Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

President's column: Another member benefit: Learning something new

By Bob Young (Ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

Sometimes the smallest statements seem to make the most profound impact.

That thought came to mind as I was sitting at a conference table with several other NEO STC members to judge competition entries. The fact that these members had sacrificed a beautiful Saturday morning to help with the consensus judging in itself spoke volumes for the volunteer spirit of our organization. But that's a topic for another day.

The comment that drew my interest occurred during a discussion of a technical term. A member said, "I didn't know that. See, you learn something new each day."

Bingo! Learning through observation and discussion is the catalyst for STC membership. A lot of lip service is given to ways for providing membership service. Yet, it simply boils down to getting involved with your peers to glean some knowledge about our technical profession.

The opportunity has never been better, with diverse topics at monthly meetings, webinars, software seminars (see related story), networking, and, of course, the annual STC conference in May. STC membership offers all of these avenues; it just takes some investment of resources (time, energy, money).

Which brings us to membership dues. Yes, it's time to utter that obnoxious four-letter word: d-u-e-s. By now, current members should have received renewal information. The online registration is easy but, with the holidays and everything, it's also easy to put off renewing. So, this is a friendly reminder that there is incentive to take care of the dues payment before January 1. (There's a grace period to Feb. 28, 2006 to still be eligible to vote in STC elections.) See Membership Categories for rates.

Dues are tax deductible, but they must be deducted on the tax form for the year in which they were paid. So, dues paid in 2005 can be deducted only from the 2005 tax return. If you pay after December 31, 2005, then the dues are deductible on the 2006 tax return form. Dues can be deducted as a charitable expense, a business expense, or a miscellaneous deduction. Check with your accountant or IRS office to see which option applies to you.

Prospective members can get 13 months for the price of 12 if they send their dues this month to the STC office.

How? Contact membership@stc.org. Members can renew online at http://www.stc.org/duesrenewal/.

If your employer pays the dues, please send them a note of thanks along with one of our new color brochures about NEO STC. The brochure is available at http://www.neostc.org/brochure.pdf.

There are many activities planned for the coming year. We hope you will continue to join us, and hopefully "learn something new" along the way.

On behalf of the officers, we wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday!

December 8 meeting: Holiday social hour

Join us for our fifth annual holiday happy hour! This is the time of year when we reflect back on all that has happened this past year. Hopefully we can focus on the positive! Bring your festive and cheerful spirit as we kick back with friends.

Please bring 3 cans of food or a $5 donation for the Food Bank to the event. This is a request and is not required for meeting registration. Starting at 6 p.m., there will be a buffet dinner of chicken, pulled pork, macaroni and cheese, green beans and soft drinks. Cost is $15 for members and students and $18 for non-members.

For more information on the Food Bank, see http://www.clevelandfoodbank.com/food/organize.asp

♦ Location: Hoggys Barn & Grill, Valley View; find us in the upstairs Party Loft.

See http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20051208.html for additional details and online registration.

Upcoming events

♦ 12/7/2005: Webinar: Mastering Metadata: Making the Most of Your Content Management System. No local host site yet.*

♦ 12/8/2005: Monthly Meeting: Holiday Social Party and Food Drive at Hoggys Barn & Grill, 5975 Canal Road, Valley View. Members are encouraged to bring three cans of food or a $5 donation for the Cleveland Food Bank.

♦ 12/9/2005: Networking lunch. Ruby Tuesday, 3265 West Market St., Fairlawn

♦ 1/11/2006: Webinar: Textual Bloopers and How to Avoid Them. No local host site yet.*

- 1/12/2006: Monthly meeting: Ed Stevens presents "Best foot forward on different paths"

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

Reminder: If you RSVP but do not show up for a meeting, it costs the chapter money — we have to pay up-front for meals. Please remember to let the Programs Committee (programs@neostc.org) know in advance if you have registered but cannot make it to a meeting.

Non-NEO STC events

- 12/14/2005: Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Usability Professionals' Association (http://www.neoupa.org/) and Web Association combined holiday party. Begins at 5:30pm at the Flat Iron Cafe in the Flats. Current NEOUPA members (as of December 1, 2005) will get in free — no cover or food charge and it includes 1 drink! Non-members will be charged $10 at the door.

The return of Software Saturday

Alan Houser, a certified Adobe instructor, will provide a full-day teaching seminar on Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 and Quadralay's WebWorks ePublisher Pro on January 21, 2006 at Cuyahoga Community College's Western Campus in Parma. The hands-on training is from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Parma location.

Whether you are a novice user or veteran FrameMaker user, Houser will share a few secrets on honing your single-sourcing skills. He will also share hints on converting Microsoft Word documents into other platforms using ePublisher Pro's functionality.

Houser will teach you how to construct a FrameMaker template and then use ePublisher Pro to customize the single-sourced copy for online Help, or for Web-based applications or mobile devices. This same process can be used for Microsoft Word documents.

RSVP by Tuesday, January 17, to programs@neostc.org or call 330-966-4568. Include names and email addresses of all attendees.

Upcoming board meeting

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for January 10 from 6 pm to 8:45 pm at the Independence Library at 6361 Selig Drive in Independence. Officers and committee chairpersons are expected to attend this important meeting.

Committee chairpersons are to write a one-page report on what their respective groups have accomplished to date toward their goals. Please provide several copies of your committee report for all in attendance.

Please let President Bob Young (Ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net) or Vice President Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com) know if you need any equipment for the report presentations or if you cannot attend this meeting.

For directions to the library, see http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org and click on the Branches tab.

November meeting review: Back to College Night at Tri-C

By Sherri L. Henkin (sleah47@juno.com)

It was "Back to College Night" for NEO STC on November 10, 2005. At Tri-C's Western Campus, Professor Stan Kohn presented "Adobe Photoshop CS2 - Highlights 101."

Professor Kohn explained that Adobe has added features to this newest version of Photoshop that enhances its usability in light of the developments in digital imaging. The handouts detailed the system requirements and features of CS2. And, although Adobe does not require a Macintosh for CS2, Professor Kohn gave us his biased opinion about using Macs for graphic work!

This session of "Highlights - 101" focused on the CS2 features relevant to technical communicators:

- Licensure Changes: If users own a PC and a laptop, the license now covers both of these machines. Caveat: both must be either PC or Mac.

- The Adobe Bridge: This is the File Browser portion of CS2. This feature creates thumbnails for all of the Adobe products. This feature affords the user the option to make changes to the thumbnail images in that format.

- Metadata: While viewing the thumbnail, the user can view property detail about the digital image, including, for example, the make and model of the camera used.

- Saving an Image for the Web: Regardless of the original photograph file extension, users can save images as gif, jpg, etc., depending upon the ultimate use of that image.

- Palette: Although one can manipulate the color of a digital image, the palette that is specific the image limits the extent of color manipulation

- Text: If most of the project is image-based with minimal text, Photoshop is the best software to use.

When sending images to clients using Photoshop, there are three options:

- Save thumbnail images to a PDF presentation and protect it with a password.

- Contact Sheet: The user can select the size of the document, resolution, column size, and so on.

- Picture Package: The user can select the page size, different layout options, and resolution choices.

As part of our session, we toured of the Visual Communication and Design Center. Professor Kohn and his associates showed us through the dark rooms, graphic labs and classrooms, consisting of state-of-the-art — and beyond state-of-the-art — equipment. Professor Kohn has obtained grants from various businesses and private foundations for this Center of Excellence.

In wrapping up this session, Professor Kohn encouraged us to review the class offerings and consider becoming a Tri-C Vis/Comm student. It is tempting — for the privilege of learning from talented professors and using some unbelievable equipment!

Welcome to new and transferred members!

- Nicholas Bucur

- Kristen P. Easton

- Shannon J. Siwicki

- Paulette M. Tiggs

We look forward to seeing you!

Member profile: Nams Malik

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

Namrata (Nams) Malik makes a great contribution to our NEO STC chapter as a member of the team that maintains the jobs section of the NEO STC Web site. Nams became a student member of the STC Pittsburgh chapter in 2002 and joined NEO STC in 2004, at which time she volunteered to work for the employment committee.

Nams did her undergraduate work (Bachelor in Science and Diploma in Systems Management) in India, where, after graduation, she spent a few months teaching SQL Server and Java. She then heard about the field of technical communication and became interested because, as she puts it, "I love technology, writing, and communicating with people." Technical communication, she goes on, "seemed to be the perfect blend of all three."

Her first job as a technical communicator was for an enterprise resource planning company in India, where for about 2 years, she was involved in various national (India) and international (East Africa) projects.

A 2004 graduate of Carnegie Mellon with a Master of Arts in Professional Writing, majoring in technical communication, Nams is currently working with the Middleware Group (Global Manufacturing Solutions) at Rockwell Automation, as an Information Developer.

Her current job responsibilities include:

- developing online help, release notes, application program interface (API) and hardcopy documentation

- updating product web sites

- creating documentation and estimation plans for projects

- assisting application developers in making graphic user interface design decisions

- interacting with technical support engineers to learn about customer-related issues

Besides involvement in NEO STC activities, Nams is a member of STC's Emerging Technologies SIG and is part of STC's International Technical Communication SIG (http://www.stcsig.org/itc/) where, as she explains it, "My primary responsibility is to serve as a liaison to a country by monitoring their STC newsletters, as well as other sources of technical communication news that illustrate happenings in the field of technical communication. Currently, I am the liaison for Japan, Latin America, and India."

Nams currently lives in Mayfield Heights while the rest of her family is in India. Her interests include a love for reading, both fiction and non-fiction. In her spare time, she says that she loves to "study typography and interface design." She also loves to travel. A couple of years down the line, she says that she would like to go back to school to pursue a degree in human computer interaction and design.

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Thanks to competition volunteers

Our thanks to Candace Wintering for running the competitions this year. This is not an easy activity to chair, but Candace had everything organized and running smoothly. We also want to thank the members who judged entries. Thanks also go to Cheryl Bennett, who made the judges' arrangements at John Carroll University.

Special thanks to John Carroll Communications Instructor Robert Noll for letting us into the school on two early Saturday mornings to use the computer lab and a conference room.

Announcing the STC Atlanta Chapter 2006 Currents Conference and call for speakers

The STC Atlanta Chapter is proud to announce Currents 2006, the 17th annual technical communications conference, on March 24 and 25, 2006 at the Atlanta campus of Mercer University. Currents 2006 includes a full-day workshop on Friday, March 24 and a full-day conference on Saturday, March 25. BreakPoint Books will be present on Saturday with technical communication-related books for sale.

For more information on Currents 2006, point your browser to http://www.stcatlanta.org/currents.htm. Additional details will be posted to the Web site as information becomes available.

Call for Speakers

Share your professional expertise with fellow technical communicators at Currents 2006. The Currents 2006 planning committee is now accepting proposals for presentations. For information regarding proposals, see http://www.stcatlanta.org/currents06/callforspeakers2006.pdf

Submit your proposal no later than Friday, January 13, 2006. Authors of accepted proposals will receive detailed instructions for preparing their papers for publication, which will be due no later than Friday, February 24, 2006.

For more information, contact Leigh Richardson (lrichardson@intellisync.com).

That time again: Dues renewal

You should have received your dues renewal reminder. To renew online, you can go to https://www.stc.org/duesrenewal/. Renewing online is fast and easy — all you need are your membership number, password, and credit card. If you have forgotten your password, go to http://www.stc.org and select "password reminder."

Membership categories:

♦ Classic membership, $150. Entitles members to the paper versions of Intercom and Technical Communication and access to the online versions, and full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site. Members in this category may choose one of the following community options for 2006: two chapters, one chapter and two SIGs, or four SIGs. Classic members may join additional SIGs at a cost of $5 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of $10 per chapter.

♦ E-Membership, $140. Entitles members to the same benefits as classic membership, except that e-members do not receive paper copies of Intercom and Technical Communication. Members in this category may choose one of the following community options for 2006: two chapters, one chapter and two SIGs, or four SIGs. E-members may join additional SIGs at a cost of $5 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of $10 per chapter.

♦ Limited Membership, $130. Includes subscriptions to the paper versions of Intercom and Technical Communication and full access to the members-only area of the STC Web site. Limited memberships do not include membership in chapters or SIGs.

♦ Student Membership, $55. Student members receive the same benefits as e-members, but have no voting rights. In addition, student members may join an unlimited number of SIGs and up to two chapters (one student and one professional). Students may join additional chapters at a cost of $10 per chapter.

♦ Retired Membership, $75. Entitles members to the same benefits as classic membership at a reduced rate. To qualify for retired membership, an individual must have been a member of STC for 10 or more years, and must be either 60 years old or medically retired.

Handy hint: Change the formatting of comment text in Microsoft Word

You can change the display of comment text (the ones you create using Insert > Comment from the menu bar or Reviewing task bar. Here's how:

1. Create a comment or place your cursor in an existing comment.
2. Open the **Style** menu.
3. Make sure the Comment Text paragraph style is displayed.
4. Change the font or paragraph style as needed.

And for your holiday cooking — Keep garlic from sticking to your knife while mincing. Place a few drops of olive or vegetable oil over the garlic. The oil will coat the garlic and keep it from sticking to the knife.

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 highlight a few of the job listings from the NEO STC job site (http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php).

Technical and scientific communication

- Ben Venue Laboratories in Bedford is seeking a Senior Technical Writer to author complex documentation products, develop templates, review drafts, and mentor technical writers. More information
- Ben Venue Laboratories in Bedford is seeking a Technical Writer to develop Master Batch Production Records for pharmaceuticals, including information coordination, writing, and review. More information

Web design and development

- American Greetings Corporation in Cleveland is looking for a Web Designer to design visual interfaces for key Web sites, maintain existing Web sites, and design promos, ad banners, seasonal promotions, and newsletters. More information
- Eaton Corporation in Cleveland is seeking a Manager, Digital Communications to manage digital and web-oriented communications projects for Eaton's corporate communications. More information

Training and instructional design

- National City Corporation in Cleveland is seeking a Training/Development Specialist III to carry out learning and development initiatives to enhance employee management and leadership capabilities. More information
- Key Bank in Cleveland is looking for a Senior Employment Development Manager to manage regional learning strategies, analyze skill needs, implement training initiatives, and create training design documents. More information

Graphic design and technical illustration

- Insivia, a marketing and technology firm in Cleveland, is seeking a Graphic Designer to produce creative collateral, including corporate identities, direct mailers, brochures, print ads, multimedia ads, Web sites, and advertising media. More information
- Sanctuary Software Studio, Inc., an Akron-based multimedia production company, is seeking a Multimedia Designer with strong skills in HTML, CSS, Macromedia Flash animation and ActionScripting, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Illustrator. More information

Editing

- Penton Media in Cleveland is looking for an Associate Editor to join the American Machinist editorial team to write articles and departments and conduct interviews. More information
- Applied Industrial Technologies, Inc. in Cleveland is seeking a Web and Print Copywriter/Editor to coordinate Web site content, in-house catalog production, and other information technology-related projects. More information
- Penton Media in Cleveland is looking for an Associate Editor to join the Contracting Business editorial team to write articles, post articles to the magazine's Web site and e-newsletter, attend conferences and seminars, and participate in magazine production. More information

Communications and marketing

- Theken Spine of Akron, a leader in spinal implant systems, is seeking a Marketing Communications Specialist to develop advertisements, literature, datasheets, graphics, and other marketing-related material. More information

- Progressive of Mayfield Village is looking for a Communications Specialist II to create presentations, write scripts and manage video production, develop collateral materials and articles for company-wide communications, and create Web site content. More information

If your company has a job opening, please contact any member of the NEO STC Employment Committee:

- Sarah Burke (sarahwilsonburke@hotmail.com)

- Nams Malik (nmalik@software.rockwell.com)

- Sherri Henkin (sleah47@juno.com)

Job listings on the NEOSTC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience!

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