

## The evolution of perennial questions

Miki Magyar, Senior Member, Rocky Mountain Chapter

A recent thread on the TECHWR\_L list spawned a thread on the STC Quality SIG discussion list about the validity of quality metrics and led inevitably to issues of certification. My first reaction was rather like that of the bowl of petunias in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*—"Oh no, not again!" But as I looked at the various comments and responses, it occurred to me that things have changed, even though it often seems they have stayed the same.

Steve Jong began with the query, "Do you feel that the concept of measurement which has been applied to many other fields (some would say 'all' other fields), does not apply to us?" His summary of the previous thread was that the "consensus in the forum was that technical writing is different from other professions in which productivity can be measured..."

I then pointed out that "There are some critical terms which can have several referents: quality and productivity. And 'the concept of measurement, which has been applied to many other fields' originated in manufacturing, where there are explicit standards, parameters, and baseline measurements against which to measure today's output. ...what you measure and reward is what you'll get. If we succumb to the mania for 'efficiency' at the cost of quality, we'll just see more of the kind of stuff that gives us a bad name."

For some, the need for metrics was part of an ongoing quality improvement process, but for others, it was a demand from management. Several people mentioned metrics that are currently being used. Erika Yankovich said, "[the] Quality department measures us every month, using metrics we developed together." Presumably these metrics make sense to all concerned. Sam Alper said that at his division they are considering the following: tracking customer calls where the docs really were at fault, usability baseline on

major revisions, and tracking reported errors.

Bonni Graham says she uses both internal and external metrics for her operation:

- 1) (Internal) estimated page/topic count vs. actual page/topic count
- 2) (Internal) estimated cost vs. actual cost
- 3) (Internal) % of clients who report themselves satisfied with the manual they received
- 4) (External - client side) # of days by which we beat or exceeded the deadline
- 5) (External - client customer side) % by which support calls (or product returns) rose or declined after release of the manual
- 6) (External - client customer side) % of customers who report that the manual influenced them positively in their buying decision

I said I used these as internal measures: "I/O - when I got a change request, I logged it in and out. Reviews - again, I logged the date I sent a doc or section to an engineer for review, when I got it back, and when it was ready for the next round. Technical accuracy - I tracked the kinds of markups I got from SMEs - additions, corrections (major and minor), and opinion (including their attempts to reintroduce passive voice)."

Steve Jong talked about using weighted pages for estimating productivity at IBM. "I believe a new page was weighted 100%, a revised page 50%, and an updated page 25%... I have found it's trivial to divide the page count by the revision number to obtain a metric I also call a weighted page. The first version of a document is weighted 100%, the second 50%, the third 33%, etc."

Each of these people also commented on the associated difficulties with these metrics, including the time required, the fact that they were often incomplete or ambiguous, and the need to ask other too-busy people to participate.

See "Evolution" on page 8.

*technical writing is different from other professions in which productivity can be measured...*

## DocQment Staff

### Editors

Jennifer Atkinson  
Lori Fisher  
Liz Hidalgo  
Sophia Marx

### Production

Richard Colvin

### Quality SIG staff

Lori Fisher, manager  
Robbie Rupel, membership

## To join the SIG

Contact the STC office at  
Society for Technical  
Communication

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1854  
(703) 522-4114

## Publication Policies

We welcome articles for "BookQueue," "What's Hot," or "In the Trenches." Articles should be 400 words or less. Email or phone the *DocQment* editor, Lori Fisher, if you want to review your topic before submitting an article or to request style guidelines.

Submit your articles at any time during the year to the *DocQment* editor. We prefer ASCII text via email. You can also mail us a 3 1/2" PC- or Macintosh-formatted diskette with ASCII text, Word, or RTF files (please mark format and application version number on diskette and include your phone number and name.) All articles will be edited for length, clarity, and appropriateness. Include a brief bio statement.

You may reprint original material appearing in *DocQment*, as long as you acknowledge the source and send us a copy of the publication containing the reprint.

## Email or mail submissions to:

lorif@us.ibm.com  
DocQment Editor  
918 Nevada Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95125  
Daytime phone:  
(408) 463-3573

## We'll answer some FAQs, have a debate or two, and see you at the annual conference

*Lori Fisher, Associate Fellow, Silicon Valley Chapter*

There are some exciting things happening in the Quality SIG. Our web site is being redesigned and updated. The recent addition of Frequently Asked Questions midyear '98 has drawn some attention and visitors to the site. In the area of metrics, we have a new subgroup leader for the work group on Quality Metrics. We welcome Steve Jong in this new role, and thank him for taking it on! Those of you who subscribe to the Quality SIG listserv probably saw the vigorous debate on this topic in late December '98 and January '99. Metrics continues to be one of the most frequently debated topics in our SIG. If you'd like to join the group working with Steve on collecting and publishing examples of ways to measure quality, please email him at

jong@lightbridge.com.

Soon it will be time again for the annual conference, which will be held in Cincinnati this year. We hope many SIG members will make the trip so we can meet one another in person. The SIG will sponsor several activities at the conference: a panel discussion on Quality, five tables at the Networking Luncheon, and an annual meeting of Quality SIG members to be held Tuesday morning during the breakfast hour (watch the final program for details about location). All SIG members are encouraged to attend and get to know other members. We hope to see you there!

Lori Fisher manages the User Technology organization at IBM's Santa Teresa Laboratory in San Jose, CA and is manager of the STC Quality SIG.

## Quality SIG web pages get a new look

*Don Lenk, Senior Member, Washington, D.C. Chapter*

The Quality SIG's web page subgroup is working hard updating the look and usability of our web site. Liang Chen is working on the overall structure of our pages to make them more attractive and easier to navigate. Amber Gray is rearranging the bibliography by topic to make it easier to use and create an accessible format. Don Lenk continues to keep the content current.

We plan to have our improvements on line before the STC conference in May. If you have not seen our web site, please visit it at <http://stc.org/pics/quality/>. If you have any suggestions for improvement or new content, please contact Don Lenk at [SunSymID@aol.com](mailto:SunSymID@aol.com).

Don Lenk has his own technical publications business, Sun Symbol Information Development, in Northern Virginia.

## Quality SIG membership report

*Robbie Rupel, Quality SIG Membership Manager*

Greetings from St. Louis! As of December, the Quality SIG has 522 members, up from 468. Greetings from St. Louis! As of December, the Quality SIG has 522 members, up from 468. Welcome to all of our new international members from Australia, Belgium, Canada (Alberta and Ontario), Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Welcome to all of our newest domestic members from Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, Washington DC, and Wisconsin. Welcome to all of our new members!

In the last newsletter, I asked some of you to share information about yourself with other members of the Quality SIG. I am pleased to say that you responded. This quarter, we will produce the first of a series of profiles of members under the title "Who we are!"

If you would like to be profiled, please write a brief article focusing on the following questions:

- What do you do and where do you work?
- Why did you join the Quality SIG?
- What quality-related issues are you currently facing and how are you trying to resolve them?

Send submissions to me at [rupel@inlink.com](mailto:rupel@inlink.com). Until next time....

# Who we are!

*Robbie Rupel, Senior Member, St. Louis Chapter*

This quarter, I am pleased to welcome new SIG member Julie Conlon to the Membership column. Julie has agreed to be profiled for this column. (To be profiled in an upcoming newsletter, contact me at rupel@inlink.com.)

**SIG:** *Tell us about yourself.*

**Julie:** I work for a small Telecommunications Software company in Ireland called Accuris. We have about 110 employees and are jointly owned by Telia (Swedish Telecom), KPN (Dutch Telecom), and Telecom Eireann (the Irish telecom company). Accuris is a relatively new company and is still finding its feet. I joined Accuris when I finished college. I have a degree in Psychology from Trinity College, Dublin and a Postgraduate Diploma in Technical Communication from Limerick University.

**SIG:** *Tell us about Accuris.*

**Julie:** Our writing department is small (4 writers) but we are currently recruiting 2 more writers and a graphic designer. The writing department (the Information Engineering Group) mainly writes manuals and online help to accompany software products developed in-house.

**SIG:** What quality issues are you facing? How are you working to resolve them?

**Julie:** As a small group of writers in the fast-moving telecoms industry, we face several challenges. Three quality issues stand out: standards, costs, and tools

Our first quality issue regards standards for all of the major processes and tools that we use. For example, we have FrameMaker, RoboHelp and Word standards, and standard procedures for writing and reviewing. However, we recognize that to produce quality documentation, we have to do more than simply apply our standards. Our concerns center around two points:

- We are hiring more writers, including contractors. As the group expands, it will be a challenge to maintain consistent levels of quality [without clear standards].
- We recognize that it is impossible to document every writing standard that we employ. If we over-document our methods, they become a millstone, writers become discouraged from using them, and they are filed away. However, there is an equal danger that too much of the Accuris way of writing goes undocumented. We recognize that we need to balance maintaining consistency between writers and allowing for adaptations to style sheets and

standards in response to the requirements of different projects.

To resolve this issue we have attempted to produce standards that are generic enough to provide a strong guide to how documentation should be written and also allow for the customization of documentation to the requirements of specific projects. They can be adjusted to suit the demands of each new project. In fact, we prefer the term "Style Guides" to that of "Standards" as this more aptly reflects their role. The latest version of each style guide is on every writer's desk. Writers are encouraged to suggest style changes.

Our second quality issue, one that we constantly encounter when producing project proposals relates to the cost of quality. Many companies do not recognize this and are not willing to pay for it. We want to produce the best documentation we can. However, quite often we are constrained by a client's budget on a project and cannot spend the amount of time and resources that we would like.

We have tried to resolve this by building a strong portfolio and by raising our profile within the company. We recently gave a presentation to project managers (who will ultimately be our clients) in which we described our processes and the metrics involved in producing documentation.

Our third quality issue surrounds the tools we use. Technology rapidly changes. New products are released, existing software is updated and new trends emerge. We must track all of these. We must choose which trends to follow and which products to buy and learn. Not all of them suit our needs and facilitate our quest for quality. New tools are not necessarily an improvement on the old tools. We try to resolve this issue by keeping up-to-date with the opinions of our peers.

**SIG:** *Why did you join the Quality SIG?*

**Julie:** We joined the Quality SIG because quality is our main priority. Through the Quality SIG, we learn how other companies have solved their quality issues. We identify which publications we need to buy and we observe the industry trends in relation to improving the quality of documentation. We achieve a competitive advantage by differentiating ourselves on the basis of the quality of our products.

Robbie Rupel is the Documentation Manager at Computerized Medical Systems, Inc., in St. Louis, MO.

*We recognize that it is impossible to document every writing standard that we employ ... we need to balance maintaining consistency between writers and allowing for adaptations to ... the requirements of different projects.*

---

## Musing on metrics

### Documentation and quality assurance programs

Steven Jong, Senior Member, Boston Chapter

*This column is adapted from my guest column, "The Quality Revolution and Technical Communication," which appeared in the October 1997 edition of the STC magazine Intercom.*

Over the past generation, the theory of product quality has been revolutionized by visionaries such as Deming, Juran, and Crosby, who completely reversed long-held beliefs about quality and how to achieve it. By applying the language and models of contemporary quality theory to the domain of technical communication, we can see that the revolution in thinking about quality has significant implications for our profession. As an example of how this change in thinking affects us, consider editing.

The traditional pubs model is the familiar cycle of writing, editing, proofreading, and production, in which each editing pass removes errors. In quality terms, this is an "inspection" model of quality control (QC): examining the output of the writing process, at one or more points along the way, looking for defects. The idea is that poor quality is culled from the output stream. The cost of quality, traditionally taken as the cost of the QC department, would in our domain be the cost of editing and review. The QC model assumes that finding more defects requires more frequent and stringent inspections, to the point where the cost becomes prohibitive. Issues derived from this viewpoint would be: "How many editing passes does it take to minimize errors? At how many points should a document be proofread? What number of draft and review cycles is optimally cost-effective?"

Having edited and reviewed documentation myself, I can attest that the model in which pages are cranked-out in haste and edited at leisure is clearly wasteful. (Crosby would call the results, which may require heavy editing, "scrap and rework.") It's well understood that the later in the production process a problem is detected, the more expensive it is to fix. Not only is the QC

model expensive and inefficient, it's inherently vulnerable to error. The editor who gets bogged-down in correcting spelling and punctuation mistakes—low-level copyediting work—risks missing more significant, structural errors. Technical reviewers, distracted by obvious grammatical slips, are even more likely to miss technical errors.

Massive inspection is as impractical for documentation as it is for anything else, but with a significant twist: Inspecting writing can open it up to subjective interpretations, in which case the more inspectors, the worse the result.

What is the solution to this problem? Another way of framing it. The new quality theory views the cost of quality as the cost of poor quality (finding and correcting defective work, whether during production or in the field). The way to improve quality is to prevent the introduction of errors. This is the "quality assurance" (QA) model. In documentation, as with software or automobiles, the best way to improve the quality of the output is to improve the quality of the input. This is not an editorial function, it is a writing function. Applying it to documentation, writers should be taught (and motivated!) to produce the best drafts, with the fewest editorial errors, that they can. As Crosby would put it, they should strive to "do it right the first time." In addition to review, QA editors can help determine and teach the standards and processes used in documentation groups. The quality issues become: "What are the best practices? What are the standards and models to follow? How can we improve the quality of the input to us (namely, specifications)?"

Under today's quality theory, then, editors can move beyond quality control to quality assurance, where their true value can be appreciated.

*Next time: Marching toward world-class documentation*

Steven Jong is Documentation Team Manager at Lightbridge, Inc. in Burlington, Massachusetts. You can reach him at [jong@lightbridge.com](mailto:jong@lightbridge.com).

*The editor who gets bogged down in correcting spelling and punctuation mistakes—low-level copyediting work—risks missing more significant, structural errors.*

---

## **BookQueue**

### ***Tools for Virtual Teams: A Fitness Companion*** **by Jane E. Henry and Meg Hartzler**

**1998 ASQ Quality Press: Wisconsin 153 pages ISBN 0-87389-381-6**

*Mary Ann Campbell, Member, Houston Chapter*

"Welcome to the age of the networked organization," Jane E. Henry and Meg Hartzler write on the opening page of their workbook, *Tools for Virtual Teams*. Henry and Hartzler recognize the need to prepare their readers for the difficulties they are likely to encounter as they begin working on virtual teams where the members are separated geographically, culturally, and rarely (if ever) meet face to face.

Henry and Hartzler apply the Team Fitness Model they developed to the virtual team, discussing the special challenges that face members of newly-forming virtual teams and those trying to keep virtual teams on track and productive once they are up and running. Henry and Hartzler's model consists of four fitness areas:

- Customer focus
- Direction
- Understanding
- Accountability

According to the authors, teams trying to achieve these four fitness areas will encounter challenges in three areas:

- Direction/Focus
- Values/Principles, Operating Agreements
- Synergy/Communication

*Tools for Virtual Teams* supplies exercises to help virtual teams avoid problems that arise when they are not working effectively in these areas. Henry and Hartzler state that " . . . teams that focus on building effectiveness through using these exercises will gain the competence and confidence needed to perform at their best."

The book follows an easy-to-read format with pertinent quotations, from professionals who use virtual teaming, set-off in boxes and scattered

throughout. The Introduction chapter briefly explains the factors such as globalization and competition that have led to a greater dependence on virtual teams, and defines what the authors consider a virtual team. The second chapter, "The Team Fitness Model and Virtual Teams," introduces the Team Fitness Model and defines each of the four fitness areas using the following topics:

- Definition
- Factors
- What's Different for Virtual Teams
- The Good News
- The Challenge

The remainder of the book is devoted to exercises that address three challenges faced by virtual teams. A brief discussion of the first challenge, Direction/Focus, is followed by eight exercises, that can be completed either in-person at a start-up meeting (which the authors recommend) or electronically. Seven exercises are provided after another brief discussion of the second challenge, Values/Principles, Operating Agreements; and nine exercises follow the discussion of the third challenge, Synergy/Communication.

The pages are perforated, allowing easy removal of the worksheets. In addition, the book has three useful appendixes: a manager's checklist, a sample agenda for a start-up meeting, and a suggested meeting structure.

The focus of *Tools for Virtual Teams* is on setting up a team and getting through the early stages of a project. For these purposes, the book is valuable.

Mary Ann Campbell is a Technical Writer for Compaq Computer Corporation in Houston, Texas.

*Teams that focus on building effectiveness through using these exercises will gain the competence and confidence needed to perform at their best.*



# A look at ISO 9001:2000

Ralph Robinson, Senior Member, Toronto Chapter

The following article is based on a thorough examination of the draft ISO\CD1 9001:2000 standard currently under review by members of TC 176, the Technical Committee of ISO responsible for the ISO 9000 series of standards.

## The ISO 9000:2000 family

The year 2000 version of this series of quality standards will be comprised of only four documents: ISO 9000, ISO 9001, ISO 9004, and ISO 10011. The auditing standard, ISO 10011, may be delayed if plans to develop a common standard for use by both ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 auditors run into snags.

For other areas, such as the QS 9000 standard for the automotive industry and AS 9000 for the aircraft industry, technical reports will likely be issued to provide industry-specific requirements beyond those in ISO 9000:2000.

## A new rationale and a new structure

A new reality in the business world has led to a rethink of the ISO 9000 series, resulting in a new approach to quality management systems. Based on a business-oriented process approach, the standard will feature easier-to-understand requirements, increased emphasis on customer satisfaction and continuous improvements, compatibility with environmental management and other management systems, and wider applicability for companies not involved in traditional manufacturing activities.

This process approach focuses on two cycles for developing, producing, and using products and services. The first cycle makes up an organization's internal processes and is represented by two major clauses in the standard: Management Responsibility in clause 5, and Resource Management in clause 6.

This cycle feeds into the Process Management cycle, covered under clause 7, which encompasses

those processes required to develop, produce, install, and support a company's product or service. This cycle involves customer interaction, thereby ensuring feedback on how well an organization meets the needs of its customers.

Both of these cycles share a fourth element, Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement, which is detailed in clause 8. This element provides for extracting data from customer responses and other internal activities relative to the quality system to ensure that continuous improvement becomes part of the management of quality.

## An area of concern

A major concern with this new structure relates to companies already registered to the 20-element structure of ISO 9001:1994. *Will I have to revise the structure of my current documentation set to meet this new standard?* The present stand by ISO is NO. Since the former 20 elements are readily identifiable in the new standard, it is felt that a cross-reference matrix from old to new will satisfy most registrars.

I tend to think the jury is still out on this one. Personally, while revising the structure will present some headaches, I think the short-term pain will yield the following long-term gains:

- ease of maintenance and use
- ease of internal auditing
- improved relevance to the users of the supporting documentation

In the next newsletter, I will discuss the five major changes in ISO 9001:2000 that will affect a company's quality management system, and therefore, impact their ISO registration.

Ralph Robinson is author of the book "Documenting ISO 9000: Guidelines for Compliant Documentation."

*The standard will feature easier-to-understand requirements ... compatibility with environmental management ... and wider applicability for companies not involved in traditional manufacturing activities.*

---

## In the trenches

### Knowledge Leveragers 'R' Us: Technical writers as producers of quality tools

Amy Perry, Member, Hoosier Chapter

Many technical writers decry the lack of understanding and respect technical writers encounter in the workplace. In the First Quarter 1999 issue of *Technical Communication*, George Hayhoe offers a solution that I would like to expand on. He observes that "we need to educate our employers and clients about the significance of what we do and the value we offer to their bottom lines." A specific way to think about the value we offer is to think of documents as tools, like hammers or screwdrivers. In contrast to scientific papers, which are written after-the-fact as reports, technical documents are written prospectively, with a particular use and user in mind. They need to be designed with utility (usability) in mind. Just as a screwdriver or a hammer needs certain characteristics depending on its intended use, a document needs to have certain characteristics depending on its intended use.

As Hayhoe points out, the Apollo 13 astronauts used the emergency procedures written partially by technical writers to return to Earth alive. The procedures were tools. My teammates use a checklist I created to make decisions regarding equipment. The checklist is a tool. In general, technical writers enable corporations to take advantage of knowledge residing in the minds of SMEs. We prevent knowledge from going unused. We are creators of knowledge-leveraging tools, which are tools in their own right.

As a result, I like to think of my documents as resembling a particular type of tool—a lever. When I write my communication context (which includes audience analysis) and plan my document, I am designing my lever. When I create my document—which conveys the knowledge being leveraged—I make the lever. When the reader is reading my document, he or she is being assisted (lifted) by the lever. In the physical world, if a lever is not designed correctly, it breaks or does not complete the job. In

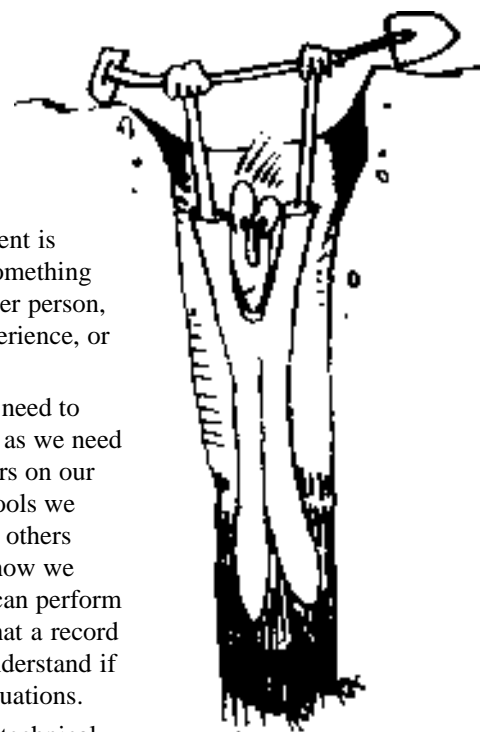
documentation terms, if a document is inadequate, the user has to use something else also. For example, ask another person, make a mistake and learn by experience, or fail altogether.

Because documents are tools, we need to document them too, just as much as we need to document the work of the others on our team. We need to document the tools we create. We need to do this so that others coming after us will understand how we arrived at our decisions, so they can perform document maintenance, and so that a record exists that helps us and others understand if that tool is applicable in other situations.

Talk abounds on whether to hire technical writers based on the software tools they know or their writing ability. Many people think knowing how to use an authoring tool means knowing how to author. This concept is erroneous. We use authoring tools to create the tools that are documents, just as a machinist uses machine tools to create the tools that are screwdrivers or hammers. We need to know how to run the equivalent of a lathe but still need to know which tool is needed, and which type of that tool. This is where our decision-making process—audience analysis, contextual investigation, usability, etc.—comes in. Our process is a tool also.

Treat your processes and deliverables as tools by documenting them on the same basis as you document the other products and processes within your project. Treating your deliverables and processes with this degree of respect can create more respect on the part of fellow workers. This might result in their using technical writers more and earlier, which can then enhance the quality of the project as a whole.

Amy Perry is a Senior Technical Writer for CREW Technical Services, Indianapolis, Indiana.



*We need to educate our employers and clients about the significance of what we do and the value we offer to their bottom lines.*

*Engineers get respect because management understands what they do...*

*From "Evolution" on page 1.*

Even the STC competition guidelines often refer to "appropriate for the audience" in many places. So it seems apparent that there is no real agreement on what should be measured, or how, or why.

Yet this question has popped up at least once a year, almost always in conjunction with issues about certification. It is guaranteed to generate a lot of heat, but very little light. Some feel, as Steve Jong does, that "it is possible to certify technical communicators by measuring their performance...", while others feel just as strongly that the move for certification is the wrong response to some real problems: the desire for more respect (as evidenced by larger pay checks) and the need to uphold high standards of work. Chris Hall noted that "If neurolinguistic programmers can get certified, it seems as though we should be able to. Unfortunately, that's not practical..."

Bonni Graham discussed two of the answers to "why do we want to be certified?"

"Well, engineers are certified, and they get a lot of respect." Her response was that engineers get respect because management understands what they do, and how they contribute to the bottom line, and that this is not often true for technical writers.

Bonnie also said, "Too many people who aren't competent are taking jobs away from those who are because HR doesn't know what to really look for." And again, she says that "HR hires this way because management doesn't understand how our profession contributes to the product and

thus to profitability. ... We have a sales job here, people, not a certification issue."

None of this is new. These questions, positions, opinions, and suggestions have been part of the professional dialogue for a long time. How long? Well, actually, I think it's recent relative to the length of time there has been an identifiable profession of 'technical writer'. (I'm sure someone will correct me if I'm wrong!). My perception is that the content of the discussion is evolving slowly. I see more people talking about what's actually being done in the workplace, fewer complaints, and more confidence that we really can demonstrate our contribution to the product and the bottom line.

My suspicion is this issue will keep appearing in one form or another until there are enough colleges offering degrees in technical communication for a long enough time that the degree becomes a de facto certification. If that scenario is true, then it seems to me that we can have the most influence on the real problems of quality, status, and pay by putting our efforts into shaping the content of the classes and the list of core competencies taught. It might make more sense to certify the degree program, rather than the people.

Will there be a place in this brave new world for those of us who come in sideways? Of course. We'll have to make sure there is. In the meantime, tune in again next year for the continuing story.

Miki Magyar is a Senior Technical Writer at McData Corp. in Colorado and does consulting in Technical Communication Support Services.

Visit the STC Quality SIG web site at <http://stc.org/pics/quality/>

If you aren't already signed up for the discussion on our listserv, send an email to [majordomo@stc.org](mailto:majordomo@stc.org) and in the body of the message enter: `subscribe stcqsig-l youremail@address` (The character at the end of `stcqsig-l` is a lowercase L)

To post a message for others on the listserv to see, send an email to:

[stcqsig-l@stc.org](mailto:stcqsig-l@stc.org).

---

# Quality at the Annual Conference

Lori Fisher, Senior Member, Silicon Valley Chapter

Come to the annual conference in Cincinnati this May to find out more about quality. In addition to the annual meeting of the Quality SIG, there are 3 sessions specifically dealing with information quality:

## **TR 9W Quality Improvement Through Process Improvement**

Analyzing and improving the information development process, and ISO-9001.

## **TR 7W The Basics of Quality**

A panel discussing basic quality issues covering definitions of quality, measuring quality, and implementing quality. The impact of ISO 9000 and how writer-developer relations affect quality will also be discussed.

## **TR 8W Objective Quality Metrics: Can They Be Established?**

What objective quality metrics are possible? Two proposals for quality metrics are given, and results of an experiment on readability formulas are presented.

If you are presenting a paper at the conference, let the SIG manager, Lori Fisher, know about it (whether or not the topic is quality) so we can publicize sessions being held by members of our SIG. Send Lori a note at [lorif@us.ibm.com](mailto:lorif@us.ibm.com) with the title of your session, your name, and the session identifier.

---

## The quality SIG is going to Cincinnati. Are you?

Ralph Robinson, Senior Member, Toronto Chapter

Once again, several intrepid members of the Quality SIG will be holding a panel discussion at the 46th Annual STC Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio this May. We are scheduled to present on Tuesday, May 18, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm. This could change, however, so check the Preliminary Program, which is due for release in early February.

This year the panel has chosen the theme, "The Basics of Quality" and will feature discussions on a wide variety of topics. These topics will deal with the meaning of quality, how to measure quality, looking at adapting some concepts from the ISO 9000 series of standards to the

documentation process, and how the writer-developer relationship can affect document quality.

All presenters are seasoned veterans of STC Annual conferences and promise to provide insights and information that will help you improve the quality of those documents you slave over on a day-to-day basis. Come listen to them, learn from them, and enjoy the many other aspects of an Annual STC Conference.

See you in Cincinnati!

Ralph Robinson is author of the book "Documenting ISO 9000: Guidelines for Compliant Documentation" available through R2 Innovations in Mississauga, Ontario.

*Several intrepid members of the Quality SIG will be holding a panel discussion at the STC Annual Conference in Cincinnati...on Tuesday, May 18.*



## What's Inside?

The evolution of perennial questions .....	1
SIGNificant news .....	2
Membership report .....	2
Who we are! .....	3
Musing on metrics .....	4
BookQueue .....	5
A look at ISO 9001:2000 .....	6
In the trenches .....	7
Quality at the Annual Conference .....	9
The Quality SIG is going to Cincinnatti. Are you? .....	9