

A note from the editor

THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS have been an exciting time to be a member of STC. Not only have the publications been improved and redesigned, offering more versions and features than ever before—including an online edition of *Intercom* built on WordPress that was launched at the STC Summit earlier this month—but there are also two other developments that have been announced recently.

First, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its newest *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH) in December and "Technical Writer" now has its own chapter for the very first time. This is a result of a long-standing relationship between STC and association economist Richard O'Sullivan, principal of Change Management Solutions, who was honored for his service at the STC Summit with a President's Award.

The OOH presents some good news in its inaugural "Technical Writer" chapter as well. It states that technical writers held close to 50,000 jobs in 2008 and, more importantly, employment is expected to grow 18 percent—"faster than average," and nearly twice the rate projected for the nation's workforce in total—from 2008 to 2018. The chapter also calculates a median salary of \$61,620 as of May 2008, with further breakdowns for specific industries.

Overall, the inclusion of the position and the information provided are good news for STC members and the profession.

The other good news from STC is that, on 30 April, the STC Board of Directors accepted a business case from its Certification Task Force after 35 years of ongoing discussion. The Society has embraced the idea of certification for technical communicators and, in the coming months, will be developing a certification program.

Certification creates two enormous benefits for our profession and for practitioners. First, certification establishes a solid foundation for the legitimacy and economic contribution of technical communication. Second, certified practitioners can clearly demonstrate their expertise as technical communicators, greatly enhancing their value in the marketplace.

Practitioners will become certified in six core competency areas: user analysis, document design, project management, authoring (content creation), delivery, and quality assurance. As a result, employers and clients alike will now have a concrete idea of the expertise, contribution, and value that technical communicators bring to the marketplace.

Expect to hear much more about certification in the coming weeks, including the official press release in the June issue of *Intercom*. Stay tuned for a page on the STC website dedicated to promoting certification and explaining the value of certified technical communicators.

When you couple all of these developments with the articles in the May issue of *Intercom*, from other sectors of the technical communication family tree, it is clear that the need for technical communicators is stronger than ever.

LIZ POHLAND

intercom

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Publisher Susan Burton, CAE

Editor Elizabeth E. Pohland

Interim Editor Whitney Potts

Assistant Editor Kevin Cuddihy

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Barker, *The Academic Conversation*

John G. Bryan, *Ethics Case*

Elizabeth G. Frick, *Business Matters*

Geoffrey J. S. Hart, *Information Design*

Marc Lee, *Media Matters*

Rich Maggiani, *Social Media Insights*

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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300

Fairfax, VA 22031-1803

+1(703) 522-4114 | +1(703) 522-2075 fax

Send questions and correspondence to the editor at the above

address. General information about STC: stc@stc.org or

www.stc.org.

Address Changes: membership@stc.org

Intercom Editorial: intercom@stc.org

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