



## Jan White to Visit Michiana to Kickoff 2003- 2004 Season

Looking for something different in your work week? Need to charge up those creativity cells? Well look no further.

In an effort to start the 2003-2004 St. Joseph Valley meeting calendar with a “**BANG**”, the chapter has made arrangements for Jan White, well-known author and lecturer to STC members across the country, to give a half-day “mini-seminar” presentation.

This presents the chapter with a unique opportunity. Since the meeting is open to all interested parties on a reservation only basis, this allows the chapter to both present timely and pertinent information to STC Chapter members and to bring the presence of the chapter to the attention of area professionals, business and educational institutions.

So what is it all about? We'll let Jan say a few words himself:

The frantic competition for attention demands a new mind-set. The axioms and “supposed-tos” that were in place when we came to our jobs or we learned in journalism or art school don't work well enough any more. They must be replaced by a different attitude in which personalized persuasion plays the key role. We flatter ourselves that we are in “publishing”—an intellectual art form—but the reality is that we exist because we are a service whose goal is speed and efficiency of communication.

Our job is to sell intelligence. That is why we must bridge the chasm between the editing and designing functions, melding content with form, the words with the graphic presentation. We must manipulate our verbal/visual materials to make our product inviting (so they want to enter), obviously in their interest (so they want to peruse it), and vivid and apt (so they understand and remember it).

Therefore, the design has to display the nuggets of information to make the product irresistible, not as a splashy technique grafted onto the page just to catch attention, but as a functional lubricant to slip ideas off the page into their minds.

The examples in this presentation will deal with the full spectrum of practical verbo/visual techniques to be exploited for the sake of that speed and efficiency: contrast, space, flow, type as speech made visible, the physical aspect of our product, legends as snare elements, and especially color as a functional raw material.

This presentation is open to writers, designers, communication managers—anyone interested in creating more effective printed communication.

For details please see page 4.

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WEBSITE: [www.stc-sjvc.org](http://www.stc-sjvc.org)

## President's Column

*By Kirsten Klassen*

The planning committee for our chapter of STC met in June to make recommendations for filling positions and discuss ideas for meetings this next year.

Bethany Rusbasan has concluded her term as president. We are grateful to her for the two years she served as president and the two years before that as president-elect. Bethany has been a loyal supporter of the chapter and we're glad she will continue to advise us from her position as past president (and she's wondering if it will ever end!).

At the meeting, I volunteered to be president for a two-year term. Mark Stucky is willing to serve as president-elect, while also serving as webmaster. Bethany will handle public relations this year, replacing Barb Wellnitz (who has returned to Indianapolis on assignment). Gary Futoma will continue as treasurer, and Ralph Rumpf as newsletter editor. This list is what we're proposing. If anyone else would like one of these coveted positions, we would be happy to either secede or to share the responsibilities. Please contact me if you have any concerns or suggestions about the slate of officers for this year.

Thank you to Mark, Barb, Gary, and Ralph for your important roles in keeping the chapter going. Each of you has made a unique contribution that has not gone unnoticed.

We are looking forward to an interesting year of meetings. The first three meetings are scheduled, and we're checking out some other possibilities for the rest of the year. We'll keep you informed as plans are finalized.

Thanks also to Joseph Warren, professor at Andrews University, for offering to host a meeting on the campus in Berrien Springs. We're excited at the prospect of opening the world of technical communications to students.

### 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

Well, we're back again. Apologies for the long hiatus. Too much going on in too short a time. Hopefully, things are now under control. So, what's been happening?

As you can see, Bethany's tenure as chapter President ended this past July. Since we were in a little disarray at the end of last spring we also missed what should have been our annual officer elections. Not the proper thing to do, but we have always been a flexible chapter, to say the least.

Fortunately, we've had some volunteers step up to fill a gap in officer's list. At this year's Officers Meeting, Kirsten Klassen and Mark Stucky volunteered to fill the President and President-Elect positions and Bethany Rusbasan agreed to replace Barbara Wellnitz as the Chapter Public Relations person. Kirsten and Mark have both served as the chapter president previously. We have a unique history as a chapter; Presidents are often called to serve more than once. (Why do you think I'm staying here?)

The officer's voted to accept their offers and to retain the remaining officer positions. If the general chapter membership is concerned, or disapproves, we can hold elections to vote on the contested positions. Just contact one of the officers listed on page one to voice your concerns.

You will find a new chapter member roster included with this newsletter. If you find your contact information is incorrect and needs updating, please contact the *Watermark* editor. Also, remember that member information is considered confidential and is not to be used in any manner without the approval of the individual member. Please check your e-mail address closely. Send updated information to the *Watermark* editor.

If we do not have your e-mail address, it would be very helpful if you would provide it. We often use e-mail to send special notices and information to our members and it is a great way to provide meeting change information on short notice. We may not be able to contact you otherwise if the need arises.

As you can see, we are kicking off the 2003-2004 meeting year in a big way. Jan White is coming into town to give a half-day seminar presentation. Details can be found on page 1 and page 4.

This is a first for our chapter (at least for as far back as I can remember). We have talked about trying something like this a number of times but were often hampered by a lack of funds and volunteers to help with the administration of the event. This seems to be the best of both worlds as the administration is relatively straightforward and if we get the participation we hope for, we should break even. If we are successful I am certain we will be open to conducting more mini-seminars in the future. If you have any thoughts on this or know of presenters who would be of general interest to the chapter and area professionals, call one of your chapter officers and let them know.

As with other first issues, you will also find a listing of planned meetings for this year. Some dates and times are tentative and will be firmed up as the year progresses.

We are also trying something else new this year. Last spring, the chapter was approached by Professor Joseph Warren from Andrews University about the possibility of collaborating on some presentations. Professor Warren teaches some technical writing classes at Andrews and wants to give his students a look at real world technical writers. We will be holding a general panel discussion about technical writing at the meeting in October in collaboration with Andrews.

As we start a new year, I ask all of you to at least consider the possibility of providing an article on some relevant topic to your newsletter.

Your newsletter provides a unique venue for sharing experiences, professional insights and general knowledge with other members of the chapter. It also is a resource that can help each of us grow as professionals.

I have toyed with the idea of a column that focused on everyday problem solving in the technical writing arena, from software to techniques. If you would like to share your experience and insight, please feel free to let me know; I can make room.

## September Meeting

### Meeting Details

**Date:** Thursday, September 11,

**Time:** 1-5 p.m. Optional dinner afterwards.

**Presenter/Host:** Mr. Jan White, see side-bar at right.

**Topic:** Editing and Designing Today

**Place:** Tippecanoe Place ([www.tippe.com](http://www.tippe.com)) ballroom, 620 W. Washington St., South Bend, IN 46601-1444, 574-234-9077. See map and directions on the Tippecanoe Website ([www.tippe.com/directions.html](http://www.tippe.com/directions.html)).

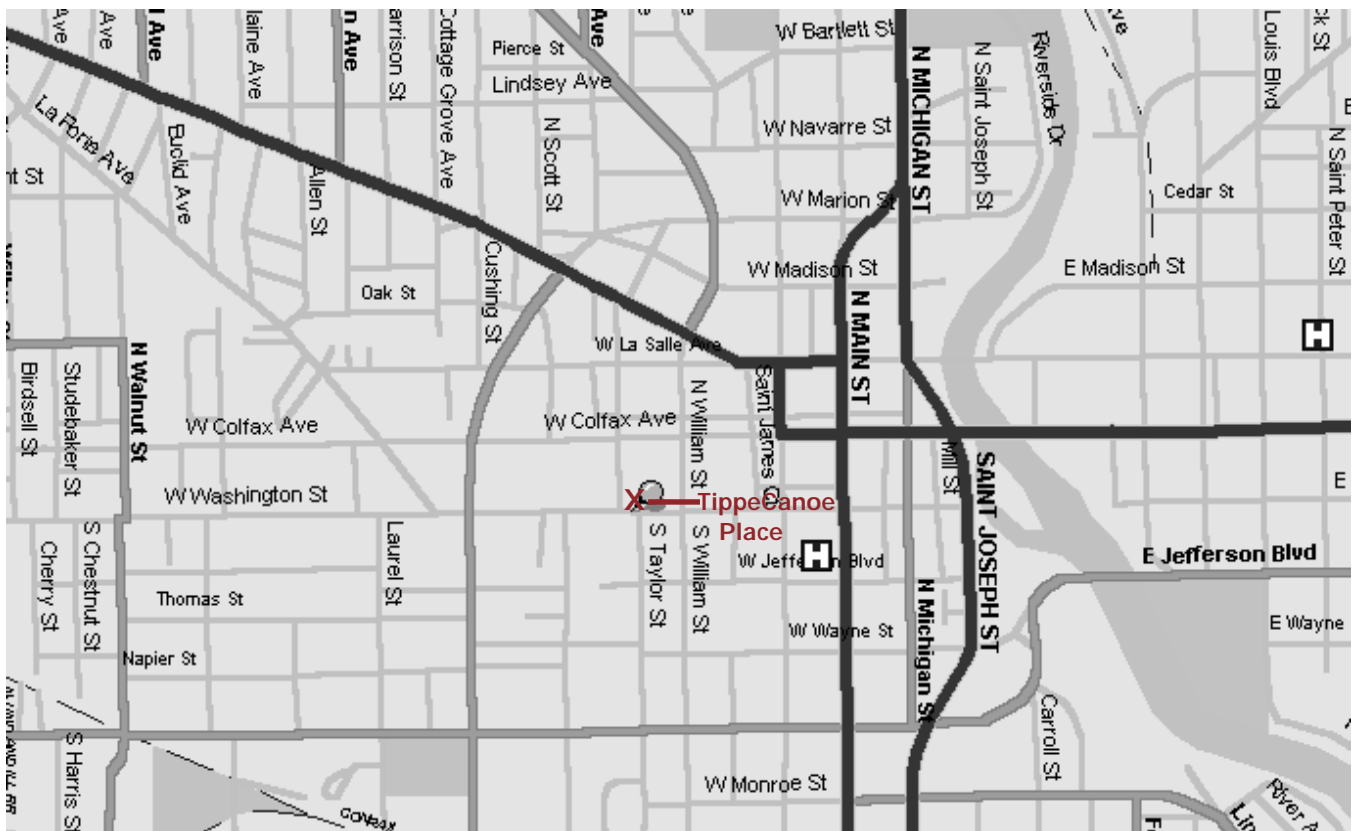
**Cost:** \$50 for the afternoon (dinner not included). Registration checks can be mailed in advance to: Gary Futoma, Treasurer, 17409 Barryknoll Way, Granger, IN 46530. Registration payment will also be accepted at the door, but you must still make a reservation in advance.

**RSVP:** By Sept. 8 to Kirsten Klassen, by phoning 574-533-9511 (800-348-7468) ext. 432 or by emailing [kirsten.klassen@mma-online.org](mailto:kirsten.klassen@mma-online.org).

### About our presenter:

Jan White is a communication design consultant who lectures worldwide on the relationship of graphics to editing. He has given more than 1,800 seminars in 27 countries. As consultant, his goal is to persuade word-people to think visually and visual people to think verbally. Architect by training, he was with Time Inc for 13 years, then established his own publication-design firm in 1964. Since 1984 he has concentrated on consulting with publishing companies and editorial organizations, working with editors and designers at the professional level. He developed the graphics for Xerox Publishing Standards and worked with Kodak and other companies on their technical documentation. He is author of a dozen books on visual techniques in publishing. The completely new third edition of his classic *Editing by Design* is due out in September, and the third edition of *Graphic Idea Notebook* will follow in May 2004. (See [www.allworth.com](http://www.allworth.com)). He lives in Westport, CT and can be reached at [janvw2@aol.com](mailto:janvw2@aol.com).

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## Blogging for Dollars:

### Using A Blog to Market Yourself, Your Writing, and More

*By Scott Abel with additional contribution by Lisa Woods. Both are members of the Hoosier chapter.*

Finding yourself unemployed in these less-than-desirable economic times is frightening, to say the least. In recent years, sharing your resume with a few recruiters was all that was needed to uncover new, better opportunities. The market was flooded with openings, and jobs were seemingly abundant. But times have changed. Today, the market is flooded with applicants. Recruiters from a wide variety of firms are fighting to fill the same jobs. Money is tight. Competition is fierce.

There are a variety of ways to market yourself on the Internet. You can – and should – post your resume to popular Internet employment sites. Recruiters often use these sites to search for candidates. Some of the best sites are well known:

monster.com  
hotjobs.com  
dice.com  
careerbuilder.com

And some lesser-known sites are also helpful:

computerjobs.com  
cybercoders.com  
thingamajob.com

Another tactic is to post your profile to one of the many professional and technical writing web sites:

TECHWR-L.com  
writerfind.com  
sologig.com  
creativemoonlighter.com

Local and national STC websites also provide job listings and information about contract gigs and freelance work.

But the best way I've found to locate job leads and to differentiate myself from the rest of the pack is to create a weblog that showcases my professional experience, my writing, and some of the activities in my professional life

that make me attractive to employers.

### What in the heck is a weblog?

In a recent article entitled "Getting Through the Blog! Living in the Blog-Osphere," Janie Payne of the Montana Chapter of STC, described weblogs (also known as blogs) as "personal web pages containing short, frequently updated messages - often with links to other items or articles on the Web - arranged in reverse chronological order, newest first." Payne says "Blogs are usually maintained by one person (although some blogging software allows multiple contributors) and are written in a conversational manner. There are blogs about cats, knitting, TV shows, baseball, life in the Antarctic - you name the topic, and there is probably a blog devoted to it."

The folks at blogger.com, a software provider whose offerings include a popular weblog publishing tool of the same name, offer a similar description of blogs, but add, "Weblogs help small groups communicate in a way that is simpler and easier to follow than email or discussion forums. A blog can help keep everyone in the loop, promote cohesiveness and group culture, and provide an informal 'voice' of a project or department to outsiders." And some blogs stimulate dialogue by providing a way for readers to comment on what they read.

In a nutshell, a blog is a place for an individual or group to present current information, insights, and links for others with similar interests. A blog can be as formal or informal as you like, and with a little savvy you can ensure it's indexed by search engines, it's a great tool to increase your visibility to potential employers and your peers. Most blogs can also be "private" which means that while the content is not publicly viewable or searchable, you can grant access to only certain people, such as potential employers.

### So how will I know a blog when I see it?

The best way to learn what a weblog is (and is not) is to visit some good examples created by technical communicators.

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## My Not-So-Gentle Reminder

*By: Carol Zollinger, Northeast Ohio Chapter*

Each time I go to the annual conference, I go with expectations. I'll learn a lot. I'll find at least one fabulous session that, by itself, was worth coming for. I'll stay up nearly all night, at least once, talking to friends that I only see once a year. (Which of course makes it exceedingly difficult to get up for the following morning's session, but is definitely worth it. I can even justify this professionally - read on.) I've never been disappointed in the past, and I wasn't this year, either.

This year, however, is the first year I noticed a theme that seemed to be directed specifically at me. Either all of the presenters have been spying on me and decided to teach me a lesson, or I was feeling guilty about something, because I got nailed to the wall. The guilt thing seems more likely, but it's just so much easier to maintain righteous indignation if it's someone else's fault, so I have decided that they were spying on me.

I went to a session about estimating time for projects. They talked about metrics, and project management techniques, and networking within client companies. Then I went to a session where a panel of experienced technical communicators dispensed advice, told us funny stories, and answered any nosy questions we came up with about their careers. And told us to network. Then I went to a progression for independent contractors and consultants. They talked about job boards and marketing and networking and contracts and networking. Oh, and networking. Then I looked at my schedule and I saw that I myself had conspired against me and scheduled me for a networking luncheon. What was I thinking?

Besides, I said to myself, I know I have to network! Everybody knows you have to network. This is not a new concept. And after I chewed on this for a while, I sat myself down and gave myself a good talking to. (If only my mother knew that I do this for myself, she could stop intervening. But I digress.)

Young lady, I said, you have not attended one

chapter meeting since you relocated from the Hoosier chapter in September. That's eight months! I don't care that it takes awhile to get to the meetings, or that you were too busy, that you were too tired, or that you just didn't feel like facing a crowd of people that night. There is just no excuse! No, don't even try to argue with me. No excuse! (Do you see how my mother is with me even when she's not? I'm digressing again, aren't I?)

And ultimately, there is no excuse. We all know why. You build relationships. Those relationships lead to more relationships. These relationships lead to new ideas, new jobs, new ways to handle the stressors of your job, and new information about software and other tools. The list goes on and on.

My new resolve after the annual conference got me to the May meeting of the Northeast Ohio Chapter, though the gentle reminders from some very excellent chapter leaders may have helped. And do you know, networking isn't even so bad? I actually enjoyed myself! It's kind of like exercising. Takes me forever to drag my lazy self out to do it, and when I'm doing it I think, "Well, you know, this is kind of nice. Why did I wait so long?" (Please note that running is an exception to this rule. Running has always been at least as bad as I thought it would be.)

The problem, of course, is that the metaphor keeps working. Like exercising, no one can do your networking for you. STC can help by providing great program meetings, networking luncheons, an annual conference every year, and, if you are very lucky, your own personal reminder system via friends in the chapter. But nobody can actually show up for you. We all have to show up ourselves. And again, like exercising, it's not enough to just show up. We have to talk to people, listen, and share information. We all have to make new acquaintances, and stay up all night talking to the ones we already have. (See? I told you I could justify that. I can justify anything. Next time you are explaining an expensive new kitchen gadget or another power tool to your significant other, you call me. I can help.) We all have experiences or information that somebody else can use. Chances are, somebody else at this very moment has the information that you could

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## Not so Gentle... (continued from page 6)

use.

I don't really like to think of myself as thick, but I had to be hit over the head with the intellectual equivalent of a two by four to remember what I needed to be doing. Hopefully, by sharing my own reminder, I'll prevent some of you from needing your own. So, I hope to be meeting all of you, or seeing you again, at chapter events in the upcoming months. And if I myself am not there like I said I would be, you have my permission to drag out the two by four again, and apply it liberally.

*This article first appeared in the July/August 2003 issue of "Lines and Letters", the North-east Ohio Chapter newsletter.*

## **St. Joseph Valley STC Meeting Schedule Announced**

The St. Joseph Valley Officers propose the following dates and topics for the 2003 - 2004 meeting schedule:

**Sept. 11** - Jan White, "Editing and Designing Today." A half-day, "mini-seminar" presentation. (See page 1 and Page 4.)

**Oct. 16** - "Technical Writing as a Profession" a panel discussion hosted by Prof. Joseph Warren of Andrews University.

**Nov. 17** - "Developing an Ad Campaign" a presentation by Bill Robinson, Creative Director for MMA

**Feb. 11** - "Mapping Information" a presentation by Mark Stucky.

**Mar. 16** - TBA

**Apr. 29** - TBA

While there are meeting topics under consideration for the TBA dates, the chapter is always open to member suggestions about new topics. If you would like a presentation dealing with a specific topic, please contact a chapter officer with the topic and likely presenters to help us facilitate the meeting.

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## Blogging (continued from page 5)

Guy K. Haas maintains a weblog entitled Some Thoughts on Communication. Haas created this unofficial STC blog to provide a forum for discussion of matters of interest to members of STC.

The Creative Tech Writer: The Meaning of Life is in the Manual is another excellent blog maintained by "Jenny" (no last name provided). Jenny waxes poetic on subjects, including why she hates reading the STC journal Technical Communication.

Perhaps the best example of a weblog maintained by a technical communicator is ID Blog the official blog of the STC Information Design SIG maintained by Beth Mazur. Mazur discusses usability, design and anything else that catches her attention, and her writing is crisp, as is the look of the site itself. Links are interesting and provocative.

Darren Barefoot, a technical writer, uses his blog to highlight his skill set and experience.

Another useful resource for those seeking to understand weblogs can be found in the March/April 2003 issue of MetroVoice, the Newsletter of New York Metro Society for Technical Communication. The author, Lisa Young, explores why technical writers Blog on the side.

### **The Content Wrangler**

I created my blog, The Content Wrangler, to help me market myself. It's basically an online portfolio that I can modify on-the-fly from wherever I may be, as long as I'm connected to the net. The site is home to my resume, articles and book reviews I've written, details about classes I've taught, presentations I've given, etc. I direct recruiters and prospects to my site so they can better understand my skill set, writing ability, involvement in industry groups, etc. And, I include a link to my site in the signature line of every email I send, thereby giving my site (and me) additional exposure. This is a particularly valuable marketing tactic if you participate in online discussion groups or listservs in which your weblog address may be seen by hundreds, perhaps thousands of others.

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## Blogging (continued from page 7)

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### Things to keep in mind

If you decide to create a blog to promote yourself professionally, leave the personal stuff out. While blogs traditionally have been soapboxes for the opinionated, your professional blog should be on topic and should present you in the same “voice” you’d use with a human interviewer. Discuss anything you’d feel comfortable covering in an interview, but remember that as a marketing tool your blog may well be the first exposure a recruiter has to your experience and personality—and you want him or her to like what’s there enough to get in touch. Your blog is your chance to show off your professional accomplishments (preferably with online examples), to demonstrate your expertise in entries that describe how you solved problems, and potentially to share links to resources that may be of use to others. If you’re lucky, your blog will become a resource for fellow technical communicators because it contains info that’s valuable to them, and their attention in turn will result in greater visibility for you with employers. Be sure to feature your contact information (email) prominently on the site, and update the content regularly to promote a loyal readership and to indicate to readers that it’s a current project to which they can respond.

### Getting Started

Many blogging tools are free or provide free trials—test drive several and figure out what works for you. The key thing to realize is that you don’t have to be a web guru to get your blog up and running—many of the blog tools out there target those with little or no experience coding html. You can then learn as much or as little about coding as you choose. And most blogs are to a degree customizable, so as your experience and creativity grow you can give your blog a facelift with custom graphics, edit and apply cascading style sheets, and experiment with features such as calendars and mailing lists.

I purchased pMachine blogging software, a web-based blog creation tool that met my criteria for ease of use, cost and functionality. PMachine Support is friendly and the docu-

mentation is thorough, so when I have a problem it gets resolved fast. Plus I can manage my blog entries, post to my blog from my email account, and change the look and feel of the site. You may find another blogging software package better meets your needs—the best way to know is to research what’s available.

Whether you’re currently employed or job-hunting, a blog is a great way to capture and store writing, samples of your work and resources that catch your eye. And even if you’re not currently looking for a position, it can be a good way to network in the technical communication community. Blogging is inexpensive, and you’ll develop new (marketable!) skills while you’re doing it.

### About the Authors:

Scott Abel (abelsp@netdirect.net) is a content management strategist who assists his clients in planning and preparing for content management initiatives. Scott is a frequent presenter at industry and professional service seminars, an instructor at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis Community Learning Network, and President of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), Hoosier Chapter.

Lisa Woods is a consultant to the pharmaceutical and insurance industries who specializes in computer system validation, regulatory compliance, and making unwieldy documentation manageable, useful, and compliant. Contact her at [Idealanwoods@hotmail.com](mailto:Idealanwoods@hotmail.com).

## September Meeting (continued from page 4)

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**Additional Dinner Opportunity:** If you would like to stay after the event and have an informal group dinner with Jan, you are welcome to do so, but you must make a reservation in advance. Everyone will pay for their own dinner.

**More Information:** See updated information about this seminar on the St. Joseph Valley chapter’s web site:

[www.stc-sjvc.org/meetings.htm](http://www.stc-sjvc.org/meetings.htm).

For more information about the Society for Technical Communication, see [www.stc-sjvc.org/techcomm.htm](http://www.stc-sjvc.org/techcomm.htm) and [www.stc.org/](http://www.stc.org/).