

Ragged Left

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THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

BERKELEY CHAPTER

JULY PROGRAM

Why Good Help is Hard to Find

BY BILL KRITZBERG, VP PROGRAMS

We work very hard crafting online help. Do users love us for it?

Turns out, only 7% of users in a recent survey found online help within business productivity software to be “very useful.” Sixty-five percent found it “occasionally useful” or “not useful.” And 71% of novices find online help “unhelpful” and not supportive.

Why? Is it because help is inherently reactive, anticipating users’ failure—rather than providing information when users really need it—before they fail?

For STC-Berkeley’s July meeting, Andrea L. Ames, owner of the technical communications firm Verbal Imagery, will discuss the current help paradigm and why it’s failing. She’ll also cover the basics of embedded assistance, as well as the technologies, infrastructure, skills, and knowledge you need to develop effective embedded assistance products.

Andrea has more than 15 years experience in technical communications. In addition to her work with Verbal Imagery, she’s a principal technical writer at Vertical Inc., in Sunnyvale, CA. She’s written two award-winning technical trade books, and she’s a contributing editor for *Web Techniques* magazine.

Andrea has made and continues to make significant contributions of STC chapters in the Bay Area. She is a Senior Member of STC and through 2001 is the Director-Sponsor of STC’s Region 8.

This presentation will be of substantial value to any technical communicator faced with helping users through online help. For meeting details, see page 2 or the chapter site www.stc-berkeley.org.

Register for Hawaii STC Conference

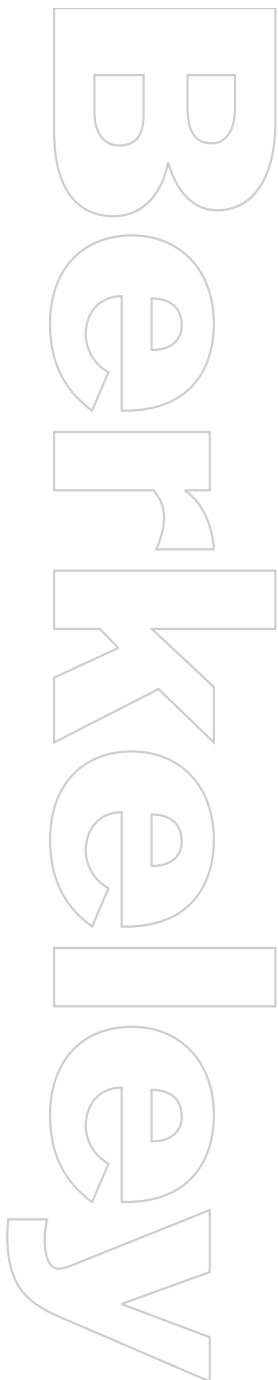
Plans for the upcoming STC Pan-Pacific Conference are coming together. If you live in STC Region 7 or Region 8, you have probably received your conference invitation and preliminary program. Be sure to respond soon: the early registration discount ends July 31, and discounted hotel and airfares end soon as well. This is going to be an exciting and fun conference—you won’t want to miss it.

Conference information, including the registration form, is available on the conference web site: www.pan-pacific.org.

The STC Region 7/8 Pan-Pacific Conference will be held October 19-21 2000, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Our conference hotel is the Renaissance Ilikai Waikiki, a luxury hotel located on Waikiki Beach. To whet your appetite, have a look at this beautiful setting at this site: www.ilikaihotel.com.

Inside this issue

- About the STC 2
- STC-Berkeley Chapter Meeting Details 2
- An Open Letter from New STC President 3
- Biotech SIG Plans Potluck Celebration 3



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About the STC

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION is the bridge between those who create ideas and those who use them. Conveying scientific and technical information clearly, precisely, and accurately is an essential occupation in all sectors of business and government.

STC has more than 20,000 members and 144 chapters worldwide. Its members include writers, editors, artists, illustrators, photographers, audiovisual specialists,



managers, supervisors, educators, students, employees, and consultants.

STC strives to:

- Advance the theory and practice of technical communication.
- Promote awareness of trends and technology in technical communication.
- Aid the educational and professional development of its members.

Membership

Membership is open to everyone. Regular membership is \$110/year, with an additional \$15 enrollment fee the first year. Student membership is \$45/year.

To receive additional information and an application form, via mail or email:

- Call our chapter voicemail number 510-466-5464 and leave a message.
- Send email to bkymbrs@stc.org.
- Send mail to STC-Berkeley, PO Box 1007, Berkeley CA 94701-1007.

Advertising Rates

Page \$70, 2/3 page \$50, 1/2 page \$40, 1/3 page \$30, 1/6 page \$20, business card \$10. STC members receive 20% off. Ad deadline is the fifteenth of the month prior to publication.

Submissions

Ragged Left publishes original articles and illustrations. We edit them to meet our needs. You retain copyright but grant every STC publication royalty-free permission to reproduce the article or illustration in print or any other medium. Please contact the editor for details of how to submit articles and illustrations.

Deadline for unsolicited submissions is the 21st of the month preceding publication. Other STC publications are hereby granted permission to reprint articles from *Ragged Left*, provided such reprints credit the author and the specific *Ragged Left* issue, and a copy of any publication containing such a reprint is sent to the *Ragged Left* editor.

STC-Berkeley Chapter Meeting Details

Next meeting: Wednesday, July 12.

Café de la Paz serves STC-Berkeley members delicious South American food. The meeting begins at 6 P.M. with networking, conversation, and a no-host bar, followed by the buffet at 6:30 P.M. Chapter business and announcements are made around 7:15 P.M., followed by the speaker.

If you want to eat dinner, reservations are required and *must* be received (by Bill) no later than 12:00 NOON the Monday before the meeting (July 10). Reservations are necessary so that we can order the right amount of food. Do *not* contact the restaurant.

Send checks to Bill Kritzberg, 401 Melrose Avenue, Alameda, CA 94502.



RSVP online: Use your credit card to order meeting reservations via the chapter Web site, www.stc-berkeley.org.

With a reservation, the meeting fee with food for members is \$17, for student members is \$14, and for nonmembers is \$20; if you come for the program only, starting at 7:30 P.M., the fee is \$12 for members and non-members (\$10 for students). If you are not eating, payments may be made at the door.

Fix Your Résumé

STC-Berkeley offers free résumé reviews to all comers, whether they are members or not. If you know someone who is a technical writer and would like some help with his or her résumé, we offer résumé reviews by people who have experience making hiring decisions.

With the average employer taking less than a minute to look at your résumé, another pair of eyes can help present your qualifications in the best light, *and* get you hired.

Résumés for review must be received the Friday before the monthly meeting (July 8). Send résumés to employment@stc-berkeley.org. Arrangements will be made to meet at the monthly meeting and to discuss the suggestions.

An Open Letter from New STC President

BY MARK HANIGAN, STC PRESIDENT

Hello, and Happy STC New Year! We are just coming off of another very successful STC Annual Conference, this 47th edition having taken place in Orlando! If you were there, you would have to agree that it was the best yet in terms of the number and variety of sessions. Also, from my vantage, it appeared that everyone enjoyed all the conference activities from our opening keynote, Thomas Koulopoulos, through our side-splitting closing speaker Bill Herz.

If you were not at this year's 47th annual conference, it is not too soon to start planning to attend next year's edition, which will be in Chicago on May 13-16, 2001. Like nothing else, the STC annual conference provides us with the setting to celebrate our profession, renew and make new professional acquaintances, and expand our technical and professional knowledge.

For me, STC's 47th Annual Conference was most special in that I begin my one-year term at the "STC helm," a privilege for which I am most appreciative. And now that the conference is over, I look forward to getting to work on this year's agenda.

All of us are going to be very busy over the summer, helping to advance this year's objectives, and, of course, preparing for the Fall 2000 meeting of the STC board. This year, the Fall board meeting is to be held on September 14-17, 2000 in Winnipeg, MB, hosted by the Manitoba Chapter. With the exception of an executive session, all STC board of director meetings are open to all members. So, if you are in the area, please stop by. (Location details will be forthcoming!)

The theme of the 2000-2001 STC year is *Providing Value*. Needless to say, all of the efforts to make our organization successful takes the efforts of literally hundreds of individuals—just like you! If there is an area of STC at the Society level that is of interest to you, let me or another member of the board know. Or, if you just want to drop me a line, my email address is onwritetrk@aol.com.

My personal philosophy is to "take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously." Couple this with my belief about STC: Collectively, we have all of the knowledge, but, individually, none of us do. This means you are the keeper of a piece of this collective knowledge. Let's share the wealth!

Yours in friendship and service,

Mark Hanigan

JULY BIOTECH SIG MEETING

Biotech SIG Plans Potluck Celebration

Next meeting July 5: Everyone is invited to meet the new Biotech SIG Chairperson, Ruth Wright, and say farewell to this year's chairperson, Wynette Weaver, at the July 5th Biotech SIG meeting. We will be discussing topics for the coming year and ways to publicize the Biotech SIG meetings. The Biotech SIG needs your ideas and input to attract new members and to offer programs that are attractive to the current members.

So bring along a potluck dish and your ideas for a fun evening of sharing and networking at the July 5th Biotech SIG meeting at the Chiron Cafe.

For more information contact Wynette Weaver, Biotech SIG Chairperson, at (510) 524-2459 or email: wynette22@yahoo.com.

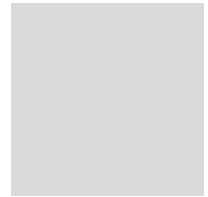
Directions to the Chiron Cafe

The Chiron Cafe is opposite the old main Chiron building in Emeryville. From Highway 80, take the Powell St. Exit and go East towards the hills. At the bottom of the overpass is Hollis St. Turn right on Hollis St. Go approximately two long blocks until you see a large geometric masterpiece of architecture painted in purple and orange ahead. This building is at an intersection with a traffic light. Turn right at the traffic light. Turn left at the stop sign and continue until you see an open driveway gate on the left (~ 500 ft.). Go through the gates and bear left. Plenty of parking available to your right. Park and walk to the circle (with the large vaguely DNA-like sculpture). The Chiron cafe is a small separate building on the left.

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P.O. Box 1007
Berkeley, CA
94701

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Next Meeting:

Wednesday July 12

An Introduction to Embedded Assistance

with **Andrea L. Ames**

Meal reservations required by Monday, July 10.
See page 2 for costs and meeting details.

RSVP online: Credit cards accepted at
www.stc-berkeley.org. Please do *not* call the restaurant!

Café de la Paz: 1600 Shattuck Avenue (at Cedar)
Buffet and No-Host Bar 6:30 - 7:30
Announcements and Program 7:30 - 9:00

STC-BERKELEY MEETING LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS

By BART: Exit the Berkeley station (Richmond line) at Center and proceed north six blocks up Shattuck Ave. to 1600 Shattuck at Cedar.

From north of Berkeley: From I-80, take the University Avenue exit. Go east (towards UCal) to Shattuck Ave. Turn left (north) on Shattuck and go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From south of Berkeley: Take I-880 north from San Jose through Oakland. Follow the highway as it curves sharply to the right (where traffic merges) and becomes I-980. Continue on I-980 to Highway 24 (toward Berkeley/Walnut Creek). Take the first exit from 24 (Martin Luther King Jr./51st). Turn right on 51st St. and make first left onto Shattuck Ave. Proceed north on Shattuck to downtown Berkeley. Turn left on University Ave., then right again at first light (north) onto Shattuck. Go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From San Francisco: Take the Bay Bridge towards Oakland (I-80 East). At the end of the bridge, stay in the left-hand lanes and head towards Berkeley and Sacramento. Proceed two miles and exit onto University Avenue (on the exit ramp, stay in left lane of split). Go east (towards UCal) to Shattuck Ave. Turn left (north) on Shattuck and go seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

From far East Bay: Take Highway 24 west through Caldecott Tunnel, exit Ashby Avenue. West on Ashby to Shattuck Ave. Right on Shattuck to downtown Berkeley. Turn left (west) on University Ave., then right again at first light (north) onto Shattuck for seven blocks to 1600 Shattuck. Turn left on Cedar for parking.

