

# Devil Mountain Views

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC  
November/December 2002

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## **Emerging Technologies**

**Don Huntington**, contributing editor, gives a few suggestions on keeping up with changes. Reading this newsletter is one of them!



## **Humor**

So, you want a lengthy contract? Before you decide, read the chilling tale of one Ms. Tina Smart in '**Terminal Contract**' written by **Adrienne Tange**.



## **Staying Busy in a Slumping Economy**

**Don Huntington** gives us some tips on how to maintain great relations with your client, no matter what the project.



## **Member Spotlight**

**Lenore Weiss** shares her story, "After my previous job developing online help for e-commerce applications at an aspiring dotcom that was going nowhere, I longed to be sacrificed to lay-offs."



## **Chapter Activities**

[Leaders Wanted!](#) - You can serve your chapter and boost your career.

[Literacy Project](#) - Catch up on the project news.

[Congrats Sr Members](#) - New Senior Members.



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## Emerging Technologies: Responding to the Changing Face of the Tech Writer's Role

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by [Don Huntington](#)  
EBSTC Member

We technical writers can currently be forgiven for the feeling that we are riding on a tiger—hanging on and wondering in which direction the beast will head next.

Over the next few issues, we will explore some of the changes that are taking place in our industry. Topics we will cover may include:

- Single sourcing—Is this the next best thing?
- Internal newsletters—Getting the word out
- Online technologies—Information in your face and in your pocket
- HTML vs. PDF—How can you decide?
- Creating a de facto online standard—Designing Web pages for easy navigation
- Client solutions—Identifying and scratching the actual itch
- Graphical communication—The new show and tell

We can be excitingly proactive about increasing our knowledge and skills. Tools are available to efficiently bring our knowledge of any topic up to an impressive level. A general principle to help you prepare for the future is to keep honing and refreshing your skills. There are a number of ways you can do that. I'll remind you of two:

- Keep current on your reading
- Use the Internet

### Keep Current on Your Reading

All of us receive the STC *Technical Communication* journal each month. Sometimes we don't have time to read every article, but we should make it a practice at least to skim every article—drawing from each the main points. If you are like me, every issue will contain one or more articles that you will want to read in detail, about topics that advance your knowledge in some area that you are already proficient in—keeping you current and pushing you ahead.



Read the DMV newsletter. Do you know the three parts of information modeling? If not, that failure is due to not reading Gwaltney Mountford's helpful summary of the STC Conference, in last issue's [Nashville Nuggets](#). We should keep developing our skills—be more equipped to communicate information when the next issue of an STC journal or our chapter newsletter comes out than we are at this time.

### Use the Internet

An important task for every modern technical writer is increasing our skills in using the Internet as a source of information.

The Nashville Nuggets article mentioned above talked about a Six Sigma scheme for increasing quality. I went to the Google search site and entered

the following search string and term:

“six sigma” “documentation”

This produced 7,110 hits. THE VERY FIRST HIT had a link for Six Sigma Newbies that presented a detailed and well-written overview of the topic.

The Web has a truly boundless supply of resources for learning. For example, I entered the following in the Google search site:

“online learning” “free”

The search produced 193,000 hits. I updated the search as follows:

“online learning “ “free” “java” “script”

and still had over 3,000. Same result when I substituted another string:

“online learning” “cascading style sheets”

The wonderful fact is that we can respond to change faster than the industry can change. Learning a few techniques and changing a few attitudes will enable us to respond to the changing face of our technical writing role and to master the technologies that are continually emerging.

## An Even Easier Information Source

If you can't be bothered by even the simple process of using a search engine like Google to find what Six Sigma is about, you can always go to [Webopedia](#), enter a term, and usually receive a simple, clear definition. On those occasions Webopedia doesn't have the term, you can provide the term that the site failed to define and they will consider adding it.

People often complain that there is too much information on the Internet—they are unable to find their way through it. They feel like they are looking for a needle in a haystack. A better picture is that of looking for a bouquet in a gigantic, sunny park full of flowers. If all you want is to “pick” a single “flower”—in our example, finding out what Six Sigma is all about—then it doesn't matter if there are six sites or 7,110.... All you need to do is grab what you need from the closest one.

I'm still learning the lesson that I don't have to remain in ignorance about any topic. A wealth of information on almost any topic is only a couple of mouse-clicks away. ▲

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# TERMINAL CONTRACT



by [Adrienne Tange](#)  
EBSTC Member

**T**ina, a middle-aged technical writer, opened the unlocked lobby door of the Frankenstein Research Center and stood there uncertainly. The lobby was lit only by dimmed overhead lights and a sliver of October moon shining through shaded windows. The room was deathly quiet. "Where is everyone?" she thought to herself as she glanced at her watch. Dr. Frankenstein had said to meet him in the lobby at 8 pm sharp.

She sure hoped this meeting with him would be fruitful and bear her a lucrative contract. A fellow writer had warned her not to go out alone to the isolated lab at night. It was rumored, he had told Tina, that a technical writer had come to work there and was never heard of again. Phooey, Tina had thought. She needed the money to pay for her new BMW and that trip to Palm Springs she wanted to take.

Suddenly the lobby lights brightened and a low rumbling voice behind her asked, "May I help you?"

Tina jumped, swiftly turned around, and tried to refocus her eyes in the brightened room. As her eyes adjusted, she saw standing in front of her a large muscular hunched man. He had a broad oval head that was covered with patches of longish gray hair that hung down, large bulging eyes, and he was wearing a dark suit. She could have sworn no one else was in the room.

"Hi, I am Tina Smart, the contract technical writer. I have an 8 pm interview with Dr. Frankenstein."

**T**here was a long moment of silence as the man slowly processed the information and then responded, "Yes, I am Hugo. Dr. Frankenstein is expecting you. Please, sit down and he will be here shortly."

Tina walked over and sat on a white couch in the middle of the lobby, and then noticed she was alone again. "How does he do that?" she thought to herself.

Tina looked around the room as she sat there waiting. The lobby had plain white walls, a bare white tile floor, and only a white chair, the white couch she was sitting on, and a chrome coffee table as furniture.

Tina heard the click of hard-soled shoes on the tiled floor and turned to see Hugo and a smaller man walking down a stairway.



"Hello, Tina, thank you for coming. I am Dr. Frankenstein. No, please don't get up," said the doctor as he waved a thin hand at her. Tina noticed the doctor had a grayish cast to his skin and that his white lab coat hung down from narrow thin shoulders.

"This is Hugo, my assistant."

"Yes, we met. Would you like to start by looking at my writing samples, Dr. Frankenstein?" Tina asked.

Dr. Frankenstein perched on the couch near her and proceeded to look through her portfolio. Out of the corner of her eye, Tina could see Hugo standing like a statue behind them.

"Good samples," Dr. Frankenstein said, and then closed the binder with a loud thud that echoed throughout the room. "Now let me show you the lab where the equipment is that you will be documenting."

**T**ina followed the two men up the staircase to the first door marked *Private! Do Not Enter!* The doctor opened the locked door with a key and turned on the lights. Inside was a large shiny metal machine that almost filled the room. It reminded her of a large x-ray machine she had seen at Valley Care Medical Center, with a large top-shaped part attached to an arm that hung over a metal rectangular-shaped table.

"Hmm," Tina said as she stared at the machine.

"Yes, it is impressive," Dr. Frankenstein murmured as he too stared up at the machine.

"What did you say your study was about?"

"The creation of human life."

Maybe she should have paid more attention in her college science classes.

"Do you mean cloning?"

"Not quite. But you will find out soon enough," the doctor replied. "Here is the software that runs the machine," he said, pointing to a computer console. "My employees will use the user manual you will create to run this system. I need the guide simple enough for them to understand. A typical employee is like Hugo. And I need it as soon as possible."



**T**ina glanced at the complicated machine and then at Hugo. This could be more of a challenge than she thought. She sat down in front of the console and viewed the main screen. In the middle of it were four blue buttons: *Starting the Process*, *Adding Parts*, *Adding Power*, and *Stopping the Process*. She navigated through a few screens and began to feel confident. The system looked well organized and very simplistic.

"I believe you told me a previous writer started a user guide?" Tina asked.

“Yes. This is part of it,” said the doctor as he handed Tina a small user guide. “Mr. Smith, the former writer, started to rewrite the documentation but was unable to finish it, poor man.” Dr. Frankenstein shook his head sadly.

Tina glanced through the document. It was very well written but seemed very short. She was about to ask the doctor more questions about the previous writer when the doctor interrupted her thoughts.

“This user guide is vital to my project. I want you to know that I will pay your rate, whatever it is. However, you *must* work on site, as stipulated in this contract, until you finish the user guide.” He held a contract in front of her.

Tina stared at him for a moment. This must be his feeble attempt at humor. She forced a laugh and then quipped back, “What will you do? Lock me in a room until I finish, like you did the last writer?”

For a moment, the doctor looked paler than ever.

“Don’t worry, doctor, I know you are only joking,” Tina bantered.

She felt euphoric, like when she had one too many margaritas at Chevys. He would pay top dollar for this project! Dollar signs danced in front of her eyes.

Hurriedly, Tina grabbed the contract out of the doctor’s thin hand. She then glanced quickly over the 3-page contract, filled in her rate at the appropriate blanks, and signed the bottom with a flourish. She didn’t bother to read the other two pages of stipulations. She then said her goodbyes and told him she would see him tomorrow.

**T**he doctor walked out of the lab with Hugo following and opened a second locked room next door. Inside the small room was a cot, a table that held a computer and a cardboard box, and an office chair. In the chair, leaning over to one side, was the skeleton of a man dressed in a dusty gray suit.



“Like you, Mr. Smith, Ms. Smart isn’t interested in seeing the other 700 user guide pages Hugo wrote,” the doctor said as he walked over to the box, which contained a mass of jumbled papers with indecipherable writing on them. “She also didn’t read her contract closely enough. Oh, well—her loss, my gain. Hugo, remove Mr. Smith and prepare the room for Ms. Smart. She will be with us a long time.” ▲

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## Staying Busy in a Slumping Economy— Keeping a Client (Happy)



by [Don Huntington](#)  
EBSTC Member

My belief that a real technical writer can write on any topic was challenged last year when I acquired as a client an entrepreneur whose area of expertise was (of all things!) janitorial services.

I met Mitch when a mutual acquaintance told him that I would be able to help him write a short article outlining his accomplishments for a bio to be submitted to a club he was joining.

Mitch was delighted with the quality of the resulting article and put me to work on another project—a manual describing all aspects of how people can get into the esoteric business of cleaning computers for companies and institutions.

This was followed by a number of other projects throughout which I maintained an excellent relationship with Mitch. I developed a number of principles that guide and support my service. I would use them with any client:

- Stay organized
- Be ready for anything
- Provide wise guidance
- Work without boundaries
- Be a servant

### **Stay Organized** *A professional writer always keeps work organized.*

I never meet with Mitch without a list of tasks. I always begin by saying something like, “We have six items to get through.”... then I go through each item efficiently and effectively, never taking a minute longer on any item than necessary. Mitch leaves our meetings with me feeling that his time has been spent well.



### **Be Ready for Anything** *A professional writer can write in any venue.*

I cultivated an opportunity to write an article for Mitch for the local newspaper. I had never written an article like this but worked intelligently to create exactly the article that Mitch—as well as the editor of the newspaper—would like.

### **Provide Wise Guidance** *A professional writer is a communications specialist.*



Mitch wanted to write a letter of complaint against a company that had stiffed him of payment for services. I enveloped his complaint inside an article about Mechanics Lien laws, which became an important part of Mitch's book about small

businesses. I had never before heard of Mechanics Lien laws, but the Web has more information on this topic than any lawyer could carry around in his/her head.

**Work without Boundaries** *A professional writer is a resource manager.*

When Mitch needed some graphics work done, I immediately told him of a person I knew who did great work at reasonable prices, did the spec on the graphics, contacted the artist, edited the submission, and received and submitted the artist's invoice.



There isn't any communications task that I wouldn't undertake for Mitch.

**Be a Servant** *A professional writer is a provider of valuable services.*

Mitch's business is small (though growing). His budget for my services is limited. I always work within reasonable limits—never pushing the extreme of his funds while always leaving him the impression that he is getting good value for his money. I have repeatedly reassured Mitch with the words, "I will do everything I can to provide you with solutions and never do anything to create any additional problems."

It takes commitment and intelligence to keep clients—and to keep them happy—in this slumping economy. The above five points provide no recipe for success (our work is much too complex to ever be pinned down in such a way). However, they are ingredients, I believe, that can be mixed into almost any successful client/writer relationship. ▲

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## Member Spotlight: Lenore Weiss

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by [Lenore Weiss](#)  
EBSTC Member

After my previous job developing online help for e-commerce applications at an aspiring dot-com that was going nowhere, I longed to be sacrificed to layoffs. But the company needed its writers. I patiently waited around for a severance package until it became clear I wasn't going to be fired. After a time, I couldn't stand it. I quit.

First I landed a small contract job, which allowed me to collect unemployment insurance. Then I began to look around, spending mornings checking the job boards. Was I worried? No! I felt great after being emancipated from the deadline-driven life of a technical writer. However, seven months later with bills to pay, I needed to re-enter the job market. Here's what I knew:

- I was tired of straight technical writing
- I didn't want to commute
- I wanted new challenges

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to critique AC Transit's newly launched [Web site](#). AC Transit provides bus service in the East Bay to 13 cities, from Fremont in the south to San Pablo in the north, and in the unincorporated areas of western Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The Marketing and Communications Manager was impressed enough by my comments to encourage me to apply for a temporary opening that led to a full-time job. Now I'm the Web Content Manager for AC Transit's Web site.

### Information and Understanding

What do I do? I work with both the in-house user group and the developers of the site who reside in Skokie, Illinois. I'm in charge of copy for about 1,500 pages, which includes PDFs. I use a custom content management system. My responsibility includes the architecture of the site, designing the way information is displayed to the public. In this capacity, I recently worked with the Human Relations (HR) department to redesign the Career Postings area, educated by my years as a technical writer to the way internal and external clients work with information, plus my skills as a project manager.

As an example, I worked with HR to redesign their area from a linear representation of how they did business in a print environment, to a more interactive site. This included changing job listings from a scroll-down display to a tabular format and providing application forms in PDF. Applicants could either download or complete forms online. We also defined two separate HR paths—online and offline recruitment—to accommodate the realities of how the department does business. I interviewed users, did research, coordinated the work with the developers, and tested the new architecture. We launched several months ago. The new design has been a resounding success with big savings for HR. I'm now engaged in a similar process with the Purchasing Department as they move to take online bids.

My overall job is to reduce the noise in communication channels by

eliminating extraneous content, simplifying formal options, and narrowing possible interpretations. Design is the intermediary between information and understanding. This is what drew me into technical writing and it's what has helped me to metamorphose into my current position.

### **New Ways to Use Information Design**

I recently returned from a meeting with the developers where we discussed the future direction of the Web site. Currently, our design is more representative of a "design by committee" approach. We're looking to develop more empirical data so we can analyze the "click-throughs," actual paths users take in moving through our site. This will give us more information about how to revamp our content. I'm using the skills of an information designer in a new way. ▲

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## Chapter Activities: Leaders Wanted



by [Gwaltney Mountford](#)  
 STC Associate Fellow

You. The podium on the second Thursday of the month. Ahhh, such a pretty picture.

Yes, we know it is only October and the chapter election is months away. But our goal this year is to have a contest for at least one position, giving the East Bay chapter members a choice. And to do so we have to start early to identify candidates for the spring election.

You can, too. Have you considered chapter leadership? Do you know of someone you would like to see in a leadership position?

To jump-start your thought process, the East Bay Chapter Nominating Committee and Board listed the key activities and benefits of the elected officers (below). If any of these positions looks inviting, please contact one of the Nominating Committee members—Diana Wilcoxson, Margie McCutcheon, or Gwaltney Mountford. Or email the [committee](#). We would be delighted to talk to you about the position—as would the current incumbent.

### And Early Next Year...

The Nominating Committee plans a reception before the chapter's January meeting to talk with any of you who are interested in running for chapter office. Previous officeholders will also be on hand to answer your questions. We will inform you of the specific date and time later this year.



So, browse through the leadership position descriptions and picture yourself in one of these roles. It is a pretty picture.

### East Bay Chapter Leadership Roles

Listed below is an overview of the activities and benefits for each of the chapter's leadership positions. For more details about each position, see the [chapter handbook](#).

#### President

Provides overall management of the chapter's affairs. Specifically, appoints special assistants for specific tasks; controls the budget; submits chapter reports to the Director-Sponsor and the Society; meets with the chapter's board; and schedules annual elections.

#### Benefits

Creating or maintaining fabulous visibility, not only in our chapter, but also at the regional and Society level. Honing management and organization skills. Shaping chapter's direction and goals. Having fun.

### **President-Elect**

Assumes the duties of the president if the president is incapacitated; oversees SIGs; maintains the bylaws; encourages special projects; and becomes president next year.

#### **Benefits**

Learning to be president. Creating or maintaining visibility. Honing management and organization skills. Shaping chapter's direction and goals. Having fun.

### **Vice President—Arrangements**

Oversees arrangements for meetings; accepts reservations; and coordinates with the restaurant to make sure that the chapter needs are met.

#### **Benefits**

Developing negotiating skills while working with restaurants. Creating or maintaining visibility. Honing interpersonal and organization skills. Shaping the chapter's direction and goals. Having fun.

### **Vice President—Programs**

Manages the Program Committee, including planning chapter meetings, finding speakers, and working with speakers to make sure audio-visual equipment and other needs are met.

#### **Benefits**

Meeting interesting leaders in the profession. Creating or maintaining visibility. Honing organization and scheduling skills. Shaping the chapter's direction and goals. Having fun.

### **Secretary**

Records minutes of all board meetings; handles official correspondence; sends thank-you notes to speakers and VIP visitors; and acts as liaison to newsletter editor, web weaver, and database manager.

#### **Benefits**

Creating or maintaining visibility. Honing organization and report-writing skills. Shaping the chapter's direction and goals. Having fun.

### **Treasurer**

Keeps the books; prepares and monitors the budget; makes deposits and payments; and prepares a simple Annual Fiscal Report.

#### **Benefits**

Creating or maintaining visibility. Shaping the chapter's direction and goals. Having fun. If you like numbers and money, this is the job for

you.

### **Nominating Committee Members**

Selects qualified candidates for the annual election; prepares and distributes the ballot; validates and counts the votes; and notifies board and chapter of election results.

### **Benefits**

Honing persuasion and interpersonal skills. Shaping the chapter's direction and goals. Having fun. ▲

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## Chapter Activities: Technical Literacy Project



by [Lenore Weiss](#)  
EBSTC Member

### Use Our Resources

Are you familiar with our chapter's Technical Literacy Project? Go to the [East Bay Chapter's](#) site and click the Literacy Project button on the left navigation bar. You can use the lessons and resources to expand the program to work with schools in your own area. This may help you to make a contribution, develop writing samples for your portfolio, and even find a new career!

### Share Your Unused PCs

Recently, we put out a call for unused PC equipment. There has been a strong response to this call. Thank you, membership! However, we could still use more equipment. The computer teacher at Montera Middle School in Oakland is looking to reestablish the Mac-based lab that was gutted by an unknowing long-term substitute last year. She appreciates our chapter's help. Contact [Lenore Weiss](#). ▲

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## Chapter Activities: Congrats to Senior Members



Congratulations to our new Senior Members!

- **Kathi R. Bruce**
- **Erika R. Steponic**

According to the STC Bylaws, the grade of senior member is conferred upon those who have held the grade of member in STC for five years.

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## Editor's Message




by [Ashwini Tharval](#)  
 Managing Editor

### Hello Readers!

Welcome to another edition of *Devil Mountain Views*. I hope you enjoyed the last issue. Thank you for your encouraging emails.

### Themes for Coming Issues

We also received a few emails from members interested in writing for the newsletter. Here are the themes for the next two issues:

#### January/February issue:

Independent Contracting (The dos, the don'ts, and the how -tos of contracting, including project management, time management, finding projects, and the all-important rate review)

#### March/April issue:

Trends in Technical Writing (New trends like information mapping, and basic issues like clear writing, designing, editing, and indexing)


You are also welcome to write about new technologies or methods you use at work, stories about your projects worth sharing, tips about finding work, or your latest stress-busting yoga workshop—in short, anything that can help us become better and more informed technical writers.

### What's in Store?

In this issue itself, contributing editor **Don Huntington** tells us how he ended up writing about janitorial services. **Lenore Weiss**, long-time member, talks about her current job at AC Transit. **Gwaltney Mountford** has an informative article about chapter leadership. In keeping with the spirit of Halloween, we have a horror story by **Adrienne Tange**. **Scott Wallace** took a break this issue and will resume his series on 'Online Writing' next time. Let us know how you like this newsletter.

### EBSTC Program Leaders

In addition to the various administrative council positions Gwaltney mentions in her article, EBSTC has a number of committees that make the chapter's activities possible. Some of these committees will be looking for a new manager and some for new members. Current EB committees include: Employment, Resume Counselor, Membership/Database, Education, Publicity, Hospitality, Web Weaver, Newsletter, Community Outreach, and Historian. If you are interested in volunteering for any of these groups, send me an [email](#) or contact [Susan Harlan](#). We'll connect you with the contact for that group.



### Renew Your Membership

Don't forget to renew your STC membership. I just got an email from STC. It's really convenient and easy to renew online.

Till next time, then. Keep writing!  
 Ashwini

P.S. Send me an [email](#) if you are interested in writing an article for the newsletter. The word limit is 500–600 words. Thanks. ▲

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## President's Message

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by [Melody Brumis](#)  
 EBSTC President

Are you looking for work? If so, you are not alone. Many chapter members are actively looking. At our October meeting, we shared tips on resumes, portfolios, finding your niche, networking, and interviewing. Luckily, many of the presenters are in the East Bay Chapter, so you can follow up with them at a meeting or by e-mail. **Sue Phelan** and **Pat Butowick** are our resume counselors, **Gwaltney Mountford** is our resident portfolio guru, and **Judy Herr** has wonderful ideas for finding your niche.

### STC Membership

You can find their e-mail addresses on our EBSTC web site [Leadership](#) page or through the [STC web site](#). The Member Directory is now part of the members-only perks. If you are not a current member, now is a good time to join.

During the annual fall membership drive, STC offers a special discount to new (or lapsed) members who join the Society after October 1, 2002. For the regular member rate of \$140 (\$125 for dues plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee), new (or lapsed) members will be credited with dues paid for the remainder of 2002 and for calendar year 2003. That's *fifteen months of Society membership for the price of twelve*. You can join directly through the STC web site or you can contact our membership manager, [Marsha Workman](#).



### Chapter Web Site

You may want to keep an eye on the [EBSTC web site](#). The [Events](#) page, for example, now has links to both the Touchstone (our publications contest) and the Region 8 and International conferences.

The Region 8 conference, which will be held in Las Vegas in January, is still in its planning stages. I've found the regional conferences a good way to try out new presentations. You can pick a topic you'd like to learn about, learn about it, and present what you've learned. You'll not only get immediate feedback, but suddenly—voila!—people begin to see you as an expert in the field. You can also go as a participant, and have a good time too.

### STC Scholarships



What else? I've just heard about an STC scholarship available to full-time graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in technical communication.

Four awards of \$1,000 each will be granted for academic year 2003–2004. Application deadline is **February 15, 2003**.

Application forms and instructions are available from the STC office: 901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203-1822, phone (703) 522-4114, or through the [STC web site](#).

**Ideas Welcome** As always, we want to hear about what the chapter can do to support you in your professional goals as a technical communicator. [Email me](#) with your ideas, suggestions, and especially any ways you might be willing to contribute your talent and time. See you at the next meeting! ▲

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## Chapter Meeting Information

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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
November 7	Adobe: Chris England Scott Hamlow	Single-Sourcing with Framemaker 7
December 5	Deidre Murr	Metrics: What Technical Communicators Measure and Why.
January 9	Nancy Mulvany	Indexing Software
February 6	Robert Fish	Business Improvement through the Art of Self-Mastery

### New! Survey Results

You can now see meeting survey results for past meetings. Click the date to see the survey results.

Date	Speaker	Topic
<a href="#">September 2002</a>	Ron Person	Writing for the Web
<a href="#">October 2002</a>	Tim Carl and Diane Daly Gwaltney Mountford Judith Herr Sue Phelan Ron Rothbart	Interviewing Portfolios Enlarging Your Niche Resumes Networking

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## Meeting Survey Results: September 2002

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Ever wonder what happens to those surveys you fill out? On this page we present the results of the surveys you completed for the meeting. The surveys are used to help the chapter determine future meeting topics, and to provide constructive feedback to our presenters.

**Topic** Writing for the Web  
**Facilitator** Ron Person  
**Date** September 5, 2002

### In one word, describe this presentation.

Answer	# Respondents
Informative	7
Excellent	4
Enlightening	2
Great	2

### Single answers:

Clarity, Condensed, Educational, Energizing, Expectations, Good, Helpful, Interesting, Lively, Pertinent, Professional, Reassuring, Revelational, Rivoting, Stimulating, Terrific, Thought Provoking, Useful, Valuable, Webby

### On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), please evaluate the following:

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Your knowledge of the subject <i>before</i> this presentation.	4	10	12	10	1	2.84
Your knowledge of the subject <i>after</i> this presentation.	0	3	1	20	13	4.16
Applicability of this presentation to your job.	1	1	7	9	16	4.12
How likely are you to use this information on the job.	1	2	6	10	17	4.11
Overall value of this presentation.	1	2	2	9	23	4.38
Convenience of the meeting facilities.	2	1	1	13	19	4.28
Conduciveness of the facilities to a meeting.	3	0	2	10	21	4.28
Food	0	1	3	14	14	4.28

### How did you hear about this meeting?

Answer	# Respondents
Email	7
Website	7
EBSTC email announcements	6
Member	5

**Single Answers:**

Chronicle, EBSTC Presidential Invitation, email via Silicon Valley STC, from an STC member, member via email, Peggy Shepard, Richard Mateosian, STC

**Are you an STC member?**

Yes	51
No	5

**How many years have you been working in the field?**

Median: 10 years

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## Meeting Survey Results: October 2002

Ever wonder what happens to those surveys you fill out? On this page we present the results of the surveys you completed for the meeting. The surveys are used to help the chapter determine future meeting topics, and to provide constructive feedback to our presenters.

The October meeting was a roundtable format with several facilitators each discussing a different topic.

Topic	Facilitator
Interviewing	Tim Carl and Diane Daly from the Carl Group
Portfolios	Gwaltney Mountford
Enlarging Your Niche	Judith Herr
Networking	Ron Rothbart
Resumes	Sue Phelan

### In one word, describe this presentation.

Answer	# Respondents
Good	3
Helpful	2

### Single answers:

Great, Lots of Fun, Excellent, Very Good, Very Informative, Unfocused, Beneficial, Slow--I did not enjoy this evening, Informative, Useful

### On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), please evaluate the following:

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Your knowledge of the subject <i>before</i> this presentation.	0	2	7	6	1	3.38
Your knowledge of the subject <i>after</i> this presentation.	0	1	1	9	5	4.13
Applicability of this presentation to your job.	0	2	3	5	5	3.87
How likely are you to use this information on the job.	0	1	4	4	6	4.00
Overall value of this presentation.	0	1	2	7	5	4.07
Convenience of the meeting facilities.	1	0	2	4	8	4.20
Conduciveness of the facilities to a meeting.	1	0	0	8	6	4.20
Food	4	3	6	1	2	2.63

**How did you hear about this meeting?**

Answer	# Respondents
Email	7
Website	4
Member	1

**Are you an STC member?**

Yes	12
No	2

**How many years have you been working in the field?**

Median: 13 years

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## Meeting Report: September 2002

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by [Bill Ardis](#)  
 EBSTC Member

New!  
 See the [meeting survey results](#).

### **The Ron Person Performance Piece: Writing for the Web – Effectively**

Ron Person, a West Coast writer with deep development and book-authoring expertise, kicked off the EBSTC's fall season—and this made the kickoff a heckuva lot better than Friends and Bob's Your Uncle (or whatever the current popular sitcom is). In a program packed with ideas and entertainment—and chocolate for those who paid close attention—Ron gave us a thrill-ride through the thicket of notions regarding how learning is best accomplished on the Web.

### **Screen-to-Brain Learning**

If you write for the Web, the task requires “a structure and style that help the reader find what they need and then read it quickly.” On the Web, if the data are not readily available, or the means to get the data are not clear—bye-bye readers, they're gone.

What follows is a summary of Ron's ideas from his presentation.

### **Readers Need Context**

Establishing context enables the reader to find personal relevance, a critical factor in adult learning. A seminar provider for software help developers studied how 16 people used Help when filling out an online conference registration form. The only registrants who completed the registration were those who had received an overview (context) before beginning the procedure.

### **Significantly Increasing Web Usability**

Sun Microsystems' Science Office rewrote two white papers using different structures and writing styles. They found that 80% of readers scanned text on the Web—and that reading from a computer screen was 25 percent slower. A few of Sun's usability guidelines:

- Segment documents into multiple pages.
- Reduce word count by 50 percent.
- Write links as phrases that clearly and briefly describe the linked content.
- Use bulleted or enumerated lists.

### **Satisfying the Online News Junkie**

Poynter Institute studies how people read newspapers. After reviewing data from hundreds of pages read by volunteers, the Institute created guidelines now followed by many online newspapers. A few of the Poynter Institute's guidelines are:

- Readers' eyes first move to text, then to graphics.
- Text is skimmed before it is read.
- News readers scan shallowly, but widely.
- Short, descriptive headlines are critically important.
- Briefs are read three times more frequently than in-depth articles.

- In most articles, only the first line or two are read.
- Readers rarely read more than 75 percent of the way into an article.

**Conclusions** While Web page designs may vary, there are certain development guidelines to be followed to communicate quickly and easily with the reader. A few of these guidelines:

### Main page or search-result page

- Use narrow columns of 45 to 55 characters for faster scanning.
- Position headlines in a narrow column.

### Headlines

- Write short, descriptive headlines.
- Link headlines on the main page to detailed content.

### Briefs

- Follow headlines on the main page with briefs.
- Briefs are one to three summary lines.

### Articles—detailed content

- Write in an inverted pyramid style.
- Use a wide column of approximately 100 characters for faster detailed reading.
- Write with a restricted vocabulary.
- Write with restricted, simple grammar.
- Use simple sentences.
- Put the conclusion first in the article.
- Put the topic sentence first in a paragraph.
- One paragraph should contain one idea.
- Sentences should have 20 or fewer words.
- Paragraphs should have 5 or fewer sentences.
- Use bullets or enumerated lists.

**Resources** [Writing for the Web](#)  
[Poynter Institute](#)  
[National Cancer Institute](#)  
[WinWriters](#)  
[Usable Web](#) ▲

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## Networking

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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	<a href="#">Sacramento</a>	<a href="#">Charlotte A. O'Hara</a>
Week 2	<a href="#">Berkeley</a>	<a href="#">Kathryn Munn</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">San Francisco</a>	<a href="#">Marc Smircich</a>
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	<a href="#">East Bay</a>	<a href="#">Melody Brumis</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">North Bay</a>	<a href="#">Chris J. Muntzer</a>
Week 4	<a href="#">Silicon Valley</a>	<a href="#">Beau Cain</a>

### Join the Networking SIG!

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 also provides members with information about the market and serves as a support group.

The SIG meets every **third** Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in San Ramon at Marie Callender's Restaurant, 18070 San Ramon Valley Blvd. We have a separate section in the restaurant, so just ask for the East Bay Networking SIG.

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

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## Director-Sponsor Report: Adding Value for Members

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

October 2002

By now, you've probably noticed that the [STC web site](#) has a member's only section, moving certain features behind a secure login based on your membership number and a password assigned by the main STC office. If you haven't noticed, shame on you - the STC web site contains a lot of useful information no matter what your involvement with the organization.

In January 2001, the STC Board of Directors voted to change our policy to allow chapters to restrict certain informational items to members only. We evaluated the variety of information available on chapter and the Society web sites, and decided that some of it could legitimately be placed behind a login. After further discussion, we decided to extend that change in policy to the main STC web site as well.

Primarily, the items "behind the curtain" are the Society-level job listings (for membership enhancement value) and the member directory (to protect your privacy even better).

You may be asking why are some items restricted to members but not all? The answer lies in our status as a charitable organization (which enables members, among other things, to claim STC dues as a charitable donation). Bill Stolgitis, in the October 2002 *Tieline* provided the following background and insight:

### Background

Since 1968, when STC was reorganized as a 501(c)(3) charity, STC has devoted the substantial part of its efforts to activities within the scope of its charitable purposes. These activities (e.g., publications, conferences, research, scholarships) can be found in STC's Articles of Incorporation and its bylaws.

In keeping with its charitable status, STC has made these services available to members and non-members alike. The IRS, however, recognizes that while conducting the daily business of a charity, there will be some activities essential to the charity's well-being that are not, strictly speaking, charitable in nature. The IRS allows these activities so long as they do not constitute a substantial part of the organization's activities.

For STC, such activities have included selling advertising (magazine and journal), renting the mailing list, and providing employment information (clearly not within the scope of STC's charitable purposes). These activities have always constituted an insubstantial part of STC's total activities.

### Restricting Services to Members Only

STC is fully engaged in many activities that are within the scope of its charitable purposes. And these services must be made available to members and non-members alike. As mentioned above, STC is also allowed to engage in activities that are not within the scope of its charitable purposes so long as these activities are "insubstantial" (a minor financial burden). These non-charitable services may be restricted to members only.

Thus the new main site has been arranged to better expose the value of being an STC member. Chapters may, as well, choose to limit access to

various services they provide, so long as doing so does not create an undue burden on the chapter finances. In addition, actions that contribute directly the STC's charitable purpose (such as seminars or chapter meetings) may not be restricted to members only, although members may be given preferential pricing.

If you have any questions on this policy, contact your Director-Sponsor or the Society office. ▲

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## Society News

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Following is a preliminary list of the candidates for STC office for 2003. The final list will be published in *Intercom* in December.

<b>President*</b>	Thea Theich
<b>President-Elect*</b>	Andrea L. Ames
<b>Second Vice President*</b>	Sandra W. Harner Deborah F. Sauer
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mary Jo Stark (unopposed)
<b>Director-Sponsors</b>	<b>Region 2:</b>  Victoria Koster-Lenhardt Doreen A. Mannion  <b>Region 3:</b>  Hary-Janos Bottka Beth Tanner
<b>Nominating Committee Members**</b>	(Two to be elected, each for a two-year term)  Kathleen B. Aughey Rita B. Johnson Christopher Juillet John O. Shipman

\* The *STC Bylaws* specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected.

\*\* Members of this year's nominating committee are Michelle Ratcliffe (manager), Suncoast chapter; M. Katherine Brown, Snake River chapter; Nan J. Fritz, Boston chapter; John V. Hedtke, Hoosier chapter; and Deidre A. Murr, San Fernando Valley chapter. ▲

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## Educational News

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by [Becky Rude](#)  
 EBSTC Member

STC is once again sponsoring telephone seminars. These seminars are reasonably priced and allow you to share sessions to reduce the cost.

### What Is a Telephone Seminar?

A telephone seminar is much like a large conference call where the speaker makes his or her presentation over the phone. You simply dial the 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! You then sit back and listen to the presentations and join in the lively Q&A discussion.

<b>Benefits</b>	- No travel time - Pay per site and not per person - Train all your people without their leaving the office
<b>Cost</b>	The cost is per site, not per person. U.S. sites: \$145.00 USD Canadian sites: \$160.00 USD
<b>Sign-up Info</b>	<a href="#">STC web site</a>
<b>Dates</b>	Bi-monthly November 2002 to March 2003

For more information on each topic as well as online registration information, click the links below.

Date	Speaker	Topic
November 7	Constance Billé	<a href="#">Getting Into Instructional Design</a>
November 19	Whitney Quesenbery	<a href="#">Looking, Finding, Searching...How Users Do It</a>
December 13	Douglas Florzak	<a href="#">Finding Work in Troubled Times</a>
December 17	Seth Maislin	<a href="#">A Brief, Comprehensive Indexing Primer</a>
January 8	Diane Feldman & Carla Merrill	Managing a Software User Interface Design Team
January 15	Whitney Quesenbery	Using Personas in the Development Process
February 5	Stacia D Kelly	Creating Persuasive Executive Summaries
February 13	John Hedtke	Fast and Easy Time Management
March 12	Phylise Banner	Making the Complex Clear and

		Pretty
March 19	Seth Maislin	Evaluating an Index (even if you only have five minutes)

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## Employment News

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Take a look at job postings around the Bay:

Chapter	Resource
East Bay Chapter	<a href="#">Job postings</a>
Sacramento Chapter	<a href="#">Job postings</a>
Berkeley	Get job leads to your inbox. Send an email to <i>STCJOBSBA-L-request@stc-berkeley.org</i> . Leave the subject line blank, and type 'subscribe' in the first line of the message body. They send job leads weekly.
Silicon Valley	To subscribe to their mailing list, send an e-mail message to <i>join-svc-jobs-list@lists.stc.org</i> .
San Francisco	To get job leads, send an e-mail to <i>STCJOBSBA-L-request@stc-berkeley.org</i> . Leave the subject line blank, and type 'subscribe' in the first line of the message body. You will receive leads several times per week.
STC	Additionally, <a href="#">STC</a> has a jobs database, which is now part of the 'Members only' section. Just type in your member id and password to access the listings.

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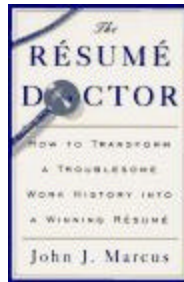
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## Book Review: The Resume Doctor

by [Lisa Espenmiller](#)  
 EBSTC Member

*The Resume Doctor: How to Transform a Troublesome Work History into a Winning Resume*, John J. Marcus, HarperCollins, January 1996

*Lisa Espenmiller is a consultant available for hire for resume writing. You can contact her at [girlpoet@pacbell.net](mailto:girlpoet@pacbell.net).*



*The Resume Doctor* is the resume book that I use most often. It is the only book I need when working on my own resume or writing resumes for clients. The author gives pointed, solid advice on what to include, what not to include, and how to write it well.

### Not Just for Questionable Histories

Although the subtitle implies that the book is specifically geared toward troublesome work histories, I find it a valuable tool for writing any resume—and besides, who doesn't have some issue in their work history that they're trying to make palatable?

I like the way the book is organized—it's easy to reference the table of contents to know exactly where to go for answers to your questions or concerns.

### Action is the Ticket

The best advice for anyone writing a resume is to avoid writing a boring, repetitive resume filled with boring, repetitive verbs. The author gives a list of 220 action words for each bullet point of a resume, and advises, "Begin each accomplishment and duty with an 'action' word, such as 'Revamped the entire organization's financial systems,' 'Created a new style sheet and template,' 'Counseled employees on how to handle interdepartmental conflict.'"



A few action words from the book:

Advanced	Enhanced	Rehabilitated
Anticipated	Formulated	Saved
Attained	Guided	Shaped
Built	Inspired	Solved
Charted	Launched	Strengthened
Conceptualized	Molded	Taught
Debated	Predicted	Transmitted
Detected	Publicized	Triggered
Discovered	Questioned	Unified
Eliminated	Reconciled	Wrote

### Standing Out

The book also provides fifty before-and-after sample resumes that highlight the points made. There are many creative suggestions that will make your resume stand out in a stack and will help win that coveted interview, not a rejection letter. ▲

## About Devil Mountain Views

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### 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

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Devil Mountain Views also reserves the right to edit articles to fit its stylistic standards and space constraints. Articles are edited, copyedited, and proof-read before publication. The newsletter also reserves the right to not print articles deemed unfit for publication.

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### 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](#).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>2002–2003</b>	Managing Editor: Ashwini Tharval
<b>2001–2002</b>	Managing Editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format.
<b>1999–2001</b>	Managing Editor: Teresa Washburn
<b>1997–1999</b>	Managing Editor: Kelly Walker
<b>1996–1997</b>	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.
<b>1995–1996</b>	Managing Editor: Bruce Robinson. The <i>Twig</i> is published by President Gwaltney Mountford to supplement the <i>East Bay Log</i> .
<b>1994</b>	Newsletter name changed to <i>East Bay Log</i> .
<b>1962</b>	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**

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

## 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.

Thanks everyone for your emails! Hope we are keeping up to your expectations.

Great look to the web site!  
I'm really liking the way our web site is looking these days. Good work!

**Allan Francke**  
EBSTC Member

Great Newsletter!  
**Don Fink**  
(fairly new chapter member)

Loved reading the DMV. You and all the newsletter staff are such talented people! Congratulations on the award, too.

**June Schaefer**  
Chapter Historian

New look, new logo

I love the new look and the new logo. This newsletter has a clean look, easy links, and is well organized. I even don't mind reading it online!! Excellent work of you and your team.

**Gwaltney Mountford**  
Associate Fellow, STC

Great newsletter  
Love the newsletter. It looks great. Way to go.

**Janet Bran**  
EBSTC Web weaver

Nice new look and AVAST! Prepare to be boarded!

I like the new design—clean, and easy to navigate.

As you may know from reading Technically Write, we don't reprint other chapter articles if they are online. We simply link to them. I'd like to link to Bill Ardis' book review. I notify you of course out of courtesy, and because it's a chapter achievement line item (for you).

**Douglas Dow**  
Managing Editor  
Technically Write, Lone Star Chapter

**From the Editor:** Thank you Doug. Readers, take a look at [Technically Write](#).