**GUIDELINES FOR *INTERCOM* AWARDS**

**Guidelines for the *Intercom* Outstanding Article Award and the *Intercom* Distinguished Special Issue Award**

**INTRODUCTION**

*Intercom*, the Society’s magazine, publishes articles about the issues and topics that are driving the conversation in the world of technical communication. It provides practical examples and applications of technical communication that will promote readers’ professional development. Each month, *Intercom*highlights the thought leaders and practitioners who are shaping the future of the profession and delivering exceptional value to companies, nonprofits, and government organizations around the world.

The *Intercom* Outstanding Article and the *Intercom* Distinguished Special Issue awards were established by the Board of Directors in 2013 to recognize authors of superior articles and guest editors of superior issues of the Society’s magazine.

The *Intercom* Outstanding Article award recognizes the author(s) of an outstanding article that appeared in *Intercom* during a calendar year. The *Intercom* Distinguished Special Issue award recognizes the guest editor of an exceptional issue of *Intercom* magazine during a calendar year.

Judges base their decisions on the article and special issue’s content and form. Content is judged on the degree to which it represents contributions to new knowledge, new perspectives, or practical communication applications or techniques. Form is judged by the degree to which it embodies effective and appropriate organization, plain language, relevant and meaningful tables and/or illustrations, and a superior conviction or enthusiasm in transmitting information.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Any article or guest-edited issue that appears in the magazine during the calendar year is automatically entered in that year’s competition. There is no entry fee.

**COMPETITION MANAGER**

The magazine editor serves as manager of the competition. The editor acts as a resource for the judging team but does not participate in the team’s deliberations.

**Judging Team Selection**

The competition manager appoints three members to the judging team. This team may consist of such distinguished STC members as an Editorial Advisory Panel member, a fellow of the Society, an academic member, and/or a practitioner. A prior year’s winner of the competition may also be invited to serve as a judge.

The manager designates one of the judges as the team leader.

**AWARD LEVELS**

**Outstanding Article**

Only one Outstanding Article award may be given each year to recognize an author or authors who have written an original outstanding article in *Intercom* magazine.

**Distinguished Special Issue**

Only one Distinguished Special Issue award may be given each year to recognize the guest editor (and STC volunteer member) of an issue of *Intercom* magazine.

**Recognition of Winning Entries**

Each author and guest-editor of a winning article or issue in this competition receives a certificate.

The winners of the Outstanding Article and Distinguished Special Issue awards are recognized at the Honors Banquet at the STC Summit by the magazine editor or competition manager.

Winning entries are displayed at the competitions exhibit at the STC Summit.

**JUDGING PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA**

**Procedure**

The judges agree to complete their initial reading and individual evaluations of the articles and special issues by a mutually accepted date. On that date, the team leader asks the other members to identify their top three or four contenders for both awards, along with a short statement explaining the reasons for their selections.

The judges continue their discussion of the top contenders until they reach consensus on the Outstanding Article and Distinguished Special Issue, if any (there may be years in which no award is granted).

**CRITERIA**

The criteria used to evaluate entries are based on several areas, including: audience awareness, originality, writing, structure and style, and applicability and value to practitioners and stakeholders.

**Audience Awareness**

Questions to be addressed:

1. Does the article topic or guest-edited issue address the interests of a majority of the magazine’s readers? (A topic need not appeal to the entire readership, but it should not be so specialized that it fails to appeal to most of the readership.)
2. Is the article or issue applicable to active practitioners of technical communication?
3. Are the examples and illustrations provided by the authors appropriate for the audience as well as the topic?
4. Does the article or issue appeal to an international audience?

**Originality and Use of Sources**

Questions to be addressed:

1. Does the article or issue make a significant original contribution to the field of technical communication? How?
2. If an article is not an original contribution, does it summarize existing knowledge in a particularly significant, effective, or cogent way?

**Writing, Structure, and Style**

Questions to be addressed:

1. Does the organization of the article or special issue effectively contribute to readers’ understanding of the ideas the article contains?
2. Does the writing significantly exceed expectations for articles published in *Intercom*?

**Applicability and Value to Practitioners**

Questions to be addressed:

1. Does the article or special issue provide practical examples and applications of technical communication that will promote readers’ professional development?
2. Does the article or issue do an exemplary job of tying theory or research results to practical strategies that practitioners can implement on their jobs?
3. If the article is a case study or based on personal experience, is it applicable to a significant number of technical communication practitioners?
4. If the article is a tutorial or how-to, is the process or procedure relevant to a significant number of practitioners?
5. Is the article or issue of such value to practitioners and other members of the technical communication audience that it deserves to be honored as the outstanding article or special issue published in STC’s magazine during the past year?