



January/February 2006

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tecolote

Tecolote is the official newsletter of the New Mexico Kachina Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. Our mission is to advance the profession of technical communication across New Mexico by increasing networking among professionals, creating opportunities for members to improve skills, and recognizing technical communication excellence.

From the President's Pen

by Bob Johnson

Our Chapter is off to a great start this New Year. I hope your year is also starting off well.

I am especially pleased that our two primary methods of communication are running "full bore" again. Thank you Kathy Pallis (incurring a learning curve with InDesign) and Ellen Cline (article traffic cop and editor) for your work on this still-sort-of-new e-newsletter. Also, a big thank you to Jean Gabriel, our new Webmaster. It's looking good, Jean!

As I write this, I am fighting off the urge to nap because of a great meal at Sadie's Restaurant where we held our annual Awards Banquet to recognize our fellow New Mexican technical communications professionals and meet new people. See Judy Prono's article on the PAO Competition on page 4.

We are excited about our STC SW Region Director's upcoming visit in April to our chapter and state. More details about Sherry's visit are in the Kachina Calendar under "Chapter Activities."

Being February (already?) we are only two months from the time (April 15th) when we traditionally elect our Chapter's Admin Council for the next term (July 2006 – June 2008). Have you been feeling an urge to step up and serve in some capacity on our Admin Council? Perhaps your plate has been too full, but this summer, things will be slacking off for you? Great! Call our Past President, Judy Prono, or myself, to discuss this further.

Do you have an idea regarding our chapter's activities or how our chapter can better meet your needs as a member? Please send me an email or give me a ring. Until we meet again!

Bob Johnson
President
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NEW MEXICO KACHINA CHAPTER**

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Member Profile: Konnie Andrews

Just how far can technical communication take you? If you're Konnie Andrews, it might be anywhere in the world. She's lived and/or worked in Turkey, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Singapore, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic.

After starting out her professional life as a geologist, Konnie went on to get an M.A. in Technical Communication at NMSU. She explains that she switched careers, in part, to get away from the boom and bust nature of the energy business.

At one of her early geology jobs Konnie's boss discovered that she was a good writer and promoted her to a position where she was responsible for reports. Konnie found she liked writing and editing, and the satisfaction that comes from contributing to a successful communications piece.

"And then we get to travel." Konnie says that technical communication (or any type of writing) is really a "portable career" with great flexibility. It allows her to work in some of the same places where her husband, Craig, a wastewater engineer, can also work.

Since 1990, when she first went to Egypt, Konnie has lived outside the US for almost 12 years. In addition to working as a technical editor for Chemonics, an international development company that works with USAID, she's been involved with new business development, freelance magazine writing, and proposal writing.

Konnie has learned that to enjoy living and working overseas you have to be culturally sensitive and open-minded. She's found that writers, trained to be information gatherers and communicators, have a skill set that is easily transferable to other jobs. Companies in the US and overseas need people who can gather facts and make sense of them, providing information in a manner that others can understand.

Now settled in Albuquerque, Konnie is self-employed. Her company, Clear Concepts, provides editing and writing of technical, training, and public awareness materials for a number of clients. One of her larger recent projects was a resource manual on the production of biogas and biomethane from dairy animal waste. Although she's written about a variety of topics, she likes writing about water, geology and environmental subjects the most.

Konnie is a long-time STC member, but while traveling it was hard to be involved. Currently, however, she's the Treasurer of the Kachina chapter. In 2002, while working in Albuquerque for Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, she served as a local competition judge, and in 2003 she was a judge for the STC International competition. She'll be a presenter for the "Writing and Editing Progression" at STC's Annual Conference.

If any STC members would like to discuss the interesting mix of cultures in Uzbekistan or traveling in Central Asia, get in touch with Konnie. She'd love to share her knowledge.

New Mexico Communicators “Win Big” Again

By Judy Prono

Technical communicators from New Mexico won 43 awards in the 2005–2006 Southwest Regional Publications, Art and Online (PAO) Competitions, including Best of Show in the Pubs competition. Sponsored by the Southern Arizona chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), the Southwest Regional PAO Competitions received 95 entries from five states: California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Oklahoma. Of those entries, 80 won awards.

Three levels of STC awards are given; in descending order they are Award of Distinguished Technical Communication (DTC), Award of Excellence, and Award of Merit. Entries that won DTC awards will go on to compete in the STC’s International Art and Publications Competitions. Judging for these competitions will occur in February and March, with winners announced at the Society’s annual conference in May.

NM communicators won 4 DTC, 17 Excellence, and 21 Merit awards. In addition, Todd Heinrichs, Jean Butterworth, and Vicente Garcia, technical communicators from Los Alamos National Laboratory, won Best of Show in the Technical Pubs Competition for their Physics Division Activity Report 2004. Their annual report won DTC awards in both the Pubs and Art competitions. Two other entries, a poster from Los Alamos and an annual report from Sandia National Laboratories, also won DTC awards in the Technical Art Competition. Best of Show in the Art Competition went to an annual report from UCAR (University Corporation for Atmospheric Research), headquartered in Boulder, Colorado. There were no DTC winners in the Online Communications Competition and therefore no Best of Show was awarded.

Awards were handed out Saturday, January 28, at a luncheon sponsored by our chapter. Held at Sadie’s in Albuquerque, the luncheon recognized winning entries in the Southwest Regional PAO Competitions that were developed by New Mexico technical communicators. After receiving their DTC and Best of Show awards, Todd Heinrichs and Jean Butterworth from Los Alamos spoke about some of the challenges they faced in developing their Physics Division Activity Report.

Three Southwest STC chapters—Phoenix, New Mexico Kachina, and Oklahoma—collaborated with Southern Arizona in supplying judges for the competitions. We supplied one Online and two Pubs teams. The following Kachina members joined me in judging: Paul Braiman, Ellen Cline, Todd Heinrichs, Bob Johnson, Maryjane Long, Helen Moody, Kathy Pallis, and Mary Quitzau. Our teams evaluated entries from other states.

Congratulations to all award-winning NM communicators and best of luck to our DTC winners in the international comps!

The NN Kachina Chapter is looking forward to sponsoring our Region’s PAO competition next year.

STC Website

Current Picks

The STC has a large website that has been recently updated. It's full of information you might not know is available. Besides offering members STC publications in electronic form, information about local chapters, upcoming competitions, and job listings, the following are direct links to a few of the many features on the site that might be of use to you now.

Candidate Statements

Know before you vote. Read the bios and comments of STC members who wish to serve at the Society level during the next term.

<http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>

Upcoming Seminars

See descriptions of upcoming "webinars." If at least five Kachina chapter members let Jonathan know they will attend (via response to his query email sent the week prior), we order the seminar for presentation to our chapter members at a selected site.

<http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp>

Annual STC Conference

For the latest information, here is the link to our Annual Conference website:

<http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>

The Preliminary Program is here:

http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/2006preliminayProgram.pdf

(Yes, preliminary is spelled incorrectly, but this is the link to the downloadable pdf file of the program.)

Chapter Website Updates

Notice anything new on the Kachina chapter website lately? You should. Our new webmaster, Jean Gabriel, is currently working her way through the site, deleting old material and adding fresh information.

With the help of chapter officers and members, she wants to keep the content up-to-date with chapter events, newsletter issues, meeting handouts, membership statistics, officer biographies, and links to Society information. Jean started work on the site during the holidays, and is committed to a complete review and regular maintenance.

Visit the site at www.stc-nm-kachina.org. If you have an idea for the site, a correction, or a question, please get in touch with Jean Gabriel at jean@gabe.org.

Trinitite Explosions

by Carmelita Wasson

President - STC Trinitite Chapter

The STC Trinitite Chapter is New Mexico Tech's student chapter. Established in 1984, the chapter has adopted a mission to provide Technical Communication (TC) resources for New Mexico Tech (NMT) TC majors and minors, as well as the entire NMT student population. After a few years of dormancy, the chapter has come back to life thanks to the hard work and dedication of its officers and members, making this one of our most exceptional academic years.

Last semester (August – December) STC Trinitite rejuvenated the dormant chapter. We held two meetings a month, attended an STC Kachina workshop on Information Architecture, developed a newsletter, and sent six students to the STC Region Five conference in Mesa, Arizona. Students from NMT had not attended a regional conference since the nineties.

This semester we plan on continuing the chapter's mission and branching out our activities to include the entire campus. During the next four months, the Trinitite chapter plans on sponsoring several workshops open to the NMT campus and Socorro community. These workshops will cover topics such as building effective PowerPoint presentations, learning the basics of Adobe Photoshop and InDesign, and using Macromedia Dreamweaver. We also plan to visit Texas Tech University, publish two newsletters, and attend the Edward Tufte workshop in Albuquerque.

If you are interested in any of these events, or just would like to learn a little more about the Trinitite Chapter, please visit www.nmt.edu/~stc or send an email to stc@nmt.edu.

Tecolote Back Pages

The Making of the Kachina Chapter

“Several of us in Albuquerque are interested in starting an STC branch. How does the idea strike you?” wrote Judith Reynolds to Helen Lindberg in Los Alamos on September 14, 1982. Helen replied, “A number of us in Los Alamos would be interested. . . if we can work out an equitable arrangement for sharing the meeting places.” That exchange eight years ago marked the beginning of the Kachina Chapter.

James K. Smith, a colleague of Judith at BDM Corporation, took the lead and processed the paperwork with STC Headquarters, which issued a charter on March 23, 1983 for the Central/Northern New Mexico Chapter. Obviously, a better name was needed. Rio Grande would have been an ideal choice, but our colleagues to the south in Las Cruces had beat us to the punch.

The first meeting for the Central/Northern New Mexico Chapter took place at La Posada Hotel in Santa Fe on July 10, 1983. At that meeting, we elected chapter officers and chose the chapter name, “New Mexico Kachina Chapter”. Jim Smith became the first president in recognition of his work in founding the chapter.

Eleven STC members-at-large and two prospective members met on that Sunday afternoon for a luncheon buffet and subsequent meeting. They were Dorothy Amsden, Elva Clinard, Helen Lindberg, John McDonald, Colleen Curran, Kathryn Ryan, Jeannette Mortensen, Barbara Edwards, Lynne Johnson, Glenda Ponder, James Smith (members); John Kempf and Mariellen Kuna (prospective members).

A predecessor of the Kachina Chapter existed in Albuquerque in the early 1970s, but we don't know much about it. What was it called? Who were the members? Was it based at Sandia? If you have information about this chapter, we'd like to know more. Following its demise, a growing number of STC members-at-large continued to work in Albuquerque and Los Alamos. The Los Alamos members had discussed forming a chapter on several occasions but decided against it. They thought that a greater variety of membership was essential to having a well-balanced organization.

The first issue of the chapter newsletter appeared in November 1983. In that issue, Jim Smith commended the chapter on its “wide representation from several different organizations. The diversity should make this an interesting group and one in which everyone should be able to find professional growth.” He was right.

At the time of that first newsletter, the Kachina Chapter had 48 members. Today it has 193. Of the eleven charter members, four remain. Two others are still STC members but left New Mexico to pursue their careers elsewhere.

From the December 1990 Issue (Vol 8, Issue 4)

The New Mexico Kachina Chapter Admin Council in December 1990 was:

Chapter President: Helen Lindberg

Vice-Presidents: Chris Madigan and Mary Mann

Treasurer: Carole Yee

Secretary: Dorothy E. McDuffie

Membership Chair: Howard Lindberg

Publicity Chair: Jonathan Briggs

Education Chair: Charles Campbell

PAO Competition Chair: Lori Parrott

Employment Information Chair: Doug Swift

Newsletter Editor: Maria DiStravolo

Region 5 Director-Sponsor: Jodi Heiken (Los Alamos, NM)

Chapter Activities

STC Social

Thursday, February 16th, 5:30-7:30pm at Konnie Andrew's home. Chat with other technical communicators. RSVP to Konnie at konniewandrews@comcast.net or 797-7683. She'll give you the address and directions.

Career Panel and Student Recognition

Saturday, March 25th, 11am at UNM, Humanities 108. Volunteer to be part of a professional panel helping students learn more about career options in technical communication. Awards for student work will also be given. RSVP to Jonathan Price at jprice@ktech.com or 254-4148.

Project Estimating Workshop with our STC Southwest Region Director

Saturday, April 15th, 11am (location TBD). In addition to meeting with admin council members, Sherry Michaels will provide a workshop on Project Estimating. Come meet Sherry — an awesome STC leader. There will be a minimal donation for this event.

STC Webinars

These remote seminars are presented free of charge, but you must RSVP. Please contact Jonathan Price in advance at jprice@ktech.com or 254-4148. We must have a minimum of five members signed up to purchase these presentations.

February 8, 2006 — Documenting APIs: Step Up to the Plate

February 22, 2006 — Improve Your Technical Communication Skills through Creative Writing Techniques

March 8, 2006 — Instructions for Writing Instructions: Guidelines for Organization and Content

April 12, 2006 — Software Simulations: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices

To read descriptions of the webinar topics, go to <http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp>.

Upcoming Admin Council Meetings

February 16, 5:30pm — “STC Social” in lieu of council meeting.

March 25, 10am — Before the “Career Panel.”

April 15, 10am — Before the “Project Estimating” workshop.

Calendar events are listed at the time of printing and cover the next few months of activities. Some events may change. Please check the STC Kachina Chapter website for updates at www.stc-nm-kachina.org. STC Kachina Chapter members will receive periodic email updates with locations and sign up information. If you would like to list an event in the next Tecolote issue, email jprice@ktech.com with event information.



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