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 Hawaii

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

Online Professional Development for Technical Writers

Are you interested in furthering your career potential and developing your skills in the latest technologies? Worried about the high cost of education and missing work to learn?

With three-month online courses on topics ranging from Professional Technical Writing to XML Authoring, you can learn at your convenience without spending a lot of money!

Visit www.online-learning.com to find out more about the payback of XML skills for technical writers and to get more info on our courses. New sessions start monthly...

STC members receive a 20% discount if they mention their membership upon registration.

www.online-learning.com
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
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 Transitions**
by CrystalGraphics

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.
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.


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
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
President’s Notes cont., cover

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.

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.