



# The Wave

## Palm Beaches Chapter Region 3



October 2002

Vol. 14 No. 8



### October Meeting

#### Date, Time, & Place

Wednesday, October 9, 2002  
6:30–8:30 p.m.

Il Villaggio on South Beach  
Condominium, Community Room  
1455 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach

The meeting is free. Optional hospitality cost is \$3 for members and \$5 for nonmembers.

#### Agenda

- 6:30–7 networking
- 7–8:30 meeting and presentation
- Presenter: Carrie Unger
- Topic: *Technical Communicators: Be your own boss! Work @ Home!*
  - Requirements
  - Advantages
  - Disadvantages
  - Useful links

Learn how to start and manage a technical communication and documentation corporation. In this economic market, if you can't get hired permanently, you may be hired for a project! Being incorporated provides professional credibility, tax advantages, and limited liability.

Carrie Unger has 10 years experience as a writer and an editor, and 5 years experience in the networking industry. She started her own consulting corporation in 2000. Carrie has done work for local and national clients. She is an accomplished technical writer and editor.

#### Directions

- Take I-95 and then exit I-395 East (Dolphin Expressway)
- Stay on I-395 as it becomes the McArthur Causeway, then 5th Street in Miami Beach
- Stay in the middle lane of 5th Street for several blocks.
- Left at either Collins Ave (A1A) or Ocean Drive (scenic route)
- Right at 15th Street
- Il Villaggio is an orange and yellow 17-story high rise. Pause at the "Guest/Valet Parking" entrance, located at the end of the 15th Street cul-de-sac on the right-hand side. There is an orange guard house with "Il Villaggio" on the facade.
- Tell the guard you are attending the "STC meeting" and proceed up the ramp.
- Leave your car with the valet (FREE) and walk across the plaza to the community room.

Northbound: Do NOT use I-195 (Airport Expressway) to Miami Beach, as this puts you into the major reconstruction of Collins Avenue north of 17th Street!

For those arriving on foot, use the pedestrian entrance to the condo located at 1455 Ocean Drive. At the gate, use the intercom and tell the reception desk you are attending the "STC meeting." Proceed through the gate and use the elevator to go to level 2. The community room is across the plaza to your right. ☞



### STC Salary Survey Moves Online

Every year, STC surveys a random sample of its membership that work as technical editors and writers in the U.S. and Canada. The survey gathers information regarding this population's salaries and benefits. In the past, this survey has been mailed as an insert to the September/October issue of *Intercom*. This year the survey will be available exclusively from the STC Web site ([www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)) and will be posted by October 1. ☞

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## New Members Save Money

As part of its annual fall membership drive, STC offers a special discount to new members who join the Society on or after October 1, 2002. For the regular member rate of \$140 (\$125 for dues plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee), new members will be credited with dues paid for the remainder of 2002 and for calendar year 2003. That's fifteen months of membership for the price of twelve.

Among the benefits of membership are subscriptions to *Intercom*, the Society's monthly magazine, and to *Technical Communication*, the Society's quarterly journal. These periodicals contain articles on the theory and practice of technical communication. Other membership benefits include discounts on STC's annual conference, the largest gathering of technical communicators in the world; eligibility for group rate insurance; and access to STC's special interest groups. For more information on benefits, visit the STC Web site at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org).

Please pass this article and newsletter to a prospective member. To join STC, prospective members can

fill out an electronic form or download an application at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org). Membership applications can also be requested from the STC office:

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



## Related Organization Spotlight:

### Project Management Institute

by *Barrie Waters*

As technical communicators, we manage our projects from start to finish. Since its founding in 1969, Project Management Institute (PMI®) has grown to be the organization of choice for project management professionalism.

With almost 95,000 members worldwide, PMI® is the leading nonprofit professional association in the area of Project Management. PMI establishes

*...continued on next page*

## The Wave

This newsletter is produced by the Palm Beaches Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a non-profit organization. The newsletter is published the last week of each month, except for July and August, during which one Summer issue is published.

### Society for Technical Communication

Our Mission...*Designing the future of technical communication*. STC is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. Contact the STC at 901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203  
703.522.4114 (voice) [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)  
703.522.2075 (fax) [stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org)

**Reprints & Submissions:** Material may be reprinted if the Palm Beaches Chapter is given credit and the newsletter editor receives a copy of the publication containing the reprint. We encourage letters and articles for publication. Material should be submitted to the editor in electronic format by the deadline (third Friday of the month). Material submitted for publication may be edited for length, clarity, or appropriateness.

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### Chapter Information:

#### Elected Officers

President—Rachel Alexander  
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#### Volunteer Staff

Employment Mgr—*Phil Edkins*  
Newsletter Editor—*Elaine Malfas*  
Webmaster—*Jo Anne Byrne*  
Membership Mgr—*Warren Muench*  
Public Relations Mgr and Program Committee Chair—*Barrie Waters*

## 2002–2003 Program Year Schedule

*Mark your calendars now for the upcoming program year!*

- Nov. 13 Chapter Meeting at Ultimate Software, Weston
- Dec. 11 Holiday Social
- Jan. 8 Chapter Meeting at NCCI, Boca Raton
- Feb. 12 Chapter Meeting at Ultimate Software, Weston
- Mar. 12 Chapter Meeting (location TBD)
- Apr. 9 Chapter Meeting at NCCI, Boca Raton
- May (no meeting, please join us at the 50th Annual STC International Conference, Dallas!)
- June 11 Chapter Awards Dinner

*Related Org. Spotlight...continued*

Project Management standards, provides seminars, educational programs and professional certification that organizations desire for their project leaders. Visit [www.pmi.org/](http://www.pmi.org/) and [www.southfloridapmi.org](http://www.southfloridapmi.org) for more information. 



## September Meeting Minutes

*by Elisabeth Reynolds, chapter Secretary*

The Palm Beaches Chapter held its first STC meeting of the 2002–2003 program year September 18, in the brand new meeting facility of NCCI Holding Inc., in Boca Raton.

Barrie Waters was our site host. She arranged the catering, by Sodexo. Madalyn Ostrofsky provided cookies and drinking cups. Jill Goermar provided the drinks and acted as greeter. Barrie, Mike Rosenblum, and Paul Levert shared the job of photographing the meeting.

The meeting began with a half-hour of networking from 6:30 to 7 p.m., follow by a warm welcome to the more than 30 attendees by new chapter president Rachel Alexander.

Rachel then introduced herself and the rest of the chapter officers: vice president Mike Rosenblum, treasurer Warren Muench, secretary Elisabeth Reynolds, as well as immediate past president Barrie Waters and new employment information manager Phil Edkins. She then introduced webmaster Jo Anne Byrne and *Wave* editor Elaine Malfas, who were not in attendance.

Rachel made several announcements regarding the Florida Technical Communication Competition and encouraged everyone interested to participate:

*...continued on next page*



*September Meeting Presenters (from left): GaryKaufman, RyanMcMahon and our chapter vice president Mike Rosenblum*



*2002–2003 Elected Officers (from left): Elisabeth Reynolds (secretary), Rachel Alexander (president), Mike Rosenblum (vice president), Warren Muench (treasurer), and immediate past president Barrie Waters*

All photos on this page: Mike Rosenblum's camera

### Meeting Minutes...continued

- The call for entries to the Suncoast Chapter FTCC closed September 18, 2002
- The call for judges for the Suncoast Chapter FTCC continues until September 30, 2002
- The call for entries for the Atlanta Chapter FTCC is open until October 4, 2002
- Our March 2003 meeting will feature winning FTCC entries and a panel discussion by entrants and judges

Rachel also called for a volunteer to act as host and greeter for Deborah E. Berg's workshop on Web design on November 9, 2002.

She then introduced our two speakers, Gary Kaufman of DAS Enterprises and Ryan McMahon of Impact Technical Resources, and special guest Sue Glannan of Signature Consultants. Both our speakers and special guest are experienced at placing technical communicators in jobs in the South Florida area.

The topics Gary and Ryan's presentations were timely: *Survival Skill in a Competitive Market* and *Landing a Job in a Difficult Economy*.

Gary's presentation focused on skills that get people into the job interview and included resume preparation,

targeting companies, searching for jobs on the internet, and working with agencies.

Ryan's presentation concentrated on interview skills, and also included information on resume preparation, networking, and searching traditional and electronic sources.



*Phil Edkins, our chapter Employment Information Manager, at the September Meeting*

Both speakers helpfully provided hardcopies of their presentation's PowerPoint slides.

After the presentations, Gary, Ryan, and Sue answered attendees job search questions.

The meeting ending with door prizes. Thanks to the generosity of guest Sue Gallan, every person present went home with a prize, including Signature Consultants t-shirts, coffee cups, and mouse pads.

Looking ahead to the October 9 chapter meeting, site host David Swim reminded us that the meeting will be held at Il Villago condominiums on Ocean Drive in Miami and will include free parking for all attendees. ↪

## My Experience with Earning a Technical Writing Certificate Online

*by Carol Capper [see the Member Glimpse, page 7]*

I recently joined the online crowd and discovered that education on the Internet is big business. Colleges, entrepreneurial education firms, and big businesses like *Barnes and Noble* offer classes in various fields. Tuition ranges from free to thousands of dollars, and education levels range from one class to a full university degree. Confronted with this information overflow, I narrowed my search, first to "technical writing education" and then to simply "technical writing."

I began my cyber education journey by determining the level of education I wanted, the length of time I could devote to online education, and how much I could afford to spend. After identifying these basic parameters, ...continued on next page



*Door Prize time at the September Meeting*

All photos on this page: Mike Rosenblum

### *My Experience...continued*

my search was greatly narrowed. I chose a group of courses entitled “Technical Writing Certification Series” offered by *The JER Group*. This company met my self-determined standards. The \$1200 price was modestly inexpensive yet costly enough to give me the impression that I was undertaking something consequential. The three courses (Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Technical Writing) were each scheduled to take 6 weeks. Upon successful completion, the desired Certificate of Technical Writing would be issued from Ohio University. I was impressed when I learned that the Intermediate and Advanced instructors were university professors with PhDs (the beginning course would be taught by a graduate student—*scoff!* *This one will be a snap*, I thought.) I also read that one of my professors was the published author of a technical communications book. Sold! I paid immediately, anxious to begin.

I received an e-mail from my graduate student at the beginning course. The textbook was *Technical Communication* by John Lannon. We reviewed basic grammar, memo reports, and acceptable e-mail practices. The most important week in this course focused on elements of writing style and how to rid your writing of common bad habits. I found this review bracing, especially when my instructor found instances of passive voice, empty sentence openers, excessive nominalization, and prepositional phrases in my writing! This instructor got my full attention. One assignment I found useful was writing a sexual harassment policy for all the employees of a fictional company. I gained a whole new appreciation of avoiding sexist language. I awarded this class a C+, and the textbook an A.

The intermediate course introduced technical writing as an art. I learned the basics of technical writing such

## Our Web Site

**[www.stc-pbc.org](http://www.stc-pbc.org)**

Visit our chapter Web site for meeting updates and other helpful information.

as headings, true technical descriptions, definitions, highlighting and emphasizing, and handling special notices such as cautions and warnings. Now we’re getting somewhere, I thought. My instructor paid special attention to what he considers one of the most important uses of technical writing—instructions. I learned so much in this course that I rate it and the textbook a resounding A. The instructor was Dr. David McMurray, and his online textbook (based on his book *Power Tools for Technical Communication*) can be found at [www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/acctoc.html](http://www.io.com/~hcexres/tcm1603/acchtml/acctoc.html).

The advanced course promised to give me the expertise and confidence to market myself as a technical writer. The textbook was Pfeiffer, Keller, and Helba’s *Proposal Writing: The Art of Friendly and Winning Persuasion*. Building on the skills I acquired in the previous two courses, the advanced course emphasized audience analysis, document organization and design, supplements, visuals, and research techniques. The first week was a crash course on using the Internet as a tool to conduct research. I learned about a host of valuable search engines and their individual merits.

The primary project for the advanced course, worth 80% of the final grade, was creating a professional proposal in response to a Request for Proposal (RFP), also written by the student. I intended to create a 10-page proposal, but enthusiasm and the information overload of the Internet

led me to produce an 18-page project. I learned to manage my online information searches and to edit, edit, edit! I rated this course and textbook a B+.

Overall, I found the exchange of ideas between instructors and me to be a rewarding aspect of online education. We were faceless to each other, but a rapport developed during each class. I found online education to be motivating, challenging, and rewarding. I recommend it to anyone who wants to upgrade their skills or enter into a new career field. ☞

## Resources

*This column includes Web sites and other resources that our members may find interesting. If you would like to share your favorite resource, e-mail the info to the editor [emalfas@lvp.com](mailto:emalfas@lvp.com).*

*From Barrie Waters—*  
The Internet is loaded with resources. At the September meeting, Gary Kaufman of DAS Enterprises shared the following URL:  
[www.aquent.com/whitepapers/](http://www.aquent.com/whitepapers/)  
The white papers on this Aquent Web site contain tips on Print to Web Translation Tips, Proposal Skill & Price Guide, and 25 Photoshop Tips & Tricks. Gary’s presentation on Survival Skills in a Competitive Market reminded us to keep our technical skills sharp and current, and these white papers can help us achieve our technical fitness.

*From Elaine Malfas—*  
The TECHWR-L list and its Web site contain a wealth of info for technical writers:  
[www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/](http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/)



# What it means to belong to STC

by Linda Oestreich  
Region 5 Director-Sponsor

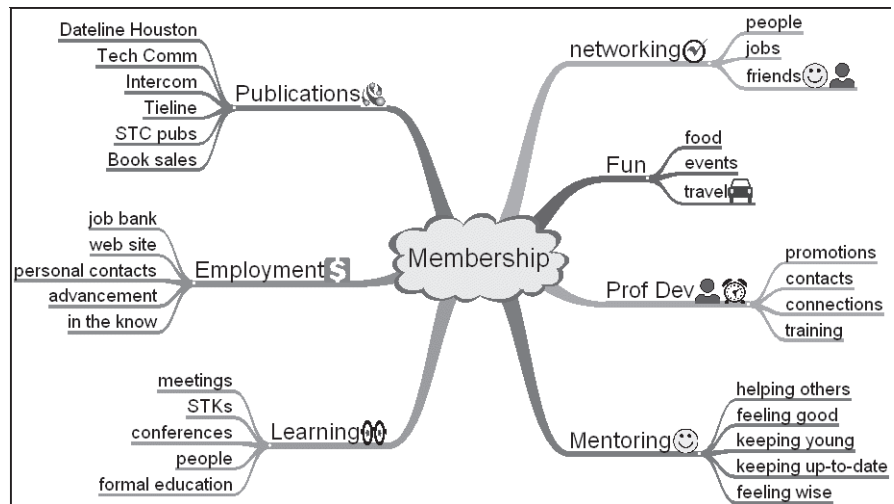
STC membership offers more than most of us realize. I have been a member for many years, yet when I recently checked the STC Web site, I was surprised by some of the benefits we receive. As a new member we often plead ignorance of those benefits. Each new member gets an STC New Member packet, but rather than look through the materials, we put them aside and plan to look through them later. At the other end of the spectrum, long-time members seldom reassess their membership. We take advantage of certain perks because we know they exist. We don't check to see what's changed. I just completed a year as Membership Director of STC-Houston, so I now know our membership perks. It's hard to sell it if you don't know what it's worth!

To start, check the STC membership benefits Web page at [www.stc.org/benefits.html](http://www.stc.org/benefits.html). At the left of the page, you will see several items: click on *10 Reasons to Join* or click on the *STC New Member Kit*. What a great surprise! Both pieces offer all kinds of information that will either remind you of stuff you've forgotten or teach you about stuff you never knew!

## My Perk List

When I first began thinking about this article, I drew a mind map of all the topics I might discuss with you. Here's a copy [shown above right].

This map was the result of some solo brainstorming—before I went to the STC Web site. When you look at it, realize I built it from my personal perspective. It's not a complete list, but it shows what came to my mind in just a few minutes. I definitely forgot some things, but look at all I remembered!



Perk list mind map

This mind map has seven major branches. How many of them do you “work”? You know what I mean...do you work the mentoring? Or the professional development? Are you someone who works the publications but passes on the mentoring and networking? Over the years, I've worked all the branches, just not all at one time! You don't have to “work” it all—but it's a lot more fun when you do!

## STC's Perk List

Rather than only look at STC through my eyes, here are the 10 areas STC emphasizes in the brochure, “10 Reasons to Join STC.” (These are also 10 reasons to LOVE being a member!)

1. *Intercom*
2. *Technical Communication*
3. chapter activities
4. STC annual conference
5. competitions
6. special interest groups
7. Web information
8. jobs database
9. STC technical communicator salary survey
10. Networking

How many of the ten do you take advantage of? Do you make time to read some of the articles in the two publications? How often do you take part in chapter activities? When was

the last annual conference you attended? Do you belong to a SIG? Are you active in it?

## Challenge

Whenever I hear people complain about the STC membership fee, I remind them to look at the value they get for their dues. We get so much more than we pay for! I think STC is one of the best bargains around!

So, even though you're probably already a member, stop and reevaluate just why that is. Are you taking advantage of all STC has to offer—both in what you give and what you get? If not, I challenge you to reconsider. You'll find STC a grand group to belong to. We're fun, we're smart, and we're here to help you be a better technical communicator. Give us a chance. ☞

## Chapter Objectives

*The objectives of the chapter are to advance the arts and sciences of technical communication throughout Southeast Florida, and more broadly through its association with the international Society.*



## From the President

by Rachel A. Alexander

Crisp leaves falling and crunching underfoot, a chill in the air, mist on the windows in the morning...these just aren't our experiences of autumn in South Florida, but we'll remember them (or imagine them) just the same as October opens. Fall has fallen (technically), and we're all looking forward to the coming relief from the HOT weather of summer. I know we're hoping our state can escape the errant, late-season tropical storm or hurricane, too.

If there's been a storm in your career life, this month's meeting will certainly appeal; as a follow-up to Gary and Ryan's September presentations on working with staffing companies to find new opportunities, and interviewing well, Carrie Unger will present *Technical Communicators: Be Your Own Boss! Work @ Home!* an alternative to working the "9 to 5" office schedule.

In November at NCCI, continue to escape from any boredom you might be experiencing in your professional development by attending the first workshop of the 2002-2003 year with Debbie Berg, STC member, technical communicator, webmaster and master trainer. We're happy to have Debbie returning on Saturday, November 9 to guide us in *Web design workshop: tips and techniques with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe ImageReady 7*. Debbie has proven a crackerjack resource, and someone who's given back to her chapter a great deal in return for her membership dues and the networking opportunities we provide.

Our Web site ([www.stc-pbc.org](http://www.stc-pbc.org)) has all the details for the workshop [also see the Professional Development Opportunites box on this page], and you can get a great deal when you register by October 26. Additionally,

## Professional Development Opportunites

### **Macromedia Flash MX: Hands-on Training**

Expert Web designer and instructor Debbie Berg will teach the basics of vector-based animation using the new Flash MX's tools and features. Visit [www.flawebdeb.com](http://www.flawebdeb.com) for details on this hands-on course. Topics include:

- Creating frame-by-frame, shape-tweened, and motion-tweened animation using vector objects, imported graphics and text
- Incorporating sound and video into Flash movies
- Adding interactivity and maintaining control over Flash movies with ActionScript commands
- Building efficient, optimized animations with Flash features & techniques: bitmap properties, preloader techniques, publish settings

Dates: November 4, 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21

Time & Location: 6-9 p.m. at Lynn University, Boca Raton, FL

Instructor: Deborah E. Berg

Cost & Registration: Cost for the course is \$250. Contact Trish Koomen at 561-237-7801 to register. This course is offered through the College of Professional Adult and Continuing Education at Lynn University.

you can find directions to the October meeting in South Miami there—we look forward to seeing many of you in Miami at a great meeting.

Best—  
Rachel 



## Member Glimpse

*This column provides a glimpse of a chapter member. By knowing a bit more about each other, we can strengthen our chapter network. Please e-mail your info & answers to these three questions to the editor.*

**Name:** Carol Capper  
**City:** I live in Satellite Beach  
**Contact:** [cappercap@earthlink.net](mailto:cappercap@earthlink.net)

### **What do you do?**


I am a self-titled Technical Writer. I will be establishing myself over the next several months as a freelance or contract writer, and I envision myself telecommuting from home. This goal

is my primary reason for joining STC. I know I will need help along the way.

### **What do you use?**

I use Adobe Framemaker, which I learned by purchasing my own copy of the program along with the Adobe Framemaker 6.0 *Classroom in a Book* program. My document "eye" has been thoroughly developed from years of developing training and marketing materials using the popular Microsoft Office Suite programs. My entire career to date has been in office administration.

### **What is your technical writing background?**

I am new to this field. I decided upon technical communication because I love to write and want to make my income from writing. And where does the technical aspect fit in? That would be from my aborted college career in electrical engineering. I didn't graduate from college, but I did develop a handy engineering point-of-view. I am merging these two aspects of my background to found an even better career. 



## Employment Information Report

by *Phil Edkins, EIM*

The latest south Florida postings are available on our chapter Web site ([www.stc-pbc.org](http://www.stc-pbc.org)). You can also check the national listings at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org).

You can contact me at my home e-mail [philiped@juno.com](mailto:philiped@juno.com), or at work [philip\\_edkins@partech.com](mailto:philip_edkins@partech.com).



## From the Editor

by *Elaine Malfas*

The deadline for the November issue of *The Wave* is **October 25**. Send submissions to [emalfas@lvp.com](mailto:emalfas@lvp.com). I can accept just about any file format.



## Conference Calendar

### October 31–November 2, 2002

The American Medical Writers Association (AMA) 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference. San Diego, CA. For info, call 301-294-5303 or visit [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org).

### November 6-9, 2002

The American Translators Association (ATA) 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference. Atlanta, GA. For info, contact the ATA 703-683-6100 [ata@atanet.org](mailto:ata@atanet.org) or visit [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org).

### November 7-9, 2002

STC Region 7 Conference. Vancouver, BC. For info, contact Rahel Bailie [rahelab@ureach.com](mailto:rahelab@ureach.com) or visit [www.region7conference.com](http://www.region7conference.com).

### November 18-21, 2002

The American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST) annual meeting. Philadelphia, PA. For info, contact the ASIST 301-495-0900 [asis@asis.org](mailto:asis@asis.org) or visit [www.asis.org](http://www.asis.org).

### May 18–21, 2003

STC's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Dallas, TX. For info, visit [www.stc.org/conferences.html](http://www.stc.org/conferences.html).



## Quote of the Month

An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't.

— *Anatole France*

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