

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



September 2015 Issue

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President's Column

Brian Smith

As NEO STC begins a new season of programs and other activities, I thank all the committees and dedicated volunteers for an information-packed transition. Everyone came to the small group meetings with enthusiasm and new ideas; we are off to a great start for another award-winning year!

When I first began working in the business world, my company was still sending paper memos through an inter-office mail system. If someone did not receive a response within a couple of days, I probably got a phone call or a knock on the door. Now, it is not unusual to get over a hundred emails a day and that does not even include my personal e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, photo sites and other social media that I use. With an avalanche of information coming in and everyone expecting an immediate response, things can quickly spin out of control.

So, when I thought about the goals I wanted to achieve as president of NEO STC, I realized this would be the perfect occasion for our members to learn more about social media, how to use it and manage it better, and how businesses and other groups use it to communicate with their customers and members. Who knows, gaining more knowledge about social media might lead to new career opportunities! In the upcoming months, be sure to check the award-winning NEO STC newsletter, *Lines & Letters*, for more information about getting started with the various social media platforms.

To start off our 2015-2016 season, join us on Thursday, September 10, 2015 for "Tips for Technical Illustration" presented by Tricia Spayer. Be sure to check out the list of events at <http://neostc.org> to register for the presentation.

Newsletter Promotion: Submit Articles to be Eligible

Submit an article to this newsletter via newsletter@neostc.org to be eligible for our drawing for a \$50 gift card.



- ◆ Angie Dianetti and Janean Voss were the winners of our 2014-2015 drawing.
- ◆ Barb Philbrick won for the 2013-2014 drawing.

Book reviews, article reviews, event and meeting reviews, and articles on any topic of interest to our readers are welcome. We are always looking for coverage of NEO STC events and would be happy to work with you on an In the Spotlight feature.

Please stay tuned for details on when this promotion ends. This promotion applies to members of NEO STC only.

Editors – A Writer's Superhero or Archenemy

Jennifer Yaros

When you read the Acknowledgement section in a book, you always see a big, heartfelt note to the author's editor. "This book wouldn't have been possible without the patience and help of my dear editor..." However, have you ever received comments back from your editor and thought that he bled all over your writing because there is so much red ink? Sometimes don't you feel a little offended that she questioned your work or made a comment like "Consider making this section more engaging by..." Who's the writer?!

Ok, take a deep breath and let's look at this objectively instead of emotionally. Yes, you have worked hard on writing the course or manual. You take pride in your work, but you are a writer not an editor. The editor is not there to change every word you write or to question every paragraph. He is there to make your writing better, make valuable suggestions for improvement, and to protect the company's reputation for quality.

Proofread

Before you provide your work to your editor, make sure that you have reviewed it. If you catch the simple stuff then the editor can concentrate on the meat of the writing.

Run the spell check tool to catch any obvious spelling and grammatical errors.

Reread the entire deliverable; one sentence at a time, one word at a time to make sure it makes sense.

Look at the formatting of every page. Make sure it is consistent and there are correct headers and footers.

Make sure page, section, and chapter numbers are consecutive.

I strongly recommend that either you or your company adopt an Editing Checklist to ensure that all projects receive consistent and thorough editing. Before giving the project to your editor, go through the Editing Checklist yourself. If you do not have one, you can download a checklist here:

<https://writespotblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/editing-checklist.doc>

Edit Levels

Not all projects require an in-depth edit, especially if it is a revision of a draft the client has reviewed or updates to an existing manual or course.

When you provide the project to the editor, make sure that you state what level of edit is required and make sure that you provide adequate time for the editing process. Here are some guidelines:

Edit Type	Time Estimate	Description
Light Edit	8 pages per hour	Usually used as a final review of the project materials. It includes typical proofreading, conformance to style guidelines, and checking for errors in headings, tables, figures, and references, plus basic grammar and punctuation errors. The text is skimmed.
Medium Edit	4 pages per hour	Usually used as a first review of the project materials. It includes everything from the Light Edit, word usage errors, overly complex sentence structure, and overly complex (long) procedures. Every word is read.
Heavy Edit	1 page per hour	Rarely used. It includes everything from Medium Edit, plus rewriting to improve sentence and paragraph structure, and overall document organization.
Online Learning / Help	4 screens per hour	Includes a Medium Edit plus usability, functionality, and special requirements checking.

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Final Word on Editors

Editors are Superheroes. They make your writing the best it can be. Develop a collaborative relationship with them so that the final project is a result of a team effort and not a one-man-show.

The editor is not your archenemy. If you do not agree with a change that your editor recommends, then do not make the change. You have the final power to accept or reject the editor's comments. However, that also means that you are responsible for that final decision. Make sure you do not let pride make the decision for you.

Ten Emerging Educational Technologies: Article Review

Jeanette Evans

Common themes identified in this list of top new trends in educational technologies include individualism, shared information, and hands-on. This is according to Pamela DeLoatch in her article at <http://www.edudemic.com/10-emerging-education-technologies/>.



In the **individualism** grouping, we see this list:

- ◆ Wearable tech
- ◆ Bring your own device

◆ Mobile learning

In the **shared information** grouping, the following is listed:

- ◆ Cloud computing
- ◆ Collaborative
- ◆ Openness

For the **hands on** grouping, the list includes:

- ◆ 3D printing
- ◆ Flipped, blended learning
- ◆ Online learning
- ◆ Gamification

Concerning flipped and blended learning, the author predicts that these trends let teachers have a chance to "spend more time on areas that are challenging to students." This is instead of spending class time on lectures that students can access online.

With regard to online learning, the article states the idea that "as the number of online learners grows, organizations will begin to create more structured programs and measure their effectiveness." My guess is that effectiveness of online learning will continue to improve and grow.

Whether we work in an area related to education or not, it can be worthwhile to be aware of trends in educational technology to see if we can use related techniques for the audiences we serve in our own work.

Talk of the Town

Lee Murray, Youngstown State University, MA in Professional and Technical Writing, received the NEO STC Scholarship Award "for demonstrating both dedication to the study of technical communication and leadership potential in the field."

PMI - NEO (the NE Ohio chapter of the Project Management Institute) is celebrating its 25th anniversary. See <http://www.pmineo.org/> for more details.

APEX award calls for entries will appear in November, 2015. See <http://www.apexawards.com/> for details about Apex awards and <http://stc.org> for details about STC awards.

In the Spotlight: Lee J. Murray

Lee J. Murray and Lynn Nickels

Fellow NEO-STC members, please meet our Scholarship Winner Lee J. Murray!

Lee hails from Bournemouth, a beautiful seaside resort town on the south coast of England. It was voted "The Happiest Place to Live in the UK" in 2007. In August of 2008, he moved to Youngstown, Ohio. Luckily, it turns out the grass was in fact greener, and he says it has certainly proven to be the right move for his family.



Bournemouth, UK

Lee says, "My employment history is a bit of a mixed bag. I left school at 16 to become a travel agent, a job that doesn't really exist anymore. The retail style travel agency business model was dying when I signed up, but the rise of the internet killed it off completely a few years after I jumped ship. Fresh-faced teenagers in polyester uniforms have been replaced by shiny websites (as advertised by William Shatner and the scruffy Trivago guy,) and, frankly, It's probably for the best. Being a travel agent was a crashing bore, and I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. I'm glad I quit it before that slice of the industry disappeared from under me."

He tells *L&L*, "After the travel agent gig, and for a couple of wonderful, happy years, I ran a little guitar store, which I co-owned with my best friend. We never made any money, but we had a lot of fun. After I married my wife, I worked in construction briefly, and started a door installation company when my first daughter was born. I've bounced around a lot since then, but I seem to be finding my feet as a writer and researcher. The weird, eclectic selection of not-quite-careers has shaped me as a person and imbued me with a sense of freedom in my choices. It's allowed me to make ridiculous decisions, like marrying an American and moving to Ohio and having a bunch of kids and going back to school."

Currently, Lee is a full-time student and a stay-at-home dad, looking after a three-year-old and a one-year-old. He and his wife also have an 8-year-old.

Lee started at Youngstown State University (YSU) in 2011 and will graduate with a BA in Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) at the end of the summer after finishing up his foreign language requirements, and then plans to go to graduate school.

"So basically, all that I have to do this summer is learn French in 16 weeks. That's all. No big deal!" he says.

"I take my education very seriously, and I'm really competitive at school. I'm hoping to bring some of that fire in my belly with me into graduate school, which I begin in September. I'll be teaching freshman writing classes in Spring 2016, which is absolutely thrilling. Another two years of school that I'm excited to get stuck in. I'm considering completing a thesis instead of a portfolio, which will probably mean more work in year two. This might open more doors for me academically, though, so it's worth the late nights in front of the computer. I'm focused on school right now, and I haven't settled on an exit strategy yet."

Lee also recently completed an undergraduate certificate in entrepreneurship in the spring.

As for hobbies and other interests, Lee says, "Kids and hobbies... sometimes it seems like those two options are mutually exclusive! That said, I play guitar occasionally, and I've recently started experimenting with cooking. Sometimes successfully, often not. I try to read when I can, but my only real hobby nowadays is coursework."

As far as NEO STC, he said he learned about the NEOSTC through Jay Gordon, his undergraduate advisor and coordinator of the PTW program. He applied for the scholarship and won. This is a great lesson for students and professionals out there who want to continue their education! There's more scholarship money through NEO STC to be had, so make sure to spread the word or apply for it yourself!

For information about NEO STC's scholarship application, contact us at scholarships@neostc.org.

Four Agreements (and Clear Communication): Book Review

Jeanette Evans



A manager I worked with recently provided copies of this book to her staff (and me), so I want to say a few words about this interesting read, especially the parts about clear communication.

The book gets 4.5 stars out of 5, with 2895 reviews listed, when I checked Amazon recently, plus Oprah gave the book a thumbs up. The author is a surgeon and son in a Mexican family of traditional healers. He also went through a near-death experience due to a car accident that made him re-examine his life and write this book.

- ◆ Be impeccable with your word.
- ◆ Don't take anything personally.
- ◆ Don't make assumptions.
- ◆ Always do your best.

Those are the four agreements the author notes should make your life better.

"Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama." Those words, I would think, would be near and dear to all involved in technical communication as well as all communication.

"Nothing others do is because of you. What others do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering."

That to me sounds like good advice.

The Four Agreements, Don Miguel Ruiz, M.D., 1997. Amber-Allen Publishing, San Rafael, CA (paperback, 140 pages)