

# PROCEEDINGS

## STC@50

Celebrating 50 Years

1953-2003

### STC's 50th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 18-21, 2003

Wyndham Anatole, Dallas, Texas

Each year, the STC conference attracts the world's largest gathering of technical communicators with unique educational and networking opportunities. This year, the conference will also kick off the celebration of STC's 50th anniversary—a terrific opportunity for fun as well as learning and career development.

# Certifications and Credentials for Scientific Editors

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*Most professionals want to further their careers over the course of their working life. Scientific editors as a whole do not have well-defined paths for establishing their careers, unlike professionals such as lawyers and doctors, where the educational and credentialing processes are well established. Where can scientific editors get their training? Where can they get experience? This paper will explore experiences, certifications and credentials, as well as training, and degrees, specific to scientific editing that can help further the careers of scientific editors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Unlike professionals such as lawyers and doctors (who go to specific schools to learn their craft, intern to get on-the-job training, and then pass various examinations before being allowed to call themselves “lawyer” or “doctor”), the educational and career paths of scientific editors are often not well defined. Lawyers start by going to law school. Doctors start by going to medical school. Where, however, does a scientific editor start? Although many start by having an educational background in the sciences, this is not always the case.

The career paths and experiences of scientific editors are extremely varied. Some majored in science in college and many even have doctorates. There are those scientific editors, however, who have that title merely because they edit manuscripts of a scientific nature, but they do not understand any of the content. Many fall into a continuum between these two extremes of education and understanding.

What can scientific editors do to further their careers? How can they distinguish themselves career-wise? In this paper, various ways scientific editors can get ahead in their field through training, experience, and certifications will be discussed.

## THE VALUE OF STC MEMBERSHIP IN ALL WALKS OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

For someone who is just entering the field of technical communication, or for someone who is a seasoned veteran, a membership with STC offers many opportunities for professional development. Members of this 20,000-person worldwide professional association can be involved directly or indirectly in all of the services that STC offers to its members. Some benefits of a membership are as follows:

- Receiving the monthly *Intercom* magazine and the quarterly *Technical Communication* journal
- Networking, networking, networking
- Participating in local and regional chapter activities
- Attending the STC annual conferences
- Participating in various competitions
- Accessing the STC Web site at: ([www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org))
- Accessing a jobs database
- Joining Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

A number of STC SIGs are available for scientific editors including “Scientific Communication,” “Technical Editing,” and “Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication.” Other SIGs that may be of interest to scientific editors are “Technical Editing,” “Emerging Technologies,” and “Policies and Procedures.”

STC also awards scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students, as well offering educational grants to advance the theory and practice of technical communication.

## WHAT THE REAL WORLD CAN TEACH

In addition to networking with colleagues through society membership, real-world experiences are essential for preparing scientific editors for various editing and publications management positions. In addition to more traditional firms that employ technical and scientific editors, other types include research organizations, management consultants, professional membership societies, trade associations, and association management firms.