

September 2002

Volume 36 No 1



The San Diego
Signature

www.stc-sd.org

September Poll

Which type of workshop would you most likely attend?

- Tools (applications)
- Writing techniques
- Professional development
- Management techniques
- Other
- None

Submit Vote

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

E-mail:
stcsignature@yahoo.com

Newsletter Staff

Publication Information

Advertising Information

Chapter Council

STC Mission Statement

 [Click for newsletter PDF](#)

Download Acrobat Reader

Visit the Society Web site at www.stc.org

Feature Article

How to Work With a Technical Illustrator
A picture is worth a thousand words. Learn six great tips for getting the best photo illustrations.



Editor's Desk
Kicking Off the New Chapter Year

Chapter Meetings
*Sept Meeting Preview
*Sept Time & Place

Book Review
The Non-Designer's Design Book

President's Podium
Benefit From and Contribute to STC Community

Tech Issues
Identify Your Software's Strengths, Weaknesses

Humor
Badge Required Beyond This Point

Visiting Author
Create Revenue Opps Through Good Design

Advice
Grammar Rules Get Bad Rap

Introductions
Entertaining Technical Writer

Director-Sponsor
To Conference or Not to Conference

Usability
Process to Protect the User Experience

Kudos Corner
Member Achievements

Competition News
Stand Out From the Crowd

Professional Development
Invest in Yourself

Dear Muse
Real Advice for Real People

New Members
Welcome Aboard!

Employment Desired
Members Looking for Work

Designing the future of technical communication

Copyright 2002 San Diego STC



You're in luck!
Click to reserve this spot today!

September 2002

Feature Article


[Return Home](#)

 Photos by
Ann M. Throckmorton


Photo 1. I photographed the construction of this tower grain dryer (five story, sheet metal) in southern Illinois.



Photo 2. Did I mention that a tornado struck our work site (same tower grain dryer as photo 1)? True.

How to Work With a Photo Illustrator

By [Ann M. Throckmorton](#), M.A., Senior Technical Writer and Photo Illustrator

A photo illustrator is one who documents a product or procedure with photographs. This involves taking the photos and organizing them in a way that is easy for the target audience to understand. Both mechanical and electrical assembly can be photo illustrated. The documentation may be a step-by-step photo sequence with a photo for each discrete step. Or it may be a summary photo, for example, of all the components laid out in the order in which they will be assembled. Photo illustration can substantially clarify the text and do it in an economical way. There is truth to the saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words." Photograph illustration conveys precise detail visually. It allows the user to identify parts at a glance and to more easily use the product or procedure.

When I was a senior technical writer/photo illustrator for GSI Grain Systems, it was my job to create new construction manuals ("Assembly of Portable Grain Dryers," "Installation of Tower Grain Dryers," and "Installation of Electrical to Tower Grain Dryers") for domestic and international distribution. In writing each 200-plus-page book, I worked with engineers, electricians, factory stewards, and construction-site crew leaders. I especially remember two long, hot weeks on-site at a grain elevator in a corn field in southern Illinois where I photographed the construction of a five-story tower grain dryer. The subsequent book took me five months to write. The step-by-step photos I had taken provided the outline for the book.

Tips for Maximizing Photo Illustration

The best way to work with a photo illustrator is to be one yourself, but if you aren't or don't have time to be, here are some tips for maximizing the process of photo illustration.

Tip 1. Let the photo illustrator do what the photo illustrator needs to do. Seriously, the photo illustrator needs a certain amount of creative leeway in order to capture the information. Let the photo illustrator tell you what is needed for lighting, arrangement of parts, and background. Creative technical writing is not an oxymoron, and neither is creative photo illustration. If the photo illustrator says that a tangle of scrap wires lying under the part to be photographed will confuse the image, believe the photo illustrator and remove the wires.

Tip 2. This tip goes hand in hand with Tip 1. The photo illustrator will need management's whole-hearted support. The photo illustrator works with SMEs, such as engineers and technicians, to compose and take photographs. This is the



Photo 3. Tighten setscrews on metering drum bearing.



Photo 4. Bring two opposing tower roof sheets to the tower roof center collar.

best way to obtain authoritative source information. These highly skilled folks, who are sometimes very possessive of their knowledge, will need to be won over to the idea of photographing their work. The best chance for success is when upper management is 100-percent behind the photo illustration project. Management should introduce the photo illustrator to the SMEs with whatever admonishment to cooperate is necessary.

Tip 3. In a research and design context, all steps in the sequence may not be—to put it delicately—may not be fully developed. In the case of an unfinished product that management wants documented, I highly recommend honest, open dialog with the photo illustrator. The photo illustrator is not a quality control agent and will not be making a status report on the product. There are ways to photograph around problem areas, but the photo illustrator needs to know where they are. For example, if the correct-size grommet is not available on the day of the photo shoot, let the photo illustrator know. Maybe the photo can be taken from an angle that shows the grommet assembly but not the gaps the correct-size grommet would seal.

Tip 4. This is a corollary to Tip 3. Do not lie to the photo illustrator. It is bad karma. And, remember, the photo will not lie. Speaking of karma, if the photo illustrator is pleasant to work with, takes good photos, and provides useful documentation, say so. Thank the photo illustrator, and be sure to commend the photo illustrator to management. Your colleague, the photo illustrator, will do the same for you.

Tip 5. SMEs who are demonstrating how widgets fit together should groom well before the photo shoot. I've done so many pixel-by-pixel manicures in Photoshop, I should charge extra. On the bright side, scratches, bruises, and tattoos can also be readily digitized into oblivion. Stand up straight; you represent the company!

Tip 6. Everyone appearing in the photos should keep in mind that the expression on their face is one that may very well travel around the world. Photo illustration is used extensively in manuals intended for international use; photos are essential when readers are speaking and reading different languages. So smile.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

Editor's Desk

September 2002

Kicking Off the New Chapter Year

By [Lana Walker-Helmuth](#), Managing Editor, and
[Sharon Bradshaw](#), Associate Editor

A hearty hello from the new *Signature* editors! We hope you had an enjoyable summer. [About [Lana](#) and [Sharon](#)]

So, are you ready for the new chapter year? We are, and we're looking forward to contributing to our chapter's success through this newsletter. If you haven't heard, *Signature* has gone to HTML format ([see July article](#)).

Our new Web presence will give us greater exposure than ever before. Virtually anyone with an Internet connection can visit our e-newsletter and enjoy the great variety of information, expertise, wisdom, and humor our talented contributors offer.

It's not too late to get involved. If you have an article idea simmering on the back burner, consider bringing it to a boil and send it in. We're also looking for:

- one or two people to write a book or software review
- someone to write [Kudos Corner](#), a new monthly column created to acknowledge member achievements

Banner Ads

What's with the banner ads? Well, we're seizing the chance to promote advertising in *Signature* as an easy, inexpensive way for advertisers to target their market. It's in their best interest to make their offers irresistible, so we'll be encouraging marketers to offer meaningful discounts to our readers (that's you).

You'll get good deals, and our chapter will have a little more money to put into member services.

Monthly Polls

The chapter council is very interested in learning what's on your minds. What's important to you as a technical communicator? What can the San Diego Chapter do to help you achieve your goals? The monthly polls will give us an idea.

We also encourage you to e-mail any of the [council](#) with your comments, suggestions, or concerns.

Bon Voyage!



[Return Home](#)

Get your message out to your target market in *Signature*! [More...](#)

Sample ad below

Vertical Rectangle 240 x 400

We're giving away a copy of FrameMaker every day for the next 30 days!



Really.

<<[Click here](#)>>

Enough from us. We've got a great issue with several new columns, an interesting feature on working with photo illustrators, and visiting experts from the San Diego Computer-Human Interaction group. Return to the [home page](#), and click away!

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

[Return Home](#)

September 2002

President's Podium

[Return Home](#)[Author Bio](#)[Administrative Council](#)

Benefit From and Contribute to STC Community

By [Walter Hanig](#), President

Fellow members,

Welcome to the 2002-2003 chapter year!

I'm writing this on the way back from my high school reunion in a one-high-school town in Tennessee. More so than at previous reunions, I was struck by the sense of connection to my classmates, many of whom I never knew those many years ago.

I think that, perhaps because of the tragedy of last September 11, each of us felt more like part of a community. We shared some common experiences in the past and were sharing some common challenges in the present: empty or soon to be empty nests, boomerang children, aging parents, prospects of retirement, and the aches and pains earned since graduation.

It occurred to me as I reflected on the reunion and the time spent with old, dear friends that STC, particularly at the chapter level, is also a community. Like any community, no two members have identical situations, interests, goals, experiences, or skills.

However the characteristics we do share are more significant than our differences. We all want to be appreciated and rewarded for our contributions. We want to learn new skills. We want to face new professional challenges. We want to share our experiences with others.

My goal as president of the San Diego STC Chapter is to help create an environment where these wants can be met. Clearly, this is an ambitious objective. It's more than I or the Administrative Council can expect to accomplish alone. Yet, by drawing on the strength of the chapter community, this objective doesn't seem so tough. In a community, at any given time, some members need assistance and others have the time and ability to assist.

Personally, I've gotten much help from chapter members. Thanks to Suzy and John for welcoming me to the community. For examples, thanks to Kris for getting me involved as a volunteer, thanks to Tom for putting in my résumé at Qualcomm; thanks to Jim for encouraging me to create a chapter presentation. I'm sure my experience as a beneficiary of others' knowledge, time, enthusiasm, and counsel is not unique. I'd bet that each of you has benefited from another member at one time.

With this background, I ask you all to consider ways you can help other members of the San Diego STC community. Volunteers are always needed. You can contribute as little as an hour a month or as much as you can spare. The opportunities to help are varied. Some are solitary; others involve close work with a committee. Some tasks recur; others are single instances.

However you choose to contribute, I guarantee you'll feel the satisfaction of giving. Please contact any member of the [Administrative Council](#), and let us know you can contribute to our community. Even if you can't make a commitment now, please consider giving back to the chapter when one of us asks you to help.

Our first meeting is September 11. We considered canceling the meeting but ultimately decided that we could meet and still respect the tragic loss suffered by so many individuals and our country.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Visiting Author

[Return Home](#)[Author Bio](#)[Click here to learn about SanDCHI](#)

Create Revenue Opportunities Through Good Design

By [Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave](#), SanDCHI

I wish I had a dollar for every meeting, workshop, executive retreat, and budget presentation that I've attended over the years where I've listened to software managers and company executives expound on how they could eliminate the overhead of software technical support if only they had a better product to sell.

While sitting in yet another such meeting recently—this one the July San Diego Computer-Human Interaction meeting—I had a true organizational epiphany. I'll get to that *ah ha!* moment shortly.

The July meeting featured David Foltz as our guest speaker. Foltz's topic was "Visual Design and Usability—How Do Graphic Designers 'DO' Usability?" It was an interactive presentation with a lot of participation from the attendees. At one point, one of the participants chimed in to expand on one of David's points, that design that is both effective and affectively appropriate results in interfaces and interaction experiences that users ultimately convert into perceptions of being more satisfied with the product. This is clearly a good thing.

Another participant piggybacked on that statement and added that, when companies deploy products that are well designed, those companies could realize bottom-line benefits by significantly reducing the overhead that is consumed by the technical support team (e.g., Help Desk, Customer Service, the poor schmoes who answer the phones).

No matter how it's phrased, there seems to be this pervasive idea that the only way to enjoy a bottom-line benefit relative to the relationship between design and software technical support is to improve the design (duh!) and thereby obviate the need for this form of customer service. This is not a good thing!

This was not the first time I had heard a designer or programmer or analyst (aka: non-customer-service professional) express the belief that eliminating or significantly reducing technical support was a sub-rosa benefit of improved design. But it was when I had my *ah ha!* moment.

Changing Roles

My epiphany was that a company's real return on effective design relative to its effect on the cost of providing technical support services does not come about from cutting services

that are no longer needed but from *changing* the kind of service those groups provide.

I think what gets lost in the minds of folks who are knee-jerk advocates of eliminating or reducing technical customer service overhead as a natural benefit of improved design is the understanding that these are the very groups where the vast majority of product and customer knowledge resides. Companies should keep these important organizations and enhance their corporate bottom lines by **recasting the roles that these service professionals fulfill**.

What? Doesn't that cost more money? Isn't the point of improved design to reduce costs? Save money?

No, not necessarily.

Creating New Revenue Streams

The flip side of the goal of good design being to save money is for it to *make money*. One inexpensive way for a company to make more money is for it to create new services to sell into the existing customer base.

So here's the real-world application of that *ah ha!* moment: an extremely elegant way for companies to create new revenue streams is for them to field products so well made that customers no longer need to contact Technical Support to answer lower order "how" questions. Instead, companies need to retrain their support staff so those professionals can deliver value-added services that provide end users with answers to higher order "what if" questions.

By changing the focus of their Technical Support Departments from **reactive** information delivery agents to **proactive** knowledge consultants, companies can create product-pricing models that actually add to the bottom line. This means that technical support organizations become profit centers rather than cost centers.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

SanDCHI



About SanDCHI

By [Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave](#)[Return Home](#)

Related articles:

[Create Revenue Opportunities Through Good Design](#)[Process to Protect the User Experience](#)

The San Diego Chapter of CHI (Computer Human Interactions), SanDCHI, was founded four years ago by a group of usability and design professionals representing companies such as AOL, Claritas, Intuit, Motorola, Qualcomm, and Sony along with practitioners in-training from UCSD, SDSU, UCI, and other colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada.

Since its founding, SanDCHI has grown to include hundreds of members from throughout San Diego, Orange, and Riverside counties. Its charter is to research, discuss, and attempt to solve issues related to human factors, usability, and ergonomics across a variety of disciplines including hardware, software, and Web design in the support of the development of easy-to-use products.

To participate in lively online discussions of these topics and others or to learn about the date and location of our next meeting, join us at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sandchi/>.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Region 8 Director-Sponsor Report



[Return Home](#)

To volunteer to help with the conference, contact Kathryn Munn at kathrynmunn@attbi.com or Bonni Graham at bgraham@manuallabour.com.

To conference or not to conference, that is the question

By [Bonni Graham](#), Region 8 Director-Sponsor

Many of you have e-mailed me asking when the 2002 Region 8 Conference will be, enough so that I figured a column spent on it would not be inappropriate.

The best answer I can give you is: I don't know.

We have most of a committee ready to work on implementing a conference vision. We have a volunteer coordinator, Kathryn Munn, who knows what additional talent we need and is ready to organize and manage it. We have interested attendees.

What we don't have is a conference manager. What we don't have is a location or a theme (things, usually at least, decided on by a manager).

The original manager had to step down for personal reasons. I applaud this person for that decision; recognizing when is a good time to step down is a mark of maturity and is difficult to do. However, it leaves us without a leader. In an ironic twist on the old saw, we have too many Indians and not enough chiefs.

The original location returned an unacceptable contract. I applaud the hospitality committee for rejecting this contract—it was the responsible choice.

I think a conference is still possible. Not in November, of course, our traditional time frame. But a conference in late winter or early spring can be done. We have a startup budget, thanks to the exemplary work performed by De Murr, the conference manager for 2001's highly successful Guerilla Conference. We have equipment, also from this conference, that can be carried forward. We have a Web address (thanks to Jeff Randolph for renewing that) to publicize it.

We need a conference manager with a vision of theme and the willingness to see it through. It is not something you have to do alone. We also have an advisory committee consisting of the top conference management talent from past years. There has never been a better opportunity for someone to step forward and try running a conference. We have never been better prepared.

But it's up to you. The conference is a grass-roots effort. It is not a requirement imposed from the top; it is not an event that "someone else" will start. If you want a conference, someone will have to step forward and manage it.

Will it hurt the conference to skip a year? Not at all; we have

before and we can again. However, I would love to see us continue this effective educational experience. Attendees routinely praise the knowledge and connections they acquire at the regional conference. (And who, in this economy, can turn down connections?). And I can tell you from extensive personal experience that you get far more out of a conference you work on.

If you're interested in volunteering to help with the conference at any level, contact Kathryn Munn at kathrynmunn@attbi.com or myself at bgraham@manuallabour.com. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have and get you set up to move forward on the safest management opportunity you'll ever have!

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Competition



[Return Home](#)

Stand Out From the Crowd: Southern California Technical Publications Competition

By Elaine Randolph, Senior Member, Orange County Chapter

To serve as a competition judge, contact Jack Molisani, jackm@prospring.net.

In our current challenging economic climate, we need to seize opportunities to stand out from the crowd.

What differentiates our work and makes it special? Winning an award in an STC publications competition can provide prestige and recognition for you and your company (or your clients if you are a contract writer).

This year, the combined STC chapters of southern California are sponsoring a technical publications competition that provides us with an opportunity to showcase our talents as writers. Cochaired by **Adrienne Escoe** and **Kara Dodge** of OCSTC, the competition enables you to win in several ways.

Be a Contestant

Enter the competition. Each entry will be evaluated by a team of judges who will use a set of criteria established by STC for the appropriate type of publication, either printed or online.

Even if you don't win an award, you will receive valuable feedback from qualified judges. If you do win an award at one of the three competition levels, you will gain more than a certificate—you will have achieved prestigious recognition that you can list on your resume.

Entries are due **October 4**, so that distribution and judging can be complete before the holidays. Winners at the Distinguished level are sent on to the society-level competition.

Be a Judge

Experienced writers can participate as judges. If you have served as a judge in past competitions, we need you. If you have always wanted to gain this rewarding experience, we want you.

Serving as a judge brings several rewards. You will be using your experience for the benefit of others and the society, and you will be seeing wonderful work from other writers that can provide you with ideas to use in your future projects.

If you want to serve as a judge, contact Jack Molisani at jackm@prospring.net.

Learn More on the Web Site

Complete information for this year's contest will be located on the Web at www.ocstc.org/competition.asp. Visit the site for information about the schedule, various types of documentation that you can enter, the entry forms, cost of entries, and other details.

Don't miss this opportunity to stand out from the crowd. Gain the recognition you deserve!

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

New Members



Welcome to the San Diego Chapter!

[Return Home](#)

By [Simrita Dhir](#), VP-Membership

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

Please welcome new members **Vickie Hearne** and **Sandra Y. Stoddard** and reinstated members **Anthony J. Pastizzo** and **Katrina Sjoberg**.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Chapter Meetings

[Return Home](#)[Click here for
September meeting
details](#)

September Meeting Preview: FrameMaker 7.0—Scott's Back!

By [Elaine Tsang](#), VP-Programs

We are pleased to kick off the first meeting of the 2002-2003 chapter year with **Scott Hamlow**, an application engineer from Adobe Systems, Inc.

Many of you may recall his visit a few years ago when he introduced FrameMaker 6. His presentation, one of the most highly attended in our chapter's history, was first rate and left us wanting more.

He covered the topics that are important to technical writers, he told us about shortcuts and tricks, he demonstrated a thorough understanding of the program, and he did a great job fielding questions from the audience. Therefore, we had to have him back to introduce FrameMaker 7.0.

Scott has been in the document publishing industry since 1991. He began as a technical editor and writer and learned Adobe FrameMaker and Adobe Acrobat. He also learned the intricacies of the PDF and PostScript file formats.

Scott quickly saw the value of single-source publishing with Adobe FrameMaker and all of the benefits of Adobe PDF. This has been his focus since he joined Adobe Systems in 1999.

Please join us for an informative evening discussing the new features of FrameMaker 7.0 as well as XML, single-source publishing, and the concept of structured authoring. [[Meeting details.](#)]

June Meeting Review

By Sean Griffin

We covered the June meeting in the summer edition of *Signature*. [Click here if you missed it.](#)

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Next Meeting Details


[Return Home](#)

September Meeting Time and Place

By Nadine Barter Bowlus

Date: Wednesday, September 11, 2002**Our presenter:**

Scott Hamlow of Adobe will talk about FrameMaker 7.0. [See Meeting Preview.](#)

Time:

5:30--Networking
6:15--Dinner
6:45--Presentation

RSVP: Make your dinner reservation by 5 p.m. Sunday, September 8. See details below.

Place: Wyndham Garden Hotel, 5975 Lusk Blvd., Sorrento Mesa. Located east of I-805, at the corner of Lusk Blvd. and Mira Mesa Blvd. (behind Chili's Restaurant). Phone: 858-558-1818

Menu: Buffet

- Tossed Garden Salad
- Fresh Fruit and Berries
- Stuffed Jumbo Pasta Shells
- Beef Teriyaki Stir Fry
- Seasonal Selection Steamed Vegetables
- Warm Dinner Rolls and Butter
- Dessert Table (Chef's Choice)
- Coffee, Tea, and Iced Tea

Cost (Dinner and Presentation):

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

*Add \$5 if you do not make a reservation by 5 p.m. Sunday, September 8.

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

**To receive this special rate, you need to make a reservation by 5 p.m. Sunday, September 8.

Cost (Presentation Only-no reservation required):

- Members \$10
- Nonmembers \$15

RSVP: Make your reservation online (preferred) by 5 p.m. Sunday, September 8. Visit <http://www.stc-sd.org> and click on **Reservations**. Or phone your reservation to (619) 525-7716. **Reservations are required if you choose the dinner option to ensure enough food is provided.**

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Tech Issues

[Return Home](#)

Matt Sullivan is the training director for GRAFIX Training, Inc.,

an Adobe-certified training provider with offices in San Diego and Tustin.

Among his Adobe certifications are Acrobat, FrameMaker, FrameMaker+SGML, and Photoshop.

Direct questions on technical issues to matt@grafixtraining.com

Find previous "Tech Issues" columns at www.grafixtraining.com/stc/stc.html.

Identify Your Software's Strengths and Weaknesses

By [Matt Sullivan](#)

Recently, while waiting for a flight in the airport, I realized how many electronic devices we all carry. So I figured it was a good time to pull out the portable keyboard for my Palm and write this article.

Of course, I also have a digital camera in my bag next to my cell phone. And I'm wondering if I should pull out my MP3 player so that I don't have to listen to all the airport noise. (Okay, so I'm a little more "connected" than most.)

Do I really work any faster or more effectively than someone without all these devices?

Honestly, on a normal day in San Diego I don't do any better than folks with a cell phone and a desktop computer. The reason is that all this gadgetry only helps when I'm away from my primary computers and connections.

I think that the utility we get from most software is the same. Using FrameMaker's thesaurus to look up synonyms is helpful only if there's no desktop thesaurus available. Using Word to output HTML is helpful only when we don't have a program designed to do that function.

I stress in class that there are many features in these programs we can safely overlook. It's a case of the right tool for the right job. I suggest that you identify the strengths of your software and, more important, the weaknesses.

Here's a list of my most used applications and, in my opinion, their biggest strengths and weaknesses:

FrameMaker

Strength: Keeping track of the components of a book such as numbering of components like chapters, tables, and TOCs.

Weakness: Creating simple graphics. I don't spend more than 10 minutes discussing Frame's creation tools. I spend time on importing graphics from other applications.

Photoshop

Strength: The best bitmap editor out there. Period.

Weakness: Combining pixel-based art with vector-based, or shape-based art and type. Photoshop turns everything into pixels, which can lead to fuzzy graphics and type.

Illustrator

Strength: Creating art that looks mechanical or airbrushed.

Weakness: Working with bitmaps. Adobe tried to turn Illustrator into a simple page layout program years ago. Didn't work then, doesn't work now!

Speaking of page layout programs, in order of market share:

QuarkXpress

Strength: Straightforward interface. Acceptance in commercial printing market.

Weakness: Technical support from the company. Cumbersome type and graphics controls.

PageMaker

Strength: Ease of use. Just what you'd expect from the program that spawned the DTP industry.

Weakness: Lack of features. Limited future upgrade potential.

InDesign

Strength: Superior type controls for those who need them. The best handling of graphic formats, including native Photoshop and Illustrator files.

Weakness: The 1.x releases. Lack of printing controls really hurt InDesign's initial acceptance. However, it still ranks as my favorite page layout program.

Acrobat

Strength: Acrobat Reader installed on nearly everyone's computer.

Weakness: Lack of marketing. This program does more than you'd think, including database entry, document revision control, and electronic signatures to name a few. Check it out.

Now that I've gone through the pros and cons of my favorite software, I think I'll do the same thing with all my electronic gadgets and see what I can get rid of!

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Advice

[Return Home](#)[Author Bio](#)

Grammar Rules Get Bad Rap

By [Beth Vollbach](#), *Signature* Copy Editor

A lot of editors quibble about grammar rules; they don't think there should be any. But I want to mention some grammar rules, anyhow, and I invite dissenters to e-mail *Signature* at stcsignature@yahoo.com.

First of all, there is a difference between *that* and *which*. *That* should be used to introduce a restrictive clause, and *which* should be used to introduce a nonrestrictive clause. Mixing up *that* and *which* can lead to misunderstanding.

For example, if I say, "The drain which Keith unplugged worked well," you might wonder whether I meant, "The drain, which Keith unplugged, worked well" (i.e., the drain worked well, and Keith unplugged it). Or I might mean, "The drain that Keith unplugged worked well" (i.e., someone else tried to unplug that drain and didn't do such a good job).

My theory is that the *that* versus *which* rule is confused a lot partly because it is American. People forget or never realized that what's acceptable in European English isn't in American English. Or they may know that Europeans/Canadians spell some words differently, e.g., they spell *program* *programme*. But they so often read books published in England or Canada that they get used to their style and don't realize American style is different.

Another example is the use of "an historic." Americans would correctly say "a historic," but many (most, I think) Americans think "an historic" is right. Remember this rule: use *an* before vowel sounds and *a* before consonant sounds. We Americans pronounce the *h*.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

SanDCHI: Usability


[Return Home](#)

We introduce this new column on usability, written by members of the San Diego chapter of CHI (Computer Human Interactions).

[Click here to learn about SanDCHI.](#)

Author Michael Korn's [\[see bio\]](#) primary professional goals are:

1) to design products that make everyday tasks easier to do with technology than without technology, and

2) to contribute to the technology community such that San Diego becomes known as a haven for ease-of-use technology development.

Application in the Technology Industry: Process to Protect the User Experience

By [Michael Korn](#)

This month's column is intended to lay the groundwork for a continuing series of writings related to usability application in the technology industry. The content may be a bit dry this go-around, but I'll try to include an example or two so that we all stay on the same track.

In practice, *usability* has many different meanings:

- process of designing and evaluating for ease of use
- application of behavioral methodology to the collection of user interaction data
- tool used to facilitate or obstruct the development of a product

Any or all of these three definitions can be operating during the product development cycle at nearly any time.

Usability process, also referred to as "user-centered design" (UCD), is often embraced by product or usability managers who use the process as a means of maintaining their own objectivity while also reminding themselves and others for whom the product is being designed.

Folks who are focused on usability or UCD in its process state have usually attained a position in the product team in which they are able to apply user ease-of-use principles *early* in the design process.

Usability as an application of behavioral methodology is the usability professionals' jargon for doing the nuts-and-bolts user-testing work. Managers and professionals might use the term *usability* to refer to usability test design, data collection, data management, data analysis, and formulation of conclusions. These practices as well as product usability guidelines are based upon empirical, behavioral research that is continually being confirmed and/or disconfirmed in universities all over the world.

It is the practices and rigor of behavioral science that can effectively distinguish usability research from market research. In this context, *usability* is jargon for all stuff that behavioral scientists do to facilitate ease of use.

Usability as a tool used with strategic or even nefarious goals in mind is the application of process or technique for purposes for which usability was not designed. This is clearly the most dramatic and possibly entertaining use of usability. But it is often the most deleterious to the product as well as the profession.

Products that attempt to use usability test results as a justification or "blessing" for the already completed design are asking the usability professionals to swallow their tongues for the sake of the product. This is similar to a gymnastics trainer's predicament if the gymnastics coach asks the trainer to allow an injured gymnast to perform even though the trainer *and* the coach know that the athlete is injured.

As you might infer, *usability* is a term that can easily be misinterpreted and sometimes misused. *Usability* is sometimes used synonymously with terms such as *UCD*. The balance of this column is dedicated to the usability or UCD process.

The Usability Process

The steps associated with the process of designing for ease of use begin with identifying the objectives. The objectives might include 1) designing a Web site so that most consumers perceive the product to be easy to use and 2) creating a product that can be installed on a home computer with a minimum of frustration.

Objectives should be sensitive to the business objectives and engineering constraints, also. So, if you're asking whether it's necessary for usability professionals to know marketing and software engineering, the answer is a resounding, sort of. You need to know enough to be sensitive to their objectives. And you need to err on the side of knowing *too* much.

Once objectives are set, the usability engineer will set measurable goals. These measurable goals will set the framework for the balance of the UCD of the product. Based on the objectives, goals might be to design a product that can be successfully installed by 90 percent of the target population without a customer support call.

Another goal might assess whether the product is easy to use. For instance, a goal of 80-percent success on the most common product task with two or fewer errors might signify a goal.

It is then incumbent upon UCD or usability professionals to define the users. Using empirically valid sampling and survey techniques, the usability pro systematically begins identifying the characteristics of the most likely users of the product.

Again, it's important to maintain sensitivity and respect for the business' perspective of who the current users are as well as other target populations the business is hoping to attract. Once user profiles have been agreed upon, usability identifies and prioritizes the product tasks on the basis of the behavior characteristics outlined in the user profile. Those products that make the most common tasks easy to use for the right user segments are far more likely to have high customer satisfaction ratings.

The design of the product follows the prioritization of the tasks. In an ideal world, a user interface (UI) designer would then design the screen flow of the product on the basis of the "requirements." These requirements may be distributed by business, but they should have a separate section for usability requirements and should reinforce the close association between the UI designer and the usability engineer.

Only after a testable design has been created do we begin the actual testing of preliminary versions of the product with real users. But, as should be clear by now, the influence of usability up to this point is almost as important in designing easy-to-use products as is the actual testing.

Next month, I will go into more detail about the methodological definition of *usability*. I will outline many of the procedures that usability professionals use. I will also try to describe why rather subtle, seemingly irrelevant procedural steps can greatly influence the usability test results and, ultimately, product design.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Professional Development

[Return Home](#)[Administrative Council](#)

Invest in Yourself Through Courses and Workshops

By [Audrey Johns](#), VP-Professional Development

Now is the time to invest in yourself. Adding to your existing skill sets can lead you to new opportunities in this ever-changing job market.

Throughout the upcoming year, STC's Professional Development group will attempt to provide as many opportunities as possible to our members. Soon, each San Diego Chapter member will be contacted by e-mail to fill out a survey to provide the Professional Development group with feedback about courses and workshops that interest our members.

We're teaming up with vendors to offer courses at substantial discounts to STC members. Also, any nonmember sponsored by an STC member will receive a discount, although less than the member discount.

Register Early

A minimum number of attendees will be required for each course, so it will be important to register early for courses you plan to attend.

Respond to Survey

The feedback from your surveys will help us to better serve you, so please take a few minutes and respond to the survey when you receive it. The sooner we receive your responses, the sooner we can begin scheduling the courses you may be interested in attending.

If you have any questions or suggestions for Professional Development or if you are interested in serving on the Professional Development Committee, please contact me at ajohns@omnigon.com.

I look forward to receiving your feedback from the (soon to be sent) questionnaire.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Employment Desired


[Return Home](#)


Illustration © 2002
Ann M. Throckmorton

Members Looking for Work

Sean Griffin

sgriffiner@juno.com

(760) 500-1367

Experienced educator and manager seeks position in training and instructional design. Fifteen years' experience in instructional design and presentation for groups large and small, in business and in educational settings. Ten years' experience in business management—was Business Manager for Number One Sears Store in Southern California. Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Management, and California Teaching Credential for Business and English courses.

SKILLS: Development/adaptation of training courses and materials; implementation of training in classroom and seminar settings; business management; project management.

TOOLS: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher, FrontPage, PageMaker; Windows and Macintosh operating systems.

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 20th of the month. Ads received after the 20th will be inserted if possible.

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

Ann M. Throckmorton, M.A

ann.throckmorton@cox.net

(619) 303-2575

Senior Mechanical Processes Technical Writer/Photo Illustrator, with thirty-five years work experience in industry, government, education, and business. I conceptualize, design, research and interview to produce original, step-by-step photo-illustrated text in office or field context. I write in plain, practical terms: instruction sheets, operation guidelines, SOPs, assembly and construction manuals.

TOOLS: Adobe PageMaker and Photoshop, Word, Excel, Outlook, Visio, Lotus Notes with Database; learn new programs easily. I have a high level of curiosity and keen interest in complex, mechanical and electrical processes. References. Portfolio of writings and illustration formats.

PERSONAL INTERESTS: SCUBA/snorkel, reading about science, cooking, painting portraits on commission.

Erica Ueland

eeuwe@earthlink.net

Writer with background in computer-based training, instructional design, editing, QA, and team management is available for contract or permanent assignment. Eight years experience researching and writing interactive courseware, lesson specifications, objectives, job aids, tests, scripts, storyboards, management plans, manuals, reviews, test plans, QA plans, checklists, government reports, brochures, news releases, proposals, booklets, recommendation reports, and aviation materials.

Recent work is on IMI (Interactive Multimedia Instruction) DoD contract. Active security clearance.

TOOLS: Proficient/familiar with Microsoft Office Suite, WordPerfect, PhotoShop, Access, Dreamweaver, Visio, Quark, SnagIt, HTML.

Valerie Finley
vrfinley@hotmail.com
(626) 914-9554

Highly experienced documentation specialist with graphic design background, four years of experience in technical writing and WinHelp development seeking a full-time position creating, developing, and producing technical documentation.

Four years of experience in technical writing and editing user guides, manuals and online Help following the Chicago and Microsoft manuals of style.

Three years of experience in developing online context-sensitive Help for hardware and software in a Windows-based environment.

Served as Publications Manager and Web Designer for the 1998 STC Region 8 Conference.

TOOLS: MS Word, ForeHelp, Corel Draw, PhotoPaint, Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator, PhotoShop, RoboHelp, FrameMaker.

[Return Home](#)

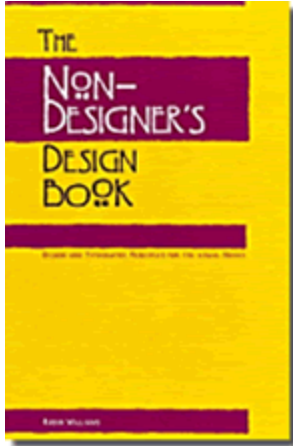
[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Book/Software Review


[Return Home](#)

The Non-Designer's Design Book

 Review by [Lance-Robert](#), VP-Finance


Robin Williams

Peachpit Press
144 pages, paperback,
approx. \$14.95

Originally assigned as an optional textbook for an information design class, *The Non-Designer's Design Book* has earned its place among my top references. At under \$15, it is also my least expensive reference. I have bought multiple copies for myself and other writers I've trained or worked with.

Robin Williams (no relation to the comedian of the same name) originally wrote Macintosh manuals, such as *The Little Mac Book*, but has since greatly expanded her expertise and audience.

Easy to read from cover to cover, the book uses a light writing style and humor to simply explain four visual design concepts: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.

Contrast means to avoid page elements that are similar to each other. For example, if you have two fonts that are not quite the same, then you should make them very different so that your reader can distinguish one from another and not think the printing press made an error.

Repetition means that your documents have a consistent look and feel throughout.

Alignment means that information is logically and consistently aligned on each page.

Proximity means that related page elements are physically close to each other, such as a figure and its caption, and are separated from unrelated elements. As the author states on page 14, there is a handy acronym for remembering these four design concepts; for decency's sake I will not state it here.

What my students and I found most useful were the realistic before-and-after examples. Of all the teaching methods, I find learning by example to be one of the easiest to grasp and retain. The author redesigns various page layouts, resumes, business cards, and advertisements, each time showing you and explaining the redesign process in stages. She includes brief quizzes in various sections to test and reaffirm your knowledge. Like my teacher before me, I found it well suited for the training environment.

The author also lists various practical and decorative fonts. She gives practical examples and explanations of fonts that do and do not belong together. This comes in handy if you work for someone who actually lets you use another font besides Times Roman on occasion.

Throughout the book, the author encourages readers to make informed choices. "Don't be a wimp," she says. She encourages you to try out new designs and to not hesitate just because they've never been tried before.

The sequel to this book is *Robin Williams Design Workshop*, coauthored with John Tollett. I also recommend that book. Although not as easy to read and more expensive, it builds on the concepts described in the first book. It has more detailed information and provides more practical examples from everyday correspondence.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Humor

[Return Home](#)[Author Bio](#)

Badge Required Beyond This Point

By [Karen Field](#)

I work in a company that has, like many San Diego companies, restructured its resources. My habit of obsequious gratitude for my job prevents me from sharing much about the situation, except this: if you get to the office and your badge still lets you in the door, we joke, you're still employed.

Of course, verifying employment status is not the only use for badges; there's also the minor issue of protecting trade secrets.

So badges are useful. Badges are necessary. But I'm probably preaching to the choir, or whispering to the paranoid, as it were. If you work in an environment like mine, you know that your security badge is your constant companion.

Still, there are those who work in this cloak-and-dagger world who fail to see the point of such security measures. I met one just the other day in an elevator. I scanned my badge over the card reader and pushed my floor number, then looked at the stranger, who appeared to be badgeless.

She said, "Three, please," all business. I thought: 1) I'm not her doorperson, and 2) where the heck is her badge?

I went with the latter sentiment. "Where's your badge?"

Badgeless tilted her head, popped her gum, twirled a finger in her hair and said, "Oh, I forgoooot it."

I hesitated. I thought, maybe I should let her up. But we've had layoffs. How do I know that she isn't some ex-employee here to even the score? Holding the elevator doors open, I teetered between doing the nice thing and doing the right thing, and Badgeless waited.

Then I remembered something. Security cameras are everywhere. That day in the elevator something told me that even if Little Miss Badgeless turned out to be legitimate, our security team would find out I breached protocol, and then I would not need to worry about using a badge ever again.

I looked again at my elevator companion. This unidentified being, who knows the culture as well as I do, expected me to jeopardize my job just because she's absent minded.

I took charge: faster than you can say "Loose lips sink ships," I punted her off the elevator into cyberspace. Well, maybe I wasn't that forceful. Instead, I said, "Would you please get off?"

Badgeless rolled her eyes, sneered once, and stepped off.

I never found out if that Jane Doe made it up to her floor that day, but guess what? My badge still works—for now.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Introductions

[Return Home](#)

We're pleased to welcome **Michael Abrams** as the new columnist for "Introductions."

[Author Bio](#)

Entertaining Technical Writer First Experiences Stage and Screen

By [Michael Abrams](#)

Résumé bullets we all have, but she's got TV credits, including lead and feature roles on *Divorce Court*, *Matlock*, and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*. She's done stage work and voice-overs and produced and directed commercials.

Marsha Fickas is the most entertaining of technical writers. I'm not kidding. She's a publications specialist with experience on stage and screen, and her off-camera life has been an adventure, too.



For a frisson, ask Marsha to describe a Saharan sunset framed by the Doser pyramid at Sakara (the one with stair steps). During her émigré days in Cairo, Marsha would hop out there for weekend rides past the Sphinx "in the saddle of a tall white horse that ran like the wind."

So how did Marsha find herself documenting medical equipment and military ordnance in San Diego?

The tale begins in suburban Riverside, where as a teenager Marsha was drawn to theater. She earned a best-actress award from her high school drama department, won a scholarship to Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatre Arts, and was picked as female representative during a nationwide young actors competition. She acted professionally and sang lead for rock bands touring the West Coast in the ensuing six years.

When Marsha's partner took an offer to develop flight-training films for Saudi pilots, she joined him. That was followed with stays around Arabia, North Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean. She wore many hats: commercial-jingle writer, cohost of the first English-language radio program in Abu Dhabi, singer in Arabic, set designer for a Ceylon Tea brochure on location in Sri Lanka. Talk about flexibility, resourcefulness, and being comfortable in multicultural contexts!

Back home, Marsha found TV gigs and other work, but Hollywood glamour soon gave way to the grind. Los Angeles intruded: traffic, smog, and, in 1991, Rodney King and the riots.

Marsha and a friend escaped to Fallbrook.

Plans to set up a landscape-design business were aborted by the bad post-Desert Storm economy, freeing Marsha to try her hand at writing. She enrolled in a Palomar College English class, where she discovered not only was she good at writing, but the art satisfied her creative cravings.

From there, Marsha worked and learned, stringing for the *Times Advocate Escondido*, now part of the *North County Times*, and the *Press-Enterprise*, Temecula. She trained in broadcast television and radio production. Then she fell into technical writing, being hired to a term contract at Camp Pendleton's Naval Weapons Station.

"On my first day I was handed a tutorial of QuarkXpress," Marsha says. "I was told I had two weeks before I needed to begin the process for my first draft of the military technical field manual." So began a period (which continues today) of being a voracious software learner.

She landed at Alaris Medical Systems as a Publication Specialist and enjoyed frequent teaming up with interpreters to develop foreign-language documents. Unfortunately, Marsha was swept up in a mass layoff; she's now looking for work. Her focus is technical writing because there are more job opportunities and better pay than in journalism or theater.

So how does all of this tie together? Well, it can't hurt when the same person writing documentation can produce training and promotional videos. And how do theater, journalism, and tech writing compare? Says Marsha: "Many of the same skill sets can be applied by varying the use of different ratios of research, creativity, imagination, and technical data."

And, she adds, the three can be raveled into one common thread, and that's communication.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Kudos Corner


[Return Home](#)

"Kudos are good for our collective karma."
—Mark Hall, *Signature* contributor

This new column acknowledges member achievements. We're looking for a volunteer to seek, gather, and write member news, such as awards, certifications, and advancements. If you're interested, please contact the editor at stcsignature@yahoo.com.

Kudos Corner: Member Achievements

Members Win APEX Awards

Several San Diego Chapter members earned the Award of Excellence for entries in the Fourteenth Annual Awards for Publication Excellence (APEX) Competition. According to the competition brochure, APEX 2002 awards were based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and success in achieving communications effectiveness.



Bonni Graham, CEO of Manual Labour in San Diego, and her staff writers, **Cathy Concors** and **Heather Caliri**, won the award in the Hardware and Software Manuals category for the *Data Tree for the Desktop Documentation Set*.

Bonni and Heather were also awarded for an entry in the Manual and Report Writing category, the *TREO 10 User Manual*.

"We're very excited about our APEX awards," said Bonni. "I'm proud of the team for creating exemplary manuals and equally proud of the positive customer feedback we receive."

Manual Labour has won awards in past APEX competitions for their Web site, marketing materials, and manuals created for Nissan North America, EDVision Corporation (now owned by Scantron), Kenwood USA, and Animal Resource Management. They've also won STC local and international publication competition awards.

Lana Walker-Helmuth, a Temecula information designer, won the APEX award for an Intranet site she developed while working for San Diego City Schools. "It's wonderful to have communications professionals look at your work and judge it as excellent. I encourage more technical communicators to enter next year's competition!"

For competition information, visit <http://www.apexawards.com>.

San Diego Locals Win Touchstone Competition

The San Diego area is home to several winners in **Touchstone**, the Northern California Technical Communication Competition. Visit the competition Web site at <http://www.stc-touchstone.org/2001>.

Listed here are local winners. Congratulations to all!

Online Communication

Category 1 Help

Excellence

Materials Studio Reflex and Reflex Plus
Accelrys, Inc.
Catherine Nanz, Vanessa Hoy, Kathleen Kearney Moore

Intuit TurboTax EasyStep FAQs for TY00
Intuit
Michael Tallman, Kerri De Rosier

Category 2 Demonstrations

Distinguished

Intuit ProSeries Evaluation CD for TY00
Intuit
Mike Walter, Bruce Meyer

Achievement

Online Quicken 2002 Show Me Videos
Intuit
Scott Caplener

Wireless Internet Launchpad (WIL)
Qualcomm, Incorporated
Gail Dana, Steve Wendt

Open Your Eyes
Qualcomm, Incorporated
Gail Dana, Steve Wendt

Category 4 Tutorials/Training

Distinguished

Intuit TurboTax Deluxe videos for TY00
Intuit
Bruce Meyer, Kristina Cobarrubia, Mike Walker

Category 5 Books

Excellence

Intuit ProSeries Electronic User's Guide for TY00
Intuit
Jan Harris, Wayne Boeck

HP PhotoSmart Onscreen User's Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Nikki P. Kraft, Carolyn Passig Jensen, Alecia Hunter

Technical Publication Winners

Category 3 Quick Reference Guides

Excellence

ProSeries Evaluation QuickStart Card for TY00
Intuit
Wayne Boeck, Jan Harris, Kerri De Rosier

Intuit ProSeries QuickStart Guide for TY00
Intuit
Wayne Boeck, Jan Harris, Kerri De Rosier

Solutions Mixing Guides
Noritsu America Corporation
Clark McDuell

HP PhotoSmart 1315 Setup Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Suzanne Hosie, Carolyn Passig Jensen, Alecia Hunter

Merit

HP PhotoSmart 100 Setup Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Suzanne Hosie, Carolyn Passig Jensen, Alecia Hunter

HP PhotoSmart 1215/1115 Setup Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Suzanne Hosie, Carolyn Passig Jensen, Alecia Hunter

Category 4 Software Guides

Excellence

Intuit ProSeries User's Guide for Tax Year 2000
Intuit
Wayne Boeck, Kerri De Rosier, Jan Harris

Quicken Setup Guide
Intuit
Mary Kaye Polomik

JAMIS open e-timecard Systems Guide
Portera GC
Mike Mullarkey, Kathleen Pierce

Merit

Workforce Web User's Guide and Quick Reference
Ericsson Wireless Communications, Inc.
Mary Drobnis, Kitt Medrano, Michael Hecht

Intuit ProSeries Evaluation Guide for TY00

Intuit
Wayne Boeck, Jan Harris, Kerri De Rosier

Category 5 Hardware/Software Combination Guides

Merit

HP PhotoSmart 100 Photo Printing Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Suzanne Hosie, Lise Porter, Alecia Hunter

HP PhotoSmart 1315 Basics Guide
Write on the Edge, Inc.
Nikki P. Kraft, Carolyn Passig Jensen, Alecia Hunter

Category 7 Non-Computer Equipment Guides

Merit

I-SAGE Kit
Invitrogen Corporation
Darshini Mehta

PurePro Caulobacter Expression System
Invitrogen Corporation
Anne Chen

Category 18 Documentation Sets

Achievement

VESTA M1 2.2 Documentation Set
Plant Equipment, Inc.
Heather Barry

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Mail for the Muse

[Return Home](#)

Send your letters to Dear Muse at stcsignature@yahoo.com. We guarantee your confidentiality!

Muse, the inspiration that motivates a poet, artist, or thinker.

Dear Muse: Real Advice for Real People (Sorta)

Dear Muse,

I have a problem. My girlfriend, who is a technical writer, corrects my grammar all the time. Proper English usage is her compulsion. The other day I pronounced *mischievous* "mis-che-vee-ous," and she spent 15 minutes explaining the difference. Now we're not speaking. What do I do?

Tongue Tied

Dear Tongue Tied,

Public health workers wash their hands frequently. Psychiatrists analyze their spouses to death. Editors can't pick up a magazine without a red pen in their other hand. In other words, most people are prone to obsession about some traits of their work, and your girlfriend's monomania is pronunciation. So, even if you don't feel as strongly about the English language as she does, try to patient with her. And remember— it could be worse: she could be a sex therapist.

Dear Muse,

My company recently went through two rounds of layoffs. Many of my friends got RIFed, but I did not. I'm sad for them and glad for me, but now they bad-mouth this company whenever we talk. I don't know what to say. This is still my employer, after all.

Left Behind

Dear Left Behind,

Your RIFed friends probably feel rejected and afraid. If a lover moved your things to the curb and asked for the keys to the house back, you wouldn't wander the streets singing his praises, especially if the breakup adversely affected your bank account.

For whatever reason, you are the lucky party here, so try to be sympathetic. When your friends begin their sad songs about your employer, nod sympathetically and change the subject. Just don't chime in. Your friends don't need fuel for the torch they're burning, and you don't need to feel bad about the job that pays your bills.

A final thought: Since your company is going through layoffs, start a job hunt for yourself. Call it "Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover."

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Author Bios


[Return Home](#)

Meet Our Illustrious Authors!



Michael Abrams, Introductions. Michael started his writing career as a journalist. He found himself, a New York guy, in Texas, driving a pickup truck and covering the Mexican border.

After a stint at City Hall for the *San Diego Union*, he went to work for a local politician. Bad fit! So Michael found a job writing about engineering workstations and CAD/CAM, which he did for nine years. Good fit!

Now he's writing for UCSD's Jacobs School of Engineering.

Sharon Bradshaw (Associate Editor). Sharon started her writing career as an escrow officer, writing escrow instructions. She changed careers and became an award-winning television producer and script writer. Sharon founded Tammarine Production Company and wrote and produced over 25 docudramas. Today, she is a senior writer/editor at Dot Hill Systems.

She exchanged the financial roller coaster ride of being self-employed for working in the high-tech industry. Guess she is a risk-taker through and through.

Karen Field, Humor. Karen has been a technical writer for six years and specializes in writing software documentation. Formerly an exercise physiologist, Karen writes freelance articles on health, nutrition, and fitness for magazines in her free time.

On writing the "Humor" column, Karen says, "I never have trouble finding something to poke fun at in our profession. I think that says a lot about tech writing!"

Karen works at Peregrine Systems in Del Mar.



Walter Hanig, President's Podium. Walter discovered technical writing after previous careers in military software design and end-user program management. He manages a gang/group/cartel/junta/cabal of talented writers at Ericsson Wireless Communications. But if he wins the lawsuit, he'll pursue his real talent, cooking.

Walter served the chapter as Finance Vice-President and Administrative Council jester for the previous four years.

Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave, Usability. Deborah, contributing author from SanDCHI, has been an information design professional far longer than she will admit publicly. Her career has spanned such noble disciplines as teaching and senior management.



She continues to interweave her first passion—helping people succeed—into all her endeavors. DGH has been the principal consultant of **dgh enterprises** since 1994 and has periodically taken leave of her senses to labor for exceptional companies like TransTech and Claritas.



Michael Korn, Usability. Michael, contributing author from SanDCHI, has been working in the field of product and interface design for six years. Before that, he did post-graduate work in usability as well as human factors psychology.

Michael is married with two children.



Beth Vollbach, Copy Editor, Advice. Beth admits she's been a technical writer and editor since 1983 when she began writing for GM in a Detroit suburb. She now works for Bechtel in San Diego, where employees are known to stay for years—*years*.

Also an editor of two -page proposals for her husband's company, Evans Plumbing, she is much appreciated as she tries hard to make the job look difficult.

For Bechtel, Beth edits technical reports supporting environmental investigations of Navy and Marine bases.



Lana Walker-Helmuth, Editor's Desk (Managing Editor). Lana (rhymes with *banana*) loves to create things. Give her a user guide, help system, knowledge base, or newsletter to design and she'll be happy.

As a new golf enthusiast, she suspects she's on her way to becoming the next Tiger Woods. After all, they share the same Myers-Briggs personality profile and have *almost* the same swing pattern.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Newsletter Information

[Return Home](#)

**Reach hundreds
of technical
communicators
for little cost!**

[Advertising Rates](#)

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:

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

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.

By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Unless otherwise noted, copyrights for all newsletter articles belong to the authors. The design and layout of this newsletter are © San Diego STC, 2002.

Permission to Republish

Material published in *Signature* may be republished if *Signature* and the author are credited. After publication, send a printed copy to the editor at the above address. If the publication is electronic, e-mail the newsletter URL or PDF to stcsignature@yahoo.com.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Newsletter Staff



Signature Staff

[Return Home](#)

[More about the
San Diego Signature](#)

Managing Editor

Lana Walker-Helmuth
lane@pe.net

Associate Editor

Sharon Bradshaw
sbradsh2@san.rr.com

Copy Editors

Beth Vollbach
bethvollbach@earthlink.net

Pamela Fridie
Fridie_Indexing@msn.com

Illustrator

Ann M. Throckmorton
ann.throckmorton@cox.net

Proofreaders

Mark Hall
mark@hallmarkinterfaces.com

Catherine Robinson
croby2@yahoo.com

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

2002-2003 Council Members

[Return Home](#)**Chapter President, Walter Hanig**wdhanig@alumni.rice.edu

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

VP-Finance, Lance -Robertlance.robert@tarari.com

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

VP-Membership, Simrita DhirSDhir@gers.com

Simrita is a technical writer at GERS, a leading supplier of software systems and e-business solutions for retailers.

VP-Professional Development, Audrey Johnsajohns@omnigon.com

Audrey is a senior technical writer and editor at Omnigon Technologies, a bioinformatics company.

VP-Programs, Elaine Tsangelaine@tecstandards.com

Elaine is a staffing manager at Technical Standards, Inc. She's also served as our chapter VP-Membership.

VP-Employment, Ken Wilsonkwilson@lqtechnology.com

Ken is a technical communications consultant in Carlsbad. He served in the East Bay Chapter as Employment Manager.

Newsletter Managing Editor, Lana Walker-Helmuthlwalker@designpro-inc.com

Lana is a business communications consultant in Temecula. She wrote a monthly column and feature articles before becoming managing editor.

Newsletter Associate Editor, Sharon Bradshawsbradsh2@san.rr.com

Sharon is a senior technical writer at Dot Hill in Carlsbad. She wrote the monthly meeting review and other articles for the past two years.

Chapter Web Site Manager, Suzy Hosiesuzy@wote.com

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

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)

September 2002

Mission Statement

[Return Home](#)

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**

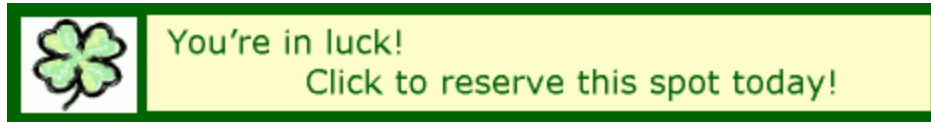
The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. STC is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 25,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, 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)

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)



Sept 2002

Advertising

[Return Home](#)

Got questions?
Comments?

Want to place
an ad? Contact
the editor at
stcsignature@yahoo.com

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

Horizontal Banner (see samples at top and bottom of this page)
Home page at bottom: \$50
(Top not available.)

Feature article at top: \$40
Feature article at bottom: \$30

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

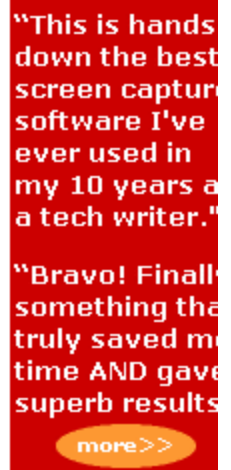
Medium or Vertical Rectangle ([click to see samples](#))
Editor's Desk at right: \$50

▼ advertisement

Button 120 x 90

[Save BIG on book](#)[XML Revealed at](#)

Vertical Banner 120 x 90



Presidential Podium at right: \$50

Vertical Banner (see sample at right side of this page)

Feature article at right: \$40

All other articles at right: \$30

Button (see samples at right side of this page)

Home page at bottom: \$40

(Space at the top is not available.)

Feature article at right: \$30

All other articles at right: \$20

Text link (see samples at right side of this page)

Home page at bottom: \$30

Feature article at right: \$20

All other articles at right: \$10

Specifications

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

Maximum file size: 18K

Horizontal Banner: 468 x 60 pixels

Medium Rectangle: 300 x 250 pixels

Vertical Rectangle: 240 x 400

Vertical Banner: 120 x 240 pixels

Button sizes: 120 x 90 or 125 x 125 pixels

Text link: No more than 2 lines per ad; no more than 21 characters (including spaces) per line

(Sizes based on Internet Advertising Bureau Standards)

Submission Requirements

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

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

Payment Information

Payment must be received before the publication date.

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

Mail check to:

SD-STC

P.O. Box 910557

San Diego, CA 92191-0577

Advertising Policy

The publisher reserves the right to request revisions or to reject advertising. The advertiser and the advertising agency assume liability for all content of the advertisement published and for any claims arising thereof against the publisher. The publisher is not liable for delays in the scheduled publication dates beyond a refund of prepaid advertising space costs.

Liability

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.

[Return Home](#)

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#) | [Visiting Author](#)
[Director-Sponsor](#) | [Competition News](#) | [New Members](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)
[Tech Issues](#) | [Advice](#) | [Usability](#) | [Professional Development](#)
[Employment Desired](#) | [Book Review](#) | [Humor](#) | [Kudos Corner](#) | [Dear Muse](#)



Advertising Sample

September 2002

Editor Sees Two Eventful Years

By [Rick Bradshaw](#), Editor



[Return Home](#)

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

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

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

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

Copy Editors:

Elizabeth Vollbach
Pamela Fridle

Illustrator:

Ann M. Throckmorton

<<article snipped>>

Medium Rectangle 300 x 250

Online FrameMaker Classes!

STC
Discount!



Convenient

Affordable

Real-world

Engaging

www.caretraininginc.com

Vertical Rectangle 240 x 400

**We're giving away a
copy of FrameMaker
every day for the next
30 days!**



Really.

<<Click here>>