Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

October meeting: Technical communication project tracking and metrics using Microsoft Sharepoint

Rockwell Automation created a robust project tracking system using Microsoft Sharepoint. Recording over 40 pieces of metadata for every project, Rockwell Automation has created a unique system that allows them to monitor existing projects as well as future projects, with views to overall workload by individual communicator, by business unit/product groupings, and by current status.

Speakers

Kathleen Ruggeri has more than 20 years of experience in the Technical and Marketing Communication fields for Rockwell Automation, the leader in industrial automation products. Kathleen currently manages the Information Architects, Editors, and Information Developers for the Cleveland-based operations of Rockwell Automation.

Liz Gardipee has more than 15 years of experience in Technical Communication for Rockwell Automation, and manages the Information Developers for the Milwaukee and Mequon-based operations of Rockwell Automation. Liz is the curator and administrator for the Rockwell Automation Sharepoint site, and is a metrics expert.

Hope to see you there!

Thanks to our September meeting sponsor, Localingua!

Upcoming events

NEO STC events

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

- 9/25/10: Bicycle ride and dinner in the Cuyahoga Valley Meet at the Lock 29/Peninsula trailhead at 1648 Mill St., Peninsula, OH, 44264. Contact Amy Vogt (avogt11@yahoo.com) to RSVP and for additional information.
- 10/14/10: October meeting: Technical communication project tracking and metrics using Microsoft Sharepoint. See http://tinyurl.com/
- 10/20/10: Networking lunch. Geisen Haus — German Pub and Eatery, North Canton.

- 10/30/10: Joomla workshop. This half-day workshop is free to any current chapter volunteers, $30 to chapter members, and $45 to nonmembers. Details coming soon!
- 11/11/10: November NEO STC Community meeting.
- 11/18/10: Networking lunch. Mavis Winkle's Irish Pub, Twinsburg.
- 12/9/10: December NEO STC Community meeting.
- 11/18/10: Networking lunch. Creekside Restaurant, Brecksville.
- 1/13/11: January NEO STC Community meeting.
- 1/18/11: Networking lunch. Vieng Asian Bistro, Westlake.

Other events and dates of interest

- 9/23/10: Annual NEOUPA networking/social event. See http://www.neoupa.org/.
- 9/29/10 (RSVP by 9/22): Microsoft Visio by Radcom, Inc. http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining
- 10/4/10, 10 am EDT: Deadline for proposals for the STC 2011 Summit Call for proposals
- 10/7/10 to 10/9/10: Practical Conference on Communication (PCOC). See http://pcoc.stc-etc.org/.
- 10/9/10 (RSVP by 10/2): Introduction to Adobe Captivate by Radcom, Inc. http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining
- 10/9/10 (RSVP by 10/2): Introduction to Adobe Captivate by Radcom, Inc. http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining
- 10/13/10: Using non-traditional social media marketing. See http://www.ipgcleveland.org/events.aspx
- 10/13/10 and 10/20/10 (RSVP by 10/6): Instructional design by Radcom, Inc. http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining
- 10/14/10: Philadelphia Metro Chapter competition submission deadline. See http://stcpmc.org/index.php for detail.
- 10/19/10: Web seminar "Task Analysis for Developing Policies & Procedures Content Users Need and Prefer," presented by Raymond Urgo and offered by the Policies and Procedures SIG. stc's notebook
- 10/23/10 (RSVP by 10/15): Intermediate to Adobe RoboHelp by Radcom, Inc. http://tinyurl.com/radcomtraining

President's column: We are here!

By Ginny Haas

The 2010-2011 year is underway, and this year's message is "We are here." We are here for you as members as a resource to help you keep up with what is going on the technical communication field, to help you polish your skills, and to connect you with your peers. We are here as a resource for the companies that hire technical communicators. We are here to connect with northeast Ohio colleges and universities who have programs related to our field. We are here to connect to other related organizations and to the community. We are here!

Some of the ways we let everyone know we are here is through our events. The Executive Board and the committees have spent the summer months planning for the coming year. We have already held our first social event at Blossom, and our first program event at Compuware. Our networking lunches have also continued throughout the summer.

Our first program event was a success. Thanks to the Programs Committee who put it all together, Bob Dianetti the speaker, Compuware who hosted the event, and Localingua our sponsor. I enjoyed catching up with several of you and meeting new members, as well as several nonmembers. We have several other exciting things planned for the coming months. Watch the events calendar on our Web site for upcoming events.

We are still working out some final kinks in the new website, but we are ready for training on the new platform. We are offering a half-day Joomla workshop on October 30. The workshop is free to any current chapter volunteers, $30 to chapter members, and $45 to nonmembers. The official announcement is coming out soon.

Thanks to the Sponsorship Committee, we have our first two sponsors lined up for the year. Localingua sponsored our September meeting, and MadCap is sponsoring our October meeting. The sponsorships fund our annual scholarship. We have a strong start, but we need to find one or more sponsors for all of our events this year. If you know of a company or individual who would be interested in sponsoring an event, contact our Sponsorship Committee.

Here is your chance to get involved at the international level. Rich Maggiani, STC Board Director-at-Large, is organizing an STC Membership Committee. He needs help on the Implementation Sub-Committee. Contact Rich at rich.maggiani@solari.net for more information or to volunteer.

In the spotlight: Rachel Thompson

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

Congratulations are in order to Rachel Thompson who recently won the All-Ohio Scholarship in Technical Communication award for $1000.

Having earned a 4.0 average from her high school in Cypress, TX, Rachel currently holds a GPA of 3.75 as a student in Technical and Professional Communication at Cedarville.

"I am tremendously excited about the ever-growing field of technical communication," states Rachel in her scholarship application.

With computer skills that include Adobe products such as Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop, Rachel also knows Microsoft Outlook, Powerpoint, Publisher, and Word.

Corporate Culture, Advanced Grammar, Communication Theory, Advanced Composition, Design of Manuals, Style for Technical Communicators, Technical Editing, Technical Communication, Production Tools, Portfolio Design, and Making of the Modern Mind are some of the courses she has completed.

But, that tells just part of the story about Rachel. She writes that, "In high school, I participated in speech and debate to hone my communication skills. By my senior year, I became a nationally ranked, highly decorated speaker (third place in Original Oratory, NCFCA Nationals, 2008; Lincoln-Douglas debates regional qualifier, 2007 and 2008)."

Her previous employment and experience include being a contract designer for Midtown Community Church and the Criminal Justice Department at Cedarville. She also was a technical writer for Opportunity International of Chicago and is owner/director of Parachute Parties for Children and a program director and assistant coach for Thompson Tumblers.

She says she has an "entrepreneurial streak" and "operated her own non-competitive preschool gymnastics program since 2007." Concerning other past achievements, Rachel states that this, "helped prepare her for the rigorous academic environment at Cedarville University, where I am enrolled in the Honors Program and serve as the Activities Director for the honor society Tau Delta Kappa, as a tutor and Teaching Assistant for the Academic Enrichment Program, and a discipleship small group leader."

Concerning a possible career interest, Rachel writes, "The non-profit organization interests me as a neglected frontier, largely untouched by the influence of technical communication. Many non-profit organizations communicate with good intentions, but seldom have a real communication strategy. They feed the poor, heal the sick, and provide opportunities for advancement — imagine the impact they could have with the help of an effective communication strategy!" Rachel's eloquence concerning this interest appears throughout her application.

This was the first year that the NEO, Central Ohio, and SW Ohio communities combined to pick a scholarship winner and the first year of our All-Ohio Scholarship in Technical Communication. The NEO and SW Ohio communities split the award amount of $1000, also a first this year.

A thank you goes out to all the judges, and to NEO STC Academic Relations Co-Chair Sarah Burke in particular. Special thanks to our scholarship sponsors, Radcom, Inc., Star Group America, and Neil Perlin at Hyper/Word Services. We couldn't do it without you!

Sarah, an STC scholarship winner herself, developed the idea of having an All-Ohio scholarship and coordinated the efforts and communication with the various Ohio chapters. She also coordinated much of the draft work for the scholarship and related communication.

Professor Sandi Harner of Cedarville recommended Rachel. As stated by Professor Harner, "I am confident that Rachel has the potential to make a significant contribution to the field of technical communication, her chosen major. Surely, she is the kind of student your scholarship was meant to honor."

Please stay tuned as we put together details of the scholarship for the coming year and let us know if you would like to judge.

Alternatives to the NEO STC competition

Our chapter will not be sponsoring a competition this year. If you are interested in submitting, you are welcome to submit to other chapter's competitions. The newsletter will list competition deadlines in Upcoming Events in the "Other events of interest" listing.

If you see information on other competitions, please forward the information to newsletter@neostc.org. We try to catch all the announcements, but extra eyes are helpful!

NEO STC volunteer opportunities

The Education Committee could use an additional volunteer. Contact Ginny Haas if you are interested.

Book review

Googled: The end of the world as we know it

By jill.mccauslin@gmail.com

Ken Auletta's Googled: The end of the world as we know it is a comprehensive history of Google, but also a study of Google's effect on other companies and industries, especially the advertising and media industries.

The book is written in a chronological fashion. It starts with the very beginning of Google and some discussion of the search engines in use at the time. It then follows the growth of the company and their search for a way to make profits. Auletta discusses the effects of going public — one interesting point was that nobody understood just how much money Google was making until their IPO was released. Suddenly people took them much more seriously. It covers the challenges of rapid growth and finally the effect of the economic downturn on Google.

I found the first third of the book to be the most interesting because it discusses how Google's founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, worked to grow Google. Their emphasis on hiring engineers and focusing on their product made for a creative, unusual company. There was a struggle on finding a CEO to work with them because most of the business people they met couldn't think creatively enough or didn't understand what they were doing. For a company that is only twelve years old, it was amazing to me how nostalgic the first section of the book felt to me.

An interesting business idea is the freedom Google provides its employees, particularly the technical staff. All Google engineers are given 20% of their time to work on whatever they choose. Many of the products that Google now offers come from those projects. Auletta makes it clear that much of Google's wealth of product comes from the freedom given to the technical staff. That investment has had huge payoffs for Google. Interestingly, Auletta says that companies such as Apple have decided they need to follow suit.

Auletta does point out that sometimes the Google leadership just does not understand some of their critic's concerns or even user's concerns. He returns to the well-publicized story of them not wanting to offer the

ability to delete message in Gmail. The thought was they were giving everyone so much space and search capability that there was no need to delete messages. People protested enough that Google added the delete function. I think of that when I delete messages from Facebook — thank goodness I don't have to keep all this junk!

Another interesting discussion was how inter-related the companies in Silicon Valley are. Half of Apple's eight directors serve as Google's directors and advisers. Steve Job's coach is the same coach hired to work with Page, Brin, and CEO Eric Schmidt. As of the time of the book, there was some talk that this might not be sustainable.

Google is under great pressure now by their board to increase profits due to the downturn in the economy. Page and Brin refused to use paid links in their search results. Therefore when I first saw the "Sponsored Link" show up on my search results, I knew they'd lost that battle.

The author, Ken Auletta, has been the author of the "Annals of Communications" column in The New Yorker since 1992. He clearly understands the consequences of Google's services on traditional media. He points out the huge divide between Google and traditional media and discusses the consequences of Google's move into selling advertising and media. He makes it very clear that some of the TV networks have handled this better than others and newspapers and magazines are still trying to find a new way of profitable existence. As Auletta points out, the difference between the new media and the old is that now the consumer is in control.

This discussion is probably the most important part of this book. Most of us are well aware of the difficulties that newspapers and magazines are having. Auletta points out that this industry would have had problems regardless of Google, but Google's existence sped up the process. It wasn't just Google — it was the Internet.

The book concludes with a discussion of what the future holds for Google and for the new and old media. Auletta argues that society doesn't really need newspapers but it does need journalism. That seems to be the issue.

I found Googled to be a well-written book that moved beyond the standard fare about an Internet start-up story. It is not one of those non-fiction books that are so popular right now where the author strings together a few chapters that are really magazine articles and calls the result a book. It's a clear look at both the history and the effect of Google. I recommend this book for a

thought-provoking study of where we've been and where we're going on the Internet.

And now … stay tuned for the movie! After I finished reading this book, I learned that the rights to the book have been bought for a movie. I have to imagine that the movie will focus on Page and Brin because they provide the drama of Google.

Book review

Anatomy of an American Dream

By Paul Hanrahan

An integral part of the American Dream is the self-made man. In Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004), journalist Alfred Lubrano reveals the intense personal experience of the upwardly mobile in contemporary America.

Lubrano discusses how class, an often taboo topic in the U.S., affects those who move up the social ladder as they progress beyond their parents and friends in education and career.

Through interviews with over one hundred persons who have made the transition from working to middle class, Lubrano makes palpable the journey of blue-collar youths toward a white-collar adulthood.

Lubrano refers to those who make the arduous trek from a blue-collar background to being a journalist, as he is, or other licensed professional, as some of his interviewees are, as "straddlers." Straddlers are those who realize they straddle two class cultures in a way that affects their relationships in the present and their potential to realize future dreams and ambitions.

If you are a white-collar professional who comes from a blue-collar background or are simply curious about the experience of those who 'pull themselves up by their boot-straps,' you should consider reading Limbo. If you are blue collar, have reached an impasse in your career, and wonder why, the stories and analysis in Limbo may hold an answer for you.

A striking passage illuminates class differences in approaches to work:

A blue-collar woman rearranges the stock in a warehouse and, boom, it's finished. A white-collar woman has to present a report, then justify it, sell it, and resell it to bosses who must decide whether the work is complete. The work doesn't always speak for itself. You need to speak for the work and explain its existence — brag about it — even if it's what some boss

told you to do in the first place and then forgot. Lots of blue-collar people are taught as kids that boasting and self-promotion and credit hogging are wrong and unseemly; but that's precisely what's needed to succeed in the office, as long as it's deftly and subtly done. (p. 138)

In fact anyone who feels their work is unappreciated could learn from the above passage illustrating class differences in approach to work and career. If you are blue-collar or are interested in understanding a white-collar co-worker or boss who comes from a working-class background the anecdotal stories in Limbo are of value. There are a series of stories in Limbo where straddlers have an ah-ha experience that brings into focus their own existence as those who have broken the barriers of class that exist in American society but are so seldom discussed.

One story of class enlightenment that I found gripping addressed the difficulties of straddlers when they are dating and forming a family:

After saving scallop and other fish money for a year, Joe accumulated enough cash to take the girl to dinner. "I remember being struck by the distinct feeling that it wasn't the event for her that it was for me. And I had intended it to be a big deal for her. It became clear in a moment that she just had no idea of the sacrifices a person like me would have to make to take her out. We graduated and she moved on. I never saw her after that." (P. 170)

While Joe's experience emphasizes how alone or out of place the upwardly mobile may feel at times, a recurring theme in Limbo is that the self-made man often acts with the support of the blue-collar family that raised them. There is often a strain between the upwardly mobile and those they knew during their working class youth, yet most admit they would not be who they are if it were not for those they grew up with.

Frederick Douglass expressed well Lubrano's theme that the self-made man does not simply pull themselves up by their boot straps in isolation:

It must in truth be said though it may not accord well with self-conscious individuality and self-conceit, that no possible native force of character, and no depth or wealth of originality, can lift a man into absolute independence of his fellow-men, and no generation of men can be independent of the preceding generation. (Blassinghame, John and John McKivigan (ed.): The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One, vol. 4. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 545-75.)

Limbo clearly illustrates the experience and consequences of being upwardly mobile today as opposed to when the mythical self-made man of the American Dream took shape during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The talk of the town: Tri-C and Radcom win Communicator Award; Mike Halkovich publishes photograph book

The collaborative team of Cuyahoga Community College and Radcom, Inc. has won The Communicator Award of Distinction, an award honoring communications professionals for creative excellence. Their entry, "Changes in Body Functions," is part of the State Tested Nursing Assistant's Program and won in the Interactive Multimedia — Education (academic) category. Congratulations!

Mike Halkovich self-published a book of his color photographs called *Missed Blessings*. You can preview the book at http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1561834. Awesome!

Evaluating an iPad

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net) and James Gayhart

We received an iPad for evaluation from Blackboard Inc. in the spring of 2010. Blackboard provided iPads to Blackboard users to look at mobile learning possibilities and evaluate the Blackboard Mobile Learn application.

We hope you find our observations of interest as you think about mobile learning possibilities at your site, general use of an iPad, and/or adapting to tablet uses in your environment.

Our evaluations are not comprehensive, but offer general and informal observations. The iPad made the rounds throughout our office, the Office of eLearning & Innovation (eLi) at Tri-C. eLi provides the primary support for Blackboard — the Web-based learning management system that lets students and faculty participate in classes delivered online — at Tri-C as well as supporting e-learning in general at the school.

In addition to evaluating Blackboard Mobile Learn, we also looked at free applications on the iPad and the iPad itself to see if this tablet would be a useful tool for learning. If the platform overall is not useful, this will be a factor in evaluating the Blackboard application. We will start with the general observations.

The iPad we found to be light enough to be portable. Weighing a mere 1.5 pounds, it is lighter than most laptops and netbooks. If the assumption is that mobile technology is the way of the future, the iPad could be a viable option, especially when used with electronic textbooks. It would provide a larger workspace than other portable devices, such as cell phones. Many feel the workspace on a cell phone is not adequate for extended reading or writing. The iPad provides advantages over other portable devices such as laptops, netbooks, or cell phones for these reasons.

How readable are books on an iPad? We agreed that based on the iPad sample novels tested, reading a novel would be no problem. Reading a textbook where you want to mark in the textbook presents challenges for the iPad and is an area needing improvement. One approach would be to combine electronic materials with some paper-based materials.

What is the Blackboard Mobile Learn application like? For students, the application provides a quick and easy way to view course contents, assignments, grades, and discussion board posts. Users can also post to existing discussion threads. Posting assignments or taking tests is another matter: users would have to use the iPad's web browser (Safari) for such actions. eLi is recommending that students use a computer to post assignments and take tests. Instructors can also see course contents and discussion board posts. However, if they need to change the course contents, they are unable to do so with this application.

What are our other observations about the iPad? For users who have a full schedule, the Calendar application works as a great virtual appointment book. And, for users who are tied to their e-mail, the Mail application makes life easy. The Notes application allows for quick note taking and the YouTube application rivals YouTube's website.

"There's an app for that." In addition to the dozen included applications, Apple has thousands of free and paid iPad-specific applications that enhance the iPad's use. The iPad also runs the more than 200,000 iPhone and iPod Touch applications. Lost in the woods? Try the Compass application. Want an interactive version of Alice in Wonderland? Alice Lite makes reading fun. Want to improve your knowledge? Try reading Wikipedia as a magazine with the Discover application. Having problems keeping track of all your social networks? Flipboard condenses your social media streams into a single application.

Is an iPad cost effective? Only time will tell. If an iPad used with electronic textbooks is more cost effective than buying traditional textbooks, certainly that would be a factor in the move toward the iPad or similar tablet. This is yet to be determined, as not all textbooks are currently available electronically.

With all its benefits, there are a few drawbacks. First, with prices ranging between $500 and $830, it may be cost-prohibitive for many students. Second, the iPad works best with a regular internet connection. The version we tried worked through Wi-Fi. Since Wi-Fi is available at all of the Tri-C campuses, it is not an issue when on campus. However, for those users who do not have internet access at home, the iPad will not be as useful to them. There is a 3G version that mitigates the internet access issues at an increased device cost and a monthly cost of $15 to $25.

In conclusion, the iPad is a great way to consume content regardless if it is web pages, music, or videos. Creating that content however proves to be a challenge. While it can be a great educational tool, the iPad cannot match the power and functionality of a normal computer. Yet, it is a device with great potential worthy of further investigation. Even though the iPad was released in April, 2010, it has already sparked a mobile learning revolution. The future looks bright for mobile learning and more importantly for our students.

Note to readers: James Gayhart won a 2009 Award of Excellence from NEO STC for the Blackboard tab on My Tri-C Space. He is also responsible for the runaway saw video that went viral in 2010. You may have seen it.

Tip: Grammar — The long dash

By Paulette Henning (pmhenning@ra.rockwell.com)

The long dash, or em dash, is a punctuation mark that can be difficult to fully understand, yet many people use it. To help you feel confident in your use of the em dash, keep these guidelines in mind.

♦ Use an em dash to introduce information like a colon does. The only difference between the em dash and the colon is that a colon requires a complete sentence before it, whereas an em dash does not.

- We considered three places to go on vacation:

Hawaii

Alaska

Oklahoma

- We considered —

> Hawaii
>
> Alaska
>
> Oklahoma

The dash in the second list indicates that each item on the list completes the sentence.

♦ Use an em dash to introduce a surprising or emphatic ending on a sentence:

> We were discussing Hawaii and Oklahoma — then we heard about a fantastic cruise to Alaska!

♦ Use a pair of em dashes to set off an interruption in the middle of a sentence. You can also use parentheses or a pair of commas. However, em dashes indicate more of an abrupt and unexpected interruption that might actually be more interesting or important than the sentence itself. Here are examples:

> Hawaii, we all agreed, is by far the best choice. [ordinary interruption]

> Alaska — a cruise line is offering a phenomenal deal — is also a beautiful choice. [important and very interesting interruption]

> Oklahoma — where my in-laws live — has to be considered. [another important and very interesting interruption]

So, these three guidelines — to introduce a list, to introduce an emphatic or interesting end to a sentence, and to set off important or interesting interruptions — can help you use the em dash with confidence.

To add an em dash quickly on a Microsoft operating system, use the shortcut keys Alt+0151 (using the numbers on the number pad). On a laptop, the shortcut might include the function key, such as Fn+Alt+0151, using the numbers in blue on the keyboard.

Diane Feldman Technical Editing SIG scholarship

The Technical Editing SIG offers two scholarships. The first scholarship assists students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree in Technical Communication (or a related area, such as professional writing or human computer interaction). The second assists students who are pursuing a graduate degree in Technical Communication (or a related area, such as professional writing or human computer interaction).

Students applying for one of these scholarships are expected to be able to demonstrate their focus on topics related to technical editing through their academic studies, current jobs, special projects, or undergraduate/graduate program.

For more information on these scholarships, see http://stc-techedit.org/Scholarship.

STC reminders

STC Buyers Guide

STC now offers a Buyers' Guide for technical communications products and services. See http://www.stc.org/about/buyersguide.asp.

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 has a group on LinkedIn named Northeast Ohio STC Community.

Join us on http://www.LinkedIn.com (you must be a member of LinkedIn, which is free for a basic membership). To join the group:

1. In the left navigation, click **Groups** or **User Groups**.
2. In Group Directories box on the right, click **Find a Group**.
3. In Search Groups, enter **Northeast Ohio STC Community**.
4. Click **Search**.
5. Select **Join this group** (under the group description).
6. Follow the instructions. There will be waiting period while your membership is approved.

NEO STC listserv

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

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

Premium pages for members

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: newsletter@neostc.org

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.