

Lines & Letters

Vol. 17, Issue 5

Northeast Ohio Chapter

Mar/Apr 01

President's Notes

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Lines & Letters Editors

Sharon Ambro
sharon.ambro@grc.nasa.gov

Karla Caldwell
kcaldwell@parker.com

Laurie Harrison
lharrison@radcominc.net



SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Designing the
future of
technical
communication

The 48th Annual Conference for STC will be held May 13 – 16 in Chicago, Ill. If you're thinking about going, I urge you to attend. There are lots of sessions of great interest (and a number of speakers from our chapter); plus, the location is convenient. Check your *Preliminary Program* that was mailed in February for details about the conference.

You may have noticed on the *Preliminary Program* that a new logo for STC has been created. This logo complements the changes the society is making to achieve its brand.

Since we're going to have to use the new logo and plan our materials and Web site with this logo in mind, the board has decided that our chapter needs a logo as well. Kris Henige is heading a committee to determine the best way to get a new logo designed (contest, hiring an independent designer, etc.). If you are interested in participating, contact Kris.

Also, another change has occurred. Our chapter's web site is now located at www.neostc.org. You no longer have to work your way through the main STC Web site to find us. Not only do we now have our own URL, moving the site should allow us to expand the services we're offering online. For example, I'd like to see a local e-mail list group created. I think it would provide all of us with an easy way to ask each other questions and find local resources.

Maria Hlas headed up the nominating committee this year. She contacted a lot of you, I know, and many of you have volunteered to help on different committees. Thank you, Maria, and everyone who volunteered.

The April networking lunch will be April 18th at 1:00 at Anthony's on the River in Youngstown. The Youngstown State University student chapter is making the arrangements. It would be fantastic if a group of us could attend because it gives the students a chance to meet people who are working in the field they're studying. If you have the time, I hope you can attend.

The May networking lunch will be May 9 at Aladdin's Café in Independence. I hope to see you at one of these lunches!

I also want to thank Jeanette Evans for all of her work coordinating the breakfast meeting in February that we held with other professional organizations in the area. We had good attendance and an informative meeting. James Cookinham, the director of NEOSA, spoke about the state of the information technology industry in Northeast Ohio and the role of NEOSA. Jeanette did a fantastic job of coordinating everything. Thanks, Jeanette!

There are lots of upcoming events. I hope you'll make time to attend as many as you can!

Jill McCauslin, President

General Information

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

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles for publication via e-mail.

Deadlines

Deadlines for submissions are as follows:

May/June	submit by 5/1
Sept./Oct.	submit by 9/1
Nov./Dec.	submit by 11/1

Advertising Sizes/Rates

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- 2 issue – \$66.50
- 3 issue – \$94.50

Half col. (2.25 x 5 in.)

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- 2 issue – \$47.50
- 3 issue – \$67.50

Quarter col. (2.25 x 2.5 in.)

- 1 issue – \$15.00
- 2 issue – \$28.50
- 3 issue – \$40.50

Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if the article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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Joint Meeting Highlights IT Growth

By Kris Henige, Vice President

The Northeast Ohio Chapter of STC held its annual joint meeting with the Association for Women in Communications (AWC), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) on February 21 at the New Horizons Learning Center in Independence.



Jim Cookinham, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Software

Association (NEOSA), spoke to 48 attendees at the meeting about how NEOSA is encouraging the growth and development of the local information technology (IT) industry so it can compete in a global market. He also explained the NEOSA Angel Network, an investor-only forum that provides a communication venue for private investors and entrepreneurs.

NEOSA (www.neosa.org) is a non-profit group comprised of organizations and companies that support and serve the software industry in Northeast Ohio. It currently has more than 450 members.

Chapter Calendar



April 18 Networking Lunch: 1:00 PM Anthony's on the River, Youngstown.

Sponsored by the Youngstown State University (YSU) student chapter. Contact Michelle Wall, vice president STC, YSU student chapter at M21kate@aol.com for directions. Everyone is invited to come!



April 18 Meeting: NASA. Details to be distributed.



May 23 or 24 Meeting: American Society of Metallurgy (ASM) International. Details to be distributed.

Technical Standards' Worst Manual Contest 2000-2001

By: Ben L. Bunyi, Staffing Assistant
Technical Standards, Inc.

Technical Standards, a documentation facility and employment service exclusively for technical writers and documentation specialists, located in San Marcos, Calif., hosted its annual Worst Manual Contest. Rosemary Gonzalez of San Diego, Calif. received a \$500 cash prize for the worst entry, a set of instructions for exercise equipment.

Just about everything was wrong with the winning entry. Not only was it poorly translated, the instruction set was vague and confusing and focused on how *not* to use the equipment. The illustrations were nicely drawn, but did not have reference numbers, even though the instructions referred to the illustrations by number. Some good did come out of this entry: a new medical term "vomitive" was introduced.

The following are some excerpts from the winning manual.

"The knees should be closed together the pad. Can't relax at any time when you exercising."

"If you feel vomitive, dizzy or any uncomfortable condition during the exercise, stop exercising immediately."

"When we exercise, our feet must cross and tie the safe rubber band (pls see the fig up.) That is very important."

"Away from the dangerous things (glass wall angle of table, sharp things... etc) during the exercise."

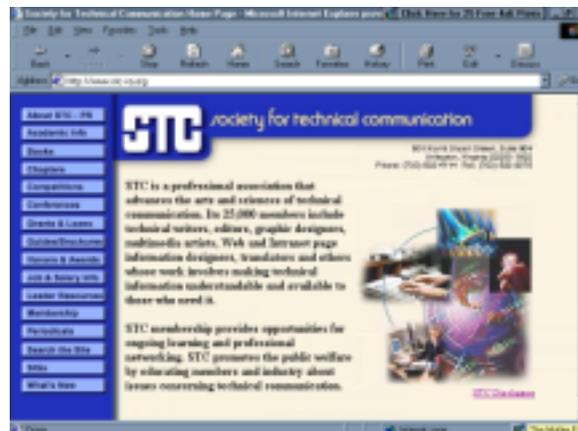
Technical Standards would like to thank everyone who submitted entries to their annual Worst Manual Contest. The worst five entries can be viewed on its Web site at www.tecstandards.

Technical Standards, located in San Marcos CA, is a documentation facility and employment service exclusively for technical writers and documentation specialists.

STC Merges into One Web Site

STC is in the process of merging the two current Web sites www.stc.org and www.stc-va.org into one site to streamline information and eliminate confusion. After April 1, STC will use only the stc.org Web site.

Bookmark your browsers!



Northeast Ohio Chapter STC Officers

President: Jill McCauslin
jmmcauslin@radcominc.net

Vice President: Kris Henige
khenige@parker.com

Secretary: Monica Lusk
MLusk@radcominc.net

Treasurer: Beth Williams
bwilliams@software.rockwell.com

Im. Past President: Maria Hlas
mhlas@radcominc.net

Membership: Irene Jones
irene_jones@insurquote-ias.com

Mentoring: June Muhic
jmuhic@radcominc.net

Programs: Elizabeth Simeral
elisim@nls.net

Joint Meeting: Jeanette Evans
jeanette.evans@marconi.com

Public Relations: Michelle Poore
mlpoore@infinet.com

Employment: Gigi Kolt
gokolt@ra.rockwell.com

Competitions: Cheryl Bennett
sdblue@earthlink.net

Rosemary Snow
rsnow@radcominc.net

Carol MacKay
CMacKay224@aol.com

Student Competition: Bege Bowers
bkbowers@cc.ysu.edu

TechniCom: Angela Dianetti
adianetti@radcominc.net

Web Site: Mark Blake
mblake@nordson.com

Kristen Jackson
kjackson@radcominc.net

Newsletter (see cover)

Northeast Ohio Chapter STC Board Nominations for STC Year 2001-2002

By Maria Hlas, Immediate Past President

Soon after the new year, it is time to start putting together a slate of candidates for the STC board positions of vice president, secretary, and treasurer. This task traditionally falls to the immediate past president. So I dutifully found a nominating committee, Mike Bates and Cheryl Ridenbaugh, and we began our search. This year we have had a wealth of volunteers eager to help us on the various committees in the coming STC year. The only problem became getting a full slate of candidates for the three board positions.

We are lucky to have found three great candidates but no opposing candidates. I prepared to send out the ballot when I happened to read our chapter bylaws on elections. It states, "In the case of a slate of unopposed candidates, the names of the nominees shall be published in the chapter's newsletter. If no opposition is filed within 21 days after publication, the candidates shall be considered elected to their respective offices by acclamation. There shall be no requirement for a mail ballot." The candidates are:

Vice-President: Beth Williams



Beth is an information developer with Rockwell Automation. She has been involved with STC for 12 years, starting as a student member of the Bowling Green State University chapter. She attends many

society events ranging from chapter meetings to annual conferences, and has served as the Northeast Ohio STC treasurer during the past two years. She believes STC is an excellent resource for communicators, and wishes to continue as an officer to contribute to the opportunities it provides to both current and new members.

Secretary: Kim Lindsey



This is Kim's second year in STC. She has been at RADCom, Inc. for six months as an information designer. She

designs and edits training materials and procedure manuals for online and printed media. In her "previous life" as a bench medical technologist for 18 years, she was a user of technical documentation, so she had a good opportunity to see what works and what doesn't and why. Kim lives in Copley and likes science fiction and classical music. She also volunteers for the Cleveland Orchestra.

Treasurer: Dennis Verbiar



Dennis is a senior member of STC and has been a member of the Northeast Ohio Chapter for seven years. He has

held numerous positions including project leader, supervisor of technical writers, advanced medical technology writer, and medical technology writer in the Information Design Department at Bayer Corporation in Oberlin. He is currently enrolled in the Web Developers Certificate Program at

John Carroll University.

I would like to thank Beth, Kim, and Dennis for volunteering for these positions. If there is no opposition, they will serve on next year's board with Kris Henige who ascends from vice-president to president, and Jill McCauslin who becomes immediate past president.

Thanks also to Mike Bates and Cheryl Ridenbaugh who helped me with the nominating committee. We also welcome all those who volunteered to help with the Administrative Council Committees. I'm sure we'll hear more from them soon!

Remember!



Look online at
www.neostc.org
 for the May/June
 Issue of *Lines & Letters*

STC's New Brand: a Mission, a Statement of Values, and a Story

By Sharon Ambro, Co-Editor

Since November 1999, STC has been working to develop its new brand—the meaning and personality behind the name “STC.” The brand not only is a new mission, a statement of values, and a story that explains what STC stands for, but it is also the promise the Society makes to its members, employees, and the public (see *Guidelines for Integrating STC's Brand*, AD-104-01).

Along with a new brand, STC developed a new logo. You can see STC's new logo on the cover of this issue of *Lines & Letters*, and you'll be seeing it on all STC communications. The new logo and the logo guidelines (which are incorporated into the *Guidelines for Integrating STC's Brand*) are now available on the STC Web site. (Go to www.stc.org and click on “What's New.”)

A Mission



As Past President Mary Wise announced at the Orlando Conference's Leadership Day, the new STC mission statement is “Designing the Future of Technical Communication.” The mission

describes what STC does as well as looks to the future. STC wants us—its members—to get excited about the Society's direction as we all play integral roles in designing the future of our profession.

A Statement of Values

STC maintains four core values:

- Open-minded
- Member-focused
- Effective
- Ethical

As STC members, it is our responsibility to put this statement into action.

A Story

An organization's story is a brief explanation of what the organization stands for, who its members are, and how it views its future. The story is a cornerstone of the brand because it shows the Society's values in action.

“Through information sharing and industry leadership, STC helps professionals design effective communication for a technical world. Because technology touches everyone, STC promotes public welfare by encouraging the development of better-educated professionals whose jobs are to make complicated information usable by many.

The organization's growth has mirrored our growing dependence on technology. Initially, STC was primarily made up of engineers who, among other activities, wrote instructions and descriptions of how electrical and mechanical products worked. A profound change took place as the pervasiveness of technology and the need to understand it became an integral part

of our everyday lives. With the emergence of the Internet and online communication, our members now focus on supporting all aspects of the rapidly evolving world of technology.

The organization began because those working in the field recognized themselves as professionals with unique training and career issues. Today, STC is nearly 50 years old, with 150 chapters and 25,000 members worldwide. It is the largest organization for technical communicators. STC offers industry leadership and the education, networking, and information required in a world where change is “the way it is.”

See the *Guidelines for Integrating STC's Brand* for more information on STC's brand, branding tools, and how to employ these tools in your chapter, your work, and your life.



**For
The
Record...**

From a Washington, DC, chapter e-mailing: “A ten-year study of 2,700 people by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center found that those who volunteer on a regular basis dramatically increase their life expectancy. Remember, the greatest benefits of STC belong to those who participate. The long life part is just a bonus.”

IdeaWatch.org Keeps Technical Communicators Current

By Thea Teich, STC Region 4
Director-Sponsor

Keeping Tabs on What's Going On

How frustrated are you by the impossible task of keeping up with the thinkers in our field? I'm not discussing the latest release of FrameMaker or RoboHELP here; I mean the people who are writing the books and giving the sessions on the major overriding concepts or subjects, such as instructional design, usability, management, document design, and communications effectiveness, among others.

What would you think of a Web site specifically designed to help technical communicators keep up with this information, which is developed, updated, and maintained for technical communicators by technical communicators as a service to STC?

IdeaWatch Works

That's what IdeaWatch.org is all about. Developed by Jennifer Square of the Central Ohio Chapter STC and Heidi Hansen of the Chicago Chapter, IdeaWatch.org provides reviews of works of various "gurus," original ideas of particular usefulness to technical communicators, and how those ideas can be implemented to make your jobs easier, your work more enjoyable, and the world a better place.

Well, maybe I exaggerate. However, IdeaWatch.org does act like an information filter, making these mountains of material digestible. And, the people who are filtering and sifting



The IdeaWatch.org home page

the information are your fellow members—so the result is specifically designed for your needs. And, it's free.

In addition, Jennifer and Heidi have organized monthly book discussion groups at their chapters and are assisting other chapters in setting up similar groups. Each group reviews a specific book, and the resulting information becomes the basis for that month's IdeaWatch Web site offerings.

The result is inexpensive professional development whenever you need it, plus the opportunity to meet and work with fellow members who support one another in this endeavor. Unlike other sites that may offer compilations of information on specific subjects, IdeaWatch.org doesn't overload you with massive lists of references and other related Web sites. Those sites require you to filter and sift. The

people behind IdeaWatch.org—and this can include any interested STC member—have read the gurus' books or attended their presentations. The information is therefore qualified by people just like you.

Exploit the Site

To take advantage of IdeaWatch.org, visit the site. Help organize an IdeaWatch monthly discussion group in your chapter. Currently, IdeaWatch Special Interest Groups (SIG) are starting at the local level in the Central Ohio, Chicago, and Southwestern Ohio chapters. Eventually, IdeaWatch organizers hope to apply for Society SIG status.

For more information, check out IdeaWatch.org and distribute the informational flyer or contact Jennifer Square of the Central Ohio Chapter STC at squarej@nationwide.com. And let me know how things go, too!

Managing Documentation with Humor and Grace: an STC Telephone Seminar

Managing the people and projects associated with technical documentation gets more difficult every day. Coping with changes in technology, blending teams after mergers and acquisitions, meeting ever-changing deadlines and requirements—these are just some of the challenges technical communication managers and team leaders face. This telephone seminar, held April 18, 2001 from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m., will give you practical tips and techniques that you can use to help keep your sanity while those around you seem to be losing theirs.

The objectives of this seminar include the following:

- To develop methods to promote your department
- To discover your professional passion
- To understand the real reason subject matter experts are not more cooperative
- To appreciate the role of humor in ensuring your success
- To learn a sure-fire way of helping co-workers to appreciate the challenges of being a technical communicator
- To understand how respect and credibility are earned, not awarded

You will also take away two complete presentations supporting the objectives of this seminar that you can tailor to your needs and offer to your colleagues at the office.

What is a Telephone Seminar?

A telephone seminar is similar to a large conference call—but in a more controlled, radio-like environment.

Dial the 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! Then sit back and listen to the presentations and join in the lively question and answer sessions.

Benefits

- No travel time
- Pay per site and not per person
- Opportunity to train all your people without anyone leaving the office

Cost

With a telephone seminar, the cost is per site, not per person.

U.S. sites: \$125

Canadian sites: \$140

Overseas sites: Please contact the STC office

An additional \$8 will be charged for registrations received less than five days before the seminar.

Registration

Call 800-775-7654 to register (please have credit card ready).

About the Speaker

Doreen A. Mannion, a senior member of STC, has been a professional communicator for more than 15 years. She is also an award-winning author, a frequent speaker at STC's annual conferences, and the Management and Professional Development stem manager for STC's 48th Annual Conference, May 13–16, 2001 in Chicago, Illinois.

What's The Problem?

How do I make my PDF files print clearly from Acrobat Distiller?

Answer:

After loading the screen shots into Adobe PageMaker and ensuring that they will print clearly from that application, follow these steps to get them to print clearly from the PDF files they are distilled to.

1. From the Print Dialog box, click Options.
2. Set the image sampling to Normal (PS printers only)
3. Click the Write Post Script to file check box.
4. Click Save. PageMaker will create a Postscript file.
5. Open Acrobat Distiller.
6. From the Settings menu, select Job Options.
7. Select the Compression tab.
8. Deselect all of the checkboxes.
9. Click OK.
10. From the File menu, select Open.
11. Locate the Postscript file in your system.
12. Select the file and click Open.
13. Set the file to be saved in the desired location as a PDF.
14. Distill the file.

Use the magnifying glass tool to see the detail of the screen.

http://www.neostc.org
Hudson, OH 44236
1696 Georgetown Rd. Unit A
Northeast Ohio Chapter STC

Designers of Technologically Advanced Products Strive for Usability

By Laurie Harrison, Co-Editor

Having new stuff on the edge of the latest technology is cool. Russell J. Branaghan, Ph.D., agreed as he explained the challenges product designers face developing technologically advanced products. Branaghan spoke at the Northeast Ohio Chapter STC meeting March 21 at the Clarion Hotel in Middleburg Heights.

Branaghan, a cognitive psychologist with Fitch, an international design consulting firm located in Columbus, Ohio, outlined three strategic decisions product designers must consider during the design process:

- Determining the primary need the product should fulfill
- Managing the convergence/miniaturization tradeoff
- Making the product useful, useable and desirable

In determining the primary need a product is trying to fulfill, Branaghan said a successful product should not be all things to all people.

One approach to product design Branaghan discussed is the Swiss army knife approach, where a product can be a collection of several lower-level functions. It may not necessarily be “THE tool for the job, but A tool for the job.” Another approach is modular design, where the product may be designed to work with several modular components, such as adding a phone module to Handspring’s Visor personal digital assistant.

In designing a product that is useful, useable and desirable, Fitch’s developers must consider human usability factors, emotional motivation and functionality. Fitch uses a variety of research methods for gathering information to address these concerns. Some of them are personal interviews, observation in a testing

laboratory, door-to-door surveys and emotional expression through art.

Interviewing users on their own turf is important because using a product in their environment can reveal important information that cannot be gleaned from an interview in a testing laboratory, according to Branaghan.

He also said that it is helpful to explore a user’s emotions. Users were asked to create a collage that revealed their emotions while they were using a product. Then they were asked to create another collage that displayed the emotions they wanted to feel while using the product. Often these collages revealed different results.

After a demonstration of the Iomega HipZip MP3 Player, a product that Fitch helped develop, Branaghan said that one of the goals of successful product design is to “make the product more transparent so the user can appreciate the experience more.”