Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

President's Column November 2007: NEO STC is providing member value

By Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com)

In November, STC will send a reminder for you to renew your STC membership. Please renew when the notice is sent. If you are not already a member, when you join in November, you get two months' (Nov. & Dec. plus 2008) membership free!

If you are wondering what value STC membership, and the Northeast Ohio Community in particular, has for you, consider the following points. In the past year alone, NEO STC has:

- Hosted an extremely successful Regional Conference
- Won an Award of Excellence from STC International
- Held eight monthly meetings with learning and networking opportunities
- Held 12 networking lunches
- Held STC Webinars at local companies
- Provided a jobs database, with free listings for local employers
- Hosted a networking listserv for members
- Provided opportunity for members to list their resumes on our Web site
- Awarded eight competition entries, including awards of Merit, Excellence, Distinguished, and Best of Show
- Recognized two Distinguished Chapter Service Award recipients [International level awards]
- Recognized one Associate Fellow [International level award]
- Published 10 newsletters
- Provided a directory of employers who hire technical communicators, for members
- Provided numerous volunteer opportunities that benefit people in their careers
- Provided many more member services

We would also like to work on sharing our knowledge. The Academic Relations Committee is hosting a scholarship this winter/spring for college applicants who are studying Technical Communication. More details to follow. We would also like to be able to share our knowledge in other ways, such as mentoring students, other members, or people interested in the profession. We have a few plans in the works, but if you have some ideas about sharing your knowledge, send me a message.

As you can see, being a member of NEO STC means getting in touch with others in our community, sharing ideas, asking for advice, learning new things, and being recognized. We have many more activities in the works, including some awesome Software Saturdays with great learning opportunities. We also have some exciting news to share at our November meeting that will benefit you. We have a vibrant community — come to the November 19 meeting to see for yourself!

Monthly meeting on November 19: Online networking

New ways to develop yourself professionally

- Date: Monday, November 19, 2007
- Place: TMW Systems, Inc., Beachwood

Online networking is a new way of networking, with a different set of rules from our traditional world of networking. E-mail, invitations, and photos replace the 30-second elevator pitch, handshake, and working the room. The Internet opens new avenues for success in our lives, both professionally and personally. Knowing how to network online successfully means learning where and how to network and mastering a new etiquette.

We will discuss how to build and cultivate your online network and how to make the most of what you are already doing. We will:

- Look at LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Discuss other effective networking venues.
- Discuss how to present yourself online.
- Consider some of the reasons you should be networking.

Presenters: Angie Dianetti and Jill McCauslin have over 35 years combined experience in technical writing and instructional design. They are both Vice Presidents of Radcom, Inc., a local consulting company specializing in custom content development. As business owners, they have spent countless hours over the last 11 years networking both online and in person.

For more information, see www.neostc.org/calendar/20071119.html.

We look forward to seeing you!

New member orientation: Meet with members of the Executive Board to see what NEO STC is all about. Receive a new member packet, and have an informal discussion about STC and our local community.

Consultants and Independent Contractors SIG meeting: What value and services you want from your SIG. Networking followed by a roundtable discussion about what services you want from the SIG. RSVP to Lori: lori.klepfer@ljkconsulting.com.

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

Software Saturday: Developing for XML/DITA

It's not too early to register for the first Software Saturday, Developing for XML/DITA.

This class will be taught by Bernard Aschwanden, president of the Toronto STC chapter, on January 12, 2008. For class details and registration information, see http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20080112.html.

Upcoming events

- 11/14/07: Webinar*: Pattern Language as a Workshop Management Tool, presented by Michael Hughes. 1 pm to 2:30 pm. Cost: $149 per group. For more detail, see www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp.

- 11/15/07: Networking lunch: Hoggy's, 5975 Canal Rd., Valley View. See calendar for detail.

- 11/19/07: NEO STC Monthly Meeting. For detail, see Online Networking.

- 11/29/07: Webinar*: How to Use Audacity Digital Software to Produce a Podcast, presented by Jerry Franklin. 1 pm to 2:30 pm. Cost: $149 per group. For more detail, see www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp.

- 12/12/07: Networking lunch: The Winking Lizard, 511 E. Aurora Rd., Macedonia. See calendar for detail.

- 12/13/07: Chapter Holiday Party at Hoggy's in Valley View.

- 1/1/08: Deadline for payment of 2008 membership dues.

- 01/12/08: Software Saturday: Developing for XML/DITA. See Developing for XML/DITA.

- 3/28/08: Spectrum 2008, held by the Rochester (NY) chapter. See the Rochester Chapter STC Web site http://www.stcrochester.org/ for detail.

- 6/1 to 6/4/08: Technical Communication Summit.

* Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these Webinars. If you would like to host a seminar, please e-mail us.

Webinars have finally returned!

By Renee Murray

It has been a long wait, but we now have two new upcoming Webinars. Michael Hughes will present the first Webinar, Pattern Language as a Workshop Management Tool, on Wednesday, November 14, 2007. Jerry Franklin will present the second Webinar, How to Use Audacity Digital Software to Produce a Podcast, on Thursday, November 29, 2007.

For those of you who have never participated in a Webinar, Webinars are Web-based seminars combined with telephone conferencing. The Webinars last approximately 90 minutes and they begin at 1:00 p.m. We are searching for volunteers to host our approaching Webinars. Hosts provide the Webinar location and perform nominal administrative tasks to help everything run smoothly.

If you are interested in hosting, please e-mail me. For more details on the upcoming STC Webinars, visit the STC Web site: http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp.

I hope you will all take advantage of the free educational opportunities and enjoy participating in Web-based learning!

STC Conference Review — The Crucial Communicator 10/12/07 Cleveland

By Thomas Schmidt (TSchmidt@gedusa.com)

What I thought I would like least about the Crucial Communicator was driving to and parking in downtown Cleveland. As it turned out, I was pleasantly surprised — I encountered no significant traffic delays or problems finding the Hilton Garden Inn. Parking was a breeze, too. I was off to a good start. Following are some bits I came away with from the sessions I attended.

Keynote Presentation. Having seriously considered majoring in Industrial Psychology while in college, I

particularly appreciated Dr. Melvin Smith's presentation on Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is the ability to manage one's own and others' emotions. Dr. Smith shared his expertise on how emotional intelligence pertains to motivational and leadership strategies.

Web 2.0. Scott Abel has good name recognition among technical communicators. Now I know that he's also very entertaining. Scott's presentation on Web 2.0 taught me that Web 2.0 is about a shift in focus. The focus has shifted away from the static Web page, and toward the user. The focus is on providing Web services that enable the user to create, share, and organize content. For example, one service allows users to organize content by enabling them to store and share bookmarks using keyword tags. Wikis, another example, allow users to create and share content.

Structured authoring. Neil Perlin's presentation, "Structured Authoring without Framemaker or DITA," provided a clear definition of the fundamentals of structured authoring without the explanation being clouded by any particular tool. Neil presented four definitions, or levels, of structured authoring. The first, or lowest level, he calls "visually structured." In a visually structured document, all content is in Normal style, and all formatting is applied locally using the formatting toolbar. You can see the structure by the use of bold headings, varied fonts, and other formatting inconsistencies. But Neil would suggest that this is not really structured authoring because it does not leverage the power of computers for reuse and single sourcing. In contrast, the fourth, or highest level, of structured authoring is "Programmatically structured" by being validated according to a DTD or XSD (like DITA). The key features of this highest level of structured authoring are that the content is programmatically structured and the structure is programmatically enforceable.

DITA. Alan Houser's Presentation on DITA provided a basic definition and overview. He then went on to give some valuable tips on how to apply DITA and how to determine if it is right for you. One valuable tip pertained to cross references. I had been wondering how in the world cross references are handled, given that they need to be document specific and context specific. DITA relies on a file system of chunks that may end up reused in a multitude of deliverables, and thus are anything but document or context specific. The solution is to avoid inline cross references. In other words, do not put a cross reference in the same paragraph with its body text. Rather, make sure the cross reference is in a separate paragraph and is treated as a separate DITA topic. Do try to keep the cross reference in the same visual field as its associated body text, though.

XML. For me, the most valuable presentation was Russell Ward's "A Bit of XML to Solve a Boatload of Problems." I could sense immediately that Russell was one of us. He is a full time technical writer who created a single sourcing solution using Structured Framemaker and XML. Russell presented not a hypothetical example, but a real world documentary of how he used commonly available technology to design and implement a single sourcing solution. His solution was an evolutionary process that he presented in sequence. Russell needed to produce and manage a vast array of interface command manuals for his company's computer hardware products. He needed to deliver his content using PDFs and the Web. I could relate to his challenge and could see myself requiring a similar solution in the not too distant future. He took the plunge and conquered redundancy and inaccessibility of content by using structured content, conditional text, text insets, and multichannel publishing.

Russell tapped the power of Structured Framemaker. He used it as an XML editor to import and format XML content. He leveraged its plug-ins and scripting capabilities by developing two plugins that enhance content reuse. He calls the plug-ins "ABCM" and "Inset Plus." ACBM makes the use of multiple overlapping conditions much more manageable. Inset Plus enhances the manageability of text insets. He makes both these plug-ins available for free on his Web site at www.weststreetconsulting.com. Russell's solution also uses Framemaker to publish his content to PDF.

Russell used JavaScript to drive the automated publishing process on a Web server. Admittedly, a "significant" amount of JavaScript writing was necessary.

In the end, all in attendance saw a real world example of an automated single sourcing solution that did not require the purchase of an expensive prepackaged content management system.

An electronic copy of Russell's presentation is available at www.weststreetconsulting.com/misc/russ-neostc2007-pres.pdf.

Wrap-up. What impressed me about The Crucial Communicator as a whole was how effectively it provided such a volume of valuable information in only one day's time. This was obviously a great challenge for those coordinating this event, and a challenge well met.

STC Regional Conference surpasses goals

Keynote, presentations on target for educational experience

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

A capacity crowd of 111 technical communicators converged on the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Cleveland on October 12 for the "Crucial Communicator" STC Regional Conference. NEO STC also welcomed international experts in standards and user documentation from the ISO JTC 1 SC7/WG2 group from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and United Kingdom.

The impressive turnout, coupled with cutting-edge sessions by some leading STC presenters, was the result of more than a year of planning by many NEO volunteers. The event received an overall satisfaction rating of 3.7 from a 4-point scale by conference attendees. That is an incredible tribute for our chapter. Everyone should be proud!

Here's a sampling of just a few complimentary comments:

"Thank you again for the invitation. I had a wonderful time, learned a lot and always love being with members. Please let everyone know I felt totally taken care of." — **STC Executive Director Susan Burton**.

"This was undoubtedly the most professional STC local/regional conference I ever attended. The program and arrangements were first-rate, and your entire team should be commended." — **ISO representative Annette Reilly**.

"I've worked in tech comm for 15-20 years … and it's sometimes hard to find gatherings where you learn something. I learned a LOT at this one." — s**tatement from conference evaluation**.

"Expertise level of presenters —- excellent. Very much enjoyed keynote speaker Dr. [Melvin] Smith. Web 2.0/Scott Abel - fabulous! Well done, thank you!" —- **statement from conference evaluation**.

Dr. Melvin Smith from Case Western Reserve University set the tone for the day with a lively keynote address on Emotional Intelligence. His humor mixed with facts on brain patterns for the thought process and emotional responses were intriguing. Dr. Smith stressed the benefits of a positive outlook not only in the workplace but for our daily lives.

Scott Abel's closing address on Web 2.0 also was entertaining as he showed, through live Web feeds, how the Web platform has become more service-oriented rather than "lists of lists of data." He gave conference attendees some sites to further investigate, such as Jott.com, Del.icio.us.com, and videojug.com.

Session topics, covering a wide range of industry applications from DITA, structured authoring, editing, Captivate, to XML, were expertly delivered by Lisa Adair, Susan Burton, Keiran Dunne, Richard Hodgkinson, Alan Houser, Neil Perlin, Annette Reilly, Thea Teich, and Russell Ward. Our special thanks to all of them!

Conference co-chairperson Stephanie Webster also deserves kudos for the preparation and success of the Thursday night Welcome Reception. More than 50 people attended the reception at the hotel and were then shuttled by chartered bus for dinner at the Hard Rock Café in Tower City. Jean Church added a creative flair to the evening with her paper-made computer mice, a few of which contained stickers for special rock and roll prizes. Well done Stephanie and Jean!

Comprising the core planning committee were co-chairs Stephanie Webster and Bob Young, NEO President Tricia Spayer, Programs coordinator Kim Lindsey, Public Relations chair Jean Church, e-mail and Web designer Paul Holland, Treasurer Denise Kadilak, and Sponsorship chair Ginny Haas, who practically single-handedly raised more than $7,000 in corporate sponsorships and donations. Angie Dianetti, Sherri Henkin, and Sharon Resar also contributed a lot of time and effort to the overall success of the conference.

We also want to thank the following individuals that made this event possible: Brian Baddour, Sarah Burke, Jeanette Evans, Karla Fitch, Laurie Harrison, Kris Henige, Michelle Kastro, Mario Morelos, Tom Palombo, Barbara Philbrick, Rebecca Postupack-Slifer, David Spayer, Jim Spayer, Al Storey, Beth Troy, Amy Vogt, Denise Whitney, and Candace Wintering.

This event also was successful because of the tremendous support by the following sponsors: MadCap Software, STAR Group of America (Platinum sponsors); Diebold, The Geo Group (Gold); Cuyahoga Community College — Western Campus , Quadralay (Silver); ComponentOne, Adobe, MadCap, PPI Technical Communications (Rock & Write sponsors).

The following groups also donated items and prizes totaling more than $10,000: Adobe, AmTrust, ComponentOne, The Content Wrangler, FastSigns, The Geo Group, KSK Digital Printing Solutions, Master

Printing, MAXIMUS, Microsoft, O'Reilly books, Parker Hannifin, PPI, Radcom, and STAR Group.

Audiovisual equipment was donated by: InFocus Productions, Kim Lindsey, Klauscher Architects, Pressco Technology, Parker Hannifin, Radcom, and TMW.

NEO STC members honored at regional conference

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

Veteran NEO STC members **Barbara Philbrick** and **Bob Dianetti** were honored during The Crucial Communicator STC Regional Conference on October 12 at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Cleveland.

Barb, our newsletter editor extraordinaire, received a special STC pin in recognition of her being honored as an Associate Fellow this year. Barb is the second NEO STC member to receive this prestigious award. Bege Bowers was named Associate Fellow in 2002.

Bob received a plaque in recognition of his three-year tenure as Region 4 Director and service to the chapter. His award reads, "To Robert J. Dianetti, for his many years of meritorious leadership and commitment to NEO STC and the profession of technical communication. His tireless service as Region 4 Director has been an inspiration to his chapter and members of the Society for Technical Communication."

Our congratulations to Barb and Bob!

Member profile: Lisa Adair

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

Lisa Adair, a 1993 graduate of Youngstown State University in professional writing and editing, is a full-time editor with Rockwell Automation in Cleveland. Lisa was an intern and contractor before joining the group as a technical writer 11 years ago.

In 2005, she became one of two-and-a half editors at Rockwell. An STC member since 1994, Lisa has won several Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit in Northeast Ohio STC Technical Publications competitions. She also judged in the 2006 NEO STC Technical Publications competition. A member of STC's International Technical Editing SIG, Lisa also copyedits articles for the SIG newsletter, *Corrigo*.

Lisa crafted the presentation "Growing and Managing a Formal Editing Process," describing Rockwell's editing function. She presented this topic as part of an editing progression at the annual conference in Minneapolis in May and The Crucial Communicator STC Regional Conference this October. Lisa addressed the way the editors at Rockwell manage the workload of 14 writers spread over 7 locations. She explained how they manage the projects, edit with one voice, and gather metrics. She also described the editor and developer checklists that the department uses to assist with the editing process. Lisa is scheduled to make a similar presentation at an upcoming STC chapter meeting in Pittsburgh.

When not at work, Lisa enjoys spending time with her husband and two children. Her daughter is in second grade and her son attends preschool. Lisa and her family enjoy boating and rooting for the Detroit Redwings hockey team. Lisa is a native of the Youngstown area, where she currently lives.

Member profile: Ginny Haas

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

Ginny Haas joined STC in 2006, on the advice of Bob Dianetti, who said it would be a great way to learn more about technical communication. As for her involvement in STC, Ginny explains, "I attended the international conference in Minneapolis as an exhibitor. This gave me the opportunity to meet several of the other exhibitors and national sponsors in person. Later, when I contacted them regarding our regional conference, they already knew my name."

Working on The Crucial Communicator Conference committee was what Ginny calls a great experience to get involved. Her role in the conference was to secure sponsorships and exhibitors. Ginny notes that this role helped her hone her sales skills. "Since I am in sales, I am used to making cold calls and negotiating the details of contracts. I had the opportunity to work with an incredibly talented group of people on the committee. Bob Young and Stephanie Webster helped me get started. We worked together to come up with the sponsor levels. Bob gave me the initial list of potential sponsors to contact. Stephanie, Tricia Spayer, and Kim Lindsey continued to feed me possible contacts for sponsors and exhibitors. I was able to speak with and meet the many wonderful sponsors and exhibitors for the regional conference. Although it was a big commitment, it was worth every minute."

With an Associate of Arts Degree from Kent State University, Ginny started at Radcom in May 2006 as a Sales Assistant. Ginny is now an Account Executive at

Radcom, Inc. Radcom is a training development and documentation consulting company based in Hudson, Ohio. "I work to maintain relationships with our current clients and develop new accounts. Often times my clients have a problem that stems from a gap in knowledge. This gap can be between the company and its employees or the company and its clients. I can help when the gap can be closed by improved training or documentation. I work with them to come up with solutions to meet their specific goals. Sometimes I work with people who are part of a training or documentation team, but they have a specific project deadline that they cannot meet with the current staff. Radcom has been able to provide qualified writers and instructional designers to help these clients meet their project deadlines."

Prior to Radcom, Ginny worked for The Pattie Group, Inc., a landscape development firm, from 1993 to 2006. Ginny started at The Pattie Group in Accounts Payable, became the Contract Administrator, and eventually the Assistant Sales Manager. Ginny and husband, Bryan Hutnik, live in Ravenna. Ginny's daughter, Brandi Adamic, graduated from KSU in August, 2007. Ginny's son, Christopher Adamic, is a fourth year student at The Cleveland Institute of Art.

2007 WritersUA Skills and Technology Survey results are in

The results of this annual Skills and Technologies survey are now available. See www.writersua.com/surveys/skillstech07.

Free e-learning courses

By Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com)

There are free courses out there, just waiting for you to expand your knowledge.

Check out these course titles from My101:

- Advanced Microsoft PowerPoint 2003
- Intermediate Microsoft Excel 2007
- Your First Web Page
- Beginning Adobe Illustrator CS2
- Digital Home Video Editing Techniques
- Introduction to Portrait Photography, or my favorite series:

- Jump-start your creativity: Exploring Leonardo DaVinci's Notebooks

The courses generally run several sessions, opening one or two lessons per week. There are lessons, assignments, and message boards where you can talk to the instructor or fellow classmates. I've taken "Your First Web Page," "How to Think Like Leonardo DaVinci," "Digital Video Editing with Vegas Video," and a few others. I've found them pretty worthwhile.

I in no way represent Sony, My101, nor any of their affiliates!

To see the available courses or sign up, visit http://my101.learningcenter.sony.us/. The program is run by Sony, but not all courses have to do with Sony products.

Handy hint: Tips for maximizing screen space with Internet Explorer 7

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

Internet Explorer 7 has many useful toolbars, but sometimes you might want to close or hide those toolbars to maximize your screen space for viewing Web sites.

To turn off the Links bar, Status bar, or Menu bar:

1. Right-click an empty area next to a tab.
2. Uncheck **Links, Status Bar,** or **Menu Bar** as desired.

To view a Web site in IE7 in full-screen mode (hiding menu bars, toolbars, and the Windows taskbar):

1. Disable the Status bar if it is visible.
2. Press <Alt> + <Enter>.

Notes on full-screen view:

1. Move your mouse to the top of the full-screen view to open the IE7 standard controls.
2. Press <Alt> + <Enter> to return to window view.
3. If you are using multiple monitors, the IE7 full-screen view should only cover the current monitor.

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

Around the Society: Interesting articles from other community newsletters

- The unsung praises of editors. The Technical Editing SIG has a discussion of an article that appeared on salon.org. See http://www.stc-techedit.org/2007/08/20/general-impressions-in-praise-of-editors/. (Thanks to Sarah Burke for passing this along!)

- "Getting Yourself Hired Lesson 3: Do You Have Any Questions For Me? "by Dalton Hooper. Silicon Valley *Connection* newsletter, September 2007. See http://datelinehouston.wordpress.com/?s=getting+yourself+hired

- Book Review: *GUI Bloopers 2.0: Common User Interface Design DON'Ts and DO's*. See http://tinyurl.com/2695s7

- Review of MadCap Flare: http://www.ocstc.org/pdf/ts082007.pdf

- Review of Bluefish Editor (an open source HTML editor): http://www.ocstc.org/pdf/ts102007.pdf

- Emotional intelligence: http://datelinehouston.wordpress.com/2007/08/

- "You Google, but do you iGoogle?" http://www.stc-dfw.org/newsletter/current/feature7.html

- "Book review: *Manage It! Your Guide to Modern, Pragmatic Project Management by Johanna Rothman*." 2007. http://datelinehouston.wordpress.com/2007/10/24/book-review-2/

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! 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/

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

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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.