

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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President's column, December

The year's end is fast approaching, and the 2004-5 NEO STC season is gliding along like the proverbial one-horse open sleigh.

We've enjoyed several excellent meetings and web-based seminars and will offer these and more in 2005.

One improvement I could put on my holiday wish list, is to see more of you at these events – I really do miss your input and participation, and hope you will consider joining us for a networking lunch or monthly meeting soon!

By now, you should have received your renewal information and the annual dues notice for STC.

The Transformation initiative, at the international level, is resulting in new options for your membership.

Between our website and the society's (specifically, see <http://www.stc.org/transformation/>), and the letter from STC's Executive Director enclosed with the snail-mail dues notice, you've probably got plenty of information to help you understand these options.

The biggest decision for most members will be whether to continue receiving the journals in printed form or to go with the online-only versions.

We are of course hoping that all of you will continue membership in your "Geographic-Based Community," that is, our chapter. Today's economic climate has only heightened the value in local professional involvement. Plus, chapter members will continue to receive the fully-discounted member rate for meetings and other activities.

If you have questions about the renewal options, please do contact me or one of your other chapter officers. We'll be happy to help.

I wish you and yours a joyful and bright holiday season and hope to see you in the new year!

~ Kim Lindsey

Meeting December 9" Eat, drink, be merry, and help the needy!

Join us for our fourth annual holiday happy hour and food drive! Bring a guest if you like and kick back with friends. We'll be collecting nonperishable food and cash donations for the Cleveland Food Bank. Let's help those in need and make it another record year for our chapter.

We request that you bring three cans of food or \$5 to help the Cleveland Food Bank. (Donations are not required for meeting registration.)

We'll be meeting at the Flat Iron Café in the Flats, 1114 Center Street, Cleveland, OH, 216-696-6968.

For more information, including preregistration, see <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20041209.html>.

Upcoming events

- ◆ 12/8/2004: Phone seminar, "Highlighting Hazards: Mastering Warnings & Error Messages"*
- ◆ 12/9/2004: Holiday Social and Food Drive (see above)
- ◆ 1/12/2005: Webinar, "Webinar: Preemptive Project Planning"*
- ◆ 1/13/2005: Regular monthly meeting

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

Who would you like to hear speak? We will be doing a joint meeting with the Pittsburgh chapter on Saturday, April 23, 2005. If there is a particular speaker you can recommend, please send your suggestion and contact information to Nicky Bleiel (nbleiel@matrixplus.com) of the Pittsburgh chapter and our own Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com).

November meeting wrap-up: Karen Schriver

by Jill McCauslin (jmccauslin@radcomservices.com) and Maria Hlas of RADCom, Inc.

Karen Schriver, Ph.D., of KSA Document Design & Research, Inc. spoke at our November chapter meeting. Her talk, Top Ten Information Design Challenges for Organizations, was both informative and entertaining.

Karen presented what she feels are the top ten challenges in Information Design, showed some poorly designed materials, and followed each sample up with improved designs. The top ten information design challenges are:

1. Organizing content around stakeholders' goals
2. Evoking a positive person via word and image
3. Providing summaries, previews, breadcrumbs
4. Composing and formatting headings

5. Displaying the hierarchy visually
6. Shaping content to meet hybrid rhetorical goals
7. Cueing similar content consistently
8. Employing contrast to escape "gray pages"
9. Breaking content into meaningful chunks
10. Creating graphic replacements for prose

Some of these challenges were not necessarily new but she said she finds that they are still often overlooked. Some of these include presenting information for the user's benefit, using headings and consistent formatting for visual cues, chunking information, and using white space effectively.

A couple of her examples were especially interesting. One is the idea of transporting to paper documents some of the navigational prompts that we typically use on web sites. This is a great way to show people their location in the materials and how much further they have to go.

Another useful idea is "freeing" your data. Karen showed how using boxes around data closes it in and makes it harder to read. A more open look increases the usability. Based on her talk, we've already reevaluated some of our spreadsheets in our office.

Some of her samples came out of our everyday world. The meeting was the week after Election Day and she was able to show us both the ballots used in the Florida 2000 elections and the revised ballots used in the Florida 2004 elections.

She also showed us some proposed changes to the IRS Form 1040 and gave us a lesson on why strong information design principles do not always win out.

We've seen Karen speak several times and we agree that we always come away with something of value. It was great to welcome Karen back to northeast Ohio.

Technical publications competition winners

by Beth Williams (Beth_Williams@intuit.com) of Intuit

On November 20th, 2004, the NEO STC chapter held the consensus judging for this year's technical publications and online competition. As competition manager, I would like to announce this year's award winners:

Technical Publications Competition

Award of Excellence - Best of Show Award

- ◆ In-Court/Supreme Court User Guides by Robert Young

Award of Excellence

- ◆ Primavera System Administrator Guide by Kristen Kelleher
- ◆ Viterion 500 TeleHealth Monitor Operating Instructions by Mary Holland, Andrew Dawson, and Mark Blake

Award of Merit

- ◆ ProgressBook Quick Start Guide by Laurie Harrison, Jeff Bryk, and Anne Gort
- ◆ Software Manager Reference Manual by JoAnn Keosaian, Teresa Toth-Fejel, and Seth Seppanen
- ◆ Advanced Repackaging with Wise Package Studio Training Guide by JoAnn Keosaian, Kimberly Sanchez, and Ashley Gottfried-Quam

Thanks goes to Regina Alessandro, Sarah Burke, Kris Henige, Michelle Kastro, Joel Lantz, and Kim Lindsey for judging this year's technical publication competition.

Online Competition

Award of Excellence - Best of Show Award

- ◆ Pressco Web Site by Tricia Spayer

Award of Merit

- ◆ Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics Laboratory Specialist Training Program by Mary Toye and the iDesign & Delivery Team

And, thanks goes to Bob Clark, Kristen Jackson, Denise Kadilak, Lori Klepfer, Barb Philbrick, and Bob Young for judging the online competition this year.

See the entries at our February meeting

We will be showcasing our competition entry winners at our February 10th, 2005, program meeting, so please plan to attend not only to view outstanding technical communication, but also to say congratulations to our winners and thank you to our judges.

Volunteer opportunities

Our Programs Manager, Carrie Begeot, could use some help. Tasks would involve helping her with details like communicating with the speakers to get topic and biographic information, creating the meeting announcements, and keeping track of RSVPs and meal

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choices. Help Carrie continue to provide us with excellent chapter meetings!

Ken Rogers, our Treasurer, would like a backup for handling meeting registrations at the door. Tasks include collecting payment, preparing receipts, and greeting members.

Contact Carrie at carrie_begeot@intuit.com, Ken at drken@adelphia.net, or Kim Lindsey at klindsey@parker.com to volunteer.

NEO STC is only as strong as its volunteers! Help NEO STC while increasing your professional visibility, developing new skills, and becoming friends with fellow members.

Welcome to new members!

A warm welcome to the following new chapter members. We look forward to meeting you!

- ◆ Daryl Stein
- ◆ Jeffrey Bryk
- ◆ Ellen Kurr
- ◆ Michael Renock-Wecker
- ◆ Stephanie Schmezler
- ◆ Ashley Janke
- ◆ Sherri Sakoff

What annoys you most about Microsoft Word?

by Karla Fitch of Parker-Hannifin, Inc.

O'Reilly, the well-known technology topics publisher, is pulling together a new book called "Word Annoyances" and they're looking for help from users like us!

As you might guess, "Word Annoyances" ponders the problems, snarls, quirks, bugs, and just dumb things about Word that drive users nuts. The annoyances will encompass a range of topics: general misbehavior, creating and saving documents, text entry and editing, formatting and layout, printing, tables, macros, and so on.

Word is the most ubiquitous -- and probably the most annoying -- word processor on the planet. If you have annoyances that you would like to see solved, email marsee@oreilly.com with "Word Annoyances" in the subject line. Make sure to note what version of Word and Windows you are using!

An example:

The Annoyance

The wretched animated paper clip keeps appearing every time I try to get help from Office, and sometimes even when I am just working. How can I get rid of it?

The Fix

Some people love the Office Assistant characters -- Clippit (the paper clip), Rocky the Dog, the Office Cat, the Genius, Mother Nature -- but I have never met these people. Everyone who mentions the Office Assistant wants to get rid of it. And anyone enthusing about the wonders of Merlin is a good candidate for the target end of a fire-hose demonstration.

To prevent the Office Assistant from appearing, right-click the Office Assistant character that's currently bugging you and click Properties on the shortcut menu. On the Options tab of the Office Assistant dialog box, clear the Use The Office Assistant check box. Click OK.

What if you want the Office Assistant back? Simply choose Help > Show The Office Assistant, and the brute is back with you. Invoking the Office Assistant like this selects the Use The Office Assistant check box on the Options tab of the Office Assistant dialog box, so you'll need to clear this check box when you want peace and quiet again.

NEOSTC O'Reilly User Group

The NEOSTC has joined with [O'Reilly](#) to offer members discounts on O'Reilly products, review copies of books, and other exciting benefits.

Anyone who has ever browsed the computer books section at their favorite bookstore is sure to have noticed books published by O'Reilly. The technology topics publisher is well known for featuring line drawings of rare animals on its otherwise stark, white covers.

Originally established as a technical writing and consulting company, O'Reilly started publishing books in earnest shortly after 1988. Since then, the company has unfolded into one of the best-known computer and technology publishers in the world.

The O'Reilly User Group & Professional Association Program was formed in an effort to promote communications between the publisher and the readers that made O'Reilly so successful. Professional associations that join the program enjoy the following benefits:

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- ◆ Review copies of O'Reilly products
- ◆ Donations of books and other promo items
- ◆ 20% user group member discount on all O'Reilly products and conferences
- ◆ User group newsletter (<http://ug.oreilly.com>)
- ◆ Quarterly catalogs
- ◆ O'Reilly speakers

For information on getting discounts on O'Reilly products, or to request review copies of new books, contact Karla Fitch (kfitch@parker.com).

The Helpline: The Key

What does the key do?

Most people know that you can use  to open the Start menu, but did you know it can also:

- ◆ Minimize all windows: +D
- ◆ Show all windows: +Shift+M
- ◆ Open My Computer: +E
- ◆ Cycle through the Taskbar (like Alt+Tab, but without opening another window): +Tab
- ◆ Open the Windows Explorer search function: +F
- ◆ Open the Run dialog box: +R
- ◆ Open the System Properties dialog box: +Break

Hot jobs

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the [current chapter website](#) for details.]

Every month, we will highlight a few of the job listings from the NEO STC job site (<http://www.neostc.org/jobs/>).

- ◆ GED Integrated Solutions in Twinsburg, OH, is looking for a technical writer for its Engineering Department.
- ◆ The Ernst & Young office in Cleveland, OH, is looking for an Internal Communications Manager to manage the publication and communication of procedure documents.
- ◆ Progressive Insurance in Mayfield Village, OH, is looking for Training Manager I. This position will manage the analysis and identification of specific

training needs for personnel and manage Trainers who plan, develop, administer and conduct training.

- ◆ Progressive Insurance is also looking for a Training Specialist II. This position will be responsible for technical training and course design.
- ◆ Progressive Insurance is also looking for a Training Specialist III. This position designs and develops user interface features, site navigation, and overall site orientation.
- ◆ LESCO, Inc., in Strongsville, OH, is looking for a Print Production Supervisor who will supervise the direction, execution and distribution of marketing communications materials.
- ◆ Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P. in Cleveland, OH, has an opening for an Electronic Marketing Manager. This position will be responsible for managing, implementing, and maintaining technology-based marketing tools including the SSD web site, mailing lists, databases, intranet, and CRM tools.
- ◆ The National Association of College Stores (NACS) in Oberlin, OH, is looking for an Assistant Editor, Publications. This position will write feature articles and department copy for The College Store magazine, assist with copy flow management, and handle other writing duties as assigned.

If your company has a job opening, let Sarah Burke (sarahwilsonburke@hotmail.com) or Nams Malik (nmalik@software.rockwell.com) know. Job listings on the NEOSTC web site are free and reach a targeted audience!