



March 2009, Volume 21, Number 7

March dinner meeting

5:45 p.m.
Tuesday, March 3, 2009
Place Louis Riel
190 Smith Street

How to get what you want in today's job market Frank Hanel (RESCHEDULED)

Please confirm your attendance by noon, Friday, February 27, with meetingcoordinator@stcmanitoba.org

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**2008 STC
Community of Excellence**

STC Manitoba
is a chapter of



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

March dinner meeting

How to get what you want in today's job market

Editor's note: Our speaker was ill for the February dinner meeting and has rescheduled his presentation for the March meeting.

Have you ever had to look for work when the economy was failing, companies are downsizing, and hiring is on the back burner? Those who have know just how tough that can be. In this presentation, Frank Hanel will work with meeting participants on how to get noticed by employers and how to translate skill sets to job specifics. Some areas he will cover include:

- What are the realities of resumes, cover letters, and so-called "superstars"?
- What separates job applicants from job getters?
- How do you get that dream job?



If you are interested in some up-to-date and useful information on job searching, please join us for a serious and lively discussion of what works, what's hot, and what's not.

About the speaker

As an employment counsellor with Horizons Job Action Centre, Frank Hanel works with the unemployed and underemployed to assist in their search for work. He helps clients develop job-related resumes, cover letters, networking abilities, and Internet strategies. He also provides interview, self-confidence, and motivational techniques. His previous experience includes work with developmentally delayed individuals, resort operation in Falcon Lake, and managing *StressBlasters*, a career and personal development company.

STC Manitoba job bank



Speaking of jobs ... looking for one? Don't forget to visit our job bank at www.stcmanitoba.org/forums. STC Manitoba members get first access to jobs posted in the job bank. Check regularly to see what's available.

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. 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 [Interim], Andrew Quarry
andrewquarry@gmail.com
Vice-President, Margaret LeSage
margaretl@caamanitoba.com
Past President, Brad Friesen
Secretary, Holly Steele
Treasurer, Donald Nordman
Membership, Vacant
Public relations, Dorothy Davidson
Program, Lauren Bailey

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 (interim) president

As an escape from the incessantly bad news about the world economy, I've been reading Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. And, as an escape from the frightening discussions in that book about the annihilations of life on earth caused by eruptions at Yellowstone and objects falling through the atmosphere, I've been reading another Bill Bryson book—*The Mother Tongue: English & How It Got that Way*. These reading experiences have led me to reflect on what a privilege it is to be able to work with words and, in particular, to work with words in English.



I realize of course that we, as technical writers, have an obligation to use plain language and avoid words that our audience won't readily understand. It is, however, comforting to know that, should the need arise, the appropriate word for a morbid fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of my mouth has already been coined—arachibutyrophobia. Some lucky technical writer somewhere may have an audience ready to take this word in stride.

[By the way, in case you're wondering, the spelling checker in my version of *MS Word* has no suggestions to make on how to correct the spelling of arachibutyrophobia.]

At the last chapter meeting, I mentioned some limitations of MS Office 2008 for the Mac as compared to MS Office 2007 [for PCs]. One of these limitations is rather odd—there is no English Canadian setting for Language. Perhaps this is the reason that my spelling checker has no suggestions to make on how to correct the spelling of arachibutyrophobia.

Andrew

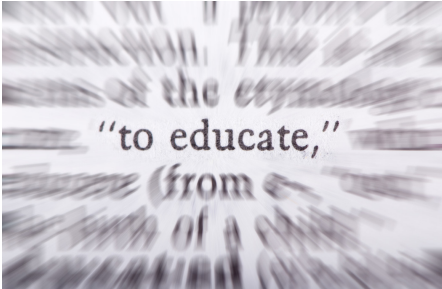
Professional development courses

Course	Date (2009)
University of Winnipeg	
Writing for the Web	March 23
Effective Feedback Skills and Strategies	March 26
Red River College	
Technical Communications: Intro	April 8–June 10
Graphic Communications: Intro	April 6–June 5
Web Site Development: Intro	April 6–June 22 or
How to Write for Magazines	April 7–June 2

From the editor

21 Credit hours in 3 days

Last year I decided that I needed a bit of a change in my career direction; however, my career plans did not quite work out with my goals, so I decided that I needed a change. To move forward, you need the right tools, and in my case it's education.



That means going back to school, *again*. I guess this means I can't ever be accused of not being interested in life long learning.

After a brief attempt at Red River College, I chose the University of Winnipeg. I've decided to get my certificate in Web Design and thanks to the short, but intense courses at the university, I'm on my way. The journey began with the introductory course. Originally scheduled for four 4 - hour classes each Saturday for the month of February,

it wound up being three 8 - hour classes.

Did I mention the class was on a Saturday? Learning Java script all day was a challenge. There was more focus on theory than hands on instruction for most of the first day and some confusion with class times. Is it 10:00 to 2:00, 9:00 to 4:00, or 9:00 to 5:00?

Although the course is valued at 21 credit hours and should run from 9:00 to 4:00, the confusion of the course time means we're in class from 9:00 to 5:00. This makes for a very long day, especially after working a full week; so the need to pay attention is important. Since the course is condensed, it means having a quiz at the end of the day! So much for studying ahead of time.

Next up, Photoshop consisting of two 3 - hour classes twice a week during the month of March with a little French class sandwiched in between. I can hardly wait!

Cheers,
Rachel

February dinner meeting

PowerPoint without Bullets

By Andrew Quarry

Lauren Bailey rescued the program portion of our February chapter meeting when the original speaker had to cancel because of illness. Fortunately for the chapter, she had been pessimistic enough to have a presentation partially prepared and ready for such emergencies. Her topic—*Making a Bulletless PowerPoint Presentation*—attracted a high level of audience participation.

Lauren demonstrated how some of the criticisms made of the classic, bullet-laden PowerPoint presentation can be avoided. The approach she recommends avoids the vertical arrangement of bulleted points altogether. Edmond Tufte and others have blamed bulleted presentations for undermining the critical faculties of audiences exposed to presentations prepared with PowerPoint. Instead Lauren uses graphic elements

such as rectangles, usually arranged horizontally, to focus audience attention. In general, the audience is encouraged to work a little harder to appreciate the presenter's argument because the logical flow of the argument is not as ploddingly displayed as is commonly the case with PowerPoint presentations. At the same time, developers can use as many of PowerPoint's whiz-bang effects as good taste [or bad taste] permits.

In response to questions from the audience, Lauren said that, in cases where the presenter is someone other than the developer of the presentation, some selling of the approach may be necessary. In any case, the script for the presentation has to be developed as an element separate from the presentation display; and some additional rehearsal time will be required.

Survey Results Overview

Encouraging you to attend chapter meetings

by Holly Steele and Andrew Quarry

Out of more than 40 potential returns, 15 persons responded to the Executive Committee's question on "What would encourage you to attend STC meetings regularly?" At their February meeting, committee members expressed pleasure with the response rate and the detailed nature of most of the responses. The committee has been concerned about a declining attendance. In summary, the responses don't point to a clear solution, but there are some ideas that the committee intends to act on.

The open-ended nature of the question poses a challenge for tallying the responses—the tallies given here should be taken as indicative of tendencies and trends, not as clear and simple results.

Eight respondents cited *scheduling and schedule conflicts* as issues. A couple of these indicated that a longer view of the planned program for the year would facilitate their personal planning and one suggested trying noon-hour or weekend meetings.

Eight respondents cited *program content* as a major factor motivating attendance. The comments were largely but not entirely positive. Some of the topics that were suggested include

- job search and employability skills
- training techniques
- issues involved in contract work
- effective communication (oral and written)
- dealing with difficult technical document

Holly Steele is a technical writer. Her business, Train Write Solutions, offers technical writing and training services to small and medium-sized businesses. She is also the Secretary of the Manitoba chapter of the STC. Holly Steele can be contacted at trainwritesolutions@gmail.com

Andrew Quarry is the current interim President of STC Manitoba. He has frequently served on the executive since the chapter was founded. He has over 30 years of experience in information development.

projects

- lawsuits

One person also commented that she would like a mixture of tools, business, lifestyle, and peripheral topics.

Five persons mentioned *networking* and *friends* in their responses. Some of these persons urged the executive to do more to ensure that newcomers feel welcome. Some commented that, while they enjoyed seeing friends at the dinner meetings, they were seeing the same people and not enough business networking was going on.

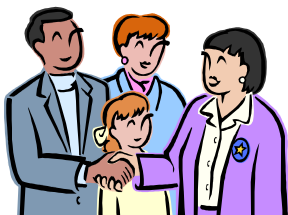
Note: The executive has added Q&A sessions to chapter meetings to encourage more discussion of technical communication topics.

A couple of persons mentioned *food* as an issue. The committee intends to forward a couple of ideas arising from these responses to next year's committee: signs identifying ingredients whenever a buffet is offered and investigation of an approach for ordering directly from the restaurant menu.

Three persons, in effect, excused themselves from the discussion—one gave the reason that they were retired and two said that they live so far away that attendance at meetings is not practical.

The Executive Committee appreciates the time people have taken to respond to the survey and welcomes continuing comment.

Change makers needed!



STC Manitoba's annual general meeting is just around the corner. The executive committee is looking for chapter members to sit on the 2009–2010 committee.

If you feel inspired by President Barack Obama's movement for change you can believe in, contact Brad Friesen Brad.L.Friesen@gmail.com or Andrew Quarry andrewquarry@gmail.com to make some STC Manitoba history!