

# Devil Mountain Views

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC

Supporting technical communication in the  
San Francisco Bay Area since 1962

January / February 2010

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- Just posted: [podcast](#) of January's speaker, Jeffrey Gardiner, on "Writing in the Open: Using Wikis to Create Documentation"
- STC will hold Elections March 9, 2010 through April 8, 2010. Read about these candidates:
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## Feature Articles

### [Editing Modular Documentation: Some Best Practices](#)

The first part of a two-part article, [Michelle Corbin](#), an STC Fellow who works at IBM, and [Yoel Strimling](#), a member of STC Israel, offer best practices for editing modular documentation. This part describes the mechanics of modularization and best practices for editing modular documentation. Part 2 in the March/April 2010 issue of *Devil Mountain Views* will describe the editor's role in creating modular documentation.

### [Write on Time: What Do Technical Communicators Do?](#)

EBSTC senior member [Melody Brumis](#) and co-owner of Write on Time Solutions looks back at the jobs that Write on Time Solutions completed in 2009 and lists some of the things that technical communicators do.

### [Six Reasons Why Your Wiki Isn't Working](#)

[Ellis Pratt](#) of Cherryleaf Technical Authors in Twickenham, United Kingdom, tells us why some wikis work and some don't.

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# Editing Modular Documentation: Some Best Practices

by [Michelle Corbin](#) and [Yoel Strimling](#)

*Michelle Corbin is an STC Fellow and was co-manager of the Technical Editing SIG. She has been a technical communicator for 20 years, with the past 12 years being spent as a technical editor. She works at IBM and works on topic-based writing projects for multiple software products, using DITA and the IBM Eclipse Help System.*

*Yoel Strimling is a member of STC Israel. He has been an editor for over 10 years, and currently works as the Senior Technical Editor for the Technical Communications Group (TCG) of Comverse Inc. in Tel Aviv.*

Note: This article is reprinted from the proceedings of the STC 55th Annual Conference - Technical Communication Summit.

*This article will be presented in the East Bay Diablo Mountain Views newsletter in two parts — "The Mechanics of Modularization" in this issue and "The Editor's Role in Creating Modular Documentation" in the March/April 2010 DMV.*

## Introduction

Much has been said about the creation of modular documentation - from content management systems ([1](#)), ([9](#)), to information architecture ([11](#)), to delivery forms ([5](#)), to the usability of modular content (content being easier to use, easier to understand, and easier to find ([6](#))), and so on. However, not much has been said about the editing of that content, and what the editor's role is in such an environment.

Carter ([2](#)) and Mott and Ford ([7](#)) both suggest that writing modular documentation is different from writing linear documentation because writers are now developing content as opposed to writing in the traditional sense. Therefore, editing content requires developing a mindset different from that of traditional editing.

## The Mechanics of Modularization

The main goal of technical documentation is to provide access to technical content in an easy, efficient, and logical way. By separating descriptive from procedural information, organizing this information into discrete, standalone modules called topics, and then linking related topics to each other, writers can help readers quickly and easily find and use the information they need. Writing in a topic-based modular manner also helps writers better organize, construct, and write their documentation because it forces them to think about how to present the information in a clear and succinct way.

Modularization is based on these main concepts [\(1\)](#):

- Chunk text into logical standalone topics.
- Label topics with clear and meaningful titles.
- Link related topics to each other.

## Chunk Text into Logical Standalone Topics

Chunking is the process of categorizing blocks of information into independent standalone topics based on their content type, and focuses on separating descriptive information from task-oriented information. This separation helps readers access only the most important and relevant information, structured in a concise and easily readable format.

The three basic types of topics are concept topics, task topics, and reference topics [\(4, 5, and 6\)](#):

- Concept topics provide background information that readers need to know before they can successfully understand and use a product or service. These topics describe concepts in a descriptive or narrative format, and answer the questions: *What is it? What does it do? How does it work? Why is this important?*
- Task topics provide sequential, step-by-step instructions that describe how to do something, that is, they answer the question: How do I?
- Reference topics provide additional detailed explanatory information [\(4\)](#). These topics usually present the information in a structured lookup table or list format.

## Label Topics with Clear and Meaningful Titles

Labeling is the process of creating unique, clear, concise, and accurate headings that correctly identify the content included in a topic. This structured format further separates descriptive from task-oriented information and provides immediate visual clues to orient readers, enabling them to easily search for and access the information they need.

## Link Related Topics to Each Other

Linking is the process of connecting topics to other related or relevant topics, which enables readers to easily jump back and forth between related subject matter in a document and to find the information they need. While the hierarchy represents the

structure and flow of the different standalone topics, the links are the glue that holds all of the different topics together to provide meaningful content.

## Best Practices for Editing Modular Documentation

Based on these three main concepts of modularization, as well as on our combined editorial experiences, we have identified the following guidelines that we consider to be best practices for editing modular documentation:

- Topic types must not be mixed.
- Topics must be standalone.
- Introductory information must be clear and to-the-point.
- Topics cannot be too long.
- Paragraphs must be short.
- Titles must be unique and descriptive.
- Related topic links must be meaningful.
- Topic collections must be useful and reader-focused.

### Topic Types Must Not Be Mixed

As stated previously, modular documentation must be chunked so that descriptive information (concept and reference topics) is clearly separated from task-oriented information (task topics). Readers who are looking for information about how to do something do not want to wade through too much descriptive information to get to what is relevant to them. Similarly, readers who want to know detailed background information about what a product or service does do not necessarily want to see step-by-step procedures about how to use it.

Editors must be aware of the difference between descriptive and task-oriented information when editing modular documentation. For example, when reviewing a task topic about how to reset the status of a monitored system process, we need to make sure that it contains only the step-by-step procedure readers need to carry out the task successfully. There must be no information about how the utility that does the system monitoring works, no information about other things the utility does, and no information about how to configure the utility.

An important point must be made here, though. All task topics need some sort of brief (one- to three-sentence) introduction about the purpose of the task and its context. This descriptive information is an integral part of the task topic and is not a separate, standalone concept topic.

### Topics Must Be Standalone

Because modular documentation is made up of chunked topics that are not read in any particular sequence, each one must be standalone. Readers must be able to understand the topic they are reading without having to read something else, that is, all the information they need is located in this topic.

However, topics should not repeat the same background information over and over again. To reduce this risk of repetition, only the most relevant information is written in the topic, and then cross-references to where readers can get more details are provided (links between topics are discussed in a subsequent guideline).

Editors must determine how self-contained a standalone topic must be and how much repetition of information is needed. When we edit these topics, we must keep in mind the question, *"If readers started reading at this topic and had not read anything else prior to this, would this make sense?"* Continuing with our example of the task topic about resetting a monitored process's status, we need to make sure that the answer to this question is yes. Readers must have enough contextual information about this task to understand and carry it out (provided by the brief purpose information before the procedure starts), and if they want more information about the utility, there must be a cross-reference to the relevant concept topic.

## Introductory Information Must Be Clear and To-The-Point

Chunking documentation into meaningful standalone topics requires the information in the topics to be organized in a logical and usable order. This chunking of information means that the first paragraph of a topic is the most important paragraph because it states the purpose of and summarizes the information presented in that topic. Procedures especially require standard introductory wording (1). This introductory information helps readers know if they are in the right place for the right information they need. The first sentence of the topic must also be clearly and directly related to the title, so readers can immediately see the connection between it and the topic content.

This first paragraph can also be used in building search terms in searching systems, and in some display implementations (such as the IBM® Eclipse Help System), the first paragraph can be used as hover help for links and as descriptive text for embedded child links. The introductory information serves the topic itself, and it is reused for many other retrieval techniques.

## Topics Cannot Be Too Long

Chunking documentation naturally limits the length of topics, improving the readability and usability of the information. Topics must provide just enough detail, with information that is focused and precise. They must include only the information relevant to the readers, and they must exclude information that readers do not need to know.

So, how much information can really go into one topic? Readers will not read pages and pages of text, but if you make the topics standalone, how much information do you include before it becomes too much information? Unfortunately, editors are forced to use the classic response to many quandaries: It depends. It depends on the subject, the audience, the environment, and many other factors.

One of the best analogies to help organize topics so that length is not an issue in the topic collections is the principle of the inverted pyramid that is used in journalistic writing. The most important information is presented first, followed by the next most important, and so on, so that, if the editor of the newspaper article needs to reduce the word count to fit the space available, none of the important information in the story is deleted. Also, Web page design borrowed the concept of above the fold (or, more precisely, above the scroll) from newspaper publishing, and this design concept holds true for modular documentation as well. Readers almost always read the information above the fold (or what starts the topic) but only sometimes make to what is below (or what comes at the end of the topic).

## Paragraphs Must Be Short

In addition to limiting the length of the topics by chunking documentation, paragraphs must also be kept short. Readers do not read every word of our documentation. They skim and scan it seeking the tidbits of information that will help them get their job done. Using white space and formatting techniques to ensure that the information is visually effective helps achieve the short paragraphs.

Once again the newspaper analogy is applicable. You never see a newspaper article with unbroken columns of text, but instead see several short paragraphs that flow from one to another [\(5\)](#). The same is true for modular documentation: you must keep your paragraphs short.

## Titles Must Be Unique and Descriptive

As stated previously, topics in modular documentation must be labeled with unique, clear, concise, and descriptive headings that correctly identify the content included in that topic. Because topic titles are used in search results, titles must clearly differentiate the topics from one another and make sense even when taken out of context [\(1, 3\)](#).

Topic labels communicate the type of information included in the topic (for example, gerunds or verb forms communicate task information, such as Managing Clusters, and noun or adjective-noun strings communicate concept or reference information, such as Cluster Management). Topic titles also communicate the scope of the information included in the topic (for example, mentioning UNIX® in the title shows that the information applies only to UNIX-based systems). Placing the key unique words at the beginning of the title also helps readers find the topics that they want more quickly.

Ultimately, though, topic titles help readers decide if they need to (or want to) read the topic. This decision is analogous to reading a newspaper. When people look at a newspaper, they look at the headlines first. If the story is interesting and relevant to them, they start reading the rest of the article. The same holds true for modular documentation.

Editors must keep this guideline in mind when reviewing modular documentation, ensuring that no topic label is repeated, that every topic label uses the correct syntax for its topic type, and that every topic label is as descriptive as possible. Continuing with the previous example of a utility that monitors process status and the procedure for how to reset process status, we might suggest that the concept topic that gives the background descriptive information be labeled Process Monitoring, while the task topic be labeled Resetting Process Status.

## Related Topic Links Must Be Meaningful

Linking topics together is an important component of modular documentation. This linkage enables readers to navigate between topics and retrieve relevant information.

Several different types of related topic links can be implemented for modular documentation:

- Inline links, or integrated cross-references, provide direct

and immediate access to the related information but they also interrupt the flow of the topic.

- Related information links, which appear at the end of a topic, provide access to the related information but only after the reader has read through the topic and can separately consider what additional information they need.
- Parent/child links reveal the hierarchy or organization of topics within a topic collection and enable readers to get broader information or other related specific information.

Within the information model, information architects must define a consistent and logical linking model. This linking model must define if and how each of the types of links that are available will be used. For example, the model must describe whether both inline links and related information links are allowed. Or, it must show that if an inline link is used then that link cannot also appear as a related information link. Finally, the model must define the acceptable number of clicks for your readers and your information, and then design a linking model that supports that number.

## Topic Collections Must Be Useful and Reader-Focused

The final best practice guideline encompasses all three of the basic modularization concepts. Although modular documentation is made up of chunked, standalone topics that do not have to be read sequentially, a clearly labeled information hierarchy or story that links the topics in a document to each other must exist. Task topics almost always have related concept topics, reference topics are referred to by multiple concept topics, and so on. Even when a document is written in a modular style, it must still be organized in a logical and usable manner [\(6\)](#).

Goal-oriented or task-focused organizations of topics can help readers find and retrieve the information they need quickly and easily [\(6\)](#). Tasks can appear at the topmost levels of the hierarchy, and the concept topics and reference topics that support those tasks then appear directly under those task topics. Grouping, ordering, and labeling topics logically (in some order of sequence) and consistently within a product information set, as well as across information sets, is important to readers. Editors must ensure that the topics being reviewed follow this hierarchy and tell the appropriate story.

There are also times when readers need to be forced to read

sequentially, for example, tasks that must be done in a particular order. In these cases, editors need to provide tools for writers to use to force sequentiality, such as creating standardized wording in the introductory information for task topics stating the number of the task and the task sequence, or a creating a rule for linking the first and last steps in each task in the sequence.

*Note: This is the end of Part 1. Look for Part 2 in the March/April 2010 issue of DMV.*

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# Write on Time: What Do Technical Communicators Do?



by [Melody Brumis](#)

EBSTC Senior Member

*Melody Brumis has been a contract writer and active East Bay STC member. Recently, she embarked on the adventure of starting a small business with her friend, Adrienne Tange. [Write on Time Solutions, LLC](#) is a technical writing company that creates clear, concise and accurate technical documentation or Web content — always on time and on budget.*

Since starting our business, Write on Time Solutions, Adrienne and I have attended many networking events. At each event (aside from STC), I'm asked these questions: "What is a technical communicator?" and "What do technical communicators do?"

While I could answer these questions with a standard elevator speech, see [Elevator Speech Do's and Don'ts](#), I've found that my replies vary every time because my work as a technical communicator varies. In fact, I enjoy being a technical communicator because it's a career that's always changing.

## Work We've Done

I thought I could call 10 technical communicators and get 10 different answers. Instead, because it's the beginning of the new year, I decided to reflect on the work that Write on Time Solutions was hired to do in 2009.

### Template Design

Our first project was helping an instructional designer create a template for a Word document. I'd call this template design.

### Grant Writing

Our second project was writing a grant for a winegrower's association. I'd call this grant writing.

## Blog Creation

A third project was creating a blog for a virtual assistant. I'd call this blog creation.

## Flowchart Development

A fourth project was developing a flowchart of financial processes for an online auction company. I'd call this flowchart development.

## Instructional Design

And, finally, at our current project for a major California utility, we're designing training curricula for employees. I'd call this instructional design.

## And Many More

In conclusion, we had a busy year and yet our list only scratches the surface of what technical communicators do. In the past, we've done more writing of procedures and processes, online help, user guides, and Web site development. And, who knows what we will be doing in the future. We had one call for what we'd call a copywriting project.

We do know that it looks to be an exciting, fulfilling, and prosperous New Year. What will you be doing in the New Year? Or, shall I ask you this question: What do you do as a technical communicator? If you'd like to add to our list, send us an e-mail at [info@writeontimesolutions.com](mailto:info@writeontimesolutions.com). We'll share our combined list in our next column.

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*Melody and Adrienne are writing this column to help you achieve small business success. If you have questions, e-mail them at [info@writeontimesolutions.com](mailto:info@writeontimesolutions.com). They will address your questions in future columns.*



# Six Reasons Why Your Wiki Isn't Working



by [Ellis Pratt](#)

Sales and Marketing Director for [Cherryleaf Technical Authors](#)  
near London, United Kingdom

*Ellis Pratt's company writes straightforward user information and also has specialist recruitment and training divisions. "I've realized that I enjoy explaining things to people," says Pratt. "It's the part of sales and marketing that I love the most. Having said that, I'm not a technical writer, and I'm usually kept away from the delivery side of the business."*

Associate Editor's Note: Coincidentally, our January 2010 speaker at our Chapter Meeting, Jeffery Gardiner, talked about working with Wikis at Sun Microsystems. Take a listen to his [podcast](#).

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Wikis are an easy way to create and publish documentation online, but many do not work because they are incomplete and contain out-of-date information. Why is that? Why do some wikis work and others fail? Here are six key reasons.

## 1. The Wiki Isn't Managed

In many ways, a wiki should be treated like a teenage party. If all you do is provide a space for people to entertain themselves and you then leave them to it, you shouldn't be surprised to find that, when you come back, the place is in a terrible mess or everyone's left. Someone needs to edit, moderate, and even lead. In other words, the content needs to be managed.

## 2. Readers Struggle to Find the Information They Need

Wikis are designed to have a flat information structure. The intention is that you can find information in just a few clicks. Wikis rely mostly on the search function. Unfortunately, it isn't always possible to do this successfully, particularly if the wiki contains lots of information. Complex information often needs a long navigation trail. What's more, the search engines supplied with many wikis aren't up to the job.

So you may need to use an alternative search engine. One option is Google's chargeable service, where you use its software to provide the search results. You may also need to create a series of pages for menu or landing pages (collections of links to relevant pages).

### **3. You Picked the Wrong Software**

Just because Wikipedia chose the MediaWiki software platform doesn't mean it's the right software for you. There are other free wiki platforms, such as TWiki, that have better capabilities; for example, marking "official" content from other forms of information and printing content to paper.

### **4. Not Enough People Are Actively Participating**

Many people start a wiki with the belief that "if you build it, they will come." Unfortunately, that's unlikely to happen. Studies of wikis indicate a 90:9:1 rule: 90% of people are readers, 9% are editors, and 1% are writers. Therefore, you must ensure that someone is responsible for writing content.

### **5. You Actually Wanted People to Discuss and Converse**

Although wikis do include a discussion tab, it's seldom used. It might be that a wiki isn't actually what you need. You might be better off with a blog, a Google Wave, or even a Web authoring tool that lets users append comments to the bottom of a page.

### **6. You Created an Island of Information, and it's Hard to Reuse the Wiki Content Anywhere Else**

Although wikis may contain valuable content, it can be difficult to reuse the content elsewhere — for example, to move content from an internal wiki to a printed user guide, to your Web site, or to a Help file. Because you have to maintain two versions of the content, you run the risk of introducing inconsistencies and errors and incurring extra time and cost. Organizations are developing tools to manage wiki content, and they are well worth investigating.

### **Solution: Choose the Right Tool for the Right Purpose**

Choose your platform based on the problem that you want to solve and the capabilities that you want your solution to provide. For example, wikis are a useful tool when you want people to see a work-in-progress or when you want people to collaborate and contribute to a document.

Finally, you may need someone — a technical writer, a copywriter, or an editor — to oversee the information.



## President's Message



by [Adrienne Tange](#)

*EBSTC president and  
co-owner of [Write on Time Solutions, LLC](#).*

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Happy New Year!

I'm Adrienne Tange, your President for the upcoming year. For those of you who do not know me, I have been a member of STC for many years. I have served our club, the Orange County Chapter, and the Silicon Valley Chapter as newsletter contributor, Consultant's PIC founder, and President-Elect. I also ran an extremely successful job fair at Scotts in Walnut Creek, in which employment agencies, resume reviewers, and portfolio reviewers participated.

First off, let us have a big round of applause for [Ann Adams](#) for leading the chapter last year. In the middle of a historic recession she managed to keep the chapter vibrant. She has done an outstanding job as President of our chapter during STC's financial struggles. We have not seen the last of Ann, because she has kindly volunteered to become our chapter's Social Media manager.

Secondly, I would like to share some of the ideas I have for 2010. I consider myself an innovator. Some of the innovations I plan to implement this year for our chapter are:

- Increasing meeting attendance to 30 to 40 people every month by more advertising, social media, and adding more value. Call up local colleges, like San Jose State, to personally have the teachers invite students to attend our meeting.
- Partnering with other local professional groups for special meetings or job fairs.
- Changing up the location of the meeting to make it easier for all members to attend.
- Helping everyone in the chapter to get a job or contract. To do this, we will pair members looking for a job with an

experienced member who has a job. This mentor would help the unemployed communicator get through the stressful job-hunting process.

If you have an interest in helping me or have any other ideas to add to this list, email at [atange@writeontimesolutions](mailto:atange@writeontimesolutions). I look forward to meeting you at our next meeting!

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## Editor's Message

by [Alliene Turner](#)



*Alliene is an EBSTC Senior Member and long-time East Bay resident. She also runs an online bookstore, <http://turnerbookstore.com>.*

Welcome back. Happy New Decade! My local paper ran an amusing article titled "What's in the cards for 2010?" The article presents a special reading of tarot cards for the coming year by fortune teller Pam Curry.

In a nutshell, the cards told Curry that Tiger Woods won't be able to save his marriage, that unemployment will still be a problem, and those investing in the stock market are advised to do so with caution. More positively, though, the swine flu won't pose a big problem, the drought will end, and the Bay Area is in no danger of a major earthquake.

Like any good soothsayer, Curry ended her reading by reminding us that "destiny is in your hands." My wish is that our destinies brings each of us all that we need and at least a little of what we want.

This issue, we again have several guest contributors, in addition to the Write on Time Solutions regular column.

**Michelle Corbin**, an Associate Fellow of STC who works at IBM, and Yoel Strimling, a member of STC Israel, offer best practices for editing modular documentation. This lengthy article will run in two parts. Part 1 describes the mechanics of modularization and best practices for editing modular documentation. Part 2 will describe the editor's role in creating modular documentation.

EBSTC senior member **Melody Brumis** and EBSTC President **Adrienne Tange**, co-owners of Write on Time Solutions, offer tips that they picked up as new business owners. In this issue, Melody looks back at the jobs that Write on Time Solutions completed in 2009 and lists all the things that technical

communicators do.

**Ellis Pratt** of Cherryleaf Technical Authors in Twickenham, United Kingdom, gives us six reasons why our wikis may not be working.

Thanks to **Susan Moxley** who did a great job editing the articles, and **Joe Humbert** who published them in our award-winning newsletter format. My New Year's wish is that more local members contribute articles to DMV. The next deadline is early February 2010. Please send your articles or ideas for articles to me at [hairston.turner@gmail.com](mailto:hairston.turner@gmail.com). ▲

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Welcome to the East Bay Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

Technical Writers and Communicators can find resources, solutions, jobs, professional connections, and friendship with the East Bay Chapter. Devoted to professional Technical Writers and Communicators, STC is a non-profit international organization.

STC members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, educators, students, engineers, and scientists in all areas of technology. [more>>](#)

### Upcoming Meeting

**Thursday, February 4, 2010**

**"Let Your Illustrations Do the Talking"**

**by Elizabeth Fraley and Scott Allshouse**



They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Today's high tech companies understand the value of providing detailed accurate information on demand that is also visually appealing. So how can you enrich the content of your information by creating high quality illustrations and animations quickly? [more>>](#)

### STC Election Candidates

For the upcoming [STC Elections](#), meet candidate:

- [Nathaniel Lim](#), candidate for Nominating Committee
- [Tricia Spayer](#), candidate for Director
- [Nicky Bleiel](#), candidate for Director

Be sure to vote Mar. 9, 2010 through Apr. 8, 2010.

### EBSTC Professional Dev SIG

### Mark Your Calendars



Note these upcoming events

- **Feb. 4** - [EBSTC Meeting](#) - Liz Fraley of Single-Sourcing Solutions and Scott Allshouse of PTC - "**Let Your Illustrations Do the Talking**"
- **Mar. 4** - EBSTC Meeting- Joan Lasselle of Lasselle-Ramsey - "**Content Management Systems**"
- **Apr. 1** - "**Technical Trends Panel**"

### Be an EBSTC Ambassador...

#### ...at East Bay Colleges and Universities

The EBSTC College Connection committee is looking for professionals from a variety of jobs within the technical communication arena to talk to students about the many career paths, opportunities, and rewards in our chosen profession. This may take the form of panel discussions in classes or one-on-one conversations at career days and other employment related and help young college students explore this career potential for themselves, join our Speakers Bureau.

- Complete the [Speaker's Information Form](#)
- Email it to: [janetd.gray@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janetd.gray@sbcglobal.net)

All college events will be staffed from available members of the EBSTC College Connection Speakers Bureau. Sign up today!

### New Volunteer Jobs

### EBSTC Professional Development SIG

Join us for lunch the second Thursday of every month

11:45 am - 12:45 pm  
Willow Tree restaurant in Dublin

Willow Tree Information:  
6513 Regional Street, Dublin  
925-838-9111

To join the SIG YahooGroup:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EBSTC\\_Professional\\_Development\\_SIG/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EBSTC_Professional_Development_SIG/)



**Looking for current job opportunities? Contact Ken Evans, [evansken@aol.com](mailto:evansken@aol.com)**

### Newsletter

#### Devil Mountain Views

Our award winning newsletter is up and running. Check out the [Nov/Dec issue](#).

**Got articles?**  
**Submission deadline for the Jan/Feb issue is early December 2009.**

Contact Managing Editor [Alliene Turner](#).

### STC Live Web Seminars

All seminars 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. PST.

#### Upcoming seminars:

For content details and to enroll, see the list of [seminars](#).

### Join STC Today!



- Be part of the friendly chapter
- Pump up your resume
- Build your skills
- Earn reward smiles for every hour spent

Please consider what you can contribute to the chapter as we need your help!  
[more>>](#)

[TOP](#)

Become a dues-paying member of STC and take advantage of all the "Members Only" resources including:

- *Intercom*, STC's magazine
- *Technical Communication*, STC's quarterly journal
- Networking opportunities; educational opportunities designed to expand your skills
- STC's online database of job openings in technical communication
- Local chapter activities
- Annual Salary Survey

Joining online is fast and easy--just go to [JoinSTC](#).

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Send website comments or report errors to the Webweaver, [Joseph Humbert](#).

Last updated: Tuesday, February 2, 2010 7:25 AM

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## Networking

- [Northern California STC Chapters](#)
- [East Bay STC Network \(Yahoo! Groups\)](#)
- [East Bay STC LinkedIn Group](#)
- [Professional Development SIG](#)

### Northern California STC Chapters



There are five active Northern California STC chapters. Each chapter meets on a different Wednesday or Thursday so you can attend all the meetings. Contact the respective presidents for more information or visit the chapter Web site.

Wednesdays	Chapter	President
Week 2	<a href="#">Berkeley</a>	<a href="#">Richard Mateosian</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">San Francisco</a>	<a href="#">Gilbert Gonzalez</a>
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	<a href="#">East Bay</a>	<a href="#">Adrienne Tange</a>
Week 3	<a href="#">North Bay</a>	<a href="#">Chris Muntzer / Michael Meyer</a>
Week 4	<a href="#">Silicon Valley</a>	<a href="#">DJ Cline</a>

### East Bay STC Network



Connect with your fellow East Bay members by joining this Yahoo! Groups network.

Voice your opinions and your ideas for making this Chapter more responsive to your needs. The more members who sign up the greater our network will be, the better our Chapter will be.

For more information and to join, click [East Bay STC Network](#).

## East Bay STC LinkedIn

Connect with your fellow East Bay members by joining this LinkedIn group. News and announcements can be posted and shared here. Find the group at

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1996708>

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## Professional Development SIG

The EBSTC Professional Development SIG supports and encourages our personal evolutions as we transform ourselves to remain marketable.

### Monthly Meetings

It's easy to remember when we meet because it's exactly a week after our chapter meeting.

<b>What</b>	EBSTC Professional Development SIG meeting
<b>When</b>	Second Thursday of the month at 11:45 A.M.
<b>Where</b>	Willow Tree Restaurant, 6513 Regional Street, Dublin, 925-838-9111



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## Congratulations to Our New and Senior Members



Welcome to our new, transfer, and reinstated members! We hope to see you at our next [Chapter meeting](#).

**[Alisa Bonsignore](#)**  
**[Mary M. Bartels](#)**  
**[Susan C. Simms](#)**  
**[Alfred B. Stansbury](#)**  
**[Linda P. Urban](#)**  
**[Pierre Allard](#)**  
**[James Doull Miller](#)**

We honor those members who have become Senior Members this year. Senior Members have been STC members for five years.

**[None so far this year.](#)**

## **STC Information**

*Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.*

For information about STC, go to the [Society's Web page](#).

9401 Lee Highway Suite 300  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
703-522-4114  
[stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org)

## **DMV Basics**

The East Bay Chapter newsletter is named after a local landmark, Mount Diablo, in Northern California. With a few exceptions, all distances in California are measured from that point, called the Mount Diablo Meridian. The East Bay Chapter serves the cities along the 680 corridor and the east/west part of 580. City-wise it's Vallejo to Pleasanton, Tracy to Oakland and Fremont. We have members from each of those places.

### **PUBLICATION POLICY**

We are always interested in sharing technical communication trends and information with our readers. For details, contact the [Managing Editor](#).

### **PUBLICATION SCHEDULE**

*Devil Mountain Views* is published bimonthly, five times a year (January, March, May, September, November) with occasional e-news.

### **ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

Jan/Feb 2009 issue – December 2, 2008  
Mar/Apr 2009 issue – February 2, 2009  
May/Jun 2009 issue – April 2, 2009  
Sept/Oct 2009 issue – August 2, 2009  
Nov/Dec 2009 issue – October 2, 2009

### **WRITER'S TEMPLATE**

If you are submitting an article, please download our [template](#) to use as a guideline for writing your article.

### **REPRINT POLICY**

Articles may be reprinted provided credit is given to *Devil Mountain Views* and the author, and a link to the article is sent to the [Managing Editor](#). If the newsletter is printed, please send two copies to the mailing address listed below.

### **MAILING ADDRESS**

Joe Humbert, 7001 Sunkist Drive, Oakland CA 94605

### **[ADVERTISING POLICY](#)**

## Copyright Statement

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. 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.

*Devil Mountain Views* also reserves the right to edit articles to fit its stylistic standards and space constraints. Articles are edited, copyedited, and proofread before publication. The newsletter also reserves the right to not print articles deemed unfit for publication.

Unless otherwise noted, copyrights for all newsletter articles belong to the authors. The design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2007-2008.

## DMV Staff **MANAGING EDITOR**

[Alliene Turner](#)

### **ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Joseph Humbert

### **CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Susan Moxley

## Chapter Officers

For a complete list of officers, see the EBSTC Web site's [Leadership](#) page.

### **PRESIDENT**

[Adrienne Tange](#)

### **PRESIDENT-ELECT**

open

### **TREASURER**

[Joseph Humbert](#)

### **V.P. PROGRAMS**

[Gwaltney Mountford](#)

### **V.P. ARRANGEMENTS**

[Jeanie Egbert](#)

### **SECRETARY**

[Helen Cheung](#)

## DMV History **Note:** We will update this section as our chapter archives are updated.

- Awards given in one year reflect the work of the editors from the previous year.
- In 2009, the chapter changed their fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year.
- If you were a managing editor during a time frame that is missing from the history, please [let us know](#).

Year	Notes
2010	Managing editor: Alliene Turner
2009	Managing editor: Alliene Turner <b>Award of Merit</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition
2007–2008	Managing editors: David Eicher (Sept 2008), Joseph Humbert (January 2008), Alliene Turner (May 2008) <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2006–2007	Managing editor: David Eicher <b>Award of Merit</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2004–2005	Managing editor: Becky Rude <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2003–2004	Managing editor: Becky Rude Guest managing editor: Gwaltney Mountford <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2002–2003	Managing editor: Ashwini Tharval <b>Best of Show, Most Improved, Distinguished Technical Communication</b> awards in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2001–2002	Managing editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format. <b>Award of Merit</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1999–2001	Managing editor: Teresa Washburn <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.

<b>1997–1999</b>	Managing editor: Kelly Walker <b>Award of Excellence</b> in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
<b>1996–1997</b>	Managing editor: Melody Brumis Newsletter name changed to <i>Devil Mountain Views</i> . Susan Moxley won the contest held to rename the newsletter. In July 1996, a spoof issue called <i>East Bay Flame</i> is published.
<b>1995–1996</b>	Managing editor: Bruce Robinson An offshoot, the <i>Twig</i> , is published by President Gwaltney Mountford to supplement the <i>East Bay Log</i> .
<b>1994</b>	Newsletter name changed to <i>East Bay Log</i> .
<b>1962</b>	The <i>Pacifica News</i> was published in the fall in the year the <i>Pacifica</i> chapter was founded. (The chapter was renamed to <i>East Bay</i> in 1982 under President T.R. Girill.) ▲

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## Advertising Policy

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**Product Types:** Only advertisements for products or services related to technical communication can be placed on the EBSTC Web site and *Devil Mountain Views*.

**Format:** Ads must be in either GIF or JPG format.

**Dimensions & Rates:** The following rates are valid for one month on the EBSTC Web site or one issue of the newsletter.

336 X 280 = \$150

468 X 60 = \$120

160 X 155 = \$80

120 X 60 = \$50

**Ad Location:** The EBSTC webmaster and the managing editor determine the appropriate ad placement. Ads may be placed on any page in the Web site or newsletter or on a sponsors page. Ads will be included in the "Printer Friendly" version of the newsletter.

**Payment:** Payment must be received by the [East Bay Chapter treasurer](#) before the ad is run. Payment can be made by check.

**Inquiries:** If you have questions or want to start your ad, please contact the [Managing Editor](#).



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The main table lists the issue date, the author(s) for the featured article(s), and the article name.

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Date	Author	Article Name
Current Issue: <a href="#">January/February 2010</a>	Michelle Corbin and Yoel Strimling Melody Brumis  Ellis Pratt	<i>Editing Modular Documentation: Some Best Practices</i> <i>Write on Time: What Do Technical Communicators Do?</i> <i>Six Reasons Why Your Wiki Isn't Working</i>
<a href="#">November/December 2009</a>	Gordon McLean Melody Brumis Karen Reiser Rogers George	<i>The Black Art of Estimation</i> <i>Write on Time: Should You Hire a Friend?</i> <i>Progressive Versus Simple Tense Verbs</i> <i>Writing Good Instructions is Sometimes a Matter of Life or Death</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2009</a>	Tom Johnson Adrienne Tange  T.R. Girill  Alliene Turner	<i>Is This Meeting Really Necessary?</i> <i>Write on Time: Differentiating Your Company by Certifying Your Business</i> <i>EBSTC Technical Literacy Project Through the Eyes of History of Science</i> <i>Book Review: How to Read a Book</i>
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<a href="#">March/April 2009</a>	Rebecca Metschke Melody Brumis Andrea Wenger	<i>Eight Job Search Myths — Busted</i> <i>Write on Time: Keep Those Kudos Coming</i> <i>Obsessed With Possessives</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2009</a>	Paul Mueller Adrienne Tange Liz Miller Sri Kumari	<i>The Yellow Brick Road to Technical Communication</i> <i>Write on Time: Tips to Get Over Sales Rejection Fast</i> <i>Why Did You Spam Me?</i> <i>Book Review: Indlish — The Book for Every English Speaking Indian</i>
<a href="#">November/December 2008</a>	Karen Reiser Louellen S. Coker Melody Brumis Bruce A. Walat	<i>That or Who? Knowing When 'Who' is More Appropriate</i> <i>Creating a Professional Portfolio</i> <i>Write on Time: Marketing Your Business</i> <i>Now, More Than Ever, STC is Important to Your Career</i>
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<a href="#">May/June 2008</a>	Laura Dahlinger T.R. Girill Meryl Natchez Steven Oppenheimer Danett Weinshelbaum	<i>The Lone Writer as Project Manager</i> <i>Literacy Outreach by E-Mail</i> <i>TechProse Still a Resource for Bay Area Consultants and Companies</i> <i>Patent Careers for Technical Writers, Engineers, Scientists, and Medical Professionals - Part 1</i> <i>Garden Solace</i>
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<a href="#">November/December 2001</a>	Linda Shaltz Angelina Nachimuthu Terri Winters Liz Miller Bill Ardis Adrienne Tange	<i>Fight or Flight?</i> <i>Online Job Search: Some Tips and Techniques</i> <i>Resumes That Shine</i> <i>Punch Up Your Portfolio</i> <i>Diary of a Consultant</i> <i>Spotlight on Sue Phelan</i>
<a href="#">September/October 2001</a> (1.3 MB PDF)	Don Huntington  Ashwini Tharval Patrick Lufkin Patricia Smith Rosalind Rogoff Richard Lederer	<i>Grasping the Essentials in Writing for an Online Audience</i> <i>An Introduction to XML</i> <i>Touchstone 2001 Seeks Entries, Volunteers</i> <i>Joys and Pitfalls of Contracting and Consulting</i> <i>Reinventing the Wheel</i> <i>Devouring Words</i>
<a href="#">January/February 2000</a> (1.5 MB PDF)	Lenore Weiss Rosalind Rogoff Andrea Ames	<i>Stranger in Paradigm</i> <i>Is It Live or Is It Memorex?</i> <i>Director-Sponsor Report:</i> <i>1999 Region 8 Conference</i>

<p><a href="#">November/December 1999</a> (1.9 MB PDF)</p>	<p>Lenore Weiss &amp; Judith Herr Dana Chisnell Judith Herr Lenore Weiss Judith Herr Judy Skinner</p>	<p><i>Technical Literacy Program at Fremont High School</i> <i>STC Outreach -- Where You Come In</i> <i>Art of Leading of an STC Chapter</i> <i>Lenore Visits a Class at Fremont High</i> <i>What Do You Want to be When You Grow UP?</i> <i>Eating Tomato Soup With a Fork</i></p>
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<p><a href="#">July/August 1999</a> (583 KB PDF)</p>	<p>Lu Rehling Lenore Weiss Alice Gallagher  Rosalind Rogoff Anahita Wager Smith</p>	<p><i>It's Our Future, So Let's Make the Most of It</i> <i>Creating Partner Documentation</i> <i>Today's Technical Communications Job Market --</i> <i>Answers to Some Frequently Asked Questions</i> <i>Technical Training: Help Authoring Tools</i> <i>Using Knowledge Management to Organize and Deliver Information</i></p>

