



tecolote

Dec 2006
e-Volume 1, Issue 06

In this Issue

Good News for TC Professionals	1
Kachina Chapter Officers	2
Update on Kachina Chapter Finances.....	3
Past President of STC to Speak at Awards Banquet, Meet with Chapter Members	3
STC Officers for 2007 Announced.....	4
When the Image Signifies Data: Digital Image Manipulation Concerns.....	5
Profile: Dr Julie Ford.....	6
Personas: Abstracting Users from Real-Life Data	7
On the Web	7
Southwest Regional PAO Competitions	8
Heading to Minneapolis in '07.....	8
Kachina Calendar.....	9

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.

Good News for TC Professionals

by Linda Lambert

"We like to provide our students a broad range of opportunities. One of the best ways to do that is to allow them to interact with as many professionals as possible."

The growth of New Mexico Tech's Technical Communication (TC) program is good news for businesses in need of quality, professional technical communicators. The program encourages interaction with a variety of industries and professionals to hone student skills and allow local industry the advantage of pre-professional services.

What is advantageous about a New Mexico Tech TC major?

Upon program completion, the TC student will have a Bachelor of Science degree. Degree requirements include a minimum of 12 hours dedicated to a science or engineering focus, so the students understand the language of scientists and engineers. In addition to this focus, an additional 8 hours of science or engineering with labs is required. These requirements are beyond the Chemistry, Physics, and Calculus courses required for all New Mexico Tech graduates.

Students are included in interdepartmental projects and projects for organizations associated with New Mexico Tech, a science, engineering, and research university. Projects have included editing scientific publications, preparing proposals, designing websites, developing product-support documentation, and generating graphics that enhance the usability of these products.

Curriculum requirements include a 3 credit hour internship and a 1 credit hour community service module, as well as courses in writing, editing, multimedia design, and publication management. Internship and community service requirements are varied and flexible to ensure successful integration into a variety of industry needs and expose students to a broader experience base in their field.

The TC department's small class size, quality instructional staff, and the faculty's willingness to work with established professionals have nurtured the growth of the TC program. As a result, the program attracts quality students as well as successful partnerships with TC professionals.

The TC faculty consists of Dr. Ford, specializing in technical and professional communication; Dr. Lynda Walsh, specializing in linguistics, and scientific and visual rhetoric; and Dr. Rick Mott, specializing in multimedia design theory and digital navigation.

A corporate advisory board composed of professionals from Qwest, Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Hewlett Packard, assist students with portfolio reviews, advice, and career placement. The board also keeps faculty abreast of current trends in industry.

To learn more about New Mexico Tech's Technical Communication program and collaborative opportunities with TC faculty and students, or to offer community service or internship experiences, contact Dr. Julie Ford at 505-835-5468 or jford@nmt.edu.

Linda Lambert is an electrical engineer who is pursuing a Master's Degree in Technical Communications at New Mexico Tech.



Kachina Chapter Officers

President — Jonathan Price
(505) 254-4148, jprice@swcp.com

Past President — Bob Johnson
(505) 254-4142, ziagrants@msn.com

Vice President for Programs — open

**Vice President for Public Relations
— Ellen Cline**
(505) 247-3155, ecline@swcp.com

**Asst. Vice President for Public Relations
— Ellen Torgrimson**
(505) 822-9400, etorgrimson@dbstephens.com

Secretary — Jean Gabriel
(505) 254-4167, jean@gabe.org

Treasurer — Konnie Andrews
(505) 797-7683, konniewandrews@comcast.net

**Education Chair/Job Bank Chair —
Scott Sanders**
(505) 277-0754, ssanders@unm.edu

Membership Chair — Maryjane Long
(505) 266-6271, mlong@swcp.com

Newsletter Editor — Kathy Pallis
(505) 466-4481, palliskc@comcast.net

Webmaster — Jean Gabriel
(505) 254-4167, jean@gabe.org

Historian — open

tecolote

December 2006 issue
e-Volume I, Issue 06

Tecolote is the newsletter of the
New Mexico Kachina Chapter of the
Society for Technical Communication.

Managing Editor
Kathy Pallis, palliskc@comcast.net

Associate Editor
Ellen Cline, ecline@swcp.com

Contributing Editors
Bob Johnson, ziagrants@msn.com
Konnie Andrews,
konniewandrews@comcast.net

Submissions

We welcome submissions from Kachina
members for publication. Submit articles in
plain text format to palliskc@comcast.net.

Reprints

You are welcome to reprint original
Tecolote articles provided you
acknowledge the source and send a
reprint copy to the Managing Editor.

© STC New Mexico Kachina Chapter,
Society for Technical Communication.
All rights reserved.

STC New Mexico Kachina Chapter
PO Box 25291
Albuquerque, NM 87125-5291
www.stc-nm-kachina.org

Update on Kachina Chapter Finances

Good news! We generated over \$3,000 in income for our chapter by hosting the 2006 regional competitions. Although all associated expenses are not yet in (including the cost of the celebratory awards luncheon scheduled for the third Saturday of January), we expect to clear more than \$2,000 when all is paid. A big thanks to Bob Johnson, who chaired this year's competitions, and to Judy Prono, whose guidance and assistance were invaluable. Also, *muchas gracias* to the judges, whose generous commitment of time and expertise made the competition possible.

Here's a snapshot of our current finances, as of December 3, 2006.

Kachina Chapter Finances	
ASSETS	
Savings and checking accounts	\$9,629.53
Certificate of deposit (matures on December 11, 2006)	4,089.96
Inventory (estimated—primarily software)	500.00
Petty Cash	70.15
LIABILITIES	
Current liabilities	100.00
Long-term liabilities	0.00
NET WORTH	\$14,189.64

Past President of STC to Speak at Awards Banquet, Meet with Chapter Members

by Bob Johnson, Immediate Past President

On Saturday, January 20, 2007, our chapter is looking forward to holding the Southwest Regional Publications, Art and Online (PAO) Competitions awards banquet at Sadie's Restaurant in Albuquerque. One of the Oklahoma Chapter members who served as a judge is Suzanna Laurent. As some of you may remember, Suzanna served as our Society's President during 2005-2006. She will be coming out to congratulate the competition winners and to provide a "What's new in the STC?" update at the banquet.

We are also pleased that Brenda Huettner (Southern Arizona chapter), our new Region 5 Director, is able to make time in her busy schedule to attend the banquet and pass on her congratulations to the awardees – and of course, to talk with chapter members.

On Friday evening, January 19th, the Kachina Chapter will be taking Suzanna and Brenda to dinner. All chapter members and prospective members are invited to join us. Going on recommendations, we plan to eat at Zio's Italian Kitchen, located on Coors Blvd. on the southeast side of Cottonwood Mall. If you are able to join us for dinner, please RSVP to either Jon Price at 254-4148 or myself at 254-4142. If you need a map of Zio's location – send an email to me at ziagrants@msn.com.

We are hoping for a great turnout at the banquet on January 20th and a relaxing post-holidays evening on the 19th.

We look forward to seeing you at one or both events.

STC Officers for 2007 Announced

The preliminary slate of candidates for Society office for 2007 was released in mid-November. The candidates are listed below:

Office	Candidate
President*	Linda L. Oestreich <i>(unopposed)</i>
First Vice President*	Mark H. Clifford <i>(unopposed)</i>
Second Vice President*	Cynthia C. Currie M. Katherine (Kit) Brown
Treasurer	William C. (W.C.) Wiese <i>(unopposed incumbent)</i>

Directors

(Three to be elected, each for a three-year term.)

Jonathan W. Baker

Mollye M. Barrett

Nicoletta A. Bleiel

Jackie A. Damrau

Leah Guren

Steven F. Jong

Robert G. Young

Nominating Committee

*(Two to be elected, each for a two-year term.)***

Rachel A. Jordan Houghton

Suzanna Laurent

* The STC Bylaws specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected.

When the Image Signifies Data: Digital Image Manipulation Concerns

by Tony Perreault

You've put the finishing touches on that long, detailed report on comparing optical and radio astronomy images when the primary investigator comes to you and complains that a particular optical image isn't bright enough and that a certain radio image isn't sharp. You sigh and open the images in question. On the optical image you adjust the contrast and saturate the colors to make it "pop," and you run an unsharp mask on the radio image, making it sharper but also introducing fringes and artifacts that you don't notice at the time.

When the report is printed, both the optical and radio images that you adjusted look quite a bit different than the originals, portraying information that was not intended. The primary investigator is questioned, and he informs the powers-that-be it was entirely your fault. After all, you were the technical writer and editor of the project, and it was you who manipulated the images. You soon find yourself on the street, pink slip in one hand and your possessions in a box under your arm.

To paraphrase A.D. Skinner from *The X-Files*: Welcome to the wonderful world of image manipulation.

Just as photojournalists have to deal with ethical concerns when using image manipulation applications, so do we in the technical communication field. It can be tempting to want to alter an image by making it sharper, adjusting the contrast just to make it look better. When the image represents scientific data, the effort to make it look better may result in either loss of information—saturation of colors tend to make similar colors blend; or the addition of false information—sharpening an image too much might introduce fringe artifacts that could, in some cases, represent data.

Guidelines for acceptable techniques of image manipulation of scientific data have been created by Douglas Cromey, the manager of the Cellular Imaging Core of the Southwest Environmental Health Services Center (SWEHSC), located at the University of Arizona. The Cellular Imaging Core provides training and technical expertise to SWEHSC investigators who use microscopy and scientific images in their research. While the focus of these guidelines is directed toward biology researchers, they still are a useful reference point concerning the manipulation of images. Some of the guideline items are reproduced here, with the whole list available online at http://swehsc.pharmacy.arizona.edu/exppath/micro/digimage_ethics.html.

- Digital images that will be compared to one another should be acquired under identical conditions.
- Manipulation of digital images should always be done with a copy of the raw image data.
- Simple adjustments to the entire image are usually acceptable.
- Manipulations that are specific to one area of an image and are not performed on other areas are questionable.
- Use of software 'filters' to improve image quality is usually not recommended for biological images.
- Avoid the use of lossy compression.
- Be careful when changing the size (in pixels) of a digital image.

As technical communicators, we need to be aware of ethical concerns when editing images, regardless if the image represents scientific data or not. We must be concerned that when altering the image we do not change the data that the image represents. Ideally, there would be no need for image manipulation; realistically, most images will need some level of manipulation. It is our task to preserve the meaning of the data.

Tony Perrault is employed at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory near Socorro and is enrolled in New Mexico Tech's Technical Communications Program.

Profile: Dr. Julie Ford

Dr. Julie Ford, Director of the Technical Communication Program at New Mexico Tech, is working hard on attracting students. The efforts she and her colleagues have made have paid off, with the number of majors in the program doubling in the last few years since she joined the faculty in 2003.

At the same time, the program has been evolving to reflect the changing nature of technical communication. More classes in web design are being offered and changes in the curriculum to account for the shift to XML and single sourcing are being made.

The fact that Tech offers a Bachelor of Science degree, unlike most technical communications programs which offer Bachelor of Arts degrees, sets the school apart. Since Tech is a science and engineering school, the program is a good fit.

“We found that a lot of employers are pleased. To them a BS degree guarantees knowledge of math and science, and the ability to more easily communicate with scientists and engineers.”

Since receiving her PhD in Rhetoric and Professional Communication from NMSU in 2001, Dr. Ford has done consulting work in the pharmaceutical industry and was employed as adjunct faculty at the University of Dubuque, Dubuque, Iowa.

Dr. Ford’s scholarly interests are in three areas that are reflected in a number of articles she has authored or co-authored.

The first direction has to do with knowledge transfer. She is studying how engineers and engineering students use knowledge learned in technical writing courses. While there are many engineering and science students who wouldn’t touch writing with a ten foot pole, Dr. Ford is finding that more and more faculty in the engineering and science departments are acknowledging the importance of writing and passing that on to students.

Organizational communications is the next research focus. Dr. Ford is performing studies with a major US airline on their internal communications as they relate to a unionization attempt and merger. She has observed the “dance” the airline has had to perform trying to persuade employees to not join the Teamsters while struggling to stay within the rules for such communications.

The third research area has to do with single sourcing and XML and how these are changing technical communication in the workplace. An upcoming article titled “The Convergence of Technical Communication and Information Architecture: Managing Single-Source Objects for Contemporary Media” with co-author Richard K. Mott will appear in *Technical Communication* in February.

Dr. Ford and her colleagues are working to incorporate real world projects as part of students’ studies. They are integrating interdisciplinary projects into courses, and trying to blend theory with practice. For example, Dr. Rick Mott is teaching a professional writing workshop next semester that will involve projects from other departments on campus as a way for students to get exposure to working with scientists and engineers.

In the future, Dr. Ford would like to continue to grow the major and eventually have a masters program in technical communication at Tech. She has started doing informal polling of alumni, and feels the program would fill a need.

Since internships are required for technical communication majors, Dr. Ford is always interested in talking to those who might be able to provide opportunities for students. Internships can be done over the summer, or part-time during the school year. You can contact Dr. Julie Ford at (505) 835-5468 or jford@nmt.edu.

Personas: Abstracting Users from Real-Life Data

Notes from the STC 2006 Region 5 Conference
November 2–4, Addison, Texas

Have you ever found yourself floundering through an assignment with only an amorphous idea of what your audience (or user) really wants or needs? It's happened to me more times than I would care to admit. Thus, despite my preoccupation with juggling coffee and sweet roll and finding a place to sit in the already crowded room, I found myself intrigued by John Pruitt's keynote address at the 2006 Region 5 Conference, "Keeping People in Mind: The Creation and Use of Personas."

According to John—who has conducted usability and user research for Microsoft since 1998—a persona is a concrete representation of an imaginary person or persons who embody the characteristics of a target user population. Personas help the entire development team focus on user needs and wants during design and development. The concept of personas was promoted in Alan Cooper's 1999 book, *The Inmates are Running the Asylum*, as a means of helping to translate raw information about users into highly specific, data-driven, and actionable design targets that streamline the product design and development process.

A key to developing effective personas is to base them on real data—if you use the wrong persona, your design will not be appropriate and your project will fail. Information about your target audience must be rigorously obtained and collated from surveys, interviews, and other sources as part of the "family planning" stage of the persona "lifecycle." This concept is more fully explored in *The Persona Lifecycle, Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design* which John coauthored with Tamara Adlin of Amazon.com. Although I haven't read the book, I did check out the nine 5-star reviews from readers available at amazon.com and—keeping in mind that some of the reviews seem to have been written by coworkers of the authors—have added it to my reading list.

As a freelance editor, I don't have the need or resources to develop personas to the same extent as companies like as Microsoft and Amazon, but I can use the concept to make better use of information obtained from interviews and other sources of information about my readers. I've started by examining the level of detail provided by some example personas I downloaded from the website of Quarry Integrated Communications (http://www.quarry.com/integration/interaction_design/personas/).

Now, I'd better get back to that DOE document I'm working on. . .let's see, my reader, Janie Patterson, has six other environmental documents to review on her desk, gets about 30 emails a day to respond to, is still getting nasty letters from The Forest Guardians about the last document she approved related to xyz, has 4-year old twin sons who she drops off at day care every day at 7:15, and has an office with really bad fluorescent lighting. . .

ON THE WEB

Check out "Tech Writer Voices" at <http://techwritervoices.com/>.

It contains podcasts of technical writing topics.

Southwest Regional PAO Competitions

We've had a busy fall sponsoring the fifth annual Southwest Regional Publications, Art, and Online Competitions. The chapter received 56 entries from technical communicators in Arizona, California, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. The entry deadline was Sept. 30, the kickoff meeting for judging was Oct. 21, and Nov. 11 was "judgement day," when judges met in their teams to reach consensus on awards. Twelve teams of judges evaluated entries, two from the Oklahoma chapter, three from the Southern Arizona chapter, and seven from our chapter. We are now in the process of notifying submitters whether or not their entries won awards and sending them the judges' evaluation forms. We will announce the specific awards won at our awards luncheon on January 20.

Evaluating entries was a two-step process: Judges first reviewed entries individually and completed 2- to 4-page evaluation forms for each one. Then they met in teams to compare their evaluations and reach a decision on awards. Most of the Kachina teams met at Ktech Corporation on Nov. 11 for lively exchanges on the strengths and weaknesses of the entries they were assigned. The key evaluation criteria are how well entries fulfill their purpose and "speak to" their targeted audiences. Although time-consuming, judging is a rewarding opportunity to see a variety of communication products and exchange views with colleagues about what makes for effective communication in technical art, pubs, and online media.

This year's Kachina judges were Mark Wing, Jay Tracy, Ellen Cline, Konnie Andrews, Elaine Perea, Jonathan Price, Louise Mendius, Maryjane Long, Todd Heinrichs, Clay Dillingham, Sheila Molony, Helen Moody, Jean Gabriel, Sheina North, Kathy Pallis, Ryan DeMares, Steve Wolfel, Doug Swift, Bob Johnson, and Judy Prono. In addition to judging, Bob Johnson put in many hours as the competition manager, organizing the comps, logging in entries, and shipping entries to offsite judges.

Come join us at Sadie's on January 20 to see many of the award-winning entries.

Heading to Minneapolis in '07

STC's 54th Annual Conference, the Technical Communication Summit, will be held in Minneapolis next year. Pre-conference workshops start May 12 with the main conference running from May 13 to May 16. The conference agenda is shaping up nicely with about 200 learning sessions being offered. The tracks include demonstrations, mini-workshops, discussions, and progressions.

There will also be two new program tracks premiering at this year's international conference: case studies and research reports. "Leadership Day," which is held on Sunday, is an informative, dynamic and popular feature for conference attendees.

Other conference events include keynote speakers Simon Singh and Ze Frank, and mega-opportunities to network with fellow technical communicators and leading industry companies.

Save \$150 by taking advantage of "Early Bird" registration. The table below shows the registration fees and deadlines.

	Early Bird (by Feb.28)	Advance (by May 4)	Walk-in (After May 4)
Member	\$645	\$795	\$895
Nonmember	\$875	\$1020	\$1120
Student Member	\$175	\$175	\$250
Student Nonmember OR Retired Member/ Nonmember	\$225	\$225	\$225

If your interest is piqued, you can read more about the conference, as well as information on travel and lodging, on the conference website at: www.stc.org/54thConf/index.asp.

Join us in Minneapolis in '07!

STC Webinars

The Kachina Chapter presents these lunchtime learning seminars free of charge to members and students, although any and all contributions towards the expense of presenting them are appreciated. Attendance is free for STC members and students; \$10 for non-members.

All webinars take place on Wednesdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. Webinars are held at Ktech Corporation at 10800 Gibson SE (south of I-40, east of Eubank).

RSVP to 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. If we do not receive enough indications of interest, we will cancel the webinar.

January 17, 2007 — The Xfactor — From HTML to XHTML.
Presenter: Neil Perlin

January 31, 2007 — ANSI Z535.6 — A New Standard for Safety Information in Product-Accompanying Literature.
Presenters: Stephen Hall and Elaine Wisniewski

February 7, 2007 — Creating Indexes on Web Sites and Intranets.
Presenter: Heather Hedden

March 14, 2007 — Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask.
Presenter: Rahel Bailie

March 28, 2007 — Visible: The New Valuable.
Presenters: Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger

April 11, 2007 — Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate — In Half the Time.
Presenter: Kevin Siegel

May 2, 2007 — Choosing the Right Usability Technique (to answer the right question).
Presenter: Whitney Quesenbery

You may view a description of upcoming STC web seminars on the Society's website at <http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp>.

Upcoming Admin Council Meetings

Saturday, February 17 — Administrative Meeting, 11 am
Location to be determined.

Saturday, March 17 — Administrative Meeting, 11 am
Location to be determined.

Saturday, April 21 — Administrative Meeting, 11 am
Location to be determined.

Upcoming Events

Friday, January 19, 2007 — Dinner.

Administrative council meets at dinner with Suzanne Laurent. Suzanne, our Society's Immediate Past President will come to Albuquerque to participate in our PAO Awards Banquet. Suzanne will be talking to us about the latest STC happenings and our chapter's continued vitality. Please join us! RSVP (so we can plan where to eat) to Jonathon Price by December 22 at jprice@swcp.com.

Saturday, January 20, 2007, 11:30 to 2:00 — Banquet.

Our chapter hosted this year's Southwest Regional PAO Competitions. We will hand out the awards while consuming a great New Mexican meal at Sadie's Dining Room, at 6230 Fourth Street NW. We are excited that Suzanne Laurent, STC past president, will be joining us. She will be updating us on current events within our Society and sharing her thoughts about this year's Regional competitions. Email jprice@swcp.com.

March 15 to April 15, 2007 — Kachina Chapter Administrative Officers and Administrative Council Elections and Appointments.

April 15, 2007 — Announce New Slate of Officers and Chairs.

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@swcp.com with event information.



New Mexico Kachina Chapter
Society for Technical Communication
PO Box 25291
Albuquerque, NM 87125-5291

© New Mexico Kachina Chapter, Society for Technical Communication. All rights reserved. www.stc-nm-kachina.org