

northbay news

The monthly newsletter of the NorthBay Chapter of the
Society for Technical Communication

Volume 8, Number 2, February 2001

In This Issue

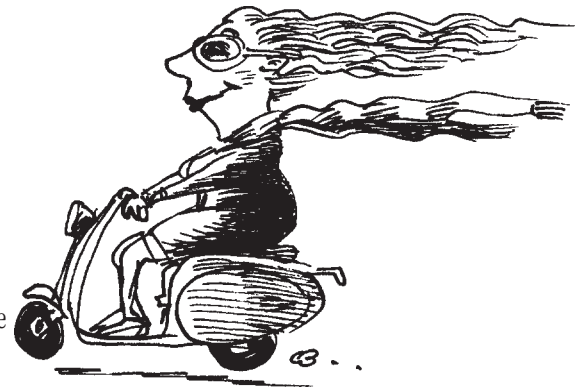
- ❁ *Experiment in Learning: CSU Hayward Online Tech Comm Program*
- ❁ *News and Opportunities, Part 2*
- ❁ *This Month's Meeting*
- ❁ *You Must Renew to Vote for the New Director-Sponsor*
- ❁ *Netiquette*
- ❁ *Healthy Computing Tip: Armrests*
- ❁ *Employment Opportunities*

Experiment in Learning

CSU Hayward Continuing Education
Online Technical and Professional
Communication Program
Michele Green, NorthBay Chapter

Recently I completed the online course, *Introduction to Technical Communication*, offered by CSU Hayward. It was an experiment in the experience of learning. Welcome to the 21st century! Where was this program when I attended university?

I have vivid memories of long commutes, even longer lectures, and the necessity of having a parking lot strategy. As a student who drove to school, I quickly learned the lessons of parking, which have



For avoiding traffic and parking problems, even mopeds can't beat an online class.

Continues on page 3 ➤

News and Opportunities, Part Two

John Dibs
President

This column continues and expands on the themes in the president's column from last month's issue.

I received several positive comments about the January presentation on process mapping, given by Karen Widmer. For those of you who were not able to attend, Karen demonstrated how to gather, map, and display information about processes. Karen's solutions addressed a common task faced by many technical communicators. You can reach Karen's consulting firm, Performance Modeling Services by e-mail at karenwidmer@earthlink.net.

If you or others you know are interested in preparing and delivering a presentation for one of our monthly meetings, please contact our vice president in charge of programs, Kurt Huget.

Continues on page 6 ➤

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We welcome articles, advertising, and news about meetings, workshops, and courses that pertain to technical communication. Please e-mail simple text to the editor at jdibs@earthlink.net. Advertising rates (per issue): \$20 for 1/4 page, \$35 for 1/2 page.

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STC Mission Statement

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

This Month's Meeting

Thursday, February 15, 2001

Portfolio Basics

by Lance Gelein

Senior Member, Sacramento Chapter

Past President, International STC

Portfolios are an essential part of the job search for the technical communicator. If you don't have one, come to the NorthBay Chapter of STC meeting to learn how to put one together, use it in an interview, and learn the 10 keys to a successful portfolio.

The presentation includes the following topics:

- Why have a portfolio
- Putting a portfolio together
- Portfolio basics
- Using a portfolio
- Critique - demonstration
- Review and Questions

If you have a portfolio bring it with you to the meeting to have it evaluated and critiqued.

Meeting Schedule

Location:	Parker Compumotor, 5500 Labath Dr., Rohnert Park	
Time:	5:30 - 6:30	Networking and Refreshments
	6:30 - 8:15	Introductions and Program
	8:15 - 8:30	More Conversation, Idea Swapping

Experiment in Learning

Continued from page 1

stayed with me far longer than any other lesson, certainly longer than business management or calculus. As fond as I am of my university day memories, I had no desire to relive the past, so I reluctantly ventured into the 21st century and enrolled in CSU Hayward's course. For those who wish to pursue a certificate or simply a course or two in technical communication, this program is something to consider.

Honestly, I didn't do enormous amounts of research before choosing this course. I work full time, and the idea of reinstating the parking lot strategy at Sonoma State, commuting to UC Berkeley, or spending my evenings in lectures was rather unappealing. CSU Hayward had the

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only complete online certificate program that I unearthed, so I enrolled. I really had no idea what to expect and nothing to compare the course to but in the end, I think it was a good choice.

The five-week course was time intensive and challenging. The courses are instructor-led and, unlike many online courses, classes begin and end

on specific dates. Interactive participation is a key requirement for students, so much so that I felt I knew my classmates quite well when the course concluded. Assignments forced



*Another great benefit to online learning:
no one can see you.*

the more reluctant students to interact with each other by critiquing one another's work and completing group projects. This sounds simple enough but with each person's unique work schedule (on- and offline) and varying time zones, it is often more difficult than one would think. All in all, I didn't miss the physical classroom and found the online class fun.

Without much to use as a comparison, I would recommend this program. Since my CSU Hayward experience, I have enrolled in an online class with another organization, and I have not found the current course as stimulating or as interactive as CSU Hayward's. Perhaps it's me, perhaps it's the nature of the course, or the instructor, but I prefer my experience at CSUH.

The Basics

CSU Hayward Continuing Education's certificate program consists of eight courses: five required and three electives. Each course is five weeks in length (sounds great, but don't let that

fool you, it kept me busy!) and two courses can be taken per quarter. Dependent on the number of units, the courses cost either \$295 or \$595. Spring 2001-quarter registration begins February 19 and classes begin March 22, 2001.

Registration can be done over the phone or by fax in no time at all if you own a credit card.

Information can be found through the following means:

- On the Internet at www.extension.csuhayward.edu
- By phoning Jeanne Ekdahl at 510-728-2319
- By e-mail to onlinewriting@bay.csuhayward.edu



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You Must Renew to Vote

Don't Miss Your Chance to Vote for the New Director-Sponsor!

Andrea L. Ames

STC Region 8 Director-Sponsor (1998-2001)

Happy New Year, everyone! If you've not already received it, there's an STC membership renewal form in the mail with your name on it. The sooner you renew, the sooner you'll get your 2001 STC election ballot. You can't vote if you aren't a member, and the "polls" close in March, so don't be late with your renewal form.

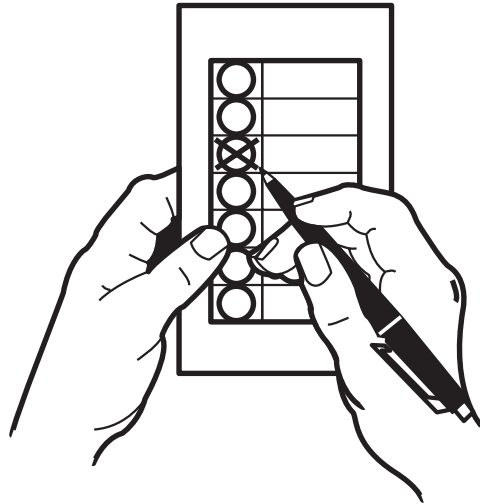
Here's how it works. By mid-March, all members who renewed their membership before February 28 will receive a ballot. All you have to do is read the ballot statements of all the candidates, and vote! You'll be voting for a new Second Vice President who will, according to STC bylaws, go on to become First Vice President, then President, and then Immediate Past President. You'll also vote for a new STC Treasurer—who will serve a two-year term—and two of the four members of the STC Nominating Committee.

The part of the 2001 election that affects each of us and our chapter most directly, however, is the election of a new Region 8 Director-Sponsor. As we learned in November during the US Presidential election, every vote DOES make a difference, and your new Director-Sponsor will be representing you for three years, so don't sit out this election! You have a difficult choice

to make, as we have two excellent candidates: Alison Reynolds, from the New Zealand chapter, and Bonni Graham, from the San Diego chapter.

Alison Reynolds (formerly Sanders)

Alison Reynolds has been a technical communication educator at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology in the South Island of New



No dimpled or hanging chads allowed.

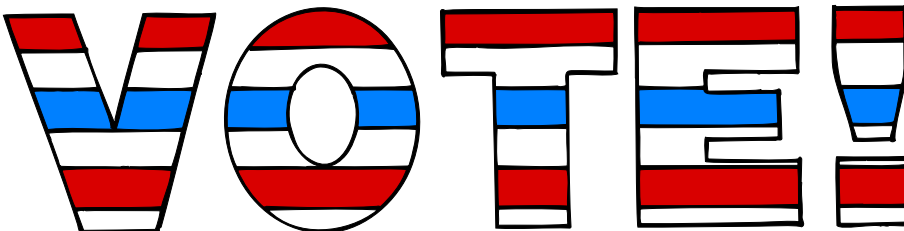
Zealand since 1995. Alison is a senior member of the New Zealand Chapter where she served as President and has been a competition judge for the last five years. She has presented papers at the Annual Conference in Anaheim in 1998 and the Region 8 conference in San Ramon in 1998, as well as attending the Annual conference in Seattle in 1996. Alison was fortunate enough to meet STC members and attend chapter meetings in the San Francisco area in

1998. Alison has developed the only online technical communication qualification in Australia: the Graduate Diploma of Technical Communication. This was a pioneering adventure five years ago when online education was just beginning. She is currently developing an online course in usability testing and a degree in Information Design.

Bonni Graham

Bonni Graham has spent 10 years as a practicing technical documenter. In 1994, she started Manual Labour, a technical documentation outsource provider. She has created manuals for clients like Sony, Kenwood USA, and Nissan North America (with Technical Standards). She is a Senior Member of the San Diego chapter, and in the past she started and managed the Southern California Unified Technical Publications, Art, and Online Competitions and managed a regional conference. Her most recent STC effort was serving as the Deputy Chair for Region 8 for the Pan-Pacific Conference. She is currently the Chair for the International Technical Publications Competition. In her copious free time, she performs improvisational comedy with the Creative Urges.

Read your ballot statement for more information about the outstanding qualifications of these candidates. Region 8 can look forward to excellent leadership and representation during the next three years, and I'm certain that the Society can look forward to significant future contributions from both of these candidates—no matter what the election results.



Netiquette

Annalise Beck, NorthBay Chapter

At a recent technical communications conference, I attended a session about Internet courtesies, commonly called *netiquette*. The

By keeping tighter control over who gets their e-mail address, people may cut down on SPAM and unsolicited e-mails.

presenter suggested that it is better to send a message to oneself and copies to coworkers or friends using the “BCC:” (blind carbon copy) field rather than to send “bang” e-mails to groups of people using the “To:” field. By following this rule, the lecturer argued, the addressee avoids receiving endless threads of forwarded messages before getting to the actual message, and the sender avoids disclosing his or her e-mail address to recipients.

The presenter noted that some people treat their e-mail address like an unlisted phone number. By keeping tighter control of who gets their e-mail address, such people hope to cut down on SPAM and unsolicited e-mails. One woman in the audience recounted having to change her e-mail several times one year and even getting a restraining order against someone who was stalking her. The bottom line is that your collection of e-mails addresses (personal and professional) is a commodity that someone else would

like to have—so be careful how you use it.

Another session at the conference touched on legal issues. In summation, the message was this: Never send an e-mail that you wouldn’t want to hear read aloud in court. Be careful with office gossip. Be careful with your friends—some may not want chain letters or off-color jokes. Know your audience.

In addition, two recruiters at the conference said they would not place or hire someone who addressed the same e-mail to both them and their competitor. In other words, only send an e-mail (or a letter) to one person or business at a time if you are looking for a job.



Undesirable results may occur if job applicants send the same e-mail to competing firms.

looks like I idiotically sent something to myself and the recipient got it by mistake). It’s something to think about.



Healthy Computing Tip: Armrests

Erik Peper, Ph.D and Katherine Hughes Gibney

Is your chair like an airplane seat, ergonomically designed for 95% of all bodies so that each individual is slightly uncomfortable? Although many office chairs have adjustable features, armrests often are too high and cause us to unknowingly raise our shoulders. Relax your shoulders by checking your armrests.

How to Check Your Armrests

Sit comfortably in your chair with your hands on your lap, your shoulders relaxed and your elbows against your trunk. Check your elbow height in relation to the arm rests. If your elbows are lower, you are forced to raise your

shoulders when using the armrests. When sitting in this position, we often continue to maintain shoulder tension.

If adjustable, lower the armrests so that you do not have to raise your shoulders to allow your arms to rest. A better solution is to remove the armrests completely (most can be unbolted from the bottom of the chair) and allow your arms to rest on your lap during micro-breaks.

Eliminating the armrests also offers more freedom for “flow typing” where your arms, shoulders and trunk can move instead of being rigid and constricted. (Note: To receive the Healthy Computing E-mail Tips, send an e-mail to healthco@sfsu.edu.)



News and Opportunities

Continued from page 1

Chapter Officer Nominations

The chapter is now officially over the 100 mark, at 110 members! Elections should be held soon for transition in the late spring. As the soon-to-be outgoing president, I am acting as nomination coordinator. Interest has been expressed in both the Membership and Webmaster positions. I am actively seeking volunteers to fill the office of Treasurer (Quicken is required for this duty), as well as Newsletter Layout (PageMaker is required). According to Carolyne Gibson, the treasurer role is the easiest and most fun. We'll also have openings for Vice President and Hospitality. Elections may be held as early as the March meeting in order to have time for transitioning to new officers.

STC Grant Application Update

A second STC Special Opportunities grant advisory meeting was held at Sonoma State University's Extended School of Education in January. Chapter members Kurt Huget, Mark Weddle, Carolyne Gibson, Annette Gooch, and John Dibs attended, along with Toby Wraye, our grant writer. Fitting everyone's busy schedules together took a good deal of perseverance, but we pulled it off. At the meeting we exchanged concerns and hopes about the potential grant research for developing a technical communication curriculum in the North Bay.

The big news is that with Toby's assistance, a grant application will have been submitted by the time this newsletter is published! Should the application pass the grant committee, the STC board will vote on it at their March meeting.

New Chapter ISP Update

Barbara Herbert will oversee the transition from our current STC-

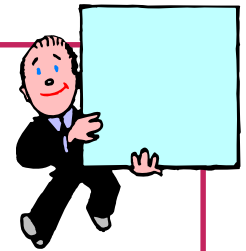
sponsored ISP to a local ISP. We have petitioned Sonic.net to host our chapter site as a non-profit organization. The national STC is requiring chapters to transition to their own ISP by April 1, 2001.

Teaching and Educational Opportunities

Instructors and guest instructors are needed for workshops on topics in technical communications. These workshops are a great opportunity for experienced communicators to share their knowledge and interests. For consideration, contact Carol Tremmel (carol.tremmel@sonoma.edu) at Sonoma State University's School of Extended Education or Annette Gooch (agooch@santarosa.edu) at Santa Rosa Junior College. You may also wish to speak with Mark Weddle or Eunice Malley who have taught workshops in the recent past.

Three Saturday workshops will be offered this spring at the School of Extended Education: Introduction To Technical Writing (March 17), Researching and Analyzing Technical Information (April 7), and Introduction to Indexing (April 28). For information, visit www.sonoma.edu/ExEd/Text/Spring/tc.html.

SRJC is offering three courses this spring: Technical Writing (English 84A), Intermediate Technical Writing (English 84B), and two sections of a Saturday workshop series on Technical Writing in the Workplace (English 348.1). Information about these courses can be found on the Santa Rosa Junior College Web site, santarosa.edu (click on the Academics: Schedule of Classes link, then navigate to the English department).



Technical Writer

Turin Networks in Petaluma is looking for an experience technical writer to join our team. You'll develop and write documentation for our broadband optical networking products. We ask that you have at least five years of experience and a college degree in a related subject.

This position requires strong writing skills, attention to detail, high energy, and a positive attitude. You'll work closely with engineering, marketing, and customer support to create high-quality installation, configuration, troubleshooting, and maintenance documentation for Turin Network's products.

Your ability to work with applications such as FrameMaker, HTML, drawing

programs, Webworks, Java, and to pick up new software applications as we proceed, is essential. This position has excellent growth potential in a cutting-edge telecommunications company. If you're tops in the field, we'd love to hear from you.

Check out www.TurinNetworks.com, and then paste your resume into an e-mail and send it to:

Candace Duff
(CDuff@TurinNetworks.com), and to either Tim Jenkins
(TJenkinsduff@TurinNetworks.com) or Megan Edwards
(MEdwards@TurinNetworks.com).

We meet on the third
Thursday of each month

Our March Meeting

**Thursday,
March 15, 2001**

Topic:

To Be Announced

Chapter Officer Elections?

Parker Compumotor
5500 Labath Drive
Rohnert Park
stc.org/region8/nbc/www/

