

Signals

Nov/Dec 2006

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Pitch a hands-on workshop for the ACE/NETC conference

New at the ACE/NETC conference this year will be in-depth, hands-on workshops for professional development. These workshops can be two, three or six hours long, and presenters can charge up to a \$10 fee for each of the 20 participants in each session. High-end computer labs will be available for the workshops if needed.

Applications will be accepted for proposals in any content area. Workshops will be considered in any area. A survey of members revealed an interest in workshops on writing, digital photography (field production and postproduction/editing), Flash, digital asset management (such as organizing photos), Podcasting,

and resources for the new Web developer (such as CSS, RSS feeds, etc.). The committee wishes to see workshops on a variety of levels from advanced to beginning (such as beginning workshops for professionals working outside their field, e.g.: Writing for the Video Producer, or Video Editing for the Very First Timers, or Tips and Tricks for the Seasoned Photoshop Professional). The application process is the same for any workshop proposal, and is available at <http://www.aceweb.org/proposals/>.

REMEMBER:

The deadline for submitting proposals is January 8, 2007.



ALBUQUERQUE

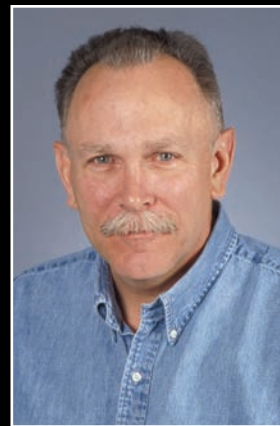
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ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE



From the President



Along with most of you, I opened my mail the other day and found my reminder to renew my ACE membership. My inner skinflint piped up and said, "Why now? I just helped pay for a wedding, the door on my car is falling off, and the water softener only wants to backflush." Inevitably, that annoying goodie voice in my head reminded me that I pay more than half my annual ACE dues every month for a gym membership to lift heavy objects just to put them down again and to run on a machine that goes nowhere with a bunch of people who don't perspire! Seriously, I am convinced that joining and contributing to ACE is a tremendous bargain.

I am also convinced that we have a unique opportunity to attract new members this year. The New Mexico meeting is going to be excellent and the program will both challenge and reward you. Please consider inviting someone you know to attend or submit a proposal, perhaps jointly. Who knows, they might even join ACE!

On a more contemplative note, I've been feeling a little lost lately, mostly because so much of what I hear and read seems somehow relevant and important.

However, I know for sure that the time to actively cut fences and find new opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other is now. A very fine editor I know recently went to a highly regarded conference on Web publishing. Looking a little wild-eyed, she said afterwards, "We're doing everything wrong!" Hyperbole? Probably. Prophetic? Come to New Mexico and find out. Better still, come to Albuquerque and tell us how you're doing it right.

On the practical side, along with your membership renewal, there are a number of other dates and deadlines creeping up. Session proposals for "Double Creature Feature" are due Jan. 8, 2007. Critique and Awards entries are due Jan. 26, 2007. Remember, all the C&A instructions and entry forms were distributed electronically and can be found on the Web site. Don't forget, too, that Feb. 16 is the due date for a number of ACE awards. See the ACE Web site for information on all this stuff.

Finally, I am happy to tell you that one of my personal concerns is now relieved. Over the past couple of years, we have been restructuring ACE's financial

accounting. This restructuring was guided by Finance Committee recommendations and responsibly implemented by ACE Headquarters. It was a large project that changed our basic procedures and, during the transition, left me concerned about whether our dues were adequate to cover normal operating expenses. The ACE Finance Committee, ably chaired by Judy Winn and with excellent support from Ashley Wood and Amanda Aubuchon at Headquarters, has reviewed ACE finances and has recommended to the board that a dues increase is not necessary at this time. The board has accepted this recommendation. My inner skinflint is quiet and my goodie voice says, "Whew!"

In the meantime, best wishes for the new year. I very much hope to see you in New Mexico.

Bob Sams

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ACE President
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In Brief

ACE member publishes speech ghostwriting book

“Speech Ghostwriting: Crafting Effective Speeches for Other People” by Douglas Perret Starr, a professor of agricultural communications and journalism at Texas A&M University, is a 95-page, tightly packed handbook designed to help ghostwrite speeches for the boss. Starr is a former speech ghostwriter for the Florida lieutenant governor and for the Florida insurance commissioner. He is also a former Associated Press newsman. The book

explains in detail how to gather information, put the speech together, analyze the audience, write the speech of introduction, and get publicity for the delivered speech. It also provides a brief history of speech ghostwriting. The book can be ordered from Marion Street Press Inc. at www.marionstreetpress.com.

Douglas Perret Starr
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Marci Hilt returns to the USDA

ACE member Marci Hilt has returned to the USDA as a communications coordinator after spending three and a half years on loan to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

While at USTR, she was the press secretary for the nation’s chief agricultural negotiator.

Since she’s been back at the

USDA, Hilt has been working on special projects. She recently served as program chair for the 2006 Government Communicators conference in Washington, D.C.

Hilt founded the ACE media relations SIG and served as ACE D.C. regional director from 1998 to 2001. ACE presented her with an Award of Excellence in media relations in 1989 and the Beacon Award in 2002.

Marci Hilt
USDA
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Photo by: R. Teri Memolo

Marci Hilt

Texas ACE members host communicator from Cameroon

The agricultural communications department at Texas A&M participated in the 2006 Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program sponsored by the USDA. Texas A&M served as the host institution for ten distinguished professionals from Afghanistan, Romania and Cameroon.

Catherine Ngo Momha of the World Agroforestry Centre in Cameroon is the first communications professional ever selected as a Borlaug Fellow. During the month-long program, she worked with ACE members and others in the department to learn about educational methods, communication strategies, and technology that will help in her work.

The World Agroforestry Centre conducts research and extension programs to promote the domestication of indigenous plant species of exceptional economic and nutritional value.

Judy Winn
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Mike McWhorter, of the International Agriculture Program at Texas A&M, and Judy Winn, extension communications specialist, honor Catherine Ngo Momha of Cameroon on completion of her Borlaug Fellowship.

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ACE is a non-profit association representing professional communicators and information officers generally within the land-grant university system, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state agricultural agencies, similar institutions in other countries and those with professional interests in agricultural communication.

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Amanda Aubuchon

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ACE develops professional skills of education, government, and research communicators and information technologists to extend knowledge about agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences to people worldwide.

Stop by the ACE Web site
www.aceweb.org

ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE



IN AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND LIFE AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Our History

The impact of NPAC

ACE is launching an exciting new program in leadership and management development for its members. We've been asked to think about another major program ACE carried out – the National Project in Agricultural Communication (NPAC) – and speculate what its impact has been and what impact the new Leadership and Management Institute might have.

The assignment intrigues us. We don't have hard data to work with. We just have to search our memories. And we came up with what *we* think happened because of NPAC.

NPAC was a seven-year project ACE carried out in the '50s. It started as a way to improve skills in writing, editing, photography and other fields. It quickly developed into a much more basic examination of communication through the eyes of the best practitioners and the most applicable models, theories and social science research findings available.

So what do we think happened to ACE and ACE members as a result of NPAC? It isn't easy to separate NPAC's impact from the impact of changes

going on all over the country during those years. But let's take a stab at it.

Imagine ACE in the '50s. There was one Ph.D. in ACE then – and his degree had little to do with communication. A bachelor's degree was just barely the norm. Most communicators churned out media materials by the seat of their pants. There was no Journal of Applied Communications and there were no special interest groups. There were almost no academic programs in agricultural communication. If an ACE member wanted to upgrade, there was little or no place to go.

Most staff had little or no standing with the academic world. Most had little contact with their colleagues in other states except maybe at the annual ACE meeting – to which they often paid all expenses out of their own pockets. And ACE had no permanent headquarters – states rotated duties among themselves. Nor was there an Agricultural Communications Documentation Center.

Now look about you and appraise the advances made in the above areas. You can draw up your own list of advances to

compare. For us, the changes have been phenomenal.

We can't say that NPAC brought about all these changes. The impact of NPAC was more diffuse as well as specific to each of us – more in stimulating, challenging and showing ACE members ways to improve themselves and their organization. That energizing of each of us to get moving, get ahead and fix things was where the greatest impact of NPAC lay, in our opinion.

No one can say where the ACE Leadership and Management Institute might take us, but the potential for unforeseen change will be there. Can we again rise to the occasion and be drawn into new, exciting and productive avenues, just as with NPAC?

Get involved with the Leadership and Management Institute. There'll be something for everyone if we get in there and seek it. And then just think what our list of accomplishments will look like in another 50 years!

Mason Miller and Hal Taylor
Life Members

Call for Leadership and Management Institute participants nears

How does an individual initiate change in the workplace? What do you need to know to guide a team project? What does it take to lead a communications or information technology unit? These questions provide a glimpse of the knowledge and skills you can acquire from the Communications & Information Technology Leadership and Management Institute.

A call for the first class of participants will be issued in January. Those selected to participate will make a one-year commitment that includes three site-based trainings, a self-directed project, ongoing interactivity and collaboration via distance

education technologies, and learning opportunities to be arranged at each participant's workplace.

The institute will help participants

- grow as communications and information technology professionals, expanding professional contacts and learning to better meet the needs of our institutions;
- plan strategically for communications and information technology initiatives
- identify issues, trends, opportunities and challenges that affect the communications and information technology professions;

- learn how to effectively communicate what communications and information technology units do, including their value to the larger organization;
- increase understanding of the unique characteristics and circumstances of communications and information technology units.

Look for the e-mail announcement coming in January. It will include a link to the institute's Web site and all the information you need to apply as a participant.

Steve Dodrill
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Behind the Mu-SIG

[Editor's note: The X-tension Chords are comprised of musicians who are also members of ACE. Although sought after by other professional organizations, they are expected to appear again at the ACE/NETC 2007 conference in Albuquerque. Following is a recollection by someone who was there at the beginning. His views do not reflect those of ACE.]

I first met the X-tension Chords at Caesar's in Tahoe. I had AV duty at the ACE convention there so they'd put me up in one of the smaller suites as part of the room block.

But on the same floor, there were the High Roller suites, you know, and that's where the ACE hospitality suite was. One time I was heading to my room, and across the hall from the hospitality suite were these guys sittin' around playing musical instruments. I recognized a few of them from around, you know, and now I know that one of 'em was Jim Coats from California, and Robert Casler from Arizona was also there. There were others. I think Robert's kids were somehow involved.

Later that day I learned that somebody had complained about the music – which was weird – this was a Casino, and they were basically playin' bluegrass instruments, you know, quiet-like. So somebody must have lost big at the tables, or they were just wound too tight to begin with...complaining about acoustic music on the hospitality floor of a big casino hotel. Ah well, I guess it takes all kinds.

So later that night, I'm lockin' up the projectors and stuff, ready to get a jump on the next morning, and there's some ACE people millin' around where the breakout rooms are. Normally that's all locked off, but I had a key. So I went to see what was what, and they said they'd gotten in trouble with the hotel for too much noise the night before.

I remember it like it was yesterday. That crazy guy from Ohio State – the auctioneer – Randy Nemitz. He'd conned the security chief in the hotel into letting them get together in the breakout rooms. "We're the one's rentin' 'em," he

said. "We might as well use 'em." I looked in one of the smaller meeting rooms, and it was packed!

Well, the next night, they'd gone big-time. They had sound gear, and they'd moved into the back of one of the big 200-seater rooms, instead of crammed into those little quarter-sized Easy-Bake Oven type meeting rooms. I was busy enough pushin' the AV cart down the halls that I didn't pay much more attention, but lots of people were talkin' about these guys. Who'd a thought it was the start of something that would turn into anything.

San Antonio

By the time the next ACE/NETC meeting rolled around in San Antonio, lots of changes had taken place. Larry Jackson from Kansas State was rounding up instruments ahead of time. People brought stuff. They even had a room set aside for playing at night. And we knew how to work the hotels by this time, so we grabbed their white baby grand piano and wheeled it into the room with us, hoping they wouldn't bill us for using it. They didn't care. And it was cool. Lots of people coming in and out of the group, playing different instruments, all kinds of stuff. That's when they let me start hangin' around with 'em.

What a line-up – Owen "Big Money" Roberts, the Guelphian Troubadour; the Mandolin Twins ("Ammond Brother Jim" Coats and "Reno Robert" Moore); Kyla Kruse, fresh out of the coffee club circuit in Central Illinois; Robert "Steady" Casler on tubs; Ron "Wildside" Thomas on a borrowed fretless bass; Larry "Action" Jackson on electric guitar cord; Chris "Fingers" Dicus on electric keyboard; Tom "Walk the Line" Knecht doin' some side man vocals; and Jeff "the



Members of the ACE Mu-SIG in Quebec City.

Lap" Hino throwin' down some brilliant National steel guitar stuff.

From there it just mushroomed. There was the "X-tension Chords Unplugged" at the Don Strange Ranch (Coats, Moore, Kruse, Hino, Dickison, Sams) and a whole bevy of musicians accompanying the Development Fund auction and playing after hours.

Quebec City

We had a sweet setup in Quebec, playing in an actual club room, and added some real international flair with Chris "Hugh's Kid" Maynard on blistering electric guitar, a few cameos from the Casler/Jammer Kids, and an astounding discovery in Bruce Schultz, who brandished a fiddle and banjo with the best of 'em. And a thoroughly amazing federal-level walk-on by USDA chanteuse Janet Allen, whose pipes could compete with Aretha, or Koko, or Whitney, or even the self-proclaimed "greatest singer who ever lived," Celine Dion.

It all becomes a blur after that. All I can say is, "Man, what a ride. I was lucky to be a part of it. Who knows what these dudes will come up with next?"

For Behind the Mu-SIG, I'm Elton John-Boy.

John Dickison
Northeastern Region Director
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D.C. region sponsors two communicator activities

In 2006, the D.C. region of ACE sponsored two great opportunities for ACE members. The region helped plan and sponsor the 2006 Government Communicators conference, "Government & Media: Perception & Reality," and also held a brown bag luncheon with the editor of AgroWashington and the Dyergram.

At the Government Communicators conference, attendees took advantage of panels, a keynote address by Karen Hughes, and breakout sessions by communication experts, journalists, and high-level government officials. There was also plenty of time for networking with peers and visiting the ACE exhibit table!

The breakout sessions included Whiz-Bang Communications Tools: Leveling the Playing Field for People With Disabilities; Crisis Communication: Preparation, Execution and Recovery; Serving Up Science for Mass Consumption: The Secrets of Successful Scientific and Technical Communications; and Building Good Media Relations: Tips & Advice From the Pros Who Know How.

Over a dozen ACE members attended the conference and took advantage of a discount offered by the D.C. region. D.C. Region Director Anne Henderson and past Director Judy Rude were on the Planning Committee, and member

Marci Hilt chaired the Program Committee.

Marci Hilt also planned the brown bag luncheon "An Unauthorized History of USDA - Or, Where the Bodies are Buried" on Nov. 8, 2006. The speaker was Nicholas Kominus, editor of AgroWashington and the Dyergram, who worked at the USDA in communications more than 50 years ago. He shared what it was like to work at the USDA during that time, as well as some interesting USDA history. For example, in the late 1970s, to recognize the culinary achievements at the USDA's cafeterias, then-Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland, with a formal ceremony and a tasteful brass plaque, renamed the dining room "The Alferd E. Packer Grill." Cafeteria fare improved immediately.

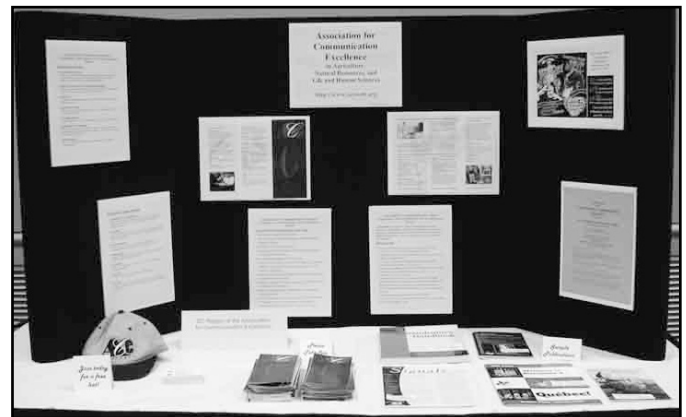
For the uninitiated, Packer was a mountain guide who, in 1873, misplaced a group of prospectors seeking new gold fields in Colorado. According to charges filed later, Packer managed to be the only survivor of the trek by snacking on the remains of the rest of his party. When sentencing Packer, the judge supposedly

observed: "There were only seven Dimmycrats in Hindsdale County, and you et five of 'em."

The luncheon was well attended by both ACE members and non-members. Plans are already in the works for a luncheon early next year with Nicol Andrews, Deputy Director of the USDA's Office of Communications. Andrews will talk about her experiences working on crisis communications for FEMA during Hurricane Katrina.

Thanks to all ACE members who participated in these events. The D.C. region is looking forward to another great year in 2007!

Anne Henderson
D.C. Region Director
ahenderson@csrees.usda.gov



The ACE exhibit at the Government Communicators onference, "Government & Media: Perception & Reality." ACE was a sponsor for the conference.

UNL ag economist receives Nebraska ACE Communicator of the Year award

Darrell Mark, assistant professor and extension agricultural economist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has been named the 2006 Nebraska ACE Communicator of the Year.

The new award, which will be given annually, recognizes an Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources faculty or staff member who communicates clearly and displays exceptional expertise and professionalism in promotion, publications, news and technology.

Mark will receive the ACE Communicator of the Year award at his January departmental meeting. The award is sponsored by the Nebraska chapter of ACE.

Mark is a regular analyst on "Market Journal," a weekly 30-minute television program. His research and extension interests include cattle production and marketing, agricultural cooperative management and farm management.

Mark joined UNL's Department of Agricultural Economics in 2002. He received his doctorate degree in 2001 and master's degree in 1998, both from Kansas State University. A native of South Dakota, he earned his bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University in 1997. He continues to be actively involved in his family's farming operation in eastern South Dakota.

Sandi Alswager Karstens
University of Nebraska
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Check out the
ACE
job board!

To see a full listing
of job postings,
please visit
[www.aceweb.org/
membersh/job.html](http://www.aceweb.org/membersh/job.html)

WANTED

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR – UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Description:

Assistant professor, nine-month, tenure-track position (Position# Y07038-A) with responsibilities in teaching, research and service in the department of agricultural and extension education at the University of Arkansas. Summer employment is possible.

Major Duties and Responsibilities:

This key person will 1) teach undergraduate and graduate courses supporting the agricultural communications concentration area; 2) conduct research relevant to departmental initiatives, especially in agricultural communications; and 3) counsel and advise undergraduate and graduate students.

Qualifications:

The successful candidate must have an earned doctorate in agricultural education, agricultural communication/journalism, or a closely related discipline. Preference will be given to candidates with formal academic preparation and/or professional experience in one or more of the following: print and non-print media, computer and information technologies, public relations, and technical and scientific writing. Candidates should have demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, scholarly writing and service activities. Professional experience in both agricultural communications and teacher education is desirable.

For the complete position announcement, including the application procedure and deadlines, go to
<http://www.uark.edu/depts/aecedhp/aeced/index.htm>.

The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.



Association for Communication Excellence

Membership Application

If you are joining ACE for the first time, please complete this form and return it to:
ACE Headquarters, University of Florida, P.O. Box 110811, Gainesville, FL 32611; Fax: 352/392-8583

Name: _____ Title: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Select your membership type. For help in determining which membership is right for you, please visit www.aceweb.org. With the exception of student/recent graduate memberships, all first-year memberships are \$50.

- _____ Active (Any person whose duties relate to communicating about agriculture, natural resources, life sciences, or human sciences or who has a professional interest in communications related to those areas)
- _____ Institutional (For active memberships paid by an institution)
- _____ Student/Recent Graduate (For full-time undergraduate or graduate students and those who have graduated within the last two years. Dues for full-time students and persons in their first year after graduation are \$25. Dues in the second year after graduation are \$50. In the third year after graduation, members are considered active members and pay full dues.) Year in which you graduated or will graduate _____
- _____ Charter (For the designated representative of a charter country; all persons in that country who qualify for membership receive affiliate member status.) Name of country applying for charter status: _____

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- _____ To receive Signals, ACE's bimonthly newsletter, in printed form, check here. Please note that current and past issues of Signals are available online at <http://www.aceweb.org/pubs/signals.html>.
- _____ To receive the Journal of Applied Communications (JAC) in printed form, check here. Please note that the JAC is currently not available in electronic format.

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