

# Lines & Letters

## Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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### President's Column February/March 2008: Recognizing our volunteers

*By Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com)*

Continuing from last month's newsletter, I would like to recognize a few more people that have helped make NEO STC the exciting community it is.

**Beth Troy** came to our chapter from Indiana. She hadn't even attended one of our meetings, yet she volunteered to help set up our monthly programs. She told me that this was a great opportunity to get professional event experience that she wouldn't normally get in her regular work schedule. She impressed us by jumping in and organizing speakers and locations for half of our meetings.

**Shannon Siwicki** has helped us with the other half of our meetings. This was her first time coordinating events for NEO STC, and she has come through successfully. Our members gave rave reviews of the cookies she provided as desserts for a couple of our programs. She helped us make wise decisions and took care of many important details.

**Paul Holland** also came to us from another state — Texas — and jumped right in. Paul helped us with our October Crucial Communicator Conference Web site and Constant Contact e-mails. He continues to help us with web issues and he set up a Constant Contact account for NEO STC. It is fantastic to see the energy and talent we have in our chapter.

**Ginny Haas, Jean Church, and Amy Vogt** have put their hearts into our STC International Public Relations Competition entry. This entry will be for our PR efforts for the Crucial Communicator Conference in October. From mounds of meeting notes, files, exhibits and e-mails, this group has compiled quite an impressive entry, which will be entered into a competition in March. What a fun, creative group!

**Sarah Burke and Jeanette Evans** have also put their hearts into the Academic Scholarship Program that was launched February 4. This program is intended to encourage college students who are studying technical communication, and to increase awareness of STC. It really is a worthwhile program, and I believe that this will benefit our community greatly.

There are more of you out there that deserve recognition too. I hope to reach you in future columns. Thank you to all our volunteers who keep impressing me with your efforts.

### Monthly seminar: Crucial Conversations

On March 13, join NEO STC for a unique soft-skills presentation about the techniques that you can use to confront controversial issues and strengthen relationships in your workplace.

Whenever you aren't getting the results you are looking for, it's likely that you are stuck because you haven't had that crucial conversation with the right person at the right time in the right way. Whatever the issue - a problem with poor quality, slow time-to-market, declining customer satisfaction, or a strained relationship — if you cannot talk honestly, you can expect poor results. On the other hand, if you can put your crucial-conversation skills to work, you will have taken that first, important step to solving the problem.

Gary Miller, the President of the NEO ASTD, Training and Occupational Development Manager for the SGS Tool Company, and certified Crucial Conversations trainer, leads this exciting workshop. Gary's passion is training and education. He supports the quote: "If you choose a job that you love, you will never have to work another day in your life."

- ◆ Date: Thursday, March 13, 2008.
- ◆ Place: Hines Hill Conference Center, Peninsula, OH

For directions and maps, go to the web site for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association at [www.cvnpa.org](http://www.cvnpa.org), select the Contact Us menu, and select the PDF for directions to the administrative office.

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

### Laptop Software Saturday: FrameMaker

*By Anne Paczula (anne@paczula.com)*

A new Software Saturday has recently been scheduled for April 12. "Intermediate Unstructured FrameMaker 8.0" will be presented by Alan Houser, President of Group Wellesley, Inc. Alan is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker and Adobe Certified Instructor. A frequent guest of the NEO STC chapter, he is a highly experienced trainer and consultant and is past president of the Pittsburgh STC chapter.

Important note: In contrast to previous Software Saturdays, this training will not take place in a computer lab. Participants must provide their own laptops for this training. In addition, they will need to install

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FrameMaker 8.0 prior to the training. A free 30-day trial version is available at the Adobe Web site at <http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=framemaker&loc=en>. Although NEO STC prefers to host Software Saturdays in a computer lab, scheduling difficulties left little choice but to try this alternative.

The registration deadline is April 9, and you may register at <http://neostc.org/calendar/20080412.html>.

If you plan to attend and are able to arrive early, I could use volunteers to help set up the registration table and place signs throughout the building. Additional hands would be much appreciated. Please let me know when you register.

### January meeting review: Managing the information behind the content

*By Paulette Mitchell Henning  
([pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com](mailto:pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com))*

On January 10, 2008, at Jimmy Daddona's restaurant in Solon, Sacha Fedier from STAR Group in Switzerland presented how to manage product information life-cycle. Sacha discussed that far too often, content is managed from the perspective of a document or the consumer's view with little or no attention given to the management of the information that is used to create the content.

Sacha highlighted the differences between content management and information management and the inherent flaws found in the traditional document/content management paradigm. When implemented properly, an information management approach to content management reduces the complexity of the technical publication production and management process and provides an all-in-one system that allows the intellectual assets of an enterprise to be captured, reused and leveraged, and target-specific information to be published on-demand.

Companies that have adopted this strategy have reduced their publication costs by as much as 40%, increased their publication productivity by as much as 400%, decreased time to market by as much as 60%, and reduced translation costs by 75% to 95%.

### Upcoming events

- ◆ 3/6/08: Using DITA for Conditional Text at 1 pm ET. See [access.stc.org/imispublic/Core/Events/Events.aspx?](http://access.stc.org/imispublic/Core/Events/Events.aspx?)

- ◆ 3/11/08: Practical Uses for DITA - Part 1: Service Manual Application (SMA) at 1 pm EST. See <http://tinyurl.com/2jl3su>
- ◆ 3/12/08 to 4/14/08: Vote for your STC leadership.
- ◆ 3/13/08: Monthly seminar: Crucial Conversations.
- ◆ 3/14 to 3/15: Currents 2008 in Atlanta. See [www.stcatlanta.org/currents.htm](http://www.stcatlanta.org/currents.htm).
- ◆ 3/16 to 3/19: WritersJA Conference in Portland, Oregon. See [www.writersua.com/ohc/](http://www.writersua.com/ohc/).
- ◆ 3/20/08: Networking lunch: Joseph Beth Booksellers/Bronte Bistro, Legacy Village, Lyndhurst. RSVP to Jill McCauslin ([jmccauslin@radcomservices.com](mailto:jmccauslin@radcomservices.com)) .
- ◆ 3/26/08: How Quality at the Source Affects Global Customer Satisfaction, by Richard Sikes, from 1 to 2:30 PM EST. This free Webinar is offered to STC members only. Watch for registration details in mid-March.
- ◆ 3/26/08: Practical Uses for DITA - Part 2: Product Documentation and Training at 1 PM EST. See <http://tinyurl.com/2ocfvj>
- ◆ 3/28/08: Spectrum 2008, held by the Rochester (NY) chapter. See [www.stcrochester.org/](http://www.stcrochester.org/) for detail.
- ◆ 4/12/08 Laptop Software Saturday: Intermediate Unstructured FrameMaker 8.0, from 9:00 to 4:00. See [www.neostc.org/calendar/20080412.html](http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20080412.html) for details.
- ◆ 4/30/08: Promoting Your Business or Nonprofit By Using a Press Release. Register by March 30 and receive a \$26 discount. For more information or to register, contact Andrea C. Carrero by e-mail at [andrea@wordtex.com](mailto:andrea@wordtex.com) or by phone at 1-610-494-0316
- ◆ 6/1 to 6/4/08: Technical Communication Summit in Philadelphia. See [stc.org/55thConf/register/index.asp](http://stc.org/55thConf/register/index.asp)

### Want to meet other Technical Communicators?

NEO STC is looking for a volunteer to develop programs for unemployed technical communicators. Please contact Anne Paczula for more information about this volunteer opportunity.

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### Renew those memberships!

A new promotion is underway through STC. If our chapter reaches a certain percentage of renewing members by March 31, we have a chance of receiving four free registrations to STC's 55th Annual Conference in Philadelphia, PA, June 1-4! Please renew your membership before March 31 so we can have this opportunity. If we accomplish this goal and receive the free registrations, we will hold a drawing for the conference registrations, which would be available to all members who have renewed. This includes all of you who have already renewed (thank you!)

### Congratulations to several NEO STC members for international STC achievements!

#### New NEO STC Associate Fellow Jeanette Evans

I am delighted that my right-hand person on the newsletter, Jeanette Evans of Rockwell Automation will be receiving the honor of Associate Fellow this year! Associate Fellow is an honor bestowed by STC International. It recognizes long-term service to STC, as well as significant contributions to the profession of technical communication. We are extremely proud to have Jeanette as part of our community. She will be officially recognized at STC's 55th Annual Conference.

#### New Distinguished Chapter Service Award recipients: Angie Dianetti and Bob Young!

This is an International-level award presented to members who have contributed significantly to our chapter. They will be officially recognized at our May meeting. We wish to thank and extend hearty congratulations to both Angie and Bob.

#### Denise Kadilak published in *Intercom*!

Her article, "Implementing Structured FrameMaker," was published in the February 2008 issue of *Intercom*. Check it out at

<http://www.stc.org/intercom/Index.asp?SSOToken=iO4wZfRcpzm66wW%2bfqi0Hp%2bDan4%3d>

#### Bob Young and Stephanie Webster published in *Tieline*!

Their article, "How to put the PLAN in planning an STC Regional Conference," was published in the February 2008 issue of *Tieline* (The Society Leaders' Newsletter). Check it out at <http://www.stc-cdx.org/node/825>

**Keep up the good work!**

### NEO STC Scholarship Deadline April 1

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

Don't let the deadline fool you — NEO STC wants to hear from Ohio's brightest technical communication students. Our community is accepting applications for a \$1,000 scholarship until **April 1, 2008**. For details, see [neostc.org/scholarship](http://neostc.org/scholarship).

NEO STC is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to one deserving Ohio undergraduate, graduate, or community college student studying a technical or scientific communication-related field. This scholarship is designed to encourage local academic excellence, provide the profession with educated communicators, and promote greater awareness of and participation in STC. Applicants will be evaluated based on their potential to contribute to the profession.

A special thank you goes to Pressco Technology Inc. for donating some of the funds for this scholarship. Pressco engineers and manufactures high-speed intelligent vision inspection systems for the global food, beverage, and container industry.

NEO STC plans to notify the winner by **May 1** and will recognize the recipient at our May meeting. While the committee has a few scholarship judges lined up, any NEO STC community 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. Judging will take place in April. 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 are interested in judging, please contact Sarah Burke.

### Chautauqua offers practical solutions and insights for FrameMaker users

*By Julianne Forsythe (jkforsythe@ra.rockwell.com)*

In the last issue of this newsletter, Lori Neuman wrote an entertaining review of the recent Software Saturday where Bernard Aschwanden of BrightPath Solutions gave a crash course in DITA authoring and tools. In addition to the valuable learning, one of the perks of making this early Saturday morning trek to Tri-C was a chance to win a free registration to the third annual FrameMaker Chautauqua on February 14 and 15. I was one of the lucky winners. So, I packed my bags and headed to North Carolina (not Chautauqua!) for the conference.

The FrameMaker Chautauqua takes its name from the traveling shows of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that provided popular education through lectures and other activities, modeled after the Chautauqua Institution of western New York (definition adapted from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). Sponsored by Bright Path Solutions, the two-day "chautauqua" brought together approximately 70 software users, certified experts, and consultants to exchange ideas and discuss applications of Adobe FrameMaker. Attendees came from businesses of all sizes, as well as education and government/military institutions. The presentations by real-world users provided practical solutions and insights on diverse topics for both structured and unstructured FrameMaker users.

RJ Jacquez, Adobe Systems, Inc., was the opening keynote speaker. He gave an overview of the new Adobe Technical Communication Suite, which combines FrameMaker, RoboHelp, Captivate, and Acrobat 3D into an integrated package. By doing so, Adobe is aiming to address industry trends such as incorporating animation into help files and adding 3D images to documentation. The suite also provides a toolkit to support the changing role of today's technical communicator, who is often tasked with creating traditional documentation, plus other deliverables such as online help, e-learning, demos, and knowledgebases.

This year's conference featured three tracks: What's New and Best Practices, Tools and Case Studies, and Structured XML and DITA, which was my particular interest. As an attendee, you could choose from sessions to help with your current projects, or hear about ways to extend your capabilities in the future. Hot topics included multi-channel publishing, converting to structured FrameMaker, using Frame plug-ins, developing with the FrameMaker Development Kit (FDK), and creating demos and simulations with Captivate.

The sessions highlighted what's new in FrameMaker 8.0, including improvements to the DITA application, and gave me a greater appreciation of the power of the full Adobe Technical Communication Suite. I was also impressed by the Adobe representatives who were at the conference to hear feedback from people who rely on their tools everyday to do their jobs. I left the conference with a lot of food for thought, inspired by how a bit of inspiration and creativity can improve how we, as technical communicators, create, manage, and deliver content to meet the changing needs of our customers.

### **Book review: *Total Workday Control Using Microsoft® Outlook: The Eight Best Practices of Task and E-Mail Management***

*By Sharon Resar Sternburg (str\_cdp@yahoo.com)*

Book information: Author: Linenberger, Michael. Second printing 2006. Publisher: New Academy Publishers, San Ramon, California. ISBN-13:978-09749304-1-1 [289 pages, including index, \$21.95 USD (soft cover).]

In this easy to follow how-to book, efficiency guru Michael Linenberger shows readers how to turn Outlook e-mail into the key to an organized workday — sort of an electronic Franklin Planner on steroids.

In a reader-friendly fashion, Linenberger presents his eight best practices as a logical system; and in a step-by-step guide he teaches his readers how to create efficiencies using e-mail and task management in Microsoft Outlook. The format of the book is reminiscent of the Dummies books, especially in its use of examples. However, the presentation flows more smoothly and is less elementary, thus engaging the reader to finish the book from cover to cover.

While unlocking the power of e-mail and task management, *Total Workday Control* provides the added benefit of focusing on the workday through the lens of efficiency. The profit margin on this read is tips on task prioritization, project control and completion, as well as an enhanced knowledge of Outlook's functionality.

I was particularly impressed with the fact that the author took the time to address the different versions of Outlook, and how his system can be used with Blackberries, Palms and Smartphones. Technical Communicators will appreciate the fact that Linenberger assumes nothing — the teacher teaches well.

If you are someone who wants to add efficiency to your workflow simply by taking full advantage of Outlook, or someone who just wants to learn more about how powerful a tool Outlook can be, I recommend you add this book to your reading list.

### **APEX Awards go to local technical communications firm**

In July 2007, Radcom, a technical communication and instructional design consulting firm based in Hudson, Ohio, won two APEX Awards (Awards for Publication Excellence). APEX awards recognize excellence in many categories of printed and electronic publications. Some of the categories include marketing, training,

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documentation, newsletters, and websites. Radcom had two entries that won an Award of Excellence.

- ◆ Radcom Sales Packet in the Corporate Capability & Identity Materials category submitted by the Radcom Sales Team.
- ◆ Radcom Web site - 10th Anniversary in the Most Improved Web & Intranet Sites category submitted by Radcom, Inc. in collaboration with rkstudio6. Radcom also thanks Clayman Advertising for helping Radcom develop their new corporate logo, which prompted the redesign of the Web site.

More information on the APEX Awards can be found at [www.apexawards.com](http://www.apexawards.com).

In January, 2008, Radcom also was also selected as one of the Top Businesses by DiversityBusiness.com for distinguishing themselves as one of the top entrepreneurs in the country. Over 600,000 businesses in the United States had the opportunity to participate in the 8th annual contest. The awards are based on gross annual sales value and the business profile on file with DiversityBusiness.com. This award is the basis of Diversity Business.com's annual Top Business List which is seen by over 15 million people and is used by major corporations and large buying organizations for finding new business partners.

### **"On the whole, I'd rather be in Philadelphia."**

*By Al Brown, Senior Member*

We hope you take W.C. Fields' quote to heart and join us here for the Technical Communication Summit June 1-4. You know what to expect at the Summit itself: News about the latest developments and techniques in our field and the chance to get together with colleagues and friends, old and new. But there are plenty of surprises and unexpected pleasures waiting for you in the City of Brotherly Love.

Just a few examples — you can:

- ◆ Visit the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where it all began. Or Franklin's Court to see a working replica of Ben Franklin's printing press and find out how things were done before laser printers.
- ◆ Wander out Ben Franklin Parkway to see the Museum of Natural History, the original dinosaur museum; climb aboard a full-size Baldwin locomotive at the Franklin Institute (almost everything here was founded by or named after Old

Ben); or check out the world's largest collection of work by Dadaist master Marcel Duchamp at the Art Museum.

- ◆ Hop on the SEPTA subway to take in a Philadelphia Phillies (baseball) home game at Citizens Bank Park. (Yep, they are in town May 30th through June 5th.)
- ◆ Head down the Avenue of the Arts for a musical, theatrical, or dance performance by one of our world-class companies.
- ◆ If you really want to go hard-core Philly, try the Mummer's Museum (2nd Street at Washington Avenue).

In short, there are lots of things to see, do, and eat (not just pretzels and cheese steaks) in William Penn's "Greene Country Towne." Stop by the STC-Philly Metro Chapter's Hospitality Booth and say hello. We will be glad to suggest something exciting that fits your particular interests.

See you there!

### **Member profile: Sherri Henkin**

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

Sherri Henkin began her relationship with STC in 2002 with LA STC. She joined STC to stay current with technical writer news, employment, and educational opportunities. As she puts it, the "actual driver to join was in a program in LA STC with Raymond Urgo (P&P) who guided us on defining our long-term and short-term goals. One of mine was to join STC by a certain date — and I did. I am now a Senior Member."

Having moved to Cleveland in September, 2004, and transferred membership, Sherri feels that NEO STC helped her orient to Cleveland and employment in the area. She has been involved in the NEO STC community first on the Employment Committee (2004-2006) which she says is a great way to get to know the employment market, Crucial Communicator Conference Committee (2006-2007), and currently on the Newsletter Committee. Sherri's employer AmTrust was one of the donors for give-aways for the Crucial Communicator conference in Cleveland.

For the 2008 STC Technical Summit (June, 2008), Sherri will be a presenter as part of the Policies & Procedures SIG Progression Session. The Progression Session format is an educational session that has different speakers presenting on various topics simultaneously.

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Speakers each host a table with a presentation on a topic from their own area of practice.

Sherri's topic is "Moving from Documentation Specialist to Process Improvement Analyst — or — When Opportunity Knocks, Open the Door." As Sherri describes, the presentation is based on her career journey from documentation specialist to process improvement analyst/business analyst, including the role STC has played in this process. The presentation is a work in progress; highlights are outline the skills for each role, provide pointers on growing one's skills, and discuss how the business analyst option is one method to grow one's technical communicating skills.

Holding a BA in political science from Boston University, Sherri also has a Master's in Public Administration at NYU. Her work background includes everything from office manager to business owner (where Sherri learned graphics and wrote advertising and marketing copy) to administrative assistant in the late 90's at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. "It was there that I learned to write procedures, job descriptions, and informal employee communications. I enjoyed those parts of the work, so it was that job that jump-started me into P&P writer. AmTrust Bank — in Cleveland — is a first in two ways: in a bank and documentation specialist." Currently, Sherri is a Senior Process Improvement Analyst in Mortgage Banking.

Now living in Cleveland Heights, Sherri points out that what motivated her to move from LA to Cleveland was marriage to a Clevelander. She still has many professional and personal ties to LA, where she had lived for 19 years. Sherri's hobbies include writing creative non-fiction (several pieces have been published), reading, swimming, and traveling. Her volunteer work includes being a speaker for small community groups.

### Member profile: Anne Paczula

By Jeanette Evans ([jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net))

Anne Paczula joined NEO STC in early 2007. She had no prior involvement with STC before moving to the Cleveland area in 2005 and working for RADCom. As Anne puts it, "I learned that my employer was a very strong supporter of NEO STC. In fact, I got my job with RADCom thanks to the job listing I found on the NEO STC Web site!"

Before moving to Cleveland, Anne lived in the Washington, DC area and worked as an instructional designer for various consulting firms that did federal contract work. "I had the opportunity to develop user

materials and computer-based and classroom-based training for operators of mechanical demining equipment in countries plagued with landmines, first responders to hazardous materials incidents, air traffic controllers, and government budget personnel."

While living in the Washington metro area, Anne volunteered for the local chapter of the American Society for Training and Development and was also a member of the International Society for Performance Improvement.

As an undergrad, Anne studied French and psychology. Then, after living in France for two years, Anne earned a masters degree in international affairs. While studying and working, "I had the opportunity to travel to different parts of the world including western Europe, Rwanda, Jordan, New Zealand, Cambodia, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. I very much enjoyed the international travel and am glad I was able to visit these diverse places before starting a family."

Anne lives with her husband and 2-year-old son in Fairlawn, outside Akron. An avid reader, Anne highly recommends *Consumption* by Kevin Patterson, a fictional work based on the changes that the Inuit people of Canada have experienced in recent decades.

### Interesting articles from other community newsletters

**WritersUA Survey: User Assistance Salary Survey Results Available** The results of the [2008 WritersUA Salary Survey](#) are now available. The survey provides a variety of compensation figures — all specific to the user assistance profession.

### STC election information

STC's 2008 election will open in early March. Personal messages 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.

Don't forget to vote! Last year, only 14.3% of STC's members voted. Make your voice heard!

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### Why I Seek Your Vote: Linda King, STC Director-at-Large candidate

By Linda King ([linda.king@hp.com](mailto:linda.king@hp.com))



The past few years have been a time of significant change and challenge for our industry and for STC. At the Society level, the STC Board of Directors is driving changes that will shape our

organization and our profession in the coming years. I am a staunch advocate for STC and believe passionately in the unique value that skilled technical communicators can provide. Active membership in STC has been a significant factor in my own professional success, so I want to help ensure its continuing value for technical communicators worldwide.

Careful strategic planning, professional management, and effective delegation are critical to ensure the health and growth of STC. Cost-effective avenues for continued training and skill building are essential for advancement in our careers. Initiatives to raise the visibility and stature of our profession are needed to increase employers' perceived value of technical communicators. At the same time, STC members need more and clearer communication from the Board and administrative staff to understand issues, the basis of decisions and positive steps being taken, and the expanded information and services becoming available to members.

As a 30-year technical communicator, career-long member of STC, and an STC community leader, I have followed developments at the Society level with keen interest. While serving as STC Houston president this year, I've had new opportunities to learn what is happening at the Society level and have become directly involved whenever possible. I am an LCR volunteer and a member of the STC Finance Task Force, Voice of the Communities committee, and 2007 Academic-Industry Leaders Summit. I am also a volunteer member of the proposed initiative to develop a technical communication body of knowledge. I regularly attend STC conferences, where I have led springboard sessions and made presentations. I co-hosted international judging in Houston, judged internationally in 2006, and hope to be an international judge again this year. I have also served effectively on boards of other non-profit organizations.

I am running for a position on the STC Board of Directors because I want to contribute directly to sound decision-making for the benefit of the entire organization and to expand and improve communication from the Society to our members. As an STC Director I will bring

dedication, valuable listening, analytical, negotiation, and mediation skills and an unusual breadth of experience that enables me to conscientiously represent all communities in our organization: I have lived abroad; worked in a variety of technical industries for companies large and small; contributed as a lone writer, team member, and manager; and been a member of both very small and very large STC communities.

I hope you will allow me to serve you at the Society level by casting your vote for me in the STC election occurring March 12 through noon on April 14, 2008.

### STC Leadership Challenge: Reaching Out and Reaching In: Lisa Pappas, Candidate for Director-at-Large

By Lisa Pappas ([lisa.pappas@sas.com](mailto:lisa.pappas@sas.com)), Senior Member  
— Associate Fellow — Carolina Chapter



As a member of STC and the Carolina Chapter for nearly twenty years, I have witnessed dramatic change in our profession. While technical communicators have always worn many hats, now we seem to have exchanged classic fedoras for propeller beanies. As a candidate for

the Director-at-Large position, I want to share with you my vision of STC's leadership challenge.

In response to globalization, out-sourcing, and ever-increasing rate of technology change, our profession has been diversifying. We still share attributes, but opportunities for specialization have multiplied. The effect on STC has been, I fear, to disperse group identity and shared mission. In the next few years, to evolve and thrive, I believe that Society leadership must ask its membership both to reach out and in.

We talk of "telling our powerful story," but to whom? We need to raise awareness of our organization, our profession, and the value both provide. One way to do so is to reach out to related organizations. Many STC members also belong to other professional organizations, such as Usability Professionals Association (UPA) and American Society for Training & Development (ASTD). I propose that joint members engage in cross-organization publications. For example, in April 2007, Karen Mardahl, my co-manager in the AccessAbility SIG, and I submitted an article for the UPA newsletter, The Voice (see "Seeking an Accessible and Usable Survey Tool" available:

[http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/upa\\_publications/upa\\_voice/volumes/2007/april/access.html](http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/upa_publications/upa_voice/volumes/2007/april/access.html)). Efforts such

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as this can help other professionals learn about our society and recognize what we offer.

We also need to raise awareness of our value to employers of technical communicators, including organizations that contract with technical communication consultants. One way is by recognizing members' contributions and alerting employers to those. I would also like to see the Society sponsor research to provide quantitative evidence of added value. For example, could we demonstrate that technical publications written and edited with translation in mind were in fact more efficient and less costly to translate?

A third way that we should reach out is through volunteerism. Our technical communication skills can be invaluable to non-profits who might not otherwise have those skills. For instance, we could encourage Society members to contribute to standards organizations. For some months now, I have participated in the W3C Protocols and Formats (PF) and Education and Outreach (EO) working groups. In particular, I am an editor on the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) suite (see WAI-ARIA Introduction, available: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/aria>). Through that effort, I have introduced others to Society for Technical Communication and demonstrated the value a technical communicator can contribute.

In addition to reaching out, however, I believe very strongly that the STC leadership must reach in. Our membership is diverse and for the Society to remain relevant and resilient, we must evolve to meet those disparate needs. One way diversity is served is through the virtual communities, our SIGs. We need to do a better job of supporting these virtual communities in order to retain and grow membership and to strengthen our group identity.

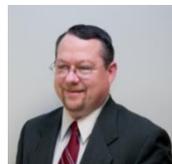
Drawing on my extensive experience as a technical communicator, I want to contribute actively to our Society's evolution. I ask for your vote in March. To learn more about me:

- ◆ For insight to my background and motivations for running, see <http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/candBio01.asp?candID=11>.
- ◆ In this interview, learn what led me to a career in technical communication, and what prompted some interesting turns: <http://stc-carolina.org/newsletter/tiki->

[index.php?page=Reinventing+a+Career%3A+An+Interview+with+Lisa+Pappas](http://www.stc.org/index.php?page=Reinventing+a+Career%3A+An+Interview+with+Lisa+Pappas).

### Looking to the Future: Garret Romaine, Candidate, STC Board of Directors

*By Garret Romaine*



My credentials, experience, and passion for our profession make me an excellent choice as an at-large director on the STC board. This short article reviews my background, explains some of the challenges as I see them, and

explains my goals for our future.

I hope your career as a technical communicator is rewarding, whatever your expertise. Most of us make a good living, and salaries are holding up. Having thrived during the boom in the technical writing field of the late 1990s, we have expanded our expert skills and abilities. Our toolset is incredibly robust, and those of us in the technology world have core capabilities that rival software engineers. We have come a long way as a profession, and part of that is thanks to the efforts of STC members.

#### Significant Issues Ahead

At the same time, though, our professional organization faces serious issues. There is a continuing challenge to deliver value to individuals. We need creative solutions if we are to expand the organization. The economy is slowing, and our members will need the most current skills and abilities in order to compete.

We face this opportunity from the vantage of a Society that has many moving parts. We are more than just cutting-edge XML experts in high demand; we are also the academics who keep classes relevant and send forth graduates of interest to hiring managers. We are writers in the public sector, facing tight deadlines with dwindling resources. We are the editors who mark up text and make others look good in any media. We are the illustrators and designers who marry visuals to words. We are the managers who send employees to annual conferences as wise investments. And-finally-we are the members who show up at local meetings or log on to virtual communities and participate. Our needs are different, but our goals are the same: we want the time we spend as volunteers to directly benefit our careers.

We all rely on STC for expanded networking opportunities, cutting-edge classes, lectures, and workshops, and enhanced professional advocacy. Through STC, we have the opportunity to share ideas,

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learn new tools, and make ourselves more productive and efficient. New and prospective members ask me all the time, and sometimes in just these words: "What's in it for me?" It takes longer and longer to answer that question, because there are so many different STC communities to join.

### Relevant Experience

My experience as an educator, active STC volunteer, and experienced technical communicator is relevant to this election. I have taught technical writing and editing at the university level for the past 12 years. My goal has been to deliver information that bolsters the careers of neophyte undergraduates as well as seasoned communicators in graduate studies. I have taken advantage of STC volunteer opportunities as chapter president, mentor, employment manager, competition manager, and workshop organizer. I have presented at conferences, written for Tieline, Intercom, and Technical Communication, and served as a judge for local and international competitions. In 2005, my colleagues both honored and humbled me as an Associate Fellow, and since then I have attended board meetings, worked on the Fresh Eyes team, and served on a committee. I am ready to step up to the job of director.

While teaching and volunteering, I have worked steadily as a senior writer, lone writer, author, contractor, consultant, and manager. My STC experience has been a key talking point for me, and I am sure it has on occasion led directly from the interview to the job offer.

### Helping Your Career

I hope you can say that STC has made a positive difference in your career. Knowing STC members, I would expect to hear from you if that has not been the case. High expectations are good; none of us should be complacent.

I thus ask for your vote — and I also ask that each of you help move our profession forward. We are all in this pursuit together.

### **Mike Hughes, Candidate for Second VP**

*By Mike Hughes (mikehughes@mindspring.com)*



In this article I tell you a little about me and my vision for our profession.

#### Who am I?

I am a Society Fellow, currently on the editorial advisory board for Technical Communication and the Ken Rainey Excellence in Research award committee. I chaired the subcommittee on Research at the STC Academic-Industry Leaders Summit in 2007, and I was organizer and leader for the Sharing Corporate Knowledge Institute at the Summit Conference in 2007. I am also currently filling an interim director position on the board. In my day job, I am a user assistance architect for IBM. I have a master's degree in Technical Communication and a PhD in Instructional Technology, and I am a Certified Performance Technologist through the International Society for Performance Improvement.

#### Who are we?

Technical communication is a diversified profession, one that supports multiple career paths and roles. Whether we call ourselves technical writers, information developers, instructional designers, content managers, or whatever, we improve the user technology experience by providing information that eases and enhances that experience.

When our profession was initially emerging, we stated our value in terms of the correctness and completeness of our documents and the clarity of the language in those documents. Then, as we matured, we started defining our value in terms of how we benefited our end users. And now we are taking our value proposition to yet a higher level: how we support the missions and objectives of the organizations that employ us. This means that our value can't stop at the quality of the communications we produce; it must extend to the effectiveness of the actions they enable, and beyond that, to how the improved effectiveness of our users benefits our sponsors. The list is long, but these are just a few:

- ◆ Increased customer adoption (because new products and services are easier to install and use)
- ◆ Reduced support costs (because product owners can maintain their own products better)
- ◆ Lower medical costs (due to better patient compliance with medicines and procedures)

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- ◆ Improved product quality and reduced production costs (because workers can comply with best practices that are easily understood)
- ◆ Increased customer loyalty (because the web sites and other communication channels we create build communities of common value and interests)

### What should STC be?

If those are some of the things we are about, what should the role of STC be?

- ◆ Provide professional development programs in the core body of knowledge that defines us as a profession
- ◆ Show leadership and provide education in the emerging tools and technologies that direct our future as a profession
- ◆ Serve as our advocate in government and industry to articulate our contributions and needs as a profession

We have invested a lot of our Society energy and resources over the last several years in improving the structure and governance of STC. I think we can quit reinventing ourselves now and put our new structure to work. We need to shift our focus outward again and ensure that as members we are getting full value for our dues. My main focus as an officer will be the following:

- ◆ Maintain a balanced budget that funds the programs that add the most value for members
- ◆ Ensure that our publications and conferences provide the content that helps members do their jobs
- ◆ Create a collaboration where members, vendors, employers, and academic communities help technical communicators keep up with the ever-changing demands for tools and technology knowledge
- ◆ Support a certification program through STC that helps our sponsors trust and understand our value and that creates sustainable careers for technical communicators

Please visit my Web site at <http://www.mindspring.com/~mikehughes/index.htm> to get more information on my background or read some of my published papers. Go to my blog at <http://user-assistance.blogspot.com> and click the STC label to read more about my positions and thoughts on specific topics related to my candidacy.

### **Defining a TC Body of Knowledge: Hillary Hart, Candidate, Director-at-Large**

*By Hillary Hart, STC Fellow Austin; Academic; and Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication Communities*

As a candidate for director-at-large, I believe that one of the most important initiatives STC can undertake is to define a Body of Knowledge (BoK) for the technical-communication profession. In my role as co-chair of the STC BoK committee, I am dedicated to bringing our profession into the 21st century by actually defining it, in all its variability. Why is this effort necessary?

First of all, a profession cannot be recognized as a profession until it is defined as such. Engineers, for instance, have a body of knowledge they must master before they can practice as engineers, whether structural, electrical, or mechanical. Although technical communicators may not yet want such a highly codified and subdivided set of skills and practices, we do need an authoritative place to find answers to that eternal question: "What do technical communicators do, anyway?" New practitioners need to see their professional development pathways spelled out, along with concomitant educational/training opportunities. Veteran practitioners need a means for assessing their progress and determining what additional training they may need. Or they may simply need quick access to guidelines for new techniques and technologies (structured authoring, content management, etc). And executives, who may never have heard of technical communication, need a place to find out what it is that TCers can do for their company. That place is the Web-based set of definitions, domains, and documents that will bring together a TC BoK.

Secondly, many recent studies of technical communicators show that writing is just a part (and sometimes a small part) of what successful technical communicators actually do. In my co-authored survey (see *Technical Communication*, November 2006), only 8 out of the 75 responses listed "writer" as a unique identifier. Our data show that communicators seem to be spending about the same amount of time on communication processes as they are on creating end-user documents or products. If we want to maximize our value to the business functions of corporations and agencies, we need a body of knowledge that will make that value clear to employers.

The BoK effort is currently being led by a team of experienced industry and academic STC members. This

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spring, you will be invited to look at the initial outline of a hierarchy of domains, skills, and knowledge levels. This BoK is yours to develop; the start-up team is simply trying to put together a straw site to start the collaborative effort. Some of us are usability experts; some of us manage content; some of us train and teach other TCers. What are the essential skills, concepts, and knowledge bases that unite us? When we can answer that big question, we will be a true profession.

Please look for news of the BoK project, and plan to attend the 2008 STC Summit in Philadelphia to hear about progress and to participate in developing a meaningful TC Body of Knowledge.

I ask for your vote so that this important BoK project stays on track for the next three years!

### **Pushing Buttons: Member Value & Service: Suzanne Guess, Candidate, Director-at-Large**

*By Suzanne Guess*



In December, I participated in an STC Board Director Orientation phone call after being nominated as a candidate for Director at Large. The candidates learned about face-to-face meetings,

conference calls, and the time commitment we can expect (which is, incidentally, whatever you think it might be multiplied by three) if elected. As we talked about the campaign guidelines and how to craft our own individual messages, I started thinking about what about STC governance was important to me. What pushes my buttons is clear: value and service to our members.

Service delivery and member value are hot buttons with others, too. Since the beginning of the year, I have heard and read a lot of discussion about whether or not to renew membership. Many feel that they are not getting the value for the dues paid. As with many things in life, we often get out of something exactly what we put in. Do you go to meetings? Do you attend web seminars? Do you belong to listservs? If not, is it because you don't feel like your professional needs are being met? Have you told your chapter, SIG and Board leaders what you'd like to see? You have a say.

That's only part of the equation, though. STC's operations have not always reflected sound business practices. Even though many may disagree, STC is a business and it cannot survive if we continue to do things "like we've always done it." That's clear given declining membership, reduced revenue, and the resulting difficulties delivering service and providing

member value in our global workplace. In order to improve service and value, we need to better align our business model with our objectives. This means we will have to prioritize and spend strategically to get the most value and impact for our dollars.

As a business owner, I have learned how to prioritize, strategize, spend, and deliver service and value. This involves hard, unpopular choices that are often required for stability and for growth. I used these same skills during my term as president of STC-Central Iowa. During those two years, our community accomplished rechartering, revising our by-laws, implementing a strategic plan (where none existed before), implementing a new Web site using open source technology, and cutting unnecessary expenses to establish a scholarship program. I am prepared to roll up my sleeves, look at what STC does, ask if should we stop doing it, continuing doing it, or do something else.

I am running for Director at Large because I believe in the value of membership, the value of networking, and the value of professional development. I am qualified for Director at Large because I have STC experience, industry experience, leadership experience, business experience, academic experience, and from my point of view, one of the most important prerequisites: a sense of humor to keep it all in perspective. One of your STC member benefits is a vote in our annual election. I ask that you use it and elect me as Director at Large.

### **My Vision: STC as the Global Leader for Technical Communicators. Rich Maggiani, Director-at-Large candidate**

*By Rich Maggiani (rich.maggiani@solari.net), STC Fellow and Director-at-Large candidate*



STC needs Board members who are experienced in the field, who understand our profession and the contribution we make to the world, who recognize the role that STC plays in representing and promoting our profession, who understand the services STC must provide for our membership, and how STC must be the global leader for us. This is my vision for STC and one that I will arduously pursue as your Director-at-Large.

I care deeply about STC. I have been an STC member for more than 12 years. I have held a volunteer position in every one of those years, beginning with being a co-founder of the Vermont chapter to my current role of leader of the Public Relations committee (which has 18 international members). Last month, I was honored to

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become an STC Fellow in recognition of my work as a marketing and technical communicator.

My profession is technical communication. I have been practicing that profession for well over 20 years. In my work, I constantly focus on promoting technical communication as a profession, and technical communicators as professionals who create unending value.

Experienced with STC Board matters. I have been doing STC Board-related work for over three years now. Three consecutive Board Presidents have appointed me one year as Assistant to the President for Competitions and two years as Public Relations leader (my current position) where my committee has been breaking new ground in researching and promoting technical communication and technical communicators around the world.

Experienced as a Board Director. I am experienced with Boards of Directors. I have been Board President for the Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR) after sitting on that Board for four years. VBSR is a state-wide business organization. As Board President, I directed a transition from a tactical to a strategic Board. I have also been Board President for two years for a food cooperative in New York after having sat on that Board the two previous years.

Business experience. For over sixteen years, I owned and operated a full-service marketing and technical communication agency. Currently, I am running Solari Communication, a company dedicated to applying technical communication to help clients increase sales and profitability. As a business owner, I understand how STC as an organization must operate to be successful, I understand the inner workings of technical communication and how to successfully market and promote our profession.

Educational experience. I currently teach technical communication to undergraduate students at Champlain College in Vermont. Previously, I taught graduate students at Saint Michael's College business writing and communication skills. I am certified to teach secondary education through adult learners. I have also presented numerous sessions on communication topics to STC local, regional, and international conferences as well as other organizational conferences.

A humble testimonial. "The Society needs dedicated members like Rich representing it." — -Dr Thomas Barker, STC Fellow and Director of Technical Communication at Texas Tech University.

### **Providing value: STC takes the lead. Lawrence D. "Larry" Kunz, STC second vice-president candidate**

*By Larry Kunz (lk81924@gmail.com), STC Fellow*

Are you getting value for your investment in STC? Many members, as they renew their memberships for 2008, are asking what value they receive in return for the dues they pay.

I'm pretty well sold on the value of STC. Just last year I got a new job after spotting the opening on my chapter's employment page. During the interview process, I benefited from the experience I've gained through STC and the contacts I've made in STC.

But that's just one person's experience. STC must offer real value, consistently and across the board, to members and prospective members. STC will need to offer even more value to remain competitive in the next few years.

(Yes, I said "STC" and "remain competitive" in the same sentence. STC is a business, and it confronts significant issues and stiff competition in today's marketplace. It's nice to think that STC is more than just a business and that it will always be here. But the reality is that, to remain viable in the short term, STC must do better at proving its value.)

Taking a longer view, however, STC has an opportunity to provide value in ways that go far beyond what is possible today. STC is uniquely positioned to take the lead in defining the profession of technical communication. When we do that, we'll provide significant and enduring value for our members, for practitioners who haven't yet become members, for the people who employ us, and even for society in general.

#### Defining the Profession

Ever since I joined STC 25 years ago, we've been saying that technical communication is a profession. But we are an immature profession, and as a result our work often isn't taken seriously by the people who employ us and the people who buy our products.

To grow into a mature profession, we need at least two things:

- ◆ An agreed-on code of ethics. STC has its own ethical code, but it doesn't represent the consensus of the entire profession, and it is not enforceable.

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- ♦ A unique body of knowledge, and the expectation that each practitioner has mastered that body of knowledge.

The technical communication profession is desperate for leadership — desperate for a set of ethical values, an agreed-on body of knowledge, and perhaps a credentialing system.

Today, all of the pieces are in place for us to develop technical communication into a mature profession. We have the will, we have the know-how, and we have an organization — STC — with the stature, the broad reach, and the resources to lead the way. STC can assemble the building blocks for our profession, it can forge consensus, and it can gain buy-in among the significant stakeholders in the worldwide community of technical communicators.

### What Is STC Doing?

As a member of the STC board of directors, I am leading the effort to formulate a strategic plan, or roadmap, that positions STC as the leader in defining the profession — especially by establishing a body of knowledge and promoting ethical standards. (We've already begun working on the body of knowledge.)

You might have heard the phrase "telling our powerful story." The strategic plan focuses on raising the profile of all technical communicators — and emphasizing the value we provide to our employers and to the world in general — by marketing our people and the work we do.

The strategic plan also emphasizes establishing and expanding partnerships. By teaming with other organizations, STC will strengthen its leadership role in the profession and position itself to provide even more value to its members.

STC doesn't need to be fixed. It needs to be modernized. The board of directors, along with the executive director and her staff, understand this. We know that STC must keep providing value over the short term while setting the stage for long-term value by defining the profession. We are implementing plans to keep the business of STC strong by retaining and attracting members and by constantly reviewing its suite of programs and services to ensure that they still make sense.

I believe that we can find a way to develop technical communication as a profession and continue delivering real value to our members — all without losing the social and interpersonal aspects that have made STC so special to so many people over our history.

### What It Means to You

Defining the profession will benefit every technical communicator because it will make us more valuable to the people who sign our paychecks. Instead of simply saying, "I need some manuals and online helps" (which reduces technical communication to a commodity, not a profession), our employers will realize that they need professional people who contribute value to the organization by increasing customer satisfaction and making products easier to use — thus easier to sell.

We will prove our value on a much wider stage as well. By providing information that makes technology work for the people who use it, we contribute real value to society as a whole.

I am running for second vice-president because nobody is better acquainted with the issues that STC will have to confront as leads the profession to where we want it to go. I can foster a climate of creativity and cooperation in which we'll plot a course for the Society and the profession. STC needs leaders who can build consensus and explain decisions to the membership at large. I hope you will entrust me with your vote.

The next few years will be exciting. Along with my membership dues, I have chosen to invest my time and energy in being a part of this effort. I hope you will agree that STC's future, and the value it will bring to you, is worth investing in as well.

Lawrence D. "Larry" Kunz is a member of the Society's board of directors and immediate past president of the Carolina chapter. He is employed as a Senior Technical Writer at Systems Documentation, Inc., in Durham, NC, where he manages a large software documentation project.

To learn more about Larry, check out [lk81924.googlepages.com/home](http://lk81924.googlepages.com/home).

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### Chapter Reminders

#### 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.]

If you are looking for a position, remember to check the NEO STC job site. I have gotten a number of calls recently looking for writers, and I always point them to our jobs site at [www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php](http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php)! Remember to update your resumes.

Employers: Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience! See [neostc.org/jobs/](http://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](http://www.neostc.org/official/listserv.htm)

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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](mailto:newsletter@neostc.org).

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