

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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Celebrating 50 Years:
1953 - 2003



President's Notes

by Lori Klepfer, NEOSTC President

Believe it or not autumn is here, the time for harvesting, gathering and preparing for winter. Harvest your membership in STC by participating in the chapter. To help you prepare for your next challenges and opportunities:

- ◆ Attend the monthly meetings. Mark your calendars for October 16th. We'll be meeting at InfoPlace, the comprehensive career resource at the Orange branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library. Meet others in your profession and take home valuable information. Bring a friend. We are attempting to keep meeting fees low in deference to our challenged economy.
- ◆ Attend the STC telephone conferences. These are free for NEO STC members. They are a hit! To date, we have offered three, and the Adobe Acrobat seminar has 15 attendees signed up as of my writing this article. We are planning to offer the November telephone conference: Technical Communication Departments: Establishing a Baseline of Performance on Wednesday, November 5, 2003. RSVP to me.

I want to thank our host sites to date: RADCom Services Inc.; Intuit, Inc.; Parker Hannifin Corp.

- ◆ Attend a networking lunch.
 - October 15 -- Meet fellow members at the Fox and Hound in Mayfield Heights
 - November 13 -- Weia Teia in North Olmsted.These lunches are another way to meet with your colleagues and build not only a network but also lasting friendships.
- ◆ Enter the Online Technical Communication Competition.

The deadline is 10/31. Beth Williams is the chairperson, entries and inquiries can be sent to me. Beth is looking for a co-chair.

- ◆ Volunteer to judge the Online Communication or High School Technical Communication Competition. If you have contacts at a high school, inform them about the competition. You can find details and a brochure on our web site.
- ◆ Volunteer! Our membership committee is coordinating opportunities for you to get involved in the chapter. We will have "job descriptions" at each meeting, and our Web site will be kept up-to-date with opportunities. In the meantime, contact Jessica, Candice, or Beverly for information about how you can help now.

To help the chapter prepare for your harvesting, your board and committees met in August. We developed an action plan to support our chapter's strategic plan initiatives:

- ◆ Goal 1: Improve communication among members

We hope to make our Web site a key communication piece. The NEO STC listserve is another valuable resource. To date only a fraction of us participate in the interactive forum. The listserve is an unobtrusive way to connect with your colleagues.

We have also created e-mail address for key committees. Check them out on the web.
- ◆ Goal 2: Improve employment resources for members

If you haven't checked out the job board, please do so. Sarah and Myron are working hard to build the list of opportunities. They and a few volunteers scour the papers and job boards to bring you a list of opportunities targeted for us. They are also planning to connect with employers.
- ◆ Goal 3: Increase educational opportunities for members

Telephone seminars are one way we are offering education opportunities for you. Look to the Web site in the near future for a survey of possible courses of interest. We are planning to offer half-day or full-day workshops on topics of interest to professionals in the field. I believe NEO STC can be the preeminent technical communication education provider.

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◆ Goal 4: Increase visibility among non-members

With press releases and marketing to different associations we can make Akron and Cleveland aware of NEO STC. We are working on volunteer opportunities in the community to help us connect with others. Stay tuned as the plans are firmed up. Our board announcement appeared in Craine's Cleveland Business in the issue for the week of September 15.

◆ Goal 5: Increase visibility in the educational/academic community

Our high school technical communication competition as well as a planned college-level competition help raise awareness of our profession. Please offer you support to Dr. Bege Bowers for the high school competition and Jeanette Evans for the college level competition.

Additional goals include:

◆ Accept online credit card payments for meeting registration.

Ken Roberts has arranged for us to use PayPal to register for meetings online with a credit card. By registering online, you can pay in advance and skip the registration line at the meeting.

◆ Pay for three international conference registrations

Each monthly meeting, telephone seminar and networking lunch you attend places your name in the drawing to win one of three International STC conference registrations.

At the September meeting I was honored to give Beth Williams the Chapter of Excellence plaque national sent us. Let's keep building our momentum. We are committed to striving for Chapter of Distinction. We cannot achieve anything without you!

Feel free to communicate your ideas about other ways we can meet member needs and our strategic goals this year.

Happy Harvest!

Lori

REVIEW: September Meeting

By: Carol Zollinger

The September meeting of our chapter provided an interesting and compelling forum in which to discuss the

hot topics we, as technical communicators, all face today. For the attendees, it was a chance both to hear what colleagues and leaders in the field are thinking about today's hot topics, and to throw our own opinions into the mix, and see how they held up.

The nature of the meeting being what it was - multiple roundtables and topics going at once - I obviously wasn't able to hear everything that was discussed. I wasn't even able to make it to every table; I missed the Paper or Plastic topic discussing media and doc delivery. I'd complain more that attendees didn't get to go to every table, but apparently it was our own fault. I hate it when that happens. The problem was that everybody was so into the discussions we had a hard time breaking away from the tables when we were supposed to. The groups I was in, for sure, were having really interesting conversations, and it didn't look like any other groups were suffering in that regard. So what were we yakking about this whole time, you ask?

At one table, Kim Lindsey led a discussion on Linking Technical Writing to Training. Taking the quoted statement that, "As e-learning grows in popularity, the quality of online courses and the 'learner experience' is declining," we discussed the current methods of training and

e-learning and how they interact with technical writing. In our collective experience, technical writers infrequently have direct input, or even insight, into training materials. Because of the ways the two disciplines interact, though, it's important to stress connections whenever possible. For instance, we discussed the fact that audience analysis and information, while vital for content development, is equally important when considering delivery methods for e-learning. Not all learners absorb information in the same way, and having a variety of methods presented to learn the same information will reinforce the information, and provide the best possible method for a spectrum of learners.

At my next stop, Ken Rogers guided our conversation about level of technical knowledge we need at the TW: Dummies or SMEs? table. It's the eternal question, no? Exactly how much technical knowledge should a technical writer have? Our best answer was that it depends. I know, I know, but it's true. It depends on the SME you're approaching: does he like you to start questions from a solid base of existing knowledge, or would she rather you came more "humbly," seeking all knowledge from her? Sometimes, our anecdotal evidence suggests, it doesn't matter how you approach

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a person, you're going to get what they feel like telling you. It also depends on the audience you're writing for. If you're documenting highly technical information with an audience of experienced programmers, technical knowledge is necessary and assumed. On the other hand, if you're writing for an audience of novice computer users and you're a whiz-bang computer guru yourself, it can be awfully hard to write without assumptions. And it depends on your personal situation - as we were reminded, someone with a great deal of specific technical knowledge can be less easily replaced than a generalist. Depending on your situation, that may be a huge consideration for you, or not one at all.

We learned about Selling Through ROI at a table with Beth Williams. How do you let your company know your value? How do you let others in your company know what you're good at? Pretty often, it comes down to money, and we have to be able to show a return on investment (ROI). In some cases, this can be easy: one company has a contract that specifies free technical support for a software product that is not accompanied by documentation. A direct connection is seen between the absence of documentation and the money that could have been made on the technical support. Many cases, though, are not so clear. In these situations, we must become more flexible. Sometimes, an evaluation of competitor documentation may be a route. We can also learn to think about clients differently. If appeals regarding customer documentation go unheard, it's possible to make your clients internal; for example, you might produce documentation and training for the help desk, which makes them more knowledgeable and responsive, saving the company time and money.

Mike Bates was next, with Usability Testing Without All the Fuss. Mike illustrated the varying options for usability, from a \$100,000 lab with all the trimmings to a handheld video camera on a tripod to cardsorting. Scale was discussed as well: in most cases, testing only five users will identify 80% of your usability bugs. Beware of skimping on time and space, though - tests that aren't performed one on one can be skewed. It was also pointed out that while involving end users is a great marketing tool, you can gain credibility by using "inside" testers, found within your company. Either way, it's best to find people that will actually use your software.

My final stop of the night was Portfolio Building with Kris Henige. Discussion ranged from whether we need portfolios at all to the form they should take, and their content. In general, we agreed that a portfolio is a useful tool. For example, one participant noted that in

preparing context pages for her portfolio, she also prepared herself for interview questions - by the time she had written about the project, she had re-familiarized herself with it, and was ready to use that information in an interview. The content your portfolio includes, and whether it's paper or online, often depends on your situation. Are you looking for contract work or a permanent position? Have you worked on proprietary information in the past, and are you able to display that work, or will you need to find alternatives? Some alternatives for proprietary information that were discussed are user comment cards, evaluation forms, and documents written outside of work.

So it was a good evening with some great discussion. The big-as-your-head onion rings didn't make matters worse, either. And now, all together: three cheers for the program committee! (And, no, I don't want anything from them, and am not related to any of them, as far as I know. I just thought they might like to hear that.) I'll be looking forward to our next meeting.

See you in October!

Adding Training Components to Your Documentation: An STC Telephone Seminar Review

By Jeanette P. Evans

On Wednesday, August, 6 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM EST, STC sponsored another seminar in its telephone seminar series. Rives Hassell-Corbiell presented the material on the topic of adding training components to documentation. This was my first STC telephone seminar. I found the seminar agreeable in both content and delivery.

NEOSTC sponsored a local hookup for the August 6 seminar. RADCom hosted the NEOSTC session by providing at its Hudson office a conference room with speaker phone. The room presented a comfortable setting for the event with Jill McCauslin providing able technical support. All went smoothly for us in terms of the telephone hookup. RADCom provided us with a printout of the slides that Rives used. Many thanks to RADCom for supporting the event.

Several of us noted that at the August 6 session Rives Hassell-Corbiell's voice was very clear and her enunciation careful. I was also impressed with how smoothly the Q-and-A session proceeded, with questions coming from all over the U.S. About a dozen of us attended the NEOSTC session in Hudson. I understand

that you can also participate as an individual, using an individual telephone, if you pay the required hookup fee.

Concerning the content of the seminar, Rives provided an overview of the topic and answered questions in an appropriate manner. The goal of the session was to "leverage existing documentation without channeling time and effort into a separate training project." She covered techniques that include:

- ◆ Assessments
- ◆ Objectives
- ◆ Tests
- ◆ Quizzes
- ◆ Drills
- ◆ Checklists
- ◆ Job aids

She noted that all can be used in print or online environments.

I spoke with several people who had attended other STC telephone seminars and found the August 6 session similar in quality and content to other seminars in the series. I found this venue to be a good way to get content across and look forward to attending future sessions.

PROGRAMS COMMITTEE REPORT

By: Stephanie Webster, Member

Hoggy's was a hit! The NEO STC programs calendar started out with a great meeting centered around progressive table discussions covering topics from Paper vs Plastic to Usability – Without all the Fuss. Everyone was in a great mood to see familiar faces after a long summer break and there was quite a bit of tech talk! The Programs Committee was thrilled with how well the kickoff meeting went and is very excited about the plans for the rest of the year. We'd love to see you at every one of the upcoming meetings – Mark your calendars now!

October 16: InfoPLACE

Marty Jaffe from the Cuyahoga Country Library will be presenting InfoPLACE.

This program includes focus on career direction and decisions, job search strategies, and interviewing skills. With the economy starting to pick up again, every one of us should be on our toes to be the best employee, or potential employee available! This is a great opportunity to invite others outside the technical communications

realm. Encourage those who are looking for jobs or want to brush up on enhancing their career path to come to this meeting!

Location: Orange Branch of the Cuyahoga County Library (Chagrin Blvd, Pepper Pike)

November 13: Selling Your Services through ROI (Return on Investment)

Scott Abel, President of the Hoosier STC chapter, is coming to speak to us about the mysterious topic of ROI, Return on Investment. Selling through ROI was one of the table topics at the September 18th meeting and there was a lot of buzz in trying to figure out these pressing questions:

- ◆ How do you define ROI?
- ◆ What can you do to prepare for an ROI plan?
- ◆ What is the best way to determine ROI?
- ◆ Once you figure it out, how do you sell it?

Join us this meeting to answer these questions and learn how you can improve the perception of the worth of your work!

December 8: Holiday Happy Hour

This will be our third annual holiday happy hour. We encourage you to come to this informal get-together and kick back with your STC friends. Again, you'll have an opportunity to give to the Cleveland Food Bank – we donate more every year – let's make this year another record for our chapter!

We are looking for volunteers to help plan this event – please send an e-mail to programs@neostc.org if you are interested.

Membership News

Welcome New Members

We added one new members to our chapter. Please join Lines & Letters in welcoming:

- ◆ Namrata Malik

Special welcome to you, Namrata! We look forward to seeing you at upcoming meetings and events!

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New Senior Members

Congratulations to our newest Senior Members:

- ◆ Jacqueline L. Conn
- ◆ Mary M. Cosgrove
- ◆ Peggy S. Coyne
- ◆ Monica M. Lusk

Chapter Membership Counts:

- ◆ Members = 85
- ◆ Senior Members = 81
- ◆ Student Membership = 6
- ◆ Retired Member = 1
- ◆ Associate Fellow = 1 : Dr. Bege Bowers
- ◆ Total Members = 174

Total membership for STC International reached 19684.

If you or someone you know in the chapter has good news to share, e-mail the editors at newsletter@neostc.org.

Between the Lines

Getting to Know Our Members Better

By: NEO STC Membership

Congratulations to Carol Zollinger!!

Carol was recently recommended by STC national as a newsletter reprint for other chapters for her article "My Not-So-Gentle Reminder" in our July/August edition of *Lines & Letters*.

The editors of *Lines & Letters* have had numerous requests to reprint her article -- some coming before STC national sent out their recommendation.

Way to go Carol! Many congratulations on a great article!

Are you doing something Between the Lines? If so, please let us get to know better by sending an e-mail to the editors at newsletter@neostc.org.

NEO STC Members Judge Special Awards at Intel Science Fair

By: Kris Henige, Senior Member

The Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) came to the Cleveland Convention Center in May, and STC was there!

The Intel ISEF is the world's largest pre-college science fair, and over 1,200 students from over 40 countries competed individually and in teams for more than \$2 million in awards, including tuition grants, internships, and scientific field trips. Over five million students compete in regional and state fairs to reach this "Olympics of Science Fairs."

STC International is affiliated with the Intel ISEF as a Special Awards organization, which means the Society sponsors judges and funds awards at the competition each year. The Northeast Ohio Chapter (NEO STC) was asked to provide judges for special awards that focus solely on technical communication. The NEO STC judges, who volunteered two full weekdays to help, were:

- ◆ Glenn Goldney
- ◆ Kris Henige
- ◆ Doug Kepp
- ◆ Kim Lindsey
- ◆ Carol Mackay
- ◆ Nancy Secrist
- ◆ Dannette Thompson
- ◆ Beth Williams



Kim and Beth are "spaced-out" as they have fun at an exhibit at the competition.

The following STC judges with previous ISEF experience came to help us:

- ◆ Marian Barchilon (Associate Fellow, Phoenix Chapter)
- ◆ Claudia Huff (Georgia Tech University)
- ◆ Andrew Malcolm (Fellow and Society Secretary, Rochester Chapter)
- ◆ Therese Turman (Member, Atlanta Chapter)
- ◆ Daniel Wise (Fellow, Birmingham Chapter)

On the first day, we paired off and chose which of the 14 categories we would evaluate. Categories included Zoology, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Earth Sciences,

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Mathematics, and Chemistry. Each pair reviewed the project displays, then chose the best projects for additional evaluation later by all the STC judges. The students were not present for the preliminary judging, although on the second day we were able to meet some of them. Projects that we liked but that did not win received a "Great Work!" STC card and a pin.

(Trading pins is popular among the participants, and some veterans have multiple pin collections from previous fairs. Each NEO STC judge received a supply of Ohio Bicentennial pins to give away and trade, and the other STC judges brought pins from their home states.)

Once we determined our finalists, we had to choose seven awards: three for written reports, three for display presentations, and one team award. STC also provides a one-year subscription to Intercom for each of the winners' high schools.

After judging was complete on Wednesday, the Society treated us to a thank-you luncheon at the Metropolitan Café in downtown Cleveland.



The Judges consider the merits of the competitors' work.

On Thursday night, I was honored to present our awards at Cleveland Public Hall with Marian Barchilon of Arizona State University, who manages our part of the competition for STC. Because the participating organizations presented alphabetically and STC was near the end (after the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration and before the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry), I was able to watch nearly the entire ceremony. It was very exciting and moving to see young people recognized for their brains and creativity. Marian and I got to meet our winners as we were waiting in line for our group picture, and they were very mature and personable. Several were planning to become teachers.

The projects that won the STC awards are listed below. You'll notice that our winners came from around the world, including Asia, Europe, and Latin America. A complete list of awards can be viewed at www.sciserv.org/isef/results/sao2003.asp or www.stc.org/isefc_winners.asp.

The 2004 ISEF will be held in Portland, Ore. My sincere thanks to all those who helped make this a great success.

WRITTEN REPORT

Award of \$500 for Distinguished Technical Communication in a Written Report:

Chaotic Fluids: An Examination of Phase Transitions in Taylor-Couette Flow

Mairead Mary McCloskey, age 17, Loreto College, Coleraine, Co Derry, Northern Ireland

Award of \$250 for Excellence in a Written Report:

Perfect Musical Harmony: A Mathematical Analysis of Four Historical Tunings

Michael F. Page, age 15, The Pingry School, Martinsville, New Jersey

Award of \$100 for Merit in a Written Report:

Gene Expression Analysis of Synovial Cells in Response to Impulsive Shock

Irene Yuan Sun, age 16, Ben Davis High School, Indianapolis, Indiana

DISPLAY PRESENTATION

Award of \$500 for Distinguished Technical Communication in a Display Presentation:

Investigations of the Fern Life Cycle and Its Implications

Arie Anne Schiller, age 17, Central Lee High School, Donnellson, Iowa

Award of \$250 for Excellence in a Display Presentation:

Bucking a Trend: The Owls

Miyuki Mashiko, age 16, Mito First High School, Mito, Ibaraki, Japan

Award of \$100 for Merit in a Display Presentation:

The Power of Pitch II: Investigating the Use of a Variable-Pitch Wind Turbine to Optimize Power Output Under Varying Wind Conditions

Galen Daniel Maly, age 17, Yorktown High School, Arlington, Virginia

DISTINGUISHED TEAM

Distinguished Team Award of \$1,000:

Aloe barbadensis and Allium sativum as Possible Bacteria Inhibitors on the Lids of Soft Drink Cans

Jaime Eduardo Flores, age 16, and Fernando Javier Nido, age 16, both of Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

On the Front Lines Column: History of Our Chapter



Cleveland Chapter Board of 1956

- ◆ Chairman George Sumner
- ◆ Vice Chairman Edna Samonek
- ◆ Secretary Virginia Rose
- ◆ Treasurer Rex Culler
- ◆ Bylaws John Clough
- ◆ Programs Bernard Ross
- ◆ Membership William Hohmann
- ◆ Publicity Robert Denega

Northeastern Ohio Chapter Chairman/Presidents

- ◆ George Sumner 1956
- ◆ R.K. Culler 1957
- ◆ John W. Dietrich 1963
- ◆ David Netti 1974-1975
- ◆ John R. Braverman 1975-1976
- ◆ John W. Hansel 1976-1977
- ◆ Catherine A. Christman 1977-1979
- ◆ David Netti 1979-1980
- ◆ William S. Fleming 1980-1981
- ◆ William J. Carnes 1982-1983
- ◆ John Hansel 1983-1984
- ◆ Beth Mellas 1984-1985

- ◆ William S. Fleming 1985-1986
- ◆ John Bush 1986-1987
- ◆ Dave Long 1987-1988
- ◆ Donna J. Burrer & Patricia Geller 1988-1989
- ◆ Faye Lepp 1989-1990
- ◆ David M. Cratty 1990-1993
- ◆ Lori A. Moreland 1993-1995
- ◆ Kelly Graham 1995-1997
- ◆ Tenley A. Orendorff 1997-1998
- ◆ Robert J. Dianetti 1998-1999
- ◆ Maria M. Hlas 1999-2000
- ◆ Jill A. McCauslin 2000-2001
- ◆ Kris Henige 2001-2002
- ◆ Beth Williams 2002-2003
- ◆ Lori J. Klepfer 2003-2004

Wearing Both Hats

Or: To SME and not to SME

By Brian Baddour

I am the enemy. I am an SME, a programmer. Hate me.

Wait, don't! I'm a technical communicator too. That shouldn't surprise you in a society where most people lucky enough to have a steady job these days wear many hats, especially in companies of medium or small size.

Wearing a white hat, I assembled and edited our most comprehensive product manual in FrameMaker®. In another hat, I publish marcom on our web site. More recently, I've donned a black hat to design and program our online extranet and CRM systems, which someone else documents.

As westerns gave way today's police and law dramas on the television, the line between the white hats and black hats in our society has blurred. After all, tech writers are beginning to recognize themselves as experts at the subject matter of grammar and indexing, while successful SMEs like web programmers have had to embrace the fundamentals of testing and user-oriented design.

How many of us in those medium or small companies read "Intercom" articles about SMEs, nod as we identify with those inter-office tensions, then feel guilt pangs as we recall times we wore that black hat? If you're not raising your hand, don't count yourself lucky quite yet.

You in the audience: Wasn't that you who trained an underling or apprentice how to take over the responsibilities of the company newsletter? I saw the SOP they wrote to streamline your old project. SME.

And you, the one everybody goes to because you're the company Microsoft Office expert: You spoke in the lingo of the trade when showing a co-worker how to make a table in PowerPoint®. They didn't really understand, but scribbled down the how-to. SME.

And of course you, the grammarian, whom the VP approaches before presenting almost every speech: She isn't comfortable with her content until she gets your stamp of approval. Yup, SME.

Like villain actors say, "it's fun to wear the black hat sometimes." The way I see it, in those humble moments as a dreaded SME, the white hat learns a little more about the black hats' needs. We learn to succeed together as part of a larger society. It becomes less "us against them." Learn to recognize the SME in yourself, then empathize and become more productive with "them."

Paper Prototyping for Tech Writers

Telephone Conference

By Beth Williams

On Wednesday, September 10th, 2003, Carolyn Snyder presented a telephone seminar titled, "Paper Prototyping for Tech Writers." In Carolyn's words, a paper prototype is a variation of usability testing, where "representative users perform realistic tasks by interacting with a paper version of the interface that is manipulated by a human 'computer' who doesn't explain how the interface works."

Paper prototyping uses drawings of an interface (these can be hand-drawn or screen shots created using tools such as Visio or Visual Basic), rather than an actual working example of the interface. A user is then asked to perform tasks in a usability scenario, but rather than using a computer to navigate, the user indicates the desired selection on the drawing, and the "human computer" displays another drawing with the selection results. It is important for the user to see how the interface will reflect his or her actions, so realistic data should be used whenever possible.

The difference between storyboarding and paper prototyping is that storyboarding focuses more on the development end and looks more at the actual workflow

of a product, where paper prototyping is focused on the users and how they will interact with the interface.

An important point to note is that people seem more comfortable making suggestions on a paper prototype than they do to a traditional computer-generated mock-up of an interface during usability testing. This is likely the case because a product seems more in-process and available for changes when the user sees only a paper prototype, rather than looking like a finished product just because the interface appears on the computer.

Benefits of paper prototyping include:

- ◆ Provides feedback earlier than computer-based usability testing
- ◆ Easier to change designs that don't work, even as quickly as between users
- ◆ Fast to create, test, and modify
- ◆ Inexpensive
- ◆ Facilitates communication between the development team and users, and within the development team

Drawbacks include:

- ◆ Doesn't find some classes of problems
- ◆ Tasks sometimes must be constrained
- ◆ It's impossible to prototype something that can't be implemented
- ◆ Changes very rapidly, so it's hard to capture everything you've learned
- ◆ Can be a tough sell to other team members

Carolyn listed some of the findings from paper prototypes as classic usability issues such as confusing terms, navigation, and controls, missing or incorrect user requirements, priorities for the next release, design alternatives, and issues outside the user interface. Things technical writers can learn most from paper prototyping are what assistance users need, the natural order for tasks or procedures, terms for the index, which parts of the interface are relatively stable, and basically how the software actually works. Paper prototyping gives the technical writer an opportunity to introduce or champion the technique, and even to participate in creating the screens. Overall, communication is enhanced within the team, because often the software developers will turn to the writers and ask them to suggest text for the prototype. Writers can find out how the interface works (or should work) earlier in the process. And finally, paper prototyping allows writers to become more involved in the development process by

suggesting how the interface will look, rather than just documenting it.

Free Tools to Help Conduct Usability Activities

By: Mike Bates, Director/Sponsor, Region 4

OvoStudios provides a free data logger that can be used to log a usability test. The free version is great but does not synch with any audio or video equipment or allow you to create highlights. That add on is where the cost begins. It is a very easy to use logger and probably the best free logger out there. This is a great tool to consider if you want to run a usability test and capture your results. You can check it out at <http://ovostudios.com/OvoLogger.htm>

You can also use a card sorting technique to determine navigational layout and category groupings. I prefer to use 3x5 index cards while conducting the exercise with users and then use EZCalc from IBM to perform that data calculations. IBM offers two free products: EZSort and EZCalc. You can sit a user in front of a PC to actually perform the card sort using EZSort. I found it a little cumbersome, but it can work. I have observed that users spend more time trying to learn how to use EZSort than actually sorting the cards into groups. If you are trying to influence the overall navigation or menu layout in your application, I would encourage you to run a card sort test.

You can learn more about both products at: http://www-3.ibm.com/ibm/easy/eou_ext.nsf/Publish/646.

If you have any questions or want any more information, please let me know.

Mike Bates | Customer Experience Manager | Intuit | 216.825.6543

Manage Dependencies Before They Impact Your Next Publication

Feature Article

By Victor Clough

Once you have identified your internal and external publication dependencies and calculated hours per page, what do you do next? Many teams do a good job of identifying dependencies, but few seem to effectively reduce the impact they have on quality and customer satisfaction.

If you want to better manage publication dependencies, Victor Clough of the Northeast Ohio chapter of the Project Management Institute offers up a five-step approach to identify dependencies and reduce the level of impact they have on cost and quality of your next publication in his article "Manage Dependencies Before They Impact Your Next Publication." [Click here](#) to open the article in a separate PDF.

Esoteric Editor Column

by Erika Weliczko, Esoteric Editor

Writing and Reading for E-Mail Lists

How many of us have eagerly subscribed to newly discovered e-mail lists hoping to learn from, and with, knowledgeable people interested in the same things?

Listserve, e-mail lists, and the like can be valuable sources of experience, lessons and best practice. Unfortunately, many e-mail forums can evolve into personal exchanges, sometimes hostile. When bad attitudes take over the typing fingers and displace knowledge sharing, the tendency to unsubscribe increases.

E-mail lists require both writing and reading. This is not rocket science. The cycle of writing and reading for e-mail lists is really a modified version of the editorial process and knowledge development. Compose a thought or question, fine-tune the message, and pass it on to the audience - that covers the writing portion. The e-mail forum allows for immediate written responses from the participatory audience. Eager readers look for meaning and evolving answers, even if we did not initiate the thread. Let the reading begin. And they're off.

Where do e-mail lists as knowledge communities fall apart? Decrees from the soapbox are perhaps less appropriate for lists that are established to share information. Such statements are more exercises of writing than an offer of material to read. Consider switching the order to reading followed by writing. Though we read written words and the order may seem self-evident, I think it is another way to remember the audience. Read as the audience, write for the audience, repeat. Switch directions. Write for the audience, read as the audience, repeat. Contribute to the balance as reader and writer in your e-mail lists. Accountability and sincerity help all communications, especially the virtual kinds.

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Society for
Technical
Communication

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Life is short, let's write and read rewarding and energizing words. Happy reading and writing!

Got something to say about what's happening in our Chapter, the District or National? Send a LETTER TO THE EDITOR and tell us what you think.

TECHNIFACTS -- 1950's

Technical Communication	Year	Science/Technology
Engineers and technicians do most of the technical writing.	1950	The United States begins a foreign aid project, the Point Four Program, designed to bring technological skills to developing nations.
Ads for technical writers appear in the "Help Wanted" classified ads under "Jobs for Men."	1951	John Mauchley and J. Presper Eckert build UNIVAC 1, the first computer to be commercially available and the first to store data on magnetic tape. First useful electric power is produced at the national reactor testing station at Arco, Idaho.
Joseph D. Chapline documents the UNIVAC computer, using examples to document its functions.	1952	UNIVAC 1 correctly predicts the outcome of the U.S. presidential election - a landslide victory for Eisenhower - but no one believes it.
<p>Two of STC's three parent organizations were founded in 1953: the Association of Technical Writers and Editors (TWE) and the Society of Technical Writers (STW).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In April, a group of about 40 technical writers gather at the "Workshop on the Production and Use of Technical Reports" at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and debate the need for a national professional association dedicated to technical documentation. This led to the November meeting (also in Washington) of 40 technical writers and editors who formed TWE. ◆ On October 7, 50 technical writers and editors meet in Boston to form the Society of Technical Writers (STW). Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute announces a Master of Science degree in Technical Communication, the first of its kind, and also holds its first Technical Writers Institute for professionals. 	1953	In Philadelphia, John Gibbon, M.D. performs the first successful open-heart surgery at Jefferson Medical College, using the heart-lung machine that he invented. Francis Crick and James Watson present their double-helix model of the DNA molecule. IBM releases its first mainframe computer, the Model 701.
<p>The first phototypesetters, invented in France, go into use in the U.S. Norbert Wiener defines "Cybernetics" as "the study of the control and communication in the animal and the machine."</p> <p>In Pasadena, California, Charles Van Hagan and Ted Tyler found the Technical Publishing Society (TPS), the third organization that eventually merged to become STC.</p>	1954	<p>Dr. Jonas Salk develops a polio vaccine and begins a program of mass vaccination of children in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.</p> <p>In an area of California that will become known as "Silicon Valley," Texas Instruments creates a new generation of transistors using silicon in place of germanium.</p> <p>TV Dinners are introduced in the U.S.</p>
Technical communication professionals and technical communication educators begin a "dialogue" to make courses more relevant to "real-world" requirements of the profession, including both visual and verbal aspects of communication.	1955	The Velcro fastener is patented.
The Council of Biology Editors holds its first annual meeting.	1956	John Backus and a team at IBM invent FORTRAN, the first computer programming language. John McCarthy develops Lisp, a

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Technical Communication	Year	Science/Technology
		list-processing computer language often used in artificial intelligence. Burroughs demonstrates the first desk-sized computer, the E-101, intended for use by engineers and scientists, not businesses.
<p>The Society of Technical Writers (STW) and the Association of Technical Writers and Editors (TWE) join forces to become the Society of Technical Writers and Editors (STWE). The new society publishes a journal called the STWE Review.</p> <p>The Technical Publication Society (TPS) holds the first national competition for technical publications and technical art. The winning entries are displayed at the TPS's fifth annual conference in the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, CA, May 17-18, 1957.</p>	1957	In October, the Soviet Union launches the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik I. A month later, Sputnik 2 carries a dog, Laika, into space, with instruments to monitor her body's reactions to space flight.
STWE develops a set of canons for ethical conduct. The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) establishes the journal Transactions on Engineering Writing and Speech, later called the IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication. B. F. Weil, editor, publishes the first book devoted to technical editing.	1958	In the United States, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is formally inaugurated. Werner von Braun and his team launch the first American artificial earth satellite, Vanguard I, which gets its electrical power from solar cells.
The Internal Revenue Service rules that STC is a nonprofit, Federal tax-exempt business league as defined by IRS regulation 501(c)(6).	1959	<p>Grace Murray Hopper and her team invent the Common Business Oriented Language (COBOL) computer language, designed to be more English-like and human-readable than previous computer languages.</p> <p>Strunk and White publish the first edition of <i>The Elements of Style</i>.</p>

NEO STC Vocabulary Builder

megillah \muh-GHIH-luh\ noun

slang : a long involved story or account

Example sentence:

Mom could never make a long story short --- she always had to tell the whole megillah in excruciating detail.

Did you know?

Although "megillah" is a slang word in English, it has perfectly respectable Hebrew origins. "Megillah" derives from the Yiddish "megile," which itself comes from the Hebrew word "megillah," meaning "scroll" or "volume." ("Megillah" is especially likely to be used in reference to the Book of Esther, which is read aloud at Purim celebrations.) It makes sense, then, that when "megillah" first appeared in English in the mid-20th century, it referred to a story that was so long (and often also tedious or complicated) that it was reminiscent of the length of the megillah scrolls. The Hebrew word is serious, but the Yiddish "megile" can be

somewhat playful, and our "megillah" has also inherited that lightheartedness.

gauche \GOHSH\ adjective

*1 : lacking social experience or grace; also : not tactful
: crude

2 : crudely made or done

Example sentence:

"I can't believe she'd be so gauche as to ask you how much money you earn," Courtney huffed.

Did you know?

"Gauche" is one of several words that come from old suspicions or negative associations surrounding the left side and use of the left hand. In French, "gauche" literally means "left," and it has the extended meanings "awkward" and "clumsy." Presumably these meanings came about because left-handed people could appear awkward trying to manage in a right-handed world -- or perhaps because right-handed people appear awkward when they try to use their left hand. In fact, "awkward"

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itself comes from the Middle English "awke," meaning "turned the wrong way" or "left-handed." On the other hand, "adroit" and "dexterity" have their roots in words meaning "right" or "on the right side."

**Indicates the sense illustrated in the example sentence.*

haruspex \huh-RUSS-peks\ noun

: a diviner in ancient Rome basing his predictions on inspection of the entrails of sacrificial animals

Example sentence:

The haruspex declared that the outcome of the battle would be favorable.

Did you know?

"Haruspex" was formed in Latin by the combination of "haru-" (which is akin to "chorde," the Latin word for "gut") and "-spex" (from the verb "specere," meaning "to look"). Appropriately, "haruspex" can be roughly defined as "one who looks at guts." The ancient Romans had a number of ways of determining whether the gods approved of a particular course of action. Such divination was called "augury," and a haruspex was a type of "augur," an official diviner of ancient Rome. (Other augurs divined the will of the gods through slightly less gruesome means, such as observing the behavior of birds or tracking celestial phenomena.) "Haruspex," like "augur," has developed a general sense of "one who prophesies," but this use is somewhat rare.

prolegomenon \proh-lih-GAH-muh-nahn\ noun

: prefatory remarks; specifically : a formal essay or critical discussion serving to introduce and interpret an extended work

Example sentence:

The book is introduced by a lengthy prolegomenon, which is followed by 17 chapters of analysis.

Did you know?

"Prolegomenon" is the singular and "prolegomena" is the plural of this scholarly word, though people sometimes mistakenly interpret "prolegomena" as the singular. The word, which comes from the Greek verb "prolegein" ("to say beforehand"), first appeared in print around 1652. It has appeared in the titles of noteworthy scholarly and philosophical works, but it has never been as common in general use as its older cousin "prologue." "Prologue" usually refers to an introduction to a literary work or to a speech addressed to the audience at the beginning of a play. "Prolegomenon" is most often used of the

introduction to a work of scholarly analysis. Both words can also be used in a broader sense to refer generally to something that serves as an introduction.

repine \rih-PYNE\ verb

*1 : to feel or express dejection or discontent : complain

2 : to long for something

Example sentence:

"They saw less of each other, and Robyn was aware that this did not cause her to repine as much as perhaps it should have done." (David Lodge, *Nice Work*)

Did you know?

In longing, one can "repine over" something ("repining over her lost past"), or one can "pine for" something. The two words, used thus, mean close to the same thing, but not exactly. "Pining" is intense longing for what one once knew. "Repine" adds an element of discontent to any longing -- an element carried over from its first sense ("to feel or express dejection or discontent"), which has been in use since the 16th century. (Washington Irving used the first sense in his 1820 work *The Sketch Book*: "Through the long and weary day he repines at his unhappy lot.") "Pine" and "repine" are from Old English "pinian" ("to suffer") and probably ultimately from Latin "poena" ("punishment"). "Poena" also gave us our word "pain."

**Indicates the sense illustrated in the example sentence.*

fastidious \fass-TIH-dee-uss\ adjective

1 : having high and often unpredictable standards

*2 : showing a meticulous or demanding attitude

Example sentence:

The celebrated imperial Easter eggs designed by goldsmith Peter Carl Faberge are regarded as the ultimate in fastidious workmanship.

Did you know?

There's nothing offensive about fastidious workmanship, and yet the word "fastidious" traces to the Latin noun "fastidium," meaning "disgust." "Fastidium" itself is most likely a combination of the Latin words "fastus," meaning "arrogance," and "taedium," meaning "irksomeness." ("Taedium" also gave us our "tedium.") In keeping with its Latin roots, "fastidious" once meant "haughty" or "scornful" or "disgusting" or "disagreeable," although those uses are now archaic or obsolete. The word then came to be applied to someone who was overly difficult

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to please or squeamish, and later, to work which reflected a demanding or precise attitude.

agita \AJ-uh-tuh\ **noun**

: a feeling of agitation or anxiety

Example sentence:

The prosecuting attorney's aggressive cross-examination seemed to give the defendant agita.

Did you know?

Judging by its spelling and meaning, you might think that "agita" is simply a shortened version of "agitation," but that's not the case. Both "agitation" and the verb "agitate" derive from the Latin "agere" ("to drive"). "Agita," which first appeared in English in the early 1980s, comes from a dialectical pronunciation of the Italian "acido," meaning "heartburn" or "acid," which derives from the Latin "acidus." For a while its usage in American English was limited to New York City and surrounding regions, but the word became more widespread in the mid-90s.

bamboozle \bam-BOO-zul\ **verb**

*1 : to deceive by underhanded methods : dupe, hoodwink

2 : to confuse, frustrate, or throw off thoroughly or completely

Example sentence:

Tommy bamboozled his parents into believing he was too sick to go to school last Friday.

Did you know?

In 1710, Irish author Jonathan Swift wrote an article on "the continual Corruption of our English Tongue" in which he complained of "the Choice of certain Words invented by some pretty Fellows." Among the inventions Swift disliked were "bamboozle," "bubble" (a dupe), "put" (a fool), and "sham." (Perhaps he objected to the use of "sham" as a verb; he himself used the adjective meaning "false" a couple of years previously.) What all these words appear to have in common is a connection to the underworld as jargon of criminals. Other than that, the origin of "bamboozle" remains a mystery, but the over 300-year-old word has clearly defied Swift's assertion that "All new affected Modes of Speech ... are the first perishing Parts in any Language."

**Indicates the sense illustrated in the example sentence.*

evanescent \eh-vuh-NEH-sunt\ **adjective**

: tending to vanish like vapor

Example sentence:

For Marcy, the enchantment of the elegant ballroom was as evanescent as Cinderella's gilded coach -- it vanished the instant Dudley appeared.

Did you know?

The fragile, airy quality of things "evanescent" reflects the word's etymology. "Evanescence" derives from the Latin verb "evanescere," which means "to evaporate" or "to vanish." English has several other words that mean lasting or staying only a short time. "Ephemeral" and "transitory" apply to what is bound to pass ("superstardom is transitory"); "ephemeral," especially, implies striking brevity of duration ("fads, by their very nature, are ephemeral"). "Fugitive" and "fleeting" imply passing so quickly as to make apprehending difficult ("a fugitive smile flitted across his face"; "caught a fleeting glimpse"). "Fugacious," which we featured as a Word of the Day in July, is used of all things fleeting and transitory; it's also the least common of these synonyms.

synecdoche \suh-NEK-duh-kee\ **noun**

: a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole or vice versa, the species for the genus or vice versa, or the name of the material for the thing made.

Example sentence:

The poetic use of "fifty sails" for "fifty ships" is an example of synecdoche.

Did you know?

"Synecdoche," from Greek "syn-" ("together") and "ekdoche" ("interpretation"), is a good word to know if you are a budding author. Writers, and especially poets, use synecdoche in several different ways to create vivid imagery. Most frequently, synecdoche involves substituting a part for the whole, as in our example sentence. Less commonly, it involves putting the whole for the part ("society" for "high society"), the species for the genus ("cutthroat" for "assassin"), the genus for the species ("a creature" for "a man"), or the material for the thing made ("boards" for "stage"). Synecdoche is similar to metonymy -- the use of the name of one thing in place of something associated with it (such as "Shakespeare" for "the works of Shakespeare").

Regional Opportunities

Leading with Authenticity Workshop

From the Central Ohio Chapter:

The Central Ohio workshop scheduled for October 4, 2003 has been changed.

The Leading with Authenticity Workshop has been postponed until March 27, 2004 where it will be offered as part of the Central Ohio Chapter Professional Development Conference.

Please continue to check the website for upcoming announcements. The conference will explore how we all draw upon personal values and interior aspirations to construct a leadership stance toward the world. For more information, please contact:

For more information: Sunday Zidonis (614) 287-5987

Web Site: www.centralohiostc.org

E-mail questions to: szidonis@csc.edu

Northeast Ohio Writers Forum

WHAT: Scary Freelance Writing Tales -- Tricks 'n' Treats

Thrilling, chilling, and unpredictable -- that's freelance writing. It's not for the faint at heart!

Courageous writers -- come share your frightful stories of assignments gone awry, bungled billings, mysterious misprints, red ink terrorism, and more. What are your tricks for turning bad situations into treats? There's one rule for this "roundhouse" discussion: mention no names (you can be imaginative here). Let's learn and get some good advice from one another.

Enjoy apple cider, sweet treats, and fun prizes. You don't have to wear a Halloween costume -- unless you really want to.

Regulars -- please note earlier start time.

Date: Tuesday, October 14

Location: Cuyahoga County Public Library, Mayfield regional Branch

For more information: Sandy Woodthorpe
www.writeon4you.com 440-639-0819

E-mail questions to: iwrite4you@earthlink.net

For map and directions, go to:
<http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/branchespages/myr.htm>

Documentation & Training 2003 Conference

Keynotes:

- ◆ David Pogue: New York times technology columnist and one of the world's best-selling technical how-to authors, with over 2.5 million books in print. David's talk is "Interface Design: The Last Stumbling Block".
- ◆ Vincent Flanders: Author of two best-selling books on Web design. Vincent's talk is "Web Design for Online Learning and Training".

Content: 32 sessions offered by 27 speakers over 2 days. Sessions include:

- ◆ content management
- ◆ content design
- ◆ content development
- ◆ e-learning
- ◆ simulations
- ◆ globalization
- ◆ multimedia
- ◆ .NET

Date: October 6 - 7, 2003

Location: Boston University

Cost: \$599 for both days. Includes 32 sessions, 2 keynotes, food/reception, materials

To Register: Web - <http://www.doctrain.com>, PDF - <http://www.doctrain.com/pdf/doctrain2003.pdf>

STC Society-level Information

STC Educational Opportunities

More New Phone Seminars from STC

STC has greatly expanded its program of telephone seminars--ten will be offered from October 2003 to March 2004! Some of these will include a Web component--participants will not only hear the presenter via conference call, they will also follow along online via a series of Web pages.

Information for all upcoming Phone/Web seminars can be found at www.stc.org/seminars.asp. Additional information on sponsor, location and price can be found on the NEOSTC Calendar

STC's telephone seminars have been a great success so far--please help us keep the momentum going!

STC 2003 Salary Survey

STC's Web site now includes this year's salary survey for technical writers and editors in the U.S. and Canada.

This survey, one of STC's most popular publications, has been posted in PDF format on the members-only section of our Web site.

Please visit www.stc.org/salary.asp to see salary and benefit statistics broken down by geography, experience level, and other factors.

If you haven't yet been to the members-only section of the Web site, please note that you'll need your STC member number and a password to enter.

If you do not have a password or have forgotten your password, go to www.stc.org and select "Forgot your Password?" to get assistance.

STC Honored in APEX 2003 Awards

STC took four awards in this year's APEX 2003 publications competition.

- ◆ Russ Bombardieri, STC's webmaster, won a Grand Award for STC's Web site in the "Web and Intranet Sites" category.
- ◆ George F. Hayhoe, editor of Technical Communication, earned Awards of Excellence in the subcategories "Magazines and Journals-Online and Electronic" and "Columns and Editorials".
- ◆ Intercom received an Award of Excellence in the "Magazines and Journals-Printed Four Color" subcategory.

The APEX awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and overall communication effectiveness.

APEX 2003 received close to 5,000 total entries in eleven major categories; of these, 100 (about 2 percent) won Grand Awards, and 1,541 (about 31 percent) won Awards of Excellence.

The APEX competition has been conducted annually since 1989 by Communications Concepts, Inc., the Springfield, Virginia, publisher of Writing That Works: The Business Communications Report.

CIC SIG SUMMER UPDATE

[NOTE: This article refers to a Society-level SIG, not our local chapter.]

By: Linda Gallagher, Co-Manager CIC-SIG

CIC SIGers,

We hope that you are having a great summer. We received great feedback on our first eblast that we sent before the STC Annual Conference. We're back keeping you informed about CIC SIG happenings.

Latest Independent Perspective newsletter now available

The new issue of the Independent Perspective, the SIG newsletter, is now available at <http://www.stcsig.org/cic/pdfs/July2003.pdf>

Call for panelists for the 2004 Annual Conference

As you may know, the CICSIG sponsors both a progression and a panel each year at the Annual Conference. Last year we did a very successful panel on partnership arrangements for independents.

It is time to form the panel. At the CICSIG business meeting in Dallas in May, the consensus for the panel topic was "marketing." Tommy will put the proposal together (due date August 1) and coordinate and moderate the panel. He have one person already signed up, and need two more.

If you are planning to attend the conference in Baltimore next year and wish to participate in this panel, please e-mail Tommy at thomas.barker@ttu.edu with a title and an abstract as soon as possible.

Back issues of the newsletter available

We have also posted back issues of the newsletter for your perusal at: <http://www.stcsig.org/cic/pages/newsletter.htm>

SIG history page

We also have a new history page where we are documenting the history of the SIG. We especially want to pull together a chronology of the SIG leaders (managers, newsletter editors, and Webmasters), so if you've been involved in the past, please let us know.

<http://www.stcsig.org/cic/pages/history.htm>

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If you have questions about the SIG or would like to volunteer, contact either one of us. We'd love to hear from you!

Thomas Barker & Linda G. Gallagher, Co-Managers,
Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest
Group, Society for Technical Communication
(<http://www.stcsig.org/cic/index.html>)

EMPLOYMENT OPS

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the [current chapter website](#) for details.]

Looking for a job?

Hiring a technical communicator?

Advertising an opening?

Then check out the new and improved Jobs pages on the Northeast Ohio chapter Web site. Here you'll find job openings from Akron to Cleveland to Youngstown (and beyond) covering the field of technical communication. You'll also find pages where you can submit a resume or job opening for posting. And, if you need contract consultants, job placement services, or other employment resources, you can find these, too. It's all here: <http://www.neostc.org/jobs/>

Lines & Letters Editors

- ◆ Nora Ebie (nora.ebie@tri-c.edu)
- ◆ Erika Weliczko (erika@en.com)

If you know of other chapter news or volunteer opportunities, e-mail the editors at newsletter@neostc.org.