

### "Exploring Careers in Writing" Panel: Summary

*By Janean Voss*

NEO STC participated in the "Exploring Careers in Writing" panel discussion on March 20 at John Carroll University. Students interested in learning more about careers in professional writing attended this event hosted by the JCU English and Communications departments.

The panelists were Clint O'Connor, Film Critic for the Plain Dealer and Cleveland.com (<http://www.cleveland.com/>); Bryan Pflaum, Director of Creative Learning at The Cleveland Clinic; Dr. Carrie Buchanan, Assistant Professor in Journalism at JCU; Kris Henige, IT Technical Communications Manager at Parker Corporation; and Amy Vogt, Senior Training and Development Specialist at University Hospitals.

Each panelist spoke about a specific area of professional writing, and shared stories about their experiences that led them to their respective careers. Kris and Amy, our NEO STC representatives, spoke about technical communications from a hiring manager's and practitioner's perspective, respectively.

After the panel presentations, there was a Q&A session, and then a social period where students stayed to talk further with the professionals. The students in attendance seemed engaged and enthusiastic about the opportunities that are available to them in professional writing.

The Professional Writing track at John Carroll University is a new program being piloted in the Department of English for launch this fall. Coursework in this track will include literature, professional writing, and language and literature studies. An internship in professional writing is also required.

We appreciated the opportunity to participate in this panel discussion, and look forward to cultivating a partnership with JCU and this new track.

### In the spotlight: Genelle Pretty

A graduate of Cedarville University, Genelle Pretty holds a BA in technical and professional communication with minors in Bible and international business.

Currently serving as the NEO STC membership committee co-chair, Genelle maintains for NEO STC the Constant Contact database using membership information and provides resources to new and

prospective members. As part of her duties, she also holds orientation sessions for new NEO STC members.

Previously a member of the Cedarville student community of STC, Genelle held positions as historian, hospitality, treasurer, and newsletter editor. Her impressive involvement with the Cedarville STC community also includes work with the 2008 STC Conference held at Cedarville.

Working now at Parker Hannifin, Genelle is part of Corporate Information Technology Technical Communications, where she creates and updates quick reference and training guides for IT applications. She also works on help files and training tutorials.

Genelle previously worked at Steelcase in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the Information Technology Vendor Management Office. Part of her responsibilities included creating a communication plan for transferring IT work from Grand Rapids to Malaysia.

Janean Voss and Genelle recently won an award in the NEO STC technical communication competition. The award was for Parker Hannifin's entry, "Universal Customer Master Online Help."

Genelle recently agreed to be at the event where John Carroll University invited NEO STC members to distribute STC materials and answer questions about membership, scholarship opportunities, and programs. This is in connection with John Carroll piloting a new Professional Writing track program. NEO STC members also participated in a panel discussion at JCU with the goal of educating JCU students about the new program and exposing them to opportunities available in technical communication.

In her free time, Genelle enjoys running, reading, cooking/baking, and traveling with her husband to visit family and friends.

### Of interest

The Technical Stylist on the Battle of the Usage Guides: A brief discussion of some usage guides (<http://www.stc-techedit.org/Battle+of+the+Usage+Guides>)

The article "Introduction to Documenting APIs, SDKs, and Web Services" in the "Ragged Left" (the STC Berkeley newsletter) provides a lot of detail. See [http://www.stc-berkeley.org/RaggedLeft/2012/RL\\_v25n01\\_Win2012.htm](http://www.stc-berkeley.org/RaggedLeft/2012/RL_v25n01_Win2012.htm) (you will need to scroll down to find the article).

### Digital Textbooks: What Students Think

With many information products moving to digital formats or soon to go digital, especially in light of mobile devices such as tablets gaining in popularity, it could be worthwhile for us to look at what students in higher ed think of digital textbooks to see if we can get insight to apply to our own projects.

Students from various Ohio colleges and universities recently used digital textbooks as part of a pilot program aimed at evaluating students' reactions to the experience.

Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and other Northeast Ohio schools participated in the program. Faculty involved in the pilot selected Flat World textbooks for their courses, giving students free access to the Flat World Knowledge suite of digital learning materials. To access their books, students in the digital textbook pilot program could:

- ◆ use a web browser
- ◆ download files to an iPad, Kindle, Nook, or other e-reader
- ◆ download to an MP3 player or iPod
- ◆ print from a PDF file

In addition to Tri-C, some of the Ohio schools involved in the pilot included Lakeland Community College, Lorain Community College, and the University of Akron. What did students think of their digital textbooks? Some of the results of the student survey on the program include:

- ◆ 91% thought open textbooks were more cost effective
- ◆ 78% said their open textbook was the same or more engaging than other textbooks used
- ◆ 67% agreed that digital is more flexible than print
- ◆ 49% said they prefer digital to paper

The Tri-C courses where the pilot was used include several disciplines:

- ◆ Accounting
- ◆ Business communication
- ◆ Introduction to business
- ◆ Introduction to psychology

For more information, please see the Community College Week publication available at:

<http://www.ccweek.com/News/templates/pdfs/TEch-Special-Reports/CCW030512-Tech-Supp.pdf>

### Meeting review: Smartphone application UI

Our February 8 meeting on "Development Techniques for User Interface Text and Web-based Content in Smartphone Applications" featured Joe Welinske.

A big thank you goes out to the people at Keithley Instruments, where the meeting was held.

At the meeting, the speaker covered examples of mobile application creation. He discussed user interface text and content delivery for mobile platforms that include iPhones, iPads, and Android devices.

A concern with mobile devices is the small screen size that puts great importance on the words and phrases that appear. Joe noted that usability testing can help you choose the words for the situation. Usability testing can also make the application easier to use.

Meeting attendees saw Joe compare the same output on various devices. Concerning the delivery of content, Joe noted that especially when it comes to training and user assistance content, there are advantages to providing content as a web-based deliverable inside an application versus embedding it in code.

Thank you again for all involved in this informative and enjoyable evening.

We would also like to thank Adobe for helping to help offset some of Joe's travel costs for this meeting. They have been an excellent supporter of our technical communication community. You can check out the Adobe Tech Comm Suite here: <http://writersua.info/xN0JyC>.

Joe has published a book, "Developing User Assistance for Mobile Apps," which is available in print, Kindle, and ePub: <http://www.writersua.com/mobile/book.htm>.

### Tools and tips: Print a web page without a header or footer

Here are some great methods for getting rid of headers and footers when printing web pages: [http://community.spiceworks.com/how\\_to/show/2543](http://community.spiceworks.com/how_to/show/2543).

### Tools and tips: Personalizing the Microsoft ribbon

Did you know that you CAN make changes to your Microsoft Ribbons?

Go to **File > Options > Customize Ribbon**, and move the items you use the most to one tab.

You can also add your most commonly used commands to the Quick Access Toolbar.

For more detail, see <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/can-i-customize-the-ribbon-HA010227754.aspx>.

Also see the Windows Secrets article at <http://windowssecrets.com/top-story/unlock-the-power-of-the-quick-access-toolbar/>.

To find that now-hidden feature, see <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/learn-where-menu-and-toolbar-commands-are-in-office-2010-and-related-products-HA101794130.aspx>.

### In the spotlight: Joe Welinske



A thank you goes out to Joe Welinske, President of WritersUA, for speaking at our February meeting. As explained at <http://www.writersua.com/jwbio.htm>, Joe is the president of WritersUA (formerly WinWriters), a company devoted to providing training and information for user assistance

professionals. Joe has been involved with software documentation development since 1984. The focus of his work is producing high quality seminars and conferences for the user assistance community.

The WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance has drawn thousands of attendees in eighteen years. This includes representatives from 43 U.S. states, six Canadian provinces, and 23 other countries. The WritersUA Conference has been expanded around the world in cooperative efforts with other user assistance training providers. These events include the Australasian Online Documentation Conference held in Australia and the Online Help Conference - Europe.

Joe was the publisher and managing editor of the Online Help Journal. This publication was founded as the printed WinHelp Journal in 1994 to provide subscribers with the latest news and techniques concerning professional Help system development. Joe has also taught at the University of Washington in the

Department of Technical Communication, the University of Santa Cruz, and Bellevue Community College. He regularly provides featured talks at chapters of the Society for Technical Communication. Joe is currently serving in his second term as President of the Puget Sound Chapter of STC.

Together with Scott Boggan and David Farkas, Joe authored two editions of the popular and pioneering book *Developing Online Help for Windows 95*. Joe also makes regular contributions to major publications. *Developing HTML Help* appeared in the November 1997 issue of PC Magazine. "Beyond Help," his article from the April 1995 issue of WINDOWS Magazine, gave a comprehensive introduction to Windows Help development.

Joe received a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Illinois in 1981, and a M.S. in Adult Instructional Management from Loyola University in 1987. In his spare time he likes to travel and write.

"Development Techniques for User Interface Text and Web-based Content in Smartphone Applications" covers the topic of the February meeting. The session concerns user interface text and content delivery for iPhone/iPad, Android, and generalizations for other mobile platforms as well.

Since mobile devices have reduced screen real estate, it puts a great weight on the words and phrases appearing in the applications. The first word to come to mind is rarely the best word. Usability techniques can help you choose the perfect word for every situation, and make your application that much easier to use. By understanding how application creation is done, you can do much of the design work on your own.

To deliver your content, especially for training and user assistance content, being able to provide your content as a web-based deliverable inside an application has several advantages over embedding it in code. One advantage is that there is no need for your content to go through the Apple application review process. A second advantage is that you can update the content at any time without affecting installed applications. A final advantage is that you can do all of your work without the need for programming resources.

Joe is also author of the book *Developing User Assistance for Mobile Apps*.



### NEO STC Community Officer Elections

Elections will be held May 10, 2012 at the Annual Business Meeting.

Candidates for our 2012/2013 NEO STC officer positions are:

- ◆ Paul Holland: Vice President Candidate
- ◆ Kevin Halaburda: Treasurer Candidate
- ◆ Claudia Thompson: Secretary Candidate

All voting members may vote for our candidates in person or by proxy at this meeting on May 10. For each officer position, each voting member may vote for the candidate identified above, or identify a write-in candidate. Any write-in candidate must be a regular, student, or senior member of the NEO STC community to qualify. If we have a quorum of voting members (10% of membership) voting at the May 10 meeting, then the candidate that receives the majority of votes in their respective position will be elected.

If you are unable to attend the May 10 meeting, and would like to vote by proxy instead, please contact Ginny Haas by May 8 to let her know who you are designating as your proxy to attend the meeting and vote in your place.

### An emerging technologies list to ponder

*By Jeanette Evans*

The short list for emerging technologies for 2012 from the prestigious group that brings The Horizon Report includes the following as available from the <http://horizon.wiki.nmc.org/> site. Looking at this list could be of use in our own work to see what thinkers in the world of education conclude are top emerging technologies and ponder how we might use these technologies for our own projects.

#### Time-to-adoption

One year or less

1. Cloud Computing
2. Mobile Apps
3. Social Reading
4. Tablet Computing

Two to Three Years

5. Adaptive Learning Environments

6. Augmented Reality
  7. Game-Based Learning
  8. Learning Analytics
- Four to Five Years
9. Digital Identity
  10. Gesture-Based Computing
  11. Haptic Interfaces
  12. Internet of Things

Stay tuned for more details on The Horizon Report and its latest edition.

### What is The Horizon Report

The New Media Consortium and EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) collaborate to provide the The Horizon Report and complete the underlying research, providing such research and reports since 2005.

HP provides grants to make the report possible. Full reports are available online with access permission granted under a Creative Commons Attribution license to use the report freely if a proper citation is made.

### About the previous list

Electronic books and mobiles topped the list of emerging technologies in 2011.

An article in Intercom covered this list in light of how these technologies might influence technical communication work.

### About haptic interfaces

If you can use a reminder or introduction (as I did) to haptics, wikipedia has a good overview. Here are some excerpts.

- ◆ Haptic technology, or haptics, is a tactile feedback technology.
- ◆ Haptic feedback is commonly used in arcade games, especially racing video games.
- ◆ Some simple haptic devices are common in the form of game controllers, joysticks and steering wheels in particular.
- ◆ Tactile haptic feedback is becoming common in cellular devices. Handset manufacturers like LG and Motorola are including different types of haptic technologies in their devices; in most cases, this takes the form of vibration response to touch.

- ◆ Various haptic interfaces for medical simulation may prove especially useful for training of minimally invasive procedures.
- ◆ Haptic interfaces are also used in Rehabilitation robotics.
- ◆ The Shadow Dextrous Robot Hand uses the sense of touch, pressure, and position to reproduce the human grip."

### NEO STC Community: Book Club survey results

The NEO STC community is considering the idea of starting a book club, and we wanted to hear from our members before making the decision to move forward. The book club would offer its participants the opportunity to read STC-related material that may otherwise be overlooked, keep up with current books and authors, and get exposure to new viewpoints.

To get feedback, we sent a survey in January/February to our members with five questions:

- ◆ If the chapter formed a book club, how often would you attend?
- ◆ How frequently would you like the book club to meet?
- ◆ What type of items would you like included in the reading list?
- ◆ Where (or how) would you like the chapter to hold the book club meetings?
- ◆ When would you like to have the book club meetings?

We heard back from 19 of our members, and the overall results have shown that there is a strong enough interest to start a NEO STC community book club!

In the 19 surveys we received back, the majority voted:

- ◆ I would try to attend every meeting.
- ◆ The book club should meet every other month.
- ◆ The reading list should include some combination of books from the Book Review section of the *Technical Communication Journal*, and articles from the *Technical Communication Journal* or *Intercom*.
- ◆ The book club meetings should be held at a coffee shop.

- ◆ The book club should meet on a weekday evening at 6PM.

Based on these survey results, we will send out information about the first book club meeting soon!

### Strong chapters need strong leaders

#### The NEO STC needs you!

*By: Ginny Haas, Janean Voss, and Lisa Mileusnich*

The NEO STC continues to be one of the strongest, most active chapters in the STC. As with most organizations, chapters are only as strong as the members who pull together to help the chapter succeed. This is your opportunity to help run this amazing chapter.

It is time to start planning for next year's NEO STC leadership. The new leaders will take their positions on July 1. Each year the chapter fills the positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Vice President. The current Vice President moves into the President position, and the President becomes the Immediate Past President. If you are interested in any of the open positions, or if you would like to nominate another NEO STC member for one of the positions, contact Ginny Haas.

The following is some additional information about each position.

#### Treasurer

Lisa Mileusnich is the current chapter treasurer. Her main responsibilities as treasurer are:

- ◆ Pay the chapter's bills, by check or by debit card. (Examples include banquet invoice for monthly meeting, web site hosting fees, scholarship award, and reimbursement to committee members for supplies.)
- ◆ Register attendees at monthly meetings and workshops, and deposit funds from those events.
- ◆ Manage the chapter's checking account using Quicken.
- ◆ Manage the chapter's PayPal account.
- ◆ Work with the chapter president and other chapter members as necessary, to determine the next year's budget. (For example, in the fall of 2011, the group put together the 2012 budget.)
- ◆ Prepare and submit financial reports to the NEO STC board and to the Society.
- ◆ Serve as authorized signer on all Chapter accounts.

# Lines & Letters

## Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



April 2012 Issue

Page 6

- ◆ Submit the chapter's tax return, which is actually a lot easier than her own taxes!

This is her second year as treasurer, and she has enjoyed learning the inner workings of the chapter. Our monthly meeting fees are put back into the chapter funds to continue providing quality meetings for our members. Lisa also likes working the registration table at meetings because she gets to meet a lot of new people.

### Secretary

The Secretary maintains a record of Chapter activities. Duties include:

- ◆ Keeping track of volunteer recognition points.
- ◆ Attending Administrative Council meetings.
- ◆ Recording and distributing minutes of Administrative Council meetings.
- ◆ Performing other tasks requested by the Chapter President.
- ◆ Assisting with the creation and distribution of the Board Meeting agenda and forms as necessary.
- ◆ Taking notes at the Board Meetings.
- ◆ Sending thank you notes to any speakers, presenters, hosts, etc.
- ◆ Participating in the Executive Board decision-making process.

### Vice President

Janean Voss currently holds the role of Chapter Vice President for 2011-2012, and is looking forward to serving as the Chapter President in 2012-2013. As Vice President, she:

- ◆ Commits three years to the chapter board:
- ◆ Year 1: Chapter Vice President
- ◆ Year 2: Chapter President
- ◆ Year 3: Chapter Immediate Past President
- ◆ Takes on tasks assigned by the President or volunteers services to the President/board
- ◆ Takes on the duties of the Chapter President in the temporary absence or incapacity of the President
- ◆ Communicates frequently with the Chapter President, and is copied on applicable chapter communications
- ◆ Shadows the Chapter President to learn the role

- ◆ Attends the annual STC Summit near the end of the Chapter Vice President term (April/May time frame) to learn more about the International Society, network with other members and leaders from around the globe, and gain insight into what initiatives to uphold during her presidency

Janean's major reason for joining and volunteering for STC was to help her stay connected to others in this profession, and to continue to learn more about the industry. As Vice President, she has continued to develop her leadership skills, and has enjoyed learning about what makes the chapter tick – our chapter committees (Programs, Membership, Academic Relations, and so on). Our committees do a fantastic job of giving our members and guests great benefits through their efforts, and are receptive to ideas that are presented to them.

Please consider running for Chapter Vice President if you would like to:

- ◆ Learn, develop, and apply your skills
- ◆ Build leadership experience
- ◆ Gain experience in working on a team to develop and apply ideas
- ◆ Have a voice in what happens in the chapter

You will definitely enjoy the experience!

### President

Sharon Jendrisak currently holds the position of the Chapter President. She oversees the Chapter operations and helps individual committee managers to plan, organize, and conduct various Chapter activities. Duties include:

- ◆ Lead the Chapter and Administrative Council in establishing and meeting identified Chapter goals.
- ◆ Presiding at Administrative Council and Board meetings.
- ◆ Appointing Chapter committee managers and overseeing their activities.
- ◆ Presiding at committee kickoff meeting to start the year.
- ◆ Helping committees plan tasks and set deadlines.
- ◆ Serve as an authorized signer on Chapter accounts and signing other documents as required.
- ◆ Presiding at Chapter meetings

# Lines & Letters

## *Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter*



Society for  
Technical  
Communication

April 2012 Issue

Page 7

- ◆ Serving as liaison between the Chapter and the Society.
- ◆ Reporting to the Society on Chapter activities as required by Society policy.

Sharon has decided to volunteer in the leadership of the chapter as a way to be a part of all the committees and their yearly planning. She felt it was a very rewarding experience, as she was able to gain insight into the inner-workings of the chapter, and she got to work closely with many wonderful volunteers.

### **Immediate Past President**

Ginny Haas currently is in the role as the Immediate Past President. In her role, she advises the Chapter President and the Administrative Council on policy and practice and provides a link to the previous administration. Duties include:

- ◆ Attending Administrative Council and Board meetings.
- ◆ Helping select and approach potential candidates and committee members about participating throughout the following NEO STC year.
- ◆ Attending kickoff committee planning meetings as needed to transition chapter activities to the President.
- ◆ Performing other tasks requested by the Chapter President.

Volunteering to serve on the Administrative Council is an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth. Get involved!