

STIMULUS

Volume:9 Number:6

May 1983

President: James F. Gallagher, 2824-P Cedarwood Dr., Ottawa, Canada K1V 7R1
Editor: Henry Knoll, 101 Caroline Ave., Ottawa, Canada K1Y 0T1

Personae gratae

A paper on Structure Technical Writing, the one of which STIMULUS published a precis in the last issue won Mike Jordan the award of Best Article on Reporting Formal Research in the 1982 National Council of Teachers of English Publication Awards Program.

Sam Estwick has been given an Associate Fellowship in the STC in recognition of his dedicated work for the association, and our Chapter in particular.

Sharon Rudnitski has been in the limelight of the world biological science for her ideas on nomenclature.

Mike Jordan - again! - won a prize for his articles published in STIMULUS under the heading "Doing it in Style".

John de Gonzague has become a senior member of the STC.

Members of the Eastern Ontario Chapter of the STC generally, 60 or 70 of them.

RES NON GRATUM

STIMULUS did not get an award this year. There are two possible reasons for this oversight:

- (1) it didn't deserve an award,
- (2) to win twice in a row is more difficult (it is even for American presidents).

Last Word

Actually I have nothing more to say. At the meeting of the executive last Wednesday I handed over the editorship of STIMULUS to Sharon Rudnitski. But that happened before I realized that I don't need this space for a full announcement of the next meeting (see instead the reminder on page 6).

Anyway let me say that the task of putting STIMULUS together was an enjoyable one.

I hope that that was somewhat reflected in your pleasure of reading some of it.

In this issue everything is in transition. On page 2, Mike Jordan is coming back to do it in style again. The editorial (page 3) sees me at my best; that is, when I devote myself to the greater glorification of nothingness. On subsequent pages (4 and 5) we have a review of the year by the outgoing but introvert president, Jim Gallagher, and a prospect for the year by the incoming president, Jack McFadden. (That's at least some who know whether they are coming or going.)

Alan Darisse is at his usual best (page 6): shovelling more trouble.

Stability establishes itself again with the last item of this issue.



DOING IT IN STYLE

Dr. M.P. Jordan

SEMI-COLONS AND CONJUNCTIONS - A HAPPY PARTNERSHIP

Q I have been told that semi-colons replace conjunctions and cannot be used with them. Is that so?

Bryan Bestvater

A There are a few occasions when a semi-colon can be seen to replace a conjunction; but when it does, the meaning of the conjunction may be lost:

- (1) For strength and control of cracking and deflection, inclined web reinforcement is a highly effective type of web reinforcement for all the L/D and x/D ratios studied; the effectiveness of other types of web reinforcement depends on the L/C and x/D ratios. (Journal of the American Concrete Institute, March 1972, p.175)

This is a difficult text to understand quickly because the writer followed the rule and failed to signal the contrast. The next example works well, but the continuity of and or the logic of thus would have been more specific.

- (2) Financial transactions will be handled electronically; the use of cash, or even cheques, may become rare. (Canadian Electronics Engineering, April 1974, p.5)

Frequently a semi-colon is used where a conjunction cannot be used. This means that the semi-colon and the conjunctions have different functions as they do not share the same sentence environments. In the following example the complexity of the second sentence up to the semi-colon forces the use of the semi-colon and the marked re-entry this tectonic event instead of simply and.

- (3) During late Eocene time, the compression reached its fullest strength. In the Varder zone, it caused a southwestward thrust, folding both in the basement of this area, previous-

ly closed, and in its cover; this tectonic event was accompanied by synkinematic regional metamorphism (Mercier, 1966b). (Geological Survey of America Bulletin, July 1974, p.1079)

Quite simply, the semi-colon is used whenever punctuation a little stronger than a comma is needed - whether or not you also need a conjunction between the clauses. The best way to demonstrate this is to let language speak for itself:

- (4) The dominant military, or official or commercial classes cannot easily change their orientation; and their social dominance, and the institutions through which it is exercised, prevents others from securing power or changing policy. (The Communicator, 72, p.12)
- (5) What Wiley measured were the angles at which beak (on the one hand) and wings (on the other) were raised during the display; and whether the signal was aimed at a male bird, a female bird, or no one in particular. (New Scientist, 6 Nov 75, p.317)
- (6) The large nationalised industries argue, perhaps with some justification, that goods of the highest possible quality are essential and worth paying for; but in the ultimate only they can judge whether the price they are paying for the additional safeguard of intensive quality assurance can be justified. (Electronics and Power, May 1977, p.413)
- (7) This could range from being a source of reference information (e.g., a checklist of characteristics of particular industries, ecological surveys, etc.) to providing some analytical function as well (such as an environmental indexing system); or it could go so far as supplying a team of environmental impact assessors. (New Scientist, 6 Nov 75, p.325)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

There are times when the best of us get down in the mouth working on STC activities. We often feel like the boy on the burning deck. We wonder why we aren't in our easy chair with a good book and a bottle of Courvoisier.

Having served as program chairman, competition co-ordinator and president, I have often had doubts about the usefulness of our programs (not being a freelancer, there were no contracts to be had!) But I can say truthfully, on the basis of discussion with hundreds of people, that we have a major role to play. Let me give you some examples from this year.

Our recent technical writing seminar, given by Mike Jordan, attracted 35 persons, mostly from high technology firms. Many of these people told me there is a great need for these short, inexpensive, practical workshops to help them cope with demanding projects. These are people who can't afford to get in a rut because there won't be any crane around to pull them out. Theirs is a competitive occupation where regular updating of skills is essential.

The many smiling faces at our annual awards banquet told us that technical communicators long for recognition of their hard-earned achievements. Sometimes the significance is much greater than we might expect. Ernie Zucker, who attended this year from Stelco in Hamilton, told us that previous awards won by his publications people helped them win outside contracts that saved several jobs threatened by the recession.

Thelma Cartright teaches an evening course in editing at Carleton University. She feels our chapter can help with training and development for technical editors. I think we can.

We will continue to meet important needs next year with Jack McFadden as president. Each of you can help by doing much more to promote chapter activities.

- Jim Gallagher

Letter to the Editor

I enjoyed reading your article dealing with 'writer's plague'. I also use the individual card technique. However, I recommend the use of 5 x 8 notecards instead of the 3 x 4 you mention. I'll explain why I like the larger size better.

When I am brainstorming or researching an article or brochure, I put each idea or reference topic on a separate card. As soon as I complete a card, I set it aside. At this point I am not concerned about what is subordinated to what, I am simply gathering ideas and material.

It is good to let some time pass before sorting the cards and using them for making a formal outline. I like to leave my options open as long as possible. As you say, the card system is ideal for classifying and reorganizing the ideas they contain in a logical manner. Once I have my outline, I use the cards to expand the material on them into sentences, and sentences into paragraphs. This is why 5 x 8 cards are better.

- Ernie Zucker.

Academic Programs in Technical Communication

Member **\$5.00**
Nonmember **\$8.00**



Society for Technical Communication
815 Fifteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

clip and mail today

Please send me _____ copies of *Academic Programs in*

Technical Communication at \$ _____
total \$ _____

Send to:

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

....according to Jack

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR '84

Each year we publish a slate of candidates for the new executive of the Eastern Ontario Chapter. And each year, the nominated president is told to assume he or she is a shoo-in, "so get busy and give us an article telling us your hopes for the year!"

My first hope is that I don't end up with egg on my face because I have assumed too much. My second hope is that I can do as well as my predecessors. Under their guidance, the Chapter has been steadily expanding its influence as well as its capability to provide us members with a useful service.

I expect that the new executive will come up with a program of regular meetings that will continue to provide us with the opportunity to meet and be stimulated by others inside and outside STC. I also expect that we will continue to enlarge and improve the quality of the annual technical art and publications competition.

However, I do have hobby horses of my own that I would like to pursue during the coming year. One of these involves the development and implementation of the three-semester Technical Writers Course which is scheduled to start at Algonquin College next January. I believe we have a vested interest in what the course will produce.

A related interest is a counselling service that might be undertaken by our Chapter. Members of the executive spend a lot of time answering queries about technical communication and how to become a technical communicator. An organized counselling service would ensure our answers are consistent and complete.

Still in the educational sense, I hope to see some of our programs help us into the computer age. There are still a few of us who have not had the opportunity to appreciate just where the computer fits in our lives in both the personal and the work-related sense. I think we need to learn more about on-line documentation, for example.

There are other aims mentioned in a Chapter Feasibility Study done in 1980 that I hope to see accomplished in 1983-84: the referral directory project is an example. More social events is another.

But most of all, I hope that this next season ends with you more committed than ever to the aims of our Chapter and STC, simply because we have done a good job.

Jack McFadden

SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR 1983-84

President	- Jack McFadden
Vice-President	-
Immediate Past	-
President	- Jim Gallagher
Secretary-Treasurer	- Hyacinth Harewood
Program Director	- Richard Redman
Assistant Program Director	- Monica Berridge-Sills
Membership Director	- Peter Oakey
Assistant Membership Director	- Alix Solem
Publicity Director	- John Wallis
Editor, Stimulus	- Sharon Rudnitski
Assistant Editor	- Karen Dallas

1982/83 EXECUTIVE OF THE EASTERN ONTARIO CHAPTER OF THE STC

Jim Gallagher	President	993-2463
Alan Darisse	Vice-President	995-1393
Richard Redman	Program Director	837-2721
Cecilia McDowall	Secretary-Treasurer	731-7080
Henry Knoll	Newsletter Editor	592-2790 ext. 775
Sharon Rudnitski	Associate Editor	995-9207
Curt Labond	Membership Director	233-4870

Petards and Spears

Marginal movements in society tend to adorn themselves with characteristics whose sole purpose is to enhance, if not mystify, their presence in society. Sociologists have spent generations trying to apply conclusions drawn from the study of families or villages to vastly larger population units. In order to give their dubious approach some air of legitimacy, they developed intricate methodologies and a hocus-pocus vocabulary which effectively make it almost impossible to question or discredit their analyses. Economists have followed the same path, dragging us through the imponderable muck of econometrics. Even history, that pristine mother-love of the social sciences, has lost its intellectual purity and is now vulnerable to manipulation by the methodologists and verbal alchemists.

Is it any surprise, then, that we are experiencing the desecration of the art of technical communication. As a body, technical communicators are like a cow standing in an enclosure looking back as the modellers' bull approaches with that all-too-familiar look in his eyes. The cow will never be the same.

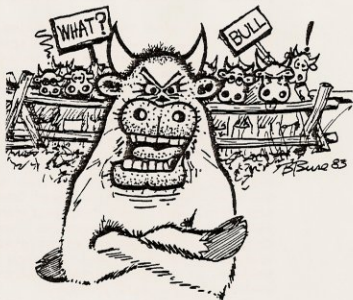
What has prompted this analogy is the reading --partial, I admit-- of a 1981 NASA publication "Technical Communication: Perspectives for the Eighties". Example: B.F. and M.S. Barton pack a lot of bull into 10 long pages of "What is Technical Writing: Prolegomenon to a Contextual Definition". At first, one wonders if this is a new Greek tragedy. Instead, as one pulls one's weary eyes across each page, one discovers a truly North American tragedy in the making. We are told by the Bartons, the dynamic duodenum - most indigestible by the way - that "...the time is ripe for a meta-perspective on the question" and that they will not offer a definition of technical writing but rather "...suggest a direction for future inquiry." Translated: "We do not know what the hell we are talking about, but we have a notion about what it means."

The Bartons boldly assert that the "constituent" term "writing" in "technical writing" implies a "privileging of the written word" and, what is surely worse, land sakes, a "privileging which is ultimately seen as unwarranted."

Later, they warn that previous attempts to define technical writing have revealed "...de facto predispositions toward monism, binarism, and ad hoc modelling."

It is, indeed, a sad day for technical communication. The Bartons and other creatures of their ilk seem inexorably to be moving into prominent positions in the field of technical communication. In fact, they could very well be forming the spearhead in this field. If it is true that one can be hoisted on one's own petard, is it not equally true that one could be impaled on one's own spear?

- Alan Darisse



REMINDER

ANNUAL SPRING RITES

on 4 June 1983, starting at about 5 p.m.
at 33Banner Road (Party Rooms)

Banner Road is just off Greenbanks Road,
south of Baseline.

Price: \$6/person, payable to:

Hyacinth Harewood
75 Birchview, Nepean
224-0527

From the Director-Sponsor

The Board and the Strategic Planning Committee have been considering the establishment of special interest groups (SIGs) within the Society membership. These would roughly parallel the interest stems used at the ITCCs. To aid the Board in its discussions, a questionnaire has been approved which you will all receive within the next few months. The intent is to determine the general membership's interest in the concept of SIGs.

Another sign of growth is new chapters. The Board approved the establishment of the Southeastern Minnesota Chapter and the Edmonton Branch. The Anchorage Branch has reached chapter status as the Greater Anchorage Chapter. On a less happy note, the Eastern Idaho Chapter has been dissolved and the remaining members made members-at-large of the Society.

The Board approved a change in the Society's By-laws concerning the Nominating Committee. Effective with the 1984-85 elections, members of the Nominating Committee will serve for two years instead of one. Also, all four members will be elected. Previously, three members were elected and one was appointed by the President. The President will continue to appoint the committee manager, who will serve for one year. It is felt that this new structure, particularly the two-year term, will provide more continuity for the committee.

Our Society membership continues to increase. As of January 26, membership was 6,717. This is a 9% increase over the total at the first of last year, and already higher than last year's peak membership of 6,444. The membership campaign seems to be working.

— Bob Nelson

And you worry about Writer's Plague?

The following is an actual on-the-job accident report submitted to an insurance company by an accident victim. To set the scene the employee was assigned to repair storm damage on a building. This is the report:

"When I got to the building, I found the storm had knocked some bricks off the top. So I rigged up a beam with a pulley at the top of the building and hoisted up a couple of barrels full of bricks.

When I had repaired the building there was a lot of bricks left over. I went up and filled the barrel with the extra bricks. Next, I went to the bottom and untied the line.

Unfortunately, the barrel of bricks was heavier than I. Before I knew what was happening the barrel started down, jerking me off the ground. I decided to hang on.

Half way up I met the barrel coming down and received a severe blow on the shoulder. I continued to the top, banged my head against the beam, and jammed my finger in the pulley.

When the barrel hit the ground, it burst its bottom. This allowed all the bricks to fall out. I was heavier than the empty barrel, so I started down at high speed.

Half way down I met the barrel coming up and severely injured my shin. When I hit the bottom, I landed on the bricks and got several painful cuts from the sharp edges.

At this point, I must have lost my presence of mind. I let go of the line.

The barrel fell down and gave me another heavy blow on the head.

This put me in the hospital."



MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

VOL. 2, NO. 4
APRIL 1983

A forum for the exchange of information among Associations involved in the management process.

Address all correspondence to: Management Calendar, Suite 214, 1750 Courtwood Crescent, Ottawa, Ontario, K2C 2B5. Publishers of Management Calendar will make every effort to record information accurately but cannot be responsible for errors and omissions.

MAY 17—Association of Records Managers and Administrators, *ELF Program, Eliminate Legal Files.* Ted Ferrer, Pathfinder Systems Design Ltd., The MacDonald Club, 153 Gilmour. Program Director Suzanne Smith, 992-8646.

MAY 18—International Word Processing Association, *May Supper Meeting.* 5:00 p.m., National Press Club, 150 Wellington Street. Call 233-1472 for details.

MAY 18—Records Management Institute, *Mail Management, Canada Post.* 1:30 p.m., Gatineau Room, RA Centre, Riverside Drive. President Michel Poitras, 996-5802.

MAY 18—Canadian Public Personnel Management Association, *Annual Meeting/Freedom of Information.* 12:00

MAY 18—Association Canadienne de la gestion du personnel des services publics, *Réunion Annuelle/La liberté d'accès à l'information.* 12h00, 20^e étage, L'Esplanade Laurier ouest. Appeler Bob Emond, 593-5511.

MAY 24—Administrative Management Society, *Why an administrative management society?* Lloyd Loynes, Associates Consulting Services, 5:30 p.m., Talisman Hotel, 1376 Carling Avenue. Program Director Lloyd Loynes, 733-9669.

MAY 25—Canadian Micrographic Society, *May Dinner Meeting.* 5:00 p.m., The MacDonald Club, 153 Gilmour. For information call, Steve Donahoe, 593-5430.

MAY 26—OD Canada Network,

SEMINARS, CONFERENCES & TRAINING PROGRAMS

APR. 29—Professional Secretaries International *Executive + Secretary = Team.* A one-day seminar for executive secretaries. Programme: A.M.—*Panel Discussion*; P.M.—*Professional Secretary's Job in the Information Age.* The Skyline Hotel, 101 Lyon Street North, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For information, call Professional Secretaries International, 744-3721 during the day or 225-3578 evenings.

MAY 3—Ottawa Personnel Association: *The Impact of Human Rights Legislation—*a one-day seminar designed to provide a general review of current Human Rights Legislation; identify some important concepts; outline the role of management and discuss special interest topics (such as 'Systemic Discrimination', 'Bona Fide Occupational Requirements' and 'Reasonable Accommodation'). Sheridan El Mirador, 480 Metcalfe St. Information: Bob Day, 829-1530.

MAY 10—Human Resource Management, *Selection Strategies* by Dr. Paul Harwood.

MAY 24—Human Resource Management *Relocation Counselling* by Dennis Cooney.

Associates Consulting Services presents a series of half day seminars, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 in the conference room. Ottawa

This is an excerpt of a monthly bulletin which STIMULUS may carry in future issues. The meetings of our Chapter may be listed in them as well. Jim Gallagher has been working on the liaison.