

Tieline

The Society Leaders' Newsletter

The New *STC Bylaws*: A Leaner Approach

By Robert J. Dianetti, Chair, *STC Bylaws Committee*, and Director, Region 4

Editor's note: This article is the second in a three-part series explaining STC's efforts to revise its bylaws. The first article, "STC Bylaws, Version 2.0," appeared in the January issue; the third article will appear in an upcoming issue. Members will be asked to approve the new bylaws sometime later this year.

As many STC members know, our current bylaws document is a patchwork of definitions, policies, procedures, and other content that is a combination of the three. According to STC's legal counsel, this patchwork approach was the norm approximately fifty years ago, when the Society's bylaws were created. Needless to say, times have changed. Fifty years of additions and modifications have given rise to an urgent need to overhaul the bylaws.

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And much more!

Current association best practice indicates that a sparser, more policy-oriented approach is a much better way to approach the document. The new STC bylaws are being written with this approach in mind.

Expected Changes

So, what can we expect when we see the completed document? First, it will be much smaller, and the language much clearer. Certain familiar sections will be missing and other completely new sections will be present. Membership categories will be clarified, and dues level choices will be absent. Favorites such as recognition categories will be missing as well, as will details of committee purpose and organization. Other changes and updates will also be apparent.

Of course, all this information is important and will still be contained in Society documentation. But since this information is *procedural* and not *policy-driven*, it will appear in a stand-alone Society "standard operating procedures" document to be written at a later date.

Removing procedural information from the bylaws empowers STC's standing

committees to define and refine themselves to reflect their changing roles in the Society.

Balancing Structure and Freedom

How do we ensure continuity for the committees and other operating structures if they are not governed by the bylaws document? This is where the tricky part comes in. The bylaws must be written in such a way that *guidelines* are defined for the committees that they can take away as their mission or goal. These guidelines must provide structure and definition without restricting the freedom of the committees to do what they do best. It's a fine line, and one to which the STC Bylaws Committee is paying a lot of attention.

So, what level of procedural information is appropriate? The answer is, "just enough to ensure the orderly continuity of the Society and to help it achieve its goals." What more do we need?

Please send comments and questions regarding the STC Bylaws to rdianetti@radcomservices.com. ♦

For Fastest Results. . .

Use the online forms for joining STC or renewing your membership. The forms are available at <https://www.stc.org/onlinejoinstc/NewMemberMainInfo.aspx> and <https://www.stc.org/duesrenewal/stcLogin.aspx>. Newsletter editors, please consider adding this note to your newsletters. ♦

Editor

Cecily Farrar

Tieline is published for STC leaders. The purpose of *Tieline* is to improve communication and serve as a link between STC communities, volunteer leaders, and the Society office. Distribution to other community leaders is encouraged. Reprints from *Tieline* are permitted if credit is given and a copy sent to the editor. Electronic copy is available at the Web site noted below.

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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Attend Leadership Day!

All community and Society leaders are encouraged to attend STC's Leadership Day on Sunday, May 13, immediately preceding STC's 54th Annual Conference. Leadership Day is a free event and features a host of networking activities, workshop sessions, and presentations designed to help chapter and SIG leaders execute their duties more effectively. This year, Leadership Day begins at 7:30 AM with a continental breakfast. Several sessions will be held on issues related to STC, such as community leadership, public relations best practices, and the Leadership Community Resource (LCR). More information on Leadership Day can be found online at www.stc.org and in upcoming issues of *Tieline*. The full schedule will be distributed at the continental breakfast.

Attend STC Leadership Day and take away a wealth of resources and practical solutions for the year ahead. Please send the names of chapter leaders who will attend to the STC office. You can e-mail them to Elaine Gilliam at elaine.gilliam@stc.org or fax them to +1 (703) 522-2075. ♦

Election Materials on www.STC.org

In mid-January, information about candidates for Society-level office was posted to www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp. As in past elections, the information includes candidates' responses to questions posed by the STC Nominating Committee and summaries of their STC service and professional experience.

An online form allows members to submit questions to candidates and view their responses. Questions submitted by members are automatically forwarded to all of the candidates running for a particular office. Each candidate decides whether to respond to a question; responses are not required.

The election opens in early March and closes at noon, Eastern Time, on **April 12, 2007**. Please note that the closing date allows winning candidates time to prepare for their first Board meeting at STC's 54th Annual Conference in Minneapolis.

Only members who have paid their dues by **February 28, 2007**, will be eligible to vote. All eligible members will receive voting instructions in early March. ♦

The STC Membership Cycle

March 31, 2007, is the last day to renew your STC membership. (Membership applications and payment must be received by/on February 28 in order to vote in Society elections.) In April, the STC office will purge from its records the names of all members who have not renewed their membership by the March 31 deadline. Chapter leaders should be aware that this practice skews membership numbers by creating an artificial peak in March (when nonrenewers are still counted) and an artificial low in April (when a significant number of members who will eventually renew are removed from the database). The most reliable way to measure changes in membership is to compare the counts on similar dates from consecutive years (for example, June 30, 2006, and June 30, 2007). ♦

Ten Ways to Recognize STC Volunteers Virtually



By Judith Herr, SIG Advocate

For each issue of Tieline, a representative of the twenty STC special interest groups (SIGs) shares wisdom, hints, and lessons learned on different aspects of facilitating virtual STC communities, whether based on subject matter or geographic location. Currently, SIG leaders are rapidly exploring various collaborative tools and management styles to provide benefits for their SIG members—and to recruit SIG volunteers and leaders.

As Edwin Schlossberg says, “True interactivity is not about clicking on icons or downloading files, it’s about encouraging communication.” SIG leaders are working on just that. We hope that some of the information in this series will be applicable and helpful to other STC community leaders as well.

Judith M. Herr, STC SIG Advocate (herrj@comcast.net)

How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!

—Maya Angelou

How shall STC effectively recognize the diverse contributions of virtual volunteers? For STC SIG leaders, demonstrating appreciation can be challenging and rewarding. Recognition is best if public, timely but lasting beyond the moment, and of value to the honoree as well as scaled for the quality and extent of the volunteer’s accomplishments. The gift might be in the form of a newsletter article, a handmade token, a formal title, a commendation, or the good wishes of peers, family, employers or clients, and friends.

The suggestions in this article include some that require the help of colocated, face-to-face community members; others can be accomplished entirely without “real” intercession. Several both recognize the contributions of the volunteer and broadcast the value that technical communicators bring to their clients and employers.

If you have sat through too many community or professional group volunteer recognition events where a somewhat detached presenter thanked everyone with something like, “Whatever you did, thanksalot,” you realize that, as Sue Vineyard says, “Vague turns people off, and specific turns people on.” STC leaders have the opportunity, the enthusiasm for innovating, and the right skills as communicators to turn our volunteers on.

1. **Recognize volunteers in print.** Make sure each volunteer is recognized through newsletters, the Web site, discussion lists, and other communication media. For example, send press releases to the publications of STC communities and other pertinent organizations (such as SIG Web sites, local newspapers and magazines, chamber of commerce bulletins, and so on), post news on the STC Web site and other sites and blogs, and include recognition in meeting notes.
2. **Invite active participation in the virtual community’s decision-making process.** According to Paul Wellstone, “Successful organizing is based on the recognition that people get organized because they, too, have a vision.” Take advantage of volunteers’ insights and vision to improve the community.

Virtually, continued on page 8

Register by February 28 for Conference Early Bird Rates

Online registration for STC’s 54th Annual Conference is now open at www.stc.org/54thConf. Registration is also available by fax and by mail. Make sure you take advantage of the Early Bird rates, which offer the best value. Register by **February 28** for significant savings:

- ❖ Member early bird rate: \$645—a savings of \$250 off the on-site rate
- ❖ Nonmember early bird rate: \$875—a savings of \$245 off the on-site rate
- ❖ Student early bird rate: \$175—a savings of \$75 off the on-site rate

Also, for the first time, STC is offering a group rate for professors and students. Groups of four students and one professor can register at a special rate of \$895.

For other rates, please see the conference Web site at www.stc.org/54thConf. ♦

Community Membership Drives

To attract new members during their membership drives, chapters can use the promotional items mailed to all membership managers and student chapter advisors in early November. These items include membership applications, flyers promoting STC's 54th Annual Conference, and copies of the *Discover the Benefits* brochure. *Discover the Benefits* contains information about STC and its services, publications, and special interest groups. Applications and brochures can also be downloaded from the Society Web site.

Below is a list of STC membership drive achievers. The communities listed are leading their respective categories in growth percentages from June 30 through January 31, 2007. Chapters are ranked in the size category they attained on June 30, 2006; the list also includes a category for SIGs. The numbers in parentheses denote the number of communities in each category as of June 30, 2006. As an inspiration to all STC communities, *Tieline* will publish an updated version of this list in every issue through March 2007.

Professional Chapters, Size Category 1

More than 600 members (2 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Silicon Valley	13.80
Boston	12.91

Professional Chapters, Size Category 2

301 to 600 members (9 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Toronto	19.26
Houston	17.13
Washington, D.C.	16.23

Professional Chapters, Size Category 3

151 to 300 members (18 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Wisconsin	25.93
Northern New England	24.85
Eastern Ontario	20.51

Professional Chapters, Size Category 4

76 to 150 members (24 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
India	40.00
Pittsburgh	25.40
Southwestern Ontario	22.39

Professional Chapters, Size Category 5

41 to 75 members (21 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
James River	29.51
Four Lakes	26.79
San Gabriel Valley	22.41

Professional Chapters, Size Category 6

Fewer than 41 members (29 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Susquehanna Valley	66.67
Rock Valley	36.36
Alaska	33.33

Student Chapters, Size Category 1

20 or more members (7 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
James Madison U.	112.50
U. of Minnesota	24.00
North Carolina St. U.	17.24

Student Chapters, Size Category 2

Fewer than 20 members (23 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
London Ontario	225.00
Miami U.	100.00
U. of North Carolina-Charlotte	100.00

Special Interest Groups

(20 communities)

<i>SIG</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Quality and Process Improvement	101.76
Environmental, Safety, and Health	74.90
Lone Writer	66.87 ◆

It's Coming. . .

The Leadership Community Resource (LCR) will officially launch on May 13—the day that Leadership Day will be held at STC's 54th Annual Conference.

Be sure to check upcoming issues of *Tieline* for more details on what you can expect from the LCR. ◆

U.S. and Canadian Members: Deduct Your STC Dues

Editor's note: We are grateful to Geoffrey J. S. Hart, Associate Fellow of the Montreal Chapter STC, who provided information and guidance for this article.

Depending on which country you live in, you may receive tax benefits in addition to the professional and educational value you receive from Society membership. This article highlights some of the benefits that U.S. and Canadian members may receive.

Benefits in the United States

If you pay taxes in the United States, STC dues are tax deductible. Please note, however, that *dues must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid*. In other words, dues paid in 2006 may be deducted only from 2006 tax returns. Therefore, if you paid your 2007 dues on or before December 31, 2006, these dues can be deducted only from your 2006 return. Members who have questions should contact their local IRS office or their accountant.

You can claim dues as a deduction in several ways: as a business expense, a charitable expense, or a miscellaneous deduction.

Business Expense

Employers and self-employed consultants may claim the full amount of dues as a business expense.

Charitable Expense

All STC members who pay taxes in the United States can deduct at least a portion of their STC dues if they claim this portion as a charitable donation. IRS publication 526 (rev. 2005) defines this option:

If you receive a benefit as a result of making a contribution to a qualified organization, you can deduct only the amount of your contribution that is more than the value of the benefit you receive.

As a 501(c)(3) organization, STC is a qualified organization. To determine the

amount of charitable contribution you may claim, subtract the cost of tangible benefits you receive from STC from the amount of dues you paid in 2006. STC's tangible benefits can be estimated at \$30 per year: \$15 for the Society's quarterly journal, *Technical Communication*, and \$15 for the magazine *Intercom*. The amount of dues you paid depends on your membership category. Classic members and limited members determine their charitable contribution by subtracting the cost of tangible benefits (\$30) from the cost of dues (\$150 for classic members, \$130 for limited members). Because student members and e-members do not receive printed versions of *Technical Communication* or *Intercom*, they do not receive tangible benefits, and may deduct the full amount of dues for 2006 and 2007: \$140 for e-members and \$55 for student members.

Table 1 will help most members determine their charitable contribution.

Please note: If you received prorated credit from STC toward your dues, your dues and charitable contribution will differ from the amounts listed below.

Table 1. Charitable Contributions for 2006 and 2007 STC Dues

Membership category	2006 and 2007 dues	Tangible benefits	Charitable contribution
Classic	\$150	\$30	\$120
E-membership	\$140	\$0	\$140
Limited	\$130	\$30	\$100
Student	\$55	\$0	\$55
Retired	\$75	\$30	\$45

Miscellaneous Deduction

Those who do not fall into the categories defined above may claim their dues amount as a miscellaneous deduction. (For miscellaneous deductions to affect taxes, the total amount of miscellaneous deductions must exceed 2 percent of your adjusted gross income.)

Money, Not Time

Please be aware that while dues, contributions, and out-of-pocket expenses may be deducted, personal services may not.

Benefits in Canada

Some of the information in this section comes from "The Economics of STC Membership: For Everything Else, There's Mastercard," an article written by Geoffrey J. S. Hart, Associate Fellow of the Montreal Chapter STC, for the February 2005 *Tieline*.

Deduct, continued on page 10

Let Us Know about Tax Benefits in Your Country

The communication department is preparing a more encompassing version of "U.S. and Canadian Members: Deduct Your STC Dues" to run in our publications next year. To do this, we need your assistance. If you are familiar with tax benefits that members in your country are able to receive as a result of their STC membership, please e-mail this information to the *Tieline* editor (tieline@stc.org). Thank you in advance for your help. ♦

Filling a Leadership Vacuum

In response to a recent question posted to the STC presidents' mailing list, chapter leaders shared their ideas for recruiting volunteers when members don't seem to be stepping up to the plate to take on leadership positions. Below is a summary of their ideas, which you might consider using if your chapter is experiencing a similar situation.

Note: Visit lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stc_pres to subscribe if you are a chapter president and not already a mailing list member. You might also find it helpful to read some of the articles on recruiting volunteers in the *Administration* section of the *Tieline* knowledge base (www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineKb01.asp).

From Jon Baker, Boston Chapter STC:

"[T]he best way to get people involved is to ask. One-on-ones work best. I'd identify six people in your chapter to approach. Then go ask. I might even double-team them—that is, have someone else on your chapter's council and yourself tackle each candidate.

"One other note: I don't know the size of your chapter, but normally one doesn't volunteer for a council position. Election by the chapter membership is the preferred means of filling council positions. I realize that not all chapters have the luxury of holding elections.

"I would also get your Director involved, if your region still has one, or go to the Leadership Community Resource (LCR). Mary Jo Stark is the new leader of the LCR, which should have someone who can help.

"If that fails, you can then indicate to your chapter membership that the positions will remain open until someone steps up. If no one does, then suggest to the membership that the chapter will be dissolved. There is a process for chapter dissolution, which again your Director or the LCR can help with if it gets that far."

From Al Hood, Atlanta Chapter STC:

"We had a bit of a crisis this last fiscal year in Atlanta when the first and second VPs had resigned midyear. Our membership was decreasing, participation all around was dropping, and things were looking pretty bleak. Holly [Harkness, chapter president,] stepped in and decided to do something. She started asking people to help. By phone and in person. It worked. Our membership is up by more than 10 percent. We have almost every position in the council filled. We have a full complement of officers with many new and young members stepping up. We have already heard some of the younger members talking about running for second VP this year.

"So just ask. It works."

From Kit Brown, Snake River Chapter STC:

"We faced the same problem in the Snake River Chapter STC. The charter leadership was so burned out after ten-plus years that they just disappeared from the chapter. We held a leadership workshop with Mary Wise as presenter, and invited all chapter members to attend. This got some of the people excited about being more active.

"The other thing that I have been encouraging each person on the current board to do is to identify one or two people and start cultivating them by asking the new person to take on a specific, small—but doable—task. As people have success and have social interaction from it, they become more interested in taking on bigger things. I constantly remind people that you get what you give from the organization . . . and that STC is a safe and fun place to learn/practice skills that you might not get the opportunity to learn on the job.

"One of the biggest mistakes that leaders at all levels of the organization make is that we don't delegate effectively, which means that no one gets groomed to take over our job . . . as soon as we take on a role, we should get in the habit of immediately identifying a couple of people to groom for the position.

"One of the problems is that STC is largely a community of introverts who are reluctant to raise their hand even if they have a burning desire to do something—unless someone asks them directly. Since you have an immediate need for new leadership, I would suggest that the current board divvy up the chapter list and contact everyone on it (prepare a script and some questions to ask everyone). Make sure that the council members are hovering near the doors during meetings and greeting everyone who walks in—and asking them a question about an interest or what they want to get out of the meeting. Also, spend a few minutes at the next board meeting identifying every volunteer opportunity in the chapter, and break them down into the smallest chunks possible. Then, as you are talking to people, don't ask if they are interested in volunteering (which usually results in a knee-jerk no); instead, ask WHAT they are interested in volunteering for (subtle difference, but important). See if you can figure out a really good fit for each person you talk to."

From Vici Koster-Lenhardt, TransAlpine Chapter STC:

"The TransAlpine Chapter STC is just going through this same situation.

"One thing to keep in mind is something that's not discussed very often and in many ways is taboo: chapters go through inactive periods. And this is OK.

"Consider it a resting period. It gives everyone a chance to regroup, rethink, gather energy. When asking people directly doesn't work, allow the community to rest. What does resting mean?"

Vacuum, continued on page 9

Society Events

February 7, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Heather Hedden will host an STC live Web seminar, "Creating Indexes on Web Sites and Intranets," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on manually created A-Z site indexes as a solution for managers of Web or HTML content. The structure of HTML indexes and a review of how such indexes compare with site maps, taxonomies, and search engines—as well as an overview of Web-indexing tools—will be presented. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

February 10, 2007 CONFERENCE DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting presentations for the fourth annual technical communication conference of the **Manitoba Chapter STC** and Red River College is **February 10**. The conference will be held April 12–13, 2007, at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. More information and a call for presentations can be found on the chapter Web site, stc-manitoba.org.

February 21, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Makarand Pandit will present an STC live Web seminar, "Working in Global Teams," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar is designed for both those just getting started in a virtual team environment and those who want to optimize their virtual relationships. It is especially beneficial for participants working with teams in India. Pandit will discuss the state of technical communication in India and share the experiences of Indian technical writers working in virtual teams. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

March 9–10, 2007 CONFERENCE

The **Atlanta Chapter STC** will host its annual conference, "Currents 2007," at the Mercer University Atlanta campus. Conference session topics include

management, online content, tools and technology, writing and editing, usability, consulting and independent contracting, and marketing. Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director, will deliver the conference keynote address. For more information, please contact Dirk Bender at dirkbender@gmail.com, or visit www.stcatlanta.org.

March 14, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Rahel Bailie will present an STC live Web seminar, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. This seminar provides the groundwork for understanding what a content management system (CMS) is and what it does, the differences between various types of CMSs, circumstances in which content management can be beneficial, and techniques for determining system suitability. The seminar will also demystify the industry vocabulary, thereby eliminating some of the barriers that can slow down the investigative process. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

March 16–17, 2007 CONFERENCE

The **Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC** will host its annual conference in the conference center at Penn State Great Valley, located in the Philadelphia suburbs near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Featured speakers include Cheryl Lockett Zuback, Neil Perlin, Ed Marshall, Stephanie Morgan, and keynoter Robert Glushko. For more information, please e-mail conference@stcpmc.org or visit www.stcpmc.org.

March 28, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger will present an STC live Web seminar, "Visible: The New Valuable," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on how documentation departments can show their value by becoming more visible within their organizations. For more information or to register for

the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

April 11, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Kevin A. Siegel will present an STC live Web seminar, "Creating Interactive CBTs with *Captivate*®—in Half the Time," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. Participants will learn how to maximize the potential of Macromedia *Captivate*®, a powerful tool for creating software simulations, and how to create hybrid computer-based training systems (CBTs) that will cut development time by 50 percent. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

April 12–13, 2007 CONFERENCE

The **Manitoba Chapter STC** and Red River College will hold their fourth annual technical communication conference, "Technology and Teamwork," at the Red River College Princess Street campus. For more information, please contact Leslie McKendry-Smith at lmckendry@skyweb.ca, or visit stc-manitoba.org.

April 18–20, 2007 CONFERENCE

The **TransAlpine Chapter STC** will host its spring 2007 conference at the corporate center of Zurich Financial Services in Zurich, Switzerland. For more information, please contact Daniel Jones at daniel.jones@hispeed.ch. To register, please contact Nancy Gelman at nancy.gelman@roche.com.

May 2, 2007 LIVE WEB SEMINAR

Whitney Quesenbery will host an STC live Web seminar, "Choosing the Right Usability Technique (To Answer the Right Question)," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. This seminar will review options for usability evaluations and examine how they can be used most effectively. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

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STC Adopts Diversity Policy

STC continuously strives to make efforts to recognize the diversity of its members. As such, the organization has implemented a new diversity policy, which appears below. This text can also be found on the Society Web site at www.stc.org/about/diversityPolicy01.asp.

As an international professional organization, we recognize that the membership of STC includes individuals representing different faiths, religions, beliefs, and lifestyles. STC aims to make its services and benefits available to all members while respecting their differences.

When planning activities that cross borders and include members with cultural, national, and faith differences, every effort is made to assure that these

activities are not in conflict with the sensitivities of members. However, because of the global nature of our organization, it is possible that some activities may conflict with national or religious holidays. Should this happen, no insult to members and their culture, nation, or faith is intended or implied.

STC asks anyone who is unable to participate in a Society-level STC event due to a conflict with a national or religious holiday to contact the office. Often, proceedings or papers from events are available to those unable to attend.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the STC office at +1 (703) 522-4114 or stc@stc.org. ♦

Virtually, continued from page 3

3. **Demonstrate trust by delegating the next biggest job.**

Although it may not initially feel like a reward, recruiting honored volunteers for more complex projects is a strong compliment and a recognition of their contribution. Pass it on and turn it loose.

4. **Give personalized tokens.** Make something that matches each volunteer's achievement and is personal like a CD/DVD containing a sketch, music, a Web site design, or a homemade movie. Consider a current book, CD, or DVD picked specifically for each volunteer—one that you'd like to borrow yourself.

5. **Schedule an online real-time event.** Arrange an RSS feed or a podcast, or hide the recognition announcement on a SIG or personal Web site, then send an e-mail to all members inviting them to the online event. Surprise the volunteer as the honored guest at the event.

6. **Plan to present an award at the volunteer's work site during a meeting that includes senior managers or clients.** Consult with the honoree to find the best occasion and recruit a local SIG member to present an award demonstrating STC esteem. This can be something that will fit well in a cubicle or, better yet, the company display case in the lobby.

7. **Letters, we send letters.** Write letters to the corporate bigwigs in the honoree's company, noting the exceptional work of their employee. Mention how favorably the honoree's achievements reflect on his or her employer.

8. **Include recognition as an agenda item in each meeting.**

At virtual and/or face-to-face meetings, make recognition the first agenda item. For example, start off with "Our special thanks to . . ." Names of those recognized should be in bold and highlighted on the agenda.

9. **Give a gift to share.** For example, for a night out after all those hours spent on the volunteer project, buy a voucher for two movie tickets in the recipient's location plus an ice cream cone certificate. Ask for help from a local STC member. (An alternative gift might be a voucher for a fifteen-minute chair massage.)

10. **Create hoopla at a face-to-face event.** STC gatherings include local chapter and regional meetings, and the annual conference celebrations. Stage a parade with music and noisemakers to mark the occasion. A crown or party hat for the recipient might add to the mood. Consider setting up a terminal with an Internet connection to enable chatting with those not there—and take digital photos for posting to STC Web sites.

Revisions, comments, and/or replacements for the items here are strongly encouraged to help develop these ideas over time (send to herrj@comcast.net). ♦

If we are to achieve a richer culture—rich in contrasting values—we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

—Margaret Mead

Vacuum, continued from page 6

1. Inform the STC office about this rest period.
2. Keep your bank account active if you have a trustworthy person to oversee related transactions. If not, inform the STC office. They can provide some guidance.
3. If there are volunteers who are still keeping things going, such as the newsletter or Web site, encourage them to keep going.
4. Let community members know that the chapter is alive, just going through a rest period. Make it OK.
5. Keep the conversations going. New leaders will come and show interest. The worst situation you want to get into is asking someone to take on a leadership position who then says yes out of guilt (or the fact that no one else says yes). The low energy will reflect back on the community.
6. If no one steps up after six months, poll the community about shutting down the chapter. If people respond negatively and still no one steps up, wait another six months before taking any action to close down the community.

7. After one year of rest, if no one steps up, reevaluate the goals of the community. Maybe rechartering is necessary to get it off on a new start.
8. When new people do step up, recognize and communicate the end of the resting period and the new beginning!"

From Mike Ball, Boston Chapter STC:

"I have experienced this in another volunteer organization. I found the advice of an experienced association manager very helpful. Among his comments: Identify possible candidates and determine what spots or tasks you need filled, as specifically and in as much detail as possible. Ask a candidate directly—no e-mail—if he or she would be interested.

"Often it takes being able to define the job and to ask directly and very specifically. Many people are waiting to serve when asked.

"Honestly, having done this a number of times, I find the hard part is not in the asking, but rather in defining the roles and related duties adequately enough. You need to know the number of hours and exact duties." ♦

Events, continued from page 7

May 12–16, 2007

CONFERENCE

The **Technical Communication Summit—STC's 54th Annual Conference** will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Preconference workshops will begin on May 12. For more information, please visit www.stc.org/54thconf.

June 4, 2007

CONFERENCE

The **Israel Chapter STC**, which will celebrate forty years as a chapter—and as the oldest STC chapter outside of North America—will hold its semiannual convention, "The Proactive Technical Communicator: Multiple Disciplines, Multiple Perspectives," at the Daniel Hotel, Herzliya, Israel. For more information, please e-mail convention@stc-israel.org.il or visit www.stc-israel.org.il.

Send announcements of your community or regional events to tieline@stc.org. ♦

IDL SIG Scholarship Applications Due March 15

The Instructional Design and Learning (IDL) SIG proudly announces a \$500 scholarship to assist students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or certificate in the area of instructional design. Students applying for this scholarship are expected to be able to demonstrate their focus on topics related to instructional design through their academic studies, current jobs, graduate or certification program, special projects, and/or the STC annual conference.

The deadline to submit entries is March 15, 2007.

For more details and all necessary forms, go to www.stcidlsig.org/cms and click on Scholarships. ♦

Ask the Office

Do you have a question that you would like to see addressed by the "Ask the Office" column in *Tieline*?

We invite you to submit questions for publication in upcoming issues. Please forward questions to the *Tieline* editor at tieline@stc.org. We hope to hear from you. ♦

Report Shows Increase in Number of American Volunteers

The information in this article comes from a Washington Post article written by Amy Joyce, titled "It's All in a Day's Volunteer Effort: Firms Promote Service with Paid Time, Ideas" and dated November 19, 2006. The article can be read at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/18/AR2006111800002.html.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service's "Volunteering in America" report,

65.4 million Americans (28.8 percent) volunteered in 2005. This is an increase from 2002 of almost six million volunteers.

The report states that individuals between the ages of 35 and 44 are most likely to volunteer. According to Amy Joyce's recent *Washington Post* article, many businesses are creating volunteer programs, in part to recruit the best employees to their organizations. Companies such as Forrester Research,

Inc., and PricewaterhouseCoopers give a day off to employees so that they can volunteer. IBM has created a Web site that showcases new opportunities and allows staff members to keep track of their volunteer hours.

"I think employees are looking for organizations that reflect their values," Tim Riley, Forrester chief people officer, states in the article. "This is one way we can at least signal to prospective employees the culture here." ♦

Promote Your Conference in *Intercom*

Intercom is eager to promote STC conferences and seminars. If your chapter or SIG is organizing an STC event, please send as much information about the conference as possible to intercom@stc.org. Include the conference date and site; the name, phone, and e-mail address of a contact person; a related URL; and a sentence or two about the conference theme or content. This information will be listed in *Intercom's* "F.Y.I." section, which promotes events of interest to technical communicators.

To ensure timely publication in *Intercom*, submit conference information three months prior to the issue in which you want the information to appear. For example, if your regional conference is scheduled for December, you'll probably want details to appear in *Intercom* no later than November, which means that you must submit information by August 1. The *Intercom* editors look forward to hearing from you. ♦

Deduct, continued from page 5

STC membership fees are generally deductible from your income tax, particularly for freelancers. In many jurisdictions including Quebec, STC membership qualifies as an educational expense.

According to Hart, tax deductions depend on how much you paid for your specific category of membership and how you are declaring the expense. Many jurisdictions allow freelancers to include one professional association membership in their eligible expenses,

in which case the entire amount of your membership expenditure is an eligible deduction.

Hart also notes that membership may qualify as an educational expense, whether as a personal or a company one. "In Quebec, for instance, companies are required to spend a certain minimum percentage of their gross budget on training, and STC membership qualifies," he explains.

According to Hart, another possible way that both U.S. and non-U.S. members

can deduct their dues is by writing off the cost of all purchased STC publications under the "books and publications" expense category on their tax forms. Doing so allows members to write off the costs of *Technical Communication*, *Intercom*, and community newsletters.

If you would like additional information about the tax benefits you may be able to receive as a result of STC membership, whether you live in one of these areas or elsewhere, please consult your local tax laws or speak to a tax attorney. ♦

Mailings from the STC Office

- In January, STC members received an e-mail soliciting feedback on topics to be discussed during the February Board meeting.
- STC members who did not pay their dues by late January will receive reminder notices from the STC office.
- The *Preliminary Program* for STC's 54th Annual Conference will be mailed in February.
- In early March, all eligible members will receive ballots and voting instructions for the upcoming election for Society office. Information on candidates has been posted to www.stc.org and will also appear in the March 2007 issue of *Intercom*.

Community Leaders' Monthly Reminders February

- The STC Board of Directors will meet **February 2–3, 2007** in Arlington, Virginia.
- Students must submit completed applications for STC scholarships offered in the 2006–2007 academic year by **February 15, 2007**.
- Applicants must submit completed applications for the Marian Norby scholarship by **February 15, 2007**.
- Remind members that membership applications and payment must be received by/on **February 28, 2007** in order to vote in Society elections.
- The deadline for your chapter or Society-level SIG to send entries to STC's public relations competition is **March 5, 2007**.
- Entries for the international student technical communication competition must be received by the competition manager by **March 15, 2007**.
- The annual STC election will take place in **March and April 2007**. Ballots will be mailed in early March.
- Activate your nominating committee and prepare the slate of chapter office candidates for the upcoming election. After holding the election, begin considering which officers will attend Leadership Day on **May 13, 2007** at STC's 54th Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Membership at a Glance

As of February 1, 2007:

Total members:	16,354
Members residing in the U.S.:	13,833
Members residing in Canada:	1,489
Members residing elsewhere:	1,032
Total communities*:	153

*Includes 103 professional chapters, 30 student chapters, and 20 SIGs



Leadership Links

Leaders' Reference Guide: www.stc.org/PDF_Files/ChapterLeadersGuide_0607.pdf

Chapter Handbook: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chResources01.asp

Tieline Knowledge Base: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineKb01.asp

Chapter finances: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chFinances01.asp

Tieline archives: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineArchive01.asp