

February 2003

Volume 36 No 6



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## February Poll

Which chapter meeting location would be most convenient for you?

- Mission Valley
- Sorrento Valley
- Downtown (Little Italy)
- Rancho Bernardo
- Del Mar
- Carlsbad
- Other (see my comment on the message board)

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At the poll page, scroll down and use the message board to post your comments.

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To receive chapter e-mail, contact Patricia Ray at [Pat@TheWriteAttitude.com](mailto:Pat@TheWriteAttitude.com).

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## Feature Article

**Work Efficiently With RoboHelp HTML**

By Suzanne Hardy

Information architecture is more than creating useable, quality deliverables. It's creating ways to work in the most efficient way possible in the tool you use. Learn tips for working smarter in RoboHelp HTML, an authoring tool for developing online information.

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Feature Article

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## Work Efficiently With RoboHelp HTML

By [Suzanne Hardy](#)

If you develop online help, policies and procedures, a Web site, or other online documentation, you may use or have had exposure to eHelp Corporation's RoboHelp HTML. If you want to learn more about how to work efficiently in this help-authoring tool, this article is for you.

In RoboHelp HTML, you work with a "project" to organize information, build structure and navigation, and add content. This project contains all the files used in the online documentation, such as HTML (topic) files, image and multimedia files, and style sheets.

Experienced online information developers know that managing this information involves more than just writing and creating links (which are skills on their own). Developing a project in an authoring tool such as RoboHelp HTML is *information architecture*, a skill you use to make information useable, easily available, consistent, and logical. You practice information architecture not only to achieve the ideal output but, also, to work as efficiently as possible in your authoring tool, making the project easy to maintain, lean, and efficient.

You can use RoboHelp HTML to accomplish this goal. Here are a few ideas from the latest version (X3).

- **Linking.** You already know how to create links, and you know the basic rules, such as don't overwhelm users with too many links on a page, and link to information that directly pertains to the hotspot text. But are you using links as efficiently as possible in your project?

If you have information that is repeated throughout multiple topics, changes can be time consuming to maintain. For example, in a large project I was working on, I noticed that when a set of measurement units changed in the product I was documenting, I had to make the change in many different topics. So I created a single topic that listed the measurement units and then created "popup links" to the topic in all the topics that referred to the measurements.

Creating the "core" topic and the popup links didn't take very long, and it was worth it to consolidate the information. The popup link gives users the information they need in a small window that opens on top of the main topic without making them "leave" the main topic.

- **Conditional text.** If you need to deliver several versions of a project, such as a printed manual and an online help system, or a subset of the online help, it's easier to maintain one set of source files than it is to update duplicate information in separate projects. Consider using conditional text to "mark" text that you want to be delivered for each version. (For example, an image to be distributed in the printed manual only could be marked with a tag called "Print"). When you generate the project, you define which tags you want to exclude from the output.

The initial work of planning the strategy and applying conditional build tags is worth it given the time you'll save by not maintaining separate sets of files. Don't be intimidated by this feature—it's not just for advanced users and can save you lots of time.

- **Templates.** Do you have certain information that goes into every topic you create, such as a table, text, logo, or other element? In RoboHelp HTML, you can create new topics based on a topic template that has specific text, tables, images, or other characteristics. Using templates saves you time if there's information that needs to be inserted every time you create a new topic.
- **Headers/footers.** When you use the headers/footers feature with templates, you can repeat information at the top and/or bottom of multiple topics. For example, before circulating topics for review, you can create and apply a footer that displays the author's name, the date, the module, and other tracking information. Or you can add a logo or a copyright to the top or bottom of topics. When you update the header/footer, all topics associated with it are automatically updated.
- **Style sheets.** If you're using RoboHelp HTML, chances are you are using a style sheet. Style sheets allow you to control the formatting of your topics in one location instead of in each topic, ensuring consistency and saving an untold amount of time in formatting.

Some authors also use *inline styles*, which are applied from the Formatting menu or toolbar. For example, if your dialog names are always boldface, you might select the dialog name and click **Bold** on the **Formatting** toolbar or menu (instead of changing and applying a style from a style sheet). However, inline styles can cause problems—they override style sheet formatting. So, if you make a change to your style sheet, any text with inline styles applied is not updated.

To fix this problem, create and apply character styles (which you can apply to words or blocks of text globally), instead. Then, if you decide all the dialog

names should not be boldface, you can simply change the character style once in the style sheet instead of searching every topic and manually removing the boldface formatting.

- **See Also cross-references.** When clicked, the **See Also** button displays a list of other topics users may want to see, providing another navigational aid for users. To use this feature in topics, you create a grouping of topics and then add the button to each topic.

See Also references are different from Related Topics references and are easier to maintain. With Related Topics, you manually add topics to each button. Any time you want the list of related topics to change, you must open every button to make the change. If you have a small number of topics with a rather unusual or customized list of related topics, Related Topics references work fine. Otherwise, use See Also references, which update every button when you change anything in the group.

As you can see, there are many ways to make your job as information architect easier. You can find quick and efficient ways to manage your RoboHelp HTML projects that will save you lots of time in the long run.

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## Editor's Desk

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Wall painting by Giulio Parigi in the years 1599-1600.

## Moving Earth

By [Lana Walker-Helmuth](#), Managing Editor

I can always rely on my wall calendar to provide a theme for this column. *February* quotes Archimedes, the great Greek mathematician, inventor, and astronomer: "Give me a place to stand on and I will move the earth." He had discovered that a very small force is capable of moving a very large weight with the help of levers.

This issue's [feature article](#) by Suzanne Hardy illustrates this principle. How much easier it is to create or manage a large project by leveraging simple, time-saving devices. Matt Sullivan's [Tech Issues](#) column also demonstrates this truth. It is well worth our time to invest in learning all we can about the tools of our trade.

Archimedes astonished people when he pulled a ship single-handedly with a system of compound pulleys. Have you ever astonished your boss by doing something in one hour that would have taken someone else one day (or longer)? Isn't it a great feeling?

The tools of our trade, of course, include more than software or hardware. [Humor](#) columnist Karen Field, for example, shows the power of leveraging "negotiating skills" in the face of unreasonable demands rather than grinning and bearing the load.

Because I'm now on a roll with this principle, I see it at work in [Walter Hanig's article](#) as well. He's talking about leveraging the skills, talents, and experience of our members. Don't miss a great opportunity to use a small amount of your time to yield a large result.

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## President's Podium

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### **Friends, Writers and Editors, Lend Me Your Time!**

By [Walter Hanig](#), President

For a variety of reasons, we've had several resignations from the chapter's administrative council this year. Fortunately, some members have stepped forward to help out on the council; thanks Michael (Programs) and Sue (Membership). However, we still have an opening for Professional Development. This realm includes identifying commercial classes or workshops that will interest our members and coordinating the development and presentation of "home-grown" workshops, such as those on FrameMaker, indexing, and "get that job" from previous years.

I don't expect that the VP-Professional Development will give any workshops, though that would certainly be welcome. I do expect the VP to identify the subjects, find speakers, and coordinate logistics for the workshops.

I would hope that there are volunteers who would help out. For example, one volunteer might be in charge of taking e-mail registrations and payments at the workshop. Another might provide light snacks (for example, coffee and bagels). Other aspects of logistics include publicity, finding a location, and providing audio/visual support.

Of course, nothing makes the VP's job easier than knowing someone willing to lead a workshop. You don't have to be a trained speaker. You don't have to be a leading expert. You just have to know your subject well enough to help others and want to help them. If you're the person in the office that others ask, you're qualified! As a speaker at several workshops, I can attest to the satisfaction you'll get.

We'd like to hold half-day workshops, followed by an optional networking lunch, on a variety of topics, from software tools (Illustrator, Photoshop, Visio, and WebWorks Publisher are examples) to specialized usage of tools (for example, building templates in FrameMaker) to improving one's writing skills (indexing and writing for online, for example) to new/not-so-new technologies (such as XML).

The focus will be on providing enough information to help you in your job. For example, you need to know enough Photoshop to improve the quality of screen captures; enough Visio to draw simple process diagrams, or enough WebWorks Publisher to decide if it will meet your needs. Think of the subjects as "xxx for technical communicators."

If you have benefited from other chapter members' volunteer efforts, here's the opportunity to give back, either as VP, Professional Development, or as a presenter. Please contact me, [wdhanig@alumni.rice.edu](mailto:wdhanig@alumni.rice.edu).

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New Members



## Welcome to the San Diego Chapter!

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By [Sue Heim](#), VP-Membership

Interested in joining the STC? [Click here](#) for Society information.

Please welcome new members:

**Thomas Bruner**  
**Linda Bannan**  
**Toni Michael**  
**Theresa Freese**  
**Brook Wills**  
**Craig Brown**  
**Leslie Williams**  
**Barbro Sjutun**

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Press Release


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**Renewal deadline:  
February 28**



## Taking the "Dis" out of "Disabilities"

### *Special-needs SIG seeks support*

Just a reminder as the STC-membership renewal process creeps up on its February 28 deadline: STC's newest SIG, the Special-Needs SIG (SNSIG), is still looking for new members to support them in their twin mission to assist technical communicators with disabilities in the practice of our profession and to provide all technical communicators with information that will help them make our communication products more accessible to users with disabilities. A detailed mission statement is available at the Web site <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml>.

The SNSIG has already made significant progress:

- a comprehensive Web site (<http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml>)
- an online newsletter (posted at <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/newsletter.shtml>)
- extensive support to the 49th STC Conference, including publication of Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs and an Addendum thereto, a successful progression, and several articles in the Proceedings (conference materials available at <http://www.stc-orlando.org/prodev/49notes/SNC.asp>)

But there is much yet to do; to accomplish it, the SNSIG needs more people. It is looking for both active members (to join their initiatives) and patrons, whose affiliation will help the SIG secure the budget it needs to fulfill its objectives.

If you wish to support the SNSIG, you have two options.

- If you have not yet submitted your STC membership renewal, simply check the SNSIG box when you do.
- If you have already submitted your STC membership renewal, download the SIG sign-up form from [http://www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/sigform.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/sigform.pdf), and mail or fax it directly to the STC office at:

Society for Technical  
Communication  
901 N. Stuart St., Ste. 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1822  
(703) 522-2075 Fax

In either case, in order to be added to the SNSIG's newsletter and/or listserv without delay, contact

[daniel.w.voss@lmco.com](mailto:daniel.w.voss@lmco.com) or [jvinegar@myranch.com](mailto:jvinegar@myranch.com).

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## Press Release

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## Second Vice President Candidate Asks For Vote

By Sandi Harner

The position of second vice president of STC is a very important one because the person elected will automatically become first vice president and then president. I would appreciate your vote for second vice president of STC.



Sandi Harner

My experience with STC began in 1984 when I became a member. In 1985, I developed the technical and professional communication major for Cedarville University where I have now taught for more than 20 years. In 1988, I chartered the Cedarville University Student chapter, which I have advised since its beginning. The value that I have received from my membership in STC is immeasurable. Through chapter meetings, publications, and conferences—both regional and annual—I have learned so much while developing a professional network as well as a network of friends.

I began my involvement on the international level in 1992 as manager of Sigma Tau Chi. That quickly led to manager of the Jay R. Gould Award, judging for the Ken Caird Student Article Competition, reviewer of proposals for the STC Annual Conference, and onsite judge for the International Technical Publications Competition. I am currently serving on the STC Board in my fourth year as Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs. In that capacity, I am responsible for eight committees.

I was named Fellow in 2001, received the Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication, and named Associate Fellow in 1996.

As full professor at Cedarville University, I have directed the technical and professional communication program since its beginning. My responsibilities, in addition to teaching a full course load, include developing curriculum, securing and supervising full-time and adjunct faculty, advising students, supervising independent studies, placing and supervising student internships, and advising the STC student chapter.

In addition, I have served as an independent consultant, contract writer, and trainer since 1976. In 1997, I received the STC Faculty Internship Grant and worked as a communications manager in a technical marketing communication firm. In 2002, I co-authored *Technical Marketing Communication*, part of the Technical Communication Series published by Allyn & Bacon/Longman.

For almost 20 years, my passion has been to prepare young people to make a significant contribution to the profession of technical communication. That role has kept me focused on

core competencies, emerging technologies, and communities of practice. My current position on the STC board for the past four years has provided many opportunities to work at the Society level with initiatives such as research grants and special opportunities grants, as well as chapter-level activities in helping to develop mentoring guidelines and education committees.

In the last few years, the growth of communities of practice has broadened our traditional definition of technical communication. This is evidenced by the significant growth in the STC SIGs—which now number more than 20 with a total membership of 26,441. If we are to be effective as the leading professional organization for technical communication, we must actively embrace those nontraditional groups such as technical marketing communicators, usability experts, instructional designers, Web designers, and others who make up the workforce of today's technical communicators. The challenge is to help the employers and employees alike to perceive them as the technical communicators they are.

I believe that all these experiences prepare me to fulfill the responsibilities of the second vice president of STC, as well as first vice president, and finally the president. The Academic Vice President, my Dean and Department Chair have pledged their full support should I be elected second vice president. This support will be evidenced by a decreased teaching load as well as financial support for the travel involved in the position.

When it is time to vote in the STC election, please take the time to go online or mark your ballot and vote for Sandi Harner—STC Second Vice President.

For more information, see [www.sandiharner.com](http://www.sandiharner.com).

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## Chapter Meetings

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[Click here for  
February 12 meeting  
details](#)

## Data Manipulation Using Dreamweaver MX

By [Michael Cardenas](#), VP-Programs

Stuart Harris, our own local expert on Dreamweaver MX and author of *Dreamweaver UltraDev for Dummies*, will provide some "visual *Cliff Notes*" on the highly complex application that Dreamweaver has become.

Stu is a humble man, although there's no reason for him to be. He is a Macromedia-certified Dreamweaver MX instructor, and he co-authored the books *Netscape Quick Tour*, *HTML Publishing With Internet Assistant*, *HTML Publishing for Netscape*, *Dynamic HTML Developer's Guide*, and *Drumbeat 2000 for Dummies*. The first edition of *HTML Publishing for Netscape* was named the best computer book in the 1996 San Diego Book Awards.

Stu will be emphasizing Dreamweaver's ability to integrate database lookup information into the usability experience. He will first offer a comparison between the original Dreamweaver interface and the new MX working area. He will then run through parts of the tutorials he wrote for Dreamweaver UltraDev using ASP/Javascript server technology. Finally, he'll offer some general tips and tricks.

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## January Meeting Review

By [Eric Hurd](#)

After members enjoyed a scrumptious serving of Chicken Picatta, Walter Hanig, president of the San Diego chapter, opened the meeting with general announcements.

## Announcements

### New Meeting Location

- Next month our meeting will not take place in its usual location. We will meet at Woodfin Suites.
- Walter asked for a show of hands for preference for a new regular location for meetings. About half the room preferred a place near Little Italy. When the group was asked about the possibility of moving the meeting north of the 805/5 split, a few hardy souls raised their hands. Nothing is decided as of yet. [[Take the newsletter poll!](#)]

### Volunteers

- Walter thanked the many volunteers who help make our meetings happen and keep the chapter running

smoothly. Of note, thanks to Suzy for managing our Web site, Lance for stepping in as e-mail master, Nadine for making hotel arrangements, Lynn and Deypika for running our library, Lana and Sharon for their work on the newsletter, and Mike McGraw for his feature article.

- Walter welcomed back Pat Ray as the master of e-mail. He also thanked Lance-Robert for filling in temporarily. Contact Pat at [Pat@TheWriteAttitude.com](mailto:Pat@TheWriteAttitude.com) if you would like to be included in the STC San Diego e-mail list. The list is used to distribute news of upcoming events.
- Michael Cardenas is our new Vice President of Programs. If you have any ideas for topics or would like to give a presentation yourself, contact Michael at [mcardenas@multitrans.com](mailto:mcardenas@multitrans.com).
- [Sue Heim](#) is our new Vice President Membership.
- We are looking for a VP of Professional Development. This person will be responsible for setting up training and seminars for the chapter.
- The library will purchase any book that you are interested in if you are willing to write a book review.
- STC International is conducting a series of mid-day phone conferences. If you are interested in attending one, please contact [Walter](#).

After the announcements, Walter welcomed all first-time attendees and invited members who are looking for work to stand up and introduce themselves. Afterward, members who were looking for employees were invited to announce their available positions.



Guest speaker Phil Black

## Guest Speaker

### Does Your Thinking Limit Your Success?

The evening's guest speaker was Phil Black from Productive Learning and Leisure. Phil began by providing a model for the relationship between thoughts and results.

Thoughts => Feelings => Action => Results

### Education and Knowledge

Sometimes knowledge gets in the way of our ability to make a choice. When we make decisions based purely on past experiences, we limit our choices, even though the present conditions could lead to very different outcomes. By sticking only with what we know, we exclude ourselves for possible benefits from the unexpected outcome.

When considering the past, present and future, our knowledge resides in the past, goals reside in the future, and decisions are made in the present.

### **Awareness**

Phil used an iceberg as an analogy for consciousness. Only 11 percent of the iceberg is visible above the water. Likewise, only about 11 percent of our thoughts, which drive our actions, reside in our conscious mind. The majority of them occur in the subconscious mind.

Phil made the case that a lot of our subconscious thinking could be moved to conscious thinking just by being more self-aware. He cited our extensive use of mental shortcuts. He gave an example of a woman he encountered who was driving while applying makeup and speaking on the cell phone.

He then used a short exercise to demonstrate how increasing our opportunities can be a simple matter of changing the way we think. When he held up a "no strings attached" \$10 bill, most of the audience waited for the "catch" until a member jumped up and grabbed it. In short, increasing our awareness of opportunities increases our opportunities.

Referring back to the original model, Phil advocated becoming more aware of our actions and the types of results they produce. By doing this, we can adjust our original way of thinking in order to get the actions we want. Then, we can choose actions that will help us attain our goals. In short, with limited awareness, our beliefs are updated by results instead of higher awareness.

### **Taking Inventory**

Phil suggested that we sit down and make a list of our life goals and reasons for not having attained them yet. Then, we should sort the reasons into those which are based on thoughts, and those which are based on fact. For example, if a life goal was to become President of the United States, a reason for not attaining that goal based on thought might be that you did not have enough time. In actuality, you did have time, but applied it elsewhere. A reason that would be based in fact would be that you do not meet the minimum age requirement. By doing this, we increase the awareness of how our thoughts play a major role in the quality of our lives.

In conclusion, it is important to:

- Know thyself
- Take inventory
- Be willing to explore
- Think out of the ordinary



Wally Buck winner  
Kimberly Hiland

Walter thanked Phil for his presentation and all for attending. Phil passed out flyers for an in-depth session with Productive Learning and Leisure. For more information visit [www.productivelearning.com](http://www.productivelearning.com).

This month's Wally Buck winner was Kimberly Hiland. Congratulations, Kimberly! See you all next month!

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## Next Meeting Details

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Note the new location at Woodfin!

**RSVP:** Make your dinner reservation by 5 p.m. Sunday, February 9. See details below.

**Want to pay in advance?** The chapter accepts credit cards for payment of advance reservations using PayPal. See details at [chapter Web site](#).

## February Meeting Time and Place

By [Nadine Barter Bowlus](#)

**Date:** Wednesday, February 12, 2003

**Time:**

5:30—Networking  
 6:15—Dinner  
 6:45—Opening Remarks and Announcements  
 7:00—Presentation

**Place:** **Woodfin Suite Hotel**, 10044 Pacific Mesa Blvd., Sorrento Mesa. Hotel is located east of I-805, one block east of the Wyndham Hotel. Turn north on Pacific Heights Blvd., then left on Pacific Mesa Blvd. The hotel is at the end of the cul-de-sac. Hotel Phone: 858-597-0500

**Menu: Buffet**

- Penne with grilled vegetables, basil, and tomatoes
- Roasted beef tri-tip
- Green salad
- Spinach salad with raspberry vinaigrette
- Steamed vegetables
- Rice pilaf
- Baked potatoes
- Dinner rolls and butter
- Dessert table (Chef's Choice)
- Coffee, tea, and iced tea

**Cost (Dinner and Presentation):**

- Members \$20\*
- Nonmembers \$25\*
- Students \$15\*

\*Add \$5 if you do not make a reservation by 5 p.m., Sunday, February 9.

- Unemployed members \$15\*\*
- Unemployed nonmembers \$20\*\*

\*\*To receive this special rate, you need to make a reservation by 5 p.m., Sunday, February 9.

**Cost (Presentation Only—no reservation required):**

- Members \$10
- Nonmembers \$15

**RSVP:** Make your reservation online (preferred) by 5 p.m.

Sunday, February 9. To register, visit [http://www.stc-sd.org/forms/meeting\\_reservation.htm](http://www.stc-sd.org/forms/meeting_reservation.htm). Note that you may pay in advance using PayPal. You may also phone your reservation to (619) 525-7716.

\*\*Reservations are required if you choose the dinner option to ensure enough food is provided.\*\*

**Cancellation:**

To cancel a reservation, send your notice to Nadine at [chezowlus@earthlink.net](mailto:chezowlus@earthlink.net).

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Advice

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Linda Oestreich is Director Sponsor for Region 5. She has been a member of STC since 1979 when she joined the San Diego Chapter. She served as chapter president here for two years.

## How Do You Spell Success?

By Linda Oestreich

Fellow STCers,

I just returned from a delightful visit to the Texas A&M campus to speak to the College Station Student Chapter. As students, the chapter members are at the beginning of their careers. They might join the field of technical communication or follow one of a thousand other career paths. How will they determine whether they have succeeded? I don't know, but I believe they most likely will succeed.

Success is something we feel about ourselves. Some people equate success with money, some with power, some with fame. Some people define success as being content in who they are and what they do. The criteria for success can differ, depending on the context in which you consider them and the focus you bring to them. Although we can define success from many different viewpoints, I have chosen three to consider here:

### Time of Life

When I was first on my own, my priority was to have fun. Later I changed my outlook to do things that would support my family and enhance my professional development. Still later I began to do things that would help me gain a connection with the world and would in some way help others around me. Can you see how each phase of my life has reflected very different success factors?

### Making Money

This success factor incorporates the trappings of our lives: the neighborhood we live in, the car we drive, and the impression we make on others by the things we have collected. Somewhat incongruously, family obligations show up again. Making money to support a family is success of a different kind than making money to drive an expensive status car.

### Feeling Fulfilled

Various things feed our personal, introspective selves. The things that fulfill me on a spiritual level also make me feel successful. Interestingly, strong family connections again show up as an important aspect of that sense of fulfillment.

Although family shows up for me in each area, career (and thus STC) doesn't show up at all! As I think about this fact, I realize that career is there, but it's there indirectly. I need a career to have professional development. I need a career to

make money. I need a career to feel fulfilled. It turns out that I need a career to help me have the means to do other things, but the career itself is not the actual thing that shows up when I think of success.

I believe success is what we want it to be. And we usually want it to be something different than we did last year—or 10 years ago. I also believe we can be successful in some areas of our lives but not so in others, and it is up to us to figure out if that's okay. Some of us have challenging, difficult work lives but have fulfilling relationships, a strong bond with family members, and a good sense of self. To me, such a person is more of a success than the person who makes millions of dollars but has no friends, no feeling of contentment, and weak (or no) bonds with family.

Alex Noble wrote, "Success is not a place at which one arrives but rather is the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey." I believe he was right. May your journey bring you the spirit of success.

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Tech Issues

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Matt is president of GRAFIX Training, Inc., an Adobe-certified training provider with offices in San Diego and Tustin Ranch. Matt has experience in all aspects of electronic and print publishing, which helps to explain his prematurely gray hair.

For tech questions or suggestions for articles, you can reach Matt at [matt@grafixtraining.com](mailto:matt@grafixtraining.com).

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## FrameMaker's Master Page Usage

By [Matt Sullivan](#)

A few weeks ago I had trouble with a new feature in FrameMaker 7—the ability to assign a Master Page based upon the Paragraph Tags used in a document.

Unfortunately I ran into this issue in the middle of class, my six students making this problem a bit more difficult to solve! (That'll teach me to stray from the normal lesson plan.)

If you're not familiar with the Apply Master Pages feature yet, it's actually quite cool. Rather than manually applying Master Pages using the deeply nested Master Page Usage command, you can set up a table on your Reference Pages and automatically apply the Master Page based on the Paragraph Tags you use on individual pages. This is convenient for things that require page breaks such as full-page graphics or rotated tables.

In theory, this system sounds great. Unfortunately, although I expected problems with converted Frame 6 documents, I had the same problems with both new and converted documents: I couldn't locate the Reference page needed for the conversion table.

This missing Reference Page meant the next topic in class was a review of Frame's online help system. We couldn't find a direct reference to what we needed to do but ultimately found a hint to the solution in the online documentation:

*If the mapping table does not appear in the reference pages, choose Format|Page Layout|Apply Master Pages.*

After following that advice, we found that the Reference Page did indeed appear as promised, and we were then able to modify the table entries to map Paragraph Tags to Master Pages appropriately.

Once created, modifying the table is fairly straightforward. It's really not any more difficult than the HTML Setup Dialog. The only part I found confusing was the Range Indicator. For my work I found that the Single Page option worked best, though I would use the Until Changed option when I was using multipage tables.

With the added steps needed to create the table, the advantages to using this feature don't really show up until further along in your editing cycle.

After all of your Paragraph Tags have been assigned to appropriate Master Pages, Frame will update Master Page Usage as part of the Update Book process. This means that Master Page usage will be updated as part of the normal workflow within a book but that standalone documents will need more attention. If your work doesn't require Book files, you will need to keep using the Format|Page Layout|Apply Master Pages command to update your Master Page assignments. This will still be a big timesaver over proofreading for Master Page usage.

While working with a few of our clients, I've found the Master Page Usage works consistently and removes one of the more frustrating proofing tasks, reapplication of Master Pages.

Next month, I'll discuss how to modify the base Frame template as well as changes to the Frame initialization file.

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Other Issues

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Pamela Fridle is the sole proprietor of Fridle Editorial Services. You can see why she doesn't often take on the formatting role in addition to her usual editing and indexing roles.

Pamela is also a *Signature* copyeditor.

## Learning Tact With Microsoft Word

By [Pamela Fridle](#)

I'm learning tact in dealing with my employee, M.S. Word. When he refuses to fetch a picture to place on the page (he is in fact being cantankerous, hiding the one I had already placed there), I say "All right, maybe later, maybe tomorrow."

When he blinks stupidly at my polite request to open a document, I say, "Take a break," and I ask his clone to do it. (Sometimes his clone is naïve enough to actually do the job!)

Being tactful with my employee is not easy, though. Word is tricky and deceitful. He promises to leave things where I've placed them, but when I return in the morning some subtle change has been made—the drop cap has mysteriously grown an invisible beard, pushing lines out of place; three paragraphs have gone back to their SME's full-justified format; every other page number has a larger twin in its place.

Of course I do lose my cool when these things happen. Who wouldn't roar at such an employee and angrily beat him into submission? Then just when I'm ready to go to print, someone is bound to look over my shoulder and say, "There's no chapter number for section seventeen." There was yesterday. Ooooh, it's hard to be tactful!

I don't know how he even thinks up all these pranks. You'd think my office was a class of unruly kindergarteners!

But it's not. Word can get really mean. Occasionally, when he thinks he's being overworked, this guy manages to clone himself en masse, and the whole army of them rise up invisibly and demand the closing of the store, saying there isn't enough room for them to work. No amount of reasoning will subdue them. If I yield, they'll insist I fire every other employee. So down come the shutters and off go the lights. It's time for *me* to take a break. Sometimes it takes the whole night for the uprising to be suppressed. So much for tact.

As if that isn't enough, he seems to be building a file on me behind my back. Sometimes he leaves an ominous message that he's adding to the "Normal" file, whatever that is, but I never see it.

So why do I keep the guy? I hear there are employees out there who are really intelligent and reliable. (One's name is Frank, ...or is it Frame?) But they take a lot of breaking in. I'd fire Word with gusto, but the thought of interviewing all those candidates and then retooling the store for the new employee....

I sigh, shake my head, and open Word again. Maybe he'll behave better this time.

Are there classes one can take on learning to be tactful with Word?

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Book/Software Review

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By  
Steve Krug

New Riders  
Publishing approx.  
\$25

## ***Don't Make Me Think!***

Review by [Mark Hall](#)

Wouldn't it be great if you didn't have to frequently contemplate your next action when using a Web site? If everything you saw just made complete sense? By teaching the basics of Web design in plain English, *Don't Make Me Think!* by Steve Krug seeks to all but eliminate those aspects of Web sites that confuse and frustrate most users. And Krug achieves this in a lighthearted and visually appealing manner. Perhaps best of all, because the book is a slim 195 pages, it's a book you can easily read in one or two evenings.

Krug is no quack. He has more than 10 years of accumulated Web design and usability testing experience, honed through working for reputable companies like Apple, Netscape, AOL, BarnesandNoble.com, and Excite@Home. During his career he has watched dozens of users struggle to use these and other Web sites, which is undoubtedly the best way to learn what doesn't work on the Web. The book jacket describes Krug as a "little-known but highly respected usability consultant." He may have been relatively anonymous before, but, based on the buzz I've heard about him in the San Diego usability community alone, Mr. Krug is not destined to stay "little known" for long.

Krug asserts that "there are no simple 'right' answers for most Web design questions (at least not for the important ones). What works is good, integrated design that fills a need—carefully thought out, well-executed and tested." This is Krug's overall philosophy as he covers the three parts of the book:

- guiding principles
- things you need to get right
- making sure you got them right

The text speaks plainly, not academically, which helps to draw readers into his dialogue and make his explanations understandable for readers with little or no previous Web design experience.

In Chapters 6, what I consider to be the *meat* of the book, Krug covers the five components for a highly usable site:

- clear site sections (aka persistent navigation)
- a site ID
- a home button/graphic
- a way to search
- a location for site utilities

To help readers track their learning, Krug concludes the

chapter by listing a series of "trunk test" sites in which he invites the reader to find the missing elements and suggest how each site could be improved. By stepping through these examples and showing how each of his design principles is applied, Krug helps the reader to internalize each key concept.

While *Don't Make Me Think* has many positives, it does fall short in a couple areas.

- The chapter "Animal, Vegetable or Mineral" describes how making "mindless choices" makes a site easier to use. Since this statement is obvious, it adds no real substance to the book.
- Krug's discussion of home page layout and taglines doesn't really belong in a Web usability primer. While discussing these topics provides some good food for thought for the uninitiated, its presence in a book that focuses on design and usability is a bit puzzling.

If you are a Web site designer or a usability specialist, *Don't Make Me Think* will likely just be a light, quotable read. If you are not a professional designer yet either directly or indirectly contribute toward making Web sites or software products more usable, *Don't Make Me Think* would be a great addition to your library. And at Amazon's special promotional price of \$24.50, perhaps you should also buy a couple extra copies and give them to colleagues you've been trying to convert into "usability faithful."

Write the reviewer at [mark@hallmark-consulting.com](mailto:mark@hallmark-consulting.com).

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## Don't Say "Cheese"; Say "Choose"

By [Karen Field](#)

If you've been a tech writer for longer than, oh, say, 20 minutes, you probably have experienced what I call the "say cheese dilemma."

Working furiously toward a deadline, which you can see rising over your monitor like a tornado on the horizon, you encounter an uptight SME who wants you to add "just one little chapter" to the documentation. Instead of saying, "I'm sorry, I don't have time," you say, "Sure." Then you smile as if you're saying "cheese" when, instead, you're gritting your teeth and wondering, "How on earth will I get this done?"

I have a solution. Don't say "cheese"; say "choose."

I had this opportunity just the other day when I was talking to my uptight SME—let's call him "USME." (I pronounce it "UseMe.") Our deadline loomed. Because customers had criticized the product's installation process in the last release, in this release our top priorities were the installation itself and the installation guide. To complicate matters, UseMe and his coding cohorts trembled in the presence of the English language. So they had refused to write any specifications; those cowboys had just started coding.

So here we were: Three days from the deadline, eager to please uneasy customers, stumbling down the tunnels of the development process without benefit of a roadmap or even a lantern.

**And UseMe says:** We've changed five screens in the Admin module. You can just take new screenshots and replace the old ones in the book, right?

**Me:** Maybe. Why did you change the screens?

**UseMe:** Oh, we added some functionality.

**Me:** So some procedures have changed, too.

**UseMe:** Well, I guess, yeah. But it's just five screens.

**Me:** Five screens, five altered procedures, and—if I know software—maybe one or two new ones. Am I guessing correctly?

**UseMe:** Well, yeah.

**Me:** I can do that.

**UseMe:** Great!

**Me:** Which chapter of the installation guide should I leave unfinished?

**UseMe:** What?

**Me:** Well, I still have only three days. You added functionality but you didn't add more days to the week, right?

**UseMe:** Of course not. I'm not a magician.

**Me:** Okay, so which part of the installation guide do I leave unfinished?

**UseMe:** The installation is the most important part of the product.

**Me:** I know.

**UseMe:** If the customer can't install the product, they won't even see the new functionality.

**Me:** I know.

**UseMe:** If the documentation isn't accurate, they won't be able to complete the installation.

**Me:** I know.

**UseMe:** So I think the installation guide should be your top priority. Maybe we can add the new screens to the user's guide after the release date and put the updated book on the Web site.

**Me:** That would work.

**UseMe:** Thanks, Karen.

**Me:** Hey, I'm glad I could help.

Crafty, yes? I kept the focus on the top priority, and UseMe thought he had made the decision. Try it next time you're in a similar situation. Otherwise, saying "cheese" will just make you crackers.

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## Introductions

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## Member Zigs and Zags to Writing Career

By [Michael Abrams](#)

According to geometry, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That's math, not people. When it comes to them, a few zigs and zags are great. How else to explain **Faye Rivkin**?

A lover of science and technology and a chemist by training, Faye was bitten hard and early by the word bug, and that's what's driven her down the circuitous path to where she is today. While studying her chemistry texts at the University of Delaware, Faye couldn't resist rewriting friends' term papers. They got better grades, and she got a taste of what her future would bring.

After graduating, Faye found work as an agricultural researcher in Princeton, New Jersey. The laboratory environment was interesting, she says, but the routine became repetitive. So she thought she'd try something with more human interaction. She moved to another chemical corporation and into inside sales and technical support. From there she became a recruiter of scientists, eventually working for a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.

Next she was hired to set up an employee call center for BOC Gases, an old British-based company that sold oxygen for hospitals, acetylene for welders, and other vaporous matter. When BOC became a takeover target, Faye coordinated the implementation of an HR call center while writing informational materials about benefits, severance, and other HR matters in print and on the company intranet. This was Faye's career turning point because she loved the writing.

"Mostly on a whim," Faye says, she came to San Diego in March 2000, soon landing at a small wireless startup in Sorrento Valley. She enjoyed her interactions with the scientists and engineers and found the work mix was what she was looking for. She wrote user guides for customers and other materials, including several company Web sites, marketing brochures, and white papers. Then came the great telecom crash.

Rather than become another layoff statistic, Faye went where the work was, not waiting for it to come to her. She's found plenty of work as a contractor, writing Web content, marketing materials, and policies and procedures for companies in a number of different industries. Recently we saw her making a hiring announcement at an STC San Diego Chapter meeting. While the contractor's hat seems to suit Faye's energy and optimism, she would definitely consider becoming an employee again if the right position comes along.

Asked how she finds her clients, she said: "I know it's corny, but network, network, network." She adds, though, that it's also important to realize things will come your way in due time. "I'm very much of a mind-set that everyone will find out what they want to do and that you shouldn't just take a job just to have a job or take a promotion just because it's a step up."

Lateral moves are sometimes better if they bring knowledge and skills. In other words, it's okay to move in circles, which is about where we started and not a bad place to end.

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*Signature* is the newsletter of the San Diego Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to educating and advancing the careers of technical communicators. Newsletters are published monthly during the chapter year (September through June).

STC has more than 25,000 members and 150 chapters nationwide. For more information about the San Diego Chapter visit our Web site at [www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org) or call our hotline at (619) 525-7716. Write to us at:

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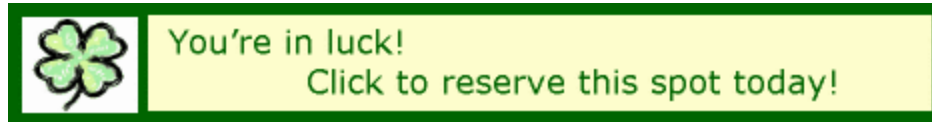
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## Signature Advertising Information

### Publication Overview

*Signature* is a Web newsletter published by the San Diego Chapter, Society for Technical Communication (STC). It is issued ten times a year to more than 300 local technical communication professionals, managers, and educators. Other STC chapters, special interest groups, and related organizations also receive e-mail notification when each issue is posted. Because *Signature* is on the World Wide Web, readership is potentially unlimited.

*Signature* contains information produced by technical communicators for technical communicators. Advertising in *Signature* is the most direct way to reach the growing technical communications market in San Diego and the surrounding area.

### Publication Schedule

*Signature* is published every month except July and August. Each issue is posted on the Web within the first three days of the issue month. Closing date for advertising is the 10th of the prior month.

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## Advertising Sample

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## Editor Sees Two Eventful Years

By [Rick Bradshaw](#), Editor[Return Home](#)

As many have said before and others will say in the future, this is my last column for and my last issue of *Signature*. It has been an eventful two years since I took over as editor. We've gone from a print publication with a dated appearance and largely borrowed articles to an electronic publication with a more updated appearance and articles largely written by local people. Along the way, we've managed to win a couple of awards.

We have a new team of editors coming in next year. Hopefully, they will be able to continue to improve the publication. To them I say, never let it stand on laurels of the past. Go forth and conquer new issues in new and better ways.

Many of you, our membership of more than 300, don't regularly attend meetings. Many of you may not have an idea of what is required to fill the various council positions and of the staff of volunteers behind them that is required to do the job. The newsletter staff is the largest in the chapter in some regards. Some are core staff while others are more of an adjunct staff since they may only contribute one article or service per year. While not everyone can contribute each month because of time constraints, many do; others have contributed multiple times both monthly and throughout the chapter year. Every one of these people has risen to the challenge and performed admirably.

For those of you who may download this issue and read it but not come to the June meeting, I'd like to introduce to you and thank those people who have helped to make *Signature* what it has become in chapter year 2001/2002. There are many. This is not a one-person show by any means. They are listed in no particular order. They will be individually recognized at the June meeting.

**Copy Editors:**

Elizabeth Vollbach  
Pamela Fridle

**Illustrator:**

Ann M. Throckmorton

<<article snipped>>

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If you're interested in serving as VP-Professional Development, contact Walter Hanig. For a description of the position, see [Walter's column](#).

**Chapter President, Walter Hanig**
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Walter is a technical writing manager at Ericsson Wireless Communications and has been a council member since 1998, serving as VP-Finance.

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Suzy is President/CEO of a technical communications business in Vista, Write on the Edge, Inc. She has also served as our chapter President and VP-Professional Development.

**VP-Professional Development, Open Position**
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## STC Mission Statement

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Our mission statement is: **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:** \$125 per year (plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)
- **Student Member:** \$50 per year (enrollment fee not required)

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