



# M A N U S C R I P T

March 2007, Volume 19, Number 7

## March dinner meeting

5:45 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 6, 2007  
Place Louis Riel  
190 Smith Street

Michael Hartley: *Publishing and marketing a novel*

Please confirm your attendance by noon on Friday, March 2, to Nirdosh Ganske at [nganske@rrc.mb.ca](mailto:nganske@rrc.mb.ca)

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## A portfolio for any professional situation

by Neil Ternowetsky

So what is the big deal with portfolios? Since I was 15 years old, my parents and teachers preached at me to get my portfolio together. I never knew what to include in the portfolio, when to submit it, or what the importance of having it was. What I have since learned is that a portfolio is a collection of one's best work and is the most valuable tool we have to move our careers forward.

### Portfolios are important in the application process

Employers may ask for a sample portfolio with your application; thus, you have the opportunity to create a positive first impression before meeting the employer. A positive first impression can make the difference between getting the job and heading back to the want ads. If your portfolio is professional, includes only your best work, and is relevant to the applied job, the portfolio might be enough to convince the employer that you are the worthy candidate. Remember that you are applying for a job that is being pursued by many others; thus, your portfolio may be the extra "something" that sets you apart from the rest of the pack.

### Portfolios are important for the interview

Now the employer has received your portfolio and invited you for an interview. Your portfolio, if used properly, has the ability to help you control the entire interview process.



The portfolio is a script for the entire interview. You can answer employer's questions by simply pulling documents out of the portfolio and showing examples. For example, the employer may ask, "What projects were you involved with in your last job?" The answer is in the portfolio and all you need to do is pull it out and explain it. If the employer asks, "What qualifies you for the position" the answer is again there for you to grab and show the employer.

The portfolio needs to be revised for every interview. Doing so

*Continued on page 2*

## Manuscript

Manuscript and its shorter sibling Micro Manuscript 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 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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**Mission:** Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

For more information about STC-Manitoba, please visit our Web site at <http://www.stcmanitoba.org/>.

**Executive Committee  
2006-2007**



President, Nirdosh Ganske, [nganske@rrc.mb.ca](mailto:nganske@rrc.mb.ca)  
Vice-President, Brad Friesen,  
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Public Relations, Ted Anderson  
Program, Ben Davies  
Newsletter, Steve Bagel  
Web site, Ben Dorge  
Job bank, Bev Shafirka

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

## *Portfolios for any professional situation continued from page 1 ...*

**makes the portfolio relevant for the applied position. A portfolio that has not been looked at in two years will be irrelevant to the position being applied for.**

### **Portfolios are important when you already have a job**

**What happens when you want a promotion? Before you start knocking on your CEO's doors, make sure you have prepared your portfolio. Just as in the application process, your portfolio has to be professional and relevant and include your best work. Once your portfolio is ready, you can ask for the promotion. When the CEO asks why you deserve the promotion, you can answer with the help of your portfolio. Just as in the interview process, your portfolio helps you control the meeting with the CEO and show why you deserve the promotion.**

**So back to the questions I have had since I was 15:**

- *What do I put in my portfolio?*  
**Include a resume, references, testimonials, copies of awards, affiliations and samples of past work in your portfolio. Keep in mind that the contents of the portfolio need to be current and relevant to the job.**
- *When do I submit my portfolio?*  
**Present your portfolio anytime you need to prove your worth in the work place.**
- *What is the importance of having a portfolio?*  
**A portfolio is a versatile tool that allows you to gain an edge in your career advancement.**

### **For more information on portfolios refer to:**

St. Amant, K. 2002. The 10 commandments of effective portfolios, *Intercom* June 2002  
Cooke, L. 2005. Professional portfolios; showcasing your Technical Communication skills, *Intercom* February 2003  
Scott, J. 2002. Portfolios for Technical Communicators: Worth the work, *Intercom* February 2000  
Molisani, J. 2003. Portfolios: Tools for acing the interview, *Intercom* September/October 2003  
Smith, H., Paper & electronic portfolios: sales kits for Technical Communicators in the twenty-first century, *Intercom* August 2003

## President's message

by Nirdosh Ganske

In reaching for a topic I could write about for this issue of *Manuscript*, I went browsing through newsletters of other STC chapters, seeking inspiration from other presidents' messages. What I found was inspiration for anyone wanting to write an article for a newsletter.

I came upon an article by Mark Stucky titled "Mapping reality: Life, communication, and everything" in the *Watermark*, a newsletter of the St. Joseph Valley chapter. Written in two parts, this article starts on the first pages of the last two *Watermark* issues. I've included the links for those who may be interested in reading about what maps have to teach us about communication.

Part 1: [http://www.stc-sjvc.org/V39-2\\_Watermark\\_1-06.pdf](http://www.stc-sjvc.org/V39-2_Watermark_1-06.pdf)  
Part 2: [http://www.stc-sjvc.org/V39-3\\_Watermark\\_4-06.pdf](http://www.stc-sjvc.org/V39-3_Watermark_4-06.pdf)

In a number of recently written articles, I found references to the creation of *personas*, an audience analysis technique made popular

by Alan Cooper in his 1999 publication about user interface design titled *The inmates are running the asylum*, a book with concepts of relevance to technical communicators. You may want to read it if you are intrigued by the terms *cognitive friction* and *the cost of dancing bears*, and you are willing to have challenged your most cherished ideas about usability testing, style guides, visual design, and focus groups. For an overview, read the book review at the following link:

[http://www.uidesign.net/1999/books/oct\\_books1.html](http://www.uidesign.net/1999/books/oct_books1.html)

Though eight years old, the book outlines problems that apparently have not gone away.

What struck me as I browsed through newsletters of various chapters was the extraordinary quality of some of the articles. If you've wanted to write an article for the *Manuscript* but don't know where to start, I recommend that you review newsletters from other chapters to get some inspiration.

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## From the Editor

by Steve Bagel

It's been a pleasure producing this issue of *Manuscript*. Three steps was all it took. First, I agreed to allow the Technical Communication students at Red River College produce this issue. Second, I sent them some material. Finally, I got out of their way (I consider staying out of their way part of the third step). So, without further ado, I must thank Neil Ternowetsky and Lydia Klassen for their outstanding work.

Unfortunately, February's meeting was cancelled because of low registration—as someone who has been on a tour of the Industrial Technology Centre (ITC), I can say this was unfortunate, because the level of precision they achieve is remarkable. Fortunately, March's meeting will compensate.

All of you dreaming of having your writing published—and these days everyone wants to have something published—will benefit from coming to Michael Hartley's presentation *Publishing and marketing a novel*.

One last thing before I leave you. While attending the monthly meetings and reading *Manuscript* are both commendable ways of supporting STC Manitoba, serving on the executive committee is another way for you to directly influence these two components of our chapter, among many others. So if you have ideas for enhancing STC Manitoba's contribution to the local technical communication community, volunteer for the executive.

## STC webinar on safety information standards in documents

by Lydia Klassen

Have you ever heard of webinars? I am familiar with seminars, but I had never heard of webinars until the beginning of my second term in the Technical Communication Diploma Program at Red River College.

According to [Webopedia](#), “webinar” is short for *Web*-based *seminar* and is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar over the Web.

On January 31, 2007, I had the pleasure to attend a webinar with my fellow students and instructors. The topic of the slide show presentation was *ANSI Z535.6 – a new standard for safety information in product-accompanying literature*. After logging into the Web and connecting with the presenter over the phone, the new adventure was about to begin.

The presenters, Elaine Wisniewski and Steven Hall, provided current information on the general, environmental and product safety standards required to convey safety messages in manuals.

Paying attention to details and providing clear instructions is very important to catch the reader’s attention. Because users seem to skip the warning and caution sections on products, experts suggest including safety measures in the directions on how to handle the product.

At the end of the presentation, everybody was welcomed to ask questions by typing them into the message board or using the phone. It was a new, but also very exciting, experience, and the information provided was very useful.

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## STC webinar on creating indexes on Web sites and Intranets

By Neil Ternowetsky

On Wednesday, February 7, 2007, the students of Red River College’s Technical Communication program took part in a second webinar. Heather Hedden, of Hedden Information Management, hosted the webinar. The focus of the webinar was Web site and Intranet indexes. The webinar provided background information on indexes, creating site indexes and additional resource information regarding site indexes.

Heather started off with simple information; for example, she started by using the British Indexing Standard to define an index as “a systematic arrangement of entries designed to enable users to locate information in a document.” By the end of the webinar, she had described index codes and tools.

Just like the first webinar my class attended on January 31, 2007, Heather’s webinar ended in a question session. Attendees of the webinar were invited to type in their questions to an

online bulletin board or to call their questions in.

The webinar was of great use to me and, based on their reactions, my instructors, who are trained in the field of technical communications. I assume, based on my instructors’ reactions, this particular webinar’s information will be of great use to many professionals in the technical communications field. It was interesting to hear the questions people had and even more interesting to hear how far across North America the webinar stretched; at one point a man from Georgia asked a question.

Webinars are a great tool to convey vital information to a large and wide spread audience without costing a great deal of money to attend. I personally would be encouraged to attend further STC webinars based on my experience with the two I have attended.

## Technical Communication Certificate Program at twelve: Kevin Wynne, graduate

By Rachel Ines

Kevin graduated from the Technical Communication Certificate program in 2005. An STC member since 2004, Kevin joined the society at the suggestion of one of his Red River College instructors.

Before entering the Technical Communication Certificate program at Red River College, Kevin worked as an entertainment reporter, senior proofreader, and magazine editor. He is currently working as a contract writer for an insurance company in Winnipeg, where his responsibilities include writing field documentation for the company's new policy management system and supporting the Documentation Lead.

### What made you decide to take the certificate program?

"I was looking for a program that met my requirements in the areas of cost, time demands, and relevance to the regional business community. I heard about the program from Kevin Longfield (Technical Communication Diploma Instructor), whom I had originally consulted for advice on which program he thought would be best for me."

### How has the Technical Communication Certificate program helped you in your job?

"The program has created the basis for further learning and knowledge transfer in two different work settings. Through the certificate program, I was exposed to a variety of concepts and best practices in the technical communications field, taught by industry practitioners."

As a graduate from the certificate program, what are Kevin's thoughts about the program? "The program provides experienced, capable instructors delivering industry-relevant curriculum and is a program that I would recommend."

As with any profession, the educational experience for technical communicators does not end at graduation. The next STC/RRC conference is scheduled for April 12–13, 2007. Having previously attended the STC/RRC conference, Kevin was asked what he thought about the conference. "The conference offers technical communicators networking opportunities and a selection of interesting speakers." And on that note, if you haven't registered for the conference—do so now—you never know what you may be missing!

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## News from across Canada



### Alberta Chapter

*Marketing for Technical writers*

Presenter: James McCormick

When: March 15, 2007

Where: Calgary Technologies 3553-31 Street NW, Calgary Alberta

Time: 7:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

### Montréal Chapter

*CV Clinic for Technical writers*

Presenter: Marta Cepek

When: March 2007

### Toronto Chapter

*Madcap Flare tutorial*

Presenter: Mike Hamilton

When: March 13, 2007

Where: TBA

Time: 7:00 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

# Surviving presentations: strategies for the terminally shy

by Susan Haire, Senior Member

Your worst nightmare has come true. Your boss is so impressed with the marketing brochure you prepared for your company's latest trade show, that he now wants you to make a presentation to the clients.

A presentation, where you have to stand in front of a group of strangers who are all staring at you as if you are about to spout pearls of wisdom and where you have to talk—out loud—without making a complete fool of yourself.

So what do you do?

Easy. Try to get out of it. Persuade your boss that Joe in the next cubicle is a much better public speaker than you. So what if you know the subject better than Joe, you can quickly bring him up to speed, right?

Wait. Do you really want your boss to know you can be replaced so easily? Let's try something else.

You could claim you don't know the subject well enough to give a presentation. No, that won't work. Your knowledge of the subject is the reason the boss wants the presentation in the first place.

It looks as if avoidance is not going to work. But just because you are now stuck giving the presentation, it doesn't mean you have to expose yourself to the stares of your audience. Let's have a look at the 'heard but not seen' options.

Presentations are usually given as a slide show with somebody talking about the images on the screen. Slide shows are presented in a darkened room. Key word – 'dark.' Who's to know if it's really you doing the talking? Why not record the commentary onto a tape recorder ahead of time? Then while the slides are popping onto the screen, you can cue the tape to play at the same time.

Also, make sure you have lots of handouts. Hopefully your audience will be so busy reading ahead that they won't be paying any attention to you.

Many books have been written about public speaking, but with a bit of ingenuity and sneakiness, you might never have to worry about it again.

## Manitoba STC/RRC conference portfolio competition



We will be having a portfolio competition for all participants at the fourth annual STC/RRC conference. \*You are encouraged to submit a technical communication portfolio to the conference committee.

There will be two categories for judging:

- Students (including graduates of 2006)
- Technical communicators who are working in the field

A winner from each category will be decided based on peer judging. Ballots for the contest will be handed out at the registration booth on each day of the conference.

Prizes for the winning portfolios will be awarded at the conference wrap-up.

Portfolios will be returned to participants after the prizes have been awarded.

If you would like to participate in the portfolio competition, please contact either Brad Friesen or Rachel Ines by noon on Friday, April 6, 2007. You will be responsible to bring your portfolio to the conference on the morning of Thursday, April 12, 2007.

\* This contest is open only to conference attendees.



### Contact information

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## Professional development courses: resources for training

University of Winnipeg Continuing Education—<http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/dce-index>

University of Manitoba Extended Education—<http://www.umanitoba.ca/extended/division/>

Red River College Continuing Education—

<http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E>

Course name	Dates	Location	Link
<b>Leading organizations, individuals, and teams</b>	March 20–April 10, 2007	University of Manitoba Continuing Education	<a href="http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf">http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf</a>
<b>Creative writing</b>	March 22–May 25, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>
<b>Understanding the design process</b>	April 1, 2007–March 31, 2008	University of Winnipeg Continuing Education	<a href="http://dce.uwinnipeg.ca/dce/index.cfm?do=dce.courseListingGrouped&amp;programNumber=5000006">http://dce.uwinnipeg.ca/dce/index.cfm?do=dce.courseListingGrouped&amp;programNumber=5000006</a>
<b>Web marketing communications</b>	April 1, 2007–March 31, 2008	University of Winnipeg Continuing Education	<a href="http://dce.uwinnipeg.ca/dce/index.cfm?do=dce.courseListingGrouped&amp;programNumber=5000006">http://dce.uwinnipeg.ca/dce/index.cfm?do=dce.courseListingGrouped&amp;programNumber=5000006</a>
<b>Fundamentals of records and information management</b>	April 2–June 18, 2007	University of Manitoba Continuing Education	<a href="http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf">http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf</a>
<b>Basic business communications</b>	April 2–June 18, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>
<b>Basic writing skills</b>	April 2–30, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>
<b>Editing, plain language</b>	April 2–June 18, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>
<b>Graphics communication: an introduction</b>	April 3–May 29, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>
<b>Intermediate writing skills</b>	April 3–June 5, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	<a href="http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E">http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E</a>



## **Technology and Teamwork** Technical Communication Conference

April 12th & 13th, 2007

### **The upcoming technical communication conference**

The Technical Communication Conference is jointly sponsored by

- **STC Manitoba** (new Web site address: [www.stcmanitoba.org](http://www.stcmanitoba.org))
- The **Technical Communication Diploma Program** at **Red River College**

#### **Where?**

The conference takes place at Red River College  
Princess Street Campus  
160 Princess Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

#### **When?**

On Thursday, April 12, and Friday, April 13, 2007



#### **Why attend?**

Our conference promotes collaboration within the Manitoba technical communication community. Benefits of attending the conference include

- Networking with professional technical communicators and other industry representatives
- Sharing knowledge and skills
- Showcasing local talent
- Discovering new tools for technical communication
- Keeping up-to-date with technical communication trends and developments in Manitoba

#### **How to register?**

Registration for the conference is now open. To register, download and complete the registration form. Once you have completed the registration form, you can mail the form with a cheque or money order payable to STC Manitoba

#### **Need more information?**

If you would like more information, visit the conference Web site at [www.bradfriesen.com/conference/](http://www.bradfriesen.com/conference/), or e-mail **Leslie McKendry-Smith** or **Brad Friesen**.