

Welcome to the Quality SIG's conference issue

Introduction to this issue

Ralph Robinson, Toronto Chapter, Quality SIG Manager

Members of the Quality Special Interest Group (SIG) will be very active at this year's STC Annual Conference at Disney World in Orlando, Florida, May 21 to 24. This issue of DocQment is dedicated to providing the membership at large with an overview of these SIG members' presentations.

Many of us look forward to attending the STC Annual Conference each year. There is no other event for technical communicators that provides so much valuable information on emerging trends and new technologies that are about to affect our very being, as well as the opportunity to meet so many great people.

The success of any conference is in the technical content that it provides for the attendees. Many members of the Quality SIG make a significant contribution to the success of each STC Annual Conference by sharing their knowledge and expertise with others. This issue of DocQment highlights members who are making presentations as solo efforts, as part of a progression, or as a member of the Quality SIG's panel presentation.

The editors of DocQment publicized this event via the Quality listserv, asking all those making presentations to submit an overview of their work. If you are presenting and missed out or didn't hear of this opportunity, we offer our sincere apologies for the oversight and wish you every success with your presentation.

Let us know what you think of this special issue. Should it become a regular part of our DocQment schedule? Email your comments to ralph.robinson@honeywell.com.

Enough of my babbling. Read on and see what your fellow members have in store for you at Orlando.

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

Countdown to the conference

Jennifer Atkinson, Hoosier Chapter, Quality SIG Acquisitions Editor

Even if you are a seasoned conference-goer, you might enjoy some reminders about how to prepare for attending the 47th STC Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida. For details, you can see the information on the home page of the conference (www.stc.org/47th/index.htm) and on STC's website (www.stc-va.org/47thConf/47conf.htm).

Your conference countdown checklist might include the following tasks:

- Determine who needs to approve your expenses for the conference. Write a well-reasoned, passionate proposal, and receive a big thumbs-up to go. If your manager can't free up enough money in the budget for you to attend, propose an alternative. For example, suggest that if the company pays for your airfare and registration, you'll pay for your hotel and meal expenses.
- Check flights and buy your tickets. If you look for tickets online, remember to fly into Orlando International Airport, not one of the smaller regional airports.
- Decide whether you want to rent a car or arrange for a shuttle from the airport to the hotel. Then make the appropriate reservations.
- Send in your conference registration. You can do this through the mail or, with a credit card, register online at the STC website. Look for the Forms link.
- If you are considering a visit to the Magic Kingdom or other Orlando attractions, compare the discounts available through STC, AAA, and AARP. Buy tickets now or decide to wait until you're there in case you just can't tear yourself away from STC activities.
- If you work for a company with multiple locations, send a company-wide email to all the writers and compile a list of everyone who is attending the conference. Agree to meet for drinks on Sunday night.
- Check your company's travel guidelines. Find out whether you need receipts for every expense or just the ones over a certain amount. How do you handle tips? What is the maximum amount for meals?

See "Countdown" on page 5

SIGNificant News

Share breakfast with other SIG members and the SIG leadership

Ralph Robinson, Toronto Chapter, Quality SIG Manager

Grab your breakfast and join us on Tuesday morning from 7:15 until 8:15 at the annual Quality SIG Business Meeting. No, this isn't a dry, financials-based, report-bound committee meeting. Come and provide feedback to the leadership team of the SIG on what you liked, what you didn't like, and how you would improve the SIG. All members of the leadership team are dedicated to serving you as best we can. We need your suggestions and input to make this SIG better for everyone. Come out and hear what we've accomplished this year and what we've planned for next year, then let us hear your thoughts.

See you Tuesday morning, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. (OK, maybe bleary-eyed and half-awake, but you can do it.)

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

Quality SIG membership report

Robbie Rupel, St. Louis, MO Chapter, SIG Membership Manager

As of March 31, 2000, the Quality SIG has 547 members. Welcome to our newest members from the United States and Canada.

Welcome also to our new members from Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, China (Hong Kong), India, Israel, Korea, New Zealand, a US military base in Panama, and from England and Scotland.

Fun fact: The Quality SIG is truly an international SIG. Our members come from four continents and almost every time zone. Following is the geographical distribution of our membership.

United States: 434 members:	Tennessee: 5 members
Alabama: 2 members	Texas: 30 members
Arkansas: 3 members	Utah: 3 members
Arizona: 3 members	Virginia: 15 members
California: 75 members	Washington: 15 members
Colorado: 14 members	Wisconsin: 13 members
Connecticut: 7 members	Canada: 55 members:
Washington DC: 1 member	Alberta: 8 members
Delaware: 1 member	British Columbia: 5 members
Florida: 15 members	Manitoba: 1 member
Georgia: 14 members	Ontario: 26 members
Iowa: 4 members	Quebec: 13 members
Idaho: 2 members	Saskatchewan: 2 members
Illinois: 17 members	Australia: 3 members
Indiana: 8 members	Austria: 2 members
Kansas: 1 member	Belgium: 3 members
Louisiana: 3 members	Denmark: 4 members
Massachusetts: 19 members	Finland: 6 members
Maryland: 17 members	France: 6 members
Michigan: 14 members	Germany: 2 members
Minnesota: 16 members	Hong Kong: 1 member
Missouri: 5 members	India: 3 members
Montana: 1 member	Ireland: 1 member
North Carolina: 16 members	Israel: 5 members
Nebraska: 3 members	Japan: 2 members
New Jersey: 9 members	Korea: 2 members
New Mexico: 4 members	The Netherlands: 3 members
Nevada: 2 members	New Zealand: 2 members
New York: 22 members	Panama: 1 member
Ohio: 18 members	Portugal: 2 members
Oklahoma: 2 members	Slovenia: 1 member
Oregon: 8 members	Sweden: 2 members
Pennsylvania: 23 members	UAE: 1 member
South Carolina: 3 members	United Kingdom: 6 members

Robbie Rupel is the Documentation Manager at Computerized Medical Systems, Inc., in St. Louis, MO. You can reach her at robbie@cms-stl.com.

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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* acquisitions manager, Jennifer Atkinson, 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 the 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.

Postmaster Send address changes to STC office at the above address.

The best practices make the best quality

Steven Jong, Boston Chapter, Senior Member

(WE 5S - Tuesday, 8:30 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.)

Steven Jong will give two versions of a presentation on measuring quality at the STC Annual Conference. The first is titled “The best practices make the best quality.” In this detailed version, Jong will describe an Excel workbook used by Lightbridge to record information about the documents produced each year.

Originally created to record document order numbers, this workbook has been expanded to include many categories of process data. It now provides valuable management and tracking information. By using this document to record and measure completion of critical processes, Lightbridge has been able to reinforce and encourage use of best practices including planning, review, signoff, and archiving.

As part of a panel discussion, “Addressing quality in the real world,” chaired by Ralph Robinson, Jong will present the same material in an abbreviated version.

Steven Jong is Documentation Group Leader at Lightbridge, Inc., in Burlington, Massachusetts. You can reach him at sjong@lightbridge.com.

ISO 9000:2000—what does it mean to technical communicators?

Ralph Robinson, Toronto Chapter, Quality SIG Manager

(WE 6B - Tuesday, 11:00 A.M. - 12:00 noon)

The ISO 9000 series of Quality Management Standards is about to change, and these changes present another opportunity for technical communicators to spread their wings and broaden their horizons. No, you won't be required to learn a new software package or dust off your programming skills. All that's required is changing your perspective on how businesses operate and how managing quality within an organization contributes to its success.

Ralph Robinson will present an overview of the draft changes to this international standard, how an organization will be affected by these changes, and related opportunities for technical communicators. Learn what you must do to prepare yourself for success in the challenging world of documenting quality management systems. See how you can positively affect the organization you work for or the clients you serve. Learn about another field where technical communicators can leverage their skills and abilities into satisfying work—both professionally and financially.

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

See the Quality SIG Online

The Quality SIG has two online resources that provide information about the Quality SIG and its activities: a website and a listserv. We hope you will find these valuable. Questions about the website should be sent to Don Lenk at donlenk@aol.com. Questions about the listserv should be sent to Ralph Robinson at r2innovations@myna.com.

Accessing our website. Visit the STC Quality SIG web site at stc.org/pics/quality/.

Subscribing to the listserv. If you aren't already signed up for the discussion on our listserv, send an email to lyris@lists.stc.org and in the body of the message type:

subscribe stcqsig-l <your name> (The character at the end of stcqsig-l is a lowercase 'L' and the <> characters are not part of your entry.)

For example: subscribe stcqsig-l ralph robinson

Posting to the listserv. To post a message for others on the listserv to see, send your posting in email to:

stcqsig-l@lists.stc.org (The character at the end of stcqsig-l is a lowercase 'L'.)

Unsubscribing from the listserv. If you are already signed up for the discussion on our listserv and wish to unsubscribe, send an email to lyris@lists.stc.org and in the body of the message type:

unsubscribe stcqsig-l <your name> (The character at the end of stcqsig-l is a lowercase 'L' and the <> characters are not part of your entry.)

For example: unsubscribe stcqsig-l ralph robinson

Transforming our roles from writers to designers: a manager's perspective

Lori Fisher, *Silicon Valley Chapter, Associate Fellow*
(MG 7H - Tuesday, 2:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.)

As software documentation becomes increasingly integrated with the software interface, technical communication organizations must apply new skills to create new kinds of deliverables. In addition to the traditional technical communication skills of task analysis, audience analysis, and written communication, today's technical communicators may also need programming, visual design, and user interface design skills.

Managers must find ways to hire and train writers with these skills and then retain them. They must also actively work to realign the perception of technical communication with its new roles in the future of software development.

Lori Fisher is Senior Manager of User Technology at the IBM Santa Teresa Lab in San Jose, CA.

Documentation processes: case studies

Robbie Rupel, *St. Louis, MO Chapter, SIG Membership Manager*

(MG 9R Wednesday, 8:30 - 10:00 A.M.)

This session includes case studies on how organizations are changing their methods for producing their documentation and the impact this has had on technical writers and their deliverables.

In this session, Robbie Rupel, STC Quality SIG Membership Manager, will present a paper on her experiences working through documentation process changes in a regulated environment (in her case, an ISO-certified company that is also regulated by the FDA). She will describe the changes her company made as it moved toward a more structured environment. Rupel looks at the impact this had on her team and on the new opportunities associated with the changes.

Robbie Rupel is the Documentation Manager at Computerized Medical Systems, Inc., in St. Louis, MO. You can reach her at robbie@cms-stl.com.

Mentoring program initiatives: worth your time and effort

Lori Fisher, *Silicon Valley Chapter, Associate Fellow*

(MG 2N - Monday, 10:30 A.M. - 12:00 noon)

Lori Fisher and Mollye Barrett will offer a collaborative session about mentoring initiatives, focusing on what members should know about mentoring if they want to start their own programs. Barrett will describe the Wisconsin Mentoring Program and share some of her organizational experiences with this program. Fisher will talk about her experiences with mentoring in the corporate environment. She'll also describe a new mentoring program for the Silicon Valley Chapter of STC.

Lori Fisher is Senior Manager of User Technology at the IBM Santa Teresa Lab in San Jose, CA.

Addressing quality in the real world

Ralph Robinson, *Toronto Chapter, Quality SIG Manager*

(WE 7B - Tuesday, 2:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.)

Panel: Ralph E. Robinson (Moderator), Don Lenk, Amy Perry, Robbie Rupel, Steven Jong

Do you know what characteristics are considered key in assessing the quality of your company's products or its documentation? Are you aware of the many ways that quality can be judged or the many factors that affect documentation quality? Are you interested in learning some of the ways that technical writers try to measure and improve the quality of the documentation they write?

If you've answered yes to any, or all, of these questions, you will want to be sure to catch the Quality SIG panel presentation at this year's STC Annual Conference in Orlando from May 21 to 24. Five members of the SIG leadership team will discuss:

- ways of determining key quality characteristics for documentation
- how simple tools can be used to assess documentation quality
- methods for measuring quality
- the impact of international standards on corporate policies and procedures

Finally, one member will report on an implementation at her company, outlining what worked, what didn't, and how the project is currently progressing.

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

Online portfolios: marketing yourself in the electronic age

Shelby Rosiak, *Silicon Valley Chapter, Quality SIG Production Editor*

This session focuses on one basic premise: technical documents should be displayed in the medium for which they were created. Electronic documents such as online help files, PDFs, web pages, and wizards should be presented in an online environment. The online portfolio allows technical communicators to demonstrate their proficiencies effectively and efficiently.

During this session, Shelby Rosiak will discuss selecting work for an online portfolio as well as the options available for creation and distribution of online portfolios. She will present examples of online portfolios as well as give a demonstration on the creation of one type of online portfolio.

Shelby Rosiak is a Software Engineer with IMS User Technology at the IBM Santa Teresa Lab in San Jose, CA. You can reach her at rosiak@us.ibm.com.

STC Annual Conference do's and don'ts

This material is provided by a relative veteran (six consecutive) conference attendee as a guide to newcomers on how to get the most out of the STC Annual Conference.

Do's

1. Do attend every seminar/workshop you can. Get the most out of your dollars spent: you'll never get a better chance to immerse yourself in every aspect of our profession.
2. Do take advantage of every networking opportunity – there will be hundreds of them.
3. Do attend every social function you can.
4. Do speak to everyone you meet – especially those who sit beside you at seminars and workshops.
5. Do hand out your business card, AND get one in return. They'll be a great resource network for you in the future.
Tip: File the cards by year so you can reference the conference at which you met your contacts if you ever call them for information.
6. Do visit the vendor's showcase. It's a great way to see some of the latest technologies and speak to those who are in the know.
7. Do visit the onsite bookstore. You'll find a great collection of texts directly applicable to our profession in one place.
8. Do make sure you attend the conference reception on Sunday night: it's the greatest collection of technical communication professionals you'll ever come across.

Don'ts

1. Don't immediately retire to your room after a day of attending seminars/workshops.
2. Don't hesitate to talk to others attendees, especially someone you've never met before.
3. Don't miss out on the social aspects of the conference.
4. Don't miss the vendor's showcase area.
5. Don't miss the conference reception on Sunday night.
6. Don't miss the SIG Networking Luncheon.
7. Don't worry about the food – it'll be the normal conference fair: nothing special, but filling.

Suggested recipe for an initial quality program

Amy Perry, Member, Hoosier Chapter

(WE 7B - Tuesday, 2:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.)

This session is part of the “Addressing quality in the real world” panel discussion.

Ingredients:

Management commitment

Your commitment

Basic office software

Before the project:

1. Identify discrete tasks for which you will track time spent.
2. Obtain a commitment from others to track their time according to the identified tasks.

During:

3. Keep track of the time spent on each task.
4. Record lessons learned at defined points.

After:

5. Analyze the time spent on the tasks.
6. Brainstorm to identify further lessons learned.
7. Diagram the “as is” workflow and “should be” workflows.
8. Organize “lessons learned” list.
9. Write and publicize a summary report.

Amy Perry is a Senior Technical Writer at NISYS, Inc., in Indianapolis, IN. You can reach her at aperry@nisis.com

From “Countdown” on page 1.

- ☐ Go to a Disney store in your area and buy souvenirs for your family and co-workers. It'll be easier than hauling them back from the conference. You can store the souvenirs in your car until you get back in town.
- ☐ If you're presenting a session at the conference, schedule a practice presentation for your co-workers. Then practice for your friends at home. Then find some strangers and practice for them. Make photocopies of your presentation to hand out, and double-check your PowerPoint slides.
- ☐ Check the Orlando weather. Pack your laptop, business cards, sunscreen, sunglasses, and walking shoes.
- ☐ Set your email to Out-Of-Office mode, and turn on the Temporarily Out-of-Office message on your voicemail.
- ☐ Stop at the book store and buy mind candy for the flight (such as People magazine and John Grisham novels). Buy a new highlighter, and use it on the flight to highlight the Preliminary Program. After you arrive and check in, you can use your Preliminary Program as a starting point to determine which sessions to look for in the Final Program.

You're ready to get on the flight, enjoy the conference, and knock 'em dead at your session. Watch out Orlando—here we come!

Jennifer Atkinson is a Senior Technical Communicator with Tivoli, Systems, Inc., in Indianapolis, Indiana. You can reach her at Jennifer_M_Atkinson@tivoli.com.



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