



September 2007, Volume 20, Number 1

September dinner meeting

5:45 p.m.
Tuesday, September 11, 2007
Place Louis Riel
190 Smith Street

Nirdosh Ganske: *Ten ways to improve document readability: For managers, engineers, and others who write* [see [page 2](#) for details]

Please confirm your attendance by noon, Friday, September 7, with Nirdosh Ganske at NGanske@rrc.mb.ca.

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Enter our Manitoba photo contest!

Help us replace the background of our banner with a new photograph of Manitoba scenery! In addition to the opportunity to display your work, you may win \$50. The banner with the winning photo will be used in this newsletter and on our chapter's Web site.

To enter the contest, before noon on September 28, 2007, send an electronic file (in .jpg format; not exceeding 1 MB) of an image that you created to Brad at brad.l.friesen@gmail.com.

Brad will arrange for a poll of persons participating in the chapter's Web forum. You can access the forum via a link on our Web site: <http://www.stcmanitoba.org>. The newsletter committee will decide on the winner, award the \$50 prize, and start using the photo in the banner of the October or November issue of the newsletter.

Conditions:

1. You may enter only one image in the contest.
2. The image must not include any recognizable persons.
3. The image must be composed of Manitoba scenery and must be accompanied by a brief description of the general location.
4. You must own the full copyright to the image you enter in the contest; that is, you must be the photographer who created the image.
5. By entering the contest, you are giving STC Manitoba unlimited license to use the photograph in any of the chapter's publications, by any medium, and you are giving STC Manitoba the right to use it in any way; for example, STC Manitoba may choose to use only parts of it, and to adjust its appearance, or to use it in any combination with text or other images.
6. By entering the contest, you are accepting the authority of the newsletter committee to make the final decision—a decision that may be based on factors other than the merits of the photograph itself (as explained in the following photograph).

Although the poll for the contest will be conducted using only the photographs, in deciding the winner of the contest, the newsletter committee will also be considering how the photograph may be merged with other elements of the banner. The committee welcomes your ideas in this regard.

(“Contest” continued on page 3)

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



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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

Welcome back! I hope you all had a great summer.



Since the Annual General Meeting in May, the executive committee has met on several occasions to plan for the upcoming year. We have a very energetic team and have come up with some excellent ideas for the upcoming year.

This summer we made some upgrades to our Web site. I would like to introduce a new feature to our Web site, the STC Manitoba Forums. The purpose of the forums is to provide a new method of communication between friends and members of STC Manitoba. I highly encourage everyone to check out the new forums. Please remember to read the rules before registering.

You can access the forums by going to the STC Manitoba Web site and selecting the **STC Manitoba Forums** link under *Quick Links*, or by going to www.stcmanitoba.org/forums.

The fifth annual Technical Communication conference will be held on Monday, April 14, and Tuesday, April 15, 2008. We are currently looking for volunteers for the conference. If you are interested in volunteering please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

I look forward to seeing you at the September 11 dinner meeting. We have a very interesting presentation lined up as Nirdosh Ganske will be discussing *10 ways to improve document readability*. As always, if you have any thoughts or suggestions please feel free to send me an e-mail at brad.l.friesen@gmail.com. You can also send me a private message on the STC Manitoba Forums.

Brad

September dinner meeting program

Ten ways to improve document readability: For managers, engineers, and others who write

If potential readers are intimidated by the look of your document or your subordinate's document, they'll avoid reading it, if they can.

Recent research shows that readers want to be able to grasp the content "at a glance." But you have been taught to document your evidence carefully! Perhaps your particular profession requires you to document everything in consummate detail!

Join Nirdosh Ganske and explore ten ways to quickly make your documents more readable and more professional looking, without sacrificing your important content.

If you are ...

- dissatisfied with the way your documents look
- reluctant to read those "text-heavy" reports generated by your subordinates
- tired of searching for what you need, through pages that all look the same
- still using ALL CAPS for emphasis

... then you need to attend this event!

Climate change NOT happening!—STC volunteers NOT needed!

Whether or not you're needed, the current STC Manitoba volunteers would very much appreciate your company. The following positions are still open.

For the STC/RRC conference, term ending May 2008:

| Position | Duties |
|--|---|
| Conference chair (or co-chairs) | Act as lead for organizing the conference, schedule regular meetings with conference committee, identify conference theme, plan and organize the conference |
| Committee members | Assist with planning and organizing the conference—various positions, attend regularly scheduled meetings |

For other chapter support positions, term ending July 2008:

| Position | Duties |
|---|--|
| Meeting coordinator | Coordinate meeting information with the Program Chair and Database Coordinator, send out meeting notices to the general membership, create an attendee list, coordinate dinner plans with meeting place staff, distribute attendee list to executive committee members. Monthly commitment: 2–5 hours |
| Manuscript (newsletter) editor (or co-editors) | Plan the content, motivate contributors, edit contributions, lay out the contributions, coordinate newsletter distribution with database manager Monthly commitment: approx. 10 hours |
| Web site manager | Redesigning the web site, maintaining regular updates on web site, uploading documents, posting up-to-date information as requested Monthly commitment: 2–10 hours |

If you are interested in filling any of these positions, contact Brad Friesen at brad.l.friesen@gmail.com or Rachel Ines at rachines@hotmail.com.

Chapter Dinner Meetings Schedule

| Topic | Date | Presenter |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| TBA | October 2, 2007 | TBA |
| Comparative Analysis | November 6, 2007 | Ron Blicq |
| Job Competencies | December 4, 2007 | Keith Sinclair |
| Progression | January 8, 2008 | TBA |
| Emotional Intelligence | February 5, 2008 | Heather Erhardt |
| Organizational Development | March 4, 2008 | Leanne Douglas |
| STC/RRC Conference | April 14 and 15, 2008 | TBA |
| Annual General Meeting | May 6, 2008 | TBA |

("Contest" continued from page 1)

Also, we've asked you to restrict file size to 1 MB. This is just to protect the functioning of our e-mail account. We will probably be interested in higher quality images (larger file sizes) once we've made our choice. Please keep your original file with this possibility in mind.

Rhetorical analysis of the Winnipeg Fringe

By Kevin Longfield

My theatre company, Theatre Anywhere, has a mandate to highlight under-recognized theatre artists. These can either be artists who have not completed their training or trained artists who have yet to get their careers on solid ground. Although we are not a professional company, we strive for professional-quality work and use professional rehearsal models. As Troy McClure would say, you might remember us for such Fringe plays as *Six Times a Day*, *montana*, or this year's offering, *So Far from Eden*. Someone got me thinking about the rhetorical similarities between producing a Fringe show and producing technical documents.

Theatre and the rhetorical situation

In the Technical Communication Diploma program at Red River College, we recommend doing a rhetorical analysis before beginning a document. This analysis has three parts:

- audience, the people who will use the document
- purpose, what you want your document to accomplish
- context, the situation in which your document will be used

Another key element in document development is the user experience, or the result the document helps to create. Let's look at some documents involved in a Fringe show, and analyze them rhetorically.

Choosing the play

Audience: The potential audience is anyone who might attend the Fringe Festival, from regular customers to people whom we might entice for the first time. The Fringe audience is very diverse, attracting a broader spectrum of society than the more traditional theatre events. This audience is also more daring in its choices, although comedies draw far better than tragedies.

Purpose: Our main purpose was to produce a great theatre experience. In taking our audience's time, we are receiving something precious from them, and we must offer something precious in return. Beyond that, we need to fulfill our mandate to spotlight under-recognized artists. Finally, we need to attract enough patrons to both pay the bills and fulfill our mandate.

Context: The Fringe is a major event. It attracts performers from all over the world. Since about half of the productions tour the Fringe circuit, local

shows have to compete with a very high standard of work. Our play had to appeal to audiences in this context and stand out from the hundred or so other plays and up to two dozen other choices the audience might have in our time slots.

Result: In choosing Steve McIntyre's *So Far From Eden*, I decided to go with a well-known Fringe figure. McIntyre has created and performed in many Fringe classics, including co-writing what some consider the ultimate Fringe play, *Mind of the Iguana*. The play's subject, a retelling of the Garden of Eden story, would appeal to the audience's sense of adventure but at the same time would be accessible.

An ideal outcome is that the show gives Gives artists the big breaks they need, while thrilling sell-out crowds and raking in lots of money. I'll save this discussion for later.

Grant applications

The minimum rate for Equity actors is \$560 a week, plus benefits and a processing fee. Since a play requires a few weeks of rehearsal plus almost two weeks of performance, this costs money. Since I am not independently wealthy, I have to apply for funding from such agencies as the Manitoba Arts Council (MAC).

Audience: The decision-making body for a grant application is a peer jury. Juries comprise at least three disinterested artists plus a non-voting staff member from MAC. These people are senior artists and academics. The staff member is someone with extensive experience in the art form and a thorough knowledge of the funding criteria and decision-making procedures. Although this person does not vote, this person can be influential.

Juries expect a professional application, attention to detail, and a compelling argument. They rank applications according to pre-set criteria, so you must cover all criteria effectively. You also need to be concise. I know from sitting on similar juries that juries quickly lose patience with a rambling document or one that does not give you navigational aids.

Purpose: The purpose here is clear: you want funds so that you can afford to pay the company members.

(“Fringe” continued on page 5)

(“Fringe” continued from page 4)

Context: Juries receive funding applications before their deliberation session. They meet for a few hours, and rank the applications. The odds of success are far better than a lottery ticket, but also usually less than 50-50. Jurists receive a stipend, which encourages them to be professional in their judgment. The longer the process takes, the lower is their effective hourly rate, so it does not pay to waste their time with wordy or hard-to-navigate documents.

Result: My application was as brief as I could make it. I used substantive headings and a table of contents. I also had a section which showed how past productions had advanced artists’ careers, to show that the company was meeting its mandate. We received full funding (\$4000). This was enough to cover most of the artists’ pay.

Posters

If you’ve ever been to the Fringe, you know it’s poster city. There’s the hundred or so companies vying for your attention.

Audience: The audience is anyone who might visit Old Market Square, whether or not the person is a theatre fan.

Purpose: Ideally, the poster will entice someone to see your show. Many people wonder if the cost in dollars and trees justifies the effort. Can a poster really make someone buy a ticket? My answer is probably not, at least not by itself. What a poster will do is raise awareness and perhaps entice someone to read the program blurb or

consult recent reviews. The poster’s ethos must therefore match the other promotional materials. The poster must also reflect the experience a potential audience member might expect.

Context: When the entire wall of a building has posters on it, how do you ensure that someone will notice and read yours? The answer is eye-catching graphics. Almost as important, you need to give your potential audience the information they need to act on their decision to see your show. A common mistake is a poster that is visually compelling but obscures such key information as date, times and location.

Result: We chose an image of a raised fist holding an apple, and a black-and-white colour scheme. This scheme reflects a line in the play, when Adam asks what choice he has, and Eve replies, “Yes or no.” It was a striking image, but after the fact I wonder how well the graphic design reflected that the play was a comedy.

Did rhetorical analysis help?

We had great reviews and word-of-mouth for our show. Although we had good houses, we did not have sellout crowds. Possibly, we did not emphasize the comic aspects of the show enough, or perhaps other factors limited our audience. On the plus side, the playwright was thrilled with the exposure he received and complimented us on how well we understood his play.

If we had not considered the rhetorical situation for each document, I doubt that we would have enjoyed the success we had.

Kevin Longfield teaches in the Technical Communication Diploma program at Red River College. He also wrote *From Fire to Flood, a History of Theatre in Manitoba*. *From Fire to Flood* won the Margaret McWilliams award for local history in 2002.

It’s back! Enter the STC Manitoba “Bring a guest” contest

How would you like to have your next year’s STC membership fees paid by someone else? If you do, read on! STC Manitoba is once again sponsoring the Bring a guest contest, starting in October, 2007. As with last year, the same rules apply. A guest is considered anyone who is neither an STC member nor a Technical Communication student.

The participant who brings in the most guests to monthly STC meetings wins! A contest winner will be announced every month and will receive a prize at the subsequent dinner meeting. In the event of

a tie, the prize will be shared between the contest winners.

Each guest will receive a free pass to a subsequent dinner meeting. Regardless of the number of times a guest appears at meetings, each guest will be counted only once for the purposes of the contest.

At the end of the operating year (May 2008), the grand prize winner will receive a paid-up STC membership. Brochures with contest details will be available starting September 11 at the first chapter meeting of the year.

Software that works for you

Doodle—More than mindless scribbling

by Rachel Ines

When you think of the word “doodle,” does something like this come to mind:



The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines doodle as “an idle scrawl or figure drawn absent-mindedly.” But Michael Naf has co-opted “Doodle,” as the name for a web-based tool that makes the often challenging task of scheduling a meeting of several persons seem simple.

Currently, I belong to a project team with members based at three locations across the city. Scheduling regular meetings by e-mail is a chore in itself and requires a lot of organization. I was recently introduced to a meeting scheduler called Doodle. Since I’ve used Doodle, I find scheduling more efficient. With a click of a button, I can submit my availability and see project team members’ availability as well. Recently, the executive committee used it to schedule our first meeting and the overall response was great. So how does Doodle work?

1. First, visit the Web site:
<http://www.doodle.ch/main.html>
2. On the home page, under “Schedule an event” click on “Create a poll”

3. Once you view the poll page, enter your meeting information

Appointment title:

Appointment description:

Your name as initiator:

Your e-mail address:

The e-mail address is optional. If you supply one, you will receive an e-mail each time somebody votes in your poll. If you do not wish to receive those mails, just leave the field empty.

Click the button to continue to date selection

As the initiator, you will be asked to enter basic information about the event. Entering your email address is optional and you can add it if you would like to receive updates on who has submitted their information.



I suggest that you include your email to allow you to make changes to the meeting schedule if necessary.

4. Select the dates you want to schedule the meeting:

Date Selection (Step 2 of 3)

| July 2007 | | | | | | | >>> |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | |
| | | | | | | 1 | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | | |

Currently selected dates:

Wed 25. 07. 2007

Thu 26. 07. 2007

Tue 31. 07. 2007

Click day to select.
Click selected day to deselect.

Click >>> to change month.

Doodle®

Latest News

24.08.2007:

Doodle in Hungarian

14.08.2007:

New Doodle version online

10.08.2007:

Users can now add comments to polls

[All news](#)

[Thanks](#)

Schedule an event...

... such as a board meeting, business lunch, conference call, family reunion, movie night, or any other group event.

[View example](#) [create poll](#)

Make a choice...

... among movies, menus, travel destinations, or among any other selection.

[View example](#), [create poll](#)

How does Doodle work?

1. Create a poll.
2. Forward the link to the poll to the participants.
3. Follow online what the participants vote for.

[Learn more](#)

5. Enter possible times to schedule the meeting.

| | Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 | Time 4 | Time 5 | |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Wed 25. 07. 2007 | 1:00 | 3:00 | | | | More time slots |
| Thu 26. 07. 2007 | 10:00 | 1:00 | 5:00 | | | |
| Tue 31. 07. 2007 | 2:00 | 6:00 | | | | |

Click the button to save the times you entered.

Upon completing your entry, you will receive a confirmation message that your poll has been created.

You can now e-mail the link to meeting attendees. If you need to adjust times and dates in your meeting schedule, you can go back into the poll and modify it as necessary.

Doodle outlines the steps to help you create your own poll. The following link directs you to this information <http://www.doodle.ch/help.php.en>.

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 and has worked as guest editor on *Manuscript*.

From the (acting) editor

Well it looks like fall has snuck in early this year and it's time to gear up for the upcoming year. First I'd like to thank the executive members who helped to brainstorm for both this issue and for future issues on articles that can be included in the newsletter. Second, I'd like to give a big thank you to Andrew Quarry for assisting me with publishing our first issue of the new year!

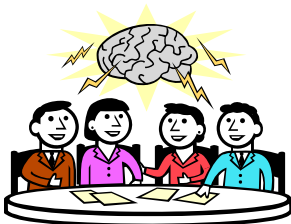
As you can tell, we've changed the look of *Manuscript* this year and we're seeking your help to make this happen. For all those photographers out there, we're asking you to submit Manitoba photos for our photo contest. Additionally we're always looking for contributors to the newsletter. If you've got something to say or something you would like to share, why not write an article? What

better way to get in touch with the membership?

Finally, we're looking for an editor for *Manuscript*. STC Manitoba has a great history of active and outstanding volunteer members. [I can say this for certain as I'm also the chapter archivist and the work is reflected in our chapter history!] Whether you've been a volunteer in the past or the present, consider the great work our chapter members have done and still continue to do, and volunteer your time.

Rachel

Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud.
— Helen Dyer



Share your ideas to help make the conference a success!

Conference brainstorming session

We need **you** to attend a brainstorming session to plan the fifth annual technical communication conference.

Tuesday, September 18, 2007
5:35 pm
Red River College, Princess Street Campus
160 Princess Street

If you are interested in attending the brainstorming session, please e-mail Brad Friesen at brad.l.friesen@gmail.com by noon on Friday, September 14, 2007.

Professional development courses delivered in Winnipeg

| Course | Date (2007) | Course offered at |
|---|--|------------------------|
| Effective oral communication | Sept 11 – Nov 27 Sept 12 – Nov 28 Sept 13 – Nov 29 | University of Winnipeg |
| Effective written communication | Sept 11 – Nov 27 Sept 12 – Nov 28 Sept 22 – Nov 10 | |
| Oral and written communication | Sept 17–Dec 3 | Red River College |
| Online documentation | Sept 18–Nov 20 | |
| Report writing | Sept 18–Nov 8 | |
| Technical Communication— Introduction | Sept 20–Nov 22 | |
| Intermediate writing skills | Sept 20–Nov 22 | |
| The new literacy: Communicating with blogs, wikis and podcasts 5 | Sept 28 | University of Manitoba |
| Effective feedback skills and strategies | Oct 05 | University of Winnipeg |
| Writing for Public Relations | Nov 01 – Dec 12 | |
| Mastering policies and procedures manuals | Nov 21 – 22 | |
| Designing and delivering dynamic workshops | Nov 29 to 30 | University of Manitoba |

For more detailed information on the courses listed above, visit the following Web sites

University of Winnipeg Continuing Education

<http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/cms-filesystem-action?file=pdfs/dce/timetable-0708.pdf>

University of Manitoba Extended Education

http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide07-08.pdf

Red River College Continuing Education

<http://www.rrc.mb.ca/files/File/coned/07-08%20C+DE%20Program%20Guide%20Final%20.pdf>

