

# Lines & Letters

## Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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### Monthly meeting November 9: Being your own boss

Have you ever wondered what it is like to own your very own technical communication company? Well, wonder no more. Come to the NEO STC meeting in November and hear Bob Dianetti, co-founder and President of Radcom, tell you all the juicy details and insider information you always wanted to know! Sales, project management, time management, recruiting, managing employees, victory, and the agony of defeat. Hear it all — no holds barred in this fun, interactive presentation. Question and answer time at the end caps off a fun discussion of what "being your own boss" really means!

Bob will also update us on what is going on in STC at the national level.

The meeting is at DataVantage in Solon.

Please note: The chapter is billed per registration. If you register but do not attend, you will still be expected to pay for the meeting.

Register by Monday November 6 by sending an email to: [programs@neostc.org](mailto:programs@neostc.org)

For more information and to prepay using PayPal, see <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20061109.html>.

We look forward to seeing you!

### Upcoming events

- ◆ 11/2 to 11/4: Region 5 Conference. For more information, go to the conference Web site: <http://www.region5conf.com/>
- ◆ 11/8/2006: Webinar: Choosing the Right Usability Technique (to Answer the Right Question).\*
- ◆ 11/9: Monthly meeting: Being your own boss
- ◆ 11/14/2006: World Usability day. See the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Usability Professionals' Association (NEOUPA) for local events.
- ◆ 11/17/2006: Deadline for the Toronto chapter's Annual Online and Print Publications Competition. See their Web site for more information at [www.stctoronto.org/competition/Competition\\_06\\_07.html](http://www.stctoronto.org/competition/Competition_06_07.html)
- ◆ 5/12 to 5/16/2007: Technical Communication Summit — STC's 54th Annual Conference — in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**\* Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these Webinars.** If you would like to host a seminar, please e-mail us.

Reminder: If you RSVP but do not show up for a meeting, it costs the chapter money — we have to pay upfront for meals. Please remember to let the Programs Committee ([programs@neostc.org](mailto:programs@neostc.org)) know in advance if you have registered but cannot make it to a meeting.

### Webinar hosts needed

The Education Committee is looking for volunteers to host up-coming STC Webinars, including the November 22 seminar presented by North East Ohio's own - Robert Dianetti!

### World Usability Day, November 14

*by Jeff Janis ([Jeff\\_Janis@Progressive.com](mailto:Jeff_Janis@Progressive.com)), President of NEOUPA*

Join the Northeast Ohio chapter of the Usability Professionals Association (NEOUPA) as we celebrate World Usability Day across the world on November 14, 2006. Check out the [www.worldusabilityday.org](http://www.worldusabilityday.org) site.

While some Northeast Ohio companies will hold events for their own employees, NEOUPA will be participating in a few events. We welcome you to participate informally in the discussions or just hang out socially at the following events.

#### Cleveland Museum of Art Library — 6 to 8 pm

Several activities will be presented at the museum, including informal roundtable discussions of accessibility, Web 2.0, user research, remote usability testing, eye tracking, and landing page usability, with representatives from Intuit, Progressive Insurance, Ernst & Young, eMergent Marketing, Brulant, Kent State University, and other northeast Ohio companies and universities.

The Cleveland Museum of Art has generously donated their library space. We thank Keybank for sponsoring this event, which will be facilitated by NEOUPA.

FREE admission — refreshments will be served.

Seating is limited, so reserve your spot for World Usability Day events at the Cleveland Museum of Art today! See the NEOUPA Web site at [www.neoupa.org/](http://www.neoupa.org/) for registration information.

Kent State University Library, Student Center — 12:00 to 3:00pm

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An open house sponsored by Information Architecture and Knowledge Management (IAKM) will feature displays and testing to help introduce the importance and pervasiveness of usability issues to the university community.

Highlights include eye tracking demonstrations in the School of Library and Information Science Usability Lab, displays of well-designed everyday objects, and giveaways of user-friendly prizes (iPod shuffle, paper clips, t-shirts, pencils).

FREE admission.

### Tri-C West Campus

More details to follow on an event on the southwest side of Cleveland. See the NEOUPA Web site at [www.neoupa.org/](http://www.neoupa.org/).

## STC supports World Usability Day

STC is supporting World Usability Day ([www.worldusabilityday.org](http://www.worldusabilityday.org)), Tuesday, November 14, 2006. Primarily sponsored by the Usability Professionals' Association, World Usability Day is a series of events that promote the values and benefits of usability engineering and user-centered design. The events will take place over a 36-hour period in more than 30 countries around the globe.

"STC's involvement in World Usability Day is a logical extension of technical communication," says Paula Berger, president of STC. "Everything that technical communicators do is about usability, whether making instructions more usable through better writing, interfaces more usable because of better labeling and navigation, or products more usable because of user testing. It's all part of the same continuum."

As part of World Usability Day, STC and CM Pros ([www.cmprofessionals.org](http://www.cmprofessionals.org)), an organization of content management professionals, are organizing a global online card-sort exercise. The exercise is made possible by the donation of WebSort software ([www.websort.net](http://www.websort.net)) from Parallax, LLC.

Card sorting is a quick, inexpensive, and reliable technique for determining how people categorize information. This knowledge helps information architects and usability professionals create structures for print and online information that make products and technologies more usable.

STC's card-sort exercise will be carried out by participants on five continents. The exercise will provide

insights about regional variations in the ways people organize information. Anyone interested in participating in this valuable exercise can sign up at [www.stc.org/wud](http://www.stc.org/wud).

## October meeting review

By Kim Lindsey ([klindsey@parker.com](mailto:klindsey@parker.com)) and Kristy Benson ([tuxbird@neo.rr.com](mailto:tuxbird@neo.rr.com))

The monthly meeting for October featured table discussions on several topics of interest: Content Management, Graphics, and Lone Writers, and a fourth table for general discussion.

The **Content Management** table was facilitated by Kathleen Ruggeri and this popular subject sparked a lively and serious interchange, since several local companies are moving toward these authoring methods.

At the **Graphics** table, leader Amy Vogt provided drawing paper and colored markers to get the juices (and ideas) flowing.

I was at the general discussion table, which was intended to be a discussion of Portfolios, facilitated by Jill McCauslin. However, since everyone at the table was already gainfully employed, we chose to talk about other topics instead — notably, translation issues, grammar questions, and workplace experiences.

For the **Lone Writers** table, I'll let Kristy Benson give the report:

I sat at the Lone Writers table and the main topics of our discussion were:

- General discussion of tools, particularly WebWorks ePublisher Pro
- The importance of having an editor, and how many of us do/do not have our work edited by someone else (it was about a 3-to-1 ratio)
- How to justify hiring another writer when the volume of work grows to more than you can handle by yourself
- The pros and cons of marketing your writing services to other departments within your workplace, outside your core job duties
- Stories about funny typos, crazy deadlines, and generally the type of networking and commiserating that Lone Writers don't often get a chance to share

### Report on the Cleveland Technical Societies Council

By Kim Lindsey ([klindsey@parker.com](mailto:klindsey@parker.com))

On Tuesday, October 24, Jessica Hendricks and I attended the annual planning meeting of the CTSC, held at the Flat Iron Cafe in the Flats. Representatives from many different science and engineering societies were there to discuss their plans for the year, ideas for meeting locations and topics, and the ups and downs of professional organizations in general. We learned that many other societies are experiencing the same challenges we face and that, comparatively speaking, we are doing better than most, both in terms of providing value to our own members and the stability of STC at the Society level. When I described our successful membership campaign last year, I am sure I sensed some envy in the room! (Way to go, Bob Young, Beth Williams, and everyone else who helped with the membership drive!) CTSC provides some services to member organizations, and our board will be looking into how we can take advantage of those. Jessica and I made several useful contacts and feel that participation in this multi-society council will continue to be valuable to the chapter in the future.

### Congratulations to a new senior member!

Thank you to Ken Rogers for remaining us with us for five years.

### Member profile: Bob Young

By Jeanette Evans ([jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net))

An NEO STC chapter past president and competition winner (including Best of Show), Bob Young makes a huge contribution to the NEO STC chapter. When Bob was president, we earned an Award of Excellence for the chapter overall and two honors for the Public Relations Committee.

In describing his background, as Bob puts it, "my professional writing career has taken some interesting twists and turns. I was a sportswriter for 15 years for two daily newspapers after being graduated from Ohio University with a Bachelor's of Science in Journalism in 1978. During that time, I was a beat writer for the Cleveland Indians and Akron/Canton Indians, now called the Akron Aeros."

Concerning his love for baseball, Bob notes that he got an early start when he was chosen to be bat boy for the Cleveland Indians for the 1972 and '73 seasons. "I won

a writing contest sponsored by The (Cleveland) *Plain Dealer*, topping some 1,300 contestants. It was a dream come true for any 15-year old. I had the opportunity of meeting all the players for the visiting teams my first year in the dugout and the second year I was the Indians' bat boy. For those who might be wondering, this was the Gaylord Perry, Charlie Spikes, Buddy Bell, and Frank Duffy era. The position gave me an excellent perspective of the ups and downs encountered by professional athletes, which helped immensely when I covered the team as a sportswriter. Athletes are regular people, facing challenges just like the rest of us. But, they have a passion and a drive for what they do. I have tried to demonstrate those same intangibles in my work and personal activities."

Currently working as a senior documentation specialist and lone writer at MAXIMUS, a judicial software company in North Canton, Bob joined the company in 1995, after working as a contract negotiator for The Newspaper Guild and free-lance writer. "I represented writers and workers at several publications, including *The Plain Dealer* and *The (Canton) Repository*."

Bob goes on to say, "I believe that all writing, whether news, sports, or technical, should be concise, accurate, and informational. My success in technical writing has been due to my involvement with NEO STC, starting in 2000. I learned about the organization from a fellow technical writer and drew upon the expertise of other members."

Bob lives in North Canton with his wife, Carol, and two teen-agers, David and Sandie. David is a freshman at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, S.C., studying marine science. Sandie is a junior homecoming queen at North Canton Hoover High School. Carol, who is Director of Medical Education at Aultman Hospital in Canton, and Bob celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in May, 2006.

### Managing life and work: Dinners by the Dozen

By Barb Philbrick ([caslon@alltel.net](mailto:caslon@alltel.net))

One of the ongoing difficulties of being a working person is getting dinner on the table. Even though I work primarily from home, it can be tiresome to plan, buy, and prepare meals, and seems like some crisis starts brewing with work when I need to be getting dinner ready.

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So I was interested in a new service offered nearby — Dinners by the Dozen ([dinnersbythedozen.com](http://dinnersbythedozen.com)). I stopped by to see what they were about. The owner, Carolyn Ritchie, gave me a quick rundown of the service they provide and let me sample one of her meals. Essentially, they plan the meals, buy the food, and prepare the food to be mixed into a meal. They promised that in two hours, I would have 12 meals ready to throw into the freezer until we were ready to eat them. I was sold and decided to give it a try.

I showed up ready to make some meals, along with about 10 other people. The owner gave us a quick rundown of the rules and procedures (tie back loose hair, wash hands between food stations, which set of instructions to follow, and a list of the meals I had ordered). Then I was off preparing. Each person (or group of people — a family with two teenage sons was there, as well as two friends who prepared their meals together) took over a food station.

Each food station had a set of instructions, and all the measuring devices for each ingredient. The instructions were very simple to follow — they were based on the utensils provided (for example, instead of saying 16 ounces of yams, they said to use two 8 ounce ladles). I talked to the owner a little about the instructions. She told me that about 50% of patrons read the instructions and for the most part, it's OK, but she keeps an eye out for the tricky parts where users will get into trouble if they don't follow the instructions (don't you wish we had that option?)

During preparation, helpers moved dirty dishes out of the way, filled up depleted supplies, cleaned counters, and answered any questions. As each meal was completed, I sealed it and stuck on a label with cooking instructions and suggested side dishes. Sure enough, at the end of two hours, I had 12 dinners ready to go, including sirloin stir fry with fettuccine; flank steak with feta and pine nut stuffing; pecan chicken with honey mustard sauce; chicken and turkish pilaf; southwestern chicken and sweet potato soup; and seafood cioppino.

For my family, this service has been great. When we plan meals, we figure out which Dinners by the Dozens meals we are going to use that week, pull them out of the freezer, then plan sides and other meals around it. So far, all of the meals have been either good or excellent (one of the advantages of making it myself — I could spice and adjust ingredients to suit the tastes of my family, except for an unfortunate bit of confusion between paprika and cayenne pepper). The jury is still out on cost, but it looks like our grocery bills are lower,

so we think the cost will be negligible. Also, the nutrition information on their Web site has been a great help in calorie counting.

For us, there were only a few downsides. There are few vegetarian options (we are trying to increase the number of vegetarian meals we eat). However, Carolyn will let you bring in meat substitutions, such as tofu. Another downside is that we must remember to pull the meals out of the freezer so they have enough time to thaw. Although it wasn't a problem for us, she also told me that she is adjusting her menus so that more items can be divided into two or three portions instead of four or six — she has found that empty-nesters really like the service (she had originally expected mostly families).

A lot of these dinner preparation services have been popping up, and I suspect that each one has a style and flavor of its own. We will probably try another one to see if we like the food as well or better (or the service — some offer Kids' Chef sessions where the kids can come and help). One way or another, I think a dinner preparation service is going to become part of our dinner planning.

### **Book review: *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric: Leadership Wisdom from the World of the Wizards***

*Reviewed by Kim Lindsey ([klindsey@parker.com](mailto:klindsey@parker.com))*

"Wouldn't it be more than a little strange if the best-selling children's books in modern times contained some of the deepest wisdom that contemporary businesspeople need for successful careers, great relationships, and flourishing lives?" (xiii)

So begins this worthwhile amalgam of Greek philosophy, leadership principles, and fantasy literature.

Tom Morris, former professor of philosophy at Notre Dame and now corporate philosopher, describes how he spontaneously drew illustrations on wisdom from JK Rowling's novels during a presentation. But the connection is obvious: In its UK printing, the first novel was titled *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and General Electric runs an R&D facility called the "House of Magic."

While the book could be used to introduce both Greek philosophy and business concepts to a younger audience, it also imbues serious subjects like wisdom and virtue with an aura of fun, making them more approachable and perhaps more memorable for everyone.

Numerous quotes and examples from all six Potter novels help Morris develop a theme that runs through many of his writings: Sustainable excellence, coupled with fulfillment in our work.

The book draws liberally from many sources, from ancient to modern, in business and philosophy, as well as the Potter novels themselves. There are quotes from Jack Welch (former chairman of GE) and Socrates, Mark Twain and Moses. To underline the breadth of Dumbledore's insight that "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities," the author gives two parallel quotes: One from the Stoic Heraclitus, the other from the film *Batman Begins*. True wisdom is timeless and cross-cultural.

He also describes many similarities between Aristotle, his own ideal man, and headmaster Dumbledore, an idealized fictional character. Indeed, Aristotle's prize pupil was another boy wonder: Alexander the Great.

The varied sentence structure and expansive vocabulary make this well-edited book a pleasing read. Summaries that appear in every section re-state the topic at hand, sometimes with a slight twist. For example, the chapter on Ethics has a section titled, "Ethical and Unethical People." The summary: "It's ironic that the alternative to an ethical life is the unbridled pursuit of power — since the deepest source of genuine power is living the ethical life." (79)

A word of caution: Since it draws on all six Harry Potter volumes, the book contains spoilers galore. If you have not read all six books, or if your only involvement is the films, the book won't mean as much to you.

I will conclude with a final quote from Morris, who encourages, "Wisdom about life can be distilled from the process of living by anyone who pays enough attention." (190)

Book information: *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric: Leadership Wisdom from the World of the Wizards*. Author: Tom Morris. 2006. New York, NY: Currency. [ISBN 0385517548. 272 pages. \$24.95 USD (hardcover).]

### Book review: *XML for Dummies*

By Jeanette Evans ([jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net))

When I felt I should get a background in XML, my thoughts turned to the Dummies series. In the past, I have had good luck learning from Dummies books.

After reading *XML for Dummies*, I noticed on amazon.com the book got 2 stars out of 5. Some people called the book worthless and downright wrong, but a few in the minority liked it. While I feel the book did not totally meet my expectations, I don't think the book was totally worthless.

The book did an adequate job of introducing XML concepts. Plus, as a reference on tag formats, it should prove helpful. What I found lacking, however, was the right information to give me the overall grasp on the subject that I wanted to get. After reading the book, I took two online classes on the subject. The classes gave me the right level of conceptual background as well as enough examples of XML, which the book in general did not provide.

Normally, I like the Dummies format, style, and approach, which this book uses. In *XML for Dummies* it is the content, not the style, that I found lacking.

The sections of the book include the following, in addition to a glossary and index:

- ◆ XML Basics
- ◆ XML and the Web
- ◆ Building In Validation with DTDs and Schemas
- ◆ Transforming and Processing XML
- ◆ XML Application Development
- ◆ The Part of Tens

Book information: *XML for Dummies*. Authors: Lucinda Dykes and Ed Tittel. 2005. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc. [ISBN: 0764588451] 366 pages, including index. \$24.99 USD

### Handy hint: Adding connection points to Visio shapes

By Lisa Mileusnich ([lmileusnich@parker.com](mailto:lmileusnich@parker.com))

Adding connection points to shapes in Microsoft Visio is sometimes necessary because the standard connection point is not where you want it to be. Also, certain shapes (such as arrows) do not have standard connection points. To create connection points, follow these steps:

1. Select the shape you want to add a connection point to.
2. Click the **Connection Point** tool. (It looks like an X. If it is not visible, click the arrow next to

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the **Connector** tool, and then click the **Connection Point** tool.)

3. Press **<Ctrl>**. A blue crosshair appears near the mouse pointer.
4. Drag the crosshair where you want the connection point to go, and click the mouse. A pink X appears to designate the connection point.

### Hot jobs

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

Check out just a few of the hot jobs from our Web site at <http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php>!

#### Technical and scientific communication

- ◆ WIL RESEARCH LABORATORIES, LLC has multiple positions open for Scientific Report Writer/Study Analyst. Responsibilities include review of study records and preparation of methodology section of reports, collation and quality control of data, preparation of report tables, scientific interpretation of data and writing the results of the study for submission to study director, client and governmental regulatory agencies.
- ◆ First Consulting Group is seeking a Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist to document current and new applications (analysis through design requirements) including complex system architectures.
- ◆ Hyland Software is looking for a Bi-Lingual Technical Writer: English to Portuguese who will be responsible for researching product functionality of their OnBase® software, writing content for on-line help files, training guides, marketing material and user manuals. The job will include translation from English to Portuguese, and further documentation in Portuguese. Previous technical writing or translation experience is preferred but not required. .
- ◆ Kforce is seeking a Technical Writer for their client's Documentation Department. Strong English, technical writing, and computer science/information systems skills are preferred..

#### Web design and development

- ◆ Acxiom Corporation is looking for a Web/Internet Developer to perform programming tasks to

promote internal and external customer skills in using computer technology.

- ◆ Progressive Insurance is seeking a Web Designer II to design and build web pages using a variety of graphic software applications, techniques, and tools.

#### Training and instructional design

- ◆ Progressive Insurance is looking for a Instruct Designer III who will be responsible for determining training needs for technical or professional skills, and creating, designing, developing, and maintaining new training materials.
- ◆ Graphic design and technical illustration
- ◆ The Bonne Bell Company is looking for a Graphic/Web Designer who will be responsible for providing design solutions based on the understanding of the target market, objective and strategy of each project.
- ◆ Ajilon Consulting is seeking a GUI Designer/ Software Engineer who will create and develop concepts and specifications that optimize the function, value and appearance of products for the benefit of the end user.

#### Editing

- ◆ Long Point Media is seeking an Editor to work in its Brunswick, Ohio headquarters. The successful applicant will oversee the day-to-day operations of its new regional magazine and manage the development of web-related products.
- ◆ American Greetings is looking for a Writer/Editor who has strong writing and editing skills, and conceptual ability.

#### Marketing communications

- ◆ National Association of College Stores is looking for a Director of Marketing who will be responsible for the direction and management of the organization's product and service marketing and promotion activities..
- ◆ Cleveland Metroparks is seeking a Zoo Marketing Specialist who plans, develops and coordinates communication projects for Cleveland Metroparks Zoo that will promote and maintain a favorable public image, increase visitation and revenue, and provide educational information to the Zoo's visitors and staff.

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- ◆ Knotice Ltd is looking for a Copywriter/ Client Service Specialist who will work with the Director of Client Services and will be responsible for the development and execution of strategically based electronic communications on behalf of our clients.
- ◆ Things Remembered is looking for a Creative Communications Manager who will understand and guide the company in how to use personalization in product, display, copy and visual merchandising.

### Internship

- ◆ Careerboard.com is seeking a junior or senior level student to join their rapidly growing company as a Design Associate. You will have the opportunity to interact with leading companies and organizations as you design banner ads, profile pages and co-brands to support their employment branding initiatives

If your company has a job opening, please contact Namrata (Nams) Malik at Nams Malik (nmalik@ra.rockwell.com)

Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience!

### **Reminder: Our local listserv**

[NOTE: As of 2015, the chapter listserv has been supplanted by our LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the [current chapter website](#) for details.]

The NEO STC listserv is an e-mail mailing list available to all our members. The listserv was established to provide another way for members to communicate and network with each other. If you have not been receiving postings from the listserv, you are probably not a member and must join. All subscriptions are approved by a designated list moderator.

To join (subscribe):

1. Go to the listserv Web site.
2. Click **Join stcneohio-I**.
3. Type your e-mail address in the appropriate field. Your e-mail address is required to participate in the listserv.
4. Type your full name in the appropriate field.
5. Specify your preferences in the **Status, See Your Own Messages**, and **Acknowledgement** boxes.
6. Click **Save**. Your submission will be confirmed.

To post a message

1. Go to the listserv Web site.
2. Type your e-mail address and password (if any) in the appropriate fields.
3. Click **Click here to enter stcneohio-I**. The listserv options display.
4. Click **Create a new message**.
5. Type your message in the appropriate fields.
6. Click **Send Message Now**.

For more detail, see [www.neostc.org/official/listserv.htm](http://www.neostc.org/official/listserv.htm)

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