



January 2008, Volume 20, Number 5

January dinner meeting

5:45 p.m.
Tuesday, January 8, 2008
Place Louis Riel
190 Smith Street

Progressions

Please confirm your attendance by noon, Friday, January 4, with Joanne Kusiak at meetingcoordinator@stcmanitoba.org

Future Meetings

February 5—*Emotional Intelligence* with Heather Erhardt

March 4—*Organizational Development* with Leanne Douglas

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January dinner meeting program—multiple presenters

What's a progression?



In an STC Manitoba progression, chapter-meeting attendees move from table to table getting a flavour of three or four topics within an hour or so. Because the presenters are usually members of the chapter, this meeting format provides a special opportunity to find out about the interests of your professional colleagues.

The presenters at our January meeting will be

- **Kevin Longfield**
Title: Decision making: how to sort through the haystack
Description: Kevin will explore some tools for sorting complex information when making a decision.
- **Dennis Rogers**
Title: Empathy, Imagination, and the Perfect Public Speech
Description: In a roundabout, stammering, and likely rather perplexing way, Dennis will hint at the attitudes and avenues likely to lead you to the perfect public speech.
- **Andrew Quarry**
Title: Cheap tricks revisited
Description: Andrew will provide simple devices for getting your clients thinking and collaborating.
- **Rachel Ines**
Title: Ten tips to archive your way to organization
Description: Rachel will provide tips on how to assess, manage, and care for your archival collection on a limited budget.
- **Susan Haire**
Title: Technical communication is, too, sexy!
Description: James Bond had 'Q'—See what other 'sexy' jobs technical communicators do.
- **Henry Shorr**
Title: Digital Photography Tips
Description: Henry will focus his presentation on taking great pictures with a digital camera.

STC Manitoba is a chapter of



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. Submissions and ideas are welcome. 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.

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Public relations, Kevin Longfield
Program, Autumn Robbie-Draward
Meeting coordinator, Joanne Kusiak
Job bank, Bev Shafirka

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

For many of us, January is the time of year when we reflect on the past and try to set new goals or resolutions for ourselves in the new year. Unfortunately, many of our goals are often broken shortly after we announce them and that is why I like to think of January 2 as national resolution breaking day.

But why are so many resolutions broken shortly after they are made? Perhaps our resolutions are too generic or maybe we tend to make resolutions because that's a part of celebrating New Year's Eve. To me, it seems that most people set resolutions and never advance to the next step, failing to create a strategy to achieve their goals.



Although setting goals is an excellent idea, it is a skill that we should practice not just on New Year's Eve, but throughout the year. Whether one of your goals is to paddle a canoe to the Amazon rainforest or to climb to the summit of Mount Everest, you need to learn how to measure your success, re-evaluate your goals, and develop strategies that will help you achieve your goals throughout the year. Yes, you may fail; but there is nothing wrong with failure. Think of failure as a learning opportunity. Many of us will not learn from other's mistakes, but from our own mistakes.

When setting goals for ourselves, we need to set a variety of goals. These goals can include personal goals, such as a lifestyle change or a financial decision, and should also include goals for our careers, such as ongoing training and professional development.

For many technical communicators, ongoing training and professional development is necessary to stay current with the job market. One way to do this is by attending an STC meeting, joining a professional organization, or volunteering for one of the STC committees—by the way, the chapter is always looking for volunteers.

I first heard of the STC as a student in the Technical Communication Diploma program. After I graduated, I joined the executive committee when approached by a senior member of the Chapter.

Being a member of the Executive Committee has provided me with an opportunity to work alongside successful people in our community. I have learned new skills that will help me become a better team member and a better leader.

You don't have to be an STC member or a technical communicator to attend STC monthly meetings—the meetings are open to everyone. However, by joining the STC, you can receive a number of benefits. Joining the STC allows you to access the STC job bank, show your commitment as a professional, and share common interests with professionals working as technical communicators or related jobs.

Another noteworthy benefit is the professional network you can build by attending meetings. From 60 to 80 percent of jobs are found through networking. I was one of those people who benefited

(Continued on page 3)

Report from the December dinner meeting

Job competencies and more!

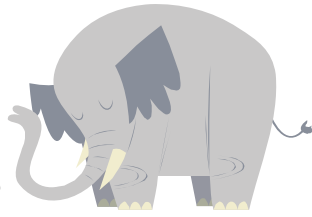
by Rachel Ines

Q: How do you get an elephant into the fridge?

A: Open the door, insert elephant, close the fridge.

Q: How do you get a giraffe into the fridge?

A: Open the door, remove the elephant, insert the giraffe, close the door.



On December 4, 2007, a hearty group of STC members braved a true Winnipeg winter night to learn about job competencies. As a bonus, they got to hear some clever pre-schooler jokes. You may be wondering how jokes, such as the sample above, relate to job competencies. They are part of the tools employed by companies to test a person's ability for dealing with the repercussions of actions, to test memory, and to test if a person can learn quickly from his or her mistakes. In fact, 90 percent of executives who have been asked these same questions get the answers wrong, while many pre-schoolers get the answers right.

Keith Sinclair, President and CEO of Harris Consulting, used this opening for a discussion that focused on two applications of job competencies:

- leadership/management assessment and development
- general career development

Leadership/management assessment and development

There is ample evidence of a crisis in leadership. In response, when recruiting and advancing leaders, some of the better companies are going beyond screening for technical knowledge, skills, and achievement to considering job competencies.

(“From the President,” continued from page 2)

through networking with STC colleagues to land my current job.

That's all for this month. As always, if you have any thoughts or suggestions please feel free to send me an email at brad.l.friesen@gmail.com. You can also send me a private message on the STC Manitoba Forums.

Brad

Rachel Ines is the current Vice-President of STC Manitoba. She works as a research technician with the IEGC Project at the University of Manitoba. Rachel graduated from the Technical Communication Diploma Program at Red River College and has been a regular contributor to *Manuscript*.

These companies invest effort in determining a short list of job competencies that will be of value for a particular position in their organization. They then assess candidates with respect to these competencies so as to select candidates who fit well with the company's philosophy and cultural values and the specific roles they are being asked to fill.

The focus on leadership is key to mobilizing an organization. Among several points that Keith made, a couple stand out:

- up to 85% of people who leave organizations say that they are leaving their managers, not their jobs
- bad management is one of the top two reasons for the high turnover in the high-tech sector

The assessment of candidates uses questions that are intended, as far as possible, to reveal actual behaviours. For example, it can be more useful to know what a candidate has actually done in a challenging situation than to get them to speculate on what they might do.

General career development

Keith says that since the 1990's, we have been in the era of the self-managed career—the era of the free agent. At the same time as some companies are recognizing that it isn't healthy for the organization to require that you become a manager to advance your career, you have a responsibility to “know thyself.”

As a start towards knowing thyself, in addition to just googling the term “competency assessment,” he suggested looking for the following on the Internet:

- the online assessment tools provided by the Gallup Organization—180 questions help you find your five key strengths
- the 16PF (16 personality factors)—a generic assessment tool for assessing six competencies

A copy of the *PowerPoint* slides Keith used during his presentation can be found on the STC Forums at <http://stcmanitoba.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=93&highlight=keith+harris>.

2008 Technical Communication Conference hosted by STC Manitoba and RRC

For those interested in
technical communication in Manitoba

April 14–15, 2008

Red River College, Winnipeg, Manitoba



Call for presentations

Deadline for entries January 15, 2008

Be a presenter at the conference

You are invited to be a presenter at the fifth annual technical communication conference held in Manitoba, jointly hosted by the Manitoba Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), and the Technical Communication Diploma program of Red River College (RRC). You'll enhance your resume, establish your credentials as an expert in a field of practice, and increase your visibility in the technical writing community in Manitoba. You'll also get a discounted registration rate for the conference.

About the conference

The conference *Technical communication: the bridge over muddy waters* consists of two days of sessions on Monday, April 14, and Tuesday, April 15, 2008. You are encouraged to submit presentations in the following areas of interest to those who engage in technical writing.

- *Covering the basics* includes topics such as editing, writing, grammar skills, developing relationships with subject matter experts, project management, career development for technical communicators in Manitoba, human factors.
- *Collaboration and teamwork* includes a look at how you can work more effectively in groups using media, knowledge management, virtual teams, and so on.
- *Technology* looks at new developments in technology to help or challenge technical communicators, such as FrameMaker, XML, handheld devices, publishing with Adobe Acrobat, single sourcing.

About presentations

Each session is fifty minutes. You may request a double session for a longer presentation or workshop.

Presentation formats are

- Individual presentation: an in-depth analysis of a specific topic by an individual speaker
- Workshop: an interactive presentation with learning exercises
- Panel discussion: an in-depth analysis of a subject by a group of experts, followed by an informal discussion with the audience
- Progression: small group exchanges consisting of a 15-minute presentation including group discussion

How to submit your presentation

Submit your proposal by email to Brad Friesen (brad.l.friesen@gmail.com). Please put *Conference Proposal* in the subject line. The deadline for proposals is January 15, 2008.

Provide the following information:

- Outline and objectives of your presentation
- Overview of your presentation
- A short biography of no more than 100 words (this will be published in the Preliminary and Final programs)
- Format of the presentation (individual talk, workshop, panel discussion, progression)
- Audience level
- Any equipment needs
- Any other special needs (for example, wheelchair access)
- Scheduling restrictions (any days or times you cannot be at the conference to present)

You will hear early in January whether or not your proposal has been accepted.

About the hosts

The Manitoba Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) has been an award-winning chapter since it received its charter in 1989. STC internationally is an organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication—it is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its approximately 18,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers and multimedia artists. For information on the Society, see the website at www.stc.org.

Red River College launched its two-year Technical Communication Diploma program in 2002. For more information about the program, see the program website at rrc.mb.ca. (Select *Full-time programs, T*).

For more information about the conference, see the conference Web site at www.stcmanitoba.org/conference.

Contact

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Celebration of winter

After several years of warmer than normal winters, early indications are that “normal” winters may have returned. To celebrate the return to traditional values, the editorial staff is temporarily using a winter theme for the newsletter banner based on the photo shown opposite, which was contributed by Mike Bradshaw.



Whither the hyphen?

from the editorial assistant

Whither the hyphen in e-mail?—now "email," according to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (COD). It has been the fate of many hyphens to wither away, but in this case the COD appears to be dispatching it with unseemly haste, leaving wreckage in its wake.

You may have noticed that here, at *Manuscript* headquarters, we started the year with a hyphen in e-mail and now have none. Our standard for spelling in general has been to defer to the COD, with a few documented exceptions. When I documented our standards in 2001, there seemed no need to single out this hyphen for special protection. Both reference dictionaries, the COD and the Gage, sanctioned only the hyphenated version.

The mother of the COD, the OED as presented on OED.com, specifies "email" for the noun and e-mail for the verb. Wikipedia, as of November 27, 2007, said that the spelling is "disputed," but lists several authorities supporting the hyphen and only a few rejecting it. This is one of a few cases in which IBM and Microsoft are on the side of truth, justice, and correct spelling (that is, with a hyphen) and Apple is allied with Google and ebay on the wrong side of this issue.

Armed with the knowledge that CP [Canadian Press] and the Globe & Mail have also continued to use the hyphen, I intend to propose a revision to our standards that will specify that this is another in a very short list of cases in which we won't use the COD spelling. The hyphen in e-mail will return!

Andrew

Do you have an opinion on whether to keep the hyphen in email in or out? Why not write a letter to the editor or share your thoughts on the STC forums? [Visit this link to see Andrew's article on the forums <http://stcmanitoba.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=95>] We'd love to hear from you!

STC membership renewal

Don't forget your renewal!

Membership type	Includes	Cost
Classic	Printed publications Online publications Choice between the following: one chapter + one special interest group (SIG) or up to three SIGs	\$175 (add \$15 for extra postage)
E-membership	Online publications Choice between the following: one chapter + one SIG or up to three SIGs	\$165
Student	Online publications One student chapter One regular chapter Up to three SIGs	\$60
Retired	Online publications One student chapter One regular chapter Up to three SIGs	\$75

Converting from RGB to Pantone in one step

By Rachel Ines

I'd like to introduce a new feature to Manuscript called "From one technical communicator to another." I encourage the membership to submit tips they've discovered while working in different software programs. I find that a lot of the knowledge I've acquired is through personal experience and information shared by not only other technical communicators but from other professionals such as the printers or vendors.

As technical communicators, document design involves not only writing clearly and addressing the audience's needs, but it also requires us to draw on other skills such as creating a functional layout of the document, choosing colours, and choosing a printing format.

Microsoft Publisher is a program that allows users to create more formal and structured documents using templates provided by Microsoft or developed yourself. *Publisher* is more user friendly than, say, *Microsoft Word* for projects such as creating an annual report. If you find you're developing a higher end document and printing on higher end equipment, it becomes important for you to understand the difference between dealing with RGB, CMYK, and Pantone colours. Most companies have existing style guides identifying a specific colour to use; these colours are often identified with the Pantone number.

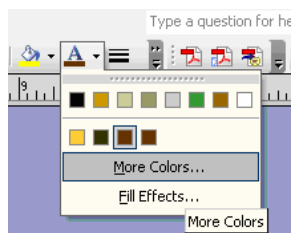
Looking at the default settings in *Publisher*, often the RGB colour is shown. Many sites online will assist you with converting an RGB to a CMYK or a CMYK to a Pantone colour. However, this is a very time consuming task that requires many steps. I've recently learned that I could skip this step simply by using options that I wasn't aware of within *Publisher*.

Identifying colours for printing

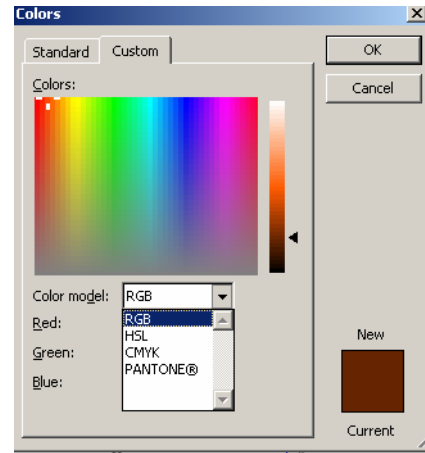
Publisher allows you to customize your colours simply by selecting the **More Colors...** option.

Once you've selected the **More Colors...** option, the default tab opened is **Standard**. Click on the **Custom** tab to view your colour or to customize your colour.

Click on the arrow beside



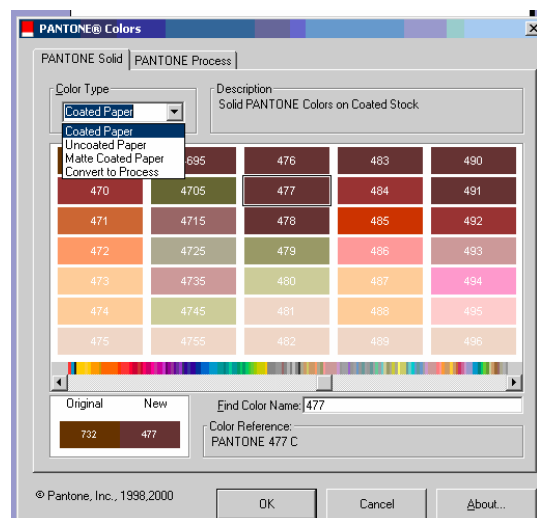
the **Color Model** box. The box will open and show you four colour options:



If you know the specific colour for your text or background, select the appropriate option. In my case, I needed to identify the Pantone colour to the printer.

A new window box opened identifying the Pantone shade that the printer needed.

I could select from the **Color Type** drop box to select the type of paper the document would be printed on (coated or uncoated).



The discovery of this option will help me in the future development of document designs. No longer do I need to go through multiple steps to convert colours from RGB to Pantone; I can do it all within the same document I'm working on.

Chapter action

When was the last time you attended a chapter meeting? Has the daily grind been keeping you busy and unable to network with your fellow STC chapter members? Well, if so, we can help! The executive committee is always looking for ways to keep the membership informed on chapter activities, in this section, we'll provide updates of chapter events.



Bring a guest contest

Are you tired of paying yearly dues? Do you find yourself discussing chapter dinner meetings with your colleagues? Do you find that your colleagues are interested in STC Manitoba activities?

Well why not invite them to a dinner meeting? We still have four months left in the contest, so why not invite a colleague and earn credits towards the STC Manitoba "Bring a guest contest." The winning chapter member will be announced during the May Annual General Meeting and the grand prize is your yearly membership paid in full by the chapter or free dinner meetings for the 2008 – 2009 year (for those members whose membership is sponsored by their workplace).

Volunteers wanted!

Got the winter blues? Looking for ways to motivate yourself to get out of the house during winter? Well why not volunteer your time for the chapter? We're always looking for members to volunteer for different committees—any amount of time you can contribute to the various committees

would be greatly appreciated. Currently, we're looking for members to volunteer their time for the following committees:

- STC/RRC fifth annual conference
- Web site
- Newsletter (articles and proof readers wanted!)
- Dinner meeting/conference speakers
- Executive committee 2008 – 2009 (it's never too early to start thinking about it!)

STC Forums

The STC forums are available for chapter members to network, discuss issues in technical communication, or just see what's happening with STC Manitoba.

If you've got a burning desire to discuss technical communication issues why not see what's happening on the forums

<http://stcmanitoba.org/forums/index.php>

Professional development courses

Course	Date	Offered at
Social Technology for Teaching and Training: Exploring Today's Communication Tools	Jan 7 to Apr 11, 2008	University of Manitoba
Designing and Writing Manuals	Jan 7–Mar 17, 2008	Red River College
Technical Communication— Introduction	Jan 9–Mar 12, 2008	
Effective Written Communication	Jan 8 – Mar 25, 2008 Jan 10 – Mar 27, 2008	University of Winnipeg
Effective Oral Communication	Jan 7 – Mar 31, 2008	
	Jan 15 – Mar 25, 2008 Jan 16 – Mar 26, 2008	