



Wading Through the Web

by Dean Liscum, Information Developer at BMC Software, Inc.

Conceive of a problem and the Web is the solution. E-mail, e-meetings, e-schools, e-business. Have a question? The Web has the answer. Yes, but where? Can you find it in 5 minutes? An hour? 24 hours?

Humble Beginnings

The Web started out as the Internet. It started out as a network that spanned continents as opposed to cubicles. It connected universities and government agencies. Its purpose was to facilitate communication, to share information through e-mail and the exchange of text files. And it did.

But someone pushed it. Someone wanted more. First came pictures, then sound. Next came animation and movies, and finally everything. Then somebody, probably a salesperson or the significant other of a salesperson, said, "Now that we have access to everything, let's sell it and make a profit." And so they're trying. Entrepreneurs and engineers are making things up as fast as they can, but in the end, it's all data: sights and sounds and maybe smells soon.

Purists will tell you that it's really about information, but it's not. If it

were, librarians would rule the world; as it is, they can barely keep the elementary school kids at bay. Regardless of its origin, the Internet is increasingly about money. Directly or indirectly, every buzzword related to the Web can trace its origins to the almighty dollar.

Take the latest life-saving invention: online shopping. It protects you from inclement weather, drunken drivers, sociopaths in strip malls, air pollution, and a host of social diseases, to name a few of its benefits. But online shopping is nothing more than catalogue shopping that takes advantage of the latest technologies. Sears and Roebuck invented the concept of convenient shopping from home more than 100 years ago. The Internet is just the latest technology to help retailers cut costs. It allows them to eliminate the catalogues and the customer service representatives that processed order forms or telephone orders. The genius of e-biz is in making shoppers enter the order and then convincing them that online data entry is a convenience, not a chore. Tom Sawyer would be proud.

.whatever

The Web's structure is based on its original audience and its original owner, the United States' Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The Internet Assigned Numbers Association (www.iana.org) doles out the names now. Others, like the World Wide Web Consortium (www.w3.org), help manage the Web and develop standards. IANA divides the domain namespace into two categories: generic domains and country code domains. A site's domain name reflects the type of

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Dateline Houston

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(The membership directory password is homer+wagner.)

Editor's Notes

Note: Attend Banquet Next Year

by Verna Dunn, Information Developer at BMC Software, Inc.

How did you spend Friday, January 21? Approximately 150 members of the STC Houston chapter attended the annual awards banquet at the Westchase Hilton Hotel. I was among those who attended and, as always, I enjoyed the evening. For those of you who did not attend, I thought I would share some of the reasons that I recommend attending the banquet.

The banquet offers an opportunity to socialize. I bumped into some old friends; I had the opportunity to visit with some of my current friends and coworkers in a relaxed, festive atmosphere; and I made a few new acquaintances. I ran into one classmate I had not seen since graduation, and I caught up with friends whom I worked with elsewhere and whom I seldom see anymore. It was great to catch up and reminisce.

As we all do, I am always looking for ways to improve my documentation. The display of winning entries offered a unique opportunity to view what other companies and information developers do and how they do it. There were some terrific examples of technical documentation among the winning entries from this year's publication, online, and art competitions, and the annual awards banquet offers one of only a few opportunities to view those great examples.

For those looking for a job, the banquet offered a great networking opportunity. There's something about an awards banquet that attracts management; I saw more managers, those with the power to hire, at the annual banquet than I've seen at any of our other events this year.

If I were looking for a potential employee (or coworker), the banquet would have been the place to look. The annual banquet draws more members than any other event that STC Houston sponsors throughout the year, and this year was no exception. Recently, a member asked me whether I knew anyone who could fill a managerial position with his company. He was looking for someone who had the ability to plan, develop and implement documentation using the latest technology. I asked him, "Are you going to the banquet?" He wasn't, and he didn't, so he missed out. STC Houston offers networking possibilities all year, but the annual banquet offers the best opportunity to meet information developers and to view the work that they had a hand in developing.

I enjoyed the opportunity to view the competition. I overheard some say that they felt their (unentered) work was better than or just as good as that of the winners. Seeing the competition gave some the confidence to consider entering the competition next year. Not that any of the winners were less than deserving; they were all excellent. But you'll never know how yours measures up unless you join in. It doesn't hurt your business (or your salary) to have a few awards hanging in the lobby or reception area of your place of business—or in your portfolio.

I enjoyed applauding friends and colleagues who did enter and win. It's good to see your friends succeed. It's also nice to be there for them—it encourages them to be there for you.

See you next year?

Chapter President's Comments

Celebrating Distinguished Service

by Janette Sexton-Shahout, Contract Writer on Assignment at Nuforia, Inc.



It gives me great pleasure to announce the recipients of the Distinguished Chapter Service Awards for 1999–2000: John Reynolds III, and Nicole Smart-Wycislo. Through the years, both individuals have consistently been active in the STC Houston Chapter.

John joined STC in August 1991 and served as chapter treasurer from 1993 to 1996. The chapter continues to operate and thrive under the financial guidelines that he instituted.

Ever attracted to technological challenges, John spearheaded the chapter Web site project and served as chapter webmaster from 1996–98. For his many contributions to the chapter, John received the Innovator of the Year award for 1997–98.

In 1998 John planned and implemented our online membership directory. Each quarter, he posts the directory to our Web site as a downloadable, password-protected file. This idea saves the chapter a significant amount of printing and postage costs and makes member contact information more accessible and useful to our members.

While implementing our online membership directory, John began serving as our database manager. Last summer he implemented another innovation—seamlessly integrating the membership database with other forms of communication.

Citation: Your innovation, ability to meet technological challenges, and desire to improve the effectiveness of member and chapter activities have enabled the chapter to flourish in a changing, technological environment.

Nicole joined STC in October 1992 and has been an active leader as long as she has been a member of our profession. She has served on many chapter committees and was a director from 1997–99.

While a student at the University of Houston-Downtown in 1992, she helped organize the Professional Writing student group. She managed the Student committee of our chapter during 1993–94 and also managed several Region 5 Conference activities in 1995.

Nicole helped spearhead three important initiatives for the chapter—our chapter Web site in 1995, our 1994–96 Strategic Plan, and our Share-the-Knowledge committee from 1994–99. She also played an integral role in the chapter's recent restructuring efforts.

Currently Nicole is comanaging the Region 5 Conference 2001 committee.

Citation: Your vision, leadership, creativity, enthusiasm, and genuine interest in people have consistently nourished the chapter and its volunteers and have enabled the chapter to flourish in an ever-changing environment.

We celebrate these two Distinguished Chapter Service Award winners. Their dedicated service is an inspiration to us all. Please join me in congratulating John and Nicole for their distinguished service to the STC Houston Chapter.

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Wading Through the Web

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organization that owns the site. Generic domain codes include

- .gov—government entities
- .edu—educational facilities
- .com—for-profit enterprises
- .org—non-profit organizations
- .net—network providers
- .mil—U.S. military organizations

For all the Web's anywhere-anytime hype, geography plays an important role. The country codes are available at a country's discretion. They range from .AC (Ascension Island) through .CA (Canada) and .UK (England) to .ZW (Zimbabwe). However, none of this structure has anything to do with the type of information you'll find on these sites. That is, unless you're into conspiracy theories. Then, you'll want to categorically avoid the .mils and .govs.

Hide and Seek

To sift through the sites, some yahoo invented the *search engine*. It wasn't Yahoo, but the chocolate soda namesake did make search engines cool and a public commodity. The concept, like that of Superman, borders on transcendent. The reality behind the concept, like "Superman" the movie, is not so elegant. Both require a lot of all-too-human intervention, not to mention the guide wires, pancake make-up, and blue tights.

Spiders, which are programs in Perl or other cross-platform languages that seek out sites on the Web and report their content, do some of the work. However, the reality is that site owners who want to get recognized register their sites with search engines. Some go so far as to buy presence in a search engine. A few,

like Google.com, swear that their searches are not tainted by human intervention. Nevertheless, their magic algorithms don't make them any easier to use than the other engines.

The problem with search engines is that the name means what it says, "search." The users, you and I, have to wade through numerous possibilities or refine and re-search. According to all the literature, you're only likely to "wade" through two or three clicks; I'll go five or six, but I cuss like a teenager after three. If you're counting, it usually takes more than three clicks to wade through the first ten hits, but it only takes one or two to get good and lost or to wind up on a porn site.

Portal or Pitfall

Next came the *portal*, which was one of those noninventions. A marketing guy noticed that the home page was a lot like a door that opened to the Web, so he decided to call it a door. Then someone, probably his boss named Matt, said, "Let's call it a door mat." The mail person heard it and said "Let us be your doormat. Oh, that'll bring 'em running." They went to www.Thesaurus.com and after careful consideration of the existing arachnid and book metaphors for the Internet, they chose a nautical term, "portal."

The portal was going to solve everybody's problems. It was going to make the Web manageable for users and funnel users to e-commerce sites where they would gladly max out their credit cards.

A portal is supposed to give you perspective. Like your front door, it's supposed to give you a point of reference, a place from which to understand the world. But it doesn't.

It blinks and whirs and oversimplifies the world into 10 or 12 categories. Putting the portal in the hands of marketing geniuses is like having a salesman as a doorman. Every time you step out the door, he's telling you that the ice cream man just passed and he's having a two-for-one special on bomb pops and if you're buying he's driving. At first it's euphoric, then it's annoying, and finally it's downright disturbing.

The portal's attempt at taxonomy is noble, but nowhere close to workable. The online world of information divided into 10 or 12 or 14 categories, none of which are exhaustive and all of which overlap, is not one we can recognize or successfully navigate. In such a world, where would one look for a computer for the family? Under *Computers? Family? Shopping? All?* The truth is you're better off searching. You'll get lost, get discouraged, develop a Zen-like satisfaction with your old computer, and save some money.

Some portals at least let you save your search by customizing your own portal. This idea, too, is a marketing gimmick backed up with a nifty Perl (or Java) script that allows you to embed a bookmark/favorite in an HTML document.

Unfortunately, this type of portal suffers from the same pitfalls that bookmarks and favorites do. As your mother probably warned you, if you choose your favorites judiciously and organize them neatly, they're a wonderful tool. However, if you gather them haphazardly, your home page will quickly resemble my garage.

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Awards Banquet Report

by Janette Sexton-Shahout, Contract Writer on Assignment at Nuforia, Inc.

The spacious ballroom of the Westchase Hilton hotel allowed for mingling and viewing the entries for the STC competition, and it provided a great view of the presentation of awards on



First-time entrant Gina Waterman and husband Ken, were thrilled with the Award of Excellence for her entry, DECAF Developers Guide.

two giant screens. The gold cloths on the tables gave a festive and special air to the evening. Attendees enjoyed the scrumptious meal.

Let me congratulate everyone involved with the banquet.

The volunteers who had helped make the competitions and the banquet successful received recognition for their efforts at the banquet. Director of Competitions Jocelyn Williams received the well-deserved Superstar Award for her unflagging, exemplary work on the competitions and the banquet.

Most importantly, Mistress of Ceremonies Melanie Flanders

ensured that the program moved at a good pace.



Jocelyn Williams receiving kudos for an outstanding evening from Ragna Case.

See you all next year!

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Outside the Box

The market-savvy folks have been on the Web, and they know what your bookmarks look like because theirs look like that too. Consequently, they're thinking outside the box—literally. They've printed their URLs in newspaper and magazine ads. They flash them on the screen during TV commercials.

Think of it: pictures, sound, and motion, and the best they can come up with is the printed words: www.forget-me-not.com. They print them on gimme-caps, bumper stickers, jewelry. Some companies have gone so far as to put their name in URL format. Why? So they won't get lost amidst the jumble of information.

And it's not just companies. It's leagues and libraries. My son's soccer league has a Web site, and

every handout I get from them reminds me of it. My local library prints out receipts that list the books checked out. The list always ends with .org.

Help Is on the Way—Maybe

The consortium (www.W3.org) consorts to create metadata, which is information about information. The metadata takes two forms: PICS (Platform for Internet Content Selection) and RDF (Resource Description Framework). PICS is a set of labels assigned to different types of information. It was devised to enable net nannies to screen unsuitable content. RDF is a declarative language. It enables information designers and authors to write statements about the properties of information and its relationships to other information on the Web.

Both of these types of metadata have potential.

The problem is that metadata resembles, in spirit if not in kind, indexes. Both types are well-designed tools that can instantaneously direct a reader or user to the exact location of the information needed. The problem is that between the potential and the actual, stands the Web author. For all its transcendency, metadata relies on humans.

Given the fact that authors of all types (Web and non-Web) often can't be bothered to develop more than a perfunctory index, can we really expect anything more from metadata?

For now, the chaos continues.

STC Houston Technical Publications, Art and Online Competitions Award Winning Entries

The STC Houston Technical Publications, Art and Online Competitions are over, and the winners in each of these three competitions are listed below. But first, here is an overview of the awards presented. The following levels of awards are presented to qualifying entries:

- Award of Merit (third place)
- Award of Excellence (second place)
- Award of Distinguished Technical Communication (first place)

While there are three levels of awards, no maximum or minimum is placed upon the number of awards presented at each level. Each entry is judged on its own merits and, therefore, all or no entries could receive an Award of Merit, an Award of Excellence, or an Award of Distinguished Technical Communication.

Judges present an Award of Distinguished Technical Communication to those entries that meet the highest standards for excellence in their category and contain few or no weaknesses. Entries that earn an Award of Distinguished Technical Communication are also entered in the STC International Competition.

After the awards are decided, one Best of Show winner is selected for each competition from among those entries that earned an Award of Distinguished Technical Communication.

Here are the awards listed by competition, by category, and by award:

Technical Publications

In Category 1, Promotional Materials, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Enterprise Data Propagation Solutions
— Valerie Delgado

E-Business Solutions
— William Davenport

Service Assurance for Baan Environments
— Dana Farver

EarthWave Ad
— Stephanie Barriault
— Kevin Donihoo

Oracle Solutions
— Valerie Delgado

SEG-Crazyman Ad
— Stephanie Barriault
— Kevin Donihoo
— Craig Mikes

Reliability—Advanced Downhole Monitoring and Reservoir Control
— Jesse Aguilar
— Jason Latts

Award of Excellence

A Corporate Desktop Solution Brochure
— Deborah DeMan

Mini Medical School Brochure
— Mary G. Havard

Oracle Applications users...Administration Headaches?
— Cheryl Garcia

PC Lifecycle Solutions Brochure
— Deborah DeMan

Solutions That Work Together Tradeshow and User Group Campaign
— Kathy Ashmore

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

Bendyman-Services Ad
— Stephanie Barriault
— Kevin Donihoo

In Category 2, Informational Materials, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Exxon Truck Lubricants Brochure
— Ginger Bertrand

OnePoint Operations Manager Solution Guide
— Melanie Achard
— Jewel Darby

PCI Hot Plug Technology with Microsoft Windows Architecture
— Lisa Haberle

PDVSA Market Information Report
— Deborah Long

The Institute for Medical Humanities 1973–1998

— Mary G. Havard

— Sandy Sheehy

VI Architecture for SANs

— Rikki Mitman

— Cynthia Ramirez

Award of Excellence

Caring for Coastal Wetlands

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana, an Executive Summary

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

DECAF Developers Guide

— Gina Waterman

Industry Shift Toward Synchronous DRAM Technology

— Donald Flenoy

Your Guide to UTMB

— Mary G. Havard

In Category 3, Quick Reference Guides, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Documentum WorkSpace for Customer Support User Guide

Amy Sharp

Enron Performance Management Quick Reference

Enron Global Technology Document Design Group

In Category 4, Software Guides, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Message Explorer for MQ User Guide

Terry Lambert

PATROL IP/Optimizer Getting Started Guide

Jocelyn Crump Williams

Award of Excellence

Customer Choice Program

Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Message Explorer for MQ Reference Manual

Terry Lambert

In Category 6, Computer Hardware Guides, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Home Networking Feature Guide

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Internet PC Features Guide 3500 Series

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Internet PC User's Guide

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Mobile Internet PC Reference Manual 300, 1200, 1600, 1800, and 1900 Series

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Award of Excellence

Compaq ProLiant 8000 Servers Maintenance and Service Guide

— Linda Branam

— Dan Garza

— Justin Haworth

Compaq TaskSmart C-Series for Internet Caching Maintenance and Service Guide

— Tom Green

— Justin Haworth

— Kathy Hayward

In Category 9, Training Materials, the following awards were presented:

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

EarthWave Training Manual

— Chris Anderson

— Karen Farrell

— Debi Maucione

GX III Training Manual

— Susan Collins

— Karen Farrell

GX-VM Training Manual

— Susan Collins

— Karen Farrell

In Category 12, Newsletters, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Paragon Quarterly Newsletter

— David Arnold

— Kelly Schlesinger

Award of Excellence

Supermarket Savvy

— Ginger Bertrand

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Awards

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Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

PSLines

— Metamor Documentation Solutions

In Category 13, Technical Reports, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Wyeth-Ayerst Prescription Drug Benefit Report

— Julliana Newman

In Category 14, Trade/News Articles, the following award was presented:

Award of Merit

Underwater Masterpiece

— Wendy Cederberg

— Lynn Charles

In Category 15, Scholarly/Professional Articles, the following award was presented:

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

Head and Neck Melanoma

— Julliana Newman

In Category 17, Books, the following awards were presented:

Award of Excellence

Status and Trends of the Nation's Biological Resources

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

Wild Orchids of Texas

— Ann Liggio

— Joe Liggio

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

Invasive Plants: Changing the Landscape of America

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

The Best of Show award in the Technical Publications Competition went to the following entry:

Invasive Plants: Changing the Landscape of America

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

Technical Art Competition

In Category 4, Interpretative Illustration, Tone, the following awards were presented:

Award of Excellence

Chevron Chemicals Environment, Health & Safety Web Page Design

— Sandy Stout

Chevron Gulf of Mexico Procurement Web Site Design

— Tracy Pearson

— Susan Soto

In Category 10, Cover Design, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

3D Seismic Case Histories Gulf Coast Basin—GCAGS

— Ginnie Murphy

Award of Excellence

Explosive Products Catalog Cover

— Theresa Davis

— Melanie Walker

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

EarthWave 1.1 Installation Guide

— Stephanie Barriault

— Kevin Donihoo

GX-VM Training Manual

— Stephanie Barriault

— Kevin Donihoo

— Craig Mikes

UTMB Quarterly, Spring 1999

— Mary G. Havard

In Category 11, Poster Design, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

BP Amoco—1999 United Way Contributions

— Richard Rogers

— Michael Scott

Award of Distinguished Technical Communication

Aero Palm-Size PC Announcement Poster

— Martha Andress

MP1600 Microportable Projector Poster

— Deborah DeMan

In Category 13, Promotional Materials Design, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Chevron Data Center

— Sandy Stout

Award of Excellence

Chevron: DISWin—Drilling Information System for Windows

— Debbi Ferguson

— Sandy Stout

The Best of Show Award in the Technical Art Competition went to the following entry:

UTMB Quarterly, Spring 1999

— Mary G. Havard

Online Communication

In Category 1, Help, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Pipeline Studio Help

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Presario 1800 Series

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

Award of Excellence

Compaq Presario 5300 Series Computer

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

InfoBase List Help

— Kathryn Harrison

PATROL for Networked Applications Online Help

— Melanie Boston

— Jessie de Jong

Presario 1200 Series

— Kitba Consulting Services, Inc.

In Category 3, Technical Marketing, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Armada Quick Reference

— Beverly Rogers

Compaq ArmadaStation EM ReferenceGuide

— Beverly Rogers

In Category 4, Tutorials/Training, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

July 1999 Compaq Deskpro Family of Personal Computers Web-Based Training

— Darryl Carrington

— Randy Hoch

— Hoyt Lindley

— Robert Nicholson

— Jeffery Nuckles

In Category 5, Books, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

EarthWave Training Manual

— Chris Anderson

— Karen Farrell

— Debi Maucione

GX III Training Manual

— Susan Collins

— Karen Farrell

Award of Excellence

Chevron Gulf of Mexico Operation Manual Web Site

— Tracy Pearson

— Susan Soto

— Sandy Stout

Making a World of Difference: Recent USGS Contributions to the Nation

— U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center

In Category 6, Reference, the following awards were presented:

Award of Merit

Modem Commands

— Beverly Rogers

Category 7, User Support Tools, the following awards were presented:

Award of Excellence

Compaq ProLiant 6500 Upgrade

— Catherine Bendig

— Peter French

— Richard Ryznar

— Dragos Tapu

Online Sales Tools

— Chris Black

— Ruth Metcalf

— Dee Dee Perrone

Thanks to all who participated!

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56 100°F days

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Region 5 Conference In Albuquerque, New Mexico October 13–14, 2000

The New Mexico Kachina chapter will host the STC Region 5 Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico October 13–14, 2000.

Call for Papers

Conference organizers are calling for proposals for talks and workshops dealing with challenges facing technical communicators now and in the next few years. This two-day conference will have the following threads:

- Future Subjects in Science and Engineering
- Workshops on Career Development
- Challenges for Twenty-First Century Communicators
- Modeling Information in Electronic Space

Send your 100-word proposal by e-mail to jprice@swcp.com or by the U.S. Postal Service to

Jonathan Price
The Communication Circle
918 La Senda NW
Albuquerque NM 87107

The due date for proposals is March 21, 2000. Call 505-898-4912 for more information.

Balloon Fiesta

The conference will be held during Albuquerque's annual Balloon Fiesta, which features more than 1000 hot-air balloons. Activities have been planned so that conference participants and their families can enjoy both the conference and the Balloon Fiesta.

Hotel Rooms Limited

Because of the Balloon Fiesta, availability of hotel rooms will be limited. Conference organizers reserved a block of 40 rooms for conference participants at the conference site. If you plan to attend, you should reserve your room as soon as possible.

Call the Sheraton Old Town at 505-843-6300 and mention the STC Conference to receive the special conference rate.

Tips and Tricks Alphabetize Lists in a Table Using Word

by Jamie West, Information Developer at BMC Software, Inc.

Use this tip to create alphabetized lists in a table or for alphabetizing lists of topics in Word or RoboHELP.

To create an alphabetized list:

1. Type a list of the text that you want to include in the table. Separate each item with a paragraph mark.
2. Select all of the text in the list.
3. Choose **Table => Sort**. The Sort Text dialog box opens.
4. In the **Sort by** field, choose Paragraphs.
5. In the **Type** field, choose **Text**.
6. Choose the **Ascending to sort from A-Z** radio button.
7. Click **OK**. The list of text is sorted alphabetically.
8. Select the alphabetized list.
9. Choose **Table => Convert Text to Table....**
10. In the **Number of Columns** field, enter the number of columns that you want your table to have.
11. In the **Separate text at** field, choose the **Paragraphs** radio button.
12. Click **OK**. The list becomes a table, sorted alphabetically across rows.



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Region 5 Director-Sponsor

Report from the January 2000 STC Winter Board Meeting

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor



From January 13–15, 2000 the STC Board of Directors met in Phoenix, Arizona and concluded the following business:

- Formation of the James Madison University student chapter in Harrisonburg, Virginia.
- Formation of the Illinois Heartland chapter in Bloomington/Normal, Illinois, and the concurrent dissolution of the Illinois State University Student Chapter.
- Recognition of STC as a cooperating society in the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Conference on Universal Usability: Solutions, Systems, and Methods (to be held November 16–17, 2000, in Washington, D.C.) and designation of Dr. Janice C. (Ginny) Redish as STC liaison.
- Formation of the Edison College student chapter of STC in Piqua/Greenville, Ohio.
- Appointment of Lottie Applewhite as manager of the Journal Editor Fellowship Committee.
- Appointments of Diane Feldman and Patricia Tierney as comanagers of the Technical Editing SIG.
- Appointment of Carol Luttrell as manager of the International Technical Communication SIG.
- Appointment of Brian Follas as manager of the Illustrators and Visual Designers SIG.
- Appointment of Peggy Malecki as manager of the Conference

Support Committee for STC's 48th annual conference in 2001 in Chicago.

- Appointment of Ernie Mazzatenta as manager of the STC Nominating Committee for 2000-2001.
- Approval of a merit grant for the Boston chapter to serve as seed money for the Carol Landers Spirit of Volunteerism Fund. Carol Landers was a consistent, active, and vital member of the Boston chapter who passed away very suddenly last year at the age of 42. This grant, along with funds raised by the Boston chapter, will support an annual award to a chapter member, aimed at assisting that member in attending a professional conference, training course, or similar program.
- Approval of a merit grant for the Manitoba chapter for development of its public relations program.
- Approval of a Special Opportunities Grant to Cynthia L. Self and Gail E. Hawisher.
- Approval of a Special Opportunities Grant to Stephen Bernhardt.
- Approval of a Special Opportunities Grant to Carol M. Barnum.
- Approval of the STC Intellectual Property Statement.
- Approval of startup funds for the Journal Editor Fellowship Program. This program is aimed at providing training to people

interested in editing scholarly journals.

- *Technical Communication*, the STC journal, goes online and becomes searchable at the end of January 2000. Two years of issues, February 1998–February 2000, will initially be available, with other issues to follow.

For more information on the various programs mentioned above, please visit the STC website.

Other issues discussed at the Board Meeting include the following:

Membership

The percentage of non-US STC members is increasing steadily. The new STC membership materials have been very well received. Chapters can obtain copies of these materials from the STC office.

E-mail Addresses/Membership Lists

STC does *not* release e-mail addresses to third-party vendors. The “spam” you may be receiving from technical communication service vendors does not emanate from the STC office. Indeed, for the first time this year, the Society office released the STC Membership Directory under license, instructing recipients about restrictions on its use: it must be personal use. It was necessary to issue the directory under a license because membership directories cannot be copyrighted. If you know of misuses of the STC Membership Directory, please contact the STC office (membership@stc-va.org)

Continued on page 15

IKON Ad



Berger & Co., familiar to the Houston Technical Communication community for almost a decade, has been bought by **modis Solutions**, one of the largest information technology providers in the world.

modis Solutions continues to offer the same professional Technical Communication services it has always provided, along with its outstanding training classes. The former Berger agreement of training discounts for STC members still applies. Current courses include:

GIS Courses
UNIX

PERL
ORACLE

Contact:

Mac Katzin, Technical Writing Cheryl Palmer, Training
MKatzin@berger.com cheryl.palmer@berger.com

5 Greenway Plaza, Suite 1700, Houston, TX 77046
713 / 627-7878



New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy

The following individuals recently joined the STC Houston chapter:

Deborah Leech

Last summer, Deborah began working as an intern for the Men's Wearhouse and was hired as a Technical Writer a couple of months later. Deborah recently graduated from the University of Houston–Downtown with a degree in Professional Writing so she is quite new to the field and has not yet found a particular area of expertise. She is considering entering a graduate program to delve deeper into technical communication.

Gregory Brown

Greg graduated from the Colorado School of Mines in 1976 and works for Marathon Oil Company in

Lafayette, Louisiana as an advanced senior geophysicist. He is interested in knowledge management solutions for the geoscience and engineering disciplines. At Marathon, Greg is involved in a knowledge management initiative designed to build cross-discipline communication, contacts and lessons learned. Greg is interested in pursuing technical writing as a second career after retirement from the oil industry.

Stephanie A. Hilliard

Stephanie has worked in the communications industry since 1994, when she started her own company, The Write Type, to provide technical writing and Web page design services. Currently, Stephanie works full-time at The Texas A&M University System Health Science

Center as a staff assistant. Her position includes handling grant submissions, laying out course notes, and Web page design and maintenance. Her main areas of interest are technical writing, desktop publishing, and Web design. Stephanie lives in Bryan, Texas.

Helen Shoup

Helen has worked in the communications industry since 1971 and has owned her own company, H. Shoup & Associates, since 1992. Her company specializes in organizing and writing user manuals and in creating functional intranets in which the user can easily find information. Helen is also an Information Mapping® instructor and believes that it is a great organizing tool for any writer.



February Volunteer of the Month

by Heather A. Shelly, Technical Writer at Lyondell-Citgo Refining, LP

The volunteer of the month for February is Zachary Taylor. Zac has been a great source of help to the Houston chapter since he joined STC in 1997. Many of you have met Zac at the monthly program meetings, where he manages the registration table. He has been the coordinator of the Meeting Registration committee for the past two years and actively served on the committee before he became coordinator.

In his youth, Zac considered several career paths: chemical engineer,

medical doctor, the military, even government spy. He rejected these paths for the more glamorous career of technical writing, but he managed to retain the intrigue associated with espionage.

In his current mission Zac is the information architect of the Technical Publications department at BMC Software, where he creates authoring and development systems for integrating electronic performance support systems into applications. So far, he has not been injured on the job.

In between assignments, Zac enjoys watching the Astros fail their mission in the post-season (again), collecting killer yo-yos, finding hidden messages in Dr. Seuss, eating Ben & Jerry's Pistachio ice cream, drinking champagne (stirred, not shaken), and evading danger with the latest high-tech gadgetry. Zac's personal goals include running with the bulls in Pamplona, inspecting a Scotch distillery (to protect the innocent), and attending Mardi Gras in a style befitting an agent in Her Majesty's Secret Service.

Report from the January 2000 STC Winter Board Meeting

Continued from page 12

Telephone Seminars

The Technical Indexing Telephone Seminar conducted by Peg Mauer, manager of the STC Indexing SIG, covered 48 sites and more than 300 participants. It was extremely successful.

Academic and Research Programs

A great deal of interest has been expressed in the new Teaching Fellowships for Practicing Professionals. This program provides stipends to practitioners willing to teach a course in technical communication at a college in their area. Awards will be granted in May. For more information, see the STC website.

Conferences

The 47th Annual Conference in Orlando has received more proposals than any previous conference. Approximately 260 technical sessions are planned, a 20 percent increase over last year. And, as the 1999 conference saw a 14 percent increase in sessions over 1998, the conference appears to be getting bigger and bigger.

External Relations

A public relations firm, Parker LePla, is conducting a “branding” survey for the Society. The results of the survey will lead to the development and implementation of an updated “corporate” identity for STC and

will enable STC to market membership and services with a more consistent “voice.”

Professional Development

The Special Needs committee is currently working on a brochure and Web page about its services.

The Core Competencies committee is continuing its work to specifically identify the requirements of a professional technical communicator in today's markets on the basis of interviews with people with hiring authority, educators, and practitioners.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
March 1	EBD*	April newsletter deadline		verna_dunn@bmc.com
March 14	5:30 p.m.	Joe and Ann Liggio present “ <i>Wild Orchids of Texas: The Research and Writing of a Non-Fiction Book</i> ”	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)
March 14	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston board meeting	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)
April 1	EBD	May newsletter deadline		verna_dunn@bmc.com
April 11	5:30 p.m.	General Meeting (speaker and topic TBD) and election of Chapter Leaders	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)
April 11	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston board meeting	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)
May 1	EBD	June newsletter deadline		verna_dunn@bmc.com
May 9	5:30 p.m.	General Meeting (speaker and topic TBD) and vote on revisions to Bylaws	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)
May 9	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston board meeting	Holiday Inn Select 2712 Southwest Freeway	Janette Sexton-Shahout (see “Chapter Contacts,” page 3)

* End of Business Day

Meeting Program Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Topic: *Wild Orchids of Texas:
The Research and Writing of
a Non-Fiction Book*

Speakers: **Ann Liggio and Joe Liggio**

Are you passionately interested in a particular subject? Do you want to share your love for this subject with the world? Are you willing to do extensive research and document your sources? Ann and Joe Liggio, authors of *Wild Orchids of Texas* (University of Texas Press, 1999), believe this is what producing a nonfiction book is all about, and they believe you can do it, too.

Since its publication last October, *Wild Orchids of Texas* has been selling well online and at bookstores as far away as Japan and the New York Botanical Garden gift shop. Featured twice in the *Houston Chronicle* and also in *Intercom*, the book received an Award of Distinguished Technical Communication in the STC Houston Technical Communications Competition.

The Liggios will share all their experiences in creating and publishing their nonfiction book.

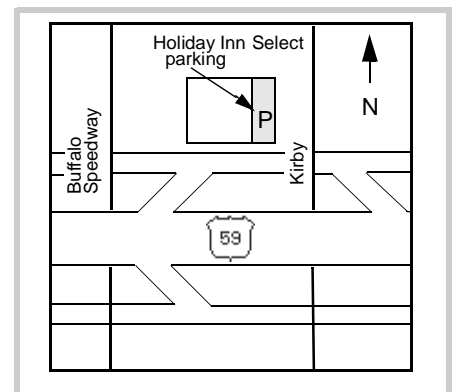
Ann Liggio, an STC Associate Fellow, has been active in STC since 1975. She started her own successful consulting business in 1990.

Joe Liggio has published natural history articles and nature photographs in magazines, books, and calendars. He is an environmental consultant and is completing an M.S. degree in Environmental Science.

Wild Orchids of Texas will be available for purchase at the meeting. The Liggios have also donated a copy to be given away as a door prize. For more information about their book, see <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/ligwil.html>.

Meeting Basics

Place: Holiday Inn Select
2712 Southwest Freeway
(near Kirby)



Date: Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Time: 5:30 p.m. networking
(hors d'oeuvres)
6:20 p.m. announcements
6:30 p.m. program

Cost: \$10 (members)
\$13 (non-members)
\$3 (student and unemployed members)
\$6 (student non-members)

Monthly Drawing

A drawing for various prizes is held at the end of each general meeting. Tickets for the drawing can be purchased at the registration desk. Proceeds benefit the Marx Isaacs Student Scholarship Fund.