

Devil Mountain Views

[Printer Friendly HTML Version](#)
[Archives](#)
[About Devil Mountain Views](#)
[Letters to the Editor](#)
[Send Us Your Comments](#)
[EBSTC](#)

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC
 September/October 2002

[Editor's Message](#)

[President's Message](#)

[Meeting Information](#)

[Chapter Activities](#)

[Member Spotlight](#)

[Networking](#)

[Society News](#)

[Director-Sponsor Report](#)

[Employment News](#)

[Educational News](#)

[Book Review](#)



conference.

Nashville Nuggets

The 49th annual STC conference was held in Nashville this time. **Gwaltney Mountford** gives us an account of the "new-idea" sessions she attended at the conference in between sipping tea and enjoying venison. This photograph was taken from Gwaltney's room at the

Trends in Technical Writing

Susan Harlan, who also attended the annual conference, talks about two new words which should be added to a technical writer's repertoire: ROI (Return On Investment) and BC (Business Case).

Online Writing

Scott Wallace starts a new series on Online Writing with the eternally controversial issue of Web and web. He recommends using web in generic situations and Web in specific situations.

Meeting Report

The anniversary party was a great success. There was poetry and there was cake! Enjoy these photographs of the event taken by **Becky Rude** and **Susan Harlan**. Becky also gives us a summary of the program presented by Mark Shaltz on how to make each interview memorable.



Award of Merit
 2001-2002
 STC International
 Newsletter Competition

Nashville Nuggets

by [Gwaltney Mountford](#)
 STC Associate Fellow

Nashville was better than expected. Among the pleasant surprises: A fabulous restaurant, F. Scott's, where I dined with old conference friend and new STC Fellow De Murr (our December speaker) on venison while listening to live jazz. And the Opryland Hotel, which was not the tacky version of Disney World that I had expected. I planned my conference day with a cup of tea on my balcony overlooking a lush garden and listening to a nearby waterfall.



Information Modeling

This year I chose a couple of "new-idea" sessions. Two were on Information Modeling (one by Joann Hackos and the other by Ann Rockley). Information modeling, as Hackos points out, is about finding things, about access. Hackos identifies three layers: metadata dimensions, information types, and content units. Metadata dimensions, the outermost layer, are the taxonomy, the labels for the information, the categorization. Metadata dimensions identify the structure and hierarchy of the information. Information types are standard categories of content (for example, concepts, procedures, references). Content units are the building blocks of the information types (for example, procedure title, procedure introduction, procedure objectives, steps, notes).

Rockley states that information modeling is based on audience and information analysis. What are all the possible uses and users of the information? The idea of modeling information is to determine how to single-source across media, product lines, and information types. By plotting the content units within information types, you can determine which ones are the same (and can probably be re-used) and which ones are different. You further review differences to determine why the content units are different—is it because of the media, the audience, or the product? Similar ones may be able to be made the same and thus be a candidate for re-use. Information modeling is not,

as they say, a trivial task. However, if you have many documents and want to single-source, it probably would be worth the effort.

Both Hackos and Rockley have captured their ideas in new books. *Content Management for Dynamic Web Delivery* (Hackos) is already available. *Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy* (Rockley) will be available in October.

I left Nashville the way I leave all conferences: with a sense of time well spent and more items for my to-do list—interesting new people to keep in touch with and exciting new ideas to explore.

Six Sigma Another new-idea session dealt with Six Sigma. Six Sigma is a process using statistics to develop total quality in your product. The statistics measure how far a process (and a step in the process) deviates from perfection. By knowing the defects, you can work to correct them, thus approaching perfection. Originally used in manufacturing, where statistical measurement of defects within a process is relatively straightforward, the Six Sigma process is now being used in many other areas, including documentation. Frankly, I got more from a five-minute explanation from a former client than I did from this presentation. What the presentation did provide was a critique of four books on the subject, where I might learn about what all this fuss is about.

I also attended the Manual Evaluation Workshop, which I've attended twice in the past. This time was different; I was an evaluator. I evaluated the manuals of three people (30 minutes each). They seemed to be pleased with the discussion and went away with specific ideas to improve their documents. What did I go away with? New understanding. For example, one person was a graphics designer. I was, therefore, surprised to see design problems within her document. How could this be so? Because she was looking at visual elements in terms of esthetics, not in terms of helping communication. Hmm. Something to watch out for in my own work.

I left Nashville the way I leave all conferences: with a sense of time well spent and more items for my to-do list—interesting new people to keep in touch with and exciting new ideas to explore. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Trends in Technical Writing

by [Susan Harlan](#)
 EBSTC President Elect



In deep discussion
 at the STC
 conference.

Pictured are
**Gwaltney
 Mountford** (left)
 and **Susan Harlan**
 (right).

Notes from the 2002 STC Annual Conference

Scanning the list of technical session topics to be presented at the 49th STC Annual Conference in Nashville last May, I was drawn to the subjects covering trends in technical writing and job-skill marketing. Once at the conference, I heard international speakers bring a global perspective to some of the changes occurring in the profession. What has happened in the job market this summer is an example of the foresight shown by the presenters in May.

The topics centered on business *changes* and the current *state of flux* in the profession. Life as a technical writer will not be the same for most of us. We not only need to learn basic software such as Dreamweaver and Framemaker, but also how to view technical writing from a business perspective—for example, in terms of return on investment (ROI), and how to write a business case (BC). The speakers presented the very positive message that **GOOD WRITERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED!**

We need to consider the speakers' observations and recognize the enormous amount of change and restructuring occurring in the business world today. The following is a summary of the notes I took at various sessions where knowledgeable speakers outlined what we need to do to prepare ourselves for work in the future.

Global Changes in Technical Writing

Under the old rules, *specialization* was a requisite in a good economy and *diversity* in a poor economy, but now the requirement is diversity with some specialization. The technical writing profession focuses on core skills, mainly writing. But like so many other professions, it now requires specialized knowledge in other areas, too. Fifty percent of technical writing jobs now draw on a combination of writing and programming skills. The ability to write code, JavaScript, or XML is valuable for these positions. However, there are other specialty areas that combine with technical writing—such as instructional design, information architecture, and such industry-specific combos as

statistics for insurance writing—as well as skills in interviewing, managing, or design.

At this point, you might ask if it's time to jump ship or find another line of work. Perhaps not, because the whole world is changing, and other professions are also going through changes.

The global perspective offered by the speakers manifests three trends for technical writers:

- Outsourcing—shifts costs away from internal to external.
- Offshoring—sends technical documentation work overseas.
- Single Sourcing—creates multiple documents from a single content file.

At this point, you might ask if it's time to jump ship or find another line of work. Perhaps not, because the whole world is changing, and other professions are also going through changes.

A New Direction: Business Tools for Tech Writers

Good business tools and procedures must be used to justify adding or delaying changes like those noted above. One such tool is ROI. This involves zeroing in on the bottom line, proving value by knowing what a customer wants in the documentation, and then articulating this in correct business language. Presenting an ROI analysis is best accomplished by developing a BC, a formal report and managerial tool that incorporates metrics, business logic, and managerial language.

We as writers need to understand the impact of these business tools and learn how to use them. Metrics is objective data used to make a point. It's a measurement of quantities as well as qualities and can illustrate how a situation affects the bottom line. For example, in a rush to deadline, the manager overseeing the technical writers may insist that editing must be skipped this time. "It's a waste of time," is the argument. Using metrics in response to this situation, the tech pubs staff can show that by skipping the editing process, the documentation mistakes that reach customers would increase Help Desk calls by 22%. Another example involves a cut in staff. With metrics, the tech pubs manager knows that an untimely 33% cut in staff forecasted by management will extend the project timeline by one third. This would cause the manuals to be completed 33% later than normal, which would make it impossible to ship the product.

To handle the possibility of sending tech writing work offshore, strategies need to be developed that include metrics and business logic. The offshore price for technical writers is between \$7 and \$8 per hour. With metrics, the project cycle time, editing costs, and management time costs can be calculated and then analyzed from a business perspective. This data might cause management to reassess the use of offshoring.

Metrics and business logic can also be applied to single-sourcing decisions. Often the IT department drives single sourcing because it involves both software and hardware. Yet, technical communicators could be running the single-sourcing function because it is process-oriented. Analyzing the situation using business tools might return single sourcing to its rightful owners.

Toward the Future Conference speakers offered brief examples and explanations of ROI and BC, and then suggested reading books or taking a business class to flesh out our knowledge. In the future, so it appears, in addition to learning new software, we will also need to be able to discuss efficiency and cost-reduction strategies or refer to documentation as a product for increasing revenue.

Check the list of speakers for the East Bay Chapter's fall meetings, and you will notice that our programs are focusing on these changes. With program topics such as "Writing for the Web," "Metrics," and "Framemaker 7 & XML," we are looking forward to the future and preparing to meet the challenge. Please join us this year and also plan to attend STC's 40th anniversary conference next May in Dallas.



Pictured from the conference are left to right **Teresa Washburn**, **Judith Herr**, and **Brenda Huettner** (president of the New Mexico Kachina chapter last year, editor of the STC International SIG newsletter, and friend of Judith). ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Online Writing:

The Great “Web” vs. “web” Debate

by [Scott Wallace](#)
 EBSTC Member

One of the delights of having your own web site is exchanging email with strangers who share your interest in the subject matter of the site.

Three summers ago I published online my [WebStyle Guide](#), which, though it's growing a bit frayed around the edges, remains a very useful style guide on the Internet for writers and editors developing content for or about the world of technology. Since then I've corresponded with people from Paris to Fiji, from Wellington to Montreal, on a variety of matters relating to “web style.”

No subject has been the source of more spirited discourse than when to capitalize *web*. Usually, though, people don't want to debate the topic. They just want someone—anyone—to give them an answer. Here's what I tell them.

Two Popular Approaches

Web is used both as a proper noun (*Web*, referring to the World Wide Web) and a common noun (*web*, referring to other computer networks based on the same underlying technology as the Web, e.g., intranets and extranets).

But basing style decisions on this distinction can lead to confusion and the appearance of inconsistency. Someone who maintains a company's intranet server would, technically, be a webmaster, while someone sitting in the next cubicle running the company's World Wide Web server would be a Webmaster. Obviously, something more straightforward is called for.

1) The simplest approach is to choose between an uppercase *W* and a lowercase *w* and use it in all instances involving the word *web*. So it's either a) *Web site*, *Web technology*, and *surfing the Web* or b) *web site*, *web technology*, and *surfing the web*, period, end of discussion.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* and *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* use a lowercase *w* for all terms relating to computer “webs” (networks) except *World Wide Web*, whereas *Webster's New World Computer Dictionary* and the *Encyclopedia of Technical Terms* go with uppercase.

While this approach certainly makes the writer's job easier, it lacks the precision that every punctilious technical communicator strives for.

2) A more precise alternative that's gaining currency is to capitalize the word when using it as a noun and lowercase it when using it as (or as part of) an adjective: *surfing the Web* and *on the Web* but *web site* and *web technology*.

Both the *Web Content Style Guide* and *Dictionary of Computer and*

Internet Terms advocate this style.

A Better Choice More precise still is a third approach, which is the one I recommend to those who seek my opinion:

- Use *Web* only when a noun or adjective refers specifically to the World Wide Web—*Web site*, *navigating the Web*, *Web presence*.
- Use *web* in situations where the word could be applied generically either to the Web or to other browser-based networks—*web master*, *web technology*, *web browser*.

Based on examples given, this appears to be the approach favored by the *Associated Press Stylebook*, though AP doesn't state its rationale for capitalizing some words and not others.

Other Tech-Style Issues *Web* vs. *web* may be the most debated style question related to the Internet and associated technologies, but it's certainly not the only one. Consider also *Website* vs. *Web site*, *e-mail* vs. *email*, *web master* vs. *webmaster*, and *online* vs. *on line*. Then there are general matters of style, such as whether to italicize URLs and email addresses.

These broader issues will be the focus of parts two and three of this article, which will appear in the November/December and January/February issues of *Devil Mountain Views*. Included will be a number of resources that should help reduce some of the head-scratching that often afflicts those writing about things technological. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Meeting Report: June 2002

by [Becky Rude](#)

The EBSTC 40th anniversary party was held at Crow Canyon Country Club in June 2002. It was a fun and historic event for the chapter. Our dear Margie McCutcheon was honored by Bill Ardis with a thoughtful poem, many chapter volunteers were recognized, Mark Schaltz provided a talk on a unique way to interview (see the [article](#) below), much food was eaten, and we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly!

Enjoy the pictures!



EBSTC is 40 years old! ▲



Devil Mountain Views Staff (partial)
 Susan Harlan, Bill Ardis, Don Huntington,
 Ashwini Tharval, Scott Wallace, and Becky Rude ▲



Becky Rude, Mary Helen Clements, Wallace



Margie McCutcheon-President 2001-2002

Skywriter

She walks among us
 But her pen is ever among the clouds
 Seizing ideas, grasping words
 Grounding them in the earth where
 They'll do the most good

Words do not exist
 Until writers create them
 Marching along like
 Patient little soldiers
 Full of meaning
 Full of consequence

Thus, our Margie,
 So skilled at keeping the soliders aligned
 While keeping one eye skyward
 Casting about for that elusive thought
 Which will put it all in perspective.

Write on, skywriter.
 We thank you.
 You've done it all
 So very well.

With love and appreciation for Margie McCutcheon
 June 6, 2002
 East Bay Chapter
 Society of Technical Communicators

Clements, June Schaefer

Wallace was a special guest—he was a charter member from 1962! See his profile in our [Member Spotlight](#). ▲



Mark Santacroce and Richard Mateosian ▲

[Hear Bill Ardis read his poem!](#) (506 KB mp3 file-opens in your sound player)



Roz Rogoff, former EBSTC president, and Wallace Clements, charter member ▲



Margie McCutcheon, President 2001–2002
Melody Brumis, President 2002–2003 ▲

Mark Schaltz: Tell a Story, Get a Job

Mark works at ChevronTexaco and has been involved in recruiting and interviewing for over 15 years. He suggested that we use "stories" while interviewing to leave a memorable impression.

What's a story?

An entertaining or informative example of how you used a particular skill or solved a problem.

Use STARS in your stories

Every story should follow the STAR format, be brief, and provide relevant information to the topic being discussed.



S = Situation: Describe the work situation.

T = Task: Describe the task you had to complete.

A = Action Taken: Talk about the action you took.

R = Results: Describe how the results were beneficial to the company or improved a specific skill.

Mark suggests that you take time to write your stories down and organize them into different categories such as teamwork, project management, working with difficult people, or working under tight deadlines. This way you can review your story file before an interview and select the best ones for that particular company. During the small group exercise practicing this method, many chapter members expressed that they had never considered this technique, but planned to start using it. Happy story writing! ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Editor's Message



by [Ashwini Tharval](#)
 Managing Editor

Welcome back!

Did you notice our new look? We have been working on it all summer long and I hope you like the change. [Let me know](#) what you think about our new look and our new logo.

Some More Changes

This has been a summer of changes: EBSTC administration changed hands at the 40th anniversary party held in June. **Melody Brumis** is our new president. For those of you who missed the party, we have a photo gallery on the [Meeting Report](#) page. Be sure to check it out.

We also had a little re-shuffling of our own. **Becky Rude**, who was co-managing editor, is now the web designer. **Don Huntington**, who was the web designer, is now a contributing editor along with **Scott Wallace** and **Adrienne Tange**. I am the managing editor. **Angelina Nachimuthu** and **Hasmig Vasverdian** are still associate editors, and **Elaine Parrish** is the copyeditor.

The Big News



I was saving the best for the last. Devil Mountain Views won an award of Merit in the 2001–2002 STC International Newsletter Competition! Thank you for all your support and emails. We are raring to repeat it next year as well.

Pictured at left is the award the chapter received. You can click it to see a larger than life view.

Congratulations and a big thanks to our team and all our writers. I want to acknowledge everyone so here goes:

Contributing writers for September 2001 issue—**Teresa Washburn** (managing editor), **Don Huntington**, **Margie McCutcheon**, **Patricia Smith**, **Patrick Lufkin**.

Contributing writers for November 2001 issue—**Linda Schaltz**, **Terri Winters**, **Angelina Nachimuthu**, **Bill Ardis**, **Liz Miller**, **Don Huntington**, **Adrienne Tange**, **Susan Harlan**, **Margie McCutcheon**.

Contributing writers for January 2002 issue—**T. R. Girill**, **Gwaltney**

Mountford, Diana Wilcoxson, Bill Ardis, Becky Rude, Brodie Hilp, Margie McCutcheon, Adrienne Tange, Scott Wallace.

Please forgive me if I have missed a few names (I am sure I have!). A special thanks to all of you who supported us with your compliments and comments.

It's been great sharing this win and this newsletter with all of you. We had a wonderful time putting it all together. It's hard to believe we have been doing this for a whole year! Well, here's to another great year, and hopefully another win.

Happy reading. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

President's Message



by [Melody Brumis](#)
EBSTC President

Welcome to the new EBSTC year. What did you do on your summer vacation? I've heard (no T-shirts yet) from EB members vacationing in Hawaii, St. Thomas, Paris, and Kentucky. I've also heard from EB members who have started new jobs (contract as well as full-time) this summer. Good news is that there are still jobs in technical communication. Our goal is for the East Bay Chapter to become **so** visible that jobs find us.

In July, EB leaders met over pizza and beer to brainstorm plans for the upcoming year. Since many of the members were looking for work, our focus again was how to get work. Where are the jobs? Who's getting them? Who's hiring? How can we be first in line?

New Chapter Activities

This meeting of over 20 EB members kicked off many activities to promote our pursuit of work. I've highlighted some of the activities that you might want to participate in.

- **Revolutionize the jobs page**

While our [jobs page](#) has been great, the job postings have slowed down. The *new* Jobs page would allow members to post their resumes themselves, and on the other end, hiring managers to post their openings. **Linda Shaltz**, **Scott Wallace**, and **Bill Ardis** have been working on this.

- **Brand the East Bay Chapter**

Branding is a giant step in making our chapter more visible. A first step in branding is our logo, and we now have one already on our [EBSTC web site](#). Kudos to **Becky Rude** who designed the logo, **Bill Ardis** who modified it so it fits STC standards, and **Janet Bran**, our web weaver, who posted it.

- **Bring in new members**

Last year our membership went down. This year we would like to attract new members as well as bring back some former members. A few ideas we have to increase membership are fun, interesting monthly programs, a new member kit and orientation, and publicizing our chapter to the community.

- **Share our knowledge**

Who's counting? —but within our chapter we have years, nay *decades* of experience. Is there a way to share the skills and tools we've accumulated? How about a mentors page on the web site where interested members list what tools or skills they excel in? We would then know whom to call if we had questions or if, perhaps, our company had an opening requiring set skills.

Volunteer If you are interested in working on these or any other activities, please email me at mbrumis@aol.com. You may not only learn a new skill by participating, but who knows? This new skill, or friendships built while volunteering, may lead to the job of your dreams. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Chapter Meeting Information

The following table provides the upcoming chapter meeting schedule. For details on meeting location and reservations, see the [meetings page](#) on the chapter web site.

Date	Speaker	Topic
September 5	Ron Person	Successful Writing For The Web
October 3	Panel of Speakers/Experts	Preparing for the Road Ahead
November 7	Adobe: Chris England Scott Hamlow	Single-Sourcing with Framemaker 7
December 5	Deidre Murr	Metrics

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Chapter Activities: EBSTC Community Outreach Update

by [T. R. Girill](#)
STC Fellow

Passing the Baton Five years ago **Lenore P. Weiss** imagined EBSTC's community outreach involvement in the Oakland public schools, and then she made it happen. She talked to Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) administrators and teachers, and over several years at several schools she patiently coaxed a good idea into actual classroom visits and technical writing lessons. In fact, her success at Montera Middle School led to an invitation for her to serve as Montera's volunteer technical support resource for the school's whole parent/teacher community, starting this fall. But that exciting role (plus her "real work" at AC Transit) doesn't leave much time to chair the EBSTC outreach effort. So the baton has passed to me as her co-conspirator in outreach to the Oakland schools for the last three years.

Web-Shared Materials Our technical writing workshops at Montera Middle School and at Oakland's Fremont High School have gradually yielded grade-appropriate technical writing examples and exercises that are hard to find (and expensive to buy) commercially. So the EBSTC outreach project began freely sharing its teaching materials on the chapter web site two years ago. Each year we have expanded these shared resources for interested teachers (or parents). In May, we added a background study that explains how our approach promotes general cognitive maturity along with specific writing skills ([Example Elaboration as a Neglected Instructional Strategy](#)). This September the set of posted exercises will almost double as our description-writing cases join the instruction-writing cases published on the web site last year. Take a look at the [East Bay Technical Literacy Project](#) to see what our chapter now shares with anyone interested in technical writing in urban public schools.

The Maynard School Collaboration One focus of EBSTC's outreach project has been the "Media Academy," a journalism-themed cluster of related classes that encourages students at Oakland's Fremont High School to see the real-world relevance of developing their basic reading and writing skills. Each semester last year, for example, I threaded six-week technical writing workshops into four grade-10 English classes under the auspices of Media Academy director Michael Jackson. This summer OUSD finally approved the (very gradual) transformation of the Media Academy into a "new autonomous small school" (still at the Fremont site), the Robert C. Maynard Communication High School. Teachers are now scrambling to simultaneously launch the new school and maintain the old one. Technical writing will contribute strongly to the academic success of the Maynard School, but the details will only unfold along with the fall school term. Any chapter member interested in helping with this adventure can contact me at trg@llnl.gov.

The Grice Committee In June, STC Fellow **Roger Grice** became the first national STC "Assistant to the President (AP) for Outreach." He immediately

enlisted a committee, which he asked me to join, to work with him to make community outreach more prominent among national STC activities, and to coordinate individual chapter outreach projects. This new high-profile AP role is very encouraging for those of us in STC looking for ways to apply technical communication to the educational and related development problems of our local communities. I'll share with you the work of Grice's committee as its plans come into focus during the year ahead. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Member Spotlight: Jacquelyn Lee



by Don Huntington
EBSTC Member

*Jacquelyn Lee is an EBSTC member. After working as a programmer and a technical writer for 13 years, Jacquelyn started her own recruiting company, **Writing Innovations**, which provides innovative solutions to technical writing challenges in the Bay Area.*

Don wrote Jacquelyn's biography for her [web site](#). This article is excerpted from that material.

Punching Through to Success

Jacquelyn grew up in a ghetto area of Oakland, but her parents never let her feel that she was poor. She excelled in high school, getting good grades as well as being head of her high school cheerleader squad. She subsequently became the first of eight children to go to college, which she attended on a four-year scholarship.



It seemed to Jacquelyn that life became conflicted when she moved from high school to college. From that point on, life seemed to challenge her in everything she set out to do.

Jacquelyn graduated from predominantly black McClymonds High in Oakland and entered the mostly white Scripps College at Claremont University. In fact, hers was only the third class entering that college that included African-Americans. The director of the Claremont science program told her that black people didn't belong in the program. In response to that racist and ungallant comment, Jacquelyn says she took five science courses in a single semester and got all As and Bs. Her performance that semester served as a model for the other African-American students and finally secured the respect of the department heads.

Getting Down to Work

Entering the workforce produced a whole new set of challenges. Jacquelyn began her career in the Bay Area working in the lab at Chevron Research and requested that one of the VPs give her a position in development and human resources. He instead gave her a job in the engineering department as a programmer.

Jacquelyn took a training class alongside engineers at a time when she says she "didn't even know what a byte was," but she successfully developed a few small programs, a Statistical Analysis System (SAS) database, and a Nomad database.

Jacquelyn eventually entered the world of technical writing in the most common way—through the back door. While working in a

customer support position at Intuit, Jacquelyn developed her first technical manual—even though she didn't know what a manual was!

Jacquelyn subsequently showed the manual to the manager of the writing group, who said the manual was well organized, thoughtful, and well written.

Doing What She Really Wants to Do

Jacquelyn has come to realize that rising to meet challenges in her life produces a joyful sense of accomplishment. She has become sensitive to the feeling that she is being propelled through life even through the tough times. An old Ojibway proverb says:

"I went about in pity for myself. And all the while a great wind was blowing me across the heavens."

Jacquelyn said she began to enjoy the feel of that heaven-sent blast. She's having fun rising to meet the challenges of life. Her life is heading in a great direction.

She has come to realize that she is at heart a people person. Her greatest satisfactions come from human communication.

Jacquelyn started a company, Writing Innovations, in 1997 as a way of working with and serving people—specifically in helping writers become successful.

Jacquelyn says she's going to be successful in growing her company to an impressive size! She's going to face up to and overcome the challenges. And she plans to help a lot of people!

If you're interested in what Jacquelyn is up to, check out her [web site](#). ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Networking



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	Charlotte A. O'Hara
Week 2	Berkeley	Kathryn Munn
Week 3	San Francisco	Marc Smircich
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	East Bay	Melody Brumis
Week 3	North Bay	Chris J. Muntzer
Week 4	Silicon Valley	Beau Cain

Networking SIG Starting!

Are you looking for work? Wondering how to get the next job or contract? Join East Bay Chapter's Networking SIG and share job leads, contact names, and other employment resources. The SIG will also provide members with information about the market and serve as a support group.

A meeting time for the SIG will be decided at the September 5th chapter meeting. If you are currently out of work, about to finish a contract, or want to find out more about technical writing jobs, our Networking SIG might be just the place for you.

For more information, contact [Melody Brumis](#) or [Susan Harlan](#). ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

STC's Mission "Designing the Future of Technical Communication"

Annual Election Results The STC annual election took place a few months back and these are the new STC leaders for 2002-2003:

President

Edward J. See, New York Metro chapter

First Vice President

Thea Teich, Southwestern Ohio chapter

Second Vice President

Andrea L. Ames, Silicon Valley chapter

Secretary

Andrew Malcolm, Rochester chapter

Director-Sponsor, Region 1

Jonathan W. Baker, Boston chapter

Director-Sponsor, Region 5

Linda L. Oestreich, Houston chapter

Director-Sponsor, Region 7

Rahel Anne Bailie, Canada West Coast chapter

Nominating Committee

M. Katherine Brown (Kit), Snake River chapter
Nan J. Fritz, Boston chapter

Other Regions

The Director-Sponsors of Regions 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 remain the same (Chris Benz, Carolina chapter; Rob Houser, Atlanta chapter; Mike Bates, Northeast Ohio chapter, Michele Davis Berkes, Wisconsin chapter, Bonni Graham, San Diego chapter). ▲

Director-Sponsor Report: To Conference or Not to Conference, That is the Question



by [Bonni Graham](#)
Region 8 Director-Sponsor

Pictured at left is **Bonni** with **Guy Haas**, immediate past president of the Silicon Valley Chapter, at the annual STC conference.

Many of you have emailed me asking when the 2002 Region 8 Conference will be—enough so that I figured a column spent on it would not be inappropriate.

The best answer I can give you is: I don't know.

We have most of a committee ready to work on implementing a conference vision. We have a volunteer coordinator, Kathryn Munn, who knows what additional talent we need and is ready to organize and manage it. We have interested attendees. What we don't have is a conference manager. What we don't have is a location, or a theme (things usually at least decided on by a manager).

The original manager had to step down due to personal reasons. I applaud this person for that decision; recognizing when is a good time to step down is a mark of maturity, and is difficult to do. However, it leaves us without a leader. In an ironic twist on the old saw, we have too many Indians, and not enough chiefs.

The original location returned an unacceptable contract. I applaud the hospitality committee for rejecting this contract—it was the responsible choice.

I think a conference is still possible. Not in November, of course, our traditional timeframe. But a conference in late winter or early spring can be done. We have a startup budget, thanks to the exemplary work performed by De Murr, the Conference Manager for 2001's highly successful Guerilla Conference. We have equipment, also from this conference that can be carried forward. We have a web address (thanks, Jeff Randolph, for renewing that!) to publicize it.

We need a Conference Manager with a vision of theme and the willingness to see it through. It is not something you have to do alone. We also have an advisory committee consisting of the top Conference Management talent from past years. There has never been a better opportunity for someone to step forward and try running a conference. We have never been better prepared.

But it's up to you. The conference is a grassroots effort. It is not a requirement imposed from the top, it is not an event that "someone else" will start up. If you want a conference, someone will have to step forward and manage it.

Will it hurt the conference to skip a year? Not at all; we have before and we can again. However, I would love to see us continue this effective educational experience. Attendees routinely praise the knowledge and connections they acquire at the regional conference (and who, in this economy, can turn down connections?). And I can tell you from extensive personal experience that you get far more out of a conference you work on.

If you're interested in volunteering to help with the conference at any level, contact [Kathryn Munn](#) or [myself](#). We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have and get you set up to move forward on the safest management opportunity you'll ever have! ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Employment News: Capital Networking Tips



by [Melody Brumis](#)
EBSTC President

Melody compiled a list of networking tips generated by an STC panel discussion last year at the [Sacramento Chapter](#). She encourages everyone to attend other chapter's meetings as a way to network.

Sell Yourself



- Prepare a brief synopsis of yourself (30–60 seconds). Practice it and be prepared to recite it whenever you get a chance to tell anybody.
- Carry business cards with you with your name and contact information.
- Do your job well.
- Do not smile too much at interviews; look intelligent.
- Hang onto your “befores” for your portfolio.

Keep in Touch



- Keep in contact with people you like in previous jobs. You'll create friendships, as well as maintain good contacts for when you are looking.
- Be friendly and listen well. Talk to everyone! Someone will know somebody else who can help you. Referrals are best.
- Stay in contact with agents. Start looking for a job or contract early (before you really, really need it).
- When working for a company, keep in touch with vendors you meet.
- Just call people and see what they are up to. Keep it on a personal level.
- Maintain contact with your university.
- Ask each friend for two contacts you can meet. When you meet with them, ask each of them for two more contacts.
- Make lunch dates with friends in the business.
- Keep in touch with people you meet in STC and technical communication classes.
- Keep your email database current and send occasional notes.
- Share URLs with co-workers. This will encourage them to share new web sites with you.
- Keep in contact via email with contacts from previous jobs (especially during holidays).

Be Friendly



- Listen to the other person's passion; get them to talk about it.
- Don't burn any bridges.
- Get to know people over time (versus superficial relationships).
- Introduce yourself. Talk about the HOT weather, sports, your kids.
- Don't monopolize a conversation. Try to learn about others and what they do.
- Be genuinely interested in people.
- Get to know your neighbors—someone may be CEO of a company that needs a writer.
- Call back people who call you.

Be Active



- Join STC.
- Don't just join an association—get actively involved.
- Every meeting or social event is a networking opportunity.
- Visit different trade group meetings—there are different writing opportunities in all industries.
- Go to Chamber of Commerce mixers and any party you can!
- Attend product user group meetings. Email other users of the product.
- Take a class, read journals, and email authors.
- Donate your technical writing services (this person did for her children's preschool and playgroup).
- Look for opportunities to write, and volunteer.
- Critique web sites of companies where you want to work.
- Contact companies that are advertising for developers on the Internet.
- Send a cover letter about yourself. Describe how you can help them. If they are interested, have them request your resume. Once they get your resume, their interest is piqued.
- Attend STC meetings (chapter hop!).
- Don't keep the fact that you're looking a secret. Tell everyone you can. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Educational News

There is never a bad time to go back to school! The following universities/institutes offer 4-year or 2-year programs related to technical communications:

[California State University, Fullerton](#)

[San Francisco State University](#)

[American River College, Sacramento](#)

[De Anza College, Cupertino](#)

[Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa](#)

[UCSC Extension, Cupertino](#)

Information about certificate programs in technical communications and other related academic programs can be found using STC's [Academic Programs Database](#). ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Stephen King's *On Writing*: The Craft of Clear Communication



by [Bill Ardis](#)
 EBSTC Member

On Writing, Stephen King, Pocket Books, ©2000

Writers are storytellers. Technical writers, like novelists, have a story to tell: the narrative must flow, it must be clear and coherent, it must leave the reader with a sense of completion. The reader can now successfully write JavaScript, use a new QA tool, or better understand the pain and humiliation that Carrie White combated with her telekinetic powers.

[Stephen King's](#) *On Writing*, now in paperback, is a valuable tool in a writer's quiver. King discusses here his early years as a writer and his first major success: the sale of paperback rights for *Carrie* which he wrote and revised on a beat-up manual typewriter resting on a board across his lap in the small house he shared with his wife (novelist Tabitha King) and two children.



"The paperback rights to *Carrie* went to Signet Books for four hundred thousand dollars," King's agent tells him on the phone. King writes:

"I stood in the doorway, casting the same shadow as always, but I couldn't talk.... "Did you say it went for forty thousand dollars?"

His agent replied that the amount was, in fact, *four hundred* thousand. King went out and bought a new hair dryer for his wife because he couldn't think of anything else to get her. When she heard the amount, she began to cry.

Waiting for Your Muse

King knows how to move a story along, and he has little patience for highfalutin', tutti-frutti ideas about writing. To be a good writer, he says, you've got to "read a lot and write a lot." He spends useful time discussing how to structure a narrative, how to identify the theme which supports all good narratives (what's the theme of your client's Methods and Procedures document? It certainly has one!), critical rules of good grammar and syntax, the paragraph as the major organizing element of the narrative, and the importance of strong, clear sentences. "Cut the adverbs!" he says. "Let nouns and verbs do the heavy lifting." He also reminds us of that splendid writer's tool, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

If you're waiting for the muse to strike before writing that first novel,

don't wait too long. King tells us that his muse is "a basement guy." This smelly guy in his torn undershirt is not going to sprinkle fairy dust on your typewriter and cause a Pulitzer Prize winner to appear. He's smoking stinky cigars and admiring his bowling trophy, waiting for you to get on with your writing. Establish a routine for writing. Stick with it.

Surviving His Own Characters

Finally, King tells the tale of the accident that almost killed him more than two years ago. A distracted driver struck him as he was taking his customary afternoon walk on the shoulder of a roadway near his home. As King, prostrate on the ground beside the road, regains consciousness, it occurs to him that "...I've nearly been killed by a character...out of one of my own novels." King sees this fellow sitting "...on his rock with a cane drawn across his lap" with a look of "pleasant commiseration." King looks down at his leg, twisted oddly to one side, and croaks to the fellow, "Please tell me the leg is dislocated." The reply: "Nah. It's broken in maybe five, six places." His surgeon later told him that the region below his right knee had been reduced to "so many marbles in a sock."

King survives the accident to walk again and finish this book, halfway done when the accident occurred. He is a journeyman writer with a practical eye fixed on what good writing means. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

About Devil Mountain Views

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 Managing Editor, [Ashwini Tharval](#).

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

Devil Mountain Views is published bimonthly (September, November, January, March, May).

ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Sept/Oct 2002–August 2, 2002
Nov/Dec 2002–October 2, 2002
Jan/Feb 2003–December 2, 2002
Mar/Apr 2003–February 2, 2003
May/June 2003–April 2, 2003

REPRINT POLICY

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

MAILING ADDRESS

Ashwini Tharval, Managing Editor, 316 Countrybrook Loop A, San Ramon, CA 94583-4483.

Copyright Statement

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. When you submit an article, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Unless otherwise noted, copyrights for all newsletter articles belong to the authors. The design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2002.

DMV Staff **MANAGING EDITOR**

[Ashwini Tharval](#)

925-901-0589, 316 Countrybrook Loop A, San Ramon, CA 94583-

4483

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

[Angelina Nachimuthu](#)
[Hasmig Vasgerdsian](#)

COPYEDITOR

[Elaine Parrish](#)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

[Don Huntington](#)
[Scott Wallace](#)
[Adrienne Tange](#)

WEB DESIGNER

[Becky Rude](#)

Chapter Officers For a complete list of officers, see the EBSTC web site's [Leadership](#) page.

PRESIDENT

[Melody Brumis](#), 707-644-6926

PRESIDENT ELECT

[Susan Harlan](#), 510-797-4298

TREASURER

[Janet Bran](#), 415-776-0104

SECRETARY

[Brodie Hilp](#)

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

Year	Notes
2002–2003	Managing Editor: Ashwini Tharval
2001–2002	Managing Editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format.
1999–2001	Managing Editor: Teresa Washburn
1997–1999	Managing Editor: Kelly Walker
1996–1997	Managing Editor: Melody Brumis. 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: Susan Moxley. The <i>Twig</i> is published by President Gwaltney Mountford to supplement the <i>East Bay Log</i> .
1995–1996	Managing Editor: Bruce Robinson
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.)

DMV Awards

Year	Award
2001–2002	Award of Merit in the STC International Newsletter Competition. Managing Editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude.
1998–1999	Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition. Managing Editor: Kelly Walker. ▲

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)

Letters to the Editor



We'd love to hear from you with comments, suggestions, and stories we should know about. Write to [Ashwini Tharval](#), Managing Editor.

Just wanted to tell you how good the articles in the latest newsletter are. I really laughed over "[Cross-Cultural Interactions](#)"; since I work in a very multi-cultural company myself, I can empathize.

Jeanie Egbert
EBSTC member



Former *Devil Mountain Views* editor **Susan Moxley** (center) talks with Becky Rude (left) and Ashwini Tharval (right) at the EBSTC 40th anniversary party. Susan came up with the newsletter name during a contest in 1996. Susan still enjoys reading the newsletter!

[DMV Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Nashville Nuggets](#) | [Trends in Technical Writing](#) | [Meeting Report](#) | [Online Writing](#)