

SAN FRANCISCO

February 2003

ActiveVOICE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

Feb. 19th Meeting

RoboHelp "Q & A"

Presenter: RJ Jacquez

Learn from the expert about new features in RoboHelp X3, such as how to enhance your Help system by integrating software demos with RoboDemo and how to create Flash-based demos and tutorials without learning Flash. You'll see a demonstration of RoboPDF that creates PDF files from Windows-based documents. You'll also get answers to questions about RoboHelp X3. For example, where do you draw the line on using conditional text and resort to multiple instead of single sources for Help systems? How do you work with templates to maintain consistency in HTML styles between Help systems? How do you map HTML styles to Microsoft Word styles to make printed manuals look like manuals instead of printed Web pages?

Now is your chance to get some answers. RJ Jacquez, RoboHelp Product Manager, will review new RoboHelp features and respond to the top 5 questions submitted to us via our online survey on Acteva.

Please note: the cutoff for questions is Monday at noon, but you can register to attend the meeting until midnight on Tuesday if space is still available.

March 19th Meeting

Tell a Story, Get a Job

Presenter: Mark Shaltz

Mark Shaltz, an IT manager at ChevronTexaco and long-time interviewer, will talk about how you can leverage your skills and experience to distinguish yourself among a crowd of other job applicants. Mark has been involved with interviewing and training all levels of management in successful interviewing techniques. He has elevated the level of interviewing standards at his company.

Mark has over 20 years of IT experience working for two different Fortune 100 firms. He also has been a corporate interviewer and taught interviewing techniques for 15 years.

SEE INSIDE FOR MEETING TIMES, LOCATION, & MORE DETAILS!



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Beyond Javadoc: Generating Developer Documentation in FrameMaker

By *Kris Hahn*

James F. Bisso, CTO of Bitzone LLC, spoke at our November 20th chapter meeting about producing Application Programming Interface (API) reference guides in FrameMaker. An API is a group of functions and utilities for creating software applications. An API saves the programmer from having to write program code for all the tasks that the application must perform. API documentation usually comes in two parts:

- A programmer's guide
- A reference guide

The programmer's guide typically contains conceptual information and procedures—the “how to” that the programmer needs to know to use the API. The reference guide for an object-oriented API typically shows class hierarchy diagrams, lists class names, function signatures and parameters, and data members, and describes each of these constructs.

Javadoc™ is software from Sun that generates API documentation in HTML format. The information for the documentation comes from comments in the source code and the names and structure of the API objects. You insert a comment into the source code surrounded by forward slashes and asterisks, as follows:

```
/** This function gets the password of the user. */
```

You insert references to function parameters, return values, and other constructs using Javadoc tags, prefaced by @. Javadoc parses the source code, pulls out the comments, and formats and organizes them according to the hierarchy of the API objects. It even creates the diagrams of the class hierarchy.

The MIF Doclet API from Sun expands the capabilities of the Javadoc Doclet API, so you can use it to generate MIF (Maker Interchange Format) documents. MIF is a text format for exchanging information between FrameMaker and other applications. MIF commands control formatting and page layout. FrameMaker interprets the commands in the MIF file, and turns them into FrameMaker formatting and layout properties. You can import a MIF file into FrameMaker as you do any file. Reference and master pages are imported as well as body pages.

Using the MIF Doclet and FrameMaker you can generate PostScript and PDF. Using the MIF Doclet, you can also convert simple HTML files to MIF, which is handy for adding chapters to the API documentation. You import and convert HTML files using an XML Book File, the XML equivalent of the FrameMaker book file. This file specifies the order that files appear in the book. You can add sections generated from HTML files and specify the order of packages and classes in the API documentation.

The MIF Doclet uses the same set of Javadoc tags (for example, @return, @param and @see) that the standard Javadoc Doclet API uses. With batch processors fmbatch or dzbatcher, you can fully automate printing of documentation for a set of Java packages with a single command. The MIF Doclet can generate headers, footers, and the table of contents and index, including chapter and page numbering.

Jim posted examples and written instructions on the Bitzone web site, so we could get hands-on experience generating developer documentation.

Kris Hahn is the volunteer editor of ActiveVOICE.

Holiday Party

By Kris Hahn

The December 18 holiday party was our best attended ever, drawing more than 45 guests to the London Wine Bar. I'm happy to report that nobody got schnoekered on eggnog, and we didn't sing off-key Christmas carols. We enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres, drank plentiful quantities of wine, and played a fun game invented by Lu Rehling, Chapter Past-President. She proved her insight into the psyche of technical communicators by creating the perfect party game for us. We technical communicators are full of interesting thoughts, but often need some encouragement to break out of our shells. When guests arrived, party organizers led them to tables of prizes, technical books, a resume writing service, and software. The guests signed up to be eligible to win the prize they wanted, and were told to find a champion to argue why they deserved to win. The game worked well to create party chit-chat, which in some cases developed into very interesting gab.

Later in the evening, Susan Becker, Chapter Vice-President conducted the *Show of Champions*. Contestants for prizes identified their champions, who came before the crowd and expressed why their partners deserved a prize. The most dramatic argument came from Paul Sinasohn, championing Ben Johnson, Chapter Treasurer. "Ben's new bride, Kirsten, yearned for a book," cried Paul. "This is the very book that had been at the top of their wedding gift wish-list: *Adobe Master Class: Design Invitational* by Deke McClelland."

Unlikely as it seems, the crowd was persuaded. Our virtual clap-o-meter measured their resounding approval to give Ben and Kirsten the book. Paul, for his efforts, appropriately won *How to Do Everything with ACT!* by Douglas J. Wolf. Thanks to Keith Albert for soliciting prizes from companies and to all the contributors of the prizes: Addison-Wesley, Adobe Software, Andrew Davis at

www.lifesworkservices.com, Digital Press, McGraw-Hill/Osborne, and Peachpit Press.

Kris Hahn is the volunteer editor of ActiveVOICE.

TPW Scholarship Award

Each year, the San Francisco Chapter STC sponsors a scholarship for students in the Technical and Professional Writing (TPW) Program at San Francisco State University. This year, we have awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Marilyn Latham.

Annette Castro, our chapter's Education Manager, was responsible for publicizing and administering the scholarship at SFSU.

15th Writer in the Workplace Conference

March 29, 2003.

<http://www.stcsacramento.org/WIW2003/index.htm>

The theme for this year is "Communicators at the Center," with 12 seminars in four stems. JoAnn Hackos is the keynote speaker. The conference also includes technology presentations, a job and product fair, and resume and portfolio reviews.

The Region 8 Conference

Has been postponed until July 2003. Please refer to:

http://www.stcregion.org/region8/r8_conferences.htm for details and updates. If you have any questions about the conference, contact Patrick Morrissey at patrick.morrissey@idc-mcs.com.

Our Meetings

When

Third Wednesday of every month.
6 pm: Networking and hors d'oeuvres; 7 pm: Program.

Where

Downstairs at the London Wine Bar: 415 Sansome between Sacramento & Clay.

Reservations

Reservations
Make advance reservations at <http://www.stc-sf.org> (click Acteva)
Admission at the door is on a space-available basis.

Cost

With advance reservations:
\$10 STC members;
\$15 non-members; \$8 students.
At the door:
\$13 STC members;
\$18 non-members; \$11 students;
first-timers free with coupon
(from our Web site).

Directions

From BART

Get off at the Montgomery BART Station. Leave by the "Sansome Sutter" exit and walk straight ahead.

From the East Bay

Take the Bay Bridge (Hwy 80). Take the first exit, Fremont. Follow Fremont across Market, where it becomes Front. Go 1 block. Turn left onto Pine. Go 2 blocks. Turn right onto Sansome. Go 2 blocks.

From the Peninsula

Take Hwy 101 heading N. Continue on Interstate 80 heading NE. Take the 4th St./Embarcadero exit. Continue straight on Bryant for 1 block. Turn left on 3rd. Turn right on Folsom. Turn left on Fremont. Follow Fremont across Market, where it becomes Front. Bear right on Front. Turn left on Pine. Go 2 blocks. Turn right on Sansome.

From the North Bay

Take Hwy 101 heading S. Turn left on Broadway heading E. Go down Columbus heading SE. Bear right on Montgomery. Turn left on California. Turn left on Sansome.

Parking

The closest parking garage is at One Embarcadero Center. The entrance is located on Battery between Sacramento and Clay.

President's Notes and News

by Marc Smircich

*Marc Smircich is a Senior Technical Writer for Quintessential School Systems in San Mateo, California. He has 14 years of experience documenting financial and human resources applications.
Email: info@stc-sf.org.*

Welcome to Our Chapter!

New Members

JX Bell
Tim Bombosch
Alison L. Fraser
Josie Graeney
Martha H. Larson
Babk Rezvani
Mark Schlagenhauf
Erwin J. Steinbeisser

Transfer and

Reinstated Members

Jed A. Clark
Ann M. Cullen
Minette E. Norman
Janet R. Rahn
Margaret M. Randall
David H. Robertson
John Salvini

Congrats on Senior Member Status

Daria A. Hutchinson
Michael D. Peterson
Kevin S. Wong

Mark your calendars. The STC's 50th Annual Conference is coming up on May 18 through 21 at Dallas. I encourage you to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn about what is happening in the great, wide world of technical communication.

The conference provides a choice of over 200 sessions so you can learn new skills and become informed about new trends and technologies. Also, the conference is a lot of fun. It's a great opportunity to meet technical communicators from all over the world. If the upcoming conference is like previous ones, there will be networking lunches, receptions, parties, and other occasions for renewing old acquaintances and making new ones.

For the latest information, visit the STC's web site at: <http://www.stc.org>.

San Francisco Chapter Information

Web site: <http://www.stc-sf.org> Phone: (415) 820-1566 Email: info@stc-sf.org

Regional STC Chapter Meetings

San Francisco chapter meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

For details: www.stc-sf.org

Silicon Valley chapter meets the 4th Thursday of each month.

For details: www.stc-siliconvalley.org

Berkeley chapter meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

For details: www.stc-berkeley.org

East Bay chapter meets the 2nd Thursday of each month.

For details: www.ebstc.org

North Bay chapter meets the 3rd Thursday of each month.

For details: www.stc-northbay.org

Sacramento chapter meets the 1st Wednesday of each month.

For details: www.stcsacramento.org

SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

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First Class Mail