Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

President's Column Aug/Sept 2007

By Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com)

Welcome to the 2007-2008 year for the Northeast Ohio community of STC!

Many activities are underway, thanks to the tireless undertakings of many committees and volunteers.

I am very excited about our upcoming Regional Conference in October. It is our privilege to have so many internationally-renown speakers come to Cleveland. I hope to see all of you there!

Our first meeting of the year, on September 5, is a great way to meet fellow technical communicators and find out what they are doing. Our round-table format provides a variety of topics, so you can get a taste of several aspects of technical communication.

I'm also very excited to meet with a few of our technical gurus to find ways to enhance our Web site. We'll be meeting towards the end of August to talk about possible automation of job postings, more use of RSS feeds, and a possible new format for our newsletter (not that it's not already great!). These technical enhancements will enhance what our community can offer you, while taking some of the labor-intensive burden off some of our volunteers.

I hope to continue the great work of several of my predecessors. We have a great momentum in our community, along with a lot of excitement. It's great to see so many people so passionate about their profession!

September 5 NEO STC Evening Meeting

Join NEO STC as we start another great year! At our September meeting, you will have a chance to speak with other technical communicators about the following topics:

- Editing for readability and accuracy
- Getting involved in NEO STC
- Updating your resume and portfolio
- Using free, open-source tools
- Increasing your visibility to your employer
- Using FrameMaker and Word

Our one-hour meeting is a simple table progression. Choose three of your favorite topics and spend 15 to 20 minutes at each table to discuss the topic of your choice.

This meeting offers you a great opportunity to network with other technical communicators by discussing topics that interest you!

- Date: Wednesday, September 5, 2007
- Place: Buca di Beppo, Westlake, OH

For more information, see www.neostc.org/calendar/20070905.html.

We look forward to seeing you!

Please note: The chapter is billed per registration. If you register but do not attend, you will still be expected to pay for the meeting and meal.

Big names, low cost for regional STC conference

Early-bird registration deadline approaching

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

Top-notch presentations at a low, low price await STC members who participate in the "Crucial Communicator" STC Regional Conference on Friday, October 12 at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Cleveland.

For just $120 per STC member, the action-packed day includes presentations by notable STC presenters Scott Abel, Neil Perlin, Thea Teich, Alan Houser and two international experts in standards and user documentation from the ISO JTC 1 SC7/WG2 group. STC Executive Director Susan Burton also will attend to provide an insight into the evolving field of technical communication.

Register today — early-bird registration expires September 14. Thereafter, registration for STC members is $150. Register at www.neostc.org/conf/register.htm.

Topics being presented include Web 2.0, structured authoring, Captivate for e-learning, DITA, integrating authoring and translation, international documentation standards, and XML solutions. Dr. Melvin Smith of Case Western Reserve University will give the opening keynote address on Emotional Intelligence.

List of presenters and their topics

- Scott Abel: "Understanding Web. 2.0 and Its Impact on Technical Communication"
- Lisa Adair, Kelly Graham: "Growing and Managing a Formal Editing Process"
- Keiran Dunne: "Bridging the Gap between Authoring and Translation"

- Richard Hodgkinson: "International Standards for Software Documentation"

- Alan Houser: "The Darwin Information Typing Architecture: What it Means for Technical Communication"

- Neil Perlin (Two Presentations): " Structured Authoring Without FrameMaker or DITA" and "Creating Visual Training Using Captivate"

- Annette D. Reilly: "Xtreme Management for Technical Communication"

- Thea Teich: " When Did Google Become a Verb?: American English as a Moving Target"

- Russell Ward: "A Bit of XML to Solve a Boatload of Problems"

But wait, there's more ….

- Vendor Demos: MadCap Software, Star Group, and The Geo Group will demonstrate their latest products and services.

- Hotel Discount: There is a discount on rooms at the Hilton for $109 per night until September 10. Call 216-658-6400 and ask for the "NEO" block code.

- Rock & Write Welcome Reception: Join us Thursday night for this complimentary reception at the Hilton Hotel, starting at 5 p.m. This will be a wonderful opportunity to network with peers, guests, sponsors and vendors. Dinner will follow at the Hard Rock Café for just $25 per person.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Upcoming events

- 9/5/07: Monthly meeting. Buca di Beppo, Westlake.

- 9/14/07: Deadline extended! Last day for early registration rates for the Crucial Communicator. Register now to save $30!

- 9/18/07: Networking lunch. 356th Fighter Group, 4919 Mt. Pleasant St. NW, North Canton.

- 10/05/07: Last day to register for the Crucial Communicator.

- 10/11/07: Rock & Write Reception. See www.neostc.org/conf/rockandwrite.htm for details.

- 10/12/07: STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. See www.neostc.org/conf for details.

Reminder: If you RSVP but do not show up for a meeting, it costs the chapter money — we have to pay upfront for meals. Please remember to let the Programs Committee (programs@neostc.org) know in advance if you have registered but cannot make it to a meeting.

The latest in Academic Relations

By Jeanette Evans and Sarah Burke, Academic Relations Committee Co-Chairs

The academic relations committee grew by one this summer when we recruited Sarah Burke to co-chair the committee. As a committee of two, we spent the summer outlining our committee's plans for the year. Our committee is focusing its efforts on three initiatives:

1. Launching, judging, and awarding a chapter scholarship

2. Reaching out to area technical communication programs

3. Gauging member interest in educational outreach at the high school level

Chapter scholarship. NEO STC is offering a $500 scholarship this academic year to a deserving college undergraduate, graduate, or certificate program student in technical communication. The winning student will be chosen based on the quality of his or her technical communication coursework and potential to contribute to the field. In preparation for the scholarship launch this winter, we spent the summer gathering scholarship best practices from other chapters and refining the chapter's scholarship application and related materials.

If anyone is interested in serving as a scholarship judge, our committee is recruiting. Any chapter member in good standing who has at least five years of experience in the field and who is not currently affiliated with a learning institution or technical communication program is eligible to judge. While we are still finalizing the scholarship process and its deadlines, judging will most likely take place in late winter or early spring. Judging is a great way to give back to NEO STC and your profession and will only demand a few hours of your time to review and discuss the entries.

If you have ideas on how to encourage students to apply for the scholarship or how to further advertise that our chapter has a scholarship available, please let us know.

Technical communication program outreach. To improve our outreach with the area's technical communication

programs, we began developing an academic relations database. This database contains points of contact at the following institutions that have some level of technical communication program:

- Bowling Green State University
- Cedarville University
- Cleveland State University
- Kent State University
- Miami University
- University of Findlay
- Youngstown State University

During the year, we will be reaching out to these programs to introduce them to STC and to our chapter. Programs of particular interest include Cleveland State's new certificate programs in technical writing and science writing and Kent State's master's program in information architecture and knowledge management.

High school outreach. During the August board meeting, several members mentioned that they are interested in visiting area high schools to speak with students about technical communication as a career option. If you have done this in the past and are willing to share your experiences, please let us know.

We look forward to hearing from anyone interested in enhancing our chapter's academic relations work. It is, after all, through these small efforts that we support and help encourage the next generation of technical communicators. You can contact us at academic@neostc.org.

Education committee report

Many thanks to the chapter members who participated in the education committee's online survey in July! Forty-one respondents reported their interest in different kinds of software training and provided useful input for the committee to plan and schedule training:

- There was great interest in training on XML/DITA, Framemaker, Captivate, and Photoshop.
- There were a wide variety of software programs that members want to learn. They include Illustrator, GoLive, Dreamweaver, Arbortext, InDesign, Flash, and advanced Microsoft Word.
- Saturday received the most votes for scheduling training.

- Proponents outnumbered opponents of using laptops for training.

We have been contacting potential trainers and are in the process of confirming a trainer for January 2008. Details will be available in next month's issue of Lines & Letters.

For software topics that received a handful of votes, we would like to try an idea suggested by a chapter member. Based on a concept called BarCamp, chapter members with an interest in the topic gather at a pre-arranged meeting location such as a café or restaurant to informally share what they know, discuss challenges, and exchange information. Anyone who would like to organize one of these gatherings around a particular theme, please contact Anne Paczula at anne@paczula.com and you will be put in touch with others with similar interests.

We are considering using laptops in at least one training session. The advantage is that an alternative training location could be used, less time is needed to set up the facility, and training participants could download and take a look at trial software prior to the training. For those who don't have laptops, we are in the process of identifying businesses that lease laptops. Leasing would be at the participant's expense; or, if anyone is willing to lend a fellow chapter member a laptop for training, send an email to anne@paczula.com. We would set up a guest user profile to limit access to the laptop owner's files.

Survey respondents suggested a few ideas for training resources that we would like to share. Keep an eye on the Education page of the chapter Web site for updates.

We are excited to get started with new webinars this year. At the moment, we are waiting for STC to complete developing the seminar program. As soon as we know more, we will forward an update to everyone. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Renée Murray at zimrood@yahoo.com.

The education committee could use volunteers to help with training logistics or assist in coordinating informal training gatherings. Please send an email to anne@paczula.com if you are interested.

Member profile: Joanne Wittenbrook

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Joanne Wittenbrook recently completed the Cleveland State University certificate program in technical writing (www.csuohio.edu/ce/programs/bus_profcert.htm#tw).

About the program, Joanne says that it is a great experience for someone who is already in the workforce and wants to specialize in technical writing. She goes on to say, "The classes I attended were filled with people working in some capacity that required they refine their technical documentation skills. It was great to get an inside look at how different companies are approaching the development of their technical documentation and the development of their employees."

In her present position at Progressive Insurance, Joanne notes, "I am implementing a document management system in the IT department. I am creating training for the developers and analysts on how to write concise technical documentation. I'm also going to be working on developing a knowledge base for the Usability lab at Progressive, which is very exciting work. I've been on the job (for less than a year), but I've already participated in a demonstration of eye-tracking technology with the Kent State Usability and Information Architecture department and was given the opportunity to consult with Douglas van Duyne on the construction of my knowledge base."

She further states that "technology and the technical communication field is changing so quickly. I foresee the need for more programs like the ones at Cleveland State's Cole Center to provide a resource for professionals to develop skills to keep pace with change. With new disciplines like Usability and Web information architecture, those of us who left school long before the Internet need some way to get on the bus of all the new opportunities."

Joanne's background also includes work at OfficeMax, where she led a team of project managers in development and support of the OfficeMax Print and Document Services department. She developed and reviewed technical documentation and training materials, tested software and hardware configurations, and deployed desktop publishing equipment and software in retail locations. Her business experience also includes working as a designer and assistant art director for The Sharper Image and Ogilvy & Mather in San Francisco, CA. She can be reached at jwittenbrook@ameritech.net.

For those of you interested in the technical writing certificate program at CSU: This program was developed for both the traditional technical writer, as well as for any professional responsible for designing, creating, testing, and maintaining documentation in the workplace. The certificate program offers a user-focused approach to technical communication. As explained in their Web site, the program uses a series of interactive workshops to teach writers and documentation professionals key strategies for becoming an audience-centered communicator. You earn a Certificate in Technical Writing by completing four required courses and two elective courses.

Required courses include: Tech Writing Boot Camp (core course; taken first), Step-by-Step: Manuals and Process Documentation, Test Driving Your Documents, and Editing for Effect.

The elective courses may be selected from the following: Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign: Level I, Adobe PhotoShop, Dreamweaver: Introduction, FrontPage: Level 1, HTML: Introduction, and Visio for Administrative Professionals.

Introducing the 2007-2008 NEO STC Board & Committees

Please welcome the following NEO STC members, who have volunteered for the 2007-2008 Executive board and committees. Note that several positions are still open — please contact Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com) if you would like to volunteer for a position.

Executive Board:

- President: Tricia Spayer
- Vice President: Amy Vogt
- Secretary: Sarah Burke
- Treasurer: Denise Kadilak
- Immediate Past President: Stephanie Webster

Committees:

- Academic Relations: Jeanette Evans, Sarah Burke, co-chairs
- Community: Kim Lindsey (CTSC), Bob Young (NOCA)
- Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC-SIG): Lori Klepfer, chair

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- Education: Anne Paczula (Software Saturdays), Renee Murray (Webinars)

- Employment: Traci Billingsley, Renee Murray, (representative open)

- Membership: June Muhic — chair

- Networking Lunches: Angie Dianetti, Jill McCauslin, co-chairs

- Newsletter: Barb Philbrick — chair, Jeanette Evans, Sherri Henkin, Jan Lowry, Lisa Mileusnich, Bob Clark, Paul Holland, Sharon Resar, representatives

- Programs: Shannon Siwicki and Beth Troy (co-chairs), Kris Henige, Sharon Jendrisak, and Stephanie Webster, representatives

- Public Relations: Mario Morelos — chair, Jean Church, Michelle Kastro, representatives (representative open)

- Regional Conference: Bob Young — chair, Stephanie Webster, Kim Lindsey, Sherri Henkin, Tricia Spayer, representatives (plus many more!)

- Web site: Brian Baddour — chair, Candace Wintering, representative, Paul Holland, Conference Web site

Movie review: Starring A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Helvetica. Produced and directed by Gary Hustwit.

By Julie Mason (julie.mason@parker.com), Parker Hannifin Corporation

Your friends just might not get it. "Why," they might ask, looking at you more than a bit dubiously, "are you going to see a movie about a font?" And then, as though it would somehow be more excusable during the week, "On a Saturday??"

While it is true that the idea of a feature-length film starring a typeface is a bit unusual, Helvetica is not just any typeface — for fifty years, it has been the defining visual feature of scores of corporations, governments, and organizations around the world. Today already, says director Gary Hustwit, you have probably seen it several times as it "told you which subway platform you needed, or tried to sell you investment services or vacation getaways in the ads in your morning paper."

Shot on location throughout the United States and Europe, this beautifully crafted high-definition film highlights Helvetica's impact on urban spaces. The film

also features a delightful array of interviews with some of the most recognized names in the world of design. Regardless of whether they love or hate it, the designers give the typeface a lot of credit: it is either most perfect sans-serif typeface possible or the most boring typeface in the world; it either has a calming and unifying effect or it is a cause of both the Vietnam and Iraq wars.

The Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque presented Helvetica last month to an audience of several hundred typophiles, ranging from art students to retirees to our group of technical writers. After the showing, Cleveland native Michael Bierut, an award-winning graphic designer and former president of AIGA, gave a brief talk on his comical interview in *Helvetica*, the making of the film, and his former work with design great Massimo Vignelli.

You haven't missed your chance to celebrate the 50th birthday of the world-famous typeface: Helvetica will return to Cleveland for an encore screening on October 6 at the Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque. You can visit www.helveticafilm.com to find more worldwide showings, and to pre-order the DVD ($20), which will be released November 6.

About the Typeface (quoted from www.helveticafilm.com)

"Helvetica was developed by Max Miedinger with Eduard Hoffmann in 1957 for the Haas Type Foundry in Münchenstein, Switzerland. In the late 1950s, the European design world saw a revival of older sans-serif typefaces such as the German face Akzidenz Grotesk. Haas' director Hoffmann commissioned Miedinger, a former employee and freelance designer, to draw an updated sans-serif typeface to add to their line. The result was called Neue Haas Grotesk, but its name was later changed to Helvetica, derived from Helvetia, the Latin name for Switzerland, when Haas' German parent companies Stempel and Linotype began marketing the font internationally in 1961.

"Introduced amidst a wave of popularity of Swiss design, and fueled by advertising agencies selling this new design style to their clients, Helvetica quickly appeared in corporate logos, signage for transportation systems, fine art prints, and myriad other uses worldwide. Inclusion of the font in home computer systems such as the Apple Macintosh in 1984 only further cemented its ubiquity."

Book review: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*

Reviewed by: Jeanette Evans
(jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006, $60.00, 2112 pages, hardcover, ISBN-10: 0618701729

This updated edition includes, according to its Web site, revised biographical and geographical entries as well as up-to-date charts and tables for topics such as world currencies and chemical elements. Among the 500 entries new to this update are: Amber Alert, blogosphere, gravitino, halo effect, hawala, lycopene, malware, micropolis, proteome, Qi Gong, SARS, shout-out, speed dating, sudoku, Texas hold'em, text message, and wiki.

Wikipedia explains the history of this dictionary, noting that the first edition appeared in 1969. Its creation was spurred by the controversy over the Webster's Third New International Dictionary. James Parton, the owner of the history magazine American Heritage, was appalled by the permissiveness of Webster's Third, published in 1961, and tried to buy the G. and C. Merriam Company so he could undo the changes. When that failed, he contracted with Houghton to publish a new dictionary. The AHD was edited by William Morris and relied on a usage panel of 105 writers, speakers, and eminent persons for usage notes. The AHD made the innovative step of combining prescriptive elements (how language should be used) and descriptive information (how it actually is used).

The AHD is larger than a desk dictionary but smaller than *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* or *The Random-House Dictionary of the English Language*. A lower-priced college edition includes monocolor printing. This dictionary can also be purchased with a fully loadable CD-ROM that contains the entire text of the updated Fourth Edition, 68,000 audio pronunciations, 1,000 full-color photographs and illustrations, and a college-level thesaurus with more than 260,000 synonyms. The CD-ROM has spell-check capability and can be used in conjunction with any Microsoft Office application to get definitions at the click of a mouse.

This updated edition does not disappoint. The content is as good as ever, including the most helpful usage notes. The paper version still has the striking illustrations and beautiful packaging that includes the recessed index tabs.

In *Slaying the English Jargon* (an STC publication), Fern Rook notes that there are many English language dictionaries. The main ones she considers to be the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the M-W unabridged and collegiate dictionaries, and the AHD. Others, she notes, are the Random House unabridged and collegiate dictionaries and Webster's New World Dictionary (from World publishing). Several others use the Webster name.

Fern goes on to state that most dictionaries do a good job in the four most important functions of spelling, meaning, pronunciation, and syllabification. However, there are differences in other areas that you should consider when deciding on purchase or use of a new dictionary. She cautioned us when pointing out Dr. Samuel Johnson's statement that dictionaries are like new watches: the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true.

She stated that the M-W unabridged is the most prestigious in the United States, considered to be the authority by librarians and linguists. The appearance of *The American Heritage Dictionary* was notable in that it was the first to have made the best seller list. M-W dictionaries concentrate on what is widely used. The AHD provides usage guidelines for those who need to find out whether a word is considered to be standard usage. For example, for grub, AHD shows "Slang Food" in the entry. M-W shows simply "food" for its entry.

Fern felt that one of the best features of the AHD is that it lists the most common meaning first, not the historical order, as M-W does. AHD is the most readable dictionary. If you need to know how a word is commonly used, AHD is a good choice. A M-W dictionary or *The Oxford English Dictionary* is a good choice if you need to know historical information about a word.

Handy hint: Microsoft Outlook Personal Folders Backup

By Barb Philbrick (caslon@alltel.net)

As some of you know, I recently lost a hard drive. So my first tip is to remember to do your backups!

Fortunately, I had backed up my data files, but I do not regularly back up my application files, so I lost my Microsoft Outlook pst file. Since I use Outlook as part of my reminder system, this was a mess for me! (In

particular, anyone who sent me newsletter articles earlier this summer, please resend.)

To prevent this from happening again, I looked into options for backing up my pst file. My first preference was to change the default location of the pst files to be with my data files, so it would get backed up with all my other data files. I couldn't figure out how to do this, but while looking I found another option — Microsoft offers a free tool called the Personal Folders Backup that can be added onto Outlook 2002 or above.

It is simple to install and use — it adds an exe file to your computer and an option to the Outlook File menu called Backup. It is so simplistic that it can be confusing — there is no feedback on the install and Microsoft's directions are weak. To verify that the install worked, you need to close and re-open Outlook, and then check the File menu to see if Backup appeared.

To use the program:

1. In Outlook, from the File menu, select **Backup**.

2. On the dialog box, select **Options**. The Backup Options dialog box is displayed.

3. In the Reminder box, set the frequency of backups.

4. In the Backup Files list, select which files to back up.

5. In the File Location box, select the location where the files will be backed up.

6. Click **OK**.

7. Click **Save Backup**. (This will do an initial backup and save your settings).

Once you have done this setup, it displays a reminder to back up your pst at the frequency you specified; just click Backup on the reminder to back up the pst. If you are interested in this utility, see http://tinyurl.com/4xwnh.

Chapter Reminders

Job news

By Barb Philbrick

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the current chapter website for details.]

There is a new job Web site on the block for the Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, and Canton areas. In Spring 2007, NorTech, a regional technology-based economic development organization, launched the Beta version of www.neotechjobs.com.

EmployOn, LLC, developed the Web site, which uses spider technology to compile jobs postings from across the Internet into a single massive, searchable job database.

This is a great resource for job seekers in the area — it turns up jobs from a wide variety of sources. However, I noticed that it turns up a lot of duplicates, which can make it a bit tedious. If you can forgive the duplicates, it does a good job of identifying jobs in our area and looks like a great tool for job seekers.

For another great job resource, check out the NEO STC Web site at www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php!

Employers: Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience! See neostc.org/jobs/

NEO STC listserv

[NOTE: As of 2015, the chapter listserv has been supplanted by our LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the current chapter website for details.]

The NEO STC listserv is another way to stay connected with other NEO STC members. It's easy and it does not generate huge amounts of e-mail!

For information on subscribing, see www.neostc.org/official/listserv.htm

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Love it? Hate it? Let us know! Contact us: newsletter@neostc.org

See something interesting? Tell us about it!

Many of our NEO STC members are also members of another STC community or SIG. If you receive a newsletter and find an interesting article, please consider passing it on to the Lines and Letters editors at newsletter@neostc.org.

You can also submit articles directly through http://www.neostc.org/lines/submit.html.