

President's message

At the 2009 Summit in Atlanta I learned about the financial state of our society and actions that chapters must take to keep our organization going. The next 18 months will be tough for STC chapters, but our chapter officers believe that working together, STC members can keep the society, and our chapter, afloat.

Why I belong to STC

A lone writer and new in the profession, I joined STC in 1985 in a desperate effort to figure out what I was supposed to be doing for my new employer. And STC threw me a lifeline. Over the years I have participated in chapter, regional, and international programs, and with the society's help I have indeed learned what a technical communicator does. Further, as the world changes, so does our profession, and STC has taught me new tools of the trade.

One of the experiences that made me appreciate our society occurred less than a year ago when our chapter revived the Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC). Working on the planning committee showed me how much I can learn simply by giving a little time to the society. I learned from conference manager Tim Hammon how to harness the enthusiasm of a committee to organize a great conference. I learned about decisive leadership from past-president Katrina Gramelspacher, and about money and facilities management from Amy Kidd and Dale Powell. Mary Knepper gave me insight into how to assess the conference and turn a good list of lessons learned into a good list of programs for the upcoming year.

How chapters will support the international society

The international organization expects a \$1.2 million shortfall by the end of this year. Each chapter will contribute to recovery in the following ways:

- We will forego "pass-through" monies - portions of dues that have traditionally been distributed to chapters.
- Our members will absorb a substantial dues increase that is expected to lower society membership by 30%.
- We will submit detailed budgets for the period of time through the end of 2010, and we will send surplus funds to the national organization. STC hopes to gain \$500,000 from surplus chapter funds.

How our chapter will thrive in tough times

- Vice President and Program Manager Mary Knepper is designing programs that respond to member requests:
 - Social Media 101 ("Why I should care about social media?")
 - Using Wikis and Blogs to Communicate Technical Information
 - New Tools of the Trade
 - Programs that highlight member accomplishments
 - Social events to help us all get to know each other
- Membership manager Marla Vinson plans activities that focus on retention and growth:
 - An exit survey of members STC-ETC has lost
 - A method of tracking the whereabouts of former student participants
 - A publicity strategy for distributing STC mailers
 - Developing a membership directory and an associated phone tree to get the word out about programs and activities
 - Joint events with other professional communications organizations
- Webmaster Laurel Bowen updates our web site content and design to meet changing member needs.
- Treasurer Katrina Gramelspacher will propose a budget including tried-and-true activities: continuation of the scholarship program, revival of a local publications competition, and PCOC 2010.

The next 18 months will not be easy for our organization or for our chapter. But together we can learn a few things about technical communication tools, share a few stories of our own successes as communicators, and have a great time getting to know each other as we meet tough times head-on and look toward a new and better STC.