

October 2003

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The San Diego Signature



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E-mail:
stcsignature@yahoo.com

Newsletter Staff

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San Diego Members:
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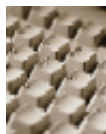
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Signature Staff

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

Graphics 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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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

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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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Chapter President, Walter Hanig

wghanig@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

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 Cardenas

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

kelleyw@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.

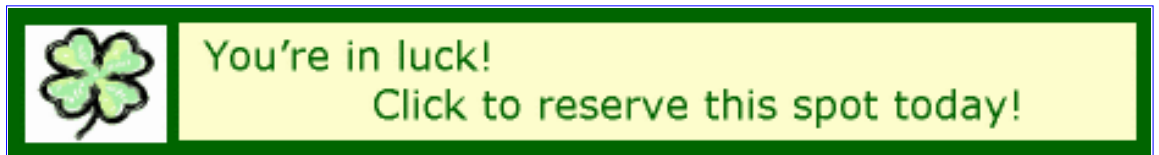
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Feature Article



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The Value of Project Management

By [Catherine Robinson](#)

Companies are increasingly looking for ways to cut costs and streamline processes. Therefore, they are finding value in hiring project management specialists who are capable of delivering projects (whether routine or special projects) on time and on budget. As companies continue to look for ways to better meet market demands and beat out the competition, they are hiring capable project managers who have an understanding of sound project management techniques and processes with the confidence to bring projects to successful completion.

When my manager said I would be a great candidate as a project management specialist, I knew I needed the proper training to gain the expertise to perform this role successfully. Because I had recently taken several night and weekend classes, I decided to find a distance-education class to fulfill my training needs. After researching my options, I enrolled in the University of California Berkeley Project Management extension program.

I quickly learned the value of a project manager just by looking at the curriculum. It entailed my learning about building and managing teams, controlling costs, developing timelines, managing risk, meeting deadlines, and solving problems. Whew! Does that sound like enough for a project management specialist to handle?

I find that I am learning a lot in my project management training, so I want to pass on some of the key points of that knowledge to you, the technical communicator. These include:

- " integration management
- " scope management
- " time management
- " cost management
- " quality management
- " human resource management
- " communications management
- " risk management
- " procurement management

I look forward to sharing some of the key concepts of successful project

management with you, so be sure to stay tuned.

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Fall Membership Drive



Join STC

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

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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: \$140 per year (includes a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)

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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.

Join After November 1 and Save on Dues

As part of its annual fall membership drive, STC offers a special discount to new members who join the Society on or after November 1, 2003.

For the regular member rate of \$140 (\$125 for dues plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee), new members will be credited with dues paid for the

remainder of 2003 and for calendar year 2004. That's 14 months of Society membership for the price of 12.

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.

Please pass this article to a prospective member. To join STC, prospective members can fill out an electronic form or download a membership application at www.stc.org. Those who prefer to have a membership application mailed to them can request one from the STC office at the following address:

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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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It's All About MEnglish

By [Karen Field](#)

If you've worked in the business world for oh, say, twenty minutes, you're familiar with what I call Manager's English --MEnglish. MEnglish is ripe with words like leveragability, synergistic, and knowledgeshare. MEnglish has become the language of CEOs and marketing folks alike. MEnglish abounds.

Deloitte Consulting partner Brian Fugere did a study on this business jargon. He noticed an interesting trend: as companies such as Enron slide into ruin, MEnglish appears more often in their corporate missives. The deeper the muck, the more pervasive the jargon. Deloitte Consulting, in a hiccup of altruism, responded to the study results with a useful string of code.

To help the afflicted identify MEnglish and sweep it from their prose, Deloitte Consulting developed Bullfighter, a Word add-on that measures the amount of verbosity in a document and suggests tips for fixing it.

How does Bullfighter work? According to the product's online help, BF checks a document for words that are fictional, used out of context, overused, or combined in a nonsensical way. (A simple rule: Any word ending in -age like leverage or bondage, raises flags.)

I'm disappointed. Having worked in a company that was shall we say Enron-esque in its accounting practices, I can tell you that bad news goes down easier when it's served up in MEnglish. When layoffs are looming, I'd rather read an email that says, "Due to market volatility and paradoxical priorities, it has become necessary to refocus our resources in a sizable manner in the near future, over one that says, "Look, we really messed up. Odds are 50-50 you'll still have a job on Monday.

On top of burying bad news in a pile of manure, MEnglish demonstrates the flexibility of the English language, not to mention the human tongue. Guys who couldn't diagram subject-verb-object sentences in high school English say things like, "Let's interface on the issue offline and dual-align on the extent of the problemage. Some CEOs are so glib, in fact, I assumed MEnglish was a course in MBA school, along with Creative Accounting 101 and The Necessity of the See-No-Evil Board Member.

Still, Bullfighter is a nifty tool, and somewhat addictive. Having downloaded it free from the Deloitte Web site (www.dc.com/bullfighter), I check everything I write against the Bull Index. The latest issue of a newsletter scored a 9.6, clean as can be. An XML implementation guide I'm writing drew a less stellar score. Well, that's okay. It's written for managers. They don't speak plain English anyway.



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Book Review



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Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy

Ann Rockley, with Pamela Kostur and Steve Manning
(Indianapolis: New Riders Press, 2003)

Reviewed by [Karen Field](#)

Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy provides a hands-on perspective of content management (also known as single sourcing). Author Ann Rockley, an Associate Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication and president of The Rockley Group, addresses aspects of content management based on an organization's needs.

The book opens with a discussion of the basics of content management, which the author calls unified content strategy. Section 2 helps readers determine whether a unified content strategy is worth the time and money needed to build a content management system. The final sections describe how to design a content management system and the tools and techniques required for such a system.

I found chapter 2, Fundamental concepts of reuse, and Chapter 14, The role of XML, interesting from a technical writer's perspective. In Chapter 2, the author describes the vital role of generating multiple documents meaning brochures, online help, web pages and so on from one source. She acknowledges that content must be modified for different audiences. What works in a slick marketing brochure, she says, is not appropriate for user documentation. With that in mind, she shows how to adjust the wording of content to target a specific audience.

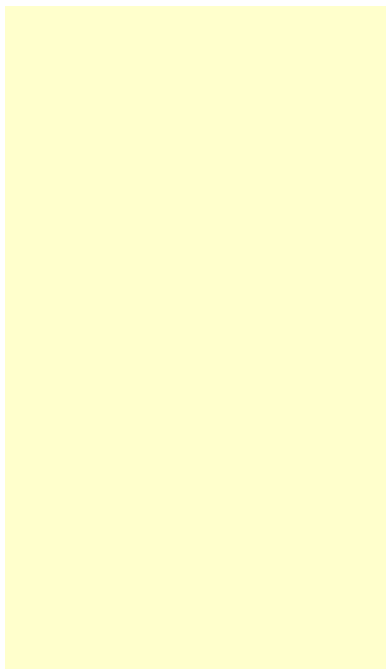
In Chapter 14, The role of XML, Rockley explains that XML is the backbone of any good content management system. After a brief history of the evolution of XML and a description of XML itself, Rockley writes that XML is the tool of choice because so much data gets exchanged over the Internet. In the summary of this chapter, she says, XML is not the only technology solution for reuse, but it is the most powerful by far. XML combines the best functionality of SGML with the ease-of-use of HTML, which is the best of both worlds.

There are many good books on content management on the market. This book, although rife with business jargon, is rich with information technical writers can use, from a discussion of tools to a description of the role of the technical writer in the content management process.

Managing Enterprise Content can help technical communicators take a leading role in helping an organization structure and manage information.

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General Announcements



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New Member Orientation Dinner

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership, San Diego STC Chapter](#)

All new and transferring members to the San Diego chapter are invited to the New Member Orientation Dinner, to be held Tuesday, October 14th, at 6:00 p.m. Come meet your council members and fellow new members, poolside, at the Hanalei Hotel. Enjoy dinner at no charge, compliments of San Diego STC.

Members who have joined STC or transferred into the San Diego chapter since September 2002 will receive an invitation to the dinner. Your RSVP will be appreciated. For more information, contact Sue Heim, VP Membership at sue_heim@msn.com.

"Careers in Writing" Presented at UCSD Extension

By [Lance-Robert, VP Finance, San Diego STC Chapter](#)

Thursday, September 18, chapter President Walter Hanig and I were asked to attend the Careers in Writing presentation at UCSD Extension. This presentation was designed to give students and working adults an inside look at the world of technical writing, screenwriting, fiction writing, copyediting, and journalism.

Tania Mayer of UCSD Extension moderated the panel, which consisted of five UCSD Extension staff members and industry leaders. These included our own Region 8 Director-Sponsor Bonni Graham, novelist Nancy Holder, San Diego Union-Tribune journalist David Coddon, copyeditor Laurie Gibson, and screenwriter/director Michael S. Gregory.

Walter and I were asked to attend because of our STC affiliation. Walter told everyone about the STC and the San Diego Chapter, and I gave them some specifics about the meeting location and handed out the same STC brochures I bring to the monthly meetings.

Linda Bannan of the San Diego Professional Editors Network (SD/PEN) was also asked to represent her organization.

Panelist Michael S. Gregory also represented the Southern California Writers Conference (SCWC).

David Coddon started the discussion by relating his experiences with the Union-Tribune publishing company. In addition to his other duties, he writes for the Night & Day section on Thursdays and the Currents section on Sundays. What I found most interesting was his passion for bringing the truth to the reader during unfortunate times like the September 11 attacks.

Bonni Graham gave an excellent, humor-filled presentation, and I'm certain she convinced all the attendees that technical writing doesn't have to be really dry and boring. She spoke of how important it is to learn about the technology you're describing in your documents or online help and not just throw information from the design engineers directly into the documents. She spoke of how she is a technology junkie and learned long ago how to keep her VCR from flashing 12:00 all the time. Learning about the high-tech industry, she said, was not something the attendees should be afraid of.

Nancy Holder discussed her various novels and short stories and the pros and cons of dealing with agents and publishers. She started out writing romance novels but later found that her true passion was writing horror stories. (They always say it's the quiet ones you have to watch out for.) Among her many credits are several episodes of Highlander and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. She encouraged newcomers to the profession to not give up. Her first novel still has yet to be published, she said, even though she has long since established a sound reputation.

Laurie Gibson talked in depth about copyediting. She emphasized how important it is for an organization to maintain a consistent look and feel throughout their documents. She recounted one time in which the eyes of a character in a novel she was proofreading inexplicably changed color as the story progressed. She emphasized that bad editing can make an organization look bad in the mind of the reader.

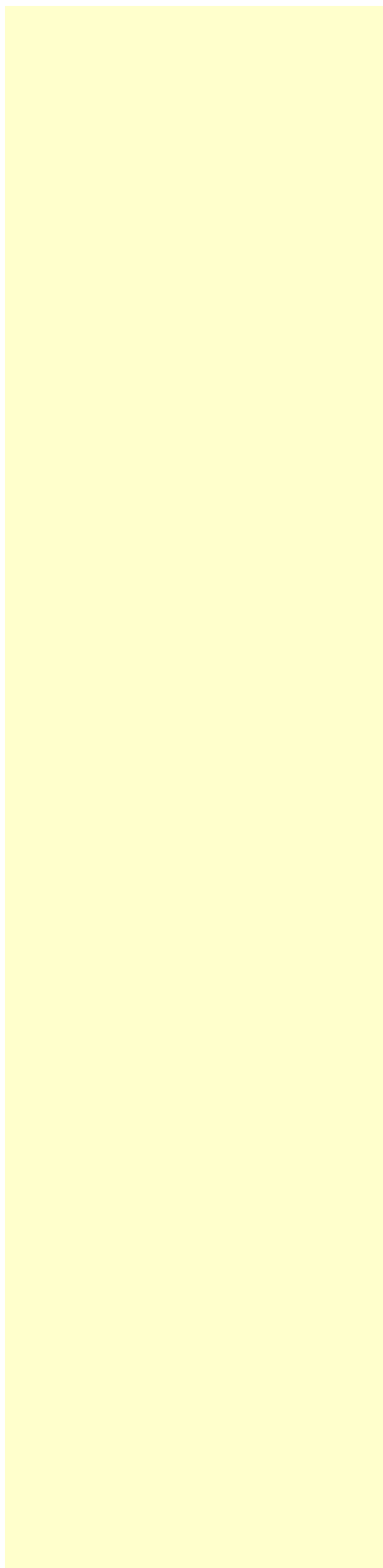
Michael S. Gregory also gave an entertaining presentation and talked about writing for various movies and television shows, including comedies, dramas, adventure stories, and documentaries. He is currently directing a new movie called Armageddon Jones. He also spoke at length about the SCWC. He heartily endorsed the screenwriting software called Final Draft.

Tania thanked everyone for attending and encouraged them to help themselves to the STC, SD/PEN, and SCWC brochures. She also asked attendees to fill out the survey forms.

The next day, Tania e-mailed some of the survey comments she received from the attendees:

- " Very entertaining and personable and approachable all of them!
- " Bonni Graham should be on the stage!
- " It was such a pleasure to be in the presence of those who truly are passionate about what they do!
- " Meeting writers in multiple fields really showed me how many opportunities exist for writers.
- " I will take courses after seeing these marvelous people who can teach me.
- " Loved the class, inspiring, helps with direction want to attend SCWC.
- " Fabulous speakers! I thought writers were supposed to be introverts!

In case you need them, the Web site for SD/PEN is www.sdpen.com, and the Web site for SCWC is www.writersconference.com.



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What Do You Value?

By [Catherine Robinson](#), Managing Editor

Sometimes I have to ask myself what I value in life. In my job, I value the extra training I get to improve my skills and learn how to do my job better. In my personal life, I value spending time with my family and sharing fun experiences to keep my relationships growing and memories building. Aside from those, I have to ask myself what else I value in life.

Recently the CEO of my company talked about value propositions. As he spoke, the message I got was that we have to consider each of our expenditures and see what value they bring to the organization. Sometimes the value we get is being able to re-invest in other opportunities.

As a member of the STC, I have found value in sharing experiences with other technical communicators. More than that, as I find myself in the position of managing editor of the STC newsletter, I am learning a lot about commitment, trust, and reliability. I am also sharpening my technical skills, as I pound away in DreamWeaver to create the newsletter pages. I am learning the value of working with a fine group of people who have expertise I don't, but who are willing to share.

I hope to have the opportunity to work with many of you, as you consider writing articles or columns, or contributing technical tips, such as Lance did in his article about creating hypertext markers in FrameMaker. All the information is relevant and somebody can always learn something new. I look forward to making sure we have a great newsletter that you will continue to value.

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Educate Thyself: Enhance Thine Options

By [Walter Hanig](#), President

These days, when getting or keeping a job is becoming increasingly difficult, it is wise to look for ways to enhance one's value to employers and to enhance one's options. Educating oneself is not for the sake of education per se but for the benefits that come from it.

My story begins 20 years ago, in the days when PC meant personal computer, before there was an IBM standard. My employer used proprietary computers based on CP/M. The only applications I recall were WordStar and SuperCalc. I taught myself these tools and discovered an empowering lesson: when you can easily modify a document yourself instead of sending it back into the secretarial queue you're much more willing to solicit and accept changes to that document. Further, knowing how to use a spreadsheet meant that I could accept and even seek out tasks that were normally outside my job duties. I thus increased my value as an employee.

Fast forward to this past May, when I attended the International STC Conference at my own expense. I learned much about the technical and cultural/organizational challenges of FrameMaker 7®. I was particularly interested in this session because I've been intrigued by XML for years. We used FrameMaker 7 briefly at Ericsson, and I'd applied for a job managing a FrameMaker 7 migration project. At the conference, I ran into the same person at many of the sessions. Because she worked for another telecom company with a San Diego office, I was especially glad to get to know her. This later proved to be an additional benefit.

In June, I took classes in XML Fundamentals and Advanced XML through the San Diego Community College District, Centers for Education & Technology www.sandiegocet.net/index.php. Each class lasted for six 3.5-hour sessions. They were very well taught in an excellent hands-on facility. And they were free. In fact, they were better than free. As a student, I could purchase a student ID card for the princely sum of \$2. Why did I want a student ID? So I could buy software at the educational rate. Instead of paying \$330 or more for DreamWeaver MX, I paid \$100. That difference was enough for me to learn another tool that enhances my value as an employee.

By educating yourself, through software tutorials, conferences, classes, volunteering, or other methods, you increase the ways you can bring value to your job. You have no job? More education gives you more paths to pursue when searching for one.

And finally, if you wondered how I benefited from meeting the woman at the STC Conference, here's how: she gave my name and a recommendation to a hiring manager at her telecom company, and he told me about an opening before it was public.

So my advice is to educate yourself every way you can, anytime you can.

Take a class, read a book, do an online tutorial, volunteer for a new task at work or in a professional group. You can't know what the benefits will be, but I guarantee there will be benefits.

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FrameMaker: Chapter Template Numbering, Part I

By [Matt Sullivan](#)

For this month's article, I've decided to tackle a project I've wanted to do for quite some time: chapter template numbering. But because of the scope of the project, I'll have to break this into two separate installments. This month I'll discuss preparation and strategy, and next month I'll cover the details relating to the process itself and the codes or building blocks involved.

In my FrameMaker classes, the topic consistently ranked as the most difficult is our section on multiple autonumbers. This is not too surprising, really, because FrameMaker's autonumbering capabilities are quite robust. In fact, this material is so odd that Adobe's Classroom in a Book doesn't even address it in detail.

That said, what I want to do is walk you through the process that I go through when I set up the numbering system for a client's template. It doesn't even require work in FrameMaker, since the first step is really to set up a worksheet to hold your notes and record the changes you plan to make to the autonumbering properties of your various paragraph tags.

Note: If you are using FrameMaker 5.5 or earlier, the process differs significantly. If you need details, contact me at matt@grafixtraining.com.

Figure 1 shows a sample worksheet, a completed worksheet, and questions designed to help you figure out which blocks are needed to get the desired result.

Figure 1

Worksheet for Autonumbering

Para Tag	Example	Series	1st Level A/N	2nd Level	3rd Level

Questions to ask:

Do I Display the value?
 Do I Increment the value?
 Does the value Reset
 Where do I reset?

Codes Used:

<n> = Display
 <n+> = Increment
 <=0> = Reset
 <> = Placeholder
 <Schapnum>= Current Chapter Value

Completed Worksheet for Autonumbering

Para Tag	Example	Series	1st Level A/N	2nd Level	3rd Level
ChapterTitle	Chapter 1: Sample Text		Chapter <Schapnum>:		
Heading1	1.2/t Sample Text	C:	<Schapnum>.	<n+>	<=0>
Heading2	1.2.3/t Sample Text	C:	<Schapnum>.	<n>.	<n+>
FigureTitle	Fig. 1-4: Sample Text	F:	Fig. <Schapnum>.	<n+>	
TableTitle	Table 21: Sample Text	T:	Table <n+>		
ListIntro		L:	<=0>		
NumberedList	1:/t Sample Text	L:	<n+>.	<=0>/t	
Sublist	a)/t	L:	<>	<n+>)/t	

*the yellow area represents the Autonumber Format box in the Paragraph Designer

Starting the Process

I typically store my notes on a custom Reference Page called numbering within my actual FrameMaker template file. This allows me to use FrameMaker's table capabilities to sift through the process, and allows me to store the notations directly within the chapter template itself. Translation: I can't lose this valuable work! My notes stay right with my project.

Regardless of how you create or store the data, the first thing to do is to list the names of the paragraph tags that will have automatic numbering associated with them. These names make up the first column of the table, and I typically order these tags in the same hierarchy as my chapters. In other words, the ChapterTitle paragraph tag is at the top of the list, and List items are toward the bottom.

The second column contains examples of the numbering I want to see

within my document.

Finishing the Prep

Keep in mind that our goal is to work through the building blocks needed by the Paragraph Designer to achieve the proper numbering for our chapter and book files.

In my example table, I've highlighted some of the cells in the ChapterTitle row. These cells represent the area in the Paragraph Designer/Numbering properties that control my Autonumber Format. Each row contains coding that I will ultimately retype into the Paragraph Designer/Numbering/Autonumber Format area for the corresponding paragraph tag.

The final prep tool I find handy is a few sample chapters with all of my required paragraph tags sprinkled throughout. I use this sample material to work through the current values for my paragraphs, and it typically resembles an outline, where the paragraph tags are nested, but unnumbered.

Next Month -- Part II

Next month in Part II we will look at the development cycle for these tags, and find out how Frame keeps the numbers current (and correct!). We will also look at how the Book file controls our Chapter numbering by setting the value of the <\$chapnum> system variable.

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October 2003

Chapter Membership



Welcome to Our New Members

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

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Welcome to our new and transferred members, as well as to our reinstated members! The following are new/reinstated members since August 2003.

New Members

Susen Herold

Members Who Have Transferred Into Our Chapter

Mark Bloom
John Behrens
Heather Wise
Kate Pietrelli

Reinstated Members

Julio Campo

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[Click here for October 8 meeting details.](#)

If you make a reservation, but find you cannot attend, please cancel your reservation by sending an email 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.



September meeting attendance numbers:

49 attendees
4 no-shows

October Chapter Meeting Preview: 21st Century Technical Communication Trends

By [Michael Cardenas, VP Programs](#)

How do long-term trends affect us as technical communicators? What can we extrapolate from our knowledge of the past to form a coherent set of likely expectations for the future? In her presentation 21st Century Technical Communication Trends, Marie Highby will trace changes in publications technologies, computing, writing media, and the teaching of writing since the 1960s and will discuss what these changes may imply for the future of our profession and for career planning.

About Marie Highby

Marie Highby, a consultant and writer, is in charge of San Jose State Professional Development's Technical Writing and Communications Certificate Program. In addition to her teaching, Marie's varied career has included stints as a forecasting analyst and marketing writer in the investment management and banking industries, and she is currently active in Silicon Valley as a corporate trainer. Marie holds an MA in literature from Duke University as well as an MBA from the University of Virginia.

September Chapter Meeting Review

By [Eric Hurd](#)

San Diego Chapter Meeting - Wednesday, September 10, 2003

After yet another scrumptious dinner at the Red Lion Hanalei, Walter welcomed us back from our summer break. To keep our meetings relevant and useful, he encouraged new members let him know if the meetings are meeting their needs.

Announcements

The following were announced.

"Walter Hanig recognized several of our volunteers, including Catherine and Jennifer for their first newsletter, Pat Ray for setting up Topica (to allow us to control our e-mail list membership), and

Sue Heim for organizing the New Member Dinner.

" Sue Heim announced that the New Members Dinner will be held on Tuesday, October 17th, at the Red Lion Hanalei. The meeting will be poolside with ten chapter officers and 65 new members invited.

" Walter offered a table-full of old books to members for free. He invited other members to do so at our next meeting.

" Walter announced that the San Diego chapter has reached a new milestone: our membership has exceeded 300 members.

" Walter recognized Lance Roberts for paying our bills, filing our financial report (no small task according to Walter), and investigating potential financial institutions for managing our funds.

" Beth Peisic from Intuit announced the need for test subjects for an upcoming usability study. Test subjects will receive \$100 each.

" Deypika Singh also announced upcoming usability testing at eHelp for the RoboDemo product. This is a good opportunity to provide feedback for software that we use in the industry.

" Cathrine Whitaker from eHelp offered 15-day trial versions of RoboHelp Office.

" A telephone seminar will be held on September 24. Bonni Graham will be presenting Proving Your Worth to Clients and Employers. For those interested, the chapter will subsidize the \$145 connection fee if five or more members are interested (\$10 each). If you host the telephone seminar, the \$10 is waived.

" Mark Bloom, past president of the Orange County Chapter, announced an upcoming 1-day seminar: Zen and the Art of Internet Shopping.

Volunteers Needed

" Michelle Petersen will be organizing chapter-based seminars for professional development. She needs volunteers to help out with logistics.

" Our chapter is resuming our résumé review program. Volunteers are needed to review peer résumés, and then meet face-to-face with the owners. The meeting typically occurs at chapter meetings.

" The newsletter staff is looking for writers. If you are interested, please contact the editors at stcsignature@yahoo.com.

" If you would like to read a book for free, and it is not in our chapter library, the STC chapter will buy a field-related book of your choice if you write a review of it.

"Perfect Vs Good Enough"

Michael Cardenas introduced the evening's guest speaker Suzy Hosie. Suzy is the founder and CEO of Write on the Edge, a technical writing company located in Vista, CA. Suzy has a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation that you can download by clicking the following url: http://www.stc.org/meetings/meeting_030910.htm.



Suzanne (Suzy) Hosie

Several members from our local chapter attended the 50th STC International Conference in Dallas, Texas. Walter pointed out that a lot of the topic information is available from the STC Web site: <http://www.stc.org>.

The following are some of the bits of wisdom that came up during her presentation:

" Know your stakeholders. Stakeholders may include the end-users, engineers, marketing reps, printers, localizers, accounting reps, and even the person who signs your check.

" Identify the stakeholders needs as opposed to their wants. Address them as fully as possible. When they conflict, remember who signs your check.

" Don't embarrass yourself or your company. Don't take on assignments that are set up for failure, for they can hurt your reputation.

" Although you can shoot for perfection, perfection is nearly impossible. People change, needs change, things are missed no matter how many times they are reviewed. This does not mean mediocre documentation is acceptable.

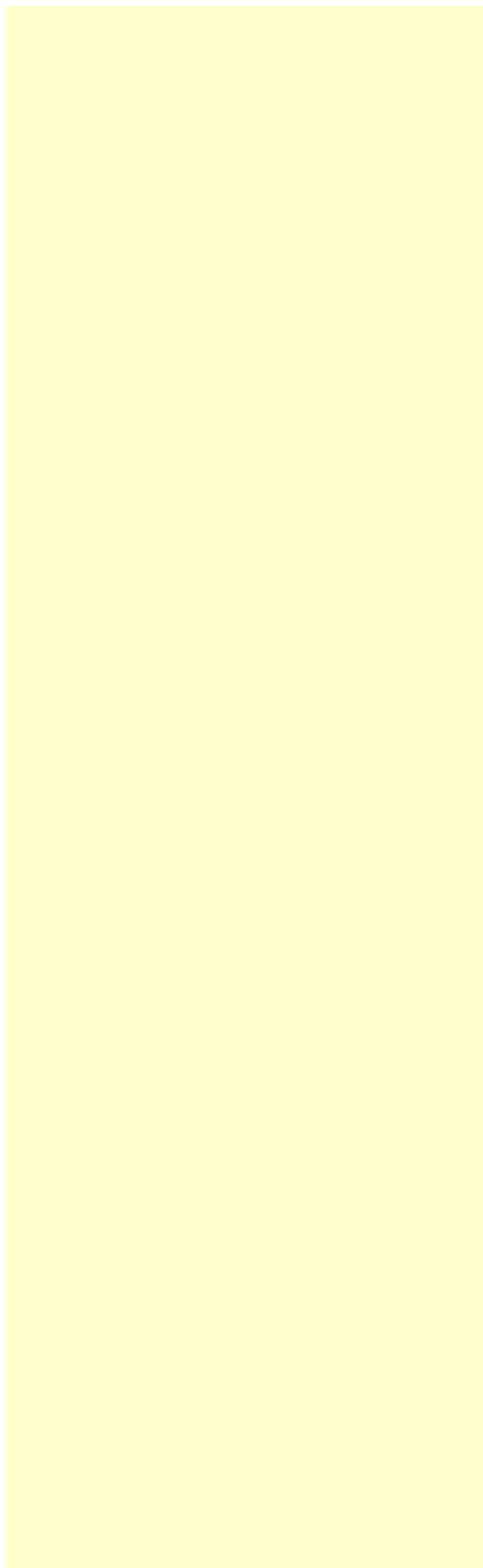
" Good enough looks easy from the outside.

" Be diplomatic. Be easy to work with. With so many stakeholders, technical writers are highly visible. By being pleasant, you can contribute to the harmony of the company, which adds value beyond writing good documentation.

" Make friends with the people you rely on for information. Remember that relationships are give and take. Try to have something to offer, even if it is simply a piece of chocolate. Report defects.

" Remember that we are not just writers, but communicators. Develop your interpersonal skills. Face-to-face meetings are better than e-mail.

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Professional Development



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Chapter Offers Low-Cost Training Opportunities

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

Recognize yourself?

- You've been looking for work for several (or many) months, and you're going to scream if you have The Conversation again with yet another recruiter or HR representative:
"Do you have any Dreamweaver/WebPublisher/FrameMaker (+SGML, of course)? No? But you have Frame 6 and HomeSite experience? Oh, okay. Let me get back to you."
- After working on the same three books for the past three years, you're bored stiff with your current job at a relatively stable company, but you're waiting until the economy gets better before seriously looking for something else. Your eyes occasionally (or frequently) wander to Monster or Dice, but the ads all seem to be asking for someone with Photoshop or Dreamweaver experience--applications that you've maybe played around with a bit, but don't feel comfortable listing on your résumé.
- At your latest contract, you've inherited 600 pages of documentation where all of the screen captures have been resized and squished to fit into the company's FrameMaker templates. The graphics are a blurry mess. As you update the screen captures for a new release, you know that there has to be a better way to work with the limited page space that you have, but you're just not quite sure what to do.

As technical writers, we frequently want or need to update our technical skills to either do our current jobs better or find a better job. Unfortunately, many of us are currently out of work. For those who are employed, many companies have slashed training budgets and provide limited educational assistance. Over the course of the next STC chapter year, this column will focus on identifying low-cost training opportunities, such as homegrown seminars, telephone seminars, and other classes for San Diego Chapter members.

Telephone Seminars

The San Diego Chapter is subsidizing group sessions of STC's series of telephone seminars for seminar topics that generate sufficient interest. The fee for attending one of these group sessions is only \$10 per participant.

See the "Professional Development" section of the chapter Web site for more details about telephone seminars.

Fall Classes at UCSD Extension

The fall class schedule for UCSD Extension's Technical Communication Program is now available online at <http://www.extension.ucsd.edu/Programs/index.cfm?vAction=certDetail&CertificateID=113>.

You do not have to be enrolled in the certificate program to enroll in one of the following courses currently scheduled for fall 2003:

- Technical Communication I
- Tools for Technical Communicators
- Presentation Skills for Technical Communicators
- Copyediting I
- Writing for the Biotech Industry
- Computer Networks I
- Introduction to Computer Science

- Digital Imaging I: Photoshop 1a
- Adobe Illustrator: Introduction
- Dreamweaver I
- XML for the Web: Part I

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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

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

Recent graduate, (03/03), of the Certificate Program in Technical and Scientific Writing at San Diego State University. Internship with Consistent Image of San Diego, California. Responsible for transferring the template for two large documents from Quark Express 5.0 to Framemaker 6.0. Assisted the company with several other print and online documents for Sprint wireless devices and services. Supervisor's comments: "A skilled writer", "A very good technical writer", "Nice to work with", and "Excellent work habits".

Principal booklet designer for a volunteer student team that produced a revision of the Substitute Teacher Handbook for the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District.

Position sought: Full-time work 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, and Excel; familiarity with Quark Express 5.0 and PowerPoint

Personal interests: Science fiction, contemporary jazz, philosophy, helping ordinary people understand technology and the world better through clear, logically thought out verbal and visual communications

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October 2003

Helpful Tip



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Kinko's Offers Spiral Binding for Reference Manuals

By [Lance-Robert](#), VP Finance

Have you ever wished that reference manual for the software package you use so often at work or home would lay flat, but it doesn't because the publisher used perfect binding instead of spiral binding? Now there is hope!

For \$4 per book, Kinko's will shave the perfect binding off any book and replace it with spiral binding. Now, for example, your copy of the FrameMaker 7 User Guide will lay flat on your desk the way nature intended and remain open to the page you want. If your book has a CD pocket in the back, it will also be spiral bound.

There are some restrictions, so it's best to ask about them before you hand over any books for modification. If the branch does not have spirals large enough to accommodate books more than one inch thick, they might need to break the book into two or more volumes. They are also willing to combine books that are less than one inch thick into a single volume if you ask them to do so. Black seems to be their standard color for spiral binding, but others are available upon request.

Depending on how busy the branch is at the time, you might be able to have this done while you wait. At the very worst, you might have to come back in a day or two.

I hope you enjoy this handy tip. I highly recommend that you resist the initial temptation to haul your entire bookshelf to Kinko's at once, however.

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