



# Virginia Council

## Communications Committee Report

June 6, 2003

1. Committee Name. At the last meeting, we decided to consolidate Webmaster and Public Relations. The committee name was not established at that time. I would like to propose the title of communications committee. This is consistent with the Region 3 convention and seems to fit quite well. I have already taken the liberty of updating the web site with this nomenclature.
2. Committee Members. I have added the mail list editors to the points of contact on the council roster. The council communications committee therefore consists of the Chair plus all the newsletter editors, webmasters, and list owners. I plan to contact each of these groups with relevant matters in the future.
3. Section Web Sites. Region 3 has had volunteers looking at the region web sites for current content and general maintenance. I am please to note that all the council's sites came away as meeting the Region 3 standard. I have been using them to gather information for the council roster and web site updates and would like to pass along my personal appreciation for all webmasters. They are all doing an outstanding job.
4. Council Mail List. I updated the council roster and added all the new names to the mail list. I had one bounce; hopefully Sean has taken care of that. Anyone who is not on the list that would like to be added can go to the "Mail List" link on our web page. It will bring you to a form to sign up form our list and each of the section newsletters.
5. SPAM reduction. Hopefully you have noticed a significant decrease in the pleas from African oil ministers sent to your Virginia Council and IEEE alias. I went through both our council site and my local section site and removed all the mailto: references. The Region 3 communications committee brought up this issue and we decided robots (or you may know them as web crawlers) were using these references to develop mail lists for the purpose of generating Spam. I have chosen to make all mail references plain text. The Region 3 communications committee is conducting an experiment to determine the relative effectiveness of this versus the use of a JavaScript to "mung" the address. If their tests show that it is relatively safe, I will eventually encode all my email references with that scheme. This was a huge undertaking that took me several 32-hour weekends. Hopefully it was worth the effort. I will be contacting your webmasters with the results of our experiments.
6. Website Redesign. In researching JavaScript, I learned about "frames". I have fallen in love. You will notice the new look of the site and hopefully find it easier to navigate. Previously I used Dreamweaver templates to update the entire site. This meant that every time I changed a menu I was updating about 150 files. With the use of frames, the date of last edit is more likely to reflect an actual content change instead of just a menu update. It also means that site updates go a lot faster. I also found that I use a single document to replace multiple documents and have few "copies" of the same information. There are some drawbacks to this approach, mostly related to accessibility for handicap users, however I believe my design takes this in account. I would like any feedback if you are having any problems with the new format.
7. Newsletter Production Project. Sean proposed developing a project for improving the

economics of our section newsletters. According to Sean he is spending 23 cents per piece. However he has capital costs of about \$500 to buy the mail list software. If the list is used eight times, the total cost is somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 cents per piece, plus his committee has to stuff the envelopes. The Hampton Roads Section pays 33 cents per piece to have the entire process done commercially. So what do the other sections pay per piece? Is there a problem here we can fix? We identify the problems before we proceed.

8. News Feed. Do you use a news feed reader? What is news feed reader? You can read more at <http://www.feedreader.com/> that is a free version available under the General Public License. Our news feed is available at <http://ewh.ieee.org/r3/vc/rss.xml>. I have to update the information by hand, so there may be some delays, but I can guarantee that there will not be any offers from African oil ministers.
9. Region 3 Newsletter. Butch Shadwell is attempting to assemble a collaborative effort to put together the Region 3 newsletter. You can find a description of the effort under the topic Region 3 Newsletter Production Design at <http://ie3col.eng.uab.edu/twiki/bin/view/R3econ/AgendaDevelopment>. If you would like to participate or submit an article please let me know.
10. List Owners. Mail list owners are reminded that Sean Haynes mail list management utility is available for download from our web site by selecting the link for the "List Utility". *Note: this link was previously "Mail List Utility" but I found it confusing since we also have a link for the "Mail List" and when the HTML wraps it was hard to tell the difference. Apologies if it confuses anyone.* The utility is not fancy but it can help you manage your SAMIEEE updates better.
11. Webmasters. I noticed that some of our web sites still do not have the IEEE in Virginia site listed in their links. I encourage you to include it. If this is more than a mere oversight, please let me know what I can do to improve the usefulness of our site.
12. Feedback. So let me know how the Council Communications Committee can help your communications volunteers.

Respectfully Submitted,

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