President’s column: Springing forward
By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

It’s still bone-chillingly cold outside but the hope of spring is right around the corner. Soon, we’ll be tending to the garden, mowing the lawn, and doing other outdoor chores. It sure beats cabin fever.

With thoughts of spring-cleaning, some business matters occurred the past couple of months that I want to bring to your attention.

First, board members approved at the January meeting to send the incoming president to the STC Conference each year. We will pay for the registration fee for the incoming president, who this year is Stephanie Webster. This is an important trend for our chapter because of the wealth of information available at the international conference. The Sunday Leadership Day features excellent seminars and panels with tips and techniques on running a chapter, on configuring a budget, and with discussions on speaker topics. Chapter leaders come home armed with ideas and less apprehension for stepping into the office.

But, the STC conference is much, much more than officer training. It’s also for every member of the organization — the three-day event offers something for everyone toiling in the technical profession. For example, Neil Perlin, who spoke to our large chapter gathering in September, offers sessions on the latest tools in the industry. Software vendors are available for one-on-one discussions and product demos. In addition, there are topics on all aspects of writing. The recent webinar on creative writing that drew a lot of interest

With over 200 sessions to choose from and with the social gatherings for networking, the experience is well worth the cost. If you are unsure how to approach your boss about attending, especially with this year’s glitzy host site in Las Vegas, I suggest the assistance of an article in Intercom. Go to http://www.stc.org/intercom/PDFs/2005/200512_31.pdf for tips on what to emphasize to your boss to get approval to attend the STC Conference.

I urge every member to make an effort to attend the Las Vegas conference. Session topics are previewed in the Preliminary Proceedings, which was mailed to members with the February Intercom. A conference registration form is on the back page of the Preliminary Proceedings. You can also access a PDF document of the Preliminary Proceedings from the international web site. At the conference, you will gain more strategies and techniques to enhance your career.

Additional highlights of what the NEO STC board members acted on at the January Board meeting are:

♦ Approved awarding 15 polo shirts embroidered with the NEO STC logo to the top 15 point-earners for this year. Deadline for accumulating points is April 30. We will announce the members who have earned the shirts for their service to the chapter at the May meeting, and we’ll take sizes at that time. The shirts will be presented at the first meeting next year. As a reminder, all members receive one point each for attending NEO STC sponsored meetings, luncheons, and activities. The Recognition Program is designed to encourage participation and spotlight volunteers. The cost of the shirts will be paid by MAXIMUS' charitable contribution. Contact Secretary Tricia Spayer at tspayer@pressco.com if you want to know your point total.

♦ Approved the Employment Committee to publish a listing of local technical communication employers to the member-only pages of the NEO STC web site by May. The list of employers will be indexed both alphabetically and by city. This is a huge benefit of membership for those currently seeking jobs or pondering a change of employment. Members will need a password to access the directory on the member-only pages. Contact Brian Baddour at baddour@att.net for the password.

♦ Approved the formation of a committee to organize a Region 4 Conference next year. This daunting task will require the help of many volunteers. But, we are confident that everything will be handled smoothly based on the teamwork we’ve observed for scheduling meetings, the Software Saturday seminar, and the April 1 joint meeting with the Pittsburgh STC chapter.

Besides welcoming warmer weather, this is the time of year for members to consider NEO STC officer, committee chairperson, and staff positions. Interested candidates should contact Bob Young at ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net or Stephanie Webster at swebster15@hotmail.com.

Excellent Upcoming Meeting Topics

The March and April meetings provide a glimpse into the ramifications of documentation in a global economy and the online tools used to communicate the message. Alan
Horvath will discuss translation memory at the NEO STC March 9 meeting at the AmeriSuites Hotel in Independence. The need to translate documents from one language to another has increased dramatically over the past couple of years. Horvath will discuss software tools that allow for the automatic reuse of documents from previous translations, thus, saving time and money. Members are encouraged to bring a co-worker to the March meeting for a $10 discount off the nonmember price.

Char James-Tanny, author and expert in Help authoring tools, will show us the latest online Help trends and tools at the April 1 joint meeting. We are co-hosting the one-day workshop with our Pittsburgh colleagues at the Holiday Inn in Boardman, Ohio. This is a renewal of a tradition of both chapters joining forces to offer a full-day training session. There will be several software vendors available to discuss Help authoring tools.

Meeting details are available at http://www.neostc.org/calendar. Registration is required.

Special highlight! We also will be honoring our competition winners at the March meeting. NEO STC secretary Tricia Spayer earned an Award of Merit in the Technical Publications Division. Stephanie Mohar and Maria Hlas from National City Corporation won an Award of Excellence in the Technical Publications Competition, and Tom Hudson and Meloyde Khattak from BMC Software received an Award of Excellence in the Online Competition. We hope you can join us at the March meeting to help us recognize their achievements!

We hope to see you at the meetings — and the STC Conference.

March 9 meeting: Meet and feats

The March 9 NEO STC meeting will be a "Meet and feats" at the AmeriSuites Hotel in Independence, beginning at 6 p.m.

The winners of the online and technical publication competition will receive their awards prior to the 7 p.m. program, which features Alan Horvath of StarGroup. Horvath will address translation and localization services and tools.

Receiving awards in the Technical Publication division are:

- Stephanie Mohar and Maria M. Hlas from National City Corporation, Award of Excellence, National City Home Equity Broker Web Site Quick Reference.

For the Online Competition, the award recipients are:

- Tom Hudson and Meloyde Khattak from BMC Software, Inc., Award of Excellence, MainView for OS/390 Interactive Guide.

We hope to greet others as well. Members are encouraged to bring a non-member to the meeting for a discount price. Non-members receive $10 off the non-member registration price.

New members are encouraged to come at 5:30 p.m. to meet the officers and receive a new member packet. The information includes how to get the most benefit from your STC membership.

Join us to help greet new members and salute our award winners! Details of the meeting are at http://www.neostc.org/.

April 1: Online Help: Trends, Technologies, and Help Authoring Tools Joint Conference with Pittsburgh

On April 1, the Northeast Ohio and Pittsburgh Chapters will hold a one-day conference in Boardman, Ohio. The topic is "Online Help: Trends, Technologies, and Help Authoring Tools" and the guest speaker is Char James-Tanny.

Talks will include:

- Trends in Online Help (Past, Present, and Future)
- Windows Vista (formerly Longhorn) Help
- PLUS an Online Help Tools Workshop — “Picking a HAT”

In addition, representatives and/or literature from many of the popular HATs will be available throughout the day, plus there will be an hour at the end of the day for questions and demos.

Please mark your calendars and RSVP today!

Upcoming events

- 3/8/2006: Webinar: Instructions for Writing Instructions: Guidelines for Organization and Content, presented by Caroline Stern. For more information, see https://stc.webex.com/stc/mywebex/default.php*


4/1/2006: Online Help: Trends, Tips, and Tools (joint meeting with Pittsburgh chapter), presented by Char James-Tanny, Boardman, OH.


5/7 to 5/10/2006: STC's 53rd Annual Conference and Exhibition at the Paris and Bally's Las Vegas hotels in Las Vegas, Nevada. Conference registration costs are now posted online at www.stc.org/53rdConf/53confRegInfo01.asp.

Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these webinars. 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 upfront 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-March Events

3/15: Instructional Design and Learning SIG webinar. Michael Tillmans will present on the topic of "Successful ID: Where Theory and Practice Meet." For more information, see http://www.stcsig.org/idl/webinar/

3/24 to 3/25/2006: Currents conference in Atlanta, GA. For more information, see http://www.stcatlanta.org/currents06/06register.htm.

3/23 to 3/25/2006: Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) OASIS Standard Conference in Raleigh, NC. STC members qualify for a $245 discount (enter the code STC when registering online). For more information, see http://www.travelthepath.com/conf/


3/31/2006: The Rochester Chapter STC will hold Spectrum 2006, an all-day conference focusing on coming trends and directions in technical communication, at the RIT Inn and Conference Center in Henrietta, New York. Keynote speakers will be Suzanna Laurent, president of Communications Design Group and current president of STC, and Jared Spool, CEO of User Interface Engineering. For more information, please contact: Tom Moran (tfmcad@rit.edu)

Webinar review: Improve Your Technical Communication Skills through Creative Writing Techniques

By Alex Hamerstone (ahamerstone@radcomservices.com)

Those of us who thought technical and creative writing are mutually exclusive were proven wrong by a webinar STC hosted on February 22nd called "Improve Your Technical Communication Skills through Creative Writing Techniques." Local STC members and guests participated from Pressco in Solon. Amy Himes, Susan Haire and Marella Colyvas presented during the webinar and focused on how characterization, hooks, and freewriting can improve our technical writing.

Marella Colyvas shared tips to awaken the creativity in each of us. Colyvas gave examples of creative people who are also technical or scientific, including Albert Einstein and Madam Curie. She suggested writing each morning, and recommended freewriting as a way to get your creativity flowing. She said that creative writing will wake up the right side of the brain, help you think and function more holistically, discover hidden creativity in yourself, and become a better thinker.

Amy Himes focused on characterization. Himes stressed that the same techniques that one uses in character sketches for creative writing can be used to discover who the audience is and what they want to know. Himes also noted that the steps of the writing process are the same for technical and creative writing: observing, interacting, experiencing, brainstorming, drafting, writing, testing, polishing, editing, and reviewing.

Susan Haire presented on hooks, which she defined as the elements that attract a reader to pick up a book and to keep on reading. Haire noted that the first page or paragraph sets the tone of the entire work, entices readers into a story and determines whether the reader will enjoy the learning experience. Haire showed how hooks can improve technical documents, with an
example of a scientific calculator. She described how letting users know that more advanced features will be discussed in later chapters is a hook to get readers to keep reading.

This was a worthwhile and enjoyable webinar. Not only were the presentations informative and clear, the attendees in the room added some great perspective. Although creative and technical writing require different tones, styles and techniques, there are similarities. Applying the lessons learned in this webinar should make for more enriching technical writing.

Congratulations to new senior members!

Congratulations and thank you for your continuing membership!

❖ Deborah D. Arney
❖ Michelle E. Price
❖ Brian E. Smith
❖ Tricia Oleksy Spayer
❖ Janee B. Voss
❖ Robert G. Young

Senior members have been with STC for at least five years.

Member profile: Robert Dianetti

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

Bob Dianetti is a highly active member of both STC and our NEO STC chapter. Dianetti previously served as NEO STC chapter president, and he currently serves as director-sponsor for STC Region 4 http://www.stcregion.org/region4/, which covers Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania and includes 21 professional chapters and 7 student chapters.

Dianetti is president of RADCom, Inc., a Hudson-based company with a staff that designs, develops, and delivers e-learning, training, and documentation. If you go to the company web site at http://www.radcomservices.com/, you will see the impressive list of awards RADCom, Inc., has earned, including a Weatherhead 100 Upstart Award, praising RADCom Inc. as one of the fastest growing companies in Northeast Ohio.

Dianetti has received several awards from NEO STC, including a Distinguished Chapter Service Award for his continued commitment to leadership and education within the Northeast Ohio Chapter of STC.

Receiving recognition in appreciation for his guidance and assistance to Cuyahoga Community College through his service as the Chairman of the Technical Communication Advisory Board, NEO STC also awarded Dianetti its Volunteer of the Year. This award was given for his extraordinary effort in volunteering his time and talent and for helping to raise the level of awareness and the caliber of the technical communication profession in Northeast Ohio.

Dianetti lives in Hudson with his wife, Angie, and his four children. Angie is a co-owner of RADCom, Inc.

In addition to his work in the field of technical communication, Dianetti is a leader helping those in the community. He and his employees participated in the Light the Night Walk to benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Two teams of RADCom, Inc., employees raised over $4000.

What is it like to be an STC Competition judge?

Original concept by Brian Winter (Brian.Winter@vertexinc.com), Team Leader, Information Development, Vertex Inc. http://www.vertexinc.com/ (a member of the Philadelphia Metro chapter).

Prepared for NEO STC Lines & Letters by Bill Lukshaw (wlukshaw@datavantagecorp.com) Documentation Specialist, Datavantage

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I volunteered to be a judge at the last STC Competition. I knew that as a judge I had to be fair and impartial. Isn't that what they say about all the courtroom judges on TV? I found that saying that and doing it are two very different things.

I found that I had to act out several roles in order complete my task. These roles included: end-user, editor, and of course, a writer.

I would like to offer the following advice to all first-time judges:

❖ Try to put yourself in the end-user's shoes. Look at the entry and ask yourself "Does this document tell me what I need to know?" Is the visual aspect of the document such that the user can easily read it without needing a magnifying glass or falling asleep? Can the user easily find the information he or she needs and understand it when they find it?
As an editor, you need to look at the writing style. Is it consistent? Does it flow smoothly from one topic to the next? Is the document easy to read? By "easy to read" I mean, are the sentences of a reasonable length and is the information in the sentences understandable?

Offer constructive criticism. Your comments should not be aimed solely at pointing out mistakes and errors. How can the author better accomplish his or her purpose in creating the document? Don't fall back on "Well, I would have done it this way." There are a zillion ways to do a thing. Your job as a judge is to determine: 1) Did they accomplish what they set out to do? and, 2) How well did they do it?

Finally, don't be so sensitive to the author’s feelings that you do a fluff job and don't be so critical that you hack the document to pieces. Try to find the middle ground where you accomplish your purpose which is to judge the entry on its merits.

Brian Winter of the Philadelphia Metro STC chapter offers the following advice for entrants:

You may have spent weeks or months analyzing needs and designing, constructing, evaluating, and refining your work. The STC judges are typically going to spend 4 hrs (maybe less) reviewing it. Are they going to be more expert about your project than you? Of course not. But, usually, the judges are clever enough people to offer some good best-practice insights and pick up on opportunities for improvement that you may not have considered. Recognize the limitations of what a volunteer judge can offer in a brief, outsider review, and value their perspective for what it can realistically provide.

Focus on the feedback and not the award level. I had one entry I thought was fairly well-crafted get rejected by the judges as having no merit. Deployed in the field, that same piece has held the highest satisfaction rating in our user surveys for several years now. Go figure. I've also had entries that I thought were merely good get Distinguished awards and go on to the International competition. I've known a few other authors to have similar experiences. The kudos are nice when you get them, but sometimes the award decision will leave you scratching your head. Regardless of the award, though, I usually get some good suggestions for improvement. That's the real value you get out of your entry fee.

Expect that you will not agree with all the judges' comments. I find that out of 2 or 3 judges per entry, usually only one of them has a lot of really good feedback, with the others being a bit hit and miss. Sometimes, depending on the luck of the draw, you may find yourself disagreeing with all of the judges' opinions. Take what you can make use of, lay aside the rest, and try not to take it personally.

If you do have an unlucky experience, please don't hold a grudge and write off the whole competition for years. In fact, having a rocky time as an entrant makes you a great candidate for Judge in the next year's competition--you now know what mistakes to avoid!

STC Candidate Elections: Bylaws Change Regarding Presidential Chain Succession in the Event of a Vacancy

By Robert J. Dianetti, Manager, Bylaws Committee and Governance Committee

As many STC members know, our organization has a long history and has had to manage many changes over the years. Like many organizations, STC has a set of bylaws that are used to run the organization efficiently. These bylaws are periodically updated to address changes in procedures or direction of the Society. Ideally, updates are done proactively. Sometimes, however, unforeseen events occur that require the bylaws to be modified in a more reactive manner.

This past year, our first vice president resigned. The current bylaws call for a new first vice president to be nominated by the president and approved by the board of directors. The new first vice president would then ascend to the presidency the following year. In trying to fill the vacancy, we discovered that the bylaws sections regarding succession did not provide enough detail about the presidential chain to ensure an orderly succession. Clarity is needed around whether the officer completing a vacancy-created term continues in the presidential chain or whether a contested election is required.

Some bylaws changes can be approved by the board of directors. Other changes, like the proposed change discussed in this article, require a vote by the general membership. This article shows the original wording and the proposed new wording of the affected section. It also discusses some arguments, both pro and con.
Here is the text of the proposed bylaws change, direct from the board meeting minutes:

Move to add the following Bylaws change to the 2006 election ballot—replace Article IV, Section 5 with new wording:

**Original wording:**

If the office of the immediate past president is vacant, it remains so until the next election. A vacancy in the office of president is filled by the first vice president unless that office is also vacant, in which case the second vice president succeeds to the presidency. If the office of second vice president is also vacant, a president is elected from among the board members by majority vote of the entire board. A vacancy in the office of first vice president is filled by the second vice president unless that office is also vacant, in which case the first vice president is elected from among the board members by majority vote of the entire board. Persons nominated by the president to fill vacancies in the offices of second vice president, secretary, treasurer, and director are elected by majority vote of the entire board. Vacancy appointments extend to the next annual business meeting and are not deemed a term of office within the meaning of any restriction imposed by Section 4 above. If a director's term of office has not expired at the end of a vacancy appointment, a new director is elected to fill the unexpired term.

**Proposed new wording:**

A. **Vacancy in the Office of Immediate Past President.** If the office of the immediate past president is vacant, it remains so until the next regularly scheduled election.

B. **Vacancy in the Office of President.** A vacancy in the office of president is filled by the first vice president. If the offices of both first vice president and second vice president are vacant, a president is elected from among the board members by majority vote of the entire board and serves only until the end of the term of president. A person so elected president does not automatically succeed to the office of immediate past president.

C. **Vacancy in the Office of First Vice President.** A vacancy in the office of first vice president is filled by the second vice president. If the office of first vice president is vacant and the office of second vice president is also vacant, a first vice president is elected from among the board members by a majority vote of the entire board and serves only until the end of the term of first vice president. A person so elected first vice president does not automatically succeed to the office of president at the end of the term of first vice president. Instead, a president is elected during the next election, during which at least two candidates are presented.

D. **Vacancy in the Office of Second Vice President.** If the office of second vice president is vacant, a second vice president is elected from among the board members by majority vote of the entire board and serves only until the end of the term of second vice president. A person so elected second vice president does not automatically succeed to the office of first vice president at the end of the term of second vice president. Instead, a first vice president is elected during the next election, during which at least two candidates are presented, and petition candidates are accepted (in this case only).

E. **Vacancy in the Office of Secretary, Treasurer or Director.** If there is a vacancy in the office of secretary, treasurer, or director, a secretary, treasurer, or director is elected from the ranks of members in good standing who have attained the grade senior member or higher by a majority vote of the entire board and serves only until the next annual business meeting.

F. **Nominating Persons to Fill Vacancies on the Board.** Any board member can nominate a member to fill a vacancy on the board, subject to the constraints specified in this section.

**Arguments in Favor of the Bylaws Change**

In the original version, only the president is able to nominate replacement board members. The board has the opportunity to vote on the selection, but the pool of nominees would be limited, and there might be qualified candidates who would not otherwise have the opportunity to run for the office. In the new wording, any board member can nominate a replacement officer. This could result in several candidates for the vacant office and in more choices for a board member's vote.

A second advantage of the new wording is that board-elected replacement officers would serve only until the end of the original term for the specific office and not automatically advance to the next higher position. For example, a replacement second VP would serve only the
remainder of that term for the second VP position. That person, or someone else, would need to be elected by the general membership to the first VP position the following year. Under the old wording, a president-appointed, board-elected second VP could stay in office and eventually become president. The Society leadership feels that the presidential chain should have membership-elected officers in place as often as practical.

Arguments Against the Bylaws Change

One potential downside to the new wording is that there could be too many nominees for the vacant office. For example, if there were ten nominees, then it’s possible only two or three votes would be enough to win election. This is surely not a way to build consensus.

Another downside is that the "presidential chain" might experience a loss of continuity, especially if someone new to Society-level activities were to be elected to the office of president. New blood is a good thing, but running an international society like STC requires an incredible amount of experience and finesse. Someone new to the board stepping into such a high office could be problematic for the Society at large, despite the good intentions of everyone involved. The current wording would prevent this from happening.

Third, if an appointed VP is allowed to proceed in the presidential chain, the Society benefits from that person's experience. If that person is replaced, that experience may be lost.

All in all, this is an interesting proposed bylaws change. Succession needs to be clearly defined, no matter what type of organization you have. Although the scenario of having to replace several board members is hard to imagine, in our world of uncertainty, it could happen. Even if something as mundane as ill will on the board caused several officers to resign, the Society would be well advised to have a strategy and plan in place for as orderly a transition as possible. It is easier to handle unexpected change if the process to be followed is clear and unambiguous.

Handy hint: Customizing the RoboHelp .LNG File

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

You can customize certain text in your help’s user interface by making changes to the .LNG (language) file in the RoboHelp project. For example, you could change all displayed text to another language. Customized text is available for WebHelp, WebHelp Pro, and HTML Help outputs.

When you change the .LNG file, the modifications only apply to that project and its generated outputs. To make changes to another help file, you must customize the .LNG file for that project.

Note: If you customize any text in a skin for WebHelp or WebHelp Pro, the skin text will override the .LNG file.

To customize the .LNG file in RoboHelp:

1. Click File>Project Settings.
2. Make sure the General tab is showing, and click Advanced.
3. Select the LNG File tab on the Advanced Settings for Localization dialog.
4. Select the text you want to modify and click Edit.
5. Edit the text and click OK.
6. Click OK to close the Project Settings dialog box.

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

♦ Tooling University (part of Jergens, Inc.) of Cleveland seeks a Content Developer/Associate Content Developer to create training materials for web-based classes on industrial topics

♦ Virtual Hold Technology an Akron-based software developer specializing in virtual queuing solutions for call centers, is looking for a Technical Writer to write and edit technical reports, brochures, and manuals for internal documentation, customer reference, and publication

Web design and development

♦ The Flood Company of Hudson, an international coatings company, seeks a Web Content Specialist to develop, manage, and coordinate online content
to further sales, customer satisfaction, and marketing and educational efforts.

- IdeaStar Inc. of Independence is looking for a Web Designer to design and build cutting-edge Web sites for customers and collaborate with a dedicated, supportive team of project managers, programmers, and network administrators.

Training and instructional design

- DeVore Technologies, Inc., a Cleveland-based IT company focused on desktop training, technical training, software development, and web development, seeks Application Trainers/Documentation Writers for full-time and contract-based projects.

- The Information Services department of a Cleveland-based company is looking for an Instructional Designer/Training Specialist to develop, design, implement, facilitate, and maintain training solutions.

Graphic design and technical illustration

- U-Store-It of Middleburg Heights is seeking a Graphic Designer to design a variety of marketing collateral, as well as manage digital assets and perform website design and maintenance.

- American Greetings Corporation of Cleveland seeks a mid-level Graphic Designer with Macintosh-based Freehand and Photoshop skills to plan and design dimensional products such as packaging and labels.

Marketing communications

- Degussa Corporation of Cleveland seeks a Marketing Communications Specialist to oversee graphic design, project management, and website management. This position involves designing and updating collateral materials, coordinating their development, and assisting with the layout, enhancement, and updating of corporate websites.

- Roadway Express, Inc. of Akron is looking for a Marketing Communications Coordinator/Writer to research, develop, and write copy for internal and external communications; support, maintain, and defend the Roadway brand; oversee public relations efforts; and manage department budgets and operations.

- NAS Recruitment Communications of Cleveland is seeking flexible Freelance Copywriters to write ad copy on the premises on an as-needed basis throughout the year.

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)
- Rebecca Martin (rrm3@sbcglobal.net)

Job listings on the NEO STC 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