

Devil Mountain Views

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC
May/June 2004

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of our St.
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Elaine Parrish presents search and destroy tips for those pesky typos.



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION



2002-2003 STC Newsletter Competition

Best of Show and
Award of Distinguished
Technical Communication

Marketing Your Non-Writing Skills

by [Dara Golden](#)
DMV Contributing Editor

Dara Golden is the former Interim Editor of [Connection](#), the Silicon Valley Chapter's newsletter.

In this job environment, it's important for others to know that you do more than "just write." It will increase your exposure within the company, and may also help someone else out. The more you are known and contribute within the company, the more it benefits your career. This article provides tips for increasing your exposure at individual, group, and management levels.

Individual Suggestions

Promote your non-writing talents.

- **Work with other departments.**
This implies more than going to the developers when you need something. Interact with co-workers not only when you need help, but also when they do.
- **Learn and network at in-house meetings.**
Meetings are a time for determining what everyone does and how they affect company projects. If you don't know what someone does, network with them later.
- **Take your job seriously.**
Be professional when discussing your department or job at all times. One software company's writing group referred to themselves as "Club Docs" and wondered why no one in the company took them seriously.
- **Continue your education.**
Keep your skills up to date. Brushing up on the basics, such as editing and grammar, never hurts.
- **Be technically proactive.**
Be aware of current and future trends, such as programming, XML, or Photoshop tricks. Attend STC meetings to both learn trends and meet people who are applying them in their work.

Group Suggestions

Work together to improve your group image in the company.

- **Enter an STC contest.**
Ask for permission to enter a document in a competition, such as Touchstone.
- **Write an article for an STC newsletter.**
Often technical articles arise from the workplace. If you solved a problem, it may be of interest to other writers.
- **Hold training seminars.**
Seminars may be in-house, such as presenting style guidelines to other departments, or external, such as presenting at an STC event. If you have a style guide and need feedback from other departments, hold a brown-bag lunch meeting to solicit feedback.

Management Suggestions

Promote your group as more than "just writers."

- **Make the group more visible.**
A former publications manager once commented, "We need to break the ivory tower." She attended meetings and was proactive in getting

the word out that "We don't just write. Work with us and we can help you." By the end of the year, groups approached her when new projects were starting to ensure documentation needs were met.

- **Help other departments, as time provides.**

Does Marketing need assistance with their literature? Is there a new company web site that needs visual and factual help? As time allows, offer to help the groups responsible improve their work. One writing group edited drafts of a paper and received a "thank you" at the end of the published paper.

- **Cut costs.**

If writing a script makes the FrameMaker to HTML conversion smoother and quicker, solicit help to cut costs. In the long run, it benefits everyone, including your writers (who spend less time hand-fixing HTML), Marketing (shorter documentation turnaround time), and upper management (more time to do something else).

When a manager increased her group's exposure, the CEO contacted her and said, "I have never seen that group so active before. I used to meet them in the hall and I didn't have anything to connect them to. Now I see them in meetings, busy and active, and it makes me aware that they are productive." So, be proactive—it may not guarantee your job, but it will ensure that people know who you are.

Thanks to Mark Roulo and Becky Rude for their help with this article. ▲

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Chapter Activity: An Outreach Theme with Five Variations



by [T. R. Girill](#)
STC Fellow, East Bay Chapter

T. R. Girill currently manages the East Bay STC's Technical Literacy Project. For more details about this initiative, check the [EBSTC](#) web site.

The East Bay Chapter's literacy outreach project (jointly sponsored through a time commitment by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory) unfolded with new variations this spring, continuing an expansion begun last fall. During the fall 2003 school term, we fielded technical writing sessions in multiple English classes hosted by two teachers new to the project (**Deborah Wilson** and **Christian Rideout**) at Oakland's Media Academy High School. Unfortunately, unexpected levels of campus violence prevented carrying that work into 2004. But three other teachers in the Livermore school district specifically asked to try technical writing for the first time this spring, yielding new variations on the project theme.

Literacy at Livermore

From January 21 through February 17, 2004, I presented 1.5-hour weekly workshops on instructions and descriptions for the developmentally disabled class at Livermore High School, enthusiastically hosted by special education teachers **Carolyn Heath** and **Patti Vanarsdall**. These sessions gave the students an enriched view of work-world life and showed them the importance of effective nonfiction reading and writing outside the classroom.

The challenge in these lessons was adaptability: to see if the literacy project's past strategies and materials, tuned for under-performing urban grade 10 students, would adapt well to the needs of this suburban but developmentally disabled audience. The answer is "yes." To successfully customize for this class, I did the following:

- Introduced all the analytic activities with extra physical examples and exhibits (thus we edited recipes amid the actual fruits and vegetables that they mentioned).
- Emphasized prewriting exercises (such as finding, marking, counting, and labeling text features) to build genuine cognitive skills without presupposing handwriting or spelling abilities that some of these students lacked.
- Altered the scope, pace, and vocabulary of some material (such as the pieces out of which we rebuilt big technical descriptions) to better suit the longer class sessions but shorter attention spans of this group.

The Granada Variations

Meanwhile, at Granada High School, also in Livermore, English teacher **Judy Bailey** volunteered to add technical writing to her grade 11 lessons for the first time. We met twice to negotiate a blend of basic technical writing and "traditional" English topics (drafting abstracts, plagiarism) with which she was comfortable. Five differently customized Granada workshops began on March 25 and continued well past the deadline for this article (ending late in April).

The focus at Granada was less on developing writing skills than on promoting writing responsibility. The students met and tried new techniques to be sure. They even piloted exercises originally planned for the Media Academy biology class. But because they came better prepared, they could more directly appreciate usability as a writing goal, and we discussed the many implications of this goal during each class.

An Invitation Each of the five high-school teachers who newly experimented with literacy building through technical writing this year brought unique interests and concerns to the project. And in each case, a rewarding new variation of literacy outreach emerged.

The literacy outreach project always welcomes new contributors; contact [T. R. Girill](#) to explore the possibilities. ▲

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STC Transformation Project: Focus on Communities

by **Ginny Redish**
 STC Fellow

The following is an excerpt from the transcript of the STC Transformation – Communities broadcast phone call. The excerpt was edited for DMV by **Gwaltney Mountford**.

This is the second in a series of telephone calls that explain the Transformation Project to the Society's community leaders. In the first call, **Thea Teich**, president of the Society, focused on the goals and principles of the Transformation Project.

This call features **Ginny Redish**, an STC Fellow from the Washington, D.C. chapter, co-founder of the STC Usability SIG, member of several other STC communities of practice, and former member of the STC Board of Directors; **Fred Sampson**, President of STC's largest geographic community, Silicon Valley; and **Whitney Quesenbery**, former Manager of the STC Usability SIG, one of STC's oldest communities of practice.

The excerpt is from Ginny's portion of the call. To hear the call in its entirety and to see the full set of slides, go to the [transformation web site](#). (The audio file for this call stays on the web site for only a short period.)

STC's four goals for the Transformation Project:

- Increase the value of our services to members.
- Create financial stability for the organization.
- Promote membership growth.
- Be a leader and an advocate for our profession.

I'm talking with you today because I was part of a three-person team that took the lead on thinking about communities for the STC Transformation Project. The two other members of that team were Fred Sampson and Whitney Quesenbery. Fred, Whitney, and I based our work on the goals and principles that the STC Board established for the Transformation Project (see the sidebars in this article).

As we worked on the concepts for communities, we thought about how to apply these principles to meet the goals.

What Is a Community?

Here is our definition: An STC community is a group of people who share common interests, activities, and initiatives; who communicate regularly; and who derive benefit from their association.

- STC communities must provide value to their members—value that members think is worth paying for.
- STC communities must have enough people to create a sustained group of leaders, over time.
- STC communities must do more than simply exist. They must have a visible presence; for example, with some or all of the following: a newsletter, a web site, discussion groups, listservs, conferences, educational programs, or other innovative ways of serving members.
- STC communities must grow and evolve. This may be through increasing the number of members, adding new activities, or the energetic participation of members in current activities.

What Types of Communities Does STC Have Now?

Transformation Project's seven principles:

- Do no harm.
- Respect our existing communities.
- Build on the organization's strengths.
- Support the development of communities of practice.
- Diversify our membership.
- Offer more and varied choices.
- Promote the value of technical communication.

STC currently has 118 geographic communities (chapters) ranging from five to just over 1,000 members. STC also has 21 communities of practice (Special Interest Groups or SIGs) ranging from 249 to more than 2,400 members. [Figure 1](#) lists the number of members in the 21 largest geographic communities and in all the SIGs. Notice that all of the SIGs are larger than most of our geographic communities.

25,200 of us belong to one or more of STC's SIGs. STC has 20,000 members. That means that many of us belong to more than one STC community. You belong to a geographic community—your chapter—and perhaps to several communities of practice—your SIGs.

STC also has 33 student chapters, most of which have 50 or fewer members. Many of these local communities centered on a college or university campus include both enthusiastic members and academic advisors, preparing the next generation of technical communicators who will then join our other communities.

Another very important aspect of community within STC is how we have spread around the world. In her reasons for the transformation process, Thea said, "Our world has become global." Indeed it has. STC has communities all across the U.S., Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. We have innovative solutions to far-flung geography. For example, the TransAlpine chapter gathers technical communicators from five European countries.

Members from all of these places also participate in our virtual communities. The editor of the Usability SIG newsletter lives and works in Belgium. The Communities Committee for implementing the Transformation Roadmap has members from New Zealand, Finland, Austria, Belgium, Israel, and Germany as well as the U.S. and Canada. Connecting STCers across geography is critical.

What Does All This Tell Us About STC and How We Must Change?

Why do we need to redefine community within STC?

As you have just seen, the reality of our community affiliations in STC has changed radically in the last decade.

Here are some other interesting and important facts to consider:

- In a membership survey that STC conducted in 2002, 42.4% of the respondents said that they had not attended a single chapter meeting in the previous twelve months.
- As of today, 43% of STC members belong to at least one SIG. At present, we pay extra for each SIG that we choose to belong to. This is particularly striking when you consider that many of us belong to more than one SIG. See [Table 1](#) in the sidebar.

It is clear that the structure of STC is not in line with what the members are doing with and in our communities.

- The voting board is based entirely on geographic communities. All the Director-Sponsors represent chapters; the SIGs are all represented on the board only by the first vice president, who has other responsibilities besides representing all the SIGs.
- The award and reward structure has recognized some types of communities far more than others.
- The budget process and rebates have not been equal across types of communities.

Our communities have changed. Now STC is going to change to keep up with what has, in fact, happened.

A key element of the transformation is equal treatment from STC for all communities.

Table 1: Number of members belonging to more than one SIG

Number of members	Number of SIGS
2,500	2
1,500	3
900	4
500	5
750	more than 5

What Types of Communities Are We Thinking Of?

What types of communities might STC have?

Communities may be based on many concepts, as shown in [Figure 2](#). As you look over the seven clouds, you will recognize many communities that already exist within STC, as well as some that perhaps don't exist yet, but that logically fit with those that do. The figure might spark your thinking of new communities that you would like to help start or participate in. Any of these community types might be virtual or face-to-face or a combination.

...

The STC transformation is a work in progress. Fred, Whitney, and I helped to start the thinking about communities. Now we are part of the Communities Committee headed by **Linda Oestreich**. The committee has 24 members representing many geographic communities and many communities of practice. See the list of [Bay Area contacts](#).

The committee is focusing on two major goals, with a sub-committee for each. **Deb Sauer** leads a group that is defining a community, in more detail, and determining what support (financial and administrative) it needs. **Roger Grice** leads a group that is determining the criteria and process for re-chartering existing communities. The re-chartering process gives communities the opportunity to evaluate and articulate their goals and the value they bring to their members.

The Communities Committee will be working closely with the committees that are working on other aspects of the transformation—governance, finance, membership options, education, and communications.

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What Can You Do?

There are many ways you can get involved.

- Talk with your chapters, SIGs, and committees about the transformation and what it will mean to you and to them.
- Start to think in new ways about your communities.
- Post questions about the calls at the [transformation web site](#).
- Contact your director-sponsor or your SIG leader with questions or comments.
- Read the articles on the [transformation web site](#).

Help make this happen! It's your profession and your Society!

Resources and Contacts **Society Contacts**

See the [Board of Directors web page](#) for Society contact details.

- **Chapters:** [Suzanna Laurent](#), second vice president; or your director-sponsor
- **SIGs:** [Andrea Ames](#), first vice president/SIG liaison
- **Communities committees:** [Linda Oestreich](#)

Bay Area Contacts

We want to hear from you—your comments, your suggestions, your questions. Please participate in this large STC community endeavor. The Bay Area chapters have three representatives on this committee:

- [Viki Maki](#) (Berkeley Chapter): Re-chartering criteria sub-committee

- [Fred Sampson](#) (Silicon Valley Chapter): Re-chartering criteria sub-committee
- [Gwaltney Mountford](#) (East Bay Chapter): Community definition sub-committee

Final Note

Gwaltney encourages East Bay members with thoughts about communities to [contact](#) her. She will make sure that your thoughts are discussed with the committee. ▲

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STC Transformation Project: Focus on Communities

Figure 1: STC Largest Chapters and SIGs

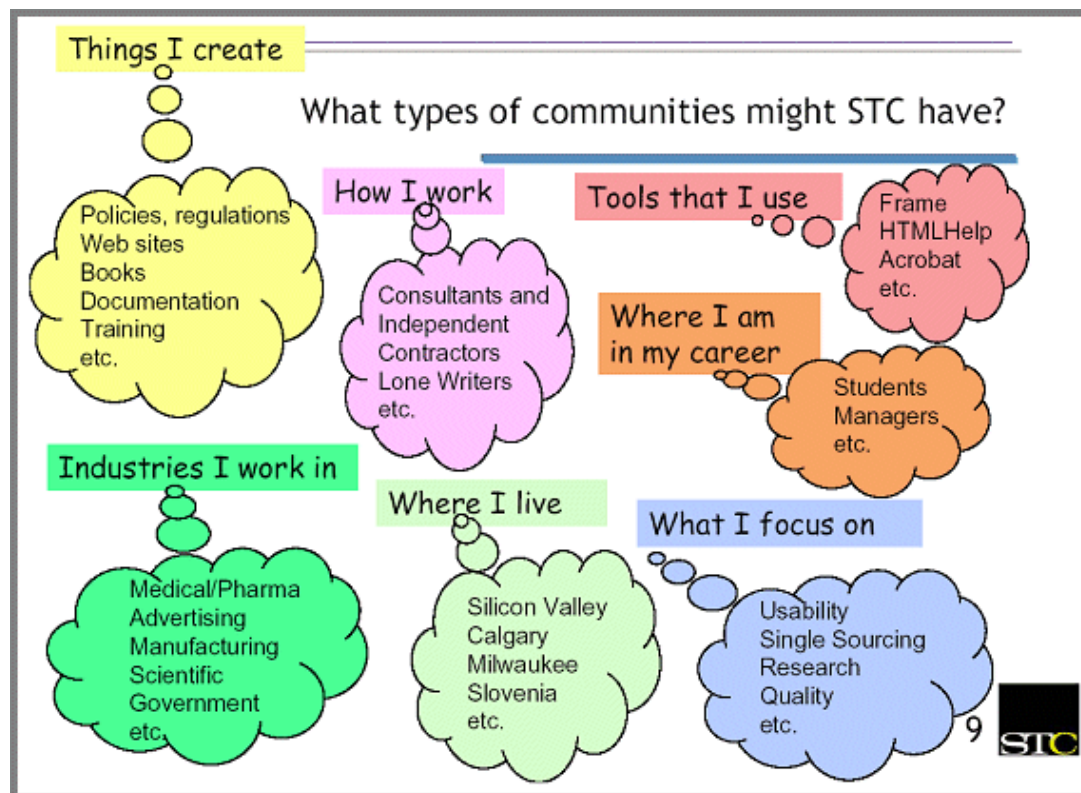
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21 LARGEST CHAPTERS		21 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS	
Name	Members	Name	Members
1 Silicon Valley	1,016	Information Design	2,417
2 Boston	980	Online Information	2,349
3 Puget Sound	766	Technical Editing	2,278
4 Washington, DC	649	Usability	2,097
5 Twin Cities	642	Consulting & Independent Contracting	2,000
6 Chicago	574	Instructional Design & Learning	1,761
7 Toronto	565	Emerging Technologies	1,389
8 Rocky Mountain	558	Management	1,375
9 Lone Star	549	Single Sourcing	1,284
10 Atlanta	545	Marketing Communication	1,148
11 Houston	505	International Technical Communication	998
12 New York Metro	498	Lone Writer	950
13 Willamette Valley	404	Policies & Procedures	839
14 Philadelphia Metro	393	Scientific Communication	794
15 Orange County	374	Education & Research	715
16 Carolina	336	Illustrators and Visual Designers	692
17 Southeastern Michigan	320	Quality	628
18 San Diego	312	Indexing	611
19 Canada West Coast	291	Canadian Issues	326
20 Austin	267	Environmental, Safety & Health	320
21 Eastern Ontario	254	AccessAbility	249
Total for 21 chapters	10,798	Total for 21 SIGs	25,220

Source: STC membership reports, November 2003

Figure 2: Community Types

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Member Spotlight: The New EBSTC Leaders

The new East Bay Chapter leadership introduce themselves...



Becky Rude President

A talent for writing (discovered while working as a social worker and graduate services administrator) led me to the profession of technical communication seven years ago. Soon after that, I joined STC as a way to become educated about the profession and to meet other communicators. I have really enjoyed my volunteer work for STC, first in Wisconsin, and now in the East Bay. Volunteering has given me great resume and portfolio material, confidence in my abilities, and wonderful friends.

Past President Melody Brumis coined the phrase "the friendly chapter" as a way to describe EBSTC. I want to continue that tradition by meeting more of you and encouraging you to get involved with the chapter. I think there are great things we can do for the community and each other if we work together.



Linda Shaltz President-Elect

I grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan and stayed there until I married my husband Mark, who proceeded to move me around the country until he found a place that "fit." Seriously, we transferred due to his position in ChevronTexaco and have lived in Michigan (of course), California, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Texas.

In my position with STC, I'm hoping to help build chapter membership, and am especially interested in bringing in students and recent graduates. I would also like to more actively pursue employment opportunities for our unemployed members (I can't seem to take off that Employment Manager hat!) through rejuvenation of the Job Posting page on our web site and involvement of recruiters at the meetings. I welcome your ideas as well!



Joe Humbert Treasurer

My background is actually in physics, with a B.S. and an M.S. from Cal State University at Los Angeles. In the mid-1980s, I owned and operated a homegrown software company, Kidbit Software, featuring educational software, where I wrote the programs, user guides, brochures, and advertising copy. I am the co-owner of a child care center, where I write the monthly newsletters, parent guidelines, employee contract, brochures, and advertising copy. I am working on a Certificate in Technical Communications at UCB Extension, which I hope to complete this summer.

An active member of the East Bay STC, I twice judged in Touchstone, have helped keep the web site up to date for the last two years, and am currently the chapter's treasurer.



Melody Brumis
Vice President: Programs

I have been writing stories all my life. I wrote and illustrated my first book, *Corny the Carrot*, at age 6. By age 10, I was writing the life story of JFK as narrated by his rocking chair. I now enjoy writing creatively for a technical audience. Besides writing, I love to teach, train, and sing at karaoke bars. I have my own consulting business, and am currently on contract at ChevronTexaco in San Ramon. As VP of Programs, I am looking forward to learning a lot, making new friends, and having fun.

As part of that fun and to pique your interest...In July, look for a special Ergo Interlude at your favorite pizza parlor—details will be posted on the [chapter web site](#).



Joy Montgomery
Nominating Committee Member

I have been a procedure writer, procedure analyst, technical writer, and editor since 1981. I do procedure analysis, and write process and product documentation, some of which have won awards from STC. I have provided high-energy, dynamic presentations for APICS, Rotary, California State Employment Development Department, and Pronet, and am a member of the Toastmasters District 57 Speakers Bureau. I have a B.A. from San Francisco State University. I think the most important task for our organization is to educate employers on the value of STC members. ▲

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Ask Elaine: Quick and Dirty Copyediting



by [Elaine Parrish](#)
DMV Copyeditor

If you have an editing question you'd like to see addressed in a future column, please submit it to [Ask Elaine](#).

Copyediting is a comprehensive process that encompasses many complex and interrelated elements. In ideal conditions, the editor reads through the entire manuscript first, to get a feeling of flow and style as well as substance, then begins the dual process of *mechanical editing* (dealing with such things as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) and *substantive editing* (reorganizing and rewriting as needed). These activities often require the editor to mentally shift gears, so several passes through a piece of writing are usually needed in order to end up with as polished a final product as possible.

Getting the Most Value

Today's business environment is seldom conducive to quality, highly polished prose. If time or budget constraints force your team to perform only a quick and dirty editing job on written materials, there are several ways to concentrate your editing efforts to get the most value.

A good copyeditor checks for dozens of different things in a single piece of writing. Here are some of the most important:

- **Run a spell check.**
You can't depend on spell checkers to find every mistake, but, flawed as they are, they do catch some of the most obvious typos. (Forget about grammar checkers, though; most of them are all but useless.)
- **Look at all headers and footers.**
Make sure they are worded consistently, and that they alternate if they are supposed to (e.g., page numbers always appear at the outside margin in double-sided text). This is particularly important when you are working with sections in Word.
- **Check all bulleted and numbered lists.**
Look for parallel structure and consistent capitalization and ending punctuation. Also, check numbered lists to be sure they start with one and are consecutive—especially if working with Word.
- **Make sure page numbers are sequential.**
If you're working with sections in Word, be especially careful in the use of the "same as previous" feature when using automatic page numbering.
- **Watch for inconsistencies in enumerated items.**
For example, when a sentence starts out, "Following are the five most important points..." make sure that there are indeed five points following, not four.
- **Check for consistency of repeated elements.**
This is especially important with names. The same person's name should not appear as Atkins in one place and Adkins in another.
- **NEVER COPYEDIT YOUR OWN WORK!**
You are almost sure to miss at least one glaring error—one that is certain to jump off the page at you, screaming and laughing, when you pick up the first of 500 copies you've just had printed and sent out to everyone in your organization.

Your Deceiving Eyes

This last point is by far the most important. You know what you're trying to write, and when you read your own material, your eyes will convince you that that's what you've actually written.

Even seasoned editors shudder at the thought of editing their own work. Foolishly, I tried it once years ago when I applied for a freelance copyediting position. After sending out my resume, I discovered I had misspelled the word "January" in my cover letter. I'll leave you to guess whether I got the job. ▲

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Editor's Message



by [Gwaltney Mountford](#)
STC Associate Fellow, DMV Guest Managing Editor

Well, I'm back. I had so-o-o much fun as guest managing editor two issues ago, that I came back for a second term, so to say. This time we have a *planned* theme: value added. The spark for the theme came from **Dara Golden's** article, [Marketing Your Non-Writing Skills](#). In this time of off-shoring and downsizing, we need to assert our value, to ourselves and to our employers or clients. It is sometimes hard to articulate the value we add to our organizations. Dara's article may give you some ideas.

One of the ways some of us add value is by providing project management services, even though we are not project managers. Often the project management is for document development projects, but some of us also provide writing services to project management teams. **Richard Mateosian's** book review, [Managing Development](#), focuses on a few books on project management and requirements gathering. He even reviews one of the books that was the source of the [Helping Make Projects Work—Common-Sense Practices](#) article in the March/April issue of DMV.

Another slant on value-added is the ways that STC can add value to your professional growth. **Susan Harlan** points out a few of these ways in her [President's Message: Adding Value to STC Membership](#). This issue also contains a report from the [Transformation Project](#) looking into the value that chapters and SIGs provide to their members. One of the activities of the Transformation Project is to realign STC's relationship to these communities in order to meet the needs of members in this age of virtual teams and Internet communication.

In [An Outreach Theme with Five Variations](#), **T. R. Girill** explains how he has been adding value to the lives of developmentally disabled students (and others) through the outreach program. Value-added was a key feature in Dr. Clark Quinn's February presentation to the chapter, so ably recapped in **Becky Rude's** [Meeting Report](#). And finally, **Elaine Parrish** jumps in with copyediting techniques that add value to our documents by improving their professionalism in her article [Quick and Dirty Copyediting](#).

As the preparation for this issue was wrapping up, I received April's *Intercom*. There on the cover was the title of their feature article—you guessed it, *Broaden Your Horizons: Enhance Your Image and Value*. So after perusing *Devil Mountain Views*, pick up the *Intercom* for more on this timely topic.

Once again, I would like to thank the very professional team at DMV: Associate Editor **Hasmig Vasgerdsian**, Copyeditor **Elaine Parrish**, and Web Designer and DMV mentor extraordinaire **Becky Rude**. (**Angelina Nachimuthu** is taking a break from the newsletter to have a baby. Everyone on the newsletter team joins me in sending her our best wishes.) It is largely due to the wonderful experience I had with them last time that I agreed to take on this issue.

St. Patrick's Day Contest Winner

In the last issue, we held a St. Patrick's Day contest. It was easy to enter—you only had to count the number of shamrocks and send in your answer.



Susan Simms won a \$20 gift certificate from Amazon.com. Susan says she has never won anything in her life. Now that's a value-add from DMV!

This is the last issue until fall. Between now and then, you have two other opportunities for adding value to your professional development: the annual conference in Baltimore May 9th through the 12th, and the Region 8 conference in July. See [Society News](#) for details on both.

Until the fall, then, we wish you a splendid summer and hope that this issue helps you on your way to adding value to your professional life.

Gwaltney Mountford
Guest Managing Editor ▲

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President's Message: Adding Value to STC Membership



by [Susan Harlan](#)
 EBSTC President

Low-Hanging Fruit

The Society for Technical Communication has viewed the term "adding value" in several different ways in the past few years. In a visit to the Phoenix Chapter in 2002, the then-Society President, **Edward See**, reported that adding value means "picking the low-hanging fruit." He explained that you can start with the easier tasks, such as documenting your work processes, and from there you can get efficient and reduce the time cycle. The work can then be translated into measurable goals that "translate into real dollar savings." Think about this good advice to the Phoenix STC members.

(Read the complete article, [The Value Proposition](#), on See's visit in the November issue of the *Rough Draft* newsletter.)

Behind the Curtain

Also in 2002, **Bonni Graham**, the Region 8 Director-Sponsor, published an often-quoted article called [Adding Value for Members](#) that first appeared in the Silicon Valley Chapter newsletter, *Connection*. Bonni noted that the Society, as an international organization, adds value through its [web site](#). And this value comes from, "Primarily, the items 'behind the curtain' ... the Society-level job listings (for membership enhancement value) and the member directory (to protect your privacy even better)." She cited the history of the Society as a 501-C-3 non-profit organization in which a substantial effort goes toward activities, including publications, conferences, research, and scholarships, that fall within the scope of "charitable purposes."

The Friendly Chapter :)

Ideally, you're agreeing with these value-added attributes of STC membership at this point. Now, I would like to take you into another dimension of value, and this is at the East Bay Chapter level ... so we're talking about a local perspective. In this month's chapter meeting we had a very skilled and articulate speaker, **Clark N. Quinn**, Ph.D., Director of User Experience at [Knowledge Anywhere](#). In a very concise and well-documented presentation on usability, he stopped at one point and said to the members, "This is a very friendly group!" Well, some of us EBSTC members have been saying this for years. Now, it's time to say that this friendliness really does "add value" to your membership!

How many group meetings can you attend where people really want to talk to you and listen to your ideas or questions? EBSTC Chapter members have been doing this, and the chapter has had this reputation for years. As a matter of fact, that's why I'm here. When I first came to the Bay Area over 13 years ago and started exploring STC chapters for membership, I had a choice among several locations. At that time, and certainly now, it was the friendliness of the East Bay Chapter that attracted me and caused me to select it as my home chapter.

A Thriving Chapter

So, what is this friendliness, and how does it add value? The EBSTC Chapter members are willing to help one another out in managing this chapter and making the monthly meetings happen and the newsletter get published. A group of professionals with their various skills have banded together and really want to make this chapter not only work, but thrive to the point of receiving international recognition. Wait 'til you hear the results for the Chapter Awards Ceremony at the annual convention. The East Bay Chapter will most likely be honored again ... maybe even receive a great honor. That remains to be seen, but just know that the chapter's friendliness creates positive feelings among the members, and it also creates high-level results. And that's a good value-adding combo!

Best Regards,
 Susan ▲

Chapter Meeting Information

Upcoming Meetings

Attending meetings is a great way to learn new things and connect with technical writers around the East Bay.


East Bay programs are usually held at Crow Canyon Country Club in San Ramon. For details on meeting location and reservations, see the [meetings page](#) on the chapter web site.



Judy Herr, Richard Wallis, and Patrick Lufkin all won door prizes at the March meeting.



Susan Moxley talks with presenter, **Elaine Winters**, after the March meeting.

Date	Speaker	Topic
May 6	Linda Urban , UC Berkeley Extension 	<i>Information Architecture for Technical Communicators</i> How is being an information architect different from being a technical communicator? In May, Linda Urban will answer this question, define IA jargon and describe techniques and approaches from information architecture that you can apply to your technical information projects. Linda is an award-winning technical writer, help author, and instructor. She has more than 20 years of experience in designing and developing technical information, including online help, user guides, reference information, and training. She also works with writers and teams to improve the quality of their documentation, focusing on both usefulness and usability. Among the courses that she teaches at UC Berkeley Extension are Information Architecture, Usability, and Online Documentation. Information Architecture was the number 3 topic of interest from our recent membership survey.
June 3	Beau Cain , Past President, Silicon Valley Chapter 	<i>Changing of the Guard</i> Out with the old, in with the new, ring-a-ding-ding. Yes, it's that time again—so join us for a fun-packed evening where you will hear Beau highlight the Society's past year's accomplishments and coming year's plans, meet your new leaders, honor our volunteers, and PARTY, PARTY, PARTY. ▲

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Meeting Report: April 2004



by [Becky Rude](#)
EBSTC President-Elect

The April Fool's jokes were abundant at the April chapter meeting, which was held on April 1st. Everyone had a good laugh, but more importantly, we also learned a great deal from **Dr. Clark Quinn's** presentation on *An Electronic Performance Support System and Information Consolidation*.

Dr. Quinn presented a case study from his company, [Knowledge Anywhere](#), where he is Director of User Experience. From this case study he shared "take home" lessons that we can all use.

The Case Study



Dr. Clark Quinn

Dr. Quinn's customer is in the medical device industry and is developing a state-of-the-art machine for analyzing patient samples. The customer had traditional user documentation, online help, and training. They wanted to go one step further and create a support-driven electronic performance support system (EPSS) that provided onboard help for the machine.

Knowledge Anywhere wanted to go even further and develop an *integrated* performance support system (IPSS) that provides a centralized method of developing documentation, training, sales, and support materials rather than the traditional method where each area develops its own materials. Knowledge Anywhere proposed that they be the central group for creating all these materials and that they be involved in the product design and development process from the beginning.

The tenets of the Knowledge Anywhere method are:

- Using a user-centered vision integrated throughout the product development process.
- Providing centralized product information to increase company productivity.
- Adding strategic value throughout the organization.

The Take Home

Following are the lessons from this project that Dr. Quinn believes we can all use:

Understand the business

To succeed as technical communicators, we must learn what is important to executives when making decisions. Then, we must use those values in presenting our case.

Understand where you can add value

Communicate how you can improve business costs by centralizing product knowledge and using single sourcing to create all documentation, online help, and support and training materials. Make executives understand that you can greatly improve the user experience and thus increase the odds of product success.

Manage “up” about the potential

Talk to those above you in the organization chart about how things can change and how you can make that happen. Have a grand vision about the potential for change.

Manage success factors to ensure change

As communicators we must manage what we do best:

- Work to coordinate differing information sources.
- Smooth out differences in viewpoints.
- Provide team members with a broad view of the product so they understand how their piece affects the complete product.

We can also work to get involved early in the design process rather than waiting until the end when the product is nearly complete. This was a key component of Knowledge Anywhere’s method.

Leverage technology for knowledge/performance/learning integrated solutions

We must use single sourcing techniques and whatever technology works best to create the end product. Developing the best solution for a particular project requires knowledge of available technologies, not just a “one solution fits all” mindset.

Moving Up the Chain

Dr. Quinn’s central message is that as technical communicators we need to start moving up the value chain by embracing a user-centered vision integrated throughout the product development process, centralizing product information to increase company productivity, and adding strategic value throughout the organization. We’ve heard this message from many other sources throughout STC this year, but Dr. Quinn brought a real-life perspective through his case study and gave us concrete ways to achieve it. ▲



Networking

- [Northern California STC Chapters](#)
- [Professional Development SIG](#)

Northern California STC Chapters



There are six active Northern California STC chapters. Each chapter meets on a different Wednesday or Thursday so you can attend all the meetings. Contact the respective presidents for more information or visit the chapter web site.

Wednesdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	Sacramento	Jeff Simon
Week 2	Berkeley	Joe Devney
Week 3	San Francisco	Susan Becker
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	East Bay	Susan Harlan
Week 3	North Bay	Rolfe Dlugy-Hegwer
Week 4	Silicon Valley	Fred Sampson

Professional Development SIG

The EBSTC Professional Development SIG supports and encourages our personal evolutions as we transform ourselves to remain marketable.

Monthly Meetings

It's easy to remember when we meet because it's exactly a week after our chapter meeting.

What	EBSTC Professional Development SIG meeting
When	Second Thursday of the month at 11:45 A.M.
Where	Willow Tree Restaurant, 6513 Regional Street, Dublin, 925-838-9111

Join the SIG Yahoo Group

Because the group is private, you can't find it using the search function. If you'd like to join, send us an [email](#). ▲

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Society News

- [Society's Mission](#)
- [STC 51st Annual Conference](#)
- [Region 8 Conference](#)

Society's Mission

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

STC 51st Annual Conference: Navigating the Future of Technical Communication

Each year, the STC conference attracts the world's largest gathering of technical communicators, providing unique educational and networking opportunities. At STC's 51st Annual Conference, you'll learn new tools and techniques, share ideas, network with peers, and preview the latest software and services from dozens of vendors.



What: STC Annual Conference

Where: Baltimore, MD

When: May 9–12, 2004

Registration: Register [online](#)

More Info: See the [conference web site](#)

Region 8 Conference: Charting a Bold Course

In light of post dot-bomb realities, conference director **Eric Butow** says, "Difficult times demand bold action and the ability to reinvent ourselves and our profession. We have chosen the conference theme in hopes of giving attendees the information and the tools they will need."



Conference planners say this will be one of the most ambitious conferences to date. The conference hopes to draw approximately 300 attendees from Region 8 and adjoining regions. Region 8 includes California, Nevada, Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand.

In addition to several dozen presentations and seminars, the three-day conference will include a leadership retreat, a pavilion trade show, a job fair, a bookstore, computer terminals where attendees can check their email and surf the Web, hands-on computer tutorials, and a keynote speaker for each day.

Incoming STC President, **Andrea Ames**, will be one of the keynote speakers. A full list of keynote speakers will be posted on the conference web site as soon as it becomes available.

Volunteers Needed

To make it all happen, additional volunteers are needed. Eric reports, "We have a great team in place made up of STC leaders from throughout the region. But they will need help to make this the best conference it can possibly be."

To encourage volunteers and lower any financial barriers to attending, the conference is offering deep discounts to volunteers. Those interested should contact [Anne Mehaffey](#).

What: Region 8 Conference

Where: University of California, Davis

When: July 25–27, 2004

Registration: Members registering by May 15 will receive a discount. See the [conference web site](#) as details become available.

More Info: See the [conference web site](#) ▲

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Book Review: Managing Development



by [Richard Mateosian](#)
 Senior Member, Berkeley Chapter

Following up on last month's DMV theme, project management, I went back and looked at an article I wrote for the Nov/Dec 2001 issue of [IEEE Micro](#). I've extracted a few brief reviews of books on project management from that article. Most of these books focus on software development, a process that many technical communicators participate in indirectly. We can all benefit from understanding how to make that process work smoothly.



[Exploring Requirements—Quality Before Design](#) by Donald C. Gause and Gerald M. Weinberg (Dorset House, New York, NY, 1989, 320pp, ISBN 0-932633-13-7, \$50.45)

Editor's note: *This was one of the books mentioned in Jon Rude's article, [Helping Make Projects Work—Common-Sense Practices](#), in the last issue of DMV.*

The biggest problem with software development is knowing exactly what to build. Communication between developers and their customers faces many obstacles:

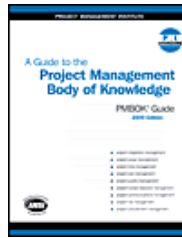
- different assumptions and terminology
- intermediaries with their own assumptions and understanding
- failure to understand and respect each other's expertise
- insufficient time to build a common understanding of the desired final product
- all the ambiguities of natural languages

A charming example of the last point is the authors' Mary Had a Little Lamb heuristic, which encourages you to substitute synonyms for the words in a requirement. For example, Mary cheated an unsophisticated investor; Mary gave birth to a small good-natured child; Mary dined sparingly on mutton stew.

A misunderstanding can cost a great deal to correct after the product is finished but very little to correct before the design phase begins. This more than justifies the cost of defining requirements carefully.

Fifteen years after it first appeared, this book is completely relevant to today's development projects. Gause and Weinberg call on their many years of consulting experience to provide practical techniques for exploring requirements. That is, they show you ways to discover and overcome ambiguity, distinguish between requirements and preferences, and push back against constraints. They show you how to tell when you're done and how to translate requirements into acceptance tests. They even give you ways to make meetings more productive.

Given the frequent disconnect between "what the customer wanted" and "what the engineers built"—the subject of a well-known cartoon—most companies would benefit greatly from improvements to the way they define requirements. This book is just what the doctor ordered. I recommend it to anyone who has anything to do with software development.



[A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge](#), 2000 ed by Project Management Institute (PMI, Newtown Square, PA, 2000, 228pp, ISBN 1-880410-23-0, \$35.95)

Project management professionals apply a variety of theories and practices to their work—some experimental, others tried and true. The combined lore of these professionals constitutes a large body of

knowledge.

The PMBOK Guide, as this book is known in project management circles, identifies and describes the subset of that body of knowledge that the Project Management Institute deems "generally accepted." It does not teach this body of knowledge, but it provides an excellent map, a well-organized skeleton with a little flesh on the bones.

This is a basic reference for anyone seeking certification in project management. It is also a helpful guide for anyone seeking to understand the underlying model of that ubiquitous but inscrutable tool, Microsoft Project. If you use Microsoft Project, but don't always understand what it's doing, read this book.

While this book is basic, if your interest is in a specific aspect or field of project management, you should also look at more narrowly focused books.



[Information Technology Project Management](#) by Kathy Schwalbe (Thomson/Course Technology, Cambridge, MA, 2000, 512pp, ISBN 0-7600-1180-X, \$53.95)

The PMBOK guide is a scant 228 pages. This book, at more than twice that length, seeks to flesh out the PMBOK and specialize it to a specific industry. Schwalbe writes in the format of a textbook, with discussion questions, exercises, and suggested readings. The layout and printing are not up to the standards of mainstream publishers, but if you can get past that, the book provides a great deal of information in an easy-to-assimilate format.

One very attractive feature of this book is that it uses Microsoft Project to develop class projects. Using Microsoft Project without understanding the underlying project management model can be confusing and difficult. The examples in this book help you avoid the confusion.



[Special Edition Using Microsoft Project 2000](#) by Tim Pyron (Que, Indianapolis, IN, 2000, 1314pp plus CD, www.quepublishing.com, ISBN 0-7897-2253-4, \$39.99)

This book is well organized, beautifully laid out and printed, well written, comprehensive, and insightful. The notes and cautions add real value by tapping into the author's extensive experience with the product.

The detailed table of contents reflects the logical structure, and the excellent index makes it easy to find information in this huge volume.

If anything can make Microsoft Project comprehensible, this book is it. I recommend it to anyone who wants to use the real power of this tool.

This review originally appeared in slightly different form in the Nov/Dec 2001 issue of [IEEE Micro](#).

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About Devil Mountain Views

STC Mission *Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.*

For more information about STC, go to the [Society web page](#).

DMV Basics The East Bay Chapter newsletter is named after a local landmark, Mount Diablo, in Northern California. With a few exceptions, all distances in California are measured from that point, called the Mount Diablo Meridian. The East Bay Chapter serves the cities along the 680 corridor and the east/west part of 580. City-wise it's Vallejo to Pleasanton, Tracy to Oakland and Fremont. We have members from each of those places.

PUBLICATION POLICY

We are always interested in sharing technical communication trends and information with our readers. For details, contact the Guest Managing Editor, [Gwaltney Mountford](#).

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Sep/Oct 2003 issue – Aug 2, 2003

Nov/Dec 2003 issue – Oct 2, 2003

Jan/Feb 2004 issue – Dec 2, 2003

Mar/Apr 2004 issue – Feb 2, 2004

May/Jun 2004 issue – Apr 2, 2004

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If you are submitting an article, please download our [template](#) to use as a guideline for writing your article.

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Articles may be reprinted provided credit is given to Devil Mountain Views and the author, and two copies of the publication are mailed to [Gwaltney Mountford](#) or the mailing address listed below.

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Product Types: Only advertisements for products or services related to technical communication can be placed on the EBSTC web site and Devil Mountain Views.

Format: Ads must be in either GIF or JPG format.

Dimensions & Rates: The following rates are valid for one month on the EBSTC web site or one issue of the newsletter.

336 X 280 = \$150

468 X 60 = \$120

160 X 155 = \$80

120 X 60 = \$50

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Payment: Payment must be received by the [East Bay Chapter treasurer](#) before the ad is run. Payment can be made by check.

Inquiries: If you have questions or want to start your ad, please contact [Gwaltney Mountford](#).

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DMV History **Note:** We will update this section as our chapter archives are updated. If you were a Managing Editor during a time frame that is missing from the history, please [let us know](#).

Year	Notes
2003–2004	Acting Managing Editor: Becky Rude Guest Managing Editor: Gwaltney Mountford
2002–2003	Managing Editor: Ashwini Tharval Best of Show, Most Improved, Distinguished Technical Communication awards in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2001–2002	Managing Editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format. Award of Merit in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1999–2001	Managing Editor: Teresa Washburn Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1997–1999	Managing Editor: Kelly Walker Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1996–1997	Managing Editor: Melody Brumis Newsletter name changed to <i>Devil Mountain Views</i> . Susan Moxley won the contest held to rename the newsletter. In July 1996, a spoof issue called <i>East Bay Flame</i> is published.
1995–1996	Managing Editor: Bruce Robinson An offshoot, the <i>Twig</i> , is published by President Gwaltney Mountford to supplement the <i>East Bay Log</i> .
1994	Newsletter name changed to <i>East Bay Log</i> .
1962	The <i>Pacifica News</i> was published in the fall in the year the <i>Pacifica</i> chapter was founded. (The chapter was renamed to <i>East Bay</i> in 1982 under President T.R. Girill.) ▲

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