



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Manuscript

Apr. 2004

A Publication of the Society for Technical Communication—Manitoba Chapter

Vol. 16 No. 8

From the
President
Ron Blicq

How do you define the term “Technical Communicator?” Fifty years ago it was clearcut: you were a technical writer, a technical editor, or a technical illustrator (and in those days you learned your trade on-the-job, because courses in technical communication were only just beginning to emerge). STC’s history reflects those three categories: the society was originally formed from an amalgamation of three societies that sprung up independently in the 1950s on the east and west coasts of

the USA, and was named the Society of Technical Writers and Editors (STWE). Shortly after, it amalgamated with the Society of Technical Publishers to become the STWP, and then in 1971 the name changed to STC.

Now, 50 years later, the evolution of an electronic means of communication and documentation has created a significant change, and those of us who perform pure technical writing have become a rare breed. One has only to look at the diversity within our small STC chapter

... continued on page 4

April Dinner Meeting

ISO and Technical Documentation

with Nelson Barnett of Standard Aero

5:45 pm

Thursday, April 1

Place Louis Riel

190 Smith Street

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

Please confirm your attendance by

Monday, March 29

to Sandra Ingram at

ISO and Technical Documentation

As an aspect of his job at Standard Aero Limited, Nelson Barrett must know all about the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and technical documentation—the topic of his presentation on April 1.

Nelson has been the Director of Corporate Quality at Standard Aero for two and a half years and says the most important part of his job is communication. He clarifies complex regulatory, commercial and internal requirements into common sense on a daily basis. On a yearly basis Nelson engages the company to apply quality to more than just parts, but also to leadership.

Complacency and short-term pressures are Nelson's biggest challenges at work; however, he really enjoys being able to influence the direction and thinking of a company.

Nelson received his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Manitoba. He went on to pursue his master's degree in Aerospace Design at Cranfield University in the UK.

With 20 years of military experience as an aerospace engineer, Nelson is a valuable asset to Standard Aero Limited. He published a CASI (Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute) paper on CF18 Structural Flight Testing, as well as his master's thesis as part of a text on composite material design and analysis. Nelson is an active member of APEGM (Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of Manitoba) and COPA (Canadian Owners and Pilots Association).

Outside work, Nelson enjoys building amateur-built aircraft and putting his private pilot skills to use. He enjoys playing hockey and finds time to coach a hockey team of 14-year-olds. When asked about what his biggest achievements have been, Nelson answered, "I get fulfillment from little steps rather than the end result. By the time the end result is achieved, I already know it's going to happen so it's the getting there that matters to me."

Manuscript

Manuscript and its shorter sibling *MicroManuscript* are the official newsletters of STC Manitoba Chapter. Together, they are published 10 times annually between September and June. The opinions expressed are those of the authors. Submissions, news, reviews, and other items of interest are welcome. Contributions may be edited for length. Deadline is the tenth of the previous month. For example, the deadline for the November issue is October 10.

Submissions and ideas are welcome. Please make arrangements in advance with Andrew Quarry. By submitting an article, you agree to its publication in *Manuscript* and other STC publications. Copyright is held by the writer. When submitting an article, please let Andrew know if it has been published or submitted elsewhere.

Andrew Quarry, Newsletter Editor
204-237-0747 aquarry@autobahn.mb.ca

Edwin Kroeger, Lisa Martin, and Robert Sorokowski of Red River College were guest editors for this issue.



Dr. Sandra Ingram on Gender and Collaboration in the Engineering Classroom

January
chapter
meeting
report
by
Dave Gustafson

I had expected Dr. Sandra Ingram, in her presentation at our last chapter meeting, to talk about the sorts of gender issues that might challenge us when we are trying to achieve a gender-neutral style in our technical writing. Instead, we learned about her observations on the interaction between gender and communication styles in teams of engineering students.

The discussion, which started during her presentation and continued for longer than usual afterwards, touched on matter of harassment and at times became emotional.

Sandra spoke to us about case studies that were published in her books. One of those books is entitled *Gender and Collaboration: Communication Styles in the Engineering Classroom*. The book is a collaborative work with Dr. Anne Parker. Anne was able to join us at the meeting and also added to the discussion.

Some of the facts that Sandra shared were:

- Today, only 16 % of the enrolments into the faculty of Engineering are women
- In 1984 enrolment was 9% and in 1997 it was 21%

- Collaborative program projects are the norm for secondary education

Sandra spoke to us about group dynamics and how the females in her case studies functioned. One of the conclusions she made was that leadership style is very important. It greatly influenced how groups functioned and how women participated in those groups. Another factor was the use of agendas. When agendas were used they greatly assisted the functioning of group meetings.

On behalf of the membership of STC Manitoba I want to thank Sandra for her presentation on such an important issue. Most of us work in teams and I would say that, for the success of those teams we always need to respect our fellow team members. Thanks for the reminder Sandra.



Dr. Sandra Ingram

Don't Lose Touch with STC

The Society office encourages all STC members to update their membership information with home addresses, home phone numbers, or home e-mail addresses. Many members provide only their work contact information, and the office often loses track of these members when they change jobs. To update your membership information, complete the STC address change form at

www.stc.org/address_change.asp or



From the President
continued
from page 1

to see the broad range of specialization: we have writers, editors, illustrators, consultants (documentation advisors), web designers, webmasters, teachers, and many more disciplines. Even those of us who teach technical communication fall into two categories: those who teach students who will become dedicated technical communicators (it will be their vocation), and those who teach technical professionals to write and speak more effectively within their different professions (for whom technical communication is an adjunct to their regular work).

Significantly, there are far more technical communication instructors teaching the latter group than the former.

Where does this lead us? To the realization that we must continually adjust to the changes that will occur in the technical communication field in future years. And the younger you are, the more you will need to recognize that, throughout your career, you will have to diversify and be willing to change direction within your area of specialization. If we are to survive as technical communicators, we cannot afford to sit back on our laurels.

May 6
Annual General Meeting

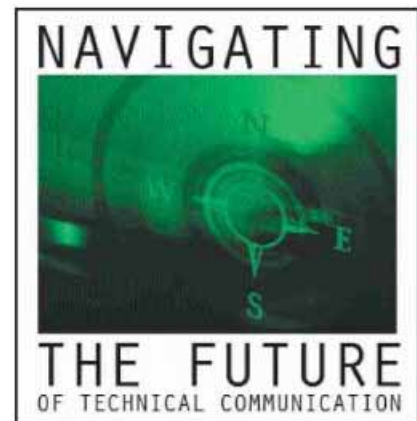
2004
STC/RRC Conference

Friday, April 16, and
Saturday, April 17

**Toward
a community
of practice
in Manitoba**

Register now!

<http://xnet.rrc.mb.ca/alexac/>



**STC's 51st Annual
Conference**

May 9-12, 2004

Baltimore Convention Centre

Join the Society for Technical Communication in Baltimore, Maryland, for STC's 51st Annual Conference, the largest gathering of technical communicators in the world!

For more information, contact the Society office.

703-522-4114
www.stc.org



Documenting ISO 9000 Compliance

As any technical communicator knows, the task of documenting an organization's policies and procedures (known as the quality management system) can be daunting. But it's important to your quality management system—and, therefore, your customers' confidence in you—to be able to trace your company's processes back to a standard. Registering compliance with the ISO 9001 quality management system ensures that your organization has followed internationally recognized guidelines in developing processes to produce a satisfactory product or service.

Businesses decide to become ISO 9001 registered because they want to control or improve the quality of their products and services, reduce costs associated with poor quality, or become more competitive. Some seek registration because their customers demand it or because a government body has made it mandatory. To become ISO 9001 registered, you must document your company's compliance with its requirements, conduct a series of internal audits and, finally, pass an external audit that finds no major nonconformities.

The magnitude of this project may seem insurmountable, especially for lone writers, but it need not be. Although documenting your company's compliance with ISO 9001 requirements may take as long as eighteen months from inception to registration,

technical communicators are in an enviable position to control how our audience perceives the new quality management system. By writing clear, crisp, and concise documentation, we can help allay readers' fears and make them feel that compliance is something they were already doing.

Some Background

Established in 1947 in Switzerland, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies. ISO promotes the global development of standardization and related activities to facilitate the international exchange of goods and services and develops cooperation in the areas of intellectual, scientific, technological, and economic activity. Among the voluntary technical standards the ISO establishes is the ISO 9000 quality management system.

The term "ISO 9000" refers to a family of universal standards for quality assurance systems. This family takes its name from a document, also called ISO 9000, which provides a vocabulary and a framework for understanding the documents within the ISO 9000 family. ("ISO 9000:2000" is the latest version of ISO 9000. The last four digits refer to the year the version was issued.)

ISO 9000 governs processes, not products. It ensures that a company has done everything necessary to provide a quality

An excerpt from an article by

Kelly A. Parr,
Boston Chapter,
in *Intercom*
(February 2002)

... continued on page 6



product. ISO first published its quality assurance and quality management standards in 1987 and then published updated versions in 1994 and 2000, hence the terms "ISO 9000:1994" and "ISO 9000:2000." These quality standards are called the "ISO 9000 Standards."

The most comprehensive standard in the ISO 9000 family is ISO 9001. ISO 9001:2000 presents the most recent standard against which to evaluate your company's ability to meet regulatory requirements and your customers' needs.

Why Comply with ISO 9001?

When customers purchase from a company that is ISO 9000 certified, they are guaranteed high-quality products or services.

Even more compelling, many companies now require that their suppliers be ISO 9001 registered, and an ISO-level quality system is required to sell products in Europe. Therefore, in many industries, ISO 9001 compliance is necessary to stay competitive.

As technical communicators, we can see that the quality and efficiency of the processes we use and those we document improve substantially in ISO 9001-compliant companies. Such companies

- Are committed to quality and continuous improvement
- Build superior projects and serve their customers in a consistent, high-quality manner
- Offer users complete and easy access to the latest documentation

- Provide a high level of control to prevent the use of obsolete procedures and documentation and to prevent unauthorized changes
- Improve traceability for design decisions, documentation, and revision control
- Streamline and codify validation systems
- Improve production efficiency

Planning ISO 9001 Documentation

The ISO 9001 requirements are broken into the following sections:

1. *Systemic requirements:* Establish and document your quality system.
2. *Management requirements:* Establish a quality policy; support and promote the importance of quality and carry out a quality plan; control the quality system; perform management reviews to correct and prevent nonconformities and issues; and above all, satisfy clients.
3. *Resource requirements:* Provide adequate resources, staff, infrastructure, and environment to support the quality management system.
4. *Realization requirements:* Control processes, such as product development, purchasing, and customer processes (including customer-supplied materials), and regulate the use of calibrated equipment.
5. *Remedial requirements:* Using internal audits and other company-determined metrics and the control of nonconforming product, monitor and continuously improve your quality system.