

# Portfolio upgrade required

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TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM

## JOB SEEKERS ADVISED TO GO DIGITAL TO GET LEG UP ON COMPETITION

BY KATHERINE ANN ROWLANDS  
THE TRIBUNE

Some local residents are taking a different tack to get hired in the competitive tech field these days — they're preparing digital portfolios on CDs or Web sites.

Mike Lujan, who works in the industry from his home in Morro Bay, has a portfolio on the Web ([www.mlujan.com](http://www.mlujan.com)). Visitors can see his resume, read about his approach to business, view his writing samples and learn about past projects and clients.

Patrick O'Hannigan of San Luis Obispo has his portfolio on a disk, which includes a similar range of information and is easy to update.

"In some ways there's no substitute for paper," he said. "But (a CD) allows you to keep all your work in one place."

The poor economy has been tough on those in the technology industry, but presenting digital portfolios on a CD or a Web site can give job seekers a competitive edge.

"It's the difference between people saying, 'Yes, I can do this,' and saying, 'Yes,



### On the Web

**Society for Technical Communication:** [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)

**SLO chapter of STC:**  
[www.slostc.org](http://www.slostc.org)

**ProSpring Technical Staffing:**  
[www.ProSpring.net](http://www.ProSpring.net)

I've done that and let me show you," said Jack Molisani, president of ProSpring Technical Staffing, a company that helps place technical writers at companies like Canon, Epson and Microsoft.

Digital portfolios burned onto a CD and

Jack Molisani, president of ProSpring Technical Staffing, spoke recently with members of the SLO Society for Technical Communication. "There are a lot more people looking for jobs than there used to be," he said, adding that applicants need to distinguish their work from the rest of the field. At left is SLO resident Patrick O'Hannigan's digital portfolio CD.

popped into a computer can display not only a traditional resume but also past projects, giving job seekers an advantage, said Molisani, whose Los Angeles-based firm hires out technical communications specialists and matches independent contractors with projects. The technology is versatile enough to serve writers, editors, illustrators or graphic artists.

"There are a lot more people looking for jobs than there used to be," he said. "You need to do something that sets you apart from the crowd."

San Luis Obispo County technical writers and illustrators who a few years ago had plenty of work — either through full-time jobs or freelance assignments — have been feeling the pinch in the past two years. But some are finding a niche, in part through marketing themselves in a savvy, more

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## Workshops aid tech writers in SLO

The Society for Technical Communication provides support for people who work in industries that need to translate industry-specific information into language that lay people can understand.

Editors, writers, illustrators, animators and graphic designers starting out in this field make an average \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually while an experienced independent contractor can make more than \$100,000 — assuming you get the work.

The San Luis Obispo chapter of the STC puts on regular workshops for people looking to build their skills and network in the community.

On May 31, for example, STC and KCBX.NET will sponsor "Secrets of Successful Project Management," a talk presented by Dottie Natal, founder of Ima-

gen Multimedia Inc. in Lompoc.

The three-part session will focus on project planning and looking for funding when initiating a project; managing the project's life cycle; and evaluating processes and outcomes.

The meeting will be May 31 at the KCBX.NET Training Center, 4100 Vachell Lane in San Luis Obispo from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The meeting is open to the public.

Admission is \$10 for students, \$15 for STC members and KCBX.NET's Nonprofit Support Center members, and \$20 for guests; pay by cash or check at the door.

For more information or to RSVP (no later than May 29), e-mail [reservations@slostc.org](mailto:reservations@slostc.org), call 462-2199 or visit [www.slostc.org](http://www.slostc.org).

— *Katherine Ann Rowlands*

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## Portfolio

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modern way, according to Adele Sommers, president of the San Luis Obispo chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, which recently sponsored a workshop on digital portfolios.

Once the information is stored on a CD, which can be as small as a business card, the portfolio can be viewed by everyone from human resources directors to marketing managers to quality control engineers.

Instead of a messy stack of papers, a digital portfolio can guide a prospective employer through an applicant's body of work visually and even with an added audio track. It allows a person to choose what they want to view at their own pace and evaluate work as varied as a Web site's online help file to a computer manual for a software company to a policies and procedures document for a hospital.

Collin Falla and Curtis Handley of C-Squared Design ([www.c-squaredesign.com](http://www.c-squaredesign.com)), a San Luis Obispo company that provides Web site design, technical illustration and animation, use pro-

grams such as Flash to show off photography and technical manuals in digital portfolios.

"The sky's the limit and the audience is key," said Sommers. "In the ideal world, we would have a version in a hard copy form in a nice portfolio case and, as an augmentation, a version that is available electronically."

The idea is spreading among both professionals and students.

Jim Howland, who teaches a course at Cal Poly on professional communications, said his students are making digital portfolios as part of the certificate program in technical and professional writing.

Last year, for a class project, students created O'Hannigan's portfolio on a disk. This year they are creating a CD for Jim Bryant, a commercial artist in Paso Robles, so that he can show his work on a prospective client's own computer.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," Howland said.

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