

President's Message

Catherine Magill, PhD



Welcome to the midsummer edition! I hope you all are enjoying the summer so far. We still have most of the month of August left to get out and enjoy our beautiful state and beyond before the fall crunch begins—So, go do it!

I hope you have all seen that the registration for the 2008 Annual Conference, October 23-25, in Louisville, KY is now open. As usual, there are many, many workshops offered as well as the wide-ranging and ever-interesting collection of breakfast roundtables and coffee klatches.

The conference organizers have planned a nice selection of tours covering many of the interesting sites that Louisville has to offer, from horse-racing to bourbon-tasting. I have attended several National conferences over the past few years and have truly enjoyed them.

Besides the obvious networking opportunities, the workshops, and roundtables, we will have a chapter social associated with the Chapter Greet-and-Go on Thursday evening. I will make dinner reservations at a nearby restaurant for all chapter members who are interested in joining us. Plan to meet at the Greet-and-Go and then walk to the restaurant. We have 2.5 hr between the start of the Greet-and-Go and the coffee klatches, which should give us enough time to have an enjoyable dinner and still get back for sweets and goofiness. It was such a great success at the Atlanta conference last year that we're making it a tradition!

We are now soliciting nominees for Chapter Board positions, so if you'd like to amp up your networking activities and have a little time to spare (it really doesn't take much time, trust me!), there are several positions

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opening up: Secretary, Vice-President (president-elect), Membership Liaison, and a new board position: Conference Director. We love to have new members participate in keeping the chapter alive and active, and the chapter can't function without volunteers.

The commitment entails two telephone conferences annually and the attendant duties, which aren't that time-consuming. I have really enjoyed networking with other medical writers through my board membership, and being active in the chapter has really helped jumpstart my medical writing career. I can't recommend it highly enough, especially for those who are new to freelancing and need help getting their name out.

And as usual, please don't hesitate to let us know if you have suggestions or ideas for events that you think would be of interest to other members of the chapter. We would love to get good ideas put into action. Also, let us know about events that are being hosted by other organizations that would be of interest to our membership, we can certainly circulate announcements of *related* events to our membership.

Chapter Financial Report

Sunny Bishop, Treasurer

The Northern California AMWA Chapter finished the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008 with a total of \$14,596 in the bank, held in a mixture of checking, savings, and CD accounts. This represents an increase of \$1143 from last year. In the period I have been Treasurer, dating from the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, the chapter bank account has increased a total of \$3443.

Our income for the past fiscal year was \$7790, including the chapter rebate, interest, and meeting fees. Our expenses were \$6647.

Chapter rebates are spent primarily to subsidize member meetings, finance our participation in the biannual AMWA parent association board meetings, and maintain the chapter Web site. In the past fiscal year, we received \$3888 as our chapter rebate from AMWA headquarters, representing approximately \$15/chapter member. The chapter rebate supported the following:

- * 25% to support a representative attending biannual AMWA board meetings;
- * 25% to subsidize member meeting expenses;

* 13% for Web site expenses;

* 8% for chapter board meeting and miscellaneous expenses.

The remainder of the rebate (29%) is in the chapter bank account.

This year for the first time, the chapter is now reporting the Pacific Coast Regional Conference finances to AMWA. This used to be done by a separate committee. These funds are kept in separate bank accounts and have completely separate accounting.

If you would like more detailed information on the chapter's finances, please contact me at treasurer@amwancal.org.

Chapter Meetings on the Way

Things are picking up!

We are in the final stages of getting set to offer another live installment of the ever-popular "Word Tips and Tricks," offered by our own Maggie Norris. This workshop is set for Sept. 20 and will be held in the East Bay--we're still looking for the exact location. Keep your eyes open for an email announcement soon.

We are also looking into several fall/winter events, including a speaker from the Public Library of Science (PLoS) to talk about the open access movement, Mary Roach (long game of phone tag), and possibly someone from Adobe to talk about their software for scientific illustrations!

Other Meetings of Interest

• September 10-11: BIOMEDevice Forum

BIOMEDevice Forum is the nation's premier executive-level conference focusing on convergence and cross-sector collaborations among companies in the biotechnology, medical device, in vitro diagnostics, and pharmaceutical industries. This two-day event brings together key players involved in investing, partnering, licensing, and developing business opportunities in the rapidly growing market for innovative healthcare products. More information at www.devicelink.com/expo/bioforum08.

• September 11-12: Biotech Supply Chain Academy

The Biotech Supply Chain Academy (BioSCA) will launch its inaugural conference on September 11-12, 2008 at the South San Francisco Conference Center. The event is designed to provide an exclusive audience of senior-level executives with authoritative insights, best practices and market intelligence about the supply and distribution of biotechnology products. BayBio is a sponsoring association. The program's theme

is "Achieving Supply Chain Excellence Through Industry Collaboration - From R&D To Patient Care." BioSCA will bring together professionals from biotech companies, their suppliers, clinical outsourcing companies, distributors, hospitals, doctors, government regulatory agencies, 3rd party service providers, academia, industry research organizations, think tanks, management consultants and NGOs. More information at www.entertainmentsupplychain.com/biotech.

• September 24: Gene Acres 2008

Gene Acres is a one-day facilities conference featuring timely analysis of issues by professionals from multiple perspectives. From facilities design to security, and from regulatory certification to international operations, Gene Acres conference provides insights into the challenges faced by life science companies every day. A closing reception will provide a perfect opportunity to network with your peers. More information at www.baybio.org/wt/home/GeneAcres2008.

Asilomar 2009 Is Sneaking Up

Time to start thinking of Springtime!

The 2009 Pacific Coast Conference at Asilomar will be held from Sunday April 26, 2009 through Wednesday April 29, 2009 in Pacific Grove, California. The conference will be hosted by the Pacific Southwest chapter and will offer AMWA credit courses (3 core and 1 advanced), noncredit seminars, and workshops of interest to medical communication specialists working in different settings, as well as networking opportunities.

The theme for the 2009 conference is "Defining Professionalism in Medical Communications."

For more information about the conference, please contact the Educational Coordinator, Lisa Tushla, PhD, at ltushla@gmail.com.

Enter and Win

• 2008 Excellence in New Communications Awards

Sponsor: Society for New Communications Research

These awards honor corporations, governmental and nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, media outlets, and individuals who are innovating in the use of social

media, information and communications technologies, mobile media, online communities, virtual worlds, and collaborative technologies. Fields of interest include advertising, marketing, public relations and corporate communications, entertainment, education, politics, and social initiatives.

The deadline for entry is Sept. 8, 2008. Entry guidelines and entry forms can be downloaded at www.sncr.org/awards.

- **2008 Samter Journalism Awards**

Sponsor: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

The Samter awards recognize the best health reporting on allergic disease in print, broadcast, and new media. Winners in each category receive a \$1000 cash prize. The deadline for entry is Oct. 31, 2008. Contest details and entry form are at www.aaaai.org/media/samter_journalism_award.

Asilomar-related Bylaw Amendments

Catherine Magill, PhD

Now that the 2008 Pacific Coast (Asilomar) Conference has been successfully completed, there are some related items that I need to share with the chapter membership.

For some time now, we have kept Pacific Coast Conference finances and chapter finances completely separate so that there is neither any intermingling of funds nor the opportunity for wayward chapter members to access the conference till. However, there is now too much distance between the two organizations. We want to codify guidelines to ensure that the chapter continues to take ownership of hosting the conference every other year. Even years are hosted by the Northern California chapter, odd years by the Pacific Southwest chapter.

In order to strengthen the bond between chapter and conference, we are adding the Conference Director to the chapter board. This would be a two year position as the conference takes about 18 months from start to finish. Putting the Conference Director on the board will strengthen communication between chapter and conference.

We also need to amend the Chapter Bylaws to codify the practice of keeping conference and chapter funds separate. In the fall election, you will see two amendments on the ballot. One adds the Conference Director as a Board Member. The other ensures that conference and chapter funds are kept separate.

These two changes will significantly increase the strength of our connection to the conference and ensure that future conferences are as successful as they have been in the past. I urge you to vote YES on both amendments.

The Truth about Templates

Maggie Norris and Laura Singer

Whenever you use Word, you're using a template.

The problem: Unless you choose another template, Word defaults to the Normal template.

Using the Normal template may sound innocuous enough. But in practice, it means that your document structure and look will be based on what the Microsoft programmers think of as "normal."

Writers generally have their own ideas about how a document should look and behave. And what writers and Microsoft programmers consider "normal" differs considerably. I have yet to meet a writer who can make a case for having 9 levels of heads, but that's what the Microsoft programmers put in the Normal Word template.

Who uses custom templates?

You may be using a customized template and not realize that you're doing so. Autonumbering is not specified in the paragraph style sheets for Heading paragraphs in the Normal template, so if your documents include autonumbered headings, someone, at some time, customized the Heading paragraph styles.

Whenever you are editing a file with autonumbered headings, you are working in a custom template. How well that custom template was constructed and how well it is maintained can make a lot of difference in how long it takes you to complete a document and your level of frustration with Word.

What custom templates can do for you

Using custom templates can simplify and streamline document origination, development, and management.

A well-designed and well-maintained template can help you with many tasks; maintaining document look-and-feel is the most obvious advantage. For example, defining a series

of heading styles and applying them consistently makes the information hierarchy easily visible on the page or on the screen.

If you need to make global format changes—reduce or enlarge the type throughout, for example, or switch to autonumbered headings—you can do so easily by making a few quick adjustments in the paragraph style sheets.

- Here are some other operations that become possible with a custom template:
 - Navigate using the Document Map View | Document Map.
 - Use the power of Outline view for editing long documents.
 - Generate hyperlinked tables of contents, tables, and figures.
 - Autonumber tables and figures.
 - Insert hyperlinked cross-references to headings, tables, and figures.

Getting started with templates

To get started with templates, first get a good handle on paragraph and character style sheets. One good resource for learning about styles is *Microsoft Word for Medical and Technical Writers* published in 2007 by Peter G Aitken and Maxine M Okazaki, two North Carolina-based AMWA members. Check it out at www.tech-word.com.

Who can design a custom template?

Anyone who understands the advantages of having a functional template and is willing to spend a few minutes poking into the underbelly of Word can learn to design and apply custom templates.

To learn more about templates and advanced applications of templates, join us at the AMWA Northern California Chapter meeting on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2008.

Welcome New Chapter Members

Don't be surprised if you see a few new faces at our next chapter meeting on Sept. 20. The Northern California chapter has gained 28 new members since last February. We have also

lost 25 members, almost all as a result of moving out of the area, for a total of 265 members in the chapter. Please take a moment to welcome our new members the next time you see them.

Like What You See?

Want to Make it Better?

The Pacemaker, our Northern California chapter newsletter, needs your help!

Please send your suggestions and submissions to editor Fred Gebhart, pacemaker@amwancal.org. The deadline for submissions to the next bimonthly issue is Oct. 1.

Our newsletter depends on your help, your input, and your great ideas for the future.

2008 Northern California Board of Directors

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