



All That for A PBJ?

by *Ralph F. Rumpf*

Technical Writing has as many “disciplines” as you can probably imagine. Most of us are familiar with the more visible ones, technical manuals, user instructions, software documentation, medical documentation, service instructions, etc. Many of us will work in one or more of these “disciplines” during our careers. But few of us work with one of the hardest disciplines: Procedure Writing.

Procedures require a level of detail beyond anything most of us are used to and a very thorough subject matter knowledge. While one can argue that you need detail and knowledge for most technical documentation, procedures are a level of detail beyond our normal experience. In addition, most industries that use procedures are regulated by one or more regulatory agencies. Procedures must not only meet the requirement of describing the task to be accomplished, but must also meet any applicable regulatory requirements and industry guidelines such as IEEE, ANSI, INPO, etc.

For example, let’s take a look at something I think all of us are familiar with; a peanut butter sandwich.

PROCEDURE PBJ 2001-3

Peanut Butter Sandwich Assembly

1.0 Purpose and Scope

1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to document the correct method for preparing a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

2.0 Prerequisites

- 2.1 A prepared sanitary work surface. (Ref : Health Department Guidelines 99-1)
- 2.2 Clean assembly implements (Ref: Procedure SAF 99-4, Use of Knives and Pointed Objects)
- 2.3 Quality ingredients as follows:
 - A. White bread (Ref : Wonder Bread Standard 98-1)
 - B. Peanut Butter (Ref : Peter Pan Standard 97-2)
 - C. Jelly or Jam

3.0 Details

- 3.1 Place assembly implements and ingredients on the prepared work surface.
- 3.2 Select two slices of bread of approximate equal size and consistency,
- 3.3 Place bread slices flat on the work surface.

NOTICE: Only qualified, trained individuals shall use assembly implements.

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WEBSITE: www.stc.org/region4/sjvc/www/

President's Corner

By Kirsten Klassen, Chapter President

This year I again had the privilege of serving as a judge in the International Technical Publications Competition. It's fascinating to look over the entries and to assess them on content, organization, design, writing, and overall impact. The best entries always remind me to...

1. Make every word and graphic element count toward one unifying theme. Don't just put in photos to break up text. Use relevant photos – demonstrative or promotional. And, write compelling captions since the photos might draw the reader into the text.
2. Clarify the relationship between all the elements so the order of importance is revealed. If you have a summary, give it a heading. If you have a brilliant quote to lead in, put it first. Make all other less-important elements on the page subservient to the quote so there is nothing vying for the reader's attention.
3. Provide navigational assistance so the organization of your document is transparent to your reader. Use tabs, page headings, table of contents, indices – whatever it takes to persuade your readers they can effortlessly find whatever they are looking for.

These things sound so easy and perhaps we all know them. But we don't always practice them. We need to take time to think so we know what our theme is and the hierarchical order of our material. Figuring this out early results in better work and award-winning documents.



STC Mission Statement

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

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Procedures (continued from page 1)

- 3.4 Open the container holding the peanut butter.
- 3.5 Using the assembly implement, remove one tablespoon of peanut butter from the container.
- 3.6 Using the assembly implement, equally distribute the peanut butter on the surface of one slice of bread.
- 3.7 Place the bread on the work surface, peanut butter side up.
- 3.8 Clean the assembly implement.
- 3.9 Open the container holding the jelly or jam.
- 3.10 Using the assembly implement, remove one tablespoon of jelly or jam.
- 3.11 Using the assembly implement, evenly distribute the jelly or jam on the surface of the remaining slice of bread.
- 3.13 Place the bread on the work surface, jelly or jam side up.
- 3.14 Set the assembly implement in a safe location out of the way.
- 3.15 Position the first slice of bread (with peanut butter) over the second piece with the peanut butter facing the jelly surface.
- 3.16 Carefully align the bread slices and close the gap until the surfaces are in contact.

4.0 Final Conditions

- 4.1 Assure sandwich is consumed within 1 hour.
- 4.2 Do not allow sandwich to sit in an area of high temperature.

While this is not a particularly good procedure, it will give you a small glimmer of the detail that is involved. Believe me, compared to some I have seen this just barely scratches the surface.

If you are curious about procedures, join us this month at Santaniello's for good food and an informative presentation by Gary Futoma.

Editor's Corner

My humble apologies to all print subscribers.

There really was an issue of the *Watermark* last month. It's just that National neglected to send me the mailing labels; or perhaps they notified me that they were not going to send them and I missed it. In either case, the end result was that no print copies were sent out.

I have made provisions to do my own labels so I will no longer rely on National's kind malevolence. At least, if I do them on my own, I know they are going to be here. If any of you want a copy, just drop me a note and I will send one along. Again, my apologies.

You may have noticed the increased hoopla for the National Conference. I admit that the mailings get a bit bothersome and we all get the feeling that they should lighten up. But it really is a big deal, especially for members of our chapter. You couldn't ask for a closer location than Chicago for a conference of this size. (Yes, South Bend is closer, but it lacks a few of Chicago's amenities.) Have any of you looked at the supplement that came with the last *Intercom*? I mean if you can't find something in the presentation schedule that interests you, perhaps you are in the wrong business.

This month's meeting should be very interesting. I have worked in the Procedures field for a little over three years now and I have not encountered, so far, a tougher technical writing discipline. Perhaps it has to do with the Procedures I write, but I have either lost a lot more hair or a lot more has turned gray. If you are seeking a real challenge in your career, try procedures.

Also, kindly note the new STC logo on the cover of this newsletter. You may want to check out the new STC guidelines for use of the STC brand. They are available on the STC website: www.stc-va.org. There's a lot of other good information up there as well so you may want to bookmark the site in your browser and check in from time to time.

I'll tell you it makes a lot better reading than cbsmarketwatch.com. (OUCH!)

What Do You Want To Do Today?

To Add a New Data Series to an Existing Chart:

1. Select the cells containing the data you wish to add.
2. Click “Copy”.
3. Click on the chart.
4. Click “PasteSpecial” on the “Edit” menu and select the options you want.

Procedures are the heart and soul of many technical documents. They allow us to quickly accomplish tasks that might otherwise require the skills and knowledge of an expert. Without this procedure, for example, we might never have figured out how to add a new data series to a chart.

Writing procedures requires us to distill the essentials of a task. Overviews and explanations may help us to understand why we do something, but when we are following a procedure usually the only thing we want to know is which option to select or what button to click. And we especially want to know if a step could be dangerous or is nonreversible.

In our March meeting we will be discussing procedures. We'll look at some examples of good, bad (and maybe even ugly) procedures. We'll explore some guidelines for writing them, and we'll encourage you to share any insight you've gained from your own experiences. Our hope is that you'll go away with at least one or two ideas that you can apply to your own writing. *So...*

To Attend the March Meeting:

1. **Call** (219/243-5819) or **E-mail** (gputoma@aol.com) Gary Futoma by Monday, March 26 to advise him that you are coming.
2. **Drive** to Santaniello's Glenlord Restaurant (2262 W. Glenlord Road, St. Joseph) on Wednesday, March 28.
 - 2a. If you want to participate in the social half hour, **arrive** by 6:00 PM.
 - 2b. If you only want to have dinner and hear the presentation, **arrive** by 6:30 PM.

3. Have a Great Time!



To St. Joseph



To Santaniello's

Directions

You can get there from two directions.

From I-94:

- 1 Exit at Exit 23, toward St. Joseph. You will pass two stop lights near the local Burger King and McDonald's.
- 2 Proceed north to the next traffic light at Glenlord Road and turn right.
- 3 Continue on Glenlord Road over the railroad tracks and about 150 feet farther. The restaurant is on the right.

From 31/33

- 1 Proceed North until you come to the traffic light at the intersection of 31/33 and M63. There is an ACE Hardware located at this corner.
- 2 Turn left onto M63 at the intersection just before the ACE Hardware.
- 3 Proceed on M63 down a dipping right curve, you will see a sign for Glenlord road on the right.
- 4 Just after the sign you will turn left onto Glenlord road. This is not a well lit road so slow down as you approach the sign.
- 5 Follow Glenlord Road east past three stop signs and a flashing red 4-way stop.
- 6 After the light you will cross over I-94 and down a dip.
- 7 When you return to the top, the restaurant is just a bit further on your left. If you cross the railroad tracks, you went too far.

Meeting Schedule

The following meeting topics are being considered for the remainder of the year.

APR Procedures

MAY Reflections on 48th STC Conf

If you have any meeting topic ideas, let us know!

February Meeting Notes

The February meeting took place as scheduled at Tippecanoe Place in South Bend. I'm sorry that more people weren't able to attend the meeting, but, as it turned out, the room we were placed in was a little small. Take a look at the photos to see what I mean.



If you don't recognize anyone, maybe you've been away too long.



Ben Dorsey gave an informative and interactive presentation on research. Besides the good food and company, I am certain everyone picked up a point or two that they could put to use back at the office.

I haven't been able to make a meeting in a while, but it was good to see familiar faces and to pick up a few extra pointers besides.

Be There or Be Square?

Hello to all chapter presidents, membership and employment folks, and newsletter editors in the great Region 4 of the STC!! I'm the program manager for this year's STC annual conference, "2001: A Global Communication Odyssey," to be held at the Hyatt Regency and Fairmont hotels in Chicago from May 13 to 16.

By now, you should have received the newly designed Conference Program. Since late last summer, our 10-person program committee has been working VERY hard to make this annual conference a great one for Region 4. Better than that: We hope Chicago is the best STC annual conference to date and one that will draw a record crowd! We just wanted to bring some of this year's conference highlights to your attention...

DeWitt Jones, award-winning National Geographic photographer, will be the keynote speaker.

If you attended the annual conference in Dallas in 1993, DeWitt was our keynote speaker then who urged us "to put juice in our cameras." He's still is on record as being the most popular STC keynote speaker for annual conferences.

Richard Lederer, author of more than 2,000 books and articles about language and humor, will be the closing speaker. He'll also do a workshop on Wednesday morning. His best-selling books include *Anguished English*, *The Bride of Anguished English*, and *The WriteWay: A Guide to Real-Life Writing*. His syndicated column, "Looking at Language," appears in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. He appears regularly on "All Things Considered" and with Charles Harrington Elster hosts a weekly one-hour radio show, "A Way With Words," on San Diego Public Radio. He is usage editor of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition Unabridged*.

Approximately 250 sessions and 17 post-conference workshops will be offered. We're very fortunate once again this year that noted and popular presenters JoAnn Hackos, Ann

Rockley, Ginny Redish, Whitney Quesenbery, Neil Perlin, and BogoVatovec among others will be very busy giving a variety of presentations. Unfortunately, past STC President and distinguished presenter, Saul Carliner, will not be in Chicago. He hasn't missed presenting at annual conferences since 1984. Saul's busy schedule has him presenting in Singapore and in Cuba in the same general time of our conference. We definitely look forward to seeing Saul again next year in Nashville.

After a 2-year absence from STC annual conferences, Bill and Kit Horton (<http://www.horton.com/start.htm> <<http://www.horton.com/start.htm>>) will return to do three presentations and a post conference workshop.

Approximately 50 exhibitors have already signed up. An onsite STC bookstore will also be set up in the Exhibit Hall in the Hyatt.

Manual evaluation workshops, usability demos, and a special Vendor Showcase featuring some of the latest products on the market will also be available.

A Global Communication Town Meeting will be held daily in the Moulin Rouge room of the Fairmont. Technical communicators from around the world will share their ideas and concerns on international technical communication.

The local host chapter is including Invited Guest Speaker sessions in which "local" Chicago people in the field of technical communication will give presentations.

STC Conference

A reminder to start planning to attend the 48th STC Conference this spring in Chicago. We hardly ever get one this close, so this is a golden opportunity.

If you have never attended a conference, you are in for a real experience, we can promise you that. If you are curious, you can obtain information from the national STC web site. If you want a more personal opinion, speak with our chapter President or any other member who has attended any STC conference. the national web site is:

www.stc-va.org

Director Sponsor Notes

By Thea Teich, STC Region 4 Director-Sponsor

Keeping Tabs on What's Going On

How frustrated are you by the impossible task of keeping up with the thinkers in our field? I'm not discussing the latest release of Frame-Maker or RoboHelp here; I mean the people who are writing the books and giving the sessions on the major overriding concepts or subjects such as instructional design, usability, management, document design, and communications effectiveness, among others. I have a stack of books on my bedside table that seems to never go down in size, only up.

What would you think of a Web site specifically designed to help technical communicators keep up with this information, developed, updated, and maintained for technical communicators by technical communicators as a service to STC?

IdeaWatch Works

That's what IdeaWatch.org is all about. Developed by Jennifer Square of the Central Ohio chapter and Heidi Hansen of the Chicago Chapter, IdeaWatch.org provides reviews of various "gurus" works, original ideas of particular usefulness to technical communicators, and how those ideas can be implemented to make your jobs easier, your work more enjoyable, and the world a better place.

Well, maybe I exaggerate. However, IdeaWatch.org does act like an information filter, making these mountains of material "digestible." And, the people who are doing the "filtering" and "sifting" of the information are your fellow members—so the result is specifically designed for your needs. And, it's free.

In addition, Jennifer and Heidi have organized monthly book discussion groups at their chapters and are assisting other chapters in setting up similar groups. Each group reviews a specific book, and the resulting information becomes the basis for that month's IdeaWatch Web site offerings.

The result is inexpensive professional development whenever you need it, plus the opportu-

nity to meet and work with fellow members to support one another in this endeavor. Unlike other sites that may offer compilations of information on specific subjects, IdeaWatch.org doesn't overload you with massive lists of references and other related Web sites. Those sites require you to do the "filtering and sifting." The people behind IdeaWatch.org—and this can include any interested STC member—have read the gurus' books or attended their presentations; the information is therefore qualified by people just like you.

Exploit the Site

To take advantage of IdeaWatch.org, visit the site and use what's there. Help organize an IdeaWatch monthly discussion groups in your chapter. Currently, IdeaWatch "SIGs" are starting at the local level in the Central Ohio, Chicago, and Southwestern Ohio chapters. Eventually, IdeaWatch organizers hope to apply for Society SIG status.

For more information, check out IdeaWatch.org and distribute the informational flyer you find there. Also, you may contact Jennifer Square of the Central Ohio chapter at squarej@nationwide.com.

And let me know how things go, too!

From the Mail Box

Subject: STC—Tech writing defined

Good morning—Nancee Moster, President of Central Illinois Chapter, sent me this. Maybe she can tell us who Scott Browne's father is?

Thea

Technical writing should be like lingerie. It should be as concise as possible and yet adequately cover all the important parts. It should be appealing to the end user and provide ready access to desired components whenever required. It should provide sufficient stimulation and interest for further exploration and result in satisfaction through use of the product..

...From Scott Browne's father

memo

Next Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, March 28, 2001

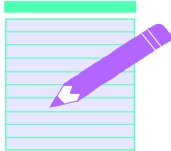
LOCATION: Santaniello's Restaurant, 2262 W. Glenlord Rd., St. Joseph, MI, (616)-429-3966 .

COST: Depends on fare.

TIME: 6:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (Social)

PROGRAM: Procedures - The Inside Scoop
A presentation by Gary Futoma.

RESERVATIONS: Gary Futoma (gfutoma@aol.com or 219-243-5819) by Monday, March 26.



IND/MI
Time



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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