Lines & Letters
Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

Thanks to our meeting sponsor

Thank you to Radcom, our December meeting sponsor! Our sponsors help fund the All-Ohio Scholarship.

In the Spotlight: Susan Congdon

At our February meeting, Susan Congdon introduced attendees to the Microsoft Office 2007 and Office 2010 ribbon interface and provided tips to ease the transition to the software. In just a few minutes, she used several new features to transform a plain Microsoft Word document into a vivid 2-column manuscript with a cover page, decorative footer, SmartArt, colorized table and stylized photo. She listed websites from which you can download interactive guides for determining where Office 2003 commands are located in Office 2007 and Office 2010. At the end of Susan's presentation, members were eager to try many of the features in the new Microsoft Word.

With her current website at http://pctrainingcentral.net, Susan is certified as a Microsoft Master Instructor and has served as a computer software instructor since 1985. Currently a freelance consultant in Microsoft Office software, her career began as a French teacher at Richmond Heights High School.

After teaching what she calls "sometimes recalcitrant students" for six years, Susan was ready for a change. With two young sons, she hoped to find a position with flexible working hours yet stimulating work. Responding to an ad for a French typist, she interviewed with a startup company, Technical Translation Services. At the end of the interview (conducted in French), she went home with an IBM Selectric typewriter and her first assignment: to prepare camera-ready user manuals, in French, for off-the-road dump trucks. As a new business hoping to expand into foreign language publishing, Technical Translation Services asked Susan to test and review new word processing equipment prior to purchasing. She was hooked! She enjoyed the challenge of learning to use new technology while producing 2000-page truck manuals.

When her children were school-age, Susan worked for CPT, a manufacturer of dedicated word processing equipment. When customers invested in CPT systems, they would attend one or more of Susan's classes. Then Susan helped her students adapt to their new equipment by providing deskside assistance. In this role, she visited law firms, factories, hospitals, and schools, learning their business processes at each stop. She helped the workers adjust to their new technology and convert their existing documents and reports. With Susan's help, the students developed processes to streamline their work. After providing deskside assistance, Susan was available to answer questions and solve problems via telephone, a precursor to help desk support.

But the writing was on the wall. Personal computers were the wave of the future. So Susan began work at CompuTrain, a small PC training firm of computer professionals with varying talents. She specialized in desktop publishing and project management software. Eventually, CompuTrain ceased to exist. But Susan had developed so many contacts in Cleveland and beyond that they began to contact her directly for training and consulting. She has served in this role since 1991.

As part of her freelance work, Susan has served Solutient of Ohio (formerly DPAI) since 1992 as a Microsoft Master Instructor, providing their end-user training. In 1999, Cleveland State University Division of Continuing Education invited Susan to teach courses in Microsoft Office as well as other software, such as Microsoft Visio and SAP Crystal Reports. She develops many courses herself, writing training manuals for many of the classes.

Susan has delivered live on-line training as well as web-based instruction, traveled from Boston to Los Angeles for client software rollouts, and authored a number of training manuals. She enjoys mentoring skilled professional women who are ready for a career change.

Susan offers knowledge of solid educational methods, especially for the adult learner, and expert-level skill in application software. Because of her broad experience in many industries, Susan prides herself in individualizing instruction and relating practical computer concepts to students' daily activities.

Welcome new members!

We have three new members who joined NEO STC during the Reach out, Connect, and Recruit Member-Get-a-Member drive at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011.

They are:

- John Gelo
- Tadd Mitchell Mooney
- Heather Utendorf

Thank you for joining. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming NEO STC events!

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

Membership renewal challenge prize winners

Congratulations to the winners in the NEO STC renewal challenge!

- Kristen Jackson won the Summit registration.
- Jeanette Evans won Bose Speakers.
- Douglas Kirchgesler won a basic membership renewal.
- Mark Sakuta and Kim Lindsey won $25 Amazon gift cards.
- Paul Oleksa won a 19" flat screen TV.

Hope you enjoyed them and thank you for continuing your membership in our chapter.

Book review

The Yahoo! Style Guide

Reviewed by Joann Rasmussen

The subtitle, "The Ultimate Sourcebook for Writing, Editing and Creating Content for the Digital World" explains how this book is more than a style guide. It's a body of knowledge with processes and methodolgy for developing almost any content available on the Web (notice the capitalized W). The book reads like a manual that a project manager would use to administer phases of product or service development.

The "Yahoo! Style Guide" is filled with suggestions for punctuation, capitalization and other variables as needed in a style guide, plus Yahoo's rationale for choosing one style over alternatives. It also includes exercises for optimizing content, research instructions for analyzing your target audiences, and an entire chapter devoted to defining your voice (branding). Writing content targeted to a mobile device? You'll find information on alternative text for images, space-saving abbreviations and SMS-appropriate verbiage.

According to the book, Yahoo standards began with a style sheet and expanded with the company. Yahoo was founded in 1994 and rose to become the most popular portal to the Internet before the dot-com bubble burst in 2002, and before Google became king of the Internet jungle.

It's not the first Internet style guide. Two versions of the "Wired Style" guide predate this book, but they contain only principles of English usage, similar to the "AP Style Guide" and "The Chicago Manual of Style." While "Wired Style" targets technical communicators, Yahoo! wrote this book for anyone who wishes to become a part of the Internet.

Unlike other style guides, the "Yahoo! Style Guide" contains references to scientific research that help determine how to design Web pages that attract and keep readers. A section on eye tracking explains why pages must feature the most important content in the upper left portion of the page. That research explains why headlines become organizational tools, and bullets or lists replace the paragraphs commonly found in printed material.

The book devotes an entire chapter to the issue of accessibility to the disabled and other frequently overlooked audiences. The disabled number 650 million globally, and that doesn't count the percentage of people who care for them and the issue of accessibility. It argues that optimal accessibility is good for business.

The Yahoo! editors included a resource section with information on Search Engine Optimization (SEO), basic Webpage coding, and instructions for compliance with international copyright law and the U.S. Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

Finally, the "Yahoo! Style Guide" complements the book with a free, online component. That content includes help from experienced editors. Other resources include tips, primers, audience measurement tools, readability measurement tools, and links to alternative style guides.

I found the "Yahoo! Style Guide" to be a helpful companion that will stay on my desktop for reference.