

President's column: Membership responsibility

By Denise Kadilak (denise.kadilak@blackbaud.com)

In past columns I've addressed the increased STC membership dues, and I've asked you to consider renewing your membership in spite of the increase. In this column, I'd like to encourage those members who have renewed to please take full advantage of this year's membership: vote in the upcoming STC election, attend NEO STC programs and workshops, and consider serving on a chapter committee or the chapter Board.

Given the financial crisis we watched the International STC struggle through last year and the unpleasant effects this struggle has had on local chapters, we all should be chomping at the bit to vote in this year's International STC election. Granted, right now we do not have much control over incoming or near-future presidents, but we do have a say selecting directors — who serve on the Board of Directors and have a direct voice in determining the Society's objectives and goals — and next year's nominating committee — the individuals responsible for selecting future candidates. For a full list of this year's candidates, see <http://www.stc.org/2009/12/stc-2010-slate-of-candidates.asp>. There will also be several candidate statements included in next month's newsletter, including one from our own Tricia Spayer, a Director-at-Large candidate.

On the chapter level, your membership comes with a number of educational opportunities, many of which are substantially discounted for members. The NEO STC chapter offers monthly programs that encourage networking and socializing in addition to learning new skills. Past program topics include document translation, WordPress, and Second Life. Future topics include tools, trends, and technology in user assistance; and information architecture. The chapter also offers day-long workshops and STC-sponsored webinars. For more information, visit the <http://www.neostc.org/>.

Finally, I want to encourage all members to consider participating on local committees or even on the NEO STC's Board. Committee work is a prerequisite for serving on the Board, but the good news is we have plenty of room for everyone. For a list of all committees and board positions and the responsibilities involved with each, see the NEO STC bylaws. If you are interested in serving, please feel free to contact me. This year's Board will soon begin work to put together next

year's committees and Board candidates, so let me know soon if you'd like to serve.

You've already paid the price to be a member for another year, so why not take some time to thoroughly investigate your membership benefits. Involvement will reap rewards both social and professional. We look forward to seeing you!

February seminar: An overview of trends, tools, and technologies in software user assistance

Joe Welinske of WritersUA will present this exciting topic, which focuses on the application of technical communication skills in the development of software user assistance. This specialization has grown immensely in the past 20 years and is very challenging and fulfilling. Technical writers are finding their role in the software development process to be increasingly valued. User assistance is much more than "Help". It encompasses a wide range of skills and technologies that are combined to improve the software user's experience. We contribute through wizards, tutorials, and web-based training. We develop and populate knowledge bases and content management systems. Printed manuals and their PDF equivalents are still an important element of our documentation sets.

Many of us are now embedding helpful content directly into the user interface. We are involved with usability testing, localization, testing, quality assurance, and branding. This presentation provides a cutting-edge overview of the latest trends in software user assistance, defines the key terminology, highlights the most important technologies, and offers predictions on future directions of our field. The 75-minute session should be of interest to technical communicators of all backgrounds and experience levels.

Presenter: Joe Welinske is the president of WritersUA, a company devoted to providing training and information for user assistance professionals. The WritersUA Conference draws hundreds of attendees each year from around the world to share the latest in user assistance design and implementation. The free content on the WritersUA web site attracts over 30,000 visitors each month. Joe has been involved with software documentation development since 1984. Together with Scott Boggan and David Farkas, Joe authored two editions of the popular and pioneering book, *Developing Online Help for Windows*. He has also taught online Help courses at the University of Washington, UC Santa Cruz,

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



January 2010 • Volume 26 Issue 5

Page 2

and Bellevue Community College. Joe received a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Illinois in 1981, and a M.S. in Adult Instructional Management from Loyola University in 1987. Joe was the president of STC Puget Sound Chapter from 2006-2008 and is now in charge of sponsorships. He is also serving as the membership director of the Puget Sound Chapter of the Usability Professionals Association.

- ◆ Date: Thursday, February 11th, 2010
- ◆ Location: Rockwell Automation

Online registration is available at <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20100211.html>.

Register: If you plan to attend, email the Programs Committee by February 8th. Or, call Denise at 216-251-0716.

Hope to see you there!

Upcoming events

NEO STC events

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

- ◆ 2/1/10: All-Ohio Scholarship available (due 4/1/10).
- ◆ 2/6/10: Social event. Après ski at Boston Mills Ski Resort.
- ◆ 2/11/10: Joe Welinske, the president of WritersUA. Trends tools, and technologies in software user assistance.
- ◆ 2/18/10: Networking lunch. Bravo! Cucina Italiana, 4224 Everhard Rd., NW, Canton, 330-494-9170.
- ◆ 3/11/10: Monthly seminar: The information design handbook, presented by Ken and Jennifer Visoky O'Grady.
- ◆ 3/18/10: Networking lunch. Joseph-Beth Booksellers/Brontë Bistro, 24519 Cedar Rd. (Legacy Village), Lyndhurst, 440-546-0555.
- ◆ 4/1/10: Due date for All-Ohio Scholarship application.
- ◆ 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.

Other events of interest

- ◆ 2/2/10: Relating technology metrics to business metrics, presented by Alec Isaacson. See <http://www.neospin.org/index.php/spin-meetings/rsvp/details/17-neospin-event-series>.
- ◆ 2/3/10: Ten things you thought you knew about writing, presented by Leah Guren. See <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp> Note: This will be hosted locally by Radcom if at least four participants sign up. Contact nschafer@radcomservices.com before 3:00pm the Tuesday before the Webinar.
- ◆ 2/6/10 (RSVP by 2/3): Caring for the authentic self: A retreat of renewal and awakening with writer and retreat facilitator Claudia Taller. For pricing and additional information, contact Claudia Taller at 440.554.6406 or at ctallerwrites@wowway.com.
- ◆ 2/10/10: Quick reference guides: Short and sweet technical documentation, presented by Ben Minson. See <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>.
- ◆ 2/10/10 (RSVP by 2/3): Microsoft Word for technical writers by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 2/17/10: SWO STC: Structured authoring (webinar). See <http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/>.
- ◆ 2/17/10: Scenario-driven information architecture, presented by Alyson Riley and Deirdre Longo. See <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>.
- ◆ 2/23/10 (RSVP by 2/16): Fundamentals of technical writing by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 2/24/10: Managing conflict on a global team, presented by Judy Glick-Smith. See <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp>. Note: This will be hosted locally by Radcom if at least four participants sign up. Contact nschafer@radcomservices.com before 3:00pm the Tuesday before the Webinar.
- ◆ 2/25 — 2/26/10: Intelligent Content 2010 conference. <http://www.rockley.com/IntelligentContent2010/>
- ◆ 3/13/10 (RSVP by 3/05): Introduction to Adobe Framemaker by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 3/13/10: SWO STC: Alan Houser workshop: Minimalist documentation — Cincinnati State,

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



Cincinnati, OH. See <http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/>.

- ◆ 3/21 — 3/24/2010: The Conference for Software User Assistance in Seattle, WA. See <http://www.writersua.com/ohc/index.html>
- ◆ 3/24/10 and 3/31/10 (RSVP by 3/17): Introduction to Adobe LiveCycle by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 3/27/10 (RSVP by 3/19): Intermediate Adobe Framemaker by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 4/10/10 (RSVP by 4/2): Introduction to Adobe RoboHelp by Radcom, Inc. <http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining>
- ◆ 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/>.
- ◆ 5/2 — 5/5/10: Technical Communication Summit 2010 in Dallas, Texas.

Congratulations to our new Associate Fellow, Angela Dianetti!

The NEO STC would like to congratulate Angie Dianetti on her STC Associate Fellow award! A well deserved recognition for one of our chapter's most dedicated members.

Help update the sponsorship list

The Sponsorship committee needs your help to update the list of sponsors for NEO STC meetings and events. The struggling economy and outdated names of employers on the contact list has made it challenging to seek support for our college scholarship fund.

Most of the \$150 sponsorship fee benefits the \$1000 scholarship, which, this year, is being co-sponsored by the Northeast Ohio and Southwest Ohio STC chapters.

To help us reach out with a personal touch to employers rather than send a letter to someone unfamiliar with NEO STC, we need your help. Please provide a contact person in your organization with their name, title, organization name, address, zip code, and phone number.

Please email the information to Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net).

We also encourage our members to talk about sponsorship opportunities with their employers. The Sponsorship committee can provide information to you that details what NEO STC offers its sponsors for their tax-free contribution to the scholarship fund.

The Sponsorship committee also is seeking advertisers for the website to generate additional revenue for the chapter. Tech guru and STC Associate Fellow Neil Perlin helped us start the process by advertising his firm, Hyper/Word, for several months on the NEO STC home page. Thanks Neil!

A 2 x 2 ad is \$35/month, and discounts are available for multi-month advertising. Ads must have an industry-related theme. NEO STC retains the right to approve or reject these public announcements.

WordPress woos wordsmiths to the web

By Lynn Nickels (lanickels@ra.rockwell.com)

Local technical communicators were wowed at NEO STC's January meeting by Kim Lindsey's presentation on WordPress.

The award-winning software can be used for content-management, personal webpage design, is customizable, pre-optimized for search engine optimization, and best of all — is FREE!

The software is a state-of the art personal publishing platform that is based on a self-hosted blogging and web site creation tool. It is also open-source, which means that literally thousands of people can make it better!

The WordPress website at <http://www.wordpress.org/>, says it's as easy as 1, 2, 3 to get started. The first step is finding a web host.

Kim's pick is Blue Host at <http://www.bluehost.com/>. For as little as \$6.95 per month, Blue Host will host your site, and the domain is included.

The second step is downloading and installing the WordPress software. The WordPress site, and Lindsey, both say it literally takes only five minutes.

The third step is to consult the documentation, which is available on the site. The documentation is in a Wiki format and contains hundreds of articles and suggestions from expert WordPress users to answer any questions newbies might have.

Pre-made and customizable themes are available. Kim suggests using Thesis Theme for WordPress — a high-

quality template system that beginners can use to get their site up and running in the shortest amount of time. There is a one-time charge of \$87 to launch a web site using Thesis. For an additional \$77, users can load Thesis onto an unlimited number of web sites. For more information on Thesis, go to <http://diythemes.com/>.

Kim also presented easy-to-use features WordPress offers, such as plug-ins. Users can easily add plug-ins for Twitter, PayPal and Facebook to their personal sites.

Long-time STC member Bob Young, said, "Kim's presentation contained a lot of useful information and the PowerPoint demonstration was easy to follow. WordPress and Thesis appear to be an excellent investment for an electronic portfolio."

For more information, view Kim's LinkedIn profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimlindseyoh>.

Meeting attendees also had the opportunity to win great door prizes! Prizes included a Joseph-Beth Booksellers gift card, \$10 off the next NEO-STC meeting, several books, and an array of beautiful calendars.

NEO-STC Chapter President Denise Kadilak closed the meeting by encouraging all to attend upcoming events. For a complete listing of upcoming meetings and social events, please visit <http://www.neostc.org/calendar>.

Book review: *A million words and counting: How global English is rewriting the world*

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

Book details: *A million words and counting: How global English is rewriting the world*, by Paul J.J. Payack. Citadel Press. Kensington Publishing Corp. 2008.

Author Paul J.J. Payack maintains a word count of the English language at <http://www.languagemonitor.com/>. According to the site, the number of words in the English language passed the 1,000,000 threshold on June 10, 2009, and English gains a new word every 98 minutes. This is about 14 new words a day. The book notes that this site and Payack's other site <http://yourDictionary.com> — one of the first multi-dictionary sites — receive over 30 million page views a month. The Harvard-educated author is the founding president of the Global Language Monitor, media commentator, and expert on culture and language, having appeared on the BBC, CNN, NPR, ABC, CBS, and NBC.

Payack argues that English is experiencing vocabulary and geographic explosions. He also notes that never in the history of the planet has a single language held the dominant position English currently holds. No other language comes close in number of words or speakers. For example, Spanish has just over 250,000 words.

The influence on English of cultural elements such as film, TV, fashion, music, politics, sports, business, technology, and science as well as countries such India, Singapore, China, and Australia are covered. The table of contents includes topics such as: the million-word march, from the corner of Hollywood and Vine, the personal is political, study abroad, how culture changes the way we communication, how corporate culture contributes to public vocabulary, high-tech English, language stats, and the wonder of language.

The book provides quick overviews of the history of the English language and how English evolved and is evolving. However, some of the book is dated. Too much of the book is about the words entering the language around the time the book was written, including Bushisms. Maybe this will be an interesting historical tidbit for future readers, but for me it had limited interest. Concerning how the author predicted in the book that the number of words in the English language would hit the million word point in 2008, the web site shows the author was off by a little.

Due to the dated portions of the book and at times its limited scope, the book is probably not one I will consider as a favorite on the subjects of English and language. The book is probably also not one that I will go back to and want in my home library.

On the other hand, I am happy I read the book and looked at the related sites. The sites look interesting and worthy of repeat visits. I can see why the sites are so popular. They have updates I will probably find of interest in the future.

If the topic of English and language are of interest to you, you may find the book a good read. Amazon reviews show polarizing evaluations. One reviewer gave the book the highest mark. Another gave the book the lowest mark. I can see both the good and bad in the book. The good outweighs the bad.

Ohio STC chapters collaborate on all-Ohio scholarship

Volunteers from the NEO, SW Ohio, and Central Ohio communities are working together to judge applications for the all-Ohio technical communication student scholarship this year. Funding of the \$1000 scholarship is being split this year between NE Ohio and SW Ohio. Watch for applications to be available in early February, 2010, at <http://www.neostc.org/scholarship/>.

Recent YSU event a great experience

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

NEO STC member Lynn Nickels is a Youngstown State University grad and former president of the YSU student chapter of STC. She recently returned to her alma mater to talk about technical writing. Here are her answers to questions about the experience.

Q When did your trip to YSU take place?

A My trip took place in October, 2009.

Q What was the purpose of your trip?

A The purpose of my trip was to talk about what technical writers in the real world do ... what types of computer programs and resources they use to do their jobs, what types of information they need to gather, and how to talk to subject matter experts to gain that information.

Q How was the event arranged?

A The event was located in an English Lab that was equipped with a projector. It was more of a round-table discussion that moved along as I presented my PPT presentation.

Q Who initiated the request for the event?

A Dr. Jay Gordon, an English professor at YSU. He is also trying to re-develop a technical writing curriculum at YSU and revive that particular program.

Q What are the what, who, and whens of the event?

A My goal was to talk to students. However, only a few showed up. There were actually more faculty there than students — which was surprising. The faculty was very interested in what applications and tracking systems Rockwell Automation uses in the Tech Comm department. Their program is not very up-to-date when it comes to being knowledgeable about what apps are used in the real world of tech comm. They were all also

very interested in our processes and the tools we use for organizing large numbers of active publications.

Q What are your impressions of the experience?

A It was a great experience, mostly because it gave me experience in presenting to an audience other than my peers. It was somewhat disappointing, though, because there were not very many students there — and I think the students really could have benefited from the information. The faculty attendees invited me to come back this spring, when they could hopefully have a better student turnout.

Q What other comments about the experience would you like to make for our readers?

A I think it is so important that we as technical communicators go out into the educational community and show them what is really being used as far as tools and software applications in the field of tech comm. Many of the subjects that are being taught are virtually useless when compared to what is actually being used in the “real world” of technical communication. It behooves colleges and universities to find out this information — it can be invaluable to their students, and the development of their future technical writing programs.

The talk of the town

Kim Lindsey is now an Instructional Designer at Cinecraft. Congratulations and best of luck in your new position!

In the spotlight: Dr. Gillian McKnight-Tutein

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

Dr. Gillian McKnight-Tutein recently submitted to the NEO STC competition her award-winning entry for the Tri-C Title III Grant Blog ... Going the Distance (<http://title3.wordpress.com/>). She entered the competition with co-contributor Sandy Moses. Dr. McKnight-Tutein and Sandy Moses work at the Tri-C Office of eLearning and Innovation (eLi) and recently attended the NEO STC awards banquet where eLi donated an 80 GB iPod to the raffle to benefit the NEO STC education fund.

Currently Director, Innovative Learning Design and Quality, at eLi, Dr. McKnight-Tutein heads a group involved with next generation learning projects including determining effective ways to implement mobile learning applications such as a Tri-C iTunes U site. According to

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



January 2010 • Volume 26 Issue 5

Page 6

the iTunes U web site, iTunes U is a free service hosted by Apple that allows instructors and administrators access to educational audio and video content for students within a college or university.

In her current position, Dr. McKnight-Tutein is also responsible for course development leadership and quality assurance of technology-mediated and distance learning. Dr. McKnight-Tutein is the first Quality Matters certified Peer Course Reviewer at the college. She is also the Institutional Representative for Quality Matters, a faculty-centered, peer review process designed to suggest quality enhancements for online courses and online components.

Dr. McKnight-Tutein has worked in the elearning, instructional design, and training and development field for over 15 years and received her Doctorate from Nova Southeastern University in Instructional Technology and Distance Education. She recently collaborated on a draft of an article on storyboarding for Intercom.

The Bulwer-Lytton fiction contest

"It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents — except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness." — Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, Paul Clifford (1830)

In 1982, Professor Scott Rice in the English Department at San Jose State University started the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. The challenge: Write an opening sentence to rival Edward George Bulwer-Lytton's infamous opening sentence to his novel, Paul Clifford, which is reproduced here.

We want YOU, gentle reader, to take up this challenge. Bring printed copies of your submittal to our March 11th meeting. We will read the entries and vote on them. You'll still have plenty of time to submit your entries yourself to the official contest by April 15th, a very ominous date indeed!

For examples and more information, visit the website at <http://www.bulwer-lytton.com>

Can you outdo last year's winners, Kim Lindsey, Lisa Mileusnich, Tricia Spayer, & Jean Church (see <http://www.neostc.org/lines/Archives/2009/0904.html> to read the winning entries.) Lisa also won a Dishonorable Mention in the global 2009 contest (see <http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/2009.htm>).

Renew your membership to be entered to win prizes!

If you renew before February 1, you will be entered to win a Garmin GPS from international STC.

In addition, if you renew before February 28, the NEO STC chapter is offering two prizes:

- ◆ First prize is registration to the STC Technical Communication Summit in Dallas (May 2 — 5). Winners will be required to provide their own transportation, food, and lodging. The registration is an \$845 value.
- ◆ Second prize is two free passes to an NEO STC meeting (a \$40 value). The passes can be used for any upcoming meeting this year or any meeting next year.

STC now offers the ability to pay dues in four monthly installments. Simply select the installment plan when renewing online. Your first payment will be processed immediately, and each of the next three will be processed a month apart until paid in full. See <http://www.stc.org/membership/renew-your-stc-membership.asp> to renew online.

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) 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.

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.]

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



January 2010 • Volume 26 Issue 5

Page 7

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

Editors and contributors

Managing Editors:

- ◆ Barbara Philbrick (BarbPhilbrick@caslonsvcs.com), newsletter co-chair
- ◆ Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net), newsletter co-chair

Additional editors and contributors:

- ◆ Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)
- ◆ Sherri Henkin (sleah47@juno.com)
- ◆ Paulette Henning (pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com)
- ◆ Sharon Resar (str_cdp@yahoo.com)
- ◆ Julie Mason (julie.mason@parker.com)

- ◆ Paul Holland (paul_holland@mac.com)

- ◆ Bob Clark (clarkre55@aol.com)

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

See something interesting? Tell us about it!

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

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