

# Lines & Letters

## Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



February/March 2010 • Volume 26 Issue 6

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### NEO STC April Social at Cleveland Art Museum

#### *And dinner at L'Albatros Restaurant*

Please join fellow NEO STC members for an afternoon at the Cleveland Art Museum, followed by an early dinner at L'Albatros restaurant. Family members and friends are welcome!

Exhibit at the Art Museum: Art of the American Indians: The Thaw Collection in the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation Exhibition Hall. This exhibition of about 145 objects from the Thaw collection of the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York, will re-introduce museum visitors to American Indian art in a broad survey that samples Native artistic accomplishment before and after the arrival of Europeans.

- ◆ Date: Saturday, April 17, 2010, 2 pm.
- ◆ Location: The Cleveland Museum of Art is in University Circle at 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106-1797. Directions to the Art Museum
- ◆ Time: Meet at the Art Museum Lobby at 2:00 pm.

If you would like to spend more time at the museum, feel free to arrive early. The Cleveland Art Museum's hours are from 10:00 am. to 5:00 pm.

Dinner at L'Albatros - L'Albatros is within walking distance of the Art Museum at 11401 Bellflower Road. There is no NEO STC fee for this event except for the cost of your dinner and drinks at L'Albatros. There is no charge to visit the Cleveland Art Museum, but there is a fee for parking.

RSVP: Contact Amy Vogt by 4/15/10. Please indicate whether you will attend both the Art Museum and dinner when you RSVP. Note that there is a limited space for dinner reservations.

Please include your cell phone number when you register.

Hope to see you there!

### Upcoming events

#### NEO STC events

Unless otherwise noted, see NEO STC calendar for detail about an event.

- ◆ 4/15/10: Networking lunch. The Boneyard, 24940 Sperry Rd., Westlake, 440-808-8300.

- ◆ 4/17/10: Social event. Afternoon trip to the art museum and dinner.
- ◆ 5/19/10: Networking lunch. Abuelo's Mexican Food Embassy, 26100 Harvard Rd., Warrensville Hts., 216-360-9030.

#### Other events of interest

- ◆ 4/6/10: Improving Software Usability with Embedded User Assistance webinar presented by Nicky Bleiel.  
<http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>. Radcom is sponsoring this seminar locally; contact [nschafer@radcomservices.com](mailto:nschafer@radcomservices.com) for more information.
- ◆ 4/13/10: The Doc Side of Agile webinar presented by Deb Lockwood.  
<http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp> Radcom is sponsoring this seminar locally; contact [nschafer@radcomservices.com](mailto:nschafer@radcomservices.com) for more information.
- ◆ 4/21/10: SWO STC: "Beyond freelancing: Organizing a real technical communications business" at Indiana Wesleyan, Dayton, OH. See <http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/>.
- ◆ 4/24/10 (RSVP by 4/16): Intermediate Adobe RoboHelp by Radcom, Inc.  
<http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 4/28/10 (RSVP by 4/21): Facilitation Skills by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 4/30 — 5/2/10: Igniting possibilities: A word lover's retreat. Cleveland Novelist Les Roberts will be the writer-in-residence. Contact Claudia Taller at [ctallerwrites@wowway.com](mailto:ctallerwrites@wowway.com) or 440-554-6406 for information on room availability and cost.
- ◆ 5/2 — 5/5/10: Technical Communication Summit 2010 in Dallas, Texas.
- ◆ 5/4/10 (RSVP by 4/27): PowerPoint for online learning by Radcom, Inc.  
<http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 5/15/10 (RSVP by 5/7): Online learning by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 5/19/10: SWO STC: "Workplace ethics" at Indiana Wesleyan, West Chester, OH. See <http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/>.

### **Congratulations to NEO STC membership renewal winners!**

The NEO STC board would like to congratulate the grand prize winner of the NEO STC membership-renewal contest.

**Jennifer Loudiana** won Thursday night's grand-prize drawing, taking home a free registration to this year's International STC Conference (valued at \$845). She was contacted Friday morning and has accepted the prize.

**Lynn Nickels** won our second place prize — passes to two free NEO STC meetings (valued at \$40).

Thank you all for your continued commitment to the NEO STC.

### **"Technical Writer" officially a distinct profession, according to US Government!**

The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its newest Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) in December and, "Technical Writer" has its own chapter for the very first time.

"This is a breakthrough achievement for STC and for the profession of technical communication," said STC President Cynthia C. Currie. "It is the result of a long-standing relationship with economist Richard O'Sullivan and our vision that technical writers (and all technical communicators) be recognized as the special breed of communicator they are."

O'Sullivan, principal of Change Management Solutions, is an association economist who has been advising BLS for 25 years and assisted STC in this endeavor. "To go from where we were in late 2006 when STC approached OMB to having a new category of technical writer in 2010 is amazing," said O'Sullivan. "Usually, putting through changes like this can take up to a decade. But our argument was compelling and the differences STC focused on were clearly apparent and hard for OMB to argue against. We had our proof in the marketplace."

STC responded to a request from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to update the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOCs), the classification system used by all US and state government agencies when collecting and publishing information on employment, wages, and salaries. The Occupational Outlook Handbook is one of the Department of Labor's most popular programs and an essential tool for the human resource management profession. The reference

details the latest changes in the 820 different occupations tracked by the BLS each year.

"Having the US Bureau of Labor Statistics recognize technical writers as a profession distinct from all other writing professions independently confirms STC's claim that not all writers can do technical writing," explained STC Immediate Past President Mark Clifford, who was STC President at the time of the initial announcement. "We're very pleased to have this distinction made in an important reference tool that is so well respected by the human resource community."

The OOH presents some good news in its inaugural Technical Writer chapter as well. It states that technical writers held close to 50,000 jobs in 2008, and more importantly, employment is expected to grow 18 percent — "faster than average," and nearly twice the rate projected for the nation's workforce in total — from 2008 to 2018. The chapter also calculates a median salary of \$61,620 as of May 2008, with further breakdowns for specific industries. (For a comparison, "Writers and Authors" had a median salary of \$53,070 at the same time, while "Editors" checked in at \$49,990. And job growth for the positions is expected to be over two percentages below the rate for the entire workforce from 2008 to 2018.)

The OOH description of the position clearly differentiates it from similar jobs. As significant points, it lists the following:

- ◆ Most jobs in this occupation require a college degree — preferably in communications, journalism, or English — but a degree in a technical subject may be useful.
- ◆ Job prospects for most technical writing jobs are expected to be good, particularly for those with Web or multimedia experience.
- ◆ Excellent communications skills, curiosity, and attention to detail are highly desired traits.

Overall, the inclusion of the position and the information provided are good news for STC members and the profession. "The OOH is the most important reference tool used by HR professionals," said O'Sullivan. "To have this distinction being made by the DOL in this document is important for the profession. It supports STC's position before employers and HR departments and provides an unbiased and respected voice backing what STC has been saying for years."

To access the new section, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos319.htm>.

### Call for proposals: Speakers needed!

Is what you do for a living on the technical edge? Do you have expertise on a topic that you are just burning to share? Have you learned something new in the technical communication field that could benefit your fellow members of STC? Then we would like to hear from you!

We are currently accepting proposals from members interested in speaking at our program meetings next year. The proposal process is fairly informal — just a few paragraphs outlining your topic. Also, please include a short biography and any previous speaking experience you have.

All entries will be juried by the Programs Committee and the Executive Board, and decisions communicated to each submitter no later than July 1, 2010. The deadline for proposals for next year's NEO STC programs is COB April 15th.

Please submit your topic and description to Denise Kadilak.

Speaking engagements at our monthly program meetings are usually an hour, but if you would like to share your time with another speaker, that will work too!

### Summary: Ten things you thought you knew about writing

*By Paulette Henning (pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com)*

The webinar "Ten things you thought you knew about writing" was presented to NEOSTC members for free on February 9, 2010 at Radcom Inc. in Hudson.

For this webinar, Leah Guren discussed ten issues technical communicators should review or learn correctly how to do when developing technical content. Leah suggested that all communicators should review these issues periodically because:

- ◆ We may have learned them incorrectly
- ◆ Technical communication rules differ from other types of writing
- ◆ Language is always evolving
- ◆ You may not be in an environment in which you can rely on other technical communicators or editors for guidance

Because language evolves, grammar rules that we learned when we were younger may not apply today.

For example, we may have been taught the following rules:

- ◆ Don't end a sentence with a preposition
- ◆ Never split an infinitive
- ◆ Never start a sentence with the word "and"
- ◆ Germanize words (for example, learned rule = bell-boy, re-use; new rule = bellboy, reuse)
- ◆ Use periods in abbreviations and apostrophes (for example, learned rule = U.S.A., PDF's, 1920's; current rule = USA, PDFs, 1920s)

Leah warned that following these old rules when you develop technical content can cause your work to look dated. She also pointed out that breaking these learned rules does not mean that you are writing poorly or incorrectly.

Other issues that Leah discussed are included in the following list.

- ◆ Using passive voice is acceptable in three cases:
  - There is no agent (for example, "Rabies was eradicated in the U.K. in the 1930s")
  - We are stressing the action or theory of operation
  - We want to avoid blame
- ◆ Bullets should complete a lead-in sentence and unnecessary capitalization and punctuation should be eliminated.
- ◆ Do not remove the optional "that" in sentences. This is especially helpful for international audiences.
- ◆ Avoid using the Latin abbreviations i.e., e.g., and etc. Most people don't know the difference between i.e. and e.g. and using etc. is a sign of incomplete or sloppy writing.
- ◆ Don't eliminate the commas after prepositional phrases, conditional phrases, and in a series.
- ◆ Avoid using hyphenation in content because the use of hyphenation can be especially confusing to international audiences.
- ◆ Find an elegant solution for presenting gender-bias text. Use imperatives, plurals, or remove the pronoun and be consistent throughout the content.
- ◆ Learn the difference between a hyphen, en dash, and em dash and use them correctly.

- ◆ Develop controlled English for an ideal global solution.

You can visit Leah's website (<http://www.cowtc.com/>) for additional information about Leah and the resources that she recommends to help us properly develop technical content.

### Summit news and notes

See <http://conference.stc.org/hotel-travel/transportation/> for airfare, car rental, taxi, and shuttle discounts and information.

Sign up before April 20 and receive discounts on preconference courses. See <http://conference.stc.org/program-info/preconference-courses/>

### February webinar with Leah Guren: Ten things you thought you knew about writing (for technical communication)

*By Rebecca Martin (rrminhud@windstream.net)*

Ever wish that just once you could end a sentence with a preposition or split an infinitive? And, why not start a sentence with and?

In technical writing, says Leah Guren, you can. Just follow Guren's guidelines for when it is appropriate. Guren, a Senior Member of STC, offered her tips on current style and usage for technical communication in a recent STC webinar.

According to Guren, writing intended for a technical setting must be as streamlined as possible so it is clearer to the user.

Technical writing is not like formal writing, and therefore, does not adhere to the same rules. Some of the changes she recommends include:

#### End a sentence with a preposition

When a preposition is part of a phrasal verb (such as back up), it is fine to have it land at the end of a sentence:

To protect your files, back them up.

#### Split infinitives

Using a split infinitive is not ambiguous or confusing and may make instructions clearer. Even the hallowed Chicago Manual of Style encourages splitting the infinitive when it imparts clarity to the sentence. Perhaps

the most well-known example of a split infinitive in popular culture is the Star Trek directive:

... to boldly go where no man has gone before.

#### Use passive voice when appropriate

We've all been trained to hunt down passive voice phrases and convert to active voice. Guren tells us that while passive voice is harder to understand, there are situations where it is acceptable. For instance, when you don't wish to assign blame to anyone, as in:

The radioactive waste was misplaced.

#### Use more commas

Technical writing, Guren says, requires using more commas, rather than less. It is appropriate to use the serial comma (a comma before "and" in a series). Also, always use a comma after prepositional or conditional phrases.

#### Streamline punctuation

Drop apostrophes when pluralizing acronyms:

1920s, PDFs (not 1920's, PDF's)

#### Simplify your bullet lists

It is not necessary to capitalize each bullet point or put a period at the end of each one.

The branch manager supervises:

daily operations

traffic flow

branch team members

#### Leave Latin out

Do you like to sprinkle your work with Latin abbreviations like e.g., and etc.? Don't. They tend to obscure meaning and require extra punctuation.

#### Know your dashes

Learn the difference between the hyphen, the en dash and the em dash and how to use them correctly.

The en dash connects a range of numbers:

pages 33–34

The em dash separates a parenthetical phrase from the rest of the sentence:

The Webinar provided a quick — and succinct — overview.

A hyphen connects compound modifiers:

She is a well-known actress.

For more examples and additional style tips, see Guren's notes linked to this article.

### Conclusion

Finally, Guren admonishes technical writers to keep up with changes in usage as language is continually evolving.

Leah has graciously given us permission to share the handouts from the webinar: [TenThing handouts from Leah Guren.pdf](#)

### Joe Welinske gives presentation about user assistance trends, tools, and technologies

*By Paulette Henning (pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com)*

Joe Welinske from WritersUA gave a presentation about the trends, tools, and technologies of user assistance to a group of approximately 40 people at Rockwell Automation, Inc. on February 11, 2010.

Joe began his presentation by defining who we are as user assistance communicators. Our range of skills and titles include writer, editor, programmer, or coder of online help web content. We run usability and quality assurance tests on developed content. We are informational or instructional designers. We develop e-learning help. We localize or translate content. We develop using the content management paradigm or through multimedia development. We interview SMEs and perform task analysis. Joe explained that because we do all or many aspects of these tasks on a regular basis, this causes our field to be very diverse.

In his presentation, Joe listed results from a survey that was taken on the WritersUA website. Based on the results from the survey, people feel that the two most valuable skills in our field are experience with authoring tools and writing ability. Survey takers feel that the least value skill is style sheet transformation.

When it comes to the most valuable user assistant technologies, survey takers listed digital manuals and browser-based help as the two most valuable technologies. They listed wikis as the least valuable technology.

Based on the survey results, Microsoft Windows is still the most dominant platform that we support. The World Wide Web is the second most dominant. The Internet/intranet is the third most dominant.

Joe mentioned the following emerging paradigms in IT:

- ◆ New categories of applications — the user interface is no longer dependent upon the operating system.
- ◆ New operating systems, such as Google Chrome.
- ◆ Mash-ups apps — developers exploit publicly exposed APIs to bring together different sets of information from different companies to create new applications.
- ◆ Web-based API docs, such as Google maps, twitter, and flicker.
- ◆ Custom devices, such as One Laptop Per Child and Ford Sync (using third-party technology for sync technologies in car mobiles).
- ◆ An explosion of device matrix and the new applications to support these devices plus the help that supports these devices.

Joe pointed out that even with the new technologies, the help issues remain the same. We must create effective access, presentation, and explanations for the help.

Joe mentioned the following emerging paradigms in user assistance:

- ◆ Comprehensive support with tools such as the Technical Communication Suite — Joe warns that the type of tool we use to develop content defines the type of user assistance that we can provide to our customers.
- ◆ The agile method.
- ◆ Careful content creation — Because every word we develop adds cost in the form of editing, markup, testing, converting, translating or localizing, we need to develop with content minimization in mind.
- ◆ Structured authoring.
- ◆ HTML 5 (Web Application 1.0) as a major contender.
- ◆ AIR (Adobe Integrated Runtime) help — not sure of its impact yet, but it is a contender.
- ◆ Creating web portals specifically for user assistant that includes all the information available to them in one place to make it easier to find information
- ◆ Training convergence — use the tools that already exist and a tool like Adobe Captivate to customize the training.

- ◆ Web 2.0, which is good for collaborating with users via wikis or twitter.
- ◆ Mobile devices, such as Flash for Simulation
- ◆ Exploiting Google and Yahoo web search optimization — Joe suggest that we search what content people are complaining about and then fix it in the help.
- ◆ Tips via email with links to other helpful information — for example, using RSS feeds to push useful information to users.
- ◆ Blogs to help us get more visibility for ourselves.
- ◆ Embedded UA, such as using pop-ups so the user never has to leave the page to get more information.

Joe also feels that technical communicators should own every aspect of the applications we support and therefore should be in every design meeting.

Joe feels the following technologies are on the horizon:

- ◆ Personalized web pages where the user needs to log in. This provides a way for web pages to be customized to user's specific needs.
- ◆ User assistance in the form of video presentations.
- ◆ Wider use of DITA and structured authoring.

And, because of rapid and continually evolving software, Joe sees the following technologies gaining ground:

- ◆ More server-side deployments
- ◆ Rolling release
- ◆ Live-to-site testing
- ◆ Voice help — this technology still needs to overcome hurdles, but it's on the horizon

To learn more about Joe Welinske and the WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance, visit the website <http://www.writersua.com/index.html>.

### **Book review: *Producing for Web 2.0 — A student guide***

*Reviewed by Jeanette Evans  
([jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net))*

Book details: *Producing for Web 2.0 — A student guide*, Third Edition. Jason Whittaker. 2009. New York, NY: Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0-415-48622-4. 272 pages. US\$39.95 (softcover).]

If information about planning, setting up, and managing a web site using web 2.0 interests you, this third edition of the book could be a good read. An eclectic and useful overview of current technologies available for online communication using web 2.0 tools appears in the book.

Of special interest are answers to questions such as — what is web 2.0, how can you customize a blog to better use web 2.0 technologies, how important is it to know Dreamweaver to do web work, how does a content management system (CMS) fit in, and what are the elements and attributes of XHTML.

Even Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, notes about web 2.0, "Nobody even knows what it means" (p. 2). Coined by Dale Dougherty of O'Reilly Media and Craig Cline of MediaLive, the term — according to Whittaker — refers loosely to platforms and technologies that represent new web developments. Instead of the static information common to web 1.0, the author notes that web 2.0 make greater use of data dynamically and includes applications such as video, audio, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds.

In the sections on customizing a blog with web 2.0 are useful step-by-step directions for using Feedy.com (p. 130) to work with RSS feeds. Further in this section the author notes that "WordPress is one example of blogging software that you can install on your own site and fine tune to match templates and styles used with your other pages" (p. 138).

Samples and codes from the book appear at the companion website of <http://www.producingforweb2.com/>, which also includes information on new developments in web production and design. The information about CMSs covered at this site and in the book reminded me of the hundreds of CMS applications available today.

Especially useful tips from the author for written content include: select an audience, write as you speak, use the pyramid technique, use links, become a reader. The pyramid technique in news journalism provides the story

at the beginning and expands from there. Originally useful for editors to cut stories from the bottom up to save space, on the web the technique can be useful not to save space but for readers who may wish to move to other pages.

The particular view of the author comes through when he discusses both technology and writing skills. He says it best when he says, "While ... coding skills are essential for the modern web producer, the fact remains that the vast majority of content online consists of text. For this reason, the ability to write well to attract your audience's attention cannot be underestimated" (p. 196).

Note to readers of Lines & Letters: A version of this review is scheduled to appear in *Technical Communication*.

### Notice of STC's annual business meeting

STC's annual business meeting is Monday, 3 May 2010, 6:30 — 7:30 pm CDT (GMT-5) at the Hyatt Regency Dallas, Landmark A, Dallas, Texas. Only STC members who have paid their dues in full may vote at the meeting. Nonmembers may attend as observers.

The business meeting will be conducted according to STC Bylaws and rules that will be adopted at the meeting. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised will be used on matters not covered in the Bylaws and rules.

The agenda and rules have been posted to the STC website at <http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/annual-business-meetings.asp>. The meeting rules explain the process to allow clear, timed, and orderly discussion of resolutions.

The minutes of last year's annual meeting are also posted on the STC website at <http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/annual-business-meetings.asp>. You may wish to read the minutes in advance.

In addition, please note that the open Board of Directors meeting is Friday, 30 April. This is to allow Board members who are part of the education program on Saturday to be able to attend the Board meeting.

### The talk of the town

In between helping out with the NEO STC newsletter and academic committee, Jeanette Evans found time to write an article with Gillian McKnight-Tutein that was published in the February 2010 *Intercom*. The article is "Effective Storyboarding ." See the article at

[http://www.stc.org/intercom/PDFs/2010/201002\\_09-10.pdf](http://www.stc.org/intercom/PDFs/2010/201002_09-10.pdf)

She also reviewed Alphabet Juice in a recent issue of *Technical Communication*.

### In the spotlight: Angela Dianetti, Associate Fellow

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

Please join us in congratulating Angie on her recent nomination to this honor. Her plaque citation reads:

For sharing best practices of technical communication, steady leadership, and continued devotion to the Northeast Ohio STC community.

Angie has over 15 years of experience in the technical writing field and a B.S. in Petroleum Engineering from Marietta College. She is Vice President of Radcom, but she has fulfilled duties as a consultant, project manager, and supervisor. As an active member of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), she has spoken several times at its international conferences and has coordinated several regional STC conferences for the Northeast Ohio chapter.

Angie has been teaching software classes, including FrameMaker and RoboHelp, to area professionals for more than eight years. Her years of experience in using these and other tools makes the classes about more than just how to use software; Angie shares best practices, tips, and tricks that can be applied to any software used for technical documentation.

Angie started Radcom in 1996 with her husband Bob. Radcom is a technical communications and training development consulting company based in Northeast Ohio. Radcom was named a Weatherhead 100 Outstanding Growth Company in 2004 and its client list includes Fortune 500 companies, their vendors, and many established and growth companies in Northeast Ohio and surrounding states.

Angie lives in Stow, Ohio, with her husband, Bob, who is also a technical writer and principal partner at Radcom. The couple has four sons.

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### And the Bulwer-Lytton winner is...

Jean Church was the winner of the Webster's Thesaurus for this entry:

"She was the kind of woman who could put the "keep" in Poughkeepsie, and keep it there, but no one would really want to keep it there, so they'd take it out, and put it in one of those self-storage units along the highway, but not the local Uncle Bob's Self Storage that's a bit run-down and seedy-looking and might keep it if you got behind on your payments, but one of the chains like U-Store-It with three locations around town, because if you found you had forgotten you had it, and started making regular payments including those back-payments, then the finders would not again become the keepers.

### STC election information

STC's 2010 election will run from March 9 to April 8, 2010. Personal messages from candidates are listed below (note that these may not be inclusive; only candidates who sent us articles specifically for the newsletter are included). In addition, STC has posted additional information about the election and brief biographies about each candidate at <http://notebook.stc.org/2010-election/>. Members can use the "Ask the Candidate" feature on the website to submit questions directly to the candidates.

This year's candidates are:

- ◆ For Secretary: Rachel Houghton and Steven Jong
- ◆ For Director (three positions to be elected): Nicky Bleiel, Al Hood, Tricia Spayer, Makarand (Mak) Pandit, and W.C. Wiese
- ◆ For Nominating Committee: Lory Hawkes, Nathaniel Lim, Linda Mikkelsen, and Preeti Mathur

To vote, log in at

<https://eBallot.votenet.com/stc><http://xxx.com/> with your election user name and password. (This was mailed to you recently. The user name is your membership number, and the password is your first name plus your membership number — not your login password.)

If you are voting by paper ballot and have not yet mailed your ballot, it is strongly suggested that you fax it to: +1 (703) 522-2075. Indicate "Urgent: STC 2010 Election Ballot" as your subject line, and address the fax to Diana Buttram, COO and Director of Community

Relations. You may also scan your ballot and email it to [stc\\_election@stc.org](mailto:stc_election@stc.org). The subject line should be: Urgent: STC 2010 Election Ballot. Ballots must be received by the official close of the election to be counted.

### Tricia Spayer: Candidate for STC Director-at-Large

*By Tricia Spayer*

I'm Tricia Spayer, candidate for STC Director-at-Large. I would appreciate your vote in the 2010 STC elections.

#### Why vote for me?

- ◆ I've been an active member in the Northeast Ohio chapter of STC (NEO STC) for almost ten years, six of which I served on the Executive Committee. I've gained experience as an adept leader in the positions of President, Vice President, Immediate Past President, Secretary, and Membership Chair. I'm currently serving as the Bylaws Committee Chair. During my year as President, we achieved the Chapter of Excellence award and received an Award of Distinction for PR from STC International. Through this leadership experience, I've learned to motivate others through respect, trustworthiness, and tenacity.
- ◆ I served as a member of the Planning Committee for the 2007 STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, OH, which was a highly acclaimed, profitable, and professionally-run conference.
- ◆ I received the President's Achievement Award from NEO STC in 2009 for my leadership and contributions to the chapter's Pacesetter and Chapter of Distinction awards.
- ◆ At the Society level, I've presented at the 2009 STC International conference, reviewed program proposals for the International conference, and have volunteered for the LCR.
- ◆ For my professional work, I achieved Best of Show and an Award of Excellence for an STC Online competition, along with an Award of Merit for an STC Technical Publications competition.
- ◆ When I promise to do a job, I do it.



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- ◆ I am very detail-oriented, and weigh all facts before making an important decision.
- ◆ I bring my creativity and enthusiasm to projects.
- ◆ I give credit where credit is due. That is, most jobs or activities are the work of committees — I make a point to thank the contributors. Volunteers need to be recognized, rewarded, and thanked.
- ◆ It's time to use my experience to benefit the whole Society.

### What future enhancements would I like to see in the Society?

The basic description of STC states that "STC is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication." The key word I see is "individual." I would love to see a program like I have observed in Toastmasters, where people complete a defined number of projects to achieve a certain level of recognition. They complete that level, and move on to more advanced projects to attain the next level, then the next. Toastmasters has a Communication track, as well as a Leadership track, so people can focus on different skills. Achievement is at an individual level, so the faster people work, the faster they reach their goals. Toastmasters has mentors and experienced leaders, just as we already have in STC — it would be great to use these resources to expand our knowledge. I feel that STC members would benefit by learning specific skills and receiving accreditation for these skills.

The work that has already been done to capture the STC Body of Knowledge is a fantastic resource. I hope that project continues to grow and that STC can soon provide certification.

I would like to see STC expand its membership base by advertising and sponsoring through educational institutions, engineering societies, and related professional organizations.

Most of us are aware that STC has been through a difficult period. I am not afraid of challenges. I've been a part of huge projects, such as the 2007 STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, and my company's implementation of a content management software package, with excellent results. I know that change does not happen overnight. It takes determination and dedication to see a project through. I am ready for this challenge. To see my experience and list of achievements, visit <http://triciaspayer.com>.

Please vote for me in the STC 2010 elections. Thank you!

### Nicky Bleiel: Candidate for Director-At-Large

See Nicky's election website at <http://www.nickybleiel.com/>

### W.C. Wiese: Candidate for STC Director Strengthening STC

Because of the economic issues and their unparalleled impact on STC, this year's elections are especially important. 2010 becomes another year of course correction for the society, with a disproportionately high impact on technical communicators.

Will this Board of Directors be asked to close down STC? Let's hope not. But economic pressures and STC's ongoing membership declines mandate change:

- ◆ STC must become an organization for the future. We can remain a Baby Boomer organization and dwindle. Or, to survive, we must meet the needs of young professionals and students. That means STC must engage them sooner, learn to speak in new ways, use different communication channels, and address early-career professional needs.
- ◆ STC must be about jobs. We must do more to help members find the opportunities they seek, raise perception of STC's value, and research and share economic metrics that quantify the impact of what we do.
- ◆ We must strengthen STC's financial foundation. We'll need to match the cost of services to demand for them, reexamine the educational products we offer, and offer value that professionals agree is worth the cost of membership.
- ◆ STC should partner. We have much to learn and much to gain from partnerships with smaller professional organizations, such as the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) and American Society for Indexing (ASI). They generally support our interests but have not been as severely impacted by the current economy.
- ◆ STC must mend ties to chapters and SIGs. These valued groups have always been most effective in promoting STC and generating the leaders who will carry STC forward.

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As a former chapter president and treasurer, I recognize that chapter and SIG membership issues are really STC's membership issues — we must work together to solve them. Community health is ultimately STC's health because chapters and SIGs attract members, encourage risk-taking and individual growth, and generate future leaders.

As STC treasurer, I worked with three STC Executive Directors in four years, contributing to financial stability during the change process. During my term, I implemented the chapter treasurers' discussion group to enhance mentorship and communication, supported infrastructure investment, made chapter and STC financial concerns visible to the Board of Directors, and fought to strengthen STC's financial footing.

I need your vote to help strengthen STC's capacity to serve a new generation of members and ensure its future.

Please send your suggestions and concerns to the election website at <http://notebook.stc.org/2010-election/wc-wiese/>.

### Nathaniel Lim: Candidate for STC Nominating Committee

#### Help me enhance the technical communication profession

*By Nathaniel Lim*

When you tell your friends and family that you are a technical writer, what is their reaction? To me, they say that it sounds like an important job and probably isn't easy. When I tell them I write online help as part of my job, they often tell me that Help does not help. Unfortunately, this is sad but true. People get frustrated when they read poorly written documents and cannot find the information they need.



This is why I am running for STC Nominating Committee. I want to make a difference. From here, I could tell you my interesting biography, awards I've received, impressive accomplishments, extensive work history, decision-making process, and reasons for running. But, that is all in my candidate statement on the STC website. Here is the stuff I could not include:

**Reliable:** I strongly believe in accountability and follow through. If I say I will do something, I make sure it gets

done (or tell people early enough in the process if I cannot do it, so we can go to plan B). I also believe in following directions and meeting deadlines. At the same time, if I don't understand the process or don't believe that the rule applies, I will ask questions until I am satisfied that this is the best way to go about it.

**Critical Thinker:** When I was a lead judge for the STC international tech pubs competition, a new procedure came into effect that required writing at least 24 comments on the judging form. Thinking that this would be too numerous, I inquired to find that this was not a hard and fast rule. The spirit of the procedure was to ensure that submitters received sufficient written comments and not just numbered ratings. Thus, I wrote critiques to help the submitters, not always conforming to the rule.

**Innovator:** My company recently started translating documents into several foreign languages. My manager gave me the task of creating a new procedure for labeling them, putting them through the approval process, and posting them on our website for customers to download. Tracking and classifying over a hundred documents with different versions and languages could potentially fall into disarray. I was careful to think things through before taking action. I asked appropriate personnel for their input and drafted a formal procedure. Management approved. Although the procedure continues to get revised even to this day, I am proud that I was part of the first effort to formalize it.

You can also get to know me at LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/nathaniellim>) and Facebook (search nathaniel lim impac). Starting March 9, please take a minute to cast your vote for Nathaniel Lim. I would be grateful for your vote for Nominating Committee.

#### Chapter reminders

Are you following STC on [Twitter](#) yet?

#### Amazon.com helps fund STC

Reaching Amazon.com through the portal on the home page of STC's website ([www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)) contributes to funding programs that have no direct revenue stream, such as committee work. STC receives a small percentage from every purchase made through the portal.

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### Join NEO STC on LinkedIn

Our chapter now has a group on LinkedIn named Northeast Ohio STC Community.

Join our LinkedIn Group on <http://www.Linkedin.com> (you must be a member of LinkedIn, which is free for a basic membership). FYI : There will be waiting period while your membership is approved.

### 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.]

To subscribe or change your settings for the Northeast Ohio STC listserv, see <http://mailman.stc.org/mailman/listinfo/stcneohio-l>.

Please let Kris Henige, the NEO STC Listserv Administrator, know if you have any questions.

### Premium pages for members

[NOTE: As of 2016, the current NEO STC website does not have password-protected content.]

NEO STC has some Premium pages for NEO STC members only. These pages include links to our very own Wiki, an Employer Directory — a listing of businesses that hire technical communicators — and more.

To enter the Premium pages, you will need a user name and password — this is different from the STC International site. Please contact our Webmaster for password information.

### Change of address? Remember to tell the STC office

Send new addresses to the STC office to avoid interrupted delivery of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. Some members assume that informing the post office of their new address is enough to ensure that all of their mail is forwarded. However, the United States Postal Service forwards only first-class mail, not publications such as *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*.

Members may also update their contact and mailing information on the STC website.

## Lines & Letters information

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Love it? Hate it? Let us know! Contact us: [newsletter@neostc.org](mailto:newsletter@neostc.org)

### See something interesting? Tell us about it!

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

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