Faculty News: A Promotion and a Newcomer

Diversity in Technical Communication
  Certificates Making a Difference
  UWTC and Humanitarian Relief
  The HITLab and Usability

Alumni In the Real World
Message from the chair
by Judy Ramey

This year UWTC scored two big wins on the faculty front: Jennifer Turns was promoted to associate professor with tenure, and the department succeeded in hiring Mark Zachry, associate professor and editor of Technical Communication Quarterly! In Jennifer’s short time in the department thus far, she has made enormous contributions to UWTC’s research, scholarship, and teaching and has become a valued colleague; we look forward to her continuing success. Mark joins us in the autumn with a diverse portfolio of research, teaching, and professional service. He will continue his research in modeling communicative behaviors, teach rhetoric and technical editing, direct a research group, and of course continue his very successful, innovative editorship of TCQ. We are really excited about the new interests and energy that Mark will bring to the department!

As you read this newsletter, I believe that you will be struck by the appropriateness of the theme that the student posTComm team selected for this issue—the diversity of technical communication. Perhaps the best example is the range of responses, from personal actions to international programmatic initiatives by our students, alumni, and faculty to the hurricane Katrina and the other humanitarian disasters we have faced. But we also see diversity in UWTC’s international activities, range of disciplinary perspectives, types of programs, and professional opportunities for students. I hope you enjoy reading about these and other topics in this 2006 edition of posTComm!

The timeline exemplifies the evolution of UWTC diversity. Graphic by Samantha Woogerd
A turning point for Jennifer Turns
by Athena Epilepsia

After working for the Department of Technical Communication for four years as an assistant professor, Jennifer Turns was granted tenure, effective September 2006. When asked how it feels to have been promoted to associate professor, Turns could only compare the experience to a long test that was finally over, coupled with a sense of relief and liberation.

Receiving tenure comes as a turning point for the hard-working professor and expecting mother. With her first child on the way, Turns will be facing the challenge of raising a child while maintaining an active role in the department. “The post-tenure thing is to figure out how to be a bit more balanced,” Turns mused, referring to her new commitments.

No stranger to the University of Washington and UWTC, Turns began her career with the university as a post-doc in 1999, and then as a research scientist in 2000. With a background in Industrial Engineering and an interest in education, Turns found a noticeable relationship between her interests and the field of technical communication. “In education, they talk about characterizing your learners; in TC, they talk about characterizing your audience. There were a lot of parallels between the two,” she reflected, smiling.

After a one-year stint as a temporary instructor for the department, Turns became an assistant professor in 2002. On top of teaching courses for graduates and undergraduates, Turns kept busy with her research: two educational projects are currently winding down while two more three-year projects are starting up.

Turns’ professional and private lives are in transition. She remains upbeat looking to the future, finding her promotion as a moment to stop and take a breath.

“When you’re in the tenure path, you’re making choices and there’s not a lot of time to sit around and decide what you want to do next. Then you get tenure, and you can take a breath and do things deliberately.”

UWTC welcomes Associate Professor Mark Zachry
by Judy Ramey

UWTC is pleased to announce that Associate Professor Mark Zachry will join the department’s faculty in autumn 2006. Mark holds a Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Professional Communication from Iowa State University and comes to us after eight years on the faculty at Utah State University. Mark is also editor of the journal Technical Communication Quarterly, one of the leading professional journals in our field, and will bring the journal with him to our department.

Mark’s research focuses on communicative practices in the workplace. Currently, with funding from the Society for Technical Communication, he is working on the modeling of communicative and mediational work in proposal writing. He also has interests in the rhetorical aspects of professional communication and in the development of technical communication as a discipline in both industry and the academy.

Mark’s wide-ranging teaching experience makes him an excellent fit with UWTC. He has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in topics as diverse as rhetorical theory, usability testing, online help, content management systems, information architecture, visual rhetoric and document design, and advanced research methods. “Mark’s diverse list of courses taught and superior student evaluations impressed us very much,” says Search Committee chair Prof. Mary Coney, “and during his interview visit his lecture, sample class, and interactions with our students confirmed our sense of his excellence in this area.”

The department welcomes Mark and his family to our community and invites all alumni and friends of the department to check our website regularly for announcements of events where you can get acquainted with him!
Improving communication and coordination during natural disasters
by Kirsten Gantenbein

Lake Naivasha in Nairobi, Kenya, is a popular destination for wildlife and safari enthusiasts. It also happens to be the setting for an international workshop on disaster response and management research, coordinated by Mark Haselkorn, a professor in the Department of Technical Communication. Recently, Haselkorn and members of the Interdisciplinary Program in Humanitarian Relief (IPHR) at the University of Washington were awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant for their workshop on June 8-10 in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants include representatives from universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and private industry.

The overall objective of the workshop is to develop a research agenda on information and communication systems in humanitarian relief response efforts. “We hope to establish a strategic alliance between humanitarian relief organizations and universities and to generate new knowledge for preparedness and response,” says Haselkorn. “Technical communicators can have a big role in designing usable systems in these unusual situations, such as the aftermath of a natural disaster.”

The humanitarian relief sector is at a critical turning point. Recent disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean tsunami, exposed shocking flaws in communication and coordination systems hampering relief efforts. Haselkorn has been studying the information and communication systems of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for several years. NGOs are often the first teams to go into areas affected by natural disasters. In these stressful situations, they coordinate relief efforts by collecting information and data to help them direct their response. However, the technological infrastructure—necessary for making effective use of that information—may not be intact. Haselkorn mentions that in the past NGOs have focused on responding to emergencies, but also need to work on capacity building—long-term planning for organizational and institutional development.

Haselkorn is the current co-director and a co-founder of the IPHR program. The grant proposal for the Nairobi workshop was co-authored by Haselkorn, UWTC Ph.D. student Steve Lappenbusch and Brian Chung and Christina Maiers from the Daniel Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington. In addition to Haselkorn and Lappenbusch, Associate Professor Beth Kolko and Ph.D. student Sandy Bartell will be going to the Kenya workshop from UWTC. The IPHR program is jointly sponsored by the College of Engineering (UWTC and Industrial Engineering) and the Evans School (The Marc Lindenberg Center for Humanitarian Action, International Development and Global Citizenship).

Lappenbusch is excited to apply his Technical Communication (TC) background to this area, as the humanitarian relief sector is extremely under-researched. “I was seeking a TC issue that really pushed the boundaries of TC in the direction I think those boundaries should be pushed, away from rhetoric and towards design,” says Lappenbusch. “I also wanted a problem that dealt with things at a level beyond just the individual user.”

The IPHR program is valuable for disaster response and communication systems research. It provides TC students opportunities for research and fieldwork in humanitarian relief by completing an internship with NGOs. Natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies are an unfortunate reality for millions around the world. UWTC researchers are helping lay the groundwork for a strategic alliance between universities and humanitarian relief organizations to improve disaster response and to enhance relief efforts when the next natural disaster strikes.

For more information, visit http://depts.washington.edu/iphr/homepage.shtml
A personal account of volunteering amid Katrina and Rita devastation

by Noah Iliinsky

A month after Hurricane Katrina and a week after Hurricane Rita, I flew to southern Mississippi as a volunteer for the non-profit Worldshelters to manufacture and deploy relief shelters for shade and storage for clothing, food, and medicine.

Everyone asks, “How was it?” The short answer is “Everything’s broken.” The infrastructure is broken, the social systems are broken, no jobs, no schools, no stores, no clean running water, electricity, or phones, no normalcy, no anything that you normally depend on. There were still cars in the ditches, some upside down. Most street signs, billboards, and highway signs were destroyed or missing. The area near Waveland, MS had many people in manufactured homes submerged for up to 24 hours. Plaster and sheet rock melted, wood warped, everything toppled over, and mold growing on every surface.

The culture shock upon my return was immediate, and in many ways more intense than the shock of the destruction. Since my return, my perspective has expanded. I’ve become acutely aware of the abundance we all enjoy. I am grateful of such an intense experience, and aware of how fortunate I am to live a life of such luxury.

A user-centered approach to hurricane relief

by Nancy Samuels

A few days after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf coast, Anita Salem, UWTC alumna, flew to Houston to volunteer with the American Red Cross at the Astrodome. “Everybody who goes to help has this idea that they are going to do one-on-one counseling, and they are going to work directly with the people. What the majority of volunteers did was sort clothes in bulk distribution. They served food. They gave showers. In my case, I collected information and published it so people could get the resources they needed to recover.”

Salem worked at the Red Cross volunteer desk. One of her functions was to match volunteers with jobs. An enormous bulletin board was covered in a mosaic of notices, including ones offering services. As an experienced consultant, Salem immediately understood that volunteers serving 25,000 people cannot be effectively coordinated by word of mouth. So, on her first day she created a volunteer form to track requests for help.

Among the notices on the bulletin board were ones from various agencies listing their services. Anita improved the usability by creating a resources sheet, organized by offerings, not agency. To a technical communicator this was basic work; to the other volunteers, it was a vital improvement. “We forget how deeply embedded and how important our skills are because they’ve become so natural.” says Salem.

One skill for a usability expert is asking people to identify their needs. Yet in the chaos of the disaster recovery efforts, sometimes survivors find getting what they need difficult because nobody listens. Salem happened to be walking in front of the Astrodome when she met an elderly man in a wheelchair. After signing up for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Association, the man wanted to get to the train station to return to the Houston hospital where he was a patient. He felt frustrated because no one would listen—Salem helped him meet his needs.

The Society for Technical Communication invited Salem to share her story during their annual conference. In planning her presentation she realized how this experience parallels her work. “In the technical communication field we operate quite often in a less direct role. We’re writing documentation, or we’re designing the interface, or we’re doing usability testing.” Every effort, direct and indirect, is equally important. “I’ve been doing user-centered design and usability for long enough now that I operate in the world that way. When you know what makes you thrive, where your passion is, you put yourself in a position where you can serve.”
Beth Kolko attends UN world summit on the Information Society
by Kirsten Gantenbein

Imagine the difficulty you would have communicating and acquiring information if you suddenly lost access to the Internet or your cell phone. Here in the United States, digital and information technologies are incorporated into our everyday routines; however, the other four-fifths of the world’s population has been left behind in the technology revolution. Beth Kolko, associate professor in the Department of Technical Communication (UWTC), travels around the globe to study how developing countries adopt different information and communication technologies (ICT). She is the co-principal investigator for a project through the Center for Internet Studies (CIS) at the University of Washington that examines how community technology centers (CTCs), such as noncommercial Internet cafés, provide the benefits of ICT to underserved communities.

This past November, Kolko, Chris Coward, director of CIS, Andy Gordon, professor in the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, and Mirah Wood, a graduate research assistant, attended the World Forum for the Information Society (WFIS) in Tunis, Tunisia to deliver their presentation “Corporations, NGOs and IT Training: Blending Private and Nonprofit Approaches to Achieving Socioeconomic Outcomes.” The forum was held in conjunction with the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society and provided a unique opportunity for the team to present their findings on a world stage.

The presentation focused on the challenges that occur when a for-profit corporation, such as Microsoft, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) try to do community development with technology. “It links back to TC because it’s all about how people use technology,” says Kolko.

The CTC project is funded by Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential program, which gives software and grants for building CTCs. Despite years of financial support for small and large-scale CTC networks, it’s unclear whether CTCs are being used to their full potential. Therefore, Kolko and her team developed a monitoring and evaluation strategy to study the impact of CTCs on different communities in dozens of countries around the world.

The objective of the WFIS is for delegates and researchers to explore the relationship between ICT and global transformation, with particular attention paid to developing countries.

“The summit was unbelievable,” says Kolko. “There were people from government delegations in suits who wanted to talk about their national ICT policies and then there were people from community and grassroots organizations who use technologies on the ground everyday to help them survive. It was like having two different worlds under the same roof.” Kolko participated in active debates and was happy to contribute her TC viewpoint to the landscape. She attended many panels, including one about safety and security on the Web for protecting bloggers’ identities in politically dangerous places—which was later disrupted by the Tunisian security forces.

Kolko travels to a variety of countries, such as Cambodia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, to research how people exchange information and adopt ICT in predominantly developing countries. These areas are also known as “emerging markets” for new technologies. Kolko explained that her research applies a user-centered design perspective to the large-scale deployment of technology. “We are looking at four-fifths of the world’s population that is largely ignored by this revolution in consumer technology,” says Kolko. “What I focus on is how communities exchange information before technology arrives. So once we understand the pre-existing patterns of where people go to get information, we can learn how to deploy technology to fit their needs.”
Courseware designed by technical communicators wins Premier Award

by Athena Epilepsia

Dave Farkas and a team from the University of Washington’s Department of Technical Communication (UWTC) contributed to the creation of an educational CD, Biology Information Handling: Essentials for Engineers, which received a 2005 Premier Award for Excellence in Engineering Education. This award-winning courseware’s goal is to teach biology to an audience of engineers.

The Premier Award was given by the National Engineering Education Delivery System (NEEDS). It is awarded to recognize high-quality, non-commercial courseware designed to enhance engineering education; in 2005, Biology Information Handling was one of only two in the nation to receive the award. Former winners of this prestigious award include the University of Texas and the United States Military Academy at West Point.

The UWTC team, consisting of Farkas and then-graduate students Patricia Kirkham and Alicia McBride, had been working on multimedia tutorials for the project since the spring of 2003 until its completion in fall of 2004. Kirkham was primarily responsible for researching design issues, while McBride wrote and worked on the script and storyboards. Farkas, one of two faculty members on the project, was the master’s committee chair for Kirkham and McBride and did a little bit of everything for the project, from working with the script to helping with instructional and interaction design.

“The purpose of the project was to make an innovation course, or series of courses, for getting engineering students to be interested in biology—particularly molecular biology,” says Farkas, recalling the project he had worked on for the past two years. “These tutorials were really made, first and foremost, to be units of the course because there are certain aspects of cell biology that are really difficult to communicate through lecture alone.”

The Biology Information Handling CD project was funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and directed by Mary Lidstrom, a Professor in the UW Department of Chemical Engineering and the UW Vice Provost for Research. Besides Farkas, Kirkham, and McBride, the team consisted of graduate student Cate Speake from Chemical Engineering, 3D artist Bob Lindenmeyer, and Marc Hoffman, a Macromedia Flash developer from Poison Dart Frog Media. Quan Zhou, a UWTC Ph.D. student, is currently the program administrator and runs the courseware website.

The set of biology tutorials cover three cellular processes—replication, transcription, and translation—using an effective combination of graphical and textual information. The purpose of the tutorials is to provide as thorough an understanding of the three subjects as can be learned in undergraduate classes and to challenge users throughout the tutorials with quizzes. There is even a final exam included in the courseware, allowing users to test all their knowledge at the end of the tutorials. The courseware is aimed towards an audience of engineering students, but it is also open to the general public through its website.

One of the challenges the team met along the way was developing visual design and narration for the animations. Interactive animations played a key role in the learning process; if cell components were not properly placed and introduced in the context of the lesson, the results could be confusing. The script for the tutorials had to be carefully written to clearly convey the subject matter and explain difficult concepts—certainly not an easy task when trying to breakdown molecular biology.

“These are the best explanations of these topics in the world; there is nothing as clear and as visual that has been done,” stated Farkas. “The fact that this was all funded as a university project and is available for free is a marvelous thing.”

The Biology Information Handling courseware can be downloaded for free at http://www.biologyforengineers.org.
The Department of Technical Communication (UWTC) has always been a family of students, faculty and staff who are driven by emerging technologies and computer interfaces. The department now welcomes a new member to the family—one with equal passion for interface technologies, yet one with far more influence in their development. Suzanne Weghorst, the Director of the University of Washington’s Human Interface Technology (HIT)Lab has joined the Technical Communication department as a Senior Principal Research Scientist.

As a TC Research Scientist, Weghorst is able to write research proposals and run projects through UWTC while working in the HITLab. Weghorst expects that the new relationship between the HITLab and the Department of Technical Communication will yield great opportunities to interweave the department’s research methodologies with the HITLab and collaborate on the development of cutting-edge interfaces. Weghorst says the Technical Communication department is “a good fit” for her because the department shares her interests in designing and testing effective, useful, and usable human-computer interfaces.

Since the HITLab recently abandoned its more autonomous administrative status, each researcher has been required to claim his or her home department in order to distribute HITLab budgets. As an independent principle investigator in the HITLab, Weghorst did not belong to a department in the University and was, thus, allowed to choose one for herself. Her choice in Technical Communication makes the department her home as a Research Scientist and as the Director of the HITLab.

Weghorst’s history with the HITLab goes back to when Tom Furness, a professor in Industrial Engineering and adjunct professor in TC, founded the lab in 1989. Weghorst was completing her master’s in Computer Science at the University of Washington when she met Furness and became absorbed by his vision of a Virtual Reality research lab. With research experience in neurobiology and sociobiology in her prior graduate work in psychology, Weghorst focused on medical applications when she joined the small group. After several years, Weghorst’s work broadened when she became the research director of the lab in 1997. The founding director of the lab, Tom Furness, stepped down from his position in 2005 to focus on the lab’s international outreach. Weghorst then took Furness’ place as director and has since been managing the HITLab’s ongoing reorganization.

Since the inception of the lab, Weghorst has been busy: leading research in the lab, authoring papers in journals from numerous publishers, from Medicine Meets Virtual Reality (MMVR) to the Association for Computing Machinery, speaking to interest groups such as the Computer-Human Interaction Forum of Oregon, editing journals, and acting as a peer reviewer for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Weghorst is now completing her dissertation on human-computer interaction for her Ph.D. through the UW’s Independent Ph.D. program, and continues to lead several HITLab projects: Augmented Tangible Molecular Models, Fast Finite Element Modeling for Surgical Simulation, and Virtual Calakmul.

The new integration of Technical Communication with the HITLab will open great opportunities on both ends. Weghorst and other researchers will be able to share Technical Communication’s famous Laboratory for Usability Testing and Evaluation (LUTE), Weghorst will be able to provide Technical Communication with access to HITLab research, and the HITLab will offer Technical Communication a closer relationship with the various other departments that share the lab. Technical Communication students will also have new opportunities to gain experience as research assistants on HITLab projects.

Weghorst is most welcome into our family and we look forward to what the new relationship with the HITLab can offer us all.
On Friday, April 14, a group of eager Technical Communication students, faculty and staff took part in an unique opportunity to get first-hand experience with some cutting-edge interface technologies at the University of Washington's own Human Interface Technology (HIT) Lab—where research is conducted on technologies once only seen in sci-fi flicks like RoboCop, Lawnmower Man and Johnny Mnemonic.

The HIT Lab is a multi-disciplinary research and development lab where researchers from engineering, medicine, education, social sciences, architecture and design arts come together to create provocative new interface technologies. During the tour of the lab, the group was encouraged to try out several new hardware devices and software technologies:

**VirtuSphere** – A Virtual Reality (VR) device that may be mistaken for a giant hamster-wheel. The device provides omni-directional movement for users who are navigating a VR environment. The information on the user’s movement within the sphere (walking/running) is gathered by sensors and then used to move the user’s avatar through the virtual environment.

**ARToolKit** – A software library that offers Augmented Reality (AR) applications with as little as a standard Windows PC and a web-cam (but requires a head-mounted display for full immersion). AR is similar to VR, except it provides users with full visualization of the environment around them (think Terminator or RoboCop—they both have AR systems). The ARToolKit was demonstrated in the HIT Lab with two projects: Magic Book—a project that explores how books utilizing ARToolKit can seamlessly transport people into virtual reality environments; and GeoSpace—an interactive 3D visualization of Earth that could give Google Earth a run for its money.

**Fast Finite Element (FFE) Modeling Simulator** – A simulator that allows for real-time deformation of complex structures such as the human body—like virtual Play-Doh. The tour demonstration allowed users to perform soft-tissue cutting, skin undermining and suture placement upon a virtual hand model.

**Virtual Retinal Display (VRD) Emulator** – A new visual interface that scans laser light pixels directly onto the retina of the eye, thus side-stepping the need for a display and sending the image directly into the eye. The VRD is especially useful for Augmented Reality applications, as there is no screen to obscure the users’ view of their surrounding environment.

**TURP (Transurethral Resection of the Prostate) Simulator** – A computer simulator that provides extremely realistic training for the TURP medical procedure with accurate virtual anatomy, tissues, and bleeding, real instruments that provide force-feedback, and user statistics that will help doctors in training pinpoint their mistakes.

The experience was a real playground for all the visitors from Technical Communication. “Wow!” “whoa!” and “cool!” were frequent exclamations as people played with the new HIT Lab interfaces. Who knows how long it may be before you find some of these in your own home. So until then, if you can make friends with someone in the HIT Lab, you just might be able to experience the future now.
UCD certificate program bringing change to local companies
by Carleigh Romeis

Through good and bad, usability professionals and user-centered design (UCD) advocates are constantly working to sell UCD benefits to their company. The University of Washington Technical Communication UCD certificate program helped two professionals with different backgrounds and experience in UCD apply UCD techniques in their jobs with success. Laurent Gherardi and Maren Costa decided to broaden their knowledge and skills by learning more about the world of UCD. The following interviews tell of the profound impact the program has had on their jobs and their lives.

Gherardi, a creative director for an online company, was a self-proclaimed “user advocate” but never used UCD methods before taking the certificate program. He relied on his design abilities and always guessed what would work best for users. The new knowledge gained from the program “has changed my life and my job.”

Since starting the program, Gherardi goes to class on Thursday night, and then applies that knowledge on Friday morning at work, always seeking to win over more of the company’s management and trustees in the name of user-centered design.

Recently Gherardi has started a new project at work, and this time he will be following the UCD process from start to finish. He was in the beginning stages during this interview and excitedly stated how he was ready to “ask our users instead of guessing” what they want and like. The UCD program has helped him understand the importance of this process and the importance of good data.

Overall, the reception of UCD at Gherardi’s company is positive, but there is still some resistance at the Vice President level. Every chance he gets, Gherardi says he enjoys educating his team “about the basics, the philosophy of it” and works to incorporate UCD with even the small things.

“This has been an eye opener. I wanted more knowledge to design with; I have actually gained a new process and it is great how much I can apply to my job.” For Gherardi it is a challenge to figure out what will best work for his situation. He has a new desire to learn even more and to go deeper in depth into the UCD field.

Costa, who completed the UCD certificate program this past March, is a lead senior designer for another major online retailer. She didn’t really know what user-centered design was before the program. Now, her understanding of UCD has affected everything she does for her job. She recently redesigned the jewelry store for her online company, critically analysing the terms, tools, and layout, as well as how people really shop for jewelry. For example, Costa realized industry standards terms such as “fashion jewelry” were not always clear to customers visiting the website meaning different things to different people. The use of UCD processes and principles greatly increased sales for the jewelry store.

Since her success with that redesign, Costa has begun creating a design process document for her company. They had never really published any kind of design process previously, and she wanted to be able to offer a close-up view for the developers but also an overview for the stakeholders.

Part of her new document covers the discovery of data and the synthesis of that information before even creating design mock-ups, using affinity diagrams, personas, and other similar methods. Through the classes in the program, Costa learned the benefit of paper prototyping and Usability Testing, as she had never had to do one herself before.

Costa feels UCD is received well at her work place, but there is some resistance to the process. “There are concerns about taking up time.” Even so, Costa says, “I enjoyed the program overall. It has added value to me as an employee.” She confidently states she feels her design process document will increase awareness of UCD and the value of the process.
Students gain “real world” experience documenting a wiki web site
by Rosalinda Rosales

Each year, Professor David Farkas challenges students in his Software User Assistance course (TC 407) to create a fully functioning online help system. This year there was an added twist: the students were presented with the task of documenting a new wiki web site, PBwiki.com, which was still under development. PBwiki is a wiki service allowing users to easily create and edit web pages for a variety of uses.

Farkas divided students into groups according to individual abilities and interests, allotted in-class meetings and also encouraged out-of-class meetings. Working with a regularly updating product gave the class a real-world experience in documentation. The way students and wiki users interacted with the wiki was continuously changing.

“The constantly changing content and site features made it difficult to keep up and ensure that our documentation was accurate,” says graduating senior Scott Main. Farkas made the growing cloud of doom a little less daunting by freezing the documentation, allowing groups to focus on equally important details in the final weeks of the project.

In creating both an online help system and a print manual, the groups were expected to utilize a base document for the help and single-source the systems. While single-sourcing documentation is an ideal solution to creating help systems, the tools and resources available did not include a one-click method to publish material in more than one medium. “It was challenging to create an attractive manual in [Microsoft] Word,” says Vaneeta Prashar, “Once it was converted...formatting would get distorted.” In the end, each group presented help systems using base documents and manually transferred information to create the online and PDF versions. The students agreed the experience was invaluable.

Farkas sent the help systems to David Weekly, founder of PBwiki, who had provided the class with free premium accounts for the quarter. “We’re really impressed at the depth of the documentation we received and the attention to detail in walking our users through the minutiae of the service,” says Weekly. “We’re planning on integrating this documentation with our help system...and hugely appreciate the assistance of the students in putting this resource together for us.”

Personas: from family planning to retirement
by Nancy Samuels

Tamara Adlin, UWTC alumna, co-authored the book *Persona Lifecycle: Keeping People in Mind Throughout the Product Design* “for those brave enough to stand in a room of smart, powerful people and say, ‘This doesn’t make sense. Let’s try something new.’ And for the smart, powerful people brave enough to listen.”

Adlin, President of Adlin, Inc., and John Pruitt wrote this book as a practical guide for using personas in the product design lifecycle. People need a practical guide for creating, implementing, and using personas. The greatest benefits are that they clarify who the product is for and give the organization a shared vocabulary. “The hardest part of creating this book was coming up with a solid process to get from raw data to personas in an easy step-by-step way,” admits Adlin. They came to see personas as having lifecycles. Stages include family planning (determining whether the organization is ready for personas), conception and gestation, birth and maturation, adulthood, and finally lifetime achievement and retirement (where a persona’s return on investment is evaluated and it is retired).

“My insistence on practical and usable methods really got stamped into me in the Technical Communication master’s program,” says Adlin. “Without the fundamentals that I got in the TC program, I would not have been able to write this book.”
in students familiar with information architecture, how the web works and how information is presented. “The Internet is the way of the future, the way technical communications are going,” says Wangen. Students who see LANL as a prospective career option benefit most from the internship. “We want to set up people that will be employees for us and work there many years,” says Wangen. “That’s the big benefit. This opens up the doors to working at the lab.”

LANL is operated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC, for the US Department of Energy. It attracts undergraduate and graduate students with backgrounds ranging from Education to Physics. While Wangen visits UWTC to recruit for the Communication Arts and Services group, he encourages students from all fields to apply for the internship programs.

DUB—the HCI nexus
by Nancy Samuels

“Human-computer interaction (HCI) research is hot at UW and DUB (Design, Use, Build) is the nexus for this research,” says Elisabeth Cuddihy, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Technical Communication (UWTC).

DUB provides a place where students can practice before giving a dissertation proposal or conference paper. When a researcher has an inchoate research idea, DUB is also an excellent forum for receiving suggestions about directions the research might take.

Participants in DUB include graduate students and faculty from TC, the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media, and the Information School. The DUB audience provides feedback in a friendly congenial atmosphere. Each discipline brings a slightly different perspective in HCI, so researchers broaden their understanding by learning about the research that others are undertaking.

With friendships and collaborations between disciplines, students become eager to take classes in other departments, enriching the classroom experience as they bring perspectives from other disciplines. Through DUB, many TC faculty and students have formed alliances with other researchers creating bridges between people and technology.

Visit the DUB website at http://dub.washington.edu

UWTC attracts attention of Los Alamos National Laboratory recruiters
by Rosalinda Rosales

The University of Washington’s Department of Technical Communication (UWTC) offers a variety of courses while also encouraging students to branch out to other departmental courses and apply that outside knowledge to enhance learning in the TC degree program. Rick Wangen, Deputy Group Leader at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in Los Alamos, New Mexico, has turned his eyes to UWTC for this very reason.

The Los Alamos Undergraduate Student (UGS) Program and the Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) Program provides students with the opportunity to work in a professional environment and receive real-world experience. Students work with a mentor, receiving regular guidance and encouragement for the duration of the internship.

Wangen, who first visited UWTC during the fall of 2005 and again this spring, is particularly interested in students familiar with information architecture, how the web works and how information is presented. “[The Internet] is the way of the future, the way technical communications are going,” says Wangen.

Students who see LANL as a prospective career option benefit most from the internship. “We want to set up people that will be employees for us and work there many years,” says Wangen. “That’s the big benefit. This opens up the doors to working at the lab.”

LANL is operated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC, for the US Department of Energy. It attracts undergraduate and graduate students with backgrounds ranging from Education to Physics. While Wangen visits UWTC to recruit for the Communication Arts and Services group, he encourages students from all fields to apply for the internship programs.
For University of Washington Technical Communication (UWTC) students interested in software documentation, IBM’s Silicon Valley Lab can be the land of opportunity. For almost 20 years Lori Fisher has been recruiting students with strong writing skills and a strong technical background to invest six months in the Co-Op (internship) program.

Fisher seeks student co-ops that have a passion for technical writing, work well in teams, and show initiative. Fisher knows UWTC is ripe with students capable for the challenging work at IBM. Over the years she has offered co-op positions to almost 30 students, many of whom went on to full-time work.

The range of duties each co-op performs varies according to the team he or she is working with. In addition to writing new software documentation and updating existing documentation, co-ops work with other writers, editors, software developers, translators and actual customers to develop usable documentation that strongly fits the customer’s needs.

IBM prepares students for the professional world by providing real work and a level of responsibility equivalent to regular employees. “Co-ops at IBM are expected to quickly rise to the level of full-time professionals and are given every opportunity to learn what is necessary to make this transition, with full support from fellow writers, team leads, editors, and management,” comments Dell Burner, a UWTC graduate and current full-time IBM employee.

For many co-ops the most exciting part of their experience was getting to deliver a product. IBM also provides co-ops with significant experience working with cross-functional teams and a fully-functioning single-source system for delivering documentation.

The IBM title of Information Developer reinforces the philosophy that technical communicators don’t just write the help, they develop it. Co-ops use their technical knowledge and familiarity with programming to contribute to the products IBM delivers.

Daniel Loftus, a recent co-op and UWTC graduate sums up his feelings and the feelings of other UWTC students who have been involved in the co-op. “Working for IBM is a lot of fun,” says Loftus. “They treat you really well.”

Brett Johnson, a graduating senior in the Department of Technical Communication (UWTC), returned in January from his six-month IBM co-op with a remarkable experience. He worked hard to meet the high standards IBM sets for its co-ops, and definitely surpassed those expectations by leaving IBM having applied for a patent.

IBM encourages its co-ops, as well as its regular employees, to be innovative. One day while reviewing a tool for configuring information, Johnson thought, “I can make this even better,” and used the opportunity to improve the tool.

Johnson’s innovative thinking and initiative created momentum within a small project, causing it to become a major work effort. Before he knew it, he was part of a team of five IBM employees applying for a patent. Johnson's contribution helped to solve a major customer frustration and opened new possibilities for an interactive documentation.

“I think what made the experience at IBM so rewarding was all the people that I worked with,” says Johnson. “The managers really seem to work on your behalf to make sure that you have everything that you need to be effective as well as happy.”

Johnson is one of several UWTC students to apply for a patent while on a co-op or internship assignment. He will return to the IBM Silicon Valley Lab in the fall as a full-time employee.
Thank you to the UWTC donors
(Includes gifts from May 2005 – May 2006)

Individual Donors
Mr. & Mrs. David B. Adkisson
Dr. & Mrs. Paul V. Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Colin E. Birge
Suzanne G. Brainard, Ph.D.
Mr. Mike & Ms. Shawna Burkey
Dr. Alan Chandler & Ms. Judith Redmond
Mr. Richard D. Colvin
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth J. Cook
Mr. & Mrs. Monty L. Correll
Mr. & Mrs. Stanton L. Cox
Mr. Matthew E. Dallas
Ms. Denise I. Fulton
Mr. & Mrs. Rey Ganir
Ms. Linda D. Gault
Mr. & Mrs. J. David Gilmore
Dr. & Mrs. Hellmut Golde
Mr. James L. Hanson
Mr. & Mrs. Masatomo Hayashi
Ms. Eileen Shan-lin Hsu
Mr. & Mrs. John F. Kasonic
Mr. & Mrs. James R. Kasper
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Kirchham
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kress
Dr. Edward A. Lachica
Mr. Charles A. Laforte
Ms. Yen B. Lam
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Lashley
Mr. Jonathan Mark & Ms. Donna Sakson
Mr. & Mrs. Donald W. McKee
Ms. Ellen M. McKinney
Mr. R. Evan Miller
Mr. Nathan W. Moore
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher M. Mulligan
Anette E. & Patrick R. Olney
Ms. Dorothy R. Paton
Mr. & Mrs. Robert W. Pendle
Ms. Monica C. Perri
Mr. J. Prekeges & Ms. I. Tenggren
Mr. & Mrs. Glenn J. Pruiksma
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas M. Pyle
Professor Judith A. Ramey
Mr. Michael D. Rathjen
Ms. Wairnola M. Rhodriquez
Mr. & Mrs. Scott De Ridder
Mr. & Mrs. Paul N. Samek
Professor & Mrs. David K. Farkas
Ms. Shirin Tabrizi
Mr. Matthew P. Tevenan
Ms. Laurel Jean Tueling
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Wall
Dr. R. Wentworth & Ms. R. DeMarco
Mr. Thomas T. Wilson

Corporate Donors
The Boeing Company
The Borman Family Foundation
The Bullitt Foundation
Cingular Wireless
Maris & Iretta Foundation
Microsoft Corporation
PACCAR Foundation
Sakson & Taylor, Inc.
S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation
United Way of King County
Wells Fargo Foundation

How donor and endowment gifts are used
compiled by Kirsten Gantenbein

The Department of Technical Communication uses donations and endowment gifts to enrich student education. Listed below are activities attended by students during the 2005-2006 year not otherwise covered by regular budget funding. We appreciate the support of our friends/Alumni for making these events possible.

• Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers International Professional Communication 2005 Conference (IEEE IPC), Limerick, Ireland
• Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) 2005 Conference, Lubbock, TX
• Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) 2005 Conference, Chicago, IL
• Association for Computing Machinery Human Robot Interaction (ACM HRI) 2006 Conference, Salt Lake City, UT
• Society for Technical Communication (STC) 2006 Conference, Las Vegas, NV
• Engineering Professional Program Women in Science and Engineering (EPP WISE) 2006 Conference, Seattle, WA
• Registration for student presenter and faculty members at STC Research Showcase, Seattle, WA
• Participatory Design Conference (PDC), Trento, Italy
• Thinking Qualitatively Workshop, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
• Usability Professional Association (UPA) 2006 Conference, Broomville, CO
• Cognitive Science Society 2006 Conference, Vancouver, BC, Canada

For a complete listing of all conferences, visit www.uwtc.washington.edu/people/postcomm
UWTC plays pivotal role at CHI conference
by Rosalinda Rosales

Computer Human Interaction (CHI), the annual conference for the Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Computer Human Interaction (ACM SIGCHI), was held in Montréal, Quebec, Canada from April 22 through April 27, 2006. Over 20 students and faculty from the University of Washington's Department of Technical Communication (UWTC), Computer Science Engineering (CSE), and the iSchool attended the CHI conference.

UWTC wants to teach students the best way to do usability testing; however, there is no current scientific evidence that certain protocols used to track user's thinking during usability testing, such as the “think aloud method,” actually work. Judith Ramey, UWTC Department Chair and Professor, proposed and moderated the panel, “Does Think Aloud Work? How Do We Know?” to discuss the issue. “We need to do the science to understand the method that we use 98% of the time,” says Ramey. The audience supplied the panel with lots of questions.

Each year students and professionals submit papers for publication at the CHI conference. Through a rigorous evaluation process, approximately 20 to 25 percent of all papers submitted are selected for presentation. This year UWTC Ph.D. student Elisabeth Cuddihy presented the paper “The Validity of the Stimulated Retrospective Think Aloud Method as Measured by Eye Tracking,” written by herself, Ramey and graduate students Zhiwei Guan and Shirley Lee. The paper discusses an experiment that studied the Retrospective Think Aloud (RTA) method for collecting usability data. The experiment provided evidence supporting RTA as a valid and reliable method for collecting information about users’ performance as well as assessing and identifying usability issues.

Each year the CHI conference is presented so that Information Technology (IT) professionals and students around the world can get together and discuss all aspects of human-computer interaction.

STC officers connect UWTC students with professionals at the STC Career Fair
by Kirsten Gantenbein

At the annual Society for Technical Communication (STC) Career Fair, students from the Department of Technical Communication (UWTC) had the opportunity to meet recruiters in their field and hand out their resumes. This year, Nate Koppelman, president of the University of Washington STC student chapter, coordinated the STC Career Fair, which was held in the student union building on the UW campus. Microsoft helped to sponsor the event.

Students met with representatives from several companies including T-Mobile, Volt, Exiblio, Entirenet, Sakson & Taylor and RealNetworks, just to name a few.

“It’s an important event connecting UWTC students with companies and to expose both students and companies to opportunities in technical communication,” says Koppelman. “We hope future STC officers continue this event and make it better each year.”

The Career Fair has always been an opportunity for students to meet with professionals about jobs and internships for positions including technical writer, and editor, instructional designer, desktop publisher, content coordinator, and usability and information architect.

Of all student chapters in STC, the UW STC student chapter has the largest membership while also providing unique access to professionals.
Lori Fisher of IBM, ally to UWTC, receives the ‘‘Mikey’’ award
by Rosalinda Rosales

Lori Fisher’s spring trip to the Department of Technical Communication (UWTC) wasn’t just another recruiting and guest lecture visit. On April 18, 2006, at the Society for Technical Communication—Technical Communication Alumni Association (STC-TCAA) Research and Design Showcase, the UWTC department presented Fisher with the Myron L. White Award of Achievement, also affectionately known as the “Mikey.” The award honors Fisher as a leader in the field of technical communication and a dedicated friend of the department. “Over the years, Fisher has been a wonderful friend, adviser, and supporter of the department,” says UWTC department chair Judy Ramey. “We are delighted to recognize her numerous contributions with this award.”

Fisher has witnessed great changes to the TC field through her work at IBM. She started out as a technical writer and has worked her way up to her current management position with worldwide responsibility. She takes an active interest in her team’s performance and the work that is done there.

When Fisher first entered the field 23 years ago she brought with her passion for communication and management that has made her, what Laura Ramsey, a member and fellow of STC, calls, a “mainstay of the profession.” Fisher says she enjoys “being an advocate and a sponsor for information development, for technical communication.” She feels that it is important for people in general to understand the value of technical communication.

Fisher’s dedication to the field has kept her involved in the TC community. She has served as a board member with the Society for Technical Communication Silicon Valley chapter, held multiple elected positions at both local and international levels, as well as judged in various STC competitions. She has also taught in an advanced certificate program in Silicon Valley.

For almost 20 years, Fisher has regularly visited the UWTC department to give guest lectures, recruit and advise students, as well as provide feedback to the department. In her sessions with students, she often discusses career directions and recommends courses that will benefit the path a student is on, regardless of their desire or interest in becoming a co-op with her organization. “She brings a gentle professionalism to her mentoring of folks,” says Ramey. She shows a genuine concern for the direction of the field through her interactions with students and TC professionals.

David Farkas, a professor in the department and long-time colleague of Fisher, goes on to say, “she has reinforced over the years the importance of very high quality writing skills.” Her input has added to the quality of education students receive from the department. “She’s a fantastic professional,” says Farkas. “I would say the greatest contribution has been the constant dialog [she creates] between industry and academia.” Fisher’s broad view of the field has been a resource to the department because it has proved to be a positive influence for the direction of the curriculum.

The UWTC will continue to treasure Fisher’s contributions to the department as well as to the field of technical communication. This is apparent as Farkas describes her as “a jewel of a person.”

“I would just like to thank the department for their support over the years,” says Fisher. “It is a two-way relationship. It is truly gratifying and exciting to see the department places value on that relationship.”
**UWTC achievements for 2005-2006**

**Faculty/Instructors/Staff**
- Jeff Babauta: Received Honorable Mention for the UW College of Engineering Outstanding Staff Award.
- Dave Farkas: Received one of two Premier Courseware Awards, given nationally, for his work on “Biological Information Handling: Essentials for Engineers”. (see feature story on page 11.)
- Mark Haselkorn: Presented "Engineering Disaster Relief," at the College of Engineering Alumni Lecture Series.
- Jan Spyridakis: Received a high rated instructor distinction from the UW College of Engineering.
- Suzanne Weghorst: Awarded the UW DO-IT program’s Annual Trailblazer Award.

**Students (BSTC/MSTC/Ph.D.)**
- Athena Epilepsia and Brook Sattler: Presented at the UW Office of Undergraduate Research Symposium.
- Vaneeta Parashar: Awarded the UW College of Engineering Donald L. Lewis Memorial Scholarship.
- Desiree Willis: Named a Society of Women in Engineering Outstanding Undergraduate Female.
- Noah Ilinsky: Advanced to the interviewing round for the UW Bonderman Fellowship.
- Jennifer Schripsema: Awarded the College of Engineering Alfred & Geraldine Cohn Graduate Fellowship.
- LaTasha Taylor: Awarded the Graduate Diversity Fellow by the Graduate Opportunities & Minority Achievement Program (GO-MAP) and the UW Graduate School.
- Sandy Bartell: Inducted into STC Sigma Tau Chi Honor Society.
- Steve Lappenbusch: Passed the General Exam and is now a PhD Candidate.
- Emma Rose: Won the College of Engineering Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.
- Carolyn Wei: Passed the General Exam and is now a PhD Candidate.
- Quan Zhou: Won a Society for Technical Communication National Scholarship.

**PosTComm wins Excellence Award in magazine production**

by Kirsten Gantenbein

Each year, a small group of graduate and undergraduate students gather around a table and brainstorm ideas for a very large task: publishing the annual issue of *posTComm*, the alumni newsletter for the University of Washington Department of Technical Communication (UWTC).

Last year, the 2005 *posTComm* newsletter received an Excellence Award in the 2004-2005 Puget Sound Technical Communication Competition, sponsored by the Society for Technical Communication (STC) Puget Sound Chapter.

The competition is open to all technical communication professionals. TC professionals judge each entry for technical accuracy and provide feedback. The three categories in the competition are Online Communication, Technical Art, and Technical Publications. *PosTComm* entered into the Technical Publication category as a magazine. There are three levels of awards, ranked from highest to lowest: Premier, Excellence, and Merit. “I was very excited and proud that posTComm held its own among other publications submitted by professionals in the TC industry” says Shirin Tabrizi, UWTC alumna.

*PosTComm* provides opportunities for TC students to get involved and gain experience in publishing and media writing. Putting together *posTComm* is a collaborative effort between students, Department Chair Judy Ramey and Assistant to the Chair Kate Long. Ramey and Long provide ideas for stories as well as their expertise—then the students take it from there. Roles such as writer, editor, production editor, “In the Real World” editor, and project manager are divided among students.

This award provides a prestigious benchmark of quality to encourage future posTComm teams. Each year is a new opportunity for the publication and team to showcase the many areas of technical communication UWTC is involved in and this year is no exception.
In 2006-2007 UWTC faculty offered the following research groups. In general, groups met weekly over the course of a quarter and included undergraduates, master’s and PhD students.

David Farkas
Quikscan: Facilitating information seeking and discussion: a set of editorial techniques for “pre-digesting” a document by means of within-document summaries and strategic highlighting.

Object Oriented Concepts: Investigating ways that concepts underlying object oriented programming can be applied to information design.

Mark Haselkorn
Designing and Managing Information for Electronic Medical Communities: Integrating VA and Department of Defense electronic medical records for continuity of care, enhancing electronic medical systems with disease-specific order menus and content management practices and maintenance of a community-based website for the Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence.

For more information, visit http://www.va.gov/ms

Improving Communication and Coordination (C&C) Systems for International Disaster Response and Management: Analyzing and addressing systemic challenges to effective emergency C&C during widespread disasters as these challenges arise during all aspects and stages of evolving response efforts, including preparedness and early warning, rescue, relief, and recovery.

For more information, visit http://depts.washington.edu/iphr/homepage.shtml

Karen Kasonic
Engineering Communication Curriculum Design: Piloting new assignments in TC 231/333 and designing and piloting an assignment in TC 231, Introduction to Technical Communication, where students create a poster to define and describe a technical object or process.

Beth Kolko
Computer Games: Understanding digital games, particularly in the context of intercultural communication; an ongoing investigation into issues of game design, usability, gender, localization efforts of games, and games as an entry point for gaining computer-related knowledge.

ICT4D: Information and Communication Technology for Development: Investigating Internet and related technology developments in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Judy Ramey
Usability Methods Research (and Eye-Tracking in Usability): Empirically investigating claims of validity and reliability for commonly used methods, to recommend best practices and to design novel methods.

Mastering Macromedia (Adobe) Breeze: Analyzing and understanding the capabilities of Breeze, an online presentation/training tool.

Jan Spyridakis
Internet-Based Research - Examining the Effect of Text: Studying how various features of online information (e.g., Web sites and Wikis), Previews and Navigation menus, affect users’ behavior, comprehension and perceptions on user performance.

Jennifer Turns
Laboratory for User-Centered Engineering Education (LUCCEE): Studying engineering educators’ decision-making and developing case studies of participant experiences in the engineering teaching portfolio program.

Tom Williams
Visual Communication: Using eye-tracking research to investigate the effects of graphic variables on comprehension, memory and performance.
Carolyn Wei travels to India for internship and research
by Scott Main

Carolyn Wei is a PhD student in the Department of Technical Communication at the University of Washington. Her research focuses on the use of information and communication technologies (such as the internet and mobile phones) to support personal relationships in digitally emergent settings such as Uzbekistan and India. This summer, Wei will begin an internship with Microsoft in Bangalore, India, to explore her interests in youth and technology, and unobtrusive user research methods.

How did you discover the internship in Bangalore, India?
Beth Kolko, my advisor, has a relationship with Microsoft Research in India, and she had mentioned to me, “They’re looking for interns. Is this something you’d be interested in?” I was, so she helped me get connected. Microsoft was pretty open-minded about what I might do down there, so I said, “Look, I’m interested how people use technology to support personal relationships.” And, they said “Oh! That’s good. That’s something we’re interested in too.”

What do you expect to be the focus of your work there?
I’m interested in finding out how young people in India use mobile phones to support their personal relationships. My general understanding is that they don’t “date” like American kids “date,” but I’m interested in activities that might move a young person further, to a marriage or some kind of more long-term relationship.

Do you think India is an especially good place for this kind of research?
Well, I think what India offers is a fresher look at how people use technology. Because the technology in the US is so integrated into our daily lives, it’s hard to see where culture comes in. What I’m hoping to see in India is that there is a generation that’s still very much remembering what it’s like not to have these technologies. But also, it’s a very traditional society in many ways, so I’m hoping to see how that culture is bumping-up against new technologies.

You’re also writing a book. What is it about?
I’m hoping to take my dissertation and flip it into a book at some point. I think the dissertation is an opportunity for me to look at this narrow question of how mobile phones are used in India and Uzbekistan for personal relationships and, what I’d like to do is, expand that to look more at other kinds of technologies that are in use.

What do you plan on doing after your internship in India?
Well, come back to Seattle, to the University, and writing my dissertation. The nice thing about all the internships I’ve been doing is [they have] made me feel very confident about the skills and experiences I’ve had in the department and my ability to function as a researcher on my own.
In the real world

In the real world...

Compiled by Nancy Samuels

Alumni share their experiences on:
- Enjoyable aspects of their work
- Personal gains from UWTC
- Pleasures in the real world

1985-1989

Susan Krala, ‘87
BSTC
Alameda, California
susan.e.krala@uscg.mil

I was in my 13th year at Microsoft when I was recalled to active duty on 9/11/2001. I'm still on active duty today almost five years later. If this was World War II and 9/11 was Pearl Harbor, 9/11/2006 would be 12/7/1946. But WW2 had been over for 15 months by then. So remember your Reservists and Guardsmen, even those that never deployed overseas. National Defense and Homeland Security are everyone's responsibility. If you're not serving, at least support those who do.

US Coast Guard Reserves, Commander, Contingency Planning Branch RRT9 Alternate Co-Chair, and D11 Incident Command System Coordinator

Heather Beebe, ‘88
BS General Studies
Aberdeen, WA
heather.beebe@ge.com

I am still working for GE on a remote basis. My husband and I travel in our RV, and as long as I can get a phone line (preferably with DSL), I'm in business. This remote job remains a dream job—doing what I like, where I want to be.

GE Healthcare Integrated IT Solutions | Enterprise Solutions
Lead Technical Writer, Remote

1990-1994

Drew Haffner, ‘90
BS General Studies
Sammamish, WA

I now sell residential, multifamily, and commercial real estate in King County for Skyline Properties. As a real estate agent, I'm an independent contractor. This means I can create my own schedule around my client obligations. Sometimes I work until midnight or 70 hours a week, but other times I can take a couple of weekdays off and go fishing, skiing, or snowmobiling with no crowds. I love having the TC skill of writing according to my audience and purpose. I'm always writing letters, property descriptions, E-mails to clients, and flyers. Thanks to TC, I do it quickly and well. E-mail was just a baby when my class was sophomores or juniors. We could only send it within what was then called the Scientific and Technical Communication (STC) department. The next year, we could also send it to the engineering department. It seemed pretty useless at the time, but look at it now.

Dr. Chet Hedden, ‘91
MSTC
chet@xyzu.net

When I joined the first TC certificate program in the fall of 1989 I had not been inside a classroom in 18 years. I learned so much that the following fall I went on to enter the master's program and was offered a job teaching engineering students how to write. Suddenly I was a 4.0 grad student getting paid to attend the university tuition-free, while pretending to be a college professor! I
loved it, so it was only natural to follow the MS with an additional eight years of research on learning with computer games—for which I was awarded a PhD in educational technology in 1998. A few months later I moved to Arizona and began a quest for employment armed with a certificate and three university degrees. But after seven years with no prospects, I retired from job hunting last year and now divide my time between various personal research projects. My graduate school days were the best of times.

Dyan Pfitzenmeier, ’92
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing
Seattle, WA
dyanpfitz@hotmail.com

As a writer and editor, I am fond of telling people’s stories and using my imagination to craft messages. Finding ways for people to send messages—so as to connect to each other—unfolds as a creative and dynamic process. The certificate lends credibility to my work and serves as a knowledge base. This photo shows me enjoying Rome on the Ponte Sant’Angelo with Bernini’s angels.

Firefly, President (self-employed)

Susan Scott, ’92
MSTC
Roatan Island, Caribbean

Greetings! I am not actually in the “Real World” anymore. I live on a tropical island in the Caribbean. I did work for Compaq Computer and they paid (via my stock options) for most of the property and house!

I began in the second year of the master’s program, in 1986 if memory serves, and Mary Coney was my advisor. In 1989 I went to work at Compaq Computers. At that time Compaq was growing exponentially and my group was renamed and consolidated and expanded. I eventually ended up as the Managing Editor of the Engineering Technical Communication Group, which meant that even though I was managing I was still writing. I received the promotion because I demonstrated management skills that I learned in the program. My group produced internal documentation such as specifications for chips. My most memorable highlight was producing the White Paper for the USB consortium when that group was trying to persuade computer manufacturers to use USB as the new interface rather than the interface proposed by another consortium led by Intel.

I admit, while at Compaq, I tried to get laid off a couple of times, but I ended up getting promoted after each purge. I finally had to quit to go sailing around the Caribbean with my husband in our 35-foot sailboat, Journey. We ended up on Roatan Island off the coast of Honduras in 1998. Since that time we sold the boat and built a house. I have taught English and World Geography at the Roatan Bilingual School. I also became a paramedic and served as Captain of a volunteer ambulance service. Now, I translate for a veterinarian who comes from the mainland once a week, and two days a week I work in the reference room of a new island library. Oh yes, I am also a part-time member of the “Home before Dark” Band that plays mainly at the Hole in the Wall, a bar reached only via water.

I haven’t totally given up writing, although now it is mostly articles in magazines about cruising or island living. Friends are encouraging me to write E-books, but I am lazy. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it!

Robin Taylor, ’92
BS General Studies

I don’t have a lot of tidbits from “the real world” to offer, but I will update my particulars.
surgery for cancer. While recovering in the hospital I found myself making usability improvements in my mind to all the various technologies and terminology used there. Overall, I am doing well and getting on with my life.

Self-Employed
www.normely.com

David Oberstadt, ‘94
BSTC
Gilroy, CA
davidod@us.ibm.com

I have had the same employer for 12 years now, but I’m not in a rut. I’ve been able to work on different assignments from documentation for our mainframe database, DB2, to tiny two-day projects, such as fact sheets and white papers. I am pleased that my job doesn’t consume my personal life. I have plenty of time to spend with my family, work in the garden, and keep bees. As I look back on my time in UWTC, I have come to appreciate one skill above all else: Good writing is essential. Nothing else matters if you cannot clearly and accurately communicate.

IBM, Informix Information Development
http://www.informix.com
Co-inventor on System and method for specifying custom qualifiers for explain tables, patent #20020049700

LeAnne (Lay) Dolce, ‘96, ‘00
BSTC, MSTC
Seattle, WA
publisher@napturalrootsmagazine.com

Since last summer, my professional life has taken quite a drastic turn for the better. I started my own publishing company, Akili Publishing, LLC (AP) in July of 2005. At AP, we focus on creating high quality publications at affordable prices for small and medium sized businesses in and around the greater Puget Sound area. Since our grand opening, we have been quite busy. In November 2005 we held our 1st Annual Natural Hair and Health Show in Seattle. With the successful conclusion of this event, we started work on the premier issue of our natural hair and lifestyle magazine, Naptural Roots. This publication is targeted at African American professionals between the ages of 24 and 45, although we cover topics for adults of all ages. Our first issue was published in January 2006 and has already been distributed in Kenya, Japan, and various locations around the US. Another upcoming publication we are excited about is a book and a set of affirmation cards. We have also created publications and Web sites for local jazz artists and catering companies. Our spring issue of Naptural Roots is scheduled for publication the first week of April.

Cingular Wireless, Software Quality Assurance Lead
Akili Publishing, LLC, Owner
Naptural Roots Magazine, Publisher
http://www.akilipublishingllc.com

Norm Ely, ‘95
MSTC
Nevada City, CA
norme@direcway.com

I am still freelancing in website maintenance and in September, I’m going to be a grandpa. In April I had
Joe L. Rhodes, ‘96  
Certificate in Technical Writing & Editing  
Bremerton, WA  
joel.rhodes@comcast.net  

Currently, I’m employed as a contract Engineering Technician/Technical Writer with the Northrop Grumman Corporation. This position is located at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, WA. In thinking about my focused efforts in achieving the coveted Certificate, I remember that the UWTC professors taught me to always remember the audience during the creation of a particular composition. Additionally, these professors also mentioned the importance of consistent project management, and the importance of pertinent data collection.

Northrop Grumman Corp., Engineering Technician/Technical Writer

Mark Alway, ‘97  
BSTC  
Mount Vernon, WA  
uwte@markalway.com  

I’m very thankful for my TC background. The company I work for is going through the growing pains of standardizing communications. I’ve helped a lot with designing our newsletter templates, logos, Web site, and describing to staff details such as the differences between serif and sans-serif fonts. Those little things make a difference when you need to communicate effectively with tens of thousands of donors.

Youth Dynamics, Director of Burlington Youth Dynamics, Burlington WA  
Educational Outreach, Instructor and Course Designer, University of Washington  
YouthTracker.net, President, Mount Vernon, WA  
http://www.markalway.com  
http://www.youthtracker.net  
http://security.markalway.com

Daun Redfield, ‘97  
BS General Studies  

Nampa, ID  
Some of the most valuable experiences I had in the Technical Communication program were outside the classroom. I had always worked alone, but in the program I learned how to work with a team as fellow students and I put our heads together in the computer lab to complete a project or as we studied together for exams. Another thing I very much value is the broad spectrum of knowledge that the Technical Communication program provided beyond technical writing—editing, graphic design, project management, Web publishing, and publication editing, for example. All of these have been useful to me in the various positions I have held. In the nine years since I graduated, I have worked in document production, but I have never written professionally. I am currently working as the copy edit coordinator for Pacific Press, a Christian book publisher in Nampa, Idaho. This is not a high-paying, visible, or prestigious position; it is mission work. But I feel very fortunate to be able to use some of the skills I acquired in technical communication to find employment in a small town like this, where traffic is not so bad and recreation opportunities abound.

Pacific Press Publishing Association, Copy Edit Coordinator  
http://www.signstimes.com (I do the html mark-up for this site.)  
http://www.elcentinela.com (I do the html mark-up and copy editing for this site.)

Anita Salem, ‘97  
MSTC  
Seattle, WA & Aptos, CA  
asalem@salemsystems.com  

In 2005 I moved with my partner, Cindy King ‘03, to the Monterey Bay area. It’s hard to get used to so much sun, and the beach is almost too much for me, but I’m muddling through. I’m still consulting in California and Washington and am in the process of refocusing my efforts. After almost 10 years as a consultant in usability, interface design,
In the real world

and product strategy, I find myself looking at ways to apply my skills to have a greater impact. No, I’m not changing careers, but I am looking to change where I put my effort. I plan on increasing my involvement in emergency management, non-profits, and public policy. I’d love to talk with others who have found themselves looking to do the same.

Salem Systems, Inc. President
www.salemsystems.com

Waka Fukuoka, ‘98
MSTC
Tokyo, Japan

Waka Fukuoka, along with her husband Taka, celebrated the birth of their beautiful baby girl named Saya on February 13th of this year. Waka has taken a one-year leave from working in the Engineering Education Department at Fuji Xerox in Tokyo, Japan, so she can devote herself to child rearing. While Waka says she finds this new challenge perplexing, she also says it is full of exciting discovery and many smiles. Waka plans to return to Seattle sometime and bring her daughter Saya to visit the department.

Tina Loucks-Jaret, ’99
MSTC
cloucks@ engr.washington.edu

One of the most important and valuable aspects of my degree was that I could take advantage of a broad range of classes, projects, and experiences. This translated into a winding career path following graduation that included a few years writing environmental impact statements, a few years in a more administrative capacity working with computer scientists at UW, and most recently a new position as a Technical Communication Specialist in the Center for the Advancement of Engineering Education also at the UW. In this new position I’ll be working with the researchers to identify and implement the dissemination of their research findings, as well as working with them to create, edit, and produce a variety of publications also related to their research results. My personal time is currently spent with my husband on gardening and home projects, hiking and camping, and preparing for the adoption of our first child.

University of Washington CAEE

2000-2005

Jenny Blackburn, ’00
BSTC
Seattle, WA
jenny.blackburn@gettyimages.com

The year 2006 finds me still enjoying my job in usability at Getty Images. The highlights include working with interesting, fun people; being challenged by new projects; expanding my repertoire of usability methods; and dipping into related areas such as market research. It has been exciting to see usability and user-centered design grow and become truly integrated and valued at Getty Images. I continue to believe that one of the absolute advantages held by TC graduates is the capacity for clear, concise communication—this is truly invaluable in the real world. On a personal front, I’ve enjoyed another fun-filled year with my husband and 3-year old son, Camden. Ongoing challenges are attaining work-life balance and taking time to sniff the flowers along the way. “It is only possible to live happily on a day-to-day basis” - Margaret Bonnano

Getty Images
and their motivation for the ways they communicate, I have found it easier to understand what people need to know with regard to technical content. For this reason, I think the Theoretical Dimensions of TC course (TC 501) provides excellent preparation for the real world. In the past year I attended the IPCC 2005 conference in Limerick, Ireland, where I made a few new friends. I also got engaged while in Ireland, which is exciting! Recently, I made the big switch to Microsoft as a User Assistance Lead for the Hardware group, which is a wonderful opportunity for me. I’m excited to be there and I look forward to the coming year!

Microsoft, User Assistance Lead
http://www.primaryspaces.com

Leisa Ashbaugh, ‘01
Certificate in Technical Writing & Editing
Leisa.ashbaugh@yahoo.com

One of the things I especially enjoy about my current assignment as a UA Lead in the Hardware Group at Microsoft is that I get to be involved in the entire software (and in this case hardware) development cycle, from inception and deciding on the product features, through shipping. In UA/UE our input is often limited to the end of the development cycle, so it is gratifying to be able to have a significant say in the user experience early in the development of the product. When I look back at my experiences in UWTC, I appreciate it all. My certificate gave me exactly what I needed to change careers and enter the technology industry. I got my first job within eight days of posting my resume on Dice.com. Now, five years later, I am a project lead and enjoy my work more than ever. I most appreciate the Editing class in which I did not do well on the first test. That was a real shock - it made me realize that I had a LOT to learn, and I did. The best part of being out in the real world is working with really great, smart, talented people in a supportive work environment. I have had that in every job, both contract and full-time employment since finishing the certificate program. Oh yeah, and good pay and flexible work arrangements.

Sakson & Taylor, deployed at Microsoft

Jamie Myxter, ‘00
MSTC
Redmond, WA
jamie_myxter@hotmail.com

As graduates of the Technical Communication program, we know how critical clarity and intention are in creating understanding. I’ve steered my career in a new direction, integrating a decade of technical publications experience, and shifted to a coaching and consulting practice dedicated to helping individuals and organizations attain their potential. I hold a core belief that our culture sits on the precipice of radical, global change. I believe this change is inevitable because the ways we are living, as a species, are fundamentally unsustainable. Corporations, organizations, and leaders are the most powerful leverage points for radical, global change. I believe the capacity to respond to change is a key indicator of health. My measures of system health include sustainability, ability to welcome and respond to change, and flexible identity. I am seeking visionary clients who are looking to revolutionize and transform their business and leadership practices. Please contact me if you’d like to know more about my new field of work.

Precision Communications, Inc.
http://www.precisioncommunications.org

Alexander Thayer, ‘00, ‘04
BSTC, MSTC
Seattle, WA
huevos@alumni.washington.edu

The time I spent learning about the concepts of discourse communities and writer/reader roles has served me quite well in this profession. By continually considering other people’s points of view, their ideas,
Marita Graube, ‘01
BSTC
Seattle, WA
mgraube@mac.com

After a year of traveling in Asia and Europe, Dean and I are back in Seattle again. I’m working as a contract technical writer with Rosetta, a local company that analyzes gene expression. It’s a great opportunity to use my science writing, interface design, and print publication skills from my TC classes. In my free time, I’ve managed to squeeze in a few ski vacations and trips to the Oregon coast. Although I still haven’t shaken the travel bug, life in the “real world” of Seattle is going very well.

Rosetta Inpharmatics, Technical Writer

Ben Schielke, ‘01
BSTC

I am working in Project Management for WaMu.com. My main focus is a project around Web site availability. I am having a very good experience with Washington Mutual and am learning quite a bit. I still find myself drawing daily from my training in Technical Communication. Katie and I are battling a previously neglected house and yard, remodeling a bathroom and doing extensive landscaping work. We had one addition to our family this year, not a baby, but a little pug named Stella, who has been keeping us quite busy.

Washington Mutual, Project Management

Elaine Zapata, ‘01
BSTC
Seattle, WA
ezapata97@yahoo.com

This past year has been pretty exciting and quite the change. I have recently moved back to the Seattle area after living in London for close to 2 years. During the past year, I was able to travel quite extensively all over Europe and saw a lot of amazing countries and met a lot of wonderful people. I’m planning on heading back to Germany and Italy in the fall with my boyfriend for another exciting trip. Not only was the move back to Seattle a big change, my previous company was acquired earlier this year, and I’m now working for GE Healthcare as a Senior Technical Writer.

GE Healthcare, Senior Technical Writer

Natalie Brockway, ‘02
BSTC
natalie@salire.com

In the “real world,” I most enjoy being able to see the impact I’m making. Starting at ground level of a start-up company turned out to be a very satisfying experience for me. I was able to take what I learned as a student and apply it in many different areas. As my company has grown from 3 to 33 since I joined, I’ve found I can apply almost all of the knowledge and skill I gained through my coursework as I help Salire be successful. As both a manager and an individual contributor, I’ve found that the following are invaluable: tenacity when you need to discover the answer, confidence and leadership when you know the answer, continuous empathy for the customer, and an almost obsessive attention to detail. My professors and the curriculum instilled this awareness in me, and I see the value of my formal education each and every day.

Salire Partners
www.salire.com

Nathan Moore, ‘02
BSTC
University of California at Davis, PhD student
nathanmo@u.washington.edu

This year I am completing my Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering at UC Davis. My research has been elucidating design principles that can be used to engineer drug-delivery capsules capable of seeking
Destry Wion, ’03, ’03
Certificate in User-Centered Design, MSTC
Strasbourg, France

Since graduating from the evening master’s program in 2003 my life has changed in many ways: I started a freelance Web design business, moved to France, married a beautiful woman, and have found the time to get more involved in the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and other international activities. Though self-employment is not always easy, it has taught me a great deal about project management, client interfacing, distributed collaboration and a whole lot more. Combined with the valuable knowledge I gained from the TC Department’s program in User-Centered Design, I feel I have a robust set of TC assets to offer any international company with Web communication needs. On a voluntary side of things, I now serve as a principal member on the STC’s Dynamic Web Services team. A significant effort is being made on the increasingly popular STC Forum. I have also spearheaded—and continue to coordinate—the international documentation Wiki and TextBook which is created for the open-source content publishing system called Textpattern. Finally, when I find the time, I publish articles at my own site and soon will be doing it in two languages. RSS feeds are available if you would like to follow along or get in touch.

Self-employed, but also looking
http://wion.com
http://stcforum.org
http://textpattern.net/wiki

Katie Schielke, 02
BSTC
katie.schielke@gmail.com

At the Seattle office of West Monroe Partners I was employee #3, so I have been enjoying building a business and working with a team that I know will make this company very successful! During my time in UWTC I gained a user-centric perspective that has really helped me with all my work, especially with day-to-day communications. I am finding out that the world is much smaller and we have a tighter-knit community than I thought.

West Monroe Partners

Jay Barker, ’04
BSTC
Seattle, WA
jcbarker@u.washington.edu

I’m currently working as a Software Engineer for Teranode Corporation, a bioinformatics software company based in Seattle. My TC background has
been especially useful as I’ve recently updated the Teranode SDK, revising the documentation for third-party developers. Frequently considering the audience for my code and documentation has helped me contribute to the best release of our product yet. Outside of work, I’m pursuing a master’s degree in software engineering at Seattle University. Over the past couple of years, I’ve also been actively involved in the Seattle club of an international service organization, Rotaract.

Teranode Corporation, Software Engineer
www.jbarker.com

Angela Boyle, ’04
BSTC
Shoreline, WA
anjela@u.washington.edu

I really enjoy writing. It feels like I get to work on word puzzles all day. My new job is great. I get to play around with software and figure it out so I can document the new fields and functionalities. This job has really pinned down the class I have found to be the most useful: Computers in TC. Learning how to learn new programs has been of vital importance to all three of the jobs I have been at. Not only do I need to learn the office-specific email clients, version managers, etc., but I am in the software business, so I have to learn all the software I need to document, too. This is really important since my last two jobs have been in financial software and I know nothing about finances! As for the “Real World,” I am most pleased with my new car. My current job is a full-time permanent position, so I need to have a good car to get me from Shoreline to Renton 5 days a week! In the photo I am holding Ernie, our five-month old Pembroke Welsh Corgi.

EDEN systems
www.aboyle.com

Kathryn A. Grainger, ‘04
BSTC
Vancouver, WA
kagraing@us.ibm.com

I graduated from the UW as Katy Sible and have since morphed into Kathryn Grainger (through professionalism and marriage). I started working with IBM in August 2004 as a non-matriculated graduate student co-op. Although my original co-op term was to be 12 months, they hired me on as a full-time employee after only five. I continued working at SVL until October 2005, when my husband and I decided to move back north, closer to family and away from the hubbub of Silicon Valley. My department agreed to let me work remotely from our new home in Vancouver, WA, in part because my lead developer works remotely from his home in Portland, OR. IBM’s been a great employer. They’ve taught me a lot about information development in the “real world” and I can certainly thank them for a solid foundation to my career. I don’t know what the future holds for me, but IBM has been more than willing to be flexible with my work assignments, so I can see myself working with them for quite a long time.

IBM, Information Development, DB2 for z/OS

Lara A. Haynes, ’04
Certificate in Technical Writing and Editing
Seattle, WA
lhaynes@amsworld.com

I write content for Web-based training (WBT) and Online Help for an insurance business management application. Although I am fascinated by technology and advances in computer science, my favorite aspects of this job are actually the non-technological elements. The visual context
of both Help and WBT allows me to incorporate artistic skill and aesthetic consciousness in the creation of more effective learning materials. To best accommodate the end-user, I must also implement psychological awareness of the user’s discourse—from the specific roles that he or she performs in the daily business workflow, to a basic understanding of the insurance business itself. This job requires that I quickly learn about software features in one “language,” the language of high technology, specs and subject matter experts. I must then communicate what I learn in another “language,” one that can relate a procedure efficiently and clearly to the user, and one that is both engaging and effectively educational. So, along with art and psychology, I incorporate linguistics in my work as well! In a nutshell—I find that writing Help nicely suits my personality.

AMS Services/Vertafore

Alyssa McFarland, ’04
MSTC
Vancouver, B.C., Canada
summerleaf@blarg.net

I am currently working as a stay at home mom to my daughter Ravenna. Can’t say that my TC degree helped with this, but it sure is fun! I’ll probably start looking for work when she starts school.

www.coiledtospring.com

Matt Queen, ’04
MSTC
Redwood City, CA
mqn@u.washington.edu

Since September 1st 2005 I have been working with a contract agency called Synergia LLC, located in Redwood City, CA. I have had the opportunity to pursue research in the graphic depiction of data (visualization) and study of problem solving/decision making under uncertainty and risk. Our set of decision analysis and support tools (ACCORD) is an ever evolving project that exercises usability, user centered design, and engineering psychology skills and scholarship. We have some exciting projects including the analysis of hazmat/first response and I am working hard to increase the attention we give to the research of visualization. Our latest work in this area has lead to projects involving the visualization of agent based simulation data. In addition to my full time job I have been teaching Human-Computer Interaction in the UW Extension’s coordinated study program, written a few articles about interaction modeling, and developed software to assist in the creation of said models.

Synergia LLC
http://faculty.washington.edu/mqn
http://www.synergia.com


Raina Richart, ’04
BSTC
Renton, WA
I’m currently working as a content/courseware developer for The Mosaic Company, based in Renton. I’m working mostly in Texas right now on a big training project for a call center. I enjoy seeing something I’ve written in print and in use, especially when students find the training materials I’ve worked on helpful and enjoyable to use. I greatly appreciate all of the practice in writing, editing, and page layout and design that I had in UWTC; these skills are especially useful in my work as a courseware developer. Now that I am out in the real world, I enjoy being out on my own and having all of the opportunities that are available. The company I work for has me traveling quite a bit, so I get to see some of the country. Now that I’m done with school (at least for a while), I am learning a lot more about the real world, and I think it’s great!

The Mosaic Company, Content/Courseware Developer

Karina Allen, ‘05  
BSTC  
ka5@u.washington.edu

Although I’m a technical writer at Boeing, my daily activities revolve primarily around web development. On average, I spend about one to two weeks a month writing user guides and procedures, and about 2 days a month writing processes. Of course, every document and web site I work with requires editing of some sort. Every day, I use the skills I developed at the UW; and every day, I learn something new here at Boeing - this keeps my work interesting and me happy. In June, it will be one year since I started working for Boeing, and so far, the year has gone by incredibly fast. I enjoy every aspect of my work, and I’m looking forward to working many more years at Boeing.

The Boeing Company

Carol Costantino, ‘05  
MSTC  
Seattle, WA

I earned my master’s degree at UW in Technical Communication in 2005 while working as Regional Vice President for Information Resources for Marriott International. Currently I am leading the effort to plan and implement the convergence of the voice, data, and portal services at Marriott International. While an undergraduate in Information Systems at the University of Maryland, I designed voice and data systems and building wiring for IBM for eight years then worked for small firms managing both government and commercial technical contracts. I joined Marriott in 1998 as a technical business manager focusing on global network design requirements. Communicating complex technical changes to non-technical management teams who are making the financial decisions about the strategic direction is always a challenge. The UW master’s program in Technical Communication provided a strong background in researching the impact of new technologies on user communities and methods to communicate the changes to diverse audiences. I live in Seattle with my husband, Seattle sculptor Charlie Bigger, and our dog, Pasta. I have offices in both Washington, DC and Seattle.

Marriott International, Regional Vice President for Information Resources

Jerry Farnham, ‘05  
MSTC  
Gainesville, FL  
jfarnham@topazpubs.com

I landed in Gainesville, Florida, about as far away from
Seattle as you can get and still be in the continental US. Gainesville is home to the University of Florida and to Topaz Publications, where I am Senior Technical Writer and Project Manager. We write craft training guides for the construction industry. The guides are the primary curriculum used in training programs that help trainees become, for example, electricians, carpenters, electronic technicians, sprinkler fitters, etc. One of the many things I enjoy about my job is traveling to meet with subject matter experts. I was recently at Marco Island, a resort area in Florida, and expect to be in Albuquerque in August. In fact, I expect to return to the Seattle area this summer to meet with our electrical SMEs. Perhaps I will have the opportunity to return to the campus and see some of my former professors and classmates. Gainesville feels like home to me. I like the climate, particularly the abundant sunshine and the pristine rivers. I have done a fair amount of kayaking (in this picture I am at Rainbow River) and motorcycle riding. The state of Florida is a great location for anyone who likes the outdoors, warm weather, and sunshine.

Topaz Publications, Senior Technical Writer and Project Manager

**Lindsey Saunders, ’05**

BSTC
Seattle, WA

goodclimbsgoodtimes@gmail.com

So much has happened since I graduated from TC last spring! Between graduation and starting employment at Pratt & Whitney, MMI (PWMMI), I spent roughly a month climbing in Squamish, Canada. Around that time, I met and began dating a B.C.-born outdoor enthusiast, Ben Kunz, who I am still happily with today. After my six-month contract at PWMMI, I joined a young consulting practice downtown: West Monroe partners, LLC. where I began my work there helping to manage the launch for WaMu Free Checking. It’s so exciting and so fun working in a small yet rapidly growing company because there is abundant opportunity to grow the culture with the business. Last month, we completed our first company duathlon (run/bike/run). I’m sure there are more on the horizon. In mid June, Ben and I will be climbing the Grand Teton in my home town of Jackson, WY, and plan to go to Spain. Of course, we will find the climbing there as well! In the photo I am climbing at Smith Rock.

West Monroe Partners, LLC
lsaunders@westmonroepartners.com
http://lindseysaunders.com
http://westmonroepartners.com

**Shirin Tabrizi, ’05**

BSTC
Seattle, WA

shirintabrizi@gmail.com

I am currently auditing the Microsoft Developer and Platform Evangelism SharePoint site. I especially enjoy gaining expert knowledge on how to best utilize SharePoint to meet my users needs. Also, listening to their issues/wants and creating new solutions are very satisfying. I greatly appreciate having solid background knowledge on the different roles within the TC industry. Not only is it useful when job hunting, but it also comes in handy when trying to deal with different types of people in different positions. What pleases me most about being out in the real world? Paychecks don’t hurt. But also the feeling of contributing to the technical field is exciting. And, it is nice having time to do all the things I couldn’t do while in school: read for pleasure, paint, exercise, and play sports.

Excell Data, deployed at Microsoft
PosTComm, 2005

Sound Transit’s Shop Dine & Ride Guide