

The Independent Perspective

Newsletter of the Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee

ITCC Offers No Dearth of Sessions for ICs

by Charley McWha

This year's ITCC program offers a wealth of information of interest to independent consultants. Nearly every session has presentations about the wide variety of topics that comprise what some euphemistically refer to as the "consulting arts."

As promised in the last issue of *The Independent Perspective*, here is a preview of what is in store for conference attendees interested in learning more about the business of business in technical communication.

Refer to the final conference program for the exact time and location of each presentation.

Monday Afternoon

Freelancing

Session ET 1B

Moderated by Arthur G. Elser, this panel discussion features C&IC PIC member Louis Rubino. Arthur and Louis will explore how a technical communicator can prepare for a career as a freelance technical writer and consultant.

C&IC PIC Meeting

Session PIC 3

C&IC PIC Manager Christopher Juillet will lead this group discussion on the status of current PIC projects and new projects and activities for the committee.

Tuesday Morning

The Meter is Running

Session MG 4C

Subtitled "Setting Consulting Rates for Independence," this workshop presents a straightforward approach to establishing consulting rates.

Tuesday Afternoon

The Client and the Contracting Firm

Session MG 6B

Moderator Jane Ellingwood and panelists Larry Poole and James Weisner discuss the use of contracted staff from both the vendor's and client's perspective.

Writing Consulting Contracts

Session MG 6C

C&IC PIC members Cynthia Kolnick and Louis Costanzo cover the essentials of developing contracts that serve both vendors' and clients' needs in this "must attend" workshop.

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C&IC PIC to Host Wine and Cheese Reception

Members and friends of the Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee (C&IC PIC), and just about anyone else attending this year's ITCC in Santa Clara, are invited to attend the C&IC PIC Wine and Cheese Reception on Tuesday, May 22, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

After a long day of conference sessions, take a few minutes to relax, unwind and breathe easy before the banquet. Check the conference program for room information. Hope to see you there! ♦

New Brochure Describes PIC Purpose, Goals, Activities

The finishing touches have been put to a brochure describing C&IC PIC activities to new and prospective PIC members. Developed by PIC member Mary Chris McManus, the brochure will serve as a "cornerstone upon which the committee can build future activities and growth," according to C&IC PIC Manager Christopher Juillet.

The piece will have its debut at the upcoming ITCC in Santa Clara to give conference attendees a taste of who and what C&IC PIC is and what we do. Copies will be sent to the 26 area coordinators that comprise the C&IC PIC field organization to support their recruiting efforts; they are also available to any STC member upon request. ♦

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On Truth

by Marek Buckiewicz

While the poet is not the poem, the writer becomes the language that he uses. If the words are vague and imprecise, then the ideas also will be fuzzy; if the message is not true, then the life is also false. This is the law.

Technical communication is about telling the truth about a technology or set of techniques. Technical communication is rooted in and delimited by the concepts of integrity and veracity, probity, honesty and trust.

Without credibility there is no value in a technical communication.

Trust is essential.

We don't expect truth in advertising. Indeed, we may even enjoy the slight of fact at which the marketing myth makers excel. Technical communication, however is utterly compromised if it is untrue. Veracity is essential.

As professional technical communicators, we are obligated to the technology which promises to deliver us from want. We techno-apostles are charged with the duty of spreading the revealed secrets of the universe to the masses. We carry the fruit of human genius to the people. We empower the populace with those solutions which our engineers have devised for their benefit.

truth (trooth) *n., pl. truths* (troothz). Quality or state of being true or accurate or honest; See synonyms integrity and probity. (*Integrity* implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility, or pledge; *probity* implies tried and proven honesty or integrity.)

true (troo) *adj., adv., & v.t.* In accord with fact or reality, not false or erroneous; genuine, not counterfeit or merely apparent.

It is the technical communicator who must make available the blessings of technology. We can make or break the promises made by the brilliant few who dream and engineer a better future for us all.

Ours is a responsible and noble calling. We serve reason and civilization. Technology is no more than a solution to some social or human problem. Whether these solutions are coded into a set of instructions or engraved into silicon or assembled with cogs and gears and levers or merely organized into a set of rational and coherent procedures, they remain the product of human intelligence; a reflection of the creative spirit of man. If man is formed in the image of God, then surely our technology is a portrait of that intellect.

Our able practice is a craft. Craft skills imply diligence and discipline, practice and care. Craft skills do not, however, reveal character. It is moral dimension which alone can raise a craft to the level of a profession.

Ours is a responsible and noble calling. We serve reason and civilization.

It is the dedication to truth as an expression of good character which is the mark of a truly professional technical communicator.

Integrity, probity, honesty and trustworthiness define professional conduct, not academic credentials or the mastery of any specific craft skill or technique.

Our profession grows when we tend truly to a need. We prosper when we serve the common good. If we but serve truth, then the truth shall set us free. In *good* we trust. ♦

Marek Buckiewicz is a unique amalgam of left-brain/right-brain activity; ten years a graphics artist and designer who also has studied electrical engineering and taught electronics. For the past ten years, Marek has worked as an independently employed information engineer. He is president of the newly formed Toronto West chapter of STC.

Reprinted from Cx, published by the Contractors and Consultants Special Interest Group in Toronto.

From the Editor

Wow! That's the only word that I can use to describe the response to the first issue of *The Independent Perspective*.

In the three months since we launched this newsletter, I have received 100 or more calls from STC members who want to be on our circulation list. Most of those who called have also joined the ranks of C&IC PIC, bringing our membership to over 350 in the fifteen months we've been in business.

Several of you also offered to write articles or columns, so future issues may well address topics such as contracts, legal issues and ethical issues in consulting.

I'm now preparing to turn over this newsletter to Charley McWha, who will manage and edit *The Independent Perspective* beginning with the July, 1990, issue. I am certain that her skills and talents will further the work we've begun, and am looking forward to seeing her ideas for this newsletter take shape.

Christopher Juillet
Editor

The Independent Perspective is published quarterly by the Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee (C&IC PIC) of the Society for Technical Communication. Address correspondence to:

The Independent Perspective
Post Box 1725
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Editor - Christopher Juillet
Associate Editor - Charley McWha

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Fall Brings C&IC PIC Conference to East Tennessee's PCOC Meeting

C&IC PIC will hold its first *Conference of Independence* in Oak Ridge, Tennessee on Saturday, October 6, 1990. The meeting will be conducted in conjunction with the East Tennessee Chapter's 14th Annual Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC), which will be held at the Garden Plaza Hotel in Oak Ridge on October 4 and 5.

The first meeting of C&IC PIC outside an International Technical Communication Conference (ITCC), the meeting is designed to provide independently-employed technical communicators an affordable venue through which to meet other practitioners and gain a deeper understanding of the business of consulting.

Although the program is still under development, the fall C&IC PIC meeting will offer presentations on a variety of topics relevant to conducting one's own private business in technical communication. Attendees will be invited to meet other independent consultants and share with their colleagues their knowledge of specific aspects of independent consulting, including:

- Setting consulting fees.
- Prospecting new business.
- Developing proposals and contracts.
- Marketing.
- Planning for taxes.
- Obtaining health and other insurance.
- Planning for retirement.
- Managing time for productivity.

The program is being arranged by PIC member Tallin Ensley; local arrangements are being handled by PIC member and STC Region 3 Director-Sponsor Fred O'Hara. Although the conference fee has not yet been established, C&IC PIC plans to hold the fee to around \$35 for the day, including lunch. Additional information about this fall's C&IC PIC *Conference of Independence* will be available later this year.

For more information about C&IC PIC's *Conference of Independence*, write Tallin Ensley at 5245 47 Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55417. ♦

Help Wanted

If you're a dedicated, driven professional who can do good work fast, under pressure, for free and have a great time doing it, consider signing on to one of several C&IC PIC positions that will soon open:

- **Membership Coordinator** -- The membership coordinator will field calls from interested STC members, manage the C&IC PIC membership data base, and send welcome materials to new PIC members.
- **Publicity Coordinator** -- This individual will publicize PIC activities within STC and have responsibility for stocking and reprinting the new C&IC PIC brochure.
- **Assignment and Opportunity Coordinator** -- This coordinator will establish and maintain a list of assignment opportunities for our independently-employed members, as well as serve as a liaison to the STC Employment Committee.

All coordinators report to the C&IC PIC manager. For more information or to offer your much needed talents, contact Christopher Juillet at 313/449-0310.

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Tuesday Afternoon (continued)

C&IC PIC Wine and Cheese Reception

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

C&IC PIC will host this special reception, open to all ITCC attendees.

Wednesday Morning

Self-Employed and Loving It

Session PR 9

C&IC PIC member Joan Todd Iverson will host a table at Progression 9 to introduce STC members to the joys and trials of self-employment.

Wednesday Afternoon

Using Contract Help

Session MG 10A

C&IC PIC members Meryl Natchez, Louis Costanzo, Cynthia Kolnick and Christopher Juillet hold an open discussion on the value of using independent consultants to complement in-house/publications staff.

Communication Consultant's Forum

Session PR 10MG

C&IC PIC members Joyce Woods, Tallin Ensley, Deirdre Murr, Louis Costanzo, Barbara Bartle, Marj Borge

and others cover a host of independent consulting topics in this hour-long progression.

The Meter is Running

Session MG 11B

C&IC PIC manager Christopher Juillet repeats his workshop on setting consulting rates for independence.

As you can see, there's much to see and do for ICs at this year's conference, so if May brings you to Santa Clara, don't forget to take in a few of these presentations. ♦

C&IC PIC Membership Exceeds 350

Interest in STC's Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee continues to grow.

In late April, 1990, PIC membership exceeded 350. With 26 area coordinators across the U.S. and Canada, C&IC PIC offers a voice to STC's independently-employed members.

For more information or to join C&IC PIC, write to C&IC PIC, Post Box 1725, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. ♦

Fall C&IC PIC Meeting Seeks Presenters

STC and C&IC PIC members are encouraged to submit proposals for the PIC's fall *Conference of Independence* to be held in conjunction with the East Tennessee chapter's Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC). (See related story on page 3.)

The day-long conference will address a variety of independent-employment topics, but needs your help and experience to succeed. Send your topic ideas and session proposals to Conference Program Coordinator Tallin Ensley at 5245 47 Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55417 by August 15, 1990. ♦

Do you have a new address or telephone number? Let us know by sending it to:

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