

# northbay news

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

Volume 8, Number 6, July/August 2001

## IN THIS ISSUE

- ✿ *Drilling the Well of Knowledge*
- ✿ *Networking in the "New New Economy"*
- ✿ *This Month's Meeting*
- ✿ *When I Grow Up, I Want to Write API Docs*
- ✿ *Writing for the Web*
- ✿ *Chapter and Newsletter News*

## Drilling the Well of Knowledge

*Kirsten Barquist, NorthBay Chapter*

During the summer of 1998, a colleague and I realized that we faced a problem common to many intellectual property development companies: the same basic material and information was being published as context-sensitive help, printed user guides, tutorials, Web-based training, classroom training workbooks, and marketing materials. As we developed our documentation set using the usual arsenal of authoring tools, the content was being trapped in these authoring tools and could not easily be moved between them. When something changed, we had to locate and update the appropriate content in all of these projects. We recognized that the fundamental problem was the entanglement of content and the authoring tool and tried to think of a method that would separate content from format.

What we finally came up with was a process in which the content would be stored as ASCII text in a database, with a record for each discrete information element to be published.

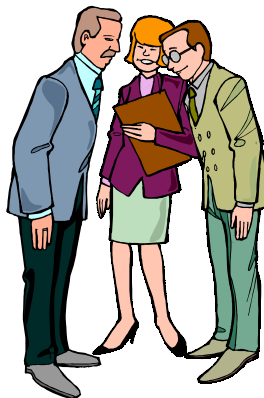
*Continues on page 6*



*If you dip into the well of knowledge, you never know what you'll pull up.*

## Networking in the "New New Economy"

*Elyse Lord, NorthBay Chapter*



*These days, it's a good idea to network wherever you are*

With the electronic equipment, industrial machinery, and fabricated metal products sectors continuing to lose jobs, and with the June unemployment rate in San Francisco climbing to five percent, a reputable Bay Area recruiter recently told his clients, "If you've been meaning to move out of the Bay Area, consider acting now."

Meanwhile, North Bay Business Journal columnist Jeffrey Gitomer has begun preaching strategies to succeed in what he calls the "New New Economy," the economy that will follow when the New Economy's "bubble finishes deflating." Gitomer advises professionals to "make strategic appearances at networking events to ensure business victory" and to set aside several hours each week to exchange ideas, advice, information, leads, and contacts with others.

*Continues on page 4*

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**submitting articles and ads**

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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, August 16, 2001**

### Resorting to Help

With the help of a turnkey presentation provided by eHelp, the producer of RoboHELP and RoboHTML, NorthBay STC officers Kurt Huget and Chris Muntzer will introduce eHelp's latest two products, RoboHelp Enterprise and RoboInfo Enterprise.

RoboHelp Enterprise monitors a help system, enabling reports to be generated that shed light on the effectiveness of the help system. The reports can answer such questions as these:

- \* Which help topics were accessed the most?
- \* How much traffic did the help system get?
- \* What could the help system not answer?

RoboInfo Enterprise creates and monitors company policies and procedures, enabling users to create and generate reports similar to those in RoboHelp Enterprise.

Chris plans to give a RoboHELP primer before launching into a discussion about RoboHelp Enterprise or RoboInfo Enterprise.

Please come to learn something new, share your enthusiasm, and mingle with friends and contacts who support the NorthBay STC chapter.

*For much of his career, Chris Muntzer has designed and installed computer based surveillance systems. As most of the installations were on offshore or remote oil field locations, he learned first hand the value of accurate information anytime, anywhere. Now happily on the other side of the fence, Chris is working at Agilent, as an embedded Help Learning Products Developer. He has a particular interest in Web-based training (WBT), XML and single sourcing.*

*Kurt Huget has been around the block too with a long stint at the former CCH (Commerce Clearing House, or Cellblock H for short) in San Rafael. His technical writing career has since taken him to North American Mortgage Company and most recently to Multimedia Live in Petaluma. In his free time he shares his talents as a guitarist and vocalist in the country jazz group Moonlight Rodeo.*

### Meeting Schedule

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

## When I Grow Up, I Want to Write API Docs

*Krista Fechner, NorthBay Chapter*

At our July meeting, Jim Bisso, vice president of Bitzone LLC, discussed application program (ming) interface (API) documentation with the NorthBay Chapter. Jim has worked as a staff and contract technical writer since 1988, specializing in API documentation and training at companies such as Oracle, Inprise, and Taligent.

Jim started off by explaining what an API is: the interface between two software components that communicate with each other. The components can include programs, subsystems, or data structures. The API is a set of named operations exposed by a server and made available to clients. In most cases, the server component is a class library (written by your company) and the client component is an application (written by your audience). The API facilitates transfer

an API is: the interface between two revealed to the outside world, and it determines how a client requests the server's functionality. Your API documentation is what enables your audience to produce the application that communicates with your company's software and takes advantage of your company's class library.

Jim told us that APIs are commonly used to allow developers to create plug-ins, small applications that work in



*"When I grow up, I want to write API docs."*

*"When I grow up, I want to be an ice cream girl."*

conjunction with larger pieces of software. Tech writers with graphics experience may be familiar with Adobe Photoshop's filters, software plug-ins that provide a wide range of special effects. Adobe provides some filters, but many others are created by third parties. By providing an API to Photoshop, Adobe "productizes" the functionality of the application, allowing third parties to expand the feature set of the program. This helps to widen Photoshop's user base and allows Adobe to focus on primary development.

### What's Different about API Docs?

The API is defined at the source-code level. In this way, it differs from a graphical user interface (GUI), which is more familiar to most tech writers. With a GUI, the user accesses a program's functions by using hardware, such as keyboard or mouse, to interact with visible

components displayed onscreen. In contrast, an API allows a programmer to access functionality programatically by calling a method. Think of methods (or functions) as the verbs that encompass the operations that the software can perform. Your document must clearly explain what each method does, what sort of data can be passed in (whether numeric or text), and what type of data is returned.

The two main kinds of API documents are reference guides, which describe the libraries contained in the API, and programmer's guides, which explain how to program an application that communicates with the API. Of the two, reference guides tend to be more straightforward and easier to write. They

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*APIs are commonly used to allow developers to create plug-ins.*

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give a complete listing of the functions or methods in class libraries and are comparable to a dictionary or index. Programmer's guides are process-oriented, providing a high-level overview that shows how the pieces fit together. They often include tutorials and practical examples, and they are more conceptual or encyclopedic. This type of document is more challenging to write because you are trying to teach your reader how to write code in a certain way.

### Who Can Write API Docs?

Jim defined the ideal API technical writer as a programmer who wants to become a writer, and said he had met only two such people in 13 years.

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*An API is the interface between two software components that communicate with each other.*

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of information back and forth using a protocol or common language. It is often the only part of the company's code that is

## Networking in the “New New Economy” *Continued from page 1*

Many STC members routinely take advantage of their local STC chapter's meetings to network. However, as cost-cutting measures and skills resource transitioning have made layoffs a daily occurrence, a growing number of STC members have begun to attend multiple STC chapter meetings. Table 1 shows STC networking opportunities in the Bay Area.

According to Les Aaronson, an employment and training counselor with Sonoma County's Job Link center, networking is becoming an essential activity for the employed and unemployed alike. Aaronson explains that “because employers can no longer provide job security, . . . employability requires that individuals continually learn new skills and maintain visibility by associating with professionals outside of their organizations.”

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*Networking is  
becoming an  
essential activity  
for the employed  
and unemployed  
alike.*

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A number of professional organizations sponsor relevant seminars and meetings that lend themselves to networking outside of the STC. For example, Bay CHI, a special interest group on computer-human interaction, meets monthly to discuss usability-related topics. And the North Bay

Table 1 Bay Area Networking Opportunities for STC Members

STC Chapter and URL	Meeting Day and Time	Meeting Location
NorthBay www.stc-northbay.org	Third Thursday of the month (no meeting in December) 5:30-8:30 P.M.	In August: Parker Compumotor 5500 Labath Dr. Rohnert Park September: Golden Gate University 150 Professional Center Drive, Ste. E, Rohnert Park
San Francisco www.stc-sf.org	Third Wednesday of each month. Networking starts at 6 P.M. (Reservation is required.)	London Wine Bar 415 Sansome St. San Francisco
East Bay www.ebstc.org	Next meeting: Thurs., Sept. 13, 5:30-8:30 P.M. (Reservation is required.)	Tony Roma's 200 Sycamore Valley Rd. W. Danville
Silicon Valley www.stc-siliconvalley.org	Fourth Thursday of most months, approximately 6-9 P.M. (Reservation is recommended.)	Four Points Sheraton Ballroom 1250 Lakeside Dr. Sunnyvale
Sacramento www.stcsacramento.org	Next meeting: Wed., Sept. 5, details TBA	Hilton Sacramento Arden West 2200 Harvard St. Sacramento

Multimedia Association meets periodically to explore new media.

A branch of the Bay Area Editors' Forum meets periodically in Cotati, and the American Society for Training & Development and the Software Developers Forum also host professional gatherings. See Table 2 for more detailed information about these organizations' programs.

Active job seekers looking to expand their networks may attend Sonoma County Job Link- and Headhunter.net-sponsored events. For information about Job Link's tech talk networking meeting, call 565-5550. For information about the next Headhunter.net “layoff lounge” event, see [www.layofflounge.com/sforsvp.asp](http://www.layofflounge.com/sforsvp.asp).

Although networking is generally most effective face-to-face, the Internet can expand a job seeker's network. And jobs databases available online contain much more than job leads. They provide clues about companies' cultures, names of hiring managers, and names of

staffing agencies that recruit for companies.

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*Online jobs  
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They also provide job descriptions for technical writers, technical communicators, information architects, instructional designers, content developers, information mappers, and the like—in multiple industries. These job descriptions can be invaluable, particularly if job seekers wish to switch industries and need to persuade hiring managers that they possess “parallel” skills to those being advertised. For a list of jobs databases useful to technical communicators, see Table 3.

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Table 2 Networking Opportunities at Non-STC Meetings

Organization Name and URL	Meeting Day and Time	Meeting Location
American Society for Training & Development-North Bay www.astdnorthbay.org	Next meeting: Wed., Sept. 19 5:30-8 P.M.	Volunteer Center of Sonoma County Classroom A 153 Stony Cir., Ste. 100 Santa Rosa
American Society for Training & Development-San Francisco www.astdgoldengate.org	Check events calendar.	Check events calendar.
Bay Area Editors' Forum www.editorsforum.org	Next meeting: Tues., Sept. 18, from approximately 6:30-9 P.M.	Borders Union Square, 3rd floor Post and Powell Sts. San Francisco
Bay Area Editors' Forum-North Bay	Varies. For details, contact Paul Engstrom at sebastopo2501@earthlink.net.	North Lights Books & Cafe 550 E. Cotati Ave. Cotati
Bay CHI www.baychi.org	Second Tuesday of the month from approximately 7:30-9:30 P.M.	Xerox PARC Auditorium 3333 Coyote Hill Rd. Palo Alto
Bay CHI-North Bay www.baychi.org/bof/north	Fourth Tuesday of alternate months from approximately 6:30- 8:30 P.M.	Check events calendar.
National Writers Union www.andreas.com/nwuwww.union- writers.org/bite.htm	Third Wednesday of the month 7:30-9 P.M.	Check events calendar. Meetings are held in San Francisco and Palo Alto in alternate months.
North Bay Multimedia Association www.nbma.com	Check events calendar.	Check events calendar.
Software Developers' Forum www.sdforum.org	Check events calendar.	Check events calendar.

Wayne Hodgins of Learnativity Alliance likens developing a professional network to building a phone network: the greater the number of users, the more powerful the network. Hodgins points out that Metcalfe's Law (the usefulness of a network equals the square of the number of network users) is "as true for networks and groups of people as it was for nodes on the Web: the power of a network increases exponentially with each additional node."

Job-seeking technical writers who don't have the time or inclination to develop professional networks might consider hiring a recruiter or a

headhunter. According to Ryan Sarti of the Volt Services Group in Walnut Creek, "By knowing a good recruiter you can in effect make contact with multiple hiring managers. . . . Even better, the recruiter already knows where you will be both a skill and cultural fit."

Before deciding to work with a headhunter or recruiter, job seekers should make sure the recruiter really has the required contacts and that budget-conscious potential employers won't select a similarly skilled candidate who didn't arrive with a recruiter's fee.



Table 3 Jobs Databases Useful to Technical Communicators

URL
<a href="http://www.ajb.dni.us">www.ajb.dni.us</a>
<a href="http://www.baychi.org/general/jobbank.html">www.baychi.org/general/jobbank.html</a>
<a href="http://www.brassring.com">www.brassring.com</a>
<a href="http://www.caljobs.ca.gov">www.caljobs.ca.gov</a>
<a href="http://www.craigslist.org">www.craigslist.org</a>
<a href="http://www.dice.com">www.dice.com</a>
<a href="http://www.FlipDog.com">www.FlipDog.com</a>
<a href="http://www.headhunter.net">www.headhunter.net</a>
<a href="http://www.hotjobs.com">www.hotjobs.com</a>
<a href="http://www1.joboptions.com/jo_bricsnet/index.jsp">www1.joboptions.com/jo_bricsnet/index.jsp</a>
<a href="http://www.jobstar.org">www.jobstar.org</a>
<a href="http://www.jobvertise.com">www.jobvertise.com</a>
<a href="http://www.makeitfun.com">www.makeitfun.com</a>
<a href="http://www.MedZilla.com">www.MedZilla.com</a>
<a href="http://www.monster.com">www.monster.com</a>
<a href="http://www.net-temps.com">www.net-temps.com</a>
<a href="http://www.northbaycareers.com">www.northbaycareers.com</a>
<a href="http://www.operationIT.com">www.operationIT.com</a>
<a href="http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/employment">www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/employment</a>
<a href="http://www.stc.org/jobdatabase.htm">www.stc.org/jobdatabase.htm</a>
<a href="http://www.stcsacramento.org/ejobs.htm">www.stcsacramento.org/ejobs.htm</a>
<a href="http://www.stc-siliconvalley.org/employment/postings.htm">www.stc-siliconvalley.org/employment/postings.htm</a>
<a href="http://www.synergistech.com">www.synergistech.com</a>
<a href="http://www.tech-search.com">www.tech-search.com</a>
<a href="http://www.vault.com">www.vault.com</a>
<a href="http://www.wantedjobs.com">www.wantedjobs.com</a>

## Drilling the Well of Knowledge

*Continued from page 1*

Format instructions would be separated from the content (text) and kept as part of the record. To create a publication, the author would select the appropriate records and export them as a text file, a process much like generating a report from any database. The author would then import the text file into the authoring tool; the authoring tool would interpret the formatting instructions to produce the published document. To update the content, an authorized person would modify the corresponding records in the content database. Other authors would then recreate the text file and update the publication(s) in the appropriate authoring tools. Unfortunately, we could not implement this grand scheme due to the usual shortages of time, money, and expertise.

Nearly three years later, I realized that what we had come up with is now known as *intelligent content management*. These days, the primary tools for implementing such a method are Standard General Markup Language (SGML) and Extensible Markup Language (XML). My first reaction on hearing the term was "isn't that what we should have been doing all along?" Yes, we should be managing our content and information resources intelligently, but intelligent content management is more than just a savvy filing system.

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*Intelligent content management is more than just a savvy filing system.*

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Intelligent content management supports true single sourcing. It should not

be confused with the publication of the same document in several formats from the same authoring tool, such as creating help and a printed document from RoboHelp or Doc-to-Help. With RoboHelp,



*Looks like he could use a more intelligent filing system...*

Doc-to-Help, and the like, content is trapped in the authoring tool and can be published only through that tool. To use a portion of the same content in another publication or document, the author must copy it into another project and probably into another authoring tool. The result is duplication of content among different projects in different tools. To maintain this content, the author must locate and revise all of the projects or source documents affected by the change.

The fundamental theme in intelligent content management is separating content (information) from format (authoring tool) and keeping the content in one organized, secured location such as a database or version control system. Intelligent content management supports selective repurposing and publication in whatever format or media is needed. In the bigger picture, it can be set up to house and publish *all* of a company's knowledge resources: user documentation, operations

procedures, performance support materials, engineering specifications, marketing materials, and so on. A consolidated content database allows all departments and groups within the company to draw from the same metaphorical well of knowledge, reducing redundancy and the distribution of outdated or conflicting information. It helps promote knowledge as an enterprisewide resource, recognized as a valuable asset and managed accordingly.

So is investing in an SGML or XML system a prerequisite to following the intelligent content management paradigm? Not necessarily. Converting existing content to SGML and publishing with an SGML system requires a significant investment; only large companies have been able to do this successfully. XML is young yet, but good tools are available; it may be a viable option for smaller companies, especially those that do not have a large body of legacy content to convert. You can take steps to implement the essence of intelligent content management, separating content from format and building an enterprisewide knowledge base, without shelling out for an SGML or XML setup. These suggestions apply to most information resource migration or transformation processes.

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*A consolidated content database...helps promote knowledge as an enterprisewide resource.*

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## Writing for the Web

*Kurt Huget, President*

Caroline Drakely and Anne Marie Smith from InfoPros made the trek from Sacramento to speak at our June meeting about writing for the Web. In the process, they demonstrated that writing Web-based content is an entirely different procedure than writing for paper-based publications. With examples and anecdotes, they illustrated what they called “the good, the bad, and the unusable.”

### Paper vs. Online

A critical factor drives the difference of how we process information from a screen as opposed to paper. Studies have shown that the mind processes online information (text and graphics) 25 percent slower than information on paper, due to the nature of how we visually process direct light versus reflected light. Consequently, the relatively dense amount of text on a page proves to be frustrating to the reader if presented in a comparable format online.

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*Online readers are impatient, and they are critical of content.*

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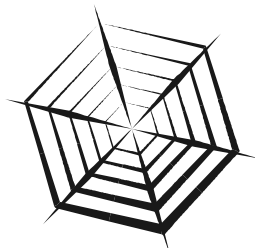
Online readers are impatient, and they are critical of content. They scan data rather than read it, and they like to be able to jump into screen content at any point. Equally important is the fact that people don't like scroll down (or up or across) any more than necessary. Therefore, screen content should be immediately available and readily apparent.

### Planning

One strategy that remains the same for creating effective online and print content is thorough planning, with consideration to the following points:

- Identify your audience.
- Identify the purpose.
- Select a structure.

In print on paper, a hierarchical structure works best for conveying information. It allows readers to quickly find the information that they need. Such



*We can learn a lot from true Web masters.*

a structure allows a modular approach to creating and presenting information. Accordingly, as a writer, you should provide multiple access points to the information (for example, functional, alphabetical, chronological, visual, and so on). In doing so, always apply this rule: Limit page navigation to three levels deep so that users should never have to navigate or link through more than three pages from the home page in order to get to the information they need.

A valuable tool for developing site content is a flowchart. It lays out the overall structure of the site, giving you an overview of page-navigation aspects. This will help you in enforcing the three-level rule.

### Modularize Your Online Content

Creating modular content makes it easier for you to organize the page and easier for your readers to process the information. Design the content so that each topic or page can stand independently

from the others, but provide links to related topics and pages.

Break up your content into chunks of information. This not only makes it easier for readers to process the information but also facilitates the page design. In chunking information, follow this rule: Limit a group of items to seven, plus or minus two. This rule also applies to bulleted lists, which are an excellent vehicle for presenting chunked information.

### Write for Scannability

Help your readers process your online content by keeping it simple. Keep paragraphs and sentences short. Write paragraphs of no more than three sentences, and limit blocks of text to fewer than 75 words. Avoid using italics, blinking text, semicolons, and colons. And definitely avoid using all uppercase text.

### Page Layout and Graphics

Keep simplicity and clarity in mind as you create graphics and design page layout. Graphics that are effective and consistent add value to a Web page. Graphics that are distracting and confusing will scare away your readers.

Design your page layout to most effectively present your online content. Position the page elements consistently, and don't use the full width of the screen for displaying text. Computer users are TV-oriented, so they look first at the center of the screen, then to the left, and finally to the right. Take advantage of this when creating your page layout.

### Further Information

I recommend visiting the InfoPros Web site: [www.infopros.com](http://www.infopros.com). There, you'll find more information on this subject, as well as a library of articles and past presentations that will surely be of interest to you.



## Drilling the Well of Knowledge

Continued from page 6

### Assess the organization's environment

Are you the only person in your organization thinking along these lines? If so, you have something akin to the task of Sisyphus ahead of you. Are there political and territorial battles in your organization that would sabotage efforts to consolidate knowledge and treat it as an enterprisewide resource? If this is the case, perhaps it is time to start looking for a better situation.

### Develop structure and modularity

Is your organization practicing structured authoring techniques? Do you have well-defined document structure, format, and authoring procedures in place? Can your existing content be separated into discrete elements? These discrete elements will be the records in your content database. If your content is poorly organized or not consistently structured, you have a lot of work to do before attempting to store it in a database-type structure. Seminars in Usable Design ([www.usabledesign.com](http://www.usabledesign.com)) offers two courses, "Developing a Single-Source Strategy for XML Authoring, Content Management, and Dynamic Web Delivery" and "Structured Writing for Single Sourcing" that could help you implement these procedures even if your organization is not planning on moving into an XML authoring environment. The seminar descriptions alone are a good read.

### Store your discrete content elements in a database or version control system

The purist approach here is to store the elements as ASCII text with format metadata separated from the content, but that is not practical if you are manually applying format and structure in an authoring tool. Version control systems such as Microsoft's Visual Source Safe are relatively inexpensive and reasonably easy to implement and support. (If you are not already using a version control system or

similar type of file management tool to store your publications source files, get one set up as soon as possible!) Store the discrete elements in the database or version control system using the plainest possible file format that is compatible with your authoring tools. To create a publication, populate a working directory with the appropriate elements. Use your authoring tool to crochet the publication together with referential links.

### Do not skimp on the analysis

This is the most important part of any design or remodeling project. Errors that slip through the analysis and design phase are considerably more costly to correct during implementation. The chances of your organization having the appropriate expertise in-house to do a good analysis and design are small. Hire an expert or send a staff member to a training course. Better yet, hire an expert *and* send a staff member to a training course.

### Resources

Hauslinger, Sarah Lee. "What the Hell Is XML?" Presentation at NorthBay STC meeting, Rohnert Park, Calif., June 1999. (See the July 1999 issue of *northbay news* for details.)

Ray, Erik T., *Learning XML*. Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly & Associates, 2001.

### ArchiTAG International Corporation:

[www.architag.com](http://www.architag.com)

### Seminars in Usable Design:

[www.usabledesign.com](http://www.usabledesign.com)

**XMLU.com:** [www.architag.com/xmlu/](http://www.architag.com/xmlu/)

Thanks to North Bay STC members Elyse Lord, Chris Muntzer, and Ken Delpit for their contributions and support.



## When I Grow Up, I Want to Write API Docs

Continued from page 3

Does this mean that an API writer has to be able to program? Not necessarily. Writing code is not a prerequisite for the job, nor does a writer have to read and understand every detail of the code. More important is the ability to work with highly abstract programming concepts. For example, a good API writer should be able to look at an existing reference guide and see that a class isn't being documented.

The audience for API docs may include project managers and quality assurance staff, but the main target is software developers, an audience that is more impressed by accuracy and completeness than by presentation. Compared with the tone of manuals for end users, the tone of API documentation can be highly technical. However, being able to explain complex topics in plain language is critical, as is knowledge of basic tech writing concepts such as chunking and information flow. API writers should have three to five years of experience in technical writing and need to understand the politics of working within an application development environment. Without a GUI, developers feel less pressure to freeze the API against further changes, so the code can (and often does) change right up to release time. API writers need to stay in the loop by building strong lines of communication with the developers.

### Why Should I Make the Change?

For writers who take the plunge into the world of writing documentation for programmers, the rewards can be significant. Experienced API writers can earn nearly as much as programmers; there are not enough qualified writers to fill the available API documentation jobs. Because the documents are so crucial to the software's success (an API shipped without

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documentation turns a CD-ROM into an expensive coaster!), API writers tend to get a lot of validation and appreciation of their work, and subject matter experts are often assigned to assist in preparing the docs.

Chapter members were eager to know what they could do to enter this lucrative discipline. Jim recommended taking a class in programming, with a focus on object-oriented design and Java. He acknowledged that there is some debate

over whether a prospective API writer should learn C++ or Java first; learning one makes learning the other easier. In his opinion, Java is easier to learn, so it makes more sense to learn that one first.

### Resources

*Designing Object-Oriented Software*, by Rebecca Wirfs-Brock (Prentice Hall PTR, June 1990).

Richard Friedman will offer a course,

“What Is Programming? A Course for Technical Communicators,” in October through UC Berkeley Extension, [www.unex.berkeley.edu/](http://www.unex.berkeley.edu/).

Jim and his Bitzone partner, Vicki Maki, are offering a class, “Documenting Java APIs” in San Francisco on Saturday, October 13, 20, and 27, from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. For more information, see [www.bitzone.com/training.html](http://www.bitzone.com/training.html) or contact Jim at [bisso@bitzone.com](mailto:bisso@bitzone.com).

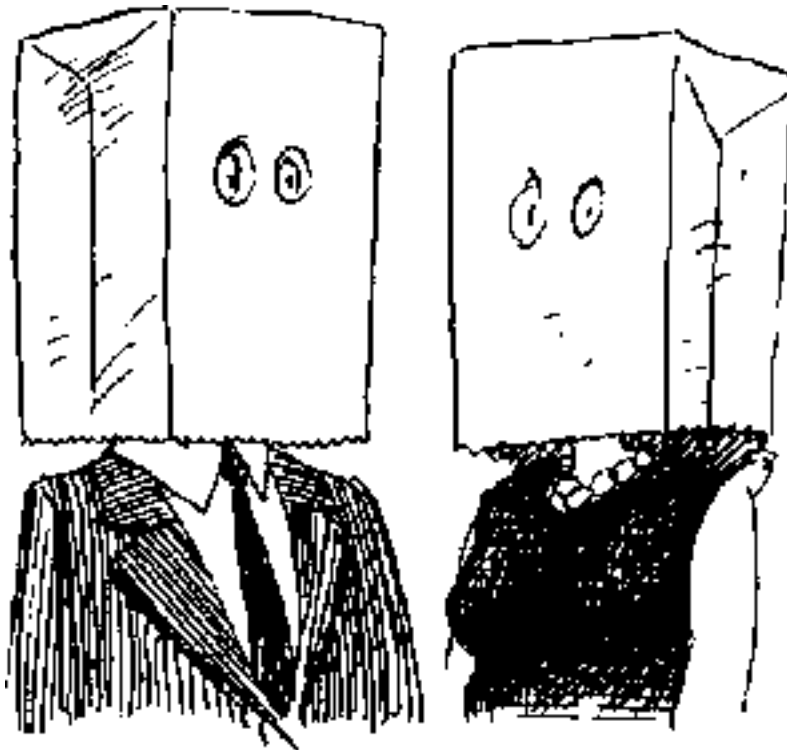


## Chapter and Newsletter News

*John Dibs, Editor*

In NorthBay chapter news, Kurt Huget is working on securing a new meeting location for our monthly chapter meetings after August. According to a poll taken at the July meeting, roughly equal numbers of attendees wanted a Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, and Petaluma location. Thursdays still seem the best day of the week to meet. At press time our September meeting location will be the Golden Gate University, Rohnert Park campus. The address and meeting location are shown on the last page of the newsletter.

Volunteers are needed for the 2001 Touchstone competition. Visit [www.stc-touchstone.com/2001](http://www.stc-touchstone.com/2001) or send an e-mail to Kurt Huget if you are interested in taking part in this worthwhile effort. In addition, a call for proposals has been issued by the STC Region 8 organizing committee. If you wish to propose a session on a topic of interest to fellow technical communicators for the annual Region 8 conference, or to find out more about the



*The identity of our next newsletter editor remains a mystery.*

conference being held November 1-3 in Irvine, Calif., visit [www.stcregion8conference.org](http://www.stcregion8conference.org).

In *northbay news*, several writers have submitted feature articles (Kirsten Barquist and Elyse Lord for this issue), and volunteers continue to do writeups of the monthly meeting topics. Beginning with this issue, I have the able assistance of

Genevieve Duboscq, an experienced copyeditor who has volunteered her services. Mary Flynn lays out the newsletter in PageMaker and generates the PDF version for online posting. Chapter Webmaster Trudie Folsom posts it on our chapter Web site. Who could ask for more?

Even with this help, I eventually have to retire from this duty due to a new daily commute to Berkeley. The newsletter is a nagging duty for any person to assume, but it has its rewards as well. The next editor would need to commit to at least a full year. Writing an article now and again can be required, but it's also possible to

reprint articles of interest from other STC publication sources. In the meantime I have gone from monthly to bimonthly issues. The September-October issue is scheduled to be published in the beginning of October. Inquiries about submitting articles and about the volunteer editor position can be directed to me.



We meet on the third  
Thursday of each month

**Our August Meeting**

**Thursday,  
August 16, 2001**

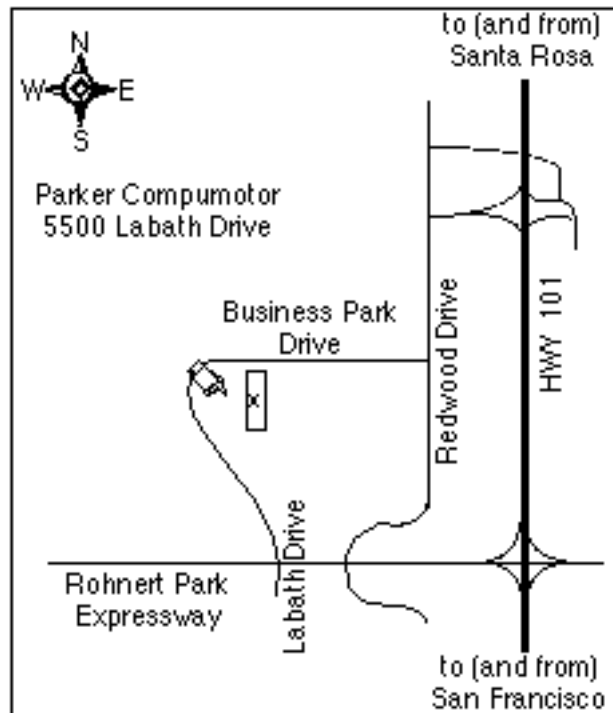
**Topic:**

**Resorting to Help**

**Presenters: Kurt Huget and  
Chris Muntzer**

Parker Compumotor  
5500 Labath Drive  
Rohnert Park

<http://www.stc-northbay.org/>



September 20, 2001

Our Meeting Place

Will be:

**Topic:**

**To Be Announced**

Golden Gate University  
150 Professional Center Drive, Ste. E  
Rohnert Park

