President's column: Reflecting on our chapter's successes this year

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

It's hard to believe that it has been nearly a year since I outlined some goals as president of NEO STC. It's true that time flies when you're having fun. Indeed, it has been a pleasure and privilege to serve as president.

We have taken some big strides in a short amount of time. The cohesive teamwork of the officers and committees combined with the willingness to try new things helped us exceed my expectations. We accomplished 11 initiatives in our strategic plan, highlighted by the recent announcement of our Public Relations entry receiving not one, but two Awards of Excellence!

It will be exciting, and quite fitting, to see the work of so many of our members this year on display in the winners' booth at the STC Conference in Las Vegas. We also have some special awards to present at the May 19 NEO meeting at the Holiday Inn on Rockside Road in Independence. The meeting is on a Friday night so members can have more time to network than on a "working" week night.

Awards aside, our revitalized PR efforts helped us achieve our primary goal of increasing membership. Starting with a comprehensive telephone membership campaign in August and building momentum with presenters such as Neil Perlin, we estimate an overall membership gain of 10 percent. The number on the "official" membership list drops in April each year because some members do not renew their memberships as quickly as others. Therefore, the non-renewals are factored in plus we have three more months of the "year" to draw new members. We obviously are pleased with the growth!

Our efforts at retaining members have included presenting 13 Senior member pins, profiling members in the newsletter and offering unique meetings, such as the February family event at the Great Lakes Science Center.

The list of chapter accomplishments includes:

♦ Starting a member recognition program that celebrates the volunteer spirit that is the underlying force for any non-profit organization.

♦ Renewing marketing efforts and a redesign of the NEO STC logo to increase fund-raising; sponsorships helped defray the cost of the polo shirts as part of the recognition program.

♦ Debuting a colorful chapter brochure that was written and designed by our members and professionally printed.

♦ Adding a members-only premium page on the Web site, which now features a directory of area employers to complement our employment postings, plus a new web form to enhance employer opportunities to post jobs directly with us.

♦ Stabilizing meeting costs by relocating to a non-banquet facility and using a caterer.

♦ Developing meeting programs that spotlight the evening's presenter, publicize our sustaining organizations and promote upcoming events.

♦ Increasing relationships with other professional groups, including the Usability Professional Association, American Society of Training and Development, and the Northeast Ohio Communication Affiliates.

♦ Hosting educational activities, such as the Software Saturday at Tri-C College and webinars.

♦ Approving to send the incoming chapter president to the STC Conference every year as part of our leadership development.

That's an impressive list that underscores the teamwork. Now we show our appreciation.

We will present a Distinguished Chapter Service Award to Beth Williams at the May 19 meeting. The award, which honors a member's long-standing service to their chapter, is nominated by the chapter officers and voted on by the STC board of directors. Beth, who has been instrumental in all aspects of NEO for many years, chaired the Membership Committee this year.

We also will present other awards as well as announce the recipients of the embroidered polo shirts. Members received one point for participating in STC activities, with the top 15 earning a shirt.

In closing, I wish I had the space to thank everyone by name, but I might accidentally omit someone. So, a hearty thanks to all for your support and commitment to NEO STC.

Incoming president Stephanie Webster is prepared to take our chapter to the next level! As the song goes, we've only just begun ...
Cheers!

Meeting May 19: Celebrate our chapter accomplishments and learn about wikis and user assistance

What is a wiki, and how does it affect user assistance?

NEO STC senior member Mike Bates will share his findings of a usability case study at the Friday, May 19 meeting at the Holiday Inn on Rockside Road in Independence. Members are reminded this is a different location than previous meetings this year.

Special awards and volunteer recognition also highlight the evening celebration as we review our chapter accomplishments for the year! Beth Williams will be presented the Distinguished Chapter Service Award, which is one of the highest honors bestowed on a member by the chapter. We will also welcome our officers and committee chairs for 2006-2007.

Registration starts at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the presentation at 7:30 p.m. RSVP by May 15 to programs@neostc.org or pre-pay with PayPal at http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20060519.html.

A wiki is a Web site that allows people to add and edit content. Bates, who leads product development at Intuit Real Estate Solutions, will discuss the impact wikis are having on user assistance and self-service support. Five months ago, his "lean" team published a 5000-plus article wiki for large commercial and residential real estate clients. Learn how clients reacted and the discoveries that could change the approach to user assistance today and in the future.

Bates has been involved in usability and technical communication for more than 15 years. He has been an active member of STC since 1987.

Our Public Relations committee garnered two Awards of Excellence

NEO STC received two Awards of Excellence for its entry in the STC Public Relations competition. The awards honor the chapter’s overall PR program and the coordinated publicity for chapter events, notably the membership telephone campaign and Software Saturday.

Members of the PR committee are Mario Morelos, Michelle Kastro and Mark Blake. NEO received high praise for the brochure, which was written and designed by Jessica Hendricks, Tricia Spayer, Joel Lantz, and Kim Lindsay. Paul Hanisko of Master Printing printed the brochures at no cost to the chapter.

Beth Williams and Jill McCauslin coordinated the membership telephone campaign and follow-up e-mails. Mario Morelos wrote the scripts that members used to communicate key points of the benefits of STC membership.

The comments from the judges included:

♦ "The brochure blends color and black/white nicely."
♦ "You also did a nice job in creating the STC Northeast Ohio Logo, which is both distinctive yet consistent with the STC logo."
♦ "...the membership telephone campaign, one cannot say enough about how well done it was."

The PR entry will be displayed in the winners’ booth in the exhibit area of the Bally’s Event Center at the STC Conference, May 7-10. The chapter brochure will be included in the bag that is given to all conference attendees.

2006 Distinguished Chapter Service Award recipient: Beth Williams

By Kim Lindsey (klindsey@parker.com)

We are pleased to announce that this year’s nominee, Beth Williams, has been approved — no surprise, once you consider her qualifications!

Beth began her STC involvement in the Bowling Green State University student chapter. After graduating with a master’s degree in Scientific and Technical Communication, she found employment in the Cleveland area and very quickly found ways to help the chapter and the entire Society. Here’s a high-level list of her contributions to NEO STC:

♦ 1999-2001: Chapter treasurer
♦ 2001-2002: Chapter Vice President (a Chapter of Excellence award year)
♦ 2002-2003: Chapter President (a Chapter of Excellence award)
♦ 2003-2004: Immediate Past President and Competitions Manager (a Chapter of Excellence award year)
♦ 2004-2005: Re-Chartering Committee and Competitions Manager (successfully re-chartered)
2005-2006: Membership Manager (successful phone campaign, fall 2005)

In addition, Beth has been a regular contributor to our chapter newsletter and has served as adjunct faculty at Tri-C, teaching technical editing. She has presented at our monthly chapter meetings, at monthly meetings for other chapters, at regional conferences, and several times at STC conferences.

Beth has been successful at everything she has set her hand to — a multitude of tasks both challenging and diverse — and she has made the chapter successful in the process.

Finally, but not least important, is the calm and workmanlike demeanor she brings to each opportunity. Her subtle good humor and patient reasoning have helped us through some difficult situations, and she is happy to mentor and advise anyone who asks, from newcomers to chapter officers.

Be sure to congratulate Beth on her well-deserved award! We will honor her at the Friday, May 19 NEO STC meeting.

**Announcing the polo shirt winners**

Fifteen member volunteers and one special friend will be recognized at the May 19 NEO STC meeting. This group of people is the first of what is hoped to be many who will be saluted for their contributions to our chapter.

A total of 16 embroidered polo shirts will be presented as part of the new Recognition Program, which spotlights the time and efforts our volunteers devote to keeping the chapter running smoothly. Members accrued points from July through April for attending meetings, luncheons, serving on the board and committees, and other STC related activities, with the top 15 being awarded shirts.

Paul Hanisko of Master Printing is among the recipients as special thanks for printing several thousand of our brochures at no cost to the chapter. The colorful tri-fold that illustrates our chapter’s purpose was praised by judges in the Public Relations entry that earned two Awards of Excellence.

The shirts, which feature a stitched NEO STC logo, will be handed out at the first meeting next year. Members receiving a shirt must provide their shirt size at the May meeting or by contacting Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net).

**Earning shirts are (with colossal thanks to secretary Tricia Spayer for patiently tracking the points for all members):**

- Sarah Burke
- Stephanie Webster
- Bob Young
- Jill McCauslin
- Jeanette Evans
- Tricia Spayer
- Lisa Mileusnic
- Namrata Malik
- Kim Lindsey
- Angela Dianetti
- Sherri Henkin
- Christina Chase
- Rebecca Martin
- Heidi Emhoff
- Barbara Philbrick

**Upcoming events**

- 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.
- 5/24/2006: Life After RoboHelp — How We Got Here and Where To Next webinar*
- 6/14/2006: Introduction to DITA webinar*
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.

April conference review: Online Help: Trends, Technologies, and Tools

By Denise Kadilak (denise.kadilak@blackbaud)

The NEO and Pittsburgh chapters of the STC hosted a joint conference on April 1, inviting Char James-Tanny, president of JTF Associates, to talk about Online Help: Trends, Technologies, and Tools. The all-day conference - held at the Holiday Inn in Boardman, Ohio - included two presentations and a group activity.

The first presentation, Trends in Help Authoring Tools (HATs), started with an overview of the history of HATs. Ms. James-Tanny diagrammed the journey, starting with Doc-To-Help, released in the early 1990s, to RoboHelp, Help Magician, HDK, and ForeHelp. The overview continued with the introduction of HTML in the mid 1990s, to the present with the industry moving toward XML and vendors working on the next generation of help authoring tools. The overview was interesting but light on specifics. For example, Ms. James-Tanny encouraged writers to move to structured authoring, warning, "structured authoring will be the norm;" however, how to start making the move was not addressed. She also failed to talk at any length about emerging HATs.

Ms. James-Tanny's second presentation, "Introducing Windows Vista Help," addressed Microsoft's next generation help platform. Although a Microsoft MVP, Ms. James-Tanny was not permitted to reveal much about the new system beyond that already available on the Internet. Still in beta, the Windows Vista Help platform touts an awareness of the user's system, aiming to display the most appropriate help content on a per-user basis. In addition, according to Ms. James-Tanny, Vista Help will "respond to — and solve — customer problems" and includes "a well-defined application user interface," with assistance accessible from the UI. Other Vista Help features mentioned include the following: structured authoring based on an XML file format know as Microsoft Assistance Markup Language, a help viewer pane, task-oriented design, and a revamped publishing model that provides users connected to the Internet with the most up-to-date content using downloaded iterative update files.

The final conference presentation was not a presentation at all. It was group work. After lunch, Ms. James-Tanny arranged the participants into several groups, handed out copies of her Help Authoring Tool Comparison Matrix, and instructed the participants to go through the matrix and determine which help system best met the needs of the entire group, an impossible task given the diverse employment backgrounds of the participants and the complexity of the 27-page matrix. Although the matrix may prove helpful to an organization shopping around for a help authoring tool, in a conference setting the matrix did not work. A number of the feature questions require research, and even working with employees from a single company with similar authoring needs, the matrix is time consuming and requires days or weeks to complete. The short time dedicated to the matrix during the conference did succeed in demonstrating how difficult the HAT evaluation process is, but the point could have been made in less time. A real presentation explaining the pros and cons of the various HAT options available would have been a nice complement to the group assignment. At the very least, more time should have been spent explaining the matrix.

Shortcomings aside, the conference as a whole proved quite informative. As is true with all NEO STC get-togethers, there was plenty of time for extracurricular chitchat about current projects, authoring preferences, and individual research. HAT vendors from ComponentOne and MadCap also gave one-on-one demonstrations of DoctoHelp and Flare, and Alan Houser, president of Group Wellesley and a Quadralay WebWorks Publisher trainer, introduced WebWorks ePublisher Pro to interested participants.

Related Web sites:

- The HelpWare Group (http://www.helpware.net/aphelp/default.htm) — For more information about Windows Vista Help
- TechRepublic (http://techrepublic.com.com/5100-10877_11-5884593.html) — Slightly outdated, but a good article about Windows Vista Help
- MSHelpWiki (http://www.mshelpwiki.com/) - Knowledgebase for all things related to online help
April conference pictures

Mike Hamilton (left) of Mad Cap Flare, Alan Houser (center) of Pittsburgh STC, and Char James-Tanny, who gave the presentation.

Welcome our new members!
We are pleased to welcome six new members:
- Catherine Hilston-Hurd
- Phyllis Hunyad
- Catherine Krzywicki
- Nicole Piorkowski
- Nisha Somnath
- Brent Woodside
We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events!

Member profile: Jill McCauslin

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

Jill McCauslin makes a huge contribution to our NEO STC chapter. She won a Distinguished Chapter Service Award in 2003, and was chapter president in 2001-2002. In 2004, she received a Continued Service Award for developing and executing the networking lunches. For the 2005-2006 term, she worked on the NEO STC membership committee with Beth Williams and continued organizing networking lunches with Angie Dianetti. Her other involvement throughout the years included speaking at annual conferences and chapter meetings. In addition, working with Angie Dianetti, Jill organized three Technicons, two of which also counted as regional conferences.

As Vice President/Human Resources of RADCom Inc., Jill is also a co-owner of RADCom, along with Angie and Bob Dianetti. A company providing training and documentation services, RADCom recently renewed their national certification as a Women Owned Business by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) in partnership with the WBENC — Southeast. The WBENC certification for women-owned businesses is one of the most widely recognized and respected certifications in the nation and is accepted by over 700 major corporations across the country and a number of federal and government agencies.

A member of Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), Jill also belongs to the Knowledgeable Network of Women, a program associated with the Greater Akron Chamber. She is also currently on the scholarship committee at the Hudson Chamber of Commerce. Prior to joining RADCom, Jill says, "I worked at several small software companies in northeast Ohio as a technical writer and general support person. I also worked at Predicasts in University Circle for 5 years and was the coordinator between development and operations and wrote documentation."

Jill currently lives in Hudson with her husband, Dave, their 11-year-old son, Nick, two dogs, and two cats. As she puts it, "I spend what leisure time I have reading, sitting at chess tournaments and soccer games, and taking yoga classes."

Webinar review: Software simulations: Tips, tricks, and best practices

By Rob Catalano (rcatalano@radcomservices.com)

On April 12, well-known author and technical communications guru William Horton presented a lively webinar on how to add panache to software simulations and make them stimulating, not exacerbating. Parker Hannifin Corporation hosted the webinar so NEO STC members could learn from Horton how to better design
software simulations and use available tools. He also imparted time-saving tips and a dash of humor.

The moment attendees walked into the state-of-the-art conference room at Parker, they saw people from other webinar sites across the country doodling on Mr. Horton's visage, playing tic-tac-toe, and otherwise desecrating his carefully designed welcome slide. Of course he encouraged this behavior in order to make the webinar interactive and entertaining. Horton's number one point was that simulations should be as fun as possible. As Horton's bio photo was a mug shot, attendees were sure that he knew how to have fun, or just get into trouble.

Since 1971, Horton has indeed been getting into trouble as he has made most every mistake possible in designing software simulations. He encouraged participants to learn from his mistakes so that they don't have a three decade long learning curve. After polling the audience on their backgrounds and levels of experience in designing simulations and using certain software, Horton tailored his presentation to meet the needs of most attendees. Horton engaged participants by encouraging people to vote, add their own tips, and ask questions throughout the webinar. He only had to tell folks to stop playing tic-tac-toe and doodling on his face once.

Horton stated that simulations are not the cure-all for all software learning needs, but with new tools they can save time and money. For example, a document Horton produced using screen captures and instructions took him 92 minutes using Microsoft Word. He then decided to take a crack at using Captivate and accomplished the same thing as a simulation in 21 minutes. Horton was a very experienced Word user and a novice at Captivate at the time, so you do the math on how simulations might save you time and effort.

There are too many tips to cover in this review so be sure to visit the link at the end for more details. Some of the most practical tips that Horton suggested include:

- Divide simulations into different levels of interactivity: 1. Show Me; 2. Coach Me; 3. Test Me; 4. Let Me
- Create a setup checklist so that you capture screens with a consistent manner and look every time.
- Record audio separately. If you don't want to record audio, use something like "Text Aloud" MP3, which simulates a voice from typed text. Attendees listened to several voice simulator programs and voted "Paul" from NeoSpeech as the most intelligible. AT&T and ScanSoft had a halting British tone, and Microsoft "Bob" sounded like, well, a robot.
- Teach data checking rather than data entry. Users already know how to type and enter information; they just need to learn what the correct data is. Have users check for accuracy from completed entry fields using matching exercises and other tools.
- Set up a template so that you only need to add the actual screen captures and specific text. This reduces workload by 65-85%.

To get more information on William Horton’s simulation workshop, to get a copy of the webinar handouts, and to take a hands-on tutorial, visit: http://horton.com/swsims.

You might find Horton's mug shot there or just look at your local post office.

**National election results**

In this year’s national STC election, 18.52% of the eligible membership base cast votes. This is a significant improvement over past years and reflects an important upward trend in member involvement. Pending official announcement of the results, our new officers are:

- President: Paula R. Berger
- First Vice President: Linda L. Oestreich
- Second Vice President: Mark H. Clifford
- Secretary: Char James-Tanny
- Directors: Mike Murray and Jeff Staples
- Nominating Committee: Constance L. Kiernan and Betsy M. Maaks

Bylaws change (Article IV, Section 5) regarding presidential chain succession in the event of a vacancy: Passed

For detail on the election results, including the number of votes cast for each candidate, see http://www.stc.org/about/electionResults01.asp
Handy hint: PowerPoint 2003 options

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

Microsoft PowerPoint 2003 has several options that you might want to turn on and off for different slide shows. They’re all conveniently located on the same dialog box.

1. Click Tools>Options.
2. Select the View tab.
3. Decide which options you want to turn off (they are all turned on by default).
4. Click OK.

When you view a slide show by clicking Slide Show>View Show or pressing <F5>, a black screen appears at the end of the show with the text "End of slide show - click to exit." If you want to remove this slide at the end of a slide show, uncheck End with black slide.

In a slide show, clicking the right mouse button displays a popup menu that allows you to end the show, among other options. To disable the right-click menu for a slide show, uncheck Show menu on right mouse click.

Moving the mouse during a slide show displays a popup toolbar in the lower left corner of the screen. The toolbar buttons allow you to navigate between slides, open a menu (the same menu accessed by the right mouse click), or use drawing tools right on the slides. To disable the popup toolbar for a slide show, uncheck Show popup toolbar.

Bonus Tip: If you want to temporarily turn off animations in a presentation, click Slide Show>Set Up Show, and check Show without animation under Show Options.

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.]

Check out just a few of the hot jobs from our Web site at http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php!.

Technical and scientific communication

• Kaiser Permanente of Cleveland seeks a Proposal Strategist I to produce on-time responses to RFPs that are accurate, thorough, and clearly communicate the Kaiser Permanente employer advantage (direct employer submittal).
• Foundation Software, Inc. of Brunswick is looking for a Technical Writer to work as a lone writer to research, write, edit, and maintain print and online documentation for its construction accounting software.
• Pepperl+Fuchs, Inc. is seeking a Technical Writer to write, edit, and proofread content for corporate web sites, product literature, and training materials.

Web design and development

• Invacare Corporation of Elyria is looking for a Web Content Manager to conceptualize, develop, write, and architect content for Invacare's website and newsletters.
• Tenth Floor of Cleveland is seeks a Web/Multimedia Designer to produce web and multimedia designs and other creative materials in a dynamic, fast-paced environment.
• Arrow International of Brooklyn is seeking a Webmaster, Senior Level with five or more years of experience to fill a new web design and publishing position.

Training and instructional design

• DATATRAK International, Inc., of Mayfield Heights seeks a Training Development Specialist to develop and deliver internal soft skills and leadership training.
• Progressive of Mayfield Village seeks a Supervisor Training II to identify technical and professional skills training needs, manage the development of in-house training, and supervise and evaluate trainers and instructional designers.

Graphic design and technical illustration

• Scherba Industries of Brunswick (parent company of Inflatable Images) is seeking an Illustrator to produce art renderings and camera ready art for its product, inflatable images.
• Lachina Publishing Services of Beachwood is seeking a Medical/Scientific Illustrator for its art department to produce top-quality 3D illustrated imagery and to fulfill other production needs.
• K & M International of Twinsburg is looking for a Product Toy Designer with strong drawing skills to support the product development process of wildlife and nature-related themed products from initial concept to finished product.
Analytical Products Group, Inc. of Westlake seeks a Graphic Designer/Marketing Specialist to design, create, and proof graphics; publish a monthly electronic newsletter; write copy for newsletters, product literature, websites, and sales materials; and conduct market research.

Editing

Staffing Solutions Enterprises of Cleveland is looking for an Editor with six years of editing, writing, or documentation experience to edit courseware, primarily Web-based and instructor-led courses.

Crain Communications, Inc., publisher of Crain’s Cleveland Business, is seeking a Sections Editor to develop story ideas for its weekly newspaper's themed sections and to work with freelance and staff-generated copy as a story editor.

Marcus Thomas LLC of Warrensville Heights seeks a proofreader to ensure that all agency documents, research papers, presentations, and advertising artwork are error free, compliant with agency standards, and meet or exceed client expectations.

Marketing communications

The College of Science Dean’s Office at Cleveland State University seeks a Grants Writer and Administrator to identify and apply for state, federal, and private funding sources for the college and college faculty, as well as to administer grants, monitor grant activity and grant reporting, and assist with grant development processes.

Vita-Mix Corporation of Olmsted Township is seeking a Marketing Communications Coordinator to coordinate lead generation analysis, marketing campaigns, and promotional activities; work with commercial creative to execute plans and communicate marketing concepts; and coordinate national and international training events.

The United Way of Greater Cleveland seeks a Senior Writer to write and edit publications, newsletters, brochures, management reports, website copy, annual reports, speeches, television and radio scripts, PSAs, calendar items, and press releases.

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