Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

President's Corner

Happy 2015! We are halfway through our NEO STC program year, but we have started a new fiscal year (for the budget, financial report, and Community Achievement Award). Our committee chairs will be meeting this winter to finalize our plans through June. This planning process also includes organizing our board for the 2015-16 year. If you have ever considered volunteering with a committee or running for an office on the administrative council, this is the time to speak up! If you have any questions, please send me an e-mail. We will include information about volunteer opportunities and council duties in the next newsletter.

Please note that some of our meetings have changed months and/or locations. To make sure you have the most current calendar of events, go to the Events page and download the calendar PDF.

Registration is open for the 2015 Summit in Columbus! The early bird rate of $875 is available through January 31. See http://summit.stc.org/ for details.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Janet S, Tom L, Devon W, Lisa S, Brigid B, Sylvia M, David Y, Lydia B, Quinton L, Gary H, Kate D, Kaylin T, and Jason V, who have joined NEO STC since September. We are glad you are part of our chapter!

Kind regards,

Lisa Mileusnich, NEO STC Chapter President

In the Spotlight: Ashleigh Petts

By Lynn Nickels

Hello, Ashleigh!

Everyone, allow me to introduce you to Ashleigh Petts. Ashleigh is an Associate Technical Writer at Hyland, Creator of OnBase. Previously, she worked as a Technical Communications Specialist at a healthcare solutions company.

Ashleigh has been very busy since becoming a member of STC in 2012. She joined as a student member while in graduate school, then joined the Northeast Ohio chapter in 2014. Since joining our local chapter, Ashleigh has graciously volunteered to help out with both the Newsletter and PR committees.

"I've also had the opportunity to speak to technical writing students at John Carroll University; I took part in a group presentation with Janean Voss and Lynn Nickels in October," she said.

Most recently, Ashleigh has lent her hand to writing and posting numerous articles to Lines & Letters and has been a great help to the Newsletter Committee.

She has a BA in Spanish from Marshall University, an MA in Spanish from West Virginia University (WVU), and an MA in Professional Writing and Editing from WVU.

Her hobbies include reading, listening to music, and watching movies. "I'm a huge fan of classical Hollywood cinema," she said.

Ashleigh recently bought a DSLR camera and has been teaching herself how to use it. "Landscapes and architecture are my favorite subjects, and Cleveland is great for both – I love photographing the lake and the fantastic older buildings, here," she said.

She also likes playing music, and "noodling around on the guitar." She says it's a great way to unwind after work.

"I'm really excited to be a part of the NEO STC community. I am fairly new to the field, and I appreciate all the great networking opportunities NEO STC provides. I also appreciate the opportunity to learn from other practitioners," she said.

Speaking for Jeanette and myself, I can say that we are also very excited to have Ashleigh as part of the NEO STC community. Thanks, Ashleigh and WELCOME!

2015 NEO STC Scholarship: A Closer Look

By: Janean Voss and Ashleigh Petts

Again this year, NEO STC is excited to offer a scholarship opportunity for students and practitioners who are seeking to further develop their technical communications skills. This spring, the NEO STC Academic Relations committee will award the 2015 NEO STC Scholarship to either a student or technical communications practitioner in pursuit of educational, professional development, or certification opportunities.

In this season of resolutions and reflection, consider how the NEO STC Scholarship could help you further your career as a student or technical communications practitioner. Listed below are some FAQs and other information about the scholarship. You can find more information about the scholarship at the NEO STC website. If you have questions, please contact scholarships@neostc.org.

What is the purpose of the scholarship?

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The NEO STC scholarship encourages local academic excellence, provides the profession with educated communicators, and promotes awareness of and participation in STC.

Who can apply?

♦ A student applicant enrolled in an Ohio school or a permanent Ohio resident pursuing a degree, minor, or certificate in a technical or scientific communication-related field.

 OR

♦ A technical communications practitioner applicant that is a permanent Ohio resident employed in a technical or scientific communication-related field pursuing a professional development or certification opportunity that will enhance your future ability to practice technical communication. Financial assistance to attend the annual STC Summit is excluded from scholarship consideration.

How will scholarship applications be evaluated?

Our judges will evaluate submitted applications and supporting materials using a set evaluation form and scale.

How much is the scholarship award?

A total of $1000 USD will be awarded for educational purposes (for student applicants) or a professional development or certification opportunity (for technical communications practitioner applicants).

Do you have to be a member of NEO STC or STC to apply?

You do not need to be a member of either to apply, but if you are a member, indicate that on your application form.

When is the application deadline?

You have until March 31, 2015 to apply for the scholarship, and you will be notified of a decision by or before May 1, 2015.

What if I submit an incomplete application?

You need to verify that you submit a complete application by the application deadline. The required documentation that you must submit is in the To Apply section on the scholarship page on the NEO STC website. If we discover during the judging process that your application is incomplete, it will be disqualified.

Who manages the Annual NEO STC Scholarship?

The NEO STC Academic Relations committee manages the scholarship, and the funds for it come from our NEO STC chapter sponsors and advertisers.

Besides managing the scholarship, what else does the NEO STC Academic Relations team do for the chapter / community?

In addition to our annual scholarship, we also do other outreach with the NEO community during the year. We have done presentations for John Carroll University, Walsh University, and Youngstown State University in the past year to educate students about STC and opportunities available in the technical communications field. We also team up with the NEO STC Membership committee to sponsor/promote a student membership funding program to financially assist students with joining NEO STC.

I'm interested in applying for the scholarship! Where can I find more information?

Take a look at the scholarship page on the NEO STC website.

A New Template for Branching Scenarios

By Kim Lindsey

Over the past several years, e-learning thought leaders have increasingly recommended the use of branching scenarios and simulations in business training.

Courses based on branching scenarios expose the learner (i.e., the user) to a situation or task that mimics what they face on the job; their responses trigger consequences similar to what happens in the real world, moving the action forward.

In essence, they learn by "virtually" doing. Although branching scenarios are no longer cutting-edge, it's still difficult to find document-based storyboard templates that align well with this instructional format. This article addresses this need and provides a downloadable MS Word template file.

The "Branching Storyboard" template begins with "Instructions for Reviewers" and a clickable Table of Contents.

Non-branching content is presented in a table format common to many e-learning storyboard templates. Since reviewers might be unfamiliar with a scenario-based learning strategy, the template provides guidelines for

reviewers before the first branching element.

A high-level flowchart of the whole scenario comes next. Labels on the shapes and connectors use abbreviated text to save space, and the "Success" path is indicated in red.

The table layout for the branched content is different from that for non-branching parts of the course. Following an optional descriptive "Setup" for the story of the scenario, numbered "Challenges" are grouped with the "Choices" available to the learner, as well as the "Consequences" triggered when they select that Choice.

"Feedback" is provided for Choices where the Consequence is the end of a path, including the Success terminus.
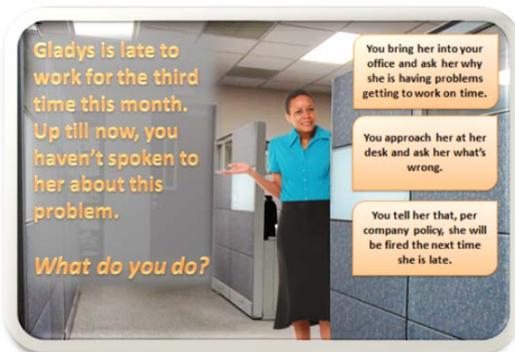
Throughout, there are spaces for development notes, questions directed toward reviewers, etc. My team has used this template successfully on a number of projects, but it will always be a work in progress, continually being refined and improved.

Please download the file and adapt it for your own purposes – and be sure to let me and the rest of NEO STC know about your experience and any improvements you make! *[This file is no longer available online; please contact the author of this article if you'd like a copy of the template: kim@cinecraft.com.)*

This article is a reprint from the October, 2013, edition of Lines & Letters *and related to Kim's Using Scenarios to Help People Learn presentation at the January 8, 2015, NEO STC meeting.*

Copyediting Resources

Are you interested in polishing your copyediting skills? A good place to start might be "Favorite Books for Copyeditors, 2014," published by *Copyediting* in December 2014.

Thanks to Sarah Burke for passing along this resource.

Social Media Support: Some Ideas

By Jeanette Evans

If you have been asked to provide or look into social media support for an organization or group, you might find of interest sharing ideas about how social media support could be helpful and what the related best practices are.

Why provide social media support

There are many reasons. Some include providing exposure to your organization or group and developing thought leadership. Another reason could be to provide a service to your group, such as helping students at a school talk about selling used text books.

It depends on the group as to which kind of social media support makes sense for an establishment. For example, a company such as Starbucks would be different than the social media support needed for a college or hospital. The media support has to fit the organization. Some groups may want to drive traffic to a web site and use social media to do this.

What avenues might work

A high tech company might find better avenues with LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+, and skip Facebook. A school might find Facebook to be the ideal place for social media support.

Twitter posts, due to their brevity, should be timely, and above all, interesting. Be yourself is a best practice that often works. Your profile and network can support postings. Then, there is that hashtag. It lets you categorize your tweet. #STC could be a possible way to categorize to help people find tweets related to the same topic. See the Twitter site for the rules.

LinkedIn lets you go more in depth with ideas. Again, your profile and network would support postings. Being professional is always a best practice that should be followed.

Google+ has a tie-in to the Google search engine, so that is something to consider. Your circles should

support your posting. You can also send email to your circle.

Facebook has such a wide reach that for a school, this could be a great avenue. You could post about upcoming events, such as graduation ceremonies and even school closings.

Metrics for postings include shares and comments. A table indicating your progress also might help.

Newsletter Promotion Extended to March 31, 2015

We are pleased to announce that NEO STC's newsletter promotion has been extended! Submit an article by March 31, 2015, to be entered into a drawing for a $50 Amazon gift certificate. Two lucky contributors will win. Submit your articles to newsletter@neostc.org.