

## Getting the Paperwork Done

By Henry Garcia

We have all heard the over-used phrase “the job is not finished until the paperwork is done.” Well the truth of the matter is that if the job is not finished correctly, it cannot go to print. This happens more often than we would like to know, and can be quite costly. Sometimes the pre-press costs have been greater than the actual printing. This can get writers over budget and into a lot of trouble.

The following results from a conversation I had with a local printer about getting a print job completed with the least amount of grief to the writer. I hope that it can add to a better understanding of getting the paperwork done.

When a writer and printer begin a new partnership, communication and education are the two most vital aspects in guaranteeing a successful outcome. To avoid unfortunate printing problems, it is crucial for the printer to meet the writer and designer (illustrator), and evaluate their understanding of the printing process. Once you have a baseline you can then determine what level of service is required.

The writer and designer need to know that the most difficult job for any printer to handle is the “rush job.” Any number of things can go wrong to stop it dead in its tracks. History reveals there is never enough time to run a rush print job the first time, but there is always time to re-run it (to fix the errors).

It is very important for the writer and designer to use print-compatible software like Adobe PageMaker, FrameMaker, or QuarkXPress. They should have the technical expertise necessary to produce a job from these programs, as well as an understanding of the mechanical processes required by the printing presses, such as trapping. If they are lacking in this area, then the printer is wise to pre-flight the disk to determine what the short-falls are within the document.

Not only is it important to fix the errors, but it is just as crucial for the printer to educate the writer and designer on how to prevent these

problems from occurring in the future. It is also important for the writer, designer, and printer to build on each experience so they become “partners in success.” Below are some guidelines to follow to help make a printing project a success:

1. Never assume anything.
2. Never take or give verbal instructions. They are too easy to misinterpret.
3. The printer should request a mock-up from the writer/designer, showing exact size, text layout, perforations, folds, scores, die-

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## Publication Information

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*Submissions and letters to the editor are welcomed and should be mailed to the STC address above, Attn: Signature Editor or emailed to the editor at the address shown elsewhere in this issue. Submissions may be edited to meet space requirements. Submission deadlines are the 1st of the month prior to the publication month. Publication is dependent on space availability. ☼*

## The Presidential Podium



**Happy New Year everyone!**

By Kris Oden

I hope this new year brings hope and resolve. I know there are a lot of people looking for jobs. For those of you just starting to look for a position, it's a good time to get a plan together. For those of you who have been looking, maybe now is a good time to step back and re-think your plan. The chapter is sponsoring a "Get That Job!" workshop on January 12, 2002 (see Mary Larkin's article on page 7). We'll provide pointers and things to think about to get started with your job search or put the spark back into your job search.

I was reminded the other day that it's important for job seekers not to blame themselves for being unemployed—it's tough out there right now. If you were laid off, you may have had to deal with those "They didn't want/like/need me" feelings. Maybe you've been looking for a while, and things just aren't coming together for you—now that's a little scary. When you have those feelings, try to focus on the positive aspects of being laid-off or out of work. Let's face it—you now have time: Time to be with your family. Time for yourself. Time to plan and research your next position. Time to decide what you really want.

To identify what you really want it's important to understand your talents. By talent, I don't mean talent as in "Tiger Woods is a talented golfer," but talent as a set of recurring behaviors that you do all the time without even thinking about it. Of course, if you use these talents without even thinking about it, they are rather difficult to identify! Think

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## The Editor's Desk

By Rick Bradshaw, Editor

Happy New Year 2002! Hope your holidays were very good and you received everything you heart desired. Now back to reality.

This month's feature by Henry Garcia is about getting the paperwork (or maybe e-paperwork) done. No matter whether yours is a physical, printed product, or an electronic one, I think you'll find it informative.

Our Visiting Author this month, Rockie Lyons Beaman, writes about training. Usually, we are most, if not only, interested in the "how" when preparing or performing training. In her article Rockie presents some pertinent questions students often are more interested in than just the "how."

- What is it I am doing?
- Why am I doing this?
- When do I perform this activity?
- How do I perform this activity?

Speaking of training, our Director-Sponsor article this month comes from J. Suzanna Laurent, Director-Sponsor of Region 5. Suzanna writes about being a mentor—what being a mentor entails and the benefits for the mentor, not just the mentored.

Once the paperwork is done, the students are trained, or the project is finished, what then? Suzanne Hardy helps answer that question in her article Personal Postmortem or Evaluating Your Performance.

If you've evaluated your performance and are wondering how you stack up salary wise, check out the STC press release about the 2001 salary survey. If, either before or after you've checked the survey, you've decided to change your place of employment or even your field of employment, check out the December Meeting

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# January Meeting Notes

By Elaine Tsang

**Date:** Wednesday, January 9, 2002

**Time:** 5:30—Networking  
6:15—Dinner  
7:00—Presentation

**Place:** Wyndham Garden Hotel, 5975 Lusk Blvd., Sorrento Mesa. Hotel is located east of I-805, at the corner of Lusk Blvd. and Mira Mesa Blvd. (behind Chili's Restaurant).

**Phone:** 858-558-1818

**Menu:** Buffet

- Tossed Caesar Salad
- Fresh Fruit and Berries
- Penne and Roasted Seasonal Vegetable Salad
- Baked Ziti
- Assorted Pizzas
- Dessert Table (Tortes, Brownies, and Cookies)
- Coffee, Tea, and Iced Tea

**Cost (Including Dinner):**

- Members \$20\*
- Non-members \$25\*
- Students \$15\*

\*Add \$5 if you do not make a reservation by 5 p.m. Sunday, January 6.

**Cost (Without Dinner—no reservation required):**

- Members: \$10
- Non-members: \$15

**RSVP:** Make a reservation online (preferred) by visiting [www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org) and clicking on Reservations, or phone your reservation to (619) 525-7716 by 5 p.m. Sunday, January 6. Reservations are required if you choose the dinner option to ensure enough food is provided.

**Meeting Notes:** Make a New Year's resolution to learn new tools of the trade, then join us to see if WebWorks should be on your list. ☼

# January Meeting Preview

## Write Once, Publish Anywhere

By Elaine Tsang, VP Programs

Everyone is talking about WebWorks Publisher, a tool set that converts FrameMaker documents for online publishing. Andrew VanConas, Vice President of Consulting for Quadralay Corporation, says, "Write once, publish anywhere" is a model that not only serves as a philosophy of efficiency, but also acts as a method to universally control content revisions and preserve look and feel."

For the January 2002 meeting, Andrew will introduce WebWorks Publisher Professional and all of its new features. He will focus his discussion on how to publish single-source documents from FrameMaker 6.0 to produce print, Internet, and numerous online help formats using WebWorks Publisher 7.0.

With more than 12 years of experience in technical writing and online

help system delivery, Andrew is a recognized expert in ePublishing techniques, tools and best practices. His primary focus is on helping WebWorks Publisher users derive the maximum value and productivity improvement in their customized online publishing projects.

During his career Andrew has implemented numerous HTML-Based Help and online documentation systems for companies such as Raytheon, QAD, Agilent, Compaq and Dell, handling extremely challenging and complex large-scale projects such as a single source system with over 25 FrameMaker books that had to be published to print, PDF, intranet, and website, as well as incorporated into an online help system. Prior to joining the WebWorks team, Andrew ran his own ePublishing and technical writing consulting company. ☼

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# December Meeting Review

## Employment Questions? Ask the Source!

By L. Sharon Bradshaw, SD-STC Roving Reporter

Our December meeting featured a panel of hiring managers who answered employment questions ranging from resumé formats to job qualifications.

We had 39 members, 13 non-members, 4 students, and 6 speakers for a total of 62 attendees. There were 11 no-shows. Please notify Elaine Tsang ([elaine@tecstandards.com](mailto:elaine@tecstandards.com)) if you need to cancel your reservation.

### Synopsis

The moderator was Kris Oden. The panelists included Barbara Newton-Holmes, Manager of Documentation at Peregrine Systems; Suzy Hosie, President and CEO of Write on the

Edge, Inc.; Tom Lorr, Project Manager at SAIC; Cheryl Nemeth, former Technical Publications Manager at Motiva Software; and Elaine Tsang, Staffing Manager at Technical Standards, Inc.



From Left: Cheryl Nemeth, Barbara Newton-Holmes, Suzy Hosie, Tom Lorr, and Elaine Tsang.

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# Visiting Author

## **What's Missing in Your Training?**

By Rockie Lyons Beaman

Reprinted From *The Willamette Galley* newsletter

Perhaps one of the easiest things to do when developing technical training is to focus on the “how,” or the procedures for completing a complex task. What we often miss, in our zealotry to make it user-friendly, is the “what, when and why of performing a task.”

When I first began developing training, I was surrounded by subject matter experts, most often engineers, who could tell me how the inside of a complex machine worked. We would spend hours drilling down to the discrete detail about how a certain piece of hardware or software worked.

When I would ask the engineer if the customer or end user would need to know this level of detail, I would get a look that said, “Of course, are you not listening to the importance of these details?” Then, off I would go to build the training. More often than not, however, I found that students or end users were not interested in those discrete details. They were more interested in understanding the answers to the following questions:

- What is it I am doing?
- Why am I doing this?
- When do I perform this activity?
- How do I perform this activity?

### **What is it I am doing?**

Most research on adult learning reinforces the concepts that people really learn in three ways: by watching, by listening, and by doing. And that adult learners really need to make connections so that what they learn is put into context or a big picture. This is really called theory, but before you dismiss theory as academic or boring, let's describe why theory is important. Theory provides the assumptions, principles or rules of procedures for why certain behaviors are exhibited.

For researchers, theory must be the foundation upon which they build their research and analysis. This means there is an explanation as well as the ability to possibly anticipate a kind of output or behavior.

In developing technical training, theory is a critical piece in helping your end users understand what they're trying to accomplish. Typically, this theory is then situated within the context of a hardware or software environment. If you're working with hardware, you may be focusing on how a particular piece of machinery works. In software, you may be talking about a particular function and how it relates to the overall application. Without a clear theoretical understanding, most people will not understand what they're trying to accomplish.

### **Why am I doing this?**

One of the biggest gaps in most software training I've seen is the lack of explanation as to why someone performs a particular task. I've been guilty of this sometimes myself. As course developers, we focus on capturing the steps or procedure for how something works. And sometimes going after how a piece of software works can be a Herculean effort all by itself because of the complexity of some of the enterprise resource planning and manufacturing execution systems that we must train on.

Knowing why a user is performing a task also addresses the need for someone to understand the big picture. And as adult learning theory suggests, retention tends to be higher among people who understand why they are performing an action or activity. It is important that you clearly provide the “why” as to a particular task. For example, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Will the task be repeated?
- Will the task be required only for troubleshooting?
- Is there a sequence of steps required before completing the task?
- Will all users perform the same task?

### **When do I perform this activity?**

Perhaps the trickiest of all of these suggestions is building in when a user must perform a task. One reason for this gap is due to the complexity of large software systems that are often segmented and only used by a select group of end users. The tension is always between how much one needs to know to perform her job and how much of the big picture is necessary in order to act competently when something goes wrong. Often determining when to perform a task is not easy. Subject matter experts may not even know when certain activities occur, especially if they're predicated on previous activities. Some subject matter experts are specialists in only one module of a particular application, so you may have to do some extra research to make the connections meaningful to your audience. However, the goal of any training exercise is to provide a competency in the end user that enables that person to respond with the appropriate corrective action. Knowing what and how to perform a task will not make the end user successful if she does not know when to perform the task.

### **How do I perform this activity?**

And finally, the actual task of performing an activity is capturing the procedures for how to perform a task or activity. Often this piece of the training plan may seem the easiest in the sense that you know you need to

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# Humor

## *Virtually Invisible*

By Karen Field

**W**e tech writers find meaning in the most mundane tasks. I discovered this the other night when a simple household chore raised an existential dilemma: I tried to assemble a bird feeder without using the instructions.

“Hey,” I thought, “I write instructions for complex software systems; I can certainly figure out a simple bird feeder on my own.” Hence the existential dilemma: If I don’t use the type of documents that I provide to users, do I render myself obsolete? The steps I took when I assembled the bird feeder led me to the answer. In case you’d like to follow the same path, I’ve documented them for you.

Required items:

- 1 unassembled bird feeder
- 1 package of DoubleStuf Oreo cookies, empty except for two cookies
- 1 carton of milk, also nearly empty
- 1 bad attitude

Steps:

1. Pour contents of bird feeder package onto kitchen counter.
2. Extricate the instructions from the pile of plastic and metal and toss in the trash.
3. Eat one Oreo cookie and take one swig of milk.
3. Observe the contents of the bird feeder package: six short screws; three long screws with threading at either end; 12 nuts for the screws; one long, clear, plastic tube in two parts with 6 holes in each part; 12 skinny, hollow, green tubes of rubber; 4 trays of assorted pieces of plastic; 12 pieces of green plastic that look like small hoods.
4. Eat the last Oreo cookie and toss the package in the trash.
5. Gulp the last bit of milk and toss the container in the trash.

6. Place the two halves of the long plastic tube together.
7. Grab short screws willy-nilly and insert them into holes in the clear plastic tube halves.
8. Realize that the screws are meant to hold the funny green mini-hoods in place.
9. Swear.
10. Remove screws, separate halves of clear plastic tube, and insert six funny green mini-hoods in big holes in tubes.
11. Reconnect halves of tubes. Note that three funny green things fell out of their holes into the center of the tube and out of reach.
12. Swear again.
13. Separate tube halves, retrieve funny green things, and think about the instructions lying in the trash, under the empty package of Oreo cookies and the empty, dripping carton of milk.
14. Think, “I’ve got it figured out!” and screw six funny green things in place, attaching nuts to secure the screws.
15. Place tube halves together.
16. Examine the rest of the parts for your next task, and reach for one of the plastic trays.
17. Realize that you must separate the tube again to insert the plastic trays.
18. Realize that you have six long screws, six funny green mini-hoods, and 12 miniature tubes left.
19. Sigh.
20. Separate plastic tube halves again.
21. Extract the instructions from beneath the snack debris in the trash, and wipe off cookie crumbs and drops of milk.
22. Smile in satisfaction. You now know why companies pay you the big bucks. ❁

# Personal Postmortem: Evaluating Your Performance

By Suzanne Hardy

**W**hat do you do when a project is finished? Heave a sigh of relief, or maybe clean off your desk and organize your files? If you are in the software industry, you might relax for a short time before you begin the next release cycle.

It’s common to quickly lose interest in a completed project and want to know what’s next. But taking some time to evaluate the project is an essential part of the process. Even if your team holds a “postmortem” meeting after the release to discuss how the project went, this is the perfect opportunity to take inventory of your own performance, processes, problems, and successes as well. Why?

If something didn’t go well (such as missing a deadline), your evaluating the process can help prevent it from happening next time. For example, a writer who missed a deadline might realize that she allowed the scope to increase without evaluating how it would affect the schedule. When the writer thought about why she allowed the scope to increase, she remembered that she didn’t want to disappoint her manager by saying she didn’t have time to implement a feature they both wanted. She also was not comfortable with the scheduling software, so she simply worked long hours and hoped it would work out. Without thinking this through, the writer might have gone into the next project “winging it” again, trying to cram in features while avoiding wrestling with the schedule. Needless to say, a pattern could develop that would be neither pleasant nor productive.

Another good reason to evaluate your own performance at the end of a project

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- cuts, drill holes, etc. This will help the writer and the printer visualize any unforeseen problems.
4. For multiple-color jobs, the writer/designer should request laser color separations. The computer will output a black representation of the specific colors on separate pages. This will help the writer and designer see if they used additional colors by mistake. In addition, they will be able to verify how they want the colors and if any elements are missing.
  5. It is important to note that electronic clipart and photo galleries use the RGB format (red, green, and blue colors) to create a full-color image. Unfortunately, the printing industry uses the CYMK process (cyan, yellow, magenta, and black). Therefore, RGB files must be converted to CYMK files prior to being inserted into the document. Specialized software packages such as Adobe Photoshop can help you convert the files.
  6. All items that are scanned must be done at high resolution, or the images will look digitized (unclear).
  7. If the project has bleeds, (where the image goes to the very edge of the piece), make sure that the document is made with an additional 1/8" area on each side that bleeds. This extra 1/8" area will guarantee the visual quality when the piece is trimmed to its final size.
  8. Before turning the disk over to the printer, the writer should save all the fonts,



- illustrations, photographs, and graphics individually on the file. Otherwise, when film is output they will be missing.
9. The writer should specify what platform, software and version are used to prevent any incompatibility issue from arising.
  10. Blueline proofs and color proofs are the last checks and balances before the job goes to the printing press. This is not the stage for making revisions to the text. Revisions require another blueline, and several bluelines can cost more than the printing itself. Therefore, check the proofs not so much for content, but for layout, size, color, and orientation.
  11. The process does not stop once a job is off the presses. If you have a large book or a very complex job requiring foil stamping, die-cutting, embossing or specialized folding, it is important to request a pre-bind or rule-out. These tools will indicate the page layout, the orientation of the die-cut, stamping, and so forth that can be verified with the writer/designer prior to finishing the job. This helps to eliminate any errors at the final stage of the completion of the printing project.

Following these guidelines can help educate the writer and designer, and make the pre-press process—getting the paperwork done—a successful endeavor for all parties. ❁

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If you are a writer you locate yourself behind a wall of silence and no matter what you are doing, driving a car or walking or doing housework you can still be writing, because you have that space.  
—Joyce Carol Oates

## STC Telephone Seminars

STC is offering six telephone seminars in 2002. Beginning January 16th, two seminars will be offered each month through March 2002. Telephone seminars have been very successful in bringing cost-effective training to STC members and others seeking to improve their skills and knowledge. This year, STC is offering online registration at [www.stc.org/seminars.html](http://www.stc.org/seminars.html).

In the first seminar, Basil White will discuss “Building a Product, Manual, and Web Site Using Customer-Focused Design.” The seminar will be held on January 16th, 1:00–2:30 p.m. EST.

A Washington, D.C., consultant and STC member, White will teach a strategy for using a goal hierarchy, a process flowchart, and a product state table to construct a customer-focused plan for every facet of a product—its interface, documentation, online help, training materials, and customer service.

For details, including an explanation of how telephone seminars work, please visit [www.stc.org/seminars.html](http://www.stc.org/seminars.html).

The second January seminar is scheduled for January 30th, 1:00–2:30 p.m. EST. Entitled “Developing a Strategic Framework for Technical Marketing Communication,” it will be led by Sandra Harner and Tom Zimmerman.

### Other seminars scheduled for 2002:

- **February 6**, “From World-Weary to World-Ready: Usability for International Users.” Hans Fenstermacher will lead the presentation.
- **February 20**, “Creating Effective Documentation Plans.” John Hedtke is the presenter.
- **March 6**, “Communicating Clarity: Make your Technical Marketing

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# Professional Development

## Get That Job Workshop, January 12<sup>th</sup>

By Mary Larkin

**H**aven't looked for a job in a while? Rusty at interviewing? Don't know what the latest salary range is for tech writers? Need to know what a good résumé looks like? If you've answered, "Yes!" to any of these questions, then you should attend the "Get that Job" workshop on January 12, 2002, at Invitrogen. The following topics will be covered:

- **Résumés**—Dean Urban
- **Interviewing Techniques**—Walter Hanig
- **Portfolio**—Bonnie Graham
- **Job Offer/Salary Ranges**—Elaine Tsang
- **Networking/Career Development**—Kris Oden

**When:** January 12, 2002, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (Check-in at 8:30 a.m.; workshop starts at 9:00 a.m. Lunch is included. The afternoon is devoted to résumé review, portfolio review, and

mock interviews.) Bring your résumé and portfolio!

**Where:**

Invitrogen  
1600 Faraday Ave  
Carlsbad CA 92008

**Cost:**

- \$10 for STC members
- \$10 for students
- \$25 for nonmembers

Send payment to:

STC San Diego  
P.O. Box 910577  
San Diego, CA 92191-0577

**Reservations:** Send an email to [maryl@castandcrew.com](mailto:maryl@castandcrew.com). Include your name, email address, phone number. We must receive your check before you are enrolled in the workshop. You will be put on the waiting list until payment is received. This workshop will be limited to 30 registrants, so don't delay in paying. ❁

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about the times when you were the happiest. What activities were you doing at that time? What activities do you lose yourself in? You know...when are you in "the zone"?

If you are having a hard time doing this, rest assured most people do. Most of us have little sense of our talents and strengths, because we spend a lot of time trying to fix what's "wrong" with us, instead of developing our talents into strengths and using those strengths to find the position that best suits us.

Last year I talked about a book called *First, Break All the Rules*. The sequel

to that book is *Now Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton (\$18.20 at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). The book outlines a program to help you identify your talents, build them into strengths, and translate these into personal and career success. This program introduces 34 dominant themes (talents) with thousands of possible combinations. Once you've identified your 5 leading themes through a web-based questionnaire, the book shows you how to think about your talents and obtain new insights into what position you might excel in.

Sometimes all we need is a new way to look at things. Good Luck! ❁

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The audience asked the questions after the moderator started things off.

Often each panelist had a different answer for the same question. It was very interesting to hear such a wide range of answers. By the end of the evening, we learned the correct answer to most questions is: it depends. It depends on the company and the job.

For example a placement agency and some hiring managers want a formatted Word résumé so they can examine the document construction. They want to know whether the candidate used styles and tabs to space information or simply pressed the space bar. Large companies usually want a plain text résumé—no boldface, underlines, or fancy fonts—because a plain text résumé is best for scanning into a database. A keyword search of this database identifies potential candidates.

All agree cover letters must be concise, job specific, and reflect company awareness. One panelist reads the cover letter first. If the applicant shows promise she will read the résumé. Another hiring manager reviews the résumé first and reads the cover letter after she decides if the candidate meets their requirements.

Some of the panelists agreed a degree is required for a senior writer position. Others said subject knowledge and experience is more important.

Most prefer chronological résumés. This style shows where the candidates started their careers and where they are going. A government job may want the entire work history for security purposes. Private industry is often satisfied with the last 10 years because work experience further back is usually not relevant.

Confused? Would you like more questions answered? Attend our January 12 workshop, "Get That Job." See Mary Larkin's article in this issue or visit on our STC Web site for workshop details ([www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org)).

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# Introductions

## Technical Writer Pilots Her Way Through Life

By Lana Walker-Helmuth

Erica Ueland writes the book review column for this newsletter. She probably knows that you can't judge a book by its cover. Apparently, I'm still finding that out when it comes to people. I met Erica at her first STC meeting a couple of years ago. She impressed me as very sweet and personable. I could well imagine her working quietly away writing at, oh, I don't know, accounting procedures or something.

But then I interviewed her. It turns out she's been working at the North Island Navy Base creating interactive instructional media for pilots and naval flight officers. She writes the lessons that teach S-3 pilots to refuel other aircraft in mid-air. I'm sorry, but that amazes me.

And then I asked her what she did before working at the base. It turns out she moved to San Diego a couple of years ago from Salt Lake City—where she had been flying cargo planes at Hill Air Force Base. What! I asked her to repeat herself. “Did you say *flying* cargo planes? Like, you were an airline pilot?” Sensing my complete surprise, she chuckled and said, “Did you think I was a shrinking violet?” Well, not quite, but I sure wasn't expecting that.

### Her path to the sky

Erica grew up in southern Minnesota in Mankato, which means “blue earth” in Sioux. She went to Beloit College in Wisconsin, where she studied English. Always dreaming of becoming a pilot, in the late 70s Erica started working on her ratings. By the 80s she worked as a flight instructor in Burbank, California, and got her commercial pilot's license. She flew for a commuter airline at LAX. Her English training came in handy on the job. Because pilots were sometimes expected to write procedures, Erica was asked to write the emergency

chapter of the general operations manual. Later she wrote a flight controller manual.

After getting her Airline Transport Pilot's License, she flew the Lockheed Electra, a large 4-engine cargo plane. She also served as a flight engineer, monitoring engines, doing tests, and managing fuel. In 1989, she moved to Salt Lake City to fly for the LOGAIR program, a Department of Defense program that oversaw a venture in which several commercial airlines and the U.S. Air Force joined to create one airline. They flew military cargo all around the world. Erica flew cargo during Operation Desert Shield, often making trips between England and Germany.

Erica loved her job and hanging out with the other pilots. Unfortunately, defense cuts in the early 90s stopped the LOGAIR program. Erica decided to stay in Utah and get her Master's in communication from Westminster College. During the day she worked for an oil services company in the human resources department and attended school at night.

In May of 1999, Erica moved to San Diego, where she has two brothers, and bought a fixer-upper. She found the North Island contract job just five days after moving here. She loves San Diego and her work, although the contract is nearing its end. She also stays busy with swimming, flower gardening in her big yard, photography, reading mystery novels, hiking and biking. No shrinking violet, Erica has made several bike trips, including Mexicali to San Felipe, and Rosarito to Ensenada. ❁

[December continued from page 7](#)

A final word of advice: if you mention STC, be sure you get the name right, “Society for Technical Communication,” not “Society for Technical Communicators.”

### Drawing Winners

Victor Roick won *What Color is Your Parachute?* By Richard Nelson Bolles. Donated by Technical Standards.

Barbara Newton-Holmes won a WallyBux. A WallyBux can be exchanged for one STC meeting and dinner.



From the left: Victor Roick and Barbara Newton-Holmes

### Announcements

Walter Hanig has two new baby box turtles.

Jobmail Coordinator wanted. If interested, contact VP-Employment: Judy Keene ([judy\\_sd@pacbell.net](mailto:judy_sd@pacbell.net)).

Individuals seeking new jobs stood and introduced themselves giving short, professional backgrounds.

Individuals representing companies with open positions introduced themselves and their companies and announced available positions.

### Upcoming Events

Next SD-STC meeting is Wednesday, January 9, 2002. Our speaker is from Quadralay and will talk about WebWorks Publisher.

### Upcoming classes:

January 12: “Get That Job.” For details, visit our Web site at [www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org). ❁

# Book/Software Review

## Macromedia

### Dreamweaver 4

By Erica Ueland

When was the last time you were able to build a Web page without having to waste precious minutes while hunting to spot errors in your code? It hasn't happened to me for a couple months. That's because I've been using Dreamweaver 4, Macromedia's stellar Web development and editing tool.

Dreamweaver 4 has a number of features that make constructing complex Web sites a snap.

One of the nicest features of the program upgrade is its integrated site manager. When constructing or editing Web pages with Dreamweaver 4, you'll be able to organize the assets in your files and easily retrieve them from the site manager. In a central location, you'll find it convenient to track and manage graphics, libraries, URLs, templates, and other content.

Gone are the days of exiting the document window to access the code source. Now you have options. You can use the Double Pane View, which displays your page and your code simultaneously. Or you can shift between Design View and Code View to see a broader area in full screen. If you are new to the world of HTML, you will be able to learn the code while designing a Web site. As you add new elements to your site, you can immediately see the coding instructions behind each new element as soon as you add it onscreen.

In Layout View, you can create tables right on the page. Cells can be "dragged and dropped" or regrouped on your page with the assurance that

they will be displayed in all browsers. Images can also be moved on your page. You will have instant feedback on your Web site's appearance. Because of this, Dreamweaver is a great example of WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) at work.

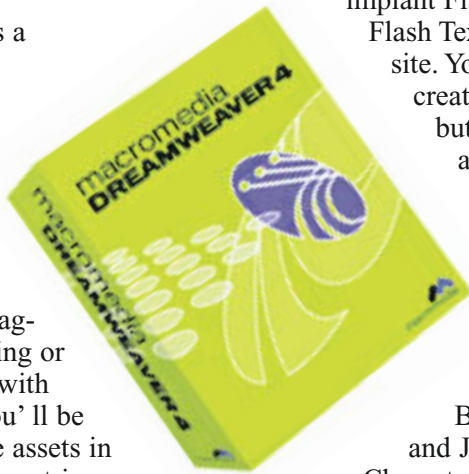
Another new feature in Dreamweaver 4 allows you to implant Flash Buttons and Flash Text directly in your site. You are also able to create or import new button styles. Buttons are just one of many "objects" from the Objects Palette.

Other objects include Table, Horizontal Rule, Navigation Bar, e-Mail Link, and Jump Menu. In the

Character Objects palette, an Other Characters icon links you to an assortment of hard-to-find special characters.

If you purchase Dreamweaver, you will actually get much more than the version you see in the box. Macromedia has established Macromedia Exchange to provide a co-op where extensions submitted by other Web developers are available free of charge. Dreamweaver has added a "Coursebuilder" to the Exchange, which enables educators and Web builders to create distance learning sites. Furthermore, it's easy to access Fireworks Studio to edit and overhaul graphics from within the Dreamweaver application.

Experienced and novice Web designers can download Dreamweaver 4 for a free 30-day trial period or purchase it for \$199.00 from the Macromedia Web site ([www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com)). ❁



*STC continued from page 6*

Matter." The seminar leader is Pamela Selker Rak.

- **March 20**, "Creating Usability Goals: Understanding What Usability Means to Your Users." Whitney Quesenbery will lead the presentation.

The cost for each seminar is \$125.00 US and \$140.00 Canadian. Overseas participants should contact the STC office. An additional \$10.00 will be charged for registration received less than five days before the seminar.

As cost-effective and time-efficient ways of improving your skills and knowledge, telephone seminars are much like a large conference call, but in a more controlled environment. Simply dial the 800 number from your telephone, enter the provided personal identification number, and you're connected. Then sit back and listen to the presentation and join in the discussions.

For the cost of one registration, several employees at a company may benefit from the seminar presentation and develop their own interactive discussions.

You may get more information and register online at [www.stc.org/seminars.html](http://www.stc.org/seminars.html). You also may complete the registration form in the December 2001 *Intercom*. ❁

## New Members

By Bonnie Blackfield,  
VP-Membership

Please welcome these new and reinstated members :

### New Members

Sara Burkert  
Richard Garner, Jr.  
Audrey Johns  
Nola Rosdahl  
Susan Schalk

### Reinstated Members:

Suzanne Driggs

# Director-Sponsor's Report

## *Mentoring—A Gentle Alliance*

By J. Suzanna Laurent, Director-Sponsor Region 5

**M**entors. Role models. Idols. Call them what you like—chances are very good that one of them has impacted your life with such tremendous force the reverberations of that influence affect the decisions you make to this day. Perhaps it was a:

- Demanding coach who always knew precisely which words would most encourage you.
- Favorite teacher who pumped a genuine love of learning into your heart.
- Devoted parent who not only spoke of virtues, but modeled them as well.
- Nurturing manager who offered you the gift of shared wisdom.

The pool of available mentors is made up of a diverse group of individuals. One common interest that unites them, however, is a desire to help their protégés reach their full potential. Successful people report that a large part of their success is due to the experience they gain through working with a mentor. Many of these mentoring relationships are informal—in fact, the mentor sometimes is unaware that he or she is fulfilling that role.

The mentor relationship has been called the “pinnacle of work relationships.” A mentor is more than a peer, more than a coach, even more than a sponsor. Mentors typically have influence within the organization or community. They use this influence to empower their protégés. The mentor relationship is really a partnership—the mentor provides guidance and opportunities, the protégé provides energy and a fresh perspective.

Most effective mentor relationships vary in terms of length and degree of formality. They are initiated by the

protégé. These relationships are true partnerships in which both parties contribute. They involve a mentor who has influence within the organization or community and is willing to use this influence to empower his or her protégé. These are the specific behaviors that mentors should practice:

- An effective mentor helps protégés think in terms of success. You can do this by holding visioning and goal-setting sessions with them.
- Counsel protégés when they have problems. Guide protégés through the thought processes necessary for developing their own solutions; don't solve their problems for them.
- Provide feedback. Tell protégés how they are doing. When negative feedback is necessary, don't preach or be overly critical. Instead, ask insightful questions such as “What could you do differently the next time?” or “Why don't you think the project turned out as planned?”
- Provide information. Mentors should serve as informational resources. Success secrets, short cuts, information about office politics, and so forth, will help protégés learn the ropes.
- Delegate authority and express confidence in the ability of protégés to take on new tasks. A protégé's greatest need is for experience. Look for ways that will help protégés practice new skills.
- Encourage exploration. Give your protégés as many opportunities to experiment with new ideas as possible, but don't be surprised if you learn something from them.

- Look for opportunities to showcase your protégé's talents. Place your protégés in positions where they can meet people who can help them meet their goals. Networking events are great for this.

It may sound as though the mentor-protégé relationship requires a great deal of involvement on your part—that's because it does. Many chapters already have formal mentoring programs because STC provides great opportunities for mentoring. Take advantage of STC membership by building a “gentle alliance” with another member who would benefit from your knowledge—you will both benefit from the experience. ❁

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### *Personal continued from page 5*

ect is to keep track of what you did well and what you learned. When performance review time rolls around, you may not remember that you successfully coordinated the entire print production process or that you delivered your online help in a different format for the first time. If you make a list and discuss it with your manager right when the project ends, you will both be better prepared when it's time for your performance review.

Spend some time on this process. Analyze status reports, emails, milestones or checkpoints, and tracking documents to refresh your memory. Then start developing a list of personal impressions:

- What did you learn?
- What did you do well?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What didn't you have time to do but would like to have done?

*Personal continued on page 12*

# Tech Issues



## Tips on Photoshop 6.0

By Matt Sullivan, GRAFIX Training & Consulting

Last month I was in the unenviable position of “cramming” for an exam. Adobe had recently overhauled their database of ACTPs (Adobe Certified Training Providers) and discovered I hadn’t taken the Photoshop Exam since version 4. Apparently, they felt I should be more up to date and (temporarily) dropped me from their list of Photoshop resources!

Forced to take the exam, I got a list of the exam topics from Adobe’s Web site and sat down for what promised to be a lovely evening with my Photoshop 6.0 User Guide. Since I doubt many of you spend much quality time with your user guides (ironic for a group of tech writers!) I thought I’d share a few of the insights I gained in the process.

### The Actions Palette, Layer Effects, and Droplets

Photoshop has an excellent scripting ability through the Actions Palette. In the past I have used Actions to record tasks like creating drop shadows. The last few versions of Photoshop have eliminated the need for this action through Layer Effects.

Layer Effects allows me to apply things like drop shadows without permanently affecting the image the shadow falls upon.

Actions can do a lot more than that. Since Actions are basically macros, or recorded keystrokes, they can be used for any repetitive task you need to do in Photoshop. That means that if you have a digital camera, you can set up an Action called “Remove Orange Cast” to change the color of a shot, then run the Action whenever you have a shot which matches that Action.

Actions can also be turned into Droplets. These can sit out on your desktop and allow you to run the Action on an image without having to manually open the file in Photoshop and start the Action. In other words, you can open the file, run a preset series of commands in Photoshop, save the file, and close Photoshop with just a click and drag on your desktop. Now I know I teach software for a living, but I still think that is pretty cool!

### Printing Many Digital Images

Although I already knew about Actions before I studied for this exam, I ran across another feature in Photoshop 6.0 of which I was totally unaware. Technical questions from friends and family are an occupational hazard for

*[Tech continued on page 12](#)*



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# Mission Statement

Designing the future of technical communication.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. STC is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 25,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, multimedia artists, Web and Intranet page information designers, translators, and others whose work involves making technical information available to those who need it.

Society membership provides opportunities for ongoing learning and professional networking. Through the efforts of a small, full-time staff and a large network of volunteers, STC promotes the public welfare by educating its members and industry about issues concerning technical communication.

- Member: \$110 per year (plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)
- Student Member: \$45 per year (enrollment fee not required)

Society for Technical Communication  
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703.522.4114 (voice) 703.522.2075 (fax)

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[What's continued from page 4](#)

capture a sequence of steps, despite their complexity, however, you should make the procedures as clean, succinct, and easy to understand as possible. For example, removing reference material in procedures will help your audience understand the flow of steps, and if you've addressed some of the earlier questions of why and when, you may be able to avoid redundancy in your course materials.

After you've captured everything that you think you need, ask yourself these questions:

- Does my end user understand what she is supposed to do?
- Does she know when to perform the task?
- Does she know why it is necessary to perform the task?
- Does she know how?

If you've covered all the bases, you're on your way to building training that will help your end user!

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*Rockie is currently writing a dissertation on the communication and training needs for participants in a software implementation for her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Professional Communication from Iowa State University. She holds a Master's Degree in Business and Technical Writing and has taught technical communication for over six years at the undergraduate level. For four years, she was the software training manager for GenRad, Inc. In a previous life, she worked as an instructional designer, trainer and technical writer for companies such as Hewlett-Packard and Intel. She has also been the Entry-Level Special Interest Group Manager for the Willamette Valley Chapter of STC in Portland, Oregon. You may reach her at [r\\_beaman@hotmail.com](mailto:r_beaman@hotmail.com). She'd love to hear from you! ❁*

## Quoteable Quotes

Events of the past two years have virtually decreed that I shall wrestle with the literary muse for the rest of my days. And so, having tasted the poverty of one end of the scale, I have no choice but to direct my energies toward the acquisition of fame and fortune. Frankly, I have no taste for either poverty or honest labor, so writing is the only recourse left for me.

— From a letter from Hunter S. Thompson to Arch Gerhart, 29 January 1958

### Wanted

Authors to write monthly columns concerning technical communication. A variety of topics are open. Each author will concentrate on the various aspects of a single topic; possible examples, but not limited to: employment, Web site information, management, and formal education (Student Liaison).

If you are interested, or know of someone who is, please contact the Editor ([rbradsh2@san.rr.com](mailto:rbradsh2@san.rr.com)) for further information. Although we will give preference to STC members, it is not necessary for the author to be a member.

This is an excellent opportunity to increase your portfolio with published articles.

"There are many lines that could be spared from the book you are reading," she said, her voice primly firm and dogmatic. "I must 'a' missed 'em," he announced. "What I read was the real goods. It was all lighted up an' shining, an' it shun right into me an' lighted me up inside, like the sun or a searchlight. That's the way it landed on me, but I guess I ain't up much on poetry, miss."

—Jack London, Martin Eden [Martin and Ruth, discussing the poet Martin called "Swineburne"] ❁

[Tech continued from page 11](#)

me. One of the common questions I get is how to optimize the paper usage of a bubble jet printer when printing on glossy photo paper. I used to recommend using a page layout program to place multiple images on a larger page, until I discovered two features in Photoshop 6.0 which help in this exact task:

### Picture Package

Under File/Automate/Picture Package, you will find a feature which allows you to print multiple copies of a photo on a single sheet of paper. Great for baby pictures and holiday cards!

### Contact Sheet

Using File/Automate/Contact Sheet II, you can set up a page which will print thumbnails of the images in a directory complete with filenames for future reference.

I hope these tips help you with your Photoshop needs; they certainly helped on the Photoshop 6.0 exam, which I passed! Just remember, those user guides have a lot of good information in them. ❁

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[Personal continued from page 10](#)

Then look at the project from another perspective:

- Did the project stay within scope?
- Did time estimates hold?
- Did the final product look like the one you planned?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, why didn't things go as planned? Was it out of your control? Did you need more resources, time, or skills?

When you're finished evaluating your own performance during the project, meet with your manager to discuss it. Be positive and open to constructive feedback. And most importantly, remember these lessons learned for next time. Only then can you ask, "What's next?" ❁

# 2001 Salary Survey Points To Financially Rewarding Career Field

ARLINGTON, VA

**A**re you looking for a challenging career field that is financially rewarding? According to a recent survey, the technical writing and editing field may fit the bill.

The average salary and benefits for technical writers and editors in the United States and Canada continue to increase, according to the 2001 salary survey conducted by the Society for Technical Communication. The average salary is \$55,360 in the United States, up 6.8 percent from \$51,850 shown in the 2000 survey, and \$54,140 in Canada (in Canadian dollars), up 8.5 percent from \$49,910 in 2000.

STC conducts the salary survey each summer. This year, questionnaires were sent to more than 3,500 people in technical communication jobs. "The survey results show a career field with increasing financial compensation," said Judith Glick-Smith, STC president. "Good technical writing is a skill employers are willing to pay for."

The survey covers the responses of more than 1,200 technical writers and editors working in entry-level through senior-level/supervisory jobs across the U.S. and Canada. Notably, the survey shows a narrowing gap in salaries between men and women. The average salary for U.S. men is \$56,310 while that for women is \$54,860. In Canada, the average salary of Canadian men is \$56,580 and that of women is \$52,730 (Canadian dollars).

"The survey results show that female technical writers/editors in the U.S. earn 97 percent of what their male counterparts earn," Glick-Smith pointed out. "In

Canada, females earn 93 percent of their male counterparts. This smaller 'gender gap' points to financial opportunities for women in the growing field of technical communication."

The U.S. Department of Labor statistics for 2000 show that among full-time employees in all professions, women earn 76 percent of men's salaries (Labor Force Statistics from Current Population Survey, Table 37; [www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cpsaatab.htm)). In Canada, 1998 figures for full-time workers show women earning 72 percent of men's salaries (Canadian Statistics, Average Earnings by Sex and Work Pattern"; [www.statcan.ca/English/pgdb/people/labor/labor01b.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/English/pgdb/people/labor/labor01b.htm)).

The complete 2001 Technical Communicator Salary Survey is available for free on the STC Web site at [www.stc.org/salary/html](http://www.stc.org/salary/html).

Editor's Note: If you wish to interview experts in the technical communication field, STC can put you in contact with:

- Managers of technical communication departments at high tech companies
- Educators in the technical communication field
- Leaders of STC

The Society for Technical Communication is the world's largest professional organization in its field with more than 25,000 members in 153 chapters worldwide. STC members work as technical writers, editors, illustrators, managers, educators, translators, and other communicators who make technical information understandable and available to those who need it. Information about STC and its programs can be found at the STC Web site, [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org). ❁

## San Diego Chapter Administrative Council

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### *[Editor continued from page 2](#)*

Review or the Professional Development columns. You'll find out some of the things hiring managers look for in résumés and more info about what to put in them.

I have an pre-announcement announcement. We have a new cartoonist/illustrator coming onboard next month. I'll introduce her to all of you through words and pictures at that time.

All that and more await you within these electronic pages. Once again, have a happy, prosperous, and creative New Year. ❁

# Online Speakers: Special Topics in Usability

**S**pecial Topics in Usability is the theme of the Winter Quarter Speakers Series offered by the Department of Technical Communication at the University of Washington (UW) via the Web in streaming video! This series offers 10 nationally renowned speakers and professionals talking about current issues in usability testing.

For the past 10 years the community has been invited to join us on campus for the speakers series held Fridays from 12:30–1:20 pm. Now you don't have to fight the traffic—you can view this series over the Web from your own computer.

## Watch Every Week

Beginning January 11, 2002, and throughout winter quarter, the Speakers Series lecture will be taped during the live Friday seminar. Friday afternoon you can log on and view the lecture in the comfort of your office or home via the Web in streaming video. Sign up with your coworkers and learn more about what other usability specialists are practicing and discovering. The series will be available for on-demand viewing at any time.

## Register Soon

The tuition fee for the Winter Quarter Speakers Series is \$400, plus a \$30 registration fee and a \$12 technology fee. To register, call 206-543-2310 or 1-800-543-2320. The registration code for this course is #59193. If you have questions, please contact Kate Long at [katelong@u.washington.edu](mailto:katelong@u.washington.edu). Speakers list available at:

[www.uwtc.washington.edu/faculty/ramey/tc\\_521/speakers02.htm](http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/faculty/ramey/tc_521/speakers02.htm).

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# Humor

## *JabberWordy*

*A Poem by Dan Hall*

*With apologies to Lewis Carroll*

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the tech writers,  
And the mome PDF's outgrabe.  
"Bewae the Word file, my son!  
The fonts that shift, the dialogs that flash!  
Beware the table tool, and shun  
The frumious files that crash!"

He took his vorpal mouse in hand:  
Long time the Blue Screen foe he sought—  
So he rested by the Ctrl-Alt-Del key,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as he stood by, enduring ennui,  
The Word file, with macros of terror,  
Came whiffling through the Windows GUI,  
And burbled with an error!

Right-click! Left-click! And through and through  
The vorpal mouse went snicker – snack!  
He left it there, and killed its error,  
And went galumphing back.

And hast thou slain the Word file?  
Come to my arms my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!  
The manager chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the tech writers,  
And the mome PDF's outgrabe.

---

*Dan Hall is a senior technical writer for SchlumbergerSema's RTEM Group. SchlumbergerSema is a French global technology services company headquartered in Montrouge, France, with offices throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Dan works in their San Carlos, CA offices. ☼*