



Laurent Shares Her Vision for STC

Candidate for STC Second Vice President

Last November while attending the STC Region 4 Conference in Michigan, I visited the Henry Ford Museum. During that visit I learned a lot about Ford and the automobile he made so successful. Many people have the mistaken idea that Henry Ford was an inventor, but Ford did not invent the automobile. He didn't even "invent" the assembly line.

So what did Henry Ford do? He learned from other people's experiences as well as his own. He took risks. He saw failure as a lesson, and he applied everything he learned to perfect the product, the process, and the policies that shaped the American automobile industry. In short, he was a great *innovator*. And because he was so willing to share the lessons he learned, he became an inspiration to many others.

I am running for the office of second vice president of STC because in my own way, I want to do as Henry Ford did. I want to use the lessons that I have learned in my 25 years in management and leadership to create innovations that will make STC vital to the careers of all technical communicators in the many fields within our profession.

One of the more innovative things that I've done in my three-year term as director-sponsor for region 5 is to attend conferences in *every* region to meet our members and listen to their ideas. This "listening tour" has given me a greater understanding of the challenges facing the Society, its chapters, and our members.

STC members work in more diversified environments than ever before, with experience, skills, and talents that vary widely. Nonetheless, we share the desire to be recognized for our contribu-

tions to our workplace. I believe that STC can help members achieve this goal. By proactively promoting the profession of technical communication, we can make a difference in the lives and careers of our members.

My strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Teaching members how to define the value they add to the products and services we provide, how to measure that value, and to add more value
- Continuing the innovative, proactive, and forward-thinking implementation of the branding and governance initiatives
- Ensuring that the STC board of directors becomes a policy-driven board
- Communicating more effectively with organizations outside our profession and with STC members and chapter leaders internally
- Providing better training for Society and chapter leaders
- Creating opportunities for members to learn so that they can become more successful in their careers.

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ELECTION SPECIAL

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Presidency Corner

By Bethany Rusbasan, Chapter President

Bethany has opted to take a rest for this month; you'll hear from her in the next issue.

In the mean time, she sent the following piece for your information and benefit.

Greetings—

I'm writing today to see if you might be willing to support a pilot project for a new listserv, TC-PUBS. The sole purpose of the listserv is to distribute information about what's newly published in the main technical communication journals to those who subscribe to the list. Messages to the list will include full bibliographic citations and abstracts for articles, plus links to any available online resources when new issues are published.

So far, three journals (Technical Communication, IEEE Transactions, and J of Technical Writing and Communication) have agreed to provide this information; we hope eventually to provide this service for all of the main technical communication journals. A key goal is to serve the needs of professional technical communicators as well as academic researchers.

What we ask of you is your help recruiting subscribers to the listserv during the pilot period (Jan-June 2002). Can you let your chapter members know of this project,

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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.

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Editor's Corner

OK, I'll be brief. Since this is an in-between issue and STC elections are approaching I opted for the political agenda. Partially to keep you informed, partially because there is little else to publish just now.

In order to print the comment of one candidate, I am required by STC to give the other side. While this may seem like a lot to wade through there is one point to keep in mind, you can influence the future of this organization simply by casting your vote.

I used a different font for the candidate's statements and reprinted them without editorializing anything. What they have to say, and how they say it are their own words.

In order to vote, your dues must be paid on time. I know that date is fast approaching so if you haven't sent in your dues, do it now and make a difference this election.

Next month we will get back to a more normal format.

November Meeting

The November meeting at Tippecanoe place in South Bend was well attended. I don't have an exact count but the table was full so that places the head count at around a dozen or so. There were also some new faces and that is always good to see.

The food, as usual, was quite good. Gary Futoma gave a very informative presentation

and provided handouts for all attendees.

I really appreciated the list of reference books Gary included in this presentation. I keep a rather extensive reference section in my office and always keep an eye out for possible additions. I took a look at several of the books Gary recommended on the Internet in the week after the meeting and have added a couple to my purchase list for my office library.

If you are looking for some new additions to your own library, you may want to contact Gary and see if he can provide you with a list of these books.

Coming Events

The following is a list of the proposed topics, dates and meeting locations for this year:

February 21, 2002

By: Kirsten Klassen (coordinator)

Topic: Tour of printers with graphic designer to talk about standards of quality

Time: TBD

Place: TBD

April 10, 2002

By: Mark Stucky (coordinator)

Topic: Rise and Fall of E-Commerce

Time: TBD

Place: TBD

June 4, 2002

By: Perry Ballard

Topic: Branding

Time: TBD

Place: Perry Ballard Offices (St. Joseph)

How's Your Writer IQ?

Test Your Knowledge of Common Proofreading Symbols and Terms:

|| center **¶** new paragraph **cap** capital letters **;** insert semi colon **=** insert hyphen

^ insert **sp** spell out **rom** roman type **:** insert colon **⊙** insert period

stet let it stand **]** move right **lc** lower case **||** align horizontal **()** close up space

insert space **[** move left **ital** italic type **bf** bold face **1/m** insert em dash

= align vertical **tr** transpose **^,** insert comma **eg#** space evenly **1/n** insert en dash

Reprinted from *Shorelines*, the newsletter of the West Michigan Shores chapter of the STC.

Statement from Andrea L. Ames Candidate for STC Second Vice President

In response to inquiries and requests from several chapters' leaders for an article about my candidacy for STC Second Vice President, I'd like to share my thoughts with you about our future—yours, mine, STC's, and the future of the technical communication industry as a whole—and why I want to continue to serve you on the STC Board of Directors for the next four years. As you might know, the candidate elected to the office of Second Vice President will serve for one year in that position and will then serve one year each as First Vice President, President, and Immediate Past President. This is an important vote, and I hope this article enables you to make an informed decision when you cast your ballot.

If you have any questions about me or my candidacy, feel free to contact me at andrea@verbal-imagery.com. You can also visit my Web site (www.verbal-imagery.com) for postings of recent chapter-meeting presentations and other information.

The Vision

If elected, I will work for the next four years to raise our strategic value—both as individuals and as an industry—to the organizations for which we work.

My vision for the industry is one in which:

- Our main goal is to ensure users' success—not necessarily to write documentation or to coerce our users to read documentation.
- We design and develop information to enable users to use products—not to fill in for the deficiencies in product design.

In other words, in this vision of the future we will no longer define ourselves by the information products (manuals, help, etc.) we deliver—nor the tools we use to develop them. Instead, our employers will recognize the value we bring to the products and information we design and develop. Think about it: The real value we bring is not the documents we develop but users' increased success! My goal is to work to help the organizations in and with which we work understand this and help enable them to get the most value from us.

As I've traveled around the country speaking with

members, I've met many of you who share this vision. From my 17+ years of experience in the industry, my vast network of associates, and the strategic work I've done with various kinds of organizations, I'm convinced that this is the right vision. The question remains: How will it happen?

The Implementation

The move toward this vision has already begun—primarily via STC. As our new mission statement proclaims, we are certainly “designing the future of technical communication.” STC is one of the most valuable and powerful tools we have, and our work in STC is one of the most important contributions we can make to our own careers. The power of many, the visibility of a large and well-respected professional organization, and vision and leadership are the ingredients that will change the face of our industry.

To do this, I want to work with the Society as I have during my 15-year STC career to enable members of our industry to become leaders and to be recognized for that leadership—particularly within our organizations and among our employers' and clients' industries. Working with the Board of Directors, committee managers, and chapter leaders, I can support and maintain important programs—like branding and governance—that are already working to move us in this direction. I can also work with other leaders to devise new initiatives to raise the visibility of STC and our industry, as well as help our employers and clients further recognize our value.

Why Me?

Not one to sit around and wait for someone else to take the lead, I've spent most of the past four to five years working to begin changing our industry to fit my vision. In my own career, I have focused on learning and developing skills, technologies, and tools to design and develop information for products and user experiences, rather than documentation deliverables. I am a technical communicator specializing in audience analysis, information and interaction design for product user interfaces and online assistance, usability, and user-centered product and information design and development process.

To assist others in the effort to move toward the future, I've acted as a mentor, teacher, and educa-

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Statement from Andrew Malcolm Candidate for STC Secretary

First, I'd like to ask you to vote for me for Secretary of STC. There's an old tale of a candidate who thanked his friend for voting for him, but his friend said, "I didn't vote for you." When asked why he said, "You never asked me and your opponent asked me and I said 'yes.'" Consider yourself asked.

I hope you will read the word-limited text that each STC member will receive with the ballot, and I'll try not to repeat that here.

The responsibilities of Secretary of STC are delineated in STC Bylaws (§IV.2.D) to be found in the annual directory issue of Technical Communication:

- [1] The duties are as-you suspect-to prepare, distribute and maintain the minutes of Society, Board and Executive Council meetings.
- [2] The Secretary also conducts official correspondence.
- [3] The Secretary is a member of both the Board and the Executive Council and in those rôles is responsible to vote upon the issues brought before the Board or Council (§IV.2 and §IV.8).
- [4] There are also the traditional rôles of [a] Manager of the Bylaws Committee as appointed by the President (§VI.1 and §VI.4.B) and [b] recorder of the discussion at the annual STC Forum.

[1] The Secretary must have the skill to record proceedings and to distill content into minutes. Thus, the Secretary needs both keyboarding and technical writing skills. My very first employment was with an office dictation equipment distributor and I acquired touch-typing skills long ago from a public school. Distilling content into understandable prose is what technical communicators do and I've won awards for technical communication. Distilling discussion into prose is a skill enhanced by experience. I've been a member of STC 38 years-the material you'll receive with the ballot tells of my STC and other professional society experience.

[2] The Secretary must from time-to-time also sign certain legal documents on behalf of the Society. Again, experience is a guide to this

essentially review function. My experience and education as a licensed real estate salesman, director of two corporations, and zoning board member have given me valuable insight into legal document language. (I was licensed in California, 1964-67, served as director of corporations owning a Rochester, NY FM radio station and a New York City theater company, and I served on two zoning boards of appeals for an aggregate of more than 10 years and chair of one for 41/2 years.)

[3] As a member of both the Board and Executive Council, the Secretary must vote on the plethora of issues that appear before those bodies. Votes are guided by experience; I've attended about a dozen Board meetings and was present (but not voting) at the meeting at which the Board accepted the resignation of Curt Youngblood, Bill Stolgitis' predecessor (ca. 1982). At that time, it was proposed to have STC managed by an organization that manages several professional societies. (STC was managed by such an organization for a year before Curt Youngblood became Executive Director.) Your officers wisely chose to have STC continue to 'steer its own ship.'

[4a] In addition to the duties specifically proscribed by the Bylaws, the secretary is often assigned by the President to oversee the work of the Bylaws Committee just as other officers are assigned other committee oversight functions and Director-Sponsors oversee the chapters. I've had a good deal of experience with bylaw establishment and revision in other organizations including the rather extensive bylaw creation and revision of the English Department at the Rochester Institute of Technology where I worked for 29 years.

[4b] A minor but significant traditional function of Secretary is the recording of the discussion at the annual conferences' STC Forum. At the Forum, members express their concerns and opinions-often passionately. Without minutes of these meetings, important issues and articulately expressed viewpoints might be lost. I pledge to accurately distill these discussions.

After having read all of that, I think you might ask, "what are your positions on various issues?" I would answer that I believe that STC should stay the course. We must be doing a lot of things right,

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Statement from Guy K. Haas Candidate for STC Secretary

I am a candidate for Secretary of the STC because I believe communication and attention to detail are vital.

The STC could do a better job of communicating with its membership. The Board of Directors does publish meeting summaries in a timely fashion, but sometimes upcoming decisions are not well-publicized. In most chapters, it is not difficult to attend a council meeting and keep abreast of issues. At the international level, the members have more limited access. The STC Forum at the annual conference is a once-a-year chance to raise issues and engage in dialog, and the cost of participating is rather high unless you live nearby. I suggest that we need an electronic venue where members can discuss matters that will come before the Board—not award decisions, grants, and the like, but such items as certification, collaboration with other organizations, technical communications education, and member benefits. The Board or the staff could post a discussion topic, provide some background information, and allow interested members to ask questions and share viewpoints before the Board makes its decisions.

During the last three decades, I have served on the boards, councils, and bylaws committees of several organizations, including social and alumni groups, homeowners organizations, school and school district organizations, and my STC chapter. I often have served as secretary, as treasurer, as webmaster, and sometimes as presiding officer. Most of these bodies have had legal requirements about record keeping and reporting. I have sometimes drafted and often edited and amended the bylaws of the organizations in which I participated. Before becoming a technical communicator, I was a software developer, and served for several years on two programming language standards committees of the American National Standards Institute (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology). Please allow me to bring my detail-orientation to the office of STC Secretary.

You can reach me by e-mail at gkhaas@usa.net.

TC-PUBS (continued from page 2)

and encourage them to subscribe? And, would you consider subscribing yourself?

Subscribers will, of course, receive all messages about new publications that are posted to the list. Additionally, during the pilot period we will be requesting your comments on content, structure, and value of the listserv, as well as information on the tools you use to access the service. At the end of the pilot period, we will evaluate the listserv to determine if the service should be continued.

Those interested in subscribing should send email to me at durackk@muohio.edu or send a message to the list (TC-PUBS@listserv.muohio.edu). The list is moderated, and I will be adding subscribers to the list as I receive requests. Announcements to the list will begin in January, after the Spring semester begins.

Thank you for your help,

Katherine Durack (durackk@muohio.edu)

Advisor, Miami University STC

Laurent - Vision (continued from page 1)

With these strategies, and with experienced leadership and guidance, STC can become the catalyst that enables technical communicators to achieve the professional status they have earned. And when that is accomplished, we will have fulfilled my vision for STC to become an organization whose members feel that the Society is absolutely essential to their profession!

I believe that I am the candidate who is most qualified to provide the leadership necessary to achieve this vision for STC. This article does not provide the space for me to properly describe the experience and personal traits that qualify me, but you may find out more about my qualifications by visiting my Web site at <http://pages.prodigy.net/slaurent> or by sending me an e-mail at slaurent@prodigy.net.

Director Sponsor Notes

By Mike Bates, STC Region 4 Director-Sponsor

Looking around the Region

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a wonderful and relaxing holiday. The holidays are an important tie to slow down and relax with their families and friends. It goes without saying that 2001 was an interesting year. This year was a challenge for all of us. STC has become more important to some of us and maybe less for others. As I read the Board reports from your chapter's presidents. I notice that many of you have done an incredible job keeping your chapters alive. You have worked with others in your area to ensure that the meeting topics are interesting and that you were there to answer questions and share your ideas.

Thank you.

In case you didn't know, every four months, your chapter president sends me a summary of what you have been up to as a chapter. The reports include information about your chapter's recent successes and accomplishments. Here's a sample of what has been going on around the region.

Successes

- * Holding professional/student chapter meetings has given students an opportunity to meet with professionals and ask questions.
- * Idea Watch has proven to be a very successful means of sharing information among chapter members.
- * Establishing and maintaining an active chapter listserv.
- * Holding art, online, and publications competitions
- * Increasing member attendance at our local meetings since May 2001.
- * Holding consistent administrative council meetings every month.
- * Moving a paper-based newsletter online.

- * Completing a successful student-chapter membership drives.
- * Holding teleconferences in-lieu of face-to-face meetings has proven very beneficial to our members.

Challenges

- * Finding a chapter newsletter editor. Getting a newsletter out using limited resources.
- * Locating a meeting location. Due to recent company downsizing, we are losing our meeting space and need to find a new place to hold our monthly meetings.
- * Managing a chapter on a small budget.
- * Finding and retaining volunteers.
- * Getting a newsletter article from our director-sponsor! <grin>

If there is something here that is interesting to you let me know. One of my goals as your director-sponsor is to better facilitate communication across the region. It starts by sharing ideas with STC members outside the bounds of your chapter.

If you are interested in learning about one of the items mentioned above, let me know. You don't have to be an officer to take action.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mike is the Manager of Information Architecture at Rockwell Automation and Region 4 Director-Sponsor. He can be reached at mpbates@software.rockwell.com.

Malcom (continued from page 5)

or we would not have had our tremendous expansion in membership and annual conference attendance. When I joined STC, née STWP, our 'office' was the dining room of our executive director and his secretary was his wife. Conferences attracted a few hundred attendees, and conference program managers accepted papers to assure that presenters added to attendance! All

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tional certificate coordinator to:

- Design programs and courses around these skills and technologies.
- Impart to my students strategies and problem-solving skills so that they can participate in this new world.
- Guide those asking for assistance to develop their careers in similar directions.

I've spoken at many STC chapter meetings, regional conferences, and annual conferences, and met many of you—the members of our industry. My presentations are aimed toward helping you make career development choices that increase your value to the industry and to your employers and clients. I've encouraged you to:

- Think outside the traditional documentation box.
- Evangelize usability and user-centered design and development techniques within your organization.
- Participate in your organization's design and development process at a strategic level.

I used my term as Director-Sponsor (1998-2001) to learn as much about you and the Society as possible. Understanding how our organization works enables me to influence STC's direction and effect change. I've also participated very actively in two very important Society initiatives:

- Integrated branding
- Governance

The results of these programs are already permeating the Society and changing the way we do business. From the Board of Directors to the Society Office to Society-level committees to chapters to members, everyone will feel the impact of these very positive changes.

I've also served the Society extensively in other international-level positions and at the regional, local and chapter levels. Details follow in "About Andrea: Andrea's STC Awards and Service."

And although I've spent a lot of time talking to

members of the profession, I also draw from extensive experience of my own in the corporate world, academia, and government—both as a direct employee and as a consultant.

I hope you'll consider the future of your career and what you would like from your professional organization. Then I urge you to vote, as your vote does make a difference!

About Andrea

Andrea L. Ames, M.S., is a technical communicator specializing in user-centered product interface and online information architecture and design, interaction design, and usability. She has more than 17 years of experience designing, developing, and producing usable technical and scientific information for products, software user interfaces, multimedia and online information systems, and print documentation. Andrea is a Senior Information Developer at IBM Corporation, where she leads information development for data management products. She is a member of the STC international Board of Directors; coordinator for two University of California Extension technical communication certificates; and a published author and freelance writer. She teaches at the university level and speaks internationally at

