

Content Strategy in TPC: How Do We Teach and Train Content Strategists?

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The role of content strategist is growing within TPC and intersects strongly with more established roles such as technical writer and technical editor. At the same time, it boasts skills and workflows all its own, including search engine optimization (SEO), content management, content modeling, and maintaining an editorial calendar. As with many emerging roles within TPC, it is now up to TPC researchers, educators, and practitioners to consider how we fit content strategy into our existing curricula and/or develop new curricula. That is the purpose of this special issue: to zero in on specific pedagogical approaches to the teaching of content strategy.

SPECIAL ISSUE DESCRIPTION

As technical content becomes increasingly important to organizational outcomes within such diverse industries as business, healthcare, education, and government, so too does the role of the technical communicator begin to shift to that of content strategist, or someone who primarily manages content across channels rather than developing technical documentation (Andersen, 2015). Technical communicators are now sometimes responsible for such diverse roles as content management, content auditing, and even search engine optimization (Getto, Labriola, & Ruszkiewicz, 2019; Getto, Labriola, & Ruszkiewicz, 2023). At the same time, we are seeing remarkable growth in jobs devoted to these content-centric skills, with many TPC professionals transitioning directly into roles as content strategists (Flanagan, Getto, & Ruszkiewicz, 2022).

The workflows and skills associated with content strategy are well-documented at this point by TPC researchers including the above and also many others (Albers, 2012; Albers & Mazur, 2003; Andersen & Batova, 2015; Bailie, 2019; Batova, 2018; Batova & Andersen, 2015, 2016; Getto & Labriola, 2016; Pullman & Gu, 2008; Walwema, Sarat-St. Peter, & Chong, 2019). The field even has its first edited collection devoted to content management, an important subset of content strategy (Bridgeford, 2020). There are still a wide variety of workflows and skill sets within content strategy that we don't have pedagogies for, however, including

- Accessibility of content and collaboration with differently abled users
- AI assistance with content development
- Analytics
- Audience analysis
- Content design or the creation of systems and technologies that allow for large-scale content publishing that meets the design requirements of specific genres

- Content modeling or the creation of repeatable frameworks for content publishing and delivery
- Content strategy planning
- Localization and development of content for English as a Second Language (ESL) and multilingual users
- Maintaining an editorial calendar
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Structured authoring
- The use of tools specific to content strategy (e.g., Component-Based Content Management Systems, SEO crawlers, structured authoring architectures such as DITA, etc.)
- UX writing or the strategic development of usable content within user interfaces of software and other applications

If our students and trainees are to remain competitive for jobs in content strategy, then we need to develop sound pedagogical and training approaches to these skill sets and workflows.

We invite article proposals from U.S. and international scholars and practitioners in academic and workplace contexts. We are particularly seeking tutorials, or original research, from practitioners working in industry who have experience training their teams in one or more of the above skill sets and who have validated their training through evaluations, outcomes, or formal data analysis.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The guest editors invite proposals for original research papers, original contributions to technical communication theory, case studies, and tutorials that address issues such as the following:

- Approaches to teaching or training in specific skills that are not historically a part of TPC, such as SEO, analytics, content modeling, or maintaining an editorial calendar
- Approaches to teaching or training in skills that are shared by many roles within TPC but that are also important for content strategy, such as audience analysis, localization, and structured authoring
- Approaches to teaching or training in entire assignments, modules, courses, or even course sequences in content strategy
- Approaches to (and ethics of) teaching and training in emerging technologies such as chatbots and AI-generated text
- Service-learning approaches to teaching and training in content strategy
- Community-based and social-justice-oriented approaches to teaching and training in content strategy
- Experiences practitioners have had training professionals in one or more areas of content strategy within professional organizations and associations

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals should be no more than 400 words in length and sent as an email attachment in .docx format. All proposals should include the submitter's name, affiliation, and email address as well as a working title for the proposed article.

Please include in your proposal the following information:

- Type of proposed article: original research paper, original contribution to technical communication theory, case study, or tutorial
- Connection to CFP: how does the proposal align with the overall aims of this special issue?
- Specific topic as it relates to the teaching of content strategy: what specific aspect of content strategy would the proposed article discuss?
- Method of discussion: how would the proposed article go about addressing this specific topic (i.e., report of empirical research, report of new process, case study of organization, discussion of emerging technology, etc.)?
- Reader takeaway: what specific knowledge would a reader of the proposed article gain by reading it? Also: what would they be able to do (e.g., teach structured authoring) after reading the proposed article?

PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

The schedule for the special issue is as follows:

August 1, 2023– 400-word proposals due

September 1, 2023 – Guest editors return proposal decisions to submitters

January 15, 2024 – Draft manuscripts of accepted proposals due

May 1, 2024 – Final manuscripts due

August 1, 2024 – Publication date of special issue

CONTACT INFORMATION

Completed proposals or questions about either proposal topics or this special issue should be sent to the special issue editors Guiseppe Getto and Suzan Flanagan at getto_ga@mercer.edu.

References

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Bios of Proposed Guest Editors

Dr. Guiseppe Getto is an Associate Professor of Technical Communication and Director of the M.S. in Technical Communication Management at Mercer University (<https://bit.ly/3qPGLfB>). His research focuses on utilizing user experience (UX) design, content strategy, and other

participatory research methods to help people improve their communities and organizations. He has published a co-edited collection, *Content Strategy in Technical Communication*, as well as a co-authored practical book, *Content Strategy: A How-to Guide*, with Routledge. The findings of his research have been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*; *Technical Communication*; *Computers and Composition*; *Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*; *Communication Design Quarterly*; and *Reflections*; as well as conference proceedings for the Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (ACM SIGDOC). His work has also appeared in industry-based publications such as *Intercom* and *Boxes and Arrows*. He has taught at the college level for nearly twenty years and has consulted and formed research and service-learning partnerships with many non-profits and businesses, from technical writing firms to homeless shelters to startups. Read more about him at: <http://guiseppegetto.com>.

Dr. Suzan Flanagan is an Assistant Professor at Utah Valley University where she teaches technical communication, editing, and collaborative communication. Her research focuses on technical and professional communication at the intersections of editorial processes, content strategy, and user experience (UX). She co-edited *Editing in the Modern Classroom* (Routledge, 2019) and is currently researching best practices in mobile UX design and the state of content strategy practitioners. Contact: sflanagan@uvu.edu.