



May 2008, Volume 20, Number 9

**Annual General Meeting
Edition**

5:45 p.m.
Tuesday, May 6, 2008
Place Louis Riel
190 Smith Street

Please confirm your attendance
by noon, Friday, May 2, with
Joanne Kusiak at
meetingcoordinator@stcmanitoba.org

Future Meetings

September 9—Leslie McKendry-Smith, *AuthorIt*

In this issue

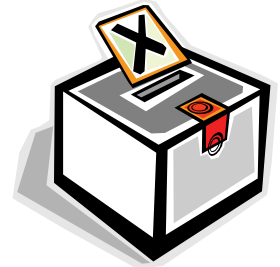
Annual General Meeting..... 1
From the President 2
New location job forums 3
Raising the technical
communication profile 3
From the Editor 4
Conference round up..... 4
TC Skills stream summary 8
Professional development 8

**Preparing for another year
The Annual General Meeting [AGM]**

Now is the time for all good members to come to the aid of their chapter.

The election portion of the AGM on May 6 requires a quorum of members at 5:45 p.m. to vote on the incoming executive and to keep the chapter alive. If you have to vote and dash because of other commitments, we'll understand. **Your attendance is important.**

As always, non-members are welcome to attend and enjoy the presentation and dinner.



Agenda Overview

5:45 p.m.—nominations/elections and awards—the nomination slate will be presented at the AGM

6:15 p.m.—Dorothy Dobbie's presentation

7:15 p.m.—dinner

May dinner meeting presenter

Dorothy Dobbie, Publisher of the *Manitoba Gardener* will be speaking about publishing a magazine (see www.localgardener.net/MBindex.html). Dorothy helped to found Pegasus Publishing Inc. in 1996 and serves as President. Prior to founding Pegasus, she was the founder of Association Publications Ltd. and Naylor Communications. She is also the publisher of *Ontario Gardener* and *Alberta Gardener* magazines. In addition to her publishing duties, she hosts a gardening show on CJOB Sunday mornings.

Dorothy is a former Member of Parliament (1988–1993), where she served as parliamentary secretary and was co-chair of the Dobbie-Beaubien Committee on the Renewal of Canada.

STC Manitoba
is a chapter of



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

Registration (cash only)	Member (\$)	Non-member (\$)	Student (\$)
Presentation only	5	10	5
Presentation and dinner	15	20	15

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.

Rachel Ines
Newsletter Editor [acting]
rachines@hotmail.com

Andrew Quarry
Editorial Assistant
andrew@cadencehs.ca

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 <http://www.stcmanitoba.org/>.



President, Brad Friesen
brad.l.friesen@gmail.com
Vice-President, Rachel Ines
rachines@hotmail.com
Past President, Nirdosh Ganske
Secretary, Holly Steele
Treasurer, Nirdosh Ganske
Membership, Andrew Quarry
Public relations, Kevin Longfield
Program, Autumn Robbie-Draward
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



First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone who helped make this year's conference a huge success! We tried a lot of new things this year and based on the responses from conference attendees, we have received some very positive feedback.

Specifically, I would like to thank

- all of our sponsors: APEGM, A&R Concrete Pumping, ComponentOne, MadCap Software, MANCOM, and Palliser Furniture
- our keynote speaker, Dr. Saul Carliner, for getting our conference off to an excellent start, and our closing speaker, Dr. Aftab Mufti, for a timely and great closing act
- Brad Keller from ComponentOne and Sharon Burton from MadCap Software for attending the conference—we really enjoyed having both of them at our conference
- Alexa Campbell for making the keynote speaker arrangements
- Mollye Barrett who flew in from Milwaukee to present
- all of the presenters and instructors who took the time to put together their presentations and present them to us—we had an awesome line-up this year
- all of the volunteers who helped make the conference possible—we couldn't have done it without them
- and finally, all of the conference attendees—we hope you all learned something new and we look forward to seeing you all at possible future events

For those who were unable to attend the conference, be sure to look for the conference report which will be made available on the forums sometime in June.

Since this is my last letter *From the President*, I would like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to serve as President of the Manitoba Chapter. It really is an honour and this has been an excellent learning experience. I will take away many fond memories of my time on the executive. I was very fortunate to have such a dedicated and hard working executive committee and I thank them for their encouragement and support.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our Annual General Meeting on May 6.

That's all for my presidential term; however, you can still contact me. 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

STC Manitoba forums update

Now where did I put that job?

Check for new job listings on the Job Bank pages of the STC Manitoba forums.

The executive committee has discontinued the system whereby members could register for an e-mail service that notified you of new job listings. Now you will check for listings on the your own initiative by going to the forums. If you register in the forums, you will have access to a "Members Only" version that displays new listings 10 days before they are displayed to the general public.

How to access the job bank

To view the latest job postings:

1. Go to www.stcmanitoba.org/forums
2. If you haven't done so already, register on the forums to gain access to latest job postings. If you've already registered on the forums, log in.
3. Under the Employment heading, click on STC Manitoba job bank to view the latest postings.

Why the move to the Web?

As STC Manitoba moves forward, we've recognized a trend towards accessing more content via Web sites. To address the current and future needs of the chapter we're trying to build an online community within STC Manitoba. Several other chapters have used forums with great success and we would like to add ourselves to that list.

Special thank you



On behalf of the executive committee, we'd like to extend a special thank you to Bev Shafirka for the time she has spent over the past few years keeping STC Manitoba chapter members up-to-date on

jobs coming into the job bank. Thank you, Bev, for all your hard work and contributions to the chapter.

The (uncertain) future of technical communication in Manitoba

Red River College has offered wannabe technical communicators the opportunity to earn either a certificate or a two-year diploma in technical communication. However, these programs are struggling for survival, and the membership in our chapter has remained somewhat static for several years. We need an injection of energy and new ideas.

Too many potential employers fail to recognize the benefits they could gain through hiring professional technical communicators; and persons who should be planning careers in technical communication are unaware of the profession. This general lack of recognition in Manitoba contrasts the findings in the United States—*Money* magazine and salary.com have ranked technical communication as the 13th highest paying job in America and they forecast

continuing growth in the profession.

On Tuesday, June 10, 2008, at 5:35 p.m., Alexa Campbell, lead instructor of the Technical Communication Diploma program, will facilitate a brainstorming session on raising the profile of technical communication in Manitoba. The meeting will take place at Red River College. Contact Alexa Campbell by e-mail (ACampbell@rrc.mb.ca) or by phone (949-8455) for more details or indicate your intention to attend the session.

While we know that many of you support our profession, we need your ideas and your time. How can we go about publicizing our profession? How can we attract new members? How can we ensure the future of technical communication in Manitoba by encouraging people to get training in our field?



STC Manitoba membership at a glance (for 155 communities)

Total STC Manitoba members	48
Total Canadian STC members	1552*
Total STC members	16 313*

*as of April 2, 2008

From the (acting) editor

Well another month has come and gone, and I for one, could not be any more rested! After completing my term position, I decided to take a well deserved vacation and head off to Europe for two weeks visiting London, Paris, and Barcelona. For those people who know me well, taking off for exotic vacations is one of my rare indulgences and it's been quite a long time since my last (real) vacation.

Not being the type for packaged tours, my friend and I, backpacked our way across Paris and Barcelona. I have to say, I'm really glad I've been studying French and Spanish (although it's been a while). It got us through our vacation during those awkward non-English speaking moments with the locals. Barcelona often went like this: Habla/Hablo ingles? (Do you speak English) which was immediately followed by Yo habla un poco d'español ... (I speak only a little of Spanish ...). Travelling in non-English speaking countries is always an interesting challenge.

There's something absolutely amazing and awe inspiring of waking up in one country one day and

going to sleep in a different country the same day. Although I only got a taste of Europe, I look forward to going back and seeing more some day. My personal highlights were taking bike tours (given in English) in Paris and Barcelona—there's nothing scarier than biking in traffic in either of these cities—the drivers scared me! Visiting the British Museum (fantastic) and then visiting the Louvre (one word: amazing) which wins hands down. I originally wanted to be a classical archaeologist. So, forget the Mona Lisa—the winged victory of Samothrace is my favourite ancient statue. Seeing it in person, absolutely surreal!

While the need to work is important, taking a vacation is equally important. Taking a time out from work's every day distractions and enjoying life on the other side of the ocean was just what I needed. Now that I'm back, it's time to get out there and see what else life (and the real world) has to offer me.

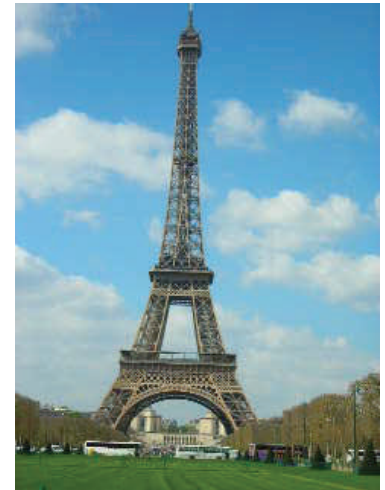
Cheers,
Rachel



Surprisingly, Big Ben is not that big. The London Eye (centre) travels 360° slowly.



For only 5 euros (plus airfare and hotel) you too can see a bullfight in Barcelona.



Paris in the spring! A beautiful view of the Eiffel Tower.

Crossing the bridge over muddy waters: Conference round up

By Rachel Ines

With much thanks to the hard work of the dedicated volunteers on the STC/RRC conference committee, the fifth annual technical communication conference was a big success. Members of STC Manitoba should be proud of their chapter's accomplishments as Dr. Saul Carliner noted in his thank you letter to Chapter President, Brad Friesen: "... I would like to thank you again for this opportunity and for your warm hospitality, and congratulate you on a successful

Continued on page 5



Continued from page 4

conference. Would you please convey my appreciation and congratulations to the rest of the chapter?"

Over the course of 2 days, 17 speakers discussed topics ranging from existing and emerging software available for technical communicators to recognizing audience needs and some topics outside the realm of what technical communicators normally deal with in their everyday work. The conference brought together chapter members from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, allowing attendees to network and see what is happening in the world of technical communication. The speakers included local and out-of-province practitioners; academic staff and instructors from Red River College, University of Manitoba, and the University of Winnipeg, and sponsors from U.S.-based software companies.

The conference opened with welcoming remarks from Chapter President Brad Friesen, Red River College's President Jeff Zabudsky, and William Boyce of Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of Manitoba (APEGM).

The conference program was organized primarily along two streams—a main stream similar to what the conference has offered in previous years and a new "Technical communication skills for technical people" stream delivered by instructors at Red River College (for a summary of the latter stream, see [page 8](#)). The streams shared Keynote and Closing presentations.

The conference offered attendees the opportunity to network during lunch and the conference reception. Conference attendees had several opportunities to win door prizes.

Presentation summaries

Documents related to many of the presentations can be found on the conference Web site. Visit www.stcmanitoba.org/conference/node/49 and visit often. The conference organizers will continue to update the presentations as they are made available. Remember that the STC forums are available if you want to share your overall thoughts about the conference.

While I couldn't be everywhere at once, I've summarized many of the conference presentations that took place April 14 and 15.

Keynote address: Dr. Saul Carliner

This was Dr. Saul Carliner's second official visit to STC Manitoba. He discussed "Recent research in technical communication" emphasizing the need to

question the researcher. Research is conducted in one of three ways: quantitatively, qualitatively, and critically with the final way not being as widely accepted. However, Dr. Carliner notes that research should be conducted on a continuum. Traditionally research is reported in journals and written in the passive voice. Often the research is written from one researcher to another which isn't the best tool to communicate to practitioners.

However, research findings in technical communication often parallels what practitioners are adopting in practice. Dr. Carliner looked at the history of how technical communication evolved from the 1920s to the present day, drawing attention to the parallels between technical communication research conducted during specific periods and what practitioners were doing in their jobs in the same period. A copy of Dr. Carliner's PowerPoint presentation is available on the conference Web site www.stcmanitoba.org/conference/node/49.

Closing speaker: Dr. Aftab Mufti

In keeping with the theme of the conference, Dr. Aftab Mufti spoke on how he along with his colleagues through the research efforts of ISIS Canada are working to "Getting bridges to talk" by using technology as a medium to communicate between the metaphysical and physical world. As Dr. Mufti noted, 'structures are acting like our bodies.' By monitoring bridges, the bridges are able to "talk" by analyzing the data.

Though a series of diagrams and a video clip, Dr. Mufti showed how technology is being used to understand the everyday stresses and strains that traffic and weather impose on bridges. Bridges that are analyzed in Manitoba provide one gigabyte of information per day. To ensure that Canada moves forward, engineering students at the University of Manitoba are learning through educational models developed in Canada that has since been adapted in 61 countries.

Brad Keller: Introducing Doc-To-Help 2008 and XML Based Authoring

As technical communicators, we employ a variety of tools to complete our work. Brad Keller of ComponentOne demonstrated how Doc-To-Help can help us make our work easier. Doc-To-Help is designed to function as a "What you see is what you get" (WYSIWYG) type of software and works much like Microsoft FrontPage or Word. Additionally, for those concerned with following standards, Doc-To-Help follows the standards set out by the W3C. Trial versions of Doc-To-Help

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

were made available for those conference members who visited the sponsor booth.

Erin Stewart: The 7 aspects of personal resiliency

How resilient a person are you really? When faced with adversity, how do you deal with it? Erin Stewart outlined seven aspects of resiliency:

1. Personal capability
2. Personal significance
3. Personal power
4. Intrapersonal skills
5. Interpersonal skills
6. Personal and social responsibility
7. Decision-making based on values

In her discussion, the common theme among these aspects was how others see you and how you as an individual relate not only to other individuals but within your own community. Erin also highlighted a number of books that attendees could review to build on their own personal resiliency.

Sharon Burton: Blaze: How the print publishing world is about to change

FrameMaker is one of the main tools for technical communicators. However, Sharon Burton demonstrated how Blaze has been updated to allow different outputs of materials without having to make decisions up front that can be limiting later. In her demonstration, Sharon noted how Blaze and Flare is similar to Microsoft Word and Adobe FrameMaker. However with Blaze, users are able to create topic-based content focussing on user needs. These small topics can be as much as two to four pages.

A beta version of Blaze and Flare is available online for people to test out and submit feedback to Sharon on her blog: madcapsoftware.wordpress.com. Trial versions of Blaze were made available for those conference members who visited the sponsor booth.

MadCap also donated a copy of Flare as a conference door prize. Congratulations to Kevin Longfield for being the lucky winner during the conference draw.

Christina Penner and Peter Tittenberger: Wikilicious

In recent years, wikis have emerged to become an important tool in allowing online communities to come and work together collectively. Whether

you're using Wikipedia or other comparable tools, Christina and Peter noted that incorporating wikis into the classroom does not have the same effect on group work as a face-to-face approach. Christina provided a summary on her wiki experience as an instructor. Two groups of 30 students have been working on the wiki in different semesters. What she found was that getting students to complete group work in a wiki was difficult because people have different notions of what collaboration means. Without motivation, it is difficult to get others to contribute to the wiki.

At the University of Manitoba, spamming is a problem. To combat this, Peter said that the University has taken security measures which require the user to know basic arithmetic before completing a page update. This deters automated spamming programs from posting unsolicited and unwanted information regularly. While the University of Manitoba hosts the wiki on a local server, Peter noted that there are a variety of free wikis available such as pbwiki or wetpaint. However, he noted that these wikis are stored on American servers. Users who are looking to develop a wiki for business reasons may want to consider the implications of storing these wikis on the American websites. For more information on the University of Manitoba wikis, visit ltc.umanitoba.ca/wiki/wikis.

Michael Farris: A live classroom for remote students

In an interesting shift, conference attendees for Michael Farris' presentation were not just sitting idly but became part of the presentation during a demonstration of Elluminate, an online virtual classroom. As students participate in distance education courses, the traditional methods once employed are now changing. Where students once felt distant and completed their homework alone in their home, technology with the aid of a hands free microphone, Internet connection, and even a webcam are changing the face of distance education. As Michael demonstrated, distance education students can participate anywhere in the world and at their own convenience through the benefits of the Internet.

Mollye Barrett: Content analysis: The key to reuse

Mollye Barrett came to discuss how completing an audit of technical documents can simplify how you reuse content for various outputs, whether for print, online, or PDF. She discussed her experience on conducting an audit for a client of

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

hers in which she had to assess 150 different books from multiple sources. So why conduct an audit? In business, Mollye noted, time is money. For example, by reusing 50 percent of the content in a business case, she could decrease the publishing time by 30 percent. She noted the similarities between her reuse of content and reuse of content in recipe books that break down recipes into the separate components needed to complete the recipe.

By conducting an audit, Mollye was able to develop a tracking tool with live links that allowed her to track document sources. In the end, a high level audit allows technical communicators to become very familiar with the document content and better identify the content and pieces required for developing the outputs required by a client.

Jane Gray: Integrating environment and economy

In a departure from the typical topics of technical communication, Jane Gray, Executive Director of the Climate and Green Initiatives Branch, discussed one of the most talked about topics today—the environment. Jane noted that science is behind in assessing the impact of climate change and within the last 10 years, climate changing events are affecting Manitoba through extreme weather causing winter roads to melt faster, rail lines to buckle, and even affecting the polar bears habitat. She noted that, in Churchill, due to the longer, warmer summers, the province has had to put air conditioning in the polar bear jails so that the bears would be able to cope with the changing temperatures.

During her session, Jane highlighted how Manitoba has been working to become a leader in the environment, not only in Canada, but internationally as well. Manitoba is first in energy efficiency in Canada and a leader in building hybrid buses. Of note, these made in Manitoba hybrid buses will be used in the upcoming Olympics. As a testament to Manitoba's contributions, Jane noted that the province has been acknowledged by such figures as Dr. David Suzuki and the Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Andrea Reichert: The story behind the

Rachel Ines is the current Vice-President of STC Manitoba. She is currently enjoying the carefree days of spring and is looking forward to her next adventure. Rachel graduated from the Technical Communication Diploma Program at Red River College and has been a regular contributor on *Manuscript*.

scenes: Writing for museums

Most of us have attended museums for the artifacts rather than the stories behind the artifacts. During her session, Andrea Reichert discussed the work that goes into developing the background and stories for artifacts at the Manitoba Crafts Museum and Library (MCML). While discussing designing artifact labels, Andrea also discussed how the MCML published a book for its 75th anniversary highlighting 75 artifacts that best reflected the museum's history. She highlighted the differences between writing a label (requires less text) and writing content for a book (allows for more text) and how it was important to develop a sense of museum literacy for visitors to the MCML as people don't view an exhibit the same way as they read a book.

What is interesting to note is that many of the issues that Andrea brought up in developing labels for the artifacts displayed parallels the work of technical communicators: audience analysis, concise and clear writing; document design and layout. So the next time you're at a museum, don't forget to read the artifact labels, you never know what kind of history you're missing out on.

George Siemens: Blogs as learning tools (and a bit of aggregation)

George Siemens of the University of Manitoba's Learning and Technologies Centre, discussed how blogs are being used not only in academic approaches but in everyday life and how they're changing the world. With an intimate group, George engaged attendees and challenged them to think about the world as they know it and see it through the eyes of a blogger.

Blogging started around 1997 and has grown faster than existing media. With the development of blogging software such as "Blogger" which eliminated the need to work with HTML, social networks began to grow as blogging allowed people to connect with one another for social reasons. George noted that blogs have become the richest areas for information sharing. If you want to keep up with the latest trends, view technorati.com to stay updated or get new ideas.

Lurking among the techies

by Andrew Quarry

Although the cloak hiding my identity as a practicing technical communicator slipped a couple of times, I attempted to lurk among the technical people at the STC / RRC conference in mid-April. This year's annual conference offered a "Technical communication skills for technical people" stream, directed at engineers and engineering support staff with an interest in developing the skills that technical communicators foster.

The keynote and closing sessions, although attended by all persons at the conference, were quite appropriate for this part of audience. Saul Carliner's keynote address provided an historical background for persons who might not, themselves, be full-time technical communicators. And Aftab Mufti's closing address on "Getting Bridges to Talk" tied into their professional interests with regard to trends in several engineering specialties and with regard to their professional responsibilities.

However, the instructors generally went directly to hardcore techniques on a few subtopics. Although this meant that it was a struggle for some to keep up, based on audience comments which I overheard, indicated that they had learned much that they will be able to apply to future projects.

Lyndsey Amott delivered the first presentation after the keynote address. She took us at a breakneck pace through the automated Microsoft Word tools for achieving a professional

appearance with less effort than might appear to be required. Kathy Davis followed with a series of exercises designed to reveal the means for writing in plain English. The next timeslot provided an option between Nirdosh Ganske's presentation on document layout and Kevin Longfield's presentation on making presentations for technical audiences. I chose Kevin presentation and was no longer able to lurk—as I was the sole technical communicator present. I suspect the others were intimidated by the homework component.

Nirdosh and Kathy started the second day of the conference with a tag-team presentation that covered the use of style guides and Microsoft Office tools for creating meaningful and attractive tables, charts, and graphs. Alexa Campbell followed with several tips on the art of creating good indexes. After a break for lunch, Alexa talked about another kind of art—using Microsoft PowerPoint for presentations that will keep your audience attentive. Last in the schedule before Dr. Mufti's closing address, Nirdosh kept up the pace with session called "How to How to: Creating effective instructional manuals."

Those who completed this stream received a certificate. The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of Manitoba (APEGM) recognized the certificate as 15 professional development units (PDUs) for its members.

Professional development

Spring may be here, but school will always be in session. If you are interested in updating your skills, listed are a few of the courses available for professional development.

Red River College continuing education

www.rrc.mb.ca/files/File/coned/C+DE%202008%20Spring%20Course%20Schedule.pdf

Web site development—Intro

Saturdays, Jun 21 – Jun 21, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturdays, Aug 23 – Aug 23, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

HTML/XHTML

Saturdays, Jun 21 – Jun 21, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturdays, Aug 23 – Aug 23, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Technical Communication: Introduction

Monday to Friday, Jul 7 – Jul 18, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

University of Winnipeg continuing education

www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/cms-filesystem-action?file=pdfs/dce/timetable-spring-summer-08.pdf

Effective Feedback Skills and Strategies

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

9:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Effective Oral Communication

Monday to Friday, Jul 07 – Jul 11, 2008

9:00 – 5:00 p.m.