STC

FEBRUARY 2012
Volume 59 Number 1

Technical COMMUNICATION

Journal of the Society for Technical Communication

SPECIAL ISSUE

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION: ZEITGEIST FOR OUR AGE (PART II)

Why People are Choosing Doc-To-Help

Write content once and publish where it is needed. Avoid learning new systems and duplicating work. Doc-To-Help gives you all you need to create and manage content, collaborate, and publish to formats your readers need.

Best support for Microsoft Word

- Write or import Word
- Use the Doc-To-Help toolbar
- Keep everything in Word

(Note that you can choose to use the built-in editor instead)

SharePoint Integration

Manage content, collaborate with teams, track translation, and publish to wikis and libraries.

Impressive Desktop, Web, and Print Outputs

Create one project and get professional quality outputs. No need for reformatting; Doc-To-Help does that for you.

Easy and Automatic from Start to Finish

Doc-To-Help is designed to be as automatic, efficient, and visual as possible. Style galleries, automatic TOC, topics organizer, theme designer, and reusable content features are among the most popular.

Download your FREE Trial @:

www.doctohelp.com

What is a technical communicator? Technical communicators develop and design instructional and informational tools needed to ensure safe, appropriate, and effective use of science and technology, intellectual property, and manufactured products and services. Technical communicators combine multimedia knowledge and strong communication skills with technical expertise to provide education across the entire spectrum of users' abilities, technical experience, and visual and auditory capabilities. For more information visit www.stc.org/story/tc_tw.asp.

The Society for Technical Communication is the largest association of technical communicators in the world. STC is currently classifying the Body of Knowledge for the field and communicating the value of technical communication. Its volunteer leadership continues to work with government bodies and standards organizations to increase awareness and accurate perception of technical communication. Membership is open to all with an interest in technical communication. Visit the STC Web site (www.stc.org) for details on membership categories, fees, and benefits.

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Technical COMMUNICATION

Journal of the Society for Technical Communication

DESIGN AND LAYOUT
EEI COMMUNICATIONS
8945 Guilford Road, Suite 145
Columbia, MD 21046
+1 (410) 309-8200

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE
Stacey O'Donnell
Business Development Manager
Society for Technical Communication
9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300
Fairfax, VA 22031-1803, USA
Direct: +1 (571) 366-1915
Fax: +1 (703) 522-2075
stacey.odonnell@stc.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS
+1 (703) 522-4114

REPRINT PERMISSIONS
TCcopyright@stc.org

Technical Communication (ISSN 0049-3155, permit 0763-740) is published quarterly by the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit educational organization, 9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22031-1803, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Fairfax, VA 22030, USA, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Agreement Number 40045946. Send change of address information and blocks of undeliverable copies to P.O. 1051, Fort Erie, ON 12A 6C7, Canada.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Technical Communication*, 9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22031-1803, USA. Printed in the USA.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS AND CORRESPONDENCE: Notification of change of address for both STC members and nonmember subscribers should be sent to the STC office. Nonmember subscription rates (print version): $400 USD per year, $415 USD in Canada, ($435 USD overseas). Individual issues may be purchased from the Society office for $40 while supplies last.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (ISSN 0049-3155) is published four times a year by the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit educational organization, as a service to the membership.

The mailing address of both the publication and the publisher is 9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300, Fairfax VA 22031-1803. The publisher is Kathryn Burton, and the editor is Menno deJong. The owner of the publication is the Society for Technical Communication. Members pay $75 for a print subscription and nonmembers pay $400.

There were 535 copies of TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION published in August 2011. The average for the preceding 12 months was 500. The paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions for the August 2011 issue were 486; the average for the preceding 12 months was 450. Total distribution for August 2011 was 511. The average for the preceding 12 months was 475. Twenty-five free copies of TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION were distributed by mail in August 2011 and the average number of free copies distributed during the preceding 12 months was 25. Twenty-four copies of TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION were not distributed in August 2010, and the average number of copies not distributed during the preceding 12 months was 25. The percent paid/requested circulation in August 2011 was 95 percent; for the preceding 12 months, percent paid/requested circulation was 95 percent.

VOLUME 59, NUMBER 1
FEBRUARY 2012
ISSN 0049-3155

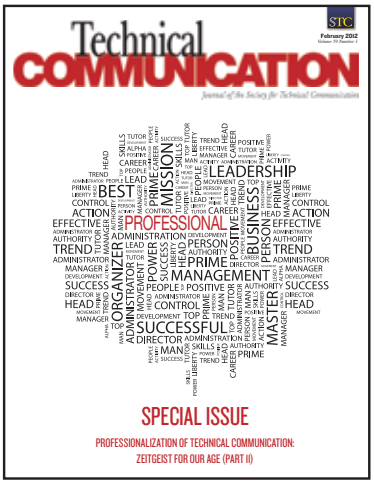
Technical COMMUNICATION

Journal of the Society for Technical Communication

FEBRUARY 2012

Special Issue: Professionalization of Technical Communication: Zeitgeist for Our Age (Part 2)

ARTICLES



DEPARTMENTS

ONLINE ONLY
TECHCOMM.STC.ORG

STC OFFICE 9401 Lee Highway Suite 300 Fairfax, VA 22031-1803 +1 (703) 522-4114 Fax +1 (703) 522-2075

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

About the Journal

Technical Communication is a peer-reviewed, quarterly journal published by the Society for Technical Communication (STC). It is aimed at an audience of technical communication practitioners and academics. The journal's goal is to contribute to the body of knowledge of the field of technical communication from a multidisciplinary perspective, with special emphasis on the combination of academic rigor and practical relevance.

Technical Communication publishes articles in five categories:

- **Applied research** – reports of practically relevant (empirical or analytical) research
- **Applied theory** – original contributions to technical communication theory
- **Case history** – reports on solutions to technical communication problems
- **Tutorial** – instructions on processes or procedures that respond to new developments, insights, laws, standards, requirements, or technologies
- **Bibliography** – reviews of relevant research or bibliographic essays

The purpose of *Technical Communication* is to inform, not impress. Write in a clear, informal style, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Use the first person and active voice. Avoid language that might be considered sexist, and write with the journal's international audience in mind.

Our authority on spelling and usage is *The American Heritage Dictionary,* 4th edition; on punctuation, format, and citation style, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition.

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

Submitting a manuscript to *Technical Communication* for review and possible publication implies that its submission has been approved by all authors, researchers, and/or organizations involved, that the manuscript (or a substantial portion) has not been published before, and that the manuscript is not under review elsewhere.

When using previously published materials (for example, images or text excerpts), authors are responsible for obtaining the permissions needed to reprint copyrighted materials.

The typical article length is between 5,000 and 8,000 words. Exceptions are possible.

Use up to three levels of headings, and indicate them clearly. Do not number headings of sections and subsections.

FIRST-LEVEL HEADING
(all caps, on a line by itself)

Second-level heading
(first word only capitalized, bold, on a line by itself)

Third-level heading (first word only capitalized, bold, followed by two spaces, as part of the first line of the paragraph)

Except for the cover page, remove all identifying information from the manuscript. This includes author names, author affiliations, acknowledgments, and references to work in progress or unpublished manuscripts.

Do not use footnotes. Instead, use author-date citations within the text, and provide a complete list of works cited (labeled "References"). Avoid multiple citations for ideas or approaches unless they demonstrate an evolution in thought or practice.

Check all author-date citations within the text and all entries in the reference list for both accuracy and conformance to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), pp. 169–224.

Submit your manuscript as a double-spaced electronic file with one-inch margins. Do not attempt to mimic the format or layout of a published article. Keep the layout as clean and simple as possible.

Microsoft Word files are preferred. If you use another word processor, a Rich Text Format (RTF) file is also acceptable. Organize your manuscript as follows:

- Page 1: Cover page – Title of the manuscript, a running head, and the names, affiliations, and contact info of all authors
- Page 2: Structured abstract – A summary of the article (maximum 250 words), using the headings "Purpose," "Method," "Results," and "Conclusion"
- Page 3: Up to five keywords and a practitioner's take-away (maximum 100 words) – A bulleted list summarizing the practical implications of the article
- Page 4: Start of the manuscript
- References
- Tables and figures – Start each table or figure on a new page.

Send the manuscript as an attachment to an e-mail message to the editor-in-chief, Menno de Jong (e-mail: TCEditor@gw.utwente.nl).

Review Process

The editor-in-chief will read your manuscript and check its potential suitability for the journal. In the case of a positive outcome, the manuscript will be sent to three independent referees for a double-masked review. On the basis of the referees' recommendations, the editor will send you a decision about the manuscript. There are five possibilities: (1) reject, (2) revise and resubmit, (3) accept with major revisions, (4) accept with minor revisions, and (5) accept as is.

Copyrights

The Society for Technical Communication requires that authors transfer copyrights to STC for articles appearing in *Technical Communication* and grant STC permission to post the articles on *Technical Communication Online* for an indefinite period. STC will grant colleges, universities, and libraries the right to use the articles free of charge for educational purposes.

Professionalization of Technical Communication: Zeitgeist for Our Age Introduction to This Special Issue (Part 2)

Nancy W. Coppola

Abstract

Purpose: To trace the contemporary currents of professionalization for technical communication and their impact on us.

Methods: Analysis of literature, including social media, and conversations with our thought leaders.

Results: A third aspect of establishing professional identity is described: emerging technological, sociocultural, and political currents. The ideological and economic processes were addressed in *Technical Communication* 58, 2011.

Conclusions: Technical communicators are emerging as active players in today's dynamic enterprise with integrated skill sets to navigate rapidly changing work structures. Roadblocks are still present.

Keywords: professionalization, new economy, political currents, body of knowledge

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- Snapshot of the new professional in the new economy allows technical communicators to compare their own capabilities.
- We are all the new professional—those who practice in the workplace and those who practice in the academy.
- We all need to contribute to building a collective body of knowledge that will sustain our current professionalization efforts.

We live in an age of irony.

Technical communication has just begun to attain the status of a mature profession—at the very time that the cultural and economic value of many professions are declining. This paradox, posited by Brenton Faber and Johndan Johnson-Eilola (Kynell-Hunt & Savage, 2003), positions the outdated ideal of traditional professions against a contemporary landscape of our postindustrial age. Gerald Savage (2004), in his conclusion to the important two-volume collection (with Kynell-Hunt) on professional status for technical communication, asserts that a modern industrialized, national profession is increasingly inappropriate to the circumstances and needs of our practice. In our changing, contingent, and globalized world, many say that we have bypassed the traditional notion of profession to arrive at an entirely different view of contemporary professionalization (Evetts, 2011, Hart-Davidson, 2001, Salvo,2006 , Spinuzzi, 2008, Swarts, 2011). This introduction to the second volume of our special issue looks at contemporary professionalization within the context of emerging political currents. Let's continue our discussion of zeitgeist(s) in an age of irony with a look back to the professionalization issues in the last issue (November 2011) devoted to this topic. A short summary of contemporary cultural and economic impact comes next, followed by what such influences mean for our profession.

Professionalization of Technical Communication

Ideological and Economic Processes for Professional Identity (Part 1)

Professions emerge in processes of struggle for market control and closure, their members seeking definition of a coherent body of knowledge and pursuing development of a professional history that will provide a unifying identity; these themes, identified in the literature of technical communication, were the focus of the first in this two-part series. We have made some gains in one important market impact—disciplinary and professional status. For practicing professionals, STC worked with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to create a separate chapter for technical writers in the Occupation Outlook Handbook, an essential reference document for corporations. This action had consequence: For the first time, the BLS has acknowledged technical writers are distinct from other writers, a critical boundary for our autonomy. For professionals working in the academy, the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition successfully lobbied both the National Research Council and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) for disciplinary status. The result was inclusion in the taxonomy of graduate programs by the NCES with one code for all instructional programs in Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing (Classification of Instructional Program Code 23.1303). We have emerging paradigms for a body of knowledge in the online resources of EServer TC Library and the STC-sponsored TCBOK (Technical Communication Body of Knowledge).

What have we learned from Part 1 of our conversation? An historical perspective for professionalization issues in Edward A. Malone's article showed us the first wave of professionalization from 1953 to 1961; Malone finds that our history teaches us to be cautiously optimistic about our achievements. For Malone, the creation of international organizations is evidence of our profession's relevance and growth. Janel Bloch documented the professionalization experiences of technical communication interns. For Bloch, the Body of Knowledge initiative and the process of credentialing will serve as a cohesive force to help early career professionals maintain disciplinary and community integrity as they face challenges of identifiability, status, value, and professional consciousness.

Emerging Technological, Sociocultural, and Political Currents in Professionalization (Part 2)

To make sense of our position as a profession, we need to understand the technological, social, cultural, and political forces that affect our world and transform the way we live and work. Certainly the convergence of technology and globalization has most significantly transformed our professional landscape. "Software is eating the world," proclaims Marc Andreesen (2011) in *The Wall Street Journal*. He notes that we are now six decades into the computer revolution, four decades since the invention of the microprocessor, and two decades into the rise of the modern Internet. At present, he notes, all of the technology required to transform industries through software finally works and can be widely delivered at global scale. We recall here Thomas Friedman's (2005) pronouncement that cheap, ubiquitous telecommunications had finally obliterated all impediments to international competition by flattening corporate structures. Innovators are increasingly independent and networked free agents rather than a vertically integrated conglomerate (Castells, 1996). The nature of work has changed. There is more emphasis on individuals who constantly define their value through self-transformation and rebranding.

Johndan Johnson-Eilola (1996) has been talking about this shift for almost two decades, since he began drawing from Robert Reich's (1991) new classification of symbolic-analytic work as a way to relocate the value of technical communication in the information economy of the 1990s. Symbolic analysts are the top tier of workers, well-educated, who apply systematic thought to identifying and solving problems, typically with new information technologies. Johnson-Eilola rightly saw this framework as a way for technical communicators to play a central rather than a service role as professionals. In Reich's newer work (2002), the economist finds that the people gaining the most value in the new economy are not especially skilled in using information

technologies; rather, the real value they add to the economy is their creativity—their insights into what can be done in a particular medium (e.g., software, finance, law, entertainment, music, physics), what can be done for a particular market, and how best to organize work to bring these two perspectives together. "They are *creative* workers," (52) Reich affirms, reinvigorating Richard Florida's (2002) claim that creativity is to the 21st century what the ability to push a plow was to the 18th century. Reich recognizes that technology increases the value of creative work by allowing it to spread more quickly throughout an organization's network and ultimately to the consumer.

Faber and Johnson-Eilola (2003), in reexamining the central role that universities play in maintaining the professional class, advance Reich's expanded ideas to view technical communication as a knowledge process with methods at the ready for solving problems associated with capitalist economic models. Their new professionals are "valued for their abilities to orient themselves to new problem situations, to come up to speed on technologies and contexts, to apply cross-disciplinary strategies and knowledge in ways that creatively address the current situation" (231).

Clay Spinuzzi (2007) would see these new professionals employed in *distributed work*, which he defines as "polycontextual, crossdisciplinary work that splices together divergent work activities (separated by time, space, organizations, and objectives) and that enables the transformation of information and texts that characterize such work" (266). His study of a telecommunications company shows us how communication is the connection between these distributed work activities. Those who will do this work need to "understand how to make arguments, how to persuade, how to build trust and stable alliances, how to negotiate and bargain and horse-trade across boundaries" (201). Analysis of distributed work environments gives us a postcapitalist economic model in which individual talent displaces systematized tradition.

Within contemporary networks of distributed work, the digital economy of postcapitalism is dramatically changing rhetorical theory and writing practices, according to James E. Porter (2010). The social dynamic of Web 2.0 threatens to overturn the fundamental expert-novice rhetorical model (think of the linear communication model, the Shannon-Weaver model), upon which writing and communication theory has long depended. Porter finds that integrated skill sets for this economy are the abilities to—

- Repackage, redesign, remediate, and redistribute existing information for new audiences and contexts;
- Make and maintain connections (a) between people, and (b) between people and information resources;
- Design social networks that enable productive collaborative thinking and work and that allow for the effective and efficient distribution of information;
- Select and tailor information for small market niches (specific audiences); and
- Design indexing, tagging, filtering, and searching strategies that allow audiences to find needed information (190).

If we listen to the pundits, the new economy provides flexible, mobile labor markets that are made global in scope through ubiquitous, cheap information technologies. And the new professional is an innovative, independent and networked problem-solver who creatively works across disciplines, time, space, and organizations to design solutions.

Are We the New Professionals in the New Economy?

If any profession is responsive to changes in the economy and technological advances, it is technical communication. Indeed, technical communicators have long been boundary-spanners whose knowledge crosses multiple disciplines. Jason Swarts (2011) finds that networking, collaborating, and distributing information are part of the technical communicator's work. His study of 26 experienced technical communicators explores how they construct social connections and network with communication technologies that link people, text, and other technologies. Yvonne Cleary, in this issue, shows the work depicted in the bloggers' comments—blogging itself included—is professionalizing work in a field that has undergone transformative changes due

Professionalization of Technical Communication

to a globalized economy and advances in networked technology. Hillary Hart and James Conklin (2006) confirm the two-way collaborative process in their study of experienced technical communicators. Their survey data show that at least 85% of communicators spend at least 20% of their work time on teams. Some technical communicators spend about the same amount of time planning and facilitating communication processes as they do creating end-user documents and products. Many of the surveyed technical communicators who had ill-defined work roles were nonetheless satisfied, a fact that suggests that technical communication work is becoming less routine and standardized and more flexible and adaptive.

Our flexibility and adaptability come in part from our being a relatively young field that allows us options and decision making not found in more entrenched professions. Our rhetorical approaches are well suited to rapidly changing contexts and priorities. And we are meeting globalization challenges; Bruce Maylath (2010) gives us an example of the globalization trend in the merging of historically distinct roles of technical communicator and translator. While especially noticeable in Europe, the trend is driven in part by the acceleration of the documentation process, such that, with the help of content management systems, technical documents are composed in 30 or more languages simultaneously, thus obliterating translators' earlier distinctions between source text in source language and target text in target language.

We could say, then, that technical communicators are emerging as active players in today's dynamic enterprise composed of flexible labor practices that are, at once, entrepreneurial in sprit and global in domain. And we have the integrated skill sets, or core competencies, to navigate the complexities of rapidly shifting work structures. We have success in the marketplace, a critical factor, as Savage has asserted, to the establishment of a profession.

- Core competency statements are themselves articulated political action (see Savage, 2010).
- These statements extend beyond naive assumptions of market control (see Evetts, 2011).
- These statements displace outdated, paternalistic notions of power with identification of specific talents (see Slack, 2003).

None of these confirmatory statements of professional presence should, however, let us believe that we are home safe. Present are problems with achieving professionalism—internal divisions, a lack of social knowledge, and the absence of commitment to social activism. Saul Carliner, in this issue, explores tensions within technical communication along the competing lines of formal, quasi-, and contraprofessionalism, with the proponents of each claiming theirs is the route to higher status. Carliner cautions that we should not assume that all technical communicators have a unified view of professionalization. Nor do all professionals have the same degree of social vision. Newcomers to the profession often lack social knowledge and therefore the key to active participation and professional status in organizations, according to Dale L. Sullivan, Michael S. Martin, and Ember R. Anderson (2003). They define social knowledge as a tacit consensus about moral values, strategic goals, and practices that suggest preferable actions in new situations (124). Kelli Cargile Cook (2010) reported that her study of doctoral graduates showed many lacked the skills that we might label as social knowledge in their job search as new professionals—the ability to describe practical applications of their work and a business understanding of the organization they were visiting. Marie C. Paretti, Lisa D. McNair, and Lissa Holloway-Attaway (2007), in their study of students participating in a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural team project, found that the students, who were digital natives comfortable in their use of virtual collaboration for social tasks, were not able to transfer those skills to establish social presence and shared goals in a professional distributed work environment. Although we are a young profession, Patricia A. Hallier and Edward A. Malone, in this issue, remind us with their introduction to Israel Light's essay, published more than 50 years ago, that our history shows similar roadblocks to professional status.

If we are to support professionalization, Faber (2002) advises that students need to learn how to be public advocates, working with media, generating public interest, building support, and creating political consensus for their occupational status on local, state, and national levels (330). But Salvo (2011) spotted an instance of positive social activism when he attended the presentation of prestigious dissertation and publication

awards at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)/NCTE ceremony:

> Both committee chairs [Bernadette Longo and Derek Ross] effectively described technical and scientific communication as integral part of the CCCs/NCTE mission, emplacing our work in the larger context of rhetorical scholarship. And there was a palpable moment during Derek's presentation when it became clear he had (therefore our community had) the full attention of the audience….As Derek and Bernadette linked research methods, engagement, activism, and scholarship with literacy, pedagogy, technology, and science, our community's work was well represented and our accomplishments as a community of scholar/teachers clear.

Savage (2010) has said that once we understand something about the processes for professionalization, they become apparent in many of the activities in our own field (164). Such is the example of positive social activism noted by Salvo above. But there are others.

Many scholars have called for a clearly defined professional practice on which to focus any research we might want to conduct. Blakeslee and Spilka (2004) decry the paucity of scholars working on complementary research questions. They note that "too much research in our field is driven by individual interests and inclination rather than by some overarching initiative" (76–77). To enact shared visions and goals, Spilka (2002) proposes creating a new consortium of broad-based democratically elected stakeholders to lead the field toward professional status and encourage research that addresses the practices of practitioners. Apparent processes for professionalization may also be found in Cleary's description in this issue of technical communication bloggers as a "virtual discourse community who share concepts of practice, identity, and learning." Joel Kline and Thomas Barker, in this issue, conducted research on a practitioner and academic community in order to theorize how structured collaboration might minimize the specific professional identity of being an "academic" or a "practitioner" in favor of the negotiated identity of a community member working toward mutual goals. They argue that when a community of practice develops between academics and practitioners, it negotiates the meaning and application of professionalism and provides the basis for professional consciousness.

Several themes emerge from the multiple voices that contributed to this two-volume special issue. We are all the new professionals—those who practice in the workplace and those who practice in the academy. But we cannot presume a unified willingness to accept professionalization among all technical communication professionals. We have a 50-year history devoted to professionalization issues, yet there is exigency to examine these anew in light of emerging political currents. The future is collaborative. Multidisciplinary teams will increasingly solve progressively complex problems of communication. The future is metacognitive. Media have led to enormous amounts of information, and those who can think critically about macro trends and their impact on micro contexts will be best able to chart the direction of distributed communities of practice, such as technical communication professionals. Yet, as individuals, we will participate in integrated professional roles that move beyond narrowly defined identities. No one here advocates embracing the traditional model of professionalism, which maintains centralized control and exclusive ownership over information to the detriment of the public good. What continues to emerge as a transformative power in these conversations is the collaborative construction of a professional body of knowledge. Born out of important research questions and workplace knowledge, a technical communication body of knowledge best captures our collective spirit toward professionalization—zeitgeist in the age of irony.

References

Andreessen, M. (2011, August 20). Why software is eating the world. *The Wall Street Journal*. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903480904576512250915629460.html

Blakeslee, A.M. & Spilka, R. (2004). The state of research in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 13,* 73-92.

Professionalization of Technical Communication

Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society. The information age: Vol. 1. Economy, society and culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Cook, K C.. (2010).Plenary panel. Programmatic trends in times of change. CPTSC 2010. Boise, ID.

Evetts, J. (2011). Sociological analysis of professionalism: Past, present and future. *Comparative Sociology, 10*, 1–37.

Faber, B. (2002). Professional identities: What is professional about professional communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 16*, 306–337.

Faber, B., & Johnson-Eilola, J. (2003). Universities, corporate universities, and the new professionals: Professionalism and the knowledge economy. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. 1* (pp. 209–234). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Florida, R. L. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Friedman, T. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Hart-Davidson, W. (2001). On writing, technical communication, and information technology: The core competencies of technical communication. *Technical Communication, 48*, 145–155.

Hart, H., & Conklin, J. (2006). Toward a meaningful model for technical communication. *Technical Communication, 52*, 395–415.

Johnson-Eilola, J. (1996). Relocating the value of work: Technical communication in a post-industrial age. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 5*, 245–270.

Kynell-Hunt, T., & Savage, G. J. (Eds.) (2003). *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. 1*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Maylath, B.(2010) Plenary panel. Programmatic trends in times of change. CPTSC 2010. Boise, ID.

Paretti, M.C., McNair, L.D. & Holloway-Attaway, L. (2007). Teaching technical communication in an era of distributed work: A case study of collaboration between U.S. and Swedish students. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 16*. 327-352.

Porter, J. E.. (2010). Rhetoric in (as) a digital economy. In S. A. Selber (Ed.), *Rhetorics and technologies: New directions in writing and communication* (pp. 173–197) . Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Reich, R. (1991). *The work of nations*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Reich, R. (2002). *The future of success: Working and living in the new economy*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Savage, G.J. (2004). Tricksters, fools, and Sophists: Technical communication as postmodern rhetoric. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. 2* (pp. 167–193). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Savage, G. (2010). Program assessment, strategic modernism, and professionalization politics Complicating Coppola and Elliot's "Relational Model." In M. N. Hundleby & J. Allen (Eds.), *Assessment in Technical and Professional Communication* (pp. 161–168). Amityville, NY; Baywood.

Salvo, M. J. (2006). Review of Power and Legitimacy in Technical Communication, Volume II: Strategies for Professional Status. Edited by Teresa Kynell-Hunt and Gerald Savage. Amityville, NY: Baywood, 2004. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 15*, 103-108.

Salvo, M. J. (2011). Email posted to Association of Teachers of Technical Writing list. April 10, 2011, 7:23 pm.

Slack, J. D. (2003). The technical communicator as author? A critical postscript. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. 1*. (pp. 193–208). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Spilka, R.(2002) Becoming a profession. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 97–111). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Spinuzzi, C. (2007). Guest editor's introduction: Technical communication in the age of distributed work. *Technical Communication Quarterly 16*. 265-278.

Spinuzzi, C. (2008). *Network: Theorizing knowledge work in telecommunications*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Sullivan, D., Martin, M. S., & Anderson, E. R. (2003). Moving from the periphery: Conceptions of ethos, reputation, and identity for the technical communicator. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. 1* (pp. 115–136). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Swarts, J. (2011). Technological literacy as network building. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 2*, 274–302.

About the Author

Nancy W. Coppola, PhD, is professor of English and director of the Master of Science in Professional and Technical Communication at New Jersey Institute of Technology. She is a Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication, 2010 recipient of the STC Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching, and 2005 and 2006 IEEE Rudy J. Joenk, Jr. Award for excellence in research. Contact: coppola@ADM.NJIT.EDU.

Manuscript received and accepted 26 January 2012.

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession: Perspectives from the Blogosphere

Yvonne Cleary

Abstract

Purpose: To examine how blogs reflect practitioner views of professionalization topics (such as education, professional societies, and value and status).

Method: Content analysis of 10 practitioner blogs, focusing on professional topics of status, education, professional societies, and the effects of technology.

Results: Although the bloggers under study appear to function as an effective community of practice, they are not currently directing their actions or attention toward the traditional goals of professionalization, such as licensing and accreditation.

Conclusions: The latent themes that emerge show that many of the goals of professionalizing (such as standardizing routes into the field and increasing respect for the work) are also concerns of practitioners.

Keywords: professionalization, blogs, content analysis, education, status, professional societies, technology

Practitioner's Takeaway

- Professions, as distinct from regular occupations, exhibit several distinct characteristics, including market closure, a fixed educational path, and high status for practitioners.
- Academics in technical communication have, for some time, sought to examine routes towards professionalization for the field. However, it is not clear that professionalization has been a goal for practitioners.
- The paper examines whether, and in which respects, practitioner blogs discuss topics relevant to professionalization.
- The paper outlines a study that analyzed 708 blog posts from 10 practitioner blogs over a 1-year period.
- The study finds that these bloggers have several concerns that dovetail with goals of professionalization, including seeking higher status for the field, discussing education and career paths, and considering the role and importance of professional societies.
- The study also finds that these bloggers currently function as an effective community of practice, by sharing resources, contributing to the field, and reading and commenting on one another's blogs.

Introduction

The literature on the sociology of professions shows that the main concerns of occupational groups seeking professional status are market control, high status, access to a career path, and a sense of professional identity (e.g., Johnson, 1972; Collins, 1990; MacDonald, 1995; Freidson, 1999; Krejsler, 2005). Professionalization has been a theme of academic studies in technical communication for several years (e.g., Kynell, 1999; Savage, 1999; Staples, 1999; Davis, 2001; Grice, 2002). Kynell-Hunt and Savage's two-volume edited collection *Power and Legitimacy in Technical Communication* (2003, 2005) tackles the historical and contemporary struggle for professionalization, and examines strategies for attaining professional status. Concerns include career progression, women's roles, conceptualizations of the field, and status and legitimacy of technical communication as a profession. Although few studies capture practitioners' attitudes in this regard, professional topics, including certification and educational qualifications, often result in heated debates on discussion forums such as techwr-l. Those who work in the field are dealing with changing technologies, processes, and economic flux, yet, as Gurak and Duin (2004) observe, academics have been "moving at a slower pace, at times seeming unsure about how to proceed" (p. 187). Rude (2009) considers the relationship between academics and practitioners to be "uneasy" but critically important (p. 188). Because practitioners have a closer perspective on our changing field, their understanding of those changes must be articulated.

This study explores how blogs maintained by technical communication practitioners contribute to the conversation on professionalization: It does so by examining how practitioners' views, expressed on blogs, dovetail with concepts of professionalization. The paper begins with an overview of professionalization theory, and compares the technical communication context with three professional concerns: training and education, status and value, and professional organizations. It also examines the effects that information technologies have on occupational groups. It then discusses the methods used to select and mine the 10 blogs under study. The Results section analyzes how the bloggers conceive and represent technical communication, which professional issues emerge, and whether blog conversations suggest an occupational group operating as a profession.

Literature Review

The term *profession* is often used loosely to describe any paid employment. Fournier (1999) refers to the "casual generalization of the notion of professionalism" whereby "secretaries, security personnel, furniture retailers (among others) are all allegedly offering 'professional services'" (p. 281). Professional is also used in opposition to amateur to describe a person whose work "is devoted to an activity, as against one who is only transiently or provisionally so engaged" (Flexner, 2001, p. 152).

In sociological contexts, however, profession has a more precise meaning, to describe a "field of work whose practitioners [have] gained control of their own training, admission to practice and evaluation of standards of performance" (Collins, 1990, p. 13). In this usage, the term refers to an exclusive, elite group of occupations, and to a status that is difficult to attain: "While there may be a general tendency for occupations to seek professional status, remarkably few of the thousands of occupations in modern society attain it" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 141).

In the literature, professions are regularly characterized according to traits of the ideal-typical. This approach is premised on the understanding that "occupations vary in the degree to which they are professionalized" (Hall, 1968, p. 93). Much of the literature "conceives [them] in the image of the service ideal" (Krejsler, 2005, p. 341), where emerging professions aspire to match that ideal. Glazer (1974) makes a distinction between minor and major professions, and others (such as Etzioni, 1969; Krejsler, 2005) differentiate between professions and semiprofessions, categorizing social work, teaching, and nursing in the latter group. Johnson (1972) argues that semiprofessions are not well advanced in the process of professionalization, while occupations such as law, medicine, and architecture are. "Occupations which stand at extreme poles of the process are, therefore, bound to exhibit real differences" (Johnson, 1972, p. 18).

Professions and professionals are not always viewed positively, even though they are often

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

characterized in mostly uncritical terms. Negative traits—of monopolization, hegemony, elitism, and bureaucratization (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Elzinga, 1990)—often lead to difficulties in how the public sees the profession as a whole (for example, the myriad lawyer jokes, based on the perception that legal professionals exploit their clients and the legal system for financial gain). Professions are often class-driven and difficult to join for those outside the middle or intellectual classes. Larson (1977, p. xiv) rejects the notion that "both sociological ideal-types and the self-presentation of professions imply that professions are independent from or at least neutral vis-à-vis the class structure." Freidson (1999, p. 119) agrees that the status of professions is partly caused by "the class origins or aspirations of their members."

Although the trait approach to describing professions and distinguishing them from "mere" occupations has been criticized, it remains the most accepted and, perhaps, sensible means of delineating professions from other occupations. However, a serious drawback is its focus on a result (attributes of the ideal-typical), rather than a process (steps to take toward professionalization). Moreover, it ascribes attributes that even the most high-status professions do not always achieve. In his study of professions and semiprofessions, published in 1968, Hall concluded that "[s]ome 'established' professions have rather weakly developed professional attitudes, while some of the less professionalized groups have very strong attitudes in this regard" (p. 103). Moreover, describing professions generically according to a set of categories disregards the individual differences among practitioners within a profession.

The focus on common characteristics of certain elite occupations also overshadows the unique requirements and characteristics of distinct occupations and has a tendency to "oversimplify the nature of professionalism" (Broadbent, Dietrich, & Roberts, 1997, p. 2).

The following sections work through three significant ideological concepts of professionalization and discuss the technical communication context in relation to each. These concepts are training and education, status and value, and professional institutions. The final section considers the effects information technologies have on professions.

Training and Education

It is difficult, often impossible, to practice in a profession without completing training, thus providing an effective monopoly for those who have. "[O]ccupational skills are regarded as nontransferable—the property of a specific community" (Johnson, 1972, p. 57). Training and education control are also factors in legitimizing a profession because where no agreed curriculum exists, it is difficult to assert the authority of its members. Freidson (1999) refers to the "strategic importance of vocational training for professionalism" (p. 121). Although the length of time taken to train contributes to the prestige of professionals, there is no fixed length of "professional" training. Professionals are prepared to spend time training and developing their skills, often for little or no financial compensation for the training duration, because such training is a career investment (Wilensky, 1964).

Technical communication does require specialized training, but there are no formal course requirements such as those in place for medicine or law, and we have no national accreditation bodies. Davis (2001) calls for a set of standards for education and practice, and suggests that the professional societies must initiate development of these standards. In a field with work as varied and diverse as technical communication, however, standards are difficult to define. Savage (2003) comments that "[m]any people in the field believe we will not be able to achieve professional autonomy unless we are able to require certification for practitioners" (p. 2). Although the STC proposed a certification model at the 2010 STC Summit and is currently advancing this proposal (STC, 2010), the discourse surrounding professionalization of technical communication appears to be driven by the academic community. Yet both practitioners and academics in technical communication complain about a disconnect between the academy and practice.

Reasons for the tension include different work requirements and work environments. Dicks (2002), in the edited volume *Reshaping Technical Communication*, refers to fundamental areas of "cultural difference." For example, academics are rewarded for individual efforts, while the great majority of practitioners work in teams. The work of academics is very different from what practitioners do. Academic work requires reflection, theorizing, and study, while practitioners have intense

deadline pressure and little time for reflection. In the same volume, however, Bosley (2002) emphasizes the common ground: For example, both groups lack status within their larger organizations, work within hierarchical structures, depend on research findings to validate their work, and must keep abreast of changing trends and technologies. She acknowledges that traditional academic perspectives can cause resentment among practitioners: "Unfortunately, although academics rarely define themselves as practitioners, they often attempt to influence the practice of technical communication. Doing so can cause some resentment, especially when academics have never held jobs in non-academic contexts" (p. 33). Her solution sees academics engaging in practice to increase their credibility.

Conflicts about training requirements are also established in the research. Bernhardt (2002) cites the industry preoccupation with narrow technical skills, notably software packages such as FrameMaker and RoboHelp. Johnson-Eilola (1996) is troubled by the focus on teaching skills in technical communication programs, which, he argues, leaves technical communication in a "relatively powerless position […] Responding to the demands of industry, almost by definition, disempowers technical communicators" (p. 247).

Status and Value

The capacity for professionals to make money in their work, commensurate with the status of the occupation, is an intrinsic, if often unarticulated, goal of professionalization. Professions with higher status tend to attract higher salaries for their practitioners. Parsons (1954) concluded that money must be a useful instrument, and perhaps a final arbiter, in measuring the status of an occupation. Financial rewards notwithstanding, professionals are valued for their contributions to organizations and to society, and financial compensation is rarely the subject of discussions about value. More important is the perceived value and status of the field and respect for practitioners.

The status of technical communicators within organizations is complicated by the obscurity of the role. Light, in a 1961 article, asks "What difference should it make to the technical writer whether he or she 'be considered a member of a 'trade;' a 'craft,' or a 'profession?'" He responds with this elucidation: "What we are called makes a big difference. In the world of work and in the process of earning a living, the words 'profession' and 'professional' represent preferred social status, high income, and specialized competence" (1961, p. 4).

Many studies of the technical communication profession have dealt with the value writers add to a product or service and the importance of demonstrating that value (e.g., Hackos, 1997; Carliner, 1998), yet the technical communicator frequently feels deep-seated inferiority toward, or does not feel respected by, subject-matter experts or other coworkers. One participant on an online discussion forum reported: "a great generalization is to say that being a technical writer is like being a horse on *Animal Farm*. Everyone knows we are necessary, but we aren't as 'good' as the pigs" (Wilson & Dyke-Ford, 2003, p. 148). Similarly, Lee and Mehlenbacher (2000) concluded from their study of the relationship between writers and subject-matter experts (SMEs): "Several writers expressed the sentiment that the SMEs did not respect the writer as an important element in the product development process" (p. 546).

These viewpoints underscore the sometimes problematic relationships among technical communicators and their colleagues in other fields. One solution posited by Johnson-Eilola (1996) to counter status anxiety is for technical communicators to operate as "symbolic-analytic," rather than support, workers. Symbolic-analytic work relies on "skills in abstraction, experimentation, collaboration, and system thinking to work with information across a variety of disciplines and markets" (pp. 245–246). This description is an appropriate, relevant reconceptualization of the value technical communicators can add in an era of user-generated content, universal information overload, and content farms (companies that hire freelance writers, who may not be specialists, for low pay to write large amounts of textual content, based on popular searches).

Status may also be affected by gender balance in a field. In terms of perceived gender-specific characteristics, power and authority, values central to traditional professions, are often referred to as "male" in orientation, perhaps making professions more accessible to men. "Gentlemanly" behavior was seen as a primary indicator of integrity (MacDonald, 1995), while "female" qualities such as care and responsibility were undervalued in traditional professions. This

situation persists. In the legal profession, for example, female traits such as empathy lead women to career paths in family law rather than domains such as corporate law, requiring male traits such as "ruthlessness, assertiveness and endurance" (Bolton & Muzio, 2008, p. 286). Although technical communication in support of heavy engineering and military activities was traditionally a male-dominated field, increasingly technical communication in support of software attracts women. In the preface to *Writing a Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators On and Off the Job*, a collection of stories of technical communicators, Savage and Sullivan (2001) write that "[r]eflecting the state of the technical communication field at present, many of these narratives are situated in computer-related industries, and most of the authors are women" (p. xxv). Bolton and Muzio (2008) suggest that "more feminized specialisms may view professionalism as a welcome source of legitimacy and as an attractive path for upward mobility" (pp. 289–290), possibly because, as Durack (1997) argues, society has difficulty "considering as 'work' a productive activity that is typically assigned to women" (p. 255).

Professional Institutions

Modern professions are distinguished by the establishment of institutions, organizations, or communities that enhance and promote their visibility and reputation and provide services for members. Such organizations usually serve the public interest to some degree, in addition to serving members (Flexner, 2001). Professional organizations also play a key role in driving and changing the profession (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002). Codes of ethics and oaths sworn on entering a profession often explicate terms of altruism and service to the community (Freidson, 1999).

Several technical communication professional organizations exist, the best known of which are the STC (Society for Technical Communication) and the IEEE PCS (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Professional Communication Society). Although ostensibly international, both organizations serve a primarily North American audience. Several institutions also operate nationally, such as tekom in Germany and the ISTC (Institute for Scientific and Technical Communicators) in Britain. The STC has recently launched Project Phoenix to reinvent the organization, following a decrease in membership and some discontent about the costs and benefits for members. Project Phoenix incorporates the redesign of the Web site and the development of a community portal (STC, 2011). A further initiative is the Body of Knowledge wiki, which attempts to develop a repository of resources for technical communicators in a single portal (Coppola, 2010). Other technical communication communities include the online Content Wrangler LinkedIn group, which has more than 6,500 members.

Professions in the Information Age

Broadbent et al. (1997) note that professional projects develop in complex socioeconomic contexts. Technical communicators are experiencing, in the early years of the 21st century, an unprecedented socioeconomic context. Although people have been writing about technology for several centuries, mass production of personal computers in the 1980s led to a much greater need for texts to explain technology to nontechnical users (O'Hara, 2001). More recently, publishing phenomena such as the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis, podcasts, discussion forums, videos, and blogs have utterly changed content production processes. These technological transformations have affected most occupations to some degree. Hanson (2009) examines the perceived threat e-learning poses for traditional academics; Lewis, Kaufhold, and Lasorsa (2010) comment on the threat posed to journalism by citizen journalism; and Bauer (2009) studies the need for regulation of cybermedicine.

For technical communicators, however, whose job is to explain technology and to produce content, these transformations are even more significant. Almost anyone, anywhere, can publish and access information. Yet, much content is shoddily produced, and "unprofessional," leading to the phenomenon Keen (2007) describes as the "cult of the amateur." A related trend, "crowd sourcing," sees the so-called crowd (comprising any online user who wishes to contribute) creating and contributing to content and products, usually for free, resulting in user-generated content. Crowd sourcing is used extensively by corporations to support products, especially in localization and customer support. Rushkoff (2009) is critical of the phenomenon: "The 'open-source' ethos encouraging people to work on software projects for free has been

reinterpreted through the lens of corporatism as 'crowd sourcing'—meaning just another way to get people to do work for no compensation" (p. 199). Outsourcing and offshoring, by-products of work distribution, are a further threat to modern professions. Paretti, McNair, and Holloway-Attaway (2007) argue that "outsourcing, offshoring, and globalization, enabled by a dynamic network of communication technologies, have altered the physical and social landscapes of our working lives" (pp. 327–328).

Conversely, the information age has exciting opportunities for professions too. For example, telemedicine enables remote interaction via telephone, between physician and patient. Herrmann (2006) foresees telesurgery, remote surgery performed using robotics, as enabling surgical operations that are currently not possible. Myriad modes of collaboration, previously unimaginable, are now routine. For example, teams in the workplace regularly involve several worksites. Work increasingly takes places in distributed environments, facilitated by technology. Distributed work directly affects how writers produce content, and demands new types of flexibility from writers (Slattery, 2007). Many schools are now also offering a virtual team experience to their students, exploiting information and communications technologies to manage the process.

The abundance of unfiltered information anyone can access, unchecked and often unbidden, must be an opportunity for technical writers, often called information professionals, who are skilled in designing information that is easy to access and use. Hart-Davidson (2001) explains the increasing importance of technical communication. "[M]ore and more, the exchange value of an information product is associated with aspects of quality that technical communicators have the expertise to look after: customization for specialized or niche audiences, ease of use, and scalability" (p. 145). Bard and Söderqvist (2002) also argue that new technologies are leading to a paradigm shift from capitalism to "informationalism," where a new elite, the "netocracy," become the ruling class. "The decisive factor governing where in the hierarchy [of the netocracy] an individual ends up … [depends on] their access to and capacity to absorb, sort, overview, generate the necessary attention for and share valuable information" (p. 117). Technical communicators, given their role as content producers, should be key operators in this netocracy.

Methodology

Blogging (web logging) has become an important discussion medium online. Blogs are "frequently updated websites where content (text, pictures, sound files, etc.) is posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1409). Blog posts tend to be discursive, and most blogs enable readers to comment on posts, thus encouraging dialogue. Blogrolls (lists of links to other blogs) also create a sense of community among bloggers (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Schmidt (2007) calls the blogosphere a "clustered network of interconnected texts" (p. 1409). A growing number of subgenres of blogs are emerging, and discussing generic blogging media is becoming as unfocussed as discussing, for example, television or newspapers (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). Rather, blogs are increasingly used as channels for expert communication about a specific topic or field.

The use of professional technical communication blogs for expert communication is examined in this paper. The following sections outline the selection process, limitations of the study, and coding of posts.

Blog Selection

I reviewed more than 30 technical communication blogs, found through searches on Google, Technorati, and Alexa, and through a list of the 25 most influential technical communication bloggers identified by MindTouch (a company that developed the MindTouch Technical Communication suite). I selected 10 blogs for analysis based on four criteria:

- Each blog was written by a technical communication practitioner. Although academics in the technical communication field also blog, this study's focus is on practitioner perspectives.
- Each blog was active during the period studied (January to December 2010).
- Each blog included posts on topics relevant to professionalization.

- Each blog selected was also part of an attempt to maintain a gender balance and geographical diversity.

I emailed each blogger to request permission to use the blog in the study, outlining how the data would be used and presented. All of the bloggers I contacted gave enthusiastic approval for their blogs to be used.

Limitations of the Study

The majority of popular technical communication blogs are written by men based in North America. Only 5 women rank among the 25 most influential technical communication bloggers identified by MindTouch, and just 7 bloggers from that list are based outside the United States. In their study of A-list bloggers, Davidson and Vaast (2009) identified only one female blogger among the most frequently appearing technical blogs.

I did not analyze microblogging sites (the best known of which is Twitter), because broadcast length is limited, and therefore the medium is more suited to soundbites than discussions. Several popular and well-subscribed blogs were not included because the content was not relevant to the focus of this paper. For example, although RJ Jacquez is first on the MindTouch list of most influential technical communication bloggers, Jacquez was an Adobe product evangelist during the period of study, and his blog was explicitly corporate and product specific. The Content Wrangler blog has a very clear focus on technology developments and therefore was not used for this study. The Cherryleaf blog, likewise, although ranked fourth in the list of most influential blogs, focuses on technical communication services, and therefore was not used for this study.

Although I strove to be objective and to use accepted techniques of qualitative research, this study represents my interpretations of blog categories, and uses a limited pool of just 10 blogs, as listed in Table 1 in the Results section of this paper. The study is necessarily exploratory and qualitative because the pool of posts on professional topics is limited (as Table 2, also in the Results section, shows, just 18% of all posts focus on issues relevant to professionalization). Although I sought permission from bloggers to examine their posts, I did not speak to the authors about their intentions or about the meaning of posts because the focus was on how the blogs themselves reflect professional topics.

Coding of Posts

Following Mayring (2000), I used both my literature review and a grounded process to define the categories for study. Mayring states that researchers should:

> formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion the material is worked through and categories are tentative and step by step deduced. Within a feedback loop those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability.

The existing literature increased my understanding of the field and the main themes of professionalization in general, together with specific issues for technical communication, while through immersion in the blog posts, I was able to determine the most important concepts emerging from the blogs. The individual blog posts and the associated responses comprised the "units of analysis" (Neuendorf, 2002). The focus of the analyses was the content of messages, rather than characteristics of the online form they take.

I used Weft QDA, an open-source qualitative analysis tool, to code each of 708 messages, assigning each post to one of the seven main categories and 54 subcategories depending on the content of the post. To increase reliability, I used a cycle of interpreting, reflecting on, and reinterpreting the data, as recommended by Kvale (1996). The main categories identified were

- Work practices, including subcategories such as document genres, structured authoring, information design and interviewing.
- Trends, including subcategories relating to work practices, work environments, and technology.
- Management, including subcategories such as leadership, quality, and content management.
- Technology, including the subcategories of social media, software, and blogging.
- Profession, including subcategories such as job roles, professional organizations, and status.
- Networking, including subcategories such as resource sharing and details of conferences.

Table 1: Blog Details

Blogger	Blog title and URL	Gender	Blog description
Sarah O'Keefe	Scriptorium Author Archive: Sarah O'Keefe *http://www.scriptorium.com/author/sarah/*	Female	**Sarah O'Keefe** writes on the corporate blog for Scriptorium, a content management company based in North Carolina, USA. She is ranked fourth on MindTouch's list. She writes primarily about trends, structured authoring, and management, but also examines the value and quality of documentation.
Ivan Walsh	I Heart Technical Writing *http://Ihearttechnicalwriting.com*	Male	**Ihearttechnicalwriting.com** is a blog by an Irish technical writer, Ivan Walsh, who lives in China. He is ranked 19th on MindTouch's list. In addition to writing about technology developments and offering writing tips, he posts on topics such as working from home, the value of technical writing, and gender issues.
Tom Johnson	I'd Rather Be Writing *http://idratherbewriting.com*	Male	The **I'd rather be writing blog** is run by Tom Johnson, living in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Johnson also posts podcasts and video interviews. He is ranked second on MindTouch's list. In addition to technology developments, Johnson discusses the profession and reflects on professional issues in many posts.
Anne Gentle	Just Write Click *http://justwriteclick.com/*	Female	**Justwriteclick** is maintained by Anne Gentle, a social media consultant and author based in Austin, Texas, USA. She is ranked sixth on MindTouch's list. Her blog posts focus on social media, but she also writes regularly about community and user engagement.
Sarah Maddox	Ffeathers – A Technical Writer's Blog *http://ffeathers.wordpress.com/*	Female	**Ffeathers—a technical writer's blog**, is written by Sarah Maddox, a technical writer working in Australia. She is ranked eighth on MindTouch's list. She posts regular blog entries, primarily focusing on software.
Tristan Bishop	Knowledge Bishop's Mission http://knowledgebishop.com/	Male	The **Knowledge Bishop's Mission** blog is maintained by Tristan Bishop, a digital strategist at Symantec, and based in Florida, USA. He is ranked 20th on MindTouch's list. His posts examine content management, customer service, and reflect on his work. Bishop's blog is active only from June 2010, but was included in the study because of the relevance of posts.
Gordon McLean	One Man Writes *http://www.onemanwrites.co.uk*	Male	**One Man Writes** is a blog by technical writer Gordon McLean, who lives in Scotland. He is tenth on MindTouch's list. McLean writes primarily about technology and writing, but sometimes uses his blog to reflect on his career and on the technical communication profession.

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

Blogger	Blog title and URL	Gender	Blog description
Bill Swallow	It's All Relevant: A Multi-topic Blog by Bill Swallow *http://techcommdood.com*	Male	The **It's All Relevant** blog is maintained by Bill Swallow, a technical writer based in New York, USA. He is ranked 12th on MindTouch's list. His blog posts focus on social media, technology, and technical communication professional organizations.
Larry Kunz	SDI Blog: Entries for "Larry Kunz" *http://www.sdicorp.com/Resources/Blog/articleType/AuthorView/authorID/24/lkunz.aspx*	Male	**Larry Kunz** writes a blog on the SDI corporation website, and is based in North Carolina, USA. His blog posts discuss trends, career development, and technology. Although not ranked by MindTouch, Kunz is a regular blogger and contributor to other blogs.
Colum McAndrew	The Robo Colum(n) *http://www.cmcandrew.com/robocolumn*	Male	**Colum McAndrew** writes a blog called RoboColum(n). He is based in the United Kingdom, and is ranked 15th on MindTouch's list. Although his blog focuses on developing help content, he also regularly explores career issues.

- Miscellaneous, including posts relating to humor, advertising, or personal issues.

Table 2 provides a complete list of categories and subcategories. Naturally, there was some overlap in discussions, and in several posts more than one topic was discussed, or topics interacted with one another. For example, a post discussing agile development might also consider its effect on documentation quality. Where a blog post discussed more than one topic, I categorized the post according to its overarching theme. The categories of primary interest for this paper are profession and networking, though other categories are also relevant to the discussion.

Results

Of the 10 blogs studied, 3 are written by women and 7 by men. Six bloggers are located in the United States, one in Australia, one in Scotland, one in China, and one in England. All are English native speakers and write in English. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the blogs examined, including the name and gender of each blogger, together with blog title, URL, and a brief description of the content along with the blogger's status on MindTouch's list of most influential bloggers.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of categories and subcategories, and the total number of posts within each category. It also shows the percentage of posts dealing with each main category. As Table 2 shows, the categories with most posts are Work Practices (25%), Technology (23%), and Networking (22%).

The number of posts categorized as Work Practices emphasizes that the day-to-day work of technical communicators (writers, graphic designers, and information designers, for example) takes precedence in these online discussions. Software tools, and increasingly, new media, also continue to be a talking point for technical communicators in such public forums. Davis (2001) labels technical communicators "tool jockeys," and contends that the preoccupation with tools is an obstacle to attempts to professionalize the field. It may be the case, however, that tools discussions are popular because they are generic and do not reveal sensitive corporate information. Moreover, tools discussions on these blogs tend to offer advice and procedural information. This desire to disseminate information signifies a commitment both to the community of readers, and to the wider profession, and coincides with Lenhart and Fox's (2006) findings; their telephone

Table 2: Categorization of Blog Posts

Category	Subcategory	Number of posts	Total	Percentage
Work practices	Writing, style, language	39		
	Information design	34		
	Work strategies	21		
	Teamwork and collaboration	16		
	Customer service and audience awareness	13		
	Document genres	12		
	Structured authoring	10		
	Graphic design	6		
	Interviewing	5		
	Culture and localization	4		
	Editing	4		
	Communication	4		
	Usability	3		
	Marketing	2		
	Intellectual property	1		
			174	25%
Trends	Work practice trends	11		
	Content strategy	8		
	Technology trends	8		
	User-generated content	7		
	Agile development	6		
	Automatically generated content	4		
	Offshoring and outsourcing	2		
			46	6%
Management	Project management	11		
	Leadership	4		
	Quality	3		
	Content management	3		
			21	3%
Technology	Social media and new media	87		
	Software	57		
	Blogging	19		
			163	23%

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

Category	Subcategory	Number of posts	Total	Percentage
Profession	Job roles	29		
	Professional organizations	18		
	Career paths	17		
	Value and status	14		
	Skill-set	10		
	Reflective practice	9		
	Training and certification	6		
	Professional identity	4		
	Gender	4		
	Job titles	4		
	Development of profession	4		
	Academy vs. practice	2		
	Altruistic service	2		
	Salaries	2		
			125	18%
Networking	Resource sharing	62		
	Details of conferences/events attended	44		
	Information about future conferences/events	29		
	Details of own presentations/work	20		
			155	22%
Miscellaneous	Humor	14		
	Advertising	6		
	Competition	2		
	Personal	2		
			24	3%
Total		708	708	100%

survey of bloggers found that 64% of respondents blog to share practical information with readers. In addition, because bloggers tend to be enthusiastic new media users, they regularly discuss the act of blogging and also examine and exploit trends in new media. Lenhart and Fox (2006) agree that "[b]loggers are avid consumers and creators of online content. They are also heavy users of the internet in general" (p. v).

It may seem surprising that intellectual property does not appear to be a concern of these practitioners. After all, for academics "one of the hottest issues surrounding online learning continues to be intellectual property" (Gurak & Duin, 2004, p. 191). Perhaps intellectual property is less a gray area for practitioners than for university employees (where the fair use doctrine applies, and content can potentially be owned by either the university or the individual). However, it is

likely that intellectual property is simply a bigger issue than these blog discussions suggest.

Although discussion of professional identity is limited, these bloggers do engage in reflection on their careers. The changing nature of work is a strong theme; many posts discuss Web 2.0 technologies, the death of manuals, online delivery, content strategy, agile environments, and the impact of structured authoring. Gender is discussed in just four posts.

Within the Networking category, bloggers share details of events, regularly reporting back from conferences. This use of blogs is further evidence of the community-driven function of many blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).

In addition to pragmatic work discussions, bloggers also consider explicitly professional topics. The following discussion examines posts about professional topics that emerge on the blogs, focusing on education and career path, status and legitimacy, the impact of technology, and professional organizations and community.

Education and Career Path

Discussions of education on these practitioner blogs are infrequent. As Figure 1 shows, only six posts are explicitly education focused.

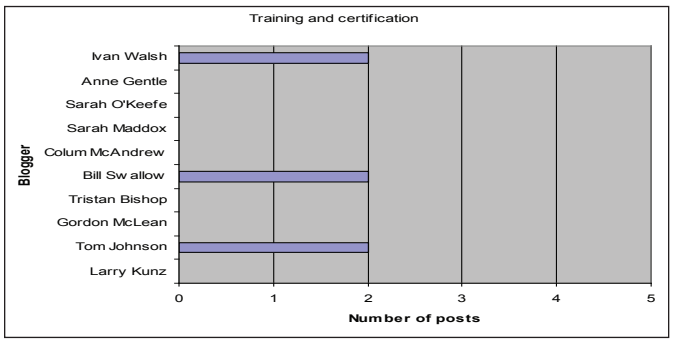


Figure 1. Posts about Training and Certification

These posts agree that academic courses are important both for the content they provide and for the development of the field. Certification is seen as a positive development, in contrast to the thrust of many similar discussions on techwr-l. (For example, contributors to a techwr-l thread on the subject of the STC certification model from July 2010 are divided on its value. Many contributors fear that certification will devalue their experience.) Tom Johnson suggests that "certification will push us more into a common path to the profession." Bill Swallow agrees that "much of the certification opposition is unfounded. That is, most voicing opposition are doing so from a very subjective if not emotional standpoint."

A comment responding to his post argues for certification as a means of moving toward professional status: "There's a philosophical purpose behind certification that most people seem to be overlooking. Certification says that technical communication is a profession, not a task." A further comment reflects on how certification can counterpoint the lack of visibility of the field:

> Nobody leaves school saying, "I want to be a technical writer." Ha ha, well that one is probably true. But if I'd known about the career I would have chosen it then, because I think it's an awesome job. Certification may help make people aware of this choice sooner.

As Figure 2 shows, 17 posts discuss career paths for technical writers. Of these, six posts explicitly reflect on the influence of education and training. Tom Johnson considers the intersections of education and career path in many posts.

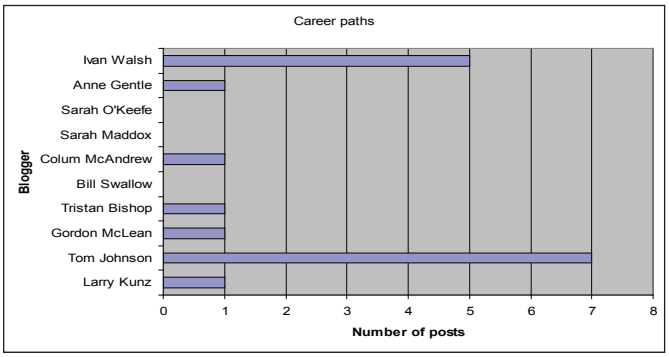


Figure 2. Posts about Career Paths

Technical communication is often characterized as an obscure field, and therefore not a subject that students are likely to select as a major at university. The following extract from Tom Johnson's blog summarizes a survey on careers:

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

> The trend in the answers is that no one sets out to be a tech writer, you just fall into it. And even if you wanted to be a tech writer, there are few degree programs in tech comm. And even if there are degrees in tech comm, you probably already have writing skills, so why do you need to get a degree in what you already know?

He suggests that this problem is in part due to the location of technical communication in English departments:

> Technical communication should not be taught in the context of an English department, because tech comm is about adding business value to customers, about developing relationships with users. This is not understood or encouraged in traditional English curricula.

Johnson outlines how his links with a local university enabled him to visit the campus and talk to students about his work, therefore increasing the profile of technical writers and enhancing students' understanding of the requirements of the role. Fostering links between practitioners and academia is an explicit goal of many academic studies (e.g., Bernhardt, 2002). However, the tension between the interests and values of academics compared to practitioners is also alluded to on Johnson's blog:

> Tech comm academics may be victims of academic traditions and culture themselves. To keep their jobs, academics must publish in journals using isolating academic discourse. They must target high-profile, peer reviewed journals that restrict access based on models of exclusivity and budgetary constraints. They can't connect too fully with practical matters of the workplace and still maintain their validity in a traditional university curriculum (otherwise they'll appear to be too vocational).

The above sentiment echoes Dicks' (2002) articulation of the "cultural difference" between academics and practitioners. The lack of conversation between academics and practitioners on the blogs examined is quite striking. Apart from a small number of comments responding to blog posts, there is no academic presence on these blogs. No academic is listed on the MindTouch list of the 25 most influential technical communication bloggers—all are practitioners. In other fields, such as economics and law, many influential bloggers work in academia. Although the bloggers in this study regularly reference blogs, websites, and occasionally white papers, they rarely reference academic journal articles or even academic blogs.

Status and Value

The status of technical communicators in organizations, and the perceived lack of respect for their work, has been a source of frustration for technical communicators for decades. As Figure 3 shows, status and value are themes explored on many of the blogs.

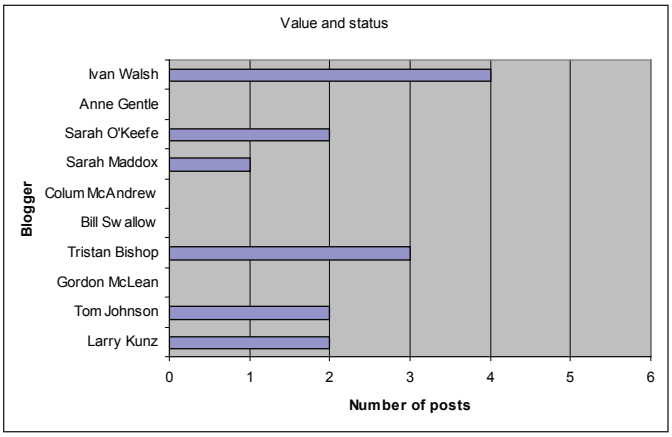


Figure 3. Posts about Status and Value

The comments that follow point to the frustration that many bloggers feel at the lack of respect for their work:

> Many technical writers feel unloved. They feel they don't get the respect they deserve. I hear this on LinkedIn and Facebook: 'people don't respect the work I do.'
> (Ivan Walsh)
> The need to be respected can be a core motivation for Technical Communicators, not to mention a source of daily frustration…
> (Tristan Bishop)
> [F]requently, documentation is still seen as a "tick in the box," a necessary evil or, even worse, an

> apathetic acceptance even though no-one else in the company quite knows why we exist other than the fact that we do.
> (Gordon McLean)

Status and value are seen to be closely related. Emphasizing the value technical communicators bring to a project is seen as a way of increasing the status of the field. Ivan Walsh describes his experiences of helping to establish technical writing departments: "One of the problems in getting the dept setup was communicating the value that the tech docs dept could offer other business units and also how it would save them money."

Sarah O'Keefe suggests that technical writers need strategic thinking when articulating the importance of technical writing:

> Instead of arguing that others are not worthy/can't write/always forget to spell-check, technical communicators need to focus on bringing value to their organizations. This requires a reassessment of the technical communication responsibilities from the top down; that is, strategically.

Several bloggers compare the status of technical communicators, negatively, with the perceived status of other related professions. Tom Johnson wonders why "whereas tech comm is generally under-appreciated or ignored, usability is on a higher level of appreciation." A post by Ivan Walsh entitled "How to get out of technical writing and into higher paid jobs" describes how technical communicators' salaries have been frozen, and lists the following among the higher paid jobs: proposal writer, web content manager, information architect, white paper writer, and medical writer.

Uncertainty about job titles is expressed by several writers. Tom Johnson observes "growing discontent with the title 'technical writer'" and a trend toward moving to other titles such as technical communicator, information developer, information designer, and content strategist. However, one reader of Bill Swallow's blog argues that the "technical writer" label is gaining currency and has recognition value.

> Why do we continue to try to find names for ourselves? Technical Communicator, User Experience Coordinator, Information Architect. We finally get an entry in the Bureau of Labor Statistics after how many years, and we still don't know who we are. People are looking for technical writers, it's a standard, so call us technical writers! We're still going to do a ton of different jobs, let's use our energy on something useful.

Bloggers are not entirely negative about their status and roles. Several have positive views both on the work, and on how writers can change perceptions. For example, Tristan Bishop argues that the value conundrum can also be viewed as an opportunity: "The technical communication profession collectively peers through a window of opportunity.[…] If you are a technical communication professional, you have an incredible opportunity to infuse value into your brand."

As a means of gaining respect for their work, Sarah Maddox advises writers to demonstrate how documentation is integral to the product: "It's a bit of a balancing act: some developers think you're wasting their time. That's not unique to the agile environment though. Not everyone is in on the secret that documentation is actually at the centre of the universe  "

An alternative take from Tristan Bishop claims that we need to seek the respect of our audience, rather than of our colleagues (who should respect our character, but are not qualified to judge our work):

> And, after two full months, I felt that my co-workers had come to respect my character. But it took two full years before I felt like they respected my work. The turning point came when a prospect mentioned high documentation quality as a driver in their decision to partner with us. At that moment, I finally understood: *It wasn't the developer's respect that mattered: It was that of my AUDIENCE*!
>
> I wasn't hired to please the developers, **I was hired to help the reader**. And, unless you are writing API Documentation, your subject matter experts are simply NOT your audience.

Although technical communication career paths are characterized by diversity, Spilka (2002) argues that this diversity need not be seen as a weakness of the field. Although these blogs reflect much confusion about the specific role of a technical communicator, both Spilka

(2002) and Anscheutz and Rosenbaum (2002) argue that the variety of job roles is positive and demonstrates an expansive, rather than disparate, occupational field. They see diverse job roles as a signifier of the expanding definition of technical communication:

> The transition to expanded roles often involves new job titles that do not immediately bring to mind traditional technical communication activities. However, title changes do not mean that individuals in these new roles cannot still feel a kinship with technical communication in spirit, allegiance, and perspective. (p. 150)

Likewise, Jablonski (2005) and Johnson-Eilola (1996) have both argued that although career paths are not clearly defined in technical communication, this lack does not necessarily symbolize professional stagnation. Other factors, such as work patterns in the knowledge economy, influence career paths.

Impact of Technology on the Field

As Table 2 shows, technology is discussed in 23% of the posts. The majority of these posts offer procedural information for users of software and social media. In addition, posts discussing trends in the field also look at the impact of technology. Table 3 shows the trends most actively discussed by bloggers.

Because they are also professionally involved in their subject of discussion, the bloggers in this study understand better than academics the reality of perceived threats such as automatically generated content, user-generated content, and offshoring. Although offshoring is the explicit focus of only 2 posts, it is mentioned in 47 of the 708 posts, demonstrating how much of a concern it is for these bloggers. Bloggers are also concerned about how user-generated content will affect their jobs in the future. The related phenomenon of "content farms" is indicated as a further threat. In addition to using her blog to discuss social media and documentation, Anne Gentle has published a book on the subject, *Conversation and Community: The Social Web for Documentation*. She explores the controversy of content farms in one blog post:

> Are content farms cluttering the web and driving down writer's pay? Or is there an entrepreneurial opportunity here that offers a low barrier to entry for content creators any where to earn pay for populating the web with content that's already being searched for?
>
> I think that a lot of these folks making money by paying writers almost nothing to "create content" will be gone in a year or two. There are too many "writers" and too much "content" already.

Many bloggers recognize that new media need not pose a threat, and posit positive suggestions as to how their potential can be exploited, focusing on the variety of skills that technical communicators possess and can leverage in their work. Solutions proposed by the bloggers demonstrate strategic thinking about the future of technical writing. There is growing consensus on the opportunities that exist for technical writers to "curate" content produced by users. Anne Gentle, in a post entitled "Content curation – a manifesto," suggests

> professional writers and technical writers should consider a move towards [content curation]. We already search for and find the best content, sift through loads of content, discard poor content, and publish the most worthy content whenever a software release goes out.

Sarah O'Keefe agrees that "user-generated content also offers an opportunity for technical writers to participate as curators—by evaluating and organizing the information provided by end users." However, Tom

Table 3. Trends Affecting the Field

Trend	Number of posts
Work practice trends	11
Content strategy	8
Technology trends	8
User-generated content	7
Agile development	6
Automatically generated content	4
Offshoring and outsourcing	2
Total	46

Johnson is concerned that content curation is a less rewarding endeavor than content creation. He explains how he believes technical writers should evolve to deal with technology changes.

> Technical writers need to expand their skillsets to go beyond writing to add more value to their company. They need to be problem solvers, analytical thinkers, contributing more than just words, but also contributing to social media, user interfaces, content strategy, business analysis, elearning, information architecture, project planning, and more.

The above comments, although they do not explicitly reference it, call to mind Johnson-Eilola's (1996) articulation of symbolic-analytic workers, and show that in the face of change, many practitioners are attempting to relocate the value of their work.

Professional Organizations and Community

As Figure 4 indicates, just five bloggers are responsible for the 18 posts about professional organizations. Of these posts, most focus on STC.

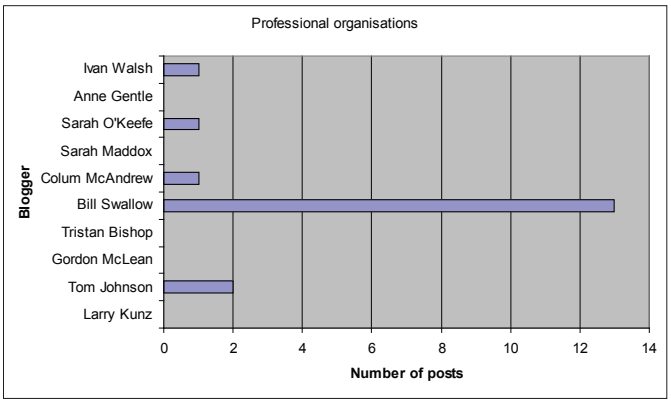


Figure 4. Posts about Professional Organizations

Interactions with professional organizations are portrayed both positively and negatively. Posts on professional organizations, and especially STC, attract high numbers of comments, and respondents tend to be positive about the value of membership. A query on Bill Swallow's blog as to whether readers will be active in STC during 2010 resulted in 12 responses, with nine readers planning to renew their membership.

Bloggers recognize the inherent value of professional organizations, especially for networking:

> Of course the networking opportunities, member's forum and conferences have all helped me in different ways, but I wanted to let it be known to the team and the company at large that we are professionals.
> (Colin McAndrew)
> The best way to find fellow technical writers is to find a local chapter of our biggest professional association—STC (Society for Technical Communication).
> (Tom Johnson)

Bill Swallow's blog has 13 posts about professional organizations over the time period under study. A response to one of his posts about STC explains the value of belonging to the organization:

> My membership dues are an investment in the future of tech comm. STC is advancing the profession in several ways—for example developing a body of knowledge and working with the U.S. Department of Labor to reclassify technical writing so as to reflect our real value. Our profession is undergoing a lot of changes, in terms of both the businesses we're part of and the technologies we support. STC is well positioned to make a positive difference.

He explains his own reasons for renewing his STC membership, but is uncertain of the future success that changes to the organization may bring:

> I see value in continuing the STC and in building a central body of knowledge, but if the majority of members do not and have left STC because of the perception that there is more value elsewhere for free.

Blogs are not exclusively positive about professional organizations. Some dissatisfaction is expressed about the services on offer to members and nonmembers of professional organizations, particularly STC. Ivan Walsh explains, "If you're in the STC, you get access to the Jobs board. The paradox is that those who most need it may not be able to afford the annual subscription."

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

STC is characterized as an "old" and somewhat static organization in some posts, as evinced by Sarah O'Keefe: "With established associations, it can be difficult to take a completely fresh look because of the constraints of structure, organization, and tradition." Bill Swallow adds, "One concern we've been hearing from many is that STC isn't relevant to younger technical communicators… that STC isn't progressive or innovative enough to suit their needs."

In addition to their discussions of the professional organizations, bloggers contribute to the profession in other ways. For example, Sarah O'Keefe's Scriptorium has developed a website called techcomm alliance, with news, blogs, forums, and details of events for technical communicators, and Scott Abel of the Content Wrangler runs a LinkedIn group with active discussions and a jobs board. Many blogs discuss developments, especially technology developments, relevant to technical communicators, and also focus heavily on troubleshooting software bugs and offering advice, tips, and procedural know-how to their readers.

Further evidence of a commitment to the community is apparent from the Networking category (see Table 2), which accounts for 22% of all posts. All the blogs examined regularly report on conferences and events. In these posts, bloggers highlight their own presentations, demonstrating a desire to increase their own profile.

The use of a blog to network reveals the importance of social capital for workers operating within a particular field: Networking is cited as a motivator in keeping a blog by about half the bloggers Lenhart and Fox (2006) surveyed.

These technical communication bloggers also report from conferences they attend, providing insightful and detailed commentary on sessions for readers who cannot attend. They regularly share resources, such as links to useful websites. Some make resources they have created themselves, including podcasts and screencasts, available to the community free of charge.

Another expression of community online is calls to action. For example, Sarah Maddox invites writers to write wiki documentation, and in another post congratulates technical writers for their participation in a project called Tips via Twitter. The introduction to the post reads as follows:

> It's recently struck me again: There is so much creativity, generosity and enthusiasm in the technical writing community! A while ago, I let people know that I was kicking off a project called Tips via Twitter. Many technical writers commented and tweeted their encouragement and ideas. … Innovation, passion and generosity are alive and well amongst technical writers. Thank you everyone!

Davidson and Vaast see bloggers as a "virtual discourse community" (2009, p. 41). Despite time, organizational, and geographical boundaries, technical communication bloggers appear to function as an effective virtual community of practice, espousing the spirit of Wenger's (1998) articulation of that phenomenon. Their posts examine concepts of practice, identity, and learning. This spirit is summarized by a comment from Sarah Maddox on the purpose of blogging: "You'll attract a group of followers who know that you're interested in the same sort of thing as they are, and that they'll learn something from you and be able to bounce ideas off you." The community-building ethos that is an essential feature of blogging is an important professionalizing activity.

Conclusion

The main findings from this study suggest that technical communication bloggers are both prolific and strongly community driven. They use blogs to share information, network, discuss events, explain procedures, and engage in conversations with their readers. Although these bloggers do not discuss professionalization explicitly and do not appear to be pursuing traditional professionalization strategies such as licensing or accreditation, their active community engagement characterizes enthusiastic professionals.

Moreover, although professionalization is never explicitly named as a goal on these practitioner blogs, latent themes emerge, suggesting that some of the goals of professionalization are also concerns for practitioners. These goals include gaining respect for technical communication, understanding and even standardizing routes into the field, examining developments that affect job roles, and analyzing potential threats such as that from user-generated content. Bloggers

are thinking strategically about the future. For example, content curation is cited as a new role for technical communicators, given the amount of (often substandard) content produced by user communities and content farms.

In the blog posts, practical concerns override to a considerable degree theoretical discussions. Almost 50% of posts discuss either work practices or technology. In posts that reflect on the role of the technical writer, heavy emphasis on the need to add value suggests some insecurity about the legitimacy of the field. Technical communicators compare themselves, often negatively, with other professionals such as usability specialists and instructional designers, regularly bemoaning their perceived inferiority. Although practitioners are not agreed on a job title to best articulate the work they do, role diversity may be viewed in positive terms and is a signifier and result of the exponential technological changes that have influenced, and continue to influence, the field.

The scarcity of comments by academics on these blogs suggests that academics and practitioners do not appear to communicate with each other through blogs at present. Nevertheless, the common ground between the two communities in relation to professionalization can be leveraged to move the discussion forward. Many of the bloggers studied already contribute to the field, presenting at conferences and submitting comments and posts on professional society blogs. Considering the strength of the online virtual discourse community developing around technical communication blogs, academics need to listen to the voices within, and, if possible, also participate in, that community.

This study has examined just 10 practitioner blogs. In addition to blogs, other online media are replete with conversations that reference professional topics. This corpus of online texts can yield much information about practitioners' views on the status of the field. Twitter and other social media can indicate the popularity of specific blogs, blog posts, and discussion topics among technical communicators. In practical terms, probabilistic techniques such as latent semantic analysis could automate the process of mining online texts because individual analysis of posts is very time consuming.

References

Anscheutz, L., & Rosenbaum, S. (2002). Expanding roles for technical communicators. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 149–164). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bard, A., & Söderqvist, J. (2002). *Netocracy: The new power elite and life after capitalism.* London: Pearson Longman.

Bauer, K. A. (2009). Privacy and confidentiality in the age of e-medicine. *Journal of Healthcare Law and Policy, 12*(1), 47–62.

Bernhardt, S. (2002). Active-practice: Creating productive tension between academia and industry. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 81–90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bolton, S., & Muzio, D. (2008). The paradoxical processes of feminization in the professions: The case of established, aspiring and semi-professions. *Work, Employment & Society*, *22*, 281–299.

Bosley, D. S. (2002). Jumping off the ivory tower: Changing the academic perspective. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 27–40). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Broadbent, J., Dietrich, M., & Roberts, J. (Eds.). (1997). *The end of the professions: The restructuring of professional work.* London: Routledge.

Bruns, A., & Jacobs, J. (2006). *Uses of blogs.* New York: Peter Lang.

Carliner, S. (1998). Business objectives: a key tool for demonstrating the value of technical communication products. *Technical Communication*, *45*, 380–384.

Collins, R. (1990). Changing conceptions in the sociology of the professions. In R. Torstendahl & M. Burrage (Eds.), *The formation of professions: Knowledge, state and strategy*, (pp. 11–23). London: Sage.

Coppola, N. (2010). The Technical Communication Body of Knowledge initiative: An academic practitioner partnership. *Technical Communication*, *57*, 11–25.

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

Davidson, E., & Vaast, E. (2009). Tech talk: An investigation of blogging in technology innovation discourse. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *52*, 40–60.

Davis, M. (2001). Shaping the future of our profession. *Technical Communication*, *48*, 139–144.

Dicks, R. S. (2002). Cultural impediments to understanding: Are they surmountable? In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 13–26). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Durack, K. T. (1997). Gender, technology, and the history of technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *6*, 249–260.

Elzinga, A. (1990). The knowledge aspect of professionalization: The case of science-based nursing education in Sweden. In R. Torstendahl & M. Burrage (Eds.), *The formation of professions: knowledge, state and strategy* (pp. 150–173). London: Sage.

Etzioni A. (Ed.). (1969). *The semi-professions and their organizations: Teachers, nurses, social workers*, New York: Free Press.

Flexner, A. (2001). Is social work a profession? *Research on Social Work Practice*, *11*(2), 152–165.

Fournier, V. (1999). The appeal to professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism. *The Sociological Review*, *47*, 280–307.

Freidson, E. (1999). Theory of professionalism: Method and substance. *International Review of Sociology*, *9*, 117–129.

Gentle, A. (2010). *Conversations and community: The social web for documentation*. Fort Collins, CO: XML Press.

Glazer, N. (1974). The schools of the minor professions. *Minerva*, *12*, 346–364.

Greenwood, R., Suddaby, R., & Hinings, C. R. (2002). Theorizing change: The role of professional associations in the transformation of institutionalized fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, *45*, 58–80.

Grice, R. A. (2002). Some reflections on the emergence of a profession: Redefinition of our profession and goals. *ACM Journal of Computer Documentation*, *26*(3), 126–129.

Gurak, L. J., & Duin, A. H. (2004). The impact of the Internet and digital technologies on teaching and research. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *13*, 187–198.

Hackos, J. T. (1997). From theory to practice: using the information process-maturity model as a tool for strategic planning. *Technical Communication*, *44*, 369–380.

Hall, R. H. (1968). Professionalization and bureaucratization. *American Sociological Review*, *33*(1), 92–104.

Hanson, J. (2009). Displaced but not replaced: The impact of e-learning on academic identities in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *14*, 553–564.

Hart-Davidson, W. (2001). On writing, technical communication, and information technology: The core competencies of technical communication. *Technical Communication*, *48*, 145–155.

Herrmann, K. J. (2006). Note and comment: Cybersurgery: The cutting edge. *Rutgers Computer and Technology Law Journal*, *32*(1). Retrieved February 10, 2011, from http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Cybersurgery:+the+cutting+edge.-a0154867181.

Jablonski, J. (2005). Seeing technical communication from a career perspective: The implications of career theory for technical communication theory, practice, and curriculum design. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *19*, 5–41.

Johnson, T. J. (1972). *Professions and power.* Hong Kong: Macmillan.

Johnson-Eilola, J. (1996). Relocating the value of work: Technical communication in a post-industrial age. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *5*, 245–270.

Keen, A. (2007). *The cult of the amateur: How blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the rest of today's user-generated media are destroying our economy, our culture, and our values*. New York: Doubleday.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Krejsler, J. (2005). Professions and their identities: how to explore professional development among (semi-) professions. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *49*, 335–357.

Kynell, T. (1999). Technical communication from 1850–1950: Where have we been?" *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *8*, 143–152.

Kynell-Hunt, T., & Savage, G. J. (Eds.). (2003). *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: The historical and contemporary struggle for status in technical communication.* Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Kynell-Hunt, T., & Savage, G. J. (Eds.). (2005). *Power and legitimacy in technical communication, volume II: Strategies for professional status.* Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Larson, M. S. (1977). *The rise of professionalism: A sociological analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lee, M. F. & Mehlenbacher, B. (2000). Technical writer/subject-matter expert interaction: The writer's perspective, the organizational challenge. *Technical Communication*, *47*, 544–552.

Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). Bloggers: A portrait of the Internet's new storytellers." Pew Internet and American life project. Retrieved February 10, 2011, from http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2006/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf.pdf

Lewis, S. C., Kaufhold, K., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2010). Thinking about citizen journalism. *Journalism Practice*, *4*, 163–179.

Light, I. (1961). Technical writing and professional status. *Journal of Chemical Documentation 1*(3), 4–10.

MacDonald, K. (1995). *The sociology of the professions*. London: Sage.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(2). Retrieved February 10, 2011, from http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~kmacd/IDSC10/Readings/text%20analysis/CA.pdf

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Hara, F. M. Jr. (2001). A brief history of technical communication. In *2001 Proceedings of the Society for Technical Communication*. Retrieved December 2, 2010, from http://www.stc.org/confproceed/2001/PDFs/STC48-000052.PDF.

Paretti, M. C., McNair, L. D., & Holloway-Attaway, L. (2007). Teaching technical communication in an era of distributed work: A case study of collaboration between U.S. and Swedish students. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *16*, 327–352.

Parsons, T. (1954). *Essays in sociological theory* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Rude, C. (2009). Mapping the research questions in technical communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *23*, 174–215.

Rushkoff, D. (2009). *Life inc.: How the world became a corporation and how to take it back*. London: Bodley Head.

Savage, G. J. (1999). The process and prospects for professionalizing technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *29*, 355–381.

Savage, G. J. (2003). Introduction: Towards professional status in technical communication. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: The historical and contemporary struggle for professional status* (pp. 137–167). New York: Baywood.

Savage, G. J., & Sullivan, D. L. (2001). *Writing a professional life: Stories of technical communicators on an off the job.* New York: Pearson Longman.

Schmidt, J. (2007). Blogging practices: An analytical framework. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *12*, 1409–1427.

Slattery, S. (2007). Undistributing work through writing: How technical writers manage texts in complex information environments. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 16*, 311–325.

Society for Technical Communication (STC). (2010). STC certification update. Retrieved February 10, 2011, from http://notebook.stc.org/stc-certification-update/

Society for Technical Communication (STC). (2011). Update on the Project Phoenix plan and process. Retrieved February 10, 2011, from http://notebook.stc.org/update-on-the-project-phoenix-plan-and-process/

Spilka, R. (2002). Becoming a profession. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.) *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 97–110). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Staples, K. (1999). Technical communication from 1950–1998: Where are we now?" *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *8*, 153–165.

Discussions About the Technical Communication Profession

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK:

Wilensky, H. L. (1964). The professionalization of everyone? *American Journal of Sociology*, *70*, 137–157.

Wilson, G., & Dyke-Ford, J. (2003). The big chill: Seven technical communicators talk ten years after their master's program. *Technical Communication*, *50*, 145–159.

About the Author

Yvonne Cleary teaches Technical Communication at the University of Limerick, on undergraduate and graduate programs. She is Program Director for the MA in Technical Communication and E-Learning. Her research interests include professional issues in technical communication, technical communication pedagogy, virtual teams, and international technical communication She has published articles and essays in international journals and edited books, and has presented her work at conferences in Europe and North America. Contact: Yvonne.Cleary@ul.ie.

Manuscript received 23 February 2011, revised 24 May 2011, accepted 5 August 2011.

Light's "Technical Writing and Professional Status": Fifty Years Later

Patricia A. Hallier and Edward A. Malone

Abstract

Purpose: To present a significant historical document in the decades-long movement to professionalize technical communication

Method: Historical analysis and textual editing

Results: Light's 1961 article applied then-current definitions of a profession to technical writing and suggested that technical writers could become professionals only through formal education and training.

Conclusions: On the 50th anniversary of its publication, Light's article illustrates the tenor of discussions about professionalization in the early years of our profession and invites comparison with current professionalization discussions.

Keywords: technical communication, history, professionalization, technical communication education

Practitioner's Takeaway

- This article provides an introduction to — as well as an edition of — Light's "Techncial Writing and Professional Status" (1961).
- It makes an important historical text more accessible and usable.
- It contributes to a historical perspective of professionalization in technical communication.

The practice of technical communication has been undergoing professionalization since at least the 1940s. The men and women who created our first professional organizations and academic programs in the 1950s were trying to advance a profession that had begun to emerge during World War II and in the postwar years. Thus, for more than 60 years, we have been struggling to achieve mature professional status. Among the many attributes of a mature profession is a strong historical identity (Savage, 2003). By studying the earliest discussions of professionalization in technical communication, we can further develop the historical identity of our profession. This year marks the 50th anniversary of an essay titled "Technical Writing and Professional Status," published in the American Chemical Society's *Journal of Chemical Documentation* (JCD). The author was Israel Light (see Figure 1), a practitioner and member of the Society of Technical Writers and Publishers (STWP), STC's precursor. Published in 1961, Light's essay was one of the more scholarly considerations of the topic at the time.

Figure 1: Israel Light, c. 1964. Reprinted from *STWP Review.*

Like today, the 1960s were a period of evolution for the field. The self-described first generation of

Light's "Technical Writing and Professional Status"

practitioners had newly emerged in the postwar industrial boom. The number of professional technical writers was on a steep ascent, as suggested by the 30% increase in STWP membership from 1960 to 1965 (Kynell, 2000, p. 106). In one of his later essays, Light (1967) pointed to the rapid change seen in practitioner roles, which had broadened widely as compared with a mere decade before. These changes inspired many poorly planned efforts at professionalization, symptoms of what Light (1967) described as "profession-itis" (p. 57). Professional status was a frequent topic of discussion within STWP, both at chapter meetings and in the Society's publication, the *STWP Review*, but also on a much broader cultural scale (Light, 1961). Highly regarded and best-selling books, such as Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers* (1959), pontificated on the subject of status and position. Other fields were also grappling with how to become full-fledged professions. It was against this backdrop that Light (1961) presented his perspective on the issue. His purpose was to address the implications, definitions, and relevancy of professionalism and ultimately to provide recommendations on achieving the goals of status and recognition.

It is likely that Light's recommendations were carefully and widely considered by his peers. He was an accomplished and high-profile figure in the field. He held five degrees, three of which were in education, including a doctoral degree ("Israel Light," 1967). His career roles ranged from speech writer to radio lecturer to technical editor, for organizations as diverse as the United Nations, the U.S. Public Health Service, and the National Institute of Mental Health ("Israel Light," 1967). He was widely published. In July 1964, he was made fellow of STWP because of his "outstanding work as a technical writer, consultant, and speaker and his unceasing dedication to the profession of technical communication" ("Grade," 1964, p. 22). In 1971, he was appointed fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Institute of Medicine of Chicago ("Members," 1971). Shortly thereafter, the Chicago Medical School/University of Health Sciences hired him as dean of its School of Related Health Sciences ("Appointments," 1969). He was a member of the Education Committee of the American Medical Writer's Association, and through that group developed technical communication courses for the School of Related Health Sciences in 1973 ("AMWA education," 1973). Just two years later, he died at age 59 ("Recent deaths," 1975). Though his tenure at the university was short, his influence was such that the university, now Rosalind Franklin University, offers the Israel Light Award each year to a student displaying exceptional leadership qualities. One of the listed criteria is involvement in a professional organization (*Student handbook*, 2007).

Light (1961) proposes three broad components to training as a technical communicator. One encompasses writing skills and technical writing genres. He places greater emphasis, though, on a second component: the addition of a strong scientific background that could enable contextualization and higher quality output. He recommends that at least half of the training should be in scientific and technical coursework. His third component is exposure to methods of document design and of working with graphics and audiovisual material. The list is in some respects forward thinking. For instance, although he states that instruction in document production was "possibly not essential," its inclusion bespeaks a broad understanding of the field at the time. He does not venture into greater specificity; instead, he advises that a survey of technical communication roles in industry be performed to identify clearly what competencies should be taught.

Whether viewed as a historical reference point to the current professionalization conversation or simply as an added voice to that discussion, 50 years later, Light's perspectives on technical communication's professional status remain compelling:

> The search of the technical writer for professional standing and status has been examined from a number of points of view. The psychological, historical, and economic reasons for this striving have been noted and justified. It appears that "profession" and "professional person" are ill-defined. Even as variously stated, the current descriptions and definitions of "profession" seem increasingly outdated and meaningless. At the same time, the technical writer himself requires more specific delineation. The one major characteristic of the professional person to which technical writers can profitably address themselves is that of specialized, academic education and training.

> The important elements of such training must be more clearly identified, the particular skills defined, and institutions encouraged to provide the basic competencies agreed upon (Light, 1961, p. 9).

The edited version of Light's original article can be found on the *Technical Communcation* Web site (E13-E21).

References

AMWA education committee aids communication courses at Chicago Medical School. (1973). *AMWA Newsletter*, *4*(5), 1. Retrieved from http://www.amwa.org/default/history/newsletters/sept73.pdf

Appointments. (1969). *Science*, New Series, *164*(3886), 1382.

Grade of fellow granted to two members. (1964). *STWP Review*, *11*(3), 22.

Israel Light. (1967). In B. K. McKee (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 1967 Institute in Technical and Industrial Communications* (pp. 134-135). Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University.

Kynell, T. (2000). *Writing in a milieu of utility: The move to technical communication in American engineering programs, 1850–1950* (2nd ed.). Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Light, I. (1961). Technical writing and professional status. *Journal of Chemical Documentation, 1*(30), 4–9.

Light, I. (1967). Collaboratively planning the formal training of technical communication specialists. *Journal of Business Communication, 4*(2), 53–67.

Members in the news. (1971). *AMWA Newsletter*, *2*(1), 4. Retrieved from http://www.amwa.org/default/history/newsletters/march71.pdf

Packard, V. (1959). *The status seekers: An exploration of class behavior in America and the hidden barriers that affect you, your community, your future*. New York, NY: David McKay Company.

Recent deaths. (1975). *Science: New Series*, *188*(4191), 919.

Savage, G. (2003). Introduction: Toward professional status in technical communication. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. Savage (Eds.). *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. I. The historical and contemporary struggle for professional status* (pp. 1–12). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Student handbook: College of health professions. (2007). Retrieved from http://www.rosalindfranklin.edu/DNN/Portals/25/documents/Biomed/CHPStudent Handbook.pdf

About the Authors

Patricia A. Hallier is majoring in chemical engineering and technical communication at Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T). Contact: Patricia.Hallier@mst.edu.

Edward A. Malone is an associate professor and director of the online graduate program in technical communication at Missouri S&T. Contact: malonee@mst.edu.

Manuscript received 20 February 2011, revised 11 April 2011, accepted 8 August 2011.

Negotiating Professional Consciousness in Technical Communication: A Community of Practice Approach

Joel Kline and Thomas Barker

Abstract

Purpose: To examine the elements of professional consciousness in technical communication to facilitate the growth of professional identity.

Method: To develop a structured collaboration model based on Wenger's three dimensions for establishing a community of practice: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire.

Results: Structured collaboration shows strong potential to nurture a community in which the specific professional identity of being an academic or a practitioner is minimized in favor of the negotiated identity of being a community member working toward mutual goals.

Conclusions: Effective collaboration between the academic and practitioner communities creates a negotiated professionalism through better research, better education, and a more comprehensive body of knowledge. Structured collaboration along the lines of community of practice can be used to encourage professional consciousness, which can lead to professional status.

Keywords: communities of practice, professionalism, academic/industry relations, body of knowledge, TCBOK

Practitioner's Takeaway

- Professional consciousness equates to professional status in technical communication.
- Professionalism consists of an identity that ensures consistency in job expectations, contributes to value added, and defines the scope of a career.
- Shared, collaborative activities among academics and practitioners following a productive, five-part set of characteristics called Collaborate, Apply, Facilitate, Negotiate, and Activate (CANFA) can increase professional consciousness among technical communicators.

Introduction

This article addresses the collaboration of academics and practitioners in an effort to understand and improve professionalism. We address activities that bridge the academic and practitioner divide in our profession in ways that allow the growth of an essential element of professionalism: *professional consciousness*. We use the term professional consciousness to mean the collective, long-term, professional identity assumed by a group that defines the scope of a lifetime career (Savage, 1999). Professional consciousness, as Savage points out, does not describe work in particular work settings or institutional contexts, but functions to define an exclusive culture within which a practitioner can find lifelong fulfillment, advancement, rewards, and recognition.

Our work draws on research conducted on a practitioner and academic community to develop a model for academic/practitioner collaboration. This work suggests that effective collaboration among the academic and practitioner communities will improve professionalism through better research, better education, and a more comprehensive body of knowledge (BOK). It develops a model based on Etienne Wenger's (1998) three dimensions for establishing a community of practice: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire. Research conducted on practitioners and academics during the STC's Technical Communication Body of Knowledge project (TCBOK) is used as a basis to model effective qualitative outcomes for academic/practitioner collaboration. Our paper shows how properly structured collaboration can nurture a community where the specific professional identity of being an academic or a practitioner is greatly reduced in favor of the negotiated identity of being a community member working toward mutual goals. We argue that when a community of practice develops among academics and practitioners, it negotiates the meaning and application of professionalism and provides the basis for professional consciousness.

Background

If we want to carve a clear path to professionalism in technical communication, one way is to find strategies that allow us, both in discourse and activity, to rise above the divisions of academic and practical that have polarized the field. In this essay, we argue that bridging this gap will lead to professionalism by developing what Savage calls a "professional consciousness" (2003, p. 155). Other arguments might focus on core skills that both areas exhibit, on the promotion of technical communication as a profession in government and labor publications, or on a key element—such as technology, history, and functionality in various workplaces—as central to our profession and therefore worthy of recognition as a defining characteristic. These efforts at building professional status, both politically and socially, are important. But the primary difficulty that most scholars find in defining our profession and achieving professional status is that technical communication exists both as a field of practice and a field of academic study. Coming to grips with this gap, which we share with other professions (such as engineering, medicine, journalism, and law) continues to represent the major obstacle to professional consciousness.

The relationship of the academic community to the professional community in technical communication reflects the broader conversation about how these two groups relate (Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001; Hayes, 2007; Kruecken, 2003; Leydesdorff & Curran, 2000). These studies examine processes of knowledge creation through publication and through the contributions that either community makes to innovation within a specific field. Many of these studies identify a gap between the two, based on methods of problem solving (e.g., Agrawal, 2001) or differing views of the characterization of research (e.g., Blumenthal, Campbell, Causino, & Louis, 1996). Other lines of division, according to Dicks (2002), fall along those of theory versus practice; industry settings versus academic settings; and business versus academic discourse styles; as well as opposing views on employment structures; collaboration strategies; and views of power, philosophies, and trust that get lumped together under the umbrella of "cultural" differences.

These cultural differences contribute to the gap between academics and practitioners in technical communication. Dicks identifies a "productive tension" between these two communities in technical communication. He defines them as culturally opposite. Two major book-length studies of professional issues in

technical communication focus primarily on resolving the differences between the scholarly and practical sides of technical communication (Kynell-Hunt & Savage, 2003; Mirel & Spilka, 2002). Both these works and others offer a range of possible causes and solutions to bridging the professional gap (Clark &Anderson, 2005; Pringle & Williams, 2005; Albers, 2005; Hayhoe, 1998; Heba, 1999; Killingsworth & Palmer, 2002; and Hart & Glick-Smith, 1994).

These approaches often point to cases of successful interaction among academics and professionals but rarely do their studies suggest concrete strategies to build new professional communities. For example, some technical communication researchers see a need for the research agenda to change to meet some of the needs of industry. In "The Issue of Quality in Professional Documentation: How Can Academia Make More of a Difference?" Spilka (2000) describes an area of the academia/industry relationship for the production of documentation. Spilka notes that one area of interest to industry, but not to academia, is "how best to define, measure, and achieve quality in workplace documentation." She provides examples of academia/industry disjoint by showing how industry values quality, and how academia has not responded with relevant research.

Similarly, Cooke and Mings (2005) address the changes in usability research to meet industry needs in "Connecting Usability Education and Research with Industry Needs and Practices" (2005). The authors discuss a small-scale study at Microsoft and seek ways that academic usability research and teaching can add value to industry. Like the pedagogical research on bridging the gap, these articles provide recommendations rather than concrete strategies for solving our academia/industry issues.

While these scholars suggest a number of solutions to the persistent and polarizing gap between academics and practitioners, without concrete strategies, specific issues—such as views of technology, views of research and a much broader set of cultural differences—continue to divide the profession along familiar lines. Of all the attempts to overcome those lines, the identification of both academics and practitioners as members of the same community, within a specific framework of communities of practice, has suggested itself as a productive approach. We turn now to the approach that scholars in technical communication often employ to create a conversation about the academic/practitioner gap.

Rather than forward an analytic model or categorization structure, most authors offer general solutions. The articles in Mirel and Spilka's (2002) *Reshaping Technical Communication* offer several perspectives on the community, including chapters on the academia/industry relationship by Bosley, Blakeslee, Paré, and Bernhardt. Bosley (2002) and Blakeslee (2002), in that volume, argue for common ground: "My argument in this chapter thus rests not solely on assumptions of difference, but also on metaphors of common ground, overlap, and similarity" (p. 42). However, the predominant tone of the book lies in the theme of community. For example, Janice Redish's foreword sets the tone for the book, proclaiming that "Community is going to be a major theme of the new century" (p. vii). The chapter by Bernhardt (2002) continues this theme, grounding it in concepts of communities of practice. He argues that the communities of practice hold promise for bridging the academic/practitioner split. He asserts that academia and industry should remain separate in their goals and practice, but argues "that their relationship could improve significantly with the shaping of what I call active-practice, an approach that involves educators and practitioners working together through project-based activities to achieve more fruitful and fulfilling working partnerships" (p. 82). Citing Wenger (1998), Bernhardt calls for the creation of "a shared sphere of activity" within which both communities can work. Bernhardt offers strategies for creating activities that can foster professional growth, but the specific characteristics of collaborative practice—the mechanisms of collaboration—remain unstated. Our research attempts to fill this gap by examining exactly why communities of practice work, with the intention of providing guidelines for their future development.

This discussion of the scholarship testifies to a conundrum; that professionalism in technical communication depends on bridging the gap between academics and practitioners. This problem persists despite generalizations about how to overcome it. It reveals how discussions of professionalism often take the form of descriptions of how the two identities differ, with the intention of finding common ground:

descriptions that fall short of suggesting ways to overcome the gap. Furthermore, this discussion reveals that a communities of practice approach has appeared in technical communication literature, but scholars have not used the specific structures of communities of practice theory, as exemplified in Wenger, to analyze the approach in depth—at least not with application to professional issues (Bridgeford, 2007). Finally, it shows that the communities of practice approach has offered a view of how professional consciousness can grow through engagement, sharing of technologies and tools, and project membership, all within the not surprising realization that people negotiate professional consciousness through these kinds of activities. Finally, these scholars suggest ways that organizations can create opportunities for such engagement, sharing, and membership. The remainder of our article will address precisely that: how a specific community of practice, the TCBOK project, grew and faltered; and how the communities-of-practice approach can shed light on how to make it a source of professional identity that bridges the academic/practitioner split.

Communities Of Practice Theory

Communities of practice is a concept coined by Lave and Wenger in their seminal book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). They developed their theory from a set of widely accepted sociological and anthropological antecedents. Later, began to reconceptualize community of practice to explain how people learn in organizations and how *community* and *identity* affect the transfer of knowledge during collaboration.

In his book *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Wenger (1998) identifies three dimensions of a community of practice: First, it is a group that coheres through a "mutual engagement" that occurs within an "indigenous" or joint enterprise. These first two dimensions create a "shared repertoire" among the group participants. These three dimensions are critical to understanding successful collaboration and critical to achieving success in establishing a genuine community of practice. *Mutual engagement* means that people are engaging with one another to define and negotiate the terms of the collaboration. Many industry and academic projects refer to a sense of "buy-in" for projects. Mutual engagement takes buy-in beyond project acceptance to the acceptance and engagement with fellow team members. A *joint enterprise* results from engaged people working toward a shared purpose and shared goals. This is important because a collection of people who share similar interests is not necessarily a community of practice unless the group collaborates toward a result or a goal. Finally, any community of practice must negotiate meaning, identity, and tools. This is what Wenger calls a *shared repertoire*, which is the language, conventions, and tools that are used for collaborative sharing in a community of practice.

Iverson and McPhee (2008) define why Wenger's three components—shared repertoire, mutual engagement and joint enterprise—seem appropriate as a theory to characterize sharing between academics and practitioners, noting that community of practice theory strongly emphasizes the interactively constructed nature of engaging, belonging, and sharing tools. Our argument is that this constructed identity underlies the professional consciousness required for professionalism. The three dimensions of community can help us identify and understand the kinds of activities, engendered through membership in a community of practice, that lead to professionalism.

Much of the technical communication literature on the community of practice approach is written for the industry workplace or to address pedagogical aspects of technical communication education. For example, Fisher and Bennion (2005) provide a case study model for deploying community of practices in the technical communication workplace, while Lappenbusch and Turns (2005) present a model at an IEEE presentation for using community of practice in the classroom. Numerous technical communication articles discuss collaboration and collaborative learning without mentioning the concept of community of practice, including Gurak and Duin's *Technical Communication Quarterly* article "The Impact of the Internet and Digital Technologies on Teaching and Research in Technical Communication" (2004). The active-practice model by Bernhardt (2002), introduced earlier, shows promise as a theory-to-practice model, especially because it recommends activity-based collaboration that supports the findings of our research. We now turn to profiling some of the successful and unsuccessful collaboration

from the STC TCBOK project as background for how communities of practice will allow academics and practitioners to negotiate professional consciousness.

Profiles of Collaboration

As we saw previously, scholars have suggested the communities of practice approach to building professionalism, but the application of theoretical principles, with the intention of finding out what works for technical communicators, has not yet occurred. The STC TCBOK project provides the opportunity to allow us to see what kinds of structures of engagement, project membership, and shared technologies can contribute to the development of professional identity.

The TCBOK began in summer 2007 from a proposal developed by the organization's academic-industry liaison at the time. In fall 2007, STC held a critical topics summit in Houston and identified a BOK as one step to becoming a unified profession. The BOK also provided a foundation for the development of a technical communication certification program, should STC decide to pursue one, although at the time the certification issue was not associated with the project.

From this critical topics summit arose a TCBOK task force. This task force then developed the initial framework and activities for proceeding with the project. Nancy Coppola, who was a member of this task force, notes that it was sometimes a struggle. "We spent a good deal of time trying to figure out what to call this thing we were creating … a conversation that covered up the underlying tension of our divergent knowledge bases through convenient metaphors." (Coppola, 2010). Also, at the time, the BOK organizers did not conceive of it as an activity that could spawn professional identity. In fact, it was one of five initiatives discussed at the Houston Summit (Barker & Hart, 2008).

The TCBOK involved almost three-and-a-half years of collaborative activity among both academics and practitioners, and as such, it provides an excellent opportunity to study how separate groups construct, or fail to construct, a shared, professional identity. Ultimately, the task force members collaborated on project documentation, persona development, and a value proposition. Subsequent meetings, workshops, and presentations at annual STC summits led to additional collaborative progress for the tasks and mission of TCBOK. Detailed taxonomies and knowledge maps were created for topical areas of the discipline of technical communication. Feedback on these topical areas was sought during the 2008 annual Summit. STC members at large could view a display or "wall" of the topical areas and use sticky notes to suggest changes or additions to specific areas.

After several months of refining the topical areas, the task force membership, which had grown to more than 40 volunteers, chose a wiki technology to initially situate the TCBOK. An EditMe wiki was created, and continues to serve as the public TCBOK portal for the project. In late 2009, the TCBOK mission shifted from topic identification to content development. "Populating content" became a priority for the TCBOK.

The following section characterizes successful and unsuccessful collaborative outcomes using the STC TCBOK project as a case study in professional development. As defined by Wenger (1998), community of practice theory posits three dimensions to the formation of a community: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire. For our research, we analyzed the experiences of participants of the TCBOK project using this rubric with data we collected from standard case study data types: interviews, documents, archived information, observation, and physical artifacts. For some quantitative triangulation, we surveyed current TCBOK participants, and we correlated the survey results with the personal interviews.

For our purposes, the profiles that follow, which grew out of the collected data, support our contention that academic and practitioner collaboration can lead to a community of practice that negotiates the meaning and character of professionalism. We contend that these profiles also show how, when the structural dimensions of a community of practice (as defined by Wenger (1998)) are not reflected in their collaborative behavior, the professional consciousness among the members significantly decreases. The community of practice approach provides a powerful tool for understanding the constructed nature of professional identity.

Profile One: Persona Development Builds Community

The development of personas by the original TCBOK project team is an example of a successful outcome facilitated by the three dimensions of community of

practice (http://stcbok.editme.com/Personas). Coppola describes a momentum shift that occurred during persona development, "Enter Ginny Redish, whose calm expert voice posed a simple question: Who is the audience for the knowledge portal?...an 'aha' moment... we were on our way" (2010). Many of the original members identified the persona-development phase as a watershed period. E-mail correspondence among BOK members at that time show an intense discussion surrounding these personas.

Every team member from this period who was interviewed pointed to the persona exercise as one of the most important stages of the TCBOK project. One academic said the benefits of the persona exercise were both collective and individual. "I immediately took elements from our persona exercise back to my classes for undergraduate and graduate students." Another interviewee noted that the persona exercise was a perfect activity for an academic and practitioner collaboration. Remarked one interviewee, "It had elements of theory and application which could support someone crafting their own ideals into a persona." How did the persona development, as a collaborative activity, encourage the growth of a community of practice?

First, the process of achieving the sense of a joint enterprise (indicative of a community of practice) during the early TCBOK project was a struggle until the persona-development phase. The steps to normalization (norming) in the prologue phase did not necessarily contribute to joint enterprise. Questions arose regarding what to call the actual BOK (e.g., is it a "body of knowledge?" "a portal?" a "map of knowledge?"). Other questions arose about style, taxonomy, and methodology for developing content. In one of our interviews, an original participant noted that one's perspective on the field of technical communication led to divergent opinion. This team member noted that some practitioners had a "product perspective," seeing technical communication as form design or document design. Others took a "process perspective," noting the skills of audience analysis, language, design, and management used to achieve communication. These divergent opinions impeded progress because participants were conceptualizing a BOK based on their local, job-specific definition of technical communication.

Until the team took on the shared task of envisioning the end user, collaboration as members of a joint enterprise was hampered. When the team could conceptualize the BOK through the eyes of a user, something that each could do irrespective to their academic or practitioner identity, a sense of joint enterprise began to develop. The collaborative activity acted as a catalyst to suggest broader definitions of technical communication and, thus, the professional identity that such a view could support.

Likewise, the process of engagement in mutual relationships flourished during the persona-development phase. Coppola (2010) notes that the team, during this period in spring 2008, was "galvanized" by the tasks established by the group (p. 14). Survey data indicate that the respondents felt mutually engaged, one of Wenger's (1998) requirements for the presence of community, during this phase. More than 87 percent of respondents reported that they felt "engaged" in sharing ways of doing things within their community. In addition, the presence of mutual engagement is shown by most of the data collected for this dimension. Interview subjects, for example, said that they "felt engaged" in the project, especially the prologue and Phase I parts.

The e-mail communication during this period indicates a consistent and frequent dialogue that encompasses communication about technical deliverables, as well as conceptual questions about how to build a framework for TCBOK. The physical artifacts of two websites in particular, a Web 2.0 tool called ComappingTM and a BasecampTM project collaboration website, illustrate how engagement occurred as participants worked on tasks to build the framework for the taxonomy of the BOK Portal. One interview subject said that this was the "best" collaborative effort in which she was ever involved.

In addition to feeling involved and engaged in the project, the persona-development activity led team members to develop a shared repertoire, which shifted the team to a community identity that was independent from each person's academic or practitioner identity. The meaning that participants associated with the profession of technical communication began to coalesce as they developed personas, taxonomy, and strategic documents. Strategic and document-based collaboration led to participants negotiating the meaning of a BOK Portal,

what a BOK portal should contain, and who comprises the audience for such a project. One interview subject stated that the use of Web 2.0 tools actually helped to negotiate meaning. Using the same tools, such as Comapping and Basecamp, initially led to some learning problems, however the team soon adopted the same tools and began to negotiate the meaning and process of activities through the use of similar tools. This tool adoption led to a "strong sense of team" without "cliques or camps," according to one interview participant.

Thus, the persona-development activity led to a sense of professional consciousness. Coppola (2010) notes that each TCBOK participant could imagine [himself or herself] as a user of the knowledge portal (p. 14); it was not simply a deliverable product. A set of personas helped to solidify who might come to the knowledge portal, but it also facilitated mutual engagement, shared purpose, and a common set of tools. Wenger's (1998) three dimensions of a community of practice are reflected in the development of these personas: joint enterprise through a conceptual vision of the users of the BOK, mutual engagement through co-creation or user profiles, and a shared repertoire surrounding the meaning of audience and the tool of persona development.

Furthermore, all three dimensions contributed to a growing sense of an integrated community between academics and practitioners. Participants eventually developed a community identity—in this case a *TCBOK community identity*—when all three dimensions were present. The presence of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire in the persona-development phase clearly led to an early community that melded participant's identities into one of being a TCBOK community member and not an academic or practitioner.

Profile Two: Content Population Lacks Engagement

What became clear to us in our research was that membership in the large-scale TCBOK project was not, in itself, enough to engender a community of practice, and thus the professional identity that theoretically comes with that activity. Specific activities within the timeline of the project led or failed to lead to that development. For example, what began as a working community of practice around the persona-development activity of the TCBOK project began to deteriorate during the content population phase. The population of content on the TCBOK portal has been slow during some periods and downright stagnant at other times. One might identify a number of reasons why this occurred, given that some elements of the project carried on as usual. For example, regular TCBOK project team meetings took place via conference calls. Many roles for TCBOK positions, as conceptualized by the Strategic Plan and Project Charter, were filled with committed volunteers. What could have caused the stagnation of progress in the project at this time?

Overall, the sense that members had of being part of a joint-enterprise dimension during content population remained consistent through the other phases of the project. During the period after the persona development, there was still significant support and purpose behind the concept of developing a BOK. One participant noted that "the TCBOK project's purpose was clarified when it was uncoupled from an exploration of certification." This move took some pressure off the TCBOK project to populate content immediately. The use of Basecamp and Comapping tools helped maintain the sense of purpose. Activity with these artifacts, as well as comments from interviewees, suggest that team members shared a sense of purpose during more recent phases when the project gained momentum from exposure at the STC Summit in Philadelphia. The work of the editing group, in which volunteers developed editing guidelines and procedures, and the sense of shared purpose of the academic programs group, in which volunteers populated this topical area down to the fifth level, contributed significantly to a sense of shared purpose (joint enterprise.) The wiki technology itself facilitated a sense of joint enterprise as the larger volunteer base increased and the activities became more routine.

Similarly, a sense of shared repertoire was maintained during the content-population activity. In fact, the larger volunteer group seemed to maintain a shared repertoire promulgated by the wiki as the dominant artifact/activity. Many of the volunteers continued to participate in defining the BOK, and outlining specific concepts within the discipline. Similarly, although the volunteer base grew, a significant number of people remained on the TCBOK team from near the beginning. This institutional memory helped new volunteers to understand the meaning and language

surrounding the project. A Yahoo!Groups site contained all the documents that the team developed, including the project charter, strategic plan, and archived minutes. Other important documents, such as the rationale for a BOK and the definition of technical communication on the wiki site itself, were accessible by all team members and available to STC membership. The project expertise that grew around these structural components of the project contributed to a sense of shared repertoire.

A significant portion of shared repertoire came from the existing TCBOK: It represented an effort to impart meaning by populating content. One interviewee remarked that "In some areas, a blank page which awaits content population is an incentive," while in other places the finely conceived content that filled the topical area—developed collaboratively—provided a sense of community. The e-mail discussion and Yahoo!Groups forum collaboration on creating a wiki to host the knowledge portal provided yet another example to contributors of how their team members came together to collaboratively build and negotiate a sense of shared purpose. Finally, words and activities developed for the wiki and its structure helped negotiate meaning, overriding one's or academic or practitioner identity. Terminology such as *volunteer*, *role*, *editing*, *portal*, *persona*, *knowledge map*, and *walking the wall* (negotiated earlier) helped to maintain the shared repertoire—and sense of community—among team members. One interviewee noted that she liked the term *walking the wall*, which came from an early affinity diagram exercise during Phase 1 of the project. She noted that it made her feel "like I was 'walking the walk' with other technical communicators." This shared nomenclature was extended in 2008 to the physical "wall" setting the TCBOK project team created at the 2008 STC Summit in Philadelphia, where summit participants could review the taxonomy on the wall and scribble changes on sticky notes.

Thus we can see that during the more recent phases of the TCBOK activities, the sense of belonging to a joint enterprise (the TCBOK project itself) and the sense of a shared repertoire (using tools, technologies, and terms)—each key elements of Wenger's three-part theory of successful communities of practice—helped the members maintain a sense of a broader community.

What was missing, however, and what contributed to the moribund nature of the project during these phases, may have been a lack of a sense of mutual engagement. With regard to the members' participation as a model of professional activity, the later, more recent phases of the TCBOK represent a significant relapse into the familiar academic and practitioner stalemates.

As an indication of the lack of engagement during the latter phase of the project, one interviewee noted that efforts inside the project began to be eclipsed by efforts outside of the project. It is significant that this interviewee noted the change of community that came about when the project shifted to content population, noting "less to share, less glamor, less kudos.... sometimes, not fun." As the TCBOK moved from strategic planning (i.e., the development of taxonomy and structure) through project governance (i.e., policy and management tools) to content population, the members' sense of engagement withered. Early and eager TCBOK participants cooperated willingly on activities or deliverables, which fostered a sense of mutual engagement. Later, many project activities that contributed to this mutual engagement during the early phases—such as persona development—were abandoned or completed. Engaging activities that centered on taxonomy development, formulation of the definition and rationale for TCBOK, mind mapping the structure for the knowledge portal, and building the wall-sized chart at the 2008 Summit with which conference attendees could view and interact were completed. Furthermore, activity-based efforts such as the development of documents to anchor the project did not continue. Engaged teams had developed documents for a strategic plan, content development toolkit, governance policy, and a project charter to control deliverables and milestones, but once this work was complete it was not replaced with other engaging activities. Our data, collected from observation, interviews, and artifacts, identifies a period in fall 2009 when this activity-based collaboration slowed, and the focus moved to content population. Questions such as "is TCBOK more like a web of knowledge or an encyclopedia" had been answered, and in their place members faced the rather non-negotiable, vague, and arduous task of "filling in content" under knowledge domain areas. Ostensibly, with a healthy framework, competent leadership team, and committed volunteer base the project seemed primed for a Wikipedia-type explosion. But content population was portrayed

as essentially a solitary task, and no personas were developed for "contributors." As mutual engagement failed to develop, so did the content fail to appear, and the TCBOK members begin to identify themselves with their corporate or academic contexts. As one interviewee put it, "We academics aren't going to write content for the BOK, we write for journals." The blood sport of "why don't they do this" began.

Profile Three: Communities of Practice Dimensions Absent During Intellectual Property Discussion

Our final profile characterizes the joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire dimensions on the issue of Intellectual Property and openness of the TCBOK portal. More precisely, it characterizes the absence of two of these community factors—joint enterprise and mutual engagement—during this period. Early conceptions of TCBOK were linked to the concept of certification: Some team members conceived a portal in the early phases that would support the certification process by codifying the kinds of information necessary for certification exams.

Our interviews and review of documents show that these TCBOK team members referred to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) that was developed by the Project Management Institute as a model. The PMBOK was created to support the Project Management Institute accreditation process in project management. Other TCBOK team members referred to the model from the Usability Professionals Association, which is a more open and flexible compilation of usability knowledge.

One participant noted in an interview that the idea to make the content accessible solely to STC members seemed "logical." This interviewee noted thatSTC already has content for which it charges, for example its publications, training materials, and webinars. So a BOK with a requirement for STC membership would be an extension of this concept. Ultimately, this issue—intellectual property—became very controversial and contentious. The effect of this the intellectual property issue on the members feeling of belonging to the community and mutual engagement brought the TCBOK activity to its current standstill.

Significantly, interviewees noted that disagreements occurred along the lines of academics versus practitioners, with practitioners favoring the monetization of the content and academics supporting a more open access system. Examining the case study data indicates an absence of two of the three Wenger (1998) community of practice dimensions on this issue (and during this period): joint enterprise and mutual engagement. Members, for one thing, did not feel that they belonged to the same enterprise and reverted to their localized, organizational identities.

Data indicate that team members could not seem to coalesce and develop a sense of joint enterprise when the direction of the project was antithetical to their beliefs, and no activity appeared to help them negotiate the impasse. Two interviewees, one from the original group of 10 and one from a later group, indicated that they left the project because of the issues of content openness and ownership. One interviewee noted that compromise was made more difficult because the opinion on the issue fell primarily along academic/practitioner lines. Academics believed in open access and felt that fellow academics might not make contributions to TCBOK because of a perceived ownership of content by STC. In an interview, one TCBOK participant questioned the input, value, and impact on other technical communication stakeholder organizations like the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing or the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication. The intellectual property issue, splitting because of academic and practitioner outlooks, kept the team members from defining mutual identities for one another because it failed to define real tasks for collaboration. In this instance, an academic was someone who wanted to have an open TCBOK portal and a practitioner was someone who wanted to monetize the TCBOK. No sense of shared purpose developed from this scenario or, more precisely, no shared purpose existed to prevent this scenario from developing. Until this point, in 2008, the TCBOK team had solved several problems and worked together to build a framework for the portal. However, during the intellectual property discussion there was no shared activity to engage in on this topic; no domain mapping or persona writing. There was little middle ground to compromise because charging for any type of access to the portal was ideologically flawed from most academics' perspectives, and providing significant content for free meant very little competitive advantage from the practitioners' perspectives.

If the participants had been involved in some real activity or, in Wenger's (1998) terms, *joint enterprise*, such as the formation of an Intellectual Property Adjudication Council, they might have willingly developed a community and negotiated a workable professional identity. The ideological perspectives linked to their professional identities might have been more manageable and, thus, might not have played such a large role.

Mutual engagement was also absent during the intellectual property discussion. Early efforts of the TCBOK team demonstrated the sense of engagement in the project regardless of an academic or practitioner background. For example, Coppola explains that activities such as mind mapping, taxonomy development, and the persona development that we detail in Profile One contributed to mutual engagement and to each participant's idea of who belonged in the community. The intellectual property issue, however, fragmented this perception of who belonged. Practitioners became identified with a closed portal and monetization and academics became identified with an open portal and no competitive advantage. We did see a few notable exceptions. One academic, for example, noted in an interview, that some colleagues were situated in applied educational certificate programs and a few of them agreed with the idea of an STC-controlled TCBOK and monetization. The interviewee said that no practitioner felt the TCBOK should be open and free, at least during the period when the issue became controversial. Who felt they belonged to the community, at least for this issue, was all about the person's perspective on intellectual property and little else.

In *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Wenger (1998) brings up an important indicator of a thriving community of practice: The members share a discourse reflecting their community's perspective. According to this indicator, multiple perspectives may exist, but only productively when the discourse conventions (such as those surrounding intellectual property) are shared. Cessation of discourse—conversations, messages, chats, Internet messaging calls—can also reflect a lack of shared discourse conventions. Our survey data indicate that during the most productive phases of the TCBOK, a majority were aware (62%), through their e-mail addresses and ways of speaking about issue, whether someone came from an academic or practitioner background. Although it did not matter necessarily, the background was associated with a specific perspective on the intellectual property issues of the TCBOK.

Of course, there was no decrease in civility or respect. One interviewee noted that "Everyone on the project were 'nice people.'" This is not a scenario where arguments became personal or hostile. But it became a situation where people with differing opinions on the intellectual property issue stopped discourse. One respondent noted, ruefully, "I don't belong here anymore." Astutely, the TCBOK team recognized that this was an ideological perspective issue and not one that, they felt, could be resolved or negotiated through mutual engagement. In the end, the team tabled the issues in hope that a decision to move on might offer a chance to restore the mutual engagement necessary to continue the project.

Finally, there was shared repertoire between team members during the intellectual property issue; however, it was an extension from other TCBOK team activities and not generated by the issue. The tools, language, and organization of the team remained consistent even during disagreement regarding the treatment of intellectual property. Team members communicated face-to-face as well as through e-mail and Basecamp. Nothing about the intellectual property discussion changed the tools, artifacts, or meaning that the team had developed to that point. After that point, however, the team failed to develop or rather to negotiate a shared meaning of the TCBOK with respect to its access (open or proprietary). Ideas for content access split roughly along academic and practitioner identities. It was clear to academics why most practitioners wanted to make the content on TCBOK proprietary; however, they did not agree with the decision. Likewise, it was not that practitioners did not have an appreciation for an open portal; however, the competitive advantage and value-added aspects for membership seemed to call for proprietary access. Despite maintaining a consistent and steady shared repertoire, the community failed to engage or develop a shared purpose during this intellectual-property controversy period. Without engagement or joint enterprise the community failed to coalesce and collaborate effectively. The academic/practitioner split, if anything, was heightened by this topic in contrast

to most of the other activities that led a professional identity rather than an organizational one.

Application Principles

Our analysis seems to indicate that Wenger's (1998) community of practice dimensions of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire are essential and visible elements of academic and practitioner collaboration. Furthermore, community of practice development is the primary mechanism for negotiating a professional consciousness in a field containing a diversity or dichotomy of professionals with strong organizational affiliations. If this is the case, how can academics and practitioners within the field of technical communication nurture these community of practice dimensions into their collaborative projects? Indeed, how can they nurture professional consciousness?

Recommended Collaboration Applications

We have introduced communities of practice theory; rationalized that professionalism is an important negotiated meaning, or "consciousness," between academics and practitioners; and recounted collaboration success and failure from the TCBOK project as evidence. Our final section addresses the growth of communities of practice by both academics and practitioners. We attempt to answer the question "How can we apply community of practice theory to define and improve professionalism in our field?"

As we ask this question, it is worth reminding ourselves that fundamental disagreements over ideology are rarely solved in communities of practice, regardless of the tightness and value of the community. The three profiles given demonstrated the importance of all three dimensions (joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire) in developing an effective community. Without an effective community, there is no chance to negotiate and develop the consciousness aspect of professionalism.

Finally, we turn to other difficult initiatives—such as certification—to see how a professional consciousness or a pattern of negotiating differences based on an awareness of inclusive professional identity might become less contentious.

We turn now from description to the question: What principles has our research discovered that can be used to nurture the changes for successful collaboration between academics and practitioners? We mentioned Bernhardt (2002) earlier in this essay, noting how his conceptualization of *active-practice* was one of the first to list ideas for communities of practice. This section of our paper adds to Bernhardt's list (pp. 87–89) with additional application ideas, integrating them with Wenger's (1998) community indicators, as a model for community and a basis for the development of professional consciousness.

In his chapter, Bernhardt focuses on the role of academic institutions and corporations in building professionalism. We suggest the professional organization as another important *professionales locus*. We disagree with Bernhardt, slightly, in our focus on membership organizations, not corporations, as the entities that can bring the two communities together. We have no bias against the workplace. But Bernhardt is astute to note that there is an academic perspective that sometimes derives from English department culture and humanities-based conceptions of education. This academic culture can be at odds with technical communication programs within the departments, and against the workplace culture itself.

Several parts of the results of our research show the value of membership organizations, such as STC, the Usability Professionals Association, or the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing. Research conducted on practitioners as part of a pilot study for Kline's dissertation indicates that practitioners want a strong relationship with academia. Corollary research suggests that both academics and practitioners overwhelmingly find conferences and seminars to be the best place to interact and find ways to collaborate with members of the other community. Some of the successful collaboration that occurs during the TCBOK project between academics and practitioners validates how a broad industry membership organization like STC can facilitate active-practice projects. But smaller organizations or committees within larger organizations can also recognize and foster communities of practice, especially if they employ a coherent model built on the research presented in this paper.

The CANFA Model of Communities of Practice Collaboration

In an attempt to build a model of successful collaboration that can lead to the development of professional consciousness in technical communication, we would like to suggest a five-part set of characteristics called Collaborate, Apply, Facilitate, Negotiate, and Activate (CANFA). We feel that when practitioners, academics, and organizational leaders wish to foster professional consciousness among technical communicators, this model may help point to work that leads to productive results. Many in the academic community have called for more collaboration on the terms (see Mirel & Spilka, 2002).

The mixture of community of practice dimensions from both academia and industry is deliberate. We recommend the areas of research, education, and training/certification as locations to foster academic and practical communities of practice.

Figure 1. The CANFA Model of Community of Practice Collaboration

The Community Must Collaborate

As we have seen, Wenger (1998) develops a conceptualization of practice using the terms *participation* and *reification* with elements of mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise. This approach to collaboration participation helps members join and identify with each other. Unlike an interest group, for example a group of fans of a sports team, a community of practice member needs to participate with other members and reify the "abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts" that give meaning to the practice (p. 59).

A strong theme that became evident from the data we studied for this paper indicates that collaboration is essential for any research, education, or training community or practice to emerge. TCBOK member participation in the user persona-building and taxonomy activities was critical. Some of the TCBOK initiatives, such as the content development phase, faltered because they did not foster academic/practitioner collaboration. Likewise, as Bernhardt emphasizes, building research panels comprising both academics and practitioners and the development of a platform that uses technology to match research needs with researchers are all good collaborative activities. Similarly, industry advisory boards for academic programs, mentorship programs, and certification initiatives are good opportunities. However, their structure needs to build collaborative participation from both communities to succeed. Without collaboration, the knowledge and social presence necessary to negotiate meaning, something that Wenger (1998) notes is critical to community, fails to occur.

One of the successes of the TCBOK project was the collaborative nature of the culture. Team members initially jumped into negotiating the meaning of important terms: What is a TCBOK portal? How do we define technical communication? What is the value proposition of our discipline? Who will use a BOK? From this collaboration came a culture of professional consciousness in which meaning was negotiated through the collaborative efforts of the community. A similar process needs to grow between researchers and educators in the discipline.

The Work Must Apply to Workplace and Institutional Settings

Many academics in technical communication have requested that academia consider research that can be applied to industry (Blakeslee, 2002). We believe a community of practice model could help this occur.

Each community benefits from a research community of practice that develops ideas for applied research.

In colleges and universities, groups need to apply their efforts in the classroom and training room. In certification, both academics and practitioners could work together to identify major activities performed by technical communicators and how they are applied, measured, and supported through education. The research itself is improved. These applied activities improve immeasurably by building the talents of both practitioners and academics. For example, the academic community adds an understanding and skill set in research methodology and design grounded in theory. The practitioner community adds a perspective of relevancy for the direction of the research and a pragmatic tool set to connect the research design to meaningful industry knowledge. Through applied principles in the classroom, community of practices that include both communities gain the ability to negotiate longstanding perspectives (often barriers is a more appropriate term) held by respective communities.

Academics often believe that choosing an applied research topic shackles their independence and reduces them to the level of corporate shill. A research community of practice would help academics to craft research agendas that are still independent but bounded by workplace and industry needs. Conversely, the research of an educational community of practice could help the practitioner community to craft research programmatic outcomes that center on problems germane to industry and the profession and are not so focused on company problems or gaining competitive advantage. Practitioners might also benefit from the outcomes and assessment skills possessed by educators if they ever hope to craft a workable certification enterprise.

The Collaboration Must Be Facilitated

In Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), the authors caution managers about trying to "manage" communities of practice. As a reviewer of this article suggested, managers "should provide the space and resources for it to flourish on its own" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). In our investigation of the TCBOK, we found significant support for this "nurturing" approach. Indeed, many industry communities of practice are created without the need for leadership or facilitation. Often, workplace issues or needs foster a community that develops from the bottom up, in which staff-level employees form a community of practice to address these needs, without a leader. Even industry communities of practice that form by top-down dictate often develop independent of leadership or facilitation.

Our proposed academic/practitioner communities of practice are different. We found that the joint enterprise for the community of practice develops independently of the academics' or practitioners' institution and job. In many instances, the communities of practice in industry tend to be homogeneous, formed by people with similar roles and identities. Our proposed communities of practice, which may lead to a professional consciousness, have grown from a groundwork that allowed for a broad mix of academics and practitioners.

Because of the broad mix of diverse organizational identities, the communities of practice between academics and practitioners need to be facilitated. Some person or entity must play a role in facilitating activities, communication, and project management. TCBOK research shows it does not always need to be the same person. One TCBOK team member took the lead on technology implementation and platforms. Another took the lead on creating personas and facilitating the discussion about how users will interact with the TCBOK. Another team member provided project management leadership by developing the milestones, meetings, tasks, and strategy to perform many of the early-phase activities. Similarly, research communities of practice need facilitation to balance the activities and input from both communities.

The Collaboration Must Be Negotiated

The research clearly points to watershed events such as technology selection, taxonomy development, and the value proposition that were successful because of community negotiation. Although some of the activities progressed without much negotiation, the events that brought the TCBOK members closer took negotiation. Negotiation provided members with a feeling of contribution and helped to solidify the social and professional relationship among the team.

The negotiation process is often overlooked during collaboration between academics and practitioners. Many collaborative projects are scoped by one

community for the sake of saving time or defining boundaries. Rarely does an academic/industry research project begin with a negotiation process that allows the two communities to negotiate the components of the project. Anecdotally, most collaborations between practitioners and academics seem to germinate from and are scoped by one community—which then, often as an afterthought, realizes that it might be a good thing to include the feedback of the other community.

One extraordinary aspect of the TCBOK was that there was nothing like it before it took form. One might argue that there were resources, such as information available about the field of technical communication on eServer. However, the value of the TCBOK project came from academics and practitioners joining to define and negotiate everything about the project: structure, terms and definitions, milestones and schedules, purpose, and connection to other entities. Negotiation is critical to the ability of team members to foster mutual engagement, sustain joint enterprise, and build shared repertoire.

The Collaboration Must Be Activity-Based

Our research during the TCBOK project demonstrated the importance of working as a team to build a community of practice. Wenger's (1998) dimensions for community all require activity to develop. Joint enterprise relates to participating in the shared sense of purpose for the organization or community. This does not occur from simply having similar interests. Special interest groups are significant entities within many membership organizations, including STC. However, as Howard (2010) suggests, we should not confuse them with communities of practice. Until such activities exist, there can be no community of practice, just a community of interest, which by itself is incapable of bridging the space between academics and practitioners to negotiate meaning (including professionalism). Research, like any community of practice, requires activity to make it a practice and foster community.

TCBOK examples of active-practice include document-centric committees that developed plans, strategies, policy, and content population guidelines. This focus on developing "something" that was a joint effort of all team members was critical to negotiating meaning. Often, it was not the deliverable (e.g., the user personas) that was the most important result, but rather the process and community that formed during the activity.

Any research initiative that involves both academics and practitioners needs to be designed to include significant amounts of activity for all team members. Similarly, educational activities, such as inviting guest speakers, creating advisory boards, hiring adjunct instructors, and conducting alumni efforts, require activities—meetings, social networking, planning, and discussions—to create the basis for productive knowledge making and consciousness building. As with research and education, certification and the development of standards—essential elements that build professional status—need activity-based reviews, research, and administration. Without activity, participants have little chance to develop the mutual engagement or negotiate the shared repertoire necessary to achieve professional consciousness.

Conclusion

We have argued that collaboration, application, facilitation, negotiation, and activity foster communities of practice between academics and practitioners in technical communication, leading to one negotiated professional identity. This collaboration is essential for a negotiated meaning of professionalism because professionalism rests on accepting and then transcending academic or practitioner identity. Although many technical communication academics have forwarded calls for more collaboration through research, teaching, and practice, no comprehensive model for achieving this has been developed. Communities of practice provide the structure for such a model, and Wenger's (1998) three dimensions can be a programmatic guide to nurturing true communities of practice.

Further, our CANFA conceptual model can help those interested in developing opportunities for professional behavior. The positive effects of the early phases of the TCBOK project hold important implications for professional relationships and professionalism as a cornerstone for the achievement of professional status in our field. The idea that academics and practitioners can engage, negotiate meaning, and share a sense of purpose means that we may be able to solve contentious professional issues collaboratively.

Fostering all three communities-of-practice dimensions may help to overcome disagreement over professionalism in our field and provide a pathway to successful practitioner and academic collaboration, especially as it faces eventual certification.

The TCBOK may have hit its final snag with the idea of certification. One reviewer of our article noted that this issue evokes the kinds of questions that threaten to divide academic and practitioner camps further.

> What does STC mean by certification? How would that perspective change programmatic and curriculum decisions? Are academics even willing to change curriculum? How does one certify writing, the writing process, and situational and audience analysis? What would stop some company from creating a software program that certifies a person's writing?

Clearly, these kinds of questions from academics will not lead to eager participation in the certification project, because they signify that the academics do not understand what certification means to them. Similarly, practitioners have no active path to help themselves understand concepts of "contribution" to a BOK, and may ask questions like the following:

Why should I contribute to knowledge that I will eventually be tested on? Will certification compete with a college degree? How does one begin to assure quality and ongoing learning to keep up certification? Will I need a license, and what if an organization decides to revoke it? Will that suggest to an employer that I have become unemployable?

The next phase of TCBOK, should one emerge, will require a much stronger sense of mutual engagement. Active participation is hard to sustain during content development, unless it fosters communities that can collaboratively develop, vet, and produce content. The next phase might revisit the most successful phase of the first stage, which was persona development. The development of personas of engagement (as opposed to personas of usage) that show how people within technical communication can connect, might help to make content population more successful. Failure to make the next TCBOK phases collaborative may doom the project to a state in which a few people attempt to maintain the content while the majority of the field complains about what is not there.

As noted, Savage (2003) identifies three elements that contribute to professionalism: market factors (we're the only ones who can do this), socio-political factors (we control entry into the profession by certification and accreditation), and ideological factors (we have a professional consciousness). In the area of professional consciousness, he says, "Without a unified sense of professional identity, practitioners of a field are unlikely to make good progress toward professionalization." And he explains, "Practitioners may identify far more closely with the particular settings in which they work than with other people who do more or less similar work in theirs" (2003, p. 140). It is not surprising that Savage and others identify the growth of this professional consciousness with efforts to identify a common BOK. Savage says,

> In order to transform one's orientation and allegiance from the associations of everyday life, it is necessary that a group should exist through which individuals can identify with common practices, concerns, interests, discourse, and values—a group, that is, which functions as a culture. (p. 141).

We have argued that the group, or community, that grew around the TCBOK project provides an example of the kind of professional consciousness Savage claims as a necessary condition for professionalization (2003). By carefully examining that community through the lens of mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise, we found that professional consciousness depends on the active involvement of members of a community of practice. Professional consciousness exists when members with strong ties to everyday institutional and corporate contexts engage in facilitated, theory-focused activities of broader significance than position and employment. Two activities present themselves as candidates for this kind of consciousness building: certification and defining a BOK. In both endeavors, academics and practitioners can focus on truly professional issues.

References

Agrawal, A. (2001). University-to-industry knowledge transfer: literature review and unanswered questions. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 3*, 285–302.

Albers, M. J. (2005). The future of technical communication: Introduction to this special issue. *Technical Communication, 52*, 267–272.

Blakeslee, A. (2002). Researching a common ground: Exploring the space where academic and workplace cultures meet. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping Technical Communication: New Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century* (pp. 41-56). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Barker, T., & Hart, H. (2008). Academe-industry leaders' summit: bringing together society resources. *Intercom*, 55(1), 28–29.

Bernhardt, S. A. (2002). Active-practice: Creating productive tension between academia and industry. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 81–90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Blumenthal, D., Campbell, E., Causino, N., & Louis, K. (1996). Participation of life-science faculty in research relationships with industry. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 335*, 1734.

Bosley, D. (2002). Jumping Off the ivory tower: Changing the academic perspective. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping Technical Communication: New Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century* (pp. 27-40). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bridgeford, T. (2007). *Resources in technical communication: Outcomes and assessments*. New York, NY: Baywood.

Clark, D., & Andersen, R. (2005). Re-negotiating with technology: Training towards more sustainable technical communication. *Technical Communication, 52*, 289–301.

Cooke, L., & Mings, S. (2005). Connecting usability education and research with industry needs and practices. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 48*, 296–312.

Coppola, N. W. (2010). The Technical Communication Body of Knowledge Initiative: An academic-practitioner partnership. *Technical Communication,* 57, 11–25.

Dicks, R. (2002). Cultural impediments to understanding: Are they surmountable? In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping technical communication: New directions and challenges for the 21st century* (pp. 13–26). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fisher, L., & Bennion, L. (2005). Organizational implications of the future development of technical communication: Fostering communities of practice in the workplace. *Technical Communication, 52*, 277–288.

Gurak, L., & Duin, A. (2004). The impact of the internet and digital technologies on teaching and research in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 13*, 187–198.

Hart, H., & Glick-Smith, J. (1994). Training in Technical Communication: Ideas for a partnership between the academy and the workplace. *Technical Communication, 41*, 399–405.

Hayes, K. (2007). Triple helix organisations, knowledge-stewarding communities of practice and perceptions of time: The hunters and gatherers of commercialisation. *Proceedings from ECKM 2007: The 8th European Conference on Knowledge Management, Vols. 1 and 2*. Reading, UK: Academic Conferences Limited.

Hayhoe, G. (1998). The academe-industry partnership: What's in it for all of us? [Editorial]. *Technical Communication, 45*, 19–20.

Heba, G. M. (1999). Research in Technical Communication: An overview of this special issue. *Technical Communication, 46*, 457–459.

Howard, T. (2010). *Design to thrive: Creating social networks and online communities that last.* New York, NY: Elsevier.

Iverson, J. O., & McPhee, R. D. (2008). Communicating knowing through communities of practice: Exploring internal communicative processes and differences among CoPs. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 36*, 176–199.

Kline, J. A. (2011). *A Model for Academic/Practitioner Knowledge Exchange Characterization Using Communities of Practice Theory.* Unpublished Dissertation, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Kruecken, G. (2003). Mission impossible? Institutional barriers to the diffusion of the" third academic mission" at German universities. *International Journal of Technology Management, 25*(1), 18–33.

Kynell-Hunt, T., & Savage, G. (2003). *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: The historical and contemporary struggle for professional status*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Killingsworth M. J. & Palmer, J. S. (2002). Research in consulting in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 11*, 389–409.

Lappenbusch, S., & Turns, J. (2005, 10–13 July 2005). *Finding their place in TC: Using a community of practice model to research emerging TC professionals.* Paper presented at the IEEE Professional Communication Conference, Limerick, Ireland.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Leydesdorff, L., & Curran, M. (2000). Mapping university-industry-government relations on the Internet: The construction of indicators for a knowledge-based economy. *Cybermetrics, 4*(1).

Mirel, B., & Spilka, R. (Eds.) (2002). *Reshaping technical communication*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Paré, A. (2002). Keeping writing in its place: A participatory action approach to workplace communication. In B. Mirel & R. Spilka (Eds.), *Reshaping Technical Communication: New Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century* (pp. 57–73). Mawah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Pringle, K., & Williams, S. (2005). The future is the past: Has technical communication arrived as a profession? *Technical Communication, 52*, 361–370.

Rheingold, H. (2010). Building virtual communities. In A. Giddens (Ed.), *Sociology: Introductory Readings* (Vol. 225). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Rynes, S., Bartunek, J., & Daft, R. (2001). Across the great divide: Knowledge creation and transfer between practitioners and academics. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 340–355.

Savage, G. J. (1999). The process and prospects for professionalizing technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 29*, 355–381.

Savage, G. J. (2003). Toward professional status in technical communication. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage, (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication. Vol. 1* (pp. 1–7). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Spilka, R. (2000). The issue of quality in professional documentation: How can academia make more of a difference? *Technical Communication Quarterly, 9*, 207–220.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

About the Authors

Joel A. Kline is an Associate Professor in the Department of Digital Communications at Lebanon Valley College (LVC) in Pennsylvania. His research interests are enterprise 2.0, digital communications, and usability. Prior to college teaching he was a principal in Concept Communications, Inc., a communications consulting firm based in Lebanon, PA. He has a Master's degree from Temple University, a PhD in Technical Communication from Texas Tech University, and the APR accreditation from PRSA. Contact: jkline@lvc.edu.

Thomas Barker is a Professor in the Department of English and the Director of the Technical Communication Program at Texas Tech University. His research interests include risk communication, public policy consulting, social networking, knowledge studies, and qualitative research methods. He is the author and editor of numerous books, collections, and articles on software documentation, consulting in technical communication, and public health communication. He has a PhD from University of Texas and is an Associate Fellow of STC. Contact: thomas.barker@ttu.edu.

Manuscript received 22 February 2011, revised 17 June 2011, accepted 3 August 2011.

The Three Approaches to Professionalization in Technical Communication

Saul Carliner

Abstract

Purpose: Explores internal divisions within our profession by exploring one particular type of tension: that technical communicators do not have a unified view of professionalization for the field.

Method: Proposes that prevailing approaches to professionalization are rooted in theories of occupations, the exclusive right to perform a job. True *occupations* have such rights legally; aspiring occupations like ours are *disciplines*. Common components of an infrastructure for occupations include professional organizations, bodies of knowledge, education, professional activities, and certification.

Results: Disciplines often establish these in anticipation of becoming an occupation, but some practicing professionals interpret and use them differently, resulting in a spectrum of approaches to professionalization. At one end of the spectrum is *formal professionalism*, which views professionalization as a stepping stone to full occupational status. It is rooted in a worldview that values expertise and sees the infrastructure of an occupation supporting the development of expertise and controlling access to the profession. In the center of the spectrum is *quasiprofessionalization*, in which individuals participate in the activities of the occupational infrastructure but without the expectation of exclusive rights to perform the work. Quasiprofessionalization is rooted in professional identity. At the other end of the spectrum is *contraprofessionalization*, which refers to initiatives that offer or promote professional services outside of parts of or the entire infrastructure, sometimes circumventing it completely. This world view is rooted in market theory and characterized by concepts like do-it-yourself (DIY), user-generated, and subject matter expert (SME)-provided documentation.

Conclusions: The differing views suggest tensions regarding support for specific efforts to professionalize technical communication, including formal branding of the profession, establishment of certification, and support for professional organizations.

Keywords: professionalization, certification, branding of technical communication

Practitioner's Takeaway

- Do not assume that other technical communicators share the same beliefs about or interest in professionalizing the field.
- The different views on professionalization explain these differences in beliefs and interests.
- Because of differing views on professionalization, technical communicators face challenges in branding the profession, promoting certification, and building professional organizations.
- Even if technical communicators reach consensus on the infrastructure of professionalization, they face a competitive environment for certain types of high-value assignments, such as knowledge management and information architecture, as other emerging professions seek the same work.

The Three Approaches to Professionalization

Introduction

In the past decade or so, technical communicators have made significant strides in establishing the infrastructure of a profession. Both the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and tekom, the German professional association for technical communication and information-development, have established certification programs. STC has made significant strides in formalizing a body of knowledge and gaining recognition for the profession from government bodies like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which provides official definitions of occupations from which employers can develop job descriptions and salary scales. These efforts supplement long-standing work like establishing and running formal academic programs in—and professional associations on—technical communication, as well as producing the conferences and publishing the journals, professional magazines, and webzines that form the foundation of the body of knowledge. Many of these efforts started in the 1950s.

In her Call for Papers for this special issue, guest editor Nancy Coppola (2010) commented that such efforts toward professionalization are supposed to bring unity to a field:

> Studies show that professions emerge in processes of struggle for market control and closure, for definition of a coherent body of knowledge, and for development of a professional history that will give the field a unifying identity.

But perhaps that is a false assumption. Just consider the division that exists over certification. Some members of the profession strongly support it. For example, the late Ken Rainey (2001) noted,

> An objective, fair, and meaningful system of certification will greatly benefit the profession of technical communication as well as individual technical communication professionals. Any reputable profession offering service to the consuming public owes itself and its consumers the validation that an objective, fair, and meaningful certification system would bring.

Others, like Geoff Hart (2008), think certification is a waste of time:

> The virtues of certification cannot be ignored, but they are outweighed by the drawbacks: There's no evidence that employers will value certification; it can be highly subjective; and it requires ongoing renewal, even for experienced practitioners, to avoid diluting its value. The more important task must be to demonstrate our value to employers. Only once they understand our value will certification provide a means to assure employers that they can expect to receive that value.

To be honest, we have not really had this discussion. Most of the discussion of the "struggle" for professionalizing technical communication focuses on external struggles, especially within the academic environment (Kynell-Hunt, 2004), such as struggles for recognition as an academic discipline and struggle for legitimacy and respect as a distinct profession. When we explore discord within the profession, we usually focus on the well-documented tensions between the academic and professional segments of the technical communication community (Carliner, 1995; Savage & Kynell-Hunt 2004).

Other internal tensions threaten professionalization, and they do not receive much attention. The divisions do not fall along the well-documented fault lines of academe-industry relations. For example, certification has its proponents and opponents in academe as well as industry.

This article is intended to start the exploration of the internal divisions within our profession by exploring one particular type of tension that exists among those involved with technical communication: that we do not have a unified view of professionalization for the field. Specifically, this article provides a background by exploring definitions and components of professionalization. Then it explores a spectrum of views on professionalization, from those who fully embrace it to those who actively resist it. Last, this article explores the implications of differing implementations of professionalization among those in the same community on the unity of the field.

A Background: Definitions and Components of Professionalization

Although many early presentations on professionalism at STC conferences focused on dress and attitude, the conceptual basis of professionalization actually emerges from theory and research on *occupations* and is rooted not in how one presents oneself, but in one's exclusive right to perform a job. This view of an exclusive right to perform work provides a basis for considering the core issues of professionalism, including the following:

- What is a profession?
- Which activities support and promote professionalism?

What Is a Profession?

Evetts (2003) and Trice and Beyer (1993) distinguished between professions that that have an exclusive legal right to perform a job and professions that do not. Trice and Beyer (1993) use the term *occupation* to distinguish professions that not only have an exclusive, legal right to perform those jobs, but also "control training for the access to doing that work, and to control the way that work is performed and evaluated" (p. 186). Only professions that have all of these rights are true *occupations*. Many perceive occupational status as the ultimate recognition of white-collar work like medicine, law, and engineering. But many blue-collar fields also have occupational status, including cosmetologists (hairstylists), electricians, and plumbers. No worker can legally work in these fields without a license; earning a license requires training at an authorized institute.

Past efforts to characterize professionalization in technical communication (such as Savage, 1977, 2003) have used such occupations as a point of comparison between the current state of our field and those of other fields. To distinguish among those who do and do not have such legal rights, this article uses terminology adapted from Trice and Beyer: *occupation* to refer to disciplines whose members have exclusive legal rights to perform work and control training for the field, as well as the performance and evaluation of the work. Law, medicine, accounting, and cosmetology are examples of occupations. The term *profession* refers to disciplines whose members do not have such rights. Training, human resources, corporate communication, public relations, and technical communication are examples of professions. None has the exclusive legal rights of an occupation. The term *discipline* refers to any field of practice, encompassing both occupations and professions.

Note that this use of terminology differs from other uses of the same terms. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines *occupation* primarily for the purpose of categorizing the types of work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010) rather than the right to perform that work. Similarly, other articles in this special issue use the term *profession* for categorizing disciplines, and do not distinguish among professions with and without exclusive legal rights to perform work.

But this distinction between disciplines is central to traditional understanding of professionalism. Many, like Savage (2003) use occupations (which he calls "mature professions") as a point of comparison. Savage uses this comparison to explain the status of technical communication, which "lacks the status, legitimacy, and power of mature professions" (p. 1). But as Evetts (2003) notes, this traditional view is, perhaps, rooted in beliefs and values and, as labor markets globalize and working conditions for occupations change, so are views about professionalism (Evetts 2011).

Which Activities Support and Promote Professionalism?

One of the core components of traditional views of professionalism is the insfrastructure of the profession. Trice and Beyer (1993) note that many professions that lack occupational status often attempt to establish an infrastructure of activities that support the growth of a profession. Sometimes they do so with the hope of gaining occupational status, sometimes merely to improve perceptions within the workplace. Most of the components of the infrastructure could be used to establish domain over a particular type of work, should a profession choose to become an occupation. Although each profession establishes its own infrastructure, these infrastructures seem to include five common components: professional organizations, bodies of knowledge, education, professional activities, and certification.

The Three Approaches to Professionalization

Professional Organizations provide people who work in the same discipline a forum for exploring issues of common interest (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Professional organizations provide a central address for the profession—that is, a group that can bring together people in a profession and coordinate the activities of the profession. The exact nature of professional organizations varies from organization to organization. At one end of the spectrum, professional organizations provide members with an opportunity to share professional knowledge and business contacts, as did the former International Technical Training Association. At the other end of the spectrum, professional organizations define the discipline and actively promote that vision not only within the profession, but to employers and sponsors who might hire members of the profession, such as the U.S.-based, 250,000 plus member Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM Membership Center, 2011). Online communities of practice, such as the Social Media Breakfast, which let people participate in conversations through the Web and social media, are increasingly playing similar roles but without formal membership and, as a result, without the resources of professional associations. Some only converse online; others occasionally meet in person (such as Ignite, which holds local meetings about once a year).

Bodies of Knowledge refer to content with which all members of a discipline should be familiar (Information Technology Terms Dictionary, n.d.). A body of knowledge typically serves as a basis for determining competent performance in the field, which is used to assess entrants to the field and evaluate the performance of professionals afterward. As the focus of professional organizations varies, so do efforts to establish bodies of knowledge. Some focus on production of content, and involve recruiting and publishing content about the practice of the profession in newsletters, Web sites, magazines, and peer-reviewed journals. Organizations like the Academy of Human Resource Development take a production approach. In contrast, other organizations have attempted use structured processes like nominal group techniques and DACUM to define the content in a body of knowledge and recruit and publish content that describes and illuminates this defined body. Examples include the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Project Management Institute.

Education, both formal academic education and continuing professional education, prepares people to practice in the field and is a primary means of ensuring ongoing professional development. Formal academic training refers to degree programs at the associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels offered by colleges and universities. Formal academic training also refers to formal apprenticeship programs, which are often administered in collaboration with high schools. Examples of degree programs in disciplines include business communication majors with public relations concentrations at the undergraduate level and master's degrees in human resource development (HRD) (which prepare training and development professionals). In the absence of controlling these programs through an accreditation process, as occupations can do, professional organizations seek to support academic education by providing scholarships and other types of material support to participate in, and influence the content of, formal education.

Continuing Education refers to workshops, seminars, and self-study programs that address topics of interest to the discipline. Continuing education programs are offered by a variety of organizations, including colleges and universities, adult education arms of public schools, private providers (often for-profit), and professional associations. Examples of continuing professional education include courses leading to project management certification, which are offered by private providers and continuing education groups, and facilitation skills courses for trainers, which are offered by continuing education programs, ASTD, and private providers like Langevin and the Training Clinic.

Professional Events serve a variety of purposes. Some events have an educational or informational agenda and serve a purpose similar to formal education; others have social or business agendas, or multiple agendas, and play as much a role in establishing a central position for the professional organization as they do in achieving other purposes. A common example of a professional event is the monthly meeting sponsored by the local chapter of a professional association. These meetings typically feature a guest speaker and, thus, have an educational focus. But most include networking

events, and some have wholly social agendas. Still other events, like job fairs and presentations by vendors, have business agendas.

Another common type of professional event is the conference, which has educational, social, and business agendas. Some also provide opportunities for organizations to conduct their own business; many professional organizations—especially those with members in varied geographic regions—hold their annual general meeting in conjunction with a conference.

Certification assesses the competence of individual practitioners against the norms of the profession (Hale, 2000). Although certification is voluntary (that is, one can practice a profession without certification), it is intended to control entry into the field and provide the means of assessing competent performance. Certifications exist in many of the communication disciplines related to technical communication, in addition to certifications of technical communication offered by STC and tekom. These additional certifications include the following:

- Business communication (Accredited Business Communicator (ABC), offered by the International Association of Business Communicators [IABC])
- Public relations specialists (Accreditation in Public Relations, offered by the Public Relations Society of America [PRSA])
- Biology editors (Board-Certified Editor in the Life Sciences offered by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences)
- Instructional designers (Certified Performance Technologist, offered by the International Society for Performance Improvement)
- Training and development professionals (Certified Technical Trainer, first offered in 1997 and now administered by CompTIA; the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance offered since 2006 by ASTD; and the Certified Training and Development Professional and Competent Training Practitioner, offered by the Canadian Society for Training and Development).

Note, however, that use of terminology for these credentials is inconsistent and, in some cases, incorrect. At the most technical level, the accreditations offered by IABC and PRSA are actually certifications. Accreditation is—

> A process of verifying that educational programs adhere to established standards of performance. For example, Engineering and Business programs are accredited by specialized organizations that have established performance standards for academic programs in the field. These standards affect not only the curriculum itself, but the qualifications of the instructors, the facilities for teaching, library and laboratory facilities, and other support services (STC Certification Commission, 2012).

Similarly, the tekom certification is actually a certificate, which validates successful completion of a program of study, rather than assessment of competence in the context of a job (STC Certification Commission, 2012).

Differing Implementations of Professionalization

Combined, this infrastructure of activities forms the basis for professionalism in many disciplines. Many people who work in a discipline are driven to establish and strengthen the components of a professional infrastructure, or participate in the activities, by an implicit or explicit assumption that the goal of professionalism is to establish an occupation. For example, when discussing the benefits of certification to the field of HRD, Kahnweiller (2009) noted, "If there were a process that certified HRD practitioners, this could provide some assurance to those who employ or engage HRD professionals as consultants that individuals possess at least rudimentary knowledge and skills to practice HRD effectively" (p. 226). That view certainly prevails in the literature on technical communication, sounding similar to the quote from Rainey presented at the beginning of this article.

But the empirical evidence suggests that perhaps other expectations motivate professionals to participate in professional organizations. Research of the Association for Association Executives suggests that two of the primary reasons that people join professional

The Three Approaches to Professionalization

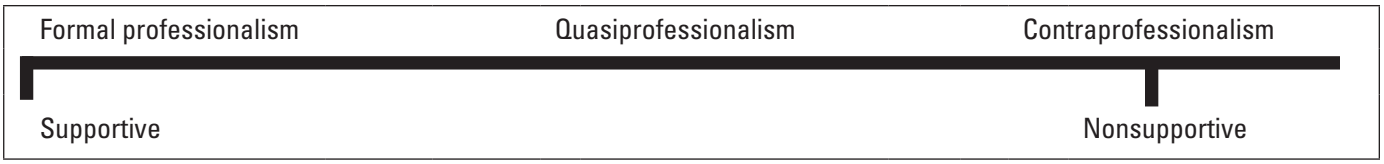


Figure 1. Spectrum of Approaches to Professionalism

organizations are access to publications and similar members-only content, and networking. Only a small percentage (usually fewer than 20%) actively participate in the organization (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997). The same research consistently found that the larger the chapter of an organization, the smaller the percentage of participation. More than differing levels of participation in professional organizations, such empirical evidence suggests that a singular view and approach to certification might not exist.

The next section explores that possibility. It first proposes three distinct approaches to professionalism. Then it individually explores these three in depth.

The Spectrum of Views on Professionalism

One assumption underlying much of the literature on professionalism in technical communication is that the concept of professionalism described thus far in this article is a shared one. This view of professionalism is called *formal professionalism*. People who advocate for formal professionalism see professionalism a stepping stone to full occupational status. This is rooted in a worldview in which expertise matters and those who demonstrate expertise are entitled to say who enters the field, how people prepare for the field, and how expertise can be evaluated. Formal professionalization has its roots in the traditional guild systems and, more recently, in licensed occupations. As Evetts (2003) notes, such closure is one of the goals of formal professionalization.

Implicit in formal professionalism is a belief that professional organizations serve as the primary advocates and coordinating bodies for their disciplines, and have both a right and responsibility to review and approve efforts undertaken to support the profession, including bodies of knowledge, education, professional activities, and certification.

But as support for certification varies among people who practice technical communication, so views of professionalism vary among people who practice all disciplines. Those who fully embrace professionalism subscribe to beliefs similar to those of formal professionalism. But as opinions on certification range from strongly for to passionately against, and everywhere in between, so do opinions on professionalism. Formal professionalism stakes territory at one end of this spectrum; partial support of professionalism, or called quasiprofessionalism, stakes the territory at the center; and strong opposition to professionalism, or contraprofessionalism, stakes the other end of the spectrum. Figure 1 shows this range of approaches to professionalism.

For example, some people who practice in a discipline appreciate the support that the infrastructure of professionalization provides, but do not necessarily see these activities as leading to occupational status, nor do they see the professional association as the only source of knowledge, education, professional activities, or validation of competence.

Such a view of professionalism is called *quasiprofessionalization* and involves efforts by individuals and for-profit organizations to provide services that either duplicate or fill holes in the programs and services provided by nonprofit professional organizations. Such efforts are offered outside of the scope of the formally organized professional community. Sometimes, the quasiprofessional effort is motivated by economic factors: A member of the field sees economic opportunity that he or she wants to explore individually, rather than offer to the organized profession. In other instances, the quasiprofessional effort is an effort to resist an initiative by the organization, such as an effort to resist a particular definition of technical communication, which some professionals might perceive as restrictive or not encompassing their own specialty.

Quasiprofessionalization is rooted in professional identity rather than an exclusive right to perform work. Professional identity refers to the "roles" that people see themselves playing (Goffman,1959). In these instances, the professional identity demarcated by the professional society contradicts the professional identity

held by the individual, who chooses to support his or her own identity. For example, if the official definition of a technical communicator describes the discipline as designing and developing content for practical uses, then people who primarily see themselves as user advocates would have professional identities at odds with the officially defined professional identity. In contrast to professionalization, which focuses on the exclusive right of a community of people to perform particular work, professional identity is focused on a self-conception and, as a result, is more focused on the individual than the community.

That is not to say that the search for professional identity is a solitary activity. Many quasiprofessional activities involve community. But rather than focusing on exclusive rights, quasiprofessionals focus on finding like-minded individuals with whom to interact.

Others who practice in a discipline such as technical communication and need to have technical content developed for their organizations actively resist efforts to professionalize; this view is called *contraprofessionalization*. Contraprofessionalization refers to initiatives that offer or promote professional services outside of parts of or the entire framework of the profession or occupation.

In practical terms, contraprofessionalization refers to efforts to circumvent paid professionals partially or completely. Do-it-yourself (DIY) documentation (such as that offered by Pyro.org), user-generated documentation (Gentle, 2009; Khanra & Bisras, 2010), and subject matter expert (SME)-provided documentation (Gentle, 2009) all represent efforts to circumvent paid technical communicators and engage others in preparing technical content for publication.

In some cases, organizations completely circumvent technical communicators. In other cases, organizations engage technical communicators to guide users and SMEs in their work. Technical communicators design and structure databases of content, develop templates to guide users and SMEs when they write content, and edit and oversee approvals of the resulting content (Gentle, 2009).

Contraprofessionalization has its roots in free market theory, which often seeks to remove barriers to competing in the marketplace (such as advocated by economists Adam Smith and Milton Friedman), and in which anyone is eligible to perform work. That work is successful if the results are acceptable to stakeholders.

In some cases, sponsors want the freedom to choose the services that best meet their needs, and, for whatever reasons, feel that users and SMEs who prepare documentation provide a better value for their documentation dollar (or whatever currency they use). Some sponsors want to avoid the cost of professional services. Other sponsors have concerns about the quality of work. Typical complaints seem to focus on the failure of technical communicators to accurately document the content or provide content that is sufficiently rich in context (Carliner, under review; Carliner & Bernard, 2011).

More fundamentally, however, the conceptual roots of contraprofessionalization emerge from a growing DIY culture in the worlds of high technology and media in which technical communicators work. The *New York Times* (2009) reports that—

> "Cheap, fast, simple tools are suddenly everywhere," Robert Capps of *Wired* magazine wrote this summer in an essay called "The Good-Enough Revolution." Companies that had focused mainly on improving the technical quality of their products have started to notice that, for many consumers, "ease of use, continuous availability and low price" are more important.

Shell (2010) notes that "cheap" and self-service have increasingly characterized many segments of the economy.

Contraprofessional efforts are not limited to technical communication. They even affect established occupations. For example, software like Business in a Box (Magder, 2011) that helps users write their own leases, business contracts, wills, and divorce settlements represent a contraprofessional effort against attorneys. Kamenetz (2010) explores how a DIY education can circumvent accredited colleges and universities staffed by tenured professors to provide a university-level education and, in some instances, credentials.

Consumers of all types of services are realizing that they do not need perfect products and services, they just need ones that reliably perform the most basic tasks. For example, after years of growth characterized by increasingly powerful computers and software, the

development of the $100 computer by Massachusetts Institute of Technology helped consumers realize that computers that let them surf the Net and perform word processing were often sufficient, and could reduce computer costs by as much as 75% (PC Magazine Encyclopedia, n.d.).

As computer manufacturers sold consumers more powerful computers than consumers needed for years, so, perhaps unwittingly, professional technical communicators have sold sponsors more communication services than they really need. To contraprofessionals, the executives who said in the 1980s and 1990s that intuitive interfaces that required no additional documentation really had a point.

And even the documentation that is necessary can be produced far less elaborately than in the past. Within technical communication, the DIY forces have their roots in publishing. As technology is now supporting nonprofessionals in creating acceptable content, so desktop publishing in the 1980s and help authoring tools in the 1990s allowed technical communicators to circumvent typesetters, layout specialists, and other professionals—resulting in huge drop-offs in their employment (Carliner, 2009). In other words, a form of professional Darwinism is at work. In previous decades, technical communicators displaced various types of production specialists, including typesetters, editorial assistants, desktop publishers, copy editors, illustrators, graphic designers, and, to some extent, developmental editors. Now the technology, to some extent, could be replacing technical communicators.

Contrasting Formal Professionalization, Quasi-, and Contraprofessionalization

These differing views suggest tensions regarding support for formally professionalizing the field of technical communication. This section considers practical implications of these differing views of professionalization with a focus on the five components typical of a professionalized infrastructure described earlier: how formal professionals, quasiprofessionals, and contraprofessionals view professional organizations, bodies of knowledge, education, professional activities, and certification. This, in turn, helps technical communicators better understand the positions of those who have other views regarding these activities, as well as what drives those differing views.

Formal Professionalism

Savage (2003) characterizes professionalization as "an exclusive process; it requires the undemocratic presumption that, as the basis of expertise, certain kinds of knowledge should not be freely available to everyone" (p.3). Evetts (2003) adds that professionalism is an attempt to manipulate the market for a particular discipline from within the field.

This view guides approaches to the infrastructure of professionalization. The formal professional view of professional organizations is that they serve as the central address of the profession. They are the first logical stop for people seeking information about a profession, coordinate all efforts to establish standards of practice and the education needed to achieve those standards, and validate education and practice—ideally with formal structures like certification. Perhaps this is why technical communicators established organizations like the Society for Technical Writers and Editors (the original name of STC), the engineering-focused IEEE formed a Professional Communication Society, as well as national organizations of technical communicators in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, and Germany between the 1950s and 1970s.

Formal professionalism views a body of knowledge as central to building a profession (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2001,) because it provides definitions of the field and key concepts related to it, as well as documents best practices and related research (Hayhoe, 2000). Perhaps that is why all of these professional organizations quickly established newsletters and, when feasible, peer-reviewed journals, like this one. The peer-review process, which mimics processes used in the physical sciences, adds credibility to content because peers who do not know the identity of an author have deemed a piece worthy of publication.

With a substantial body of published literature, formal professionals have sought to officially sanction a core body of knowledge with which all professionals should be familiar. The Body of Knowledge project sponsored by STC represents an effort in this direction. Other projects of this nature have been initiated, such as that of the Northwest Technical Center, which developed a set of competencies required by all technical

communicators that STC adopted in the 1990s when an earlier effort to define the body of knowledge did not succeed. Although formal professionals see the body of knowledge as central to defining the profession, they do not see it as static. Most bodies of knowledge undergo periodic reviews to make sure that they represent current knowledge and practices in a discipline and have provisions for revision.

In terms of education, formal professionals support degree programs in the field, viewing them as the primary means of entry into the field. The first academic programs in technical communication were established about the same time as the first professional societies and peer-reviewed journals, at Carnegie-Mellon University, Rensselear Polytechnic University, and the University of Minnesota. As the profession grew, so did the number of academic programs—at one time, the database of academic programs compiled by STC listed nearly 200 programs worldwide. Under ideal circumstances, formal professionals would seek to accredit these programs—that is verify that they cover particular content and skills and meet standards of academic performance.

Recognizing that much education in this field happens outside of academia, formal professionals also strongly stress the importance of continuing education. Many seek formal recognition through continuing education, as witnessed by the interest in certificate programs offered by STC and schools like the University of California at Santa Cruz and Simon Fraser University.

Formal professionals view events like conferences, monthly meetings of professional associations, and participation on committees as essential parts of the professional experience. In addition to providing a means of developing a professional network, such events provide an opportunity to participate in decision making about the profession and receive an experiential education that complements the formal one.

Certification represents a zenith of formal professional efforts, as it codifies what it means to be a professional in the field. Beyond its gatekeeping function, certification makes a strong political statement about the nature and value of the profession.

Quasiprofessionalism

Because quasiprofessionalization involves efforts by individuals and for-profit organizations to provide programs and services that either duplicate or fill holes in those provided by nonprofit professional organizations but outside of the scope of the formally organized professional community, it typically takes a utilitarian approach to professional organizations, bodies of knowledge, formal education, professional events, and certification.

Quasiprofessionals see a general value in professional organizations, but often view particular organizations as means to particular ends. As long as the organization meets their needs, quasiprofessionals continue to participate, sometimes quite actively. But quasiprofessionals often reach points in their development during which professional organizations no longer meet their needs. For example, some technical communicators saw their careers moving more toward usability or content management, and slowed or stopped participating in STC and focused their efforts instead on the Usability and Content Management Professionals Associations. Many taking the quasiprofessional approach to professionalism also find value in informal associations, such as interactions through nonsponsored Web-based communities like KeyContent.org, BoxesandArrows.org, and TECHWR-L that serve technical and professional communicators but work outside of the framework of a formal, nonprofit professional organization.

In terms of bodies of knowledge, the quasiprofessional has mixed feelings. On the one hand, journals, magazines, and similar resources provide these people with insights, ideas, and justifications that strengthen their work performance. But these same people have ambiguous feelings about a formally documented body of knowledge that specifies core knowledge and competencies expected of everyone practicing in a discipline because, in addition to specifying what the discipline is, it also specifies what the discipline is *not*. And quasiprofessionals might fear that part of their professional identities would be excluded from a body of knowledge.

In terms of formal education, many people advocating for the quasiprofessional approach value formal degrees and continuing education in the field, but do not see them as exclusive routes to entering the field or building competence. Many quasiprofessionals bring an eclectic range of experiences to their jobs—often unconventional ones (for example, some technical communicators have backgrounds in theater, others in engineering), and see efforts to define education as

The Three Approaches to Professionalization

Table 1. A Summary of the Views of Formal Professionalism, Quasiprofessionalism, and Contraprofessionalism on Various Components of the Infrastructure of Professionalization

	View of professional organizations	View of a body of knowledge	View of formal education	View of professional events	View of certification
Professional	Serves as the central address of the profession, establishes standards of practice and the education needed to achieve it.	Central to defining the profession. Does see it as changing, requiring periodic reviews and, if deemed necessary, revisions. Also states what the field is not.	Degree: Gatekeeper to entry to profession. Needs to be accredited to ensure that it addresses the Body of Knowledge and prepares students to take the certification exam. Continuing education: Essential, not just for developing competence but also for maintaining competence.	For professionals: Education, although with social benefits. For researchers: Opportunities to build reputations, learn the latest developments. Also good for networking.	Central to promoting the field.
Quasiprofessional	A means to an end, mostly for employment or social purposes.	Mixed feelings. As a source of intellectual direction, fine. As a definitive word, probably not.	Degree: Optional but beneficial. Continuing education: Optional, but an important means of staying current in the field.	Opportunities with several benefits: Educational Business Social	Optional
Contraprofessional	Organizations that have networking benefits but often place boundaries around the professional.	Constraining; places definitions and boundaries that preclude other views.	Degrees and continuing education: Beneficial, but the real assessment of competence is in the work—both the ability to sell it and the ability to please sponsors with it.	Opportunities with several benefits: Educational Business Social	Counterproductive. Like a body of knowledge, it constrains individuals.

precluding other routes of entry into the field. People who advocate for the quasiprofessional view see more value in continuing education, because it typically focuses on applied skills that directly address immediate work challenges. However, they do not feel that anyone has an exclusive right to offer this education; they are open to a variety of types of providers, from professional organizations to private companies.

In terms of professional events, the quasiprofessional viewpoint sees value; it even sees value in volunteering for professional organizations. But quasiprofessionals often approach professional events for social and networking benefits, or to fill gaps in programming offered by professional organizations, rather than as a statement of advocacy for formal professionism. Some quasiprofessionals even start their own events to meet needs not directly addressed by professional organizations. For example, conferences like LavaCon and the Center for Information Development Management provide programming for managers of technical communication groups, and WritersUA provides conferences and information for senior-level user assistance authors.

Quasiprofessionals see certification as a means of validating knowledge and, perhaps, as a marketing tool. But they do not see it as central to their professionalism and are not likely to be among the early adopters of certification. Furthermore, they often feel that no single certification fully represents the breadth of their knowledge, and they may seek several certifications, each reflecting a different aspect of their professional profiles.

Contraprofessionalism

Contraprofessionalism figuratively gives the finger to the exclusivity of professionalism. In fact, it often resists or undermines professional efforts.

Consider the contraprofessional view of professional organizations. Many contraprofessionals do not see the value in them. Those who do see value see it primarily in purely utilitarian terms—gaining jobs or business. For example, nonmembers who show up at a professional association meeting only when they have come up empty in a job search or to advance their careers—and stop attending once the search ends or the career reaches the intended goal—are examples of a contraprofessional view.

Similarly, contraprofessionals actively resist the establishment of a body of knowledge, often suggesting that doing so restricts the field. These people see no boundaries on the profession, so attempts to establish boundaries run contrary to their views. For example, a common objection to establishing a body of knowledge for technical communication is that technical communicators illustrate, edit, and work on user interfaces and that a body of knowledge would probably not reflect that. For similar reasons, contraprofessionals also see little value in formal degree programs in the field, because they could restrict entry into the field.

Contraprofessionals are less resistant to professional literature and continuing education, because they provide practical instruction and insight into succeeding in the job; however, they see such training and reading as optional. The primary assessment of professional competences is found in employer satisfaction with completed work. Contraprofessionals believe that they might be able to achieve such goals without any receiving formal training or reading any professional literature.

Professional activities such as meetings and conferences can offer similar utilitarian value. But volunteering to work for professional organizations is unnecessary. It might even contribute to efforts to define and constrict the work.

Not surprisingly, contraprofessionals see certification as restrictive and constraining—and unnecessary. Because employers determine whether their needs are met, additional outside assessment provides little, if any, value.

Table 1 summarizes the views of formal professionalism, quasiprofessionalism, and contraprofessionalism on various components of the infrastructure of professionalization.

Practical Implications of these Forces on Profession-Building Efforts

If these three these differing forces are at work, how does that affect efforts to build the profession of technical communication? This section explores that issue. It starts by exploring the impact on branding the profession, then considers the impact on certifying professionals, and concludes by suggesting the impact of these differing forces on professional organizations themselves.

The Impact of the Forces on Branding the Profession

Implicit in the movement toward professionalization is an attempt to *brand* the profession. Branding represents "the sum of the total impressions" (Herzog, 1973, reported in Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990) that technical communicators would like others to have of our work. Branding is also essential to marketing a service; if potential customers do not know what a product or service does or how it differs from similar services, they have no compelling reason to choose this service over others. The effort by STC in the late 2000s to have technical communicators recognized as a distinct profession (Burton, 2008) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is an attempt to address that communication.

Suppose, for example, that a potential sponsor seeks someone to write content about a product for the company Web site. The sponsor is considering a technical communicator, a business communication generalist, and a public relations specialist for the assignment. Branding suggests that, without a compelling argument that the technical communicator brings something unique to the assignment that neither

the business communication generalist nor the public relations specialist can bring, any of the three will do. Sponsors who cannot perceive a difference among the three will likely choose based on price or personal preference, rather than on the unique qualifications of the technical communicator that distinguish this candidate from the others.

The issue of branding for technical communicators is a serious one. Although no study has been performed lately, a study conducted in Western Canada in the mid-1990s did explore this issue. Researchers (Cash, 1995) first asked organizations that had used the services of professional technical communicators whether they felt that technical communicators added value to their projects. Organizations participating in the study said yes. Then researchers asked, what value did technical communicators bring? Although customers felt that technical communicators added value, they could not verbalize in concrete and specific ways the exact and unique nature of that value. In other words, technical communicators essentially had no brand identity in the eyes of these recent customers

Actually, technical communicators need look no further than our own literature to find a confusing brand identity. In addition to calling ourselves technical communicators, we have called ourselves many other names—and many of those names have not included the words *technical communicator* or even *writer*. In the 1990s, the then-executive director of STC compiled a list of job titles used by STC members for their membership records. The report identified several hundred unique titles. Among them were *product information specialist*, *documentation specialist*, *business analyst*, and *information developer*.

The term *information developer* emerged in 1980, as an attempt by IBM to provide a single job title to its technical writers, editors, and illustrators. This effort followed the change in name of the Society for Technical Writers and Editors to the Society for Technical Communication. Technical communicators originally referred to writers and editors separately. The name change was intended to break those barriers, among other issues. IBM shared the sentiment, but felt that illustrators should be included and a different name applied (Davis, 1986). About 15 years after that name change, a survey of STC members showed that a majority of them preferred the term *information* in their job titles (Carliner, 1998). STC even toyed with the idea of changing the name again to *information design*, but a subsequent branding exercise suggested that brand equity exists in the name *technical communication* (Stolgitis, 2000) and STC reaffirmed its commitment to the name *technical communicator* (Burton, 2008) in efforts to promote brand recognition of the profession.

For those who seek to professionalize, clarifying the name and providing a clear description of responsibilities like those identified by the Bureau of Labor Standards is an appropriate effort. But for quasiprofessionals, the name *technical communicator* does not speak to their self-identity. As a result, some have called themselves *content strategists* or *content developers*. Such distinctions have limited value to contraprofessionals, who believe sponsors either see little need for the service or will hire whomever offers the best proposal at the time that the sponsor seeks assistance.

The Impact of the Forces on Certifying Professionals

The distinction among technical communicators, information designers and developers, and content strategists and developers illustrates the challenge in certifying professionals in the field.

Regardless of their views on professionalism, most people acknowledge that certification acts as a barrier to practicing in a discipline: these views differ in how they feel about that barrier. Professionalization forces welcome it; they feel it gives them an edge in the job market. But not all people seek certification to limit entry into the field. Because certification is voluntary (Jong, Fisher, & Carliner 2011), many people seek it as a means of validating their identity—that is, for quasiprofessional purposes.

That is certainly the case with similar voluntary certifications. Professional organizations offering similar voluntary certifications promote those certifications using reasons associated with quasiprofessionalism. For example, the ASTD notes that its Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) "equips you with the tools to be the best in the field and lets employers know that you have real world, practical expertise that can be readily applied to the current work environment. CPLP gives you the capability, credibility and confidence to be a high performing contributor in your organization" (ASTD CI, 2009). "No one asked me to do it. The CPLP is about me" (ASTD CI, 2010).

Contraprofessionals resist certification because they feel it limits opportunity for people who might otherwise be capable of performing the work. The process of developing a certification requires that members of the profession identify the key *competencies*, "clusters of interrelated knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for performing effectively in a particular area" (CSTD, 2010, p. 11). The STC Certification Commission, which oversees certification of technical communicators, devised its list of competencies from an earlier study of the work of technical communicators by the Northwest Technical Center. This study asked technical communicators to describe their work, and from that description, researchers devised their list of competencies.

The Certification Commission updated and validated the list to reflect current working conditions. According to the instructions for certification candidates (STC Certification Commission, 2011), these competencies include the following:

- Project planning
- Project analysis
- Solution design
- Organizational design
- Written communication
- Visual communication
- Content development
- Content management
- Final production

But how unique are these competencies? Content strategists see themselves as responsible for planning, creating, delivering, and governing information within an organization (Halvorson, 2010), with an emphasis on both the content that is ultimately created as well as the process that created it (Sheffield, 2009). These competencies look remarkably similar to the following competencies addressed by the certification of technical communicators: project planning, project analysis, solution design, organizational design, content management, and final production. The primary difference is the competency governing, which is part of the job description of the content strategist but not of the technical communicator.

Similarly, a "former" [the person's self-identified designation] technical communicator described the role of a *content developer* as follows:

> For me, the difference between "technical writing" and "content development" is that Technical Writing was primarily instructional (in the positions that I held) focusing on software and/or systems/process training. Content development seems to be a more general type of writing that provides information—but more about a company, a product, not necessarily user or system documentation (personal correspondence, 2010).

These responsibilities, in turn, sound remarkably similar to those of the information designer, which Carliner defined nearly a decade earlier (2001, p. 158) as follows:

> Information designers act as architects of projects, solving the complex communication problems presented by project sponsors (that is, the programmers, engineers, marketing professionals and others who hire us to communicate their technical content with a group of designated users) and developing the blueprints of the solution that will be both acceptable to sponsors (Robinson & Robinson, 1989) and effective with the intended users.

That is, an information designer also requires competencies with project planning, project analysis, solution design, organizational design, content management, and final production.

In other words, the competencies assessed through certification might not be perceived as unique to technical communication. But as noted in the discussion on branding, technical communicators have also referred to themselves as content strategists, content developers, and information designers, so perhaps the true distinction is not in competencies but in branding.

Moreover, none of these descriptions of competencies addresses what is believed to be a unique characteristic of technical communication: the ability to easily communicate highly technical content in an appropriate way to the intended audience. The competencies defined for technical communication

merely assume that the content addressed is technical; they do not explicitly define what makes content technical, nor do they specifically assess the ability to communicate it—but then again, neither do the proposed competencies for the other professions named.

The Impact of the Forces on Professional Organizations

Although the differing forces in professionalization have an effect on branding and certifying the profession, their most fundamental impact is on the role of the professional organization.

From the view of professionalization, the role of the professional organization is to govern the discipline and serve as its public voice. Full membership in such an association is limited to those who have or are seeking certification. Although those who sell products and services to these professionals may participate in the organization, they have a full voice in its operations only if they are certified.

The quasiprofessional view of a professional organization is more that of a club. It is a community of like-minded people who share professional interests but also enjoy one another's company. Such an organization provides guidance on professional standards and conduct, but has neither the means nor the will to impose such standards. Without certification, for example, a professional organization cannot censure members whose behavior is unethical, or organizations that use outdated processes.

The contraprofessional still sees a role for the professional organization, but a more laissez-faire one. Professional organizations serve as marketplaces, bringing together buyers and sellers of services. Such a definition could include workers who provide communication skills and sponsors who need such skills, as well as organizations seeking to sell software and services to those workers and employers.

These differing views are reflected in the differing concepts of STC. Some people see STC as a professional organization and value the guidance it provides on standards, work processes, and recommended roles. Others see STC as a club and become frustrated with the organization when the conversation no longer interests them. Still others see STC as a marketplace and value it as long as it provides financial value to them—and lose interest when it does not.

Implications of These Opposing Forces for the Professional Status of Technical Communicators

The competition among these different viewpoints on professionalization match a similar but more fundamental competition for our skills. Underlying all of these differing views are differing beliefs about how to achieve meaningful work in the field.

One area in which competition is particularly stiff is in managing organizational knowledge. A recent inquiry about the certification process mentioned:

> Most organizations in their line organization do not have a department focusing on knowledge management, but most progressive organizations know that it is a must to retain the corporate knowledge they have and fully utilize this knowledge internally and externally. Among the enablers, of course, is technical communication. This is the core reason why I see Knowledge Management as a relevant degree to technical communication. Including KM expands the true value of technical communication as not being confined only to producing documents and user manuals (personal correspondence 2011).

Whether they call themselves technical communicators, content strategists, or information designers, professional communicators are by no means assured of earning these highly competitive assignments. Knowledge management experts, instructional designers, and information architects, among others, also aspire to the same assignments—each bringing their own competitive advantage and each trying to protect their "turf" (Grice & Krull 2001). The stakes are high: Those who design and structure these databases of content have the opportunity to work on meaningful projects, guide the work of others, and have impact across an entire organization. Those who merely ensure compliance with the templates, edit content, and post it are performing the white-collar equivalent of factory work (Brown & Duguid, 2000) that, at its worst, is repetitive and mind-numbing or, as one technical communicator called it, "technical stenography."

Therein lie some of the key stakes in this tug-of-war between the influences of professionalization, quasiprofessionalization, and contraprofessionalization. Proponents of each approach suggest that theirs is the route to the higher status work. But ultimately, the distinctions come not from these differences—they will come from the workplace.

Some distinctions will result from changing relationships between professionals and employers. Evetts (2003, 2011) notes, for example, even in medicine and law—among those most often named as occupations—a transition from independent employment to staff employment with hospitals and law firms is changing the extent of independence they have, even as licensed occupations. So even if technical communicators achieve full professionalization, its actual nature when that happens might differ from its nature now.

Some opportunities for technical communicators will be completely lost to DIY documentation. For many, "Good enough is the new great," as declared by the *New York Times* in its review of major developments in design (*New York Times*, 2009). Cell phones that occasionally drop calls? Annoying but acceptable. Self-produced video for Web advertising? Amateurish but also acceptable.. And user-generated documentation? Dense and winding, but acceptable, too. Other opportunities will be lost to professionals in other fields, like those in knowledge management just described.

Some who work in this field will gain opportunities by calling themselves content strategists or information designers. And others will gain opportunities by certifying themselves as technical communicators.

These scenarios suggest that certification can serve as a catalyst for greater segmentation among technical communicators along the lines of formal, quasi-, and contraprofessionalism. These scenarios also suggest that, among those who choose to certify, regardless of which segment they belong to, the act of certification can act, too, as a catalyst for the type of unity Coppola mentioned in her Call for Papers.

Most significantly, these scenarios suggest that technical communicators should not assume unity regarding professional issues. Different beliefs exist and, as a result of those differences, feelings about, and commitment to, branding, certification, and organizations like STC differ.

Note

This article is solely intended as a theoretical analysis of the concept of professionalism within the context of technical communication, so members of our community can better follow differing viewpoints. It is not intended to advocate for or against any viewpoint.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Nancy Coppola for encouraging me to stick with this article, even when I was focused on other projects.

References

ASTD CI. (2010). No one asked me to do it. The CPLP is about me. Retrieved from http://www.astd.org/content/ASTDcertification/

ASTD CI. (2009). Looking to be the best? CPLP is your ticket to success! Retrieved from http://www.astd.org/content/ASTDcertification/

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (2000). Balancing act: How to capture knowledge without killing it. *Harvard Business Review, 78*(3), 73–80.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). Standard occupational classification. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/soc/

Burton, S. (2008). Round two for technical communicators. *Intercom, 56*(5), 3. Retrieved from http://archive.stc.org/intercom/PDFs/2008/200805_3.pdf

Carliner, S. (1995). Finding a common ground: What STC is and should be doing to advance education in information design and development. *Technical Communication, 42,* 546–554.

Carliner, S. (1998). Future travels of the infowrangler. *Intercom, 45*(7), 20–24.

Carliner, S. (2001). Emerging skills in technical communication: The information designer's place in a new career path for technical communicators. *Technical Communication, 48,* 156–175.

Carliner, S. (2009). Chapter 1: Computers and technical communication in the 21st century. In R. Spilka & D. Clark (Eds.), *Digital literacy for technical*

communication: 21st century theory and practice (pp. 21–50). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Carliner, S., & Bernard, C. (2011). A qualitative study of the perceptions of workplace learning professionals. Honouring CASAE/ACÉÉA past, present, and future: Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education—Adult Education Research Council Joint Conference. Toronto, ON: June 9, 2011.

Cash, M. (1995). Manual labor: Professional input helps Canadian firm satisfy customers. *Intercom, 42*(5), 9.

Coppola, N. (2010). Call for proposals for a special issue of *Technical Communication* on "achieving professional status for our field." Retrieved from at http://techcomm.stc.org/call-for-proposals/

CSTD. (2010). *Competencies for training and development professionals.* Toronto, ON: Canadian Society for Training and Development.

Davis, S. (1986). Presentation on the reasoning behind the name, information development. 33rd International Technical Communication Conference. Detroit, MI: May 12, 1986.

Dobni, D., & Zinkhan, G. M. (1990). In search of brand image: A foundation analysis. In M. E. Goldberg, G. Gorn, & R. W. Pollay (Eds.), *Advances in consumer research (Vol. 17)* (pp. 110–119). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

Evetts, J. (2003). The sociological analysis of professionalism: Occupational change in the modern world. *International Sociology, 18*(2), 395-415.

Evetts, J. (2011). Sociological analysis of professionalism: Past, present and future. *Comparative Sociology, 10*, 1-37.

Gentle, A. (2009). *Conversation and community: The social web for documentation*. Laguna Hills, CA: XML Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Grice,R. & Krull, R. (2001). A professional odyssey: An introduction to this special issue,. *Technical Communication, 48*, 135-138.

Hale, J. (2000). *Performance-based certification: How to design a valid, defensible, and cost-effective program.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Halvorson, L. (2010, May). The discipline of content strategy. Paper presented at the 57th Society for Technical Communication Annual Conference. Dallas, TX.

Hart, G. (2008). Why certification by STC won't work. Retrieved from http://www.geoff-hart.com/resources/2008/certification.htm

Hayhoe, G. (2000). What do technical communicators need to know? *Technical Communication, 47*, 151–153.

Information Technology Terms Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.freecomputerdictionary.com/terms/59713-common-body-of-knowledge.html

Johnson-Eilola, J. & Selber, S. A. (2001). Sketching a framework for graduate education in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *10*, 403-437.

Jong , S., Fisher, C. & Carliner, S. (2011). Certified Professional Technical Communicator. Paper presented at the International Professional Communication Conference. Cincinnati, OH: October 17, 2011.

Kahnweiler, W. M. (2009). HRD as a profession: Current status and future directions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 20*, 219–229.

Kamenetz, A. (2010). DIY U: Edupunks, edupreneurs, and the coming transformation of higher education. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Khanra, M., & Bisras, D. G. (2010). User-generated content: Embracing social networking to deliver more engaging technical documentation. *UX Matters*, April 19, 2010. Retrieved from http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2010/04/user-generated-content-embracing-social-networking-to-deliver-more-engaging-technical-documentation.php

Kynell-Hunt, T. (2004). Chapter 1: Technical communication from 1850–1950: Where have we been? In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Volume II. Strategies for professional status* (pp.11–20). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Magder, J. (2011). Documentation made easy: All the expertise of an accountant, bookkeeper, CFO and in-house lawyer in a box. *Montreal Gazette*, May 23, 2011. Retrieved from

http://www.montrealgazette.com/business/Documentation+made+easy/4825562/story.html

New York Times. (2009). Good enough is the new great. *New York Times* 9th Annual Year in Ideas Supplement, December 13, 2009. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/projects/magazine/ideas/2009/?ex=1276059600&en=3315a37210ca3555&ei=5087&WT.mc_id=GN-D-I-NYT-MOD-MOD-M127-ROS-1209-HDR&WT.mc_ev=click#technology-9-HDR&WT.mc_ev=click#social_science-3

PC Magazine Encyclopedia. (n.d.). One laptop per child (OLPC). Retrieved from http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,2542,t=100+computer&i=57303,00.asp

Rainey, K. T. (2001). Qualification or certification for Technical Communicators. *tc-forum, 2001*(4). Retrieved from http://www.tc-forum.org/topicedu/et13qual.htm

Robinson, D. G. & Robinson, J. C. (1989). *Training for impact: How to link training to business needs and measure the results.*San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Savage, G. J. (1997). The process and prospects of professionalizing technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 29*, 355-381.

Savage, G. J. (2003). Toward professional status in technical communication. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Volume I. The historical and contemporary struggle for professional status* (pp. 1–12), Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Savage, G. J., & Kynell-Hunt, T. (2004). Introduction: Creating strategies for status as technical communicators. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. J. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Volume II. Strategies for professional status* (pp. 1–10). Amityville, NY: Baywood.

Sheffield, R. (2009). *The web content strategist's bible*. Atlanta, GA: Cluefox Publishing.

Shell, E. R. (2010). *Cheap: The high cost of the discount culture*. New York: Penguin.

SHRM Membership Center. (2011). Society for Human Resource Management. Retrieved from http://www.shrm.org/about/membership/Pages/default.aspx

STC Certification Commission. (2012). FAQ. Society for Technical Communication website. Viewed at http://www.stc.org/education/certification/cptc-faq. visited January 27, 2012.

Stolgitis, W (1993.) Executive director's presentation at STC Leadership Workshop. 40th Society for Technical Communication Annual Conference. Dallas, TX, May 18, 1993.

Stolgitis, W (1995). Executive director's presentation at STC Leadership Day. 42nd Society for Technical Communication Annual Conference. Washington, DC. April 25, 1995.

Stolgitis, W (1996). Executive director's presentation at STC Leadership Day. 43th Society for Technical Communication Annual Conference. Seattle, WA. May 5, 1996.

Stolgitis, W (1997). Executive director's presentation at STC Leadership Day. 44th Society for Technical Communication Annual Conference. Toronto, ON. May 11, 1996.

Stolgitis, W. (2000). Presentation on branding exercise to the board of the Society for Technical Communication. Orlando, FL, May 22, 2000.

About the Author

Saul Carliner is director of the Education Doctoral Program and an associate professor in the Department of Education at Concordia University. A two-time recipient of the Best of Show Award in the Frank R. Smith Outstanding Article competition, he also serves as editor-in-chief of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* and as a board member of the STC Certification Commission and the Canadian Society for Training and Development. He is a Fellow and past international president of STC. Contact: saulcarliner@hotmail.com.

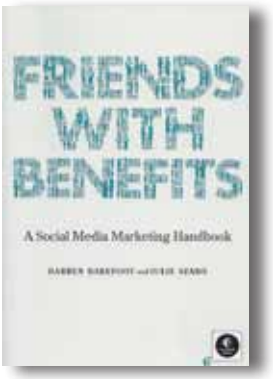
Manuscript received 15 August 2011, revised 12 December 2011, accepted 19 January 2012.

Jackie Damrau, Editor

Books Reviewed in This Issue

Friends with Benefits: A Social Media Marketing Handbook

Darren Barefoot and Julie Szabo. 2010. San Francisco, CA: No Starch Press. [ISBN 978-1-59327-199-2. 280 pages, including index. US$24.95 (softcover).]



If you're in the marketing realm, you know that you need to be involved in social media. And though there is widespread knowledge that you "should" be present, many businesses and individuals are still waiting for the business case centered on "why" it's a business "need" rather than a passing whim. Whether you're trying to make that case for you or your boss, Darren Barefoot and Julie Szabo provide ample ammunition in their *Friends with Benefits: A Social Media Marketing Handbook*.

Barefoot and Szabo make promises that they deliver on from the beginning. In this book, they guide the reader through the basics:

- How to find your way around the social media landscape
- How to launch a social media relations campaign
- How to make your website social media ready
- Ideas and inspiration for original approaches in your own campaigns
- How to avoid the risks and pitfalls of social media marketing

From providing general definitions for the newbie to real-life case studies and strategic tips for the "Kool-Aid" drinkers, they deliver. One thing I really like is that even though they focus on popular sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, the tactics they provide are timeless and transcend what's hot now and can be evolved as technology evolves.

The reason they can transcend technology lies in the fact that they focus not on the effort or task of making the sale, but rather on creating a customer relationship (user, friend; whatever you call your audience). Everything they discuss centers on putting the user first and consequently engaging the user. Barefoot and Szabo share, "Instead of Return on Investment, it's more about Return on Engagement. On a purely marketing

level, we're really trying to arm the really good fans with the brand's attributes so that they will spread them" (p. 183).

Many strategies they recommend are rooted in Forrester's four-step social strategy approach: People, Objectives, Strategy, and Technology (p. 101). And as such, it's a refreshing perspective to the initial mad rush to social media bullhorns that are thankfully beginning to die out. If you're in the camp of waiting to see if social media will "take," have decided it has indeed changed the way we market, and are ready to integrate it sensibly, then this book is worthy of being read.

Even if you're not in the marketing department, if you're using social media in the realms of customer support, product support, or customer education, you'll find value in this book. Barefoot and Sbazo address how to deal with crisis issues as well as how to be a good community steward. In short, there's something for everyone.

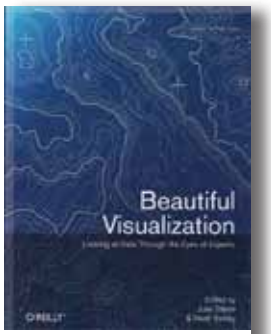
Friends with Benefits does a great job of cutting through the frenzy and providing solid, logical, and actionable tips for starting or evolving a social media marketing campaign.

Louellen Coker

Louellen S. Coker has more than 15 years in public relations, marketing, Web and instructional design, and technical writing/editing. She has an MA in Professional and Technical Communication and is founder of Content Solutions, STC Associate Fellow, and past Lone Star Community president. She conducts workshops about effective use of social media and portfolios.

Beautiful Visualization: Looking at Data through the Eyes of Experts

Julie Steele and Noah Iliinsky. 2010. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly. [ISBN 978-1-4493-7986-5. 398 pages, including index. US$59.99 (softcover)



Beautiful Visualization is useful for readers from laypersons with no data graphics software experience to experienced people with data visualization and who want to read a variety of examples of data interpreted visually. Julie Steele and Noah Iliinsky have commissioned authors, mostly academics and researchers, who create data visualization to write articles explaining the process and tools they use.

In the first chapter, Iliinsky defines a beautiful visualization: "For a visual to qualify as beautiful, it must be aesthetically pleasing, yes, but it must also be novel, informative and efficient" (p. 1). In the last chapter, Jessica Hagy defines a visualization as "only something (and everything) you can see" (p. 353). Iliinsky works with graphics software; Hagy uses pencil on index cards. Chapters in between describe ways the contributors use software to analyze millions of data points and share the stories in varied visualizations.

The authors describe the process of creating beautiful visualizations in a similar pattern. It often starts inductively by looking at raw data to see what information might be extracted. Next, the authors pose questions about what story might be told. They describe choices they must make along the way, in data and graphic displays. Actually creating the visualization becomes an iterative process until the authors extract and display the information that tells their story.

The range of visualizations takes numerous forms, which each contributor describes. Maps appear in various ways: proportional to show election results (Iliinsky) and patterns of car purchases (Shapiro), time-lapse animated maps to show patterns in airplane takeoffs and landings (Koblin with Klump), and a day

in the life of accessing the *New York Times* (Young and Bilton).

Social interaction patterns that drive Netflix and Amazon are shown (Krebs and Holloway) as well as patterns of US senators (Odewahn) and ways to study other networks (Perer).

Beautiful Visualization also shows some newer graphic techniques. Dense area graphs as well as chromograms show patterns in editing Wikipedia pages (Wattenberg and Viegas). Parallel sets display categorical data about people who died on the *Titanic* (Kosara). Several visualizations are used to show submissions to panels over a 20-year period (Stefaner) and research submissions (Schich). A tutorial explains how to explore data from *New York Times* articles that are now online (Thorp).

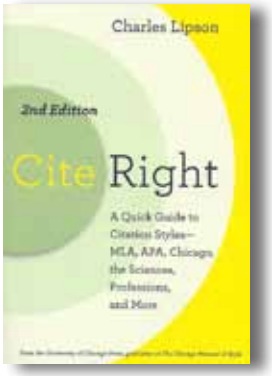
Chapters about visualizations not in a graphical axis include the creation of Wordle (Feinberg), how color conveys information (Driscoll), how virtual autopsies are becoming an important aid to forensics departments (Persson), depictions of the New York subway map (Jabbour), and a comparison of animation used in a presentation with animated data that users explore independently (Fisher). An exploration of visuals and sounds in a real physical setting is a current California experiment (Putnam, Wakefield, Alper, Adderton, and Kuchera-Morin).

The layout of *Beautiful Visualization* makes navigation easy, with the chapter number, title, and page number all in the footer. "Don't make it pretty, make it communicate a story about the data" is the actuating tag line that Steele and Iliinsky succeed in sharing.

Beth Lisberg Najberg
Beth Lisberg Najberg has more than 20 years experience as an information and instructional design consultant, documenting systems, developing custom training solutions, and creating technical presentations and for large corporations and public entities. She is principal of Beginnings (www.BeginningsDesign.com), an information design consulting firm.

Cite Right: A Quick Guide to Citation Styles—MLA, APA, Chicago, the Sciences, Professions, and More

Charles Lipson. (2011). 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [ISBN 978-0-226-48464-8. 213 pages, including index. US$14.00 (softcover).]



This modestly priced volume offers significant, immediately applicable coverage of major citation styles. Although intended for students and authors who write for journal publications, *Cite Right* deserves a prominent place on the bookshelves of technical editors, technical communicators, proofreaders, and others who work with the manuscripts of professionals in the 18 fields (the humanities; social sciences, education, and business; anthropology and ethnography; biological sciences; biomedical sciences, medicine, nursing, and dentistry; chemistry; physics, astrophysics, and astronomy; and mathematics, computer science, and engineering) Lipson covers.

Of the book's 12 chapters, the first two introduce the reasons for and basics of citations, and the last presents frequently asked questions (FAQs) applicable to all citation styles. The remaining nine chapters cover stand-alone manuals and industry-specific journals whose citations styles are used in certain fields.

Chapter lengths vary from 6 to 47 pages, depending on whether the citation style discussed applies to a field that depends on journals to set that style or whether the style is covered by a major guide such as *The Chicago Manual of Style, The Modern Language Association's MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* and *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, or *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. In each chapter, Lipson credits appropriate manuals and journals so that those interested in going directly to his sources can do so.

In breezy, first- and second-person prose, Lipson presents tidily organized chapters that feature 1 to 6 sections. All chapters start with an overview of the

field(s) in which the particular style of citation is used. All chapters contain an alphabetized, comprehensive index that lists the types of reference materials that a researcher might consult. These materials range from books and journal articles to social media, audio and video podcasts, posters, and numerous others. All chapters present examples of reference list entries and in-text citations for the types of reference material common to the field.

Additional sections appear in several chapters: a list of abbreviations commonly used in the reference list of a paper written in certain fields; FAQs regarding the citation style featured in the chapter. Unique sections appear in some chapters, for instance, in the Chicago (Turabian) chapter a short section on citing tables and notes; in the MLA chapter common abbreviations of the names of publishers; in the chapter on physics, astrophysics, and astronomy citation formats for pre-prints of unpublished papers.

One major field omitted by Lipson is law, whose citation style can be found in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*. That lapse aside, *Cite Right* is a valuable aid worth purchasing.

Ann Jennings

Ann Jennings is a senior member of STC, 2009 winner of STC's Jay R. Gould award, and professor of English at University of Houston-Downtown, where she teaches in the BS and MS degree programs in professional writing. Her technical editing students use *The Chicago Manual of Style* as one of their textbooks.

The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers.

(2010). 16th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. [ISBN 978-0-226-10420-1. 1,027 pages, including index. US$ 65.00.]

When this venerable manual is reissued once a decade, the publishing world pays attention. In the 16th edition, *The Chicago Manual of Style* reaffirms its premier status in a publishing world that now includes digital media, social media, and other formerly unimaginable delivery methods. Because its editors both safeguard useful tradition and offer ways to handle new issues, the manual remains a necessity for technical editors, proofreaders, and technical communicators.

While examining the 16th edition, I compared its chapter headings and content with those of the 15th edition, published in 2003. Topics and chapters carried over from the 15th edition have been reorganized and resequenced, and 70 pages have been added. NOTE: As a symbol of continuity, the pale blue front flap of the 16th edition's dust jacket flows into an orange back flap identical in color to the dust jacket of the 15th edition.

Much bedrock material remains in the new edition, including chapters on the parts of books and journals; manuscript preparation, editing, and proofreading; copyright and related matters; and reviews of grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling. Additional holdover chapters include those on names and terms, numbers, mathematics in type, abbreviations, foreign languages, quotations and dialogue, and indexes. Two chapters of the new edition are devoted to *Chicago*'s traditional systems of source citation: notes and bibliography and author-date. Some material has been significantly rewritten; for instance, the 15th edition's Proofs chapter that has become a segment of the 16th edition's Manuscript Preparation, Manuscript Editing, and Proofreading chapter.

New material appears alongside traditional material. For instance, appendix A on production and digital technology discusses print production as well as XML markup. A helpful XML work flow diagram (p. 879) shows how a single manuscript is tagged to produce

a print book, an e-book, and a Web publication. The diagram also addresses the processing requirements for the artwork that accompanies each version of that manuscript.

The key terms of publication production featured in the 15th edition have evolved into the 16th edition's appendix B glossary that contains those key terms plus new terms familiar to many technical communicators, for example, CSS, GIF, HTTP, JPEG, PNG, URL, vector graphic, Web browser, and XHTML.

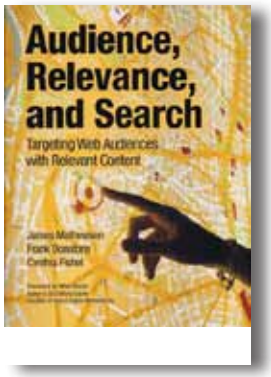
Scattered updates appear in the 16th edition. For example, the relative merits of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) are discussed. A DOI is a unique numerical code assigned to a publication for ease of identification and retrieval. The DOI system was under development when the 15th edition (pages 56 and 646) was printed. Now *Chicago* considers DOIs so important that "Authors should include DOIs rather than URLs for sources that make them readily available" (p. 657).

Note: The online version of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org, lists rules changes and new features of the 16th edition.

Ann Jennings

Audience, Relevance, and Search: Targeting Web Audiences with Relevant Content

James Mathewson, Frank Donatone, and Cynthia Fishel. 2010. Upper Saddle River, NJ: IBM Press. [ISBN: 978-0-13-700420-1. 177 pages, including index. US$39.99 (softcover).]



Audience, Relevance, and Search: Targeting Web Audiences with Relevant Content is about writing for the Web. More specifically, it provides guidance on creating content that is relevant for a specific audience that comes to a Web page directly through a search engine. Authors James Mathewson, Frank Donatone, and Cynthia Fishel, who work in various marketing and brand communications capacities at IBM, have extensive experience in attempting to zero in on the specific content that will engage potential customers, and they share their ideas on methods for creating that content, with an emphasis on content for marketing Web sites.

The authors take rather a methodical approach to sharing these ideas and, depending on your level of expertise in Web writing, you may want to pick and choose among the topics. While the authors' own target audience for *Audience, Relevance, and Search* "includes writers, editors, content strategists," and while they claim that "no book adequately focuses on creating text exclusively for the Web" (p. xix), many in their target audience will not find all the contents relevant. Mathewson, Donatone, and Fishel spend a good deal of the book telling, and retelling, readers that "writing for the Web is fundamentally different from writing for print" (p. xix). Anyone who has done any Web writing in the past decade will be more than familiar with many of the concepts and will want to look at the chapter-end summaries to find the content that may be new to them before reading entire chapters.

If your goal in writing for the Web is to improve your results in Google searches, you may glean some valuable tips from *Audience, Relevance, and Search*.

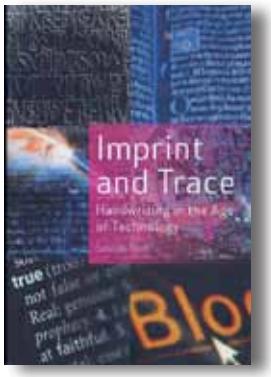
The authors focus exclusively on Google and analysis of Google's search algorithm. They provide methods for narrowing down your specific audience before you begin writing as well as instructions for using tools, such as Keyword Discovery and Google AdWords, for determining the keywords for which that unique audience may search. The next step—using the targeted keywords in specific ways to create content and metadata—is also explained. The sidebars offer good examples of some of these practices in actual use.

Audience, Relevance, and Search goes beyond creating content to creating Web site architecture and forming linking relationships with other Web sites to improve PageRank in Google. In addition, the authors include some information on incorporating social media concepts, such as social tagging and microblogging, into overall keyword research and Web site architecture strategy. Measuring audience engagement using Web site metrics tools and social media is also covered.

Linda Davis
Linda M. Davis is an independent communications practitioner in the Los Angeles area. She holds an MS in Communication Management and has specialized in strategic communication planning, publication management, writing, and editing for more than 20 years. Linda is active in the STC Los Angeles chapter.

Imprint and Trace: Handwriting in the Age of Technology

Sonja Neef. Trans. Anthony Mathews. 2011. London, UK: Reaktion Books. [ISBN 978-1-86189-653-7. 365 pages, including index and bibliography. US$40.00.]



How long has it been since you sat down and wrote a document—any document, even a personal letter or a diary entry—by hand? The computer keyboard has taken over from the pen in our written lives. Jane Austen's handwritten manuscripts, read aloud to her family sitting in front of the fire, have been replaced by blog entries produced by an array of Bridget Jones imitators and read silently and in solitude by millions sitting in front of their computers. We might be tempted to think that the entire concept of handwriting without technological augmentation is obsolete, some relic of an earlier and more graceful age. Not so, claims Sonja Neef in *Imprint and Trace*. Handwriting and technology have evolved in tandem and their fates are still intertwined. She argues, "there is no definitive dichotomy between printed script in the sense of mechanical, technical or digital writing techniques on the one hand, and handwriting in the sense of an individual, unique and singular trace on the other, but . . . the principles of 'imprint' and 'trace' are always historically and systematically bound up with one another" (p. 20).

Neef sees writing produced individually by hand and that produced in mass quantities by machine not as adversarial but as complementary. Rather than replacing handwriting, technology makes it ubiquitous. *Imprint and Trace* explores these new frontiers of handwriting, "areas in which technical reproduction makes previously unique, original works of art into repeatable, palpable and permanently available instant replays" (p. 24). While kaleidoscopically looking at these areas, Neef finds connections such as the one between the handprints painted on prehistoric cave walls and those pressed into the cement of Hollywood's Walk of Fame. Both sets of

handprints represent the same cultural practice, but the modern set of imprints is accompanied by the trace of the celebrities' handwriting.

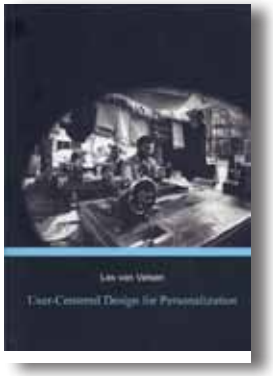
A significant portion of this book includes case studies in which Neef discusses such diverse topics as screensavers and diaries: the (authentic) diary of Anne Frank and a (fraudulent) diary attributed to Adolf Hitler. "The *return* of handwriting in the age of the photocopy and the computer marks neither an end nor a radical turning point," Neef concludes (p. 300). It is only the latest iteration of the back-and-forth motion that is inherent in the physical act of handwriting itself.

Scholarly in content and tone, *Imprint and Trace* draws on Barthes, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Bolter, Butler, Derrida, Foucault, Freud, Irigaray, Lyotard, Marx, McLuhan, Ong, and others well known in academia as Neef constructs her argument. It finishes up with 43 pages of endnotes and a 19-page bibliography. Readers interested in the history of technology as applied to writing and printing will find this book useful. It will also appeal to those studying current cultural issues involving writing, such as tattooing, graffiti, and how we conceive of and investigate the authenticity of documents and personal identities.

Marilyn Morgan
Marilyn R. P. Morgan has an MA in English from the University of Tennessee. After serving as a technical writer and editor in academic and government research organizations, she now works as a freelance writer and teaches English at the college level. She has been an STC member since 1993.

User-Centered Design for Personalization

Lex S. van Velsen. 2011. The Netherlands: University of Twente Press. [ISBN: 978-90-365-3139-9. 210 pages, including index (soft cover).]



In today's virtual world, one can easily encounter popular customizable Web sites such as BBC and iGoogle. For the designers of personalized system, questions like these arise: How can we optimize the correspondence between electronically personalized communication and the individual? How do we approach issues such as privacy, trust, and the need for control? How do we evaluate a website when it looks different to each person? Lex van Velsen, a Dutch technical communication researcher from the University of Twente, aims to address these questions in his book, which focuses on applying "the user-centered design approach to the context of electronic personalization" (p. 9).

In the first chapter, he draws a comparison between Socrates' rhetorical steps and the personalization process to explain the evolution from Socrates' "personalization by means of face-to-face communication" to today's "personalization by means of interactive media" (p. 15). He also takes us through the brief history of mass media communication to discuss the shift from "audience" to "user," which is made possible by new media technologies. To better understand user attitudes toward new technology (personalization), van Velsen conducted a large-scale Web survey where the respondents evaluated a fictitious municipality Web site. He found that trust in the technology and perceived controllability can significantly influence the users' intention in using the online content personalization.

The next chapter focuses on applying a user-centered design approach to user requirements engineering in a case study on an e-government Web site. The author demonstrates how user requirements for a personalized service can be engineered through interviewing potential users, developing a low-fidelity prototype, and conducting a prototype walk-through.

User-Centered Design for Personalization presents a literature review on publications that discuss user-centered evaluation of personalization by calling attention to the lack of details in the reporting of focus groups and interviews, which prevents the readers from duplicating the study or gaining useful information from the research design.

In the concluding chapter, van Velsen summarizes his book and introduces a technical approach, "layered evaluation," which breaks the personalization process into several steps. He advocates for an integrated approach, which combines layered evaluation and user-centered design, to create a better personalized system.

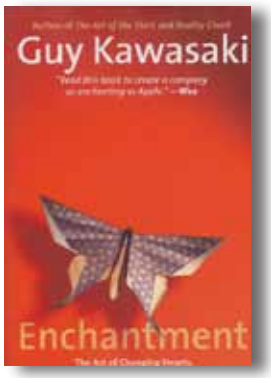
Although van Velsen's writing style and explanations are relatively accessible for lay readers, the highly statistical case studies in chapters 2 and 5 target an audience skilled in analyzing data and interpreting results of empirical studies. Terms like "univariate ANOVA analysis" and "Cronbach's alphas" can be quite daunting to the less statistically savvy. The list of references in the book was nice, yet a proper index would make this book more useful. van Velsen's goal with this book is to "contribute to the UCD toolkit for designers of personalized system" (p. 23). Hence, this book is most helpful for designers who would like to develop personalized systems using the user-centered design approach.

Felicia Chong

Felicia Chong is pursuing a PhD in Rhetoric and Technical Communication at Michigan Technological University. Her current research interests include usability testing and multimedia development and production. She has experience in teaching graphic design, Web design, and college composition.

Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions

Guy Kawasaki. 2011. New York, NY: Portfolio. [ISBN 978-1-59184-379-5. 214 pages, including index. US$26.95.]



Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions is about "delighting people with a product, service, organization, or idea" (p. xix), creating voluntary, long-lasting, mutually beneficial support. Kawasaki's aim (as in his previous books) is to change the world for the better, following sound ethical principles. He emphasizes that people must like and trust you before you can enchant them, and honors this principle by consistently conveying a likeable, trustworthy persona—and one with a gentle sense of humor. He's clearly enchanted with life, and wants to share that with you.

This book resembles an interaction-design primer for messages rather than products, but products are never far from the surface. Both are appropriate subjects for enchantment, yet the book sometimes strikes an awkward balance between message and product. Kawasaki assumes you understand key terms (e.g., tweets, RSS), leading to superficial treatment of some techniques. If you already understand the tools, you'll cope, but neophytes will have to do some homework. Fortunately, a two-page bibliography lists 20 key books that inspired Enchantment, and relevant Web links (not all free) are sprinkled throughout.

Enchantment may excite and inspire experienced readers but may overwhelm neophytes. For instance, the chapters on push and pull technologies seemed scattershot at times, aiming for many targets but hitting few solidly. Both chapters emphasize sound principles that apply with any technology, echoing Kawasaki's emphasis on people over technology. Indeed, he even provides suggestions on how to deal with people who aren't as nice as he is. In my experience, there are many bad guys out there, and although Kawasaki focuses consistently on the positive, he provides tips on how

to enchant them, avoid their enchantments, or reach a "modus vivendi."

Kawasaki's advice seems reasonable and matches my experience, but like most business-oriented books, *Enchantment* sometimes relies more on anecdata than on rigorous studies, and some cause-and-effect relationships seemed tenuous. In his defense, he never calls an idea more reliable than the evidence merits, and clearly presents the weaker advice as suggestions, not facts. Such suggestions are worth trying because Kawasaki's experience (he's a veteran enchanter) lends them credibility, and the cost of failure will typically be low.

Enchantment probably isn't for you if you're completely new to this topic (too overwhelming) or an experienced pro (not enough meat). The ideal reader is someone who's already familiar with audience needs, seeking insights on how to better meet those needs, and willing to do the work required to flesh out Kawasaki's advice. If you're such a reader, you'll find *Enchantment* a call to action to fine-tune what you're already doing and start doing new things. The table of contents provides an effective checklist for such efforts, and there's a useful quiz at the end to help you recall what you've learned.

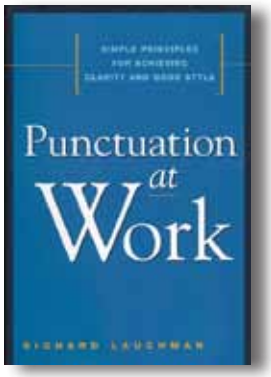
Was I enchanted? Mostly. Kawasaki is a charming and trustworthy guide, offers intriguing and insightful suggestions, and inspired me to try his suggestions in my own work.

Geoff Hart

Geoff Hart is an STC Fellow with more than 25 years of writing, editing, translation, and information design experience. As a working editor, he strives to enchant his authors, and is now equipped to do a better job of this in the future.

Punctuation at Work: Simple Principles for Achieving Clarity and Good Style

Richard Lauchman. 2010. New York, NY: AMACOM/American Management Association. [ISBN 978-0-8144-1494-1. 202 pages, including index. US$13.95 (soft cover).]



The key to understanding *Punctuation at Work* from Richard Lauchman, who specializes in plain-language writing for business and industry, is in the subtitle. This book is about using effective punctuation to write texts in plain language that are clear and easy to understand. If you have not yet investigated the work of the plain language movement in the United States or elsewhere, you're likely to be more interested after reading through this book.

Lauchman uses popular magazines and newspapers as guides for his punctuation and writing principles. He seeks a middle ground between advertisers and sound-bite journalists, on one hand, and English instructors who inculcate the "religious jargon" (p. 4) of grammar, punctuation, and usage, on the other. Lauchman acknowledges that writers have their own preferences and prejudices about punctuation. His explanations help readers form their own punctuation judgments.

Punctuation at Work has three main sections. The first section provides the definitions of terms that he uses throughout the book. In keeping with a plain style and a focus on results, Lauchman uses grammatical terms sparingly. While grammarphobes will be put at ease, more advanced readers might desire a more technical vocabulary.

The second section covers 19 principles affecting punctuation and writing. Before discussing how to use punctuation, Lauchman discusses why we use punctuation. His emphasis on using plain language is strong. Several principles are excellent maxims on their own. These principles include #1, "Punctuation can't rescue sense from nonsense" (p. 21) and #4, "In workplace writing, a sentence should yield its

meaning instantly" (p. 28). Some purists might object to principles that are phrased as questions—#13, "When is punctuation optional?" (p. 58)—or that aren't explicitly about writing—#18, "Feed your head" (p. 79). Lauchman discusses each and provides examples to buttress each point. All told, this section provides helpful examples and thorough explanations.

More than half of the book appears in the third section on punctuation marks. Lauchman provides examples and discussion on using apostrophes, brackets, colons, commas, dashes, ellipses, hyphens, parentheses, periods, question marks, quotation marks, semicolons, and slashes. He also discusses punctuating common sentence structures. Lauchman lingers on the marks that can pose the greatest challenges; to wit, dashes get 4 pages, while commas get 16.

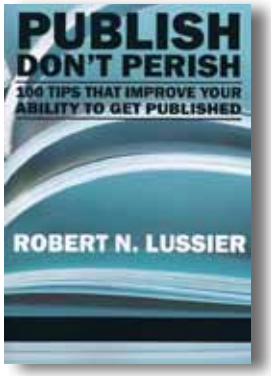
The appendix discusses how to list ideas. While Lauchman does not specifically refer to technical writing here, the examples relate to style choices technical communicators often face.

When I agreed to review this book, I thought that a book like this would discuss punctuation thoroughly and might even include a bit of punctuation history. Lauchman has written a helpful handbook that relates to both plain language and to punctuation in general. This book could be a good addition to a writer's bookshelf or an editor's set of reference books. If it had exercises, I would recommend it for teachers as well.

Russell Willerton
Russell Willerton is a senior member of the STC and an associate professor at Boise State University.

Publish Don't Perish: 100 Tips that Improve Your Ability to Get Published

Robert N. Lussier. 2010. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing [ISBN 978-1-61735-113-6. 206 pages, including index. US$29.99 (softcover).]



Publish Don't Perish is a comprehensive guide on research strategy, writing, seeking out journals, and all the associated tasks that go with academic writing, such as selecting a coauthor and meeting your school's requirements for tenure. Robert Lussier has more than 25 years' experience writing and working in academics as a professor of business management, and he has been published over 300 times in a variety of formats.

Most of the advice that Lussier offers is practical and applies to academic writing in the technical writing field as well as business. Many more experienced writers learned these tips the hard way, such as learning a school's publication requirements for tenure before accepting the position or keeping an eye out for calls for papers in e-mails from academic organizations or journals. Lussier is providing a valuable service for new faculty and graduate students by pointing out these details.

Lussier shares his advice in a very practical and frank manner, which is refreshing. He talks plainly about dealing with rejection and advises writers to separate themselves emotionally from their work. One way to do this is to view publishing as a "game" in which you win by publishing the article. Some academics would wince at this description of publishing because it might lead the writer to value quantity over quality. Yet such dispassionate views may help academics who are new to publishing take rejection less personally and keep them motivated.

The section of *Publish Don't Perish* that stood out to me was the chapter on time management. Anyone in academics knows that it is impossible to be all things to all people and that you must prioritize to be successful.

Lussier's discussion of developing priorities that meet your school's requirements as well as your academic goals is solid advice that will help to win over tenure committees as well as prevent new faculty from burning out.

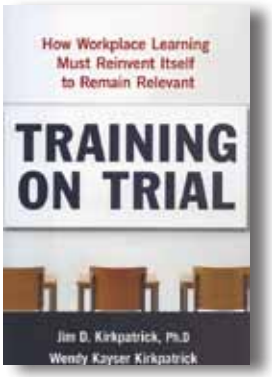
The only drawback of Publish Don't Perish is that Lussier includes information that is so basic that it insults the reader's intelligence. For example, he includes a section on writing guidelines that discusses basic grammar and contains statements like "*Nouns* are the names of people, places or things" (p. 31). Most readers would already have a solid grasp of such topics before they earned an advanced degree or attempted to publish in an academic journal. This book is not an appropriate venue for a basic grammar review, nor would most readers expect to find such information here.

Overall, *Publish Don't Perish* is a must-have for graduate students as well as new professors in any field. The advice is sound and honest in a way that a mentor or dissertation chair might hesitate to be. Yet, it is advice that many who are new to academic publishing need to hear.

Nicole St. Germaine-McDaniel
Nicole St. Germaine-McDaniel is a senior member of STC and coordinator of the Technical and Business Writing Program at Angelo State University, as well as a freelance writer and consultant. Her research interests include technical communication for a Mexican American audience and technical communication in the health fields.

Training on Trial: How Workplace Learning Must Reinvent Itself to Remain Relevant

Jim D. Kirkpatrick and Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick. 2010. New York, NY: American Management Association. [ISBN 978-0-8144-1464-4. 239 pages, including index. US$24.95.]



Training on Trial by Jim Kirkpatrick, son of the notable Dr. Donald Kirkpatrick, and Wendy Kirkpatrick, suffers from being oversimplistic and mainstream. However, this book is earnest in its core message—training must demonstrate its value to the enterprise—which is foundational to succeeding as a credible training entity.

The Kirkpatricks build the book on the metaphor of a trial and extend the metaphor to cover defendants, prosecutors, a jury, and a full slate of court-related terms to support the central idea that training is on trial. The point is, unless training managers can demonstrate the value of training, they are indeed guilty. The solution is to follow the seven Kirkpatrick Business Partner Model (KBPM) stages. The stages are identified with an acronym, PARTNER. These two tactics—an extended, simple metaphor and long, forced acronyms—are the downside of the book. The upside is that KBPM is actually a solid process, so although I dislike the wrapping I appreciate the gift.

The Kirkpatricks openly give credit to training mainstays, namely the Kirkpatrick scale and the ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) model. They adhere to the Kirkpatrick scale as absolutely central. What they add are fleshed-out descriptions and criteria for each level in multiple scenarios. They reference the ADDIE model to establish common ground with a training readership and to borrow from the established credibility of the tested process.

Without reviewing the entire KBPM or all seven PARTNER steps, I'll touch on a few insights I found particularly valuable. First is the idea of partnership. The

point is that a training manager's imperative must be to partner with business leaders as those leaders strive to deliver the business's strategic objectives. The authors note that too often training groups are content with, and sometimes even insistent on, remaining aloof from the business. These groups are invariably found guilty and suffer the consequences—downsizing, puppet agendas, loss of credibility.

Another powerful notion the Kirkpatricks bring forward is return on expectation. Here they note that return on investment is not enough to win over the jury. Good training managers must demonstrate that they not only understand their stakeholder's expectations predeployment, but that those expectations are actually met postdeployment.

Woven throughout the book is Wendy Kirkpatrick's personal story of how she entered the training profession, managed several difficult experiences during her tenure, and how she met and eventually married Jim Kirkpatrick. The story works effectively and illustrates the thesis while elucidating many of the key principles.

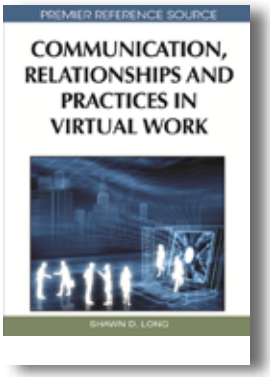
Overall, *Training on Trial* is worth the read. The packaging—extended metaphor and overreliance on acronyms—was difficult for me. The content, however, should prove valuable to any serious training manager as either a solid foundation to base a training strategy upon or at least as a reminder to do the right thing.

Gary Hernandez

Gary Hernandez is a communications manager for BP. He received his MA in English Literature from George Mason University and received his MS in English-Technical Writing from Utah State University. Gary belongs to STC and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Communication, Relationships and Practices in Virtual Work

Shawn D. Long. 2010. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. [ISBN 978-1-61520-979-8 438 pages, including index. E-book ISBN: 978-1-61520-980-4. US$180.00 (hardcover). US$30.00 (e-book).]



This collection of scholarly articles analyzes how the virtual workplace, despite early promises of enhanced management-employee collegiality, has actually increased control over workers while reducing their initiative, autonomy, and work-life balance. The studies show that communication and organizational effectiveness in the virtual workplace suffer from a loss of face-to-face interaction and nonverbal cues (pp. 47, 57, 230), poorly defined roles and responsibilities, inconsistent identity formation (pp. 101, 115), and increased "ethical risks" fostered by the limited "socialization process in virtual organizations" (p. 75). By weakening interpersonal communication, the virtual world takes "longer to build trust," if it does at all (p. 230). Thus, the technology that enables virtual work fails to resolve "major tensions between autonomy and control and between flexibility and rigidity," disempowering the employee (p. vii).

The virtual environment resembles Bentham's panopticon, a prison that maintains order through the inmates' sense of being constantly spied upon (pp. 87, 91). Eventually workers in the virtual panopticon, like the real prisoners, internalize the constant surveillance and become their own watchers. By co-opting the workers' freedom, the manager, like the jailer, induces paranoia and anxiety in the employees, the constant fear that the invisible yet omnipresent supervisor might actually "appear" or intervene unexpectedly in their work (pp. 89, 90). The fear of surveillance in the traditional workplace is intensified in the virtual world by the real "manager," the tracking system that is in fact continuously watching and monitoring.

The anxiety virtual workers experience derives from the connectivity software's ability to track productivity comprehensively and minutely—measuring keystrokes, counting calls, tracking time on task, and even recording employees on camera. Politically motivated workers learn to game the software to their advantage by identifying and maximizing the preferred metrics, thereby appearing indispensable to the remote manager (pp. 92–94, 196–197). Technology that promised to enhance collaboration and depoliticize corporate hierarchy thus facilitates its worst aspects: surveillance and politics.

Research does show, however, that worker satisfaction can be improved by defining roles and responsibilities more crisply, holding regular face-to-face meetings, decreasing the frequency and increasing the predictability of monitoring, engaging employees more proactively in making decisions (pp. 230–232), and defining a mutual code of ethics at the outset (p. 82).

Though clearly organized, with helpful abstracts and glossaries, this book badly needs copy editing (two errors in the first paragraph, dozens throughout). The style, often prolix and sometimes jargonish, could be simplified and condensed. The intended scholarly audience can be asked to tolerate the jargon, perhaps, but not the recurrent solecisms.

Virtual work is no panacea and can be abused, especially by employers, but it can also be improved by following the author's recommendations. This volume is therefore useful not only as a source of research for scholars, but also potentially as a basis for training managers and employees of virtual workplaces to communicate more effectively and constructively.

Donald R. Riccomini

Donald R. Riccomini is a member of STC and a lecturer in English at Santa Clara University, where he specializes in teaching engineering and technical communications. He previously spent 23 years in high technology as a technical writer, engineer, and manager in semiconductors, instrumentation, and server development.

Complex Worlds: Digital Culture, Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Adrienne P. Lamberti and Anne R. Richards, eds. 2011. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Company, Inc. [ISBN 978-0-89503-399-4. 250 pages, including index. US$51.95.]

From the private sector-employed professional communicator to the professional classroom communication teacher, it is becoming increasingly important and necessary to understand how to use digital technologies within various contexts. Rather than serve as a reference guide on how to use digital technologies for communication purposes, *Complex Worlds* seeks to explore the various contexts in which digital technologies affects the work of professional communicators.

Just over 200 pages, this edited collection is suitable for a wide audience range, although the editors note that the book "offers teachers and students of professional communication a collection of provocative responses to some of the most urgent challenges facing communicators today" (p. 13). For educators, this book provides upper level students with an introduction to theoretical and practical applications of digital technologies to professional communication work. I would argue that a couple of the essays would be useful to activists interested in digital culture and practitioners interested in how digital technologies can enhance their communities of practice.

Complex Worlds is divided into four parts, each part focusing on a different community of practice, from activists to practitioners to educators. The first part, "Transforming Advocacy," examines the relationship between digital technology and advocacy, and how digital technologies can prompt social action through cyberactivism, scholarly digital journals, or citizen journalism movements. The second part, "Shaping the Professions," explores how digital technologies influence the work of industry communicators. The

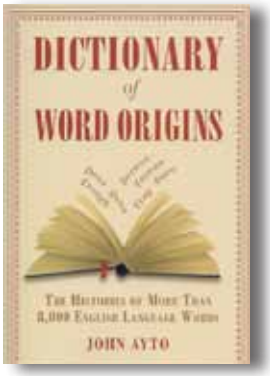
third part, "Building Communities," highlights how digital technologies create new communities that cross physical boundaries through online spaces. The final part, "Informing Pedagogy," provides professional communication instructors with recommendations on how to make students digitally informed. The edited collection ties the various essays together through the concept of digital divergence. The editors write, "the term *digital divergence* is used to evoke the multifaceted and heterogeneous contexts, users, purposes, genres, and products of digital technology" (p. 2).

Overall, the anthology is a good mix of essays that explore the interconnected, complex relationships between digital technologies, rhetoric, and professional communication. Strengths of the collection include a wide array of communities of practice (from the classroom to the newsroom) from a variety of perspectives (from the activist to the theatre enthusiast), all dealing with professional communication issues. These strengths overshadow the primary weakness, such as the timeliness of the objects of inquiry. For example, one essay examines an interactive CD-ROM and DVD, which are becoming obsolete in the era of cloud computing, flash drives, and Blu-ray disks. The final assessment is that the book is a good read for audiences interested in digital technologies and professional communication. *Complex Worlds*' topic is definitely one that is important to the professional communication discipline and will continue to receive attention as the discipline progresses.

J.A. Dawson
J.A. Dawson is a PhD candidate in Technical & Professional Discourse at East Carolina University. His research interests include professional communication and social change within a global context.

Dictionary of Word Origins: The Histories of More Than 8,000 English Language Words

John Ayto. 2011. New York, NY: Arcade Publishing. [ISBN-978-1-61145-053-8. 584 pages US$14.95 (soft cover).]



Those who work with language know that a word's derivation often enriches its meaning beyond the simple definition. However, in the interest of concision, many dictionaries give only bare-bones derivation information, leaving the reader wondering what circuitous path a word must have taken to arrive at its current meaning.

For those who hunger for more, the *Dictionary of Word Origins* has selected 8,000 key English words and given them a fuller treatment. First published in 1990, the book is now available as a quality paperback. John Ayto is also the author of the *Oxford Dictionary of Slang*, the *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins*, and *Twentieth Century Words*.

In the present work, each word gets a paragraph-long article covering where it came from, how it relates to other words, and when certain usages and meanings entered the language. You can read the articles as mini-narratives where you to see each word's evolution as a comprehensible story. Many entries also contain pointers to related words, so more than the cited 8,000 words are actually touched on.

Written in an engaging and informative style, the work is not only a useful reference, but an entertaining and instructive work to browse.

Many words have histories that shed light on our social past. For example, the words we use for livestock (*cow, lamb, swine/pig*) are rooted in Old English, while the words we use for table meats (*beef, mutton, pork*) are derived from French. The anomaly is due to the Norman Conquest, and reflects the social hierarchy—who mainly raised meat and who mainly consumed it—that prevailed at the time.

Some words are linked in surprising ways. For example, who would have guessed that *map, apron*, and *napkin* are related; each traces back to Latin *mappa*, which denoted a sheet, cloth, or towel. Or that *buccaneer* and *barbeque* both trace back to Caribbean words for

the practice of drying meat on a frame over an open fire. (The woodsmen who practiced this outdoor cooking art apparently were a lawless lot, known for their piratical ways.)

You can find all this and more in *Dictionary of Word Origins*. Readers should be warned, however, that browsing through it can become addictive.

Patrick Lufkin
Patrick Lufkin is an STC Associate Fellow with experience in computer documentation, newsletter production, and public relations. He reads widely in science, history, and current affairs, as well as on writing and editing. He chairs the Gordon Scholarship in technical communication and cochairs the Northern California technical communication competition.

resonate: Present Visual Stories That Transform Audiences

Nancy Duarte. 2010. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. [ISBN 978-0-470-63201-7. 248 pages, including index. US$29.95 (soft cover).]

The pendulum has swung . . . back. For two decades, I have listened to some engineering, business, and computer science types lament having to learn about or read classical literature. The new millennium for technical communicators, however, reveals that mythology and great stories are the meat of successful communication, especially in presentations.

Nancy Duarte's *resonate* effectively analyzes the great stories, speeches, and presentations of our time—from Aristotle's rhetoric to Martha Graham's dance performances to Steve Jobs' minimalist slides—and then poignantly teaches us how to transform our audiences. She says, "Resonance occurs when an object's natural vibration frequency responds to an external stimulus of the same frequency" (p. 4). The goal of *resonate* is to allow us to view the audience as the story's and our calling as the supporting role, the character who influences and persuades the hero to change world views.

I did not want to like this book, yet when I discovered that *resonate*'s thesis was simply to use literature, music, dance, and other humanities fields to prove how storytelling strengthens the connection between presenter and audience, I proudly rolled my eyes and verbalized a "Duh, Nancy! We English types have known this forever!" In the book's first few pages, Duarte mentions many plugs for her presentation design business: the appearance of the yellowish green |www| sign means that the reader can find more at www.duarte.com, a rhetorical move with limited persuasive value.

I was Duarte's resisting reader (p. 84ff). I did not want this book to change me because I did not think I could relate to Duarte at all. But then it happened. About halfway through Duarte's book, she won me over. I remember my arm hair standing up and the epiphanic rush of humility when I realized that *resonate*'s presentation method and Duarte's elegance in moving me from an ordinary world into an improved world absolutely worked for me and my profession.

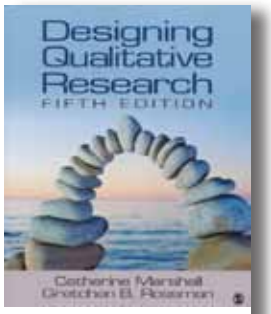
Besides the book's content offering a personal philosophical earthquake for anyone who genuinely listens to Duarte's premises of presentation truths, *resonate* contains some amazing visuals. By amazing, I mean that the book has beautiful yet informative graphics and captivating illustrations that fundamentally relate to the adjacent textual promises. My favorite is the stunning, minute-by-minute timeline of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. This technical graphic actually delineates, over a four-page spread, what happens in King's speech and why these individual parts helped make the presentation of his words so meaningful. Duarte performs this type of engrossing visual analysis many times in *resonate*, with several prominent speeches and presentations as she brings you from your reality to hers.

This book resonated with me. I highly recommend it for those who want to transform their presentation audiences and those who are willing to be transformed by them.

Nicole Amare
Nicole Amare is a senior member of STC and an associate professor of technical communication at the University of South Alabama. Her research interests include ethics, editing, and visual rhetoric. With Barry Nowlin and Jean Hollis Weber, she has written *Technical Editing in the 21st Century* (Prentice Hall, 2010).

Designing Qualitative Research

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman. (2011). 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. [ISBN 978-1-4129-7044-0. 322 pages, including index. US#49.95 (softcover).]



Designing Qualitative Research is a practical, comprehensive book that walks readers through all the major stages of running an academic-oriented qualitative research study. These stages include navigating the diverse qualitative research genres, designing a qualitative research project, writing an impactful research proposal, handling the unique ethical issues that pertain to qualitative research, managing and interpreting qualitative data, effectively distributing financial and other resources throughout the duration of a research project, approaching the final research report, and finally, advocating in support of qualitative research methods to those who are more accustomed to quantitative methods.

According to Marshall and Rossman, the three most important considerations every researcher should take into account when considering whether to conduct a qualitative research study are the study's "do-ability," "should-do-ability," and "want-to-do-ability." While do-ability refers to how feasible the study is given financial and human resources, should-do-ability concerns whether the study will contribute to the building of theory. Want-to-do-ability involves how motivated the researcher is to conduct the research project.

I greatly appreciate that Marshall and Rossman take the time to address topics that are sometimes left behind by academic professionals. For example, they touch upon the importance of taking into account the perspective of experts outside of academia in approaching a qualitative research project. Specifically, the authors state that including the views of policymakers, practitioners, and journalists ultimately demonstrates the should-do-ability of a study in asserting that "people outside the academy have spoken about the need to find answers, to explore reasons why, and to find new ways to look at a problem" (pp. 78–79).

Among other things included in *Designing Qualitative Research*, I appreciate the discussion surrounding the importance of having an exit strategy when ending a qualitative research project to protect researchers and participants from the sometimes emotional ramifications of commencing a study.

My only regret after reading *Designing Qualitative Research* is that I wasn't exposed to the book when in graduate school. Although the book appears to be targeted toward less-experienced qualitative researchers, seasoned research practitioners and novice researchers alike will benefit from the ample real-world examples integrated throughout it and the exhaustive list of further resources at the end of each chapter. Graduate students, or those just becoming acquainted with the benefits and challenges of conducting qualitative research, will find the many conversations shared between learners to be particularly insightful and reassuring.

In summary, *Designing Qualitative Research* presents the challenging, ambiguous, and oftentimes intimidating landscape of qualitative research in an approachable and actionable way.

Chelsey Glasson

Chelsey Glasson is a recent graduate of the University of Washington's Master of Science in Human Centered Design and Engineering Program. She is currently working in usability research for Salesforce.com and has worked in user experience and government research.

User Innovation Management: A Handbook

Anne Marie Kanstrup and Pernille Bertelsen. 2011. Portland, OR: International Specialized Book Services. [ISBN 978-87-7307-960-7. 105 pages. US$39.99 (softcover).]

User Innovation Management shares new participatory collaboration approach that engages users in designing solutions. User innovation management (UIM) is a method based on the 3Cs theme (Cooperation, Context, and Concept), with steps and techniques related to each. Kanstrup and Bertelsen also created an electronic digital toolkit, eUIM, that "supports the planning of the UIM process. . . . with steps, questions and techniques" (p. 12).

UIM involves the users early in evaluating or testing designs based on their values, needs, and dreams. A UIM project has a UIM facilitator, who is a reflective practitioner who helps to "establish co-operation with users, create insights and visions with users and build innovations on this ground" (p. 14). The outcome is to create a design solution that takes the users' innovations and transforms them into a usable solution.

The Co-operation theme has the UIM team with the UIM facilitator identify and select innovators and then create a user innovation plan. The facilitator keeps an "*open* attitude to users' perspectives, values and ideas" and maintains a "willingness to embrace their curiosity and uncertainty" to discover the right solution (p. 31).

In Context, the facilitator takes the user innovation plan and helps the users generate insights and explore visions to complete during the Concept theme. The authors recommend that the facilitator use a visual tangible artifacts toolkit, which is a physical set of materials that can "facilitate participation, reflection, conversation and freedom to innovate. . . typically made with the use of colors, graphics or photos" (p. 48) to stimulate the users to move, form, decorate, and sort materials to reflect on the possibilities and priorities. The TFC principle (Tune in to the design challenge, Focus on the design brief, and Check out of the design activity) helps generate visions based on present context (how it is) and possible futures (how it could be).

The Concept theme is where the users, with help from the UIM facilitator, sketch solutions (creating a framework) and present them to the decision makers. Kanstrup and Bertelsen cover two types of framework. One framework uses a four-quadrant diagram exercise in which users place one solution on each dimension, discuss each solution, and then select a unified solution. In the other framework, the UIM facilitator helps the users develop prototypes that transform their descriptions, understandings, and visions for presenting to the decision makers for consideration.

User Innovation Management provides six techniques that UIM facilitators can use during the UIM collaboration: selecting users, making plans, using insight techniques, creating and exploring visions, sketching and scenarios, and presenting. The authors end by sharing three projects in which they used the UIM themes and techniques.

Jackie Damrau
Jackie Damrau has more than 20 years of technical communication experience. She is a Fellow and member of the STC Lone Star Community and the Instructional Design & Learning SIG, and general manager of the STC International Summit Awards. She serves as the book review editor for *Technical Communication*.

Simple and Usable Web, Mobile, and Interaction Design

Giles Colborne. 2010. Berkeley, CA: New Riders. [ISBN 978-0-321-70354-5. 196 pages, including index. US$34.99 (softcover).]

William Morris, a great English designer, is commonly quoted by proponents of elegant design: "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." The thought occurs that Giles Colborne followed this general principle when authoring *Simple and Usable*. This book is more than a philosophical treatise on simple and usable designs; it is a useful workbook for interaction designers and usability experience (UX) practitioners on how best to create Web sites, applications, and mobile devices that deliver compelling user experiences.

Colborne's essential argument is this: As technology becomes more pervasive in our lives, the increasing complexity of our applications and devices is unsustainable. Simplicity in product design is powerful because people want technology that just works.

Simple and Usable is divided into eight parts, with the first two sections discussing "Why are we here?" and "Setting a vision." The author then presents the four strategies to achieve simplicity in product design: Remove, Organize, Hide, and Displace. Colborne does not claim merely that "less is more," thereby reducing features and functionality; instead he says "The secret to creating a simple user experience is to shift complexity into the right place, so that each moment feels simple (p. 180)."

Colborne and his company obviously practice what he preaches. A 20-year practitioner of user-centered design, he features global case studies from his UK-based consultancy, as well as design use cases and practices from such US companies as Cisco, Apple, Yahoo!, and Amazon. To fit into the book's international scope, the strategies and techniques he espouses are useful across geographies and cultures, and are cost-effective to implement—a major consideration in today's economic climate.

The book's layout demonstrates the principles covered in *Simple and Usable*. Each page has an uncluttered design structure of text in a generous sea of white space on the left, colorful graphics and/or photography on the right. There is only one topic per page spread, with a clear symmetry between the minimal yet descriptive headline and the visuals accompanying it. Pull quotes and practical factoids scattered throughout underscore the topics under discussion.

If there is one criticism of the book, it is that Colborne's tone can be somewhat "sermon"-like, and intermediate to advanced practitioners (the intended audience) may feel that he is preaching to the choir. Embedded in his doctrine are many useful tips and tricks, as well as analyses to apply to different scenarios and design challenges.

Finally, Colborne includes ways to keep his content fresh and relevant by maintaining a related Web site (www.simpleandusable.com) with frequently updated blog entries and a Twitter feed (@simpleandusable) where he posts and retweets UX and Interaction Design Association tidbits of goodness. In this deceptively simple tome, there are myriad complex and practicable strategies. *Simple and Usable* offers a way to make a product better.

Paula Croxon
Paula Croxon holds a BA in Communications, certificate in Technical Communication, and is pursuing an MS in Human-Centered Design Environment from the University of Washington. She is an STC member with industry experience in user experience and usability and is currently a consultant, technical writer/editor at Avanade, Inc.

Web 2.0: Making the Web Work for You

Jane Hosie-Bounar and Barbara M. Waxer. (2011). Illustrated Series. Boston, MA: Course Technology. [ISBN 978-0-538-47321-7. 94 pages, including index and CD. US$25.95 (softcover).]

Web 2.0's target audience is college freshmen and their instructors. Yet anyone teaching about using Web 2.0 technologies in the academic environment will find useful tools in the book's resources, design, and methodology.

The pedagogical framework is a classroom scenario for a freshman core course: "Building Success with Web 2.0 Tools" taught by Prof. Nadia Ahmed. Throughout the book, learners build Internet skills by working on assignments for Prof. Ahmed's class. While the average college freshman might already know this content, the book succeeds because it focuses on building and applying particular skills that students need in the demanding college environment.

Web 2.0 consists of four units: Research 2.0, Finding media for projects, Collaborating and sharing information, and Perfecting your online persona. Each lesson has a practical focus and an assignment that requires the use of the skill taught in that lesson. Throughout the book, students are working on a major project for Prof. Ahmed's class. They pick a topic, research, find, organize, and share information and media, then create and post their finished projects online. The emphasis is on practicality, collaboration, and respect for intellectual property. For example, it explores the use of Creative Commons as a media source, and in the last unit, "Professor Ahmed" also deals with privacy, protection, and avoiding the pitfalls of the Web world.

Each lesson includes a visually appealing two-page spread focusing on a single skill. The left page is mostly text, featuring a descriptive headline, a brief explanation of why that skill is important, and an "assignment" for Prof. Ahmed's course that provides a context for the learning. Running down the left margin is a series of tips, while the page's body contains a bulleted list of detailed topics, each with a brief explanation and references to the large, graphic presentations and procedures on the right page. Each lesson includes a "Clues to Use" section that provides useful ancillary information.

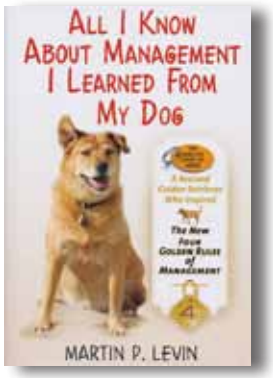
Each unit also provides a unit review, with short-answer and multiple-choice questions; a set of open-ended independent challenges, requiring critical thinking and application of the unit skills; and self-graded visual workshops that engage the learner in independent problem solving. The book also includes a glossary of Web 2.0-specific terms and an index. An Instructor Resources CD, which I did not have the opportunity to review, accompanies the book. It includes an instructor's manual, sample syllabus, PowerPoint presentations for each unit, electronic versions of all the figures in the text, solutions to the exercises, and an exam-construction tool.

This is a well-done, complete package that instructors can effectively use out of the box or adapt to needs of specific groups of learners.

Marguerite Krupp
Marguerite Krupp is an STC Fellow, an adjunct professor at Northeastern University, and a technical communicator with more than four decades of experience in the computer industry.

All I Know about Management I Learned from My Dog

Martin P. Levin. 2011. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing. [ISBN 978-1-61608-324-3. 128 pages. US$19.95.]



Not everyone can write a memoir and sell it as a management guide, but Martin Levin has succeeded in doing so. Levin has intertwined stories of his career, lessons from other management gurus, and the antics of his rescue dog Angel to craft a winning management guide.

Levin introduces us to management by relating the story of Angel's first days with him. After Levin's wife died, he struggled several months with the grieving process. After gentle prodding, he finally visited a local shelter and adopted Angel, an aging golden retriever/virgule chow mix. "Unexpectedly, I have found that my daily interactions with Angel, the frightened, unknown, and once-abandoned dog, have given me both the inspiration and the challenge to reacquaint myself with those essential management principles that have guided my . . . life" (p. 22).

Levin breaks his advice into four distinct rules: trust and leadership, communication, problem solving and decision making, and perseverance and success. To help us understand his rules, Levin includes stories of his own career and personal life, as well as stories of celebrities, and applies them to stories of Angel.

For example, to illustrate Rule 2: Communication, Levin first tells of an opportunity to work in India to promote publishing. He almost turned down the opportunity because he thought his wife would not want to live in India. He soon found out, however, that she had dreamed of living in India. He then describes the tough, on-the-job lessons he learned in India to sell his ideas using fables. To cement his communication rule, he uses the example of *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson. Then, he relates all these stories to learning how to communicate with Angel with consistent vocabulary and body language.

Levin's stories easily reach various audiences, from dog lovers who choose the book by its cover to managers looking to pick up sage advice to other readers who know Levin and want to learn more about his life. I must admit that the stretch between the rule he describes and the stories he tells is a bit far at times, but I am willing to overlook that because his stories are interesting to read, and I am sure he has many stories to tell at the age of 91.

After fully describing his four rules, Levin concludes his book with lists of "Books Worth Reading" that include dog ownership manuals, other management guides, and true dog stories. These lists help to focus the audience on Levin's supposed thesis: "If a manager can develop trust, it will lead to corporate excellence, provided he is able to communicate effectively, make the right strategic decisions, and, above all, persevere" (pp. 11–12).

Levin has succeeded in producing a book that is a very easy, relaxing read, while still conveying important principles that any adult should live by.

Diane Borgwardt
Diane Borgwardt is an STC Senior Member with more than 17 years of technical communication experience in the software, K–12 education, and engineering industries, as well as university settings. She currently leads the marketing and technical communication efforts for an engineering/architecture firm in Longview, Texas.

The Elements of User Experience: User-Centered Design for the Web and Beyond

Jesse James Garrett. (2011). 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: New Riders. [ISBN 978-0-321-68368-7. 172 pages, including index. US$39.95 (softcover).]

At a recent family gathering, I was describing user experience (UX) to a relative. All the while, I was trying to think of a text I could recommend that would easily summarize UX. When I saw *The Elements of User Experience*, I hoped I had found what I wanted. This is a slim volume, with ample use of white space and color graphics that makes for an appealing, easy read. Jesse James Garrett conveys UX ideas clearly and succinctly, defines terms as they arise, and avoids the more technical programming information that may deter a casual audience. His graphics also illustrate the discussion for visually oriented readers.

Elements gives the why and how for considering UX at each stage of the design process. Garrett's core philosophy is that a reason must exist for every design choice. Generating a working model organizing his approach, Garrett describes five interrelated element layers—Strategy, Scope, Structure, Skeleton, and Surface—that have to work together, arranged bottom-up from abstract to concrete. The book's eight chapters include an introductory UX chapter, a subsequent chapter that introduces the five elements, then one chapter for each element in which the individual layers are subdivided to incorporate element-specific attributes, followed by a final summary chapter. I particularly like how Garrett subtly weaves UX into each process step.

I regret that I didn't read Garrett's original version, so I could comment more directly on the updates in this edition. The new edition's main difference is its intention to expand the author's model beyond Web site design, which is a big deal to me because I work daily to apply UX principles to products other than Web sites. Unfortunately, the majority of the book's examples are Web-based. You are encouraged to apply the same principles elsewhere, yet Garrett doesn't lead the way. For example, the sensory section of the Surface element chapter concentrates on vision at the expense of other senses. This is helpful in describing current UX for Web sites, but it would be nice if the book also inspired readers to explore new possibilities.

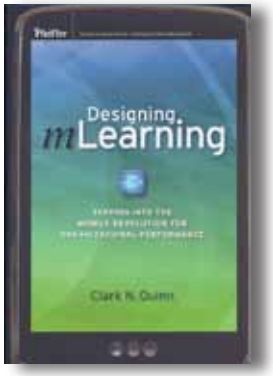
Elements is too basic for active UX practitioners, for whom the principal value is Garrett's organizational design approach. The book works best as an introductory text for students new to the field or coworkers unfamiliar with UX concepts, but it needs to be combined with more advanced texts if used in a classroom or to actually build a Web site. Overall, *Elements* feels as if it's written for use in a business environment, especially with the emphasis on brand identity in the Surface element chapter. So, while I wouldn't give the book to a relative as a casual read, I would recommend it for Web design stakeholders or team members to help them appreciate the benefits of keeping UX design in mind.

Devor Barton

Devor Barton holds a BA in Communications and a certificate in project management from the University of Houston and an MS in technical communication from the University of Washington. He is a member of STC's Puget Sound Chapter and is an ICIA certified technology specialist.

Designing mLearning: Tapping into the Mobile Revolution for Organizational Performance

Clark N. Quinn. 2011. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer. [ISBN 978-0-470-60448-9. 256 pages, including index. US$55.00.]



With the increase in smart phones and tablet devices, companies are now looking toward incorporating the mobile element to help employees learn. One leader in this area has been Merrill Lynch's GoLearn mLearning (mobile learning) effort. You can access such mLearning examples on the Web at www.designingmlearning.com, which Quinn provides in his book, *Designing mLearning*. I found this link to be a gold mine of information regarding mobile learning. At this site, you will also find information about the tools and different mobile learning blogs. You should add this uniform resource locator to your Web browser favorites.

In the opening chapter, Quinn describes how the move toward mLearning has been driven by cell phones. He explains how mLearning uses a compact digital portable device (a cell phone or an iPad) that a person carries on a regular basis. Quinn continues by defining mLearning as involving users who are now learning on these types of mobile devices. His research found that "Americans are spending, on average, 2.7 hours a day on the mobile Internet" (p. 7). He points out that some companies do not even have an office and their workers' offices are wherever they are parked with their laptop and mobile phone.

Designing mLearning contains a great list of common misconceptions and the myths behind them. For example, "We can't provide mobile learning devices" (p. 9) and "mLearning only works when the device is always connected" (p, 10). You should refer to this list when preparing a mobile learning strategy so you can address these common misconceptions. In addition, you can refer to the mobile learning examples detailing companies already using mLearning. You will find this background helpful when presenting mLearning to your company decision makers.

Quinn continues by addressing what the technology is not about and then provides concrete examples of arenas that use mobile capabilities, such as schools, colleges, and pharmaceutical sales. In Chapter 7, he includes mobile models, which will stimulate your thinking as to what you would like to include in your mLearning design. I found the final two chapters, "A Platform to Stand On" and "Mobile Design," in which he stresses using a four-step approach: analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation, to be most helpful.

The appendixes in *Designing mLearning* are invaluable as you begin planning your mLearning strategy. Quinn includes a bibliography that provides information on a variety of topics, such as the mobile cloud, along with a glossary of terms common to the mobile environment, such as Bluetooth and QR code. Appendix C contains tables that are useful when brainstorming different media opportunities. Appendix D contains several checklists that you can reference as you plan your company's mLearning strategy.

You'll find *Desiging mLearning* to be a useful book as you begin developing and implementing your mLearning design strategy.

Rhonda Lunemann

Rhonda Lunemann is a senior technical writer with Siemens PLM Software, a senior member and treasurer of STC's Twin Cities Chapter, and a member of the Hill Speakers Toastmasters Club (Club 4415).

Design Elements: Form & Space

Dennis M. Puhalla. 2011. Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers. [ISBN: 978-1-59253-700-6. 168 pages, including index. US$24.99 (softcover).]

Short, colorful, and chock-full of striking examples, this manual intended for graphic designers is not a quick and easy read. *Design Elements* presents strategies for visual organization: three chapters devoted to space—spatial forces, spatial order, and spatial structure—a chapter on sequencing, and a chapter on color structure.

The book appears to be written for novice graphic designers, because the author defines basic terms like *point, line*, and *volume*. Yet the definitions that Puhalla, a professor of design at the University of Cincinnati, provides are not simple. Note, for example, his definition of shape: "Shapes are self-contained outlines or surfaces that are defined by regular polygons or variable-sided polygons and closed curved configurations" (p. 54). The definitions and explanations throughout the book are precise and technical.

As is typical in design books, gestalt principles are explained, with illustrative visuals, at some length. But this manual defines and illustrates additional visual structures not dealt with in the typical basic design books, such as entopic patterns, the Hermann and Scintillating grids, the Fibonacci sequence, and the Munsell Color Notation System.

Design Elements is worth owning for its hundreds of beautifully presented visuals—photographs of brochure covers, logos, posters, product packaging, building signs, and door fronts, to name a few. These examples are wide-ranging in their places of origin: Cincinnati, New York, Portugal, Argentina, Australia, Japan, and other countries.

These attractive photos, which illustrate various design principles, are painstakingly analyzed. For example, to illustrate the visual concept of virtual volume, the author provides a photo of a slat and metal tubing chair design. He points out how "lines and planes define a mass area in space [with] implied surfaces along the contour" of the seat and back (p. 47).

Though labeled a "graphic style manual for understanding structure and design" on the cover and title page, this book is not a how-to manual. *Design Elements* is a repository of definitions, examples, and explications of design elements with attention to the language and principles of form.

Besides the many photographs, there are numerous grids, diagrams, and charts demonstrating structured spaces and color effect. The chapter on color focuses on how color harmonies—based on hue, value, and saturation combinations—evoke a psychological response. Following a few color charts illustrating the red, green, blue; the cyan, magenta, yellow, black; and the red, yellow, blue color systems, Puhalla uses a collection of color charts to illustrate the perceptual effect of simultaneous contrast.

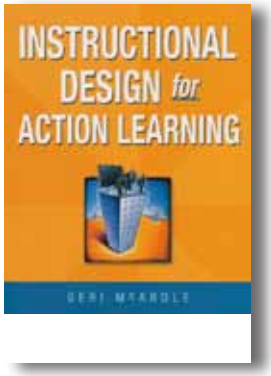
Produced on high-quality, slick paper, with each individual page carefully designed. *Design Elements* would serve well as a textbook or a basic reference work for both novice and experienced graphic designers.

Nancy MacKenzie

Nancy MacKenzie teaches undergraduate and graduate students in the Technical Communication Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is a senior member of STC.

Instructional Design for Action Learning

Geri McArdle. 2011. New York, NY: AMACOM [ISBN 978-0-8144-1566-5. 304 pages, including index. US $34.95 (softcover).]



Geri McArdle has been involved in human relations development training for more than 20 years, and it shows in this book. She has analyzed her subject thoroughly and breaks down her own practical research into six chapters: Define the Training Need, Design the Learning to Fit the Need, Prepare to Conduct the Training, Set the Scene for Learning, Implement the Training, and Measure the Effectiveness. *Instructional Design for Action Learning* can serve as a reference to improve your company's training. This book does not lend itself to reading from cover to cover because of the bulleted lists and tables that appear on nearly every page.

McArdle offers suggestions throughout the book on how to use action learning. The goal of action learning is to engage participants while in the classroom so that they leave knowing how to apply what they learned. Suggestions include using fun activities that match learning styles, encouraging learners to build on their own experiences, and strengthening learning transfer back to the job. Indicating these with an icon or a box in the page layout would have made it easier to identify them.

The author has worked in the traditional classroom environment training onsite employees. There is only one comment on new technologies (necessary to deliver training online to distant employees). From her perspective, spending more time on researching needs and matching content to those needs will prove more valuable than spending hours creating an electronic curriculum.

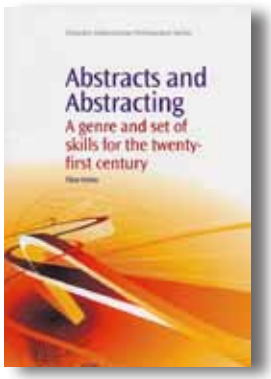
The hidden gem in *Instructional Design for Action Learning* may well be the Tips from ASTD Presentation Masters in the appendix. Seven presenters offer 73 short tips on these aspects of training: Preparation, Openings, Presentation, Endings, and Evaluation. Here's one tip (#25) relative to action learning: "Continually work for interaction. A reflective question followed by long pause can give participants time to examine a new idea, rather than play three games without having put their brains in gear" (p. 280).

If you are looking for a book that tells you how to design an Adobe Captivate online presentation, this is not it. But if you would like to ensure that your training really meets the needs of your company's employees or customers, checklists in each chapter of *Instructional Design for Action Learning* can help you consider all your options and perhaps become a better trainer.

Donna Ford
Donna Ford is a senior member of STC and has served on her local chapter's board. She has been a technical writer since 1987 in the hardware, software, and government health care industries.

Abstracts and Abstracting: A Genre and Set of Skills for the Twenty-first Century

Tibor Koltay. 2010. Oxford, UK: Chandos Publishing. [ISBN 978-1-8433-4517-6. 227 pages, including index. US$115.00 (softcover).]



Abstracts play an important role in transferring information. Among other uses, they condense longer communications, focusing on the essentials. They can appear at the beginning of articles and reports as well as electronically in online databases. But why do so many abstracts fail to help the reader?

Koltay's *Abstracts and Abstracting* attempts to answer that question. Throughout its eight chapters on definitions and characteristics of abstracts, what the abstractor needs to know, and how to prepare abstracts, Koltay presents guidelines for effective abstracts. The book concludes with a summary of the process and its importance.

According to Koltay, one problem is that those who write abstracts do not understand that there can be several types: informative, indicative (or descriptive), and informative-indicative abstracts. Selecting the appropriate type for the communication can be difficult if the writer is not aware of each type's strengths and weaknesses. Other problems with abstracts include not following the original article's structure, not

avoiding personal opinions, and not considering what information the reader needs.

Koltay first divides abstracts into two general kinds: those created by authors themselves and those created by professional abstractors. Both kinds receive extensive discussion of their strengths, weaknesses, and problems. Then he discusses the types, providing guidance for writers. For example, he tells us that passive voice verbs can be used in indicative abstracts, but active voice should dominate informative abstracts.

Koltay's assumed audience includes students, teachers, technical writers, authors of articles and conference presentations who have to submit abstracts, and professional abstractors, of whom he is one.

His description of the uses of abstracts is not normally found in other materials on abstracting. For example, he discusses the abstract written in one language of an article written in another—a central component in the Hungarian universities' courses in information and library science that he teaches. That means that translation becomes a necessary part of the abstractor's knowledge. He also points out that abstractors need to understand the subject of the original as well as the principles of abstracting.

I kept hoping that Koltay would provide annotated examples of his main points as he presented them. It isn't until Chapter 7 that we get actual examples and discussions with annotations. And there, rather than place annotations in the margins, he provides several paragraphs of commentary. Still, if you take the time to read his analyses, you will find helpful suggestions.

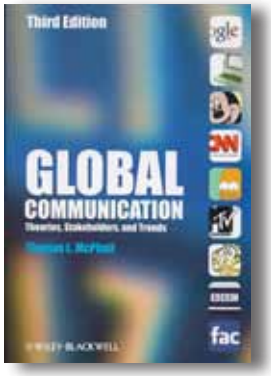
Having said that, I must admit that I was shocked by the price. Almost all the material in seven of the eight chapters is from other sources, giving the book the feel of a literature review. So, besides discussions of the various types of abstracts and examples, the book offers a view of the scholarship on abstracting, which may increase its value to the point where the price seems reasonable.

Tom Warren

Tom Warren is an STC Fellow, Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence recipient, and professor emeritus of English (technical writing) at Oklahoma State University, where he established the BA, MA, and PhD technical writing programs. Past president of INTECOM, he serves as guest professor at the University of Paderborn, Germany.

Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends

Thomas L. McPhail. (2010). 3rd ed. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. [ISBN 978-1-4443-3030-4. 400 pages, including index. US$49.99 (softcover).]



First published in 2002, this is the third revision of *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends*, a scholarly publication about the worldwide distribution of media originating in or controlled by the industrialized nations, in particular the United States. Although not specifically advertised as a textbook, this book does seem targeted at students of communications science, whether they are engaged in formal study or in the informal pursuit of knowledge. Each chapter includes extensive footnotes, as well as an introduction outlining the information to be covered and a summary/conclusion. A long bibliography at the end aids further study of the topic.

Thomas McPhail, a media studies professor at the University of Missouri, divides the world's nations into three groups: core nations (what used to be called the first world), semiperipheral nations (what was previously the second world—mainly the former socialist countries, most of the Middle East, and the BRIC [Brazil, Russia, India, China] countries), and peripheral nations (everyone else, or the third world). He then outlines several major global communication theories, including Electronic Colonialism Theory (ECT) and World System Theory (WST). ECT describes how foreign communications and cultural products alter the values and habits of people in poorer nations for the benefit of core nations. WST outlines how core nations economically dominate poorer nations and how the export of core nation media and cultural products shapes consumer behavior in the semiperipheral and peripheral countries.

The remainder of the book examines the various facets of international communications (including music, TV, news agencies, the Internet, and global advertising) through the prism of these two theories. In addition, media in several regions (Europe, the Middle

East, Asia) are covered by guest contributors who specialize in these areas.

While the chapter titles form a coherent sequence, the individual chapters themselves often seem less focused. Figures sometimes simply repeat in list form information that was already covered in the text, and chapter conclusions occasionally introduce new information. Besides a tighter structure, the book would have benefited from more rigorous copyediting. Numerous spelling and punctuation errors, repeated phrases, and words apparently left behind after revisions make reading unnecessarily cumbersome.

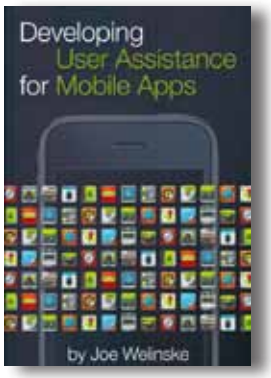
As a theoretical work that addresses large-scale global phenomena and describes multinational corporations, *Global Communication* is of limited practical use to technical communicators. For readers interested in the influence of core nation media around the globe, however, the book offers a fairly comprehensive overview of the field and its major players. And it concludes with an appeal for investing in peaceful communications instead of warfare—always a welcome sentiment.

Barbara Jungwirth

Barbara Jungwirth, an STC Senior Member, owns reliable translations LLC (www.reliable-translations.com) where she translates technical documents from German to English and codes for an HIV Web site. She also writes a blog, On Language and Translation (http://reliable-translations.blogspot.com) and posts updates on Twitter (@reliabletran).

Developing User Assistance for Mobile Applications

Joe Welinske. 2011. Vashon, WA: Writers UA. [ISBN 978-1-257-50372-8. 136 pages, including index. US$29.00 (softcover).]



What do *flick, pinch, pan, swipe, rotate, slide, spin, spread, bundle, scroll*, and *scrub* have in common? They are user interface terms that various mobile device manufacturers use. In *Developing User Assistance for Mobile Applications*, Joe Welinske provides a great link to a reference page showing which names are used by which devices (http://www.lukew.com/ff/entry.asp?1071, p. 36). Gesture terminology is just one facet of user assistance terminology that accompanies the mobile scene.

The growth of mobile applications is astounding. In fact, Apple recently announced that there are more than 100,000 mobile applications for its new iPad2. Besides mobile applications for Apple products, there are mobile applications for mobile phones and other tablet devices. Welinske reviews the main mobile devices on the market: iPhone, Android, Windows Phone 7, and tablets.

What makes a great mobile application? Welinske points out that it is one that is designed well with the user in mind. Therefore, a growing need exists for technical communicators who are skilled in user assistance for mobile applications. Welinske says that the most important questions for user assistance professionals are "What is our role going to be in mobile and how can we prepare to take that on?" (p. 2).

As president of WritersUA, a company that provides training and information for user assistance professionals, Welinske keeps current with usability issues and concerns in the mobile arena, which sets him apart from many other authors. In Developing User Assistance, he deals with many areas that writers of other mobile application books do not address, such

as external mobile support applications, Web-based help, having an external Web site, Web-based forums, and integrating with a desktop application. Welinske also packs great pictures and useful, well-selected links into this book. The old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," is definitely true in such a user assistance book.

Of Welinske's case studies, I especially liked Quickoffice and Timewerks, two applications for which WritersUA provided guidance. The case studies are helpful because he points out what WritersUA found during usability testing and he includes before-and-after screen captures. I particularly liked the TimeWerks Quick Start Tutorial, which addresses considerations such as color, steps, icons, and numbering.

The mobile application scene requires a different technical communication category. Therefore, it is in our interest as technical communicators to keep abreast of user assistance and design for mobile applications. A key point to consider is that only a few software organizations have a mobile strategy. So, by gaining background in the mobile arena, you can help companies develop their own mobile strategy and mobile applications. Reading *Developing User Assistance for Mobile Applications* is a great way to begin.

Rhonda Lunemann

The On-Demand Brand: 10 Rules for Digital Marketing Success in an Anytime, Everywhere World

Rick Mathieson. 2010. New York, NY: AMACOM. [ISBN 978-0-8144-1572-6. 282 pages, including index. US$24.95.]

In The On-Demand Brand, Rick Mathieson argues that the way for marketers to succeed in the ever-changing digital climate is to innovate, not duplicate. Drawing from his experience as the vice president and creative director for Creative: Advertising & Interactive Media in Silicon Valley, Mathieson's 10 rules for digital marketing center on the premise that companies must know their customers to decide which of the current digital trends, or which future trends, might provide the most benefit to the company and the consumer. Mathieson supports each of his rules with case studies and examples from top companies that are currently using digital marketing in creative ways and concludes each chapter with an interview of a leading digital marketer discussing their successes.

In his first and most important rule, "Insight Comes Before Inspiration," Mathieson notes that successful initiatives start with extensive research into the customer's wants and needs. In the first interview, Laura Klauberg, senior vice president of Unilever, who spearheaded Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, discusses how she learned who her customers are and what they want from their brands first. Other chapters discuss how companies have used social media, user-generated content, games, virtual worlds, mobile, and more to reach their customers. Mathieson's interviews lend support to his rules and provide solid examples for readers who are attempting to identify the digital tools and techniques that might work for their own companies.

Although Mathieson presents a wide array of digital marketing possibilities, he continues to stress that digital

tools should always be relevant to the customer. "Just because social networking is hot, that doesn't mean its [sic] right for your brand. Don't just ask yourself what your social networking strategy should be. Ask 'why' it should be, and why consumers should care" (p. 66). These direct statements emphasize Mathieson's view that while the digital realm holds much possibility, digital marketing initiatives need to be well-researched and well-planned to maximize the benefit. "Digital quite simply is not for repurposing content that exists in other channels. It's about reimagining content to create blockbuster experiences that cannot be attained through any other medium" (p. 37).

With marketers expected to spend $61 billion annually on digital initiatives by 2012, according to Forrester Research, *The On-Demand Brand* provides a clear picture of marketers' current uses of digital technologies while stressing the new platforms and issues that will certainly emerge in the coming years. In particular, Mathieson speculates that the growth of mobile marketing and highly personalized advertising will bring privacy issues to the forefront of the digital era.

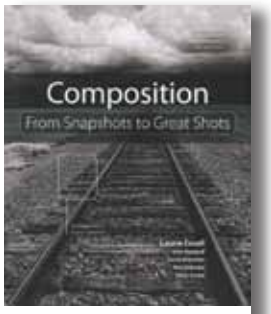
The information in *The On-Demand Brand* is very relevant to the current digital climate and can be beneficial to digital beginners and experts alike. The tools cited may change with future technologies, but Mathieson's rules will remain useful for many years to come.

Deidre Girard

Deidre Girard pursued her MS in Human Centered Design & Engineering to explore more deeply the impact of digital technology and social media on learning and engagement in higher education. She has integrated much of her research into her career as an academic advisor and communications manager at the University of Washington.

Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots

Laurie Excell, John Batdorff, David Brommer, Rick Rickman, and Steve Simon. Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press [ISBN 978-0-321-74132-5. 258 pages, including index. US$24.99 (softcover).]



Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots is a great introduction to the art of composition, how components in a photograph are arranged, and how the viewer's eye looks at the photograph. Primary author Laurie Excell provides the basics of composition in the first six chapters, while contributing photographers John Batdorff, David Brommer, Rick Rickman, and Steve Simon each provide a chapter on other composition aspects.

Each chapter offers one or more assignments, designed to reinforce concepts learned in that chapter, and you are encouraged to share the results of your assignments in the book's Flickr group online. The "Poring Over the Picture" sections in each chapter show one or two photos that illustrate the chapter concept and point out decisions made by the photographer that make the image a "great shot."

The first chapter covers equipment, including cameras, lenses, memory cards, flash, and polarizers. Excell explains her choices for what ends up in her camera bag, and how individual these choices are, based on the photographer's style. This information provides a good grounding for all the succeeding chapters.

Excell then explains the exposure triangle as well as how aperture, shutter speed, and ISO speed (which affects the shutter speed/aperture combinations you can use to obtain correct exposure) work with each other and with light. Light is a key element in photography and composition, which this book explains in the context of quality, quantity, and direction. The next three chapters focus on drawing the eye with points of interest, color, and spatial relationships.

After the first six chapters, the guest authors each write a chapter on their expertise. Batdorff goes through his entire process for shooting in black and white, including what he looks for in an image, what kind of postprocessing he does, and his entire list gear for getting the perfect shot. Rickman uses stories from his long career to illustrate how composition works in sports photography, while Brommer talks about going beyond the rule of thirds and how positive and negative space affect a photograph. Simon closes out the book by providing strategies for finding your way to the best composition for any given shooting situation.

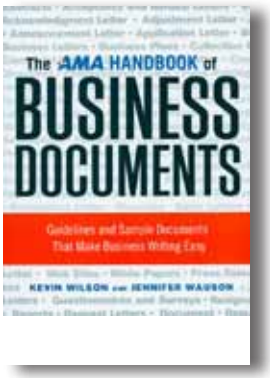
Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots is a good book to illustrate the value of composition in photography. While the book is aimed at the beginner to intermediate audience, even an advanced amateur photographer will find useful information, especially in the later chapters.

Rachel Houghton

Rachel Houghton is a senior information designer at Sage, a leading-edge construction productivity and real estate solutions company. She has more than 14 years of technical communication experience. Rachel is the STC Secretary and is actively involved in the STC Willamette Valley community. She enjoys photography and Photoshop.

The AMA Handbook of Business Documents

Kevin Wilson and Jennifer Wauson. 2011. New York, NY: AMACOM. [ISBN: 978-0-8144-1769-0. 212 pages. US$19.95 (softcover).]



There's a next step to everything. We've written the perfect resume a dozen times. Of course, one can go to extremes—like Dominguin, one of the world's greatest bullfighters, who gave them everything he had. And when that wasn't enough, he gave them his life. A handbook covering all the business writing genres should take a few next steps: a few new techniques for some of the genres it describes.

And it does, as in the excellent tips in the Email chapter (pp. 52–54) such as avoid starting a message with Re:; use the BCC field when sending to several people at once to keep their addresses private; and avoid sending long documents as e-mail messages.

The main problem lies in the nature of handbooks themselves, which are normally all-inclusive. In this case, the authors include virtually every type of business document. The trade-off in handbooks is between depth and breadth, as one must be selective. Still, instead of discussing some important aspect of a genre at length, a chapter should at least "refer" to it. For example, the Instructions chapter might mention formats like Information Mapping; Procedures, a mention of Playscript Procedure; with citation in a bibliography. Every major genre (reports, proposals, manuals, etc.) has several books written about it. To be more helpful, the book would benefit from suggested readings for those genres.

Major genres include Proposals (pp. 115–125) and Reports (pp. 133–145). The Proposals genre begins with a 1-1/2 page description followed by a nine-page sample. Considering that proposals are a very important business document, this genre deserves a more detailed description. In addition, the book devotes only seven

pages to Reports (nine, if you include the separate chapter on Trip Reports), with another five pages taken up by a sample report. The sample report omits visuals, which are a major part of business and technical reports.

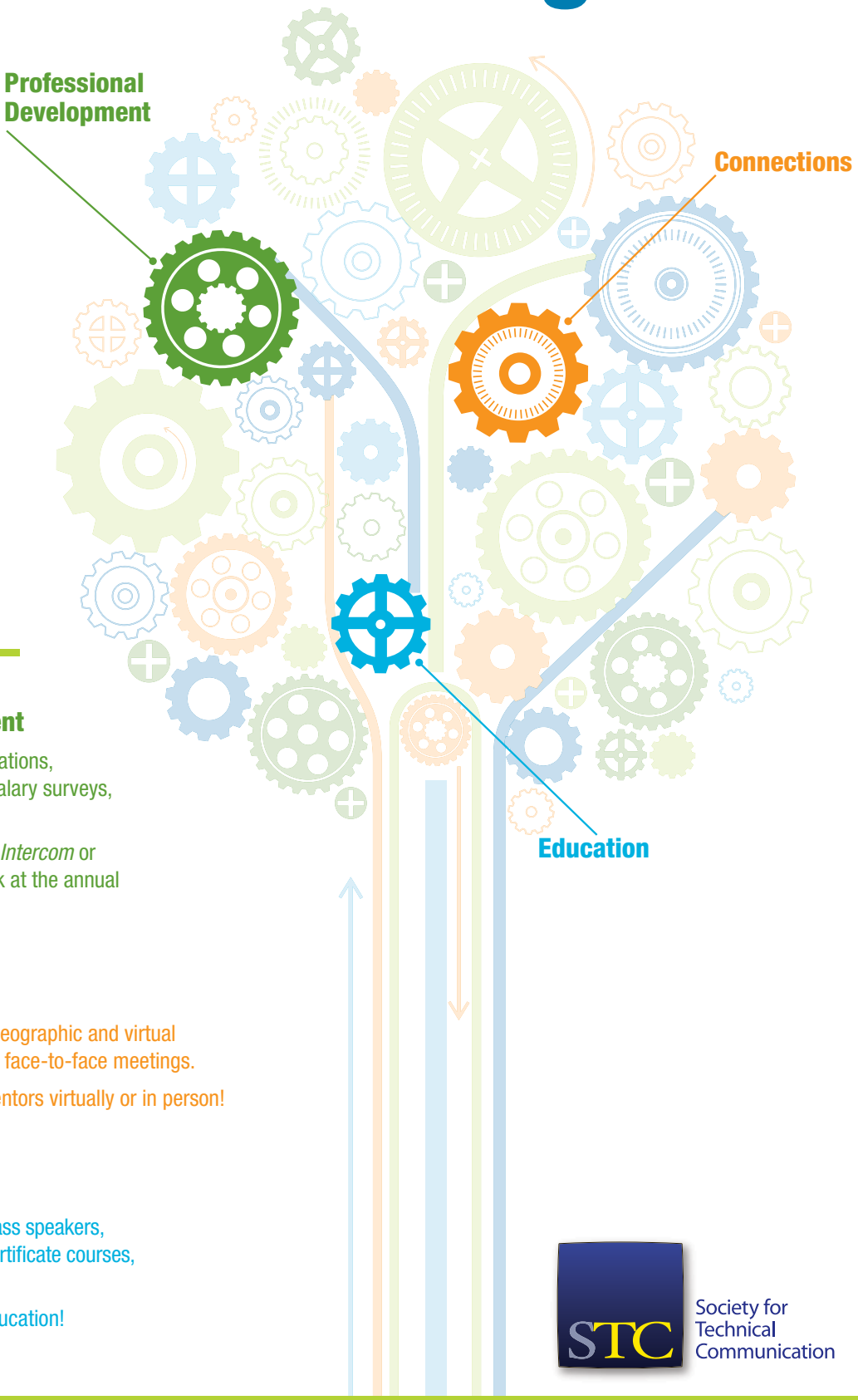
The book could be improved by combining topics that are used together in practice, such as instructions, procedures, and manuals. Also, it might omit items that are more spoken than written genres, like the sections on PowerPoint Presentations, and Speeches and Oral Presentations.

There are always, of course, minor quibbles—it's the nature of reviews—such as the recommendation that "the body of the report can be single- or double-spaced" (p. 135). Research has shown that 1.1 or 1.2 pt leading is best for the reader.

The AMA Handbook of Business Documents is a very useful conspectus for overall corporate communication needs. It does a good job in pulling together the genres that must be created and coordinated in the modern company.

Steven Darian
Steven Darian is an STC Fellow, having retired from teaching business and technical writing at Rutgers for 25 years and in eight countries. He was a manager for Raytheon in Saudi Arabia. Steven is coauthoring a forthcoming book, *IMPACT: Writing for Business & the Professions*, with Professor Olga Ilchenko.

Where it all comes together.



Professional Development

Access to award-winning publications, a career center and job board, salary surveys, and an online resource center.

Advance your career—write for *Intercom* or *Technical Communication*, speak at the annual conference, or find a new job!

Connections

A personalized social network, geographic and virtual communities, and networking at face-to-face meetings.

Connect with your peers and mentors virtually or in person!

Education

Live webinars featuring world-class speakers, free archived seminars, online certificate courses, and the annual conference.

Advance your career through education!

STC Society for Technical Communication

These are just a few of the benefits of STC membership.

To learn more, visit **www.stc.org/renew** today!

ROSEMONT, ILLINOIS

Be Where It All Comes Together

The Early Bird rate of $925 is good through 30 March; register today!

2012 TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SUMMIT

20–23 May 2012

The Society for Technical Communication is where it all comes together, and nowhere is that more evident than at the Technical Communication Summit! Technical communicators from around the world will converge on Rosemont, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, from 20–23 May 2012 for the 59th annual Summit. Choose from over 80 sessions in 10 different tracks at the conference, with some of today's top technical communicators coming together to share their knowledge.

And the sessions are just the beginning of your Summit experience! In-person networking, the Expo Hall, preconference education, the honors banquet, SIG meetings, and so much more are also available to help you advance your career.

Visit *http://summit.stc.org* for complete details on how you can be where it all comes together.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SUMMIT '12
STC's 59th Annual Conference
20-23 May 2012 • Rosemont – Chicago

Become one of the first Certified Professional Technical Communicators™

Why earn your Certification?

Leadership Recognition	Professional Status	Professional Development
Show your employers you are a technical communication leader who is committed to establishing worldwide performance standards for the field.	Join an elite group of professionals who have demonstrated their technical communication knowledge and proficiency.	The educational requirements of certification are one more reason to continuously maintain and upgrade your knowledge. Add certification to your career development plan.
Portable Career Credential	**A Sense of Achievement**	**Experience Validation**
When you change jobs, your certification credential travels with you and will enhance your employability and compensation.	Give yourself the confidence to excel at your job.	Certification confirms your experience and competency in technical communication, your commitment to the profession.

The CPTC assessment encompasses broad areas of practice that represent the major activities performed by technical communicators. The certified practitioner demonstrates proficiency in the following areas:

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL
Technical Communicator
CPTC

- **User, Task, and Experience Analysis**—Define the users of the information and analyze the tasks that the information must support.
- **Information Design**—Plan information deliverables to support task requirements. Specify and design the organization, presentation, distribution, and architecture for each deliverable.
- **Process Management**—Plan the deliverables schedule and monitor the process of fulfillment.
- **Information Development**—Author content in conformance with the design plan, through an iterative process of creation, review, and revision.
- **Information Production**—Assemble developed content into required deliverables that conform to all design, compliance, and production guidelines. Publish, deliver, and archive.

Employers know that certified practitioners earn more than their uncertified colleagues, because employers find that certified professionals are more likely to be successful hires and valued employees.

Visit **www.stc.org/certification** for more information and to submit your application.

full-service

Translation, Localization, & Multilingual Testing

in more than 60 languages

GOLD AWARD 2011 TOP TEN REVIEWS

Rated No. 1 in Translation Services by Top Ten Reviews

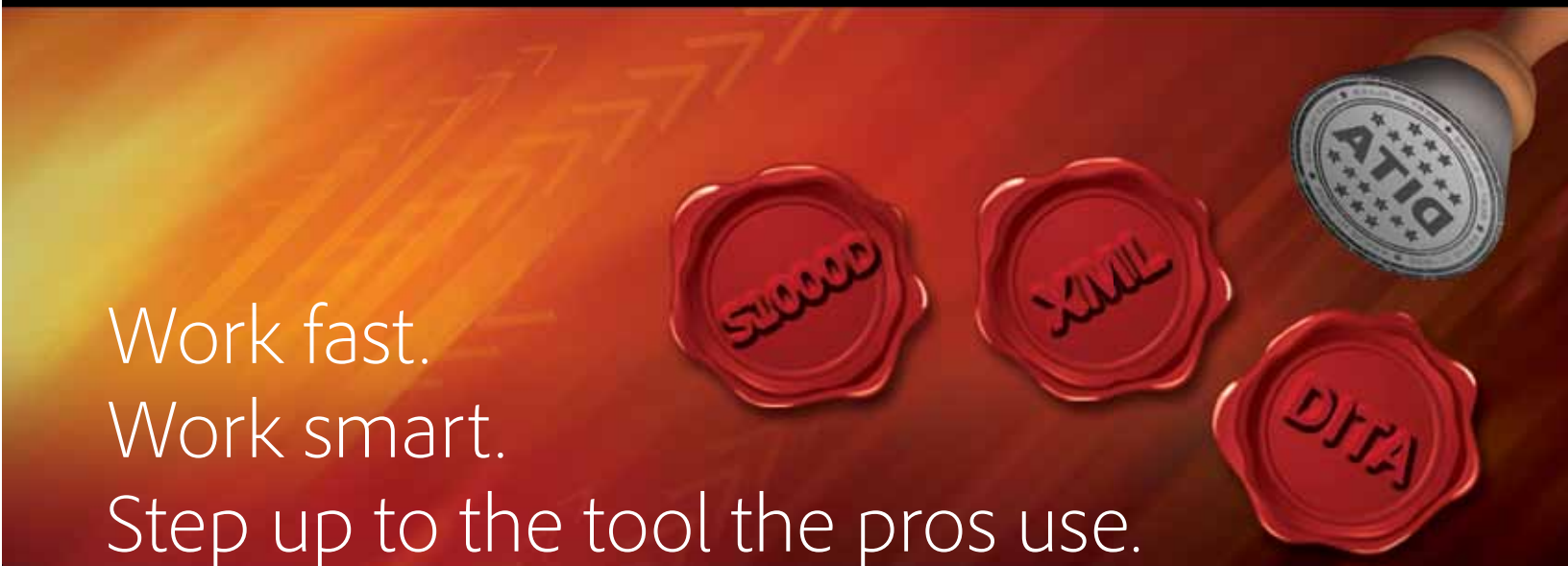
For over 10 years, Net-Translators has helped technology companies and medical-device manufacturers prepare their products for global markets. Our comprehensive localization services portfolio, experienced customer-focused project teams, and unique quality-centered approach help us consistently exceed customer expectations for deadline, budget, and accuracy. We have earned the trust of industry leaders worldwide, so you know your products are in good hands.

- Turnkey localization solutions for software (user interface, online help, documentation), websites, and marketing content
- More than 1000 professional translators, proofreaders, editors, and software localization specialists
- Cutting-edge language tools and technologies
- One-of-a-kind Multilingual Testing Center
- ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 13485:2003 certified

www.net-translators.com • North America • United Kingdom • Israel • Argentina

Net-Translators
Your Vision. Worldwide.

Adobe® FrameMaker® 10



Work fast.
Work smart.
Step up to the tool the pros use.

To learn more about and Adobe FrameMaker 10, please visit: *http://www.adobe.com/products/framemaker.html*

To test-drive Adobe FrameMaker 10 as a part of Adobe Technical Communication Suite 3.5, please visit: *http://www.runaware.com/clients/adobe/techsuite/*

Reduce your total cost of ownership with Adobe FrameMaker 10

Take advantage of the enhanced XML/DITA/S1000D content authoring, reviewing, managing, and publishing capabilities of Adobe FrameMaker 10 software to make your structured migration a streamlined, timesaving, and cost-effective move.

Choose your preferred mode of authoring—Take advantage of the enhanced XML/DITA/S1000D authoring capabilities that make FrameMaker as good at structured authoring as it is at unstructured authoring.

Manage content more effectively—Enjoy out-of-the-box connectivity with Microsoft SharePoint and EMC Documentum, and integration with other leading content management systems via WebDAV enhancements.

Speed up time to market and reduce localization costs—Efficiently repurpose content into the languages and formats customers demand.

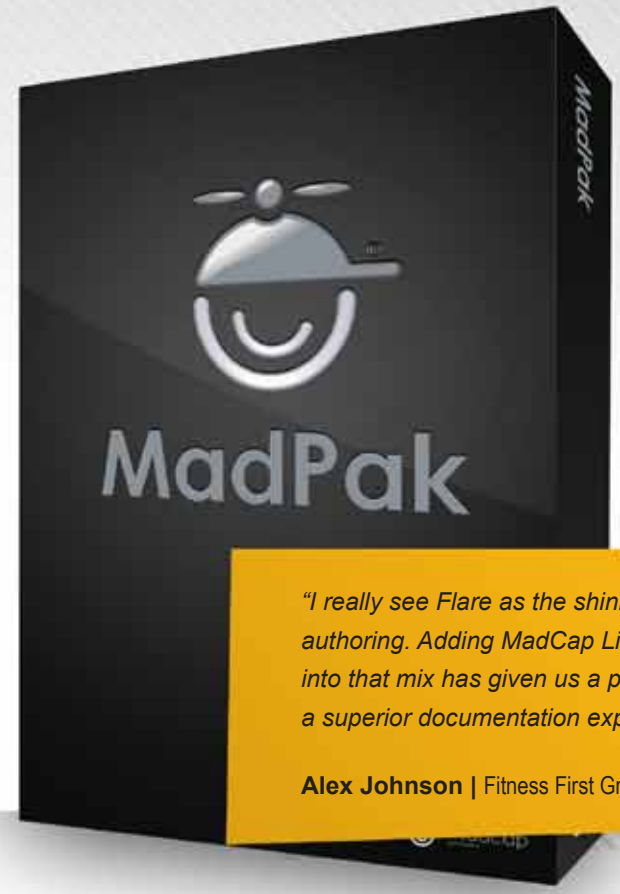
Work more efficiently—with an intuitive interface, predefined templates, customizable workspaces, and a host of usability enhancements. Collaborate faster with PDF-based roundtrip peer reviews.

Now, get more bang for your buck! Introducing Adobe FrameMaker Improved Upgrade Plan.

Complimentary Bronze support. Exclusive utilities and plug-ins. Training and consulting enablement. Special rights to buy Adobe development support.

To find out more about Frame Maker Improved Upgrade Plan, visit *http://www.adobe.com/products/framemaker/improved-upgrade.html*

This issue of Intercom is sponsored by Adobe Systems Incorporated.



THE ULTIMATE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SUITE

"I really see Flare as the shining light in documentation authoring. Adding MadCap Lingo, Contributor and Analyzer into that mix has given us a powerful suite of tools for bringing a superior documentation experience to our users."

Alex Johnson | Fitness First Group

MadPak includes six fully integrated tools:

MadCap Flare

Single-source Publishing

MadCap Contributor

Contribution and Review

MadCap Analyzer

Find and Fix Project Issues

MadCap Mimic

Interactive Demos and Tutorials

MadCap Capture

Screen Captures and Enhancements

MadCap Lingo

Translation Management

madcap software

Learn How Fitness First Uses MadPak at

MadCapSoftware.com/FitnessFirst