

## Cognition studies at Carleton

**Jackie Connors**

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The goal of technical writing is to help readers process information in a way that enables them to meet their needs or goals.

Technical writers use various information models to present the information. Such models may include overview or procedural information. These models form the basis of how writers organize and assemble information for the readers.

Writers may also use cognitive tasks to analyze and evaluate information. To plan and write effective documentation that meets the readers' needs, writers try to understand the readers' cognitive tasks, such as their perception, reasoning, knowledge, judgement, and intuition.

Carleton University offers a program in Cognitive Science through the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS), in cooperation with the departments of Philosophy, Psychology, Computer Science, and Linguistics.

The Cognitive Science program focuses on the study of the mind as an information processor. Carleton offers Undergraduate, Graduate, and Ph.D. degree programs.

For the undergraduate student, the program offers courses in Linguistics, Psychology, Computer Science, History of Cognitive Science, Language Analysis,

Biological Foundations of Behaviour, Cognitive Psychology, and Philosophy of Mind.

The undergraduate student must specialize in one of five areas:

- Philosophical and conceptual issues—Mind and language are complicated and the concepts used to talk about them are difficult. This specialization is based in philosophy and focuses on the concepts used in cognitive science.
- Language and linguistics—What clearly distinguishes the human mind from others is our rich and sophisticated language. This specialization focuses on language and how it works in cognition.
- Biological foundations of cognition—Human cognition is an aspect of the brain. This specialization studies how the brain achieves cognition.
- Cognition and psychology—Human cognitive behaviour is extremely diverse and complex. This specialization focuses on psychological research into cognition.
- Cognition and computation—One way to study cognition is to create artificial cognitive systems (artificial intelligence) and to model natural cognitive systems (the human mind) on computers. This specialization focuses on the use of computers to study cognition.

For the graduate and Ph.D. students, the program offers courses in research and seminars in Cognition, as well as further courses in Linguistics, Computer Science, Psychology, and Philosophy. The students are also required to complete a dissertation.

For more information about the program, visit:

[www.carleton.ca/iis](http://www.carleton.ca/iis).



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# Canadian Chapters Carry Surpluses; Support Reducing Membership Dues

**Gordon Brown**

*Gordon Brown is an STC senior member and served as STCEO vice president in 2001-2002. He is a senior information developer at Nortel Networks in Ottawa, where he specializes in Voice Over IP technology.*

*This article was prepared in collaboration with Canadian SIGnals.*

A survey of Canadian STC chapter presidents indicates that all chapters carry annual surpluses and at least half agree it's time to reduce annual membership dues.

With dues set this year at US\$125 and the Canadian dollar trading at \$0.63 to \$0.66 against the US dollar, after-exchange membership cost C\$230 at year end 2001.

In light of our own chapter's ongoing surpluses and the protracted downturn in most of the high tech sector, STCEO decided last spring to survey the other Canadian chapters about their finances and their views about the cost of dues.

STC chapters receive annual rebates in US dollars from head office based on membership numbers. These rebates help contribute to surpluses for the chapters. The renewal period ended earlier this year and the STC membership fee is now US\$140. With the Canadian dollar trading \$0.64 US at the end of August, dues stood at C\$218.

Consequently, in April and again in June, we asked the Canadian chapter presidents the following question: "Should annual dues be based on the Canadian dollar, for example, C\$125 rather than US\$125, even if that would necessitate a lower credit per member from head office?" The majority response from chapter presidents was "Yes!" The lower fee would make joining more affordable, would be more equitable for Canadian members vis-à-vis their American counterparts, and would per-

haps even boost membership numbers, they wrote.

Based on our questions and those of chapters in other countries, the STC head office set up an ad-hoc committee in June 2002 to examine the issue. See the sidebar story for details. Refer also to the table for a comparison of dues charged by other societies and organizations.

The following is a summary of the responses from all eight current or immediate past Canadian STC chapter presidents about the issue. For the full text of their replies, please see [www.stceo.org](http://www.stceo.org).

## **Canada West Coast: In favour**

Anne Odell, the new Canada West Coast chapter president, stated unequivocally that STC dues are too high: "I think that the current STC fee in Canadian dollars is out of line with what comparable organizations charge, and is prohibitively expensive for many," she wrote.

"I belong to another international organization which routinely prorates its fees to Canadians in recognition of the differential in exchange rates and average earnings."

"It is difficult to attract new members (and new volunteers) with the fee at its current level," she wrote. "Canadian technical writers earn the equivalent of American tech writers, but in Canadian dollars, not American dollars, and the exchange rate is currently 60 to 65 per cent," [\$0.6256 as of writing].

"We do have surpluses and we do not manage to spend all of the money we are allotted."

Table below shows a breakdown of the membership fees charged by some organizations.

| Organization   | Annual Fee (U.S. dollars) |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>ACM</b> – Association in Computing Machinery                | 99                        |
| <b>IEEE</b> – Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers | 132                       |
| <b>PMI</b> – Project Management Institute                      | 140                       |
| <b>STC</b> – Society for Technical Communication               | 140                       |
| <b>UPA</b> – Usability Professional Association                | 140                       |

### Eastern Ontario: In favour

Visnja Beg, 2001–2002 STCEO president, supports reducing dues and observed that cost is the key to membership numbers. Eastern Ontario has carried a significant surplus for the past several years.

"High membership dues are the single most frequently cited reason for not re-joining or joining the STC," she wrote.

"With the fall in the Canadian dollar, this has become even more of a deterrent to recruiting new or renewing members."

"Many members can no longer afford to renew their memberships. If the membership fee were in Canadian dollars, the

amount they would have to pay would be almost half of what the fee is now."

### Manitoba: In favour

Manitoba chapter past president Amanda Goldrick-Jones and new president Kathy Legg both agreed it is time to reduce annual dues:

"I agree with Amanda that annual dues at par with the US dollar would more than compensate for lower rebates," Ms. Legg wrote.

"While most people quote the unfavourable exchange rate as the main reason for not joining, another reason is the unpredictability of the net cost," she wrote.

"It's also sometimes very difficult to see that we (Canadians) are getting our money's worth as we pay, on average, about 50 per cent more for our memberships than do Americans."

Ms. Goldrick-Jones said a lower subsidy would not likely be a problem.

"We do carry a bank balance each year averaging around \$8,000. But as far as I know, this has not been a major issue. I don't think this would be a deal-breaker on a decision to accept a lower subsidy in exchange for lower fees."

### Vancouver Island: In favour

Lynn Zdan, 2000–2001 president of the Vancouver Island chapter, chose not to renew her membership at all this year, in part because of the high cost of dues and in part because, as in Ottawa and Montreal, chapter events are free.

"I completely agree that STC dues have gotten out of hand," she wrote, "Our chapter always welcomes non-members, and rarely charges any kind of admittance. In a sense, I won't really be missing out by not being a member."

Ms. Zdan also pointed to a large chapter surplus on Vancouver Island and low membership renewals. "Our chapter also has a large fund that has been accumulated over a number of years.

Unfortunately, our membership has shrunk to the point that we're now in the position of deciding what to do with this fund if our chapter folds. I would support a reduction in STC dues in any form. The dues-at-par suggestion seems to make sense."

### Montreal: Undecided—In favour if members agree

Montreal chapter president Stephen D. Wark wrote that if his members agree to the concept of reduced dues, he supports it, citing high chapter membership numbers and ongoing surpluses.

But Mr. Wark also said the chapter spends its surplus on workshops that provide high value to members.

"This year aside, we usually sponsor a series of workshops (about four a year) for our membership that entails a loss. A loss in revenue would jeopardize those activities."

*(continued on page 4)*

## “ Chapters Carry Surplus ”

(continued from page 3)

### Alberta: Opposed

Ian Hawkins, who became past president of the Alberta chapter as of June 30<sup>th</sup> this year, does not favour reducing membership fees. “I think that billing in Canadian funds would probably result in too large a drop.

We would lose nearly 40 per cent of our revenue,” he wrote. “I also doubt the international organization could afford the loss.

Their costs for Canadian members are already somewhat higher, just because of the border.”

Mr. Hawkins also explained how the rules governing chapter spending prevent the use of chapter funds for the personal benefit of members.

“STC rules prohibit using this money for the inurement or benefit of individuals,” he wrote.

### Southwestern Ontario: Opposed

Ted Edwins, president of the Southwestern Ontario chapter,

doesn't see a problem with having a chapter surplus or the cost of dues.

In addition to free events, including an annual barbecue, the chapter always sends its incoming president to the international conference to attend leadership events and report back to the chapter.

He personally considers the annual dues more of an investment than an expense.

“I would say that the value of the information I receive in the STC publications and the networking possibilities through chapter meetings far outweigh the deflated Canadian dollars I use to pay for membership.”

In terms of the impact of dues prices on the chapter, he said that most concerns are about value, not cost.

“Any comments about non-renewals centre on the relevance of the program or services the STC and our chapter offers.”

### Toronto: Undecided – favours local rebate

Kim F. Van Rooy, Toronto chapter president, confirmed in June that her chapter is chal-

lenged by a large surplus and is not opposed to reducing dues. B

ut she also expressed concern that basing dues on the Canadian dollar might put chapters in the red.

“Another solution might be for each chapter to voluntarily rebate some of the membership fee to their members,” she wrote.

“This would allow each chapter to decide which proportion to spend on activities.”



### Society Goals

- Enhance the professionalism of the members and the status of the profession.
- Provide information through publications, reports, and conferences.
- Report on new communication technologies, methods, and applications.
- Provide recognition and awards.
- Provide services to members at all levels of the Society.
- Promote the education of members and support research activities in the field.
- Give service to industry and academe.

## Stimulus

*Stimulus* is the newsletter of the STC Eastern Ontario Chapter and is published six times per year. It is distributed free to chapter members, libraries, other STC chapters and interested organizations.

### Reprint Policy

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### Submissions

*Stimulus* welcomes submissions on topics relevant to technical communicators in the Eastern Ontario area. We reserve the right to edit articles for length, clarity, and suitability.

Please e-mail articles and advertising copy to [stimulus@stceo.org](mailto:stimulus@stceo.org) or mail to the address below. Articles and media will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Most major electronic formats are supported for both Mac and PC.

### Submission Deadlines

All materials are due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication.

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## Dues will not be reduced, but they may be tax deductible

*The following article was prepared in collaboration with Canadian SIGnals, a newsletter produced by the Canadian Issues Special Interest Group, a SIG created to explore the issues that are unique to Canadian Technical Communicators*

**N**otwithstanding the majority view of Canadian STC chapter leaders (see "Canadian Chapters Carry Surpluses", page 2), no relief is in sight for Canadian STC members looking for a reduction in membership dues. But deducting them as charitable contributions could be an option.

An ad hoc committee studying alternative STC dues structures has ruled out reducing dues as membership numbers are in a "tailspin," according to Bill Stolgitis, STC executive director.

"In May 2001, membership numbers reached the high point," he said, "They've been in a tailspin since then retention is down 10 per cent worldwide last year versus this year," Mr. Stolgitis said.

The dues committee, struck last June by the STC Executive, compared 2002 membership totals against 2001 totals, he said. Year-over-year renewals and new memberships, while declining 10 per cent overall compared with 2001, declined less in Canada and Europe than in the United States.

Higher member retention in Canada and Europe than in the US influenced the decision not to reduce dues, Mr. Stolgitis said. Membership dropped less in Canada and Europe—8 per cent and 3 per cent respectively—compared with a 10 per cent drop in the U.S.

"In Canada and overseas, the value is seen there," Mr. Stolgitis said. And dues don't cover annual operating costs. "But for conference income and other income, we would not exist.

We could not exist on dues alone."

Further reducing already declining membership revenue isn't something the STC can afford. "Rather than changing the dues structure, the focus will be on retaining and attracting new members. The renewals are coming out this week," he said.

Annual dues were set at \$125 U.S. at renewal time last year, which ranged about and sometimes well above C\$200 after exchange.

The committee's dues review key criteria were fiscal viability, growth across all skill families, ensuring that no one constituency overly subsidizes another, and continued delivery of services.

### **Dues may be tax deductible here**

But while Canadian members' dues may not be going down, they may be tax deductible.

Dues are not tax deductible under Ontario tax guidelines as professional dues, they may be deductible as charitable contributions.

British Columbian STC members already can deduct membership dues from their income taxes, Mr. Stolgitis said. The STC was registered there as a charitable organization and that may be all that's required for membership to be tax deductible in the other provinces.

The STC is investigating that possibility. If it is found that annual dues can be deducted as charitable contributions, an announcement will be forthcoming.

*continued on page 14*

# STC Conference in Nashville

**Penny Lange**

*Penny Lange owns Penny Lange & Associates, a company that specializes in writing, editing and training for the public and private sectors*

In May, I presented a paper and chaired a progression at the STC International Conference in Nashville. I've been asked to share my thoughts on the conference and the latest trends in technical communication.

Because there are only so many conference that a person can attend, I decided to focus on a number of Ask-the-Experts sessions featuring panelists with 20-25 years of industry experience and, in many cases, high name recognition: Ginny Redish, Ann Rockley. (I *did* wonder what has happened to William (Bill) Horton, who has been a fixture at many STC conferences but was nowhere to be found at this one.)

## **Hot topics**

As always, there was a lot of interest in tools: XML, HTML, what I call "n-ML". Conference attendees wanted to know which tools they needed to be marketable. In addition to some specific suggestions, such as "Learn any one web development tool", the experts made some good general comments. If you don't know why you need XML, you probably don't need it. Technology is only good if you've figured out what you're going to do with it. There was also a reminder that there will *always* be new tools to learn. Get used to that, and get over it.

## **Same old, same old**

This was the fourth International STC Conference I've attended and, for the fourth time, there was agreement that we're being asked to do more, faster. We're expected to be technical-

ly adroit, not just wordsmiths. (This is news?!)

What *is* news is that in the current economy, we need to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of anything that will cost our employer money. This was scary to many conference attendees, who aren't used to providing the business case for any expenditure. The message from the experts was, you'd better get used to it, and get good at it—fast.

## **Grading the conference**

Overall, Nashville was a good conference, with some excellent sessions. It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet other technical communicators.

I also found that by being a presenter, I automatically met more people. First, there was an orientation session for speakers. There was also a speakers' lounge, a great place to relax between sessions. And wearing a speaker's ribbon on my nametag roused the curiosity of everyone I met, proving to be a natural conversation-starter.

Finally, a few words about Nashville. It was *not* on my Top Ten list of cities to visit. I was wrong. The Opryland Resort and Convention Center is a lovely spot. And Nashville is a great town, with warm, friendly people, and music other than country music. Yes, I attended the Grand Ole' Opry, but I also listened to some good rock and jazz.

See you in Dallas next year?



# Technical Communications Certificate

**Chris Hallgren**

*Chris is the former editor of Stimulus. He is currently working as a freelance Technical Writer.*

Starting in September 2002, St. Lawrence plans to offer a fulltime post-graduate certificate in Technical Communications at the Kingston campus.

St. Lawrence will bring together students with a variety of post-graduate educational backgrounds and challenge them to develop the writing skills needed in their chosen technical area.

The program, which is designed to be completed in two semesters plus a six-week field placement, will not only include courses in writing, but also training in the software delivery tools and media currently in use.

In addition, it will tackle such additional professional skills as electronic information management, translation and localization, and usability testing.

The basics of working as an independent contractor or consultant versus working as a corporate employee will also be covered, including self-marketing, interviewing, and resume-writing.

What sort of individual may be interested in the Technical Communications program at St. Lawrence? People may be interested in a career change into technical writing or may be looking for an additional qualification in their current careers.

The backgrounds will be varied. Those without a technical background of any kind will be asked to complete a Fundamentals of Technology course and will be seeking work, at least initially, that is appropriate for generalists.

Those whose degree or diploma is technical can train to write in their own technical fields. The one constant will be the student's interest in producing well-crafted technical information.

## How to Apply

Applicants to any Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology must submit an application form, with all transcripts attached, directly to:

## Ontario College Application Service (O.C.A.S.)

Box 810  
370 Speedvale Avenue West,  
Guelph, Ontario  
N1H 6M4

Telephone: (519) 763-4725  
or (888) 892-2288

Website: [www.ocas.on.ca](http://www.ocas.on.ca)

For more information on the Technical Communications Program, contact Jean Pfeleiderer, at (613) 544-5400/1640 or e-mail her at [pfleiderer@sl.on.ca](mailto:pfleiderer@sl.on.ca)

Visit us online at [www.sl.on.ca](http://www.sl.on.ca).



## Programme Description

The program is an intensive learning/work experience designed to prepare graduates to work as technical communicators (writers, editors, documentation specialists) in a variety of fields, including computer and software development, manufacturing, and the financial sector.

Graduates will be able to design, research, draft, edit and produce technical documents for a wide range of audiences and purposes.

# So you want to go to college

**Matt Rockall**

*Matt is a recent graduate of the Technical Writer program. He is currently working in British Columbia.*

With this article, I hope to offer some insight into the Algonquin College Technical Writer Program. My audience is future students who may be anxiously awaiting a new learning experience and are not sure what to expect.

One thing you can expect from completing the program is that you will become a better writer. Better writing though, is just a part of the result; better planning skills, technical awareness, and a proficiency with some useful software tools can also be obtained if you make the most of this course of study.

Finally, a key consideration is the friends that you will make and the people that you will meet.

The first thing you will learn from the actual writing course, Technical Writing I, taught by David Matheson, is the principle of direct structure. With this in mind, I will address the points made above as separate issues. To clarify and preview my thesis, these are the points I will address:

- Completing the program
- Becoming a better writer
- Improving planning skills
- Building technical awareness
- Obtaining proficiency with software tools
- Making friends and meeting people

As mentioned above, these goals are attainable for those prepared to make the most of the program. As with most things in life, it is up to you to define your experience in class and on campus generally.

The program is moving to Woodroffe Campus this year,

and there is plenty happening there for those students with the time or inclination to get involved.

Good luck!

## **Completing the program**

I know this seems like a “no-brainer”, but it is worth noting. Completing the program is a key to achieving the goals listed above. People leave for many reasons but I am only going to address two of them here: other opportunities and fear of math.

Think carefully before leaving for these reasons.

Our class heard of people who, in past years, were offered work before the end of the school year. They left to pursue jobs at busy telecom giants and hopeful start-ups.

Are they still employed? Good question. If not, they are competing in a tough job market where employers are demanding a combination of training and experience.

Some of our classmates threw in the towel before the first month of school was finished, partly because of their fear of Math and Science. Admittedly, we were swamped with technical subjects but the question you must ask yourself is, “Can I be a good Technical Writer?”

If you are a generalist with good people, writing and project management skills, you have what it takes. You don't have to be an engineer to write for engineers. You just need to be a communicator, able to relate to them and to your audience. Add organized reliability and you will succeed in this program.

## Becoming a better writer

You will become a better writer from your time in this program because of David Matheson, an advocate of direct structure who constantly forces revision of form and meaning.

This piece is written with direct structure; main points at the beginning, descending from each one through greater levels of detail. Previewed subheadings provide easy reader navigation. Perhaps most important, this form allows readers to read only what they need. People don't read Help pages of instruction manuals because they like the prose. They read to find out specific things and clear, effective writing helps them do so.

## Improving planning skills

You will be forced to manage your time carefully and these skills improve as a consequence. In order to simulate real-world possibilities, at any given time you will have several assignments on the go from different classes. In Technical Writing I and II (2<sup>nd</sup> term) a new writing project is assigned every week. Each one is revised repeatedly, and each revision has a different due date.

In short, personal discipline and time management are required. Don't think you will be able to do everything the night before it is due.

## Building technical awareness

Take advantage of the opportunity to learn the basics of current technologies. Last year, the common denominator amongst the students was a lack of technical training. This

is no longer a weakness for us. There are assignments where you are required to pick your own topics. Investigate your fields of interest and stay current.

## Obtaining proficiency with software tools

On-line and on the computer are where it's at. In the program you will learn to use Adobe FrameMaker 5.5 or 6.0 and RoboHelp 9.0.

You will also spend time on MS Word, though not have a full course, and will likely encounter an assortment of other software tools. Some of the teachers will tell you that these tools aren't important because they change over time and that they want to teach you the underlying principles.

This is fine but nobody will hire you based on principle alone. Some of this software is expensive. FrameMaker 7.0 with SGML 6.0 currently retails from Adobe's Web site for US\$1,499.00, while RoboHelp Office Deluxe is a cool US\$1,198 after a \$100 rebate.

The school has full versions of these programs at your disposal. Use them and learn them, as they are part of the reason your tuition is so high.

## Making friends

Over the year of school you will develop relationships with classmates, teachers and whomever you encounter in your practicum term.

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### *Make these good relationships!*

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It is easy to feel like the program is different from the real world.

This is a fallacy!

The people in your class may be some of your best professional contacts in a few years. Certainly they will know more than most about your work habits, strengths and weaknesses.

Also, many of your teachers are working Technical Writers and their approval of you can be a great asset.

Conduct yourself accordingly.

Finally, on top of the selfish businesslike considerations, another important point: some of these people may turn out to be great friends.



### Programme Description

The Algonquin College Technical Writer Program extends over ten months, from September to June.

In the first eight months (two full semesters) students do full-time course work and in the last two months they do an on-site workplace assignment.

For more information visit:  
[www.algonquinc.on.ca/technical-writer/](http://www.algonquinc.on.ca/technical-writer/)

# Indexing, the art of.

**Fred Brown**

*Fred Brown spent a decade writing computer documentation before succumbing to the love of indexing. He has written indexes for book publishers, computer firms and government agencies; has given indexing workshops to the STC and SIGDOC; and publishes an online newsletter. A double-bass player, he named his business Allegro Technical Indexing—allegro being the musical term for “fast or lively.”*

Come visit him at:  
[www.allegrotechindexing.com](http://www.allegrotechindexing.com)

If you don't find it in the index, look carefully through the entire catalogue. — *Sears Roebuck catalogue of 1897.*

“So essential do I consider an Index to be to every book, that I proposed to bring a Bill into Parliament to deprive an author who publishes a book without an Index of the privilege of copyright; and, moreover, to subject him, for his offence, to a pecuniary penalty.” — *Baron Campbell (1799-1861; Scottish lawyer and politician; Lord Chancellor 1859).*

“If there is no index, the book is probably not worth reading.” — *William J. Casey (former Director of the CIA, 1983.)*

“The jury in the Whitewater fraud trial went into its 24<sup>th</sup> hour of deliberation yesterday, sending out a public message of despair and bafflement when they asked the judge for an index to cover 700 exhibits, all complex documents.” — *The Guardian, 1996.*

“In truth, a very large part of every man's reading falls overboard, and unless he has good indexes he will never find it again.” — *Attributed to Horace Binney (U.S. jurist, 1780-1875).*

“An information retrieval system will tend not to be used whenever it is more painful and troublesome for a customer to have information than for him not to have it.” — *Mooers Calvin (one of the pioneers of Information Retrieval), 1959.*

The American Society of Indexers identifies criteria for measuring a great index:

- How relevant are the main headings? Are they useful and clear? Do they fully cover the material?
- How well are the main headings broken down into subheadings? Is the level of detail consistent?
- Does each list of subheadings fully cover the topic without being too long and without having too many page references after each subheading?
- Are all the references to a topic that are scattered across the document brought together even when varying terminology has been used in the document?
- Are subheadings both precise and concise?
- Can you find information in different ways? Are synonyms covered?
- Do cross-references guide you quickly to the right place in the index? Do “See” references direct you to terms with the same meaning? Do “See also” references direct you to related information about a specific topic?
- Given the density of the material in the text, is the index of the right length and detail?
- Are abbreviations, acronyms and symbols handled consistently?
- Are the printed index pages easy to read? Are the main headings and subheadings clearly distinguishable? Can you easily browse or scan the index?
- When a list of subheadings continues on to the top of the next column, is there a “continued heading” to assist the reader. Are any bad breaks corrected?

An index is not an inverted table of contents, nor is it a simple listing of where certain terms appear in a document. An index consists of a “compiled list of topics covered in the work, prepared with the reader's needs in mind.”



- How appropriate are the selected index terms for the intended audience?

## From the President

# STC reaches 50!

**Peter Sturgeon**

*Peter has worked in the field of Technical Communications for over 25 years. He is most recently a graduate of Nortel Networks, where he has worked for 13 years. Currently he is working as a freelance technical writer and is the Chapter president.*

### **We are looking for STCEO archivist**

We need an archivist to care for our historical documents as the STC approaches its fiftieth anniversary.

Do you have a passion for history? Are you a collector? If so, then you're just the sort of person the chapter is looking for.

If you are interested, please contact Ryszard Cimek at [cimdec@rogers.com](mailto:cimdec@rogers.com)

First, let me welcome old and new members to the 2002 - 2003 season of the Society for Technical Communications, Eastern Ontario chapter.

The rest of the executive and I look forward to working on your behalf at both the chapter and society levels to bring you an exciting and worthwhile program of education and other events.

### **The Society for Technical Communication turns 50 this year**

And at 50, as I learned a year ago, is a good time to reflect and to take stock.

I've been spending some time on the Society's main site [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org) and sense that mix of looking back and looking forward.

We are working to release a plan for this season and the coming years that reflects both where we have been and where we'd like to go as a chapter which will include:

### **Demonstrate leadership in using technology for communication.**

- Improve the Internet infrastructure.
- Extend the availability of online technical communication resources.
- Harness Internet technology to leverage the Society's collective knowledge base and avoid duplication of effort among regions and chapters.
- Develop and publicize information resources on the profession

### **Increase the visibility of the technical communication profession.**

- At the executive level, raise awareness of the value of technical communication.

- Equip chapters and members to represent the technical communication profession.
- Develop international competitions in languages other than English.
- Develop and publicize information resources on the profession.
- Record and preserve STC's history and the history of our profession.

### **Improve educational opportunities for technical communicators.**

- Increase the activity and value of Special Interest Groups (SIGs).
- Support secondary and college-level education in technical communication.
- Provide additional educational opportunities in advanced technologies.

### **Enhance resources for STC leaders.**

- Enhance leadership training.
- Improve the infrastructure for leadership support.
- Improve organizational models.

### **Provide information and resources to support technical communicators with special needs.**

- Research and define the relationship of special needs to the practice of technical communication, considering both practitioners and end users.
- Heighten awareness of, and make information available about, special needs in technical communication.

Naturally, we encourage all members to contribute to this year's program.

I can be reached at [president@stceo.org](mailto:president@stceo.org) and look forward to hearing your comments or suggestions.



## executive

### STC Eastern Ontario Chapter 2002-2003 Executive

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**("Dues may not be reduced")**

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Member dues are tax deductible throughout the U.S. as charitable contributions based on U.S. tax rules that allow qualifying not-for-profit organizations to be taxed as charitable organizations and consequently member dues are at least in part tax deductible.

**Chapter surpluses conform with U.S. tax laws**

The issue of chapter surpluses is not a problem, according to Mr. Stolgitis. Under U.S. tax law, non-profit organizations such as the STC are normally permitted to carry 2-3 times their annual operating costs in surplus funds.

The STC as a whole is not in violation of that guideline, nor are individual chapters, notwithstanding reported ongoing surpluses in Canadian chapters.

"Some chapters accumulate quite a bit of surplus funds" he said. But the best way to dissipate extra funds is via scholarships to technical communication programs. Monthly events and seminars offered to members and the public at a loss are also viable ways to spend surplus funds within the society mandate. Under U.S. law, the STC is classed as a not-for-profit organization, but is granted tax exempt status as a charity.

In return, the STC mandate is not strictly to benefit its own, but must enrich the technical communication community and public as a whole.

**Indexing Seminar**

November 28, 2002  
Dow's Lake Pavilion  
6:30 PM

Fred Brown, of Allegro Technical Indexing will present planning, methods and process for technical Indexing. He will explore the domain of professional indexes that will enhance the value of technical publications while working within a schedule and budget.

During the presentation Fred will demonstrate real live scenarios and engage participants in hands-on exercises.

"*Allegro*" is a musical term, meaning quick, lively. If time, money and usability are important to you, then get your index written in allegro time.

For more details visit:  
[www.allegrotechindexing.com](http://www.allegrotechindexing.com)



## Welcome New Technical Writing Students!!

We are looking for new ideas and articles for upcoming articles for future issues of Stimulus. Please submit them to [stimulus@stceo.org](mailto:stimulus@stceo.org).

Eastern Ontario  
Chapter

**Mission Statement for 2002-03**

Our chapter's mission is to work together in a spirit of community to promote and develop professional technical communication.

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