



January 2010, Volume 22, Issue 5

January chapter meeting

6:00 p.m. (5:45 registration and networking)

Note: new start time

January 12, 2010

Red River College

P3-18

160 Princess Street

Progression Various speakers

Please confirm your attendance by noon, Friday, January 8, 2010 with Joanne Kusiak at meetingcoordinator@stcmanitoba.org

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January progression

Annual progression event: Social networking, InDesign and portfolio development

Start 2010 with new knowledge, ideas and approaches to make your life more exciting! January's STC meeting promises an exciting round of short presentations on timely topics, as follows:

A. Ning (led by Nirdosh Ganske)

Ning is a versatile social medium that affords the user the possibility of creating a secure site (for a fee). The user interface is highly intuitive, so there is no learning curve. Nirdosh is the lead instructor for the Technology Management program at Red River College (RRC) and a former president of STC Manitoba.

B. LinkedIn and Twitter (led by Brad Friesen)

What do tweets, pokes, and hash tags have in common? Social networking! Brad will discuss the popular social networking services LinkedIn and Twitter. A graduate of the Technical Communication program at RRC and former president of STC Manitoba, Brad works as a Technical Communicator for EISI.

C. The in's and out's of InDesign (led by Rachel Ines)

What is InDesign? This session provides an overview of the program and shows how existing skills can be applied to use the program. Rachel will show documents created with the program and share tips she has learned. Rachel graduated from the Technical Communication program at RRC in 2006. She has served as Secretary and Vice-President of STC Manitoba, and is in her third year as chapter archivist and newsletter editor.

D. Everything you ever wanted to know about preparing a portfolio, but were afraid to ask (led by Susan Haire)

Susan will reveal the secrets of the essential, but often mysterious, portfolio, including what to include, how to organize it to make an impression, and how to customize it to apply for a new job or to seek a promotion/lateral move with a current employer. Susan has been a technical communicator for over twenty years. In 2007, she won the RRC/STC Portfolio Competition, and successfully used her winning entry in applying for her current job. She is a past president of STC Manitoba, and a recipient of the Distinguished Chapter Service Award.

("Annual progression event ..." continued on page 2)



Society for
Technical
Communication

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

About Manuscript

Manuscript and its shorter sibling *Micro Manuscript* are the official newsletters of STC Manitoba. 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 fifteenth of every month. For example, the deadline for the November issue is October 15.

Please make arrangements in advance with the editor. By submitting an article, you agree to its publication in *Manuscript* and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. The writer holds copyright. When submitting an article, please let the editor know if it has been published or submitted elsewhere.

Rachel Ines
Newsletter Editor
rachines@hotmail.com

Andrew Quarry
Editorial Assistant
andrewquarry@gmail.com

Printed copies of documents can be mailed to the address below:

STC Manitoba
c/o Andrew Quarry
135 Lawndale Avenue
Winnipeg MB R2H 1T2

For more information about STC Manitoba, please visit our Web site at www.stcmanitoba.org.



President, Ben Davies
benzeta21@hotmail.com
Vice-President, Susan Haire
susan_haire@hotmail.com
Past President, Andrew Quarry
Secretary, Vacant
Treasurer, Donald Nordman
Membership, Vacant
Public relations, Dorothy Davidson
Program, Vacant
Meeting coordinator, Joanne Kusiak

Members of Manitoba's STC chapter gather at the Annual General Meeting in May and elect members to the STC Chapter. Each member on the executive is elected for a term of one year.

From the President

I wanted to take an opportunity to reflect on the amazing work the STC Manitoba executive has done since I became President in May 2009.

As you may be aware, our executive has been extremely short-handed, and currently, we do not have anyone formally responsible for the Membership, Program, or Secretary positions, which has forced everyone in the executive to take on additional responsibilities to fill the void.

At the start of the year, we seriously considered cutting the program in half and only having a meeting every second month. However, after some hardcore brainstorming sessions over the summer, we managed to pull through and create with a program plan that would allow us to continue providing our "regularly scheduled" dinner meetings that everyone has become accustomed to. Not only that, but we also secured a new venue at Red River College that has saved us over \$100 a meeting in room rental fees, which has contributed to a much more balanced budget that is less reliant on kickbacks from STC International.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew Quarry, Dorothy Davidson, Donald Nordman, Susan Haire, Rachel Ines, and Brad Friesen for all their hard work and dedication to STC Manitoba since I've joined. Thank you very much! Couldn't have done it without you!

Moving forward into 2010-2011, we will be actively searching and recruiting for next year's STC Manitoba executive. The organization cannot survive without volunteers, and there will definitely be some open positions available by the AGM in May 2010. Volunteering is great for the resume, and great experience. If you haven't volunteered for STC Manitoba in the past, we strongly urge you to give it a shot!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly at benzeta21@hotmail.com.

Ben

("Annual progression event ..." continued from page 1)

How it works

Participants move from session to session, and get a 12-15 minute introduction to these areas of interest. In the past, this has proven a fun, high-energy evening. Please join us and pick up some ideas that just might change your life!

Appetizers and refreshments will be served.

Cost for members and students \$10
Cost for Non-members \$15

From the Editor

Winnipeg has officially joined the Google street revolution. On December 1, 2009, Google Street View officially added Winnipeg to a number of other Canadian cities.

While many people are upset over what they see as an invasion of privacy, I for one welcome Street View. As a visual person, it is much easier for me to drive based on landmarks and visual cues rather than be told to drive x kilometres north, south, east, or west. Living in Winnipeg, our streets are generally not designated like streets in Calgary, Edmonton, or Vancouver, so this concept is completely beyond my comprehension. If you point out landmarks by the street, THAT I understand.

The local media outlets were quick to show not everyone is rejecting Google street view. Most notable was a local company whose employees were given some very short notice that the Google car was driving down the street and took the opportunity to showcase themselves for posterity.

I don't know about other people, but once I heard that Winnipeg was finally "on the map," I quickly looked up my home on Google maps to see how

my part of Winnipeg looked. Despite a gloomy day, I think my house looked fine. Yes it would've been nicer if Google came to the city during the summer, but after the lack of summer we had, I have to wonder would it really have made a difference?

While the concept of street view is overwhelming and interesting, I do find using street view is a bit challenging. Moving my muse up and down the street, trying to get a level view of my house is not very easy, or even finding a specific address in another Canadian city is a bit of a challenge. I don't know if other people have encountered any other challenges.

And so, Google street view is here to stay. As an end product user, I for one will be taking advantage of the street view whenever I can. I hope Google can work out some of the kinks so that it is easier for me to navigate up and down the various streets, whether I'm at home or in another city such as Edmonton or Vancouver.

Until next month,
Rachel

December chapter meeting summary

Chapter update

by Rachel Ines

The December meeting was led by Chapter President Ben Davies who provided a keen group with an update of the latest information about how STC Manitoba and other Canadian chapters are dealing with the new changes imposed by STC international.

Currently, only two Canadian chapters have provided STC international with both their budgets and some surplus money. While we support our fellow Canadian chapters, the executive committee on behalf of STC Manitoba members, has chosen to stay neutral. While we support our fellow Canadians, the executive is not in a position to take on any additional responsibilities due to the lack of volunteers currently serving on the executive and time commitment required.

The Canadian chapter presidents would like to see more of a Canadian presence internationally by having a Canadian sit on the board of directors. They are also exploring the option of having a separate Canadian STC group and are working towards developing a Canadian salary survey, with the hope of distribution in 2010.

A question and answer session followed Ben's update. One of the biggest challenges all chapters will face is retaining members. Many chapter expect to lose members with the increase in membership rate so the focus is not only to encourage renewal but as the case may be, to retaining non-renewing members by encouraging them to continue to support the chapter by attending meetings.

Ben also asked members their opinion on the new venue and changes to the meeting rate structure. While those chapter members in attendance still value high quality presentations and networking opportunities, talk centred around the chapter hosting one or two day workshops on weekdays, rather than weekends.

The meeting ended with discussions on the future of technical communication. Is it important for technical communicators to be generalists or to branch out from traditional technical writing and focus on skill development using evolving technologies? The answer—it depends where you're working.

STC Manitoba chapter members

The first 15—Where are they now?

By Susan Haire

STC Manitoba became a chapter in January, 1989, after 15 people joined STC. But even though we were not officially a chapter, we had an executive and several meetings leading up to that momentous occasion. To mark our twentieth year as a chapter, *Manuscript* is running a series of articles about

Anne Parker



Q. How did you get involved with STC Manitoba back in 1988?

AP: I first heard of STC when I attended a week-long seminar on technical communication—held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The folks who ran the seminar had application forms for all of us, so I joined. When the local group contacted me, I believe I was asked to serve on a program committee that previewed abstracts that had been submitted for a conference.

Q. What was your role at that time?

AP: My involvement was minimal at the time, comprised of my role on the program committee.

Q. What have you been doing over the past 20 years? Are you still involved with STC Manitoba and/or technical communication? Did your membership in the chapter help you in any way?

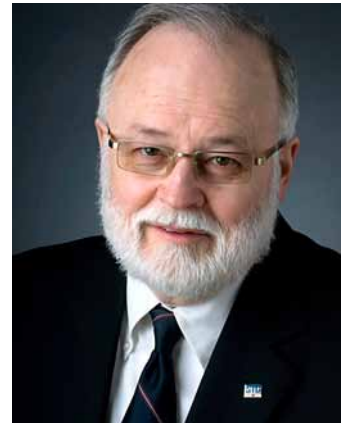
AP: My membership in the local chapter of STC seemed a good idea at the time, but I am an academic, so the chapter's emphasis on practitioners did not fit my needs at the time (or even now). Nor did the journal focus on academic research. I also had a young family and a new career, so getting too involved in a group just

("The first 15—Anne Parker" continued on page 5)

these first 15 members.

This month we are doubling up and interviewing two more of our founding members, Andrew Quarry and Anne Parker.

Andrew Quarry



Q. How did you get involved with STC Manitoba back in 1988?

AQ: At the time that I first became aware of STC Manitoba, it was just taking form. I was working as a contract employee for Manitoba Hydro writing procedures in their Methods and Procedures Section. The planning group that was setting out to form the chapter convened a meeting at Great-West Life. I think that I became aware of the meeting through a notice in the Hydro newsletter. Motivated by an interest in finding kindred spirits I decided to attend.

Q. What was your role at that time?

AQ: I volunteered to serve as Secretary at the formative meeting held at Great-West Life and held that position for the first term in the chapter's life.

Q. What have you been doing over the past 20 years? Are you still involved with STC Manitoba and/or technical communication? Did your membership in the chapter help you in any way?

AQ: Over the past 20 years, although my areas of interest have varied, my career has always been closely associated with technical communication. For example, at times, the focus of my work might

("The first 15—Andrew Quarry" continued on page 5)

("The first 15—Anne Parker" continued from page 4)

wasn't feasible. Over the years, I rarely attended the monthly meetings since these were held downtown and in the evening. Because I live out of town, I never found this very convenient. I am still involved with technical communication—I coordinate the technical communication course in Engineering; for the last two years, I have also coordinated the integration of communication into senior engineering courses. I am now an active member of CASDW (formerly CATTW), the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing. I am active in the field, and usually contribute a paper at the annual conference. I have also published papers in the field and one book on gender and collaboration in an engineering classroom. For the last several years, I have also produced a course handbook (though this is now in dire need of revision).

Q. How do you see the chapter moving forward in the next few years?

AP: A group such as this one could offer me a great deal were the emphasis to be more academic as well as more practitioner-based. If I were to offer a suggestion, it would be that—try and promote the academic side.

Q. Any other comments or words of wisdom you would like to share with the chapter?

AP: If I may, I would suggest holding the meetings in a central spot, certainly, but perhaps over the lunch hour. If an evening meeting is preferable, then I would prefer a different location; downtown is still too much of a trek for me.

Final note: Does anyone have an email address or telephone number for Denise Laporte-Dawes? If so, please contact me at susan_haire@hotmail.com. Thanks.

Susan Haire has been a technical communicator and member of STC for over 20 years. She was one of the 'first fifteen', and has served the chapter as president, secretary, and vice president (this year).

("The first 15—Andrew Quarry" continued from page 4)

have been described as systems analysis, forms development, or curriculum development, but there has always been a technical communication thread influencing my perspective.

Through most of my career in technical communication, I have worked as an employee. This aspect of my life has recently changed significantly. I have established my own firm—Andrew Quarry Business Writing Services.

My involvement with the chapter has been relatively deep—I served as president of the chapter for three terms. Membership in the chapter has been one of my key channels for staying tuned to the technical communication profession.

Q. How do you see the chapter moving forward in the next few years?

AQ: The chapter, and most interest groups like it, are at risk of fading away under the pressure of rapid change and competing demands on the attention of current and potential members.

Those of us who want to see the chapter survive have to continually look for ways of keeping a core of volunteers interested in carrying on the struggle. In turn, the core of volunteers has to look for ways of developing general awareness of our existence while offering programs that make relatively light demands on level of commitment.

Level of commitment is an issue because members of our target audience have a rapidly increasing number of options as to how to invest their time. When we want to look attractive to them, we have to find the right balance between reminding them that we exist and making it clear that they can benefit from involvement with us for relatively low investment of time and money.

Q. Any other comments or words of wisdom you would like to share with the chapter?

AQ: Nope.

Periodical review

Intercom highlights

By Kevin Longfield

I know that Rachel intended this column to be about current issues of the STC journal, but while I was cleaning out my home office (it's now messier than it was before) I found the February 1993 issue. I couldn't believe the contrast between it and the present journal.

To begin with, the cover is not in full colour. It looks just like a 1970s vintage engineering journal, to the point of having the table of contents and an illustration of an exploded isometric of an electric motor housing on the cover. It has a lot more pages, and the pages themselves are of heavier stock. Graphics and illustrations are fewer, and it has no photographs. Advertising is spread throughout the 1993 issue, instead of confined to the front and back matter in today's issues, and like the rest of the publication, the ads are much less splashy.

Some things do not change over time, however. This issue has a special section titled "Technical Communicators and Downsizing in Industry," a reminder that economic downturns are cyclical. (Strangely, an article titled "How to Write a Resume" is outside the boundaries of the special section.) There are also some indications of how the world has changed over nearly 17 years. There's an article titled "The Impact of Language and Culture on Technical Communication in Japan." Today similar articles would be about China or India.

There's also a foreshadowing of content management and single-sourcing: "The Next Step: an Integrated Approach to Computer Documentation." Former Winnipegger James Conklin writes an engaging article about how our

roles might change if we were more involved in product development, and how we might find ourselves not just writing manuals but helping to design user interfaces.

The article that really caught my eye, however, was William Horton's "Let's do Away with Manuals ... before they do away with us." You might recall that my previous column was about writing for audiences who don't read. Here is an earlier take on the same issue. In this article Horton, a leading expert in e-learning and online document design, proposes that by concentrating on writing paper manuals, technical communicators are missing out on a key opportunity to add value to our users and employers, and are potentially making ourselves obsolete.

Horton says that paper manuals are typically the last resort for users, and their use is often a symptom of poor product design. He advises that we would better serve our users if we made product use more obvious, and this includes everything from the actual product design, the labeling and symbols put on key parts of the product, help screens and the user interface for software. Products fail because the gap between what the user knows and what the product requires the user to know is simply too large, and a paper manual is not adequate to bridge the gap. As technical communicators, we are in a unique position to advocate for users and provide expertise that guides users to successful encounters with products that help them achieve their daily goals. Seventeen years later, this article is still worth a read.

Senior member Kevin Longfield joined the STC in 1991. Since then he has worked in a number of companies, and currently teaches Technical Communication at Red River College. When not involved in technical communication, Kevin and his daughter Eileen produce independent theatre through their company, Theatre Anywhere.

Bring a guest contest

STC Manitoba's Bring a guest contest is back for 2009-10.

Win a free membership worth roughly \$250.00. For more details, visit the STC website at www.stcmanitoba.org.

Around the STC

STC is offering the following events online. Visit www.stc.org for more details on the time and cost.

- January 13, 2010—The new face of documentation
- January 20, 2010—What technical communicators can learn from the comics
- January 27, 2010—Useful shareware for technical communicators

Making your point: Inserting graphs into InDesign

By Rachel Ines

As a technical communicator, we sometimes have to learn a new program in the workplace, as there may not be the time or the resources to take the proper training to learn how to use the program. For me, that program is Adobe InDesign.

For the past few years, my experience in desktop publishing has been limited to Microsoft Publisher and Adobe FrameMaker. One of the skills we have as technical communicators, is the ability to transfer skills and knowledge from one program to another. Since most of the documents I have created have been in Microsoft Publisher, I've always been comfortable creating publications whether a newsletter or an annual report with ease.

In my current job, one of the standard programs is Adobe InDesign. Initially, I hoped to get some one-on-one tutoring, but with a solid belief in my skills and ability to learn new programs, I did as most people did and taught myself the program.

One of the advantages I had was knowing how to do two things:

- use Photoshop well, including understanding how to work in layers
- use formatting styles, as learned when working in MS Word

I use InDesign CS3 at work and InDesign CS4 at home. I will expand on the differences between these versions of the program during the January progression meeting. What I would like to share in this article is what I've learned about inserting charts or graphs into an InDesign document.

One of the great things I've discovered about InDesign, is what a powerful tool this desktop publishing program is. Once you've mastered styles and formatting and planned your document, cutting and pasting text is relatively simple even with different styles. One of the challenges I've found is inserting graphics into the document, particularly charts and graphs.

Unlike some other programs, graphics cannot merely be inserted by a simple cut and paste job. While it may work one time, it will not necessarily work a second, third, or even a fourth time. Trying to convert a chart or graph by cutting and pasting from Excel to Photoshop, results in a less than desired image. Often the text is jagged, the

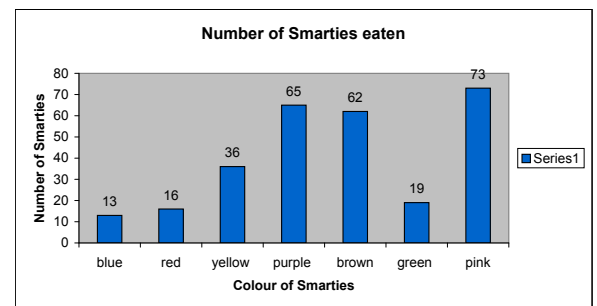
background does not look very clear, and the overall effect is less than desirable.

Inserting charts and graphs into InDesign requires a few steps, one of them is using Adobe Illustrator. Since I've never really explored this program, this isn't an attractive option for me. What I have learned is the magic of using a PDF to insert graphics into InDesign. Working with programs that can be viewed in multiple platforms is a great advantage.

To insert a good quality chart or graph into an InDesign document, follow these steps:

1. Open your graph in Microsoft Excel.
2. Make any changes to the graph as desired, such as change the font, colour of the graph, or change the text.

Colour of Smarties eaten						
blue	red	yellow	purple	brown	green	pink
13	16	36	65	62	19	73



3. Save your Excel file as a PDF.
4. Open your InDesign document.
5. Move the cursor to your placement point.
6. Insert your graph as you would any other graphic:
File>Place>your chart or graph file.
7. Make any adjustments as necessary.

There you have it! Your Excel chart or graph is now inserted at a high resolution. If you are inserting several graphs into a document, a good strategy would be to convert all the graphs first and then insert them into your InDesign document as needed. I find this works best for me.

Since I started using InDesign, I often find myself wondering how I got by before InDesign. Then again, it just goes to show, you're never too old to learn something new.

This article was written and designed using InDesign CS4.

Membership renewal

Don't forget your STC annual renewal!

STC Society for Technical Communication
Online Renewal Application

STEP 4: COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP SELECTION (CHAPTERS AND SIGS) — Step 1 of 7

All STC members may purchase membership in chapters and SIGs at a cost of \$25.00 for each chapter and \$10.00 for each SIG.

For your convenience, all of your prior year affiliations have been preselected below. Please review the list carefully and deselect any community with which you no longer wish to continue membership.

When you have completed your selection(s), please select the "Continue" button at the bottom of your screen.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
Click [here](#) to see descriptions for each SIG

Academic Illustrators & Visual Designers Online
 AccessAbility Information Design & Architecture Policies & Procedures
 Canadian Issues Instructional Design & Evaluation
 Consulting & Independent Contracting International
 Content Strategy Emerging Technologies

Chapters
Click [here](#) to see descriptions for each chapter

MN, St. Paul - Metropolitan St. U. (ST)
 MN, St. Paul - U. of Minnesota (ST)
 MO, Kansas City - Kansas City
 MO, Springfield - Missouri State University (ST)
 MO, St. Louis - St. Louis
 MT, Butte - Montana
 Belgium
 Canada, AB, Calgary - Alberta
 Canada, BC, Vancouver - Canada West Coast
 Canada, MB, Winnipeg - Manitoba
 Canada, NB, St. John - Atlantic Canada
 Canada, ON, London - London Ontario (ST)

Continue

Changes to society dues

The prorated dues amount is based only on Society dues. When starting or renewing your STC membership please include STC Manitoba! Our survival is at stake!

As part of the fourth step in your online renewal application, you may select chapter memberships. Please scroll down—way down—and make sure that there is a checkmark beside STC Manitoba!

This selection will add \$25 (USD) to your dues and significantly improve our chances of survival.

STC Membership Payment Policies

STC is offering the option with online renewals to pay for dues in four equal installments. The monthly installment payments will be automatically deducted from your credit card (or credit card backed debit card) and will begin the first business day after your application has been processed. They will continue approximately every 30 days for the next three consecutive months.

Membership type and dues	Included in membership dues	Add printed copy of	
		Technical Communication	Intercom
Basic membership \$215 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online publications Other member benefits 	\$75 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage	\$30 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage
Gold membership \$395 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online publications 1 Chapter 1 SIG 7 Web Seminars 1 online certificate course Salary Database Premium Listing (50-word description) in Online Buyers Guide & Consultant Directory 	\$75 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage	\$30 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage
SIG value package \$375 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online publications All SIGS 	\$75 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage	\$30 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage
Student membership \$75 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online publications 1 chapter 1 SIG 	\$75 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage	\$30 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage
Retired membership* \$145 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online publications 1 chapter 1 SIG 	\$75 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage	\$30 (USD) plus \$7.50 (USD) postage

*Contact STC Membership Department for eligibility