Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

2016 STC Summit Report

Kim Lindsey

The 2016 STC Summit in Anaheim California was a great experience. Our chapter was recognized as a Silver Award recipient, as this photo shows.

1 Kim Lindsey and Jill McCauslin

Most of the educational sessions I attended were focused on e-learning and/or video, and I learned something new in every one. For example, one presenter indicated that there are actual metrics to prove that scenarios work best with no more than six steps. That seems like common sense, but it's good to know that it can be proven statistically. Another excellent session had to do with leveraging the editing process to mentor new writers. I expect to put one particular tip into practice: use Camtasia to record my screen and spoken comments while editing a draft, then provide the video to the other writer as (asynchronous) coaching. Brilliant!

The Awards Reception on Tuesday evening was very special for me, as I received my Associate Fellow award at that time. It was truly an honor to be included in such an illustrious "AF" class. (This photo was taken by NEO STC friend Sherri Henkin - Thanks Sherri!)

Next year's Summit is in Washington DC and I strongly encourage all members and friends of our chapter to consider attending. I hope to submit at least one proposal to speak next year - you should too!

2016 STC Summit - Through the Eyes of a First-time Attendee

David Frev

As the 2015 Society for Technical Communications (STC) Summit in Columbus, Ohio, was going on, I was in the process of transitioning into my current role as Manager of Information Development at Rockwell Automation. Almost a year later, it was exciting to have the opportunity to attend my first STC Summit. The 2016 STC Summit offered more than 80 educational sessions within seven unique tracks aimed at providing a customizable experience for every attendee. The seven unique tracks offered several sessions on topics related to Career and Leadership, Design and Testing, Strategy and Trends and Technology and Development, to name a few. After reviewing the "Education Sessions-at-a-Glance" section of the Summit program, I selected twelve sessions that I thought would provide a diverse look at what is currently going on in the world of technical communications. A few of the various sessions I attended included a session on

usability testing to enhance documentation, a session on content management, and a session titled "An Introvert's Journey to Leadership."

The Summit opened and closed with great keynote speeches on two very diverse topics. The opening keynote speech was given by David Rose, CEO of Ditto Labs. David provided some insight into how the Internet of Things (IoT) is beginning to become part of our everyday lives with simple user-friendly objects that respond to our needs and begin to think on our behalf. He talked about everyday objects such as umbrellas, lamps, doorbells and prescription medicine bottles becoming more intelligent and providing us with information based on our interactions with those objects. The closing keynote speech was given by David Beebe, Vice President of Creative and Content Marketing at Marriot Intl. David talked about Marriott's approach to content marketing and how Marriott is reaching its consumers based on engaging them in their experiences as opposed to advertising a brand to them.

On Tuesday evening during the Summit, there was an honors reception to celebrate the accomplishments of several STC members. This year, two Rockwell Automation employees, Mollye

Barrett and Rachel Houghton, were honored with the title of Fellow. This same honor was bestowed to Robert Young at last year's STC Summit, and prior to this year's Summit, Carrie Cianciola received a Distinguished Chapter Service award for her work with the NEO STC Chapter. There were a lot of people in attendance at the conference and it makes it pretty special being there when the people that you work with everyday are among those honored for their dedication to the field of Technical Communication and the STC.

2016 NEO STC Awards Banquet and Officer Elections

Lynn Nickels

Once again, NEO STC members enjoyed a wonderful opportunity to visit and relax at the 2016 Awards Banquet and Officer Elections event. We were happy to learn that the theme for this year will be "Community," and even happier to learn that we received the Silver Community Achievement Award!

It's always exciting to learn who will continue on to take the lead of our NEO STC Chapter! We were excited to see some new faces join the ranks, as well as welcome some long-time members to the posts available beginning July 1st.

2 NEO STC 2016 Awards Banquet Attendees

2016 Election Results

- Brian Smith – Immediate Past President
- Jill McCauslin – Incoming President
- Jason Vensel – Incoming Vice President
- Tricia Spayer – Continuing on as Treasurer
- Kelly Graham – Incoming Secretary

Jill spoke a few words and explained that the chapter will begin using Adobe Connect to help build community within our area and that the "Community" theme will be a thread through our programs for the year.

Recognition Awards

There was no shortage of awards at this year's banquet. We were thrilled to recognize Kim Lindsey as a new Associate Fellow and Carrie Cianciola as the recipient of the Distinguished Chapter Service Award. The Newsletter received the Committee of the Year Award. Jason Vensel received Rookie Volunteer of the Year and Lynn Nickels received Volunteer of the Year.

Other volunteer recognition awards for ongoing dedication to our NEO Chapter included:

- Tricia Spayer
- Lisa Mileusnich
- Jill McCauslin
- Jeanette Evans
- Carrie Cianciola

Newsletter Winners

Thanks to our Newsletter winners for the most contributions to *Lines & Letters*! We had two: Tricia Spayer and Brigid Brockway. Both received a $50 Amazon gift card.

Congratulations to all. Your hard work and dedication is much appreciated!

In the Spotlight: Jason Vensel

Lynn Nickels and Jason Vensel

It is with great pleasure that I introduce our Incoming Vice President and Spotlight feature of the month, Jason Vensel! Jason currently works at DRB Systems in Green, Ohio. DRB provides automated management systems, POS terminals, hand-held portable touchscreen terminals, self-pay stations and loyalty promotion tools to Full Serve, Flex Serve and Express Car Washes, along with Quick Lube and Convenience stores. As Jason says, "It happens nearly a million times a day: Someone washes their car at a car wash using a computer solution provided by DRB Systems."

Jason explains his duties further, saying, "Some of my responsibilities include developing content for PCI compliance (PA-DSS and PCI DSS), implementing CSS3 and HTML 5 design, and administering the project and version control tools our staff use."

Jason has been quite involved with NEO STC over the past couple of the years. I know that our newsletter staff certainly keeps him busy scheduling the vast amount of Constant Contact notifications we request! He also served as 2015 NEO STC Scholarship Competition judge as well as a judge for the STC International Summit Awards Competition in 2015 and 2016. He served as the Chairperson of the NEO STC Public Relations Committee for the 2015-2016 year, and is co-

chairperson this year. Jason will also begin his new duties as Vice President in the fall.

He has been quite busy considering that this is just his second year as an STC member! He says, "While I've been involved with tech comm over 16 years, I didn't join STC until the end of 2014/beginning of 2015." I think he is making up for lost time!

Jason's education includes a B.A., English at Ohio University and a J.D. at the University of Toledo College of Law.

His hobbies and spare time, he says, are, "spending time and traveling with my wife, our 7-year-old son, 6-year-old son, and 2.5-year-old boy/girl twins. What's it like having 4 kids less than 5 years apart? This. Yeah. It's exactly like that!"

Jason says, "I also like to go running when my schedule permits. In another life, I ran on the last 4 of Caldwell High School's record-setting 8 consecutive cross country state championships."

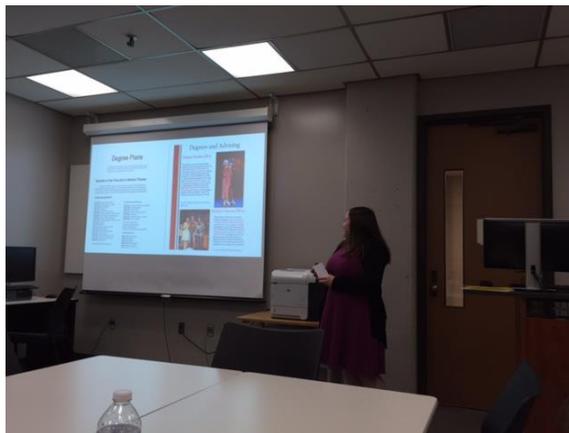I'm actually exhausted just imagining how he does it all!

Academic Relations: NEO STC Observes Future Writers at YSU Senior Presentations

Janean Voss and Lynn Nickels

"To me, it's the pinnacle of what we do as professionals – having the opportunity to observe what the next generation of writers will look like," said Lynn Nickels. On May 3rd and 4th, Rockwell Automation and Parker Hannifin professionals had the opportunity to do just that by accepting an invitation from Drs. Jay Gordon and Diana Awad Sorocco to sit in on the Youngstown State University (YSU) Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) program senior project presentations.

The PTW senior semester project allows students to choose, work with, and produce original output for a client. They learn and apply interviewing, project planning, negotiation, and time management skills as well as writing, design, and editing. We had the opportunity to hear from PTW seniors about:

- A marketing plan for Carrabba's Italian Grill
- An online Sci-Fi magazine project
- A training process implementation for YSU Student Services
- Instructional manuals for the Theater Department and The Penguin Review magazine
- Promotional materials and reviewer bios for The Emperor Honors Academic Journal
- Policy, promotional brochure, and business plan for J. Ryan Consulting
- Promotional and social media pieces for Cycle for the Cure
- Promotional materials and menu for a local Youngstown restaurant

The five professionals in attendance at the PTW senior project presentations were:

- May 3: Kelly Graham, Tech Comm Editor and Tiffany Harris and Lynn Nickels, Marketing Communications Representatives – all from Rockwell Automation.
- May 4: Lisa Mileusnich, Technical Analyst and Janean Voss, Technical Analyst – Lead

on the IT Technical Communications team – both from Parker Hannifin.

3 BLR: Tiffany Harris, Dr. Jim Schramer, Dr. Jay Gordon, Dr. Diana Awad Sorocco FLR: Kelly Graham, Dr. Julia Gergits

Tiffany Harris of Rockwell Automation said of the experience, "I enjoyed watching the presentations and found it really interesting with regard to the level of involvement some students had in their projects. I thought the senior projects were a great way to show the students what kind of roadblocks they may experience in the working world and the communication gaps that can exist in any organization. I wish I would have had a project like this during my senior year of college. It was a nice ice-breaker exercise that really got the students exploring different facets of marketing. I hope to join again next year!"

Representatives from the NEO STC chapter have been attending the YSU PTW presentations for a few years now, and we plan to nourish this relationship with the YSU PTW program in the future. When there are future opportunities for chapter members to give back to young professionals at YSU and other area universities, we will continue to extend those opportunities to our membership.
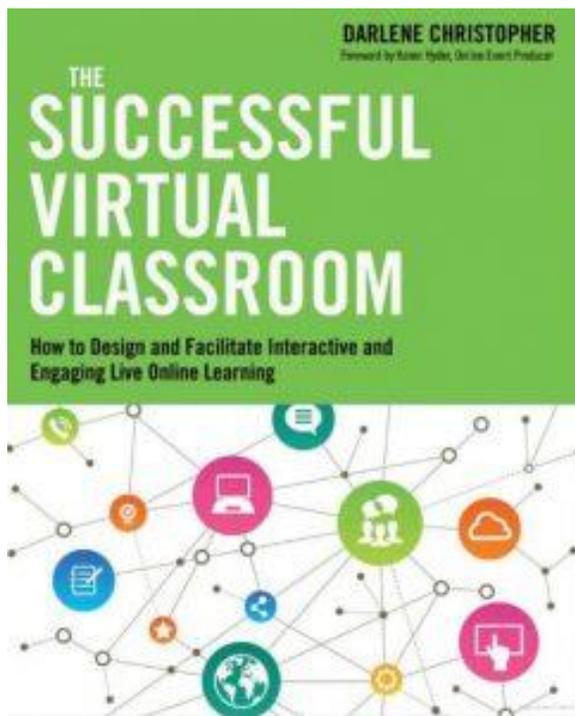

4 Dr. Julia Gergits, Lynn Nickels, Dr. Jim Schramer

Lynn said, "On a personal note, it was great to get back to my old stomping grounds! Seeing Dr. Julia Gergits, now the Chair of the English Dept., and her husband, Dr. Jim Schramer, was a special treat. Both were my teachers and advisers when I attended YSU as an undergrad and grad student. It was great to see that their influence over future students is still strong and thriving!"

Review: The Successful Virtual Classroom

Jeanette Evans

What can someone say about virtual classrooms today besides reminding folks to avoid death by PowerPoint? Author Darlene Christopher in "The Successful Virtual Classroom: How to Design and Facilitate Interactive and Engaging Live Online Learning," has lots to say on the subject, basing conclusions on her experience and citing a number of case studies from groups such as Oracle, UPS, U.S. Army, World Bank, and The Nature Conservancy.

Bringing together groups from various global locations to create a great virtual classroom can be a challenge, so to meet the challenge, the author suggests these techniques to maximize participant learning.

- Use the PREP model (plan, rehearse, execute, post review)
- Use tools, checklists, and worksheets
- Use screen sharing, polls, and breakout rooms
- Bring chat into the classroom
- Monitor feedback
- Use icebreakers
- Encourage audience participation
- Consider the cultural elements of your audience

With everyone on Amazon giving the book 5 out of 5 stars (with 10 reviewers agreeing when I checked in March, 2016) that provides a good indication the book gives good advice. It can be a resource for someone starting out in conducting virtual learning sessions or someone who has experience and wants to learn more.

In addition to giving a big picture of the advantages and disadvantages of virtual classrooms, the author also provides practical tips. I did not know, for example, that I could get free images from the https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/ site (page 78).

Scheduling support staff such as a producer, instructional designer, and IT support personnel can help during a session as this support staff is the author's idea of an ideal situation. Members of an ideal team for development include the producer, facilitator, SME, instructional designer, administrators, IT support person, and participants (page 50).

A table (page 40) provides questions to consider when learning to use a virtual classroom tool. Here are some of the questions.

- What audio options are available?
- Can I send both public and private chat messages?
- How do I display slides?
- How do I write on the screen or whiteboard?
- What are the maximum number of participants?

- What types of polls are available – multiple choice, multiple answer?
- How do people move in and out of breakout rooms?
- How do I launch the screen sharing feature?

Tips in the book come from case studies and the author's experience as a regional knowledge and learning officer at the Word Bank. She has been designing and delivering virtual training programs for global audiences for many years and is an award winner for this work.

She has a diverse technology background holding web product management positions in Silicon Valley at Infoseek, Disney Internet Group, and 3Com. She holds a Master's degree in International Management from the Monterey Institute of International Studies as well as a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of California, Davis. She is a regular speaker at ASTD national events and various ASTD chapter events, having authored articles on the subject virtual classrooms. This is her first book.

"The Successful Virtual Classroom: How to Design and Facilitate Interactive and Engaging Live Online Learning." [Paperback] By Darlene Christopher (2014), AMACOM Division of American Management Association. 224 pages. ISBN 0814434290, 9780814434291.

Note to readers: A version of this review is scheduled to appear in Technical Communication.