

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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Monthly meeting March 8: Doc-To-Help's One-Click Project Converter

Doc-To-Help's One-Click Project Converter

RoboHelp's alleged demise has left many users wondering where to turn for their Help Authoring needs. Many authors are looking to other vendors and solutions, but are hesitant due to the countless hours and dollars invested in their current projects. Is converting from one tool to another a painful project? What options do RoboHelp users have and in what direction should they go?

Brad Keller, Customer Representative for Doc-To-Help at ComponentOne, will help answer these questions in his presentation covering the current RoboHelp situation, the future of Help authoring, and how Doc-To-Help's One-Click RoboHelp Converter simplifies the conversion process and provides authors with a clear choice on who to turn to for future Help authoring needs.

Brad Keller is a Doc-to-Help Product Consultant at ComponentOne. He works closely with users, consultants, and industry experts to plan for emerging trends and new technologies. He currently has meetings with the Help authoring community scheduled across the nation in order to educate them on recent trends, RoboHelp alternatives, and various aspects of Doc-to-Help.

Competition winners will also be recognized at the meeting!

- ◆ Date: Thursday, March 8, 2007
- ◆ Place: Hyland Software Headquarters, Westlake

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.

For more information, see <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20070308.html>.

We look forward to seeing you!

Upcoming events

- ◆ 3/8: Monthly meeting. Options for RoboHelp Users: The Future of Help.
- ◆ 3/9 to 3/10: STC Atlanta Conference. Currents 2007. See <http://www.stcAtlanta.org/currents.htm>.
- ◆ 3/14: Networking lunch. Blue Canyon Kitchen & Tavern, 8960 Wilcox Dr., Twinsburg.

- ◆ 3/15: NEOUPA meeting, "Is your Web site secure?" See <http://www.neoupa.org/> for details.
 - ◆ 3/16 to 3/17: STC-Philadelphia Metro Chapter Annual Conference. See <http://www.stcPMC.org>.
 - ◆ 3/20: Free seminar: Copyright Law Issues in the Digital Communication Age. See www.cinecraft.com for detail.
 - ◆ 3/20 to 3/21: Cleveland Matchmaker, at Jacobs Field. The event brings together small businesses and buying organizations for one-on-one meetings, workshops and networking opportunities. See <https://www.clevelandb2bmatchmaker.com/bmp/>.
 - ◆ 3/25 to 3/28: Fifteenth Annual WritersUA Conference in Long Beach, CA. See <http://www.winwriters.com/ohc07/>
 - ◆ 3/26 to 3/28: Content Management Strategies/DITA North America Conference 2007. Boston, MA. See <http://www.infomanagementcenter.com/>
 - ◆ 4/12: Networking lunch. Beach Club Bistro, 21939 Lakeshore Blvd., Euclid
 - ◆ 4/12: STC election ends.
 - ◆ 4/20: Software Day: MadCap Flare Survival Guide. Rob Houser presents at Tri-C West.
 - ◆ 4/21: Software Day: MadCap Flare Survival Guide. Rob Houser presents at Riverhead Training in Pittsburgh.
 - ◆ 5/4: Last day of advanced registration for STC's 54th Annual Conference.
 - ◆ 5/12 to 5/16: Technical Communication Summit — STC's 54th Annual Conference — in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 - ◆ 10/12/07: Region 4 Conference. Watch for details!
- * Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these Webinars.** If you would like to host a seminar, please e-mail us.

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.

Can you host an upcoming Webinar?

STC is offering a couple of interesting Webinars in March, and we would love to find hosting volunteers for both:

March 14: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask

- ◆ Presenter: Rahel Bailie
- ◆ Level: Beginner

March 28: Visible: The New Valuable.

- ◆ Presenters: Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger
- ◆ Level: Intermediate

If you are interested in hosting, please let Denise Kadilak (denise.kadilak@blackbaud.com) know.

For a list of all STC Webinars, visit <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp>.

Region 4 Conference coming this fall!

Mark your calendars now! The Region 4 Conference — The Crucial Communicator — is to be held October 12, 2007 in downtown Cleveland. Although this sounds far away, preparations are already underway for this event. If you are interested in helping (an assortment of tasks are needed), please see (Bob Young (bobyong@maximus.com)) or Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com).

Levels of knowledge

By Brian Baddour, Web Committee Chairperson

Ever get the idea you are talking over someone's head? Or under their feet? It doesn't help when you ask whether they are an expert, because maybe they are just the expert in their office.

In January 2006, a blogger named Emil casually proposed numbered "levels of knowledge" by which individuals can easily convey their experience to each other; in his case, CSS experience.

Maybe he was inspired by the taxonomy of learning many educators have studied. In any case, other bloggers followed up with similar proposals for rating understanding of HTML, JavaScript, Accessibility, and even RSS. Perhaps we could throw together a few more for grammar, style, office productivity software, netiquette, and so on. Job seekers could even toss out their resumes, instead giving their prospective

employers a list of disciplines and their self-ascribed level of knowledge in each.

Yes, this method is subjective, and a trend that could be taken to an extreme. Yet its 15 minutes of fame affirms a concern: How often do we fail to "know our audience" because we don't know what level they are on?

For example, your chemistry software manual is intended for experts in chemistry (level 5) who have never seen your software before, but winds up in the hands of interns who know little of either.

Or for another example, your SME says he is a good writer, and can edit his own stuff.

Yeah, right; actually, "he is really just a level 3".

Or Uncle Tim offers to help you get more back on your family's taxes because he's been preparing his own taxes for years and never got audited by the IRS (except that one time). Steer clear; "he's a 2."

Being conscious of this obstacle has more benefit than just gauging audience personas. It is also good any time you are on a different page than a trainee, co-worker, or friend.

Web link: Article on how employers prepare for hiring contractors

This article is a good look at what employers do to prepare for hiring a contractor:

<http://www.writingassist.com/articles/hiring-technical-writers.htm>

Thanks to Jan Lowry for sending along this link.

Instructional Design & Learning SIG scholarship

The IDL SIG Scholarship team proudly announces a \$500 scholarship to assist students of all ages who are pursuing an undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or certificate in the area of Instructional Design.

Students applying for this scholarship are expected to be able to demonstrate their focus on topics related to Instructional Design through their academic studies, current jobs, graduate or certification program, special projects, and/or the STC annual conference.

This award is wholly funded by the IDL SIG. The award may be used for registration fees, books, or attendance at the upcoming STC annual conference in Minneapolis. All winners and honorable mentions will be published in the IDL SIG quarterly newsletter. The deadline for

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submission is March 15, 2007. Winners will be notified by April 15, 2007.

For more details and all necessary forms, go to <http://www.stcidlsig.org/cms/> and click *Scholarships*.

Condolences to Joel Lantz and family

Joel Lantz's daughter, Pamela, died recently. Our hearts go out to Joel and his family. May the sorrow you feel now soon be replaced by warm memories.

Member profile: Lori Neuman

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

Making a great contribution to STC and NEO STC for many years, Lori Neuman first became an STC member in 1986. She was Meetings Committee Chair 1989-1993; Chapter president 1993-1995; and Publications Competition Award Winner 1989-90, 1992-93, 2002-03, 2006-07. In addition, she received a Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 1997 and Volunteer of the Year Award (part of the CCC Curriculum Development Team) in 1999-2000. Lori was a publications competition judge in 2002-03.

With a BA in English, cum laude, The University of Akron, 1989, Lori has worked in the technical communications field for many years. She currently works at Rockwell Automation as a Technical Collateral Developer. She also worked at Nordson Corporation as a Technical Writer (1989-1994) and Diebold, Incorporated, as an Associate Technical Writer (1988-1989) and intern (1986-1988).

At Rockwell, as part of her current work, as she puts it, "I am involved in numerous initiatives designed to streamline technical communication: Controlled Vocabulary and Information Modeling. Controlled Vocabulary seeks to define a glossary for technical terms used across an organization. Information Modeling defines the structure of a standardized publication type, so that the writer may focus on authoring excellent technical content. More than a template, an information model describes the structure and function of elements that comprise a publication type."

When thinking about her background, Lori notes, "As I look back over my 20+ years in technical communication, I remember especially the place where I got my start: Diebold, Incorporated. The excellent mentoring I received there has enabled my success today. In addition, it is not often that you get to work

with as great a group of people as I did at Diebold. I still remember all of them fondly."

Remarried in 2004 to Mark Neuman, Lori and her husband recently built a new house on two acres in Seville, Ohio. Their six kids include Geoffrey Moreland II, Evan Moreland, Samuel Moreland, Erin Neuman, Andrew Neuman, and Emmett Neuman.

Lori makes a huge contribution at Rockwell as the current head of the Professional Women's Council. Outside of Rockwell, she is a Volunteer PSR (Parish School Religion) teacher, runs daily and in local 5K races, and enjoys cooking with her husband, gardening, landscaping, reading, and art. She calls herself an avid coffee connoisseur.

Member profile: Tom Duggan

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

New to NEO STC, Tom Duggan is currently working at Rockwell Automation as a technical collateral developer. Having worked at Rockwell for over 6 years, Tom accepted his present technical writing position in 2006 and shortly after that joined STC and our chapter. He recently attended an NEO STC networking luncheon and meeting on Adobe Captivate.

With a BA degree in English from Hillsdale College (1991) and MA degree in English from Oakland University (1993), Tom is originally from the Detroit area. He currently lives next to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and enjoys hiking whenever he can. He likes to travel, his favorite destination being Charleston, SC. His parents recently retired to NC, and he enjoys visiting them.

Concerning his interests, Tom notes, "I enjoy reading, running, playing tennis, and collecting and watching classic films. I have a fairly extensive personal library of books, mostly 19th and 20th-century American and European novels. I also own many fine histories."

Tom says he is an avid baseball fan. This would make him yet another NEO STC member with this interest!

Book review: *The Gregg Reference Manual*

Reviewed by Denise Kadilak
(denise.kadilak@blackbaud.com)

Book information:

The Gregg Reference Manual

Tenth Edition

Sabin, William A. 2005. McGraw-Hill/Irwin, NY.

[ISBN 0072936533. 688 pages, including index. \$51.33 USD (soft cover).]

Previously published in *Technical Communication* 54(1):111–112.

After ten editions over more than 50 years, the question is not if the new version of *The Gregg Reference Manual* is any good. That question was answered in the affirmative 49 years ago. The question is, is there anything new? The answer to this question, surprisingly, is yes, a good deal. Already recognized as the best style manual for business professionals and students, William A. Sabin has added, reworked, and rearranged, honing an already finely tuned reference tool, making it a comprehensive and accessible masterpiece.

Weighing in at a heavy 688 pages, the book is amazingly easy to navigate, thanks in large part to its unique index. Making a good thing better, in the 10th edition Sabin almost doubles the size of the printed index to 43 pages. Unlike other indexes, this one goes beyond the standard page references. Sabin references specific rule numbers, taking you to not just the correct page, but the correct entry on the page — no scanning for key words or second guessing that you found the correct entry.

In addition, an electronic index offers users even more help locating information. It includes everything in the printed index and substantially more. For example, the manual includes a section in chapter seven, "Words That Sound Alike or Look Alike," that lists hundreds of often confused words, such as "accept" vs. "except" and "capital" vs. "capitol." In the electronic index, Sabin indexes all the words included in this list, a feat far too large for a printed index. According to the publisher, the electronic index includes entries for just about all of the terms and phrases used to illustrate specific rules in the manual, allowing users to "search not only for a particular rule but also for specific words and phrases

governed by that rule." For even easier access, users can install the electronic index on their computer.

The new edition also expands its treatment of e-mail. The fifteen-page section details e-mail netiquette, including the use of blind copies and salutations, acceptable message length and sentence organization, and e-mail attachment and forwarding considerations.

Researchers will enjoy Gregg's expanded coverage of electronic-source citations. The manual offers detailed citation explanations and examples. The 10th edition also addresses how to cite spoken-word source material: personal interviews and conversations, television and radio interviews, and speeches.

The 10th edition significantly updates and expands its "Glossary of Computer Terms." To accommodate the growing glossary, the publisher has moved it from the manual to the Web site. The Web site also allows for glossary updates between editions, providing online users with the most up-to-date information available. For easier access, users can download the glossary onto their computer.

To better accommodate educators and instructors, the 10th edition of Gregg includes a separate resource manual for corporate trainers. Previously lumped with the instructor's manual, the new Trainer's Resource Manual focuses on the specific needs of the corporate trainer. The new resource manual offers advice on conducting skill-building programs, selecting worksheets, and using the Gregg Reference Manual. Both instructor supplements — The Instructor's Resource Manual and The Trainer's Resource Manual — include graphic materials such as transparencies and PowerPoint slides. Both manuals also offer instructional strategies and keys to the Basic Worksheets and Comprehensive Worksheets, which are included.

As expected, the actual entries in the *Gregg Reference Manual* are clear and succinct, but even these have been improved, with more detailed explanations and helpful examples of usage (when should you use farther vs. further or fewer vs. less, for example).

For such an established and respected reference tool, the number and degree of changes included in this new release is impressive. The *Gregg Reference Manual* is one of the few newly editioned research tools well worth the upgrade. Sabin took a wonderful manual and, for the 10th time, made it better.

Book review: *Why Software Sucks ... and What You Can Do About It*

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

Book information:

Why Software Sucks ... and What You Can Do About It.
Platt, David S. 2007. Addison-Wesley.
[ISBN 0321466756. 243 pages. \$19.99 USD (soft cover).]

Author David S. Platt teaches software development at the Harvard University Extension School and at companies throughout the world. An experienced programmer and consultant, he is also author of nine previous books and was designated in 2002 by Microsoft to be a Software Legend.

With chapters titles like "Who Are You Calling Dummy," "Tangled in the Web," and "Ten Thousand Geeks Crazy on Jolt Cola," the book is what you might expect, considering the title. Using humor that is often outrageous, the author provides insight on why so many software programs are hard to figure out and use, even losing information and crashing at what often seems the worst possible time. The author also discusses why so many Web sites are user-hostile and unsafe, allowing unwanted programs into computers.

Platt shows examples of problems in MS Word, ups.com, and starbucks.com. He gives the example of google.com as a site that is especially good.

Some will probably find parts of the book and humor offensive, but many will find something interesting in the contents, especially for readers who want to broaden their understanding of usability. Here are some ideas about what programmers and companies can do to improve their products.

- ◆ Understand that users are not programmers.
- ◆ Accept that a lack of usability testing can make the end results unusable and hurt the bottom line.
- ◆ Make usability testing a necessity, not an afterthought.
- ◆ To provide protection, use techniques other than passwords, as these are a nuisance for the user.

Platt proposes that users can do something about poor software.

- ◆ Buy carefully. Many U.S. cars did not improve until customers demanded it by buying reliable Hondas

and Toyotas. The same will hold true for software as users buy more reliable software that is easier to use.

- ◆ Provide feedback as programmers may not know what is wrong unless you tell them.
- ◆ Read reviews before buying and provide reviews to help others.

It is not clear in my mind if this will become a lasting classic in usability literature. What is clear is that this can be a fun read if you are not offended by the often irreverent and outrageous nature of the humor. This is one of the less outrageous jokes from the book:

- ◆ Q. How many Microsoft tech-support guys does it take to change a light bulb?
- ◆ I'm afraid we can't reproduce your problem. All the light bulbs here are working fine.

Handy hint: Fixing all table borders and shading in a FrameMaker file

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

When you import a Word document with tables into FrameMaker, the tables often have borders and shading that are inconsistent with the tag definitions. You can force all the tables in the file to use the borders and shading defined in the table tag catalog.

1. Select the entire document (<Ctrl> + <A>).
2. Click **Tables>Custom Ruling and Shading**.
3. Select the options to apply from the table definitions.
4. Click **Apply**.

Job news

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

Job news: The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) has launched eicareers.org, a full-service online career portal designed exclusively for the electroindustry.

If your company has a job opening, please contact Namrata (Nams) Malik at Nams Malik (nmalik@ra.rockwell.com)

Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience!

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STC election information

STC's 2007 election will open in early March. A personal message from candidates are listed below (note that these are not inclusive; only candidates who sent us articles specifically for the newsletter are included). In addition, STC has posted brief biographies about each candidate at

<http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>. Members can use the "Ask the Candidate" feature on the Web site to submit questions directly to the candidates.

Voting instructions and ballots will be sent to all members in March.

Candidate article: Jonathan W. Baker, candidate for Director

What do you want from STC?

I know from STC surveys and my experience on the STC Board that most members value STC for networking (including the conferences), publications, chapters, and SIGs. These same things have great value for me. But as a professional, I want STC to provide training/education that prepares us to grow in our jobs, certification that helps us progress professionally, job leads that foster career growth, and industry leadership that promotes a higher level of respect for the field of technical communication.

The professional/job-oriented values are actually more important to me personally than the other more social aspects. Don't get me wrong, for more than 10 years I've worked in the trenches just like most other volunteers and I have made many friends within STC. However, the problem is, I, like many other members, want more than STC has been able to provide. Does that mean I give up on STC and move on? Not necessarily.

Generally, I believe STC needs to reinvent itself. From the inside, this happens by fundamental changes in how STC does business. This means bringing both STC's financial practices and governance, among other things, into the 21st century.

Why should this matter to you? Because organizationally STC is still stuck in the very comfortable past — circa 1959, which means STC can't possibly deliver what you and I need a half a century later. Reinvention is the single greatest challenge for STC. I believe that STC can successfully reinvent itself, but only if the membership, including and especially the leadership, can let go of the past.

I am in the process of writing several articles on STC's finances and governance. These articles will be available on the web shortly.

Read my articles. Get passionate. Vote.

As always, please feel free to contact me at jbaker2525@earthlink.net.

Candidate article: Mollye Barrett, candidate for Director

Every Member Counts!

Hi! I'm Mollye Barrett and I'm a candidate for STC Director. I'm asking for your vote in the coming STC elections because I support technical communicators and the needs of STC members. I believe every member counts.

I place great store in technical communicators, the work you perform and the value you add to society. You are important and so is your work. As an STC Director, I will listen to members and learn about your challenges, I'll work to support your needs and as a result, I'll ensure that STC's governance is transparent and responsive.

As a past president of the Wisconsin Chapter and a Region 6 Conference Committee member, I understand the challenges of STC leadership. These positions have led me to recognize that the society requires changes that will facilitate growth and renewal.

My experience as a chapter mentoring program manager has connected me with professionals and students seeking a rewarding career as technical communicators. I've learned that by listening, offering encouragement and guidance, I've helped others acquire the skills and knowledge to become valuable practitioners in their field.

My role as Director would be that of a facilitator and I'll consider every issue by asking, "What do members want and need? What resources can the Society offer to support the members?"

My career has benefited from the educational opportunities of countless chapter meetings as well as many regional and international conferences. Further, I have developed a rich network of high-functioning technical communication professionals that are both colleagues and friends.

Service is the heart of a volunteer organization like STC and service is why I am a Director candidate. To the role of Director I offer my energy, creativity, and best communication skills.

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My goals are clear: offer members the education, programming, and support they need to thrive in their careers, lead the society in changes that will facilitate growth and renewal, and enjoy the opportunity to work with everyone. Some initiatives I support and propose include:

- ◆ Regularly survey members on their interests and expectations
- ◆ Ensure that STC is a member-driven organization
- ◆ Focus on STC as both a professional development and social networking organization
- ◆ Build an international mentoring program
- ◆ Recognize and honor working technical communicators
- ◆ Support STC as a business focused on the needs of members
- ◆ Support a strong membership drive for new members and contact lapsed members, encouraging them to rejoin

I have been a member of STC since 1995 and have benefited from the service of others.

Please contact me with questions, concerns, ideas or just to say hello. You can view my candidate information on the STC candidate site (<http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=22>) and additional information on my campaign site (<http://www.mollyebarrett.org>). I look forward to your vote of support and the opportunity to serve STC.

Candidate article: Cindy Currie, candidate for Second Vice President

Taking Technical Communication to New Heights!

Hello STC members! I'm Cindy Currie, a candidate for Second Vice President (2VP). I'm currently a Director, Community Affairs Committee chair, and a Strategic Planning Committee member. I belong to the Northern New England and UK chapters and five SIGs. I've been a member since 1991 and a Fellow since 2005.

For the past two years, I have worked hard to help STC deliver more value for all members. I want to continue this work, and I feel that I can best do that by increasing my commitment to STC through the office of 2VP.

My primary focus is promoting the value of technical communication to business. We need to ensure that senior management fully understands the role we play in

helping to increase the bottom line of business. It is through relationships at this level that we will succeed in bringing the profession closer to the core of business, raising its profile, and creating new and higher-level roles for technical communicators. I know we can do this by concentrating on four key areas.

Codifying our body of knowledge. The certification debate continues, with strong feelings on both sides. Certification — if we choose to go in that direction — isn't possible without a body of knowledge (BoK) against which to certify TCs. In either case, a BoK is essential to elevating the profession in the global business hierarchy, helping to further legitimize it.

Enhancing and expanding professional growth opportunities. Members must be ready to meet new and exciting challenges, so we must provide a variety of business and leadership learning opportunities, as well as education and training on methods and tools.

Creating a solid identity for STC. We need strong brand identity that loudly trumpets STC's industry leadership of the profession, and is quickly and easily recognized as one that means quality — of both the practice and its practitioners.

Reworking our business model and infrastructure. We must be able to identify, support, and promote changes and improvements with clarity, speed, and agility. STC is a business and we need to run it like a business with all the right frameworks in place to deliver on all of our commitments — to members, partners, academe, and business.

So, let's take technical communication to new heights!

You can e-mail me directly at dir1@stc.org, or you can visit the candidate Web site (preferred) and ask me questions through that mechanism so that others can view my responses.

Candidate article: Nicky Bleiel, candidate for STC Director

Hi, I'm Nicky Bleiel, candidate for Director in 2007 and I am asking for your vote in the upcoming election.

My vision: Technical communicators make users more successful. I would like to help STC make technical communicators more successful by expanding its educational offerings, adding more training courses, seminars, conferences, and even books. One of STC's goals is to "Tell our powerful story," and I plan to work on projects that help promote our profession to the business community.

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Leadership experience: I am the immediate past president of the Pittsburgh chapter. During my presidency, Pittsburgh was recognized as a chapter of excellence; during my vice presidency, as a chapter of distinction. I also served as membership chair and have been involved in program planning for four years; including serving on the planning committee for the successful Region 4 Conference held April 2004 in Pittsburgh. I am proud that I helped launch the popular "Software Saturdays" training program, which has been adopted by other chapters.

Professional experience: I have been a technical communicator for twelve years. Like many of us, I started my career writing books and producing them in hardcopy format, but have since embraced online help and user assistance, Web design, single-sourcing, usability, e-learning, and knowledge management. I have experience writing for products in a variety of industries; including media sales, industrial automation, simulation, and pharmaceutical.

Speaking and writing: I have presented talks at several STC annual conferences, both during general sessions and on Leadership Day. I have also presented at local and regional STC events, including Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. Topics have included tools and technologies, user assistance design, single-sourcing, and wikis. I have been published in conference proceedings, on the web, and in STC's Tieline (the Society leaders' newsletter) and STC Pittsburgh's Blue Pencil.

Results-oriented: Accomplishing any goal — personal, professional, or as an STC leader — requires innovation, organizational skills, and focus. As a Director, I would use these traits to deliver results to our membership. I will work with the STC Board, as well as the members, to find new ways to tackle problems and drive initiatives that will make the Society a valuable resource for technical communicators.

Thank you, and for more information, please see <http://www.nickybleiel.org>.

Candidate article: Steven Jong, candidate for Director

Thanks for taking the time to read this article! I'd like to introduce myself and give you some of my background and ideas for the Society.

My Background

Professional: I've been a technical communicator for 30 years. Currently I'm a documentation project manager at

3Com. I've also delivered training in the US and Europe, and taught writing to law students.

Communities: I am a past president of the Boston chapter. I maintained services despite declining income; we won three chapter awards of Distinction in four years. I'm active in the Quality and Process Improvement SIG (where for ten years I was a columnist for DocQment, the SIG's award-winning newsletter) and the Management SIG.

Society: Since 2002 I've served the International Technical Publications Competition as a judge, lead judge, and Best of Show judge. I've presented papers at seven Annual Conferences and several regional conferences. I'm currently involved with ISO, as an author and reviewer, as they revise and consolidate the standards for software documentation.

Nonprofit leadership: I have experience founding and leading nonprofit organizations to long-term stability. I started a recreational volleyball league at Digital Equipment. The corporate subsidy was eventually eliminated, but we dealt with this transition so well that the league still operates 20 years later as an independent entity. Also, for two years I was the president of my community chorus, a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Society Issues

STC's biggest issue is member retention. Our profession is growing worldwide, yet membership has declined by a third over the last five years. Today less than 10% of practitioners worldwide are members. Increasingly, employers don't subsidize dues, and practitioners don't see the value of membership. We need to create an STC that more practitioners want to join and more employers want to subsidize. The challenge is to provide more value, especially to senior members, and publicize that value to both practitioners and employers. We also need an open flow of information and ideas between communities and the Society. Finally, we deserve a transparent accounting of how the Society spends our money, and why.

The New Director Role The current Director-Sponsors are being replaced by directors. While a D-S represented and supported chapters in one region, directors are expected to represent all communities and all members. The role requires a strategic view of Society goals and how to reach them. For example, a tactical concern is strengthening a community; a strategic concern is strengthening the Society. (The Leadership Community Resource is being established to support communities.)

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Summary

I believe what sets me apart from the other director candidates is my long experience and broad perspective. I'm a life-long technical communicator; I've been active in both chapters and SIGs, as well as at the Society level; I've traveled abroad to deliver training; and I've led non-profit organizations to long-term stability and fiscal health.

If you'd like more information, please go to <http://www.StevenJong.net>. In March, when you vote for directors, I hope you will cast a vote for me. Thanks in advance!

Candidate article: Bob Young, candidate for Director

I am running for a director position at the Society level. In March, you will have the choice of electing three new directors from the seven-candidate field.

I humbly ask for your support to carry on the proud tradition of past and present NEO STC members who have served in Society-level leadership roles. Bob Dianetti, Region 4 sponsor and NEO STC senior member, is entering his third, and final, year as a valued director and board member. I hope to have the opportunity to learn from him so I can continue his fine work when his term expires.

A director's duties include communicating the Society's objectives to geographic communities and virtual special interest groups (SIGs). This task will be equally important this year as STC builds on its Strategic Plan. Interestingly, many of the objectives of this plan — beefed up Public Relations and Marketing Committees, more training opportunities and corporate sponsorships, and recognition of member achievements — were successfully implemented in NEO STC's chapter last year. Therefore, I believe I could make an immediate impact in these areas.

Perhaps my biggest asset is getting others involved with the process. Participation is a key element for achieving any goal, whether at the local or Society level. I firmly believe that encouraging members to get involved instills pride and the willingness to help with tasks. It also breeds future leaders. In turn, a member develops skills and friendships to further strengthen the bonds of membership. As proof, just look at the success of our NEO STC membership campaign last year, (18% gain) which was due to the outstanding teamwork of the committees.

To further increase participation, I would like to assist in the development of templates that provide chapter leaders with clear instructions on how to implement committees and programs. A lot of the STC literature is outdated or does not provide innovative steps on starting/maintaining programs. A good example is the recognition program for saluting senior members and the work of volunteers. I learned of this program by talking with members of the Florida STC chapter at the annual Conference. NEO STC packaged its own guidelines and we incorporated the recognition program into the membership campaign.

By providing constructive guidelines, such as how to start up and run a successful Public Relations committee, it will undoubtedly contribute to more communities starting PR campaigns. This will allow STC to better explain its message, and, thus, reach out to more potential members.

Thank you for your support to STC and my bid for a director position.

If you have questions, please email me at Ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net.

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