

January 2004

Volume 37 No 5



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2003 Newsletter
Competition

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San Diego Members:
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Pat@TheWriteAttitude.com.

Visit the San Diego Chapter Web
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Feature Article

Managing Your Projects

By Catherine Robinson

The Project Management Institute defines project management as "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management is accomplished through the use of the processes such as: initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing."

I'll briefly describe what I learned: From integration management to procurement management....



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Each year, STC offers scholarships to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of \$1,000 each will be granted for academic year 2004-2005. Application deadline is February 16, 2004.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office. For more information, contact the Society office:
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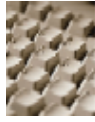
STC's 51st annual conference

May 9-12, 2004 at the Baltimore Convention Center.

For more information, contact the

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The Professional Certificate in Technical Communication





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Signature Staff

Managing Editor
Catherine Robinson
stcsignature@yahoo.com

Assistant Editor
Jennifer Mallory
jmallory100@hotmail.com

Copy Editors
Pamela Fridie
spfridie@nethere.com

Beth Vollbach
bethvollbach@earthlink.net

Graphic Designer
Fabrizio Scippa
fs@fsdsgn.com

Proofreaders
Theresa Freese
taffyfreese@cox.net

Mark Hall
mark@hallmark-consulting.com

Karie Hebert
karebear18@cox.net

Suzanne A. Hosie
suzy@wote.com

Kitt Medrano
kitt.medrano@wote.com

Bonnie Nicholls
bnicholls@cox.net

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About the San Diego **Signature**

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 or call our hotline at (619) 525-7716. Write to us at:

STC San Diego
PO Box 501261
San Diego, CA 92150-1261

Article Submission

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles to be considered for publication. Send your query and request for writer's guidelines to stcsignature@yahoo.com. Submission deadlines are the 1st of the month prior to the publication month. Publication is dependent on space availability.

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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.

Advertising Rates

Rates are based on type of ad (banner, rectangle, button, or text link), which newsletter page it is on (home page, feature article, or other), and where it is on the page (top, bottom, or side).

The following discounts apply:

- Prepayment for five issues: 10 percent discount
- Prepayment for ten issues: 20 percent discount

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All other articles at top: \$30
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All other articles at right: \$20

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Home page at bottom: \$30

Feature article at right: \$20

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Button 120 x 90

[Save BIG on books!](#)[XML Revealed at Last!](#)

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"This is hands-down the best screen capture software I've ever used in my 10 years as a tech writer."

"Bravo! Finally something that truly saved me time AND gave superb results."

[more >>](#)

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File format: gif (non-animated only) or jpeg

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(Sizes based on Internet Advertising Bureau Standards)

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Submit advertisement by e-mail to stcsignature@yahoo.com. Include contact name and phone number.

If the ad is supposed to link to a Web page, provide the complete URL. (Linked pages open in a new browser window.)

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Payment must be received before the publication date.

After receiving e-mail confirmation from the editor, make check payable to:
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Mail check to:

SD-STC

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The advertiser shall indemnify and protect the publisher from claims or expenses which may arise from the unauthorized use of any name, photograph, drawing, or work protected by copyright, registration, or label printed as a result of material supplied by the advertiser.

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Chapter President, Walter Hanig

wdhanig@alumni.rice.edu

Walter is responsible for a project converting a large suite of internal and end-user documentation to structured FrameMaker 7 at NCR.

He has served the chapter as Finance Vice-President and Administrative Council jester for four years before last year's adventure as chapter president.

VP-Professional Development, Michelle Petersen

mpetersen3@cox.net

Michelle is a senior technical writer at Alaris Medical Systems in Sorrento Mesa.

VP-Employment, Beth Peisic

bethpeisic@san.rr.com

Beth has a varied background in finance, accounting, and technical communications. She is a Senior Technical Writer at Intuit.

VP-Finance, Lance-Robert

lance.robert@tarari.com

Lance-Robert is a senior technical publications engineer at Tarari, Inc., in Rancho Bernardo.

VP-Membership, Sue Heim

sue_heim@msn.com

Sue is a technical writing consultant in San Diego. She previously served in the San Diego Chapter as Vice President-Professional Development and as JobMail coordinator.

VP-Programs, Michael Cárdenas

mcardenas@multitrans.com

Michael is president of Multilingual Translations, Inc., a localization company headquartered in San Diego since 1985.

Newsletter Managing Editor, Catherine Robinson

stcsignature@yahoo.com

Catherine is a senior information engineer in the Teradata division at NCR. She has enjoyed contributing her time and efforts to STC in the capacity of judge of the technical writers' competition and proofreader of the monthly newsletter.

Newsletter Assistant Editor, Jennifer Mallory

jmallory100@hotmail.com

After Jennifer graduated with a degree in literature, she waited for the job offers to flood in. When the surprise and rejection wore off, she began a lengthy career in marketing and editing. Currently, Jennifer works as a Health Information Specialist II with the County of San Diego.

Chapter Web Site Manager, Kelley Wilson Mesterharm

kellew@cox.net

Kelley has an instructional and curriculum design background with experience in Web accessibility and usability.



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Society for Technical
Communication
901 N. Stuart Street
Suite 904
Arlington, Virginia
22203-1822

703.522.4114 (voice)
703.522.2075 (fax)

E-mail: stc@stc.org Web
site: www.stc.org

STC Mission Statement

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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Sponsorship Opportunities



Sponsorship Opportunities

By [Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs](#)

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Would you like to promote your company, get your company name recognition and, at the same time, help the San Diego STC Chapter? Well, we have an excellent opportunity for you!

Your company can sponsor a monthly meeting. You will have your company logo and name on the San Diego STC Web site; you will get additional recognition at the STC meeting; and you will have a minute or two to present your company's products and services to the meeting attendees.

The cost per presentation is \$150. This includes dinner for one attendee, who must register in advance of the meeting.

Please contact Michael Cárdenas for sponsorship opportunities:
Phone 619.295.2682 or email mcardenas@multitrans.com.

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Membership Drive



Join STC

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

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Mission Statement: Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, STC is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 25,000 members in 150 chapters include technical writers and editors, content developers, documentation specialists, technical illustrators, instructional designers, academics, information architects, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, Web designers and developers, 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.

Society Goals

The goals of STC include enhancing the professionalism of the members and the status of the profession; providing information through publications, reports, and conferences; and reporting new communication technologies, methods, and applications; among others.

In addition to the publications you will receive, you will have many opportunities to further your own education by attending dinner presentations, seminars, and conferences. You can submit your work in our annual competitions and receive recognition and awards from your peers. And you will have plenty of opportunity to network to meet fellow STC members.

Benefits of Membership

Among the benefits of Society membership are subscriptions to Intercom, the Society's monthly magazine, published 10 times a year, and to Technical Communication, the Society's quarterly journal. These periodicals contain essential articles on the theory and practice of technical communication.

Other membership benefits include discounts on STC's annual conference, the largest gathering of technical communicators in the world; eligibility for association group-rate insurance; and access to STC's special interest

groups. For more information on these and other benefits, visit the STC Web site at www.stc.org.

How to Join

STC membership dues are paid per calendar year. Members who join after February 1 receive a prorated "credit" on their next year's dues. Dues are as follows:

- Member: \$140 per year (including a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)
- Student Member: \$50 per year (no enrollment fee)

To join STC, you can fill out an electronic form or download a membership application at www.stc.org. You can also contact the STC office at the following address and request that a membership application be mailed to you.

Society for Technical Communication
901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
(703) 522-4114
stc@stc.org

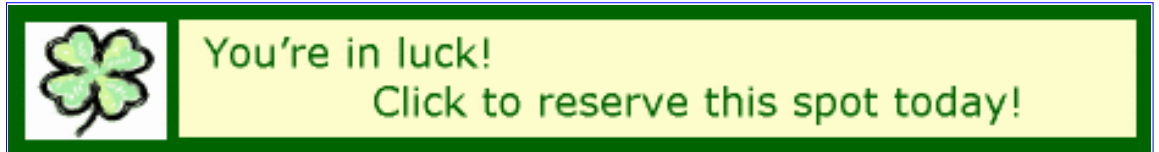
For more information on the San Diego Chapter of STC, visit our Web site at www.stc-sd.org or contact Sue Heim, vice president of Membership, at sue_heim@msn.com.

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January 2004

Feature Article



Managing Your Projects

By [Catherine Robinson](#)

In the [October newsletter](#); I wrote about the value of project management. Since I recently completed my project management course, I want to share with you what I have learned.

The course, offered by UC Berkeley extension, used two books:

- A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge PMBOK Guide 2000, by the Project Management Institute.
- Project Management by Gary R. Heerkens.

The Project Management Institute defines project management as "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management is accomplished through the use of the processes such as: initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing" (p. 6).

I'll briefly summarize what I learned.

Integration Management

Determine your problem or opportunity, understand your new project, decide what you need to do (or not do), and then create your project plan. I decided to focus on my volunteer position with the newsletter, so I considered my managing editor role as I prepared my assignments. This approach helped me to plan properly and wisely to begin producing a monthly newsletter.

Four thought processes were involved in developing my project plan:

Project Overview

Create/maintain a project team and prepare for the September 2003 publication of the STC newsletter.

Project Approach

The project will take into consideration the feasibility, planning, development, and implementation of the project, and the project team resources.

Project Objectives

- Keep STC members involved with the organization and informed on technical communication trends within the industry.
- Produce an on-time monthly newsletter for STC members in HTML format for the Web for the publication year September 2003 through June 2004.

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Project management books used in the course:

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge PMBOK Guide 2000, by the Project Management Institute

Project Management by Gary R. Heerkens

- Produce a quality newsletter with at least one monthly feature article, columns (such as humor and member profiles), and a possible monthly theme.

Major Deliverables

- Monthly production schedule.
- Initial run for the first publication due in September 2003.
- Newsletter to include feature articles, columns (such as, humor and member profiles), meeting announcements, technical publications announcements, national conference announcements, and paid advertising.

Scope Management

Make sure your project plan is in line with the expectations of your boss (in my case, in line with the needs of San Diego members). I had to define within my project plan the tasks that needed to be done in order to get contributor articles in on time, articles to copyeditors, copyedited material back for production files, production files to proofreaders, proofreader comments to the copyeditor, and then finalized comments back for final modifications of the production files.

Time Management

Manage your project's time, so that you can schedule the sequence of tasks that were defined when the project was scoped. Take into consideration the efforts of the resources available to work on your project. Are they experienced with the tasks involved, or are they learning in new roles? How much time will each resource need to complete the necessary tasks? From there, you can begin to anticipate the start and end dates of your project.

Cost Management

This is where you budget for your project's costs, trying to anticipate the monies needed for all aspects of the project in order to complete it successfully. The easiest way to begin this process is to look at previous project budget costs, and then begin to figure out if and how your costs differ, or if they actually remain the same as your previous project(s).

Quality Management

Focus on quality processes as you manage the project. I wrote up a quality process to help the newsletter team understand the flow of our monthly newsletter publication process. It explains why, how and when each phase of the process is supposed to happen.

Human Resource Management

Managing the staff of a project either means continuing to work with the same team or building a new team. If you are working with the same group of people, hopefully they are reliable and great team players who have worked well together in the past. On the other hand, you may need to hire a whole or partially new staff, which means those team members involved will need time and have to make the effort to get to know one another and learn how each can work well with the other team members. Sometimes hiring new staff members takes time for the project to get underway, so you have to take this into consideration in your project plan. New members also have to get up to speed on the products involved in the project, so training schedules should be taken into consideration.

Communications Management

Make sure you attend the right meetings, talk to the right people, inform those who need to know about the progress of your project, or lack thereof, and getting that information to the right people who may need to make decisions about how your project should continue to move forward.

Risk Management

An important part of the process, performing a risk analysis will help you to realize what the possible setbacks are and their solutions. From there you can be better prepared rather than being blind-sided. This task helped me to overcome my fears of the "what if's" and sensibly plan for those unforeseeable events.

Procurement Management

Some aspects of your project could entail having to hire outside vendors or contractors to get your project done on time. In my case, I have learned to plan to arrive at monthly meetings early to network and share the newsletter schedule and talk to our members about opportunities for them to contribute articles.

I hope you have found my learning experience helpful. If we carefully approach and plan for a project, we're more likely to be successful. I wish you all the best in your future project management endeavors.

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What's So Funny?

By [Karen Field Carroll](#)

I'm out of material. It had to happen eventually. Five years of writing a humor column would make anyone a little too serious. Actually, I'm impressed with my endurance: When I started writing this column, I couldn't imagine finding so much material on a profession as seemingly austere as technical communication. But material abounds, or at least it did.

Looking back, I realize I had help. Microsoft is always an easy target. So is any developer who acts like working for a software company is the moral equivalent to curing cancer. Recruiters are ripe fruit too. (Unfortunately, recruiters are necessary evils in job-hunting, so I bit my tongue.) Marketing departments ooze topics for humor columns. I've flung one or two zingers their way over the years.

Perhaps the biggest draw for humor, however, is not the people that technical writing supports, but technical writing itself. Think about it: People read us because they've messed up. They don't pick up our book thinking, "Ah, my bedtime novel." Instead they're probably wondering, "What the [bleep] have I done wrong?" Reaching for the book is like admitting defeat. What a wonderful way to start a relationship with a reader.

There are other plusses. We don't get a byline. We work under pressure. In the high-tech industry, we're at the bottom of the food chain. Scratch that: I think customer support is bottom, but we're next up. (Ah, CS Now there's a loaded subject.) People often see us as typists.

These circumstances that we write books people try to avoid reading, that we get no recognition have been the meat of my humor column. But after five years, I've come up short. What is funny about tech writing, really? It's fun, sure. (But don't tell your relatives that. They think you have the most boring job in the world. And they'll question your sanity if they find out you don't agree.) It's good work. It pays well. But what's so funny about it?

Again I correct myself. What's funny about the profession is neither the profession nor the people around it. Tech writers are the mad hatters of technology. The developer ponders C code and scratches his chin. The QA Jack or Jill draws up multi-level test plans with a furrowed brow. The business manager calculates sales and profit margins. And there we sit, telling people how to use a product that (a) the developer thinks is so easy to use the manual is redundant; (b) the QA person thinks is too complicated for us to understand, much less write about; and (c) the business manager thinks is so needed it will sell itself. Yet the company still pays us to show up and write books every day. No one but us thinks the manual is necessary. Oh, except the user. Now, if we could just get the users to like us.

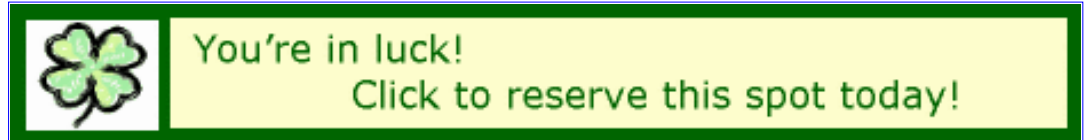


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Anniversary



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Donald W. Bush Celebrating 40 Years with STC!

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)



Don enjoying the presentation



Don, surprised as Sue presents him with a pen

On December 6 Don Bush celebrated his 40-year anniversary with STC a truly auspicious occasion. At our December dinner meeting, we honored Don with a special presentation.

How His Story Began

Don's first technical communication job was in 1962 for McDonnell Aircraft. In 1961 Don was a journalism major working in public relations for Southwestern Bell when he heard about the job at McDonnell Aircraft. They wanted a "student of language" to help engineers write proposals. He was hired in 1962 and worked as a proposal analyst until he retired after 25 years. After he retired from McDonnell Aircraft, Don began teaching at SDSU where he taught for 11 years, until he retired from teaching.

Don joined STC (or rather, the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers) in December 1963. In 1981 he became an Associate Fellow. In 1989 Don became an STC Fellow. STC Fellowship is conferred on those who have attained such eminence in the field of technical communication that the Board, by a two-thirds vote of all members, deems them worthy of being singled out as one of the select few who have distinguished the Society and the profession.

Don is a prolific writer and editor. He has written two books and numerous articles. He started writing articles for Technical Communication in 1980. In 1990 Don began writing a column for the same periodical, after the editor talked him into it. Don continues to write "The Friendly Editor" for Intercom. His most recent article appeared in the July/August issue and was titled "The Most Obvious Fault in Technical Writing."

What He's Said

Don has written close to 30 articles for Intercom alone. Doing research for his presentation, I read many of his articles. It was very hard to pick only a few, but here are some of his more memorable quotes.

- In "Ethics for Editors" in the January 1996 issue of Intercom, Don wrote, "In addition to truth, fairness, and scientific objectivity, [we] should embrace espousing the interests and welfare of the reader, not just the publisher."
- In "The Most Obvious Fault in Technical Writing" in the July/August 2003 issue of Intercom, he wrote what is probably going to be one of the most oft-repeated quotes "...the greatest fault in published technical writing is not lack of grammar, consistency, or accuracy. Its most obvious fault is something that's far easier to control: wordiness."
- In "How to Edit for Content" in the January 2003 issue of Intercom, Don eloquently wrote, "An editor focuses on the most pertinent data

and aspires to make the language move the reader."

- At the 1998 STC annual conference, Don presented a session on "The Tantalizing Technology of English." During this session he said, "As technical communicators, we have to know about management, computer programming, graphics, production... and many other skills, even keyboarding. But in professional technologies, we are not as proficient as the experts. Our greatest chance to shine as a professional is in the technology of English."

In November 2000 Don was interviewed in Technical Communication. He was asked what he thought to be the biggest changes in the technical communication profession. He said it was something he didn't want to dwell on, but membership has dramatically changed. It used to be all old men. Now it's all young women! (Have you looked around at our dinner meetings lately? He's not too far off!) Seriously, he was also quoted as saying that writing has improved considerably [as] many STC members are English majors. He continued by saying that "We owe a debt to the Fog Index. [The] use of short words and sentences has become essentially a Bible for us in technical communication."

To This Day

To this day, Don continues to support STC at the national and local levels. He does this by mentoring other technical communications professionals, writing articles for STC publications, and attending meetings. Thank you, Don, for all that you've done for us!

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If you find value in the Signature newsletter, consider contributing articles. We need feature articles, advice, technical workarounds for problems you have encountered, and some plain old helpful tips.

If you want to improve your writing skills, contribute articles. You will have the opportunity to work with our great copyeditors who can give you pointers and help you improve your skills.

Contact us at:
stcsignature@yahoo.com.

Ushering in the New Year

By [Catherine Robinson](#), Managing Editor

A new year has just begun, causing us to reflect on what has been and to look forward to what will be. As I reflect on the first quarter of our 2003-2004 publishing season of the Signature newsletter, I see a myriad of contributions including technical, helpful, and humorous articles. These contributions have enriched our readers' lives as the newsletter pages reveal the professional and personal qualities of the good people of our small technical community. Their personal contributions have made it possible for us to offer a monthly newsletter to our chapter members. For all those contributions, I am truly grateful.

Our newsletter staff has selflessly contributed their time and efforts to get the newsletter published monthly. I appreciate this wonderful group of people and the shared experiences.

As we look toward a new year, we hope to continue to share our experiences and skills with all of you. If there is any way we can help to enrich your lives further through our newsletter services, please contact us at stcsignature@yahoo.com. We look forward to hearing your fresh, new ideas. Do take care and have a wonderful new year.

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January 2004

President's Podium



New Tricks

By [Walter Hanig](#), President

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The hardest part of writing this column is coming up with a topic, month after month after month. I'm not shy about asking for suggestions and others have not been shy about offering them. So, I'd like to use this space to list a few of the tricks this old dog learned in 2003.

- Finding a new job isn't that hard . . . if you do it often enough. The gap between leaving Ericsson and joining NCR was a way-too-short seven weeks. I can take no credit for the existence of the opening. But I have no doubt that letting people know I was available and face-to-face networking played major roles.
- Volunteers are easier to find if you ask them directly. I should have learned this earlier, but sometimes begging is necessary. Sharon Burton-Hardin, our November speaker, had said as much in an STC leadership workshop.
- Box turtles need plenty of cool water and shade on hot days. This was a sad lesson whose pain was slightly diminished with the arrival of new babies, Pilgrim and Kamé, in November.
- The most effective motivation occurs after the fact. Two words, sincerely communicated: "Thank you."
- Entry level jobs for applied math majors from UCLA are hard to find. Contact me if you know of one.
- There is nothing like evacuating from home to help you decide what material items are most important.
- Structured FrameMaker 7 is cool if your act is together, templatewise. Otherwise, you're perfuming a pig.
- When it comes to training, you don't always get what you pay for. The free XML/XSLT classes I took from the San Diego Centers for Education & Technology <http://www.sandiegocet.net> were well-taught, informative, and free. Actually, they were better than free because I got a student ID card (\$2) that allowed me to buy software at the heavily discounted educational rate.
- Year after year, French Quarter Festival <http://www.frenchquarterfestival.com> is the place to be in mid-April.

- Every company has a mind-numbing collection of abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms. It's taken me only six months to learn that "CLI" doesn't always mean "command line interface."
- Likewise, every company has its own product development process. However, all companies share a commitment to ignoring the process when it suits them.
- Cooking for 25 loved ones at Thanksgiving isn't that hard when some help with the preparation, cooking, and cleaning, others stay out of the way, and others fetch rum and Coke. (Myers's Jamaican with lime, if you please). And, yes, brining a turkey is a good idea!

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January 2004

Chapter Membership



Welcome to Our New Members

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

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Welcome to our new members--whether new to STC or to our San Diego Chapter.

New members

Virginia K. Guest
Katherine A. Vitz
Veronica S. Schnizler
Francesca Barr
Betsy L. Busby
Alana L. Krider

And to a returning member

Dawn M. Heller

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Ann M. Throckmorton

How to submit an ad

Ads are limited to STC members and should not exceed 125 words. Send your ad to the editor at stcsignature@yahoo.com.

To ensure publication, we'll need your ad by the 5th of the month prior to publication. Ads received after the 5th will be inserted if possible.

You'll need to renew your ad for each month you want it published.

Members Looking for Work

Julie Kinyoun
11457 Trailbrook Lane, San Diego, CA 92128
858-513-3811 (home); 619-248-9543 (work)
juliekinyoun@hotmail.com

Excellent writer and author of articles in both local and national science publications. Possess masters degree in chemistry with over a year of relevant pharmaceutical experience. Most recently, I wrote phase I/III clinical research reports for Dermtech International in San Diego. Desire contract or permanent work in technical writing. Experienced with MS Office, Adobe Acrobat, ChemDraw, and MatLab.

M.A. Chemistry San Diego State University
Taught for general, organic and introductory chemistry laboratories; and performed multi-step synthetic reactions and analyzed product by NMR.

Work Experience

Dermtech International, 2003, Report Specialist
Wrote clinical reports for phase I/III trials, and compiled data for reports with MS Excel.

KPBS Television, 2003, Intern for "Full Focus"
Transcribed interviews using Executive Producer Program, and performed background research with MS Word.

Idec Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 2000, Chemist for Quality Control
Performed routine testing on water samples for lead, and wrote standard operating procedures and testing protocols.

Cell Therapeutics, Inc., 1999, Documentation Assistant
Organized and filed all cGMP/GLP documents for clinical trials, and learned cGMP/GLP protocols and trial format- tracked on Excel.

Richard Garner
619-425-5279
rgarner_1998@hotmail.com

I am a recent graduate, (03/03), of the Certificate Program in Technical and Scientific Writing at San Diego State University. I did an internship with Consistent Image of San Diego, California, a small consulting company that produces the manuals for Sprint Wireless Communications. At Consistent Image I was responsible for transferring two large documents from Quark Express 5.0 to Framemaker 6.0 in precise template form. I also assisted the company with several other print and online documents.

I also did much of the formatting and visual design work on a volunteer student team that produced a revision of the Substitute Teacher Handbook for the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District.

Seeking: A permanent or temporary position as a technical writer

Education: Certificate in Technical and Scientific Writing,
San Diego State University; B.A. in history, University of California,
San Diego

Tools: FrameMaker 6.0, Acrobat 5.0, Word, Excel, HTML 4.0

Samples: I have writing samples available in FrameMaker 6.0 and
Word.

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[Click here for January 14 meeting details.](#)

If you make a reservation but find you cannot attend, please cancel your reservation by sending an e-mail to Lance-Robert at treasurer@stc-sd.org. The chapter has to pay the hotel for all no-shows, which takes money away from various programs that could otherwise benefit the chapter members.

There is no financial penalty for cancelling your reservation. If you used PayPal to pay for your reservation in advance and need to cancel, the full amount will be refunded to your account within three working days.

January Chapter Meeting Preview: Using Metrics to Tell Your Story

By [Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs](#)

Metrics are just numbers. Understanding and using metrics gives a manager valuable information on the performance of products, projects, and people. Learn to identify which metrics can help you tell the right story to your management.

About Deirdre Murr

As manager of the technical publications department for Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI), Deirdre Murr supervises 17 people working on over 200 projects with an annual operating and project budget of more than \$6 million. During her 20 years in the technical communication field, she has spent ten years managing technical writing departments and projects.

Her department at WDI is responsible for the development of repair and maintenance manuals for all the attractions in the ten Disney parks.

De joined STC in 1983, was elected associate fellow in 1994, and was elected fellow in 2002. At the international and chapter levels, she has served in a variety of positions, including chapter president, for two chapters, Houston and San Fernando Valley. Houston Chapter awarded her the Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 1995. At the Society level, De was elected to the Nominating Committee in 2001.

De is also a member of the Association of Computing Machinery and IEEE.

December meeting attendance numbers:

39 attendees
2 cancellations
5 no-shows
11 used PayPal



Walter Hanig, President & Sue Heim, VP Membership



Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs



Don Bush, STC fellow, celebrating 40 years with STC

December Chapter Meeting Review

December meeting featured RJ Jacquez of eHelp

By [Eric Hurd](#)

San Diego Chapter Meeting - Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Walter Hanig opened the meeting by asking first-time attendees to cite their reasons for coming and what they expected to get out of the meeting. Some of the reasons included curiosity about the field, desire to meet fellow writers for the first time, and interest in the presentation.

Walter then invited the members who were looking for work to stand and describe their skills and the type of work they seek. Then members with job announcements were asked to stand and describe the positions available.

Happy 40th Don!

After dinner, Sue Heim surprised Don Bush, who is celebrating his 40th year with STC, with a tribute. Don, an STC fellow, joined the Saint Louis Chapter in 1963. For a more in-depth look at Don and his involvement with STC, see Don's article: "The Most Obvious Fault in Technical Writing," in *Intercom*, 2003, volume 50, issue 7.

The following is a quote from Don that is, according to Sue, making its way around the technical writing community:

. . . the greatest fault in published technical writing is not lack of grammar, consistency, or accuracy. Its most obvious fault is something that is far easier to control: wordiness.

Announcements

All members are invited to drop off or pick up used books at the adopt-a-book table before and after meetings.

Members may check out books from the STC library. If there is a book that you are interested in reading that is not available, the chapter will purchase a copy for the library if you review it for the newsletter.

Walter thanked Sue Heim for putting together the nice tribute to Don.

Walter also thanked Lance for making sure the Red Lion Hanalei, the hotel where our meetings are now held, stays with our original menu and pricing agreement. Our meetings will continue to be held there, in Mission Valley, through spring. However, we are looking into new sites for next year.

Kitt Medrano is starting a member-announcements column in this newsletter. So, if you have news, promotions, or personal announcements that you would like to share with STC, please contact Kitt at kitt@wote.com.

Members will soon be receiving invitations to take an anonymous online salary survey. We all benefit when as many writers as possible participate. In addition to discovering where we stand in the market, the data helps those of us seeking work to more successfully negotiate salary.



Don Bush honored on his 40th anniversary with STC



Don's tribute included a special tasty dessert



Don partaking in the tribute



RJ Jacquez, featured speaker from eHelp

The San Diego Chapter has officially agreed to host the 2005 Region 8 conference. More details will be available in the near future.

RJ Jacquez on The Next Generation of Single-Source Tools for Adobe FrameMaker

The evening's featured speaker was RJ Jacquez from eHelp (soon to be Macromedia). Jacquez is the product manager for FrameMaker Technologies at eHelp Corporation. He has served as vice president of technology for Quadralay and has most recently led a team at eHelp to develop a single-source solution for FrameMaker users RoboHelp for FrameMaker.

Jacquez started with a little background about single sourcing before discussing the goals of the application.

- Deliver a great user experience.
- Leverage users' existing knowledge of FrameMaker.
- Provide a nonintrusive approach to single sourcing.
- Go beyond the traditional single sourcing concept.
- Support multiple books, variables, numbering, and all building blocks.
- Go beyond the linear-based approach of simple conversion tools.

Jacquez spent the remainder of the presentation demonstrating the product. The following are some of the highlights.

- RoboHelp for FrameMaker can replicate the styles of the input Frame files. Users can also modify the styles without touching the source files.
- A single project can include multiple books as source files.
- Cross references are automatically resolved.
- Live connectivity keeps the project in sync with the source files.
- Conditional text can be set for each type of output.
- Non-FrameMaker content can be imported.
- A quick-review feature allows the user to update the styles on the fly without compiling the entire project.
- RoboHelp for FrameMaker incorporates the FrameMaker numbering engine so that all numbering is correct regardless of what is included or excluded.
- The paragraph designer allows the user to assign attributes to multiple styles at once.

- RoboHelp for FrameMaker supports FlashHelp, HTML, MS HTML Help, and Web Help.
- The index, table of contents, and glossary can be modified separately for each output type.

For more information about this product, visit www.eHelp.com (soon to be www.macromedia.com).

Jacquez wrapped up his presentation with a round of questions from the audience. Concerns were raised about lack of support for JavaHelp and separate styles for the output; but, overall, the tour was well received.

After the questions, Jacquez conducted a drawing for a full copy of RoboHelp for FrameMaker. James Guarino was the luck winner.

Meeting Wrapup

Our monthly giveaway winners were:

- Roberta Davidson and Beth Peisic, who both won STC business card holders.
- Susan Self and Lesley Robin, who won Magic Cube office supplies.
- Pamela Peterburg, who won this month's "Wally Buck," good for a free San Diego Chapter dinner and presentation.

Thank you for coming. We'll see you next year!



Roberta Davidson



Beth Peisic



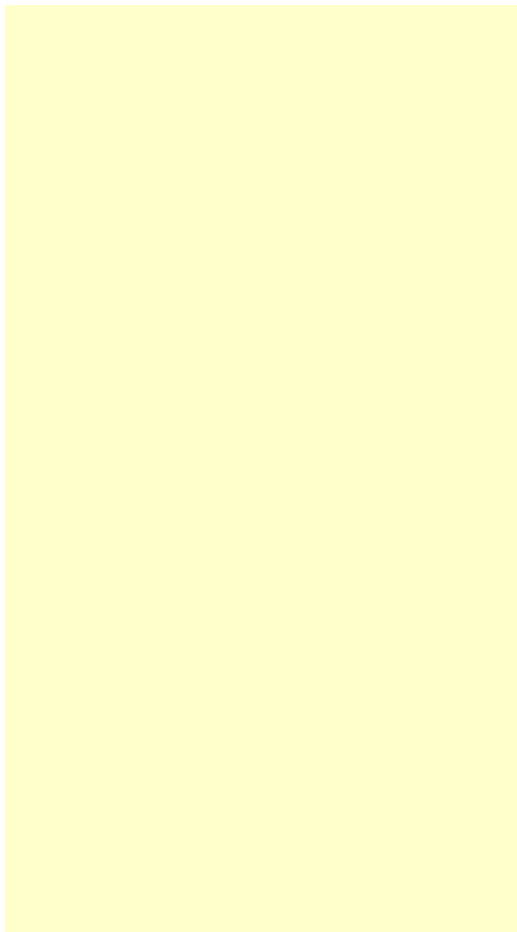
Susan Self



Lesley Robin



Pamela Peterburg



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Professional Development



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Winter Quarter Classes for Technical Communicators Offered by UC Extension

By [Michelle Petersen, VP Professional Development](#)

Many of us know that UC San Diego and UC Riverside offer Certificates in Technical Communication through their University Extension programs. However, did you know that you can take technical communication classes through these campuses without enrolling in the Certificate program? Classes for Winter 2004 start in January.

UCSD Technical Communication Courses (Winter 2004)

Course: Critical Thinking for Technical Communicators

Teacher: Bonni Graham

Course Dates: January 7-March 3

Description from the UCSD Extension Web site:

"This course explores how decisions made before the writing process begins can have unexpected ramifications. Students will examine their thinking processes how they use reason to solve problems, form opinions, and make decisions in order to improve them. They will practice identifying key questions and assumptions, assessing interpretations and conclusions, and applying criteria and standards to analysis. Course will be taught through lectures, discussions, and technical writing exercises and projects."

Course: Information Design for Technical Communicators

Teacher: Steve Margolin

Course Dates: February 10-March 16

Description from the UCSD Extension Web site:

"Professionals who produce technical communications whether they are technical writers, Web and graphic designers, trainers, or engineers can benefit from knowledge of document design. In broad terms, document design is the integration of words and pictures to help readers satisfy their goals for using the document. We will study how to use clear writing, analysis of the audience's needs, legibility of typography, design of spatial cues, and the interplay of words and pictures to create documents, printed or electronic, that readers understand and respond to aesthetically and emotionally."

To enroll in these classes or to view the entire course catalog, visit the UCSD Extension Web site:

<http://www.extension.ucsd.edu>

You may also enroll over the phone by calling UCSD Extension at

(858)534-3400.

UC Riverside Technical Communication Courses (Winter 2004)

Course: Managing Technical Communication Projects

Teacher: Sharon Burton

Course Dates: January 12-March 29

Description from the UC Riverside Extension Web site:

"This course focuses on the management of technical writing projects. The entire process of technical documentation of projects is examined, including determining the project scope, developing the information plan, estimating page counts, planning milestones and ensuring quality. Creating and updating project plans, documentation plans and content plans are also covered."

Course: FrameMaker: Software for Creating Technical Documents

Teacher: Bonni Graham

Course Dates: January 24-February 28

Description from the UC Riverside Extension Web site:

"This course provides hands-on instruction in one of the most essential tools in the field of technical writing today: Adobe FrameMaker. With FrameMaker, writers can create and manage complex multichapter documents with significant cost reduction, and the handling and creation of tables of contents, indices, cross-references, tables of figures, bibliographies, and other document components can be automated. FrameMaker can also turn documentation into HTML pages and Adobe PDF files."

To enroll in these classes or to view the entire course catalog, visit the UC Riverside Extension Web site:

<http://www.ucextension.net>

You may also enroll over the phone by calling UC Riverside Extension at (909)787-4105 or toll-free (800)442-4990.

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STC Director/Sponsor for Region 7



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Market Changes Afoot: What Do They Mean for Technical Communicators?

By Rahel Anne Bailie, STC Director/Sponsor for Region 7

One of my activities as a self-employed consultant is to monitor various job boards. The job boards I monitor include positions and contracts for technical communicators, but more importantly, they include positions for the industries we support: software development, engineering, and manufacturing. This gives me a daily temperature reading on the industry where I'm most likely to find clients and contracts.

In November, the activity on the job boards shot up. Between Nov 21 and 28, 2003, one Vancouver job board had 163 jobs posted, with almost a dozen of them being communication-related jobs: technical writer, instructional designer, marketing communications manager. This encouraging news was confirmed by a consultant from Boston, whose business suddenly got very busy; all consultants in his firm are fully booked. Does this mean that the economy is bouncing back, and what does this mean for technical communication professionals? How can we reconcile this apparent economic recovery with the opposing trend of jobs moving from North America to Asian countries?

Certainly, the increase in North American jobs is encouraging for North American technical communicators, just as the surge of product development in countries such as Singapore, India, and China is encouraging for technical communicators there. Generally speaking, product development generally indicates a corollary need to communicate product features through marketing communications, the user interface, user instructions, and internal documentation; and the communication jobs are kept in close proximity to the development jobs.

We must keep in mind, however, that as markets mature and the software industry, where so many technical communicators are employed, is maturing along with all other industries and profit margins narrow, companies continue to find ways to be competitive. We consumers like our software to be inexpensive, and we hunt around for the very best deals. To provide us with those deals, companies need to find ways to cut costs, then cut costs more, and then cut costs even more. In an industry with few raw materials, where the largest expense is the brain power of its staff, the way to cut development costs is to cut labour costs. If work can be fit into a formula and done where labour costs are less, that will happen.

From my Canadian perspective (keeping in mind that Canada was one of the first countries to which American companies sent their work "off-shore"), I see the current migration of jobs around the globe as inevitable. As much of the hard-goods manufacturing of the world has gone to China, thereby stocking North American dollar stores with inexpensive merchandise, so follows the knowledge industry to satisfy the market demand for discounted products.

What this means for me as a technical communicator based in North America is that I need to make strategic career choices. If I choose to specialize in the type of work that is moving to another part of the world, I can look harder to do that type of work locally, or I can follow the work to wherever it goes, the way that actors migrate to Los Angeles. Or I can choose to look for the type of technical communication work that, by necessity, stays closer to home. I would tap into communities adjacent to technical communication to encourage cross-pollination of ideas and see what types of work is suited to someone with my abilities, work that doesn't come with the title of "technical writer" but involves using my skill set and qualifications. I would build my network outside of the technical communication community, getting to know the decision-makers in new areas and getting known there as well.

What it would mean for me as a technical communicator based in a country with an emerging economy is that I would want to build my credibility as a professional who delivers top-quality work that satisfies the demands of a head office that may be overseas. I would tap into the body of knowledge that exists in print and online to find a way to exceed the documentation standards out there, and deliver work that meets the needs of clients and end users. I'd find out what makes the market tick and figure out where my skills should be going. I would find a colleague or peer as a mentor. I would connect into existing technical communication communities, attend meetings, take courses, and subscribe to listservs. I'd cultivate a "buddy" relationship with a technical communicator in my area of interest and find ways to share information about the demands of technical communication in various markets around the world. I'd look at trends and determine what's coming so I could stay current and not lose my work in a year (or two, or five) to another country with even lower labour costs. I'd ensure that my company knows, every step of the way, how much value I add to the product and the company, and make management see that I am a value contributor instead of a cost centre.

The next few years will be very interesting times. From new tools, such as software that writes instructions by recording screen actions as you complete tasks on screen and creates content objects for content management systems, to new trends that include moving jobs around the world in a global economy, we are continually made to examine our personal employment situations and our profession to look for interesting opportunities.



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Helpful Tips



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Creating Simple Forms in Microsoft® Word

By Gail Van Landingham

Has a friend ever stopped by and shown you a technique that was immediately useful in your job? Here's a suggestion you might find useful if you need to collect a lot of information about people: try using Word forms and import the information you receive into a database or spreadsheet. Learning to do it takes only a few minutes.

The basic process is five steps:

1. Create a form.
2. Lock it so the participants can only provide answers, not change your questions.
3. Test the form.
4. Save just the answers, not the questions.
5. Import the answers into another program, like a database or spreadsheet.

The Process

Before you start, sketch out your form on paper.

1. Create the form.
 - Open a new Word document.
 - Display the Forms tool. Click View > Toolbars > Forms.
 - Turn on field shading so you can see your form fields.
 - Add one of the form fields. You can select Text, Checkbox, or Drop-down from the Forms Toolbar.

The Forms Toolbar looks like this with field shading on.



When you finish, your form will look like this.

This is a form – not protected

- Text form field
- Checkbox form field
- Drop-Down form field

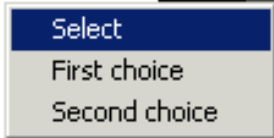
2. Lock the form.

Protect the form so the users can enter data only in the fields.

- Click Tools > Protect Document.
- Select Forms.

When you finish, your form will look like this.

This is a form – protected

- Text form field
 - Checkbox form field
 - Drop-Down form field
- 

Save the form.

3. Test the form.

Give your form to a few friends and ask them to complete the fields and send the form back to you. This is a small usability test.

4. Save the form.

- Save the data as a CSV (comma-separated value) file.
- Click Tools > Options > Save
- Select Save data only for forms.

Word saves the file with a TXT extension. Each field ends in a comma.

5. Import the form.

Import the TXT file into a database or spreadsheet. For details, see Online Help in your database or spreadsheet program.

More Information

An organization for forms design

Form designers have their own organization: the BFMA (Business Forms Management Association), whose mission is to "address the unique educational and networking needs of forms designers and managers" (www.bfma.org).

Advanced form features

For details on more advanced form features in Word, see "Using Word's User Forms," in Intercom, June 2003. This is on the STC site's members-only password-protected area.

(<http://www.stc.org/>). Click the Members Only tab > Pubs search.

Future developments for forms

Microsoft Office 2003 has built-in XML capability. For one review, see "Microsoft Reboots Office" by Jon Udell. He says, "XML capabilities in Word, Excel, and InfoPath help bridge the gap between desktop documents and databases, and give enterprises a reason to upgrade."

(http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/10/03/39FEoffice_1.html?s=feature).

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FrameMaker Autonumbering, Part 3

Finally, the Rest of the Article!

By [Matt Sullivan](#)

In the first installment of this article, I discussed the prep work for setting up chapter numbering. (See the Numbering1 link at <http://www.grafixtraining.com/stc/stc.html>.)

The second installment discussed the codes needed for the following tags:

- ChapterTitle
- Heading1
- Heading2

(See the Numbering2 link at <http://www.grafixtraining.com/stc/stc.html>.)

This month I'll finish the rest of the tags in my sample template. The additional tags are as follows:

- FigureTitle
- TableTitle
- NumberedList
- ListIntro
- Sublist

I will also discuss the use of Series Indicators (in the NumberedList section) to reduce the number of codes needed for the overall system.

FigureTitle

Following the FigureTitle sample text, we see that the Figure Title should start with the Fig. 1-4 sample text. (See Fig. 1-4 sample at <http://www.grafixtraining.com/stc/2003/articleoct03/Numbering.pdf>. In this sample text, we see that the FigureTitle should start with the Fig. text, followed by a reference to the chapter number, or the <\$chapnum> building block.)

Next, we have a dilemma. We need to increment the FigureTitle counter (our fourth-level autonumber), but we need a way to get past the counters for the second- and third-level autonumbers (the Heading1 and Heading2 tags).

Now is when we go back to the four questions on the prep worksheet.

- Do I display the value?
- Do I increment the value?

- Does the value reset?
- If so, where do I reset?

For the second level (Heading1), we ask if we want the current Heading1 value displayed in the FigureTitle. (We don't!)

Next, should the Heading1 value increment at this point? (No)

Does it reset? (No)

Because it doesn't reset, we don't care about the last question at this point.

With this set of answers, we really need something that will bypass the Heading1 counter for now. That brings us to the Placeholder code introduced last month. By typing

```
< >
```

(ensuring that both brackets are on the same line [with a space between the brackets] in the final document to avoid confusion), we tell Frame that we don't want to display the number (because we haven't specified a format such as A, a, R, r, or n), and we also tell Frame that we don't want to change the value because we have neither the + nor = symbols.

Next, we repeat the same exercise for the Heading2 tag. (After the same process, we find the Placeholder is the appropriate code at this point as well.) This gives us a current string of

```
<$chapnum>-< >< >
```

which will be followed by our fourth autonumber code for the FigureTitle, itself.

This final code should be an incrementing value that resets at the ChapterTitle level, or an Increment code (<n+>). Finishing with a colon at the end of the FigureTitle code gives us

```
<$chapnum>-< >< ><n+>:
```

Because our figures will reset at the chapter level, the Numbering Properties dialog will control the FigureTitle reset.

Note: In this case, we've already set the Paragraph tab of the Numbering Properties to reset our paragraph numbering while we were developing the Heading1 tag. So we're done with the FigureTitle tag.

TableTitle

Because the FigureTitle tag is so similar to this one, let's skip to putting in a placeholder for the FigureTitle counter, giving us

```
Table <$chapnum>-< >< >< >
```

As with the FigureTitle, the TableTitle also increments and resets at the ChapterTitle level, so we finish with an increment code and a colon, giving us

```
Table <$chapnum>-< >< >< ><n+>:
```

Note: Remember that the TableTitle will reset at the Chapter level and has been previously set.

ListItems

Frame template designers divide into two camps when it comes to list numbering. Some take the simpler approach and have a list reset tag (such as Numbered1) and an increment tag (such as Numbered). Though this system works just fine, I'm in the other camp.

For my templates, I like to minimize the number of tags in my Paragraph Catalog as well as control my numbering on the basis of context rather than the explicit tag. (I like to control the number by its position within a list rather than using extra tags to reset.) I see an advantage in being able to reorder my list items (including the first item in the list) without worrying about whether my formatting (in this case, my numbering) is still correct.

Here are some examples of how I like to control nested lists.

NumberedList

Initially, the toughest thing about our sixth autonumber is that it doesn't display the NumberedList itself the two are still linked. All the placeholders need to be able to get to the sixth position. Fortunately, Frame allows something called a Series Indicator, which is a convention for bypassing the autonumbers linked to the ChapterTitle tag.

Series Indicator is defined as a two-digit prefix to the Autonumber Format, consisting of any keyboard character and a colon.

When we use this convention, along with the answers to the four questions on the prep worksheet and our example text, our NumberedList format looks like this:

```
L:<n+>.\t
```

This list will reset at the beginning of the next list. Thus, we can't rely on the Paragraph tab in the Numbering Properties dialog to simply reset it at the beginning of the chapter. There are many strategies for this reset, but my favorite is to use a tag called ListIntro, which then calls up NumberedList as the Next Paragraph.

ListIntro

With formatting roughly equivalent to that used for basic content (Body in my templates), the ListIntro has an Autonumber Format that resets the NumberedList paragraph. The reset code is

```
< =0>, so the final code for this tag is L:< =0>
```

Sublist

Even though the Sublist example text doesn't display the NumberedList, itself, the two are still linked. After we look at the example text and answer the four questions for each level of Sublist, we have

```
L:< ><n+>
```

The reset for Sublist should occur at each instance of ListIntro. So, if a Sublist is part of the template, we need to modify the NumberedList tag to include the reset code, resulting in

```
L:<n+>< =0>.\t
```

Well, that's it folks. The next time you find yourself autonumbering in Frame, I hope this information leads you down an easier path.



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