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Tool Review

Move Over FrameMaker

By Peter Bates

Call me a heretic. I've never worshipped Adobe FrameMaker. As a production tool, I suppose it gets the job done and you do have to know it to nab whatever technical writing jobs you can find. Yet its graphics component is rudimentary, its implementation of master pages confusing, and its infrequent updates, particularly of the interface, consistently fail to impress me. I'm not alone. Every time Adobe comes out with another release of FrameMaker, my colleagues collectively sigh.

Now we have Adobe InDesign. The product is only two years old, yet it is seriously challenging FrameMaker, PageMaker, and Quark Express for the desktop publishing throne. First of all, it allows you to produce (and import) superior graphics. For example, you can easily create transparent text that overlays an object. Not only that, but you can specify the degree of transparency.

The product is helpful when it comes time to go to press. Recently, I was working on a brochure for a client. He insisted on using an RGB graphic he had picked up on the Web. When I imported it into InDesign, it did not look the same. I had programmed InDesign to display colors via a CMYK filter so they would display exactly as they would appear on the printed brochure. He wasn't happy, but at least we tackled the issue before printing. (We ended up distracting viewers from the color match problem with flashy color gradients, another task InDesign does particularly well.)

Those who use Photoshop will be familiar with the palette-driven interface. InDesign has almost two dozen palettes. Use the Text Wrap palette to select how text forms around an object (five choices) and specify the offset values (in inches, points, picas, millimeters, even ciceros, whatever they are). Use the Layers palette to add another layer to your document so that you can easily overlap objects. Be careful about this one. It's not as flexible as Photoshop's layers. If you hide an InDesign layer, a white space "hole" appears in the other layer that the object occupies. This is the only annoying flaw that I noted in the program. It would have been nice to have two versions of the same document on different layers if layers weren't so intertwined. Another feature you may like: You can group palettes together that are similar (like Character and Paragraph) or that are used frequently.

InDesign is great with large documents, too. If you placed automatic page numbers on your document pages, then the program keeps track of your page numbering even if you add a new document between two other documents in a book. I always found FrameMaker's index feature kludgy because of all those imbedded codes. If you wanted to change an entry, you had to precisely position the cursor over the code while deftly right-clicking it. Compared to this hand-twisting approach, InDesign's Index palette is a joy to use. Just click on the icon for the entry and an editable properties sheet is displayed.

If you're on your own, get this product to complement your suite of tools. Simple and powerful at the same time, it's as indispensable as Photoshop and Macromedia MX are for the Web developer.

For more information, go to www.adobe.com.

Peter Bates runs Bates Communications, a publication, promotion, and Web design company. He can be reached at pbates@batescommunications.net or www.batescommunications.net.

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President's Message

2002-2003 End-of-Year Status Report

What Did Your Council Do for You?

The great American baseball player, Satchel Paige, once said in jest, "Don't look back—something may be gaining on you." In contrast, George Santayana, a Spanish thinker and writer, noted in 1905, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." So which is it? Do we move on and not look back? Or do we look back and move on? Well, it's the end of the 2002-2003 Council's term, and I think it's a good time to look back and consider what was accomplished for you.

Looking Inward

One of our major goals was to look inward and assess what each committee does and how each communicates with the others. This might sound trivial, but just think about how Engineering, Tech Support, Sales, Tech Pubs, Training, and Marketing all try to communicate with each other. The Boston Chapter has over 15 committees that focus on increasing productivity, reducing tasks, streamlining responsibilities, and improving processes. The Council merged and eliminated some committees to improve efficiency.

Looking Outward

When the Council looked outward, we improved services for you, increased the number of SIGs, acted on your suggestions, and provided excellent programs. Look at what this year's Council did for you.

- Posted the Salary Survey
- Offered three new SIGs, bringing the total to five
- Held a reception for new members
- Promoted STC through press releases, STC-infos, news flashes, and our Web site
- Stimulated growth in the Art Competition
- Celebrated a Competitions Awards Banquet
- Offered stimulating and informative programs
- Published excellent issues of the *Boston Broadside*
- Published employment opportunities in the Job Bank
- Promoted membership profiles
- Updated our Chapter bylaws

I am very pleased with what the 2002-2003 Council accomplished. I also want to thank you for the privilege of serving as President of the Boston Chapter.

When we count our many blessings, it isn't hard to see that life's most valued treasures are the treasures that are free. For it isn't what we own or buy that signifies our wealth. It's the special gifts that have no price: our family, friends, and health.
(Author unknown)

Taryn Light, President of the STC Boston Chapter, is the Content Solutions Manager at ArchiText in Methuen, MA. You can reach her at taryn.light@verizon.net.

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Program Report

"Design a Billboard"

Idea Watch and Online SIGs Discuss Web Usability

By Carol Macbain

"Design a Billboard," advises Steve Krug, local author and Web site usability expert in his popular book *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*. At the February joint meeting of the [Idea Watch](#) and [Online Information](#) Special Interest Groups, members responded to the principles outlined in this must-read book.

Make It Easy

Don't Make Me Think is useful for both untrained recruits to Web design and for technical writing professionals. Although some of Krug's guidelines, such as using a clear visual hierarchy, are already part of every technical writer's repertoire, he emphasizes the need to make it obvious to users where they are and what they should do next to find what they want.

One way to do this is to take advantage of conventions to create a familiar environment. Then, users can make decisions quickly. Breaking up the pages into clearly defined areas and indicating what is clickable is another helpful tactic.

Krug recommends reducing visual noise by limiting colors, graying lines in tables, limiting ads and invitations to buy, and reducing the number of words to make the useful content more prominent.

Effective Home Pages

Krug says that every effective home page must convey "the big picture" by answering the following questions:

- What is this?
- What do they have here?
- What can I do here?
- Why should I be here?
- Where do I start?

"Street Signs" and "Bread Crumbs"

Clear, consistent, navigational tools ensure that visitors do not abandon a site out of frustration. For example, a tab system, which Krug calls "street signs," points the way. A line of previously visited pages near the top, "bread crumbs," reminds users how they got where they are. Krug also recommends placing a search box on every page for users who want to jump quickly to any area.

Test Early and Often

Another key to a successful site, according to Krug, is usability testing. He recommends testing early and often as a way to find out if the user "gets it." Even atypical testers can provide insights and solutions to

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problems, and a big budget is not required.

Members Respond

Members thought that most companies do not utilize usability testing, despite its clear benefits. Either there is no budget, or testing is scheduled too late in the process to incorporate changes. Krug's final chapters provide useful tips on conducting testing on a shoestring budget, which could help designers overcome these obstacles.

Steve Krug was unable to participate in the meeting as planned due to illness. Barbara Casaly led the discussion, and SIG coordinators Steven Greffinius and Colleen Strahs hope to reschedule Steve's presentation for June or July. We hope to hear more from Steve Krug on effective usability testing at a future meeting.

Design Tip

Design consultant P. J. Gardner's practical tip for Web development problems: Use WebMX or WebQA (formerly Linkbot/Metabot) from Watchfire.com to build a site map or repair broken links.

Carol Macbain is a technical writer who is working on her first Web site. You can reach her at CJMacbain@aol.com.

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Program Report

"Global Shmopal: What's In It For Me?"

ArchiText's CEO Gets Us Thinking Globally

By Carol Macbain

"Global Shmopal: What's In It For Me?" was the topic for STC's March meeting. Hans Fenstermacher, founder of ArchiText, a provider of localization and multilingual services, gave us an informative and entertaining look into the future of content providers ("us") as companies expand globally to increase market share. He reminded members that markets are growing overseas and our jobs may follow unless we can understand and take advantage of the move toward globalization.

Translation is a huge expense for businesses, but an increasingly necessary one. Fenstermacher cited studies showing that customers prefer products that use their own language. In addition to the expansion of overseas markets, the number of non-English speakers in the U.S. is also increasing. Because information is our business, we must contribute to the bottom line by helping our companies satisfy new customers who may not be comfortable with English.

Editing for Globalization Takes Time, but Saves Money

Translation fees are based on the number of words in a document plus its consistency compared to previously translated material. So it pays to put most of your effort into the source document. By ensuring that the source is concise, the writer saves money on every translation and every update. Another benefit is that the document is also easier for English speakers to use.

If You Can Cut It, Cut It

Words

The most effective way of reducing localization costs is to reduce the number of words in a document. Remove redundancies. Say only what you need to say. Be aware of word counts, and ensure that every word does count.

Graphics

Another big budget cutter is elimination of unnecessary screen shots. At current rates of \$19 per screen, per language, it is wasteful to include confirm boxes and windows that do not contribute information. A discriminating writer can determine which graphics add value.

Paragraphs



Hans Fenstermacher

Photo by Carol Macbain

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Hans Fenstermacher

Photo by Carol Macbain

Fenstermacher also cited unnecessary introductory material after a heading as not worth the expense. Companies can no longer afford to explain the obvious, for the sake of form, when there is no value to the user.

Standardized Phrases Reduce Costs

Due to the use of translation memory, common phrases do not have to be retranslated. However, when less than 65% of the document consists of phrases that are the same, or nearly the same, as previously translated text, the cost equals that of translating new text. By standardizing and cataloging frequently used phrases, writers can keep expenses down. Describing actions consistently also benefits users.

Metrics Prove Value

The cost of a minor change in the source document multiplies many times when it must be made in several manuals and eleven languages—the number required for marketing to the European Union. Fenstermacher's charts and graphs dramatically showed how a document created with globalization in mind would save a company thousands of dollars down the line. Writers have the opportunity to contribute significantly to the profitability of their companies by reducing the localization costs that will expand the market.



Attendees collaborate on globalization exercise

Photo by Carol Macbain

Of course, the key is to have these facts and figures on hand to demonstrate how these savings will be realized. Writers need to make management aware of how their skills contribute to the company's return on investment (ROI).

Steps for Global Success

Fenstermacher concluded by advising writers to take the following steps to help their companies succeed in the international marketplace:

- one way.
- If you can cut a word, do it.
- Develop content that you'll be glad to see again.
- Don't let the product team push you around.
- Don't let management off the hook.

- Define and catalog terminology.
- Collect metrics—word counts and page counts.
- Write sentences that can be used in more than

Taking Up The Challenge

The presentation ended with an exercise that asked writers at each table to decide how to "globalize" a set of instructions. We found a lot of words and phrases to cut, but it was also clear that group editing is not cost-effective.

Five Prizes Awarded

After proving we can cut redundancy with the best of them, members also demonstrated excellent hand-eye coordination as they competed for cash prizes. By tossing a ball of duct tape into a basket, five lucky contestants won back the cost of their dinner (plus tomorrow's coffee).



Hans Fenstermacher incorporates group edits

Photo by Carol Macbain

View the [photo gallery of contestants](#).

Carol Macbain is a technical writer ready to globalize. She can be reached at CJMacbain@aol.com.

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Professional Certifications

Massachusetts to Host 2003 BELS Certification Exam

By Lori Gillen

Tufts University Medical School is a host of one of the 2003 Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) certification examinations. This exam will take place on Saturday, October 18, from 1-4 pm. The location provides a great opportunity for editing professionals from the area to obtain their certification.

BELS was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials in scientific editing and publishing that are similar to those attainable in other professions. This certification is highly regarded by employers and clients who hire manuscript editors.

BELS was founded by 10 editors who had long been active in national and international professional associations in scientific editing and publishing. They began working on the development of the certification program in the early 1980s. They were assisted by consultants in testing and by administrators of certification programs in other professions. BELS was incorporated in Maryland on January 23, 1991, and the first official certification examinations were offered that year. BELS now has hundreds of members in the United States, Canada, and other countries.

You can obtain more information about the certification process and the examination by visiting the BELS Web site (www.bels.org) or by contacting Leslie Neistadt, BELS Registrar, at 706-494-3322 or at neistadt@hughston.com.

Lori Gillen is a technical writer at McKesson Health Solutions, in Newton, a senior STC member, and the leader for Boston's Special Needs/Accessibility SIG.

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Program Report

STACIEs Awards Banquet, 2003

A Night of Achievement

By Andrea Squires

The air outside was frigid, but the mood inside the Sheraton Lexington Inn was warm on Thursday, February 26, 2003 as the Boston and Northern New England STC Chapters celebrated excellence at the STACIEs Awards Banquet. "Your work has raised the bar for technical achievement. This evening is about you," Boston Chapter President Taryn Light said to the winners.



Awards

Photo by Ilana Sztainberg

Sponsors for this year's STACIEs banquet were [eHelp](#), [nSight](#), and [Bentley College](#).

In addition to the three Best of Show winners, the chapter presented 33 awards of merit, 30 awards of excellence, and 37 awards of distinction. For a complete list of winners, visit the [Competitions Page](#).

Aside from the awards ceremony, Paula "Why Do I Work in Italy" Berger, Helen "Alex Trebek" Chen, Hans "Prussian Penguin" Fenstermacher, and John "I Almost Ran Over John Lennon" Garison were brave enough to compete in two rounds of Jeopardy. Their hilarious improvisations were a great addition to the evening.

Something new this year: STACIEs Coordinator Ellen Lidington notes that two Best of Show winners are first-time entrants. First-time wins were in the categories of Technical Publications and Online Competition.

Best of Show

The following entries received Best of Show awards.

Competition	Best of Show Winner

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STACIE (STC Technical Achievement in Communicating Information) is the collective name for awards given to winners of the annual STC Boston/Northern New England Chapters' Technical Publications, Technical Art, and Online Communication Competitions.



Passing out awards

Photo by Ilana Sztainberg

Technical Art	Enterprise Virtual Array Poster, Hewlett-Packard Company, Douglas Bonin, Jimmy Maleki, Alex Hart
Online Communication	Web-based Training: Database Administration Essentials, Progress Software, Computer-Based Training Development Team
Technical Publications	MATLAB News & Notes, The MathWorks, Editorial and Production Team, Writers and Contributors, Advisory Board

Many thanks go to STACIEs Coordinator Ellen Lidington, Boston Chapter President Taryn Light, and all the judges and volunteers for a memorable celebration of technical achievement.



STACIE awards

Photo by Ilana Sztainberg

View the [photo gallery of the awards banquet](#).

View the [photo gallery of Distinction award winners](#).

View the [photo gallery of Excellence award winners](#).

View the [photo gallery of Merit award winners](#).

Andrea Squires joined STC this year. She can be reached at AWSwrite@aol.com.

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Project Management
Planning Successful Projects
Part II

By Mike Corrigan and Steven Greffenuis

Editor's Note: Part I of this article appeared in the January/February 2003 issue of the Boston Broadside.

Here's a good question: Why can't I just jot some notes on my pad and use that as my project plan? Personal notes do serve as an excellent planning tool when you work by yourself. When you work as part of a team, though, the project plan must be more formal, a document that everyone can understand and use.

Let's take a simple example. Suppose your target date for completion of the project is June 1, and you must begin your draft no later than April 1 to meet the June 1 target. That means much of your planning and research occurs during March. Here is how your schedule for the project might look:

Task	Date	Person Responsible
Submit outline for review and approval.	March 15	Lead writer
Complete review of the outline.	March 20	Project manager
Submit initial version.	April 20	Lead writer
Complete review of the initial version.	April 25	Project manager
Incorporate customer's comments. Submit final version.	May 15	Lead writer
Complete review of the final version.	May 20	Project manager
Incorporate customer's comments. Submit proof copy.	May 25	Lead writer
Correct the proof copy and approve for publication.	May 30	Project manager
Send the corrected copy to the printer.	June 1	Lead writer

As the schedule's layout suggests, a plan of this type induces cooperation between the technical publications team and the engineers responsible for development of the product. Members of each group receive regular communication from their collaborators. Moreover, both writers and engineers must respond to what they receive. As a result, both groups share responsibility for advancing the project toward completion, and both groups know what the other team members are thinking as the document takes shape.

If the schedule changes—and schedules change pretty often—at least everyone knows why. If no published schedule exists to begin with, no one knows what the target dates are, let alone why various deadlines keep receding into the future. When research, writing, and publication take too long, the project manager wants to know why. Careful planning and conscientious collaboration can't prevent all delays, but at least everyone on the team knows where the document is in its development, what has to happen next, and when the next task will be complete.

Mike Corrigan is an embedded systems engineer, and president of MHC Enterprises in Wilmington, MA.

Steven Greffenuis is CEO of TechWrite Publishing, a technical publishing company in Westwood, MA.

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Letter to the Editor

Andy Richter Clever, Ironic, and Entertaining

By John MacNeil

Dear Editor:

I read the [review](#) of the TV show, *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* (a situation comedy about a technical writer) in the March/April issue of the *Boston Broadside*.

In his negative review, Matthew Nankin writes: "For technical writers, the show is a major disappointment." I disagree. I think the show is clever, ironic, and entertaining.

Mr. Nankin specifically criticizes a particular episode in which Andy makes a stereotypical comment about "the Irish" to a new hire. The new hire (who is black) takes offense, explaining that he himself is Irish. The situation escalates up the HR chain of command. Andy (who is white) gets some "sensitivity training," which he is hard-pressed to put into practice when he begins dating a pretty, young black woman (a fellow employee). He finds himself mightily challenged in trying to accommodate her sensitivities. He cannot always determine when to celebrate her racial and ethnic identity and when to act as if he is unaware of any differences between them.

I found this to be a thoughtful and sympathetic portrayal of a very human dilemma. Not so much an ethnic or racial dilemma, but the common dilemma all of us experience when we try to understand and respect each others' differing and, at times, paradoxical values and feelings.

If *Andy Richter* does not show us a technical writer at work, it does show us a technical writer as a human being with imagination, aspirations, and feelings, rather than as the stereotypically mosquito-like irritant that software developers sometimes perceive us as.

As a technical writer, I have been trained to consider my audience when writing. The writers of *Andy Richter* are aiming at TV viewers who are seeking entertainment and humor and, perhaps, some insight into the human condition.

Matthew Nankin responds:

In his letter, John McNeil discusses the value of *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* as a general member of the audience. My review was concerned with what the show does, and does not do, for technical writers. The episode on responding to a co-worker's sensitivities would have made just as much sense no matter what *Andy Richter's* employment or profession.

Perhaps there would have been humor in showing a technical writer as "the stereotypically mosquito-like irritant [of] software developers." In the case of *Andy Richter*, we will never know. After fourteen episodes, the lay audience knowledge of technical writing amounts to no more than sitting at a desk with a rarely-used computer, socializing extensively with co-workers, and using the office to look for a date.

Editor's Note: according to the website, <http://www.tvtome.com/AndyRichterControltheUniverse>, *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* has been placed on hiatus by the Fox television network. Five additional episodes have yet to be broadcast.

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John McNeil has been a technical writer for over twelve years. When not writing, he enjoys cycling, walking, softball, sailing, and occasional TV watching. You can contact John MacNeil at macneil@flam.net.

Matthew Nankin is a Senior Member of the STC and a television critic. You can reach him at mgnankin@yahoo.com.

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Director/Sponsor's Message

Structural Change

By Jonathan W. Baker

One of the things on my mind these days concerns the issue of whether we are seeing structural changes in the technical communications business or whether things really are OK and once the economy improves, we'll all be back at work. One of the reasons that I am inclined to lean toward the structural change point of view is that in the last several weeks, I've heard from different people who are concerned about technical communications jobs migrating to other countries. I have no facts to verify this, but I do have questions and would be interested in hearing from you about what changes you are seeing in the business.

One of the long-term concerns for STC, if structural change is taking place, would be that our U.S. membership might decline, while our international membership would continue to grow. This has a raft of implications for the Society. So again, let me know what you think about this possibility. Does it worry you? Do you want to see STC become a true international organization? Is this a win-win situation for the membership? How do we get there?

Even if things are not changing structurally, we are seeing changes. Should the economy kick into high gear tomorrow, for many of us things are already different. During this recession, many of you have: chosen to retire, early or otherwise; changed careers; retooled your career for other aspects of technical communication; or simply held on. However, the long-term issues remain. Technical communicators are a greying group with dwindling numbers. New technical communicators are not pouring into the field. So again, I ask, what are your thoughts about this? Will all technical communicators be in the geriatric ward soon? Does STC need to think differently about what it offers, based upon the notion that we are an aging, diminishing group? Please let me know what is on your mind.

Another interesting aspect to this is that product documentation represents a tiny fraction of what is wrong or broken with a product. At a recent meeting of the Software Process Improvement Network in the Boston Chapter, Capers Jones (an expert in software process improvement) indicated that less than 5% of all problems with software can be identified as belonging to documentation. Pretty astounding. We do our job so well that our clients may be thinking we aren't needed, or at the very least, that documentation is easy to prepare. Not!

Last issue, change. We are in a period of huge change and transition. How are you faring? Do you think you are weathering the storm? Will you have a successful outcome? Have you done the planning that you need to survive and thrive? Let me know how you are doing. This is a time when we should be banding together and helping each other work through these miseries.

Jonathan W. Baker is Director/Sponsor of Region 1. He welcomes responses to this article at jbaker2525@earthlink.net.

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Competitions 2003-2004

Attention All Technical Writers and Artists:

Would You Like to Be Recognized for Your Good Work and Get Helpful Feedback From Your Peers?

By Mark Decker

The Boston and Northern New England chapters of the Society for Technical Communications (STC) are now planning for this year's annual competitions for technical writers, Help authors, and technical artists. That means it is time for you to start thinking about what project you want to enter in the 2003 competition. Print projects are due in the late summer, while Help and art projects are due in the early fall.

Competition categories include:

- Printed documentation
- Online Help
- Web Help
- Technical marketing material
- Technical art

Your peers judge the entries, and all entrants receive detailed feedback about their project from judges who are experienced in technical writing and art. Some entries earn an award from the STC, which represent levels of accomplishment based on STC standards. Three levels of awards are given, as follows:

- Merit — Consistently meets high standards in most areas. There may be a number of major or minor flaws, but the entry still exemplifies proficient technical communication.
- Excellence — Consistently meets high standards in all areas. There may be a single major flaw and a few minor flaws. The entry clearly, though slightly imperfectly, exemplifies an exceptional understanding of technical communication principles.
- Distinguished — Clearly superior in all areas. There are no major flaws, and few, if any, minor flaws. It is an outstanding example of technical communication principles.

Those entries that receive a distinguished award are automatically entered into the STC International Competition and compete with entries from around the world. Imagine receiving feedback from your peers from around the world.

You do not have to be a member of the STC to enter this competition, and you can submit more than one entry. Specific dates will be announced later this year.

For more information about the competition, entry forms, or contacts, please visit the [Competitions](#) page. If you need more information than is offered on the Web site, then send e-mail to stc_comp@yahoo.com.

Mark Decker is a Senior Technical Writer from Nashua and is a member of the Northern New England chapter of the STC. Mark is a member of the Online Help Competition Committee. He currently works as a contractor for Agile Enterprise in Nashua.

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Competitions

Site Needed for 2003 Competition Judges' Training Night

By Mark Decker

Planning for the 2003 STC Online Help Competition, jointly sponsored by the Boston and Northern New England STC Chapters, is underway. The competition's organizing committee is looking for a site for the annual Judges' Orientation training night. This training night is important to the success of the competition, because it prepares the judges for their work on competition day.

Approximately two weeks before the day of the competition, the competition committee holds an orientation to acquaint judges with the processes and procedures used to evaluate entries. Part of the orientation includes practice judging a sample online Help entry. The orientation typically takes place on a weeknight in mid-October, from 6:30 to 9:00 P.M. The actual date is based on the availability of the training site.

The ideal location has the following characteristics:

- Central location for Boston and Northern New England members. Companies along Routes 2, 495, or 3 have worked well in the past.
- Meeting space for 40-60 people with presentation capability. An InFocus or similar projection system is ideal.
- One or more computer labs or training rooms to accommodate 40-60 people, with a minimum of ten computers for small group practice sessions. To provide an online help system for use as a training example, we will need either Web access or permission to open files from CD.
- A central area such as a lunchroom or foyer where we can congregate over coffee and munchies.

As our host, we ask you to do the following:

- Obtain all necessary permissions in advance from your company's management.
- Identify any security requirements that we must meet (such as signing in, wearing badges, and so on).
- Schedule an hour or two when you can meet committee members at your company to look over the facility and make initial plans.
- Serve as the contact person for the committee in the weeks leading up to the orientation.
- Arrive approximately one hour early on training night to help set up the orientation.

If your company has a site that meets some or all of these criteria, please contact Joan Wotkowicz at joan@sebringdesign.com. Help us to make this year's competition even better than the last!

Mark Decker is a Senior Technical Writer from Nashua and is a member of the Northern New England chapter of the STC. Mark is a member of the Online Help Competition Committee. He currently works as a contractor for Agile Enterprise in Nashua.

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Society Highlights

STC Chapters Work to Increase Meeting Attendance

By Margaret Garcia-Nokes

Meeting Formats

In the March issue of the STC *Tieline*, Kathy Legg, president of the Manitoba chapter, describes two meeting formats that the chapter has used to attract more members: progressions and panel discussions.

At progression meetings, several speakers present simultaneously, at different tables or booths. Attendees divide themselves into small groups, and "progress" from one presentation to the next in fifteen to twenty minute intervals. This meeting style has been used at past STC conferences, and even at our own Boston chapter. The Manitoba chapter uses this format every January, when the bitter cold makes it difficult to attract members.

Panel discussions involve a moderator and two or more speakers with varying perspectives on the same topic. Each speaker talks for five to ten minutes. After each presentation, the moderator opens the floor to questions from the audience. The Manitoba chapter has invited documentation managers to discuss hiring and working with technical writers. To celebrate STC's 50th anniversary, the chapter invited recently awarded STC fellows to share experiences.

Networking Tips

The TransAlpine Chapter (TAC) has members from the neighboring countries of Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Italy. Despite this chapter's geographic disparity, its members are known throughout STC as creating one of the society's most active networks. Chapter president Victoria Koster-Lenhardt presents some tips in the March *Tieline*, useful for member groups spread near and far.

1. Organize fun activities, such as dancing, wine tasting, or even Tai Chi. Koster-Lenhardt suggests asking members what they enjoy and combining those activities with meetings.
2. Eat together. TAC meeting members prepare dinners to demonstrate dishes and wines of their varying cultures.
3. Discover ways to have members share something of themselves. Continuing on the food theme, the TAC chapter has a chocolate raffle, where members donate unique versions of this delicacy from their home countries. Each chapter will differ in what it has to share, but finding a common theme can strengthen networking bonds.
4. Celebrate together at the end of every meeting. Koster-Lenhardt suggests that this format encourages members to stay through the end of a presentation. Wine or champagne receptions are the European way; Boston members might agree.
5. Arrange some type of overnight stay, if possible. The goal here is to get people to stop looking at their watches, so ideas can flow more freely.
6. Involve new members immediately. TAC asks their new members to write a story about their experiences. The Boston chapter held a reception for new members back in January, where all were asked to volunteer for chapter duties.
7. Network with other chapters by sending a member from your group to present at another meeting.
8. Encourage informal meetings, whether there is a speaker or not, if members are geographically distant. This may not seem to apply to us in Boston, but the New England region is very broad, and Maine and Rhode Island do not have STC chapters of their own.

These networking strategies can help chapters learn more from their members, and have fun in the process.

Membership Point System

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The Piedmont chapter in North Carolina uses a points system to reward member activity. Members earn points by attending meetings or engaging in other chapter activities, such as helping to set up a meeting, presenting, bringing a guest, or writing an article for the chapter newsletter.

Any chapter interested in beginning a points program can set their own goals. The Piedmont chapter awards the most points (four) for attending a national STC conference, two points for attending a local conference or seminar, and one for writing a newsletter article or assisting a chapter officer.

Points are awarded at the last meeting of the year in the form of door prizes, such as software programs or \$50 gift certificates to area restaurants.

The system is meant to not only award members for their contributions, but, when tracked, chapter officers learn who is most interested in events. In turn, these members become candidates for chapter offices.

Margaret Garcia-Nokes is an instructional designer and associate editor of the Boston Broadside. You can reach her at margaret@cordoba.ncdsl.com.

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Society Awards

Marguerite Krupp Attains Rank of Fellow

By Christine Jacobs



The Nominating Committee of the Boston Chapter is proud to announce that Marguerite Krupp has been awarded the rank of Fellow by the Society for Technical Communication. In her 35-year career, Marguerite has contributed significantly to technical communication as a writer/editor, instructional designer/teacher, manager, mentor, Webmaster, and ardent supporter of the Society for Technical Communication. Marguerite believes that being an active member of STC has contributed immensely to her personal and professional growth, and she states enthusiastically that she's had a lot of fun

Educational and Professional Background

Marguerite holds degrees from Northeastern University (B.A.) and Boston University (M.Ed.). She has specialized in computer-related documentation. In the early 70s, she helped Honeywell Information

Systems' documentation shift to a user-centered, task-based approach. At Data General, her department created award-winning online documents. Currently, Marguerite is a Principal Technical Writer at Cisco Systems, working on virtual private networks (part of network security systems) and acting as tools guru for the department. While at Cisco, she helped develop the corporate-wide single-sourcing documentation initiative.

Invaluable STC Contributions

Since joining STC in 1976, Marguerite's contributions have been innovative and wide-ranging. In 1984, she created the Online Documentation Competition for Boston/Northern New England, and managed it for six years. This became the foundation of the international competition, which she has also judged. Marguerite served as a coordinator/judge in local, regional, and Society-level online, technical publications, art, and video/audiovisual competitions. She was General Manager of the 29th ITCC. In 1995-96, she provided guidance on the Society-level Internet. More recently, Marguerite served on the STC Governance Board, led a subteam of the Strategic Planning and Vision Committee for 2002-2007, and was on the [STC@50](#) planning committee. Marguerite also served as a book reviewer for *Technical Communication* and as a peer reviewer for that journal

Marguerite has received numerous appreciation awards from the Boston Chapter, including a Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 1989. Marguerite has contributed a plethora of articles to the *Boston Broadside* and its predecessors. A frequent presenter at conferences and chapter meetings, she has mentored hundreds of graduate students as adjunct faculty at Northeastern University. Marguerite has also been a guest lecturer for the Middlesex Community College Technical Writing Program. She is a board member, Webmaster, and technology consultant for the Crystal Spring Center for Earth Learning.

Enthusiasm and Initiative

Among Marguerite's many positive personality traits, her enthusiasm and initiative especially shine through. These traits have inspired many technical communicators to follow her example. When people see Marguerite speaking on a topic or developing a new project with gusto, they realize that they can do it, too. Marguerite believes that she has gotten involved in so many interesting and challenging STC projects because she had an idea, or she wanted to make something happen, or she simply thought it would be a fun experience. She feels that within the STC, anyone who has the interest, the drive, the vision, and the joy in the work can go far in the organization. Marguerite has found personal satisfaction, lasting friendships, and sound learning

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experiences in the STC:

- Marguerite refers to her 2.5-year effort as General Manager of the 1982 STC Conference as her "seat of the pants MBA."
- Marguerite believes that starting the Online Communication Competition was first a chance to realize a vision of the future.
- Marguerite finds that teaching upcoming technical communicators and speaking to audiences of technical communicators are energizing and force her to stay current on the latest tools and trends.

We in the Boston Chapter are especially proud of Marguerite and her efforts to ensure that our chapter and the entire STC continue to be sharing and supportive communities in which technical communicators can grow professionally and personally.

Christine Jacobs is a member of the Boston Chapter Nominating Committee. She is a senior member of STC and a principal technical writer at Oracle Corporation.

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Society Awards

Neil Perlin Attains Rank of Associate Fellow

By Christine Jacobs



The Nominating Committee of the Boston Chapter is proud to announce that Neil Perlin has been awarded the rank of Associate Fellow by the Society for Technical Communication. Neil's efforts and dedication to the Society and the technical communication profession are an example and inspiration to Society members.

Professional Background

Neil holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Boston University and an MBA in Accounting and Operations Management, also from Boston University. He is the owner and principal consultant of Hyper/Word Services and is now an internationally recognized expert in online help, online documentation design and development, and tools including WinHelp, HTML Help, CE Help, JavaHelp, XML, WML, RoboHelp, and some now known only in legend. He has worked for numerous clients in several industries, such as Banking and Finance, High Technology, Insurance, and

Manufacturing. You can see his company Web site at this URL: <http://www.hyperword.com>

Neil's career has taken several twists, as described in this list.

- He began his career at Digital Equipment Corporation (now Compaq). His positions included Senior Course Developer in the Educational Services group, Principal Systems Analyst in the Information Systems group, and finally Manager, Component Engineering Training, in the Manufacturing Engineering group.
- He left Digital Equipment Corporation and spent a year as a contract technical writer, working primarily with an IBM division in White Plains, NY. It was during this period that Neil began researching hypertext concepts, based on an exposure to the idea in the book *Dream Machines* by Ted Nelson in 1981.
- Neil joined the documentation-consulting firm of Boston Documentation Design as a senior partner. It was at Boston Documentation Design that Neil encountered some of the earliest PC hypertext software and, using that software, developed what he believes were the second and third *commercial* PC hypertext applications ever created.
- He left Boston Documentation Design in April 1990 and started Hyper/Word Services. His initial plan was to create documentation for both online ("Hyper") and hard-copy ("Word") markets. However, by 1994, the online help and documentation development, consulting, and training work had become the major part of Hyper/Word Services' market and direction. Today, Hyper/Word Services provides training, consulting, and development for online help and documentation for a variety of formats, XML, and the mobile wireless Web. Neil is a Certified RoboHELP Instructor and a ForeFront Authorized Trainer.

Contributions to the Advancement of Technical Communication

Neil has had a stellar career in the technical communication field. He has made countless invaluable contributions, including the following ones:

- Always researches the latest technologies thoroughly and participates in their development for the good of technical communicators, whenever possible. Many consider him an expert and authority on industry technology, but also note his great humility. Whether speaking to novices or experts, he treats all audiences intelligently and warmly.
- Shares his vast knowledge and enthusiasm by writing many useful articles and presenting at conferences and programs whenever possible. Many consider him one of the best at sharing and explaining the high-tech world that we technical writers live in. He is also viewed as an extremely

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generous and professional colleague, in terms of sharing his time and talents and providing assistance freely, promptly, and openly.

- Has trained hundreds of technical communicators through informative seminars and classes on the latest tools through nSight (formerly Editorial Services of New England), Solutions, and independently as Hyper/Word Services.
- Through his involvement in leading-edge technologies and conferences, has been instrumental in helping to build technical communication into both a respected profession and a community.

Service to the Society

Neil has demonstrated exemplary service to the STC on the chapter, regional, and international levels. His contributions have enriched the Society at each level. Neil was presented with a Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 2000.

Chapter Level

On the chapter level, Neil:

- Contributes frequently to the award-winning chapter newsletter, the *Boston Broadside*.
- Presents frequently and to enthusiastic audiences on the latest "hot" topics at chapter programs and workshops. His engagements always draw large and enthusiastic crowds, because his sessions are often introduced with clever and witty titles, always presented with humor and professionalism, and consistently chockfull of useful information.
- Served as a Boston Chapter Council member at large in 1995 and 1996.
- Started and acted as coordinator of the Boston Chapter's Electronic Documentation SIG from 1993 to 1996.

Regional Level

On the regional level, Neil:

- Has been involved in the Boston/Northern New England Chapters' Online Documentation Competition since 1992 in a variety of roles including judge, judges' trainer, and technical troubleshooter.
- Served as a columnist for the Northern New England chapter's newsletter (the *Nor'Easter*) from May 1993 to June 1994.
- Presents frequently at Connecticut chapter programs since the early 90's and at programs of other chapters in the region.

International Level

On the international level, Neil:

- Contributes quarterly columns to the Online Information SIG's newsletter, *Hyperviews: Online*. Neil produces intelligent, useful, and straightforward columns on a range of topics that are of interest to the SIG membership. The newsletter editor credits Neil's contributions as a necessary ingredient to the success of *Hyperviews: Online*.
- Is the author of the "Beyond the Bleeding Edge" column in the STC's *intercom* magazine. Neil's topics in these columns are thought-provoking and timely for practitioners looking to the future of the technical communication.
- Started and runs the Beyond the Bleeding Edge substem at the STC's annual conferences.
- Serves as one of the STC's representatives to the Worldwide Web Consortium.

Invaluable Contributions

Neil's focus has been on technologies and applications at the leading edge and on the integration of the technology with the business and process aspects. He thrives on sharing his excitement and knowledge of the newest technologies with his fellow technical communicators, which he does in a clear, witty, informative, and generous way.

All parts of the Society require contributions from the various disciplines within the technical communication field. Neil is an outstanding contributor from the independent consultant world. The Boston Chapter, and STC itself, are enhanced beyond measure by the energy, dedication, intelligence, professionalism, friendliness, and unselfish devotion of Neil Perlin. It is clear that we in the Boston Chapter are not the only ones that have recognized Neil's invaluable contributions and his vision for our field.

Christine Jacobs is the member of the Boston Chapter Nominating Committee who prepares the Association Fellow nominations. She is a senior member of STC and a principal technical writer at Oracle Corporation.

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Society Awards

Paula Berger Attains Rank of Fellow

By Christine Jacobs



For nearly 25 years, Paula Berger has contributed to advancing the status and skills of technical communicators and the profession through consulting and training activities, initiating conferences, working with the international technical communication community, and supporting the Society for Technical Communication.

Educational and Professional Background

After attending M.I.T., Paula began her technical writing career in 1980. She worked at a consulting company as a technical editor and writer, then worked as a freelance writer. In 1982, Paula co-founded SOLUTIONS, a technical communication company that developed information products for clients ranging from technology startups to Fortune 500 companies and spanning all industries. She

later oversaw development of SOLUTIONS' worldwide seminar division, which offered seminars (many taught by Paula) in the US, Canada, Europe, and Israel.

In 1997, SOLUTIONS started the annual Help Technology Conference and in 1999 began the TECH*COMM conference. Paula designed the conference programs, working with industry experts to develop presentations on cutting-edge technologies, methodologies, tools, and techniques. As she developed the programs for SOLUTIONS conferences and training events, Paula also developed close working relationships with many industry experts. These have continued over the years, and she still works with many of these experts on presentations, training courses, and publications.

Since 2001, Paula has been a consultant and trainer, working both independently and with Ergoline srl, a technical communication consulting company in Italy. Through Ergoline, Paula provides client consulting, training classes, and conference presentations on content management, project management, usability, and technical communication.

Paula was an adjunct faculty member for the University of California, Santa Cruz, and served on the Northeastern University Technical Writing Training Program (1988/98) advisory board. She won several Awards of Distinction in STC Boston/Northern New England Publications Competitions.

Invaluable STC Contributions

Paula has made countless invaluable contributions to the Society, at all levels.

Society Activities

On the Society level, Paula:

- Conceived of, created, and continues to deliver the Speaker's Orientation Session, which provides training on presentation skills, to over 100 speakers each year at the STC Annual Conference.
- Created and fostered the International Members Reception at the STC Annual Conference, now a

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regular program event attended by all international members, the STC Board of Directors, and the Program Committee.

- Participated in and encouraged the development of the international technical communication community, particularly in Europe. Spoke at numerous conferences and meetings, provided behind-the-scenes support, and acted as unofficial liaison between the international community and the annual conference program committee for several years (1998-2001). Arranged participation in STC conferences for many international members who would otherwise not have been able to attend.
- Served as co-manager or reader for stems at various conferences.
- Served as judge for several international competitions.
- Delivered several presentations at almost every STC Annual Conference since 1986.

Chapter Activities

On the Chapter level, Paula:

- Served as President of the Boston Chapter, 1989-90. During this year, the Boston chapter:
 - Was the largest chapter in the Society.
 - Held the largest regional competition ever (536 entries).
 - Ran an event with 750 attendees (renting the Museum of Fine Arts).
- Revived the membership directory after many years (and produced it for four years).
- Centralized purchasing of printing services, saving thousands of dollars.
- Created a new chapter identity, including the first chapter brochure.
- Served as 1st Vice President (1988-89) and 2nd Vice President (1987-88).
- During her years on the council and in chapter office, put organization and processes into place for chapter stability, laying groundwork for growth. Innovations included revamp of competitions, renting an office and hiring an administrator for the competitions, writing the first chapter bylaws, co-writing the first chapter strategic plan, and acting as the first corporate liaison to enlist financial and other support for chapter activities.

Regional Activities

On the Regional level, Paula:

- Managed the Boston/Northern New England Publications Competitions (1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89) and co-managed in 1989-90 and 1990-91. During these years, this competition was much larger than the international competition, with 350 to 435 entries per year.
- Managed the Best of Show judging for the Publications Competition, 1994-95, 1995-96.
- Worked on the InterChange Conference (Boston/Northern New England regional conference):
 - Member of original Planning Committee, 1989, 1990, 1991.
 - Manager, Management Stem, 1989.
 - Produced Conference Proceedings, 1990, 1991.
- Delivered workshops for the Boston chapter (many), the Northern New England chapter (several), and the New Jersey chapter.

Pioneer in Information Design and Development

Paula is an experienced information architect, instructional designer, course developer, trainer, technical writer, editor, marketing writer, and indexer. She developed information products from design through production, including user and reference manuals, quick references, job aids, help systems, helpdesk materials, maintenance and operations manuals, training workbooks, instructor guides, tutorials, brochures, conference proceedings, style guides, marketing material, and more.

In addition, Paula:

- Developed a pioneering approach to developing modular information products in 1984. This methodology is based on user-centered analysis and design techniques, including site visits, contextual inquiry, prototyping, extensive use of graphics, and usability testing.
- Used this methodology to develop effective, user-focused documentation for hundreds of consulting projects. Taught the methodology to thousands of technical writers worldwide.
- Created the award-winning *Writer's Reference Card*, a quick reference used by over 10,000 professional writers and non-writers at companies worldwide.
- Developed SOLUTIONS' corporate style guide, used on hundreds of consulting projects.

Dedication and Initiative

Paula was elected an associate fellow in 1997. Paula is a truly exceptional contributor to the technical communication profession. She has trained and presented to hundreds of technical communicators and mentored dozens of others, including several who have held leadership positions within STC. During her time on the Boston Chapter board, she initiated programs that have shaped the successful progression of the chapter in the past several years.

We in the Boston Chapter are especially proud of Paula and her innumerable and invaluable efforts on behalf of the Society and our profession.

Christine Jacobs is a member of the Boston Chapter Nominating Committee. She is a senior member of STC and a principal technical writer at Oracle Corporation.

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Society Honors

Chapter Welcomes New Senior Members

By Anna Pratt

Senior membership status is *not* reserved for members over the age of 50 or 55 or 60 or even 65! Actually, most of our Senior Members are still in their prime—regardless of age. So, what exactly does Senior Member status mean and who are the Boston Chapter STC members who recently achieved this status?

What Senior Membership Means

A member of the STC who maintains his or her membership in the organization for five consecutive years is awarded the designation of Senior Member. The continued support and involvement of our members keeps the Society and Chapter vibrant, meaningful, and current.

Who Are the New Senior Members

A member's status is clearly indicated in the online membership directory, both at the [Society](#) and [Chapter](#) levels. Check it out!

The following Boston Chapter members recently achieved Senior Member status:

- Robin C. Anderson
- Peter F. Ash
- Craig E. Austin
- Mark H. Avenmarg
- John Borelli
- Nina Y. Bouffard
- Trish Braidt
- Kathleen A. Burns
- Paul V. Censullo
- Debra L. Cote
- Norma D. Culviner
- Geoff M. D'Auria
- Cynthia L. Derr
- Thomas H. Goodwin
- Phyllis J. Gordon
- Gary P. Gray
- Jon RC Harvey
- Cynthia S. Joyner
- Elise Kaplan
- Eva M. Kochanski
- Nancy C. Lavallee
- Craig R. Lordan
- Richard K. McGowan
- Kelly A. Parr
- Rhonda I. Post
- Rosalyn E. Reiser
- Diane L. Romano
- Sandra L. Sabetty
- Helen A. Shaw
- Brian W. Simmons
- Joan M. Stantial
- Jonathan A. Young

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The Boston Chapter Council, Officers, and Membership Committee extend their congratulations to these members. We appreciate your ongoing involvement!

Anna Pratt currently serves as Membership Coordinator for the Boston Chapter of the STC.

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Chapter Membership Reports

Compiled by Zohra I. Mutabanna

January 2003 Membership Report

Total STC Members: 22,222

Total Boston Members: 1,074

New Members: 15	Reinstated Members: 8	Members Transferring In: 0
Michele Backstrom	Leanne P. Duncan	
John P. Cabral	Judith E. Genest	
Kathleen Chalmers	Mary Gordan	
Pamela R. Elizian	Steven F. Greffenius	
Judith A. Ericksen	Denise M. Hale	
Jennifer Griffor	Barbara-Jo Hamel	
Leslie Kirschner	Barbara E. Higgins	
Harry Lomas III	Kalpana Thakar	
Laurel Michaels		
Anne M. Morganto		
David B. Poole		
Allen D. Pratt		
Brandon P. Smith		
Richard F. Sweeney		
Jacqueline Unch		

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The Broadside staff is working very hard to provide the best newsletter possible. We would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete this form. Your feedback will go to improve the site and help us provide the service possible. Thanks.

First Name (optional)

Last Name (optional)

E-mail Address

What type of articles would you like to see more of?

Please enter any additional types of articles you'd like to see:

Please rate the usefulness of the newsletter.

If you answered "not useful" to the above question, please tell us how we can improve the newsletter:

Please rate the length of the articles.

Average number of articles read per issue:

Indicate the newsletter format you prefer:

Suggestions for future article topics:

What do you like about the newsletter?

What do you dislike?

What feature would you like to see?

Would you like to be contacted about writing an article for Broadside? Yes No

Thank you and come again soon.

To start again, press:

To send form, press:

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We welcome articles, advertising, and news about meetings, workshops, and courses that pertain to technical communication. When you submit an article, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

Please send article ideas and articles to Daphna Edgar at bostonbroadside@yahoo.com.

Article submission deadlines are as follows:

- August 5 (for September/October issue)
- October 5 (for November/December issue)
- December 1 (for January/February issue)
- February 5 (for March/April issue)
- April 5 (for May/June issue)
- June 5 (for July August issue)

For information about advertising rates and procedures, contact Anne Louiselle at alouiselle@attbi.com.

Advertising submission deadlines are as follows:

- December 10 (for January/February 2003 issue)
- February 15 (for March/April 2003 issue)
- April 15 (for May/June 2003 issue)
- June 17 (for July/August 2003 issue)
- August 19 (for September/October 2003 issue)
- October 14 (for November/December 2003 issue)

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