Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

January seminar: Using WordPress for your professional website

Please join the Northeast Ohio STC community as we meet for our January seminar. In addition to our meeting topic, we will be recognizing three new senior NEO STC members: Linda Talboo, Mario Morelos, and Lisa Mileusnich.

Presenter: Kim Lindsey will present the many advantages and uses of WordPress. WordPress is a state-of-the-art personal publishing platform with a focus on aesthetics, web standards, SEO, and usability. WordPress is both free, and priceless, at the same time.

WordPress, started in 2003, is a self-hosted blogging tool used on millions of sites and seen by tens of millions of people. It is an Open Source project, which means there are hundreds of people all over the world working on it. It also means users can use it for anything without paying anyone a license fee. WordPress can be used as a blogging tool, content management system, website creation tool, and so much more. Thousands of plug-ins, widgets, and themes allow the user to customize their projects. Find out more by visiting http://wordpress.org/about/

- Date: Thursday, January 14th, 2010
- Location: Bar Louie @ Legacy Village

Online registration will be available soon!

Register: If you plan to attend, email the Programs Committee by January 11th. Or, call Denise at 216-251-0716. Please include menu selection.

Hope to see you there!

Upcoming events

NEO STC events

Unless otherwise noted, see NEO STC website for detail about an event.

- 1/14/10: January seminar: Using WordPress for your professional website.
- 1/20/10: Networking lunch. The Rusty Bucket Corner Tavern, 6025 Kruse Dr., Suite 148, Solon, 440-248-2300.
- 2/11/10: Joe Welinske, the president of WritersUA, visits Cleveland this February to talk about the latest trends in software user assistance.
- 2/18/10: Networking lunch. Bravo! Cucina Italiana, 4224 Everhard Rd., NW, Canton, 330-494-9170.

Other events of interest

- 1/6/10: "Strategic planning for your life," webinar presented by Judy Glick-Smith. See http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp. Hosted locally by Radcom.
- 1/13/10: 'The new face of documentation," webinar presented by Rahel Bailie. See http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp. Hosted locally by Radcom.
- 1/19/10 (RSVP by 1/12): Microsoft Visio by Radcom, Inc. http://radcomservices.com/Services_Training_Offerings.htm
- 1/20/10 (RSVP by 1/13): Microsoft PowerPoint for online learning by Radcom, Inc. http://radcomservices.com/Services_Training_Offerings.htm
- 1/20/10: 'What technical documentation can learn from the comics," webinar presented by Alan Porter. See http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp. Hosted locally by Radcom.
- 1/20/10: SWO STC: WordPress: A very inexpensive and easy way to build websites (webinar). See http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/.
- 1/27/10: 'Useful shareware for technical communicators," webinar presented by Ed Marshall. See http://www.stc.org/edu/seminars01.asp. Hosted locally by Radcom.
- 1/27/10: Gold Quill Award early bird entry deadline. http://www.iabc.com/awards/gq/
- 2/10/10 (RSVP by 2/3): Microsoft Word for technical writers by Radcom, Inc. http://radcomservices.com/Services_Training_Offerings.htm
- 2/17/10: SWO STC: Structured authoring (webinar). See http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/.
- 2/23/10 (RSVP by 2/17): Fundamentals of technical writing by Radcom, Inc. http://radcomservices.com/Services_Training_Offerings.htm

♦ 2/25 — 2/26/10: Intelligent Content 2010 conference.
http://www.rockley.com/IntelligentContent2010/

♦ 3/13/10: SWO STC: Alan Houser workshop: Minimalist documentation — Cincinnati State, Cincinnati, OH. See http://www.swo-btlines.com/swostc/meetings-and-events/.

♦ 3/21 — 3/24/2010: The Conference for Software User Assistance in Seattle, WA. See http://www.writersua.com/ohc/index.html

♦ 5/2 — 5/5/10: Technical Communication Summit 2010 in Dallas, Texas.

Ohio STC chapters collaborate on all-Ohio scholarship

Volunteers from the NEO, SW Ohio, and Central Ohio communities plan to work together to judge applications for the all-Ohio technical communication student scholarship. Funding of the $1000 scholarship is split this year with NE Ohio and SW Ohio. Watch for applications to be available in early February, 2010.

Fun, food and prizes mark this year's competition awards and holiday party

By Lynn Nickels (lanickels@ra.rockwell.com)

Great food, good company and outstanding raffle prizes were icing on the cake at this year's STC Northeast Ohio chapter's Competition Awards and Holiday Party on December 10th, held at Bar Louie in Legacy Village.

The main course at this year's event was the 2009-2010 NEO STC Technical Publications Competition awards presentation. Awards coordinator and winner Lori Neuman presented four Awards of Excellence and seven Awards of Merit. This was the first time for several of those in attendance to win an award.

First-time attendee and Award of Merit winner Dr. Gillian McKnight-Tutein, Ed.D., director of Innovative Learning Design and Quality at Tri-C, said she was very impressed with the coordination of the event. "This was the very first time I attended the STC Awards banquet. It's great to see such committed individuals come together to celebrate the accomplishments of their craft," she said. Of her award, McKnight said, "I felt very accomplished. The blog was my very first and it took a lot of thought and planning. It was wonderful being recognized for all the hard work. I think just as valuable as the award was the feedback that the judges gave. I am grateful that

they took the time to offer perspective. The information will only allow me to learn more and make the communications stronger and more inviting. I'd like to thank the STC for their recognition and their dedication to their profession."

Rockwell Automation Information Developer, Jonathan Vasko, was also a first-time award winner, along with several of his colleagues. "I was pleasantly surprised to win an Award of Excellence. This was the first time I've won an award. The meeting was a lot of fun and a great end to 2009," he said.

Congratulations to:

Award of Excellence Winners

♦ Don Cramer, Mark Sakuta, Jason Gierlach for their 12CM/14CM FACEBOSS Electrical Troubleshooting Pocket Guide.

♦ Dr. Christina Royal for her eLi Blog (Tri-C Office of eLearning & Innovation).

♦ Jonathan Vasko, Joe Lee, Jessica Forguites and Siavaram Balasubramanian for their EtherNet/IP Embedded Switch Technology Application Guide.

♦ Dr. Christina Royal and James Gayhart (on behalf of the Office of eLearning & Innovation) for their Faculty Bb Tab (on My Tri-C Space).

Award of Merit Winners

♦ Bob Young, Pete Delic, Bret Hildebran and Rich Ruggeri for their ControlLogix High-Speed Counter Module User Manual.

♦ Lynn Nickels, Lorne Diebel, Bruce Andrews and Rich Ruggeri for their ControlLogix Remote I/O Module User Manual.

♦ Lynn Nickels, Lorne Diebel, Bruce Andrews and Rich Ruggeri for their ControlLogix Remote I/O Installation Instructions.

♦ Lori Neuman, Lisa Adair and Robin Boldt for their NetLinx Selection Guide.

♦ Lisa Adair, Kelly Graham and Peter Grezchowiak for their POINT Guard I/O Safety Modules Installation & User Manual.

♦ Dr. Gillian McKnight-Tutein and Sandy Moses for their "Tri-C Title III Blog — Going the Distance."

♦ Nicole Derr for her Virtual Hold Version 6.7.2 Deployment Guide.

Prizes and raffles

In addition to the awards, there were great prizes to win for all those who attended. Door prizes included

Captivate and Robohelp publications, donated by Radcom. The lucky recipients of these tasty morsels included Jason Gierlach, Mario Morelos, Sandy Moses and Stephanie Webster.

Not to be overshadowed, this year's Holiday Raffle donations were the cherry on top of this night's menu. More than $300 raised from the raffle will go toward funding educational workshops in 2010. Those who contributed to the raffle had the opportunity to win an amazing assortment of great prizes. Special thanks for beautifully wrapping and donating so many of the raffle items goes to Jean Church, with another special thank you going out to Tri-C for the grand prize — an 80 GB iPod!

Raffle winners, prizes and donations were as follows:

- A Celebrating Home lantern, won by Kelly Graham, donated by Julianne Forsythe.
- A Longaberger pie plate basket with pearl and crystal bracelet, won by Heidi Emhoff, donated by Jean Church.
- A Helvetica box, won by Gillian McKnight-Tutein, donated by Jean Church.
- A s'mores box, won by Heidi Emhoff, donated by Jean Church.
- A tea pot set, won by Mario Marelos, donated by Jean Church.
- A $50 Century Cycle gift card, won by Denise Kadilak, donated by Heidi Emhoff.
- A fruit basket and $25 Heinen's Gift Card, won by Stephanie Webster, donated by Amy Vogt.
- An Akron area discount Entertainment Book, won by Amy Vogt, donated by Radcom.
- An autographed copy of *The Gathering Storm*, won by Heidi Emhoff, donated by Kim Lindsey.
- A $50 Barnes & Noble Gift Card and Box, won by Tricia Spayer, donated by Jean Church.
- A party pail, won by Amy Vogt, donated by NEO STC.
- A set of web design books, won by Lynn Nickels, donated by NEO STC.
- An autographed copy of *Effective Onscreen Editing*, won by Kim Lindsey, donated by NEO STC.
- And last, but definitely not least, an 80 GB iPod, won by Lynn Nickels, donated by Tri-C.

And finally, this evening would not have been possible without the sponsorship of Radcom. Many thanks to Radcom for their continued help and support with our NEO STC functions!

Please join us again at Bar Louie at our next NEO STC event on January 14th, when Kim Lindsey will present the topic, "Using WordPress for Your Professional Website."

Some of our competition winners, from left to right: Dr. Gillian McKnight-Tutein, Dr. Christina Royal, and Sandy Moses

Book review: *How to be a great communicator: In person, on paper, and at the podium*

*Reviewed by Jeanette Evans
(jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)*

Book details: *How to be a great communicator: In person, on paper and at the podium*, by Nido Qubein. Audio CD. ISBN-10: 1596590254; ISBN-13: 978-1596590250.

If you have a road trip ahead of you (as I did when I listened to this book) and have a strong interest in the topic, you could find this audiobook worthwhile. Mayfield Public Library featured it on its audio shelf.

Amazon has about a dozen reviews of the book, with about half giving the book the highest rating and about half giving the book among the lowest ratings. Some criticized the book for having fluff. A possible advantage of the print book could be you could more easily find the parts of greatest interest and skip the filler. Major take-aways for me from this book — nothing surprising, but good reminders of the basics — include:

- Make audience interests your primary concern.
- Keep it simple.
- Use images and stories to connect with your audience.
- Use an outline to organize your thoughts.

♦ Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite.

♦ Don't "swim" in information; process it (especially so in today's information age).

♦ Practice a speech so that during delivery you can adjust to audience reaction and focus on a two-way dialog instead of delivering memorized lines.

Author Nido Qubein is a long-time successful communication consultant who is chairman-emeritus of the National Speakers Association Foundation, making him a good choice to tackle the topic. He also provides an effective voice for the audiobook. Not a native of the U.S., he impressively taught himself to speak English, as explained in the book in a section on overcoming obstacles. A popular public speaker in the U.S. for many years, he currently continues to speak, write, and teach, in addition to doing philanthropic work.

While some would probably not call the book must reading or something you would return to over and over, the heart of the book is basically in the right place. The downside of the book is that it spends too much time for my taste on the importance of good communication. Those parts I found tedious, often stating the obvious.

If you are looking to read strictly about technical communication, this book is not for you. On the other hand, what is not to like about ideas that are standard, classic, and clear, with a few new special insights?

Condolences to Sherri Henkin

We are sad to report that Sherri's husband, Herschel Henkin, passed away suddenly November 21.

Our chapter sent a food basket to Sherri.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Sherri and her family.

Sherri would like to pass along her thanks to everyone in the chapter:

Dear NEO STC'ers:

Thank you all for your encouragement, support, and thoughtfulness. The breakfast food basket was a wonderful surprise — the family really enjoyed the treats. May we share only happy events in the future.

Wishing you a healthy, abundant, and successful 2010!

Sherri Henkin

The talk of the town

Career moves

Jean Church is now a Technical Editor/Writer III at Northrop Grumman Corporation.

Amy Vogt is now a Senior Training and Development Specialist at University Hospitals.

Julie Mason is now Marketing Communications Writer at The Cleveland Institute of Art.

Congratulations and best of luck in your new positions!

Vote for Tricia!

Tricia Spayer is running for the one of the three Director positions in STC. Watch for your chance to vote for her starting in March!

Membership payment help: Madcap Software and STC pay membership dues; STC dues subsidies

MadCap Software and the Society for Technical Communication (STC) team up to pay for a full year of your STC membership dues. Whether you are a new member or renewing your STC membership, act now and save!

Purchase Flare and/or MadPak with any maintenance plan and MadCap will pay for a full year of your STC membership dues and fees.

For details, see http://www.madcapsoftware.com/email/20091201/content.html

For the 2010 membership year, STC will award dues subsidies to up to 400 members affected by the economic recession. The awards will include up to 100 Full Recovery Packages and up to 300 Subsidy Recovery Packages.

The Full Recovery Package is a $215 credit for Basic membership. The Subsidy Recovery Package is $65 — the difference between the dues amount for 2010 and the former 2009 dues rate ($215-$150). For full details on who is eligible for these packages and how to apply, see the STC website. Please note that the recovery packages are available only for renewing members, not new members. All applications must be received by 5 PM EST (GMT-5) Thursday, 31 December 2009, and candidates will be notified via email by 11 February 2010 whether or not they have been selected.

Handy hint: Quick and effective wireframe sketching

By Jean Church (jchurch5566@att.net)

"Why sketch?" To get all your ideas down, out of your head, on paper, in front of you where you can look at them. You make LOTS of sketches. You should focus on the concepts, not the content — the BIG picture, not the details. Sketching should go fast without a lot of effort. This article discusses some techniques for quick, effective design sketching.

In his article on ZURB, *The Secret to Successful Design Sketches,* Mark (no last name) stated, "Conveying as many ideas as possible with the least amount of effort is what makes your sketches valuable."[1] He provided these five quick tips for creating simple, fast, and effective design sketches:
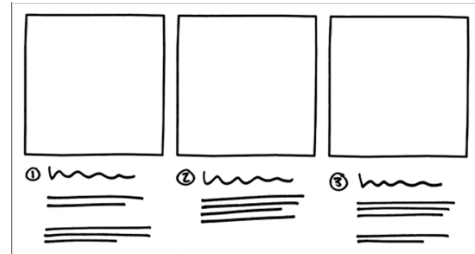
Navigation: Box, dash, dash, dash — keep your sketching minimal, and focus on the elements when they are in an active state.

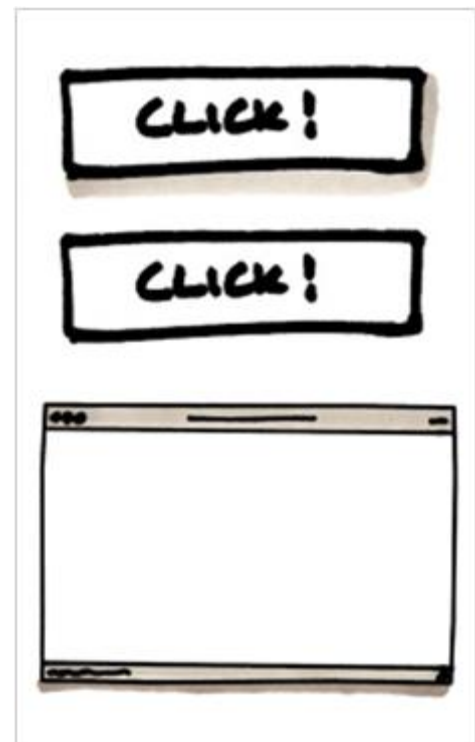**Headings and text: Nothin' but lines** — different types of text can be conveyed by using different types of lines. Squiggly lines can be used for headings and straight parallel lines can be used for body text.

Process and workflows: One box at a time — a series of empty boxes is a simple and easy way to show a work flow.

Make it thick: Sharpies for the win — use Sharpies® for drawing thick lines for prominence and big ideas, in lieu of thin lines, which are better for conveying finer points and notes.
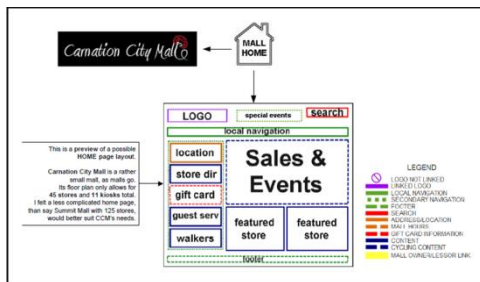
Depth and prominence: Cool shading — use shading for depth and prominence, and conveying a real world look and feel. I think using gray markers for shading, as the author suggests and as shown below, is

much better than my approach of trying to shade using a pen and ink.

Jakub Linowski credits Jonas Lowgren with this sketching technique in his article, "Isolated & Referenced Elements," for *Wireframes Magazine*. Lowgren suggests taking individual elements "out from the page view and then reference back to a mini version of the page"[2] in what I take to be an isometric or blowout view of the page. He says, "the page structure only lives in one area (the centre)."[2] "Taken together, this increases the speed in which the sketches can be generated, as there is less need to redraw full pages with all other elements."[2] I started with an earlier drawing I had (shown below, "Possible home page mockup") and I tried my own version of the isometric wireframe (shown below, "Home page notes"), and now know the power of this technique.
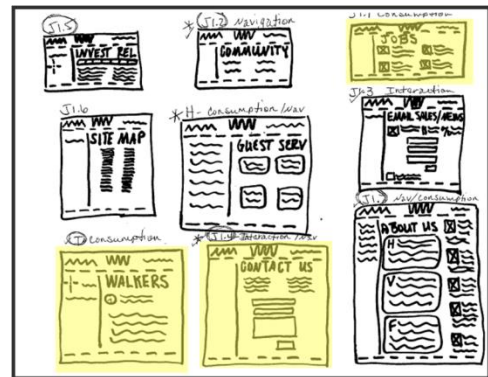

Possible home page mockup

Home page notes

In another article in *Wireframes Magazine*, "Little Frames," Linowski credits Ash Berlin with creating small wireframe sketches that "ignore detailing anything textual, content oriented or behavioral in nature."[3] These little wireframes "get at the most basic and fundamental characteristics" and "only represent element positioning and layout."[3] These little wireframes remind me of the small multiples in *Communicating Design* by Dan Brown. Brown says, "small multiples are a series of graphics that allow the

viewer to easily compare similar sets of information" and "is most effective for comparing page layouts" [4] (pg. 114). I tried making a sheet of nine pages — nine little frames in all — a 3x3 arrangement of little frames (see below). This worked OK, but I didn't want to recreate the sheet to fix mistakes. There could be many sheets with a few good and bad little wireframes on each sheet — a lot to track.

Notes for other page

Then I found Harry Brignull's article, "The 'Boxing Glove' Wireframing Technique," where he says to use Post-it® notes, a felt tip pen, "concentrate on the 'happy path'" and "physically compel yourself to do very basic, very quick sketches."[5] He says, "The constraints of the small paper makes it feel a bit like you're wearing boxing gloves — it forces you to draw only the most crucial parts of the user interface" and "…enables you to hammer through a user journey in a few minutes." I immediately tried using Post-its to create a few wireframes of a few I messed up and saw they are exactly the right size for creating little wireframes. Refer to the figure above this paragraph for an example. This technique allows for many little wireframes to be created and the best can be posted to one sheet or sheets to compile a sort of "storyboard" of the best ideas or of the "happy path." Fewer sheets are easier to track and take up much less space.

By merging ALL these techniques — simple boxes with lots of thick lines of various types, isometric views of main pages, little wireframes to capture sets of information, and Post-it notes for repetition until success is achieved — becomes an effective design combination.

References

[1] Mark. (03/12/2009) *The Secret to Successful Design Sketches*. ZURB. Retrieved November 2009 from http://www.zurb.com/article/227/the-secret-to-successful-design-sketches

[2] Linowski, J credits: Jonas Lowgren. (01/12/2009) Isolated & Referenced Elements. *Wireframes Magazine* Retrieved November 2009 from http://wireframes.linowski.ca/2009/01/isolated-referenced-elements/

[3] Linowski, J credits: Ash Berlin. (01/28/2009) Little Frames. *Wireframes Magazine* Retrieved November 2009 from http://wireframes.linowski.ca/2009/01/little-frames/

[4] Brown, D. (2007) *Communicating Design: Developing Web Site Documentation for Design and Planning.* Berkeley: New Riders

[5] Brignull, H. (01/02/2008) "The 'Boxing Glove' Wireframing Technique." "90 percent of everything." Retrieved November 2009 from http://www.90percentofeverything.com/2008/01/02/the-boxing-glove-wireframing-technique/

Handy hint: Create Microsoft Outlook email templates and integrate them onto the toolbar

Learn how to create templates for common email messages and also learn a great trick that you can use to make these templates easily accessible from the Outlook toolbar. See http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/5100-10878_11-5178650.html

In the spotlight: Shannon Siwicki

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Shannon Siwicki is an NEO STC member who currently works as a project writer for Radcom, Inc. She has been providing Microsoft® Office SharePoint Server training, documentation, and support for a manufacturing company for more than three years. She has worked with a team that redesigned a company SharePoint intranet site, and she regularly organizes and conducts SharePoint in-class training sessions for end users. Shannon also creates SharePoint team sites and discussion boards and creates detailed SharePoint user guides and technical instructions. In addition, she is currently managing a SharePoint interactive online training project.

Having earned an MA in English from Youngstown State University, Shannon also has two Graduate Certificates in Teaching of Writing and Professional Writing and Editing.

Prior to joining Radcom, Shannon worked as the editorial assistant for *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research* at Youngstown State University, where she was responsible for thorough editing of journal content for grammar, punctuation, and style standards. She was also a writing instructor and a writing tutor at Youngstown State University, and she served as chief copy editor for the university's student newspaper, *The Jambar*.

Shannon currently lives in Warren, Ohio, where she and her husband own and operate a small chain of pizzerias. You can reach Shannon at SSiwicki@radcomservices.com.

The Bulwer-Lytton fiction contest

"It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents — except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness." — Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, Paul Clifford (1830)

In 1982, Professor Scott Rice in the English Department at San Jose State University started the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. The challenge: Write an opening sentence to rival Edward George Bulwer-Lytton's infamous opening sentence to his novel, *Paul Clifford*, which is reproduced here.

We want YOU, dear reader, to take up this challenge, write your own opening sentence, and bring it to our March 11th meeting. Read your entry aloud during dinner at the meeting and be in the running for a new Webster's Thesaurus from your peers at the NEO STC. You'll still have plenty of time to submit your entries yourself to the official contest by April 15th, a very ominous date indeed!

For examples and more information, visit the website at http://www.bulwer-lytton.com

Can you outdo last year's winners, Kim Lindsey, Lisa Mileusnich, Tricia Spayer, & Jean Church (see archived issues of Lines and Letters read the winning entries.) Lisa also won a Dishonorable Mention in the global 2009 contest (see http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/2009.htm).

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Of interest

Finding the right word

Trouble finding the right word? Check out the graphic dictionary at http://www.visuwords.com/. (Thanks to Jean Church for pointing this one out!)

Job search blog

Check out Bryan Dilts' blogsite, "How to really get a great job" at http://blog.agicc.com/. (Thanks to Paul Hanrahan for pointing this one out!)

WritersUA Tools Survey results are available

The results of the WritersUA 2009 Skills and Technologies Survey are now available. This popular survey provides our community with a snapshot of the skills and technologies we most value.

See what they're saying about us!

See the kind words for us in John Ettorre's blog at http://workingwithwords.blogspot.com/2009/12/another-writing-avenue-to-explore-in.html. (Thanks to Sherri Henkin for pointing this one out!)

Chapter reminders

Are you following STC on Twitter yet?

Amazon.com helps fund STC

Reaching Amazon.com through the portal on the home page of STC's website (www.stc.org) contributes to funding programs that have no direct revenue stream, such as committee work. STC receives a small percentage from every purchase made through the portal.

Join NEO STC on LinkedIn

Our chapter now has a group on LinkedIn named Northeast Ohio STC Community.

Join our LinkedIn Group on http://www.LinkedIn.com (you must be a member of LinkedIn, which is free for a basic membership). FYI : There will be waiting period while your membership is approved.

NEO STC listserv

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

To subscribe or change your settings for the Northeast Ohio STC listserv, see http://mailman.stc.org/mailman/listinfo/stcneohio-l.

Please let Kris Henige, the NEO STC Listserv Administrator, know if you have any questions.

Premium pages for members

[NOTE: As of 2016, the current NEO STC website does not have password-protected content.]

NEO STC has some Premium pages for NEO STC members only. These pages include links to our very own Wiki, an Employer Directory — a listing of businesses that hire technical communicators — and more.

To enter the Premium pages, you will need a user name and password — this is different from the STC International site. Please contact our Webmaster for password information.

Change of address? Remember to tell the STC office

Send new addresses to the STC office to avoid interrupted delivery of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. Some members assume that informing the post office of their new address is enough to ensure that all of their mail is forwarded. However, the United States Postal Service forwards only first-class mail, not publications such as *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*.

Members may also update their contact and mailing information on the STC website.

Lines & Letters information

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Love it? Hate it? Let us know! Contact us:
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See something interesting? Tell us about it!

Many of our NEO STC members are also members of
another STC community or SIG. If you receive a
newsletter and find an interesting article, please
consider passing it on to the Lines and Letters editors at
newsletter@neostc.org.

You can also submit articles directly through
http://www.neostc.org/lines/submit.html.