



Techniquill

News and Information from the
Central Ohio Chapter STC

"Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication."



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About *Techniquill*

Techniquill is published on a monthly basis. This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. **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. Please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications. Please submit stories to: **Kathy Fishbaugh, Editor** fishbauk@oclc.org
Contributors: Frankie Hale, Peter Insabella, Susan Moran, Pam Noreault, Dan Wiltshire
The next *Techniquill* deadline is March 26, 2010.

Presidential Minute

by Dan Wiltshire

On Thursday, February 18, STC presented the first in a series of leadership webinars. This one was titled, "Are You Ready for the March Membership Reality Check?" Although members have a grace period of two months in which to renew their memberships, after the end of March, non-renewing members are dropped from the membership rolls. Because of several factors, we may expect to see a decline in renewals. Among the major causes are that many employers are no longer reimbursing their employees for professional society memberships, and unemployed members are also finding it difficult to cover the cost out-of-pocket. We'll have a better picture of how this has impacted the Central Ohio chapter's roster after the end of March.

For those of us who have renewed our memberships, now is the time to get more involved. It's up to you to ensure the continued success of our chapter. Soon we'll be searching for candidates and volunteers to fill chapter offices and chair positions. Be sure to let us know how you can help.

On the bright side, I'm happy to announce that our vice-president, Ellen Hayes, was awarded a full membership assistance package to pay for her 2010 society dues. To enter the competition, she submitted an essay describing how the STC has benefited her professionally. Ellen had been unemployed for the past several months, and therefore would have been unable to afford the dues on her own. In her role as vice-president, Ellen provides us with lots of great ideas and valuable support to the chapter. I couldn't think of a more-deserving recipient.

STC Annual Conference



The Technical Communication Summit, the annual conference of the Society for Technical Communication, will be held:
May 2-5, 2010 in Dallas, Texas.

For more information, see the conference [web site](#).

Central Ohio Chapter STC Officers

2009-2010 Chapter Board

Elected Officers

President

Dan Wiltshire

Vice President

Ellen Hayes

Secretary

Mary Hammitt

Treasurer

Mike Bickford

Immediate Past President

Pam Noreault

Committee Chairs

Publicity

Chris Dawson

Hospitality

Susan Moran

Newsletter

Kathy Fishbaugh

Professional Development

Peter Insabella

Program

Frankie Hale

Webmaster

Michael Starr

Contact:

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Links

Central Ohio Chapter STC [website](#)

Looking for a job?

See the [Central Ohio STC Job Bank](#)

Register for [Chapter meetings](#)

Join [STC Online](#)

STC [Member Publications](#)

March Chapter Meeting

by Frankie Hale

**Wednesday,
March 17, 2010
6:00 pm**

**Balancing Technical and Creative
Writing—You Can do Both!
The Fawcett Center, OSU
2400 Olentangy River Road
[Driving Directions](#)**

Times: 6:00-6:30 Registration & Networking

6:30-7:15 Dinner

7:15-8:00 Announcements & Program

Menu: Chicken Parmesan, garlic mashed potatoes, spring vegetables, salad, and beverage (coffee, tea, water)

Cost: \$15.00 Members & Students
\$20.00 Nonmembers

RSVP: by 5 p.m. Friday, March 12

Ever dream of really letting your hair down? Trading in the exactitude of technical communication to dabble in the world of steamy romance novels or tension-filled spy stories? Sandra Gurvis, the author of 14 books and hundreds of magazine articles, says you can do both. She does. Sandra is a medical writer, who also writes creatively in books, newsletters, and articles. She understands the demands of writing for each genre and wants to share tips for balancing the Jekyll and the Hyde (and everything in between) writing styles.

So don't squelch your split writing personalities. Instead realize that you are multi-talented and capitalize on it. Join us at the Fawcett Center on the evening of March 17th for tips and tricks on living the dual life of a technical and a creative writer.

To register, go to the [Chapter Meetings page](#).

February Meeting Recap

by Dan Wiltshire

The Central Ohio chapter held its traditional February lunch meeting on Wednesday, February 17. These lunch meetings have been so successful in the past that we're excited to continue to offer them.

Theresa Wilkinson gave an enlightening presentation on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Web site conversion. Theresa graduated from OSU with a B.A. in English. She has contributed numerous articles to STC's *Intercom* magazine. Currently, she is the CEO of the Web site consulting firm W-Edge Design, located here in Columbus. Her company's focus is driving new business to your site. Especially in the current economy, this is extremely valuable, yet it is easy to accomplish.

SEO ensures that people who search the Internet for terms that are related to your Web site will be more likely to find yours than a non-optimized site. By including the right amount of keywords and hyperlinks in the right places, your site can rise to the top page of a search results list.

February Meeting Recap (continued from page 2)

Web site conversion is a multi-pronged approach to converting your site's visitors into customers. This is closely tied to one of the basic rules of technical communication with which we're all so familiar: knowing your audience. Too many Web sites are designed from the corporation's point-of-view. Currently, the average site's conversion rate (the percent of visitors who turn into customers) is only about 2-3%. But when a site is designed from the user's point-of-view, visitors can more easily find what they are looking for, and become paying customers.

Theresa projected several Web sites onto the screen to illustrate typical problems with commercial sites, such as annoying music (with no way to shut it off), too much horizontal scrolling, excessive jargon, lack of navigation, and displaying the active portion of the site too far down on the home page. Google® provides a free tool to help Web designers tweak their sites. Google Optimizer gives you several ways to measure, test, and optimize your site's performance.

You can learn more about Theresa's services at her company's Web site, <http://www.w-edge.com/>.

\$1000 Scholarship in Technical Communication Available

We are delighted to announce a \$1,000 scholarship our communities are offering to a deserving student. This scholarship, to be used for educational purposes, is designed to encourage local academic excellence, provide our profession with educated communicators, and promote greater awareness of and participation in STC. Applicants will be evaluated based on their potential to contribute to the profession.

The scholarship committee will accept applications until April 1, 2010, and will notify the winner by May 1, 2010. Our winner will also be publicly recognized on our web site. See neostc.org/scholarship for details and to download an application. Applicants must submit the following:

- An application form
- A resume
- A certified copy of their latest transcript from the school currently or last attended
- A letter of recommendation from a faculty member or coworker/manager in the field of technical communication
- A one- to three-page cover letter describing their career goals and significant achievements to date.

If you have any questions about eligibility, submission requirements, or deadlines, please contact Scholarship Manager, Jeanette Evans, by e-mail at jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net or phone at (440) 449-7867.

Local Meetings

The Northeast Ohio Society for Technical Communication Chapter of STC is having Jennifer and Ken Visocky O'Grady, co-authors of the book "The Information Design Handbook", present on the topic of Information Design Dissected on March 11 at Bar Louie in Cleveland.

In a complex world, clear and accessible communication across a broad range of media has become essential. While designers need not become psychologists, knowledge of the principles framing cognition and communication, in addition to aesthetics, provides illumination for our craft. This presentation explores the connections and convergences between human perception, thinking, and learning: how we transmit knowledge, share concepts, and process information through language; and how structure and legibility affect the visualization of messaging. We know you design amazing work - this session will help ensure that everyone can use it.

Our presenters have also co-authored A Designer's Research Manual: Succeed in Design by Knowing Your Clients and What They Really Need. Jennifer Visocky O'Grady is an Associate Professor at Cleveland State University. Her design work has been recognized in numerous international publications, including Print and HOW magazines, and several books. Ken Visocky O'Grady is an Assistant Professor at Kent State University. He has won numerous awards in international design competitions. His work has also appeared in several books, and was featured in HOW magazine's Business of Design Annual. Together they run **Enspace** - a creative firm where collaboration is the hallmark of enhanced communication.

For detailed event and registration information:

<http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20100311.html>

DigitalEve Columbus

DigitalEve Columbus is part of a global, non-profit organization for women in new media and digital technology. DigitalEve events promote networking and mentoring opportunities to enrich our members professionally and personally.

Meetings are held on the second Monday of every month. For more information, visit the [DigitalEve Columbus web site](#).

2010 TWI (Training Within Industry) Summit

The TWI Summit will be held May 11-12, 2010 in Las Vegas.

The 2010 TWI Summit heads to Las Vegas. Join us at the **Green Valley Ranch Resort** May 11-12, 2010.

STC Candidate Information

STC is conducting its annual elections March 9 to April 8. Many candidates for these offices have asked our chapter to share their information with our members. Following are the campaign statements that we've received from several candidates. For more information on the election, see the [Candidates page](#) on the STC website.

The Central Ohio Chapter is providing this space as a service to the candidates and to its members. The Chapter is not endorsing any of these candidates.

Nicky Bleiel, current member of the STC Board of Directors, candidate for STC Director-at-Large

Go to <http://www.nickybleiel.com/> to read more information about Nicky, including endorsements from other STC members, as well as my biography and tech comm articles/presentations.



Help Me Enhance the Technical Communication Profession by Nathaniel Lim, candidate for STC Nominating Committee

When you tell your friends and family that you are a technical writer, what is their reaction? They say that it sounds like an important job and probably

isn't easy. When I tell them I write online help as part of my job, they often tell me that Help does not help. Unfortunately, this is sad but true. People get frustrated when they cannot find the information they need.

This is why I am running for STC Nominating Committee. I want to make a difference. From here, I could tell you my interesting biography but that is all in my candidate statement on the STC website. Here is the stuff I could not include:

Reliable: I strongly believe in accountability and follow through. If I say I will do something, I make sure it gets done (or tell people early enough in the process if I cannot do it, so we can

go to plan B). I also believe in following directions and meeting deadlines. At the same time, if I don't understand the process or don't believe that the rule applies, I will ask questions until I am satisfied.

Critical Thinker: When I was a lead judge for the STC international tech pubs competition, a new procedure came into effect that required writing at least 24 comments on the judging form. Thinking that this would be too numerous, I inquired to find that this was not a hard and fast rule. The spirit of the procedure was to ensure that submitters received sufficient written comments and not just numbered ratings. Thus, I wrote critiques to help the submitters, not always conforming to the rule.

Innovator: My company recently started translating documents into several foreign languages. My manager gave me the task of creating a new procedure for labeling them, putting them through the approval process, and posting them on our website for customers to download. Tracking and classifying over a hundred documents with different versions and languages could potentially fall into disarray. I was careful to think things through before taking action. I asked appropriate personnel for their input and drafted a formal procedure. Management approved. Although the procedure continues to get revised even to this day, I am proud that I was part of the first effort to formalize it.

You can also get to know me at LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/nathaniellim and Facebook (search nathaniel lim impac).



Strengthening STC by W.C. Wiese, candidate for STC Director

Because of the economic issues and their unparalleled impact on STC, this year's elections are especially important. 2010 becomes another year of course correction for the society,

with a disproportionately high impact on technical communicators.

Will this Board of Directors be asked to close down STC? Let's hope not. But economic pressures and STC's ongoing membership declines mandate change:

- **STC must become an organization for the future.** We can remain a Baby Boomer organization and dwindle. Or, to survive, we must meet the needs of young professionals and students. That means STC must engage them sooner, learn to speak in new ways, use different communication channels, and address early-career professional needs.
- **STC must be about jobs.** We must do more to help members find the opportunities they seek, raise perception of STC's value, and research and share economic metrics that quantify the impact of what we do.
- **We must strengthen STC's financial foundation.** We'll need to match the cost of services to demand for them, reexamine the educational products we offer, and offer value that professionals agree is worth the cost of membership.
- **STC should partner.** We have much to learn and much to gain from partnerships with smaller professional organizations, such as the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) and American Society for Indexing (ASI). They generally support our interests but have not been as severely impacted by the current economy.
- **STC must mend ties to chapters and SIGs.** These valued groups have always been most effective in promoting STC and generating the leaders who will carry STC forward.

As a former chapter president and treasurer, I recognize that chapter and SIG membership issues are really STC's membership issues – we must work together to solve them. Community health is ultimately STC's health because chapters and SIGs attract members, encourage risk-taking and individual growth, and generate future leaders.

As STC treasurer, I worked with 3 STC Executive Directors in 4 years, contributing to financial stability during the change process. During my term, I implemented the chapter treasurers' discussion group to enhance mentorship and

communication, supported infrastructure investment, made chapter and STC financial concerns visible to the Board of Directors, and fought to strengthen STC's financial footing.

I now need your vote to help strengthen STC's capacity to serve a new generation of members and ensure its future.

Tricia Spayer, candidate for STC Director-at-Large

Why vote for me?

- I've been an active member in the Northeast Ohio chapter of STC (NEO STC) for almost ten years, six of which I served on the Executive Committee. I've gained experience as an adept leader in the positions of President, Vice President, Immediate Past President, Secretary, and Membership Chair. I'm currently serving as the Bylaws Committee Chair. During my year as President, we achieved the Chapter of Excellence award and received an Award of Distinction for PR from STC International. Through this leadership experience, I've learned to motivate others through respect, trustworthiness, and tenacity.
- I served as a member of the Planning Committee for the 2007 STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, OH, which was a highly acclaimed, profitable, and professionally-run conference.
- I received the President's Achievement Award from NEO STC in 2009 for my leadership and contributions to the chapter's Pacesetter and Chapter of Distinction awards.
- At the Society level, I've presented at the 2009 STC International conference, reviewed program proposals for the International conference, and have volunteered for the LCR.
- For my professional work, I achieved Best of Show and an Award of Excellence for an STC Online competition, along with an Award of Merit for an STC Technical Publications competition.
- When I promise to do a job, I do it.
- I am very detail-oriented, and weigh all facts before making an important decision.
- I bring my creativity and enthusiasm to projects.
- I give credit where credit is due. That is, most jobs or activities are the work of committees – I make a point to thank the contributors.

Volunteers need to be recognized, rewarded, and thanked.

- It's time to use my experience to benefit the whole Society.

What future enhancements would I like to see in the Society?

The basic description of STC states that "STC is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication." The key word I see is "individual." I would love to see a program like I have observed in Toastmasters, where people complete a defined number of projects to achieve a certain level of recognition. They complete that level, and move on to more advanced projects to attain the next level, then the next. Toastmasters has a Communication track, as well as a Leadership track, so people can focus on different skills. Achievement is at an individual level, so the faster people work, the faster they reach their goals. Toastmasters has mentors and experienced leaders, just as we already have in STC – it would be great to use these resources to expand our knowledge. I feel that STC members would benefit by learning specific skills and receiving accreditation for these skills.

The work that has already been done to capture the STC Body of Knowledge is a fantastic resource. I hope that project continues to grow and that STC can soon provide certification.

I would like to see STC expand its membership base by advertising and sponsoring through educational institutions, engineering societies, and related professional organizations.

Most of us are aware that STC has been through a difficult period. I am not afraid of challenges. I've been a part of huge projects, such as the 2007 STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, and my company's implementation of a content management software package, with excellent results. I know that change does not happen overnight. It takes determination and dedication to see a project through. I am ready for this challenge.

To see my experience and list of achievements, visit <http://triciaspayer.com>.