



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

June/July 2004

Volume 44, Number 6

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Technicalities

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

Editorial

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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 and by e-mail at news@stcrmc.org. 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.

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March chapter meeting review

Senior awards celebration: Strategic planning for your life

by [Martha Sippel](#) and [Frank Tagader](#)

Drawing on her life experiences and the demands (and sometimes the lack of demand) in the marketplace, Judy Glick-Smith, principal in The GlickSmith Group, Inc. (www.glicksmithgroup.com) in Dallas, rallied STCRMC members to embrace change by taking responsibility for their own lives.

Glick-Smith, a past president of STC as well as past president of the STC Lone Star Chapter, addressed a large group of RMC senior members at a special meeting held in March. Glick-Smith described facing her own personal crises while seeing her traditional technical writing consulting business dwindle, forcing her to make some hard economic choices. Her new consulting firm now includes traditional technical writing, but she put a new "spin" on the message so that her firm now "assists organizations in making their enterprise architecture explicit."

Her talk originated from practical experience, but also looked at the state of our business and economy. She suggested viewing our lives from a metaphysical perspective. Glick-Smith recommended setting goals, meeting them, and adapting them when they don't work out.

Even visionaries are blind-sided

Glick-Smith candidly stated that even visionaries were sometimes taken by surprise. How can you avoid letting catastrophic changes in your industry affect your personal well-being? First, take responsibility for your life plan, make changes accordingly, and find your balance. In other words, be prepared.

Is there a secret to happiness? Saying that "attitude is everything" implies that we can change the future by the way we act, react, and perceive the universe around us. To achieve happiness, you must find what works for you. Glick-Smith's secrets to happiness include the following:

- Know who you are
- Know what you want to accomplish
- Maintain a positive focus
- Be flexible
- Meditate
- Learn to forgive
- Do what you love!!!!
- Practice continuous reinvention
- Get busy

You might ask, "What does she mean by saying get busy? I am busy!" We all sometimes feel overwhelmed with everyday demands. The solution is to find balance by taking responsibility, following a reinvention process, and reinventing your career and how you adapt to change. Create a plan with measurable goals and objectives so you can review your progress at specific stages along the way. Keep focused on your plan and modify it when necessary to meet the changing times.

Reinventing Your Career

How does one reinvent a career to not only survive but flourish? Glick-Smith suggested many options. One is determining your mission and what is really important to you. To do this, you must take some time for yourself and concentrate on what gives you pleasure in your life. What things make you say, "I feel good about myself and would like to do more of this"?

Define what has to happen and what **you** need to do to achieve a positive outcome. Spend the time to delineate your goals and objectives and make sure they are measurable so you can assess your progress.

Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Determine what you love about your job and which careers might use the same skill set. Perform a weighted analysis and choose your best options. Build an action plan based on the decisions, and adjust your life plan accordingly. This is often easier said than done, but if you persevere, you too can enjoy success at creating and living your life plan.

How does your reinvention relate to STC? STC is transforming itself to meet current and future needs of technical communicators, information designers, information architects, and everyone who communicates technical information. It is a difficult and painful process, but one that should benefit STC members and keep the organization healthy and financially sound.

Personal Renewal Parallels

Technical communication has always been a diverse, resilient profession. Today it is more apparent than ever that we need many skills to succeed in our profession. It is even more obvious that the number of specialties we can focus on is increasing so rapidly that it is hard to keep up.

STC's transformation started because our changing economy and industry affected the number of members participating in conferences, seminars, chapters, and SIGs. Declining membership renewals indicated a change in our industry. Major modifications are coming that STC hopes will serve our members better and provide them with a choice of how they want to be served. Recognizing successes and failures indicates that a new organizational model might better serve members.

Glick-Smith thinks that this transformation has come at the right time. Take some time to review Glick-Smith's presentation. Be willing to take responsibility for your professional growth. Be involved in making our profession something in which we can all be proud to participate.

Glick-Smith's presentation is available on the RMC website: http://www.stcrmc.org/news_events/meetings.htm. Scroll down to Past Presentations, and click on "Strategic Planning for your Life."

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Book review

Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy by Ann Rockley. New Riders; 1st edition (October 17, 2002) 592 pages; ISBN: 0735713065.

by [David Dick](#)

Are you overwhelmed with the need to create more content, faster, customized for more customers, and for more media than ever before? Do you consider storing documentation on a server as an effective content management system? Do you want to learn how content management will empower your organization? The answers to these questions and many more are covered in *Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy* by Ann Rockley with Pamela Kostur and Steve Manning of The Rockley Group. The Rockley Group is one of the leading providers of content management methodologies.

Managing Enterprise Content provides concepts, strategies, guidelines, processes, and technical options that will prepare you to meet the increasing demands of creating, managing, and distributing content. It describes techniques that will help you define your content management requirements, build your vision, design your content architecture, select tools, and overcome obstacles of managing enterprise content. It will help you to visualize the spectrum of enterprise content, the requirements for effectively creating, managing, and delivering content, and the value of developing a content strategy for your organization. That's a lot of information for one person to understand. That's why the book is written for three audiences: content managers, information architects, and authors. *Managing Enterprise Content* follows the same methodical approach that Rockley uses to teach content management in seminars and workshops.

I was expecting the book to jump into the technologies to implement a content management system. But that's not how Rockley presents content management. She begins with "The basis of a unified content strategy" and describes how content is created, who creates it, why authors work in isolation, and the consequences of isolation and centralizing content. The solution is to consolidate content in a definitive source, and a process that encourage authors to work collaboratively. The next step is to assess opportunities for content reuse. If you have never heard the term 'reusing content,' you may know it as single sourcing. You probably already reuse content (i.e., copy and paste), which works well until the information, and everywhere that it appears, must be updated. Content reuse involves using existing content components (e.g., paragraphs, sections, and chapters) to develop new documents. Implementing a unified content strategy is a costly investment: tools, technologies, and training are not cheap. Investment costs are incurred in technology, training and consulting, and lost productivity.

Examples are given for calculating the cost of authoring tools, content management systems, training and consulting-a content management system is not a plug-and-

play, one-size-fits-all solution. The return on investment is achieved by reduced time to market, reduced cost of product content development, improved accuracy and quality of content, and reduced manufacturing defects. The examples are especially helpful because you will need to create a proposal to convince budget holders and management on the return on investment of a content management solution.

Are you ready to buy a content management system? Not yet, read further. "Performing a substantive audit: Determining business requirements" begins with an introduction on how to determine goals that you want a unified content strategy to solve, for example:

- Reduce the time to plan, write, review, approve, and publish
- Create flexible content that is easily reused to create information products for multiple products and multiple media
- Reduce the cost of translation by reusing existing translations
- Make content more accessible; separating content from format makes it possible for content to be displayed automatically in a format appropriate to the disability

Rockley describes how to identify opportunities where a unified approach of content management (i.e., planning, design, authoring and revision, version control, access control, publication, and delivery to its audiences) is beneficial.

You are probably wondering how this all fits together, and Rockley explains how. "Design" describes information modeling and metadata, how to personalize content, how to design a workflow, and how to implement your design.

An information model is critical for a unified content strategy because it provides a framework for documentation. It's the 80/20 rule: 80percent of your effort is planning and analysis, and 20 percent of your effort is implementing the solution with whatever tools are selected to accomplish the goals the organization has set for itself. The level of detail of your information model depends on the level of reuse you want to achieve.

Many desktop publishing tools can dynamically publish personalized letters and forms by matching elements such as names and address-a content management system can do the same. I was confused why design is given so much attention. Why not conduct the audit, buy the tools, and worry about design later? You can't. The design of information, reuse models/maps, metadata and workflow are all tool-independent tasks. Regardless of the tools selected, you must first analyze and then design a content or information model so that it can be presented to IT staff and software vendors. Doing this in advance makes it possible for you to ask vendors to respond to a request for proposal and document how their tools can help you satisfy your specific challenges. Analysis provides an opportunity to collect metrics. From your information models, you can identify how much of your content could be reusable and where.

Educated on how content is used, where and how, you are better prepared to match the tools and technology to the organization's goals to deliver a unified content management solution. "Tools and technologies" offers guidelines for evaluating tools. With so many tools and technologies to choose from, selecting the one that best satisfies your goals and budget is a challenge. Your best advantage is to be an educated consumer before you shop around. Rockley recommends that you identify your needs, and criteria for evaluating product options in terms of usability, training provided, supporting documentation provided, technical support, upgrades and enhancements, implementation time, cost, vendor viability, partnerships the vendor has to provide an expanded solution, and references. Where do you being looking?

Some good sources are conferences where vendors present authoring solutions, such as the annual STC conference, electronic mailing lists, technology magazines, Web

sites and online discussion boards and newsgroups. A supplement to "Tools and technologies" is Appendix C, "Vendors," which is an overview of products, features, and vendors. Appendix D, "Tools Checklist," lists sample questions to ask a vendor. When you have narrowed your list of potential vendors, Rockley suggests that you either contact the vendors and request onsite demonstrations or send vendors an RFP (request for proposal).

"Tools and technologies" covers XML because it provides interoperability between applications. XML is not a set of tags that you apply to documents; it is a specification that sets rules for the creation of tag sets that you apply to documents. For instance, if you selected tools first and then designed your content, you might find that some of the content does not behave the way you expect it to. One solution would be to use XSLT to transform the content and move it around where you want it. While this may be an acceptable solution, it's not. The conversion costs time, money, and resources. There is no need to convert or transform content if it's modelled in XML from the start.

Rockley describes strategies for collaborative authoring, how to separate content from format, and how to manage change and transition. An example is given to illustrate how the same product description is reused effectively to create a show catalog, brochure, press release and Web site. It's easy to understand that people find it hard to believe that content somebody else created could possibly meet their needs. After all, Rockley notes, it was written for a different purpose and media, and the author could not have known their customers/audience/requirements. However, if content is written for a different purpose, audience, or media without considering how the content can be reused, it won't work.

Don't be optimistic that everybody will be willing to convert to a better way of authoring and managing content. Rockley presents issues to consider when planning your change management strategy such as overcoming resistance from opponents and descriptions of new and modified roles. She recommends creating a role for an enterprise project coordinator and information technologist; a change to existing roles business owners or analysts and information architects; and new skill sets (p. 413-415). Unintentionally overlooked are system administrators to maintain the content management system and to ensure that users adhere to standards.

Don't be overly optimistic that everybody will want morph into new roles and change their authoring habits. An XML system is best suited and ideal for a large documentation department for all content authoring or an organization where every author uses the XML authoring tool. A team of ten or fewer will be constrained to balance XML implementation and documentation project duties, and learn how to use the (new) content management system. Even if you assign the complex task of XML implementation and creation of information models, workflows, and DTDs (Document Type Definitions) to a consultant, the consultant will require guidance from the team. These are only a few of the constraints to overcome to assure a successful unified content strategy that Rockley expertly describes how to overcome.

Managing Enterprise Content concludes with a checklist for implementing a unified content strategy, suggestions for writing for multiple media, sample questions to ask vendors, a checklist for the tools required to implement a unified content strategy, and the importance of content relationships in version control. Pay close attention to usability. The rollout of a content management system, authoring tools, and authoring standards affects every member of the organization. If it's not easy to learn, easy to use, easy to support, and easy to maintain, authors will revert to the traditional way of writing and managing content.

Read *Managing Enterprise Content* before you invest in a content management system and consulting fees. You will be an educated and informed customer and user when you begin shopping for a content management solution of your own.

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Even vacation can't vanquish my vocation

by [Kristy Astry](#)

Humuhumunukunukuapua'a. At first sight, this Hawaiian name dismays even the most avid wordsmith. However, it becomes more manageable once you break it down into its syllables: Hu mu hu mu nu ku nu ku a pu a'a. It's pronounced hoo moo hoo moo noo koo noo koo ah poo ah'ah (that apostrophe is a glottal stop called the 'okina—kinda like a catch in your throat). As I learned on a recent vacation in Hawaii, humuhumunukunukuapua'a is the name of the unofficial state fish of Hawaii which, according to one source, loosely translates as "fish who, when it comes out of the water, snorts like a pig."

In April, my husband and I traveled to the Hawaiian island of Kaua'i (kow wah'ee) for eight days of fun and sun. My goals were adventure and relaxation, not necessarily linguistic enlightenment. But I couldn't help it. As soon as I saw and heard the elegant, lyrical (and sometimes loooong) Hawaiian words, I wanted to get to know them, too. I wanted to learn how to pronounce them, and what they meant, so I could fully embrace my experiences.

By helicopter we were introduced to Mount Wai'ale'ale. This mountain is considered one of the wettest spots on earth, with over 450" of annual rainfall. Its name is pronounced way eye'ah lay'ah lay, which means "rippling waters." From the air, land, and sea we toured the dramatic Na Pali coast (featured in movies such as *6 Days/7 Nights*) whose name is pronounced nah pah lee and literally means "the cliffs." We explored the town of Hanalei (pronounced hah nah lay, meaning "wreath- or crescent-shaped"), enjoying its funky restaurants, one-lane bridges, and lush foliage. As we traveled throughout the island, it became more remarkable how so few letters can be combined to construct so many words in the Hawaiian language - just 12 (a, e, i, o, u, h, k, l, m, n, p, and w, plus the 'okina and other diacritical marks for emphasis). The language, by the way, was recorded by industrious missionaries who felt that a strictly oral language just wouldn't do.

When we returned home, I relished reliving our adventures by narrating digital-photo slide shows for friends. I thought about why it was so important for me to learn these words and pronounce them properly. I realized that I was doing what I do as a technical writer. Even while on vacation, I was breaking these unfamiliar terms down into more manageable chunks so I could organize them, understand them, and communicate them to others. Sound familiar? And you thought all I did in Hawaii was sit on a beach and drink Mai Tais...*

*Mahalo to Andrew Doughty and Harriett Friedman, authors of the super *The Ultimate Kauai Guidebook, Kauai Revealed* (Wizard Publications). We referenced it extensively before, during, and after our trip, and highly recommend it for its authors' unbiased, candid recommendations.

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April chapter meeting review

The STC transformation: Roadmap to a better, stronger STC

by [Joel Meier](#)

At the April membership meeting STC International Treasurer (and RMC member) Mary Jo Stark gave an impromptu yet informative overview of the progress of the transformation of the STC. Here is a quick overview of her presentation.

Why transform STC?

We have to! The technical communication profession has changed, and our organization must change along with it.

How will the STC transform?

We will change it! Mary Jo made it very clear that we, the STC membership, will change the organization. Based on our input, the STC Board of Directors has developed a set of goals through which to accomplish this transformation.

What are the goals for transformation?

The STC transformation project has four primary goals:

- Increase the value of our services to members.
- Create financial stability for the organization.
- Promote membership growth.
- Be a leader and advocate for our profession.

The transformation principles

As we undertake the transformation of the STC, we are guided by the following principles:

- Do no harm.
- Respect our existing communities.
- Build on the organization's strengths.
- Support the development of communities of practice.
- Diversify our membership.
- Offer more and varied choices.
- Promote the value of technical communication.

How will we meet these goals?

The STC Board of Directors has developed a process to guide us through the transformation process. To succeed, they need your help.

Please check out the STC transformation information on the STC website—there's a complete discussion of the goals, the process, and our progress, as well as a list of people leading the effort.

Here's what to do:

1. Go to the STC home page: www.stc.org
2. At the bottom right of the page, click **Visit STC's Transformation Pages**. You'll need to sign in with your membership number and password (all members have a login to the STC site—if you don't know yours, contact the STC for the information). The link takes you to a section full of transformation information.

If you have strong feelings about the transformation, one way or another, let them know! It's important that members participate throughout the process.

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Tips from the trenches

by [Deb Lockwood](#)

Editor's note: *Some of the sites listed in the Humor and cartoons section contain material that might be considered offensive to some readers. All links in this article worked at the time of publication.*

With the World Wide Web being so dynamic, and hundreds of new sites being added daily, I thought it would be helpful to our group if I compiled a list of our favorites and publish that list in our June issue of *Technicalities*. The contributors submitted some wonderful resources, and I organized them into the following categories:

- Books, Magazines, and E-zines
- Editing
- Humor and Cartoons
- Information Architecture
- Human Computer Interaction
- List Serves
- Professional Organizations
- References
- Research
- Resources, Technical
- Search Engines
- Small Business Operations
- Standards
- System Development Life Cycle
- Teaching Resources
- Tools
- Usability
- Web Development
- Writing

Books, magazines, and e-zines

Fast Company contains business information from a unique perspective, including interesting articles that seem to capture trends. <http://www.fastcompany.com/homepage>

Forbes highlights business news. <http://www.forbes.com>

Inc. contains articles and information that focuses primarily on leadership and high-tech. <http://www.inc.com>

Writer's Digest contains hints for writers and promotes various writing classes. <http://>

www.writersdigest.com

Editing

Editorial Freelancers Association's What Members Do page contains a description of the different types of edits an editor might perform. <http://www.the-efa.org/clients.html#WhatMembersDo>

Editorial Services Guide, sponsored by the Bay Area Editor's Forum, contains definitions of editorial services. http://www.editorsforum.org/what_do_sup_pages/definitions.html

Editors' Association of Canada's Definitions of Editorial Skills page contains a list of various editorial tasks. <http://www.editors.ca/hiring/skills.htm>

Levels of Edit is a Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) booklet (second edition) that Robert Van Buren and Mary Fran Buehler wrote about the levels of editing. http://www.io.com/~tcm/etwr2371/planners/levels_of_edit.pdf

Levels of Edit (JPL) is a table that shows the give levels of edit by edit type. <http://www.uah.edu/editing/LEVELS.DOC>

Humor and cartoons

Bulwer-Lytton sponsors a contest for the worst opening paragraph to a story. Good for a laugh and 15 seconds of fame, if you're lucky. <http://www.bulwer-lytton.com>

Douglas Adams' site is for those cult followers of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. <http://www.douglasadams.com>

Darwin Awards is for those among us who enjoy reading about the shallow end of the gene pool. <http://www.darwinawards.com>

Dilbert is the premier comic strip about life in cubeland from Scott Adams. <http://www.dilbert.com>

Engrish site contains real-life examples of "flawed English." <http://www.english.com>

The Onion contains twisted national news. <http://www.theonion.com>

Rinkwords allows you to convert any corporate memo to a comic dialect such as Redneck, Elmer Fudd, or Swedish Chef [think Muppets]. <http://www.rinkworks.com/dialect>

Information architecture

American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) hosts this site, which contains information about the discipline, practice, and culture of designing. Use the "What is Experience Design" link to go to helpful information, including a case study archive. <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm?Alias=experiencedesign>

Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture (AIFIA) provides resources for the information architecture community. Information available through the Design Tools link is especially helpful. <http://www.aifia.org>

Boxes and Arrows is a peer-written journal dedicated to discussing, improving and promoting the work of information architecture, information design, interaction design, and interface design community. <http://www.bboxesandarrows.com>

Human computer interaction

Human Computer Interaction (HCI) bibliography information categories include Learn about HCI, The Bibliography, HCI Columns and News, and Developer Resources. <http://www.hcibib.org>

List serves

(Note: List serves are online discussion groups about topics that interest members of the list. These lists are of particular interest to technical communicators. One caveat though-these lists can generate a high volume of e-mail, so you might strongly consider requesting the digest version.)

FrameMaker users, go to <http://www.frameusers.com> and select E-mail lists from the menu subsection labeled "Website Subsections." This is the premier list for folks who use FrameMaker. This site includes links to product news, training classes, job opportunities, and a resource guide section.

TECHWR-L, go to <http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/subscribercentral.html>. This is the premier list for technical communicators and a source of great information that ranges from tool issues to professional development. The home page for this site is full of other interesting tidbits and links. Be sure to read the rules since Eric, the moderator, can get crabby when people stray from the topic.

XML, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/messages/xml-doc>. This Yahoo group is specifically about applying XML to technical documentation.

Professional organizations

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) is a professional society catering to technical communicators work in the medical and biotechnology industries. <http://www.amwa.org>

Association of Training and Development (ASTD) is the leading association of workplace learning and performance professionals. <http://www.astd.org/astd>

Boulder Writer's Alliance (BWA) is a nonprofit organization of communications professionals in Boulder and throughout Colorado. <http://www.bwa.org>

Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) is a localization standards organization for the GILT (Globalization, Internationalization, Localization, and Translation) business community. <http://www.lisa.unige.ch>

Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the largest organization for technical communications. <http://www.stc.org>

STC's Rocky Mountain Chapter. <http://www.stcrrmc.org>

STC's Snake River chapter. <http://www.stc-src.org>

References

Acronyms Finder, sponsored by Mountain Data Systems, is a comprehensive dictionary of acronyms, abbreviations, and "initial-isms." <http://www.acronymfinder.com>.

Babel Fish Translation is an application that translates blocks of text into other languages, sponsored by AltaVista. <http://babel.altavista.com/sites/babelfish/tr>

Barleby is the preeminent Internet publisher of literature, reference, and verse providing students, researchers, and the intellectually curios with unlimited access to books and information on the Web, free of charge. <http://bartleby.com>

Dictionary, sponsored by Lexico Publishing Group, LLC, is an online dictionary. <http://www.dictionary.com>

Earthlink contains a glossary of high speed Internet access terminology. <http://www.earthlink.net/highspeed101/glossary>

Free On-Line Dictionary of Computing, sponsored by the Imperial College Department of Computing, contains a searchable dictionary. <http://foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc.index.html>

Glossarist contains links to glossaries and dictionaries on all subjects. <http://glossarist.com>

IT Storage White Papers and Case Studies contain articles about data storage issues. http://www.itstorage.co.uk/default.asp?page=/Resources/WhitPapers/item_list.asp

Jargon Scout contains jargon that is about to hatch into the popular language use on the Internet. <http://tbt.com/jargon-scout.html>

Merriam-Webster Online includes an online dictionary and thesaurus. You can also look up the word of the day, or play word games. <http://www.mw.com>

Microsoft Press Books is a good source for Microsoft publications. <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/books>

Microsoft's Resources to Decode Technical Jargon site lists several technical dictionary-type resources. <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/start/terms.asp>

NetLingo contains a dictionary of Internet terms. <http://www.netlingo.com>

Official U.S. Time Clock contains (of all things) the official time in the U.S. This particular link takes you to the Mountain timezone. <http://www.time.gov/timezone.cgi?Mountain/d/-7/java>

One Look is a dictionary search that looks at 970 indexed dictionaries. <http://onelook.com>

[com](#)

Online Dictionary contains a listing of various dictionaries, including lists of English and non-English language dictionaries, as well as such diverse topics as law and rhyming dictionaries. <http://www.online-dictionary.net>

PC Webopedia contains a dictionary and search engine for computer and Internet technology definitions. <http://www.pcwebopedia.com>

Silicon Graphics Inc. (SGI) contains a Standard Template Library Programmer's Guide in the Services and Support section. <http://www.sgi.com/tech/stl>

Techtionary is an animated dictionary about technology. http://www.techtionary.com/index_in.html

TechWeb contains definitions of IT terms. <http://www.techweb.com>

Telecommuting and "alternative officing" by Gill Gordon includes resources for the telecommuter. <http://www.gilgordon.com>

Virtual Reference Desk provides links to other reference information, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, and style guides. <http://www.lib.purdue.edu/eresources/readyref>

Webopedia contains a dictionary and search engine for computer and Internet technology definitions. <http://www.webopedia.com>

What Is contains definitions for technical acronyms and terms. <http://www.whatis.com>

Word Smith, a community of more than 550,000 linguaphiles, allows you to sign up for a Word-A-Day e-mail program. <http://wordsmith.org/awad/index.html>.

Word Spy contains new terms in our evolving language. <http://www.wordspy.com/index.asp>

Your Dictionary is a language portal containing more than 2500 dictionaries and grammars in over 300 languages. <http://yourdictionary.com>

Research

Encyclopedia Britannica sponsors a Web site from you can use to browse their 32-volume encyclopedia, as well as the student and concise encyclopedias, Web sites, multimedia, and magazines. <http://www.britannica.com>

Forrester Research is an independent technology research company that provides pragmatic and forward-thinking advice about technology's impact on business. <http://www.forrester.com/my/1,,1-0,FF.html>

Hints-N-Tips is an exchange center for practical information. <http://www.hints-n-tips.com>

Internet Public Library, sponsored by the School of Information of the University of

Michigan, contains a wealth of information about a host of subjects, and includes a reading room with books, magazines, and newspapers. <http://www.ipl.org>

Public Library, Chicago, contains library resources. <http://www.chipublib.org/cpl.html>

Public Library, Denver, contains library resources. <http://www.denver.lib.co.us>

Public Library, New York City, contains library resources. <http://www.nypl.org>

Reference Desk is the single best source for facts on the Web. <http://www.refdesk.com>

Resources, technical

Computer Knowledge contains tutorials, information, acronyms, and more about computers. <http://www.cknow.com>

Convert Me, by Sergey & Anna Gershteins, contains an online units of conversion and metric conversion calculator. <http://www.convert-me.com/en>

Doxygen is a documentation system for C++, C, Java, Objective-C, IDL (Corba and Microsoft flavors) and to some extent PHP, C#, and D. <http://www.stack.nl/~dimitri/doxygen>

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) develops and promotes measurement, standards, and technology to enhance productivity, facilitate trade, and improve the quality of life. <http://nist.gov>

NIST's Time and Frequency division maintains the standard for frequency and time interval for the U.S. <http://www.boulder.nist.gov/timefreq/index.html>

Physics, National Institute of Standards and Technology, contains the NIST Reference on Constants, Units, and Uncertainty: International System of Units (SI) prefixes for binary multiples. <http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/binary.html>

Science World is Eric Weisstein's World of Science, A Wolfram Web Resource: A resource for math and science. <http://scienceworld.wolfram.com>

Wiha Metric Conversions, sponsored by Wiha Quality Tools, is a conversion tool that you can use to convert standard units of measure to metric. <http://www.wihatools.com/conversion.htm>

Search engines

Search engines help you locate information on the Internet by searching for sites with a particular keyword or subject. Since the way each search engine works is unique, read each engine's search criteria "how to" information so that you can effectively limit your search to relevant data.

Altavista <http://www.altavista.com>

Ask Jeeves <http://www.ask.com>

Dogpile <http://www.dogpile.com> (a meta search engine)

Google <http://www.google.com>

Lycos <http://www.lycos.com>

Search Engine Guide <http://www.searchengineguide.com>

Yahoo <http://www.yahoo.com>

Small business operations

Business Filings Incorporated (Bizfilings) includes information about incorporating your small business. <http://www.bizfilings.com/learning/index.html>

Colorado Small Business Association contains resources for small businesses published by the SBA in Denver, CO. <http://www.sba.gov/co>

Getting Started in Consulting and Independent Contracting, sponsored by the University of Texas Tech's University Writing Center includes information expressly for technical writers, including articles about getting ready, working as an independent (including an article by our chapter's Linda Gallagher), and taking care of business. <http://english.ttu.edu/gscic>

Small Business Association is a U.S. government site that contains valuable resources for starting your own business, including a guide to structuring your business. <http://www.sba.gov>

STC Rocky Mountain Chapter's website offers a variety of resources for small business owners. http://www.stcrmc.org/resources/resource_internet.htm

Standards

InfoDev Development Standards site contains code, database, and documentation standards. These information development standards are brought to you by the Application Management and Innovation Services Directorate (AMIS) of Canada. http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/ininfodev.nsf/en/h_00157e.html

International Standard Paper Sizes site by Markus Kuhn includes information about the ISO 216 paper size system. <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mgk25/iso-paper.html>

W3C World Wide Web Consortium is the standards organization for all things Web-related, and their Web site contains a great deal of resource information. <http://www.w3c.org>

System development life cycle

Software Partners LLC is a provider of highly functional web applications. The Methodology section, especially the Detailed Design information, can be helpful to anyone researching the system development life cycle. <http://www.swpartners.com/methodology.html>

Teaching resources

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) portal includes a digital library with journals, magazines, proceedings, and newsletters from the ACM and other affiliated organizations. One instructor said "I can't believe how much free text is available here. And it catalogs articles I'd never find elsewhere." <http://portal.acm.org/dl.cfm?coll=portal&dl=ACM&CFID=18231056&CFTOKEN=23957066>

EServer TC Library, a cooperative library for tech communicators is an experiment in community libraries - part library index, part Web portal - for professional, scientific, and technical communicators. This site includes many articles about various topics, career suggestions (e.g., resume, portfolios), and instruction ideas. <http://tc.eserver.org>

Normandy Sandhills contains links to various education topics, including the following: online research, list of education links, online and distance learning courses, children's and curious person's links, book reviews, book publishers and sellers, online encyclopedias, libraries and e-texts, writing and research guides, word processing with Microsoft Word, dictionaries, word origins, quotations, and teaching. <http://normandy.sandhills.cc.nc.us/education.html>

Tools

Adobe includes information about all Adobe products. The site includes technical support areas where you can research issues related to the products. <http://www.adobe.com>

FrameMaker provides reference information about Frame and Frame training and system bugs. This site is independent from the Adobe site. You can also subscribe to the Framers list from here. <http://www.frameusers.com>

FrameMaker Plug-ins is Steve Kubis' Silicon Prairie Software site, which includes auto-text, indexing, and master page tools. <http://www.kagi.com/SPSoftware>

Microsoft contains a plethora of information about MS products, tech support issues, goings on, and other stuff. <http://www.microsoft.com>

Microsoft Longhorn Help is the next generation of Help engine currently in progress at Microsoft. <http://longhorn.msdn.microsoft.com/?//longhorn.msdn.microsoft.com/lhSDK/help/hachelpauthoringguide.aspx>

Webex is a web conferencing, video conferencing, and online meeting services software application. Using Webex, you can set up the meeting so that you can access other meeting attendees' computers. This functionality is very useful for troubleshooting. <http://www.webex.com>

Usability

Alertbox, which is published by Dr. Jakob Nielsen, contains a list of articles available that address current issues in Web usability. Available articles are dated from today back to 1995. <http://www.useit.com/alertbox>

Nielsen Norman Group Information's site contains information about interaction design

solutions for the real world. <http://www.asktog.com>

U.B. Department of Health and Human Services sponsors this resource for designing usable, useful, and accessible Web sites and user interfaces. <http://www.usability.gov>

Usable Web contains 1056 links to other sites containing information about web usability. <http://www.usableweb.com>

Use It is a Web site, written Jakob Nielsen, that includes his Web usability column and new about the profession. <http://www.useit.com>

User Interface Engineering is Jared M. Spool's company, and this site contains white papers and other resource information about usability. <http://www.ue.com/publications>

Web development

CNET's "Beyond the Code" site contains resources about building Web sites, useful HTML tags and their attributes, and other architect and Web development resources. <http://builder.com.com>

HTML tag list is sponsored by the University of Salzburg's Scientific Computing Department. <http://www.cosy.sbg.ac.at/~lendl/tags.html>

Index DOT HTML, the advanced HTML reference, contains HTML language and historical information. <http://www.blooberry.com/indexdot/html/index.html>

Net Mechanic is a resource for Webmasters. <http://netmechanic.com>

Two 4 U color compose engine allows you to adjust and see how colors will appear on a Web page. <http://www.two4u.com/cgi-bin/color/compose>

Webmonkey, the Web Developer's Resource, contains how-to information about Web sites for beginners, builders, and masters. <http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey>

Web Reference contains the Webmaster's Reference Library, which includes Web authoring tips and tutorials fro Web developers. <http://www.webreference.com>

Writing

Beehive contains a basic review of grammar rules and includes practice exercises. <http://www.thebeehive.org/school/middle/subjects.asp?subject=12>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant-Writing Tutorial walks you through the process of writing a grant proposal. <http://www.epa.gov/seahome/grants/src/grant.htm>

Gary Conroy's technical writing site contains a comprehensive guide including articles, resources, and forums to all that's technical in writing. <http://www.gary-conroy.com/index.php>

Guide to Grammar and Style by Jack Lynch provides a discussion of various dogmas about grammar and explanations of accepted usages, as well as links to other

resources and information. <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing>

Guide to Grammar and Writing, sponsored by the Capital Community College Foundation, provides oodles of examples of proper grammar and usage. Use this site to refresh your memory about the basic grammar terminology and rules. <http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>

Information Mapping, Inc., is a professional services firm with 30 years' experience helping leading organizations to leverage knowledge and communications to improve performance. The method hinges on their approach to analyzing, organizing, presenting information so that it is easy for people to access, use, and remember. http://www.infomap.com/rc/rc_index.htm

Information Week's White Papers Directory, which contains free, timely, and technical information on hot IT issues. http://infoweek.bitpipe.com/data/web/iw/iw_index.jsp

Institute of Electrical Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Computer Society's site contains a style guide. <http://www.computer.org/author/style/index.htm>

IT Papers is the Web's largest library of technical white papers, Webcasts, and case studies. <http://www.itpapers.com/index.html>

New Mexico Tech Library's best picks for writing and technical communication resources. <http://www.nmt.edu/~nmtlib/subject/write.html>

Plain English Campaign is an independent pressure group fighting for public information to be written in plain English. <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/index.html>

SMOG Readability Formula is a simple method you can use to determine the reading level of your written materials. <http://www.med.utah.edu/pated/authors/readability.html>

TechComm Plus, LLC, which is Linda Gallagher's company, contains resources for technical communicators and is of particular interest to independents. <http://www.techcomplus.com/reference.htm>

Technical Communication, Mike Markel's Web site that supports his Technical Communications textbook, contains information about the examples and concepts in the 7th edition. <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm>

Technical Publications, a site by Michael Bradley, contains the following resources for technical writers: search engines and portals, good reading, mailing lists, professional associations, software and technical support, and technical writing and design. http://www.techpubs.com/resources.html#Tech_Writing

TECHWR-L is an Internet-based community and resource for technical communicators worldwide. This site includes access to a discussion list that includes more than 5,000 direct subscribers. <http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl>

University of Minnesota's guide to writing university policy contains information about the ongoing process to create, distribute, and maintain a university-wide policies, procedures, instructions, and forms. Although it is geared for universities, this guide also contains good, practical information for all policy and procedures writers. <http://www.fpd.finop.umn.edu/groups/ppd/>

[documents/information/guide_to_writing.cfm.](#)

User-Friendly Manuals' Website (Peter Ring Consultants, Denmark) contains information about producing user-friendly manuals. <http://www.prc.dk/user-friendly-manuals/ufm/home1.htm>

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The art of water-cooler diplomacy

by [Ron Arner](#)

Don't you just hate it when someone pushes your buttons? Whether it's the unfriendly honk of another car in traffic or verbal harassment from someone in the office, it's very difficult to resist striking back. But what about all the unpleasant feelings you're left with if you don't retaliate? Learning how to deal with anger and relate to personalities you just can't stand will not only increase the professional quality of your work, but it is better for your health as well.

Working for a public school system in a tight economy means lay-offs every May or June before the new fiscal year begins. This year HR arrived unannounced and escorted three unlucky co-workers one-by-one into our manager's office and then out the door. The entire episode was over in less than 30 minutes. Prior to the lay-offs, the stress level in our office was at an all-time high. Some people seemed to be trying to prove how important they were to the department; others seemed to be hiding out, hoping they would be forgotten and therefore overlooked when the cuts were made. And there were those who couldn't handle the stress and vented whenever their emotions got the best of them. Despite my best efforts, I found myself being dragged into the quagmire of office politics, siding with so-and-so over the latest paperclip controversy, and responding to an unkind remark with equal unkindness.

I have outgrown the belief that nobody ever really means to say what he or she does. I've learned to drive for the other person, especially in heavy traffic, and I try to relate to all of my coworkers even though I get along with some of them better than I do with others. Despite my best efforts, I sometimes find myself in argumentative situations, and I don't like sinking to the other person's level when my buttons are pushed. Not only do I feel that this kind of behavior tarnishes my professional reputation, but why should my health suffer, even a little bit, for the stress and unpleasant feelings that accompany hostile situations?

I've been putting off experiencing the latest professional development phenomenon, *Who Moved My Cheese*, by Spencer Johnson, M.D., but now that I've listened to the audiobook version, I think he really does have something to say. Trying to move with the cheese rather than getting stuck wondering why it doesn't keep reappearing where it was before is a good strategy for becoming more easy-going in workplace relationships. It helps me try to see the other person's point of view, and, if I still disagree, find a solution to the problem rather than getting stuck in a "who's right and who's wrong" dead end.

But what about that person who just won't let you out of his or her tirade? What about someone who insists he or she is right and won't have it any other way? At times like this, it is important to remember that the other person's refusal to bend is more a cry for help than it is a personal assault on you. Rather than becoming defensive and screaming back or whimpering away, inwardly rejoice at the other person's weakness

and take pride in the fact that you're the bigger person. This way, that person won't get the best of you, you won't lose your temper, and you'll get the satisfaction of knowing that in the final analysis, you "won" the confrontation.

I'm not suggesting that you offer your psychological services to a screaming boss or become the sounding board for your entire department. I'm simply saying that when you find yourself in that fight-or-flight mode, the best way out of it is to analyze your surroundings and gain a deeper insight into why the person you're having a problem with is acting the way he or she is. Try to keep in mind that you're not the one who has a problem, and, if you want to avoid similar situations in the future, smooth the whole thing over while resisting your urge to seek vengeance. Later on, you can rant and rave all you like. In fact, I advise doing so as a reward for passing your little pop quiz on diplomacy!

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Transformers

by [Frank Tagader](#), STC RMC President

Well, it's my final column as president. And, before I delve into it, I want to thank the many of you who have made my presidency a joy. At the risk of forgetting a name, I will not name names here. I will try to thank you each personally. And, now on to the column ...

While the STC Transformation process is still coming into its own, what has emerged for me is that each of us as members of this society needs to become a transformation agent. We need to help mold the society and the efforts that help define the "communities" we belong to within the society. The first step in choosing how this society grows is to think about what this society offers you and decide to support those things that enrich your life experience.

In my realm of thought I really hope that the chapter model survives. We have an incredible chapter here. Before the transformation effort got off the ground, I had hoped to reach out more to the members we have on the Western Slope and more to the members centered in Northern Colorado/Southern Wyoming/Western Nebraska. Because of the transformation efforts, I adopted a wait-and-see attitude instead of going with my initial idea of investing chapter funds in methods for providing our chapter meetings in streaming video for our members who reside outside the Denver metropolitan area. Time will tell if this was the right decision.

We do have a pretty good idea that, over the next couple of years, your choices to what services you "subscribe" to from the international organization will open up. You may choose not to get the printed magazine. You may choose to belong to a number of different special interest groups. But, I hope that if you currently participate in this chapter, you will continue to choose to divert some dollars to the local chapter. From all indications, chapter membership will no longer be part of the base membership price but may be included in one or more of the options. The networking and fellowship I get from this chapter are invaluable to me. Without a doubt, this chapter will not get the funding it has in the past. Many chapters will probably dry up completely.

Have you attended a program that provided you with valuable information? Do you like the effort that goes into creating our newsletter, our salary survey, our seminars, and our website? Do you get value from participating in these local efforts?

Personally, I learned a great deal about website development by being part of the web team. Also, I feel that if I was ever called upon to create an online or printed newsletter, I would have the requisite tools at my disposal from having worked on *Technicalities* for so many years. However, the biggest area of growth for me has been in leadership skills. While I no longer manage a team of people in the working environment, I don't feel I would have been as effective of a manager if I hadn't led

teams within the chapter or been elected to chapter office. It is a great way to get some on-the-job training without the same level of risk.

From a selfish standpoint, I would miss having a chapter and the local activities associated with it. Each month, I enjoy having a bit of nosh, jawing with my friends, meeting new people, and learning something from a speaker, panel, or my peers.

While the society and the chapter need to change to accommodate the changes we see in the profession and disciplines, I hope there will continue to be a few things that we hold onto that make the experience more personal and rewarding.

Now is the time to make yourself heard. Let your chapter and society leadership know what you want from the society and the chapter. Let them know how you want your dues spent. What is of value to you? What is superfluous? While STC is a community of about 20,000, that figure is not overwhelming. It's the size of a small- to medium-sized town. In such an atmosphere, you definitely can make your voice heard and help direct the society into what it needs to be to face the future. Thanks and good luck.

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Chapter news

Changing of the guard

Following are our new chapter officers for 2004-2005:

President

Marc Lee

Vice President

Marella Colyvas

Treasurer

Lynnette Reveling

Secretary

Ruth Gaulke

Nominations Committee

Cathy Barnes

Nominations Committee

Eileen Thournir

Welcome our chapter's new members!

New members for the months of January and February, 2004:

March 2004

- Chris Bloom
- Wayne Cassell
- JoAnn Heckers
- Michael Holland
- Colette Renteria
- Jeannie Saur
- Kari Treleaven
- Suzanne Yoke

April 2004

- David Barth
- Conny Hayes
- Patricia Werner

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