

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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President's Column October 2007: Kicking off the fall season

By Tricia Spayer (tspayer@yahoo.com)

As we head into Autumn, I look forward to those warm, sunny days and cool nights. I'm sure many of us are also looking forward to the Indians' post-season, and the Browns winning a game or two this year.

I am very excited about our upcoming Crucial Communicator Regional Conference on Oct. 12. This is our chance to make Cleveland and the Northeast Ohio STC Community shine! I hope you have the opportunity to attend this big event, where we will hear from influential and inspiring speakers.

This conference has been in the planning stages for well over a year. The volunteer work that has gone into planning this is incredible. It just goes to show what a handful of enthusiastic, dedicated volunteers can accomplish. To the Regional Conference planning committee, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and applaud your efforts — you have been an incredible team.

Speaking of volunteers, this community would be nothing without you. We have a great group of volunteers, and I am constantly impressed with what you accomplish. Know that your efforts are appreciated. Volunteering for tasks can also give you experience that you normally would not find in your job, such as learning HTML, organizing events, or simply becoming part of a professional group. We have volunteer opportunities that arise — some are one-time tasks, others are ongoing. Here is current list of volunteer opportunities:

- ◆ Help organize Software Saturdays
- ◆ Help Employment committee search jobs for NEO STC database
- ◆ Help judge competitions for Pittsburgh chapter

At the end of August, I met with Brian Baddour, Ken Rogers, Paul Holland, and Amy Vogt as a Technical Task Force. The goal of our efforts is to enhance member value through the use of technology. We discussed the use of RSS feeds to help plug in local jobs to our Employment section on our Web site, as well as ways to enhance our newsletter delivery. We are in the process of determining which job sites are viable sources for RSS feeds, how we will present the content to you, and how our volunteers can enter data. We are also researching possible newsletter editing tools to take some of the burden off of Barb and the newsletter staff, regarding

coding and web delivery. If you happen to have experience in these endeavors, we would like to hear from you. We would also like to hear from you if our NEO STC Employment section has helped you find a job. Send me an e-mail at the above address.

A reminder: We have a section of our Web site where you can post your resume. It's free to members, and only \$10/month for non-members. See www.neostc.org/jobs/resume.htm for instructions.

If you would like to help with one of the above volunteer opportunities, or want us to keep you in mind, let me know. Thanks! And have a great fall — I don't mean that literally...

Upcoming events

- ◆ 10/05/07: Last day to register for the Crucial Communicator.
- ◆ 10/9/07: Last day to submit proposals for STC's Technical Communication Summit (June 1-4, 2008). For more information, see www.stc.org/cfp/.
- ◆ 10/11/07: Rock & Write Reception. See www.neostc.org/conf/rockandwrite.htm for details.
- ◆ 10/12/07: STC Regional Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. See www.neostc.org/conf for details.
- ◆ 10/16–10/20/07: DocTrain East Conference. See www.doctrain.com
- ◆ 10/18/07: Networking lunch. Applebee's, 3528 Hudson Dr., Stow.
- ◆ 10/17/07: Last day to vote on STC's 2007 Bylaws Referendum at eballot3.votenet.com/stc/login.cfm.
- ◆ 10/24/07: NEOUPA event: Panel discussion at Rockwell Software. See www.neoupa.org for detail.
- ◆ 11/8/07: World Usability Day. See www.worldusabilityday.org/ for detail.

XML/DITA Training Event in January

By Anne Paczula (anne@paczula.com)

Keep your eyes on the 2008 calendar — training sessions are being planned for winter and spring. The first class is "Developing for XML/DITA," scheduled for Saturday, January 12. It will be taught by Bernard Aschwanden, a publishing technologies expert with Bright Path Solutions who has helped hundreds of companies implement successful unstructured and XML-/DITA-based publishing solutions. He is also the current

president of the Toronto STC chapter. We are very excited that he is able to fit this training into his hectic schedule.

The cost is \$75 for members, \$100 for nonmembers. More information will be available in the November newsletter. Don't pass up this chance to learn more about one of today's most significant trends in technical documentation.

Additional classes are being scheduled for the spring, so don't forget to check the calendar and the newsletter for updates.

If you are interested in picking up some software skills in the near term, we encourage you to explore lynda.com or vtc.com. Both offer low-cost, no-commitment online software training. If you take a class through one of these sites, please let us know about your experience by sending an email to Anne Paczula.

September meeting reviews

NEO STC kick-off meeting at Buca di Beppo

By Diane Lorenzi (dianelorenzi@yahoo.com)

The September 5 meeting at Buca di Beppo featured round table discussions about these topics of interest to all technical writers:

- ◆ Editing for readability and accuracy
- ◆ Getting involved in NEO STC
- ◆ Updating your resume and portfolio
- ◆ Using free, open-source tools
- ◆ Increasing your visibility to your employer
- ◆ Using FrameMaker and Word

After announcements by new NEO STC president Tricia Spayer about upcoming chapter and regional events, we headed for the discussion tables.

Amy Vogt, our new NEO STC Vice President, led the FrameMaker and Word discussion. Amy conducts FrameMaker training, and she took a one-day class with Bernard Aschwanden called "Using XML and DITA with FrameMaker and Related Tools" at the National Conference. She recommends the following books to advance your FrameMaker skills:

- ◆ *FrameMaker 7: The Complete Reference* by Sarah S. O'Keefe, Sheila A. Loring
- ◆ *Advanced FrameMaker* by Kay Ethier, Bernard Aschwanden, Brad Anderson, Robert Kern

Amidst the buzz about XML, single sourcing, and structured FrameMaker, a question arose in the first session of the FrameMaker and Word discussion group. The question was, "How do you know if you should make the move from standard FrameMaker to structured FrameMaker?" A member suggested that key factors to consider are how much you reuse content and how often you use conditional text. As the buzz continues, you may want to consider attending the NEO STC January Software Saturday, which will be led by Bernard Aschwanden.

For the second thirty-minute session, I moved to the discussion on editing for readability and accuracy, led by Beth Troy. Beth has a B.A. in English/Journalism, and has experience as a Technical Editor for a computer software company. She provides contract editing and writing services through her documentation consulting company. Some of Beth's tips on editing for readability were:

- ◆ Review your past edits to increase consistency
- ◆ Edit for conciseness
- ◆ Edit for active voice to clarify subject, verb, and object
- ◆ Ensure consistent layout

She also shared these tips on editing for accuracy:

- ◆ Know enough about the subject to ask questions
- ◆ Know your audience so that you include the appropriate level of detail
- ◆ Have a subject matter expert approve your edit

The September 5 meeting at Buca di Beppo was a great kick-off for the 2007-2008 year of NEO STC meetings!

First meeting is a tasty start to the NEO STC year

By Joanne Sutton (joanne.sutton@fmcti.com)

The first NEO STC chapter meeting for 2007/2008 came on a balmy evening at the beginning of September. As a member from the far western reaches of the chapter's geographical area (Sandusky), the Italian restaurant, Buca de Beppo, in Westlake, was easily within my driving tolerance for a mid-week, after work meeting.

Over the pizza appetizer, members introduced themselves, sipped their chosen libation and shared summer stories. For dinner, we feasted on Caesar salad, meltingly delicious manicotti, dressed with the restaurant's signature marinara sauce, and small medallions of lemon chicken.

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After the cheese cake dessert course (can you tell I'm a foodie?), Chapter President Tricia Spayer made some announcements, concentrating on the exciting Region 4 Conference, *The Crucial Communicator*, coming on October 12, 2007. Look for more details in this newsletter. With nationally-known speakers, this sounds like a fabulous learning and networking opportunity right in our own neighborhood!

In due time, we moved into the table-progression phase of the meeting. I checked in at the "Using Free, Open-Source Tools" and "Increasing Your Visibility to Your Employer" tables, coming away with some good ideas from both to use at home and on the job. But more than this, I left with the impression that NEO STC is a group of highly motivated professionals who take their careers very seriously, and who are generous with ideas and information. I have attended many STC Annual Conferences, from which I return charged up with new ideas, with my appetite for the profession renewed and reinvigorated. I got a mini-dose of that same inspiration at the NEO chapter meeting. As a lone writer out here in the boonies (but we have Cedar Point!) this interaction was welcome, indeed.

September meeting recap

By Brian Baddour

I hosted the lively "Open-source Tools" table at our 9/5/2007 seminar. Each of the three sessions brought people with different needs and perspectives to the table ... literally. Some needed a primer on open-source tools, others had misconceptions about them, and still others had used them extensively at home or work. Links to the tools mentioned at our table are below.

We all discussed the classic issues about open-source tools: Which tools have open-source alternatives, the total cost of ownership (TCO), where to go for support, and generally how to decide if the open-source alternative is right for a given situation.

I shared my experiences using open-source tools like the Mozilla Firefox Web browser, Mozilla Thunderbird e-mail software, the OpenOffice.org office productivity suite, GIMP graphic design and photo-editing software, and Wikipedia. Wikipedia is interesting, in that it is not open-source software, but is an open-source tool: One which others are free to use and modify. I also had some experience with popular open-source tools geared more for administrators than for the consumer: Apache Web server, Sendmail e-mail server, and MySQL database server.

Folks at the table discussed other open-source tools like the Drupal content management system (CMS). I learned the Simple Machines Forum is an open-source message-board program for Web site administrators. Like Sun's StarOffice project, it is a free product, with free peer support, but Simple Machines makes their living by selling advanced technical support. One attendee explained how her employer used open source tools to buttress a project just until the resources and requirements warranted commercial industry-standard software.

For many users, open source tools are only interesting for the same reason as freeware: The price. We compared and contrasted those kinds of tools. The main difference seems to be whether the software's developer has opened its source code for other developers to modify.

There are also some shareware titles that certainly aren't open-source tools. Shareware basically uses the honor system and some gentle nagging to make you pay for the software when you can. Corel WinZip file compression, TechSmith SnagIt screen capture, and Corel Paint Shop Pro, though hugely popular and having open source's anti-Microsoft flare, are neither free, nor open. However, many are being pursued by open-source alternatives.

Also contrasting open-source tools are many free hosted services, which you cannot download for installation elsewhere, and are not open for developers to modify. YouSendIt's large file transfer service and Twitter's micro-blogging site are examples.

We discussed still other products and services which, upon further research, aren't quite open-source. U3 thumb drives aren't open-source, but rather hardware that may store open-source tools like Firefox and OpenOffice. Skype is an inexpensive Internet telephone service that is never open, and only free under certain conditions. 37signals Basecamp is hosted project management software with a free edition. However, it does not open its source for developers to see or modify.

The number of tools out there is dizzying. For most folks, getting a PC with software pre-installed is a blessing of simplicity. On the other hand, if you have a need, and more time than money to spend on it, there certainly are alternative options.

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NEO STC members among conference presenters

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

The "Crucial Communicator" Planning Committee is putting the finishing touches on preparations for the Friday, October 12 conference at the Hilton Garden Inn and Gateway Conference Center in downtown Cleveland. An outstanding program features two of our own members, Lisa Adair of Rockwell Automation and Dr. Keiran Dunne of Kent State University. Lisa will address how to effectively manage multi-projects from several locations with a disciplined editing process. Keiran will focus on integrated authoring to reduce translation time and cost.

Dr. Melvin Smith of Case Western Reserve University will present a unique keynote on Emotional Intelligence. His study on how to control emotions in team settings to foster motivational leadership skills will start at 9 a.m. in the Edison Ballroom II.

Session topics also include DITA, XML, structured authoring, Web 2.0 and other hot topics to hone technical communication skills. This is one-stop shopping to make you more indispensable in the marketplace.

There will be three software demonstrations throughout the day: STAR Group will showcase its content management software, the GEO Group will discuss translation services, and MadCap will demonstrate its software tools.

Festivities begin Thursday evening, October 11, with a complimentary Welcome Reception. The "Rock & Write" networking event will be from 5-7 p.m. in the hotel's Armington Room with light hors d'oeuvres and cash bar.

Dinner follows in the "Icons of Rock" room at the Hard Rock Café. Registration for the dinner, at \$25 per person, will be taken at the hotel. You must RSVP for both the reception and dinner with Registration Coordinator Angela Dianetti (adianetti@radcomservices.com). Refer to Reception page of the conference Web site for more details.

Please note that parking is \$2 at the hotel for the reception. We encourage attendees to carpool or walk over to the Hard Rock Café. Shuttle transportation will be available for only those who may need it.

Parking vouchers will be given for hotel parking on Friday.

See www.clevelanddowntown.stayhgi.com for directions to the hotel.

Thank you to the Conference volunteers!

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net)

Planning the Regional Conference takes a lot of work to put together. A tireless, talented and tenacious group of volunteers has worked for more than a year to provide you with an excellent program.

There are many individuals to thank, notably co-chairperson Stephanie Webster, Northeast Ohio Community President Tricia Spayer, Programs Coordinator Kim Lindsey and Sponsorship chairperson Ginny Haas. Jean Church, Angela Dianetti, Sherri Henkin, Paul Holland and Denise Kadilak also have been instrumental to this event's success.

Most of all, we thank you and our sponsors for support and contribution to "The Crucial Communicator."

Call for Entries for the 2007-2008 STC Competitions

If you or your company produce technical communication products that you think are worthy of awards, we would like to invite you to participate in the Pittsburgh chapter's 2007-2008 competitions.

Pittsburgh has graciously agreed to accept entries from NEO STC members, allowing the Northeast Ohio chapter to focus on its STC Regional Conference hosting duties.

You can participate in the competition in any or all of the following categories:

- ◆ Online Communication Competition
- ◆ Technical Art Competition
- ◆ Technical Publications Competition

The deadline for all three areas is Monday, November 5, 2007.

Anyone may submit entries. An STC membership is not required.

For more information and details about how to submit your entry, visit the Pittsburgh chapter's Web site Competitions page at www.stcpgh.org/events/compete.html.

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Member profile: Amy Vogt

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

Amy Vogt is currently serving as vice president of our NEO STC community. In the past, she was co-chair of the NEO STC Education Committee. Last year, NEO STC awarded Amy the Committee of the Year Award and an Award of Merit for one of her training manuals.

Amy works at PPI Technical Communications as Quality Assurance Manager. She also supports project management at PPI, where she handles translation coordination and special projects. She has been with PPI for 15 years.

PPI, a division of Contract Professionals, Inc. (CPI), is technical consulting company located in Solon. PPI works with a variety of projects including data management, technical writing, graphic design, training material development, and translation coordination. Her company works with a diverse sampling of industries, especially heavy industry and automotive.

Amy has a BA from Kenyon College in Art and Psychology. She also focused on English and German studies in her undergraduate work. During her Junior year, she spent a semester studying in Vienna. After Kenyon, she completed part of a master's program in Art Therapy at Ursuline College, but decided to pursue the field of technical communications instead.

Outside of work, Amy and her husband, Steve, travel as much as possible. Last April, they visited Alaska to helicopter-ski in the Chugach Mountains. She enjoys skiing, hiking, writing, and playing with her chocolate Lab.

NEO STC Board meeting minutes available online

The minutes from the August 14 NEO STC board meeting are available at http://neostc.org/cmswp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/LnL_NEOSTCBoardMinutes_081706.pdf.

Welcome new and transferring members!

We hope to see our new members at upcoming events. Be sure to say hello to:

- ◆ Jo Ann Frazee
- ◆ Lisa M. Lint
- ◆ Shawn M. Rockhold

- ◆ David Cherney
- ◆ Evelyn Filipkowski
- ◆ Colleen Price
- ◆ Paul Cunningham
- ◆ Diane Lorenzi
- ◆ Patricia Toth (transferring from the southwest Ohio chapter)

Introducing your 2007-2008 NEO STC Executive Board

Tricia Spayer, President

STC Member: Since 2000

Previous Offices: Tricia served as Vice President, 2006-2007, as Secretary from 2003-2006, and on the Membership Committee from 2001-2003.

Employer: Pressco Technology Inc., Solon for 11 years.

Position: Technical Writer/ Illustrator.

Duties: Lone writer for user manuals for high-speed vision inspection systems. Also Web master. Tricia is currently administrating an Author-it implementation. This is a single-sourcing, content management system that will be used by technical documentation, training, and marketing departments. She hopes to expand use of this system to other departments after demonstrating success with the initial implementation.

Hobbies: Traveling, photography, and artistic endeavors. Tricia also enjoys reading, exercising, and spending quiet time with her two cats.

Amy Vogt, Vice President

STC Member: Since 2004

Previous Offices: Amy served as Education Committee Co-chair in 2006-2007

Employer: PPI Technical Communications for 15 years. PPI has had a corporate NEO STC membership since 2000.

Position: QA Manager

Duties: Manage Quality Assurance Team/Processes, Project Manager, Software Training

Hobbies: Amy enjoys skiing, hiking with her dog, and writing.

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Sarah Burke, Secretary & Academic Relations Co-Chair

STC Member: Since 1999.

Previous Offices: Sarah served as Employment Committee Chair from 2004-2006 and as Secretary from 2006-Present. Prior to NEO STC, Sarah was a member of three other STC chapters. She served in various capacities—from Newsletter Editor to Vice President to Education Committee member—in the Miami University student chapter, the Southwestern Ohio chapter, and the Washington, DC chapter.

Employer: Booz Allen Hamilton, a global strategy and technology consulting firm, for five years.

Position: Editor

Duties: Sarah is one of three editors for a 1,000-person division focused on economic and business analysis. In this role, she edits business communications for government clients. These communications range from multimillion-dollar proposals and marketing materials to business case analyses and reports. Sarah also designs graphics, develops document templates, and administers intranet sites.

Hobbies: Sarah is the proud mother of a daughter named Moira Clare who was born in November 2006. When not keeping Moira out of trouble, she likes listening to Irish, classical, and jazz music and playing the piano. She and her husband Brian are also involved with Irish set dancing.

Denise Kadilak, Treasurer and Competitions Manager

STC Member: Since 2000

Previous Offices: Denise served as treasurer for the Lowcountry chapter in Charleston, SC from 2001 - 2003

Employer: Blackbaud, Inc.

Position: Technical Writer III

Duties: Maintain and update document templates, conversion filters, and infrastructure files; generate help file output; write and maintain user documentation

Hobbies: Skiing, biking, walking, and reading

Stephanie Webster, Immediate Past President

STC Member: Since 1998.

Previous Offices: Stephanie served as Programs chairperson (2001-04), Vice President (2005-06), and President (2006-07).

Employer: TMW Systems, Inc., Beachwood.

Position: Software Documentation Specialist.

Duties: Stephanie graduated from Cedarville University with a degree in technical communication. She has been involved with writing, editing, project management, and business analysis over the past nine years.

Hobbies: Stephanie and her husband Tim love spending time with their son, Brandt, who will be turning one in October. She enjoys all outdoor activities including hiking, running, and biking.

Book review: Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Part 2

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

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2006, \$26.95, SBN: 0877798079 9780877798071 9780877798071 0877798079 # OCLC: 66262588

Part one of this review gave a general information about this dictionary. Part two gives a more detailed comparison of how this dictionary compares to others and some background on how a word gets into a M-W dictionary.

Dictionaries are generally considered to be either descriptive or prescriptive. Descriptive dictionaries simply show usages. Prescriptive dictionaries dictate correct usage.

Is the M-W Collegiate descriptive or prescriptive?

The entry for dictionary in Wikipedia states that the prescriptive/descriptive issue has been given so much consideration in modern times that most dictionaries of English apply the descriptive method to definitions, while additionally informing readers of attitudes which may influence their choices on words often considered vulgar, offensive, erroneous, or easily confused. Merriam-Webster is subtle, only adding italicized notations such as, "sometimes offensive" or "nonstand" (nonstandard).

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American Heritage goes further, discussing issues separately in numerous usage notes.

How does a word get into a Merriam-Webster dictionary?

According to the Web site at www.merriam-webster.com/help/faq/words_in.htm, this is one of the questions Merriam-Webster editors are most often asked. The answer is simple: Usage. "Tracking word usage to decide which words to include in the dictionary and to determine what they mean, Merriam-Webster editors study the language as it is used."

How does a word make the jump from the citation file to the dictionary?

The process begins with dictionary editors reviewing groups of citations. It is the definer's job to determine which existing entries can remain essentially unchanged, which entries need to be revised, which entries can be dropped, and which new entries should be added. In each case, the definer decides on the best course of action by reading through the citations and using the evidence in them to adjust entries or create new ones.

Before a new word can be added to the dictionary, it must have enough citations to show that it is widely used. But having a lot of citations is not enough; in fact, a large number of citations might even make a word more difficult to define, because many citations show too little about the meaning of a word to be helpful. A word may be rejected for entry into a general dictionary if all of its citations come from a single source or if they are all from highly specialized publications that reflect the jargon of experts within a single field. To be included in a Merriam-Webster dictionary, a word must be used in a substantial number of citations that come from a wide range of publications over a considerable period of time. Specifically, the word must have enough citations to allow accurate judgments about its establishment, currency, and meaning.

The number and range of citations needed to add a word to the dictionary vary. In rare cases, a word jumps onto the scene and is both instantly prevalent and likely to last, as was the case in the 1980s with AIDS. In such a situation, the editors determine that the word has become firmly established in a relatively short time and should be entered in the dictionary, even though its citations may not span the wide range of years exhibited by other words. The size and type of dictionary also affects how many citations a word needs to gain admission.

Because an abridged dictionary, such as *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, has fairly limited space, only the most commonly used words can be entered; to get into that type of dictionary, a word must be supported by a significant number of citations. But a large unabridged dictionary, such as Webster's Third New International Dictionary, has room for many more words, so terms with fewer citations can still be included.

Change and variation are as natural in language as they are in other areas of human life and Merriam-Webster reference works must reflect that fact. By relying on citational evidence, M-W hopes to keep publications grounded in the details of current usage.

Handy hints

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

PowerPoint 2003 keyboard shortcuts

We all know that we can use the arrow keys rather than the mouse to advance through PowerPoint slides, but there are many other keyboard shortcuts available to help you navigate in your slideshow. Here's a quick list:

- ◆ <F5> (from the Normal view) starts the slideshow from the first slide.
- ◆ <Shift> + <F5> (from the Normal view) starts the slideshow from the current slide.
- ◆ <Esc> ends a slideshow.
- ◆ <number> + <Enter> moves the slideshow to the specific slide number.
- ◆ <Ctrl> + <H> hides the mouse pointer and navigation buttons in the slideshow.
- ◆ <Ctrl> + <P> redisplay the hidden pointer and/or changes the pointer to a pen.
- ◆ <Ctrl> + <A> redisplay the hidden pointer and/or changes the pointer to an arrow.
- ◆ <Tab> moves the slideshow to the next hyperlink in the slideshow.
- ◆ <S> stops or restarts an automatic slideshow.

For a complete list of shortcuts, see the Microsoft PowerPoint help.

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Reset Defaults in MS Office

If you ever mess up any of your Microsoft Office program settings (for example, I had right-to-left language settings enabled in Word and could not figure out how to turn them off), you can select Help, then Detect and Repair to discard all customized settings and restore the defaults. It resets all Office applications, so it is only a last resort solution. But it really does work!

Chapter Reminders

Job news

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the [current chapter website](#) for details.]

If you are looking for a position, remember to check the NEO STC job site. I have gotten a number of calls recently looking for writers, and I always point them to our jobs site at www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php! Remember to update your resumes.

Employers: Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience! See neostc.org/jobs/

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.]

The NEO STC listserv is another way to stay connected with other NEO STC members. It's easy and it does not generate huge amounts of e-mail!

For information on subscribing, see www.neostc.org/official/listserv.htm

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.

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