REGION 5 CONFERENCE

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Friday 10:30-12:00

LOW-COST USABILITY [WRITING]

Congress

NO-COST, LOW-COST USABILITY

Have you considered conducting usability evaluations of technical documents? Come to this session to learn some basic techniques that you can start using today to help with things like:

- Heuristic checklists for document usability
- Card sorting for indexing and mental models
- Using your mother and other testers as proxies

Elisa Kaplan Miller, PR Chair, Lone Star Chapter

MINING FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK WITH NO BUDGET

In these days of reduced resources, how do you obtain essential feedback from customers? Attendees can expect to learn the ins and outs of creative customer research:

- Overcoming the barriers to customer contact
- Validating the feedback
- Transforming the feedback into actual GUI changes
- Creating checklists

J. Becky Brenner, IBM

Vanessa Wilburn, IBM

Friday 10:30-12:00

YOUR CAREER AND TODAY'S ECONOMY [EDUCATION]

Austin North

TRANSFORMING YOUR CAREER: MOVING FROM COMMODITY TO STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTOR

The economy's taken a downturn, and perhaps you've already been laid off. You've heard that many companies are "offshoring" technical writing for fees as low as $5/hour. Join Andrea L. Ames for a brief look at the state of the industry and how you can progress in your career. She'll discuss commoditized writing, how you can contribute to product profitability and company strategy, and how you can demonstrate additional value to your company or clients.

Andrea L. Ames, IBM

ADDING VALUE IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY

Technical communicators are under heavy pressure to justify their roles and activities – to show the value they add. This presentation shares case studies and articles that suggest the different ways we add value, how to measure value, and how to add even more value. References and articles will be provided.

Suzanna Laurent, STC Second Vice President

INTEGRATED DOCUMENTATION: THE MORTAR OF ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE [MANAGEMENT]

Austin South

The modern enterprise must address challenges that affect its ability to respond quickly in the marketplace and regulatory environment. This presentation discusses the concept of enterprise architecture and the role of the technical communicator in the enterprise architecture process.

Judy Glick-Smith, Integrated Documentation, Inc.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: INDEXING AND ACROBAT [TECHNOLOGY]

Senate

INDEXING TOOLS FAR AND IXGEN: SALVES FOR THE PAIN OF INDEXING

You've attended the Indexing workshops that teach you strategies for creating a usable index and editing it efficiently. But what *tools* do you use? This session introduces you to two tools that make the tasks of

creating and editing your help or hardcopy indexes fast and relatively pain free!

Kelly M. Holcomb, BMC Software

ADOBE ACROBAT TIPS AND TRICKS

Many technical writers must create PDF files from their documents for delivery. This session covers Adobe Acrobat tips and tricks, including many things most folks don't know even exist in Acrobat. We'll show you how to:

    Create and share Distiller job options
    Make PDF files from multiple documents
    Automate creation of PDF files from proprietary applications
    Rearrange PDF pages and combine pages from different documents

Becky Swanson, Benchmark Publications Group, Inc.
Carol Faldet, Johnson Printing Service

CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY: A RESEARCH METHOD FOR EVALUATING AND SOLVING WORKPLACE PROBLEMS [WRITING]

Senate

Contextual inquiry (CI) is a field research method used in "contextual design," a process in which interviews and observations of people shape the design of a system to be used in a particular context. CI is also applicable to other workplace practices. This

presentation provides an overview of CI, compares it to other methods of field research, and provides a case in which it was used.

Russell Willerton, Texas Tech University

WHERE IS TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION HEADING--AND HOW CAN YOU GET THERE FIRST? [EDUCATION]

Austin North

Most technical communicators are highly trained, very capable, and deeply committed people who bring a breadth and depth of knowledge and skill to whatever table they sit at. Why then, is so much technical communication work in danger of becoming a commodity, a "product" differentiated primarily in terms of price? How can you turn this perception--and its ramifications--around? The answer is not simply learning to deal with the latest technology. Your STC membership is one important component of the answer. What else is essential for a future in technical communication?

Thea Teich, Teich Technical and Marketing Communications

FROM A DISTANCE: MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS [MANAGEMENT]

Congress

This panel presents the experiences of managers dealing with the following situations:

- Managing an existing remote team
- Managing a remote team as a result of an acquisition
- Managing a remote team that is doing offshore work

The discussion will explore these situations, compare them, and provide practical tips and observations to help managers handle them effectively.

Ann Bishop, Vignette Corporation
Wendy Hambleton, BMC Software
Denise Moore, Cisco Systems
Karen Johnson, Dell, Inc.

XML-BASED HELP AUTHORING TOOLS [TECHNOLOGY]

Austin South

It seems that writing and formatting have become nearly indistinguishable, but it may be that in the future, technical writing will be much more about creating content and much less about formatting that content. This talk explores the issues that make this change in focus possible and probable.

Rob Frankland, Rascal Software

A MODEST (SINGLE-SOURCING) PROPOSAL [WRITING]

Austin North

How can an organization manage the radical shifts in procedures, tools, and thinking that full-scale single-sourcing requires? Our department developed a prototype project that allowed us to test the single-sourcing waters before committing to a department-wide investment. This presentation addresses the business challenges we faced and describes our information-management solutions to those challenges.
Holly Kamp, Oklahoma State University
Randy Clark, LSI Logic Storage Systems

STC AS AN ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION? [EDUCATION]

Austin South

The STC is considering moving from a 501(c)3 organization to a 501(c)6 organization, placing the STC on par with the American Bar Association and others. Many feel that it's time the STC became more of an advocate for the membership. This panel discussion will address the issues involved with such a move.
Donald S. LeVie, Jr. Intel Corporation
Janet Swisher, STC Austin
Hillary Hart, The University of Texas at Austin

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: WALKING THE WALK [MANAGEMENT]

Senate

Information developers must look at themselves as project managers. They must understand both the terminology and the tools of project management. In this session, we will look at the terminology and tools, and then walk through a project planning session. Come with a project in mind!
Shannon Salomaki, Sabre Holdings, Inc.

USING FRAMESCRIPT TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY WITH FRAMEMAKER [TECHNOLOGY]

Congress

FrameScript is an add-on tool for Adobe FrameMaker that allows you to execute scripts within FrameMaker, automating the task for which the script is written. The scripts "play back" in a manner similar to MS Word macros. This presentation examines FrameScript's features, both positive and negative. Some scripts will be demonstrated, creation of scripts will be discussed, and FrameScript resources will be given.
Tim Meiers, Pervasive Software

WHEN SOLUTIONS ARE A PROBLEM: WRITING FOR BUNDLED PRODUCTS [WRITING]

Senate

Solutions, or bundled products, are product packages or kits that contain more than one component product. For information developers, writing for solutions raise many challenges, both technical and managerial. This presentation will discuss various issues raised by the magnitude and complexity of writing for bundled products.

Emily Kaplan, BMC Software

DOING WHAT YOU LOVE AND LOVING WHAT YOU DO [EDUCATION]

Austin North

Having a sense of purpose and striving toward goals gives increased meaning, direction, and satisfaction to our jobs. We were created for meaningful work, and one of life's greatest pleasures is the satisfaction of a job well done. Discover how to love the job you have or what to look for in finding a job you can love!

Lisa D. Alvarado, Aesbus Knowledge Solutions

SELLING USABILITY: TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS AS USER ADVOCATES [MANAGEMENT]

Congress

One way to prove your department's value to the bottom line is to move into the realm of usability expertise. The speaker will present proven, practical steps to position your technical communications department as the center of usability in your organization.

Beth Schrader, STC Austin

RECRUITER ROUNDTABLE [TECHNOLOGY]

Austin South

This session discusses how candidates can excel in a challenging market. Topics such as résumé presentation, interviewing strategies, and overcoming objections will be covered. Consulting vs. permanent career choices will also be discussed.

Elizabeth Hall, Hall Kinion, *moderator*
Other Panelists TBA

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN [WRITING]

Congress

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN 101

Help! You've been assigned to do instructional design and don't know where to begin. You can start with this workshop covering the basics of instructional strategies, procedures, vocabulary, and, possibly most important, where to go for more information.
Debby Kalk, Cortex Learning

TECHNICAL WRITING AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN TECHNIQUES

In this presentation, we will discuss the ADDIE model, explain the Perot Systems Instructional Design & Development team's style guides (Word and PowerPoint), and our Training Engagement Methodology used on client accounts. The topic of copyright issues and why technical communicators are sometimes viewed as the documentation police by their SMEs will also be covered briefly.
Jackie Damrau, Perot Systems Corporation

THE VALUE OF SHOWING AND PRETENDING: USING CASE STUDIES AND MODELING TO TEACH

INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE [EDUCATION]

Senate

This presentation illustrates how the use of modeling and case studies can be valuable when teaching language usage in international communication. It highlights sample case studies and models of real-world texts written by international professionals.
Lorelei A. Ortiz, St. Edward's University

ETHICS: HOW DO THEY FIT IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE? [MANAGEMENT]

Austin South

In today's tough economy and wild frontiers, have you been sticking up for your ideals? Come to this panel discussion to hear some thoughts as we investigate ethics as they apply to you, the technical communicator. Bring your ideas and comments.
Linda Oestreich, Region 5 Director Sponsor
E. Jonathan Arnett, Texas Tech University
Aubrey Lalon Hardman, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

Saturday 8:30-10:00

AUTOMATING API DOCUMENTATION [TECHNOLOGY]

Austin North

Technical communicators tasked with documenting Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and Software Developer Kits (SDKs) can benefit from a new breed of documentation tools. This presentation introduces APIs and SDKs and describes the writer's role in producing them. Two related tools for generating programmer documentation (Document!X and HelpStudio) will be demonstrated and discussed.
Mary Connor, Advanced Solutions International, Inc.
Jeff Kilgore, Advanced Solutions International, Inc.
Courtney Robertson, Advanced Solutions International, Inc.

Saturday 10:30-12:00

CONFESSIONS OF A HIRING MANAGER: THE AWFUL TRUTH ABOUT COVER LETTERS, RESUMES, AND INTERVIEWS [EDUCATION]

Austin North

Find out from a hiring manager just what other hiring managers look for in a cover letter and résumé. You'll also learn about how to prepare for job interviews and how to control the interview. Whether you are working or looking for work, this session is guaranteed to better your chances for finding a job and maximizing your earning potential.
Donald S. LeVie, Jr. Intel Corporation

Saturday 10:30-12:00

TECH COMM'S IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE: CAN YOU ARTICULATE IT? CAN YOU SELL IT? [MANAGEMENT]

Congress

During this workshop, you will learn how to be proactive at selling your Technical Communication department and how to prove your value-add as a function. We will discuss how to track quality and productivity, how to control costs, and when to implement outsourcing as part of your strategy.
Wendy Hambleton, BMC Software

Saturday 10:30-12:00

DESIGNING AND CONDUCTING USABILITY TESTS OF HANDHELD APPLICATIONS [TECHNOLOGY]

Senate

Usability testing of handheld applications differs from the familiar task of designing and conducting tests of desktop software. This demonstration will cover methods of recruiting participants, selecting interface

elements and tasks for testing, observing and capturing participants' interaction with the device, and reporting the results to the developers.
George F. Hayhoe, Mercer University

THREE VENDOR SHOWCASES

Austin South

eHelp (10:30-10:50)

Aesbus (11:00-11:20)

Macromedia (11:30-11:50)

TOPICS ON SINGLE-SOURCING [WRITING]

Austin North

INTRODUCTION TO RE-USING INFORMATION CHUNKS: HOW TO SINGLE SOURCE INSIDE ONE BOOK

While information architects demand minimalism in documentation, customers demand all the information sequentially. To address this customer need, the presenters created nearly identical procedures in multiple chapters for a typical installation, an upgrade,

and two scenarios. Attendees will learn how to effectively re-use information chunks.
J. Becky Brenner, IBM
Vanessa Wilburn, IBM

POPULATING THE FRONTIER: SINGLE SOURCING STRATEGIES FOR NEW WRITERS

While individual companies wrestle with the quandary of whether single-sourcing is the emerging paradigm, questions abound for writers entering the field. This presentation will identify some basic competencies of single-source authoring in industry and suggest how individuals can adapt these strategies. Suggestions for integrating these strategies into the technical writing curriculum will also be shared.
Carroll Ferguson Nardone, Sam Houston State University

POLITICS AND METHODS OF USABILITY [EDUCATION]

Congress

POLITICS OF USABILITY

If you're an experienced technical communicator struggling to change your company's culture, attend this session to join a lively and interactive discussion to explore the politics of usability, including an overview of the user-centered design process, the various

objections that you're likely to hear, and some tactics for combating those objections.
Andrea L. Ames, IBM

SHOULD THE USER BE DRIVING?: A COMPARISON OF REMOTE USABILITY METHODOLOGIES

Today's tough market means *the need for speed* is critical to product development. Business information provider Hoover's Online wanted to add automated usability testing to its toolkit without compromising quality. This presentation describes studies conducted to determine the best approach.
Kerrie Green, Hoover's Online
Joe Hinder, Customer Insight Systems

Saturday 1:30-3:00

MANAGING EXTREME DEADLINES [MANAGEMENT]

Austin South

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION

Most software documentation departments share the same challenges: short time frames, inaccurate or incomplete specifications, and changes to key features late in the development cycle. This presentation provides strategies for meeting these challenges and

crafting quality documentation, with a small team or as a lone writer.
Tamara Dwyer, Clear Orbit

EXTREME DOCUMENTATION: NO MORE TRAIN WRECKS

eXtreme programming (XP), part of the larger Agile movement, is a revolutionary method for conducting software development on risky projects with dynamic requirements. Speakers will review the principles of XP, map those concepts onto documentation practices, and then describe several strategies to help teams accomplish more with fewer resources.
Mary Connor, Advanced Solutions International, Inc.
Estelle Olvera, Advanced Solutions International, Inc.
Beth Schrader, STC Austin

Saturday 1:30-3:00

BLOGGING AND EXPERT CONTENT [TECHNOLOGY]

Senate

LET'S TRY BLOGGING: CREATING INSTANT WEB CONTENT

Blogging provides an easy way to update a web page via a browser without launching an FTP client or HTML editor. In this session, learn how to turn flat, static web pages into fresh, meaningful content. Discover the elements of a blog, pick up tips for creating a blog, review HTML basics, and discuss major blog providers.

Jocelyn Williams, STC Houston

Expert Content? Sure, We Can Do That!

Customers want real world information that goes beyond field descriptions and basic tasks. Learn how to build expert content into your software in a way that improves the ROI of your products and makes your documentation a selling point, without increasing the size of your team.

Mike Wethington, BMC Software

Saturday 3:30-5:00

USABILITY METHODS [WRITING]

Congress

Usability Methods and Madness

In this session, we'll talk about the kinds of questions that technical communicators might encounter when developing training, creating documents, writing for web sites, or working on large projects. We'll work through some examples of usability tools and discuss why some methods are better than others for certain situations.

Elisa Kaplan Miller, PR Chair, Lone Star Chapter

Talking to Users and Hearing Them Answer – That's the Kick

This workshop compares an improvisational, participatory approach to web-based assessments – Design Dialogics^{SM} – to a formal, scripted test methodology. The participatory nature of a non-scripted approach comes the closest to approximating the actual user experience.

Kerrie Green, Hoover's Online

Saturday 3:30-5:00

Strategic Planning for Your Life [EDUCATION]

Austin North

Are you aware that you can achieve anything you want by spending only 15 minutes a day planning? This workshop teaches you how to take charge of your life through goal setting. Learn how to give yourself the gift of time.

Judy Glick-Smith, Integrated Documentation, Inc.

Saturday 3:30-5:00

Contractor Employment – A Comparison of Government/ Private Sector and Cost-Plus/Fixed-Cost Environments, and What it Means to the Employee [MANAGEMENT]

Senate

Moving from the private sector to government contract employment can be an eye-opening experience, offering a variety of expected – and unexpected –

benefits and realizations. The presenter will examine some of the plusses and minuses by comparing the working environments of cost-plus contracts of yesterday vs. fixed-cost contracts of today.
Gary Michael Smith, CACI

Saturday 3:30-5:00

ROBOHELP SOLUTIONS:WEBHELP FLASHHELP, AND ROBODEMO [TECHNOLOGY]

Austin South

During this session, you will learn the ins and outs of WebHelp and FlashHelp solutions and see demos of how to use RoboHelp to build FlashHelp and WebHelp. You will also see and introduction to building tutorials using RoboDemo.
Wendy Hambleton, BMC Software
Michael Hamilton, eHelp Corporation