

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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President's Notes

Jill McCauslin, President

I am excited to report that our chapter received the STC 2000-2001 Chapter of Excellence Award. Kris Henige and I accepted the award from Thea Teich, Region 4 Director-Sponsor, at the STC Annual Conference in Chicago last month. The award was given to our chapter for "leadership in cooperative programming, public relations, and support for academic programs throughout the region."

This award is based on a set of criteria that the society board created. Chapters that meet the criteria are eligible for the award. The three non-student chapters of Ohio, Southwestern Ohio, Central Ohio, and Northeast Ohio, all won chapter of excellence awards!

Chapter Accomplishment

Our chapter performed a wide range of activities this past year, including a meeting with other professional societies, as well as hosting the Region 4 Conference. We held competitions and developed a mentoring program. Our newsletter was published regularly and we tried some new public relations tools. A couple members of our chapter judged the international competition. Our chapter was represented at Bowling Green State University's open house for students and at Youngstown State University's (YSU) networking lunch and continued to work with Cuyahoga Community College on its technical writing program. Thank you, to all of you who worked so hard this year.

This year's Chapter of Service Award was given to Bege Bowers. Bege runs our chapter's high school technical writing competition and has done a wonderful job of it. I gave Bege her plaque at the networking lunch with the YSU Student Chapter. Thank you, Bege, for all of your work, both with our chapter and with the YSU Student Chapter.

Volunteers of the Month

Volunteers of the month haven't been announced for a while. The following is a list of members who have given a lot to the chapter this year and I want to thank them.

- ◆ October: Angie Dianetti, TechniCom Conference Manager - Angie organized the Region 4 Conference. (Michael Dianetti was an honorary volunteer for helping his mom at the age of two months.)
- ◆ November: Irene Jones, Membership Committee Manager - Irene contacted new members and potential members and volunteered her husband to

speak to us on Conflict Resolution. She also cheerfully sent out mailing labels every time one of us needed them.

- ◆ January: Elizabeth Simeral, Program Committee Manager - Elizabeth single-handedly coordinated our chapter meetings for the last half of the year. She arranged the meetings at the Cleveland Museum of Art, NASA's Glenn Research Center, and ASM International, as well as the usability meeting in March.
- ◆ February: Jeanette Evans, Joint Meeting Manager - Jeanette organized our meeting with the different professional organizations in the area.
- ◆ March: Maria Hlas, Immediate Past President - Maria ran the nominating committee and managed to convince a number of you to volunteer for next year. She even managed to get a few people started this year!
- ◆ April: Cheryl Bennett, Competitions Manager - Cheryl ran our competitions for the past couple of years and has helped the webmasters with some technical and stylistic advice.
- ◆ May: June Muhic, Mentoring Committee Manager - June set up the chapter's mentoring program last year and continued to develop it this year. She also found a person to replace her next year.
- ◆ June: Sharon Ambro, Karla Caldwell, and Laurie Harrison, Newsletter Editors - Sharon, Karla, and Laurie experimented this year with developing an electronic version of the newsletter via the chapter's Web site, as well as continuing to publish paper issues. They did an outstanding job this year. Thank you, Sharon, Karla, and Laurie!

Volunteer of the Year

The volunteer of the year award is presented by the chapter's president to those who contributed outstanding effort to the chapter. I am presenting this year's award to the chapter's Webmasters, Mark Blake and Kristen Jackson. Mark and Kristen redesigned our Web site and struggled through some browser difficulties. They also managed to get our chapter its own URL and moved all of the files to a new Web host. Finally, they managed to revamp everything again to accommodate STC's new logo. Thank you so much, both of you, for your work this year. It was an adventure and you did a great job.

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Many Thanks

I'd like to thank the executive board members for all of their efforts this year. I'd like to thank Kris Henige for her advice and help and for heading up the development of a logo for our chapter. I also thank Monica Lusk for serving as secretary, Gigi Kolt for handling the employment and resume pages on the Web site, and Michelle Poore for handling chapter public relations, even when her own job duties increased and took much more of her time. My thanks also to Beth Williams for handling our funds and helping us stay on track with our budget and keeping her sense of humor.

I'm sure that next year will be a great year and wish Kris Henige and her board all the best. I'll see you next year!

Northeast Ohio Chapter STC Wins Chapter of Excellence Award

The Northeast Ohio Chapter STC was presented the 2000-2001 Chapter of Excellence Award at the 48th Annual Conference in Chicago last month. Jill McCauslin, president, and Kris Henige, vice president, accepted the award from Thea Teich, Region 4 director-sponsor, for "leadership in cooperative programming, public relations, and support for academic programs throughout the region." All conference attendees who were members of an award-winning chapter wore badges during the conference signifying their membership to a Chapter of Excellence.

Southwestern Ohio and Central Ohio chapters won the Chapter of Excellence Award as well.

NEO STC Chapter Returns to Positive Financial Standing

By Beth Williams, Treasurer

I'll be turning over the Treasurer's books next month, and I wanted to update everyone on the financial health of the Northeast Ohio Chapter STC. The bottom line is that we have increased our account balance by approximately \$7,500 from two years ago when I became the treasurer. I would like to explain how we did that.

The first thing you should know is that each year the chapter receives approximately \$30 in dues reimbursement per member from the international STC organization. The Northeast Ohio Chapter STC averages around 175 members, so each July we receive a check for approximately \$5,000. In 1999, our reimbursement check was for \$4,841.50, and in 2000, the check was for

\$5,489.00. This is one of the reasons it is so important to keep your membership up to date. The money really does come back to the chapter to help with operating expenses during the year.

On July 1, 1999, our account balance was \$5,123.45. We then received our dues reimbursement, the balance increased to \$9,964.95. By July 1, 2000, our account balance was \$7,555.93, so we had increased our overall account balance by \$2,409.02.

The 2000/2001 fiscal year has been even more sound. We started with a balance of \$7,555.93. The addition of our dues reimbursement brought the balance to \$13,044.93. As of May 1, 2000, our account balance stands at \$12,928.54, so we've increased our balance by an additional \$5,372.61 this year! Technically, our current balance is only \$7,928.54, but that's because we have \$5,000 in a CD that matures in July. While there are still some expenses the chapter will incur before the June 30 fiscal year end, we should still be in the black by at least \$5,000 this year. The following table displays account activity, balances, and dates.

We increased our balance so much because we didn't spend much money. But we didn't just let the money we have sit idle because we actually increased a great deal of committee activity over the last two years. Most committees broke even. But those that had higher operating expenses were offset by committees that generated income. For example, we don't make enough money from advertising in the newsletter to cover the printing costs. Although, this year we started publishing a few issues online which will help defer expenses, so we lose money keeping the newsletter going. However, the chapter has made up for these kinds of losses over the last two years by generating an income of \$800 from competitions in 1999 and over \$1,000 from the Region IV Conference in 2000.

Every committee should be proud of the work they've done in maintaining a quality chapter sometimes within a rather strict budget. It's been exciting for me to be part of the chapter that has returned to solid financial ground since July 1999. I'm looking forward to moving into my new position of vice president for the 2001-2002 year.

Distinguished Chapter Service Award Presented at YSU Student Chapter April Networking Lunch

by Angie Dianetti, TechniCom Conference Manager

In April, several members of the Northeast Ohio Chapter STC met with members of the Youngstown State University (YSU) Student Chapter for a networking lunch at Anthony's on the River in Youngstown. Michelle Wall of the YSU Chapter and I organized the event, but Michelle did most of the work. I was very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the chapter officers.

Jill McCauslin presented the Distinguished Chapter Service Award to Bege Bowers for her work on the International High School Technical Communication Competition. It was nice that Bege was able to accept the award with her students present.

Many students brought their portfolios and resumes and received some advice from area professionals. It also gave many members from the area an opportunity to participate in a chapter event. The event was very well received.

Why Be a Chapter Volunteer?

by Chris Benz, the tallest (about 6' 6") STC board member ever, Region 2 director-sponsor

As we wrap up another STC program year, it's time for chapters and members alike to reflect on our achievements during the past year, and start thinking about what we want to accomplish in the coming year.

Region 4 chapters range in size from about 30 to more than 700. Our seven student chapters range in size from 15 to 35. Most chapters would cease to exist were it not for the efforts of a relatively small number of volunteers. These small teams of "worker bees" deliver the bulk of each chapter's offerings—newsletters, monthly membership and special interest group (SIG) meetings, competitions, Web sites, e-mailings, workshops, and so on. While those who volunteer are generally glad to do it, a small group of volunteers means that your chapter can't offer as much as it could with a larger volunteer base.

Volunteering for your chapter can take many forms. You can serve in a relatively demanding leadership role, such as newsletter editor or program coordinator, or one that requires less time but still allows you to be in the center of activity, such as secretary. You can serve in a long-

term support role, such as a writer for the newsletter or a Web assistant, or you can fill a short-term role, such as a coordinator of a chapter workshop or a competition judge. You can also identify a need and propose a role to address it; chapter leaders are generally open to anything that improves their fellow members' professional lives or the community at large.

While time is short for most if not all of us, volunteering for your chapter is richly rewarding. Here are some of the benefits: You will gain influence over what the chapter offers, making sure that these offerings meet your professional needs. Plus, the more volunteers your chapter has, the more it can offer, and the higher quality (and possibly lower cost) those offerings can be.

You will establish contacts with other technical communication professionals who can give you advice and help when you need it. Looking for new ideas for improving online help or your Web site? Wondering how to position yourself for that promotion? Having trouble extracting information from programmers? Someone in your chapter has the answer—or at least knows how to help you find the answer.

You will be able to try new things and establish new skills without fear of reprisal for faltering. Volunteers are a very forgiving group because we've all been there, and you certainly won't lose your paying job!

You will demonstrate to your employer and to future employers that you take your profession seriously. How do you suppose that will look at your next review or interview?

If you think you can find the time to enhance your career, your chapter, and your life, volunteer!

TRAF Technique Saves Time

By J. Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

Do you measure your success by the time you spend working? If so, you are missing the point. Many people today believe that real success lies in mastering techniques that help them simplify their lives and make their work more efficient so they can spend time doing what they really want to do instead of working overtime!

"You would be amazed by how relaxed some incredibly successful executives are," says Stephanie Winston. She should know, because she is the original "Organized Executive" and author of a best-selling book and a newsletter by the same name. She coaches senior-level professionals at some of the world's top companies on how to accomplish more in less time. Her models are

executives whose successful careers are matched only by their satisfying personal lives.

Winston's TRAF Technique has helped many people achieve their goal of simplifying their lives so they can do more of what they want. When you think of how many messages arrive in your mail and computer each day, it can be daunting. The real task is to handle each message quickly and efficiently and that can be accomplished by using the TRAF Technique to make sure each message results in an action.

There are only a few things you can do with a message, regardless of whether it is a piece of paper or an electronic message. One of the best time savers you can learn is to make sure you handle each message the first time you pick it up. Handling it can mean actually taking care of it or making a decision about what needs to be done. According to Winston, you can Toss it, Refer it, Act on it, File it, or lay it aside to read it—such as with a magazine or advertisement. Let's take a closer look at how this technique can save time if you apply it to your messages in the following order.

Toss It

When I open either regular mail or e-mail messages, I do it with a trash basket close at hand. Once I pick up a message, I don't lay it down again unless I have made a decision about how to handle it. When I recognize a piece of "junk mail," I save time by not even opening the envelope. Rarely do I regret throwing something away before I open it. Before you make a decision on whether or not to toss it, you might want to ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that could happen if I throw this out?" If I can't just "toss" the message, then I consider whether I can refer it to someone else.

Refer It

If possible, delegate the message to someone else. Sending it on to a colleague with greater knowledge or expertise in that area is preferable. I track those more important referrals to follow-up on later by dropping a note into a folder marked with the person's name to whom I referred the item. If I cannot refer the message to someone else, then I take care of it myself.

Act on It

Place all messages that require an action from you into one or more action folders. If you couldn't decide what to do with a message, add it to these folders as well. After all, actions include decisions that must be made. Devise a method for pinpointing the top-priority items. I create the folders with "handle by dates" so I don't miss

an important deadline. The last step is to "just do it" because when you let it pile up it takes even longer to catch up.

File It

Once the item has been acted upon, it is time to sort and file it. Mark the messages that can be discarded with a date—three months, six months, or a year. One trick I use for filing is to sort the items into smaller, related stacks as I place them in the "to be filed" stack. I set aside a time once a month to do my filing as well.

As you learn to apply this technique to your incoming messages, you will find this system saves you a lot of time. Time that can be better spent doing the things you want to do in life!

STC Meets ASM: The Result? A discussion of SGML and XML

By Karla Caldwell, Newsletter Co-editor

We gathered at the Materials Information Society's (ASM) world headquarters on a rainy Thursday afternoon, but the dreary weather didn't stop chapter members from enjoying a tour of Minerals Park and a lively discussion of SGML and XML.



After a tour of the mineral gardens, where more than 70 varieties of perennials, shrubs, and flowering trees accent a large collection of raw ore specimens and two water sculptures, attendants moved to the semi-circular headquarters building for dinner and a discussion lead by ASM's Electronic Publications Manager, Sally-Fahrenheit-Mann.

Fahrenheit-Mann outlined the processes involved in the conversion of ASM's hefty 21-volume reference series from print to SGML text. SGML, or Standardized General Markup Language, was chosen for the project because it is neither platform- nor software-dependant. This independence makes the language an ideal system for

storing valuable information that may eventually outlive the hardware and software it was created on.

To convert their reference series, ASM worked with SGML experts to develop a DTD, or document type definition that fit their needs. After nearly a year working on the DTD, they then began the laborious process of transposing the existing print books to an electronic format. With the development of a screen FOSI (format output specification index), ASM was ready to put the volumes on CD ROM. The process took more than four years to complete, but Fahrenholz-Mann is confident that the investment was well worth it.

Fahrenholz-Mann encouraged chapter members to consider SGML/XML implementation if:

- ◆ Information must be offered in more than one medium
- ◆ Content is revised often
- ◆ Information is reused by other people or products
- ◆ Information is very valuable or long-lived
- ◆ Information can be fit into a uniform type
- ◆ ISO standards are required
- ◆ Users and implementers are enthusiastic and ready for a technical challenge
- ◆ Content must be strictly controlled or precisely searched
- ◆ Your organization is supportive of an "ML" implementation

Fahrenholz-Mann concluded her discussion by providing chapter members with a list of resources and tools.

Resources

- ◆ Robin Cover's SGML/XML Web Page (xml.coverpages.org/dsml.html)
- ◆ Oasis (www.oasis-open.org)
- ◆ XML.org (www.xml.org)
- ◆ World Wide Web Consortium (www.w3c.org)
- ◆ XML.com (www.xml.com)
- ◆ XML Arena (www.xmlarena.com)
- ◆ XML Journal (www.xmljournal.com)
- ◆ XML Magazine (www.xmlmag.com)

Tools

- ◆ ArborText's Epic and Adept
- ◆ XMetal
- ◆ WordPerfect 8 and 9
- ◆ FrameMaker+SGML

STC Election Results

Society Results

- ◆ President: Judith L. Glick-Smith, a senior member with the Lone Star chapter, assumes the office of president after a year of service as first vice president.
- ◆ First Vice President: Edward J. See, a senior member with the New York Metro chapter, assumes the office of first vice president after a year of service as second vice president.
- ◆ Second Vice President: Thea Teich, a senior member with the Southwestern Ohio chapter, has been elected second vice president.
- ◆ Treasurer: Mary Jo Stark, a senior member with the Rocky Mountain chapter, has been elected treasurer.
- ◆ Director-Sponsor, Region 4: Mike Bates, a senior member with the Northeast Ohio chapter, has been elected director-sponsor of Region 4.
- ◆ Director-Sponsor, Region 6: Michele Davis Berkes, a senior member with the Wisconsin chapter, has been elected director-sponsor of Region 6.
- ◆ Director-Sponsor, Region 8: Bonni Graham, a senior member with the San Diego chapter, has been elected director-sponsor of Region 8.
- ◆ Nominating Committee: John V. Hedtke, an associate fellow with the Puget Sound chapter, and Deirdre A. Murr, an associate fellow with the San Fernando Valley chapter, have been elected to serve a two-year term on the nominating committee.

Local Results

- ◆ President: Kris Henige
- ◆ Vice President: Beth Williams
- ◆ Secretary: Kim Lindsey
- ◆ Treasurer: Dennis Verbiar
- ◆ Immediate Past President: Jill McCauslin

NASA's Glenn Research Center: A Wealth of History in Our Own Backyards

By Sharon Ambro, Newsletter Co-editor

We stood in the ground support center for the International Space Station (ISS) and imagined the room brimming with scientists and engineers crunching data, troubleshooting hardware problems, and talking to the astronaut crew aboard the ISS. This very room will be the hub for supporting the NASA Glenn Research Center's (GRC) (<http://www.lerc.nasa.gov/>) science experiments that will be on board the ISS.

NASA Glen Lewis Facility This scenario describes the beginning of the April meeting at GRC, which started off with a brief van-driven tour of the 350-acre lab that is adjacent to the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. At one point during the tour, we piled out of the vans and entered the room described above. We also saw a mock-up of the Fluids and Combustion Facility (FCF), which in a few years will be on board the ISS in Destiny, the U.S. Laboratory Module. The FCF will perform combustion science and fluids physics experiments that use the microgravity environment of space to investigate scientific questions of which the answers will someday benefit us on Earth.

Following the tour, we gathered in the Visitor Center for a presentation given by Bonnie Smith, a NASA GRC archivist. Smith evaluates the various types of recorded NASA history for proper preservation techniques and makes the materials available to the NASA staff and those interested in researching aviation and space history. She is the source for GRC historical information as well as anecdotes about GRC's birth and growth through the years.

Just as the United States was about to enter WWII, ground was broken on the Cleveland site for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) Aircraft Engine Research Laboratory (AERL) on January 23, 1941. The AERL began work on developing plane engines that could travel long distances, for example across oceans. Following some other name and organizational mission transitions in 1958, the NACA dissolved, NASA was born, and the former AERL became part of NASA and was renamed the NASA Lewis Research Center. This name honored George W. Lewis, the director of aeronautical research for the NACA. On March 1, 1999, the Lewis Research Center was officially renamed the NASA John H. Glenn Research Center at Lewis Field to also recognize the well-known and loved Ohio astronaut, John H. Glenn. This history is just a

snippet of what Smith shared with us. Visit <http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/PAO/html/history.htm> for a more in-depth history and to see pictures.

NASA's Bonnie Smith

Bonnie Smith, an archivist, joined the History Office of NASA's GRC in February 1999. Through the History Office, Smith has established several new programs including collecting corporate memory by working closely with retirees and key staff members, and organizing and collecting history-related materials from various locations and staff members. Smith works to preserve and promote the unique personality and history of GRC.

A native of Grant County, Indiana, Smith earned a Bachelor of Science in English in 1983 from Ball State University. In 1997, she earned her Master of Library Science from Indiana University.

Prior to joining the GRC staff, Smith was employed as Director and Archivist of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute, Indiana's oldest free public library, which has a collection spanning three centuries. Before moving to Indiana, she served as Assistant County Archivist, Knox County, Tennessee. In Tennessee, the focus of her work was archival preservation of the county's two hundred year old vital records, including wills, probate, land deeds, and official court records.

Smith is a member of the Society of American Archivists, Midwest Archives Conference, Cleveland Archives Roundtable, and Society for Preservation of History in the Federal Government, and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Management Challenges for the 21st Century Addresses Current STC Board Concerns

By Thea Teich, STC Region 4 Director-Sponsor

In preparation for the last meeting of the Southwestern Ohio Chapter's IdeaWatch group, I read Peter Drucker's *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* and found it also meaningful in terms of the governance workshops and discussions concerning the STC board. We're dealing with whether and how operations need to change in the future as the organization grows, further diversifies, and increases in stature.

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We're dealing with whether and how operations need to change in the future as the organization grows, further diversifies, and increases in stature.

But that's the topic of another Director-Sponsor article. Drucker's book held my interest for a variety of reasons—which is significant in itself because I usually prefer a good murder mystery for bedtime reading. Some specific points Drucker makes early in the book include:

- ◆ There is no one "right" organization, but rather the right organization fits the task at hand.
- ◆ One does not "manage" people. The task is to lead people.
- ◆ And the goal is to make productive the specific strengths and knowledge of each individual.

The first point deals with the fact that organizations, and in this case, particularly business organizations, usually prefer one method of handling all situations and conditions. Currently, the team approach is the "magic bullet," in business, and the primary way projects of all shapes, sizes, and scopes are handled. The problem is that certain types of projects do not require the attention of a team; certain types of projects never get off the ground when handled by a team; and certain types of projects never coalesce when addressed by a team. But the tendency is to blame the project and its parameters, not the process imposed to take it from point A to point B.

The second point carries even more significant impact: projects are "managed." People are "led." This not-so-subtle differentiation underlies the basic premise that people are not cogs in the wheel or "tools" to be utilized where and when needed. Providing employees, members, parishioners, or whatever, with motivation and challenges is the job the leader faces. Managers' concern is the short-term bottom line. Leaders' vision stretches out much further. Leaders delegate, mentor, and coach, and eventually, find their own replacements.

The final point hits even harder. I sometimes think that if I had ever reported to a supervisor who had this goal, I would have worked for free. Well, probably not. But such a supervisor would have engendered from me high productivity, creativity, willingness to risk, few if any complaints, and most of all, loyalty. The supervisor who cannot only recognize, but actually acknowledge, that a subordinate brings strengths and capabilities to the table that the supervisor does not have, is a supervisor to support, praise, and make look good.

I hope you are working for such people or, if you're in a supervisory position, that you delegate, coach, and mentor your subordinates so it is apparent to them that you value what they contribute to the enterprise.

The same is true for chapter leaders. To find, mentor, coach, and otherwise train your replacements—and thus, ensure not only the survival, but also the growth and influence of your chapter—you may wish to consider how to most effectively involve and challenge them.

Perhaps reading Drucker's book will help. Starting or attending IdeaWatch meetings (<http://www.ideawatch.org/>) is a second step. See you there.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

The STC Board Meeting will be held June 19 at Parker Hannifin, 6035 Parkland Blvd. in Mayfield Heights.

A Strategic Planning Meeting is tentatively planned for July. For more information, or to get involved, contact Kris Henige via e-mail.

June and July Networking Lunches

The June Networking Lunch will be held June 14 at the Fox and Hound, 1479 SOM Center Rd. in Mayfield Heights.

The July Networking Lunch will be held July 13 at the Squaw Rock Picnic Area in the South Chagrin Reservation of the Cleveland Metroparks. Bring your own brown bag lunch. Visit <http://www.clemetparks.com/> for directions.

Lunches begin at noon. Contact Jill McCauslin to RSVP.

Lines & Letters Editors

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