

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



July/August 2003 • Volume 20 Issue 1

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Celebrating 50 Years:
1953 - 2003

STC@50
Celebrating 50 Years 1953-2003

President's Notes

By Lori Klepfer, NEOSTC President

Two hundred years ago, Ohio became the 17th state of the United States. One hundred year's ago, the Wright Brother's defied gravity to begin humanity's great exploration of our earth and heavens. Fifty years ago, 1953, our profession and discipline were formalized with the founding of the Society of Technical Writers, and the Association of Technical Writers and Editors. These organizations merged in 1957 to form the Society of Technical Writers and Editors. The inventiveness of the Wright Brothers and hosts of other men and women created the purpose that our profession filled and continues to fill. Each new discovery requires explanation to create understanding, which spurs further advancements.

In July of 1956, the Cleveland Chapter was founded. In 1958, the chapter became the Northern Ohio chapter. Our early founding is testament to the technology and industry of the Cleveland area.

Here's a Happy Birthday to our profession! Throughout the year look for more interesting historical facts in the newsletter and at meetings. Festivities will culminate in celebration in the spring. Between now and then, I encourage you to peruse the STC@50 Web site.

This year is an exciting time, a time for reflection and a time to look toward the future. I have the distinct honor and pleasure to serve as your President, and I thank you for your faith in me. I also have the honor and pleasure to announce your new Board and Committee members:

Executive Board

- ◆ President, Lori Klepfer
- ◆ Immediate Past President, Beth Williams
- ◆ Vice-President, Kim Lindsey
- ◆ Treasurer, Ken Roberts
- ◆ Secretary, Tricia Oleksy

Committees:

- ◆ Newsletter: Nora Ebie, Erika Weliczko
- ◆ Programs: Stephanie Webster and Dannette Thompson
- ◆ PR/Membership: Jessica Hendricks, Beverly Peterson, Candace Wintering
- ◆ Employment: Myron Shawala and Sarah Burke
- ◆ Web Site: Brian Baddour
- ◆ Academic Relations: Jeanette Evans and Doug Kepp
- ◆ Region Sponsor: Mike Bates

You may have noticed that we combined PR and Membership. We felt that this would allow us to serve the marketing and membership needs better. Also, to help us better serve you, look for online surveys on our Web site. We want to create a dialog with you.

With that, a new year brings new opportunities. With the depressed job market, many of us are faced with the task of learning new skills or just keeping them sharp. To help your goals in that area, consider volunteering for one of the committees. We are creating "openings" now, and plan to advertise them. Each opportunity will be a small, discrete activity. Examples may be writing a meeting wrap up, writing a meeting announcement, creating a survey, greeting meeting attendees, tally a meeting evaluation. Serving in a capacity however small or large is a great way to build and practice new skills in a safe environment.

Also consider publishing an article or a letter to the Editor in the newsletter. Let's help our newsletter editor's Nora and Erika create best of class newsletter! We've won awards the last two years; let's build on our success. The newsletter is a key communication tool among our chapter members.

We belong to organizations to meet three needs:

- ◆ To learn
- ◆ To serve
- ◆ To meet others

Take some time over the summer to reflect why you belong to STC, and create a personal action plan for yourself, so that you can take full advantage of the opportunities STC and our chapter provides.

The Board and Committee members are meeting on August 9th for a kickoff-planning meeting. In the next issue, we will share the goals we have set for the year and our action plans for the year.

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In the meantime, we wish you a happy, safe, and fun summer. See you at the September meeting, which will be a round-table progression on hot topics. If you have any "burning" ones, please share them with Stephanie and Dannette.

Here's to a great 50th year and to the future!

On the Front Lines Column

President's Notes by Lori Klepfer, NEOSTC President

This year, STC celebrates its 50th Anniversary, the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers flight and the 200th birthday of the State of Ohio.

In her first article as President of the NEO STC Chapter, Lori Klepfer takes a look at the history of our profession and the history of STC.

Lori also announces the new Board and Committee members and suggests ways for us to improve our skills in this tough job market.

(See article above.)

NEOSTC Board Meeting Minutes

The next NEOSTC board meeting will take place on August 9, 2003 at the Brecksville branch of the Cuyahoga County Library.

STC Webinar Review

Making the Complex Clear and Pretty: A Lesson for Technical Communicators

By Alisa Pierre and Christopher McComb

On June 4, Intuit hosted "Making the Complex Clear and Pretty". Phylise Banner, Instructional Technologist, at Skidmore College, presided over the telephone conference.

As technical communicators, it is possible for us to guarantee the reader's interest and concentration. Phylise Banner presented this concept during her seminar aptly titled "Making the Complex Clear and Pretty." Through her explanation of different forms of design, beauty, and perfection, we are well on our way to creating "prettier" information.

Ms. Banner began by explaining the three forms of design: Information, Intelligent, and Graphic. Information design incorporates definitions, theory and practice, and applications. She defined it simply as "making the complex clear." Ms. Banner included that

the technical communicator's approach to all design must be user-centered.

Next, she explained intelligent design that encapsulates usability, simplicity, human experience, and taste. All of these facets combine to form an easier approach to the problem for the user.

Graphic design captures the basic principles, as well as the author's own creativity. Ms. Banner asked the audience to ponder if design can be measured by the degree of success demonstrated in expressing personal interpretation.

The last element of design she described is that of experience design. The users will feel familiar and connected with your work if they can:

- ◆ Orient themselves in your overall set up.
- ◆ Navigate easily through the information.
- ◆ Explore new facets of the information you present.
- ◆ Feel their intuition telling them that they, as the users, are the most important people in the process.

After Ms. Banner covered the four main areas of design, she explained the concept of beauty. Her definition described beauty as perfect...abundant...timeless. People evaluate beauty by its strength and their own societal preferences and history. She expanded on perfection as the art of using symmetry, recursion, and thought while writing and designing information.

How do all of these things compile to form a solution for us as technical communicators? Ms. Banner posed three questions to consider as we integrate these concepts into our work:

- ◆ Is perfection relative to our social systems of behavior?
- ◆ What can we learn from the way we interact with the world around us?
- ◆ How can beauty enhance our message?

Ms. Banner covered important topics to take into account as we present information. More than that, she encouraged us with the fact that there truly is more than one way to do something; that the environment in which you find yourself and the user will determine the way you fashion the information. By determining what is beautiful to the user, many of the unknowns will suddenly become known.

As technical communicators, our job is to create an experience for the user, to "open the door and lead them through." Happy beautifying!

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Reviews of the STC 50th Annual Conference in Dallas, TX

My Not-So-Gentle Reminder

By: Carol Zollinger

Each time I go to the annual conference, I go with expectations. I'll learn a lot. I'll find at least one fabulous session that, by itself, was worth coming for. I'll stay up nearly all night, at least once, talking to friends that I only see once a year. (Which of course makes it exceedingly difficult to get up for the following morning's session, but is definitely worth it. I can even justify this professionally - read on.) I've never been disappointed in the past, and I wasn't this year, either.

This year, however, is the first year I noticed a theme that seemed to be directed specifically at me. Either all of the presenters have been spying on me and decided to teach me a lesson, or I was feeling guilty about something, because I got nailed to the wall. The guilt thing seems more likely, but it's just so much easier to maintain righteous indignation if it's someone else's fault, so I have decided that they were spying on me.

I went to a session about estimating time for projects. They talked about metrics, and project management techniques, and networking within client companies. Then I went to a session where a panel of experienced technical communicators dispensed advice, told us funny stories, and answered any nosy questions we came up with about their careers. And told us to network. Then I went to a progression for independent contractors and consultants. They talked about job boards and marketing and networking and contracts and networking. Oh, and networking. Then I looked at my schedule and I saw that I myself had conspired against me and scheduled me for a networking luncheon. What was I thinking?

Besides, I said to myself, I know I have to network! Everybody knows you have to network. This is not a new concept. And after I chewed on this for a while, I sat myself down and gave myself a good talking to. (If only my mother knew that I do this for myself, she could stop intervening. But I digress.)

Young lady, I said, you have not attended one chapter meeting since you relocated from the Hoosier chapter in September. That's eight months! I don't care that it takes awhile to get to the meetings, or that you were too busy, that you were too tired, or that you just didn't feel like facing a crowd of people that night. There is

just no excuse! No, don't even try to argue with me. No excuse! (Do you see how my mother is with me even when she's not? I'm digressing again, aren't I?)

And ultimately, there is no excuse. We all know why. You build relationships. Those relationships lead to more relationships. These relationships lead to new ideas, new jobs, new ways to handle the stressors of your job, and new information about software and other tools. The list goes on and on.

My new resolve after the annual conference got me to the May meeting of the Northeast Ohio Chapter, though the gentle reminders from some very excellent chapter leaders may have helped. And do you know, networking isn't even so bad? I actually enjoyed myself! It's kind of like exercising. Takes me forever to drag my lazy self out to do it, and when I'm doing it I think, "Well, you know, this is kind of nice. Why did I wait so long?" (Please note that running is an exception to this rule. Running has always been at least as bad as I thought it would be.)

The problem, of course, is that the metaphor keeps working. Like exercising, no one can do your networking for you. STC can help by provide great program meetings, networking luncheons, an annual conference every year, and, if you are very lucky, your own personal reminder system via friends in the chapter. But nobody can actually show up for you. We all have to show up ourselves. And again, like exercising, it's not enough to just show up. We have to talk to people, listen, and share information. We all have to make new acquaintances, and stay up all night talking to the ones we already have. (See? I told you I could justify that. I can justify anything. Next time you are explaining an expensive new kitchen gadget or another power tool to your significant other, you call me. I can help.) We all have experiences or information that somebody else can use. Chances are, somebody else at this very moment has the information that you could use.

I don't really like to think of myself as thick, but I had to be hit over the head with the intellectual equivalent of a two by four to remember what I needed to be doing. Hopefully, by sharing my own reminder, I'll prevent some of you from needing your own. So, I hope to be meeting all of you, or seeing you again, at chapter events in the upcoming months. And if I myself am not there like I said I would be, you have my permission to drag out the two by four again, and apply it liberally.

See you soon!

A Presenter's View of the 50th Annual Conference

By: Lori Klepfer, President

Eight of our NEO STC chapter members attended the International Conference in Dallas this year. I was among them.

As a first-time speaker and someone who hadn't attended a conference for some time, I was little nervous. But after getting there, and seeing familiar faces of year's past made me feel at home. Then there was the speaking . . . STC does an incredible job mentoring speakers along with assisting them with deadlines and deliverables, and providing attendee evaluations afterwards. The attendee evaluations were helpful. Not very often do we have a chance to receive feedback from our peers

By the time I arrived, my presentation was ready, the Proceeding paper written and submitted, and hand outs posted on the Web. A bit more practicing and scouting of the rooms I was to be in, and I was ready to go. Overall, I found the experience rewarding. So much so, I have two proposals in development for next year's conference in Baltimore.

I would encourage you to consider speaking at a conference. About one-third of the speakers are first-time conference speakers.

I also would like to share one of the more salient pieces of information I learned at the conference. Many times a client and others will ask me whether pictures or illustrations are the best visual communication tool. The availability of digital photography causes our customers to use photos instead of artist illustrations.

Jean-luc Doumont, in his presentation "Understanding Visual Communication" states that pictures are realistic, schematic, or abstract and that drawings are better suited for communicating abstract concepts than photographs.

The reality or literalness of photographs can often confuse the user with too much detail. Jean-luc used the example of grocery store aisle markings in Belgium, a country where five languages are spoken. The store has the challenge of helping people who speak different languages complete their food shopping. If the store would show a photo of a Red Delicious apple to indicate produce, this may indicate to a shopper that only that variety of apple can be found in the aisle. Using a schematic or illustration of an apple would be better. An

illustration is more representative of apples of various varieties as a produce item.

Along with what type of picture to use, we need to consider textual descriptions. Jean-luc stated "pictures can be literal, metaphorical, or conventional. The less literal they are, the more likely they are to be misunderstood if not accompanied by a verbal clarification." We see this in practice when we observe the tool tips on the Microsoft tool bars.

Just because you didn't get a chance to attend the conference doesn't mean you miss out on the information. Many presenters uploaded their materials on the STC Web site. Please visit:
<http://www.stc.org/50thConf/sesMaterials.asp>

Encouraging Meaningful Participation

By Beth Williams

I've attended nine annual conferences, and the method I've found that works best for me is to focus on a particular area and attend as many sessions as I can that center on that subject. The majority of the sessions I attended at the STC conference in Dallas this year focused on usability issues. Here are some of the main points that I learned or was encouraged to consider further.

From the "Encouraging Meaningful Participation: Involving Users throughout the Process" session, we must:

- ◆ demand early involvement of technical communicators on technology development teams.
- ◆ recognize the importance of involving users in developing both technology and information.
- ◆ communicate for commitment. User participation enriches the communication experience, and fosters acceptance of and commitment to change.
- ◆ involve users in user-centered design by planning and writing with the them in mind, exploring and evaluating plans and drafts with them, and refining the product based on their feedback. Don't ask them what they need -- ask what they need to accomplish!

From the "effectively supporting users online" session, here is an interesting way to look at performance support systems:

- ◆ External support = low user productivity = instructor-led classes, CBT, WBT, books, and phone support.

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- ◆ Extrinsic (linked) support = more user productivity = guided tours, wizards, online help, and hypertext links to definitions.
- ◆ Intrinsic (embedded) support = high user productivity = on-screen assistants, error messages, tool tips, and status lines.

From the "Moving from Writing Documents to Meeting User Information Needs" session, which was a case study from Southwest Airlines, here are four simple truths:

- ◆ Information supports people, not products.
- ◆ Deliverables aren't goals.
- ◆ Information can't make a difference until it gets into people's heads.
- ◆ Success is the result of achieving measurable goals.

And from the "Technical Communication's Impact on the Bottom Line" session, we need to sell technical communication as a function using the following methods:

- ◆ Use productivity and quality metrics to track hours and capture and communicate customer feedback.
- ◆ Add sales to your job duties to earn respect and demonstrate the need for your function, show the value your function provides to customers, and build internal and external networks.
- ◆ Demonstrate your worth and impact on the company by communicating the ROI of your department, establishing revenue opportunities, and charging back for your services.

A Rookie's View

By Bob Young

If I were to offer advice to someone attending their first STC Conference it would be just two words: Be Prepared.

That old Boy Scout motto rang true for this rookie during the most recent conference in Dallas, Texas. There is such a wealth of information packed into the three-day event that it can be a bit overwhelming to choose between session topics, especially when some are scheduled at the same time. Fortunately, STC sends a pre-Conference publication that lists some of the topics and product demonstrations that will be covered.

I reviewed this precursor, circling the topics I believed would most benefit my time in the Lone Star State. The

preparation paid off when a lengthy flight delay forced me to miss checking in Sunday afternoon.

I had to wait until early Monday morning to receive the official Proceedings book that better defines what each speaker plans to present. Reviewing this collection of writings from the presenters suddenly made me aware of how many more sessions I wanted to attend. . . with just an hour before the event started.

So, I went through the Table of Contents and jotted down topics that seemed related to my position as a software documentation writer. The topics in the Proceedings are broken into six categories: Management; Professional Development/STC-related Sessions; Theory, Research, Education, and Training; Tools and Technology; Usability and Information Design; Writing and Editing.

The homework paid off as I moved from session to session. The presenters were equally prepared and there was something for every attendee to take back home, whether it was a handout or website address. The sessions offered excellent information that could immediately be used.

I have since referenced the material in the Proceedings. There also are other books and product demos available that make this a rewarding learning experience.

One veteran attendee reminded me that this is a conference not a convention. This person noted that the dictionary defines a conference as "an interchange of views" as opposed to a convening of delegates. I found this to be true with countless opportunities to network and discuss real world issues that occur daily, such as meeting a tight deadline, project management or using new software.

One particular conversation I had with an Adobe representative regarding an Acrobat problem saved time and money because we didn't have to log a support call. Another benefit was the opportunity to have our documentation CD ROM reviewed by a consultant. We are incorporating the suggestions offered during the 45-minute session into our online product.

This writer would encourage any technical writer/graphic designer/information specialist to attend an STC Conference. Be Prepared....for a great experience.

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Conference Session Strategy

By: Stephanie Webster

Quite a few years ago, I was able to attend the annual STC conference as a college student. The conference is so much different as a professional. As a student, you take in as much as you possibly can, but should you hit two sessions a day (maybe) – you're doing pretty well. As a professional, you can't just jump in there and expect to take anything away without a plan of attack. You want to gain as much as possible in the short time frame you are away from your desk!

When I found out that I was going to be able to attend the 50th annual STC conference – with much thanks to our local chapter for this great opportunity! – I was on mission. I wanted to find out everything I could about single sourcing and how it could fit in with our company business requirements. I was prepared for a full three days of researching, participating, and learning interesting concepts.

Where to start? The STC Web site had quick links of the conference offerings for each day. My first step was to print out each day's sessions and highlight the ones that I thought would be beneficial to investigating the online single sourcing path. There are so many lectures available that one can attend – it was hard to narrow the selections down to one per session, but at least I had a start.

In our registration bag of goodies was a handbook that detailed each day's featured sessions, SIG meetings, and luncheons. This handbook did not leave my side for the next three days. I was able to narrow down the sessions I wanted to attend based on sequence of information. There was no need to overlap ideas. I got the spectrum of single sourcing, from "Selecting the Right Single Sourcing Tools" by Anne Rockley of The Rockley Group, Inc. to a visual demonstration of AuthorIT from online guru Char James Tanney.

Another avenue to find out single sourcing information is to ask! Society members are more than willing to talk to you about their passion – technical communications. Everyone that I spoke with was easy to communicate with, even if asking simple questions. The speakers and other chapter members all know what it is like to start up on a new idea and are willing to help you move to the next step in making your research a reality. I have a handful of business cards with phone numbers that I was encouraged to call when I was ready to start my venture into the world of implementing single sourcing.

Attending ten sessions in three days can be exhausting, but I found it well worth it! I brought back a pile of notes, handouts, and PowerPoint printouts that I was able to distribute to my Documentation department. We are currently evaluating this information by reading through these pages, researching any referenced books and Web sites, and setting up online demonstrations of the applications in which we are interested.

So, did I fulfill my mission? Definitely! I was determined to find out anything I could about single sourcing and I came away with a mountain of information. I don't believe any other avenue of research could have led me to gain such a foundation on a concept as the STC annual conference. Thanks NEO STC for allowing me to complete my objective!

SIGs at the Annual Conference

By: Sarah Burke

As a first-time conference attendee, you might have expected me to write about the informative sessions I attended, the "hot" books I thumbed through in the conference bookstore, the gadgets I collected from exhibitors, or the number of business cards I exchanged during the conference. While I could talk about any of these experiences, I instead want to share with you one of the annual conference's best-kept secrets: special interest group (SIG) activities.

Especially for first-time attendees, the conference can be somewhat overwhelming; there's much to attend, see, and do and so many people to meet. SIG activities provide smaller, more informal settings for experiencing the conference and meeting its people. During the conference, I participated in a number of worthwhile SIG events, including a SIG business meeting and a SIG networking luncheon, and was invited to an off-site SIG dinner.

On Monday of the conference, I attended the Technical Editing SIG's business meeting, which drew about 10 people. Attendees introduced themselves and described the roles they play in their organizations. One of the first things I noticed was how rare (and advantageous) it was to be sitting in a room full of editors like myself! As I listened to everyone's stories, I was engaged by those who seem to face similar workplace challenges. Their stories reinforced the fact that I'm not alone in what I do (although I sometimes feel like I am); there are others here who understand. The meeting also gave attendees an opportunity to share ideas on how the SIG can better serve its members.

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I also attended Tuesday's SIG event, the SIG Networking Luncheon (\$20 per ticket). This luncheon is one of the luncheons that STC sponsors each day of the conference. The SIG luncheon, like the SIG business meeting, proved to be a valuable event. The tables each focused on the interests of one SIG, and all SIGs were represented at the luncheon. I joined one of the four Technical Editing SIG tables and engaged in delightful conversations with nine others who do editing as part of their jobs. Table discussions ranged from institutionalizing an effective editing process to editing for localization and internationalization to gaining respect for what editors do.

From the Lone Writer SIG listserv, I was invited to attend a SIG dinner at a local Dallas restaurant. While I was not able to attend, I heard those who attended raving about the wonderful time they had and those who didn't attend expressing their disappointment at not being able to do so. The Lone Writer SIG has been gathering for an off-site dinner during the annual conference for several years, and this dinner has proved an excellent way for lone writers to meet each other and match names with faces.

As you can see from the SIG activities I participated in at the annual conference alone, SIGs are far more than a \$5 fee tacked on to your annual membership dues! And, as I discovered in Dallas, they're also a great way (at your first or your twentieth conference) to meet others from around the globe who do what you do and experience the annual conference on a smaller scale. To join a SIG, download the SIG sign-up form from http://www.stc.org/PDF_Files/sigform.pdf.

About SIGs

STC's SIGs consist of members who share common interests or specializations within the field of technical communication. They offer an inexpensive way to connect with other professionals who do similar types of work or who work in similar employment situations (for example, as independent consultants or lone writers). SIGs encourage dialogue between members to broaden their technical knowledge and keep them abreast of new developments in their special interest area. Common SIG activities include publishing newsletters, participating in listservs, developing articles for Society publications, conducting surveys, and presenting seminars.

STC currently sponsors 21 Society-level SIGs, which include those devoted to information design, indexing, single sourcing, online communication, technical editing,

and usability. The full list of SIGs can be found at http://www.stc.org/sig_info.asp.

In addition to Society-level SIGs, which have an international membership, some chapters, like our own, have chapter-level SIGs. The Northeast Ohio chapter supports a local Consultant and Independent Contractor SIG, which you can join to network, share tips and professional practices, exchange leads and referrals, and benefit from others' expertise, experiences, and contacts. For more information about our CIC-SIG, visit <http://www.neostc.org/sig/cicsig.htm>.

Membership News Column

Welcome New Members

We added one new members to our chapter. Please join Lines & Letters in welcoming:

- ◆ Joseph Hodge

Special welcome to you, Joseph! We look forward to seeing you at upcoming meetings and events!

New Senior Members

Congratulations to our newest Senior Members:

- ◆ Jacqueline L. Conn
- ◆ Mary M. Cosgrove
- ◆ Peggy S. Coyne
- ◆ Monica M. Lusk

Chapter Membership Counts:

- ◆ Members = 83
- ◆ Senior Members = 81
- ◆ Student Membership = 6
- ◆ Retired Member = 1
- ◆ Associate Fellow = 1 : Dr. Bege Bowers

Total Members = 171

Total membership for STC International reached 18701.

Thoughts on the 2002-2003 NEOSTC Competitions, Competitions Survey, and the Future

By Jeanette P. Evans

Thanks again to everyone who participated this year in our NEOSTC competitions. This includes (in reverse order) those who answered the survey, entered the competition, participated in judging, helped on the

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committee, supported activities through work on last year's board, and participated in any other way.

Cheryl Bennett gets a special personal thank you from me right now! Cheryl organized and helped with competitions in countless ways and for countless years, this year in particular by accepting entries and otherwise providing advice and moral support.

If no one steps up to organize this activity for our chapter for this year, we will likely take a year out to regroup – a well deserved year off! If anyone is interested in learning more about what is involved, please let me or a member of the board know.

Members of NEOSTC who want to submit entries in 2003-2004 may do so through any other chapter. NEOSTC does not need to sponsor the activity for you to enter. Details on chapters that sponsor competitions activities appear on the stc.org web site. Please don't hesitate to ask me if there are any questions.

Potential judges may submit an application to judge in the international competition. If a judge is unable to attend an in-person judging session, a telephone conference judging option is often available. I judged on the international level for online competitions for two years via telephone conference and highly recommend the activity. Time is well spent on improving your skills in recognizing, evaluating, and communicating about what you see. You also get to see techniques and approaches that often become the latest and greatest. I found this to be especially so the year I judged web sites.

Back to the NEOSTC level, some items of interest from the survey this year include the following. Please let me know if you would like a copy of the complete report that I plan to submit to the board later this year. The purpose of the survey was to uncover areas for improvement and recruit for future volunteers. Survey Monkey was the tool I used to create the survey, with no major problems encountered so far, plus no one complained about Survey Monkey that I know of. We stayed within budget for this activity this year.

- ◆ Bob Young won the survey drawing for a free meeting.
- ◆ Processes, schedules, fees were evaluated as acceptable through the survey
- ◆ Exchanging with another chapter should continue
- ◆ Distance judging should remain an option
- ◆ Good judges' comments are of primary importance
- ◆ Communication is an area for improvement.

- ◆ We may want to use a mailing in future years.

Here are some sample comments:

1. Exchanging with another chapter.

"I would not participate in our chapter's competitions if we did not exchange with another chapter. It's important to me that we get an unbiased point of view on our entries."

"Judging entries from another chapter is more fair than judging our own. Plus, we can compare our work to another part of the country."

"[It] is a good policy to trade entries with another chapter. I think competitions are beneficial and I would like to participate in the future if I have a suitable entry. The cost, schedule, etc. seem to be appropriate to me."

2. Importance of good judges' comments

"...The awards were nice but what I really appreciated were the comments from the judges. We reviewed the judges' comments point-by-point and it made our documentation stronger in many areas. In fact, it was one reason why we decided to use a different documentation tool"

"The cost to enter is reasonable, as long as judges are thorough with their comments. I know that I spent at least 2-3 [hours] per entry and perhaps an hour of that was simply preparing my comments. I enjoyed judging, although it was a huge time commitment in a short period of time, and think that it's valuable to serve as a judge if nothing else to see what other technical communicators are producing in the field."

3. Judging process looks acceptable.

"As a first-year judge, I thought that the entire competition process ran smoothly--from the early judging meeting through the consensus meeting. It was well organized and well run."

4. Distance judging appears to be going ok.

"The distance judging worked well in my group..."

5. Communications

"We should consider sending a call for entries in the mail next year... There is a problem with communications but it's part of a larger problem. Our newsletter is now solely electronic and a lot of people no longer read it. I realized recently that I hadn't read a newsletter in close to a year. I've done

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an informal survey (about 10 people in the chapter) and they all agree that they rarely read it anymore. Therefore, it's hard to get information out about competitions (or anything else) if you're relying on the newsletter."

6. Awards luncheon

"... It's probably a nice way to do things though maybe the chapter should be invited. Certainly it's better than waiting until May for a chapter meeting."

Book Review: *Who Moved My Cheese*

Review by: *Nora E. Ebie, Editor*

Author: Spencer Johnson, M.D.

Copyright: 1998

Publisher: Putnam

ISBN: 0-399-14446-3

Price: \$19.95

Who Moved My Cheese? was suggested by a career counselor about a year ago in her efforts to help me find employment. I had been unemployed for nearly three years and was extremely frustrated and angry with no remaining confidence or self-esteem to speak of. I needed to find a new way of dealing with change and this book was very enlightening and helped get my career back on track.

Who Moved My Cheese?, with its simple story line and identifiable characters, is about change that takes place in a "Maze" where four amusing characters look for "Cheese". Cheese is a metaphor for what each of us wants to have -- a job, relationship, money, recognition, etc. The "Maze" represents where you spend your time looking for what you want.

The four characters in the book are intended to represent the various parts of all of us, both simple and complex. The first two characters are mice named Sniff and Scurry who possess only simple brains, but with very good instincts for finding "cheese". The other two characters are little people named Hem and Haw. Although they are the same size as Sniff and Scurry, they possess human-like brains with many beliefs and emotions.

Every day, each navigates through the maze in search of their favorite cheese. The story revolves around each character's beliefs and behaviors as they search for the "cheese", become comfortable with "found cheese", suddenly find the "cheese" is gone, and cope with having to find more "cheese".

The parable is very effective in helping us deal with change in our work and in our life. The author, Spencer Johnson, MD, is the co-author of *The One Minute Manager™*. His books have helped millions of people discover simple truths to use to enjoy healthier lives.

The Esoteric Editor Column

by *Nora E. Ebie, Esoteric Editor*

Adding a little . . . B A M !

Oh yea, baby!

Sorry -- I've been watching quite a bit of Emeril lately. But he actually blends well into this first-issue editorial quite well, as you'll see.

But, first let me introduce myself -- I'm Nora Ebie, one of the new Lines & Letters editors. My partner is Erika Weliczko, who is training in Colorado during this first issue. You'll hear from Erika in our next issue. (Just don't bring back snow from those mountains, Erika!!!)

We've got a good first issue, if I do say so myself. There are excellent reviews of STC's 50th Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas by several of our members. Our feature article by Carol Zollinger's is fantastic -- a MUST READ.

Beth Williams' interns, Alisa and Chris, present a review of the June phone conference "Making the Complex Clear and Pretty". I wrote a little book review on "Who Moved My Cheese", a little book about little characters; and we've included Linda Oestreich's wrap up of the STC Board Decisions from the conference. Linda is the Director Sponsor of Region 5. Our own DS seems to be MIA -- oh, Mike . . . hello, are you there? Oh well, maybe next issue.

Oh, and you can't miss this issue's President's Notes, by our new President, Lori Klepfer!

You may have noticed that Lines & Letters Light is lighter and more condensed. This is in an effort to move towards an all on-line version of Lines & Letters, as recommended by the Newsletter Competition Judges in their review of the chapter's submissions from the previous year.

We are also introducing two new features in this first issue. TechniFacts and NEOSTC Vocabulary Builder.

As this is STC's 50th Anniversary, Lori, Erika and I felt we should include a feature that gives us a history into our field and how the technology of the era related to STC's timeline. Each issue will contain TechniFacts on a

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different decade. This month we're looking back at the 1940's!

I wanted to include the Vocabulary Builder because it seems I'm always at a loss for just the right word; and I thought that others may also enjoy learning new words. Each issue will feature seven new words with their pronunciation, definition, example sentence, and some trivia about the word.

You may also find the writing styles getting a little -- well . . . BAM! Oh yea, we're "kicking it up a notch" as Erika and I both have a writing style that's a little edgier than your typical technical writer.

However, just as one of Emeril's fantastic recipes needs many ingredients to make it "to-die-for", Erika and I need many articles from our members to make this newsletter fantastic.

We will definitely be entering the newsletter competition again this year and need your help in making this newsletter a top winner.

Attend a meeting? Offer to write the wrap-up article!

Have you gone to a conference or seminar? Write a review!

Would our Senior Members like to impart some sage advice onto our newer members? Write an article!

Got a good idea for the newsletter? Don't just sit there --- send it to us!

Got something to say about what's happening in our Chapter, the District or National? Send a LETTER TO THE EDITOR and tell us what you think.

TECHNIFACTS -- 1940's

| Technical Communication | Year | Science/Technology |
|---|------|--|
| IBM develops the first proportional-spacing typewriter, which produces typescript that looks like printed pages. | 1944 | First fully automatic programmable computers, the Mark 1 and ENIAC are invented. (ENIAC's power consumption is so huge that every time the machine is switched on, the lights in the nearby town fail.) |
| Vannevar Bush writes "As We May Think," laying some of the intellectual foundations of hypertext. | 1945 | Alexander Fleming receives the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his discovery of penicillin. |
| With the end of World War II, thousands of technically trained workers return to the workforce. Many put their skills to work writing about the technologies they've learned. | 1946 | At the Computation Laboratory at Harvard, Grace Murray Hopper traces an error in the Mark II computer to a moth trapped in a relay, coining the term bug. This bug, carefully removed and taped to the log book, is the genesis of the term "bug," referring to an error or glitch in a program. |
| The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the first educational and scientific organization specifically concerned with the computer industry is founded. | 1947 | Scientists at Bell Labs develop the transistor. |
| ISTC is formed in Great Britain, the first professional society dedicated to technical communication. | 1948 | Edwin Land invents a camera and film system that develops prints inside the camera in about one minute. The Haloid Company markets the first xerographic duplicating machine, the Model A "Ox Box." |
| Joseph D. Chapline writes a user's manual for the BINAC computer and becomes the first writer of computer documentation. | 1949 | In the U.S., BINAC, one of the first electronic stored-program computers begins its operation. In England, Cambridge University's EDSAC, and early computer, goes into operation. In the U.K., Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin becomes the first to use a computer to work out the structure of penicillin. |

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NEO STC Vocabulary Builder

fugacious • \fyoo-GAY-shuss\ • adjective

: lasting a short time: evanescent

Example sentence:

Julie's bad mood was fugacious; she cheered up considerably when her son phoned to say he would be coming home for a visit.

Did you know?

"Fugacious" is often used to describe immaterial things like emotions, but not always. Botanists also use it to describe plant parts that wither or fall off before the usual time. Things that are fugacious are "fleeting", and etymologically they can be said to be "fleeing".

"Fugacious" derives from the Latin verb "fugere," which means "to flee." Other descendants of "fugere" include "fugitive," "refuge," and "subterfuge."

tantivy • \tan-TIH-vee\ • adverb

: in a headlong dash : at a gallop

Example sentence:

The picnic feast was all laid out when suddenly the skies opened up—what a scramble as everyone grabbed something and headed tantivy for the shelter of the porch!

Did you know?

"Tantivy" is also a noun meaning "a rapid gallop" or "an impetuous rush." Although its precise origin isn't known, one theory has it that "tantivy" represents the sound of a galloping horse's hooves. The noun does double duty as a word meaning "the blare of a trumpet or horn." This is probably due to confusion with "tantara," a word for the sound of a trumpet that came about as an imitation of that sound. Both "tantivy" and "tantara" were used during foxhunts; in the heat of the chase people may have jumbled the two.

cognoscente • \kahn-yuh-SHEN-tee\ • noun, plural cognoscenti

: a person who has expert knowledge in a subject : connoisseur

Example sentence:

"The great but not widely known pianist Dave McKenna . . . is revered by the jazz cognoscenti as an inspired interpreter of American standards. . . ." (Joseph Nocera, GQ, March 1997)

Did you know?

"Cognoscente" and "connoisseur" are more than synonyms; they're also linguistic cousins. Both terms descend from the Latin verb "cognoscere," meaning "to know," and they're not alone. You may know that "cognizance" and "cognition" are members of the "cognoscere" clan. Do you also recognize a family resemblance in "recognize"? Can you see through the disguise of "incognito"? Did you have a premonition that we would mention "precognition"? "Cognoscente" itself came to English by way of Italian and has been a part of our language since the late 1700s. Today it is almost always used in its plural form, "cognoscenti."

peloton • \peh-luh-TAHN\ • noun

: the main body of riders in a bicycle race

Example sentence:

Thousands of cycling fans lined the race route, relaxing in lawn chairs as they waited for the peloton to speed by.

Did you know?

If you've ever watched the Tour de France on television, you've seen plenty of the peloton, the seemingly endless flow of brightly colored riders making up the central group. You may have also gained some inadvertent insight into the word itself, which as you may have guessed is French in origin. In French, "peloton" literally means "ball," but it is most often used with the meaning "group." It's frequently used in the bicycling context, just as in English, but it can also refer to a group in a marathon or other sporting event. French "peloton" can also mean "squad" or "platoon," and since we've told you that you probably won't be too surprised to learn that it is also the source of our word "platoon."

paladin • \PAL-uh-dun\ • noun

1 : a trusted military leader (as for a medieval prince)
*2 : a leading champion of a cause

Example sentence:

"So Bobby [Kennedy] hung back, watching helplessly as Senator Eugene McCarthy, the paladin of the antiwar movement, buried Johnson's re-election chances in the New Hampshire primary." (Sam Tanenhaus, The New Leader, September 1, 2000)

Did you know?

In ancient Rome, the emperor's palace was located on the Palatine Hill, known as "Palatium" in Latin. Since the

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site was the seat of imperial power, the word "palatium" came to mean "imperial" and later "imperial official." Different forms of the word passed through Latin, Italian, and French, picking up various meanings along the way, until eventually some of those forms made their way into English. "Paladin" is one of the etymological heirs of "palatium"; another descendant is the word "palace."

**Indicates the sense illustrated in the example sentence.*

struthious • \STROO-thee-uss ("th" as in "thin" or as in "then")\ • adjective

: of or relating to the ostriches and related birds

Example sentence:

"The law is not so struthious as to compel a judge . . . to divorce himself or herself from common sense or to ignore what is perfectly obvious." (Hon. Bruce M. Selya, U.S. v. Sklar, U.S. Court of Appeals, 1st Circuit)

Did you know?

Paleontologists have found ostrich fossils that are 5 million years old, but "struthious" has only been strutting its stuff in English since the 18th century. "Ostrich" is much older. Anglo-French speakers created "ostriz" from Vulgar Latin "avis struthio" ("ostrich bird"); Middle English speakers made it "ostrich" in the 13th century. Scientists seeking a genus word for ostriches turned back to Latin, choosing "struthio." The related adjective "struthious" can be scientific and literal, or it can be figurative with the meaning "ostrich-like," as in our example sentence. The extended use suggests a tendency to bury one's head in the sand like an ostrich. But do ostriches really do this? No—the bird's habit of lying down and flattening its neck and head against the ground to escape detection gave rise to the misconception.

gibbous • \JIH-bus\ • adjective

1 a : marked by convexity or swelling *b of the moon or a planet : seen with more than half but not all of the apparent disk illuminated 2 : having a hump : humpbacked

Example sentence:

Though nights had been cloudy for most of the previous week, we knew that tonight's gibbous moon, with its hump on the right, was waning.

Did you know?

The adjective "gibbous" has its origins in the Latin noun "gibbus," meaning "hump," and in the Late Latin adjective "gibbosus," meaning "humpbacked," which Middle English adopted in the 14th century as "gibbous." "Gibbous" has been used to describe the rounded body parts of humans and animals (such as the gibbous back of a hunchback or camel) or to describe the shape of certain flowers (such as snapdragons). The term is most often identified, however, with the study of astronomy. In fact, if you run across the word "gibbous," chances are you'll find the word "moon" somewhere nearby. A gibbous moon is one that is more than a half-moon but less than full.

**Indicates the sense illustrated in the example sentence.*

Regional Opportunities

JoAnn Hackos' Best Practices Conference

Innovation: Making It Happen

You know what your people are capable of doing if you just had the support. You have great ideas that will make technical publications relevant to the customer. You've put together a strategic plan and laid out the metrics.

Why is it still so hard to make your change message stick?

Innovations are easy to imagine and difficult to make happen. At the Best Practices conference, experience how fellow information managers make a difference in their organizations:

- ◆ Learn to cope by bringing current resources to bear on solving problems.
- ◆ Help key managers and staff understand your vision.
 - Identify your key team members who can help everyone understand the need for change.
- ◆ Disarm the naysayers and laggards.

Be prepared for the challenges of Tipping Point Leadership in introducing innovations and making the changes that your team needs to succeed in tough economic times.

Join us for the most valuable management conference in your profession.

Innovator's Forum

Turn your conference experience into tangible results.

- ◆ Are you excited by speakers at the conference?

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- ◆ Do deadlines and demands drown out your good ideas for change as soon as you get back to the office?
- ◆ Take this priceless opportunity to make change happen.

Join the Innovator's Workshop immediately following the Best Practices conference to turn your ideas into reality.

Date:

Conference: September 22 - 24, 2003

Forum: September 25 - 26, 2003

Location: Seattle, WA

For more information: [Registration](#) [Web Site](#)

E-mail questions to: gretchen.marks@comtech-serv.com

Structured Writing for Single Sourcing

A JoAnn Hackos Workshop

- ◆ How do I write modular content without knowing the context in which modules will be presented?
- ◆ What information types do we need to use for our content?
- ◆ Is it possible to have too many different information types?
- ◆ Will I lose my creativity if I just write modules instead of creating an entire book or help system?

These and more questions occur every time I talk about content-management and single-source strategies to an audience of writers, editors, and managers. Everyone wants to understand what it will be like to write in a content-management environment. People who are willing to embrace a new way of working want to know what to expect. Those anxious to expand their career options want to learn what the new options are all about. They are prepared to take on new roles like information architect and repository manager, once they understand what the new roles are.

To respond, I designed the new structured-writing seminar as an extension of my long-standing Single-Source Strategy seminar. Structured writing gets closer to the decisions that writers, editors, and project managers need to make. The emphasis is on your own materials—with much hands-on participation. From information types through content units, you discuss with teammates and other attendees what the best solutions might be. You tackle granularity and semantic markup, as well as the implications of XML.

If you want to understand how your job is changing and how to respond creatively, join me in this two-day seminar. The best course—bring a small team so that you can begin to make decisions together.

-- JoAnn Hackos, PhD

Date: September 9-10, 2003 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Location: Columbus, OH

Cost: Special rate of \$825

FEE DISCOUNT: New "2 for 1" discount for CIDM members!

To Register: Online at <http://www.usabledesign.com/03register/03register.htm> or by phone at 303-234-0123

For details visit : <http://www.usabledesign.com/03register/03register.htm>

Book: This seminar now includes JoAnn Hackos's *Content Management for Dynamic Web Delivery* book FREE.

Instructor: JoAnn Hackos (see her full bio at <http://www.usabledesign.com/02leaders/02leaders.htm>)

There are only 25 seats available to ensure that you receive individualized attention. Don't procrastinate!

Telephone Conference: Adding Training Components to Your Documentation

Increase the effectiveness of your documentation without channeling a lot of time, effort, and dollars into a separate training project. This presentation shows you techniques for adding training components that effectively repurpose your existing documentation. Topics will cover include objectives, tests, checklists, job aids, and self-assessments. You'll learn what they are, how to use them, and view examples.

There will be a discussion segment for troubleshooting real-life situations. Your take-away materials will include presentation visuals, templates, examples, a resource list, and job aids that will help you decide which components will work best for your project.

Rives Hassell-Corbiell is an educator, author, and consultant. She owns Learning Edge Consulting, Inc., a performance-consulting firm based in Tacoma, WA. She has 27 years of corporate experience that includes curriculum development, instructional design and development, standards development, technical writing, project management, and interpersonal skills development.

Presenter: Rives Hassell-Corbiell

Date: August 6, 2003 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. EDT

Cost: \$145 per site

Location: Contact Lori Klepfer for more information or if you would like to participate.

Telephone Seminar: Preparing the Proposal 101

Just as Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz didn't recognize that he really had a "brain," we technical communicators often don't realize that we have the skills, talents, and experience to succeed at new endeavors. We don't need a diploma from the Wizard to tackle proposals and grants. To deliver a winning proposal, we need 1) experience in multi-tasking and coordinating projects; 2) the ability to interview subject matter experts and to write for targeted audiences; 3) energy and enthusiasm; and 4) knowledge of the unique vocabulary and processes associated with government and commercial proposal preparation.

While we as technical communicators are experts at the first three requirements, "Proposals 101" is designed to help with the fourth. Once you understand the proposal process and learn the vocabulary, you will be ready to contribute to winning efforts.

Presenter: Judith Herr

Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2003 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Cost: \$145 per site

Location: Contact Lori Klepfer for more information or if you would like to participate.

Northeast Ohio Writers Forum: Resources for Writers

Did you know that the Cuyahoga County Library has special resources for writers? Charla Coatam is Literature Specialist with the Mayfield Regional Branch. She will tell us about the library's literature collection, research databases, periodicals, discussion groups, and give us a brief tour.

Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2003 7:00 p.m.

Location: Cuyahoga County Public Library, Mayfield Regional Branch

Cost: Special rate of \$825

Contact: Sandy Woodthorpe at (440) 639-0819 or e-mail iwrite4you@earthlink.net

Documentation & Training 2003 Conference

Keynotes:

- ◆ David Pogue: New York times technology columnist and one of the world's best-selling technical how-to authors, with over 2.5 million books in print. David's talk is "Interface Design: The Last Stumbling Block".
- ◆ Vincent Flanders: Author of two best-selling books on Web design. Vincent's talk is "Web Design for Online Learning and Training".

Content: 32 sessions offered by 27 speakers over 2 days. Sessions include:

- ◆ content management
- ◆ content design
- ◆ content development
- ◆ e-learning
- ◆ simulations
- ◆ globalization
- ◆ multimedia
- ◆ .NET

Date: October 6 - 7, 2003

Location: Boston University

Cost: \$599 for both days. Includes 32 sessions, 2 keynotes, food/reception, materials

To Register: Web - <http://www.doctrain.com>, PDF - <http://www.doctrain.com/pdf/doctrain2003.pdf>

Society-level Information: May STC Board Decisions

By: Linda Oestreich, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

June 2003 (latest article: July 2003)

Wow! What a conference, and what a board meeting to launch it! The official STC board meeting was called to order on Saturday morning, May 17, in Dallas. The general topics of discussion included the upcoming retirement of Bill Stolgitis and the selection of Peter Herbst as his successor, realignment of the membership dues and rebate structure, chapter loans and grants, and the state of the Society in relation to our changing world.

At the beginning of the day, Ed See, our now Immediate Past President, shared his thoughts about the past year and extended his heartfelt thanks to the board for successfully navigating a tough year that included

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budgetary reductions, low conference attendance, and the selection of a new executive director for the Society.

Board Actions

The board took the following actions:

- ◆ Voted to give each STC chapter a membership rebate of \$30 per member for the first 150 chapter members; \$20 per person for each member over 150; and \$13.50 per student member.
- ◆ Set new membership dues of \$140 for regular memberships, \$56 (40% of regular dues) for student memberships, and \$70 (50% of regular dues) for retired members.
- ◆ Approved a \$3,000 loan to the Alberta Chapter for the 2003 Region 7 Conference.
- ◆ Approved the formation of a special committee to consult, develop, and suggest to the board a transformation of STC's operational model that can move the Society to better support the many communities of practice within STC, enable growth, and stabilize revenue.
- ◆ Selected the winners of Chapter of Distinction Awards and Chapter Pacesetter Awards.

Other Topics Discussed

The STC board also discussed the following items:

- ◆ The intent to leave currently effective processes and entities alone, yet seek to strengthen the Society's emphasis on local communities, be they local chapters, special interest groups, or other communities of practice that exist in local communities. The board plans to determine how to do this through input from members and potential members in technical communication throughout the world.
- ◆ Tactics to increase STC membership at the national and chapter levels and to raise attendance at the Annual Conference and STC regional conferences.
- ◆ Formation of a group to communicate board issues to chapters to keep them better informed and "in the loop" of decisions made at the board level.
- ◆ Ways to notify chapters of sensitive issues such as increases in dues. The board decided that chapters already understand the issues of the times and trust Society leadership to make the proper budget cuts and expense reductions, along with other changes, to ensure a strong Society.

New Lines & Letters Editors

We are your new Lines & Letters Editors. My name is Nora Ebie and my partner in crime . . . err . . . in editing that is, is Erika Weliczko. We've made some changes to Lines & Letters Light that I hope you'll like. Let us know -- e-mail: newsletter@neostc.org

- ◆ Nora Ebie (nora.ebie@tri-c.edu)
- ◆ Erika Weliczko (erika@en.com)

If you know of other chapter news or volunteer opportunities, e-mail the editors at newsletter@neostc.org.