IV. Grammar Gaffes

- Mangling Modifiers
- References Wanted
- Laffing at Misspellings
- Howta Reckanize American Slurvian

Lederer's latest title is *The Cunning Linguist*. Other Lederer titles, available through his Web site and other book sellers, include *More Anguished English*, *The Bride of Anguished English*, and *Get Thee To a Punnery*. In my opinion, Lederer's work is best enjoyed in small bites — a chapter at a time.



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Linda Gallagher Elected STC Associate Fellow

by [Kristy Astry](#)

(with contributions from Marc Lee and Frank Tagader)

Linda G. Gallagher was appointed STC associate fellow by the STC Board of Directors in February 2005. According to the STC Web site, the rank of associate fellow is conferred only upon a senior member who has attained distinction in the field of technical communication. Senior members cannot apply for the rank of associate fellow; they must be nominated by a committee composed of STC fellows and associate fellows.

"I'm very honored to be recognized by my peers for my contributions to STC and to our field," Gallagher said. "It's nice to know that someone has noticed. STC is important to me and has helped me become a successful independent technical communicator." She will be honored at an honors reception and banquet for all newly appointed fellows and associate fellows at the 2005 STC Annual Conference in Seattle in May.

STC RMC chapter past-president Gallagher is founder and manager of the STC RMC CIC (Consulting and Independent Contracting) SIG, and has managed the CIC SIG at the society level since 2002. She is owner of TechCom Plus LLC, and has earned many awards for her work over the years, including two STC Awards of Excellence and one Award of Achievement. Gallagher has presented at and served on panels at numerous regional and national technical-communication conferences. She has written several technical communication and independent-contracting articles that have appeared in *Intercom* and other publications, and has mentored STC members on getting started as independent contractors.

Congratulations to Linda Gallagher on this richly deserved award for her tireless work on behalf of the Society, the SIG, and our chapter!



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