

# Devil Mountain Views

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC  
November/December 2006

[Printer Friendly Vers](#)  
(1335 KB PDF)  
[Archives](#)  
[About Devil Mountai](#)  
[Views](#)  
[Sponsors](#)  
[Send Us Your](#)  
[Comments](#)  
[EBSTC](#)

[President's  
Message](#)

[Your EBSTC  
Leaders](#)

[Editor's  
Message](#)

[Meeting  
Information](#)

[New & Senior  
Members](#)

[Networking](#)

[Book Review](#)

## **Literacy Outreach to Science Students Through Their Teachers**

Many of today's brightest high school and college students have a distressing lack of literacy skills. **T.R. Girill** tells us about an outreach program designed to reach science students through their teachers.

## **Conducting Interviews**

Getting ready to interview a technical writing candidate?  
**Dara Golden** shares tips on how to go about it effectively.

## **Is Podcasting in Your Future?**

Did you catch the program about podcasting at the September meeting? If not, you'll definitely want to read **Patrick Lufkin**'s summary of it. Even if you did, you'll find his article illuminating.

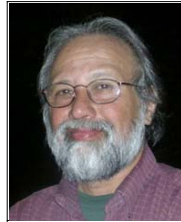
## **EBSTC Career Connection Reaches Out to Students**

In October, members of the EBSTC College/Career Connection participated in the annual career day at St. Mary's College. **Patrick Lufkin** tells us all about it.



## President's Message

---



by [Joseph Humbert](#)  
EBSTC President

Hello, all. In my new role as President, I am getting my feet firmly planted. One of the ideas we wanted to explore was to podcast our speaker programs for our members. As luck would have it, our first speaker in September was Jerry Franklin, who talked about podcasting and using Audacity, free software to record and edit audio podcasts. We used it and now have his program available for you. Go to the website homepage, click on 'Podcast' in the upper right corner. If you are an EBSTC member, you should have received by email the username and password to access the podcasts. If you are a member and haven't received this information, email me with the subject line, EBSTC Podcast. And, no, you do not need an iPod or similar mp3 device to download or hear the program. You can use your computer and Windows Media Player. We also have Jerry's PDF file of his PowerPoint presentation for you to follow along.

For October, we have no podcast because our confirmed speaker cancelled the weekend before the meeting. Mama said there'd be days like this. We scrambled for another speaker but could not find one on such short notice. So, each attendee brought in their own work to share with those who attended. We actually had a very lively discussion and it was very interesting to hear and see what others do. Sorry if you missed it.

We want to welcome two new volunteers to the Leadership board. Ann Adams does our Hospitality for us now, giving Gwaltney a much needed break. Also, meet Toni Thompson, who is helping Dave, our newsletter editor, and me with our website work. Thanks, Ann and Toni, for joining the team.

We are still in need of a Nominating Committee (two or more experienced members), and a Secretary to take notes at our Council Meetings (about four times a year),

and write up the minutes. The Secretary position is an easy assignment for a new volunteer.

The College Connection Committee made their first appearance at a job fair at St. Mary's College this month. They talked to many students and gave out materials including a coupon for half off the student rate at our meetings. Hopefully, we will see some of the students attending our meetings soon. The Committee gained insight on how best to present themselves at job fairs and will apply those lessons at new fairs in the Spring.

They will need help at these fairs. If you can volunteer, go Leadership in the website and contact Gwaltney. Also, they are taking applications for speakers for a panel in the classroom. See the website homepage for the application and contact information.

Now is the time to think about renewing your membership to STC, and especially to the East Bay chapter. The benefits are huge.

- A reduced chapter meeting rate.
- Access to a resume counselor to rework your resume.
- Email notice when the award-winning newsletter is published.
- NEW: Podcasts of speaker programs for members only.
- Educational and networking opportunities provided at chapter meetings.
- Membership in an award-winning chapter that works to benefit you.

Before the holidays catch up with you, consider renewing your membership now. You won't regret it.

HELP! We need to hear from you on how we in Leadership can best serve your needs. The best way, of course, is to come to the monthly meetings and talk with us. Another way, a new approach we are instituting this year, is to join the EBSTC Yahooogroups discussion group. Go to <http://www.ebstc.org/yahooogroups.html> to join up. We actually will be soon asking members to join. We have over a hundred members in the chapter and we only hear from a fraction. We want to know your concerns, your opinions, what you like about what we are doing, what you don't like. This is an easy way to make your voices heard!

The Leadership will soon be revising our Strategic Plan

and conducting a Chapter Re-charter. We will re-examine what the chapter's mission and goals are and to determine what steps are necessary to achieve those goals and that mission. You can be a vital part of this process by joining Yahoogroups and letting us know what you want your chapter to do for you. Or, you can email me directly at [Joiohumx@aol.com](mailto:Joiohumx@aol.com). Better yet, come to a chapter meeting and tell me in person.

Again, we all urge you to make a commitment to come to at least one chapter meeting or function this year. We would like to meet you and see who are membership are. Thank you. See you next time. Joe ▲

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

## Your EBSTC Leaders



### **Joe Humbert** **President**

My background is actually in physics, with a B.S. and an M.S. from Cal State University at Los Angeles. In the mid-1980s, I started a homegrown software company, Kidbit Software, featuring educational software for the then popular Commodore machines. I wrote the programs, user guides, brochures, and advertising copy. I am now the co-owner of a child care center, where I do the accounting and write the monthly newsletters, parent guidelines, employee contract, brochures, and advertising copy. I have created and maintain our website, <http://www.berniceandjoeplayschool.com>. In addition, I am under contract to produce and maintain the website for PARC, Preserve Area Ridglands Committee, <http://www.ridglands.org>.

I have earned a Certificate with Distinction in Technical Communication from UC Berkeley Extension in which I had the great fortune to take my very first class from Gwaltney Mountford. I have been an STC member since 2002 and have been an active member of the East Bay STC. I have twice judged in the Touchstone competitions. And for the last three years, I have helped to keep the chapter's website up to date and have been the chapter's treasurer.



### **Helen Cheung** **President-Elect**

Born and raised in the Bay Area, I graduated from California State University, Hayward with a B.A. in Psychology. I began as a programmer analyst, but found that I enjoyed writing more than working with data and code. I decided to take a leap into the technical communication profession, and made a career change. I completed a Certificate in Technical Communication through U.C. Berkeley Extension. I joined STC in 2005, and immediately became active in the East Bay STC Chapter (serving as V.P. of Programs in 2005-2006).

I am currently a Technical Writer/Senior Consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton, a global strategy and technology consulting firm. My current client is the Department of Defense, specifically the Navy.

As President-Elect and a fellow East Bay Chapter member, I look forward to meeting new people, learning new things, working with the leadership team, and having fun.



**Gwaltney Mountford**  
**Treasurer**

I've been working in technical communication for over 25 years as a writer, trainer, manager, and consultant. My husband and I own Mountford Group Inc., a software development consulting company specializing in developing custom business applications and data warehouse applications. Working in a range of industries, my contributions to my clients include everything from end-user documentation to product development support to user interface design and development.

An STC Associate Fellow, I remain active at all levels of the Society. I was chapter president and treasurer (in the 90s), managed Touchstone and a Region 8 Conference, and served on the Society Nominating Committee. I currently am an active member of the Triage sub-committee of the Leadership Resource Committee. One of my favorite STC activities is to present at local chapters and at regional and international conferences. For fun, I enjoy reading, traveling, and gardening.



**Lis Fraser**  
**Vice President: Programs**

I have been managing customer documentation departments for over 25 years in both Canada and the Silicon Valley. My experience covers a range of industries from data collection hardware and custom application software, and client/server financial software, to particle accelerators, satellite image processing systems, and retail software. I've been employed by a variety of companies (Epic Data, Orbital Sciences, Intuit, and Hyperion Solutions, to name a few) and specialize in managing small and productive customer-focused documentation teams. For the past five years I have been managing the technical writing team at Adaptec, Inc. in Milpitas.

A senior member of the STC since 1985, I look forward to

bringing in interesting and relevant speakers to the EBSTC, meeting new people, working with the leadership team, and having fun. I especially look forward to eating the tasty food at the chapter meetings.

**Jeanie Egbert**  
**Vice President: Arrangments**

I've been playing around with the Internet since 1982, long before the Web was a maniacal gleam in anyone's eye. I've been a computer programmer, analyst, teacher, and writer. I contribute well-researched and finely-worded features to my local newspaper, along with the occasional erudite commentary (okay, sarcastic diatribes!). Every member of my family believes I am a wonderful writer.

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

## Editor's Message



by [David Eicher](#)  
DMV Managing Editor

Hi, everyone. We have a number of interesting articles in this edition.

T.R.Girill has written an article about an EBSTC literacy outreach program to science students through their teachers.

Dara Golden has written an article presenting guidelines for conducting interviews with technical writing job candidates.

Patrick Lufkin has contributed two articles: one about the September EBSTC meeting program on podcasting, and another about recent EBSTC participation in the annual career day at St. Mary's College.

Linda Schaltz has contributed a review of the best-selling book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*.

We will also need interesting things to publish on a continuing basis. Anything you can offer will be received gratefully.

Dave ▲

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

# Literacy Outreach to Science Students Through Their Teachers

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

One way to expose more high-school students to the skill-building benefits of technical writing is to help their teachers blend text design activities into on-going classes. This includes science teachers. School structure encourages them to regard writing as "someone else's problem," yet weak literacy skills often prevent adequate student performance in science classes. Since *Devil Mountain Views* published its last report on the EBSTC literacy project (Spring, 2005), we have pursued several unusual opportunities to introduce technical writing to local science teachers.

## ETEC

The Edward Teller Education Center (ETEC) aims to improve the quality of precollege science instruction. Originally sponsored by the University of California Office of the President (and now also by several philanthropic foundations), ETEC brings California science teachers to UC Davis classrooms in Livermore for four levels of practical professional development.

During July, 2005, and again in July, 2006, ETEC director Stan Hitomi decided to try something new. He inserted technical writing into the week-long ETEC "Level III" enrichment activities. So first for eight science teachers (2005), then for 16 (2006), I presented two 90-minute workshops explaining the value that technical writing can add for underperforming science students:

- The teachers were pleasantly surprised to find just how much solid empirical research (in linguistics, cognitive psychology, information science, and human-factors engineering) underlies current techniques for developing effective nonfiction text.
- Together we explored reliable ways to integrate communication design with standard California science activities by reviewing the EBSTC literacy project's classroom-tested exercises for writing sound instructions and useful descriptions.

- Finally, the teachers applied these same technical writing techniques to the journal articles, abstracts, proposals, or white papers that they sometimes want to draft on their own behalf.

The invigorating theme of all this teacher training is perhaps best captured by the title of biologist Robert Barrass' notable little handbook *Scientists Must Write*.

### **Granada High School**

Science Department Head Frankie Tate offered a parallel outreach opportunity during Granada High School's own on-campus professional development day on November 4, 2005. At her invitation I explained the benefits of technical writing beyond English class to nine members of the GHS science faculty. This compressed tour through the same issues (and handouts) used with both sets of ETEC teachers was the first time that an entire California high-school department explored technical writing as a literacy-building instructional strategy.

The Granada connection offers great potential. This high school now has an ambitious renewal project underway, including a state curriculum-improvement grant and a new science building. Granada has also begun requiring a forensic-themed general science course for every freshman. All of this creates many new opportunities for science teachers to offer and for their students to try technical writing in an authentic technical context.

Two strands connect these teacher development efforts. One is reach. Each teacher influences 100 to 200 students every year, so faculty awareness of technical writing possibilities can reach many learners indirectly. The other is value. Technical communication must earn scarce time in the busy science teacher's day, and all of these workshops strove to show how it can.

If you are interested in literacy outreach, please contact T.R. Girill ([trg@ltnl.gov](mailto:trg@ltnl.gov)) to explore ways that you can contribute to EBSTC's continuing project. ▲

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

## Conducting Interviews

by [Dara Golden](#)  
DMV Contributing Editor

*Dara Golden is a former technical writer, now homeschooling her five-year-old.*

People are hired for their skills, but often fired for their personality.

An interview should cover two areas: skills and personal qualities. Whether a candidate has one or ten years writing experience shouldn't be enough to land a job; the skills the candidate has are what's important. During the interview it is also important to ensure that the candidate will fit into your group and company.

### Before the Interview

- **Determine job requirements**

Ensure that the job description matches what you're looking for in a candidate. Determine general skills the candidate must have, such as writing, indexing, and translation skills. Be specific. Additionally, omit skills that are irrelevant or easy to teach.

- **Create a general list of questions**

These are questions asked of all candidates. General questions include what the candidate is looking for in the job, what they want to do, and why they want to work for your company. These questions determine a general fit into the company and group; what they want to do may not be something done at your company.

- **Create a skill-specific list of questions**

Like the general questions, these questions will be asked of everyone. In general, writing skills must be asked of all candidates. However, questions can be created for desired job requirements, such as reading code and UNIX networking experience.

- **Create a list of open-ended questions**

Open ended questions are ones where a "yes/no" answer isn't sufficient. The candidate needs to

elaborate on answers, thus giving you more information. An example of an open-ended question is "What was your biggest challenge in a past job and how did you meet it?"

- **Review the questions**

Are the questions clearly worded? Do they cover the areas important for the job? Do they cover the goals for the interview?

- **Determine candidate-specific questions**

Once the resume is received, determine if there are additional questions you'd like answered.

- **Rank and divide the questions**

Determine the hierarchy of the questions, such as which questions can be asked during the phone screen interview opposed to the live interview. What questions must be asked and which questions can be asked if time permits? If multiple people are interviewing the candidates, divide up the questions.

## During the Interview

- **Be professional**

A good rule of thumb is to treat the candidate like you'd like to be treated during an interview. Arrive on time for the interview, shake hands, and introduce yourself. At the end of the interview, thank them for their time and let them know what they're to do after your interview, such as being escorted to HR or interviewed by another coworker.

- **Listen**

A good rule of thumb for interviewers is to talk 25% of the time and listen the rest of the time. Don't be afraid of silences - the candidate may be gathering their thoughts before answering your question. Giving an occasional head nod or saying "uh huh" lets the candidate know that you are listening.

- **Ensure questions are answered**

If an answer isn't clear or completely answered, ask "Could you elaborate on that?" or "Why?" Before ending the interview, glance at your list of questions to ensure that the areas you are focusing on have been answered to your satisfaction. If you ran out of time, have one of your co-workers ask the questions you were not able to ask.

- **Remain neutral**

Keep a poker face. Showing expression may skew the interview. Studies have shown that taking notes during interviews can also skew answers, so keep note taking to a minimum.

- **Keep control of the interview**

Lead the candidate, don't let them lead or dictate the interview.

- **Leave time at the end**

This time can be used for you to summarize what was covered and how you understood the information. Ask if there's anything else you should ask them or if they'd like to ask you anything. Do not feel obligated to answer any questions if you feel uncomfortable with them.

## **After the Interview**

- **Write down your impressions**

Include supporting data for both positive and negative impressions. If you include quotes, ensure that they are accurate. Try to keep personal biases out of the impressions. Don't talk to any of the other interviewers before you commit your impressions to paper.

- **Get other opinions**

A candidate may click with one interviewer and not with another. With different questions being answered, one interviewer may be impressed while another disappointed. Talk to the other interviewers at an agreed upon time, preferably after all interviews have been conducted. One company asked interviewers to report to the manager after the interview to give the manager an idea how to adjust the questions they were going to ask the candidate.

Keeping these pointers in mind can assist in ensuring that the right candidate is hired for positions at any company.

## Is Podcasting in Your Future?

by [Patrick Lufkin](#)

Patrick is chair of the Kenneth Gordon Memorial Scholarship and membership manager of the STC Management SIG. He also works with the EBSTC Career Connection.

Where communication capability goes, technical communication is sure to follow.

In the '80s and '90s improvements in authoring and display technologies came together to produce the mass communication revolution called desktop publishing. Technical communicators soon leveraged the new technologies to produce collateral—manuals, specifications sheets, white papers, employee manuals, flyers, press releases—with a speed and quality never before seen. Likewise, as Web technologies made the Internet easy to navigate and use, technical communicators began writing online help, FAQs, and other documents; soon providing Web content became an important technical communication specialty.

If the pattern holds, technical communicators may soon find themselves involved in podcasting.

### **What is podcasting and why is it important?**

For those who haven't been following trends, podcasting is the desktop equivalent of radio production and broadcasting. In 2005 the editors of the New Oxford American Dictionary declared "podcasting" the word of the year, a sure indication that podcasting has become one of the hottest technologies around.

In September Jerry Franklin visited the Eastbay chapter of STC to introduce podcasting and explain where technical communicators can fit into the process. Much of his presentation was dedicated to showing how a podcast is actually produced.

Podcasting technology has actually been available since around 2000, but it was not until 2004 when Apple began to throw its considerable weight behind the technology with its iTunes music store and the iPod portable listening device that the technology really blossomed.

Franklin says that estimates put the current podcast audience at between 2 to 10 million listeners; some predict that this could go as high as 60 million by 2010. He notes that even 30 million listeners would be 10 percent of the US population.

What started as a music distribution tool soon became a platform for those who wanted to sound off with movie reviews, political commentary and so on, a practice called audio blogging. Business has now discovered podcasting, and the technology appears to be positioned to take the corporate and technical communication world by storm.

In the past year corporations have come to realize that podcasting gives them a useful platform for building their brands and keeping in touch with prospective customers. Being audio, a podcast is an easy-to-use format that is especially attractive to multitaskers, those too busy to read, and those trapped in automobiles on long commutes.

A number of large corporations are experimenting with podcasts. Franklin says that the Whirlpool American Family podcast claims to have achieved 60 thousand weekly listeners with no promotion. Oracle, IBM, and Microsoft all have corporate podcasts.

Franklin cited a recent study of 3,900 IT professionals in which more than half of the decision makers said that they would prefer listening to a podcast to reading a White Paper; a quarter said they were already using podcasts when making buying decisions. Franklin predicts that by year's end all large technical companies with over \$1 billion in sales will be podcasting.

Franklin became involved with podcasting while helping his wife build a business as a certified dog trainer. He is a PeopleSoft alumnus, and is a member of STC and the IEEE Professional Communication Society. He will be giving a presentation on podcasting to the IEEE later this year.

Franklin says that technical communicators have what it takes to produce podcasts. Most are well-rounded people who have held a wide variety of jobs. Podcasting, he says, rewards such breadth of experience. In his own case, he draws on a background in music, which helps him work with sound files, and broadcast journalism, which helps him with interviewing. Most corporate

podcasts, he says, use an interview format, and most technical communicators, by nature, are good at asking questions.

He also believes that we are in a honeymoon period that makes this a very good time to get involved. At the moment, “people are willing to forgive podcasts their warts,” he says. While you want to be good, you don’t have to be perfect; there is room for those who are working their way up the learning curve.

## **Making a podcast.**

Franklin says that for the kinds of podcasting that technical communicators are likely to produce, short—5 to 20 minute interviews with a music introduction—there are only a few things you really need to know. The process Franklin outlined is simple and straightforward.

- Import sound files
- Edit/clean each file
- Create musical introduction
- Create smooth transition between files
- Mix and master podcast
- Export as MP3 and prepare ID3 tags

To make a podcast, you need a sound editor. One of the most popular is Audacity, an Open Source program that is available free on the Internet. Franklin demonstrated the use of Audacity, pointing out its major features.

Audacity is similar to a text or photo editing program. In the Audacity user interface sound files are represented as waveforms, squiggly lines like those generated by an oscilloscope. You edit the sound by manipulating its visual representation. As you gain experience, Franklin says, you will learn to “see” the audio through the waveforms.

Using Audacity, you can record and import sound files, cut and paste sound segments, stack sound channels on top of each other, adjust volume, distort sounds, apply special effects, undo and repeat what you have done, and so on. A timeline at the top of the screen shows the playing length of the file. To move files, you just drag and drop. You can turn tracks on and off for editing. You can also generate silence for use where needed.

## **Workflow.**

Franklin suggests that you import files, arrange them in chronological order, and rename them to something meaningful: “intro,” “first segment,” and so on.

Next you want to clean up each sound file. You can zoom in to cut out unwanted passages (parts of the interview you don't want to use) and artifacts (unwanted sounds such as background noises and 'ahs' and 'uhs').

After cleaning up individual files, string them together in the correct order. Franklin says it is a good idea to do all of your editing before stringing things together; if you go back later and make a cut in a file you may have to do a lot of realigning.

After you have edited your individual files, you enter the process of mastering which is where you even out the volume of the whole and otherwise prepare for distribution. When all is as you want it, convert the file from wav, the file format used for editing, to MP3, the condensed file used for listening. (MP3 takes up about a tenth of the space of a wav file.) You must also create something called an ID3 tag, which is a small code segment that identifies your content and enables people to find your podcast.

Finally post your file to an aggregator where it will be made available to the world. Franklin says that that is really all there is to it.

If you would like to give it a try, download Audacity and LAME, a required MP3 extraction file, from the Audacity site at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>.

Franklin's podcast, *The Good Dog Show*, can be found at [www.dogworks.libsyn.com](http://www.dogworks.libsyn.com).

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

## EBSTC Career Connection Reaches Out to Students

by [Patrick Lufkin](#)

Patrick is a member of the EBSTC College/Career Connection and Membership Manager of the STC Management SIG.

On October 4, May McKoon, Janet Gray, and I represented the EBSTC College/Career Connection as it launched its first major college outreach event by participating in the annual career day at St. Mary's College. The three of us manned a table and answered student questions about STC, handed out flyers and brochures, and promoted technical communication as a possible career choice. Among the handouts were an article about *Money Magazine* naming technical writer one of America's most desirable jobs, a flyer based on Joy Montgomery's book on writing résumés, and a bookmark which can also serve as a half-off coupon for the cost of a chapter meeting.

Tucked into the beautiful hills just east of Moraga, St. Mary's is a Catholic liberal arts college offering a number of programs for adults seeking to advance their careers. The school did a handsome job of organizing the day, providing shuttle bus transportation, refreshments, and even a box lunch for the presenters. I didn't count the tables, but I would estimate that fifty to seventy-five organizations were represented including employers looking to hire, graduate schools offering professional degrees in law, business and other specialties, and the various branches of the US military, looking for recruits.

The College/Career Connection committee was the brainchild of former EBSTC President Linda Schaltz. Her idea was to establish communication with local colleges to encourage students to seek careers in technical communication. The outreach effort would also have chapter building potential as students joined STC and used chapter contacts and resources to support their careers. Beyond the usual benefits of chapter membership, students would get a chance to meet with working professionals in a congenial atmosphere free from the stresses of job interviews.

Chaired by Gwaltney Mountford, the committee spent the first year developing the mission, goals, structure, process and printed material for the effort. Members of the committee began contacting colleges in late 2005 and this spring May McKoon got us invited to participate in the St. Mary's career day.

During the summer Patrick Lufkin signed on, as did our new chapter president Joe Humbert. The current members of the committee are Gwaltney Mountford, Joe Humbert, Patrick Lufki Janet Gray, May McKoon, Joy Montgomery, and Roz Rogoff. During the summer the group also changed its name from the College Liaison Committee to the EBSTC College/Career Connection, as it was thought that this would better communicate with the students and faculty we hoped to reach.

The committee plans to continue to build a strong relationship with St. Mary's college, and then reach out to other colleges once our presentation is perfected. In addition to manning table at career days, we would like to be able to man in-class panels give presentations on career related subjects, and work with college placement personnel in whatever ways they deem most helpful.

In order to expand our reach, we need additional people who are knowledgeable and willing to help. Given the usual college schedule, participants should be able to participate during weekdays. We want to organize those who can help into a speakers bureau.

If you are interested, please join our Speakers Bureau by completing the Speaker Information Form (<http://www.ebstc.org/ChapterResources/SpeakerInfoForm2.doc>) and email it to: [janetd.gray@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janetd.gray@sbcglobal.net).

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

## Chapter Meeting Information

### Upcoming Meetings

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

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

Date	Speaker	Topic
November 2	Linda Urban, Consultant	<p><b>Integrating User Assistance Into the User Interface of a Web Application: A Case Study</b></p> <p>Let's face it, for the most part, users do not want to use Help systems, and all too often, they don't. It is a challenge to figure out how to integrate supporting information into a product in a way that encourages users to actually make use of it.</p> <p>This program presents a case study where adoption of a Web-based application depends on users' early success in using it, and on their perception that the product is easy to use and learn. Providing user assistance in a format that people will actually use is critical to the success of the product.</p> <p>Fortunately, the product</p>

designers and developers are fully behind the concept of integrating user assistance into the user interface, so the hurdle of getting screen real-estate has already been addressed. But that is only the beginning. The next challenge is figuring out exactly what information to integrate. Screen real estate is limited, so how do you make sure you add the right text? When a goal is to provide answers to users' questions at the point at which they have them, how do you select what links to provide? What if you are aware of 20 questions that users may have on a given screen, at different points in their work process? Or different topics that are important to different users?

Linda discusses how these and other questions and issues are being addressed on this project. She summarizes the techniques and activities that proved most useful in defining and developing the content, and discusses how she and the developers are:

- Determining what links to put on the page
- Layering information to provide more when users are ready for it
- Using help topics as active job aids that can drive the application
- Deciding what to leave out

		<p><i>Linda Urban has over 20 years experience in technical communication, and 15 years experience creating online Help. As a consultant, Linda works on product usability, user interface design, Help systems, software and hardware documentation, and web-based information. She focuses on developing solutions that meet user needs and company goals, and her work has received local and international STC awards. She also teaches courses in technical communication at the UC Berkeley Extension and UC Santa Cruz Extension.</i></p>
December 7	<p><b>Mike Hamilton,</b> MadCap Software</p>	<p><b>MadCap Flare and the RoboHelp Saga</b></p> <p>Mike Hamilton, who spent many years working on RoboHelp, will tell us about its tortured path from Blue Sky to eHelp to Macromedia to Adobe. By providing dates and details, Mike hopes to put various rumors to rest and ensure that we all have a clear idea how RoboHelp got where it is today.</p> <p>MadCap is a software company started by former RoboHelp developers. Their XML-based help authoring product, Flare, looks nothing like RoboHelp, but the two products may be destined to compete for the same customers. Mike will give us a demonstration of Flare.</p> <p><i>Mike Hamilton is Vice President of Product Management at MadCap</i></p>

*Software, where he is working on Flare. Before joining MadCap, he served as product manager for the RoboHelp product line from 1997, when he joined eHelp, right through the Macromedia days.*

*Mike has over 15 years of experience in training, technical communication, multimedia development, and software development at several organizations, including Macromedia, eHelp/Blue Sky Software, Cymer, National Steel and Shipbuilding, and the US Navy. ▲*

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

**Devil Mountain Views**   
November/December 2006 | [Home](#)

---

## Congratulations to Our New and Senior Members

Welcome to our new, transfer, and reinstated members! We hope you can come meet us at a chapter meeting.



**Ann Adams**  
**Dennis Arellano**  
**Anne Barrett**  
**Don Benesh**  
**Deborah Caywood**  
**Angie Elliott**  
**Yvette Helmers**  
**Rena Leith**  
**John MacGinnis**  
**Sarah Mattern**  
**Elaine Pendergrast**  
**Anjana Rajan**  
**Megan Yen**

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

## Networking

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

### Northern California STC Chapters



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

Wednesdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	<a href="#">Sacramento</a>	<a href="#">Chuck Petch</a>
Week 2	<a href="#">Berkeley</a>	<a href="#">Richard Mateosian</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">San Francisco</a>	<a href="#">Tim Bombosch</a>
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	<a href="#">East Bay</a>	<a href="#">Joseph Humbert</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">North Bay</a>	<a href="#">Jerry McBride</a> (acting)
Week 4	<a href="#">Silicon Valley</a>	<a href="#">Joanne Grey</a>

### Professional Development SIG

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

### Monthly Meetings

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

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

## Join the SIG Yahoo Group

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

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

Devil Mountain Views   
November/December 2006 | [Home](#)

---

## Book Review: *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*

by [Linda Schatz](#)

*Eats, Shoots & Leaves*  
*The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*

Lynne Truss  
Gotham Books, New York NY, 2003, 209pp, ISBN  
1-592-40087-6, \$17.50

For the few of you who may not be familiar with this book, I must start with the author's explanation of the title.

**A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air. "Why?" asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.**

**"I'm a panda," he says, at the door. "Look it up." The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.**

**"Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."**

This little story sets the delightful tone for the rest of the book. Is it the definitive guide to grammar and punctuation? No, probably not. However, I can honestly say that I have never sat down to read a book on this subject just for fun, until now. Ms. Truss makes this subject about as interesting as it can get. And really now, who can find fault with anyone who takes punctuation so seriously that she would stand outside of a movie theater with a giant apostrophe on a stick, just to properly punctuate the movie title "Two Weeks Notice"?

This book was on Britain's Best Seller list for months. I find that incredible considering the topic. Apostrophes, dashes, commas, colons and semicolons are not the stuff of Pulitzer Prizes. Still, because this is an entertaining read, I found that I was learning (and re-learning) tools that are essential to my job. Who among us cannot stand to review the basics from time to time?

I must admit that I am personally quite fond of commas. Ms. Truss offers many interesting examples for us to think about, such as:

The people in the queue who managed to get tickets were very satisfied.

The people in the queue, who managed to get tickets, were very satisfied.

Call me a writing geek but this is the stuff I live for. Give me proper punctuation or give me — well, at least give me a hard time! I highly recommend this to anyone who would like a refreshingly charming refresher in punctuation (and yes, that WAS supposed to be redundant), or to anyone who would just like an entertaining reference book. Two thumbs up! ▲

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



The following table lists the issue date, the author(s) for the featured article(s), and the article name.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Article Name</b>
Current Issue: <a href="#">November/December 2006</a>	T. R. Girill Dara Golden Patrick Lufkin Patrick Lufkin	<i>Literacy Outreach to Science Students Through Their Teachers</i> <i>Conducting Interviews</i> <i>Is Podcasting in Your Future?</i> <i>EBSTC Career Connection Reaches Out to Students</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2006</a>	Dara Golden Helen Cheung	<i>Beyond the Resume</i> <i>Ten Reasons to be Vice President of Programs</i>
<a href="#">May/June 2005</a>	Patrick Lufkin Gwaltney Mountford Elaine Parrish T. R. Girill	<i>Leadership for the Emerging Future</i> <i>College Liaison Committee: The New Kid on the Block</i> <i>Sentence's Little Helpers</i> <i>How Technical Writing Supports High School Science</i>
<a href="#">March/April 2005</a>	Joy Montgomery Dara Golden Elaine Parrish Sue Phelan	<i>Surviving Resume Screening, a Brutal Process!</i> <i>Volunteer Editing and Writing</i> <i>The Truth About Ampersands</i> <i>EBSTC Needs You!</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2005</a>	Joy Montgomery Dara Golden T. R. Girill Elaine Parrish Beau Cain Becky Rude	<i>Accentuate the Postive; Eliminate the Negative</i> <i>Volunteer Editing and Writing</i> <i>Tech Writing Outreach Meets CAHSEE in Oakland</i> <i>New Year's Resolutions for Writers</i> <i>Director's Report</i> <i>Annual Member Survey</i>
<a href="#">November/December</a>	Laura Phillips	<i>Transition, Change, A Rose by Any</i>

<a href="#">2004</a>	Joy Montgomery Elaine Parrish Charleen Earley Elaine Parrish Suzanna Laurent	<i>Other Name...</i> <i>Psst—Wanna Know a Secret?</i> <i>On Becoming a "Senior"</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Liz Miller</i> <i>Confounding Compounds</i> <i>TRAF Technique Saves Time</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2004</a>	Dara Golden T. R. Girill Judy Herr Melody Brumis Elaine Parrish June Schaefer	<i>Top Ten Things I Wish I'd Known Sooner</i> <i>Sharing Outreach More Effectively</i> <i>Confessions of an STC Conference Groupie</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Sherry Smith</i> <i>Infinite Possibilities</i> <i>Keeping Our Archive Updated</i>
<a href="#">May/June 2004</a>	Dara Golden T. R. Girill Gwaltney Mountford Elaine Parrish	<i>Marketing Your Non-Writing Skills</i> <i>An Outreach Theme with Five Variations</i> <i>STC Transformation Project</i> <i>Quick and Dirty Copyediting</i>
<a href="#">March/April 2004</a>	Jon Rude David Dick and Kathy Bine Vesa Purho Dara Golden Elaine Parrish	<i>Helping Make Projects Work</i> <i>Documentation Management for Dummies</i> <i>Well Planned Is Half Done</i> <i>First Impressions: Resume Tips</i> <i>Ask Elaine: Double Trouble</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2004</a>	Sarmistha Purkayastha Suzanna Laurent Adrienne Tange Dara Golden Elaine Parrish T. R. Girill Marsha Howard	<i>How I Became a Technical Writer</i> <i>Strategies for Making Change Work</i> <i>Seasonal Poem</i> <i>Style Guides: Basic Considerations</i> <i>Ask Elaine: The Little Things</i> <i>Autumn Literacy Outreach Update</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Joe Humbert</i>
<a href="#">November/December 2003</a>	Dara Golden Suzanna Laurent Adrienne Tange Melody Brumis Elaine Parrish	<i>What's in a Mark?</i> <i>What do I Get for Belonging to STC?</i> <i>Short Story: Half-Full</i> <i>Spotlight on Hillary Russak</i> <i>Ask Elaine: A Matter of Style</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2003</a>	Susan Harlan T. R. Girill Susan Harlan	<i>Notes on the 2003 Annual STC Conference</i> <i>How Literacy Outreach Spent</i>

	Adrienne Tange Elaine Parrish Becky Rude	<i>Summer Vacation</i> <i>STC as a Volunteer Organization</i> <i>Short Story: Lethal Pen</i> <i>Ask Elaine: Reining in Apostrophilia</i> <i>Spotlight on Elaine Parrish</i>
<a href="#">May/June 2003</a>	Don Huntington Kristine Hahn Rusty Jorgensen T. R. Girill	<i>An Online Project Info Solution (Part 2)</i> <i>Single-Sourcing, XML, Alphabet Soup</i> <i>Dare to Be Dumb</i> <i>Acting Locally, Thinking Globally in Literacy Outreach Project</i>
<a href="#">March/April 2003</a>	Elaine Parrish Don Huntington Scott Wallace Linda Shaltz Susan Harlan	<i>Copyediting—Who Needs It?</i> <i>An Online Project Information Solution</i> <i>Style Guides to the Rescue</i> <i>What Does Video Capture Have to Do With Writing?</i> <i>Alternative Jobs or Alternative Job Search Methods?</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2003</a>	Gwaltney Mountford Melody Brumis Don Huntington Scott Wallace	<i>Contracting: Is It for You?</i> <i>You Have a Contract—Now What?</i> <i>A Plan for Creating Internal Newsletters</i> <i>Taming the Tech-Neologism</i>
<a href="#">November/December 2002</a>	Don Huntington Adrienne Tange Don Huntington	<i>Responding to the Changing Face of the Tech Writer's Role</i> <i>Terminal Contract</i> <i>Staying Busy in a Slumping Economy</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2002</a>	Gwaltney Mountford Susan Harlan Scott Wallace	<i>Nashville Nuggets</i> <i>Trends in Technical Writing</i> <i>The Great "Web" vs. "web" Debate</i>
<a href="#">May/June 2002</a>	Don Huntington John Gallagher Ashwini Tharval & Dipali Godbole Scott Wallace Becky Rude	<i>It Takes a Sexually Stimulated Man...</i> <i>Cross-Cultural Interactions</i> <i>Home Away from Home</i> <i>Writing Effective Online Copy</i> <i>Spotlight on Wallace Clements</i>
<a href="#">March/April 2002</a>	Faraz Hoodbhoy Roz Rogoff Dan Day	<i>3G for Everyone</i> <i>Accessibility = Usability</i> <i>Characterizing Materials on the</i>

	Ashwini Tharval Scott Wallace Adrienne Tange	<i>Nanoscale Technology Unraveled Web Usability Spotlight on Coralyn K. McGregor</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2002</a>	T. R. Girill Gwaltney Mountford Diana Wilcoxson Bill Ardis Scott Wallace Adrienne Tange	<i>Looking Back: Technical Writing in the Bay Area Morphing Through the Decades We've Come a Long Way DOS Revisited: 20 Years of C-Prompts Editorial Content on the Web Spotlight on June Schaefer</i>
<a href="#">November/December 2001</a>	Linda Shaltz Angelina Nachimuthu Terri Winters Liz Miller Bill Ardis Adrienne Tange	<i>Fight or Flight? Online Job Search: Some Tips and Techniques Resumes That Shine Punch Up Your Portfolio Diary of a Consultant Spotlight on Sue Phelan</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2001</a> (1.3 MB PDF)	Don Huntington	<i>Grasping the Essentials in Writing for an Online Audience</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2000</a> (1.5 MB PDF)	Lenore Weiss	<i>Stranger in Paradigm</i>
<a href="#">November/December 1999</a> (1.9 MB PDF)	Lenore Weiss & Judith Herr	<i>Technical Literacy Program at Fremont High School</i>
<a href="#">September/October 1999</a> (1.3 MB PDF)	Jane C. Frazier	<i>Employees and Business Process: The Point of the Shared View</i>
<a href="#">July/August 1999</a> (583 KB PDF)	Lu Rehling	<i>It's Our Future, So Let's Make the Most of It</i>
<a href="#">DMV Home</a>   <a href="#">EBSTC</a>   <a href="#">STC</a>   <a href="#">Contact Us</a>		

## About *Devil Mountain Views*

---

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

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

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1822  
703-522-4114  
[stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org)

**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](#).

### **PUBLICATION SCHEDULE**

*Devil Mountain Views* is published bimonthly, five times a year (September, November, January, March, May) with occasional e-news.

### **ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

Sep/Oct 2006 issue – Aug 2, 2006  
Nov/Dec 2006 issue – Oct 2, 2006  
Jan/Feb 2007 issue – Dec 2, 2006  
Mar/Apr 2007 issue – Feb 2, 2007  
May/Jun 2007 issue – Apr 2, 2007

### **WRITER'S TEMPLATE**

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

### **REPRINT POLICY**

Articles may be reprinted provided credit is given to *Devil Mountain Views* and the author, and a link to the article is sent to the [Managing Editor](#). If the newsletter is printed, please send two copies to the mailing address listed below.

### **MAILING ADDRESS**

David Eicher, Managing Editor, 4916 Chism Way, Antioch, CA 94531.

### **ADVERTISING POLICY**

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

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

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

336 X 280 = \$150

468 X 60 = \$120

160 X 155 = \$80

120 X 60 = \$50

**Ad Location:** The EBSTC webmaster and the managing editor determine the appropriate ad placement. Ads may be placed on any page in the web site or newsletter or on a sponsors page. Ads will be included in the "Printer Friendly" version of the newsletter.

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

**Inquiries:** If you have questions or want to start your ad, please contact the [Managing Editor](#).

## **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.

*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.

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

newsletter are copyright STC, 2006.

**DMV Staff** **MANAGING EDITOR**  
[David Eicher](#)

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
[Ken Evans](#)

**COPYEDITOR**  
[Elaine Parrish](#)

**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**  
[Dara Golden](#)

**WEB DESIGNER**  
[David Eicher](#)

**PHOTOGRAPHER**  
[Sue Phelan](#)

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

**PRESIDENT**  
[Joseph Humbert](#), 510-638-3529

**PRESIDENT-ELECT**  
[Helen Cheung](#), 510-219-0995

**TREASURER**  
[Gwaltney Mountford](#), 925-686-6613

**SECRETARY**  
 open

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>2004–2005</b>	Managing Editor: Becky Rude <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>2003–2004</b>	Managing Editor: Becky Rude Guest Managing Editor: Gwaltney Mountford <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.

<b>2002–2003</b>	Managing Editor: Ashwini Tharval <b>Best of Show, Most Improved, Distinguished Technical Communication</b> awards in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>2001–2002</b>	Managing Editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format. <b>Award of Merit</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>1999–2001</b>	Managing Editor: Teresa Washburn <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>1997–1999</b>	Managing Editor: Kelly Walker <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>1996–1997</b>	Managing Editor: Melody Brumis Newsletter name changed to <i>Devil Mountain Views</i> . Susan Moxley won the contest held to rename the newsletter. In July 1996, a spoof issue called <i>East Bay Flame</i> is published.
<b>1995–1996</b>	Managing Editor: Bruce Robinson An offshoot, 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 Home](#) | [EBSTC](#) | [STC](#) | [Contact Us](#)

## Sponsors

These companies have generously sponsored this newsletter.

**\*YOUR AD HERE\***

DMV is seeking advertisers for this issue or future issues!

### ADVERTISING POLICY

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

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

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

336 X 280 = \$150

468 X 60 = \$120

160 X 155 = \$80

120 X 60 = \$50

**Ad Location:** The EBSTC webmaster and the managing editor determine the appropriate ad placement. Ads may be placed on any page in the web site or newsletter or on a sponsors page. Ads will be included in the "Printer Friendly" version of the newsletter.

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

**Inquiries:** If you have questions or want to start your ad, please contact the [Managing Editor](#). ▲

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