



# IDEaL: Design for Learning

The Newsletter of the STC's Instructional Design and Learning SIG

## From the Manager

by Jeanette Rogers, IDL SIG Manager

I am a terrible student.

It's not that I cannot or do not want to learn, it's that I get distracted. Just like a technical writer editing a restaurant menu rather than deciding what to eat, I evaluate the presenter and training materials instead of focusing on what I am supposed to be learning.

It is often the little things right from the beginning. "Did that instructor really just say that they're not an expert?" I think, as she introduces herself. It also bothers me if the teacher jumps right into the materials without providing an agenda or overview. A roadmap is useful in the beginning because it sets expectations, and can help avoid unnecessary

questions. Without some of these introductory items I start to discredit the instructor and the materials while my mind wanders, questioning if I'll get a lot out of the "disorganized" class.

Often I'll become engaged if the topic is really interesting or the presenter is a great speaker. However, as a class progresses, some of the following things might grab my attention, veering me off the learning path.



**Slide presentation:** Are they really just going to read from the slides? Let me just take the materials and go learn on my own.

**Slide text:** Don't they realize they shouldn't put that much text on the slide? It's too small to read. Plus, I can't read all that while they are talking.

**Slide color:** How am I supposed to read the text in that color, or with that color in the background?

**Slide graphics/layout:** Why is the text over a picture, or aligned that way with the other objects

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### In This Issue...

From the Manager .....	1
About the Newsletter .....	2
The Editor's Word .....	3
Conference Review (continued) .....	4
Five Months After and Still Giving .....	6
Feature Article:	
Why are these things eating my life? .....	7
Are you asking Questions Right? .....	10
IDL SIG Survey Report .....	11
Member News .....	13
Book Review: Chicago Manual of Style .....	14
SIG News .....	15
Learning Opportunities .....	16
Tips & Hints .....	16
STC News .....	17



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Technical  
Communication

*From the Manager, continued...*

on the slide? They should have hired a graphic designer, I can't tell what those graphics are supposed to mean.

**Organization:** They should have reorganized the content for a better flow. They should have anticipated some of these basic student questions that are distracting us now.

**Writing:** Yes, typos and grammatical issues absolutely scream at me when they appear. Didn't somebody proofread the materials?

Sure, I might sound like a snob if I vocalized all of this, but this is my profession and I'm passionate about what I do. However, just like a poorly edited menu doesn't necessarily mean the food will be bad, a few glitches in a presentation won't necessarily mean I won't become engaged. This is especially true when it isn't a formal training class! For example, at a presentation given by an unpaid expert in the kayaking field, I have to remember to give the person a bit of leeway; they are a kayaker talking about a trip, not an instructional designer!

My husband is often concerned that someone might spit in our food if I point out restaurant menu typos. I can't help but carry my profession with me through my every day activities, but I have to keep it from ruining non-work experiences. If it is a professional presentation, I can always approach people after and offer my services, but I hope I never get a failing grade in a class due to my attention to instructional design and training details!

*Jeanette Rogers*

Bearer of the IDL SIG Management Torch

## IDeaL: Design for Learning

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### SIG Mission Statement

To help STC members identify and develop knowledge and practical skills for designing, developing, and implementing technical instruction in electronic and traditional classroom settings. The SIG strives to promote sound design practices, provide information, and educate about instructional theory and research.

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## STC Mission

The Society for Technical Communication advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media.



by [Robert Hershenow](#),  
Managing Editor

Historically, the quarterly issues of this newsletter have been named for the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

But this naming convention has a serious flaw: Fall in the northern hemisphere is Spring in the other half of the world. Since the STC is an international organization, and IDL SIG members hail from every continent, the issue you're reading is only the "Fall" issue for some of us.

The SIG Managers discussed options for correcting this situation in a recent meeting. We tentatively decided that we'd call the issues Q1, Q2, etc. which, though less poetic, would be more meaningful and respectful to our entire membership.

Before I make this change I'd like to know what you think about it. If you have an opinion, or a suggestion for another way to differentiate our four issues throughout the year, please drop me a line at [newsletter@stcidlsig.org](mailto:newsletter@stcidlsig.org).

In this (Q4) issue, we continue our review of the 57th Annual STC Summit with a recap from SIG Co-Assistant Manager Maralee Sautter, and a story of unexpected benefits from SIG Secretary Gretchen Hambright.

In our feature article, "Why are these things eating my life? Constructing your own personal communications strategy," SIG member Terry Whitcher suggests a practical approach to avoiding problems which can stem from being "all-ways-on."

And SIG Surveys Manager Andrew Winner's analysis of our most recent survey provides insight into what our group thinks about the STC Conference.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *IDeaL: Design for Learning*. If you'd like to contribute to this newsletter, we'll accept submissions for the Q1 2011 issue through December 15, 2010. See guidelines on p.2.

*Robert Hershenow*

Managing Editor, *IDeaL: Design for Learning*

## SIG Meeting CALENDAR

The IDL SIG Managers  
will meet on:

**October 27th,  
November 17th,  
& December 15th**

They await your  
input.



<http://www.linkedin.com/groupRegistration?gid=2298157>



# CONFERENCE REVIEW

*...continued*

*The STC's 57th Annual Technical Communications Summit  
May 2-5, 2010 - Dallas, Texas*

## Post-Conference-at-a-Glance

by *Maralee Sautter*, IDL SIG Co-Assistant Manager

The 2010 Summit was the sixth STC conference I have attended. I know how exhilarating and exhausting it can be, but as a Co-Assistant Manager of the IDL SIG, I personally gained insight into the responsibility and whirlwind role of an STC leader. I had no idea how intense it was going to be, but in retrospect, it gave me a huge appreciation for all the leaders, volunteers, and staff who work behind the scenes to make a conference run.

The following is my post-conference, sometimes humorous, recap of STC's 2010 Summit in Dallas, Texas. It was written to depict the role of a leader running from one event to another, trying to keep up with the appointment book.

### Friday evening: Arrival

- Arrived at the hotel in Dallas at 11:30 PM after a delayed flight. Argh!
- Checked in, found loud room, and exchanged for quiet room. First room was above the indoor garden and lounge area. (Later spoke to someone who got my room, and was complaining vociferously about the noise.)
- Got settled, went to the lounge, made lots of noise, returned to my quiet room, and went to sleep.

### Saturday: Preconference

- Met sister who lives in Dallas, and went sightseeing.
- Tried to use sister's computer to print out SIG treasure's reports for budget details to present at the IDL SIG Business Meeting. Broke my sister's Internet connection and could not print reports.
- Had fun, anyway.

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**Post-Conference-at-a-Glance, continued****Sunday: Leadership Day!**

- Attended Leadership Day opening session.
  - Enjoyed networking and took photos of IDL SIG attendees. Say “cheese!”
  - Listened to STC International President, Incoming President, and Treasurer report on STC’s financial stability. We made it!
  - Listened to Community Funding & Support Task Force provide ideas to improve the future of SIGs and Chapters.
  - Enjoyed the leadership progressions: *Demystifying Zero-based Budgeting*, *Managing Conflict in Your Community*, and *The Gentle Art of Self Defense*.
- Met IDL SIGers for lunch.
- Attended the All-SIG leaders’ meeting, and was introduced to other Society SIG leaders.
- Attended the Welcome Reception.
  - Enjoyed eating delicious appetizers and chatting with friends.
  - Toured the Expo Hall and ate chocolate that vendors were distributing freely. Wicked vendors!
- Went to bed happy.

**Monday: Opening of Summit 2010**

- Laughed heartily at/with the Opening Keynote Speaker Erin McKean, founder of Wordnik.com. Who knew that the dictionary died and was resurrected on the Web without a book cover?
- Spent a little time in Expo Hall visiting with vendors.
- Attended two sessions, including the Writing and Editing SIG progression.
- Attended STC Business Meeting and took photos of incoming and outgoing board members.
- Attended the Communities Reception.
  - Carted boxes of swag to reception.
  - Gave out IDL stickers and sticky notes to attendees.

- Got swag from other SIG booths, including STC business card holders.
- Had fun!

**Tuesday: IDL SIG Day**

- Attended early-morning SIG breakfast and enjoyed meeting members.
- Met for the IDL SIG brown-bag Business Meeting.
  - Enjoyed interacting with other SIG leadership managers, after a year of virtual meetings.
  - Provided financial report to meeting attendees.
  - Participated in creating SIG initiatives.
- Attended Instructional Design and Learning SIG Progression.
- Attended Honors Reception and Awards Banquet.
  - Excited to be on the stage twice—once for the Distinguished SIG Award and second for the Distinguished Community Award for Willamette Valley Chapter.
  - Loved standing behind Jackie Damrau and Jeanette Rogers—only part of me showed in the photo. Looked thinner.
- Had more fun!

**Wednesday: Final day!**

- Attended two morning sessions.
- Checked out of the hotel and tried to print my boarding pass, to no avail.
- Had lunch with sister.
- Drove to the airport, but sister got lost. Ack!
- Frantically arrived at check in with only 10 minutes to spare.
- Arrived home, happy to sleep in my own bed.
- Had great dreams about Summit 2010!

**NOTE:** Make plans to attend the 2011 Summit in Sacramento from May 15 to 18!

## Conference Review

# Five Months After the Summit, and It's Still Giving

Presenting and attending the 2010 STC Summit was a great experience. I learned a lot, and was able to share that knowledge with my team on my return as usual.

However this year, when the presentation recordings and information were put on-line, I was able to reap even more benefits for me and my organization.

I was able to share information I had overlooked or which didn't pertain to my team's work to other departments in my company, to keep our reputation as "the team with all tech-comm answers and beyond."

One department had just started their first Social Media campaign for a client and asked for our input. Several speakers had information on that topic.

So far we've been able to present information to six separate groups in our organization on areas not usually within our scope.

The CEO and executive team were so pleased with their "investment" in the Summit that I've already got a green light for attending next year.

*-Gretchen Hambright*



373 [Think outside the Frame](#)

374 [Develop and Optimize Content using RoboHelp](#)

### Education and Training

0007 [How is Technical Training Different?](#)

0015 [Instructional Design and Learning Progression](#)

0045 [Single Sourcing Sans a CMS](#)

0063 [Expert Evaluation of Training](#)

0158 [Developing a Personal Voice in Audio](#)

0182 [Using Wikis to Enhance Training Development and Delivery](#)

0188 [Academic Community Progression: Across the Spectrum](#)

800 [The Convergence of Tech Comm and Instructional Design](#)

### Emerging Technologies

0012 [Beyond the Bleeding Edge](#)

0134 [3D Communication: How Can It Help You?](#)

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on the STC Home Page:

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## Feature Article

# Why are these things eating my life?

## Constructing your Personal Communications Strategy

by Terry P. Whitcher



Being constantly connected may be the modus operandi for modern life. Online communications have made demonstrable improvements and changes to our workplace, home, and schools, which begs the question: What changes are constant communications having on the individual? By being aware of these changes, we'll be able to design a strategy which will improve the quality of our communications and stop them from eating our lives.

Studies indicate the new onslaught of rapid-fire "all-ways-on" communications access is changing our brains. There are improvements in reaction time, peripheral vision, and neural agility, but many users are overwhelmed. They no longer have time to ponder, and they feel powerless against a barrage of incoming pings. This article guides technology power users creating a strategy for reducing the stress associated with total access.

### We're ON

When the internet was being developed business forecasts focused on high-tech consumerism, but that's not the main thing the public wants to do online. The way the internet is used the most, and is making the most dramatic change in society, is to connect people with each other—one-to-one and one-to-many, synchronously and asynchronously, to communicate in new ways.

Take inventory of the devices you use to communicate with others. Add the accounts you manage and the applications you use, and chances are you'll have significant resources consumed by online access points. Your current standard operating procedure may be that you are logged in / connected to multiple devices and applications, at any time, on any day.

You are ON.

### Chicken AND Egg

Is work changing because of the new devices and applications being introduced into our personal communications, or is it because work is changing that new devices and applications are being developed? Whether it is the business office migrating to the home office or workplaces replacing functional silos with team environments, communication technologies enable teamwork with audio, video, graphical and text-based tools.

Not only is the workplace changing, but the very nature of the work is changing. The modern workplace demands fluency in multiple aspects of the business, such as product management and system development. Multiple communication devices provide access to resources necessary for the knowledge-intensive work that is being done.

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## Feature Article, continued

### Scrambled Eggs

Online communication is a part of the fabric of our workplace and school environments. So how are we—whether digital native or digital immigrant—dealing with all-ways-on communications?

Ideally, we're more informed, more aware, more involved, and more social. Certainly, we have many new opportunities to expand our worlds. The counter side to engrossment is that many users are experiencing destructive manifestations, such as:

- **Reacting, not thinking**  
No longer taking time to reflect, contemplate or make thoughtful decisions, but simply reacting—as if in crisis mode.
- **Not concentrating**  
Each interruption—ringtone, warning light or buzzer—disrupts concentration on complex tasks for up to 15 minutes.
- **Making mistakes**  
Substituting accuracy for expediency (for example, texting)
- **Increasing task time**  
Time to complete tasks is lengthened because interruptions result in fragmented working time.
- **Increasing the workload**  
Unintentionally increasing the workload by adding multiple communications updates or a new interface or application to the job.
- **Losing interpersonal skills**  
Loss of face-to-face human interactions skills, such as eye contact, appropriate gestures, and forming complete sentences
- **Alert Addiction**  
Thriving on the perpetual connectivity—every alert or message stimulates the brain and feeds the ego, which can become irresistible.

### The Brain Change

The brain's neural circuitry responds every moment to whatever sensory input it gets. Every alert exposes our brains to stimulation and interrupts our current thought processes.

Cited in a UCLA study, Neuroscientist Professor Gary Small has found through brain studies that online tasks such as text messaging have made brains more adept at filtering information and making snap decisions. These studies have also shown a rise in Attention Deficit Disorder.

By creating new neural pathways—and even what is posed as attention deficit—our brains are compensating to cope with this new super-speed operating environment. This opens a realm of opportunity in curriculum development and process engineering, to take advantage of the new capabilities and behaviors that are being learned.

When users outfit themselves with communications technologies, they often accept the fallacy that they will be more productive because they can multi-task. But we don't multi-task: we have "continuous partial attention," as termed by author Linda Stone. All-ways-on communication is creating a situation in which users continually keep tabs on everything while never truly focusing on anything.

And this stress affects more than the brain. While on alert at every moment for a new contact or bit of exciting news or information, the brain is stimulating the adrenal gland to secrete cortisol and adrenaline which cascades the stress to the entire body.

The term "locus of control" refers to whether you feel your life is controlled by you or by forces outside yourself. When a person feels like they have little choice in how many times, ways, and when they receive or have to respond to messages, their stress levels are higher and they are more susceptible to mental stress depletions.

The challenge with being connected to meet the requirements of modern interaction is to create an internal locus of control; in other words, to feel as if we are in charge of our own communications. Understanding the brain and the behavioral changes induced by being constantly connected gives us a framework on which to build a personal communications strategy.

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## Feature Article, continued

### Add Mindware to the Mix

Under duress of over-active communications, we may think the only way to reduce the barrage is to “unplug from the grid”—not answer the phone, throw away our PDAs, and cancel our accounts. While this may let off some steam, chances are we would soon encounter other stressful situations such as disenfranchisement from friends and other social impacts, even job loss. Let’s face it, to be relevant means to be connected.

When you had one device (home telephone) and one application (synchronous voice calls), you had a simple communications strategy (talking with people you knew). As you added components, you adjusted your rationale. If you’re not getting the benefits and relief you need from your inbound and outbound communications, it’s time to take a look at how to improve your strategy by adding mindware to the mix.

What is mindware? The term was coined by MIT professor David Perkins to refer to the rules, data, procedures, strategies and other cognitive tools that must be retrieved from memory to think rationally.

By applying mindware to your use of hardware and software, you will establish a set of accessibility parameters that enable an internal locus of control, and create spaces for quiet thought and uninterrupted personal interaction. There are two key mindware requirements for your communications strategy to be sustainable:

1. It supports interruptions
2. It is actionable

### Making the Connection

Communication is bi-directional. And, as in every relationship between two or more people, there are accommodations you’ll need to make.

1. Determine with whom you need and want to communicate. Find out their preferred methods of interaction.
2. Get the hardware you want to carry or have on your desk that can provide connectivity to these people. Get the accounts and software you need.

3. Determine how and when you want to be accessible. For example, you may want your mobile phone to roll over to voicemail after 10 PM. Also consider the amount of time it takes to attend to each means, the privacy you require, and if it is a redundant effort. Read the User’s Guides and personalize your tools to provide practical solutions to your communications needs.
4. Create a Rules of Engagement Matrix to share with the people you connect with. People who call or message you will learn your habits. You’ll find that if you don’t answer the phone during the dinner hour, most routine callers will adjust their call times accordingly. Discipline is required on both sides of the communication; if your e-mail autoresponds that you will reply within 24 hours, make sure you do.

To accompany your rules matrix, create some template emails and voice messages to send to your network. For instance, I have a friend who does not listen to his voice mails; he looks at his call log and returns calls based on the caller ID. So on his voice greeting he lets callers know this, and his callers have their expectations set for the return call.

Electronic communications award us with great power to keep in touch with people, often with little need to regard the boundaries of geography, location, or time. But as Uncle Ben warned Spiderman, “with great power comes great responsibility.” Our responsibility is to be connected and in control of communications to improve our productivity, relationships, and lives.

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# Are you asking questions right?

by Kai Weber

Asking questions right is more difficult and just as important as asking the right questions.

This is not about asking the right questions - with a little training and practice, we tech writers usually know how to do it. I find it much harder to ask the right questions right. I take my cue from Bertrand Russell who (allegedly) said:

*"The greatest challenge to any thinker is stating the problem in a way that will allow a solution."*

I think this is a pertinent issue for technical communicators in several ways:



- **It's our job**, essentially. Any customer can state countless questions and problems he or she wants to solve with our product. And any developer or engineer can tell us how the product works. It's our job to connect the two: To restate the customers' problems - and to answer them - in a way customers find helpful.
- It helps us **get useful answers from developers and engineers**. Some of the best developers I've worked with always kept me on my toes: They would carefully consider my question and then answer it exactly. On the other hand, they would get easily impatient if I came up with a loose question such as "what is this new feature here?"
- It helps us **get constructive feedback from reviewers and SMEs**. Asking a reviewer whether "this is good documentation" may not get you very good review comments. For a much better way to state the problem, see Craig Haiss' post about "Turning document reviews around quickly". For example, he advises to "clearly indicate any questions that you have for the reviewers". To allow for an easy and efficient solution, he also recommends "that reviewers can agree to review deadlines beforehand" and to "use a signoff slip".

## FEATURE ARTICLE, *continued*

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*IDL SIG member Terry Witcher lives in Dallas, Texas.*

- It helps us **get support from management**. This is probably the most difficult application of the quote. It requires not so much careful phrasing, but also evaluation and judgment of the problem at hand. This doesn't mean we do the manager's job. After all, the quote is not about finding a solution, but about allowing a solution. For example, I once had a scheduling conflict and asked my manager whether we could postpone delivery of one of the manuals. Instead, he negotiated to change one deliverable from a manual to a quick start guide, with a manual to be supplied later.

*Thanks to Kai Weber at Kai's Tech Writing Blog.*  
<http://kaiweber.wordpress.com/>

# IDL SIG Survey Report

- by **Andrew Winner**, IDL SIG Survey Manager

The IDL SIG Conference Survey was recently completed. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into our membership and learn how it can be better served at the 2011 Technical Communication Summit (a.k.a the STC Annual Conference). With over 100 responses to the survey, it was well-received and generated valuable insight.

We learned that most respondents (81.1%) could not attend the 2010 conference, citing money and location concerns. We heard that feedback and are currently brainstorming ways to make the conference more accessible. We learned that nearly 70% of respondents work in a corporate environment; double the amount that worked in academic and independent areas.

The survey proved beneficial in other ways. In addition to a high survey completion rate, we learned that our membership was generally pleased with the IDL SIG presence at the conference. In particular, our group's Progression Series and Business Meeting were both well-received

However, there are some things that could be done better. Our membership felt the IDL SIG offerings at the conference could have been better publicized.

We are also currently processing the excellent responses to our query about a panel discussion comparing various Tech Comm products. The SIG is working hard to determine which panels would provide the most value and working towards putting these panels together for the 2011 meeting.

Thanks to the membership for taking the time to generate this helpful feedback.

## 1. Please select the area of focus that best describes your work:

 Create Chart  Download

		Response Percent	Response Count
Corporate		68.9%	91
Academic		12.9%	17
Independent		21.2%	28
		answered question	132
		skipped question	0

Areas of Focus

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## Survey Report, continued

### 4. Please rank the following SIG-specific events and materials.

[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Least Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Neutral	Very Valuable	Most Valuable	Did not attend/did not know about it	Rating Average	Response Count
Roadmap on IDL SIG web site	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	34.8% (8)	13.0% (3)	4.3% (1)	43.5% (10)	3.31	23
Evening Reception	4.3% (1)	13.0% (3)	17.4% (4)	26.1% (6)	8.7% (2)	30.4% (7)	3.31	23
SIG Networking Breakfast	0.0% (0)	31.8% (7)	9.1% (2)	22.7% (5)	4.5% (1)	31.8% (7)	3.00	22
Progression Series	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	17.4% (4)	21.7% (5)	21.7% (5)	34.8% (8)	3.93	23
Business Meeting	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (4)	39.1% (9)	17.4% (4)	26.1% (6)	4.00	23
answered question								23
skipped question								109

### SIG-Specific Events

### 6. What else can the IDL SIG do to enhance your conference experience?

[Download](#)

Response Count

[Hide replies](#)

6

1. Just keep up the good work. Mon, Aug 9, 2010 7:30 PM [Find...](#)
2. No ideas to offer; sorry. Appreciate the great work. Fri, Aug 6, 2010 10:39 AM [Find...](#)
3. What happened to the IDL track this year? Thu, Aug 5, 2010 11:56 PM [Find...](#)
4. I think the SIG is doing a great job for its members. Adjustments need to be made for the overall conference experience. I sent my comments directly to the program committee. Thu, Aug 5, 2010 8:16 PM [Find...](#)
5. Opportunities for casual networking with SIG members I know virtually...this is the place. In Sacramento we might be able to gather casually outside of the hotels or convention center as there are coffee shops, an outdoor plaza, and the historic old town district close by. Thu, Aug 5, 2010 3:44 PM [Find...](#)
6. organize a networking pub night Thu, Aug 5, 2010 3:22 PM [Find...](#)

### Enhancing the Conference Experience



by **Stephanie Schrankler**, Membership Manager

As we begin to think about our membership news, it's also time to think (and talk) about our membership.

We understand that with the current state of the economy, more and more members are facing financial challenges. As you're making your decisions around what you can afford to participate in this year, consider the value the IDL SIG provided you over the last year.

As a multiple-time winner of the **SIG of Distinction** award, we have one of the most active discussion lists of all the SIGs in the STC. Other SIGs look to IDL to model their structure, practices, standards, and methods after. By continuing your membership with IDL SIG you continue access to the discussion listserv, IDL website, IDL LinkedIn Group, IDeaL Newsletter, and a wealth of knowledge and events from peers that face the same challenges and opportunities that you face.

If you were not very active in the SIG over the last year, commit to yourself that this year is going to be the year that you use the IDL SIG to improve your resume, attract clients, network with like-minded professional, learn something new, generate ideas to overcome your professional challenges, and share your knowledge and information with others.

Recently, you received an email from the STC regarding the renewal of your membership with the organization. This includes the renewal of your membership with the SIG! In response to your needs from a professional organization, in 2011 the STC is ramping up the membership package for all basic members to include:

- One Chapter membership (\$25 value)
- One SIG membership (\$10 value) [Available for renewing your IDL SIG Membership!!]
- Two free archived seminars (\$98 value)
- Online version of Technical Communication, Intercom, and STC's Notebook blog
- Plus more!

### What have members like you been up to in the last quarter?

**Jackie Damrau** has relocated from her family from the very "hot" temperatures of Dallas, Texas to the moderately gray, rainy parts of Bellevue, Washington to continue her employment with T-Mobile USA. She and her husband drove five days from Dallas to Redmond, Washington (their new home) watching the scenery of brown fields, cows and horses (lots of them), prong-horned deer, and other roadside anomalies, then spent seven days with no TV or radio until their stuff arrived. Yet, the electronic age was not lost as they did a lot of reading and getting license plates and driver's licenses, then un-boxing when their stuff arrived, and concluding Jackie's last week of work freedom with several doctor and dentist appointments. Now, Jackie is getting back into the work world at her new location in Bellevue, WA, and looking forward to exploring the state of Washington. Of course, she misses her parents, son and daughter-in-law, and especially her 6-year-old grandson. But that's what planes are for, right! Jackie will be attending Lavacon from 9/29 through 10/2 and looking forward to learning more about social media.

Share your membership news with the community. Send news and announcements to [membership@stcidlsig.org](mailto:membership@stcidlsig.org).

## Welcome, New Members!

Karen R. Blaha

Joe Brito

Linda Cofini

Jennifer Nicole Conjour-Matras

Jocelyn C. Dunphy

Adam B. Evans

Brad Evans

Madelyn J. Flammia

Alla Goltsman

Denise Hale

Wendy Harmon

Dorothy S. Harris

Janice Ishizaka

Diane M. Lavery

Stephanie Gayle Lindsay

Adam Lundstrom

Christine Frances Mengel

Patti Louise Ann Murphy

Brenda Proctor

Deborah M. Queen

Blair Regan

Marcia L. Sanders

Chris M. Singel

Stephen C. Smith

Valerie Spence

Seta Toroyan

Alexandra Upton

Darlene Wigton

Emily Kathryn Young

Yuejiao Zhang

## Book Review

*Michael Quinion, Editor of World Wide Words, shares his thoughts on the Chicago Manual of Style's 16th edition.*

# CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

This doorstep of a reference for writers and editors has just appeared in its sixteenth edition. In the US, the work has long been the arbiter of book style, though newspapers tend to have their own styles or follow AP style. As befits a work of the electronic age, the Manual has now been published online as well as in print and includes guidance on publishing in a digital world. It has

information on such matters as electronic mark-up of documents, the international Unicode character system, and how to cite blogs, podcasts and electronic sources. Having just changed my own house style to lower-case "internet", I note with interest that the Manual conservatively argues that it should continue to begin with a capital letter.

However, "website" (as one word) and other "web" words are now lower-cased. And "e-mail" still has its hyphen.

Other changes include arcane revisions to the rules about apostrophes and a relaxation of the rule that the first line of a new paragraph should not appear alone at the bottom of the page.

[University of Chicago Press, \$65.00. ISBN 978-0-226-10420-1.]

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by **Gretchen  
Hambright**

*IDL SIG Secretary*

The 2011 Budget was at the forefront of the Management Team's minds this summer. After much discussion and revision, it was finalized and sent to the STC for approval in October.

Aside from the budget, Committee Managers reported some new faces and features.

The Membership committee welcomes 15 new members to our SIG—see page 14.

The Webinar Committee has announced a reduction in the non-STC member webinar fee to \$50 and they are already discussing speakers and topics for the 2011 webinar series. Be sure to join us on November 11 when Jane Mackenzie-Smith presents our next webinar, "Interactivity in eLearning." More information is available on the [IDL SIG Web site](#), or you can register [here](#).

The Social Media Committee is looking at Facebook and LinkedIn opportunities.

The Survey Committee is currently seeking ideas for new surveys.

Have a safe and fun-filled autumn!





## IDL SIG Live Web Seminar

Thursday November 11  
1:30–3:00 PM EST (GMT-5)

### Interactivity in e-Learning

Presented by Jane MacKenzie-Smith

**\$20** IDL SIG Member

**\$30** STC Member

**\$50** Non Member

More information, or to register:

[http://www.stcidlsig.org/wp/?page\\_id=1240](http://www.stcidlsig.org/wp/?page_id=1240)

## STC Live Web Seminars

### Communication and Miscommunication in Virtual Workplaces

Wednesday, 3 November  
1:00–2:00 PM EDT (GMT-4)  
Presented by Pamela Brewer

### Content Management as a Practice Technical Communication

Wednesday, 10 November  
1:00–2:00 PM EST (GMT-5)  
Presented by Pamela Kostur

### Measuring Productivity

Wednesday, 17 November  
1:00–2:00 PM EST (GMT-5)  
Presented by Juliet Wells Leckenby

All sessions:

- Members \$79
- Nonmembers \$149
- Student Member \$29

View Descriptions and Speaker Biographies:

<http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars.asp>



by Robert Hershenow

### Ten Tips, Tricks, and Shortcuts for Gmail

by Amy-Mae Elliot, writing for Mashable.com

<http://mashable.com/2010/09/24/gmail-tips-tricks-shortcuts>

### Instructional Design Versus Technical Communication

A discussion at "I'd Rather Be Writing," from Tom Johnson and his blog readers:

<http://idratherbewriting.com/2010/09/16/observations-about-instructional-design-versus-technical-communication/>

### Paint.net v3.5.5

posted by Grant Hogarth on the Lone Writer SIG discussion list: "...a solid free photo editing applications for those that don't need Web sharing or the power of Photoshop (or its associated cost)."

<http://enews.pcmag.com/u.d?RYGqiVbgV7SrT7828N18P=531>

### Social Media for Trainers: Enhancing and Extending Learning

A recorded webinar by Jane Bozarth, free on the Training Magazine Network site (you will need a free account)

<http://www.trainingmagnetwork.com/topics/show/1973>

### Developing the Business Case for a Major e-Learning Courseware or Infrastructure Project - by Saul Carliner

"A successful business case is one part research and one part persuasion. This article explains how to weave both parts together."

<http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/532/>

This article is free for eLearning Guild members. Join here (several levels are available, including free)

<http://www.elearningguild.com/content.cfm?selection=doc.18>





The [2010-2011 STC Buyers' Guide to Products and Services](#) is now live! This year's Buyers' Guide is a fully online, fully functioning database with 24 category listings to select from; contact information for every company, with phone number and email address as provided; links to websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn as provided; and descriptions of services offered from premium and featured listings. Check out the Guide and use it for all your tech comm needs.

STC President Michael Hughes announced [Project Phoenix](#), "The Renewal & Rebirth of STC," to members in August. Last month, the Project Phoenix team announced "[The Road Ahead](#)," a road map for the project over the next nine months. Find out what's in store for Project Phoenix and STC—and how you can help. Throughout Project Phoenix, members will be asked for input, feedback, and discussion on a wide variety of subject areas, and all comments are greatly appreciated. "I ask for everyone to look for some way to get constructively engaged in this project during this year," said Hughes. "Together, we can build the new STC."

STC President Michael Hughes took his message to the people twice in the last month with his Open Mike blog posts. [The first entry](#) touched on personas, the value of technical communicators, the forthcoming social networking platform, and the latest Board meeting. His [more recent post](#) explained why he submitted a proposal for the 2011 Summit, even in the face of his duties at the conference as president.

## September/October **intercom** is online!

<http://intercom.stc.org/>



Included in this issue of Intercom are:

- Measuring Productivity, by Pam Swanwick and Juliet Wells Leckenby
- A Commonsense Approach to Internet Behavior in the Workplace, by Christiana Christofides
- "Automagic" Labels for Heading Cross-References, by John Irwin

In a "Note from the President," Michael Hughes explains the value of STC membership; Steven Jong provides an update on certification; and there are columns discussing the value of your LinkedIn connections, combatting the theory that "anyone can write," and instructing how to inject reality into theory. Society Pages also provides early information on the 2011 Summit and a reminder of deadlines for awards and honors.

We've also made the Flipbook and regular PDF versions of the complete issue available to everyone this month, so please share with friends, colleagues, and potential STC members so they can see what you get all year long with Intercom!



Society for  
Technical  
Communication