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For information about copyrights, reprinting articles, and submitting articles, see the article submission policies on page 3.

This printer-friendly version of the ActiveVOICE includes the same content as the online newsletter on the chapter

Web site ([www.stc-sf.org](http://www.stc-sf.org)). The text has been reformatted to reduce the number of pages required to print the newsletter.

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## April 2006 Meeting -- Work Effectively with Mindjet MindManager Pro 6

*Presented by Tim Bombosch*

The February meeting is on Wednesday, April 19, 2006, from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the Elephant & Castle in San Francisco's financial district. For details about the location and instructions for purchasing tickets, visit [www.stc-sf.org/stc-meetings.htm](http://www.stc-sf.org/stc-meetings.htm).

### About the Presentation

MindManager provides an exciting visual interface that rapidly captures, organizes, and shares all types of data, resulting in more effective analyses, better information management, smoother processes, and faster execution.

*During this presentation, you will learn how MindManager can improve your presentations, reports, project management, and brainstorming. Feel free to download a trial version at [www.mindjet.com](http://www.mindjet.com).*

### About the Speaker

Tim Bombosch is a certified Project Management Professional with 7 years of technical documentation experience. Currently, he is the Documentation Project Manager at Mindjet Corp. He is also the Vice President of the San Francisco Chapter STC. His areas of expertise are project management, network security and data management software, system administration guides, and online help. In an earlier life, he wrote extensively about German cinema and taught German for 10 years.

## January 2006 Meeting -- AuthorIT in the Real World

*Presented by Rolfe Dlugy-Hegwer and Chris Muntzer and reviewed by Josh Berman*

At the January 2006 chapter meeting, Chris Muntzer and Rolfe Dlugy-Hegwer described how they have implemented AuthorIT as a "single source content management tool" that manages data from a single location and distributes it to many users worldwide for simultaneous editing and maintenance. AuthorIT has become a driving force in the creation of systems that provide a single source for documents in a wide variety of formats ranging from print files, such as MS Word and PDF, to Web tools including HTML, XHTML, and XML.

### What is Content Management?

Traditional content management has become a static method for authors; not only must they write the text, they are also responsible for all types of formatting of the documents. Thus, the writers must control all three basic system components: 1) input, 2) processing, and 3) output. When these documents are sent to other end-users, different fonts, styles, colors, and languages are needed for the other users to understand the information. This decentralized system results in a slow and costly process due to the many copies required. AuthorIT has streamlined this process by using a database environment to manage information. The user simply writes the words, adds images and hyperlinks, and after choosing an output format, such as print, help or Web, the document is ready for publishing.

### AuthorIT's Single-Source System

At this point, AuthorIT provides the formatting -- the heart of the software's success. User-defined templates, along with object locking and unlocking

systems, make it possible for different parts of the document to be edited simultaneously by many users. Even when a topic is in use (locked mode) and can only be edited by one user, it's still available to all other users in read-only format. When the user is finished, the topic becomes unlocked and available to other users. AuthorIT's success lies in the editing of components rather than the entire document, giving authors and editors the freedom to change other components as they see fit without concerning themselves with managing the whole book. By keeping information in one source, all changes can be made very quickly, thus making documents reusable and eliminating the need for complete rewriting.

### Global Business Benefits

Of the six modules in AuthorIT's product suite, Chris is most impressed with Localization Manager, which translates source content through language memory tools -- much like an electronic thesaurus. After translation, the material is sent back to AuthorIT for final review before it's published. Chris says, "As we enter new territories, our formats need to be truly multilingual. This is especially important regarding our Asian markets, where clear language conversion is vital."

AuthorIT's object-oriented database system enables users to author and change content all in one place and easily reuse all types of print, help, or Web documents, thereby eliminating duplication, reducing mistakes, and elevating global productivity. Chris and Rolfe have proven AuthorIT to be a powerful multi-user tool that is making single-source management solutions the standard for business and commercial content.

For more information about the company, its products, and audio presentations, visit their Web site at [AuthorIT.com](http://AuthorIT.com).

*Josh Berman is an STC member and a longtime retail business owner. He earned his bachelor's degree in Information Systems from the University of Phoenix in September 2005.*

## February 2006 Meeting -- Single-source Publishing with DocBook XSL

*Presented by Bob Stayton and reviewed by Mysti Berry*

Bob Stayton's presentation about single source publishing using DocBook XSL was lively and informative -- he had a believable, complete answer for all the questions thrown his way, and we threw him as many as we could. Bob answered our many questions with a depth and breadth of knowledge that only comes from having worked with a technology for years.

DocBook is an OASIS standard DTD (document type definition which describes the structure of a Web page written in XML), related style sheets (documents that describe formatting for a specified set of documents), and the tools needed to process data into delivery formats, created specifically for technical documentation of all kinds. DocBook is based on XML, which stands for Extensible Mark-up Language, a subset of SGML. XML is a hierarchical set of entities which DocBook uses to structure content and store it separately from formatting information, which is managed by style sheets written in XSL, a language created for expressing stylesheets.

### Who Should Single-Source?

First, Bob presented information about when to consider single-sourcing with any XML-based system. Companies are usually pleased with the return on investment if they meet these criteria:

- Must deliver to multiple output formats including PDF and HTML.
- Must maintain large document sets over time.
- Need to support shared authoring of documents.
- Need to support multiple versions of a document (PDA, systems for the blind, Unix/Windows/Mac, multiple language support).
- Support batch processing environment.

In other words, a one-writer company or a company with few documentation

deliverables may not need single-sourcing.

### Why Should You Use DocBook?

The short answer to this question is -- because it works, and because it is (relatively) cheap. DocBook is a much cheaper system to implement than Arbortext's Epic, for example. Bob explained that DocBook provides a number of advantages:

- Content is separated from format by use of the XML tags and the style sheets that interpret the tags. This makes sudden style policy changes easy to manage.
- You can choose your own publishing tools, work across multiple platforms, and automate processing to produce output.

Bob noted a few negative factors associated with XML-based single-sourcing:

- Steep learning curve.
- Some time and money is required to set up system.
- Technical staff required to maintain processing scripts and to perform other tasks.

One guest mentioned that DocBook uses thousands of style tags, and Bob admitted that it could be hard for people just starting out to figure out which subset of tags they want to use.

### How Does It Work?

1. Take content, and chunk heavily -- the smaller the topic, the more likely you will be able to re-use it.
2. Design or modify style sheets to meet your company's requirements, and tag content with the appropriate tags, using the tool of your choice, from something as simple as Notepad, to more XML-aware editors like oXygen, Syntext's Serna, Arbortext Editor, or Blast Radius's Xmetal.
3. Take your XML content files and your DocBook style sheet, and feed them to an XSLT processor to produce HTML files. XSLT is a language for transforming XML documents into

other XML documents. XSLT processors include xsltproc from Gnome's xmlsoft.org, Saxon 6 from SourceForge, or Xalan Java from the open source Apache XML project.

Alternatively, you can take your XML content files and your DocBook style sheet, and feed them to an XSLT processor to produce an FO file, which you then send to an FO processor, which produces a PDF file. XSL-FO processors include XEP from RenderX, XSL Formatter from Antenna House, and FOP from the open source Apache XML project.

4. If you have the time and money, you can automate your print production: use style sheets to flow content onto pages, create automatic tables of contents and indexes, and create automatic page breaks. If you include this step, then the writer is free from having to do formatting work, and can focus on writing.

DocBook provides standard publishing features such as front matter, graphics support, tables, glossaries, bibliographies, and indexes. It also provides support for special features such as profiling (conditional text), write-it-once modular writing, cross-references, and localization.

Bob described XSL as "a funny little language. It takes a little getting used to." He also said, after the fourth time someone mentioned Arbortext, that it was in a different class of single-sourcing tool both by cost and function.

Visit Bob's Web site, [www.sagehill.net](http://www.sagehill.net), to learn more about single source publishing with DocBook. To learn more about XML, XSL, and XSLT, visit these sites:

- XML: [www.w3.org/XML/](http://www.w3.org/XML/)
- Style sheets: [www.w3.org/Style/](http://www.w3.org/Style/)
- XSL, XSLT: [www.w3.org/Style/XSL/](http://www.w3.org/Style/XSL/)

*Mysti Berry is a Senior Member of the STC, and a Senior Technical Writer for salesforce.com. Visit her site: [www.mysti.us](http://www.mysti.us).*

## Technical Writing Ranks High Among Best Jobs in America

By Patrick Lufkin

Money Magazine has ranked technical writer high among the best jobs in America.

Of 216 jobs reported on, technical writer ranked 13, a little behind Computer/IT analyst (7), but ahead of such related fields as curriculum developer (18), editor (19), and just plain writer (25). It also placed well ahead of a number of jobs that are better paid, but which have downsides in other areas, such as lawyer (37), dentist (43), and sales engineer (48).

As vocations go in America, technical writing does very well. The magazine found that 50 percent of technical writers make more than \$57,230 and that 5 percent make more than \$95,538. Projected 10 year job growth for the field was 23.22 percent.

Technical writing also did well when given letter grades on the basis of job satisfaction criteria: stress (B), flexibility (B), creativity (B), and difficulty (C).

The job of software engineer topped the list based on strong growth prospects, high average pay (\$80,500) and potential for creativity. College professors placed second, based on a variety of factors including compensation, flexibility, creativity, low number of work hours, and high number of vacation days.

The study was conducted by Money magazine, published by Time Inc., and Salary.com, compensation experts based in Needham, Massachusetts. Starting with data on some 250 job fields from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and salary data from Salary.com, they eliminated job fields with low pay, a small employment base, dangerous work environments, or few openings.

They followed up with online surveys to 26,000 people to rank the remaining job fields based on a number of job satisfaction criteria, including stress levels,

flexibility in hours and working environment, creativity, and ease of entry and advancement. Finally the positions were ranked, with double weight given to compensation and projected growth rates.

The findings were released on the Internet on April 12, and will appear in Money's May issue. Full details can be found at CNNMoney, the online home of Money magazine. Go to [money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/bestjobs/](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/bestjobs/) and follow the links.

*Patrick Lufkin is a Senior Member of STC, past-president of the San Francisco Chapter, and current Membership Manager of the STC Management SIG.*

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## Technical Communication Scholarship Applicants Sought

By Patrick Lufkin

Technical Communication students throughout Northern California have been invited to apply for the Kenneth M. Gordon memorial scholarship in Technical Communication. The invitations came in the form of information packets, fliers, and application forms sent to nearly seventy Northern California colleges and universities.

Gordon scholarships are awarded annually. Scholarship applications are distributed in the spring, judged in the summer, and awarded in time to defray the costs of the fall semester. The awards are usually in the range of \$500 to \$2,000. An award recipient may also receive a complimentary STC student membership.

To be eligible, students must be enrolled in an accredited program, intend to enter the profession, and submit a personal statement and samples of their work.

The Gordon scholarship is sponsored jointly by the Northern California STC chapters, and is funded by their annual technical communication competitions. This past year, in lieu of a full regional

competition, Gordon was funded by a technical publications competition sponsored by the Berkeley chapter.

The scholarship is named for Dr. Kenneth M. Gordon. Dr. Gordon worked as a technical editor at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and was a popular, long-time member of the East Bay Chapter of STC. He was president of the chapter from 1985-88, and was also its newsletter editor. He is remembered as an early advocate for the Northern California Technical Publications Competition, and for having contributed greatly to the success of STC in Northern California in the early years.

The scholarship was created in 1992, when the East Bay Chapter discovered that it had \$20,000 left over from having run a very successful Technical Publication Competition. Dr. Gordon had recently died, and it was suggested that part of the proceeds be set aside to establish a scholarship in his name. Since that time, the scholarship has given out tens of thousands of dollars, and played an important role in helping many enter the profession.

For more information contact the Scholarship Chair, Patrick Lufkin, at [lufkin@ix.netcom.com](mailto:lufkin@ix.netcom.com).

*Patrick Lufkin is a past-president of the San Francisco Chapter of STC, and is Chair of the Kenneth M. Gordon Scholarship Committee.*

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## New and Transferred Members

By Marc Smircich

The San Francisco Chapter STC welcomes the following people who have joined or transferred in to the chapter during January 2006.

We welcome the following new members who joined the chapter during January:

- Jessica R. Evans
- Lourdes Mora G. Llata
- Leslie MacKay

- Patrick McGovern
- Britt Murray
- Gary P. Pfitzer
- Jennifer Posivak
- Pardhu Vadlamudi

We welcome the following people who transferred in to the chapter during January:

- Pamela L. Armstad
- Naomi D. Black
- Jeri A. Bonilla
- Shelly Butcher
- Mitchell R. Gass
- Guy K. Haas
- Jeannie M. E. Klein
- Catherine A. Kline
- Darren McIntosh
- Hillary M. Russak
- Yolande Y. Salyer
- Elisa Sawyer
- Dana F. Uts
- Prescott S. Williams

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## ActiveVOICE Article Submission Policies

The *ActiveVOICE* welcomes articles from technical communicators. Having a published article is a good addition to your portfolio. This document describes the guidelines for submitting an article to this newsletter. If you have any questions, you can email the editor at [newsletter@stc-sf.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-sf.org).

### Publication Information

The *ActiveVOICE* is published six times a year in February, April, June, August, October, and December by the Society for Technical Communication, San Francisco Chapter, PO Box 2708, San Francisco, CA 94126, [www.stc-sf.org](http://www.stc-sf.org). The editor is Marc Smircich ([newsletter@stc-sf.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-sf.org)).

### Submission Guidelines

Submit all articles via email to the newsletter editor ([newsletter@stc-sf.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-sf.org)) in either of the following ways:

- Microsoft Word format as an attachment.

- Plain ASCII text in the message body or as an attachment.

If your article contains copyrighted materials, you are responsible for obtaining permission for the *ActiveVOICE* to publish the copyrighted materials.

Please include the following with your article:

- Your name. Please spell it exactly as you want it published.
- The title of the article. If you get to choose the title, make it descriptive and inviting. When readers are looking at the front page of the online newsletter, the title is the only basis they have for deciding whether to click on the link to your article.

NOTE: For recurring monthly articles, such as reviews of meetings, you do not get to choose the title.

- Headings. Please include headings so that it is easy for busy readers to scan your article (just as you do when reading technical publications). Headings are especially important when people are reading online. If your article does not have headings, the editor may add them.
- A brief bio (no more than 50 to 75 words). This bio is a chance for you to say a little bit about yourself that you want to share with the world.

### Articles Published

The *ActiveVOICE* publishes the following kinds of articles:

- Reviews of previous meetings. Each edition contains reviews of previous meetings. The typical length is 500 to 1,500 words. Take as many words as are needed for adequate coverage -- but do keep in mind how very few people have the patience to make it all the way through *War and Peace* or *Moby Dick*.
- Columns by STC officials. To keep our audience informed of what is happening with the STC, the

newsletter accepts articles from STC officers at the chapter, regional, and international levels.

- Publicity for STC events and other professional organizations. The newsletter accepts publicity articles for conferences, seminars, and other events sponsored by the STC, an STC chapter, an STC SIG, and closely related non-profit organizations.
- Articles related to technical communication. The newsletter accepts software reviews, book reviews, information about industry trends, tips on how to use popular software packages, and other such articles. To

be accepted for publication, the primary purpose of the article must be to inform and educate, rather than to market a particular product or service. If you have an idea for an article, please contact the newsletter editor at [newsletter@stc-sf.org](mailto:newsletter@stc-sf.org).

### **Editorial Discretion**

The Society for Technical Communication, San Francisco Chapter reserves the right to edit all submitted articles for length and appropriateness. The chapter is the sole arbiter of whether to accept an article for publication and when to publish it, either in whole or in part.

### **Copyright**

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