

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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President's column

"In the bleak midwinter," it was no colder than usual here on the north coast.

Involvement

I've been enjoying the opportunity to get to know more and more of you during this year. My only real frustration as chapter president has been that I'd like to spend more time talking to each person when we do get together.

It takes a special effort to come out to a meeting or networking lunch - thank you! And I hope to see you again soon!

Election

The annual STC election is coming up soon. When you receive your ballot, you will notice something unusual: This year we are voting for both candidates for office and for changes to the ByLaws of the international Society.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will see information on the candidates, so I needn't be redundant.

The ByLaws changes are significant. We are fortunate to have two Society board members right in our chapter, to help us understand the reasons and goals behind the transformation initiative.

Before voting occurs, your chapter leadership team will be prepared to answer any questions you have on the election.

~ Kim Lindsey

Meeting February 10

Usability methods for the non-usability professional

At our February meeting, Scott Butler, a usability professional with Progressive Insurance and owner of Ovo Studios, will show us how we can apply usability methods easily and cheaply. He will introduce simple and effective ways to get the feedback you need to improve the usability and quality of your products.

You will also learn how to use the data you collect to make informed decisions about modifying the design of your product, whether it is a help system or a software application.

We'll be meeting at the Holiday Inn, 6001 Rockside Road, Independence.

For more information, including preregistration, see <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20050210.html>.

Bring your business card to enter a drawing for a free copy of popular Intuit software!

The Consultant and Independent Contractor's Special Interest Group will meet at 5:30 p.m.

Upcoming events

- ◆ 2/9/2005: Webinar, "Adobe Acrobat 7.0"*
- ◆ 2/10/2005: Monthly meeting, Scott Butler on Usability Testing (see above)
- ◆ 2/16/2005: Webinar, "Global Diversity: Cross-cultural Communication Awareness"*
- ◆ 2/17/2005: Networking Luncheon, Reserve Inn, 30 W. Streetsboro St., Hudson
- ◆ 3/9/2005: Webinar, "That's a Good Question!"*
- ◆ 3/10/2005: Monthly meeting, Georgia Roeming on "Translation: A Writer's Guide" at the Holiday Inn in Independence

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

April Meeting Change. Please note that our April joint meeting with Pittsburgh has been cancelled and we will be holding our own meeting instead. The Programs Committee (programs@neostc.org) is looking for ideas on topics, speakers, and event location. We are especially interested in a graphics/images focus, in light of the great response to January's meeting.

Got any ideas? Let us know! (West-siders, here's your chance!)

January meeting wrap-up: printing hints and tips

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

On January 13th, Paul Hanisko of Master Printing treated NEO STC to a fast-paced standing room only presentation about printing documents. He introduced us to the "Printer's Alphabet Soup" (RIP, RGB, CMYK), outlined the production process, and gave us suggestions to consider when choosing a printing company.

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Paul outlined the steps in the production of a document or manual:

- ◆ Determining the budget
- ◆ Assessing which document creation software to use
- ◆ Putting information into the page assembly process using the software
- ◆ Reading the codes into a picture
- ◆ Sending the information to a RIP (Raster Image Processor)

The largest share of the production budget, Paul said, is the creation of the document, including the approval process. The other portions are costs for production and distribution.

At each phase, he recommended that the printer and the document authors be in close contact in order to monitor the process and protect the integrity of the document. Often there is literally "something lost in the translation" during the production process. An example of this "mistranslation" is between the creation software (such as Word) and the page assembly programs (e.g. Pagemaker, Quark, Publisher, or Framemaker). Changes to the original appearance can also occur during the code reading step and RIP (where plates or film are made).

Paul offered suggestions for file formats for print and graphic files. For example, low-resolution images such as tif and bitmap do not work well in a high-resolution environment. Also consider the difference in graphic files between vector (such as CorelDraw) and raster images (such as bitmaps). The producers of the documents need to know what types the printer will require. Another glitch can occur in the actual printing of the proofs. Some printers require specific files such as EPS (encapsulated postscript file).

Paul graciously fielded questions from the group concerning each of these steps. He gave suggestions about printing in the best resolution, what software packages may work best to capture screen images and how to choose a printing house. Paul suggested that we ask these questions when choosing a printing company:

- ◆ Are our files returned?
- ◆ How does the printer respond when there are problems?
- ◆ Which printing company has the same software you used in the creation process? Corollary: Same operating system?

- ◆ Does the printer provide a proof?
- ◆ In your cost analysis of digital compared to conventional printing, what is the volume to be printed and the complexity of the document? Ask the printer to price it both ways.
- ◆ How can the vendor receive original files? can they accept the three typical methods of email, a CD/Zip version, and the printed document?

Paul left us with much to consider and review. The packet of information from Master Printing has several useful documents especially concerning paper type and the printing process.

It was a jam-packed presentation!

Congratulations to our new senior members!

Kim Lindsey and Gail Pogue have achieved senior member status. Senior members have been with STC for at least five years.

National conference is coming soon!

Experiencing Technical Communication, STC's 52nd Annual Conference, will be held May 8-11, 2005 in Seattle, Washington.

The full schedule is due in early February. Check <http://www.stc.org/conference.asp> for up-to-date information.

Jobs well done

by Brian Baddour (webmaster@neostc.org), STC Web Committee Chair

Web sites on the Internet can have any number of web pages. With very few exceptions, each web site's home page is the site's most visited. "Dynamic" pages such as a calendar or search page are usually the runner-up, because they're the most actionable and current -- the most useful.

At www.neostc.org, that honor goes to our job openings page. That page alone gets about 2000 hits per month.

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

Credit our chapter's officers and Employment Committee for having the creativity, vision, and drive to engineer what technical communicators in Northeast Ohio needed

most these last 3 years: a centralized list of jobs in our field and our region. A handful of people in our chapter have taken to regularly scouring the best job listings, online and on paper, to assemble this big list. If it is not the only one of its kind, it is arguably the best.

Could it get any better?

It did, just before Christmas. And if you didn't notice the change, that's a good thing.

See, when a team of people collaborate on a web site, let alone on a single, dynamic page, they're liable to "clobber" each others' new entries. Most big job listings on the Internet use web programming to generate such pages on the fly, using a database also on the web server as its source. Databases are good at letting one person update one job opening record, while letting someone else update another such record. The STC has one, but it leaves some things to be desired, and the TTT I am on has not (yet?) fulfilled its agenda of customizing such tools for the STC's new communities. Web programs to create such tools from scratch on a web site require equal parts skill and patience.

Where would a guild of writers find a programmer to do this stuff on the cheap? We needed to look no further than our current chapter Treasurer, then Web Committee Chair, Ken Rogers. He spent hundreds of hours teaching himself a new programming language (PHP) and database management system (MySQL), coordinating design and testing iterations, adapting to an emergency change in web host (to APlus.net) on which the database resides, and preparing disaster contingencies, just to let our jobs page reach its potential.

Credit also goes to Sarah Burke, Stephanie Webster, Namata Malik, Barbara Philbrick, Sherri Henkin, and Myron Shawala, who gave Ken plenty of content and feedback.

Was all this effort worth it?

With a list approaching 100 job openings at any given time, the information is getting too big to squeeze into a single page. Maybe someone will want the list broken across multiple pages. Maybe someone else will want to narrow the search criteria. Who knows, maybe another geographic community (chapter) in Pennsylvania or Australia (!) would want to share the tool while segregating the data and co-branding the jobs list. Hey, it's a database: we can manipulate the design easily now!

So now, technical communicators in our region have better odds of making a living with their skills. Jobs well done indeed.

STC national elections coming soon

The annual STC election is coming up soon. When you receive your ballot, you will notice something unusual: This year we are voting for both candidates for office and for changes to the ByLaws of the international Society.

The candidates

Notice two familiar names on the ballot: Mike Bates and Lori Klepfer are both NEOSTC members. Congratulations!

- ◆ President*: Suzanna Laurent
- ◆ First Vice President*: Mike Bates
- ◆ Second Vice President*: Linda L. Oestreich, Deborah F. Sauer, and Paula Berger
- ◆ Treasurer: William C. (W.C.) Wiese and Douglas C. Woestendiek
- ◆ Nominating Committee (Two to be elected, each for a two-year term): Joanna Castner, Michelle A. Didier, Lori J. Klepfer, and Martha K. Sippel

* The STC Bylaws specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected.

Bylaw changes

The ByLaws changes are significant. The board of directors has approved the placement of the following changes to Article IV of the STC Bylaws. Changes to Articles I, II, IV, X, and XI of the bylaws require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the votes cast by the membership.

1. Change Article IV, Section 3. Duties of Board Members, Item C. Second Vice President, to read, "The second vice president acts for the first vice president when the occasion arises. The second vice president also performs such other duties as the president or the board may assign." This removes the text "and serves as coordinator of the Society's chapters by assigning the directors to sponsor specific chapters and by such other means as is deemed advisable."

2. Change Article IV. Section 3 Item G. Directors, to read, "Directors attend all board meetings, serve on Society committees, and perform such other duties as the president or the board may assign." Previously, this Item read, "Directors attend all board meetings, serve as directors of chapters and Society committees, and perform such other duties as the president or the board may assign."
3. Remove STC Bylaw Article IV, Section 5. Regionalization: "The Society is divided into eight regions; each region includes all chapters, members-at-large, and other affiliations that exist in that region. Those members assigned to a region elect one director who represents that region."

Procedures for STC's 2005 Election

The annual STC election will be held early 2005, and only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2005, will be eligible to vote. An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2005 allows members to receive their election materials via e-mail. In March, members who selected this option will be e-mailed the slate, candidate biographies, and voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive these materials by first-class mail. The election closes April 15.

Be sure to renew your membership by February 28 to have a say in STC's future!

English.com shows use of English as a design element: a web site review

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

I discovered this site about a year ago (though the site was formed in 1996). The site defines English as "English mistakes that appear in Japanese advertising and product design." The disclaimer page on the site notes that "the pages of this site are real and true examples of flawed English. To the best of our knowledge, none of the images have been doctored in any way..."

The site also states "No Offense Meant - Really!" and that "... among the thousands of emails received by English.com, there have been about one or two that have questioned the political correctness of the site... it is important to state here that 'Japanese English' was produced for entertainment purposes only - not to offend a particular race, people, or society. Anyone who

has lived in Japan for an extended amount of time will tell you that Japanese corporations come up with some interesting and oftentimes funny English."

It was even more telling when I read that "The webmaster of this site lived in Japan for over 10 years and loves the people and culture."

If you haven't seen the site, a visit might be in order. The site is also good for reminding us that for cases where the use of English is not for design purposes but for real communications - as in the case of instructions - consulting a native speaker is essential.

I also learned a lot from the following Q & A sections of the site that explain that, in most instances, "Japanese companies do get it right and quite often consult a native English speaker for corrections."

Q. Why do the Japanese try to use so much English if they can't do it right?

A. Most of the English found on English.com is not an attempt to communicate - English is used as a design element in Japanese products and advertising to give them a modern look and feel (or just to "look cool"). There is often no attempt to try to get it right, nor do the vast majority of the Japanese population (= consumers) ever attempt to read the English design element in question... There is therefore less emphasis on spell checking and grammatical accuracy (note: the same can be said for the addition of Japanese or Chinese characters to hats, shirts and tattoos found in the US or Europe).

Quite often it is easier to come up with English names than Japanese for a particular product. New products are brought to the marketplace in Japan more than anywhere else in the world and Japanese words and slogans quickly get used up. Japanese graphic designers will often tell you that English is widespread because the Japanese writing script (or scripts) limits their creativity - there are only so many ways to display their language, and only so many different types of fonts to use.

Q. Why can't they get it right? Don't Japanese study the English language?

A. The Japanese educational system is one of the best in the world - one of the primary reasons Japan was able to build the world's second largest economy. It is not a perfect system, however - although most Japanese study English for anywhere from 6 to 10 years as a second language, they get little practical use since there are not enough native English speakers to practice with. The fact that the grammatical structure of the two

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languages is quite different does not help. The Japanese language also does not contain many sounds that you find in English.

Q. Why don't the Japanese check their English before putting them out into the world?

A. As stated above, many companies DO check their English before placing them on products, within advertising, etc.(these companies get it right). There are just many companies/individuals that either do not care to do so (again, in such cases English is used as facet of design more than a way to communicate), or do not have the resources to check their English - although there are many more native English speakers living in Japan now, they still comprise a very small portion of the overall population.

Q. Your site disgusts me. How can you make fun of others like that? They are only trying their best to use English as a second language.

A. Please remember that the point of Engrish.com is to have fun with the Engrish phenomenon, not to make fun of (criticize/mock/ridicule) the people who made it. The webmaster has taken great pains not to point out the faults of others or have a discriminatory tone - just to have fun with the results. Engrish.com does its best to stay away from any type of "ha ha - these guys are idiots" lines or insinuations. You will also find that the vast majority of the English examples on Engrish.com were produced by companies - not individuals and that most of the Engrish found within the site is not an attempt to communicate, but are examples of English being used as a design element.

Time to renew those STC memberships!

It's that time of year.

Please do not forget to renew your STC membership this month. The deadline is February 28 to renew without an interruption in your membership status.

When you're completing the renewal form, we encourage you to thoroughly check out special interest groups (SIGs) before joining. Go to their websites; talk to others who are SIG members. Don't just pick a topic that interests you without investigating the viability of the SIG behind it.

And remember, you can join additional new SIGs later for only \$5 each. During this transformation process, STC is anticipating the formation of quite a few new SIGs.

Your NEO STC board members (see <http://www.neostc.org/official/officers.htm>) are available to answer questions about the new membership options. Renewing online is quick and easy - put it on your To Do list for today!

Helpline: Help for the color-impaired

If you need help expanding from the black and white world to color, here are two web sites that can help you make the transition.

<http://www.visibone.com/colorlab/> provides a handy reference for screen color selection. You can select colors from a palette to see the color on screen with its Hex value. Visibone also offers various paper tools for selecting colors.

Another helpful site is <http://www.colorschemer.com/>. The web site's tutorial provides a helpful overview of the color wheel, color harmonies, and other basic color information.

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/index.htm>).

- ◆ Philips Medical Systems in Cleveland, OH, has an opening for a Technical Writer. This position will be responsible for interfacing with CT Engineering on documenting new scanners/software.
- ◆ Hyland Software Inc. in Westlake, OH, has an opening for a documentation specialist to write content for online help files and user manuals and research product functionality for OnBase® software.
- ◆ DX Engineering in Akron, OH, has an opening for a Technical Writer. The individual filling this position will develop owner's manuals, instructions, and technical articles about ham radio, electronic, and antenna products and services.
- ◆ The Flood Company in Hudson, OH, has an opening for a Web Content Specialist.
- ◆ iQ Digital Studios in Akron, OH, has an opening for an Instructional Designer. The candidate in this position will research, write, design, and evaluate

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the educational curriculum delivered via CD, DVD, streaming media, and other electronic delivery methods.

- ◆ STERIS, in Mentor, OH, is looking for a Training and Development Specialist.
- ◆ OfficeMax, in Shaker Heights, OH, is looking for a Senior Designer to design, style, and carry out various individual creative projects for OfficeMax's private label packaging and related materials.
- ◆ Penton Media in Cleveland, OH, is seeking a highly motivated, detail-oriented individual for the position of Associate Editor for HPAC Engineering, a monthly magazine reaching more than 57,000 mechanical-systems engineering professionals in the commercial, industrial, institutional, and government markets.
- ◆ Diebold in Akron, OH, is looking for a Manager of Internal Communication to support Diebold's corporate strategy and direction by developing and implementing effective internal communications strategies, plans and programs.
- ◆ Ernst & Young in Cleveland, OH, is looking for an Internal Communications Manager.
- ◆ Things Remembered in Highland Heights, OH, is looking for a Communications Specialist, Promotional Displays to create communications for all visual marketing programs and promotional materials.

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!