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Message from the Chair

by TC Department Chair Judy Ramey

If this column can be viewed as a sort of State of the Department address, then I am happy to report that TC has had another banner year! Let me briefly highlight some especially noteworthy events.

I am extremely pleased and grateful to announce that alumna Donna Sakson, her husband Jonathan Mark, and her company Sakson & Taylor Inc., have created TC’s first endowed scholarship. This fund will benefit an undergraduate student from an underrepresented minority. Not only is this TC’s first endowed scholarship ever, but the gift also increases TC’s total endowment by almost 50%! A huge thank you to Donna and Jonathan for their vision and commitment to excellence.

Speaking of excellence, of course, brings me to Jan Spyridakis, who this year won STC’s Jay R. Gould Award for excellence in TC education. For Jan, this award, the most recent of many that she has won, raises the recognition of her achievements in combining teaching and research to the international level. I hope that all of you who are Jan’s former students will join me in congratulating her.

With our many wins for the year, I also have to mention a loss for us — the departure of Carolyn Plumb. Carolyn, whom many of you have known over the past 17 years as teacher, undergraduate adviser, and director of the Engineering Communication Program (among her many roles!), has moved on to Montana State University in Bozeman. We wish Carolyn and her husband Barrie all the best in their new setting.

Beyond these three major developments, we have had another busy and successful year, marked especially by growing funding for research and growing emphasis on global communication. We are also in the middle of an extensive curriculum review, with the goal of allowing us to place even greater emphasis on involving all of our students — undergraduates, day and evening master’s students, PhD students — in hands-on research. It is an exciting time to be in TC! I hope you’ll read and enjoy the stories about our activities in the following pages. Or on the Web! This year’s newsletter team had many more stories to tell than we had room for in print, so they created “postTComm on the Web,” which has story continuations, online exclusives, and an archive of earlier issues of this newsletter. I hope that you’ll check it out!

Finally, let me invite you to come to our 30-year all-classes reunion, to be held this September 10 in Seattle! In the 30 years since the program was launched by Mike White and Jim Souther in 1974, both the TC field and the UWTC program have grown and changed dramatically. We welcome this opportunity to come together with you to celebrate these 30 years of mutual accomplishment!

About the Cover
The front cover photo is the new Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering. The cover was designed by Andrea Murphy (amurphy@fastmail.fm).

Contacting postTComm
If you have any news, comments, corrections or additions, please contact postTComm (postcomm@u.washington.edu).

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http://uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm

postTComm 2004 staff:

Top row: Ben Cape, John Giang, Kristen Uhring, Karina Allen, Sara (Demery) Hyacinthe, Alyssa McFarland, Raina Richart.
Bottom row: Andrew Sengul, Seamleng Tiang, Jay Barker, Mark Hanna and Advisors Judy Ramey and Kate Long.
Spyridakis Honored for Teaching

by Andrew Sengul

For TC Professor Jan Spyridakis, teaching has always been an indispensable part of academic life. Her receipt of the Society for Technical Communication’s (STC) Jay R. Gould award last October came as no surprise in a career marked by recognition for teaching excellence.

“I felt honored to have received the award,” she said. “STC is the largest group of technical communicators in the world, and to have my teaching recognized by them is the highest honor I could receive.”

The Jay R. Gould award is given by the STC in recognition of “excellence in teaching that becomes true academic mentorship.” In any given year, there are no more than three recipients worldwide. Candidates for the award are nominated by students or program heads, and must submit personal statements and letters of recommendation from colleagues.

Spyridakis calls her fundamental teaching method “experimental learning.”

“I believe in interactive, adaptive teaching,” she explained. “My methods are based on feedback and trying to sense what the students are feeling.”

Since the beginning of her career as a lecturer for engineering writing courses, Spyridakis has been committed to teaching; indeed, she became a professor not out of interest in research alone, but so that she would be able to use research to complement her teaching methods.

“I taught a long time at the engineering writing class level,” she explained. “A lot of the textbooks, especially in new fields like Web design, are based on someone’s best guess, and I wanted to use more informed teaching methods.”

Spyridakis began work on her PhD in 1983, finished in 1986, and joined the TC professorial ranks in 1987. As a professor, she has created a mutually beneficial relationship between her teaching and research activities.

“I like to incorporate research in my teaching and tell my students what the latest developments are in the fields that I teach,” she said. “Research and teaching both feed into each other.”

Over the course of her career, Spyridakis has taught 13 different undergraduate courses and instructed numerous returning students and professionals in the department’s evening certificate program. She is currently working on a project aimed at tracking user activity on Web sites and using the resulting data to discover optimal methods of organizing online content.

Sakson $100K Diversity Scholarship

by Ben Cape

The UWTC department’s ability to recruit a more diverse student population received a big boost this year from one of its graduates.

Donna Sakson, President of Sakson & Taylor, Inc. and a UWTC grad, announced this year that she, her firm, and her husband, Jonathan Mark, will donate $100,000 to set up a scholarship fund to bring more under-represented minority students into the UWTC program and thus into the profession.

“This is a huge step forward in the department’s efforts to achieve excellence by attracting a diverse student population,” said Judy Ramey, UWTC department chair. “We are enormously grateful to Donna and Jonathan and to Sakson and Taylor, Inc. for this landmark gift.”

Sakson earned her degree at the UW in 1982. While at the UW, she formed a student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), and later served as president of the international organization. As a graduate of a relatively new program, she found herself with a wealth of knowledge among peers who had few ideas regarding what to do with the technology she had learned about in school.

“That was back when no one knew how to use a computer, and the machines we did work with still had two floppy drives,” she said.

While working as a technical writer, Sakson grew restless. She wanted to work for herself and employ others who had a passion for the same work. In 1985, at age 25, she ventured out on her own.

“I wanted to create top-quality documentation in an ethical environment and make a living doing it,” Sakson said. “I was driven.”

What came to be Sakson & Taylor is now one of the largest technical documentation companies in the world.

Continued on page 7
30-Year Reunion: Time to Celebrate

by Ben Cape

The UWTC department started in 1974 with Jim Souther and Myron White, two people dedicated to advancing communication knowledge and its importance in a world getting smaller through technology.

While the discipline of technical communication has expanded over the years to mean different things to different individuals, there is one aspect of the TC department that has never lost its importance—the people.

That is why TC Chair Judy Ramey is inviting everyone who has been involved with the department over the past three decades to celebrate its 30-year anniversary this fall at Lake Union Café in Seattle.

“This reunion is an opportunity for the whole UWTC community to come together and celebrate,” said Ramey. “Our goal is to get participation by alums from every single year of our existence! In fact, if you’d like to volunteer to help us pull this together, I’d love to hear from you!”

This fall’s gathering won’t be the first time the TC department’s friends and alumni have gathered, but it is sure to be one of the best. The field of technical communication grows exponentially every year and the UWTC department has grown with it. Although it has been a mere five years since the last department reunion, so much has changed in the program that an evening with everyone is necessary just to keep up with what has been happening on campus.

Since the department last met, it has added an evening master’s program and a PhD program, helping to bring the number of graduate students in UWTC to more than 60. There are new tools and facilities in the department, such as the Laboratory for Usability Testing and Evaluation (LUTE) and Tom Williams’ eye-tracker software. New faculty and staff have come aboard; some have a history with the department, and others have come from different schools around the nation. With so many new people and programs helping make UWTC the best TC department in the nation, there is much to brag about and share with all the friends of the department.

To ensure that everyone gets a chance to mingle with the personalities that have made the department such a success, the reunion will be set up as kind of generational mixer. Displays representing the six five-year intervals of the department’s history will be set up and act as rally points for those involved with the department during those years. No one, however, will be chained to the displays and mingling with the different generations of the department will not only be allowed but encouraged.

In order to chronicle the department’s growth and its changing face over the years, guests from the five-year time chunks will be asked to produce a poster explaining what technical communication was all about during their time at UW. As more guests sign up for the event, more information about producing the posters will be given. If you would like to be on the team to develop a poster or other display for your five-year period, e-mail Kate Long to volunteer (katelong@u.washington.edu).

The reunion will take place at the Lake Union Café, which overlooks Lake Union and has a beautiful ballroom that is often used for weddings and receptions. Food and drinks will complement a social evening where everyone will be in high spirits.

Whether you are looking for someone in particular or want to catch up with what all is going on in one of the best technical communication programs in the country, be sure to sign up to attend.

The 30-year reunion for the Department of Technical Communication at the University of Washington will be held Friday, Sept. 10 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the Lake Union Café, 3119 Eastlake Ave., in Seattle. The cost is $48 per person, but all UW and TC department Alumni Association members get 20% off the ticket price.

The event is co-sponsored by the UW Alumni Association. Guests are asked to register by calling (206) 543-0540 or by visiting the Web site at www.UWalum.com.

For more information, call the TC department at (206) 543-2567. For information and directions to the Lake Union Café, visit www.lakeunioncafe.com.

September 10, 2004 from 7-11pm
Lake Union Café
To register, call 206-543-0540 or www.UWalum.com
Then and Now: UWTC Faces Through History

by Ben Cape

Myron White

The origins of the department can be traced back to two professors, Myron White and Jim Souther, who were professors in the College of Engineering’s Department of Humanistic Social Studies (HSS). Throughout the 1960s, the pair had recognized the growing importance of good technical documentation and approached the college with an idea of creating a separate program dedicated to technical communication. The college agreed and Souther and White taught their first classes in the fall of 1974.

“We were just a couple of academics who decided to do something,” White said. “It started small but it grew.”

In the beginning of the program, students were taught the basics of technical report design and management in a series of classes taught by White and Souther. Classes could count toward a minor in another degree program or be used as a focus for an interdisciplinary bachelor’s degree in engineering or in the General Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Souther and White were able to expand the faculty, some of whom are here to this day: Jan Spyridakis, Mary Coney, Tom Williams, David Farkas, and Judy Ramey.

White retired in 1983, but has come back to teach periodically and still keeps a stack of the latest issues of the Society for Technical Communication’s (STC) Intercom on his coffee table. He said the need for information design is as relevant as ever. While there was a need for a TC education in 1974, that need has become even more acute in modern times. In the last 30 years, society has seen the widespread use of the computer, and the Internet has affected almost everything about the way people communicate.

Looking back, White said the opportunity to start a TC department was one he was glad to have taken.

“Not many people can say they started a department,” he said.

David Farkas

David Farkas was one of the professors who came to the department during Myron White and Jim Souther’s leadership. Like most technical communication faculty of that era, Farkas’ original training was in literature, but he had made the commitment to technical communication while completing his doctoral work at the University of Minnesota, and he had taught technical communication in the English departments at Texas Tech University and West Virginia University (WVU).

At WVU, Farkas was the lead instructor in a technical writing service course that enrolled about 250 engineering students each year. Plus, he taught a few advanced courses. But he was the only person in the English Department for whom technical communication was the main focus.

“I dearly loved living in West Virginia—especially because my main non-work activity is paddling a canoe,” Farkas said. “But I couldn’t resist the opportunity to join a group of faculty whose specializations were all in some aspect of technical communication.”

Farkas has seen important changes in his 20 years at UW.

“The research we conduct has become much more sophisticated. Also, we ask much more of our students in terms of preparation,” Farkas said. “Now they need to understand multimedia, usability, and much more. Plus, they need to master numerous software applications and learn programming. Early in my career, the ultimate tool was PageMaker. Another change is our increasingly global outlook. We now have projects all over the world.”

And what about the future?

“One aspect of globalism is that technical communicators in the UW are directly competing with their counterparts in other nations,” Farkas said. “We must require our students to perform at a higher level and to learn new kinds of skills. They truly need to be the best in the world.”
Mark Haselkorn

One of the additions to the department during its early years was Mark Haselkorn, a Louisiana State University professor whom David Farkas had met when he was on a faculty hiring committee at West Virginia University. Like Farkas, Haselkorn had a background in English but was leaning his studies more toward the intersection of language and technology. In 1985, Haselkorn was hired and replaced Souther as director of what was then the Program in Scientific and Technical Communication in the College of Engineering’s Interdepartmental Curricular Program. Haselkorn helped usher in the creation of the department soon after (see side story).

In its more than 10 years, the TC Department has found itself gaining more visibility in a wider academic world. In 1985, the Society for Technical Communication (STC) listed 58 academic technical communication programs in the nation. Now it lists more than 250.

“We were even more unique then than we are now and we are still pretty unique,” Haselkorn said.

Haselkorn also said the coming generation’s exposure to technology and computer communication will ensure that the issues the department is studying and teaching have a future and will remain critical.

“Even my daughter in 4th grade is learning about information design,” he said.

Beth Kolko

One of the more recent additions to the TC faculty has been Associate Professor Beth Kolko.

Like many of her predecessors, Kolko was an English professor who became intrigued by the technologies that affected composition and communication. After getting her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin in 1994, Kolko started teaching. She noticed the impact technology had on the work her students did and the culture that was developing in online environments. In the early 1990s, issues such as gender and copyright were all starting to take on a whole new meaning in cyberspace.

“I was in the right place at the right time,” she said. When Kolko came to the UWTC department in 2000, it was an opportunity to immerse herself even more in the concepts she saw influencing how technology affects communication habits. Kolko is now involved in a research group for digital gaming, a part of American life that has become so much a part of its culture that its citizens spend more on video games than they do on movies. Kolko is the department’s PhD advisor and has also gained international recognition for her work in Uzbekistan and neighboring countries as she leads a project investigating how developing countries are entering the world of technology and technical communication.

“The past three years have been the most professionally satisfying of my life,” she said.

Haselkorn saw window of opportunity

It could be said that the TC department at the UW started with a window. Or the lack of one. In 1985, some technical communication faculty members were assigned different offices. One professor was distressed to find that the office to which he was assigned didn’t have a window, so he appealed his loss of a window to a faculty review board.

At that time, the technical communication program was part of the College of Engineering’s Interdepartmental Curricular Program (EICP). While the technical communication program had its own director, Mark Haselkorn, an associate dean in the College of Engineering, functioned as department chair. After investigating the professor’s window complaint, the faculty review committee decided that faculty members had no formal right to a window in their office, but they did have a formal right to a department chair who represented them to the Dean’s office. They pointed out that the Associate Dean had a conflict of interest since he was both Chair and in the Dean’s office.

Shortly thereafter, the Dean approached Haselkorn about taking over as Chair of EICP. Haselkorn said he would do so only with the understanding that in this position he would try to dismantle EICP in an effort to leave the TC program as the functional department. The dean agreed.

So in the end, the professor was not entitled to a window, but the technical communication faculty, staff, and students were entitled to a department.
**TC Department Web Site Renovations**

*by Raina Richart*

For the past few quarters, the TC Department’s Web site has been undergoing a major overhaul. Karen Kasonic, Dave Farkas, and PhD student Quan Zhou have been working on the Web site since autumn 2003.

They began by working on the hierarchy of the site, developing two versions and testing them for usability. In winter quarter, they synthesized one hierarchy and developed the second, third, and fourth level headings. During spring quarter, they worked on writing overview pages and doing testing. Also during spring, and into the Summer, they will be fitting the old content and integrating new content into the site.

The new Web site should be ready sometime this summer. It will be available at [http://uwtc.washington.edu](http://uwtc.washington.edu).

**UWTC Scores with Student Tech Fee**

*by Alyssa McFarland*

UWTC continues to have outstanding success in obtaining infrastructure grants. This year, the department obtained over $250,000 combined funding from the Student Technology Fee grant and the College of Engineering research infrastructure grant. Both grants required written proposals, so it’s not surprising that the Technical Communication department has once again excelled in this form of rhetoric.

The Student Technology Fee award (our seventh win in seven years!) keeps all of our student technology resources on the cutting edge: the student computing lab, multimedia lab, usability lab, and new Media Space facilities (including digital cameras and other portable equipment). The College of Engineering research infrastructure award will allow us to upgrade faculty and staff resources to the same cutting-edge level so that we can meet the department’s research goals.

**Minor Remodel Equals Major Improvements**

*by Alyssa McFarland*

The TC department has benefited from two “minor mods” awarded through the College of Engineering Dean’s Office. This money went toward the remodeling of different facilities used by TC students.

The first grant, totaling $10,000, was used to remodel the student lounge in the Engineering Annex. The room has been repainted and a work surface has been added that will hold four new computers, with which small groups of students will be able to work on projects together. The old green sofa and books have been removed from the space, making way for a new conference table and chairs. These padded chairs have wheels and are stackable to help save space. Mailboxes and kitchen appliances are still present in the lounge.

The second award was $40,000. It provided three new workstations for Research Assistants in Room 13 of Loew as well as shelving and storage cabinets in the copy room in the basement of Loew Hall. Books once kept in the TC lounge are now housed on the new shelves in this copy room. In addition, the funds will provide for new computer chairs in the TC computer lab (task-oriented chairs that can be adjusted to suit individuals’ tastes) and minor office furnishings in the offices of the chair and fiscal specialist.

**TC Grads E-mail Alias Hijacked!**

*by John Giang*

The Department of Technical Communication would like to submit a formal apology to students who were on the graduate student e-mail distribution list in early 2004. The TC grads e-mail alias was hijacked and it caused mayhem for students on the list as students were flooded with junk e-mail.

All graduate students on the TC grads e-mail alias list were spammed. If a student would reply to the e-mail, the problem would get worse. As a result, the TC grads e-mail alias had to be disabled to put an end to the annoying problem.

"Sakson" Continued from page 3

Sakson’s company has grown from three employees to a firm with offices in Seattle and Vancouver, Washington; Fort Collins, Colorado; and Boise, Idaho.

A long-time supporter of technical communication education, she has continued to contribute to the UWTC department. Sakson has sat on educational boards for UWTC classes and has set up endowments for the department as well.

As an alumna of the UW and a leader in the technical communication field, she noticed that certain demographics are missing from higher education and from the field. Sakson, a scholarship recipient herself, decided to set up a permanent endowment worth $100,000.

Sakson said a diverse student body is not only good for the UWTC department, but good for the field she has seen evolve for nearly two decades.

“By offering educational opportunities, we expand diversity both in the educational setting and in our professional community,” Sakson said.
Centering Design Around Users

by Alyssa McFarland

The UWTC department has a certificate program and a coordinated study that teach students how to design with users in mind: the graduate-level User-Centered Design (UCD) certificate program and the undergraduate-level Coordinated Study in User Interface Design and Usability.

These two programs benefit more than just the students who take the classes. Everyone benefits from user-friendly design, whether it is applied to hardware and software, a kitchen appliance, telephone, Web site or medical equipment. Students have been able to take what they have learned in these programs and apply it to their jobs.

Coordinated Study in User Interface Design and Usability Undergraduate Program

The Coordinated Study in User Interface Design and Usability is an intensive, self-sustaining program that is offered through UW Educational Outreach (UWEO). It is offered to undergrads for regular tuition costs. The three 5-credit classes are offered concurrently and are completed in a single quarter.

This is the third consecutive year the department has offered the Coordinated Study in User Interface Design and Usability. In spring 2003, 24 students successfully completed the program, and 28 students completed it in 2002.

User Centered Design Graduate Program

The User-Centered Design certificate program began in winter 2003. This program includes three graduate-level classes plus a one-credit seminar and is typically completed in three quarters. As of winter 2004, 18 students had received the UCD certificate.

UWTC started the UCD certificate because there was a group of interested students who wanted to study user-centered design and usability but didn’t want to commit or weren’t interested in the full MS degree. Some of the UCD certificate students have found they actually do want the MS degree and have continued!

Neicole Crepeau completed the User-Centered Design program recently and has been able to use what she has learned in her job at Microsoft.

“I’ve applied what I’ve learned in the design of an application that allows people to create expert systems. I conducted usability tests on the application, using the information I learned in Judy Ramey’s class. And I have been able to provide better input to others on their UI designs,” she said.

Since the UCD program courses are a subset of the ones that TC Master’s students may take for completion of the Master’s degree, TC Master’s students can also apply for the User-Centered Design certificate once they complete the necessary courses and pay a $45 application fee.

PosTComm is Online

by John Giang

PosTComm now has a Web site available for alumni and friends of the University of Washington’s Department of Technical Communication (UWTC). The Web site officially went up in April and is a great resource for all things related to PosTComm and the UWTC department.

The Web site was developed by UWTC undergraduates Seamleng Taing, Sara Demery, and Raina Richart, who are all on the PosTComm staff. The project took four months to complete and a lot of hard work was put into it.

In the Web site, people can access individual articles from current and past PosTComm publications, and all articles are searchable by their publication year. In addition to the published articles, there are also Web articles that can only be accessed from the Web site.

The Web site also has previous PosTComm newsletters in PDF format that are easily downloadable. Anyone interested can download all the PosTComm magazines published since 1997.

In addition, there is information about the current PosTComm staff and how students can join the team of the student-driven publication. Students can find out about different roles and responsibilities they can choose from to participate in as part of the PosTComm staff.

Finally, there is also a link for people who would like to support the UWTC department through different funds.

PosTComm Web site:
http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm/

Master of Science in Technical Communication Degree

In the past, Technical Communication master’s students graduating from the University of Washington heard only “Master of Science” when their names were called at the graduation ceremony. Starting with the winter 2004 graduating class, master’s students now have a field-specific title: “Master of Science in Technical Communication” (MSTC).
LUTE Gets New Equipment

by Andrew Sengul

A firm called User-Centric Design made a generous donation to the TC department’s Laboratory for Usability Testing and Evaluation (LUTE) in late 2003. The portable usability testing lab donated by the company will enable the further expansion of the lab’s capabilities.

The equipment will not be used for usability testing on its own; rather, its components are being used to augment the lab’s existing usability testing systems.

The cameras included with the portable lab are now mounted in LUTE, allowing video footage of test subjects to be recorded from three overhead angles. A drop microphone from the portable lab has also been installed in LUTE.

Another important addition is the Noldus Observer usability testing software that was bundled with the portable lab equipment. This software extends the lab’s data collection capabilities with simultaneous video and computer input logging.

As well as adding new functionality to the lab, the pieces of the portable lab have been used to fully interconnect the existing components of LUTE. For instance, assistant LUTE director Rich DeSantis was able to embed the Eye-gaze Response Interface Computer Aid (ERICA) eye-tracking system into LUTE’s main usability testing station by using equipment from the portable lab.

“The gift had a huge impact on the range of things we can do in LUTE,” explained Department Chair Judy Ramey.

The portable lab was a lucky find for the TC department; User-Centric Design was in the process of moving its offices last year, had no further use for the testing devices, and planned to discard them rather than pay the cost of transporting them. User-Centric Design employee Gwendolyn Dunlap, who had taken a workshop from Ramey, then remembered that TC had a usability lab and decided to donate the equipment to UWTC instead.

Jesse Knappenberger joins department as Academic Counselor

Jesse Knappenberger was hired as the TC department’s new academic counselor, starting Monday, March 1, 2004. As academic counselor, Jesse will:

- Provide academic counseling to TC graduates and undergraduates
- Advise and recruit TC students and facilitate student admissions
- Focus on information management, course management, and event management as related to student and academic services
- Provide interpretation and effective communication of UW policies and regulation for students, faculty and staff, and the general public
- Coordinate recruitment, admission, and advising for the TC Evening Master’s Program

Knappenberger previously worked as a UW Admissions Specialist in Undergraduate Admissions.
Carolyn Wei: An Accomplished Scholar

by Alyssa McFarland

PhD student Carolyn Wei has a number of achievements to her credit. The TC department has recognized her accomplishments and nominated her for the Society of Women Engineers’ Outstanding Graduate Female award for 2004. She is a good example of a fine student who is benefiting from the generous fellowships and awards that the University of Washington and the UWTC department have to offer.

One of Wei’s academic interests is in exploring how multilingual people approach the Internet. For example, in Uzbekistan, people may speak Uzbek, Russian or one of several other ethnic languages. How do they use the Internet when most of the content on the Web is not in one of these languages?

She wrote a paper on this topic by analyzing a portion of a survey about Uzbek attitudes on technology and the Internet and their information seeking behavior. The survey was administered by a team headed by Beth Kolko and Jan Spyridakis. The resulting paper Wei wrote was accepted for the CaTaC (Cultural Attitudes Toward Technology and Communication) 2004 conference, and Wei will be traveling to Karlstad, Sweden from June 27 to July 1 to present her paper as part of a panel on multilingual internet topics. The paper will also be published in the conference proceedings.

Wei has won FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) fellowships through the University of Washington’s Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies Center (REECAS) for academic year 2003-04 and summers 2003 and 2004 to assist her in studying Uzbek language and international research methods. The FLAS fellowships pay for tuition costs and a stipend. In summer 2003, Wei traveled to Indiana University to study first-year Uzbek, and in summer 2004 she will continue studying the language in Samarkand, Uzbekistan at a summer language workshop program run by Indiana University. She will live with a host family and be fully immersed in the local culture and language.

“Samarkand is in the middle of the desert in Uzbekistan. It’s supposed to get up to 120 degrees,” said Wei.

While in Samarkand, she will continue her research for the Central Asia project as well as explore thesis ideas.

In addition to her Central Asia work, Wei has been part of the directed research group in signaling (see page 19 for more information on that group). She co-authored several papers as part of this group and will be co-presenting these papers at the IPCC (International Professional Communication Conference) in Minneapolis and at the Association of Internet Researchers conference in Brighton, England in September 2004. Visit http://uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm to see the list of citations for papers by Carolyn Wei and other UWTC students.

The Graduate School’s Fund for Excellence and Innovation is helping to fund Wei’s travel to Sweden via a travel award. UWTC has also provided a travel grant for the IPCC conference.

STC Scholarship Recipients for 2004: James Cline and Tami Kays

by Alyssa McFarland and Dale Callison

Congratulations to master’s students James Cline and Tami Kays for winning this year’s Souther and White scholarships from the Puget Sound chapter of the Society for Technical Communication!

Each year, the Puget Sound STC chapter awards one or more scholarships to outstanding students of technical communication. The Souther and White Scholarships are awarded to students who have demonstrated an exceptional aptitude for technical communication and potential for making a strong contribution to the field. The scholarship program honors two nationally-known STC Fellows from Seattle: Professors James W. Souther and Myron L. White, cofounders of the program in Scientific and Technical Communication at the University of Washington.

The application period for the scholarship is January through February, and the scholarship is awarded in April for the following academic year. Scholarship information and application materials are posted on the Web site for the Puget Sound STC chapter (http://www.stcpsc.org).

Read more about James Cline, Tami Kays, and the STC Scholarship on the posTComm Web site
Master’s Student Thayer Published in IEEE Journal

by Ben Cape

The first article technical communication master’s student Alex Thayer wrote for publication was a column for *Nintendo Power*, a magazine for Nintendo video game users Thayer read as a child.

He came a long way on his second article. This summer, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) will publish Thayer’s “Material Culture Analysis and Professional Communication: An Art Historical Approach to Evaluating Documentation” in its journal *Transactions on Professional Communication*. Thayer’s article will appear alongside distinguished scholars in science.

“It was my own brainchild so that was cool,” Thayer said.

Thayer’s article was born of a long-standing interest in finding the intersection of art and technical communication; as an undergraduate, Thayer studied art along with technical communication.

Last fall, Thayer was at an IEEE conference in Orlando when he met a professor working in Japan. Thayer asked what he would have to do in order to teach and the professor suggested publishing an “Interface” article in IEEE’s *Transactions on Professional Communication*, which specializes in interdisciplinary theories to shed light on an idea.

Thayer immediately thought of an art criticism theory called material culture analysis, the idea that studying how a piece of art was composed could teach one about the culture and time period in which it was created. He thought of the theory often and wanted to apply it somehow to technical communication.

Continued on page 30

Students Whose Travel Will Be Funded By Endowments

by Alyssa McFarland

Funds from TC endowments are available to help students defray conference registration costs and travel costs if the student will be making a presentation at a major conference in the field, receiving an award, or performing a significant administrative role (e.g., conference manager). Travel awards come from the following monetary sources:

Mary B. Coney Endowment Fund
James G. Prekeges Endowment Fund
James W. Souther Endowment Fund
Sakson and Taylor Endowment Fund
Myron L. White Endowment Fund

For more information on the TC policy for allocation of student travel funds, please visit: http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/resources/docdepot/studenttravel.htm

Below is a list of students funded by travel awards this year:

**Jennifer Barrick, Mary Evans, Brandon Maust** – STC Annual Conference in Baltimore, MD

**Rich DeSantis and Jana Jones** – Usability Professionals Association meeting in Minneapolis, MN

**Jay Barker, Mary Evans, Alicia McBride, Alex Thayer, Halima Voyles and Mark Hanna** – International Summer Workshop in Enschede, the Netherlands.

**Alicia McBride, Alex Thayer, Mary Evans, Carolyn Wei** – Cultural Attitudes Towards Technology and Communication Conference in Karlstad, Sweden

**Mary Evans, Alicia McBride, Alex Thayer, Jennifer Barrick, Carolyn Wei** – IPCC Conference in Minneapolis, MN

**Alex Thayer** – Digital Games Conference in the Netherlands

**Alex Thayer and Mary Evans** – STC National Conference in Orlando, FL

**Christina Bottomley** – A Study of Online Warnings as Communicative Action in College Park, MD

Online Exclusive

http://uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm

Tami Kays: Science Writing Apprentice
Papers Published by Students
Listing of this Year’s TC Graduates
Dean’s List
Jonathan Price Speaks on a Personal Level

by Kristen Uhring

Last winter, the TC department was honored to welcome guest speaker Jonathan Price. Price is a “well known and well respected figure in the TC community,” commented TC Professor David Farkas. Students and faculty gathered to hear Price talk about his life experiences as well as his accomplishments in the TC field.

Price, a graduate from both Harvard and Yale, has always had a passion for writing. Spending countless hours writing as a child, he grew up to become a journalist for various magazines such as Esquire, Harper’s, and Reader’s Digest. Eventually he moved to California in 1982 to work for Apple Computer, Inc. where he discovered the field of TC.

As an Apple employee, Price created their original style guide, later turning it into a book. Price also headed the development of Apple’s online help systems, which incorporated a hypertext system.

“I like the experience of multiple paths through material,” Price stated.

After his time at Apple, Price spent several years teaching at various universities, as well as consulting for many technical companies on writing for the Web.

According to Price, writing for the Web is changing. Web users are looking for more human-like communication; thus, online help will have to act more like a conversation than a document. In order to increase the use of online help systems, companies will have to create personalized embedded assistance — no more pop-ups or new screens opening. Personalization will not only appeal to users, but “knowing what readers want speeds up writing.”

Price claims the Web will adapt to several styles of writing, including ones with more sense of humor. He predicts an end to certain punctuation symbols such as hyphens and an increase in the use of exclamation points! Price said, “Every few years writing [for the Web] will change.”

For more information on Jonathan Price or his works, visit his Web sites at theprices.com or webwritingthatworks.com.

Student Research Enriches the Technical Communication Community

by Alyssa McFarland

The TC department showcased this year’s best student research on April 20 at a joint meeting of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and the Technical Communication Alumni Association (TCAA). Selected student teams delivered presentations of interest to the professional technical communication community, and there was an opportunity for networking and mingling between students, faculty, STC members, and alumni.

TC master’s student Alex Thayer presented research done by the Digital Games directed research group, where they investigated how digital games are adapted to fit an international audience.

“One of the core competencies of technical communication is audience analysis. That’s also important for digital games,” said Thayer.

For example, when preparing a violent video game for a country like Germany that has strict anti-violence laws, the creators of “Half Life” had to change the people to robots and the blood color to green.

TC students Mary Evans and Matt Queen discussed international issues as they relate to Web sites. As part of a directed research group, they used content analysis to look at Web sites around the world, with the aim of answering the research question: Is the content of sites in the United States really more informal in tone than other countries? What they found was that tone varies as much within individual countries, on average, as it does among countries.

TC student Alicia McBride described the multimedia design project she worked on to help teach undergraduate students about cell biology. She used computer metaphors because the analysis indicated that biology students were generally familiar with computers.

“Technical communicators have a lot to add to [educational, multimedia] design,” said McBride, pointing out that in working on a project like this, she had to use audience analysis to determine the best way to present the information to the students.

Each student research project had a large poster board showing a summary of their research. PosTComm regrets that we cannot discuss all the fascinating displays, but hopefully your interest has been piqued and you will want to come to next year’s showcase event!
Transitions: Carolyn Plumb Moves to Montana State University

by Judy Ramey

After a seventeen-year career in TC, Carolyn Plumb has taken a position as Director of Strategic Projects in the College of Engineering at Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman, Montana, starting in Autumn of 2004.

MSU will not be entirely new to Carolyn; she spent a sabbatical there from January through June of 2002, when she helped their College of Engineering develop departmental and college-wide outcomes for writing, and consulted on other assessment processes and tools. Asked to describe her new job, Carolyn explained that "my work will be about curricular reform, and I will be working with faculty, staff, and students on several initiatives, including recruiting and retaining Native American students to engineering and developing a freshman-level course in Contemporary Issues in Science.”

Carolyn began her transition from TC this 2003-04 academic year by taking on an exciting new assignment as an instructional development and assessment specialist in the UW School of Law, helping them re-envision their Basic Legal Skills Program to focus on collaboration, technology, and assessment.

As part of the bargain, she got a brand new office in William H. Gates Hall, the newly-constructed home of the law school situated behind the Burke Museum, much to the envy of her colleagues who continue to occupy the basement of Loew Hall!

Carolyn's career in TC has proceeded from one success to another. She started the TC master's program in January of 1987 and earned her MSTC in August of 1988. She began the doctoral program in Educational Psychology in Autumn of 1988 and received her PhD in 1991. In TC, she started teaching as a TA in winter of 1987 and became a Post Doctoral Lecturer and director of the COE’s Communication Program in autumn of 1988. She created the UW Engineering Writing Center in 1997, expanded it to include the School of Information in 2001, and further expanded it to cover Biomedical and Health Informatics this past year. She has been active across the university in governance roles; she has been Chair of the UW Faculty Council on Academic Standards for the past two years, and she has served on the UW Undergraduate Advisory Committee and Enrollment Management Committee. For many years she has been the faculty coordinator for the UWTC Certificate Program in Technical Writing and Editing. Nationally recognized for her contributions, in 2003 Carolyn won the Society for Technical Communication's international Jay R. Gould Award for excellence in education.

The entire UWTC community wishes Carolyn well in her new undertaking. We will miss her in many ways: her collegiality, her incredibly well-organized work habits, her mentoring of students, teaching assistants, and instructors, her vision and creativity, and, not least, her fantastic parties with music provided by her and her husband Barrie Russac, partners in PlumbBarrie, the noted local duo!

Carolyn said, "My 17 years with TC have been amazing. Faculty, staff, and students in TC have offered an exciting and supportive community. Friends from TC will always be a part of my life—and I'm already planning on appropriate guest quarters! What I have learned by teaching technical communication and by directing the College of Engineering’s Communication Program has encouraged me to apply this knowledge in a broader venue, which is what I've done in the law school this past year and what I will do at Montana State University."
From UWTC Students to Tektronix Colleagues

by Sara (Demery) Hyacinthe

Kelcie Anderson, Wes Kalbfleisch, and Tristan Robinson are three University of Washington (UW) Technical Communication (TC) program graduates who have moved on to become employees of Tektronix (Tek), an electronic test and measurement equipment manufacturer in Beaverton, Oregon. For this best-in-its-class developer of computer, communications, and video test equipment, Anderson holds the title Engineering Manager, Kalbfleisch holds the title TC Manager, and Robinson holds the title Usability Engineer (UE).

Kelcie Anderson, 1995 UWTC Master’s recipient, currently manages a group of usability engineers and industrial designers at Tek. Of the people in these groups, Anderson has hired two people from the UWTC program, one of whom is a contractor and the other is Tristan Robinson. When Anderson was asked how she made her decision to hire Robinson, she said, “When I’m looking for UE talent, I know that I can count on a solid theoretical understanding from people who have completed the UWTC course. I have also found every candidate from this department to be bright, energetic, and able to adapt to a number of different design teams.”

In response to further questioning, Anderson shared that the TC program gave her an appreciation for perspective, and that Mary Coney’s class, Theoretical Dimensions of TC (TC 501), is actually the foundation of the most practical knowledge she has. Anderson revealed that this course has a lot of bearing on her job and is responsible for helping her realize “there is no objective truth, only everyone’s interpretation of the situation.” This is an understanding that Anderson believes is not only helping her resolve personnel conflicts and discuss program trade-offs with program managers, but it is also helping her usability engineers and industrial designers design products that are more usable.

As advice for graduating students, Anderson shared that graduates should be able to demonstrate that they understand the theoretical process for user-centered design, show that they appreciate trade-offs that are made in a real business situation, and convey that they know how to adapt their theoretical understanding to the present situation.

Wes Kalbfleisch, 1996 UWTC Bachelor of Science recipient, is one of three managers in charge of groups working on TC projects in Beaverton, Oregon, just one of the locations where Tek has writing groups. Other writing groups are located in Tokyo, Bangalore, Berlin, Cambridge, and Padova. Kalbfleisch stated that he enjoys the challenges associated with having staff, peers, and internal customers in other countries, and he appreciates the opportunity to manage a group that comprises highly skilled technical writers. Kalbfleisch also stated that he uses the technical communication precepts that he learned in the TC program every day, and he does precisely the kind of work he had in mind when he graduated from the UWTC program. In addition to receiving a UWTC degree and position at Tek, Kalbfleisch obtained a master’s in Applied Information Management from the University of Oregon (U of O), and while attending U of O, he composed a capstone paper on the subject of factors TC managers address when moving from a traditional authoring environment to an XML-based, single-source authoring environment. Coincidentally, his group at Tek is currently working to implement their first XML application, a single-source authoring environment, for product documentation.

Tristan Robinson, 2001 UWTC master’s recipient, completed a co-op at Tek through the UW’s College of Engineering and then was hired by Kelcie Anderson to become one of Tek’s usability engineers. Under Anderson’s direction, Robinson is currently working on a project that consists of product design, usability testing, and the role of aesthetics in perceived usability for Tek’s Performance Oscilloscope division. Robinson meets with Anderson on a weekly basis to get help with removing obstacles that might keep him from doing his job well and to get help with brainstorming ways to approach difficult tasks.

In addition to his work projects and meetings, Robinson takes part in a 128-mile race walk for Tek’s 12-member relay team each summer. During his time away from Tek related activities, Robinson has worked to create two UI-related inventions for which he has applied to receive patents. One patent he’s waiting to obtain is for a product named “MyScope,” which Robinson envisioned with the help of two of his colleagues. This invention enables users to create their own customized set of controls that conform to their workflow. The second patent Robinson is waiting to obtain is for an invention of his own. He describes it as being an invention that “uses animation to help users locate very small, otherwise difficult-to-see, areas of interest on the screen of the oscilloscope.”

At the present time, Robinson is contemplating returning to school to study the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) in an academic/research environment and is hoping to apply to the PhD program in Communication at Stanford where he would study and work with Communication, Computer Science, and Psychology students and professors as part of the HCI Consortium.

For more information about Tektronix, visit www.tek.com. For more information about the individuals reviewed in this article, contact each directly via e-mail:

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Wes Kalbfleisch - wesley.d.kalbfleisch@tektronix.com
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postTComm 2004
Newly Minted UWTC Master’s Student Freeman Published in STC’s Technical Communication

by Ben Cape

Kris Freeman has always loved to write. That is why she became a journalist, enrolled in the UWTC master’s program, and went on to publish an article for the May issue of the Society for Technical Communication’s (STC) Technical Communication magazine.

“I had published a lot of stuff before so I figured I could do this,” she said, commenting on whether she felt a student with just a master’s degree could get published in a scholarly journal.

Freeman started her writing career out of school as a journalist for a small newspaper in John Day, Oregon in 1981. She moved onto magazine journalism and eventually began covering the maritime industry for trade publications.

In 1993, Freeman came to University of Washington, working as a science writer for the university’s Washington Sea Grant Program. Four years later, she started working in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences as a public information specialist. She had developed her skills in the professional world for nearly 20 years, but Freeman wanted to learn more.

“I wanted to learn better ways to present complex information, as well as techniques for testing whether the publications I created worked,” she said.

She started in the TC department’s day master’s program in 1999 and balanced work and school until she graduated in 2002. While in school, Freeman became interested in the kind of information that influences medical decisions. In the late 1990s, there was an array of medical Web sites offering services and advice. Freeman wondered what kind of influence certain factors, particularly advertising and sponsorship, had on readers’ perception of the credibility of medical content.

Although Freeman had heard plenty of anecdotal evidence about factors influencing credibility, she knew she needed to develop a scientific review of the literature and do her own research. With advice from her advisory committee, which included TC Professor Jan Spyridakis, TC Chair Judy Ramey, TC Assistant Professor Deborah Illman, and Political Science Professor Andrea Simpson, Freeman developed an experiment that would examine a few factors that could be measured. Spyridakis, Freeman’s committee chair and co-author, was especially helpful in analyzing the resulting data and writing the article “An Examination of Factors that Affect the Credibility of Online Health Information.” Freeman submitted the first draft last year and just recently finished up the final draft for publication.

As for what kind of factors affect the credibility of medical Web sites; look in the May issue of Technical Communication to find out.

Anita Salem Starts E-newsletter for Usability

by Ben Cape

SalemSystems President Anita Salem knows that everyone is too busy to take the time to read up on usability and user-centered design.

That is why the UWTC alumna has set up an electronic newsletter to keep her clients abreast of the latest developments in the field.

Salem has spent many years learning about usability. She got her undergraduate degree in experimental psychology from the University of California at Santa Barbara and was a systems designer for television and educational programming. After graduating from the TC department’s master’s program in 1997, Salem started doing consulting work. Her first client was Active Voice, a unified messaging, computer telephony and voice messaging company. In 2001, she incorporated SalemSystems, Inc.

Continued on the posTComm Web site
The Technical Communication (TC) department is involved in humanitarian aid and logistics research that will send graduate students to Africa for the next four years. This may seem unusual, but after the Fritz Institute gave a gift to the University of Washington’s (UW) Marc Lindenberg Center for Humanitarian Action, International Development, and Global Citizenship, the Center instigated a partnership between the UW’s School of Public Affairs and the College of Engineering (Technical Communication and Industrial Engineering). The purpose of the gift is to assess and improve the use of information technology (IT) in humanitarian relief organizations; since this is an interdisciplinary issue, the center reached out across campus for help. In addition, some of the money supporting this initiative comes from the UW’s Tools for Transformation initiative.

This research is a collaboration between TC, Public Affairs, and Industrial Engineering graduate students. Mark Haselkorn from TC is the principal investigator, and he is working with Benita Beamon from Industrial Engineering, Chris Coward from the Center of Internet Studies, and Mary Kay Gugerty from the Evans School of Public Affairs. Part of the IT problem stems from each organization using their own resources to conduct and manage their operations. This can work against the kind of coordination needed to efficiently deliver services and goods during a natural disaster. The Fritz Institute is trying to help create logistics software that can be used by all organizations. If this is accomplished, it could increase the efficiency of the supply chain and decrease human suffering.

This research will take five to seven graduate students from the TC, Public Affairs, and Industrial Engineering departments to Africa, specifically Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, for an eight-week summer internship. Although it is not a prerequisite for the internship, Mark Haselkorn is teaching a course for graduates and undergraduates called Humanitarian Logistics, Electronic Information, and Supporting Systems during spring quarter to further define the research the teams will perform in Africa. With the approval from the TC Curriculum Committee and the TC faculty, this course will be taught for the next four years. Although the TC department may be doing this again, this is the first time TC students have had the opportunity to go to Africa and apply their skills to the problems in that region.

Exchanging Students: UW and University of Twente

For several years, the UWTC department has taken part in a successful student exchange program with the University of Twente in Enschede, Netherlands. The spring quarter exchange allows both UWTC and Twente students to immerse themselves in a different culture while studying communication.

This year, the UWTC department welcomed University of Twente student Michel Roskam, a graduate student in Communication Science. Roskam came to the UW for a couple of reasons: it was a dream of his to explore America, he wanted to further improve his English, and he wanted a change of pace from his Dutch lifestyle.

While here, Roskam noticed several differences between his own university and the UW: the homework load is much greater at the UW, students at the UW act more serious, stressful and competitive about their studies, and the individual desks in classrooms are something he had only seen in movies. In regards to his classes, he enjoyed TC 310, Computers in Technical Communication, and TC 407, Computer Documentation, describing Professor Farkas as “a funny guy who entertain students so they listen.”

During his free time, Roskam hung out with friends, discovered the Seattle nightlife, explored the outdoors, and frequented the IMA (Intramural Activities Building). During his stay, he was able to travel all over Washington, as well as Idaho, Montana, and Victoria, British Columbia.

While Roskam was exploring Seattle, UWTC undergrad Michelle Valeriano jumped at the opportunity to travel to the Netherlands. During her exchange, she traveled through Europe, met new people, tried new food, and studied communication research methods. She was able to experience a “more balanced life” while in the Netherlands.

Once she adjusted to the more independent university system, she found her classes to be interesting, but more business oriented than what she was accustomed to at the UW. Valeriano applied what she learned by conducting a focus group on student living situations.
Bringing Technology to Developing Countries:  
Beth Kolko Attends Bangalore Workshop

by Alyssa McFarland

TC Professor Beth Kolko has long been interested in the subject of technology in developing countries. The workshop on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Sustainable Development, held from January 14-16 in Bangalore, India, gave her an opportunity to explore the topic further.

Organized by Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the United Nations and the World Bank, the workshop was an opportunity for people from many fields – government, engineering, social science and public policy – to get together and talk about issues related to sustainable development.

How can ICT improve the delivery of health care? How can ICT be used to improve transportation and agricultural infrastructures? What role can and should ICT play in education? These were some of the questions addressed at the workshop. In order to come up with research questions that might provide answers to these questions, ten to twenty people from different disciplines blended their ideas in small working groups over the course of the three-day event.

Kolko’s experience in the area of technology in developing countries enabled her to help bridge the gap between those who understand social issues related to developing nations and technical specialists. The time she spent at the workshop helped her appreciate the importance of talking to people in other disciplines who share similar interests.

The $1.2 million grant from the NSF awarded to Kolko for her work in Central Asia brought her to the attention of one of the supporters of the Bangalore workshop, who invited her to attend.

“India was amazing,” she said of her first trip to the country. “So much is going on there. The energy in the technology community was inspiring.”

She met a large number of people from around the world, whose “governments are grappling with establishing appropriate and effective policies.”

In the course of the workshop, Kolko was introduced to the work of other scholars and learned about a nascent project called Technology Peace Corps being put together by CMU and the University of California at Berkeley.

“Workshops like this one demonstrate that the work we do in academia can have a positive effect on the world,” said Kolko.

Business Japanese Online Pilot Course to Launch Autumn 2004

by Mark Hanna

The TC department’s very own Technical Japanese Program continues its tradition of innovation with the pilot launch this autumn of Business Japanese Online (BJO), a distance-learning Japanese language course. BJO focuses on oral communication training and seeks to enable business people, for whom attending classes on campus is difficult, to learn business Japanese anytime, anywhere.

According to Technical Japanese Program Senior Lecturer Masashi Kato, who is directing the project, “There have been other distance-learning language courses but this is the first of its kind because it is truly interactive.”

Continued on the posTComm Web site

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http://uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm

David Farkas in Egypt
Five TC Majors Mentor Engineering Students for Senior Project

by Jay Barker

During winter quarter, a special honors section of Introduction to Engineering Design (ENGR 100) gave students an opportunity to learn about women’s issues and technology in the context of a Web design project. Designed for pre-engineering freshmen, the course united students of all years and diverse academic backgrounds to teach them technical communication concepts. The students practiced skills including audience analysis, user-centered design, and usability as they worked in small teams and collaborated with outside clients.

Led by TC Lecturer Karen Kasonic and mechanical engineering graduate student Jessica Yellin, the section also enlisted the help of five senior TC undergraduates, who served as peer mentors for each Web project team. The mentors worked closely with students enrolled in the course, guiding them through project planning, document revisions, and technical issues, among other concerns.

When the quarter was over, the peer mentors saw their efforts pay off as the students achieved a new level of familiarity with technical communication concepts, completing four excellent Web projects. In addition to the

TC Team Completes Work on Flash Tutorial Explaining Cell Biology

by Andrew Sengul

TC Professor Dave Farkas and graduate students Alicia McBride and Patricia Kirkham have been working for the past two years on a set of multimedia tutorials that use the power of animation to explain complex processes in cell biology. The tutorials will initially be distributed without charge on CD. In the fall, TC PhD student Quan Zhou will build and maintain the Web site on which the tutorials will be made available worldwide.

The project was funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Associate Dean Mary Lidstrom, who teaches biology concepts to engineering students, was the principal investigator and team leader. The complete team consisted of Lidstrom, the TC group, program coordinator and biologist Cate Speake, Flash developer Marc Hoffman, and 3D artist Bob Lindenmeyer. The TC group focused on analyzing the audience of the tutorials, designing the animation, writing the script for the narration, developing the quizzes and interactive exercises, and designing and testing the user interface in which the tutorials run.

The tutorials cover three integral cellular processes — replication, transcription, and translation — which all involve the transfer of information contained in DNA. The tutorials are especially geared to an audience of engineering students, but they will be valuable to a broad range of learners. Notes Farkas, “This was truly a great project. We had adequate resources, enough time for user testing, and a smooth-running team with expertise in every area related to the project. As a result, these are by far the best multimedia tutorials on cell biology.”

McBride wrote her master’s project report on the design problems she dealt with working on the project. Kirkland wrote her master’s thesis on the learning styles of engineering students.
Directed Research Groups Give Students Real Research Experience

by Raina Richart

How does the informativeness of links on a Web site influence users? Find out what the research group on Navigational and Signaling Cues in Online Environments, directed by Professor Jan Spyridakis, has been working on.

Is the tone of U.S. professional communication too informal? Is the Web creating a universal tone? Those are some of the questions that the research group on The Tone of International Web Sites has been looking at, under the direction of Professor Jan Spyridakis.

Like playing games? We do. The Digital Gaming Research Group, directed by Associate Professor Beth Kolko, is conducting research on computer games, including Sony’s popular online game EverQuest. The group is also looking at engagement and immersion in educational and non-educational games.

How does TC fit into Content Management? Read more about Lecturer Karen Kasonic’s Content Management group to find out what they are learning.

Interested in Information Technology Use in Central Asia? This research group, directed by Associate Professor Beth Kolko, definitely is. Find out what they have been working on.

Wouldn’t it be great if health care providers could access information they need without interrupting their work? The group on Designing and Managing Information for Electronic Medical Communities, directed by Professor Mark Haselkorn, has been working with the Veterans Affairs Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence to make this task easier.

Find out what the Visual Communication Research Group, directed by Associate Professor Tom Williams, has been learning about line spacing, isolation, and icon size and location.

To find out more about what the directed research groups are doing, check out the posTComm Web site at http://uwtc.washington.edu/postcomm

positive effect on the students in the course, the seniors also fulfilled their TC senior project requirement.

In light of the success of the ENGR 100 honors section, the College of Engineering plans to offer it again during the 2004-2005 academic year. Undergraduates interested in mentorship should watch the TC mailing list for announcements.

On the posTComm Web site, you can read the details about Shirin Tabrizi, Aaron Stroud, Paul McWilliams, Rhonya Hamada, and Jay Barker’s involvement in this project.

Jay’s team of dedicated students shares their project notes with him.
Every year we ask UWTC alums to write in and let us know what has happened in their lives since leaving the department. This year we also asked alums to answer these few questions:

- What are you doing now?
- What is your favorite thing about your job?
- What skills do you use at your job that you learned from UWTC?

Edited by Kristen Uhring

Mark Alway
Undergraduate, 1999
uwtc@markalway.com

I left my position as the lead software developer for the Catalyst Project at the University of Washington in May of 2004. I subsequently moved to Mount Vernon, Washington, where I am finally pursuing my passion of working with teens in the wilderness. I’m a guide for white water rafting, mountain climbing, rock climbing, and ropes courses. During the off-season, I am responsible for the hiring and training of our 15-20 summer staff, the computer networks at our offices and for developing donor management software and other systems for non-profit organizations. I also continue to teach and develop courses for the University of Washington’s Extension program and consult on various projects around the state.

Cathy Anderson
Undergraduate, 1995
cathy@the4cs.com

[ I am a ] Technical Editor at Microsoft.

Kelcie Anderson
Master’s, 1995
kelcie.l.anderson@exgate.tek.com

[ I am an ] engineering manager. Favorite thing…helping my team articulate a usability engineering process. Skills used… taking different perspectives of the situation.

Autumn Arbury
Undergraduate, 2000
a.arbury@comcast.net

[ I am a] Developer, Project Manager at Innodata Isogen Corporation. Favorite thing… working at home all the time. My company’s two main offices are in Dallas, TX and Hackensack, NJ, so I have a home office and have been working from home for the past two years. There was some adjustment time in the beginning but now I have a routine, no commute time, and I get to pet my dogs all day while I’m working. Skills used… Project Management (PM) from Carolyn Plumb’s course, tech writing all the time for code documentation, and proposals for PM work.

Lesa L. Ashbaugh
Certificate, 1999
leisa@productivitypower.com

[ I am a ] Technical Writer for Entirenet, writing knowledge base articles for Microsoft AND I am a Licensed Partner for Mission Control Productivity, leading productivity workshops for individuals and corporations. Favorite thing…I get paid well to write for a living and that I get to work from home on my own schedule. Skills used…being brief, concise and clear, and looking from the end user’s point of view.

Emily Bauer
Master’s, 1999
ejbauer@uwalumni.com

[ I am a] Licensing Representative for the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. Favorite thing…working with early technologies, 5-7 years before they get to market. Skills used… investigative skills that allow me to ask the right questions when dealing with a technology I know little about. In the fall 2004, I’m starting the Master’s Degree in Biotechnology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. I’m excited about this program because it offers the rare combination of science and the business, legal, and ethical aspects that affect the development of a technology. My husband, Paul Hofmann, and I live in Madison, with our two tabby cats, Pika and Bix.

Ted Boren
Master’s, 1999
tboren@microsoft.com

[ I am a] Microsoft usability engineer working on MSN. Favorite thing… making the Internet a friendlier place for regular people. The only thing I don’t like about my job is that it’s too far away from my extended family. Anybody know of any Utah jobs? Really. Skills used… software usability is all about effective communication—the interface communicating with the user, companies communicating with customers, usability engineers communicating with their teams. Even besides the usability and design related courses, I focus on technical
communication issues every day. In November 2004, we had a baby girl, Jocelyn Jane. She rounds out our family size at eight. It’s Enough.

**Jacob Burghardt**  
Undergraduate, 2000  
jburghardt@Limina-AO.com

In the last year, I co-founded Limina Application Office, a user interface research and design firm that works with clients to bridge the gap between domain-specific knowledge work and complex information technologies. Currently, our primary client is a leading bioinformatics and scientific instrumentation firm.

**Scott Bush**  
Undergraduate, 2001  
sbush@seattleone.com

I’m currently co-founding a Web-development and Web-hosting company. It’s a scary—but exciting—business venture in which I want to try to put my skills as a technical communicator, project manager, and entrepreneur to the test. My favorite thing about my previous job (and I hope my new one!) is working with a satisfied client who’s happy that their business and personal needs have been met through my hard work and that of my colleagues. Editing skills are still a big part of what I do, skills that I learned from Dave Farkas. Carolyn Plumb’s PM class provided me some basic skills in managing projects, but I firmly believe project management must be learned in the field by doing.

**Carl Chatfield**  
Master’s, 1995  
carlc@microsoft.com

I work at Microsoft, where my title is Content Manager for Microsoft FrontPage and Project. Most of my work focuses on developing or acquiring content for the Office Online Web site, www.microsoft.com/office. To keep up with technology, I’m now a student in the UW Web Technology Solutions certificate program. I’m also teaching TC 407 Computer Documentation in Bellevue each spring for the TC certificate program.

**Paula Crockett**  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 1997  
I am a technical writer/editor at Harland Financial Solutions, Inc.

**Chris deMaagd**  
Evening Master’s, 2003  
cedemaagd@hotmail.com

I’m currently working on a 4-month assignment as a Tech Ed 2 at Microsoft. Favorite thing… transforming tortured babble into usable prose and telecommuting twice a week. Skills used… an awareness of my audience.

**Holly Dickson (Field)**  
Undergraduate, 1988  
hdickson@microsoft.com

I’ve been at Microsoft for 4 years and I am an account manager. My job entails managing the distribution of books published by Microsoft Press. It’s very interesting to see the other side of publishing.

**Norm Ely**  
Master’s, 1995  
norme@direcway.com

Greetings to all my classmates and professors! [I am a] freelance Web site developer and consultant. Favorite thing…the 15-second commute. Skills used…I use this stuff everyday, from basic good writing practices to information design principles.

**Kevin Fansler**  
Certificate, 1995  
kevinfan@windows.microsoft.com

[I am a] Lead Technical Editor at the eHome Division of Microsoft. I work on the Media Center PC, which rocks. And I get to sometimes go on site visits in China or work at the launch events in NYC. Skills used…technical editing, project management, and computer documentation. I use the grammar skills I learned in Spyridakis’ class every day.

**Stacie Finnelly**  
Undergraduate, 1987  
stacie.finnelly@harlandfs.com

[I am] Director of Documentation at Harland Financial Solutions, Inc. Favorite thing…ability to learn new tools/
skills and its flexibility. Skills used...all of them (writing, editing, publishing, management, computer documentation, proposals, etc.).

Kathleen Galvin  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 1999

Our Tech Comm group at Safeco has added Web development to our skills and morphed into a Web group because we have such good training and experience in information design and usability. It is challenging but very rewarding because our focus on the user’s experience has produced excellent Web sites, both internally and externally. I still write and edit, but the bulk of my work is Web-related. The skills I learned in the TC program all apply in my current work and then some, but the most useful skill has been the ability to flex and change with the times.

Lynn Gottlieb  
Undergraduate, 1997  
Evening Master’s, 2002  
lynng@microsoft.com

I work for Microsoft in the Real-Time Collaboration Business Unit. I’m a technical writer in the Live Meeting group, working on PlaceWare, a Web collaboration tool that lets businesses conduct real-time, interactive presentations and meetings over the Internet. Microsoft bought PlaceWare in April 2003 and is in the process of adding additional functionality and updating the documentation that came with the product. I just started this week, so I don’t have much to say. But the best thing about Microsoft is that I can move from technical writing to usability engineering to program/project management and back, without having to leave the company.

Marita Graube  
Undergraduate, 2001  
mgraube@nasw.org

I’m working full time as a Technical Writer for 4thpass, a small Seattle software company owned by Motorola. I write everything from end-user documentation to design specifications and conceptual models. On the side, I accept contract work as a science writer. I really enjoy the creative process of designing a document so that it best fits the needs of the users. I also like the paychecks because now I have enough saved up to travel the world. Dean and I plan to leave Seattle in September to spend 6 months in Asia and 3 in Europe.

Helen Grieve  
Master’s, 1995  
Helen.grieve@comcast.net

Since I graduated from the program, I have worked as a contract Instructional Designer for various companies in the Puget Sound area, primarily for Microsoft. Most recently, I have worked with a team that develops online training for Microsoft. What I appreciated about the UWTC program was its flexibility. Because it is interdisciplinary, I was able take all the Educational Technology courses, and some Computer Science, Art, and Architecture courses, in addition to the TC courses. This combination of coursework has helped me get many interesting jobs.

Jason D. Grose  
Undergraduate, 1997  
jason@grose.us

I am currently the program manager for an integrated management system for all formal training in the Marine Corps. Since earning my masters in IT last year, I’ve been assigned to work on this web-based system for the next 4 years until retirement. While my IT schooling helps me with the program’s technical aspects, my TC undergraduate degree helps me with the program management portion of the job. I’ve worked administration for most of my post-undergraduate career so it’s exciting to be using my TC skills for the first time.

Joel Hamill  
Undergraduate, 2002  
jhamill@u.washington.edu

[I am] enjoying life through skateboarding, spending time with my beautiful girlfriend, and traveling. I work as a technical writer for IBM in San Jose, CA. My favorite thing about my job is the amount of control I have over my projects. I feel that my contribution is valued. The skills from TC that I use most often are working well in teams, adapting quickly to new technologies, and the fundamentals of technical communication/technical writing. Don’t forget the importance of spelling and grammar in the field of Technical Communication.

Joanne Harvey  
Certificate, 2000

I’m currently employed as the Documentation Manager for a small construction management software company in Lake City. I love the variety of projects that I get to work on, the spontaneous assignments, the people I work with,
and the independence I have. I use most of what I learned at the UW, especially the software tools and editing skills. I don’t use the print/graphic information as much, only because we do so much work online.

John Hostvedt  
Certificate, 2001  
hostvedt@yahoo.com

[I am] working for The Boeing Company, Commercial Airplanes, as a technical writer, editor, and trainer in Engineering Process Management. My job allows me a great deal of creativity and gives me many opportunities to help technical experts communicate their ideas clearly. I love being able to work with some really brilliant people from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. Skills used…organizational, editing, and project management skills, also learning to treat subject matter experts as customers.

Jack Huang  
Undergraduate, 1998  
Jackhuang2000@hotmail.com

[I am] working at Microsoft as a Localization Program Manager in the Windows Division. Favorite thing… working with lots of smart people and it’s a fun place to work at. Skills used… project management and all the good writing skills I’ve obtained.

Megan Taylor Hubble  
Master’s, 1999

[I am a] Market Development Manager at Recharger Magazine/101communications in Las Vegas, Nevada. I enjoy getting to do a little of everything — edit, write and design for print and Web – all in one job. It never gets boring. I edit and write articles for a technical magazine, and have to tailor them to specific audiences. I use the Web skills I gained during my time at the UW, and use my survey and research design background. I married Benjamin Hubble in December 2003, and we have a house in Las Vegas.

Dan Jones  
Undergraduate, 1996  
daniel-jones@postoffice.law.cornell.edu

I have been the Webmaster for the Cornell Law School since 1999. It’s a wonderful job, with lots of different challenges every day, and a great working environment. Our IT group (We put the no in technology and the fun in dysfunctional!) participates in virtually every aspect of student interaction with the school, from online admission application, through online registration and add-drop, all the way to keeping in touch with alumni. It’s great fun.

Karen Kasonic  
Master’s, 2001  
kkasonic@u.washington.edu

I am a lecturer in the TC department and the new Director of the Engineering Communication Program (Carolyn Plumb’s former position). I love teaching and working with a wide range of students, including engineering freshman, TC undergrads, graduate teaching assistants, and evening graduate students. My position here as lecturer and academic adviser is always interesting and new challenges arrive every quarter. The TC faculty members were excellent mentors for me during my graduate program; they continue to mentor and inspire me as colleagues and peers.

Cindy King  
Master’s, 1995  
cling@u.washington.edu

This has been a big year for me! I finished my PhD in the Communication Department at UW in June, and I’m will start this fall as an Assistant Professor of Managerial Communication at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. I’m thrilled about the job, the sun, and the golf, but sad to leave the Northwest. I had a great time teaching TC 501 for the evening masters program, Winter ‘04 — so much so that I hope to be back to teach it again in the future as a visiting professor. In the meantime, surf’s up and hand me a margarita! I owe a special thanks to my favorite teacher of all time, Mary Coney, for all her help in getting me ready to teach TC 501; the terrific group of evening master’s students for making our class one of the best I’ve ever had the pleasure to teach; and Judy Ramey for all her support and help through the hiring process of my new position. Come visit us in CA!

David Kowalsky  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 2001  
david.kowalsky@comcast.net

I am a software engineer for NEC Solutions (America), Inc. in Redmond. As for TC-related work, I wrote my first white paper for NEC this year. I expect to get some more writing assignments in the future.
Chris Kuperstein  
Undergraduate, 2001  
ckuperst@alumni.washington.edu

[I am an] office administrator for Teague (Walter Dorwin Teague Associates). I am in a supporting role for fifteen industrial designers and interaction designers from all over the world. The group has a good combination of laid-back yet professional designers. And, as you can imagine in an industrial design studio, no two days are the same! A lot of my support role has to do with the HR department. I helped revise the Employee Handbook (100 pages), and throw together the Board of Directors presentation. My project management skills have come in handy from time-to-time. In March, I begin the Graduate Certificate in User-Centered Design program in hopes to move into the User Interaction design team at Teague. They like my work so far in a supporting role, and would like to see me transition into that role once my certificate is complete.

Jenny Lai  
Master’s, 1996  
jenny-lai@umail.hinet.net

I am working as a Senior User Interface Designer with AOL/Tegic in Seattle. Recently, we completed a user study in Beijing and Shanghai with over 100 participants. I used everything I learned in TC to design, plan, coordinate and supervise the study.

Michael Lasserre  
Undergraduate, 2002  
lasserre@myuw.net

[I am a] Systems Engineer for B.E. Meyers & Co. Inc. a Redmond company specializing in infrared illumination, targeting, and surveillance. I research and integrate custom surveillance systems for law enforcement agencies, militaries, and intelligence gathering entities around the world. Because my products involve several stand-alone products and systems, I get to traverse the entire organization in search of solutions. I encounter strange problems almost daily and often exploit the subtleties of our everyday lives to solve them. I literally have to immerse myself in the user’s situation to take advantage of the tiny nuances the user might come across to create and deliver an effective product that brings the user home safe. I never imagined seeing the world through the eyes of people who literally see the world and my products would not be in demand if I did not turn on the “usability” switches in my head as a TC undergrad.

Kathy Leotta  
Master’s, 1995  
KSLeotta@comcast.net

Barbara Lewton  
Master’s, 1988  
BALewton@aol.com

[I am a] writer/designer for the Retail Education and Training Department at Fred Meyer Stores. Favorite thing…I love to learn new things and work with interesting people. As a graduate student, I learned to jump through hoops I really didn’t want to jump through. But I did it anyway. I wanted that degree, by God, and I got it eventually. My major professor, Jan Spyridakis, encouraged me to hang in there, even when I wanted to quit. I am proud to have been a part (and still am in a very small way) of the U of W’s Department of Scientific and Technical Communications (as it was called back then). What an exciting group of professors and students! Getting that degree has opened up many doors for me and has led to more exciting career opportunities. Many thanks to Jim Souther and Mike White who had the vision long before many of us were even a twinkle.

Ben MacKay  
Evening Master’s, 2003  
ben@aestheticpc.com

Jennifer Mazuca  
Master’s, 2000  
jmazuca@drizzle.com

I am a Senior Product Education Trainer at IDX Systems Corporation. I travel throughout the United States, Canada,
and the UK teaching health care professionals how to use our product — healthcare information systems. Favorite thing...teaching. Skills used... teaching and working with difficult people. I use these skills on an almost daily basis! My partner (Amy Landers, UW MSTC in 1999) and I are enjoying life, living on the beach in West Seattle with our three-legged black lab, Raven.

Nathan Moore
Undergraduate, 2002
nwmoore@ucdavis.edu

[I am a] PhD student in Chemical Engineering at UC Davis. I thrive on my research’s multidisciplinary environment because it’s a place where TC skills shine. Having the ability to communicate technical information to many kinds of audiences often makes easy work of what would otherwise be difficult tasks in planning, executing, and presenting research. This past year I organized a ten-seminar series geared toward enhancing the communication skills of engineering graduate students at UC Davis. My TC background was essential in choosing content, negotiating with speakers, and developing publicity.

Jamie Myxter
Master’s, 2000
jamie_myxter@hotmail.com

I am the owner of Precision Communications. I’ve been doing a variety of work since finishing the UWTC program, including full-time regular employment, contract employment, and consulting/freelance work through my own company, Precision Communications (www.precisioncommunications.org). My off hours are still spent with Roger the dog and our new family addition, Annie, who is also a Golden.

Mary Nystrom
Master’s, 2000
Mnystrom@asd103.org

[I am] teaching at Anacortes High School: vocational courses from Oracle Internet Academy-Data Modeling, SQL, and next year Java (with other language options using MS Visual Studio); I am part of a required Technology Sampler course with 3 other teachers where I teach Technical Communication (tech. reading, tech. writing, electronic research, and documentation); and Junior English with a technology emphasis. Favorite thing...learning new skills along with my students, autonomy, job security, and retirement. Skills used...information architecture, document design, usability, communication theory, research methods, social psychology, AND HEY TOM...Reading the Educational Psychology studies on reading!!! If someone would pay me, I’d be a professional student!

David Oberstadt
Undergraduate, 1994
davido@us.ibm.com

[I am an] IBM Information Developer; I coordinate the online help for our large database deliverables in addition to the online help and three books that I work on. I work a great deal with the translators to make sure our translations into 26 languages go smoothly. It’s a big job! I also perform quite a bit of testing and verification. Favorite thing... mostly the people that I work with. I also enjoy problem solving. Skills used...project management and editing.

Jay Pederson
Undergraduate, 1999
jayped@yahoo.com

I am still working for IBM. I just started a new position as Product Manager, Windows Platform Integration for Information Management software. My favorite thing about my job is the opportunity to work with so many people across so many disciplines - plus my new role might bring me back to Seattle a few times this year. Mary Coney’s project management class taught me several skills I use everyday in the course of my work. Other key TC skills including technology assessment, understanding user (or customer) requirements, and superior written communication skills help me to be persuasive, effective, and clear in my daily interactions with executives, customers, and the press.

Pondra S. Perkins
Undergraduate, 1996
pondrap@hotmail.com
Cristina Peterson  
Undergraduate, 2002  
crpeters@myuw.net

[I am a] Technical Writer/Editor at the Federal Aviation Administration in Renton. I write Airworthiness Directives. Favorite thing…I contribute to the safety of our skies. Skills used…writing, editing, working with and questioning the engineers (SMEs). I’m also the current Treasurer of the Pacific Northwest Section of SWE (Society of Women Engineers).

Dyan Pfitzenmeier  
Certificate, 1992  
dyanpfitz@hotmail.com

[I am] president of Firefly, a resource to inform and connect. Working in communication and marketing, I relish writing and linking it to the elements of graphic design. Balancing technical and marketing documents sustains me: I am now working on a history of the UW Bothell campus and marketing for architects. As a freelance consultant, I gained confidence and know-how from the Technical Writing and Editing Certificate Program that led to corporate experience as a manager and director.

Denise D. Pieratti  
Master’s, 1999  
pieratti@rochester.rr.com  
www.dpinfodesign.com

I am the owner of D Pieratti Information Design, a Rochester, NY based company that provides businesses with marketing and communications strategy development and implementation, marketing and technical writing, and usability and evaluation services. I am also an adjunct faculty member at the Rochester Institute of Technology, teaching a class on usability analysis and design in the College of Applied Science. The most valuable TC skill I use is rhetoric, which was introduced to me by Mary Coney.

Jennifer (Holt) Pike  
Undergraduate, 1998  
jenn.pike@charter.net

After working as a technical writer for IBM, Openwave, and HAL, Inc., I have taken a hiatus to raise my children. Tyler is 11, Alexa is 8, and Carson is 1. I still use my technical communication skills for volunteer purposes such as designing Web sites for people and organizations; creating newsletters for organizations; and tutoring grammar.

Douglas M. Pyle  
Master’s, 1998  
dougpy@hotmail.com

[I will be] leaving my current position at Microsoft and preparing to move to Hong Kong SAR, China. I’ll be managing the UI team at a medium-sized company. Favorite thing…it’s new! And I still get to help provide users with technology that is usable and useful. Skills used…writing, critical analysis, rhetoric, and usability.

Rolando P. Ramos  
Undergraduate, 1995  
rollyr68@hotmail.com

I have a wife and a two-year-old son. I’m a self-employed technical writer and I recently finished a contract writing manuals for a software company. I enjoy the flexibility of being able to work at home. In my spare time, I read mystery and detective stories, photograph nature, and watch documentaries.

Liz Reinginer  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 1998

[I am] writing online Help, QA, and additional technical writing for Iron Mountain.

Brenda A. Reynolds  
Undergraduate, 1998  
reynolds_brenda@hotmail.com

I am a senior technical writer at Alerton Novar, an environmental controls hardware and software manufacturer located in Redmond, WA. At Alerton, we make buildings work. I plan, write, and edit print and online technical documents for system developers and end users. I enjoy working on multi-contributor projects serving as both a writer and as documentation project manager. Successful planning is key to delivering a quality document or help system on schedule.
Karen Sharkey  
Master’s, 1999  
ksharkey@lanl.gov

I am back working at Los Alamos National Laboratory as a writer/editor, after a three-year “sabbatical” as a technical writer for a Los Alamos software development firm. My favorite thing about my job is the diversity of the assignments I get and the opportunity to work with some of the brightest minds in the country. I have used almost everything I learned at UW, including the teaching skills I developed as a TA. I have developed a web site, provided input on interface design, taught technical writing at the University of New Mexico-Los Alamos, written many procedures, and helped my clients to turn techno speak into English. Thanks, TC!

Taylor Selby  
Master’s, 1999  
tselby@lanl.gov

I am currently a technical writer working for the same group of “serial entrepreneurs” here in Chicago that I have been with almost since I graduated in ’96. We are working on a new online service offering that involves one of the web’s next big leaps: content syndication, also known as “RSS” or Really Simple Syndication. I use my TC skills constantly: interaction design, usability testing, authoring SDK documentation, and maintaining ongoing feedback-gathering relationships with end users.

Joe L. Rhodes  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 1997  
Joel.rhodes@comcast.net

[I am] a contract technical writer with the federal government in Kitsap County.

Tristan Robinson  
Master’s, 2001  
tristan_robinson@yahoo.com

[I am a] Usability Engineer at Tektronix, Inc. My favorite (and sometimes least favorite) thing about my job is that there is so much room for good work that almost anything I do results in measurable improvement. Skills used…interviewing, rhetoric/argumentation, and research.

Anita Salem  
Master’s, 1997  
asalem@salemsystems.com

[I am] consulting and teaching user-centered design and usability. Favorite thing…interesting clients and projects, working with other TC people, and time off. Skills used…to think, to communicate, to create.

Amalia Sandoval  
Undergraduate, 1999  
sandoval_consulting@yahoo.com

[I do] independent consulting. Favorite thing…learning new technologies, learning about various industries from software/hardware, biotechnology, healthcare, to apparel. Skills used…instructional design, training development, usability testing, technical communication, and technical documentation.

Amy Scott  
Master’s, 1998  
amyjscott@yahoo.com

I am a manager in my 5th year of working in the Change Leadership and Learning practice of Deloitte Consulting. My area of focus is enterprise learning technology and online learning design. My clients have included Microsoft, Montana Power Company, Chevron, Immunex, JP Morgan Chase, and the UC Davis Medical Center. Favorite thing…assessing learning organizations and helping them evolve toward their goals. I view learning and communication as socially engineered, rhetorical moments.

Matt Shobe  
Master’s, 1996  
mattshobe@hotmail.com

I am working with the same group of “serial entrepreneurs” here in Chicago that I have been with almost since I graduated in ’96. We are working on a new online service offering that involves one of the web’s next big leaps: content syndication, also known as “RSS” or Really Simple Syndication. I use my TC skills constantly: interaction design, usability testing, authoring SDK documentation, and maintaining ongoing feedback-gathering relationships with end users.
Aaron Smalser  
Undergraduate, 2001  
asmalser@alumni.washington.edu

[I am a] Lead Technical Writer and Web Application Developer for Blue World Communications. Favorite thing…getting to develop and use many different skills in many different fields, including technical writing and editing, web and database development, technical support, project management, and more. Skills used… all of them! If I had to pick one course that had the most influence on what I do, it would be TC 407: Computer Documentation with Dave Farkas.

Dave Smith  
Evening Master’s, 2003  
farnsworth-smith@msn.com

[I work in] Ergonomics and Human Factors at Boeing. Favorite thing… very altruistic - redesigning tools and processes to prevent injuries. Skills used… continually employing user-centered design techniques to ensure that what we develop and produce is what the operators will truly use. The results: Reduced injury rates, personal satisfaction and rewards - I filed two patent applications and received two meritorious invention awards for new designs and tool improvements that I have been associated with. I really miss going to campus and being with the faculty, staff and fellow students.

Michael Stivers  
Master’s, 1997  
mike.stivers@openwave.com

[I am] working at Openwave Systems, Inc. Favorite thing…working with creative, interesting people cooking up new mobile data technology. Skills used… researching and writing about complex topics, negotiating and planning projects, dealing with the unknown, and pushing beyond my limitations. [I am] living in Santa Barbara with my wonderful wife Michelle and children John, Alex, and Louise.

Carol A. Taylor  
Undergraduate, 1983

I’m currently managing the web team for T-Mobile.com and continue to learn new things about technology and knowledge engineering every day. The TC skills I learned in structuring and presenting information are a crucial part of my work.

Robin Taylor  
Undergraduate, 1992  
robin@uspsa.org

I’m currently splitting my time serving as the Assistant Editor for Front Sight magazine and running my own small publishing house –www.taylorpress.com. My TC based skills come forward often, particularly when I do training documents for the firm that own Front Sight.

Tanner Taylor  
Undergraduate, 2002  
tannerjtaylor@hotmail.com

[I am currently working as a Technical Writer at the corporate headquarters for Expeditors International of Washington, Inc. – a worldwide logistics company. Though my title is Technical Writer, my job allows me to create a variety of deliverables other than just writing, such as Flash animations, video tutorials, printed publications, and web site designs. Nearly all of the TC courses I took in school have helped me in the work field. Thankfully, many of the TC courses introduced me to useful software applications such as RoboHelp, Microsoft Word, and Macromedia Flash/Dreamweaver. I use those applications on a daily basis. Additionally, the writing, editing, and communication skills I learned from the TC courses are very important in my job. A bit of advice to current students: make an effort to learn as many software applications as you can while still in school. Once you start staring at a screen for 8+ hours a day, you really don’t feel like going home and trying to learn about a new software application.

Mark Undeberg  
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing, 1997  
marku@mediapodium.com

I use technical communication skills everyday. As president of a small publishing and eLearning company, I have to be involved in every aspect of my company’s business. I daily work with written materials as diverse as contract development, course development, and end-user documentation. I’ve found that the project management training I received in the program has been at least as valuable as the technical communications components.
Kirk Volland
Undergraduate, 1992
kn_volland@sbcglobal.net

Presently I am still on active duty service in the U.S. Navy and assigned to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light Four Seven (HSL 47) at Naval Air Station North Island, CA. As the squadron’s Administration Officer, I call on my technical writing skills on a daily basis while editing varied products ranging from public affairs news stories to naval messages. In 2002, I was promoted to lieutenant commander, and I continue to fly helicopters, having amassed over 2,800 flight hours in Navy aircraft.

Jeremy Watts
Master’s, 1998
jeremy_watts@yahoo.com

I document Boeing flight deck, cargo, and galley configurations for various airlines. My writing covers hardware and the software that runs the hardware. I work extensively with engineering drawings to augment text in the documentation. Most of the software runs on Linux OS. The documentation is aimed at engineers at Boeing, the airlines, and third-party supplier firms. Additional writing is targeted at the FAA and Boeing managers.

Bruce Weber
Undergraduate, 2000
v-bweber@microsoft.com

I’m a consultant with Sakson & Taylor, which gives me the opportunity to work on many technical communication projects. Currently, I’m working with Microsoft on user assistance for broadband networking hardware. I guess my favorite thing about my job is the fact that I have so much variety. ALL of the skills I use at work I learned as a TC student. I think that these skills can be summed up into one phrase: Be a user advocate.

Michael J. Wenger
Master’s, 1989
mwenger1@nd.edu

[I conduct] research on visual perception, visual memory, and perceptual and cognitive skills. Favorite thing…asking questions that have yet to be answered. Skills used… logic, analysis, arguing from and organizing evidence in support of a position.

Richard Yin
Undergraduate, 2001

[I am at] PACCAR, enrolled in the Management Development Program. Favorite thing…right now, I have a new job every 2 months. I’m constantly learning and constantly improving. Skills used… communication, communication, and communication.

Elaine C. Zapata
Undergraduate, 2001
ezapata97@yahoo.com

I’m currently working as a Senior Technical Writer at the healthcare software company IDX, which is located in Downtown Seattle. My favorite part about my job right now is that I get to travel to London occasionally to work with our UK office. This has been a wonderful opportunity to expand my knowledge of localization within the Technical Writing field and to work with another office in a different country. The most important skill that I learned while I was a TC student is to know your audience. You need to know your audience’s needs and know what you can do for them in order to produce a quality product.
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“Thayer” continued from page 11

After organizing his thoughts, Thayer wrote the article off and on for a couple of weeks before finishing it, but it was far from its final form. Thayer ran a first draft past TC Professor David Farkas, who commented he had no idea what Thayer was trying to say.

“That wasn’t encouraging,” Thayer said.

Thayer left the article alone for a while but came back to it to finish it in December. He sent a copy to a Brigham Young University professor who liked it and made some suggestions, after which Thayer sent the article to the IEEE journal.

Like any other academic journal, Transactions on Professional Communication sent the article through a peer review process. After review, an article is sent back to its author with one of three comments; reject completely, accept completely, or, the most common, reject with suggested revisions.

Thayer was pleased to see he got the last response and set about the changes suggested by the article’s reviewers. Although he didn’t make all the changes suggested, Thayer revised the paper and sent it back in. He received notice it was accepted about 10 days later and could expect to see it in the June edition of Transactions on Professional Communication.

Being able to contribute to the intellectual scholarship of his field was something Thayer never thought he could do, but wants to do again. He originally thought published work was the realm of distinguished academics and of PhD hopefuls, but he knows now that a good idea and a well-written article can be done by anyone who has the will to synthesize their learning and experience in the department.

“At this rate, I’ll get an article published every 16 years,” Thayer said.
Top Paying Metro Areas for Technical Writers (2002) - annual mean

1. San Jose, CA - $75,050
2. Santa Cruz-Watsonville, CA - $72,740
3. Santa Rosa, CA - $72,250
4. San Francisco, CA - $70,880
5. Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, WA - $65,020


Metro Areas with Highest Concentration of Technical Writers (2002)

1. San Jose, CA - .176 % of workforce
2. Richland-Kennewick-Pasco, WA - .164 %
3. Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, WA - .135 %
4. Huntsville, AL - .120 %
5. Lowell, MA-NH - .112 %


Number of UWTC alums who responded to the 2004 “In the Real World” survey for posTComm

72 responded
928 did not respond

Next year, send us your news!