

Devil Mountain Views

Newsletter of the East Bay Chapter of STC

Supporting technical communication in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1962

November / December 2009

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- The East Bay STC [Holiday Party](#) is scheduled for December 3 at Crow Canyon. Fun, games, raffle prizes. Register early (by November 19) for your STC discount.
- Devil Mountain Views garnered another award in its long list of awards (nine in the last eleven years): Award of Merit in the 2008-2009 STC International Newsletter Competition. Congratulations to the editors for such diligent work.
- Long lost newsletter from [Sept/Oct 1999](#) restored. Thanks to [June Schaefer](#), our archivist, who retrieved the original print document and to [Joe Humbert](#) who scanned and posted it in our [Archives](#).

Some chapter volunteers ten years ago are still active in the chapter today. These include [Judy Herr](#) (then president), [Gwaltney Mountford](#) (nominating chair), [Jeanie Egbert](#) (Webweaver), [May McKoon](#) (arrangements), [Susan Moxley](#) (newsletter copyeditor), and [T.R. Girill](#) (contributed a book review).

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Feature Articles



Award of Merit
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[Gordon McLean](#), a technical author in Scotland, gives tips and tools on how to estimate how long it would take to create documentation for a project.

[Write on Time: Should You Hire a Friend?](#)

[Melody Brumis](#), EBSTC Senior member and co-owner of Write on Time, writes about if and how you should hire a friend. Tricky because if you hired them, you might have to fire them.

[Progressive Versus Simple Tense Verbs](#)

[Karen Reiser](#), a guest contributor from Ohio, shows how writing fewer words can

lead to clearer writing.

Writing Good Instructions Is Sometimes a Matter of Life or Death

Rogers George, a technical writer for more than 20 years, gives tips on how writing good instructions can sometimes save a life.



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The Black Art of Estimation

by [Gordon McLean](#)



By day, Gordon McLean is a technical author from the UK (Scotland, actually) with a passion for good, communicative information products, and by night he dabbles in Web design. He is the Technical Information Manager at Sword Ciboodle and has been working in the technical communications field for 15 years.

He is member of the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (and contributor to the monthly newsletter), and a member of the Information Architecture Institute. You can find more about Gordon on his [personal blog](#).

How Long is a Piece of String?

It's a common question and one I've occasionally used in reply when asked "We are building this new *thing*. How long will it take to provide some documentation for it?"

Estimating the amount of time it takes to write documentation is tricky because it relies on many differing, subtle factors. For many people working outside of a highly regimented, project-managed team, it tends to boil down to a mixture of guesswork and experience. However, it's not impossible to come up with a more reasoned estimate as long as you don't mind doing a little planning. Although, to be frank, if you aren't planning your work, you can probably stop reading now and go find a copy of JoAnn T. Hackos' *Information Development: Managing Your Documentation Projects, Portfolio, and People*.

A Tool for Estimating

So in the spirit of sharing, I present an estimating tool I've used in the past and have, very recently, uncovered again. This tool is based on JoAnn Hackos' dependencies calculator (see her book, *Managing Your Documentation Projects*, in the section about "Making a Preliminary Estimate of Required Resources"). I've adapted my tool for use with single source content but you can also use it for other types of documentation projects.

The idea is simple enough. You break down your planned content into topics, with a topic defined as a discrete amount of information that shouldn't take more than a couple of hours to write. Then, when you add in time for review and rewrite, you can take an educated guess as to how long an average topic* takes to complete. So, for the sake of discussion, let's say an average topic takes about five hours to complete. Each topic is then scored against four criteria, with the scoring used to add or

subtract an appropriate level of variance, as follows:

- Difficulty of topic — Do you know what you are writing about or is it brand new? Is it a simple topic or something complex?
- Scope of topic — Does the difficulty dictate that a lot of content is needed? Or is it a short topic of fixed content?
- Availability of information — Are you updating an existing document? Do you have a specification to work from? Or do you have to write from scratch?
- Access to SME — Do you have good access to a Subject Matter Expert? Do you have limited access only or none at all?

* Defining an *average topic* is probably the most contentious part of this method and it may take some refinement to arrive at a workable number.

Calculate Topic Complexity

Each topic is scored from 1 (long, hard, complex) to 5 (short, easy, simple), against each criterion. An average topic would score 3 for each criterion and won't affect the estimate from the standard five hours. Scoring the topics this way allows you to factor in a level of variance. A difficult topic with a large scope that has no information available, and for which you have no access to an SME, will score lowest marks (all criteria score 1) and has the highest level of variance from your standard topic estimate.

The criteria are fairly high level, and you could certainly expand on these for a more granular approach, but I've found that most issues can be assigned to one of the above criteria and that keeps the estimation as simple as possible. The variance can then be calculated (again, with an estimated time) so that you can adjust the time it takes to complete the topic. For example:

Score 1 — Variance of +2 hours per criteria

Score 2 — Variance of +1 hour per criteria

Score 3 — Zero variance

Score 4 — Variance of -30 minutes per criteria

Score 5 — Variance of -1 hour per criteria

The figures given above are, also, estimated. You'll note that the

higher scored (and therefore lower variance) topics don't gain you proportionately the same amount as you lose to the lower scored (higher variance) topics. The reality is that, no matter how simple the topic, it still takes time to document.

A long, complex and difficult topic with little to no information and no available expert will score 1 across the four criteria and add 8 hours (2 hours per criteria) to the estimated completion time for that topic, taking the estimated total for that topic to 13 hours.

Flip the example around so that you are estimating a short, simple topic, which comes with sufficient supporting information and an SME sitting on your desk to help you write it. That topic would score 5 for each criterion, and gain you 4 hours, meaning the estimated total for that topic would drop to 1 hour. (It is interesting to note that increasing the gain numbers enough could result in a topic taking less than zero time to create!)

Use My Spreadsheet to Aid Calculations

Now, the obvious thing to do would be to create a spreadsheet that allows you to add in your topics, score them against the criteria, and calculate the total estimated time-and perhaps while it's at it, add in a level of contingency. And that is exactly what I did.

Feel free to download the [estimation spreadsheet](#) (zipped Excel file). It is annotated to help you understand its use, and includes two additional columns which allow tracking when a topic was added to the spreadsheet, either as part of the initial planning, when identified during the review cycle, or because of a change in product scope. All of the calculations use basic arithmetic, so feel free to poke around and try this out.

My tool is not an exact system, but that's why they are called estimates. If for nothing else, the tool helps my team plan what they are writing about, which, sometimes, is more valuable than the estimates themselves.



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Write on Time: Should You Hire a Friend?



by [Melody Brumis](#)

EBSTC Senior Member

Melody Brumis is active East Bay STC member. Currently, she and Adrienne Tange are co-owners of [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.

No. Not if you are hiring him just because he's a friend. He has to be able to do the job.

How do you discover this? You have to go through the same process you would an unknown job candidate. Carefully review his resume before calling him in for an interview. And, check references. Check his last employer and gather as much information as you can. Discovery may be in the little things. A pause, cough, before answering the question: "Would you hire Fred back again"?

Steps for Hiring the Right Person

Martha Stewart, in her book [The Martha Rules](#), has a chapter called "Build an A Team." In this chapter, she outlines the following steps to take to ensure you hire the right person:

1. Create options by considering several candidates.
2. Check those references!
3. Make sure all involved employees meet the candidate.

I have had the good fortune of being hired by friends, so I thought it would work to hire a friend. Not always. What I forgot was that I was hired by friends from the [East Bay Society for Technical Communication](#). I had been an active member of this organization from newsletter editor to president, and these friends had seen my work. Also, every one of these friends went through the entire hiring process before bringing me on. I got no

free passes.

So, what do you do when a friend screws up? I won't go there. I will say that early on Adrienne Tange, my business partner, and I had the "friend" discussion. We decided whether our business, Write on Time Solutions, flourished or not, we would remain friends. We remind ourselves of this occasionally. And, we keep ourselves to our individual high standards in all our work.

Would You Hire a Friend?

Would you hire a friend? I'd love to hear your experiences. You can write me at mbrumis@writeontimesolutions.com.

One friend I asked about hiring a friend said, "You must make sure they have the same standards for work as you do." Another said, "Hire, yes; roommates, no!"

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. They will address your questions in future columns.



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Progressive Versus Simple Tense Verbs

by [Karen Reiser](#) , guest contributor

Karen Reiser is a freelance writer and editor living in Northeast Ohio. Her experience editing varies over the past six years from trade magazines and physics journals to more literary works including novels and short stories.

Does good grammar make good writing? Not necessarily, but it definitely helps. However, there are different ways to write a grammatically correct sentence, but just because it's correct does not mean it's the best way to express that thought. This article not only shows that some "correct" sentences read better than others, but that more words do not make better writing.

Progressive Tense Verbs

Is something wrong with the following sentences?

Jill was running through the park.

Alex was opening the door.

Diane is asking for help.

The sentences above are grammatically sound, so in that sense, there's nothing wrong with them. You will recognize the verb form as the progressive tense, formed by combining the verb "to be" with the present participle form (verb plus *-ing*). This verb tense shows the subject of the sentence engaged in continuous action. So what's the problem? Some writers use progressive tense when simple past or present tense would be more appropriate, and when they do this, the action in their sentence takes a secondary role to the linking verb.

Simple Past or Present Tense Verbs

Compare the sentences above to the following.

Jill ran through the park.

Alex opened the door.

Diane asks for help.

See the difference? It's subtle, but there's definitely a difference. These simple past and present tense verbs tighten up the sentence, improving the pace for the reader and the rhythm of the prose. These verbs also have more impact than their progressive tense counterparts.

Why Do Writers Do This?

The habit of using progressive tense inappropriately begins, for many, when they are students. If their essay doesn't meet the required word count, they use "padding" such as progressive tense, passive voice, and perhaps throwing in an extra adverb or two. Unfortunately, this can creep into their writing later and become a habit. However, what they don't realize is that more words do not necessarily make the piece better. More often than not, it only creates excessive wordiness which distracts the reader and draws them out of the story.

Final Comments

The next time you consider using progressive tense in your writing, make sure you have a reason to use it. If not, use simple past or present tense verbs instead. It will strengthen your verbs by letting them stand alone without a linking verb, and more importantly, it will improve the rhythm of your sentences.



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Writing Good Instructions Is Sometimes a Matter of Life or Death

by [Rogers George](#)



Rogers George has been a technical writer for more than 20 years. He has written on subjects as diverse as outhouse assembly, restaurant reviews, software documentation, and scientific equipment instructions.

If you saw the movie *Apollo 13*, you might remember a scene when they were trying to figure out a solution to the air purification problem: Someone was on his back in a mock-up of the spacecraft, manual in hand, figuring out some of the details of the plumbing. What if the writer of that document had been careless, not making the effort to be correct and unambiguous? That writer wasn't careless, and they came up with an arrangement that enabled the crew to survive.

Writing good instructions is really important. Poor instructions, at best, are irritating — the subject of Dad-tangled-in-a-bicycle-at-Christmas cartoons.

Instructions are steps readers follow to accomplish something. Good instructions are always more effective than poor ones. Fortunately, good instructions aren't hard to write.

Steps to Good Instructions

Pay attention to the following to write good instructions:

- Introduce each set of steps with a description of what the steps will accomplish, for example: "To access the control switch..."
- If the order of the steps matters, number the steps. If the order doesn't matter, use bullets.
- Write each step using a simple sentence in the present imperative. "Pry off the clip with a screwdriver or similar tool."
- Then tell the result. Stay with the present tense. "The panel pops up." This gives confirmation that the reader followed the instruction correctly.

- Put only one thing to do in each step. (Okay, you can add something closely associated with the action, like "... and press Enter.")
- If you can, include an illustration after the instruction. You might be tempted to skip the illustration, but don't. In some (perhaps many?) cases, readers choose to rely on the illustrations without reading the text. Create the illustrations with this in mind.
- Divide the steps into groups of nine or fewer, if possible.

A Few More Tips

Here are a few other tips:

- Strive to be unambiguous. Aim for only one possible, easily understood meaning. Try to think of how the instruction might be misinterpreted and prevent that. The goal of every step is that the reader understands immediately what to do.
- If you can, watch someone follow the instructions. If they get something wrong, it's the fault of the instructions. Fix.

And Proofread!

Proofread! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! (Imagine that Aflac® duck changing his mantra to "proofread!") Make this an ironclad rule. Proofread everything you write, even email. Get into the habit of looking for goofs.

There you have it. Writing clear instructions can change your life. Maybe even save someone's.

Good written communication saves time, reduces frustration, and prevents costly misunderstandings. You can find more tips on writing well at [The Writing Rag](#).



President's Message



by [Ann Adams](#)

EBSTC president

Greetings. While those still caught in the “lagging employment” associated with economic recovery cannot take optimism to the bank, it does appear that perhaps the worst is over. Some friends and family members who made it through the layoff cycle have recently seen pay and hour cuts restored. Let’s hope that increased hiring follows.

Chapter Stats

- We have added one new member since the last newsletter, for a total of 77. We have also seen some new faces at our Fall meetings, thanks to excellent programs from [Scott Abel](#) and [Scott Prentice](#).
- The chapter cash position is holding steady.
- Regrettably, we are no longer able to offer free meetings for program-only attendees. We have re-instituted the \$10 charge.
- How can you help? The most important contribution you can make is to attend meetings. Currently, we lose money on most meetings. If you value the opportunity to network with your peers, hear great speakers and perhaps pick up a lead on that next job, please show your support by joining us at our monthly get-togethers.

Looking For Officers

- Our 2010 Chapter Officers will take office in January. The current slate is as follows:
 - President: [Adrienne Tange](#)
 - President-Elect: [Open](#)
 - Treasurer: [Joe Humbert](#)
 - V.P. Programs: [Gwaltney Mountford](#)
 - V. P. Arrangements: [Jeanie Egbert](#)
 - Secretary: [Open](#)
 - Nominating Committee: [Richard Mateosian](#) but open to one other member
- We are also looking for a volunteer for the role of Hospitality Chair.
- Please contact any of the current voting [leadership](#) officers if you would like to know more about the open positions.

New Volunteers

- **Liz Miller** has volunteered to be the Chapter's database membership manager. The position has been vacant for quite some time, so we leave it to Liz to figure out what that entails. You will be hearing more soon.
- **Adrienne Tange** and **Melody Brumis**, co-owners of [Write on Time Solutions](#), are our new Education Managers. They plan to survey companies in the Bay Area and ask them questions such as what type of content development they are doing, how many technical writers they have, do they use contractors, do they outsource, etc. This information will be very useful to technical communicators and also will clearly show current trends.

Upcoming Programs

- At our January meeting, **Jeff Gardiner**, Editorial and Production Manager at Sun Learning Services, will talk about a wiki project that he has been leading. Jeff was on our Tech Comm Trends panel last spring and talked a bit about this initiative. He will be back to update us on how the wiki is progressing.
- At our February meeting, **Liz Fraley** of Single-Sourcing Solutions and Scott Allshouse of PTC will talk about the latest developments in Arbortext and IsoDraw. Liz spoke to East Bay on "Repurposing Content for Multichannel Publishing" last March. She also organizes a series of excellent webinars that cover a wide range of forward-looking technical issues. You can sign up to be notified of the webinars at the [San Francisco Bay Arbortext PTC/User Group blog](#).
- In March, **Joan Lasselle** of Lasselle-Ramsey will talk about Content Management Systems. Joan was also a speaker at our last Trends panel.
- In April, we will have our Trends panel.
- In May, we will include reports from the conference attendees.

We are very grateful for our speakers' willingness to come and share their latest technical insights. As our upcoming schedule shows, we even have people willing to come back again! **Gwaltney Mountford** has done a wonderful job of recruiting speakers and continues to fill our schedule with exciting and stimulating programs.

National Society Finances

- The National Society finances and future are highly dependent on two sources: member renewals at the end of the year and attendance at the annual conference.
- You will see some changes to pricing and options for membership in your renewal notices. Remember that you do have the option to pay your dues in four installments. Details of the installment plan will be on the stc.org Web site.
- The Technical Communication Summit will be held in Dallas, TX at the Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion on **May 2–5, 2010**. Online registration will begin on December 1, 2009. Details are updated at the [Conference site](#) as they become available.

Stay Connected

We have several ways that we communicate with our members. Are you connected?

- The Yahoo! Groups discussion board currently has 59 members. To sign up, click the [East Bay STC Network](#) link in the upper right corner of the ebstc.org Web site.
- President-Elect Adrienne Tange has started a linkedin group for the East Bay STC. News and announcements can be posted and shared here. The group currently has 16 members. Find the group at
<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1996708>
- Late-breaking news and reminders are delivered to your e-mail inbox through our announcements list. If you are not receiving regular notices, contact Jeanie Egbert at jeaniee@flamingocomm.com so that she can add you to the list.
- A good source of job leads and networking is the Linking Northern California Yahoo group, led by super networking guru Irene Koehler. Irene was the speaker at our Sept. 2008 meeting and continues her leadership in social media in the Bay Area. You can find the group at
<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/LinkingNorthernCalifornia/>
- We filled an open position at my employer last year with a terrific tech writer who found the job posting on the KIT List. That next job posting might be for you. Sign up at <http://www.kitlist.org/>

This is my last newsletter as President, but it is not the last you will hear from me. After the first of the year, I hope to investigate and experiment with communication vehicles for all of the Bay Area chapter members. I welcome any ideas. What's your favorite way to keep up to date with STC?

Ann



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. This issue of the Devil Mountain Views contains the usual mix of articles. Thanks to **Joe Humbert** who published them in our award-winning newsletter format.

Gordon McLean, a technical writer in Scotland, shares a tool he's adapted from JoAnn Hackos' project management dependencies calculator that helps estimate how long it should take to write single source documentation. His writing team at Sword Ciboodle (a software company in Glasgow) uses the tool to plan their writing projects.

Melody Brumis, co-owner of Write on Time Solutions, LLC, offers, as a regular DMV feature, tips that she and Write on Time Solutions co-owner Adrienne Tange have picked up as business owners. This edition Melody shares tips about hiring friends.

Karen Reiser has returned as a guest editor. She shares an article about the progressive tense that first appeared in the editing suite of Suite101.com.

Rogers George, another guest contributor, reminds us how important accurate instructions are, and to proofread everything we write.

Next DMV deadline for the Jan/Feb issue is early December. Send your articles or ideas for articles to me at hairston.turner@gmail.com. ▲

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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	Berkeley	Richard Mateosian
Week 3	San Francisco	Gilbert Gonzalez
Thursdays	Chapter	President
Week 1	East Bay	Ann Adams
Week 3	North Bay	Chris Muntzer / Michael Meyer
Week 4	Silicon Valley	DJ Cline

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 [here](#).

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>

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.

What	EBSTC Professional Development SIG meeting
When	Second Thursday of the month at 11:45 A.M.
Where	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 you can come meet us at a Chapter meeting.

James T. Hayes
Richard Mateosian (welcome back)

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

Ajay T. Mathew, since February 2009
Steven David Schaefer, since July 2009
Anna M. Schaller, since July 2009
Helen P. Cheung, in December 2009

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](#).

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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

Chapter Officers

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

PRESIDENT

[Ann Adams](#)

PRESIDENT-ELECT

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V.P. PROGRAMS

[Gwaltney Mountford](#)

V.P. ARRANGEMENTS

[Jeanie Egbert](#)

SECRETARY

[Gina Gotsill](#)

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
2009	Managing editor: Alliene Turner
2007–2008	Managing editors: David Eicher (Sept 2008), Joseph Humbert (January 2008), Alliene Turner (May 2008) Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2006–2007	Managing editor: David Eicher Award of Merit in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2004–2005	Managing editor: Becky Rude Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2003–2004	Managing editor: Becky Rude Guest managing editor: Gwaltney Mountford Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2002–2003	Managing editor: Ashwini Tharval Best of Show, Most Improved, Distinguished Technical Communication awards in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
2001–2002	Managing editors: Ashwini Tharval and Becky Rude. The newsletter is launched online in Web format. Award of Merit in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1999–2001	Managing editor: Teresa Washburn Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.
1997–1999	Managing editor: Kelly Walker Award of Excellence in the STC International Newsletter Competition.

1996–1997	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.
1995–1996	Managing editor: Bruce Robinson An offshoot, the <i>Twig</i> , is published by President Gwaltney Mountford to supplement the <i>East Bay Log</i> .
1994	Newsletter name changed to <i>East Bay Log</i> .
1962	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

These companies have generously sponsored this newsletter.

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DMV is seeking advertisers for this issue or future issues!

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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Date	Author	Article Name
Current Issue: November/December 2009	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>
September/October 2009	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>
May/June 2009	Prof. Sissi Closs Adrienne Tange T.R. Girill Karen Reiser East Bay STC members	<i>Important Questions about DITA</i> <i>Write on Time: Strategies for Today's Uncertain Economy</i> <i>Promoting Science Literacy through a Regional Science Fair</i> <i>Comma Splices</i> <i>Six-Word Memoirs</i>
March/April 2009	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>

January/February 2009	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>
November/December 2008	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>
September/October 2008	Karen Reiser Steven Oppenheimer Adrienne Tange T.R. Girill Gwaltney Mountford Patrick Lufkin Patrick Lufkin	<i>That or Which? Don't Misuse These Relative Pronouns</i> <i>Patent Careers for Technical Writers, Engineers, Scientists, and Medical Professionals - Part 2</i> <i>Write on Time: Tips for Small Business Success</i> <i>Introducing Science Teacher-Interns to Technical Writing</i> <i>Get in the Running 2008</i> <i>Call for Entries: 2008-09 Northern California Technical Communication Competition</i> <i>Call for Judges: 2008-09 Northern California Technical Communication Competition</i>
May/June 2008	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>
March/April 2008	Laura Dahlinger and Josette Schaber Linda Cunningham Jane Olivera Andrew Davis	<i>Transitioning from Technical Communicator to Project Manager</i> <i>Gems from the Writing Boot Camp</i> <i>Windows on a Macintosh Computer</i> <i>Technical Communications Internships - What, Why, Where, and How?</i>

<p>January/February 2008</p>	<p>Joseph M. Humbert Patrick Lufkin T.R. Girill Andrew Davis Joseph M. Humbert (with Gwaltney Mountford & Helen Cheung)</p>	<p><i>Podcasting Speaker Programs for STC Communities</i> <i>How Suite It Is: Adobe Showcases Its New Technical Communication Suite</i> <i>Literacy Project Resource Sharing</i> <i>Popular Misperceptions About Contracting</i> <i>2007 Holiday Party</i></p>
<p>September/October 2007</p>	<p>Patrick Lufkin Andrew Davis Patrick Lufkin Patrick Lufkin Richard Mateosian</p>	<p><i>STC Board of Directors Visits Bay Area</i> <i>Creating Structured Documentation — Will You Lead or Follow?</i> <i>2007 Gordon Scholarship Winners</i> <i>Call for Entries: 2007-08 Northern California Technical Communication Competition</i> <i>Call for Judges: 2007-08 Northern California Technical Communication Competition</i></p>
<p>May/June 2007</p>	<p>Jeanie Egbert Patrick Lufkin Andrew Davis T. R. Girill Andrew Davis</p>	<p><i>EBSTC Wins STC Awards!</i> <i>STC Board to Honor Bay Area with Important Visit</i> <i>Volunteers Needed for the 2007 Bay Area Networking Guide (BANG)</i> <i>Technical Writing Returns to Oakland's Media Academy</i> <i>Interview Tips — DOs and DON'Ts</i></p>
<p>March/April 2007</p>	<p>Patrick Lufkin Andrew Davis Kathryn Munn Gwaltney Mountford</p>	<p><i>MadCap Flare and the RoboHelp Saga</i> <i>Synergistech's 2007 Job Market Perspective</i> <i>Documenting APIs: Your First Week on the Job</i> <i>Get in the Running</i></p>
<p>January/February 2007</p>	<p>T. R. Girill Helen Cheung Guy Ball</p>	<p><i>Building Science-Relevant Literacy With Technical Writing in High School</i> <i>West Meets East</i> <i>Creating Video / Web Seminars</i></p>
<p>November/December 2006</p>	<p>T. R. Girill Dara Golden Patrick Lufkin Patrick Lufkin</p>	<p><i>Literacy Outreach to Science Students Through Their Teachers</i> <i>Conducting Interviews</i> <i>Is Podcasting in Your Future?</i> <i>EBSTC Career Connection Reaches Out to Students</i></p>
<p>September/October 2006</p>	<p>Helen Cheung Dara Golden Melody Brumis</p>	<p><i>My Experience as Vice President of Programs</i> <i>Beyond the Resume</i> <i>Member Spotlight on Linda Cunningham</i></p>

May/June 2005	Patrick Lufkin Gwaltney Mountford Elaine Parrish T. R. Girill	<i>Leadership for the Emerging Future</i> <i>College Liaison Committee: The New Kid on the Block</i> <i>Sentence's Little Helpers</i> <i>How Technical Writing Supports High School Science</i>
March/April 2005	Joy Montgomery Dara Golden Elaine Parrish Sue Phelan	<i>Surviving Resume Screening, a Brutal Process!</i> <i>Volunteer Editing and Writing</i> <i>The Truth About Ampersands</i> <i>EBSTC Needs You!</i>
January/February 2005	Joy Montgomery Dara Golden T. R. Girill Elaine Parrish Beau Cain Becky Rude	<i>Accentuate the Postive; Eliminate the Negative</i> <i>Volunteer Editing and Writing</i> <i>Tech Writing Outreach Meets CAHSEE in Oakland</i> <i>New Year's Resolutions for Writers</i> <i>Director's Report</i> <i>Annual Member Survey</i>
November/December 2004	Laura Phillips Joy Montgomery Elaine Parrish Charleen Earley Elaine Parrish Suzanna Laurent	<i>Transition, Change, A Rose by Any Other Name...</i> <i>Psst—Wanna Know a Secret?</i> <i>On Becoming a "Senior"</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Liz Miller</i> <i>Confounding Compounds</i> <i>TRAF Technique Saves Time</i>
September/October 2004	Dara Golden T. R. Girill Judy Herr Melody Brumis Elaine Parrish June Schaefer	<i>Top Ten Things I Wish I'd Known Sooner</i> <i>Sharing Outreach More Effectively</i> <i>Confessions of an STC Conference Groupie</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Sherry Smith</i> <i>Infini(iv)e Possibilities</i> <i>Keeping Our Archive Updated</i>
May/June 2004	Dara Golden T. R. Girill Gwaltney Mountford Elaine Parrish	<i>Marketing Your Non-Writing Skills</i> <i>An Outreach Theme with Five Variations</i> <i>STC Transformation Project</i> <i>Quick and Dirty Copyediting</i>
March/April 2004	Jon Rude David Dick & Kathy Bine Vesa Purho Dara Golden Elaine Parrish	<i>Helping Make Projects Work</i> <i>Documentation Management for Dummies</i> <i>Well Planned Is Half Done</i> <i>First Impressions: Resume Tips</i> <i>Ask Elaine: Double Trouble</i>

January/February 2004	Sarmistha Purkayastha Suzanna Laurent Adrienne Tange Dara Golden Elaine Parrish T. R. Girill Marsha Howard	<i>How I Became a Technical Writer</i> <i>Strategies for Making Change Work</i> <i>Seasonal Poem</i> <i>Style Guides: Basic Considerations</i> <i>Ask Elaine: The Little Things</i> <i>Autumn Literacy Outreach Update</i> <i>Member Spotlight: Joe Humbert</i>
November/December 2003	Dara Golden Suzanna Laurent Adrienne Tange Melody Brumis Elaine Parrish	<i>What's in a Mark?</i> <i>What do I Get for Belonging to STC?</i> <i>Short Story: Half-Full</i> <i>Spotlight on Hillary Russak</i> <i>Ask Elaine: A Matter of Style</i>
September/October 2003	Susan Harlan T. R. Girill Susan Harlan Adrienne Tange Elaine Parrish Becky Rude	<i>Notes on the 2003 Annual STC Conference</i> <i>How Literacy Outreach Spent Summer Vacation</i> <i>STC as a Volunteer Organization</i> <i>Short Story: Lethal Pen</i> <i>Ask Elaine: Reining in Apostrophilia</i> <i>Spotlight on Elaine Parrish</i>
May/June 2003	Don Huntington Kristine Hahn Rusty Jorgensen T. R. Girill	<i>An Online Project Info Solution (Part 2)</i> <i>Single-Sourcing, XML, Alphabet Soup</i> <i>Dare to Be Dumb</i> <i>Acting Locally, Thinking Globally in Literacy Outreach Project</i>
March/April 2003	Elaine Parrish Don Huntington Scott Wallace Linda Shaltz Susan Harlan	<i>Copyediting—Who Needs It?</i> <i>An Online Project Information Solution</i> <i>Style Guides to the Rescue</i> <i>What Does Video Capture Have to Do With Writing?</i> <i>Alternative Jobs or Alternative Job Search Methods?</i>
January/February 2003	Gwaltney Mountford Melody Brumis Don Huntington Scott Wallace	<i>Contracting: Is It for You?</i> <i>You Have a Contract—Now What?</i> <i>A Plan for Creating Internal Newsletters</i> <i>Taming the Tech-Neologism</i>
November/December 2002	Don Huntington Adrienne Tange Don Huntington	<i>Responding to the Changing Face of the Tech Writer's Role</i> <i>Terminal Contract</i> <i>Staying Busy in a Slumping Economy</i>

September/October 2002	Gwaltney Mountford Susan Harlan Scott Wallace	<i>Nashville Nuggets</i> <i>Trends in Technical Writing</i> <i>The Great "Web" vs. "web" Debate</i>
May/June 2002	Don Huntington John Gallagher Ashwini Tharval & Dipali Godbole Scott Wallace Becky Rude	<i>It Takes a Sexually Stimulated Man...</i> <i>Cross-Cultural Interactions</i> <i>Home Away from Home</i> <i>Writing Effective Online Copy</i> <i>Spotlight on Wallace Clements</i>
March/April 2002	Faraz Hoodbhoy Roz Rogoff Dan Day Ashwini Tharval Scott Wallace Adrienne Tange	<i>3G for Everyone</i> <i>Accessibility = Usability</i> <i>Characterizing Materials on the Nanoscale</i> <i>Technology Unraveled</i> <i>Web Usability</i> <i>Spotlight on Coralyn K. McGregor</i>
January/February 2002	T. R. Girill Gwaltney Mountford Diana Wilcoxson Bill Ardis Scott Wallace Adrienne Tange	<i>Looking Back: Technical Writing in the Bay Area</i> <i>Morphing Through the Decades</i> <i>We've Come a Long Way</i> <i>DOS Revisited: 20 Years of C-Prompts</i> <i>Editorial Content on the Web</i> <i>Spotlight on June Schaefer</i>
November/December 2001	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>
September/October 2001 (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>
January/February 2000 (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>November/December 1999 (1.9 MB PDF)</p>	<p>Lenore Weiss & 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>
<p>September/October 1999 (3.1 MB PDF)</p>	<p>Jane C. Frazier Patricia Smith T.R. Girill Lenore Weiss</p>	<p><i>Employees and Business Process: The Power of the Shared View</i> <i>Pictures of Verbs... Graphic Novels</i> <i>Book Review: Dynamics in Document Design</i> <i>Time to Volunteer</i></p>
<p>July/August 1999 (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>



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