



**CS**TC  
Canadian  
Community



# Canadian SIGnals

Newsletter of the Canadian STC Community

Fall 2006

## Final thoughts

*By Alexa Campbell, Fellow, Retiring Canadian STC Community Manager, Senior member of the Manitoba STC chapter*

The Canadian STC Community needs a new look. And you are being offered an opportunity to be part of forming that new look.

I regret that the new look won't include me. I am submitting my resignation as Manager of this Community, effective December 31 (or sooner if someone wishes to take over sooner). I have come to a point in my career that signals the end of activities such as managing organizations like ours.

Nonetheless, this is an exciting time to be involved as an STC volunteer. I have included in this newsletter information about the new STC Strategic Plan, our rechartering, and new board members.

It's been a wonderful adventure for me with all the incarnations of this group—from the Canadian Issues Committee (for a brief while as the Canadian Interests Committee), to the Canadian Issues SIG, and now to the Canadian

Community. We started in a hotel room under siege of construction in New York, with the leadership of Jack McFadden from Kitchener-Waterloo. We researched the state of technical communication education in Canada, and we discovered that it was a sorry state, way back in the early 90s.

How things are changing! Now we have programs across Canada, although still not advanced programs offering post-graduate degrees.

To help meet the needs of Canadian STC members who lacked access to education programs in technical communication, we created a model curriculum which we

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presented at the 1997 conference in Toronto. This provided a plan that individuals could use to round out their education or that educational institutions could use to develop their curricula.

Over the years, the *issues* weren't necessarily earth-shattering, but they were things that irked Canadians about the STC. Why couldn't we get our ballots on time for the elections? Why can't we get the group insurance that STC offers? Why can't STC help Canadian STC members get disability insurance at group rates? Why are the articles in *Intercom* focused on US tax issues or US contractor issues? Why are scholarship funds available only for four-year programs in technical communication, so that students in most Canadian programs are not eligible? Why do STC mugs and other trinkets cost so much in Canadian dollars? Things are different in Canada. We want our membership dollars to be used to discuss *Canadian* issues.

Because STC is a volunteer-based organisation, every year we must educate new volunteers about Canadian issues. The need is still there for this Community, to keep the largely US-centric STC conscious of issues outside the US. Like housework and answering email, the job is never done.

Over the years of my involvement with this group, I have met many interesting people from across Canada. I have

## Canadian SIGnals

*Canadian SIGnals* is the official newsletter for the Canadian STC Community.

It is published electronically and is available on the Website of the Canadian STC Community, <http://www.stcsig.org/canadian/index.htm>.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Send them to the current Community manager, Alexa Campbell ([acampbell@rrc.mb.ca](mailto:acampbell@rrc.mb.ca)).

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Canadian STC Community Management Committee is as follows:

Manager     Alexa Campbell (until December, 2006)

Web site     Surej Kumar

We are currently looking for eager volunteers to fill the positions Membership, Newsletter editor, Manager and Assistant Manager.

become aware of the wide diversity of activities in Canadian chapters. This Community offers Canadian communities an opportunity to communicate east-west, not just south.

So it's important to keep this community growing. I urge you to get involved, to take the Canadian STC Community into its next phase of growth and help contribute to its new look.

I am grateful to all the wonderful STC members who have helped in this community over the years, in its beginnings as the Canadian Issues

Committee, in its early days as a SIG, and through the rechartering process. Let me just say to each of you—thank you for all your efforts on behalf of Canadian members of STC. You have not served in vain.

Email me or Judith Herr ([herrj@comcast.net](mailto:herrj@comcast.net)) if you are interested in taking part in this adventure. Communities are expected to hold elections, and all positions are open for candidates.

## 2006 Canadian Associate Fellows

Each year the STC honours individuals within its ranks by electing them as Fellows and Associate Fellows.

To be awarded the rank of Fellow, nominees must already be an Associate Fellow and further distinguish themselves within the field of technical communication and attain prominence within the field. Award recipients are nominated by a committee of Fellows.

To be awarded the rank of Associate Fellow, nominees must be accomplished in the field of technical communication. Award recipients are elected by a committee of Fellows and Associate Fellows. Typically, nominations come from members of an STC community.

Nomination criteria and nomination forms are available on the STC Web site <http://www.stc.org/honors.asp>.

### On becoming an STC Associate Fellow

*By Rahel Anne Bailie, STC Associate Fellow, Senior Member, Canada West Coast chapter*

When I was asked to write an article about my recent honour, becoming an STC Associate Fellow, the idea was initially uncomfortable. After all, I've spent the last decade or two writing articles downplaying Rahel Anne Bailie, the person, while pushing into the forefront the knowledge and perspectives of Rahel Anne Bailie, the technical communicator, the manager, the volunteer leader, the content management consultant. To turn this model on its head and not write about technical topics or the local (or not so local) job market, industry trends, or professional development topics and talk about the person behind the articles gave me pause for thought.

Being nominated for Associate Fellow first meant that I had to have met the criteria set out by the STC. One of the criteria is being an active technical communicator

for at least fifteen years. To be honest, I didn't start out, some fifteen years ago, to work my way toward being an Associate Fellow. I didn't even realize such an honour existed until it was suggested to me, one year when I was chapter president, that our chapter recognize two of our chapter members who qualified for the rank. At the time, I'd been a member of STC about five years and never thought I'd achieve that rank myself.

In fact, I had stumbled on the profession of technical communication by chance. When, in the late 1980s, I was working in various jobs where number crunching was the bulk of my work, I remember thinking: I am a word person, not a numbers person. There must be a way to make money working with words. When I got my first technical communication job as a proofreader with a computer manufacturer, I entered an unfamiliar world of writers, desktop publishers, and technical illustrators, and encountered the notion that there was a professional association where we could learn more about the field and share information. As a way of connecting with the local community (community! what a concept to this newbie), I took on the job of desktop publishing the chapter newsletter and found myself learning about variations of technical communication that I hadn't know existed.

In 1992, when the first wave of outsourcing started—computer manufacturers shut down their North American operations and moved

production to Taiwan and Korea—I moved three time zones west, and immediately connected with the STC chapter in my new geographic community. Again, the idea of working toward the Associate Fellow honour was the furthest thing from my mind. It's my natural inquisitiveness that makes me to want to know, and it's in my nature to participate, organize, lead, and share. So, while becoming an Associate Fellow wasn't what led me down my particular volunteer and career path, my path led me to work on technical communication and STC-specific projects that qualified me for nomination.

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to identify myself as an STC Associate Fellow. To me, it is acknowledgement for contributions worthy of being acknowledged. We work in a profession where our work often goes unnoticed. Our writing is published without byline; our contributions to the content, the interface, the usability appropriated by other departments. Compared to an industry such as film, where everyone from the key grip to the catering company gets mentioned in the credits, our work gets done quietly and invisibly and, in cases where companies have yet to recognize the impact that good user experience can have on the bottom line, is begrudgingly allowed to get done at all. STC is to be credited with creating mechanisms such as competitions and recognition programs to honour those members who submit good work. For those of us who do our best to advance the

field of technical communication don't stop upon receiving an award—this year's personal challenge is to co-chair STC's World Usability Day committee, and coordinate the world's largest online card-sort.

I don't feel that I can finish this article without recognizing that as the world changes, so world of technical communication changes, and so, too, the world of STC changes. When I joined the STC board in 2002, I was the second non-American to be elected the board. I'd like to think that one of my contributions was to help STC get over the angst of deciding whether STC was a US or international association. STC has recognized that technical communication has gone global, and is making strides to operate under the new reality. It's gratifying for me to see how STC is evolving, with a European member in the presidential track and more opportunity for developing nations to participate. It has been an honour for me to attain the rank of STC Associate Fellow, and it will be a greater honour when other Associate Fellows from around the world are standing along side me.



**Toques, maple syrup and the Canadian STC Community—help maintain our Canadian traditions. Volunteer for the management committee. Email Judith Herr today.**

## My life as a technical communicator and STC member

by *Ralph E. Robinson*, Senior Member, STC Toronto, STC Associate Fellow



As I sit here holding onto a plaque that states that “Ralph Robinson is recognized and honored as an Associate Fellow” I am humbled by the fact that so many of those whom I hold in the highest of regard consider me worthy of this honor. I still can't believe that I have received this accolade for doing something that I love and have a passion for. But how did it all start?

In 1987 I started a job as a technical writer in the Engineering Publications Department of then Garrett Manufacturing Canada Limited. One of the women in the department who had been a member of the Toronto Chapter of STC in its first incarnation took my under her wing and guided me through those initial terrifying first months. Through Lillian I heard about the STC, searched out the Toronto Chapter, and attended my first meeting. As always happens the people there made me feel welcome and I joined immediately.

I began taking night school courses in technical writing in order to gain further credentials and at one of these lectures I learned about ISO 9000 and its need for documented policies and procedures. At

the same time my employer was about to implement an ISO 9000-registered quality management system and I volunteered to help with this effort. One thing led to another and I ended up coordinating and managing the creation of the documentation required to support both this registration and an ISO 14001-registered environmental management system at Honeywell Aerospace in Toronto.

Other writers were soon asking me about ISO documentation and I began to give presentations at local education days and STC meetings. In 1995 Linda Oestreich from Texas, an STC Fellow, took a chance and awarded a person unknown to STC members outside of Toronto (me) a post-conference workshop at the STC Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. That full day presentation on documenting ISO 9001 began a 10-year involvement of speaking at STC conferences, local chapters, and other trade organizations on standards, ISO 9000, and policy and procedure writing in general. During this

time I also wrote several articles on the subject that were published in *Intercom* and three books, self-publishing two, and the other published by Government Institutes in Maryland.

In 1999 I was given the opportunity to teach a course on Documenting Quality Management Systems at Sheridan College in Brampton, Ontario which I continue to do today. At this same time I became involved with the Canadian Advisory Council to Sub-committee 7 of the Joint Technical Committee 1 of ISO/IEC as a member of Working Group 2 dealing with documentation standards for software and systems engineering. In 2001 I was asked to become the Prime Delegate of this group for Canada and have represented our country at international meetings each year since.

So now its 2006 and I am an Associate Fellow of the STC. Wow! What an honour for doing your job, being dedicated to something you believe in and passionate about your work.

## Canadian STC Community Re-Chartering

Here is some information about our new Canadian STC Community charter.

### Mission statement

The Canadian STC Community fosters communication among Canadian members of STC to allow them to exchange information and to discuss issues within STC that

- Are of a particular concern to Canadian members
- Arise by reason of political, socioeconomic, and geographical constraints because the members reside in Canada

It also serves to educate members of STC as a whole about issues that are unique to Canada.

## Goals and strategies

Goals	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To link Canadian chapters, which are spread out geographically, and which lack a unified voice in STC internationally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a Web site</li> <li>Have Canadian STC Community manager in close contact with Canadian chapter presidents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide opportunities for Canadian members to communicate about needs, concerns and issues that are unique to Canada by virtue of geography, economics or politics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a listserv</li> <li>Provide a newsletter</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a venue for promoting professional development activities for Canadian members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertise events through the listserv and Web site</li> <li>Have Canadian STC Community manager in close contact with Canadian community presidents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To educate members of STC internationally about issues that are unique to Canada</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a Web site</li> <li>Have Canadian STC Community manager in close contact with the STC internationally, both through the Board and through the office staff</li> </ul>

## Programs and activities

- Continue to use the Web site, but develop a Web site management committee to plan and update content.
- Facilitate regular communication among members regularly email and the listserv.
- Have regular conference calls for the management committee.
- Continue to produce the newsletter, although with greater frequency, perhaps twice annually, or even quarterly.
- Advertise events through the listserv and Web site. Perhaps communicate monthly with chapter presidents to determine events to be advertised.
- Promote Canadian STC Community more actively in individual chapters. For example, have the Canadian STC Community manager in close contact with Canadian chapter presidents.
- Have the Canadian STC Community manager in close contact with the STC internationally, through the Board, through the SIG managers group, through the office staff, through status reports and participation in

international meetings for community managers.

### **Providing value to STC**

The Canadian STC Community will

- Promote STC in Canada, encourage membership in STC, and stress the professionalism of its members
- Publish a newsletter and advertise its members' participation in conferences. The Community manager will provide regularly monthly reports of appropriate activities to membership
- Report to its membership through its newsletter, listserv, Web site, and regular monthly reports to membership
- Communicate to its membership the names of all Canadian members who have been honoured through STC, and it will begin to nominate members for distinguished service and other eligible awards
- Provide a newsletter and a Web site that is accessible to all levels of the Society
- Continue to provide lists of educational opportunities in Canada for technical communicators, and it will continue to provide feature articles on educational programs in its newsletter

### **News from STC International**

#### **The New World of STC**

*By Cindy Currie, STC Fellow and Region 1 Director  
dir1@stc.org; 603.488.5027*

Our President, Paula Berger, has chosen the slogan "The New World of STC" for this year. And a new world it is!

We have a new Executive Director, Susan Allen Burton. She is dynamic and engaging, with a wealth of association management experience. Visit [www.stc.org/membership/initiatives01.asp](http://www.stc.org/membership/initiatives01.asp) for more information.

The Board of Directors is now smaller and includes President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary,

Treasurer, Immediate Past President, six Regional Directors (Regions 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) and two Directors At Large. Visit [www.stc.org/about/board01.asp](http://www.stc.org/about/board01.asp) for details on who's who.

The Executive Director and the STC Office Management team (Maurice Martin, Merrick Bechini, and Peg Cottrell) all regularly attend board meetings to ensure tight alignment between the board (that sets strategy) and the office (that executes strategy). The Office Management team has a wealth of experience to add to the mix, so we're all happy to have working so closely with us.

STC has a new Interim Strategic Plan for 2006–07. The plan is available at [www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/StrategicPlan.pdf). You can get more information at [www.stc.org/ppt/orgChart0506.ppt](http://www.stc.org/ppt/orgChart0506.ppt).

All major initiatives have an overseer at the Board level (I'm overseeing Communications with new Director At Large, Jeff Staples), and an STC office liaison (Maurice Martin for Communications) to ensure that there is a firm link between the board and the committees and how strategy is being driven through to execution and desired outcomes.

STC is now well positioned to meet our strategic goals for the year. We have a great team in place and a great plan to execute, so I'm excited for get to work on this year's priorities.

## Greetings from STC Board newbies

*By Mark Clifford, Char James-Tanny, Mike Murray, and Jeff Staples*

Here is a brief introduction to some of the new faces on the board.

### Mark Clifford, Second VP



After ten years on the administrative council of the UK chapter, and last year as an assistant to the STC President, I have to admit to some trepidation when running for second vice president! Yes, you

can change the world—but STC? Well, the next three years will be interesting!

Since completing my engineering publications apprenticeship with British Aircraft Corp. in the mid-70s, I have worked as editor, writer, manager, and recruiter, primarily with publications consultancies and service companies. I have lived and worked across Europe, with Dutch, Belgian, French, and Swedish companies, holding board-level positions with three of them. Somewhere in there, I graduated from the University of Luton's Business Program.

I currently run my own information design and recruitment company, which provides consultancy, resource, and ID solutions for European clients from offices in the UK and France.

As this year's Second Vice President, my responsibility is leading the Marketing area initiatives. Marketing STC and our members to the world is one of our key strategic goals. STC is poised to put technical communication, both for its practices and its practitioners, firmly back on the business agenda. The new STC strategic plan is designed to market our profession by communicating directly to those that use or buy our services. At the same time, it addresses the individual need for continuing professional growth.

I have committees working on developing interests with a variety of other organisations, gaining society-level sponsors, and publicising our

achievements. All of these have a huge impact on getting our message out.

When I'm not involved at work or with STC, I like to escape by going bird watching—especially in coastal areas and wetlands. In quieter moments, I'm an armchair historian. I read military histories and biographies. My passion is the Napoleonic period in Europe, in particular Wellington's campaigns in Portugal and Spain.

I have three grown children and a six year-old granddaughter.

Contact me at [2vp@stc.org](mailto:2vp@stc.org) or [mark@cliffordsells.com](mailto:mark@cliffordsells.com).

### **Char James-Tanny, Secretary**



I'm really excited about the things the board has planned for the upcoming year.

At last year's conference, I decided that I would invest two years in making STC a premier organization—one that every technical communicator would want to belong to. With my election, that's been extended a bit, as the Secretary has a two-year term.

Last year's board did some amazing groundwork for us by creating the Interim Strategic Plan and new organizational chart. We get to take it to the next step by implementing those pieces.

My job as Secretary is to record the minutes, notes, action items from all

meetings, and support all committees. I have big shoes to fill: Lori Fisher did an awesome job during her term, and she also paved the way for some of the changes I want to make.

One of the things that I'm going to implement is a Web-based Communication System (or, as I fondly refer to it, the WCS). WCS will initially be available for board and committee members, but I hope to eventually open it to the membership. (It will probably take us a couple of months to get it installed and set up correctly.)

I'm one of the proponents of certification. I think that certification could be a valuable benefit for members, and I'm in favour of anything that brings value.

Because I run my company out of my home, I tend to keep long hours. I'm online as soon as I wake up, and I tend to work nights after my son has gone to bed. I am typically not available most weekdays from 3:30 pm until 8 pm, because my son, Jesse, has a life.

I love to cook and bake. My favourite gifts are kitchen tools and gadgets. I use my time when flying to catch up on TV shows (we have Tivo, so I pull them onto my laptop) and to read. You can reach me at [stc@helpstuff.com](mailto:stc@helpstuff.com).

### **Mike Murray, Director**



In my 28th year with Lockheed Martin, I am the principal writer in the corporation's Enterprise

Information Systems (EIS) organization, the only virtual organization in the company. I support the marketing activities for these products and services. Many years of virtual communications experience add another important qualification to my STC resume.

My years at Lockheed Martin follow 10 1/2 years in the U.S. Air Force, which also exposed me to international cultures.

I was pleased when STC President Paula Berger assigned me to the Communities area along with fellow directors Sherry Michaels and Beau Cain. The Communities committee includes the Leadership Community Resource (LCR), Virtual Communities, and Community Recognition.

In addition, Paula asked me to be the Board of Directors representative on a task force that will develop a new community business model. The task force will consist of 10 or 12 leaders from communities of various sizes and types around the world and our Executive Director Susan Burton.

I do a lot of mentoring, both individuals and groups, and am especially good at examining an organization and zeroing in on what its leaders need to do to strengthen it.

Outside of work and STC, I regularly announce for various organizations, including Dr. Phillips High School (football and basketball) and Rollins College (volleyball and basketball). I am especially proud of my support of Dr.

Phillips High School, where I have announced for the entire 20 years of its existence. The school inducted me into its Hall of Fame in 2001. I am also the part-time stadium announcer for the Osceola Outlaws, a professional team in the National Indoor Football League.

For several years in a row, I have received the national President's Volunteer Service Award, which goes to individuals who demonstrate a sustained commitment to volunteer service each year. My service in Central Florida has involved restructuring and strengthening youth organizations such as Pop Warner Football, Little League Baseball, and Cub Scouts.

I have been married for 38 years to my best friend Kay. We have two adult sons and five grandchildren.

I would love to hear from you at [dirmm@stc.org](mailto:dirmm@stc.org).

### **Jeff Staples, Director**



As a new director, I became excited and was happy to learn that everything wasn't just "status quo." Everything is basically wide open, and it's an opportunity for the members and the STC leadership to continue and enhance this organization as the leader in technical communication.

In my career life, I am generally a "commodity" writer, often focusing on formatting. This type of writer is still in demand. And, in with the basic writing

tasks do come some exciting tasks, such as working on a safety survey and then formulating the mechanics to get it live on the Web.

I am one of the first two directors to be elected from the entire STC membership. The new STC org structure assigns each Director to a strategic area. I consider myself fortunate to have landed in the Communications area along with Director Cindy Currie. This area holds great

potential in all areas of STC communication but especially in the areas of Member Communication and the STC Web site and publications.

In December '05, I began what has become a regular yoga practice. In addition, I enjoy independent and foreign films and books out of the normal fare, such as those by Ayn Rand and Philip Roth.

Drop me a line at [dirjs@stc.org](mailto:dirjs@stc.org).

## Locating the communities you belong to

You can view your profile on the STC Web site and see what SIGs you've joined. Here's how.

You'll need your membership number and password.

On the STC Web site, select STC Members > Member Services > My STC Profile.

There is also a PDF file you can use to add a community. Select Membership > STC SIGs > List of SIGs < SIG sign-up form), or use the link, [http://www.stc.org/PDF\\_Files/membershipChangeForm.pdf](http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/membershipChangeForm.pdf).

