

# STC **COPYboard**

The Newsletter of the Central New York Chapter, Society for Technical Communication

Volume 10, No. 5 - May 2000

## President's Message

by Richard Inch

I am excited about the 47th Annual Conference in Orlando. For me, the conference starts Saturday afternoon when I drive to Syracuse to get on the plane. I am attending the STC Leadership Day on Sunday morning, then attend the Welcome Reception Sunday evening.

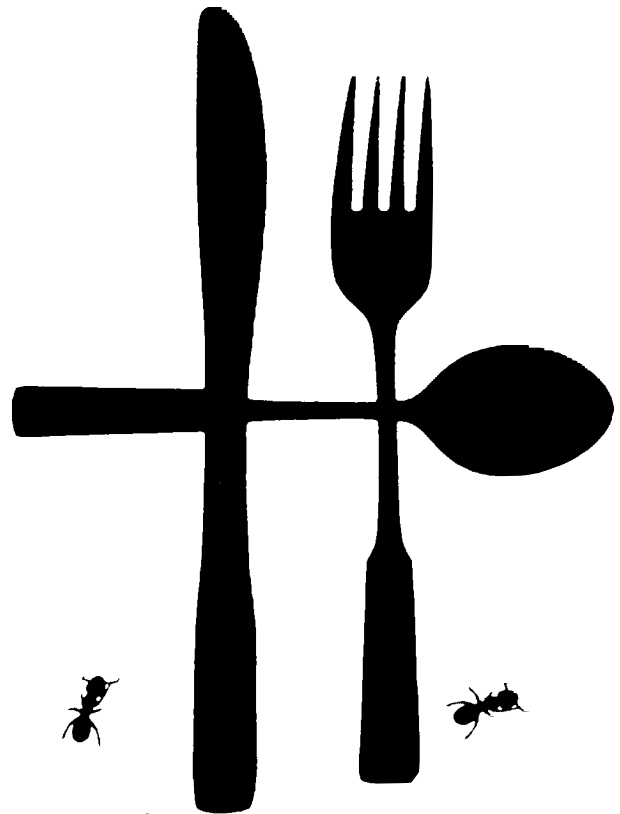
If past years are good indicators, Monday through Wednesday will be a blur of new ideas and wonderful people. I'm signed up for every luncheon and dinner possible, and have a long list of sessions that I hope to attend. (I'll try hard to get to them early enough to avoid being a "floor-sitter".) On Thursday, I'll attend an all day session (Developing Products for the International Environment). Thursday night I arrive in Syracuse at 10:00. By 11:00 I should be home --- exhausted, but feeling great, and with new perspectives to share with everyone!

Then, some R&R through Memorial Day. Well, if you can call it R&R. My wife has Memorial Day weekend all planned out for me in two simple words: Plant Flowers. I love working with flowers and I will have a great time getting the yards readied for summer. I am just amazed that Memorial Day is here so soon!

Gosh, this year has been flying by so quickly that I have already started thinking about next year. Who would like to be the CNY Chapter President next year?

Please, free to step forward anytime. In the fall, we need to get the program together for at least the spring of 2001. I readily admit, getting speakers for our meetings, setting up special events, and trying to make our chapter worthwhile for all of us is quite a responsibility. I am having a great time being "da Prez", but I know my day will end and someone new will step in and do a better job than I.

Nonetheless, I've got a good seven months to go. The first part of the year has been great. We've had excellent speakers and our meetings have been well attended. I've gotten excellent ideas from many of you --- ideas which helped move our chapter to a better place. Please, keep sending me your comments. I don't know what I would do if I did not have your ideas and your support! ■



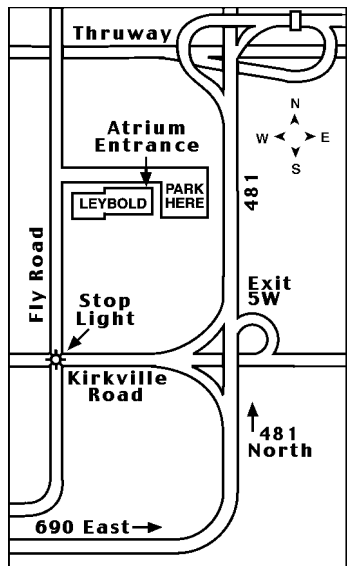
Are You  
Coming to the  
PICNIC??  
see page 5!

**COPYboard** is the official monthly newsletter of the Central New York Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, and is published eight times per year, September through June.

CNY STC Website:  
[www.stc.org/region1/cny](http://www.stc.org/region1/cny)  
 CNY STC Listserv: [cnystc-l@stc.org](mailto:cnystc-l@stc.org)  
 (broadcasts to all CNY members)  
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 Submit letters and articles to the Editor via E-mail. Deadline: 1st day of the month of publication.

To broadcast CNY Job leads to our CNY STC Listserv via email:  
[cnystc-l@stc.org](mailto:cnystc-l@stc.org)  
 CNY STC Website Jobs Listings:  
[www.stc.org/region1/cny/jobs.htm](http://www.stc.org/region1/cny/jobs.htm)  
 To post jobs, contact Ann Louise1 ([jlouise1@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jlouise1@twcny.rr.com)).

All CNY STC meetings are free and take place at Leybold Inficon\*, East Syracuse, from 6PM to 8:00PM on the third Wednesday of the month.  
 Meeting room phone: 315-434-2512.  
 (\*Except for April and Oct-see last pg.)



## Interim Treasurer's Interim Report

*Jim Hamlett is stepping down as Chapter Treasurer, and Terry Granger has accepted the position of Interim Treasurer. I'm positive that Terry will be both an excellent Interim Treasurer and a fine addition to our Administrative Council. Please offer your support to Terry as she assumes this important responsibility in our chapter.*  
 - Richard

The following interim report is provided to the members of the Central New York chapter of the Society of Technical Communications, Region 1, in good faith and confidence. This reflects outgoing treasury status as maintained by Jim Hamlett, reported to our interim CNY STC Treasurer on Monday, May 1, 2000.

Business Savings Account: Chase Bank

	#	Amt
03/01/2000 Opening Bal.		\$ 1,401.14
Deposits and Credits	1	1.68
Withdrawals and Debits	1	695.47
03/31/2000 Ending Bal.		707.35
Avg. Bal.		1131.98
avg. Percentage Yield		1.77

Interim Treasurer's Objectives:

1. Close the current account with Chase and open a new account with a more beneficial operator.
2. Ensure all Executive Councilors are identified on the new account as authorized Chapter officials with full review an oversight authority.
2. Prepare a complete fiscal report on behalf of the CNY chapter with information provided by previous treasurer.
3. Obtain official information regarding the chapter's fiscal responsibilities and membership dues refund.
4. Offer suggestions for fundraising and scholarship opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Granger  
 Interim Treasurer  
 CNY STC ■

## Minor Flap on Posting Jobs on Listservs

Last month, right after we posted an out-of-state job opportunity on our CNY Listserv, we received a terse directive on posting jobs on STC Chapter listservs which, due to its timing, appeared to be a negative reaction to our action. It chided:

*"Chapters are expected to use their listservs for chapter business only. Job postings are not STC business. Please post jobs on your web sites and not on your listservs. Because not everyone has access, posting jobs on the listserv could give the appearance of impropriety, where only certain people have access to the job post."*

When we questioned this policy, STC clarified their too-terse earlier directive, which had actually arrived in our mailbox purely by coincidence having been issued to all Chapters in reaction to some other Chapter's activity. STC's clarification went like this:

*"[A few] Chapters restrict their listserv memberships...whichv could give the appearance of impropriety if only certain people have access to job postings.*

*"The Central New York chapter doesn't have a problem. What they've done has been just fine, and entirely in keeping with the policy. CNY listserv is available to all chapter members who have not opted to be left out."*

The result of this 'tempest in a teapot' was positive; it verified that we are doing the right thing and can continue to post jobs on our CNYSTC-I whenever we get them, for all members...as well as on our website JOBS page, and in Copyboard. ■

## April Meeting Minutes

**From:** Anne Louiselle, CNY STC Secretary

**Date:** April 19, 7:30 p.m.

**Location:** SUNY IT-Utica

**Presenter 1:** Russ Kahn, Ph.D.  
Digital Photography - Practical, Ethical Issues and a  
Historical Perspective

**Presenter 2:** Patricia Dorazio, M.S.  
Usability's Front-End: The Easily-Forgotten Pieces

Dr. Kahn gave the first presentation. He commented that Digital Photography is already here. Photojournalists use digital cameras for print media and the Web. The need for fast turnaround has pushed the use of digital cameras. As an example, Dr. Kahn showed a photo of Elian Gonzalez on the LA Times Web site which was taken a few hours earlier. Some of the advantages of digital cameras include less cost, reduced turnaround time and no film costs. The camera transfers images directly from into the computer via cable or disk with little effort.

Some of the more advanced effects that digital cameras can provide are 360-degree photos. These photos can be produced using a digital camera, tripod, and fisheye lens. A series of pictures are taken and then merged together using software from the PIX Corporation.

Other effects include incorporating audio volume with the use of a recorder available on some models. Narrative which is recorded on the camera can be transferred to the computer along with the pictures. You can record up to three seconds of video on some models.

Different media require different types of cameras, so Dr. Kahn recommended basing the decision to buy on the type of quality needed. Photojournalists use higher-end cameras which typically run about \$30,000. CCD is the better technology, as it is similar to the quality of technology used in scanners. Dr.

Kahn advised against purchasing a camera with less than 2 megapixels. Three main factors to consider when purchasing a digital camera are pixels, zoom and resolution.

Dr. Kahn commented the prices of the new cameras are very volatile. The Olympus 2500L, originally priced at \$1,500, is now available for \$969. It features changeable lenses and 3x zoom. The Kodak DC265, originally priced for \$900, is now available for under \$500. This model features a fixed focus and 2x zoom. The lower end Kodak DC240 camera originally priced at \$479 is now available for \$382. It features a fixed focus and a 2x zoom. Dr. Kahn recommended the Yahoo.com Web site for researching quality, features and price.

Although the new cameras have many advantages, Dr. Kahn also commented that there are some drawbacks that accompany them. Batteries run out fairly frequently and cameras using regular disks do not have much storage. The new cameras are still priced fairly high.

In closing, Dr. Kahn advised that even though digital cameras are a new medium, users should adhere to the classical concepts of photography. This new medium brings into question some ethical concepts too. Pictures can be altered dramatically. As an example, Dr. Kahn showed several images which had been combined and altered. He reminded everyone that ownership issues still apply and permission is still necessary to use someone else's work. (see page 4)

## Region 1 Director-Sponsor's Report

**Date:** Spring, 2000

**To:** Board of Directors, Assistants to the President, Executive Director

**From:** Kitty Aughey

**Subject:** Report of Region 1 Director-Sponsor

Overall, Region 1 is in good condition with well-functioning chapters - several chapters are still working hard to revitalize. We welcomed a new chapter - Long Island chapter - in March. General Health (20 chapters):

Excellent	4
Good	9
Fair	7
Poor	0

I estimated the following status for the 6 non-reporting chapters:

Fitchburg St.-student	Fair
New York Metro	Good
Northern New England	Good
Stockholm	Fair
United Kingdom	Fair
France	Good

## Chapter News

(A combination of reports from the field plus Director-Sponsor comments)

### Region 1 - Boston

Completed one of our most successful annual publications competitions - newsletter won Distinguished and Best of Show awards - doing a membership survey to help tailor our offerings to the members (hope this will encourage more members to run for council positions and take on committee roles) - we are interested in being a part of a Region 1 conference - Carol Landers Spirit of Volunteering award fund is going well.

### Central Connecticut

The chapter had a Professional Day in November, published a membership directory and had publications and online competitions.

The geographic challenge (members at top and bottom of state) has (see page 4)

## April Meeting Minutes *(from pg.3)*

Patricia Dorazio gave the second presentation. She began by reminding us that usability testing should take place at the beginning rather than at the end of the process. Front-end testing is important because it aims to catch costly design mistakes before the actual product is produced.

Many products are hard to use because no potential users were involved in the design process. The designers assumed they could always fix the mistakes later. Front-end testing involves putting the user in the development cycle before the product is made.

Four main techniques are employed in front-end testing. They are:

1. Focus Groups - These groups are sometimes the cheapest and easiest way to gather information. Focus groups range from 12-50 people and are conducted by a moderator. The moderator asks particular questions from people who have used the product or who would use the product.
2. Observations - Information can be gathered by simply watching people. Events and human behavior are recorded.
3. Interviews, questions and surveys - These are conducted before a product is designed.
4. Contextual Inquiry - This involves visiting a customer site, interrupting and asking key questions. The inventors of this theory are Beyer and Holtzblatt. Contextual inquiry provides techniques to get data from users in

a context while they work at real tasks in the workplace.

Some Questions and Answers on Usability

Q. What is a problem? A. A situation where someone does not understand how to do something.

Q. What is a usability problem? A. A mismatch between design and user.

Four Usability Problem Components are: 1. Cause; 2. Breakdown; 3. Outcome; 4. Context.

Patricia Dorazio provided an example of a usability problem. A software team was nearing completion of a new CAD software package. The Lead designer got sick, and Pat was involved in the final testing. The Manager said that the product appeared to be completed and some dimensions need to be measured.

In a test project, the mounting bracket for a padlock was chosen to see how the software "measured up." After measuring the dimensions, it was determined that the software developers made the software calculate measurements differently than would the typical software end-user. And, each time the software was asked to measure the same distance, it came up with a different number.

The symptom was that the measurements did not match. The problem was that there was a mental mismatch. The solution was to make sure the software would meet the needs of the end-user. In this example, front-end usability testing caught and fixed something before it caused confusion for the users. ■

## Chapter News *(from pg.3)*

this chapter exploring the taping of meetings, creating a chat room or conferencing on a web site and establishing a mentoring program which may bring in students or might even lead to a student chapter.

### Central New York

This chapter has been in revitalizing mood with new leadership, improved treasury methods, new meeting site, meeting time change, refreshments at meetings, quality speakers on today's technology, revamped the newsletter, started a listserv and created a web page.

Getting members to come to chapter meetings and taking part in the chapter is a challenge. They are addressing this by improving the quality of chapter meetings, holding a meeting in Utica and a meeting in Ithaca, instead of meetings only in Syracuse, better speakers and a "no cost" picnic to members and families.

### Clarkson U (student)

A status of "Fair" is indicated because of mediocre membership, active but weak board and minimal interest across campus. Student leadership is uneven; we should be attracting more students from other disciplines, and we need to motivate the executive board. A leadership retreat next year may be a good way to address some of these issues.

Several successful meetings were held this year (good speakers and good presentations) and we had a good placement rate for graduating members.

### Eastern Ontario

We had excellent participation in our publication competition, including many judges. Our regular chapter events are well attended and many members and the public often visit our website. Our job bank is heavily utilized. Executive members actively participate. Nominat- forms and executive *(see page 7)*





We've  
Really  
gone out  
on a limb  
for you  
this time!

- We've organized the First Annual STC Picnic, for CNY STC members and families. It begins at 2 p.m. Saturday June 17th at Tulip Hill Picnic Ground at Green Lakes State Park in Fayetteville, NY.
- This is your chance to meet your colleagues and their families, or just get reacquainted with old friends – in a relaxed, summertime atmosphere.
- We've arranged FREE FOOD, catered by Buzzy's – dogs, burgers, coneys, sandwiches, salads, assorted picnic beverages, etc. Something edible for everyone!
- We've got face painters and amusements for the kids, so the adults may relax and enjoy.
- We've arranged for lots of space for kids and adults to play. (Bring your own frisbees, balls, gloves, bats, rackets, or whatever toy you like best...the place is yours!)
- There will be door prizes – some hokey, some not –but all fun!
- Green Lakes is one of the most scenic state parks in New York State, with a beautiful beach, gorgeous walking trails, and many hidden secrets to explore.
- We only need ONE THING from you: YOUR RESERVATION, by FRIDAY, JUNE 2!



# society for technical communication

## First Annual CNY Chapter Picnic

Saturday, June 17, 2PM • Green Lakes State Park • Tulip Hill Picnic Area

**Make Your Reservation NOW for our first Annual CNY STC Chapter Picnic!**

What could be more idyllic, relaxing and FUN than spending a Saturday afternoon in June at beautiful, scenic, Green Lakes Park in Fayetteville NY with all your CNY STC friends, colleagues and their families?

- Fun for the Whole Family!
- Door prizes (some hokey, some not!)
- Face Painting and Fun & Games for Kids (and Consenting Adults!)
- Picnic Shelter in case of passing shower
- Catering by Buzzy's "Wiener Wagon":
- Meet your fellow Chapter members!
- Free Food and Drinks (byob)
- Swimming at lifeguard-supervised Beach (a short walk down the hill!)
- Convenient Nearby Restrooms

Hot Dogs      Hamburgers      Sausage Sandwiches      Cones  
Assorted Salads & Dressings      Soda, Iced Tea, Lemonade, and more.

**\$5 FAMILY RESERVATION FEE REQUIRED - Reservation Deadline: FRIDAY, JUNE 2!**

(For planning purposes, we **must** know in advance how many people will attend.)  
To make a reservation, complete the form, below, and mail it along with \$5, to:

**CNY STC PICNIC**  
105 Concord Place  
Fayetteville NY 13066-2342

...we will send you a "GETIN FREE!" vehicle admission ticket - good at any Green Lakes toll booth!



✂ SNIP ✂



**First Annual Chapter Picnic @ Green Lakes State Park**  
**June 17, 2000 • 2pm • Tulip Hill Picnic Area**

# I'll Be There!

Enclosed is my \$5 Reservation Fee. Please rush me my Vehicle Admission Ticket!

Number of persons in my party: \_\_\_\_\_ (adults)      \_\_\_\_\_ (children 5 or under)

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Send my Ticket to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to:  
CNY STC**

## Chapter News *(from pg.4)*

and committee job descriptions were distributed to get more volunteers at the chapter level.

We gave a \$500 scholarship to a student in a technical writing program at our local community college. We hosted an education event on software design for writers, which was sold out. We will direct our efforts to non-renewing members to keep our numbers up and publish a chapter brochure to be sent to members and potential members.

### **Mid Hudson**

Our greatest problem is building interest in the chapter. We want to wage a PR campaign to entice people to return to the chapter. Many members pay their dues but are in STC for the monthly literature, not for anything at the chapter. They need to be shown the chapter level value.

We are putting together our improvement strategy, which consists of putting together 3 outstanding meetings, and focusing on having them well attended. If these meetings come off as planned, people will start to see the value. Then we will continue on that momentum.

### **Mohawk**

The chapter is doing fairly well with meetings in January, March, April and June. We must continue to work on the challenges of geography.

### **Montreal**

The chapter is in good shape based on overall attendance at events, the number of events and the number of members. We have had several very successful meetings - seminar on trends in the industry - workshops on marketing and web writing. Our biggest problem is lack of ACTIVE members.

### **Niagara Frontier**

We had a most successful DVD technology presentation at Full Circle

Studios in March. We have a committee planning a major upgrade of our website.

### **Rochester**

The chapter is in excellent condition based on: sound financial condition, growing membership numbers, members who volunteer for many duties, a successful conference, meeting goals and improving chapter activities, improved web content and usage, and reservations of speakers for next year.

We did a phone survey of membership to yield information to make the chapter stronger and more attractive to members. We are archiving our chapter historical materials. We moved the crossover meeting to June so new council members have time to plan and start next year's activities before the summer break.

### **Southwestern Ontario**

Even with disruption from several council members leaving, we have still managed to carry out our original objectives and add a few new initiatives. We have been holding steady in terms of delivering quality programs and member services, and we have been able to put building blocks in place for future growth.

Recent accomplishments include: launched a council nominating process and distributed nomination ballots. We developed a nominations and election process which we published in our newsletter, published a very detailed list of council job descriptions, distributed a confirmation ballot. Our goal was to have incoming council members attend our April council meeting - allowing for a longer transition period.

We have linked up with other technical writing organizations, formed an official link with our local Volunteer Action Centre, formed a web committee, had our most successful

workshop to date (profit of \$8,136), launched out chapter level management SIG, held successful online and publications competitions, conducted a local salary survey, published out membership directory and updated our chapter brochure. Clearly our challenges are shortages of resources on the Council and managing our growth.

### **Toronto**

Our excellent status is based on the number of members that attend our monthly meetings, the number of hits on our web site each month, and the success of our recent Spring Conference.

Recent chapter accomplishments include: STC international award for our monthly newsletter, Spring Conference, and creation of a Toronto Chapter T-shirt.

### **Vermont**

Our recent accomplishments include: complete overhaul of our website, starting up of an employment listserv, chapter bylaw amendments approve by society bylaws committee, increased meeting attendance, and the leadership team is working well together.

As a small chapter it is difficult to get enough people to participate on running the chapter. To support incoming council members, we have revised the bylaws to allow for two-year terms, revised the website for easier maintenance, begun planning events for next year, begun the nomination process for next year's council, developed templates for meeting flyers and are developing written process/status turnover for next year's team.

Messages for the Board of Directors

### **Boston**

Region1 needs to discuss the possibility of a regional conference. (This will be

## Chapter News *(from pg.7)*

done at Leadership Day - per kba.)

Rochester

Our librarian has requested that she and other chapter librarians should be able to access a sample of any newsletters and such that the SIGs at the international level may generate. This would be beneficial for potential new members who ask about the SIGs as well.

### Southwestern Ontario

The Presidents mailing list is a wonderful resource for incoming presidents. An idea might be to publish the programs and activities each chapter offers. Comparing notes with other chapters about meeting times, locales, protocols, etc. generate good ideas. We would like STC to design an all encompassing questionnaire that all chapters could answer, then we could help ourselves to this information for new ideas and comparisons.

Our Director-Sponsor has impressed us with her organizational skills and quick responses. She keeps us on track.

*(I am blushing - KBA)* ■

## CNY STC Meeting Calendar

- May:** (No meeting, due to Annual Conference.)
- June:** A get-reacquainted picnic at Green Lakes Park in Fayetteville NY is scheduled for June 17th at 2 PM, at Tulip Hill Picnic Grounds. The Chapter will pay for the refreshments; however, a \$5 reservation is *required* for planning purposes, which gets you a 'free' park admission ticket (see insert).
- July-August:** (We don't hold Summer meetings.)
- September:** **Wendi Evans**, Proposal Desk Manager at AppliedTheory in Syracuse, is building a Proposal Group and will talk about how the Group is evolving and the approaches they are taking to implement proposal generation services for AppliedTheory.
- October:** Our first Ithaca Meeting — a great opportunity for Southern Tier members to get involved! (details TBA soon!)
- November:** **Brett Newcomb** and **Mike Loucy** from Salt City Systems will offer expert advice on working with your print house. ■

**CNY STC *COPY*board**  
105 Concord Place  
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