Lines & Letters

In This Issue

Lines & Letters Editors

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society for technical communication

President's Notes

Our chapter has some great things going on this year. First of all, expect to see changes in the newsletter this year. We have three editors, Sharon Ambro, Karla Caldwell, and Laurie Harrison, working together on the newsletter. They are planning on distributing a monthly newsletter electronically and a longer, more detailed newsletter via the mail.

Also, expect to see some changes in our Web site this year. We will miss Kelly Graham who has done so much for our chapter and who stepped down as Web master after last year. Mark Blake and Kristen Jackson have taken on the web site. They have a lot of plans so check the site out frequently.

Our Web site has become the primary source of information on chapter activities. We're going to try to use it for even more this year.

One of the things we'd like to start this year is a list group for our chapter. It would be nice for people to subscribe to it and be able to communicate with other chapter members via email. It's a great way to get information on local resources. If anyone is interested in helping to set this up, please let me know. It would probably be an educational project.

The Region 4 conference is scheduled for Oct. 20 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Twinsburg. Ben Weisner, a Cleveland native, has agreed to come home to be our keynote

Look for eNewsletter on Chapter Web Site

Every other bimonthly issue of *Lines & Letters* will appear in electronic format as a link on the Chapter Web site (http://stc.org/region4/noc/www/). The first eNewsletter will be the November/December issue. It will feature upcoming meetings and wrap up past meetings, including board, chapter, and region meetings; feature the column What's Your Problem?; and relay other timely news and events. ❏

STC to Gather in Haiwaii

October 18th through the 24th, Regions 7 and 8 will be hosting the STC Pan-Pacific Conference in Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, Hawaii. Conference organizers promise the opportunity to develop your career path, learn new technologies, and invest in yourself for the new millennium. The conference is divided into the following session stems:

· Writing and management

· Tools and technology

· Training and education

· Translation and internationalization

The Pan-Pacific Conference also offers several hands-on workshops ranging from learning and understanding XML to effectively handling telecommuting in the 21st Century.

The Senior Contributing Editor and former Executive Editor of *Wired* magazine, Martha Baer, will give the keynote address, adding a high-tech perspective to the Pan-Pacific Conference's proceedings.

Look for more information, including a preliminary conference schedule and program, at www.pan-pacific.org.

We would appreciate any information highlighting the conference from NEO STC members. Please contact Sharon Ambro at sharon.ambro@grc.nasa.gov.

What's Your Problem?

What's Your Problem? will be a regular column that will feature questions and answers about technical-communications related issues. Each month your questions will be published in the Northeast Ohio Chapter STC eNewsletter (http://stc.org/region4/noc/www/lines.htm), and members with expertise in that area will be encouraged to respond.

Send your questions to Karla Caldwell at kcaldwell@parker.com. ❏

New Financial Industry SIG to Form

STC is forming a new Special Interest Group (SIG) addressing issues unique to technical communicators in the financial industry. Members should consider joining this SIG if they work for the following types of organizations:

Accountancy firm
Business or economic analysis co.
Commercial bank
Credit union
Investment firm
Loan broker
Loan servicer
Mortgage broker/banker
Private lender
Real estate company
REIT
Stock brokerage firm
Thrift

Please contact Steven Marshall of the San Gabriel Valley Chapter at steven_marshall@indymac.com for further information.

Please include your name and e-mail address in your message.
— *STC Press Release* ❏

Hanigan Welcomes STC Membership to New Year

Hello, and Happy STC New Year! We are just coming off of another very successful STC Annual Conference, this 47th edition having taken place in Orlando! If you were there, you would have to agree that is was the best yet in terms of the number and variety of sessions. Also, from my vantage, it appeared that everyone enjoyed all the conference activities from our opening keynote Thomas Koulopoulos through our side-splitting closing speaker Bill Herz!

If you were not at this year's 47th annual conference, it is not too soon to start planning to attend next year's edition, which will be in Chicago on May 13-16, 2001. Like nothing else, the STC annual conference provides us with the setting to celebrate our profession, renew and make new professional acquaintances, and expand our technical and professional knowledge.

For me, STC's 47th Annual Conference was most special in that I begin my one-year term at the "STC helm," a privilege for which I am most appreciative. And now that the conference is over, I look forward to getting to work on this year's agenda. And along these lines, I would like to introduce you to this year's elected STC board of directors:

Immediate Past President – Mary Wise, Washington DC Chapter

First Vice President – Judy Glick-Smith, Lone Star Chapter

Second Vice President – Ed See, Mid-Hudson Chapter

Secretary – Jean Gabriel, Orange County Chapter

Treasurer – Martha Collins, Suncoast Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 1 – Kitty Aughey, Rochester Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 2 – Chris Benz, Carolina Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 3 – Rob Houser, Atlanta Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 4 – Thea Teich, Southwestern Ohio Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 5 – Suzanna Laurent, Oklahoma Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 6 – Susan Jensen, Twin Cities Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 7 – Ellen Fenwick, Snake River Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 8 – Andrea Ames, Silicon Valley Chapter

In addition to the elected members, this year's STC board of directors includes seven assistants to the president, or APs for short. These

PowerPoint Powerhouse

Reprinted with permission from Parker Hannifin *IT News*, Spring 2000.

Anyone who designs presentations using Microsoft PowerPoint knows that using the same templates and clip art can get boring. Is this issue, we review special software, called "plug-ins," that can add variety to your presentations.

Plug-ins are available for a variety of applications, including Internet Explorer and Lotus Notes. They help users add functions to programs by allowing the computer to move through processes that it normally wouldn't be able to do. For example, the RealPlayer plug-in for Internet Explorer allows users to listen to streaming audio on the Internet.

Our favorite plug-ins come from 3-D Graphics and CrystalGraphics. From the list, we've selected three to share with you:

PowerPlugs PhotoActive FX
by CrystalGraphics

PhotoActive FX (PFX) produces still and animated effects that can help professionalize your presentation. The plug-in fits seamlessly into the PowerPoint user interface, making it easy for even novice users to focus audience attention on important visual elements.

While many of the effects can be reproduced in Adobe PhotoShop, PFX provides an easy, timesaving alternative to using such a heavy-duty graphics program.

PFX does have one major flaw. When using animations to show concepts, each animation has to be rendered separately. Not only does this limit last-minute changes, but it also creates a collection of animation files that have to be kept together with the PowerPoint show.

The CrystalGraphics Web site (www.crystalgraphics.com) allows you to download a free sample package or purchase PFX volumes one and two for $79.

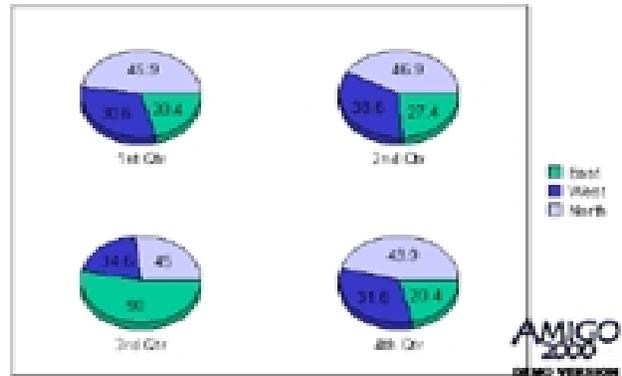### *PowerPlugs Transitions*
by CrystalGraphics

Screen Print from Amigo 2000

Photo FX before and after.

Transitions allows you to add television-quality 2-D and 3-D transitions to your presentations. Like PFX, it fits seamlessly into the PowerPoint environment. It also allows you to create special effects, like turning a slide into a cube that spins off the screen.

Unlike PFX, Transitions requires a lot of extras that average business computers often don't have. At a minimum, you'll need DirectX to help render the 3-D effects; however, this application add-on isn't made for Windows NT. To get spectacular effects, a 3-D graphics accelerator card is needed, and these cost from $400 to $3,000.

As with PFX, the CrystalGraphics Web site (www.crystalgraphics.com) allows you to download a free sample package or purchase Transitions volumes one and two for $79.

Amigo 2000 by 3-D Graphics

Amigo 2000 allows you to create 3-D, fully-rendered charts that get their color schemes directly from the preferences you set up for PowerPoint. The template gallery, included with the software, includes pie, bar, line, area, scatter, and bubble charts. Seamless integration into PowerPoint allows Amigo to also run with Microsoft Chart.

Amigo's only negative point is its cost. On CD, the program costs $124. CrystalGraphics makes a similar PowerPlugs product for only $99.

The 3-D Graphics Web site (www.threedgraphics.com) allows you to download a free sample package or purchase Amigo 2000.
– *Karla Caldwell* ❏

Region IV Conference

This year's Region IV Conference "Retooling for the Future" will be held October 20 at the Twinsburg Hilton Garden Inn in Twinsburg, Ohio.

Ben Weisner, founder and president of Weisner Associates, Inc., a Minnesota-based services firm specializing in online business and technical information delivery will return to the Cleveland area to be the keynote speaker.

The day-long conference will feature the following sessions:
• API Documentation: Seeing the Forest (and not just the trees)
• Technology Training at E-Speed: A Design Success Story
• From PCs to Net Appliances: Providing Assistance One Device at a Time
• Information Architecture: One the Web, in Help and in Print
• Creating a "Back of Book" Index for an HTML-based JavaHelp Project
• A Panel Discussion on Tools and Techniques of the Job Hunt
• It's not Rocket Science: Indexing Nuclear Documentation in a Team Environment
• RoboHelp 2000 and Beyond: Don't let the Software Intimidate You Out of Taking Control of Your Content

Conference registration will be $90.00 for STC members, $100.00 for non-members and $75 for students. ❏

STC Honored in APEX 2000 Publications Competition

Five STC entries were honored in this year's APEX 2000 publications competition.

Intercom, STC's magazine, won a Grand Award in the "Magazines and Journals" category. The STC office Web site earned an Award of Excellence in the "Web Sites" subcategory. *Technical Communication*, STC's journal, was a "triple winner" in three categories. *Technical Communication* won an Award of Excellence in the "Magazines and Journals—Online" subcategory. In addition, the joint issue of *Technical Communication* and the IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication received an Award of Excellence in the "One-of-a-Kind Publications—Printed" subcategory, and George Hayhoe's editorial "Technical Communication: A Trivial Pursuit?," published in the February 1999 issue of *Technical Communication*, won an Award of Excellence in the "Columns and Editorials" subcategory.

The APEX 2000 awards were based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and success in achieving overall communication effectiveness and excellence. APEX 2000 received 4,932 total entries in 11 major categories; of these, 66 (slightly more than 1 percent) won Grand Awards and 1,274 (26 percent) won Excellence Awards.
—*STC Press Release* ❏

General Information

Lines & Letters is published bimonthly for members of the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

Send submissions as an e-mail attachment to one of the following newsletter committee editors:

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Karla Caldwell
kcaldwell@parker.com

Laurie Harrison
lharrison@radcominc.net

Deadlines

Deadlines for submissions are as follows:
Jan./Feb.   submit by Jan. 1
Mar./Apr.   submit by Mar. 1
May/June   submit by May 1
Sept./Oct.   submit by Sept. 1
Nov./Dec.   submit by Nov. 1

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2 issue – $28.50
3 issue – $40.50

individuals participate in the board meetings and also manage a subset of the Society-level committees.

This year's APs are as follows:

Academic and Research Programs – Sandi Harner, Cedarville College Student Chapter

Communications - Lory Hawkes, Lone Star Chapter

Competitions – Michelle Ratcliffe, Suncoast Chapter

Conferences – Deb Sauer, Boston Chapter

External Relations – Laura Ramsey, Puget Sound Chapter

Professional Development – Carolyn Watt, Toronto Chapter

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – Ray Urgo

All of us are going to be very busy over the summer, helping to advance this year's objectives, and, of course, preparing for the Fall 2000 meeting of the STC board. This year, the Fall board meeting is to be held on September 14-17, 2000 in Winnipeg, MB, hosted by the Manitoba Chapter. With the exception of an executive session, all STC board of director meetings are open to all members. So, if you are in the area, please stop by. (Location details will be forthcoming!)

The theme of the 2000-2001 STC year is *Providing Value*. Needless to say, all of the efforts to make our organization successful takes the efforts of literally hundreds of individuals – individuals just like you! If there is an area of STC at the Society level that is of interest to you, let me or another member of the board know. Or, if you just want to drop me a line, my e-mail address is onwritetrk@aol.com.

My personal philosophy is to "take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously." Couple this with my belief about STC: Collectively we have all of the knowledge, but individually, none of us do. This means you are the keeper of a piece of this collective knowledge. Let's share the wealth!

Yours in friendship and service,

Mark Hanigan

Networking Lunches

We hope you will be able to join us for any or all of the informal networking lunches in the coming months:

Oct. 11	Pacers	1080 East 260th	Euclid
Nov. 7	Szechwan House at Pavilion Mall	Chagrin Blvd.	Beechwood
Dec. 8	Eddie's Creekside	Brecksville Rd.	Brecksville

speaker. We have speakers coming from all over the region and from neighboring states and we're expecting to have a great time. Also, Edward See, the Second Vice President of STC, will be attending. This is a great time to get to meet him (remember, he'll be STC president in a couple years.) We don't often get executive board members here so we're excited to have him.

We're moving the awards banquet from the end of the year to November. Cheryl Bennett has given herself a lot of work to do but moving the banquet allows people to get their awards sooner. We'll let you know the location and details for this meeting.

The networking lunches are continuing. These lunches are great. Basically, our original intent was to try to provide people who can't attend evening meetings a chance to get together. That has happened, though certainly people who attend meetings also show up. The first couple of meetings were very quiet but the ones over the past few months have been busy.

The North Canton lunch crowd was full of talk about SGML, Arbortext, and online help development. Our lunch in Mayfield Heights was split across tables. I don't know about the larger table but my table discussed job hunting, changing careers, and writing a

resume. At the lunch in Hudson we talked about FrameMaker training, PDF output, and more help file development things. The lunch in Amherst had a great crowd. We discussed who hires tech writers on the west side of Cleveland, Interleaf vs. FrameMaker, and the lack of internships in the area. Actually, there were so many topics being discussed, I'm not sure what I missed.

Somehow, I've managed to go to almost all of these lunches. Besides eating at a lot of restaurants in Northeast Ohio and driving all over the area, I've been having great fun talking to people at these lunches. If you haven't had a chance to go to one, try to come to one soon. They're really a great chance to discuss what you're doing and maybe get some different ideas from others. Also, it might be a good way to find out who works around you!

The start of 2001 should bring us some more interesting meetings. Elizabeth Simeral is planning a number of meetings for us. We'll get the details on this soon. Also, Jeanette Evans is working with some of the other professional organizations in the area to do another joint meeting.

I hope you'll join us for as many of these events as you can.

Jill McCauslin
NEO STC President

The Chapter Handbook— Online

The Chapter Handbook can be a great resource for STC leaders and for those who aspire to leadership.

Traditionally, the STC has provided the handbook to chapter leaders, but now it's available to all on the organization's Web site.

Available in September 2000, the latest edition of The Chapter Handbook can be found at **www.stc-va.org**. From the sidebar, select "Leader Resources," then scroll to "The Chapter Handbook."— *Tieline, Sept. 2000* ❑

Northeast Ohio Chapter STC Kicks Off 2000-01 Year

The Northeast Ohio Chapter STC held its first meeting of the 2000-2001 year September 20 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Twinsburg.

Jill McCauslin, Northeast Ohio Chapter STC president, presented an overview of this year's events including the Leadership and Region IV Conferences in October, judging the Northeast Ohio Chapter STC 2000-2001 International Competition, the Competition Awards Banquet in November and chapter networking lunches for the next three months.

The meeting featured the following discussion topics with one or more facilitators hosting each table:

• Introduction to Technical Writing

• Online Help

• Project Management

• Web Development Skills

The Introduction to Technical Writing table addressed the issues of building a beginner-level portfolio; career movement opportunities; and advantages and disadvantages to working in a large technical documentation department versus working as a lone technical writer.

The following topics were discussed at the Project Management table: how to estimate the duration of a project; how budget, timeline and project scope form a project management "triangle;" using "Managing Your Documentation Projects" by JoAnn T. Hackos as a project management resource; and how to handle planning for project revisions.