

## Go Online

### Stay Informed With the Suncoast Chapter Web Site

*By Laura McGrover, Webmaster & Immediate Past President*

If you haven't visited the Suncoast chapter Web site in a while, you've been missing out. In addition to a fresh, new look, the site boasts up-to-date news about employment opportunities, chapter meetings, special events, the Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC), and much more. The site is updated frequently as information becomes available, so bookmark the site and check back often.

The site offers something for everyone. Take the following tour, then visit the Web site at <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/>.

#### Home Page

A feature new to the home page is the "Latest News" section where you will find the hot news of the week. The items posted include reminders about meeting dates and important deadlines. From the home page, you also can join the listserv. To return to the home page from any other page in the site, click the **Suncoast chapter** logo in the upper-right corner. To go to the Society Web site from any page, click the black **STC** logo in the upper left corner.

#### Competition

The Competition page is the place to find information about the annual Florida Technical Communication Competition (FTCC). If you are interested in submitting your work, judging entries, or volunteering, go to the Competition page for deadlines, guidelines, and forms. As the FTCC concludes, this page will list the winners, judges, sponsors, and a preview of the next FTCC.

#### Contact Us

If you need to report an address change, post an employment opportunity, contribute an article to the *WriteUp* newsletter, recommend guest speakers, or volunteer for chapter activities, use the e-mail links provided on this page.

#### Employment

Local and national companies and placement agencies seeking technical communicators are invited to post their open positions on the Employment page. Job postings are added to this page as they are received, and they remain listed for three weeks.

#### Events

Training providers and seminar leaders can submit information about opportunities that promote the professional development of technical communicators. Events are added to this page as they are received, and they remain listed until the event.

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# 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 that they wish 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, 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 (100-700 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

Advance permission is not needed to reprint articles from WriteUp in STC newsletters. Please credit the author and publication, and send a copy to the WriteUp editors.

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Other product and company names herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

## 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 [LMartin220@aol.com](mailto:LMartin220@aol.com).

# From the Editor

One of the biggest challenges I have faced as newsletter editor has been lack of space. It was an unexpected challenge, as I was expecting lack of material to be my greatest challenge. I have been pleasantly surprised to find persons volunteering to submit articles for the newsletter. In case you missed the announcement on the listserv and our Web site, this month we have instituted a policy of giving a voucher good for a free future meeting to the person who writes a meeting review. See Chapter News on page 3 for details.

Some of my challenge stems from trying to include all of the items that are STC newsletter competition requirements and still having room for additional content that is timely and useful. Because the cost of printing and mailing a hard copy are a significant amount, almost \$2,000 last year, I am reluctant to add additional pages. To maintain the newsletter at its current eight pages, it is necessary to edit some submissions quite severely, and twice I have had to pull an entire article to make room. Because of this, two decisions have been made for future issues that will alleviate the situation.

First, the decision was made to accept advertising in an effort to offset printing and mailing costs. This information is now included in our masthead and will be given to those individuals who have inquired about placing ads.

Second, the WriteUp will be going to an online version beginning with the January/February 2003 issue. This makes it critical that chapter members become familiar with our Web site and listserv. The last issue, this issue, and the next issue will all have "how to" articles instructing you so that you can get the most out of the Suncoast chapter resources. It is a sign of the changing times that more and more information is being distributed and business is being conducted electronically. As technical communicators we need to stay up to date and take advantage of these advances in technology. ❖



Suncoast Chapter STC Financial Report 7/1/2001—6/30/2002			
<b>Starting Balance 7/1/2001</b>			<b>\$7,159.33</b>
<b>Income:</b>			
<b>Dues refund from Society</b>		\$5,724.00	
<b>Chapter meetings</b>		1,301.50	
<b>FTCC</b>		2,550.00	
<b>Misc. (Workshop, Web Host)</b>		1,061.97	
<b>Total Income</b>		\$10,637.47	
<b>Expenses:</b>			
<b>Chapter meetings</b>	\$5,337.92		
<b>Newsletter</b>	1,730.12		
<b>FTCC</b>	1,880.06		
<b>Misc. (Student chapter, Storage)</b>	1,693.26		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$10,641.36		
<b>Ending Balance 6/30/2002</b>			<b>\$7,155.44</b>



*Designing the future of technical communication*

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## Society News

As of October 1 the STC Web site includes a “members-only” section that contains the STC jobs database, full-article publications search, the STC member directory, and other premium content. If the Society has your correct e-mail address and you are an STC member, you received an e-mail explaining how to access this section. Nonmembers can still visit the STC Web site to obtain general information about the Society and its services. If you have questions, visit the Society Web site at <http://www.stc.org>.

STC Special Needs SIG is a new SIG this year. It is not limited to members with disabilities but is seeking to arm all interested technical communicators with information that will help them design technical communication products that are more accessible to an end user with disabilities. Interested persons may enroll in the SIG when they send in their membership renewal in November. You can learn more about the STC Special Needs SIG at <http://www.stcsig.org/sn/index.shtml> or see the ad on page 6. ❖

## Chapter News

The Treasurer has filed the 2001—2002 financial report with the Society office. A summary is located on Page 2.

As we go to press the FTCC committee has received 30 entries.

The Admin. Council is testing using PayPal, <https://www.paypal.com>, as a way to prepay online using a credit or debit card for chapter meetings. Detailed instructions will be in the next newsletter issue. However, if you want to try it before then, contact our treasurer, Phyllis Hunt, at [irbeach@concentric.net](mailto:irbeach@concentric.net) for information.

Do you want to attend a chapter meeting for free? Approximately one week before the meeting, the newsletter editor will post a message to the listserv asking for a volunteer to write a meeting review. The first one to apply gets the assignment. When the review is submitted, your name will be forwarded to the treasurer, who will issue the voucher that is good until May 2003. ❖

## STC Membership

In October STC members will receive an e-mail encouraging them to renew their membership online at <http://www.stc.org>. Online renewal is quick, convenient, and reduces printing and postage costs. A printed dues renewal invoice is mailed in November to those who do not renew online by November 11. Only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2003, will be eligible to vote in next year’s STC elections. ❖

### As of August 31, 2002

Suncoast chapter members 159  
(Includes 65 senior and 10 student members)  
Total Region 3 members 1,661  
Total STC members 20,318  
Members residing in the U.S. 17,608  
Members residing in Canada 1,788  
Members residing elsewhere 922  
Total number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) 21  
Total number of chapters 152  
(Includes 33 student chapters)

# Monthly Chapter Meeting Reviews

## September

By Sheena Salmon, Contributing Editor



### From Desktop to Palmtop

Presented by George Hayhoe, Ph.D., STC Fellow, Editor of *Technical communication*, and professor at Mercer University.

George Hayhoe began his presentation by highlighting some of the hardware attributes of handheld devices, such as the Pocket PC and the Palm Pilot. He then contrasted this with the standard hardware found on most desktop computers, which have an average screen size of 14" - 16" and a resolution of 640 x 480 to 1280 x 1024. A handheld has a average screen size of 3" - 4" and a resolution of 160 x 160 to 240 x 320. The screen orientation on most desktops is portrait, however the screen orientation on most handhelds is landscape. Because of these factors and other limitations such as memory and disk space, writing for a handheld must be a simplified version of what is written for desktop.

When writing for a handheld, graphics or other multimedia must be used only when necessary. Handhelds have a limited amount of memory, and reducing the file size saves download time. Because of the small resolution, it is best to use a larger font size and avoid using bold, italics, and underlines, which may appear distorted when viewed on a handheld screen.

Handheld devices have their own markup language, Handheld Device Markup Language (HDML). When creating a Web site for multiple Internet access devices, such as a PC and handheld, it is necessary to create a different document for each platform. This is not a new programming development because in the past, different documents have been created for the two major Web browsers (Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator). Code is included on the Web site to identify the browser, and then the appropriate contents of the Web page are displayed or the browser is redirected to the appropriate page. With a little adjustment of code, Web sites can additionally test for the handheld browsers.

Although the technology required for handheld devices is new, the core requirements for writing for these devices have not changed. Keep things simple, remember your audience, and test the document before publication.

### Handheld Considerations

- Limited fonts
- Small display screen
- Small amount of memory
- Small resolution

(From Desktop continued on page 5)

## October

By Cynthia Faust, Suncoast Chapter Member



### Web Redesign: Managing Content Development Effectively

Presented by Heidi Kelchner, Ph.D., Suncoast Chapter Member

Heidi Kelchner's presentation tackled a very timely subject. Web design has become a very important part of today's world. As time passes, the Web site content and design becomes outdated.

Web site redesign presents different challenges than original Web setup and design. Ms. Kelchner looked at the project from three main perspectives.

1. Why redesign? Avoid the tyranny of the old Web site and review the site from a new, fresh perspective.
2. Do you want to reinvent the wheel? Be efficient. How much of the old site can be reused? Most writing and redesign, approximately 80 percent according to Ms. Kelchner, is revision.
3. Keep an eye to the future. How timely is the content and presentation? In addition, maintenance of the site should be easy and efficient.

Take into account the reasons for redesign. Has the audience site changed? Is the company providing new services or products? What is the client's specific wants and needs?

Dr. Kelchner presented two specific tools to aid in goal definition, the Client Survey and the Maintenance Survey. She stresses, "Client input is the foundation on which successful Web sites are built." Each key decision-maker on a project should fill out a Client Survey and add any additional comments. The project manager should then review the surveys. The Client Survey is broken down into the following main sections:

- General Information - This section asks for basic company information and basic information concerning the specific project.
- Current Site - This section asks for information about the current site. What are the positive and negative aspects? What do you feel should be changed?
- Reasons for Redesign - This section asks for the main reasons for redesign. What are the goals and objectives of redesign?
- Audience/Desired Action - Who is the typical site user? What is the primary action the user should take? If possible, provide a profile of the typical user.

(Web Redesign continued on page 7)

(Go Online continued from page 1)

## Listserv

Join the Suncoast List (listserv) to receive meeting announcements, employment opportunities, and other news related to the Suncoast chapter. The Listserv page provides instructions for accessing and signing up for this free service.

## Membership

New and returning members can visit the Membership page to learn about the benefits of joining STC. Additionally, Suncoast chapter members are invited to post their own Web site links on this page.

## Meetings

The chapter has an exciting year in store for you. Check the Meetings page for a look at upcoming meeting dates, topics, and speakers. For chapter meetings, the page provides a link to a map and driving directions for our meeting location. A speaker biography is included with each meeting write-up.

A feature new to the Meetings page is the “Meeting Handouts” link where you can find presentations and handouts for past meetings (if supplied by the guest speaker). If you are not able to attend a meeting, check this page afterward to see what you missed.

## Newsletter

If you did not receive an issue of the *WriteUp* newsletter or want to print an additional copy to share with a friend, check the Newsletter page. The page offers links to the current and

previous issues, dating back to 1999. If you are interested in submitting articles, pictures, quotes, and letters to the editor, check this page for contact details.

## Officers

If you’d like to meet one of the officers, share ideas, ask questions, or express your interest in volunteering, check the Officers page for a list of officers and their contact information. If you would like to become an officer, you can review election information on this page.

## Resources

The Resources page presents links to Web sites with information relevant to technical communicators. Current resources include dictionaries, education and training, related organizations, and translation. If you know a site you would like to see on this page, send the URL and a brief description to the Webmaster.

## Students

The Student chapter at University of South Florida maintains its own Web site. See the student Web site for information about meetings and events involving the USF technical communication program.

The Suncoast chapter will continue to develop the Web site throughout the year. Your feedback is encouraged. Contact the Webmaster via the Web site with your comments and suggestions.

Visit the Web site soon!❖

(From Desktop continued from page 4)

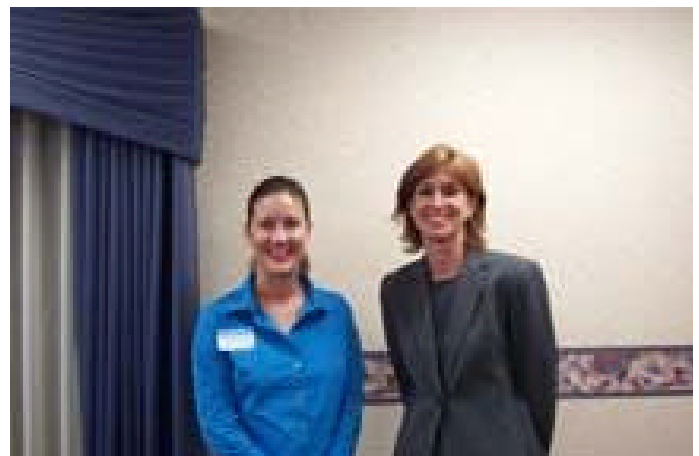
## Designing for Handhelds

- Use larger fonts
- Minimize file size
- Limit scrolling
- Limit use of graphics and multimedia

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Hayhoe gave the audience an exercise. He passed out a printed copy of the Society home page and a paper containing a small rectangle representing a standard handheld screen. We were then challenged to determine what could be changed on the Society home page to make it more handheld friendly.

Note:

The handouts from this meeting and previous meetings can be accessed from the Suncoast Web site. Click the Meeting Handouts link on the Meetings page at <http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/meetings.htm>.❖



Joanna Castner, Membership Coordinator and Heidi Kelcher, Student Chapter Liaison, visit during the October chapter meeting.

If you are new to Web redesign, Dr. Kelchner suggests the book, *Web Redesign: Workflow that Works* by Kelly Gato and Emily Colter to aid in understanding this sometimes complicated concept.

### *Thank You to:*

Phyllis Hunt for acting as our photographer.  
Kathy Ruiani for recreating our chapter logo.❖



## Are You Still Investing?

by Rob Houser, Region 3 Director-Sponsor

With the economy still uncertain, many of us have become leery of investing. Some people are pulling up stakes and retreating. Others are sitting on what they have while they wait to see what happens. And others are still investing for long-term rewards.

Do you think I'm talking about money? I'm not. I'm talking about investing in your career.

Even though times are tough, this is not the time to stop investing in your career. Do you know the tools and technology that are in demand? Are you improving your skills and abilities? Did you get at least two weeks of training this year? Are you renewing your STC and other professional society memberships? Have you created a personal training plan?

I hear a lot of people saying that they didn't get any training this year because their companies cut back on the training budget. Your companies should be investing in ongoing professional training. If they don't it's your responsibility to pick up the slack. If you identify a need for a particular class or conference and you can't get your company to pay for it, try the following:

- Offer to pay half
- Ask for paid time off and offer to pay your own way
- Agree to pay for your own expenses and reduce them by sharing a room and eating sandwiches instead of fancier meals

- Find a distance-learning outlet offering similar training
- Look for local trainers or mentors to give you the information you need
- Buy a self-paced book and commit to spending X number of hours per day completing the tutorials

My point is not just that you can find alternatives for your training but that you bear the ultimate burden of ensuring that you receive training, even if you have to pay for it yourself.

Contractors fall into a similar trap. They say, "I don't get paid to go to training." Many contractors make the mistake of living off their weekly check instead of putting some of that money aside for other expenses such as vacation/sick time, retirement, and training. Contractors get paid because they're supposed to have the latest skills and abilities. If you've been contracting for 3 - 5 years and haven't been getting additional training, you may be setting yourself up for some unexpected time off because you're not keeping up.

*Here's a little bonus:* Paying for your own training expenses counts as nonreimbursed business expenses. If you itemize on your taxes you'll get some of that money back.

*Here's a big bonus:* In a tight job market, the people with the most up-to-date and in-demand skills are the ones most likely to find re-employment quickly.

Investing in your career is the best job security you can have. It won't stop lay offs from happening, but it will give you a competitive edge in the job market. ❖

## Educational Opportunities

The **Society** is sponsoring four telephone seminars this fall:

- Getting Into Instructional Design, November 7
- Looking, Finding, Searching ... How Users Do It, November 19
- Finding Work in Troubled Times, December 13
- A Brief, Comprehensive Indexing Primer, December 17

For more information, go to <http://www.stc.org/seminars.html>.

The **Suncoast** chapter of STC will sponsor a Usability Workshop on February 15, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The workshop will be conducted by Ed See and Susan Jensen. Location to be announced. ❖

## Competition

The **Orlando** chapter is holding the 7th annual Florida High School Technical Writing Competition. The deadline is November 15. For more information, go to <http://www.stc-orlando.org/hscmp.htm>. ❖

## Around STC

The **Orlando** chapter announces the 2003 Jaffee Award, which will be presented to the Central Florida business employing the area's outstanding technical communicator. In addition an individual award winner and two runners-up will be selected. This is a new initiative that addresses the lack of recognition for people in the technical communication profession. Entries are due November 4, 2002. For more information and an application, go to <http://www.stc-orlando.org>. ❖

### The STC Special Needs SIG Wants You!

...Visit us at [www.stcsig.org/sn/](http://www.stcsig.org/sn/)



Do you have a disability of any kind?



Are you interested in making our communication products more accessible for users with disabilities?



Would you like to join an inspirational "can-do" team that is committed to taking the "dis" out of "disabilities"?

**When You Renew Your Membership, Join Us!**



# Authoring Tool Comparisons

By Jim Sands

During the last year, I have received several inquiries from chapter members regarding the differences among the various Help authoring tools and the applicability of specific tools to their writing needs.

As you already know, there are several ways to develop online documentation:

- There are Help-specific tools (i.e., RoboHelp, ForeHelp, Doc-To-Help) that are dedicated exclusively to the creation of standardized online Help and documentation systems.
- There are HTML-specific tools (i.e., HomeSite and Dreamweaver) that can be used to create HTML pages for customized Web-based Help systems.
- In addition, there are Help purists who will never use anything but the Microsoft Windows and HTML Help Workshops.

With this variety of choices, it can get quite confusing. In addition, authors often prefer to use a single authoring tool to reduce their learning curve and thus remain more productive.

As an example, I recently received a call from a member who was going to create his or her very first Help system. The caller had to import existing documentation from a variety of Microsoft Word source documents. The end result was to be a single context-sensitive HTML Help system that would be used only on Windows machines. The Help system was

expected to be large, with multiple graphics. Because of the size of the system, there was a possibility that there would be more than one author working on the project. The caller was also required to produce a hard copy manual that mirrored the online Help. Finally, the caller was told that any tool could be used to produce the Help but that the company already owned several copies of ForeHelp. Of course, it all had to be done immediately.

So, how would ForeHelp actually fare in handling this request? For the answer, I'm turning to STC member Mike Starr, who has extensive ForeHelp experience. Next month, he and I will address how ForeHelp could or could not potentially handle this request.

In months to follow, I plan to respond to the same inquiry by examining how a different tool might solve the problem. This will allow us to compare the tools using a real project as a yardstick. Since I am by no means expert in all these areas, I would like the expertise of fellow STC members to make this work. Therefore, I am asking for volunteers who are proficient in these tools (Doc-to-Help, RoboHelp, Dreamweaver, HomeSite, or others) to assist me. If you would like to participate, please e-mail me at [jsands@help101.org](mailto:jsands@help101.org) and let's discuss it.

Since the research will uncover many more details and comparisons than I can cover in my article, I'll provide the full details as we go on my Web site at <http://www.help101.org>.

**Have a question about Help?** Jim Sands is an independent Help consultant and welcomes your questions and comments. Send questions via <http://www.help101.org>, [jsands@help101.org](mailto:jsands@help101.org), or call 847-918-8761. All questions will be answered in *Help 101* rather than individually. ❖

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*(Web Redesign continued from page 4)*

- Perception - What should the user's experience be when accessing the site? What kind of message does the site project?
- Content - Content drives the site. What is the basic structure and organization?
- Technology - What kind of technology is associated with the site? Is the software or hardware outdated?
- Marketing/Updating - What is the marketing strategy and is there a planned site maintenance program?

The Maintenance Survey is used to determine how the site maintenance will be addressed after the site is launched.

Before a complete site redesign, the usability of the site is tested. A project team must be assembled and should consist of at least a project manager, information designer, Q/A lead, usability lead, production lead, designer, content manager, contact lead, copywriter, and programmer (backend). One person can hold more than one role, but the programmer and

the usability lead must not be the same person.

When the decision to redesign is complete, and a project plan is in place, negotiation between the client and the team begins. Deadlines must be set. Site structure consideration begins.

Dr. Kelchner gave us many good ideas and tips. Use as much existing copy as possible. Adapt from other available materials. Trim it, chunk it! Access scannability. Do not overuse white space. Streamline the language, make it "punchier," catch the user's attention and keep it!

The presentation was wonderful. I enjoyed it immensely. A large amount of information was presented efficiently. Now when I access a Web site, I find myself analyzing it. How easy is it for me to navigate? How informative is it? How is the material presented? As Dr. Kelchner stated, "We live in the real world, use what you have." ❖

# WriteUp

Suncoast Newsletter  
816 Blackberry Lane  
Brandon, FL 33511

Address Correction Requested  
First Class Mail



**Mission statement:**  
To promote and advance the technical communication profession in the Suncoast area and support the professional development of technical communicators, current and future.



## Upcoming Meetings

*Subject to Change*

**Obtain meeting updates at our Web site:**

<http://www.stc-southeast.org/suncoast/>

<b>Next Meeting:</b>	
November 7	Resumes and Portfolios
<b>Upcoming Meetings:</b>	
December 5	To be announced
January 9, 2003	Usability with Karen Bachmann
February 6	Knowledge Management with Judy Glick-Smith
March 6	Single Sourcing with Lynn Perry
April 3	Globalization with Nancy Hoft
<b>Workshop:</b>	
February 15, 2003	Usability Workshop with Ed See and Susan Jensen