

Congratulations!

Our Chapter has a lot to celebrate.

Chapter of Excellence Award

By Lynnette Pittman, Immediate Past President

At this year's Annual Conference, the Suncoast Chapter received an Award of Excellence! Chapters have the option of applying for awards at three different levels: Merit, Excellence, and Distinction. A lot of hard work goes into each level, and the 2003-2004 officers had the benefit of a solid foundation laid in 2002-2003 when we were recognized as a Chapter of Merit.

The activities required for each level are the activities that a chapter should engage in anyway if it wants not only to remain healthy, but to grow. For example, a Chapter of Merit must hold at least five substantive program meetings per year. A Chapter of Excellence must hold additional program meetings plus a seminar or workshop. To be a Chapter of Distinction, we would have to do all that and even more! There are 19 such items on the list for Chapter of Merit. The list is up to 30 for a Chapter of Excellence (the first 19 plus 11 more), and keeps climbing for a Chapter of Distinction.

Please support this year's officers as they work to maintain our level of "excellence" and possibly move us on into the "distinction" category.

Publicity Award of Merit

By Dina Stenz, Public Relations

Earlier this year, the STC public relations competition committee selected the Suncoast chapter as one of its

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Joanna Castner, Suncoast chapter president, holding our Chapter Achievement Award of Excellence.

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Attention

**New Meeting Location for September 2, 2004.
Holiday Inn Express, Rocky Point, Tampa, FL.**

WriteUp

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WriteUp communicates Suncoast chapter and Society news six times per year for the benefit of members and friends of the Suncoast chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

Submissions

WriteUp invites writers to submit articles to be considered for publication. Note: 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 or e-mail, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Meeting write-ups, feature articles, and software/book reviews are encouraged (approximately 800 words). Preferred formats include MS Word e-mail attachment or text in the body of your e-mail message. All submissions are subject to editing. Deadline for submission is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Reprints

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Advertising Rates

WriteUp accepts advertising. The rates per issue are \$25 for business card size, \$40 for 1/4 page, \$65 for 1/2 page, and \$80 for a full page. For details on submission, contact the editor at:
kmichellemorrow@hotmail.com

From the Editors

By Kimberley Nolder, Lou Martindale, and Kim Morrow

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lou Martindale for dedicating two years of her spare time (and who has any spare time these days?) to creating an award-winning newsletter! Her volunteer efforts are sincerely appreciated and I look forward to learning a great deal from her.

As the new newsletter editor for the STC Suncoast chapter, I would like to take this opportunity to ask for input regarding current topics of interest. I want to continue the editorial quality that has already been established and I would like to add new and useful information for our members. Some ideas I have for future issues include the following:

- Employment information
- Local educational and training opportunities
- Member spotlight (local and non-local STC members)
- What we can learn from other chapters

Please submit your newsletter ideas to me at knolder@tampabay.rr.com. This is your newsletter and your newsletter ideas will be my first priority!❖

Hello again, it's me, Lou ex-editor, back again for a short time (actually just this issue). Our two newsletter editors dwindled down to one due to Gloria's increased workload. And then they dwindled down to none due to Kimberley's family commitments. In the meantime I retrieved the files from Kimberley and have tried to put together a newsletter that I hope contains articles of interest to you. We have recruited a new to our chapter member to take over editorship beginning with the September/October issue. Her name is Kim Morrow. Kim is new to the technical communication field and has recently moved here from Albuquerque, New Mexico. I have asked her to write a short message for this newsletter and it appears below.

Thank you for your patience during our transition, re-transition, and re-re-transition.❖

I am excited to be the new WriteUp editor starting with the next issue, September/October. I look forward to learning more about the Society, our chapter, and our profession and I hope to keep the tradition of our award-winning newsletter.

Since moving to Tampa and joining the Suncoast chapter in February, I have already met so many friendly and knowledgeable people. I feel fortunate to be able to give something back to such a great chapter. I look forward to meeting more of you and learning from your expertise and experience.

If you would like something added to the newsletter, please let me know. Also, feel free to give me suggestions. This newsletter belongs to everyone in the chapter and I want it to include information that people find interesting and helpful.

I can best be contacted through email: kmichellemorrow@hotmail.com or if you would like to mail something to me: P.O. Box 89206, Tampa, FL, 33689-0403.❖

Sponsors

The following have sponsored the chapter during the current fiscal year:

University of Tampa
Tampa, FL
<http://www.ut.edu> ❖



Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication

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Society News

Update Your Contact Information at the Society Office

Help us keep in touch with you so you will receive all the latest announcements. When your snail mail and e-mail address change, please update your information in the following way:

1. Go to <http://www.stc.org>
2. Click on STC Members at the top of your screen.
3. Scroll down to Member Services.
4. Click on Address Changes.
5. Fill in your new information and click Submit.

If you don't have access to the Web form, you can call MaryRose Velasquez, the Membership Assistant in the Society office, at (713) 522-4114, ext. 200, and she will change your information, or you can e-mail her at maryrose@stc.org.

STC Telephone and Seminars

Many educational seminars are offered by the Society. Some of these are via the telephone and some are Web conferences. For more information go to <http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp>.

Transformation

You will be hearing a lot about the Society's transformation process in the coming months. For instance did you know that there will be five membership categories for the year 2005? Did you know that chapters will be called communities? To learn more or to have your questions answered the Society has created a transformation site on the Web site at <http://www.stc.org/transformation>. ❖

STC Membership

As of June 30, 2004

Suncoast chapter members	139
(Includes 2 fellows, 4 associate fellows, 61 senior and 7 student members)	
Total Region 3 members	1,441
Total STC members	17,186
Members residing in the U.S.	14,683
Members residing in Canada.....	1,540
Members residing elsewhere	963
Total number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs).....	21
SIG members	20,178
Total number of chapters.....	147
(Includes 33 student chapters)	

President's Message

STC's Transformation Initiative

How Can We Make this Chapter Relevant and Useful for All Our Members?

By Joanna Castner, President and Senior Member

The Society has begun a very exciting project called the "Transformation Initiative." The purpose of the initiative is to create an organization that is more relevant and useful to all of its members. Currently, STC is made up of an extremely diverse group. For example, our membership includes editors, writers, instructional designers, researchers/teachers, consultants, and many more. The Society leaders would like to make the international part of the organization more useful to the chapters, and it would like the chapters to find new ways to reach out to their diverse membership.

Typically, only 10% of chapter members attend their monthly meetings. There are various reasons for that, such as:

- meeting sites too far away
- meeting times inconvenient
- speakers who don't touch on some members' interests
- desire to receive the journals, etc., but not to attend meetings
- job loss causing loss of subscription

Whatever the case, the Suncoast chapter would like to institute projects that will involve more of the membership. Some of the ideas presented at the national conference:

- online discussion groups that focus on special issues (i.e., an online discussion group for online help developers; an online discussion group for consultants, etc.)
- ability to attend meetings via web conference
- meetings held twice a month, one meeting held at one location and one at another to be more convenient geographically

These are just some initial ideas. Some chapters have volunteered to be pilot chapters in the transformation. We are one such chapter. We are excited about this because it will allow us to help shape the transformation process. The main activity in being a pilot chapter is rechartering. In the rechartering document, we are asked to think about how we can meet more of the needs of our membership over the coming years.

We need your feedback! Soon we will be sending an e-mail asking you to tell us what your needs are and how you would like to see our chapter evolve. But you don't have to wait for that e-mail. Please e-mail me anytime with such feedback: jcastner@ut.edu. ❖

(Congratulations continued from page 1)

recognized entrants in its annual competition. The Suncoast chapter received an award of Merit in the Chapter Public Relations Program category. The committee cited that the entry was recognized, "For excellent presentation and great promotional materials."

Throughout the year, all of the media used to promote the Suncoast chapter and enhance the image of STC and our profession in the view of employers and the general public is collected, organized, and entered in the competition. This was the Suncoast chapter's first year entering the competition.

WriteUp Wins Merit Award

Lou Martindale, Suncoast Senior Member

The WriteUp has a long history of being an award winning newsletter. A lot of effort by each editor has gone into maintaining that quality each year.

Entering the newsletter competition is one of the requirements in the chapter achievement award. Three consecutive issues must be submitted. Each issue has thirteen mandatory fundamental elements and fourteen recommended topics, from which twelve must be included in each issue. Each issue is also judged on five editorial quality criteria and five design and delivery criteria. ❖

WritersUA Conference in Hollywood

By Kimberley Nolder

As a returning WinWriters conference attendee, I can tell you that there was no shortage of learning, networking, and excitement at the newly-named “WritersUA” conference held March 28th through March 31st.

A conference set in Hollywood doesn't sound like an optimal learning environment, but the hotel used for this year's venue, the Renaissance Hollywood, was a perfect host. Where else can you learn about tar pits and watch paleontologists sort through fossils? I was even lucky enough to get an autograph from “The Rock” before his movie premier.

Aside from the glitz and glamour, I learned valuable information pertaining to authoring tools, trends, and cutting-edge processes for user assistance. The conference also provided a great recharge to my technical writing career!

Although there was no way to see every presentation that interested me, I went to as many classes as I could. Char James-Tanny, a widely-known and accomplished speaker, explained how to manage content in AuthorIT. David Gash provided the usual level of entertainment and information regarding online navigation and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). I highly recommend his seminars! He is always willing to share his code with you and he has an open-door policy when it comes to asking him questions after the conference.

Some people I haven't seen before were Scott DeLoach, Scott Boggan, and Rebecca Sukach (see picture below). I attended two sessions by Scott DeLoach, who is a founding partner of UserFirst in Atlanta. DeLoach's sessions focused on embedded help for web-based applications and developing database-resident help to support customizable web-based applications (this one was quite technical). Scott Boggan spoke about design ideas for web-based help. One of the things I took from this session is that users are intimidated by too much text and not enough graphics and/or white space. Boggan also co-authored “Developing Online Help for Windows.” The AuthorIT representatives I spoke with recommended the session presented by Rebecca Sukach. Sukach explained, in detail, how her company made the transformation to object-oriented design.

I highly recommend the WritersUA conference to any help author who is looking for a great variety of information from intelligent and informative speakers who present all over the world. The conference venue is always great and the people who attend are very friendly. The most important thing, besides all of the wonderful things you will learn, is that this conference provides you with renewed enthusiasm for your job, networking opportunities, and a wonderful list of professional contacts.

Next year's conference will be held in Las Vegas!❖



Rebecca Sukach presented the challenges of implementing single-sourcing at our June meeting.

7 Leadership Qualities

By Jackie Damrau, Senior Member and President, Lone Star Chapter

As a leader, I'm always reading. I don't get enough time to read, but I do have a reading folder that I carry with me in my briefcase. This folder contains articles that are torn out of magazines, printed from on-line e-zines, and from personal emails that come to me that spark an interest that I say to myself, "Aha! That will make a great article to write for one of the SIGs or chapter newsletters."

The article that spurred this one came from *Selling Power* magazine's May 2004 issue, entitled "Tap into the 7 Qualities of the Best Sales Managers: Improvement isn't optional, it's mandatory (if you want to survive)" written by Maryann Hammers and Gerhard Gschwandtner (pp. 61-65,91). While reading this article and the 7 qualities, it made me realize that transformation and chapter leadership fit very well. So I'd like to share with you my views using Hammers and Gschwandtner's seven qualities.

Quality 1: Become a Master of Change

The Transformation Initiative is asking all chapter leaders to support the change, communicate it to the chapter members, and be the master of change when this initiative starts rolling. Many chapter leaders are for it; many are against it; and many are not sure where they stand. Change has been in the business world for many years.

The STC itself has been set in one mold for too many years. With the economic swings that rise and fall, so does participation in non-profit organizations. I am a member of two non-profit professional organizations, and both are suffering from a decrease in membership and conference attendance. Our organization is not alone!

Peter Drucker (as quoted in the *Selling Power* article) says, "Every organization has to prepare for the abandonment of everything it does." The STC has started doing this through its Transformation efforts. This follows on the heels of so many members saying, "If you increase my dues, what additional benefits (values) will I get." In one respect, the member is trying to justify the additional cost (especially if they are not receiving company monetary support). Yet, the member needs to be asking what can I do to make STC become a better organization for me and others.

This leads to the next quality.

Quality 2: Earn Their Trust

The STC leadership needs to earn the trust of its members that they have a solid direction in which they are taking us. Without this, the members may envision a sinking ship and jump to other professional organizations to get the services they need. During the STC 51st Annual Conference, our leadership held several sessions about transformation and what the plans to date are and how they will communicate.

For me at the time as the newly elected Lone Star chapter president, I felt that they shared as much as they could with us. The two subsequent publications that they provided during the conference (check out www.stc-org/transformation) earned them my trust.

Remember, trust is a relationship foundation. My belief is that they are not intentionally keeping things from us. They are communicating when they have a solid decision and direction that will fit all our needs.

Trust builds upon and requires your feedback.

Quality 3: Give Feedback

Giving feedback requires setting clear expectations and realistic goals. As the Society leaders are mapping out the expectations and goals for the Transformation initiative, we need to be prepared to offer our *constructive* (not destructive) feedback. Through our support and our voice, they will be able to make the necessary changes that will (hopefully) infuse members back into the organization by providing additional member benefits. Will these benefits be a little costly? Sure, but the cost of a quality education is also costly. We need to invest in our own education and professional development. What better organization to support than our own?

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Our leadership needs feedback on our individual and collective thoughts about this transformation. As chapter leaders, we are the ones that our members will look to for direction about the Transformation Initiative. Our responsibility is to provide both the positives and negatives of what transformation means to the Society as a whole and to the Chapters individually. Yes, we may lose a few members to other new or renewed communities. Yet, if we determine who we are and make known to ourselves and to them the value we provide to our members, those members will return. Under the new STC organization, it will be easier for members to choose what type of community to belong to, and can easily choose more than one community to be part of.

From trust to giving feedback, we turn to the fourth quality, building enthusiasm.

Quality 4: Building Enthusiasm

The wheels of transformation are beginning to roll. The first major outpouring of the Society's direction started at the 51st Annual Conference in Baltimore. The chapter leaders that attended the two transformation Q&A sessions and the members that attended the transformation progression received the latest information available at the time. The Society's goal is to openly communicate with the membership at large when it has a solid decision.

Does this mean that you do not have a voice in the decision? No! It means that you need to look for the silver lining for your chapter, your members, or yourself, and support the initiative enthusiastically. We are the foundation builders, cheerleaders, or support group for this initiative. Let's embrace this and move into a new era of professional development.

Embracing our professional development and the direction of the Society has one key element: our involvement.

Quality 5: Get Involved

It is well and good to sit on the sidelines and squeal our disgust at the direction that the Society is going in. Have you made your concerns known? Have you read the information on the Transformation web site (www.stc.org/transformation)?

The Society does have certain things that cannot be discussed in an open forum. However, those things that are for open discussion are made available to us. The Society officers have established independent committees that are looking into various aspects of the transformation. These committees include Communication, Communities, Education, Finance, Governance, Membership, and Technology.

Take the time to go to the website and read Newsletter Issue 2: Communities. The purpose for each committee appears in that issue. I encourage you to get involved in embracing this effort by providing your feedback (positive/negative) to the officer(s) of the committees. They are not doing all of this in a "closed-door" environment.

Just like we grow from baby to child to teen to adult, the Society needs to grow and develop into a more viable professional organization. This takes us to the next to last quality, Growth and Development.

Quality 6: Growth and Development

The Society has reached its zenith. It is time to launch a new nova that will help the Society to grow back into an organization that meets our ever-changing needs. In years past, Society members were *only* technical writers inside technical industries. Through the years, we have been able to redevelop ourselves into webmasters, instructional designers, facilitators, project managers, proposal developers, and the list goes on.

Regardless of your profession today, the world of technical communication is growing into new areas. Many other professional organizations exist that may directly focus on one particular aspect of what we do, but STC offers you a more rounded opportunity to meet with other technical communicators and to learn from their experiences. The Society's and each chapter/SIG/ community will be growing and developing as a result of the transformation effort.

We can focus on the good side, which is to return to a successful professional organization. Or, we can focus on the bad side, which means the demise of the Society, in general. Should this happen, we will turn to one of the other professional organizations to meet our needs. Will we be any happier with that organization? Will it address our specific needs as technical communicators? Will they (or are they now) experience the same growth and development pains?

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The final quality is leading people to improvement. I'd like to rephrase this to:

Quality 7: Lead STC Improvement

Hammers and Gschwandtner say:

“There are subtle, yet profound differences between innovation and ongoing improvement. Innovation demands big steps leading to breakthroughs and fast results. Ongoing improvement depends on small steps, relies on conventional common sense, pays great attention to process, and teases out results in small doses over time.” (p. 65)

Leading the Transformation Initiative requires innovation and ongoing improvement. Innovation to provide additional membership value; ongoing improvement to look at how to restructure itself into a viable professional organization that can continue meeting its members' ever-changing needs for their professional growth and development.

As Hammers and Gschwandtner said, it takes small steps, common sense, attention to process, and communication in small doses to affect a major change. The Transformation Initiative is following this process.

We are the future of the Society. Without our acceptance of change, trust, feedback, enthusiasm, growth and development, and ability to improve, we will not have a Society that meets our professional careers. Let's support the Society and stand behind them as they take the baby steps needed to transform us into a renewed professional organization.❖



Char James-Tanny (left), presented About AuthourIT at our August chapter meeting, with Joanna Castner (right), Suncoast chapter president.

August Chapter Meeting Review

By Suzanne Norman, Suncoast chapter Vice President

About AuthorIT

Presented by Char James-Tanny, President of JTF Associates

The Single Sourcing Summer Series continued in August with an in-depth presentation by Char James-Tanny. Char is President of JTF Associates and traveled from Boston, Massachusetts to address the STC Suncoast Chapter. She is an expert consultant and speaker on AuthorIT, Microsoft Help, and Help Authoring tools. The presentation included:

- Facts about the AuthorIT software tool created in New Zealand by some out-of-the-box programmers and a technical writer
- AuthorIT concepts
- Using Author IT with a demonstration of the actual tool
- Publishing with AuthorIT

She warned us there was a lot to cover and, true to her word, she managed to discuss each of the topics in enough detail to further our understanding of this powerful tool. Members that attended the June and July meetings built on the single sourcing and content structure knowledge gained from our previous summer series presenters. For those who did not attend previous meetings, Char filled in gaps on single sourcing concepts and the journey to content reuse in a database structure.

The AuthorIT software was explained as a multi-purpose documentation tool that stores content in a relational database such as Microsoft's SQL Server or JET. Content is entered in the database in an object-oriented method. For example, the tool has a hierarchy consisting of a Library which stores Books and templates with styles similar to Word. The Books contain Topics and Topic Objects such as paragraphs, graphics, and hyperlinks. A good visual for this is a directory structure, such as in Windows Explorer.

Multiple output formats are a time-saving feature of the tool. Selecting the output format is easily done by clicking the format type. Formats include Word, WinHelp4, HTML Help 1.x, HTML-based Help (Help 4.01), XHTML 1.0, JavaHelp, and Oracle Help. Longhorn Help is another format in development at AuthorIT.

Char said she had recently printed a 4000-page manual from AuthorIT for a client overseas and it worked perfectly. No Word crashes, no mishaps with numbering—the tool eliminates these pitfalls.

The use of variables for unique content was addressed. A variable as simple as <eg> populates the text as “for example”. A <prod> variable fills in the “product” name automatically. Variable shortcuts are an advantage and recommended for content reuse.

For document management, the software offers collaborative authoring, version control, security control, and handles formatting issues with the Book templates. Desktop (for a single writer), Workgroup, and Enterprise Editions are available with prices from approximately \$500-1000 and higher, depending on modules, for the seat licenses. Check out <http://www.author-it.com> for a free download trial.

The free AuthorIT software was won by Jenna, a student guest invited by Joanna Castner.

After two hours, Char managed to instruct us on the major concepts and demonstrated how to use the tool. She stayed afterwards for further questions, and gave us a comprehensive but lively presentation to remember. I will certainly download my free trial of AuthorIT—after I finish the last of Char's chocolate fish from New Zealand.❖

Suncoast Chapter News



Summer Series

Throughout the summer the Suncoast chapter has been doing things a little differently. We have been meeting at the University of Tampa and each month, June, July, and August focused on different aspects of single sourcing. The final session was an all day workshop presented by Ann Rockley on Saturday, August 7. Attendance at each regular meeting and the workshop was very good and everyone agreed the sessions were very informative. A certificate of completion will be issued to those persons attending any three of the four sessions. Summer is over and beginning in September we are going to return to our regular meeting place, the Holiday Inn Express at Rocky Point, but there are many interesting chapter meetings being planned for the future. Join us September 2, for light snacks, networking opportunities, and an informative presentation. ❖

Next Meeting:

September 2, 2004 Student Meeting. Chapter members will share information on their technical communication jobs using a round robin format.

Upcoming Meetings:

October 7, 2004 Intellectual property concerns for independent contractors and consultants. Presented by Ty Herrington.

November 4, 2004 Sarbanes Oxley. Presenter to be announced later.

December 2, 2004 Holiday Party

Note: Meetings are subject to change. Obtain meeting updates at our Web site: <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/>

Location:

Beginning in September the chapter meetings will resume at the Holiday Inn Express, 3025 N. Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, 813-287-8585.

Time:

6:30 p.m. Network and light dinner

7:00—9:00 p.m. Meeting

Cost:

\$10 for members and guests

\$5 for students

Administrative Council Meetings

You can be a part of our chapter at work by attending the Administrative Council meetings, which are held via teleconference at 8:15 p.m. on the Tuesday preceding the regular chapter meetings. Phone (toll free) 1-888-650-9063, Room 6301. ❖