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SOCIETY FOR
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Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

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Technicalities

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

Editorial Staff

Managing Editor: Dana Dutson

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Article Editors: Bridget Julian, Jay Mead, and Lynnette Reveling

Contributors: Marc Lee, John Endicott, Deb Lockwood, and Kathy Recchiuti

Newsletter design by Steve Kavalec and Ron Arner

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 on subjects of interest that they wish to be considered for publication to Society and chapter members. Please credit repeated material and send a copy of the original material to: news@stcrmc.org

Submission Guidelines

Submission deadlines and themes for the next year are as follows:

April 1, 2008 - Spring Issue - No theme (Publish date May 1, 2008)

The staff will also announce the upcoming issue and its theme via an e-mail to the membership and/or at chapter meetings.

The preferred word count for articles is 500-750 words. If your subject matter warrants it, articles longer than 1,000 words will be serialized between two or more issues.

Please e-mail all submissions to: news@stcrmc.org with the issue date, such as "October/November 2007," in the subject line. The editor can be reached by e-mail at news@stcrmc.org and by postal mail at 6025 S. Quebec St., Suite 260, Englewood, CO 80111.

Submissions can be pasted into the body of the e-mail, or sent as an attachment. If you send your article as an attachment, it should be in either RTF or DOC format. Please include your contact information.

A "headshot" of yourself to be printed with your article would be appreciated.

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.

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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Society for Technical Communication, Rocky Mountain Chapter

General Chapter Business

Rocky Mountain Chapter

Society for Technical Communication

6025 S. Quebec St., Suite 260

Englewood, CO 80111

info@stcrmc.org

Job Postings

Send job postings to jobs@stcrmc.org.

Jobs are posted on the chapter Web site (http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance_jobs.htm), and are e-mailed to the techcomm-discuss mailing list.

Chapter Web site

<http://www.stcrmc.org>

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Message from the Editor

by [Dana Dutson](#)



Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dana Dutson, and I am your new *Technicalities* Managing Editor. Over the past few months, we've fallen behind on publishing *Technicalities*, but we're finally back! Stephen Wertzbaugher has stepped down as Managing Editor. We'd like to thank him for his many contributions as Managing Editor. I'll be taking over as Managing Editor and HTML Editor for the rest of the year, along with help from Claire Schram and a previous editor and current president, Ron Arner.

To catch up and stay on track, we are publishing Winter and Spring issues. Because we already published our opener for August/September 2007, this will make a total of three issues for 2007-2008 chapter year instead of our usual six. Submissions for the Spring issue are due by April 1. The newsletter will be published on May 1, 2008.

In this Winter issue, you'll find interesting and useful information on Web-based collaboration tools and storyboarding for multimedia and e-learning. Please take a few minutes to check it out.

Regards,

Dana Dutson





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President's Corner

by [Ron Arner](#)



If you don't think that change is inevitable, just try to stop time. From the ticking of a watch to the start of a new year, change is all around us. Sometimes we appreciate the change, sometimes we don't. Regardless of what we think of it, we're always faced with the decision to either grow by overcoming obstacles, or to succumb to what change dictates.

Changes in technical communication have been frequent over the last few years. Sometimes people lose jobs as the result of these changes, and sometimes people gain them. Unfortunately, such events are often out of our control. A reduction in our newsletter staff due to such changes will result in fewer issues this year; as a result, we will not participate in the annual newsletter competition.

Rather than dwell on the negative aspects of this situation, I'm reminded of a quote from *The Sound of Music*, which goes something like, "When the Lord closes a door, somewhere He opens a window." Maybe it's time to move to a new format for the newsletter, one that doesn't require hours of work from the newsletter team every other month. We could easily adopt a less formal structure (like a blog) for the newsletter as part of our new Web design, where any member could contribute whenever he or she wanted. Such a format would only require one moderator, rather than one or two editors, an HTML coder, and several article editors. This would be a great way to free up some volunteer bandwidth for other important projects.

Speaking of volunteer bandwidth, several other changes are in store for our chapter next year. Programs, membership, and hospitality are all looking for someone to take over their duties for the 2008-2009 chapter year. Chapter elections are just around the corner as well. Please consider lending your time and efforts to help us adapt to these changes and keep our chapter alive. We can't keep relying on the same volunteers year after year and expect our chapter to continue to thrive. Without your help, more reductions in services may be just a watch tick away.





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Chapter News

Chapter Meetings

February 21, 2008 – A Whirlwind Tour of a UXD Methodology

March 20, 2008 –Working on Virtual Teams

April 17, 2008 – Increasing Online Learning Effectiveness with Blended Learning

May 15, 2008 – Network with your colleagues

June 19, 2008 – Wikis, Blogs, and Podcasting

For more information on chapter meetings, see http://www.stcrmc.org/news_events/meetings.htm.

Volunteer Opportunities

Run for STC RMC office

Here's a chance to get more involved, grow you management and communication skills, and have lots of fun along the way. Run for office for the 2008-2009 chapter year. Each year we elect a [vice president](#) (who succeeds the [president](#) the following year, a [treasurer](#), a [secretary](#), and two members to the [nominating committee](#). If interested or if you have any questions, email us at runforoffice@stcrmc.org. Thank you and we hope to hear from you.

STC Community Technology Committee

The STC Community Technology Committee is looking for a technical support volunteer. The committee needs a volunteer with technical skills to help support/administer the STC Forum (<http://stcforum.org/>). STC currently does not have a volunteer to support this tool. Potential candidates must have a firm grasp of PHP coding. If you are interested or know of an STC member who would be interested, please contact the chairman, Frank Tagader, at tagader@comcast.net.

Call for Volunteers

Please remember that this chapter doesn't run itself. While our current volunteer needs are minimal, we seriously need Program, Hospitality, and Membership Managers this year and next. Next year's work will be that much easier if you shadow the Programs and Hospitality managers now.

Currently we're in need of:

- A Membership Manager to meet and greet new members, follow up with them after meetings, and generally be available to answer questions about the STC. This is our ONLY "full time" volunteer position open at this time.
- One or two Seminars Assistants to help Deb Lockwood and Ron Arner run one Webinar and one Seminar this spring.
- Articles for our newsletter. The rest of the newsletter issues for this year are not themed, so you can submit an article on ANY technical communication topic you choose. Simply

send it to: news@stcrmc.org.

Next year we need:

- At least two people to take on the duties of Programs Manager and Hospitality Manager.

Membership News

If you have any membership news, please send news items to news@stcrmc.org.

Networking Opportunities

Get connected ... If you're an STC RMC member, consider joining techcomm-discuss, the chapter's email list. For information about the list, including how to join, view the [list FAQ page](#) and the [posting rules](#).

Employment News

You can view job announcements on the STC RMC Web site at http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance/jobline.htm.

Education News, Trends, and Opportunities

FrameMaker Course at Metro State

Linda G. Gallagher will be teaching a FrameMaker course at Metropolitan State College of Denver this Spring. This is a hands-on course where you'll get to learn FrameMaker and create a project with it for credit.

What: COM 390I Designing Documentation with Adobe FrameMaker, 2 credit hours/No Credit, \$200 (space available)

When: Fridays, February 22 through April 4, 8:30am - 12:45pm

Where: Metro North (near 120th Avenue and I-25), 11990 Grant St., Suite 102, Northglenn, CO 80233

Registration Info: Call Judy Campbell at 303-721-1313



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STC News

Renew Your Dues by February 28th

Renew your dues by February 28th so you can vote in this year's STC election. You can renew by simply logging in to the stc.org site and clicking on the Pay for Dues and Subscriptions link.

55TH Annual STC Conference

STC's Annual Technical Communication Summit will be June 1-4 in Philadelphia, PA. Early registration will be available soon, so keep an eye on the conference information page at: <http://stc.org/55thConf/index.asp>.

New STC Salary Database Available

STC members now have access to the Summary Edition of the Salary Database for technical writers. The Summary Edition republishes data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) showing salary data by state, combined statistical area, and industry. The Summary Edition also lists the top ten:

- metropolitan areas with the highest and lowest salaries for technical writers,
- metropolitan areas that employ the most and least number of technical writers,
- industries with the highest and lowest salaries for technical writers, and
- industries that employ the most and least number of technical writers.

To see the Summary Edition, visit www.stc.org/stcmembers/salarydatabase01.asp (STC login and password required).



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Storyboarding Multimedia and E-learning

by [Marc Lee](#) and [John Endicott](#), Sr. Members-STC RMC



Just as no builder would dream of breaking ground on a skyscraper without a detailed blueprint, a technical communicator preparing an online training course needs to plan what it will cover. A common medium for that plan is a *storyboard*. In this article, we introduce the concept of storyboarding, describe its goals, show an example storyboard template, and describe some best practices for storyboarding.

According to [Wikipedia](#), Walt Disney Studios created the first storyboards in the early 1930s, for the animated short *The Three Little Pigs*. Since then, storyboarding has been used to design movies, websites, software applications, and even—with a nod to fellow STC RMC senior member Al Kemp—white papers. This article concentrates on storyboarding for multimedia CBT, or e-learning. In this context, storyboarding tends to be more sequential than storyboarding for websites or software applications. Where the latter form of storyboard emphasizes visual layout, branching, and hierarchy, multimedia storyboards depict images, motion, audio, data, and mouse and keyboard action simultaneously.

Why storyboard?

The goal of a good storyboard is to represent abstract concepts such as flow, structure, and emphasis in non-linear media in a linear document. An effective storyboard conveys the content you plan to cover, and your approach to covering it, so it can easily be understood by the diverse group of people who will use it:

- Clients and subject-matter experts, who need to approve the accuracy of your content and the details of the screen graphics before programming begins.
- Developers, who need to know details of the interactivity or the navigation controls.
- Yourself. Having a structured format in which to present your content can help you think through what you want to say—and provide a handy reminder that you haven't forgotten anything.

The storyboard gives the reviewer a reading experience as close as possible to the actual dynamic multimedia experience—the sights, sounds, movement, interactions, and general learning approach—on a static piece of paper.

A simple storyboard

Figure 1 shows a storyboard page for a CBT Marc wrote about air pollution.

| ANATOMY/CELL DEVELOPING PAGE | LT | UNIT NO | 3 | ASSIGNMENT | HEALTH |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| SCREEN TYPE | FORWARD OF ANATOMY TO YOU W/EN | TOPIC NO | 3 | UNIT TYPE | START DATE/TIME/AVT |
| SCREEN ID | A11127343 | SCREEN NO | 3 | DATE LAST REVISED | 08/22/2007 |

BACKGROUND
Detailed content screen.

OBJECTIVE
A. Knows which is pulled the air. Periods for the gas allowing the composition of air? The concentration of air pollutants is to illustrate how do not contribute up from the air of the atmosphere; composition. The weight of air mass is also representing all components of pollution mass that worked in on the atmosphere per unit.

INTERACTIVITY
D. The visual response is a user's interaction. I believe graphic.

PRESENTATION ORDER
E. The visual response is a user's interaction. I believe graphic.

Problems could be a user's interaction of the screen.

| TYPE | FACE | PROP | PROP | BEHAVI | MOVE | TEXT | APP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP |
|------|-------|------|--------|--------|------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| LEFT | RIGHT | TOP | BOTTOM | TYPE | TEXT | OBJECT | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP | PROP |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 1: Storyboard page for a CBT

Plenty of off-the-shelf storyboarding tools exist, but this example was developed in Microsoft Word. While not a favorite of technical communicators, Word, through its table feature, does an adequate job. For this example Marc set up the document in landscape layout to resemble a typical computer screen, and then simply copied and pasted a blank form into each new page of the document. Using Autotext entries can make this process even more efficient.

In this example, each page represents one “screen” in the CBT, and each Word file covers one module (1-2 hours of e-learning). We generally try to keep a single Word file to 100 screens or less. If your training is graphically intensive, the files may become too big to email. In this case, you can distribute them through a website, project wiki, or FTP site—or just divide your training into smaller chunks.

The template includes the following regions:

- A. The screen ID (upper left) of this screen, which denotes Module 1, Unit 2, Topic 3, and Screen 3.
- B. The screen layout, which shows each graphic, video, or text element. It’s amazing how much detail and fidelity you can achieve with Word’s drawing tools—line, textbox, color, and shapes—plus a little patience. Of course, your final program may feature more sophisticated graphics created in Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator. If so, your storyboard should specify the graphic file name.
- C. The Dialog field, which contains the content for any audio. Either your voice talent can use the storyboard as a script as is, or you can compile these into a separate document. Again, the storyboard should specify the audio file name.
- D. The Interactivity field, which describes any user interactivity, such as clicks or text entry, and how the program responds. (In this example, the user does not interact with the screen shown.)
- E. The Presentation Order field, which specifies the sequence of any animations, pop-ups, or visual or sound effects.
- F. Finally, the Control section, which shows the navigation controls on each screen: Next, Previous, Exit, Help, and so forth.

Some Closing Tips

- For readability, try to keep everything on one page.
- If your design includes more than one screen type (objectives, content, quiz, scenario), specify the screen type in your template.
- Provide a “how to read” section for reviewers. Even the savviest reviewers will initially have a hard time understanding what they are looking at or what they’re supposed to review. A labeled sample page, with explanations like those above, will help them with this learning curve.
- When submitting a storyboard, consider how comfortable your reviewers are with editing documents online. In many cases, you may prefer that they enter their comments directly into the storyboard, with Track Changes enabled. While this method helps reviewers focus their comments, some reviewers may have difficulty using Word’s editing and table features. If so, consider having them provide comments on a hard copy of the storyboard, via an email, or in a separate document.

In some cases, you may even consider a live, roundtable read-through of the storyboard. While time-consuming and logistically challenging, a group review can help your team iron out difficult areas, which may prevent greater delays down the road.

Developing a storyboard before jumping full-speed into development is an investment of time that will pay off, by giving your clients, SMEs, and developers a clear idea of what you plan to do... before you do it!

About the authors

Marc Lee has 10 years of experience developing CBT for government agencies and private businesses. For projects that required storyboarding, the template shown above has successfully conveyed his instructional approach and gained approval for the next phase.

John Endicott has used storyboards to create training for a diverse spectrum of clients, including New York Life, the NASD, and Hewlett Packard. He takes an iterative approach to the technique, working closely with developers to fine-tune a generic format until it meets the needs of the project at hand.

Please feel free to contact the authors if you have questions about this technique and how it might apply to your own job.

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Chapter Vice-president 2007-2008
Senior Instructional Designer
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Web-based Collaboration Tools

by [Deb Lockwood](#)



Have you ever wanted to increase your productivity while reducing costs? Or conduct training without the travel expenses? Using an Internet connection, a personal computer, and some software, you can do just that.

My employer, CSG Systems, has offices in several locations in the United States. And our clients are scattered throughout the country. One of our corporate challenges has been how to deliver training to clients who do not reside in a major metropolitan area. Web-based collaboration tools offer us a timely and economical alternative.

Within the past few years I have had the opportunity to train several coworkers on our department's tools and processes. Because I work in Denver and my coworkers are in Omaha, distance is an issue. I cannot roll my chair over to the person's cubicle to demonstrate something. But with our collaboration tool, I can share my desktop with my coworkers and show them how to do something, or even better, have them take control and do it for themselves.

Features and providers

Most collaboration tools offer you the following:

- Web-based screen sharing
- Web conferencing
- Collaborative workspace including whiteboard and chat
- Video and audio components
- Class registration
- Session recording
- Meeting reports
- Polls and surveys

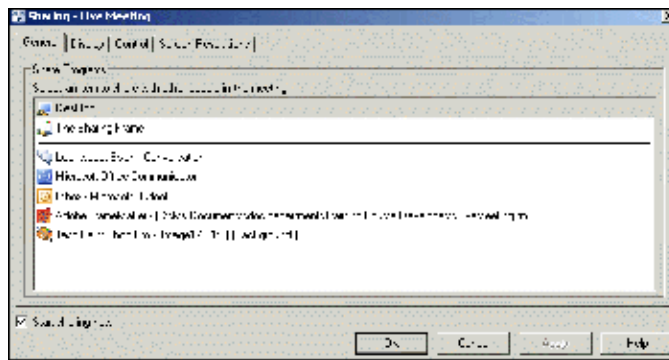
Over the past several years I've used three excellent collaboration tools: Live Meeting, WebEx, and GoToMeeting.

All three are available for free trial, and all offer comparable functionality. The pricing depends on your needs and varies greatly depending on how many licenses, meetings, and participants will be involved. One independent contractor I know spends over \$200 a month for this type of tool. If you are pricing an enterprise-level tool, you can obviously spread the cost over more users.

I've attended several free training sessions hosted by WebEx and GoToMeeting to get a feel for how training is conducted online. However, my employer is a Microsoft-compliant shop so we chose Live Meeting, which integrates smoothly with the other Microsoft Office software applications, including Outlook.

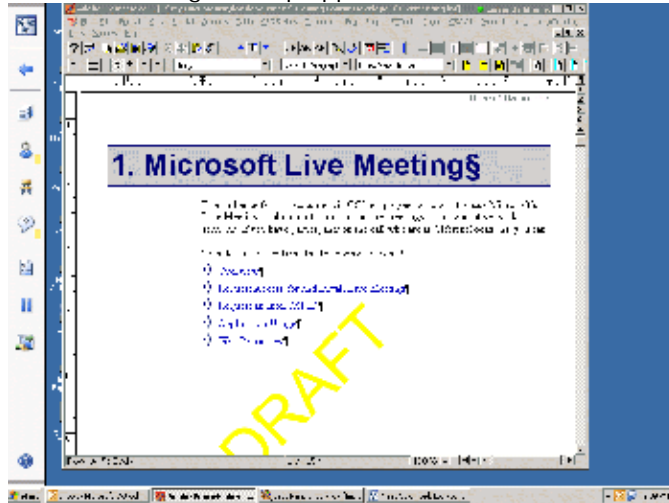
And when I say smoothly, I do mean smooth as glass. To launch a Live Meeting collaborative session from Outlook, I have two options: schedule the meeting in advance or start an ad hoc meeting.


Long-distance mentoring

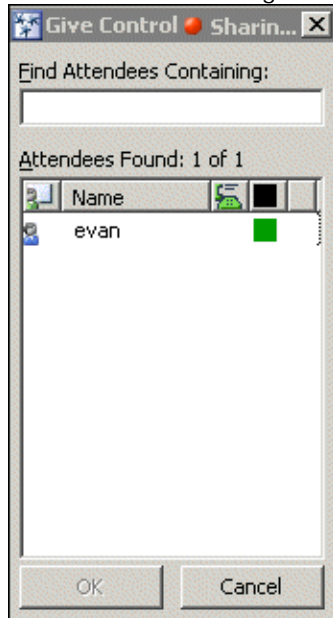


6. Select the Desktop option to share all applications, or select the application you want to share, and click OK.

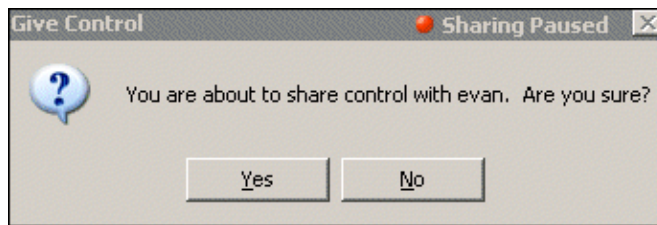
The Live Meeting desktop appears.



7. Click the Share Control button . The Give Control dialog box appears.



8. Select the participant's name and click OK. The Give Control Sharing Paused message appears.



9. Click Yes.
The participant has shared control of the desktop and can perform any action, including collaborating in shared documents.

Audio features

CSG has contracted with InterCall (www.intercall.com) to provide audio-conferencing services that integrate with our Live Meeting sessions. This works especially well with employees who telecommute, or who work at different locations. Live Meeting supports three providers: InterCall, MCI, and BT. (See the Live Meeting website for more details.)

You can also use voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) with most collaboration tools. But I've heard that there is some delay, so be sure to test the features before you buy.

Conclusion

At CSG we've found Live Meeting to be a cost-effective tool for training our employees and our clients. As CSG employees become more familiar with the tool, I expect that we will discover new ways to make use of the tool's features.

Whether your business need is to present information to a client, to collaborate with a coworker, or to train someone, collaboration tools might just offer you the solution you've been looking for.

References

- Live Meeting: office.microsoft.com/en-us/livemeeting/FX101729061033.aspx
- WebEx: www.webex.com
- Go To Meeting: www.gotomeeting.com



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November Meeting Review

by [Kathy Recchiuti](#)



The STC RMC networking meeting on November 15 at Panera Bread in the Denver Tech Center was a nice opportunity to meet others in the field, hear about job openings, and share what's going on at work, all while enjoying a good salad, sandwich or bowl of soup. The meeting was attended by John Endicott, Becky Williams, Ken Bingenheimer, Marcia Wood, Jessica Betterly, Martha Sippel and Kathy Recchiuti.

The lively discussion moved from topic to topic, including current job situations, past work in journalism, the good old days in newspaper and radio writing, and even good places to find historic photos of Colorado. We talked a little about our favorite and least favorite places to find typos and shaky writing habits, not to mention some professions that have a knack for them. We even swapped colloquialisms that add to the challenge of global communications. Can you translate any of the following: a cow on ice... a dog's breakfast ...laughing tackle. (Answers can be found at the end of this article.)



November networking meeting

Marcia talked about how much she enjoys the team she works with as a copy editor. Becky talked about "traffic," as it applies in the television broadcast world, and Martha commented about how it differed from "traffic" projects she worked on related to GIS in the transportation field. Jessica described some types of software her company develops for nonprofit organizations. Ken mentioned that he was in journalism in the past and he also shared that when you work in this industry, "You work when there's news, not when you choose." John added that he worked for a daily paper at one time. He also talked about a recent work project that involves developing software for police detectives. Some of my questions about contracting prompted Martha to share "projects that never rolled out" stories. These included crime scene investigation software (think TV's CSI visual displays) and other exciting projects that never came to fruition. She also shared a bit of what's going on in the Usability Professionals Association (UPA).

A few announced job openings: copy writer in the insurance field, technical writer for software, usability professional and programmer. At least two of these should be posted on our STC RMC Jobs page at http://www.stcmmc.org/jobs_freelance/jobline.htm by the time you read this.

People shared their memories of the Minneapolis conference and talked about plans for attending upcoming conferences in 2008.

This gathering was, indeed, a good opportunity to get acquainted with some friendly technical communicators and to network beyond the time allotted at our usual monthly meetings.

Translation of the colloquialisms above: a serious situation, a mess, teeth.

Kathy Recchiuti is Secretary of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.



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January Meeting Review

by [Kathy Recchiuti](#)



RMC President Ron Arner opened the January 2008 meeting with announcements. He mentioned that the next RMC program, *A Whirlwind Tour of a UXD (User Experience Design) Methodology*, will take place on February 21 in the usual location in the Tivoli. He displayed two FrameMaker user manuals donated by Tammy Van Boening which would be up for grabs at the end of the meeting. He added that if UCD is charging for parking on the night of a program, just mention that you are attending an event at the Tivoli and your parking fee might be waived.

Frank Tagader announced that 2008/09 RMC officer elections are not far off. He encouraged members to consider running for one of the following positions: vice president, secretary, treasurer or nominating committee. Holding an officer position can be rewarding. If interested, please email runforoffice@stcrmc.org.

Ron added that the following positions will also need volunteers for 2008/09: membership, programs, hospitality, newsletter, and website maintenance. If interested, please email him at president@stcrmc.org.

Before introducing the guest speaker, Kristy Astry let the attendees know that they would be receiving an evaluation survey via email. Feedback is appreciated, and one person who completes the survey will win a free program-only pass for a future program.

Kristy then introduced Andrew VanConas, Vice President of Business Development at Quadralay Corporation, where he has been working for over 8 years. Before Quadralay, he was a freelance technical writer and belonged to the Santa Barbara chapter of the STC. Andrew described Quadralay as a small company of less than 50 people who often wear different hats from day to day. For example, in addition to developing business, he also gets involved in documentation and development of the website.

In presenting this evening's topic, *Multi-Channel Publishing for XML Content*, Andrew explained the workings of ePublisher, a tool that takes the content a writer has created in an authoring environment and integrates it with XML, facilitating various output formats.

He began by describing DITA, an XML-based architecture for authoring, producing, and delivering technical information, providing benefits such as single sourcing, conditionally processing content, repurposing content, and specialization.

With pride in his voice, he said that ePublisher is a powerful tool that allows you to publish DITA content in many formats, including OLH, HTML, PDF and PDA, without having to learn the DITA Open Toolkit, which can be somewhat difficult. ePublisher can merge material that has been written in DITA-XML, FrameMaker, or Word into a single online deliverable.

He described ePublisher as using the factory model of input and output, with many of the same benefits. For example, it frees writers from the task of coding and allows them to do what they specialize in—writing. The factory model has three components: the first defines the overall assembly line; the second creates the stationery, which is like a template; and the third generates the output.

For a more in-depth look, see http://www.webworks.com/Technical_Assistance/Tutorials/ePublisher/StationeryWorkflow/

Andrew gave us a glimpse the product. He showed a list of existing styles that gets created when documents from different software are imported. He demonstrated how to use the easy dialogue box where you create and edit styles, and showed the tool with which you create drop-down content.

At 8:15 p.m., the speaker opened the floor for questions. An ePublisher user in the audience asked about how to place an image in both the header and footer and was delighted to obtain information that will make her life easier!

To wrap up the meeting, Andrew raffled off a free copy of ePublisher, which was exciting for people who would like to put it to use. David Wilks, who works at OpenTV, won the prize! Congratulations, David, and enjoy your multi-channel publishing!

Kathy Recchiuti is Secretary of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.



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