IEEE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Letter from the President

It is a pleasure to serve as president of the Professional Communication Society when its members are so active. Our publications are on a regular schedule, seminars on writing and speaking are being held throughout the U.S. and in the U.K., and inter-society relationships have been probed. These and many more activities are helping PC teach skills to other engineers in IEEE and also to learn skills from other communicators.

Our most recent project was the Practicum in Communication held at the request of the Richmond, Virginia Section. This was unique in that one two-day meeting featured working sessions on four aspects of communication--speaking, writing, interviewing, and taking part in a meeting. A pilot program, organized by Emily Schlesinger and carried out by Della Whittaker, Carol Adams, John Phillips, and Ron Blicq, the Practicum was called "an unusually helpful experience" by those who attended.

PC's other educational projects have been perhaps less innovative in concept but certainly not less successful in realization. Ron Blicq is so far scheduled to conduct writing workshops in Texas, Florida, and Colorado in 1978; he reports continuous enrollment and completions for our home-study course, "Technically--Write!"

At our first meeting of 1978, in Richmond, PC's Administrative Committee discussed, among other things, inter-society cooperation, ways to increase PC membership, and the concept of Area Representatives. PC belongs to the Council of Communication Societies, an umbrella organization of 25 industrial, educational, and government societies interested in furthering communication skills. The Society for Technical Communication is one that we continue to have close relations with; the two Societies send liaison representatives to each other's administrative boards.

To increase membership we are exploring advertising and personal contact methods. A total of 2000 members would seem to be a good working number; we now have over 1500. We are printing a new membership brochure and planning a publicity campaign. If you have any ideas, let us know, but meantime enroll a friend as a PC member.

One way we hope to expand is through Area Representatives. This is a new concept which asks volunteers in the U.S. and throughout the world to report on local happenings of interest, represent PC in business and professional groups, help with local arrangements for PC meetings, and publicize Society activities personnally. Our goal is to have an Area Representative in each Section of IEEE. If you are interested, contact PC's Vice President, Bertrand Pearlman, Stauffer Chemical Company, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 10522, or call him at 914-693-1200.

If you would like to work for the PC Group in any way let us know. A few are doing a lot of work to improve the Society's effectiveness, but we need more show of member interest. Activities in which everyone can help include those which involve our Committees on Education, Membership, Meetings, Publications (Transactions and the Newsletter), and Publicity. Area Representatives, of course, can serve in any or all of these fields of PC interest. Let us hear from you!

IEEE/PC
HOTEL JEFFERSON
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
MARCH 16-18
1978

John Phillips

Ron Blicq

Della Whittaker

Carol Adams

Four instructors coordinate plans for the Practicum.

Tom Patterson

Emily Schlesinger

Bert Pearlman

Happy Past President gives briefcase of PC documents to thoughtful New President.

New Vice President begins to feel weight of official responsibility.

PRACTICUM in COMMUNICATION
AND
MEETING of AD COM

Ad Com Meeting

PC's AdCom met on the evening of March 16, 1978, in the Engineers Club of Richmond, Virginia.

John Phillips was named recipient of PC's Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for 1977, and the award itself, a silver dish, was presented to him. A similar presentation, long overdue, was made to Ron Blicq, who was cited last year as recipient of the Goldsmith Award for 1976.

Bert Pearlman was elected Vice President.

Ron Blicq reported that PC will present a three-paper session on technical communication at the Conference on Frontiers in Education to be held by IEEE's Education Society in October in Disneyworld, Florida.

He also stated that 125 students have enrolled in our home-study course and 15 have completed it. Six writing workshops were held in 1977 and three are scheduled so far for 1978. One of the latter will immediately follow the FIE Conference in Florida.

PC has been asked to present a session at the International Technical Communication Conference next May in Los Angeles. Send ideas or offers of help to Emily Schlesinger.

Tom Patterson will appoint a new Editorial Advisory Board to help Rudy Joenk plan special-theme issues of PC's Transactions and obtain guest editors.

Copies of PC's Constitution and Job Descriptions will soon be printed and mailed to AdCom members.

Bob Woelfle and Pat McBride are working to publicize the benefits of PC membership by sending ads and a brochure to IEEE student members, editors, and Section leaders.

The AdCom will meet next on Friday, June 16, at IEEE Headquarters in New York City. Friends of PC and PC members-at-large will be welcome.

Practicum at Richmond

The Practicum in Communication held March 17-18 in Richmond (VA) under joint sponsorship of PC and IEEE's Richmond Section was a great success. Attending managers, salesmen, technicians, and design and production engineers called it "a tremendous bargain."

Many of these "students" improved their communication skills and self-confidence noticeably between the beginning of the first session, when they introduced themselves, and the end of the fifth session, after they had participated in exercises which involved speaking, reading, writing, illustrating, commenting, and role-playing.

Instructors in these sessions were Della Whittaker of Harry Diamond Laboratories (U.S. Army) and University College (University of Maryland); Carol Adams of Delaware Technical and Community College; John Phillips, Editor of The RCA Engineer; and Ron Blicq of Red River Community College (Winnipeg, Manitoba).

The Practicum is available to companies, private groups, professional organizations, IEEE Sections and Societies, and so on. A description of this innovative, many-faceted program appears in four parts elsewhere in this Newsletter.

There is no other communication course like PC's Practicum. Technical persons who "get their feet wet" in it are well prepared to learn the skills of communication more thoroughly.

The Practicum teaches basics and self-confidence. Those who want sharper skills and more practice can enroll in PC's specialized courses and workshops, which use the same proven methods to teach the Practicum modules in greater detail.

Official Documents

PC's two official documents--the Constitution and By-laws, and the Job Descriptions--have been recorded on magnetic tape for easy reproduction, revision, and re-issue. Copies have been sent to all AdCom members and are available on request to PC members-at-large. To obtain them, write to PC's Publicity Chairman, Robert M. Woelfle, E-Systems, Inc., Box 1056, Greenville, TX, 75401.

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Phillips Honored

At the meeting of PC's AdCom in Richmond (VA) on March 16, John Phillips was given the Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for 1977--a silver bowl presented in recognition of service within the Society's organization to improve the quality of engineering communication.

John has been a member of our AdCom since 1969, serving at different times as Meetings Chairman, Vice President, and President. He was Program Chairman for two PC Conferences and Finance Chairman for the three IEEE Conferences on Scientific Journals (1973, 1975, and 1977), and has been the Society's Treasurer since 1973.

In addition to performing admirably the duties of these positions, John has helped other members of the AdCom by suggesting activities and supporting projects. His creativity, energy, and productive loyalty have been outstanding.

John's acadamic degree is in Mathematics (Rutgers University). Employed by RCA since 1962, he is now Editor of The RCA Engineer. He is also a member of the IEEE Publications Board and of the Editorial Board of Spectrum.

Pearlman Elected

BERTRAND B. PEARLMAN

Bert Pearlman, PC's new Vice President, has for the past 13 years worked at the Stauffer Chemical Company in Dobbs Ferry, New York, first as Chief Electrical Engineer and, since 1969, as Manager of Design Engineering with responsibility for electrical, mechanical, civil, instrumentation, piping and layout functions. He is also responsible for engineering standards at Stauffer, manages corporate metrication, and represents his company on the Engineering Advisory Committee of the Manufacturing Chemists Association.

A Senior Member of IEEE and a Member of the Society for Technical Communication, Bert holds patents on the elimination of magnetic field effects and on the use of mercury in high-current chlorine cells. He has published papers on transformer maintenance and on electrical safety.

Technology and the Quality of Life

by Newton A. Teixeira

It has become fashionable to attack Technology as an adversary of Nature, but in fact, technology is as much a part of nature as the reef made by coral animals, the hill made by an ant colony, and a dam made by a beaver.

I like the term "natural philosophy" which was the pre-nineteenth century designation for what we now call science or technology. Since the roots of the word describe a "love of wisdom," philosophy should include, not oppose, the thoughts of "theophiles" or "lovers of God." Wisdom is not limited by the methods used to achieve it.

"Science" (to know) is really only a method through which one develops a hypothesis to explain a natural phenomenon, then devises an experiment to test the hypothesis, conducts the experiment, and then analyzes the result of the experiment to refine the hypothesis for further testing and so on. When the hypothesis is sufficient to explain the phenomenon and survives many tests by many experimenters, it becomes a theory or a "law." But since it survives as a law until disproved or amended, the hypothesis should be a welcome addition to man's codification of knowledge.

This concept of Science should be much more acceptable to liberal religion than is a dogma based only on "revealed truth." A reading of the history of science shows that the original hypothesis (e.g., survival of the fittest, the origin of species, the interrelationship of time and space and of matter and energy) can be as much a revelation as the hypothesis eloquently discussed in Genesis.

The problems that we attribute to technology are usually mis-applied solutions to other problems. This process of problems engendering solutions which in turn develop into new problems may be thought a fundamental sign of life and one of the grandeurs of Nature.

Life and death are inextricably woven together. Life as we know it cannot exist without death as we know it. Were it not for death, life on earth would probably be limited to the original single-celled plant form. Pollution is not only a sign of life; it is also a source of life forms. Had the great plant stage of earth-life not polluted the atmosphere with its corrosive and combustible waste product, oxygen, then animal life as we know it could not have evolved. Without animal life and its current protégé, the human, who would sing the praises of Creation?

So the waste matter, oxygen, from the plants created the ozone layer we tend to think was put there during Genesis I. Now human technology threatens the existence of this protective layer of ozone that was created by the excretion of the plants. This development in turn threatens to make the human species extinct--perhaps to make room for some other species adapted to the new environment.

(As a side note, it seems that if the smog layer were to be removed from over Los Angeles, there would be a resulting drastic increase in the rate of skin cancer among its inhabitants.)

Perhaps in our own neighborhood galaxy that exhibits itself to our little solar system as the Milky Way, another form of life has excreted a different form of pollution, something other than oxygen and humus, and has permitted a different type of mobile life to flourish. Perhaps millions of comparable events have occurred elsewhere among the countless planets of this "unfinite," seemingly infinite, universe. Perhaps we live in a culture made in the Creator's laboratory. To a microbe in our laboratories, the little Petri dish must seem like a universe.

Revelation can bring a flash of insight. Consider William Blake's inspiration—

> To see a world in a grain of sand
> And heaven in a wild flower;
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

Blake sang it. But Einstein, Newton, Galileo, Copernicus, Thales must have felt it. Maybe even Freud, Jesus, Socrates, Lao-Tse, and Moses did also.

The methods of science and the arts of religion (and I believe the latter include the arts of painting, music, sculpture and poetry) can apply only after a special insight or revealing of an aperture to truth. Sometimes this insight comes as a special view of time.

The Greek Cosmogeny seems to become more and more in tune with modern ideas. In the ancient Greek myth, the God Chaos begat Chronos and began the world. One modern theory says that, in the beginning, entropy (no capitalization) was at a maximum--hence maximum disorder; or, in another word, chaos. Since Chronos was time and time is a measure of one kind of order, then the beginning of order was the beginning of the cosmos, the universe, the galaxies, earth, and life as we know it.

A novel look at time provided insight to Darwin and Wallace. Without a view of time greatly expanded over Bishop Usher's calculation of 4004 BC as the date of creation, the concept of evolution would have been neither possible nor contemplated, certainly never published.

Recent discoveries in those microcosms, the crystal and the nucleus, have led us to think of nano-seconds and pico-seconds (a pico-second is a millionth of a millionth of a second). The measurement of the speed of light and the estimating of interstellar distances in light years have given us a different view of both distance and time. But it still takes much stretching of the mind to "take a long view."

To look at our own planet from the moon was a magnificient and inspiring experience, made vicariously possible for most of us by a combination of technologies. The most significant long-term benefit of our space efforts may be that we have seen the beauty and oneness of Earth, our space capsule.

If one thinks of what the earth has looked like from the moment at which last night's starlight was first emitted until we saw it twinkle, another view is possible. One of the most recent hypotheses on the nature of our earth says that this fiery ball will cool only until the pressures from its contracting outer crust build sufficiently to permit nuclear heating of the molten core; then the whole planet will become a fiery ball again and begin another cycle of cooling.

Life can exist only during the latter part of the cooling stage. During the molten phase, all terrestrial signs of the existence of life will be obliterated. (Only a colony of spores or men, borne on a space-ship, could survive.)

To take our own measure, we can think of a fungus growing with grandiose ideals on an unlit flasher bulb in a theater marquee; it dies without a trace when the dark bulb lights up again. If we take this view of time, then we cannot be so presumptuous as to suppose that we have become the experimenter. No matter how wild our ideas, they will be within the experiment and part of the answer to the question, "What if one of the experimental organisms is allowed to think, permitted to attempt to second-guess the experimenter? What might happen then?"

Maybe during a previous cooling, some form of life did escape the earth. Maybe it will come back, to continue or start over; perhaps it already has.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," sounds the King James version in carillon tones. Sufficient unto the species is its life span, says the evolutionist. Give me more time, says the human, for myself and my species; we have dreams yet to dream and last night's dreams are still not realized. And the poet sings,

> I have promises to keep
> And miles to go before I sleep.

In the long view, it is almost impossible to distinguish between a problem and a turning point. "Luck comes when preparation meets opportunity," someone has said. It would be very difficult to persuade a person ill with yellow fever or malaria to think it better for the world that he should die than that insect life, and thus fish and birds, should be endangered. The same technology that saved the lives of earlier potential victims created today's confusion about insecticides. We chose to overuse the cure and created a new problem.

The same technology that reduces the death rate also permits us to eliminate an unnecessarily high birth rate. We choose that it shall do the former but not the latter.

The same technology that provides agricultural chemicals to eliminate famine also enables us to control the productivity of any given area. By choosing to ignore the latter option, we permit American farmers to overdose their fields with relatively cheap fertilizer, let the excess run off, and thereby pollute the waters of the earth.

The same technology that provides machinery to make servitude obsolete and allows mankind to develop a high level of culture without Greek helots, medieval serfs, or enslaved Africans also permits the manufacture of high-quality, multiple-variety essentials for all. We choose instead to waste our productivity on senselessly competing trivia.

The same technology that provides the facilities and the ability to provide mass education also permits the achievement of high standards of literary and artistic creations. We choose instead to devote too high a fraction of this capability to the touting of competitive commercial sameness. We are saturated by flimsy products in almost indestructible packages. By our choices in the market we perpetuate the misuse of technology.

The same technology that should make intra-species war obsolete is used to escalate the stakes of horror. It is our choice.

The same technology that provides unparalleled personal mobility can also provide mass transportation which makes better use of fossil fuels. We choose to manufacture vehicles that become extensions of our psyches, and let the development of mass transit facilities languish at nineteenth-century levels.

The same technology that floods us with inane programs and news of competing deodorants permits us to foster true democracy by means of education and almost instantaneous feedback to our government; it can even make possible the turning of our television sets into booths for voting on national questions. We choose the former; we will not pay for the others.

We permit ourselves to be satiated to the point of aesthetic nausea by the goods and music and art and literature we will support. We can only hope that, like the new view of the Earth from outer space, they may, in time, become a blessing. Robert Burns pleaded for a god who would let us see ourselves as others see us. Today's communication technology holds up a mirror to our collective bad taste.

The Creator chose to give humans a mind. The same minds that devised the roll-on deodorant, the electric toothbrush, nuclear fusion, and the transistor can also develop new social systems. The same mind that created the Declaration of Independence also invented the swivel chair. The same humans that have exploited our fellow animals have also developed a science of ecology to protect endangered species. In the past we have chosen by our personal subsidies to support one kind of effort and not the other. There are signs that we will choose otherwise in the future. Whatever we have, however, will be chosen--by action or inaction.

Finally, although we have the unused option of turning technology to the world's benefit, it is nonsense to talk about technology versus nature. Even if we restrict ourselves to man's technology, we are contained within an overall view of nature. As an integral part of nature, man cannot do anything unnatural. It may seem to us that we alter the process of evolution but the inexorable process works on us too. We are part of the experiment.

The Great Experiment goes on. There are probably other Laboratories.

--Adapted from a sermon delivered to the First Unitarian Society of Newton, MA, November 14, 1976 and printed in Engineering Management Society Newsletter for March/April, 1977.

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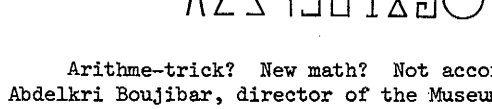


Arithme-trick? New math? Not according to Mrs. Abdelkri Boujibar, director of the Museum of Morocco. She says that the figures 0 through 9, which we know today as Arabic numerals, were introduced more than a thousand years ago by a Moroccan genius whose work was the first to be called algebra. He shaped them so that each contained a different number of angles--the figure 1 with one angle, 2 with two angles, 3 with three angles, and so on. Zero, signifying nothing had no angles.

--Source unknown

Emberson General Manager

Dr. Richard M. Emberson, long-time friend of PC and PC-ers, has been named General Manager of IEEE, after serving as Acting General Manager for six months and working since 1963 to unify the technical entities of the AIEE and the IRE, which in that year joined to form IEEE.

Dr. Emberson received the MA and PhD degrees from the University of Missouri, worked in astronomy at Harvard, on a cyclotron project at the University of Pittsburgh's Medical School, and with radar antennas and naval shipborne systems at MIT.

After World War II, he joined the US Department of Defense and then American Universities, Inc., the nine-university organization created to operate the Brookhaven National Laboratory. While with AUI, Dr. Emberson took part in work leading to the establishment of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank (West Virginia), which AUI operates for the National Science Foundation. From AUI, he joined the staff of IRE and then came to IEEE in the merger.

A Fellow of IEEE, the American Physical Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a Member of several other professional scientific societies as well as of Sigma Xi (the honorary scientific society), Dr. Emberson is quiet, modest, capable, fair, and, he says "at heart a farmer."

Congratulations and best wishes from PC, Dr. Emberson!

Ethics

Last February, IEEE's Board of Directors adopted policies and procedures to censure members for violations of the IEEE code of ethics, constitution, and bylaws and to protect members who may have jeopardized their employment by adhering to same. This action is the culmination of a number of years of effort by the IEEE United States Activities Board.

Under the new procedures, an IEEE member can be expelled, suspended, or censured for cause--that is, for conduct which is a "violation" of the constitution, bylaws, or code of ethics of IEEE, "or other materially unprofessional conduct."

On the other hand, if adherence to the IEEE code of ethics injures a member's economic status, a complaint can be submitted to the Member Conduct Committee. This committee, after screening the complaint, will report to the Institute's Executive Committee which can "offer support to the member as appropriate to the circumstances."

The role of the Member Conduct Committee has been defined carefully by the Institute's Board of Directors. Complaints against an IEEE member must be in the form of notarized affidavits containing specific information. The Committee must prepare a preliminary report within 90 days. If, after investigation, a majority of the Committee finds the complaint non-frivolous and well founded, it will proceed, and the IEEE member to be charged with a complaint must be notified at least 60 days in advance of any hearing on the matter.

A mechanism is established for selection of a Hearing Board to be chosen from a list of IEEE members picked by the Board of Directors in advance of any complaint. The Hearing Board will make a recommendation which will be acted upon by the Board of Directors. A recommendation of expulsion or suspension requires the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Hearing Board's members. A "censure" finding requires the affirmative vote of its majority.

The procedures provide that no action against a member may be taken without review and approval by all members of the Board of Directors. They may accept the recommendation of the Hearing Board or may lessen the severity of the action, but cannot increase the penalty.

Brief, Balanced, Effective

In preparing a document,

Plan and outline to move a definite reader or group of readers to do or learn something specific.

Write short words, sentences, paragraphs more often than long ones.

Use direct quotations, active verbs, straightforward diction, instead of indirect discourse, passive constructions, and evasive phrases.

Sound plain, sincere, and concise, rather than complex, pompous, and wordy.

Avoid is, are, was, were, be, been, and "bad" grammar.

Finish and put aside an easily legible copy.

Then read over the whole work. Revise, type a final clean copy, and proofread.

Make sure that you do not offend, confuse, or chase away any reader with false statements, unpleasant manner, awkward usage, wrong spelling, or ill-contrived punctuation.

--E. S.

PC in Paris

PC-er Ken Bramham directs four technical writers and one production assistant (men) and two artists (women) who prepare maintenance manuals for computers made by the Philips Company of The Netherlands. He and his associates work in Paris because the minicomputers they write for are designed there; engineering and the construction of prototype models take place in the same building.

Ken and his group members came individually from the United States, England, and Ireland; they work, write, and publish in English, in a section of Paris called Fontenay-aux-Roses. Their manuals, planned and written here but printed in The Netherlands, are sent with computers to at least 15 different countries; clear illustrations and simple English text make translation unnecessary for most senior engineer users.

Ken Bramham is an engineer-turned-technical-communicator. He served in British merchant ships during World War II and has worked in England, Canada, the United States, Holland, and France. On his desk is a block of wood like a name-plate, about eight inches long and triangular in cross-section, a gift from his associates. One side says

QUIET
Thinking Boss;

one side says

DANGER
Grouchy Boss;

one side says

SMILE
Happy Boss.

Happy Boss and Thinking Boss keep Grouchy Boss hidden. The quality of communication is not strained in Ken Bramham's offices.

French Communicators

Word comes from PC-er Ken Bramham in Paris that he is interested, even excited, about the new French Association of Technical Communicators (ACT) which held its inaugural meeting last summer.

As reported in Intercom, newsletter of the Society for Technical Communication, Alex Horoveanu and other members of ACT's provisional committee, welcome writers, editors, journalists, translators, illustrators, information specialists, teachers, and lecturers whose subject matter is technical.

Ken Bramham finds it difficult to achieve clear technical and engineering communication in France because of the nature of the French language and the official tendency toward maintaining its structural and linguistic purity.

"The worst hang-up," he says, "is caused by 'elegant variation.' In technical manuals, you find one component with umpteen different names on the same page."

ACT

An account of the French Association des Communicateurs Techniques (ACT) comes to use from England via The Communicator of Scientific and Technical Information, quarterly journal of The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators. A single organization, ISTC performs in the U.K. the function which IEEE/PC and the Society for Technical Communication (STC) share in the U.S.

The January, 1978 issue of The Communicator contains an article by John Kirkman, Fellow of ISCT and faculty member of the University of Wales, on the first full ACT meeting, which was held in Paris on September 21, 1977.

Dr. Kirkman reports that the three-hour program began with five ten-minute speeches, one by Lars Forsslund, President of INTECOM, The International Council for Technical Communication, who emphasized the fact that professional communicators in all countries face the same difficulties.

Some of these common and familiar problems were later the subjects of group discussion:

* writers' difficulties in obtaining information about products, audiences, and the purpose of documentation
* writer-illustrator conflicts
* approaches to the task of writing
* need for expertise in subject matter
* use of communication consultants
* status of professional communicators

An interesting feature of the ACT meeting, as described by Dr. Kirkman, was its being held in the gigantic CNIT conference center on a "trade only" day preceding a several-day exhibition of data-processing and office equipment. The center is a vast arena surrounded by many small conference rooms in which various professional associations hold meetings or seminars during exhibitions.

This arrangement appears to be mutually beneficial:

> It helps the exhibition by giving individuals a double motive for attending, and it helps the professional association by bringing their activities to the notice of the whole range of visitors to the exhibition.

At the ACT meeting for example, Dr. Kirkman says,

> Exhibition delegates were free to come and go at will, visiting the ACT activity just as they might visit a stand at the exhibition. Roughly 100 names and addresses were collected from people who wished to know more about ACT. Interestingly, though the individuals constituting the audience for the discussions changed continuously, the number remained constant at about 60 throughout the morning.

Dr. Kirkman points out that the French organizers have used "aggressive marketing strategy" in a "concerted effort to impress on business and industry the commercial advantages of good technical communication." He also remarks on the value of holding professional society meetings in conjunction with large commercial events.

These comments, made to the ICST, may well be heeded by other groups concerned with communication. Along the lines of a suggestion made by Dr. Kirkman, will PC members who know of forthcoming national or international events at which PC might organize a "side attraction" please get in touch with a PC officer or editor.

PC in England

Professor Eric Openshaw Taylor writes that the Professional Communication Chapter of IEEE's UKRI Section held a most agreeable Week-end Conference, March 3-5, at the Beauport Park Hotel in Sussex, England. The event, he says, attracted 14 Members, 8 of them with their ladies, and proved to be an excellent meeting in that everyone, including the ladies, was able to take an active part in the discussions.

Professor Taylor's account, which is appearing also in the IEEE Region 8 Newsletter for April, continues as follows:

"After an extremely stimulating talk by Professor Eric Laithwaite on 'Communication in Nature' on the Friday evening, the Conference spent Saturday and Sunday mornings in Seminars on 'The Spoken Word' and 'The Written Word' organized by Dr. Sinclair Goodlad of Imperial College. Ten participants each gave a 5-to-10-minute talk; listeners commented upon the manner in which each talk was delivered, and Dr. Goodlad expertly evaluated all presentations. Seven participants submitted written articles which were similarly analyzed.

"Saturday evening was devoted to an enjoyable and instructive game organized by Dr. E. Hewton of the University of Sussex. Participants were supposed to have crash-landed on the moon, 200 miles from their mother ship, with 15 items of undamaged equipment ranging from oxygen tanks to a box of matches. Each participant was asked to list these in order of priority for taking on the return journey to the mother ship.

"The party was then assembled into three groups of 7 or 8 participants each and asked to produce a list agreed on by each group. All lists were compared, by a simple marking scheme, with an 'official' list provided by space experts. As expected, the group decisions were more 'accurate' than the average of the individual decisions in the group, but a remarkable result was that each of the eight ladies produced an individual list more accurate than that of any of the gentlemen!

"This March Week-end Conference was the first event of its nature organized by the UKRI Section. Its success suggests the possibility that a similar venture may be held soon in a different part of the country."

Discussion in London

An account by J. D. McIntosh, Deputy Vice-President of the British Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators, tells in the ISTC newsletter for January (1978) about the informal meeting held last September at the Institution of Electrical Engineers (London)--the meeting in which PC's Emily Schlesinger met members of the ISTC, the IERE, and IEEE's UK Section.

An item in PC's Newsletter for January (1978) reports on this meeting and identifies those present, but Mr. McIntosh gives details of the general discussion held after the luncheon. The second part of his article, "Communication in the Electrical Industry," relates that there was "universal comment" on the near-illiteracy of many technical people and "a desire for universities and schools to rectify the present situation"--even a suggestion "that the Council of Engineering Institutions should tackle the problem seriously on behalf of all disciplines."

The article continues:

"A distinction was drawn between the necessary thinking, irrespective of language, and the ability to use the English language correctly. I mentioned the work of the ISTC Education and Training Committee and commented that there is a place for 'interpreters' to bridge the gap between the present ill-educated technological fraternity and those with whom they need to communicate.

"No specific action was agreed upon or taken, as the meeting was informal; however, useful contacts were made, and I expect that some developments will occur. At least I sensed a growing concern in the electrical industry that the ability to communicate technical information is an important asset which needs to be cultivated."

Area Representatives

The more you put into a professional society, the more you will receive from it. Why not become more involved in PC activities today?

Being an Area Representative is a good way to start, and the list below suggests some of the things you can do. It does not prescribe things you must do, but rather is a set of possibilities that you may enjoy using as a base for creative activity.

Make youself responsible for some PC-oriented field work, and let Bert Pearlman, our Vice-President, know what you hope to be doing. He works at the Stauffer Chemical Company, Dobbs Ferry, NY, 10522.

In general, an Area Representative establishes and maintains communication and provides liaison between PC's AdCom and PC members in a particular geographical area.

In particular, an Area Representative may

1. Obtain and maintain a roster of local PC members.
2. Serve as a point of contact for communication with these members.
3. Serve as a point of contact for communication with local businesses, schools, and other organizations.
4. Coordinate local arrangements for PC activities in the area (e.g., for a conference or workshop).
5. Represent PC at various IEEE and other meetings, seminars, conferences, and conventions held in the area.
6. Assist in coordinating PC publicity in local newspapers, IEEE Section bulletins, and other publications.
7. Review or send copies of regional articles of interest for publication in PC's TRANSACTIONS or Newsletter.
8. Coordinate new-member recruiting and follow-up action to communicate with local individuals who have resigned from PC or failed to pay current dues.
9. Coordinate with the Vice-President to secure help and approval for planned activities and expenditures.
10. Attend AdCom meetings and send periodic formal reports on local activities.

Active PC-ers

So far, PC's AdCom has been in direct communication with a small number of members who have either sent articles for reprint, volunteered information, or offered to help with PC projects. Let Bert Pearlman or Emily Schlesinger know if you want to join this distinguished group and how you can contribute.

Area Representatives in the U.S. are

Bill Wilson --San Diego, CA
Bob Woelfle --Dallas, TX
Jim Lufkin --Minneapolis, MN
George McClure--Orlando, FL
Dan Rosich --NY City, NY
I. M. Berman --Schenectady, NY

E. Giovanetti represents PC in Italy. Ken Bramham sends word from France. Eric Taylor and Robert Winton of our UKRI Chapter have become almost regular correspondents and commentators on the English scene--Bob Winton, indeed, made possible the reprinting in PC's latest Transactions (March, 1978) of Michael Faraday's "Advice to a Lecturer."

Three other PC-ers have asked for assignment to active duty:

Heveraldo Oliveira--Espiritu Santo, Brazil
G. Allan Ledbetter--New Orleans, LA
Peter Welch --San Francisco, CA

We hope that they will consent to become Area Representatives, or at least that they will communicate as free-lance reporters.

PC Reporters

If you're not quite ready to sign up formally as an Area Representative for PC, write an informal note to PC's Newsletter about some personal experience, local event, or professional problem related to communication. Tell us about a book you have read. Or send a copy of an article (with full information about the source) that may interest other technical communicators.

We have already printed a variety of contributions from members in the U.K., France, and Italy, but there are PC-ers in many other European countries, in Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America, and in countries of Central America, to say nothing of those in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada--about 1500 individuals in 40 nations all together.

Surely many of these engineer/communicators could say something about communication on the local scene if he met a fellow PC-er at a conference--or on an airplane. Say it in writing today and send it to PC's Newsletter so that all of us can enjoy it. You will be speaking to friends and associates whose problems and interests are human and professional--as yours are.

*

ENGLISH?

The main problem appears to be the use of a system that due to little use operators are not familiar with it.

*

Views on Dues

The poetic plea for prompt payment printed below is adapted from Editor Ken McCoy's original in the January (1978) STC Tieline, a newsletter for officers and committee chairmen of the Society for Technical Communication. Paul Andrews, whose name begins and apparently inspired the poem, is Office Manager of the Society's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The Muse Reviews Our Need for Dues

Paul Andrews
Membership renews
For each whose valid check for dues
(In envelope to which he glues
A stamp of variegated hues)
Arrives on time him to enthuse.
How loyal are the Chapters' crews!

But soon Andrews
Will not enthuse.
For unpaid dues
He'll put the screws
By extra fee to each recluse
Who would rejoin, but sings the blues--
"About the dues I had no news!"

Some sage advice we have for youse:
He who after March 1 renews
Should reinstatement rules peruse--
The five-buck fee will be guess whose.

Two explanations are given for the U.S. slang equivalent, buck = dollar. The "Eastern version" derives it from the use of deer hides as a medium of exchange between English Colonists and American Indians (17th and 18th centuries). As the skin of a buck was larger and more valuable than that of a doe, a buckskin (= buck, or sometimes, = skin) became the practical trading unit; doeskins took on fractional values and could be used to "make change." When the paper dollar was made the basis of U.S. currency, it seemed merely a smaller, more convenient buck(skin).

The "Western version" derives buck = dollar from cardplayers' cant. The buck is an object placed before a player as a reminder of his turn to deal. Cowboys and prospectors who "opened the West" used a silver dollar as the buck in their poker games so habitually that the two words became synonyms in casual usage.

* * *

Engineering is not merely a "learned" profession. It is also a "learning" profession--a calling whose practitioners must remain students throughout their active careers.

--W. L. Everitt, University of Illinois, in Spectrum, December 1977

Technology and Society

The December, 1977 issue of Technology and Society, quarterly newsletter of the IEEE Committee on The Social Implications of Technology, contains articles that should interest all engineers and all communicators. Frank Kotasek is the editor.

Stephen Unger writes about proposals and Board action related to the IEEE Code of Ethics, and about the complex inter-relations of cryptographic research, personal privacy, computer networks, and military intelligence.

Aaron Ashkinazy reviews the papers presented in two sessions of the ELECTRO '77 Convention in New York City, April 19-21, 1977--the session on solar energy and the session on energy conservation.

A shorter article in the same issue of T&S concerns the suggestion made in 1971 that released criminals might be required to carry transponders by which they could be located through real-time tracking by a computer-radio system and checked for association with later crime.

Another short article relates that an interdisciplinary team of researchers from Purdue University is assembling material on events surrounding the dismissal in 1972 of three engineers from the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) project. The work should be finished this summer. It will make available material for classroom case studies, a general monograph, and scholarly and popular articles.

Once again, individual PC-ers are urged to subscribe to Technology and Society. You should read its important, well-written articles in full, not just know that they have been printed, or glance at a comment or summary. Their subjects concern all technical people, and engineer/communicators do well to be informed about matters of general engineering interest.

Unless you already receive T&S, why not order it now? Send $2 with your Membership Number to the IEEE Service Center, 445 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ, 08854.

Social Responsibility

At the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, on February 21, 1977, Frank von Hippel, of Princeton's Center for Environmental Studies, gave an invited talk on problems involved in scientists'sand engineers' exercising professional freedom of speech and assuming social responsibility. The talk, printed in Technology and Society for June, 1977, is still timely.

Von Hippel points out that although, in general, professional societies are not now organized to intervene in the relationships of professionals with their employers, important action has been taken to protect individuals' rights to speak out against socially questionable work assignments and conditions. He urges that the scientific community use "public interest science" or policy analysis techniques to make organizations accountable for the ways in which they develop, apply, and regulate technology. A few efforts of this sort have already been started.

Von Hippel concludes with the following explanation of "why it is important that scientists and engineers--particularly those in industry and government--be given more freedom of speech than they now possess:

"Technology has become so powerful that we can no longer afford to postpone improving our systems until the problems are evident to the man in the street. There are just too many dangers, and some of them may not reach this level of visibility until it is too late to avert a catastrophe. Furthermore, the longer we wait before we rectify our technological blunders, the more expensive and disruptive the corrective action will be and the greater will be the reluctance of industry and government to make the necessary changes. We will have to settle for expensive, patched-up solutions which we can live with, instead of the cheaper and more elegant technologies which would have designed the problems out. If we could surface and deal with our technological problems earlier, much of the tremendous amounts of intellectual energy which are now expended in the struggles over whether or not to change deployed technologies could be freed for other purposes.

"What I have been talking about is the extension of freedoms which have been essential to the development of basic science to those professionals on whom we depend for the development and regulation of the technologies which science has spawned. The larger society must have free access to the knowledge and insights of these experts, who usually see the problems first and often see the solutions first.

"We have the civil rights movements for racial minorities and the women's liberation movement for our sexual majority. Now we must add to these a movement for the liberation of professionals. Otherwise our society will increasingly be left at the mercy of special interests in a world which contains a rapidly-increasing number of roads to disaster."

Von Hippels's nine-item bibliography cites more than 30 references.

* * * * * * * *

Be Careful

PC-er Robert Winton (he is Secretary/Treasurer of IEEE Region 8) sends the following "awful warning" from London:

A recent event in the UK well illustrates how devastating bad communication can be. To make clear what happened, I must first explain the background.

Every April the Government announces its Budget, which amongst other things sets taxation levels for the following year. In 1977, the Vehicle Licensing Center wished to make clear that if the vehicle license tax were increased, and if application for renewal were made for a license on or after 1 April, then the increased tax would have to be paid, even though the old license did not expire until 31 March.

What the Center did was simple enough. They overprinted the license renewal form "If the rate of tax is changed in the Budget, the new rate must be paid." Many drivers, however, on receiving this form, took it to mean that if they renewed before 31 March and if the tax were increased, they would have to remit a further amount to make up the difference. They therefore deliberately delayed their renewal to avoid the possibility of having to make two payments. In the event, the tax was increased from £25 to £40 ($13 to $21), and those who had delayed were furious when they found out that if they had renewed before 31 March they need have paid only the lower amount.

After prolonged pressure, the Government has finally agreed that those who were misled into delaying their applications have the right to a refund of the difference. There are now advertisements in the national newspapers to inform drivers of this right.

A year's campaign against the Government, followed by a national advertising campaign--all because a single, simple, sentence conveyed the wrong message!

The Fuel Cell

Generating stations powered by fuel cells--direct producers of energy through an electrochemical process--could be operating on a commercial basis in the U.S. by the 1980's.

Much depends on the final research phase--a 4.8-megawatt demonstration plant that is being cofunded by the Electric Power Research Institute, United Technologies Corporation, the Energy Research and Development Administration, and host utility Consolidated Edison Company of New York

The project bears a $42 million price tag which, barring overruns, translates to a whopping $9,000 per kilowatt at a time when even the inflationary cost of fossil-fuel plants is still running in the neighborhood of $500 per kilowatt.

It is hoped that the expensive demonstration plant will itself solve the high-cost factor, a problem that has plagued the fuel cell from its early years in the space program. Success would mean that standard design and accompanying mass production could be counted on to make costs competitive.

Fuel-cell generating stations, which promise to be electrically efficient, compact, and pollutionless (drinkable water and some waste heat are the only by-products), could then be located almost anywhere and still comply with air-quality standards.

Another non-technical problem is the availability of hydrogen which, combined with oxygen, powers the fuel cell. A principal source of hydrogen has been natural gas, but with that fuel becoming less and less available, researchers hope to extract hydrogen from alternate sources, such as coal-derived liquids.

Some scientists predict that huge quantities of this simplest and lightest element will eventually be produced by a thermal process employing nuclear reactors and breeders. The hydrogen will be transported to fuel-cell generating stations or even to fuel-cell homes for conversion into electricity.

--Baltimore Gas and Electric Company FACTS, September, 1977.

Electronic Hearing

A telephone switching technician, George Coles of Illinois Bell Telephone, has devised an ingenious system for permitting the deaf to use the telephone system for communication.

The system takes advantage of the fact that touch-tone phones have three letters on each key. To signify the first of those letters the deaf person presses the button once, to signify the second, he presses the button twice, the third, three times.

Thus, to spell H-E-L-P, for example, the deaf person dials a police station equipped with a special converter and punches out: 4-4, 3-3, 5-5-5, 7. The converter, called Vis-Com, changes the touch-tone beeps into letters on a screen.

In this way the deaf could be connected to fire stations, police stations, hospitals, and other emergency facilities and they could also be connected to the homes of other deaf people.

Since the letters normally on the telephone do not include Q or Z, the Vis-Com system assigns those two letters and the question mark to the operator button. The number "1" button, which contains no letters, is used for end of word, sentence, and message codes.

Before the invention of Vis-Com, deaf people could talk to each other at a distance only by teletype machines costing from $600 to $2500. The Vis-Com unit, on the other hand, will cost only $30.

The system will be distributed (at no profit to the inventor) by the Telephone Pioneers of America, the Bell System's employee service organization, and in non-Bell areas, by the Sertoma Foundation. Manufactured by Bartlett Manufacturing Co. of Oak Grove Village, Illinois, the sets will be sold at cost to the distributors who will request, but not require, a donation from users to help cover the production cost.

--From the Baltimore Sun via Communication News (February 1978), newsletter of the Council of Communication Societies.

Electronic Speaking

You may soon meet people who speak by fingering the keys on a little black box instead of by opening their mouths--people who suffer from cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, or injuries to the head and neck that render them incapable of speaking, or others who have had their larynxes removed (usually because of cancer).

For these inarticulates, Votrax Division of Federal Screw Works in Detroit makes a synthesizer now marketed by HC Electronics, Inc., a subsidiary of The American Hospital Supply Corporation. The new device, Phonic Mirror HandiVoice, is reported able to imitate human speech, produce complete sentences, and pronounce virtually all words in the English language.

HandiVoice uses 45 basic sound elements or phonemes activated through a keyboard and speaker. The electronically simulated human voice sounds deep and a bit nasal but is readily understandable--a talking computer.

The device costs $2000, weighs four pounds, and comes with either of two keyboards: one has numerical codes, the other has words, pictures, and symbols. Deliveries on orders made through referrals from physicians and speech therapists are scheduled to begin in April 1978.

--Adapted from Communication Notes, January 1978 and Wall Street Journal.

Electronic Lifesaver

From Time (unknown issue) via Reader's Digest (March 1978, p. 22) we learned about the Microlert, a radio transmitter roughly the size of a matchbook. The device is worn around the neck by elderly persons or by those who live alone or are subject to such physiological emergencies as a heart attack.

When the battery-powered pendant is squeezed, it sends out a signal that, from as far away as 300 feet, can set off a larger unit containing a tape cassette and player. Plugged into a telephone jack, this larger unit automatically dials a pre-programmed number--of an ambulance service or doctor, for example--and transmits a pre-taped message.

The device is produced and marketed by Microlert Systems International of Burbank, California.

THE RACE IS NOT ALWAYS TO THE SWIFT

Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

--George Orwell's translation (Politics and the English Language, 1946) of Ecclesiastes 9:11.

Take Care

An Associated Press release which appeared in the Richmond (VA) Times-Dispatch on November 17, 1977 reveals that a booklet issued earlier by the State of Missouri and designed to help teachers prepare students for English tests is deficient in spelling and grammar.

The bloopers cited were misspellings of aerosol and two ambiguous sentences:

> Ask students to list ways that the dictionary and the index from his book are alike.
>
> The student will demonstrate the ability to identify and interpret items labeled with consumer vocabulary in selecting its use for a purpose.

An editorial review was begun as soon as these shockers were discovered, but by then over 12,000 copies had been sent to addresses in the U.S. and abroad. Missouri's reputation for preparing students to take its basic English skills test may have become somewhat clouded.

Education ≠ Learning ?

Writing in New Times (April 3, 1978, p. 4), Rob Fleder discusses the sad state of education in New York City's schools. He is particularly disturbed by the functional illiteracy of many instructors and even administrators. The condition reminds him of Mark Twain's comment that education, though not as sudden as massacre, is more deadly in the long run.

According to Fleder, an investigation made last year revealed such sad examples as these in handwritten correspondence from school principals:

"The teacher should move within the children to help them instead of staying on her desk and wait for the children to line them up and correct the work."

"I will like you to accompany this children..."

"Did you notified the main office?"

"Are all your children receaving practice for [the standard test] regarless of the math program in which the mygh be involved."

"The cirriculum that you are providing don't satisfy the needs..."

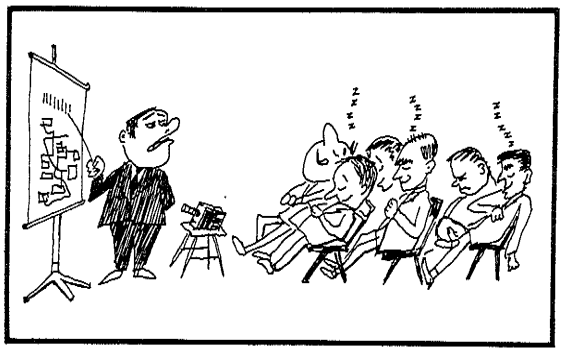
When these and similar deficient specimens of pedagogical prose were brought to the attention of the Chancellor of Schools, he equivocated in jargon--"Among the new supervisors there may be a lesser demonstration of formal academic standards."

Classroom teachers, in such a communicative wasteland, write like this: "It then become a teacher and Parent jobs to teach the children..."

Or, they ask second-graders, "What is the opposite of frog?" and "What is the opposite of apple?"

The opposite of frog is said to be tadpole!

Fleder's article concludes with the thought that although we are still in the dark as to the opposite of apple [orange, perhaps?], we all know that the opposite of education is warehousing.



- Newsletter of Vehicular Technology Group, February 1976

The Toastmaster

Recent issues of The Toastmaster present several suggestions that may help PC-ers who want to polish their communication skills. Some of the ideas concern personal matters, others are more directly professional. Five articles are summarized separately.

Face and Name Are Familiar

In The Toastmaster for November, 1977, Vivian Buchan discussed the problem of remembering personal names and gave four rules for the game of Pinning the Right Names on Faces:

1. Pay attention to what is said when you're introduced to someone. Ask to hear the name again if you can't visualize how to spell it. Repeat the name aloud and use it soon again, in conversation or to make another introduction. Repeat the name to yourself several times before you leave the person.

2. Pay attention to the physiology of those you are introduced to. Is a person tall or short, fat or thin, calm or nervous? What characteristic can help you identify this person when you two meet the next time?

3. Associate the characteristic with an object or action and visualize the person with the object or taking part in the action. For example, you might think of outdoorsy Mr. Knapp wearing a knapsack, Mr. Baldwin carrying a piano, Mrs. Lamb covered with fleecy wool, and so on.

4. Observe people in public places, note a characteristic of each, and assign a name associated with the characteristic--continuous practice in seeing people as individuals.

Innovation

The Information Theory Group is running a series of recreational competitions, No. 4 of which concerns unlikely titles for books or papers. Of the "literal illusions" listed in the March, 1978 issue of the ITG Newsletter, the following may interest PC-ers;

Ode to a Gaussian Urn
An Ergodic Review of Sensual Literature
A Village Smithy's Guide to Forging Markov Chains
--C. Harkins, Troy, NY

The Information Rate of Printed Pig-Latin
Teaching without a Pupil: Pattern Recognition Unvisited
--N. Blachman, London

Feedback Model of Regurgitory Behaviour
Truncation and Round-off in Rhinoplasty
Semi-automata as Models of Bureaucratic Behavior
Entropy, Black Holes, and Athiesm: A Reply to Information, Photosynthesis, and Religion
--J. Rothstein, Columbus, Ohio

An Algorithm for Bandwidth Compression Using Lead Weights
Matrix Inversion Using Roman Numerals
Swimming the Binary Channel
Information Transfer Using Indiscreet Channels
Error-producing Codes
Research on Pole Placement at the University of Warsaw
A Markov Model of Finnegan's Wake
Installing Mufflers on Noisy Channels
Totally Redundant Codes
--D. Pitt and M. Robinson, Urbana, Ill.

Practice Makes Perfect

Writing in The Toastmaster for December, 1977, Richard A. Taylor tells how to "Turn Your 'Agony' into 'Ecstasy.'" He discusses particularly the problem of learning how to speak with little or no preparation, and he argues that you should first have prepared several speeches "by the book."

No doubt any book on speechmaking would help, but in this case, of course, the Toastmasters Manual is mentioned. The agony of speech preparation, apparently, resolves after much practice into the ecstasy of being able to take these steps easily:

1. Narrow the topic.

2. Isolate two or three key points.

3. Think of reasons or facts to support key points.

4. Add an anecdote or illustration.

5. Decide upon the most appropriate mode of organization (general to particular, particular to general, chronological, etc.).

6. Develop an outline from which to speak.

7. Add a catchy opening and an effective conclusion.

Anticipation

Ellen M. Hajek writes in The Toastmaster for November, 1977 about "How to Tune In to (and Turn On!) Your Audience."

"The first few moments of any speaker's presentation are always the most critical ones." she says. "The success or failure of any speech may all depend upon how well the speaker has tuned in to the needs and interests of his audience and, of course, upon how well he has keyed his opening to suit those needs and interests. With a little foresight and planning, tuning in to an audience need not be a problem.

"Learning to analyze an audience and to provide something meaningful to the group is much the same as learning to become a good conversationalist. You must become interested in the members of the audience as if you were about to engage in conversation with them, and they will respond to your remarks as an individual would to dialogue. The speaker's best friend in analyzing a group will be the program chairman or the person who has initial contact with him."

To make the analysis, explore the five W's beforehand, says Ms. Hajek. Then approach your topic and address the audience in accordance with what the five W's have told you:

1. Who is your audience? Ages? Interests? Educational levels?

2. What does your audience expect? Topic? Mood? Length of speech?

3. When will you speak? Special occasion? Response to current event?

4. Where will you be speaking? Crowded room? Cold or hot hall? Noisy surroundings?

5. Why will the group be assembled? Protest? Education? Business? Recreation?

Knowing all this, you will be able to appeal to the interests and attitudes of your hearers. Speak to them as a group and as individuals, using appropriate tone, diction, and level of language for the occasion.

"Give your listeners the same consideration you would give your friends. Tune in to what they need from you, and they'll turn on to what you have to say."

May I Present...

In The Toastmaster for February, 1978, Lily B. Moskal tells how to and how not to introduce speakers. Her article, "It's My Privilege to Introduce--" points out first that a speech of introduction must explain several things: Why this subject, at this time, before this audience, by this speaker?

While answering this four-part question, however, the introduction must also set the stage for speaker and subject--be light for a humorous main speech, less relaxed for a serious lecture.

When you are giving an introduction, says Ms. Moskal, don't borrow ideas from the main speech or pre-view it, and don't talk for more than a very few minutes. Don't say the speaker's name until the very end of your introduction, but be sure to have practiced it aloud and correctly beforehand.

If you speak rightly and enthusiastically, the audience will be eager to have you end your remarks and to see the real speaker come forward. When you are ready to announce his name, look directly at the audience and say the name slowly, clearly, and correctly.

Then turn with a slight bow to the speaker and wait for him at the lectern. When he gets to you, shake his hand and be seated. After the speech, return to the lectern and thank him with a few sincere words of praise and appreciation.

Hard to Take

In The Toastmaster for February, 1978, Yvonne Michie Horn asks, "Are You a Pain in the Neck?" She describes six ways in which people are hard to get along with, tells how to avoid being one of them, and makes suggestions for dealing with such difficult people:

1. The Joker--talkative, eager to please, over-agreeable, promise-you-anything, don't-follow-through. Treatment--respond to the Joker's need for personal attention, then insist gently that you receive a realistic answer.

2. The Non-responder--silent, unhelpful, poker-face, always-a-listener. Treatment--ask for a response and stare expectantly, or set up another appointment.

3. The Complainer--whining, scolding, "always" this, "never" that, "yes, but," happiest when attacking. Treatment--hold a problem-solving stance and stick to the facts, neither agree nor defend yourself.

4. The Indecisive One--procrastinating, fact-gathering, don't-hurt-anyone, don't-be-hasty, afraid-to-be-mistaken. Treatment--don't push, discover the mental conflict, eliminate alternatives, encourage out-loud thinking.

5. The Hostile One--blaming, yelling, sarcastic, over-agressive. Treatment--stand your ground firmly without fighting, express your disagreement calmly, insist on a full hearing.

6. The Expert--knowledgeable, thorough, accurate, devoted to detail, suspicious of criticism. Treatment--ask questions for the Expert to be expert on and let him find out his own errors.

Pointers on Pointing

In Esquire for December, 1977, John Simon writes about punctuation, "the silent partner in the writing, and even in the speaking, of good English." His title, "A Pointed Discussion of Punctuation," contains a play on words (pointed = punctuated) but his article is serious.

Punctuation, says Mr. Simon, makes for basic clarity--"it is a traffic policeman averting chaos in the flow of prose." It can also, he notes, provide shades of meaning as undertones--like a stage director "supplementing the playwright's text with the weight of implication."

Examples of non-standard punctuation are easy to find in current letters, reports, and advertising. Mr. Simon reprints some with appropriately outraged comments:

Letters should begin "Dear Mr. X:" or "Dear Mr. X,"--not "Dear Mr. X;" under any circumstances. Letters in which a semicolon follows the addressee's name are usually not worth reading--"nothing intelligent is likely to be contained therein."

There is food for thought in the fact that where we should be able to "shop 'n' save," buy "quick 'n' easy," and eat "soup 'n' salad," we are urged to "shop 'n save," choose "quick 'n' easy," and enjoy "soup n salad."

"Differentation between "its" and "it's" is fast becoming a lost art," Mr. Simon remarks, pointing out that "knowledge of punctuation does not exist apart from a rudimentary knowledge of grammar." In this case, however, a little knowledge is truly, as poet Alexander Pope said, a dangerous thing.

Knowledgeable punctuators may skip the next long, editorial paragraph:

The apostrophe is used in three ways in English: with nouns and indefinite pronouns to show possession, in contractions to show omission of letters or figures, in the plurals of letters, figures, and words discussed as words. Thus,

the book's cover, the books' covers

The book is on the table
The book's on the table.

The books are on the table.
The books 'r' on the table. (informal speech)

Everybody's job is nobody's business.

You don't know. I'll not say. It's raining.

the Spirit of '76, the 1880's, six h's, two "no's"

BUT--Do not use the apostrophe with the possessive personal pronouns, his, hers, ours, yours, theirs, its. Compare

his hand, its paw
It's simple but confusing.

To support his defense of using and teaching "correct"--i.e., standard--punctuation, Mr. Simon writes,

> Some aspects of punctuation, like some aspects of grammar, have nothing to do with logic and everything to do with consistency. The mind's eye--like the eye's mind--gets used to seeing a certain order; it becomes needlessly dislocated and unnerved by deviations.

He laments that ignorance, like the heart, has its own inscrutable reasons, and exclaims, "Demanding that a student write 'correctly' so as to be readily understood is in danger of becoming illegal!"

Suggestology

Writing in Saturday Review (March 18, 1978, p. 64), Jack Fincher discusses suggestology, or SALT--Suggestive-Accelerative Teaching and Learning.

There is nothing new, he points out, in using the power of suggestion in the classroom--or even in confidence-strengthening sessions with alcoholics and those handicapped by low self-esteem.

What is new, apparently, is the systematic use of the power of suggestion, in a carefully contrived academic setting, reinforced by physical and mental exercise, music, fantasy, guided imagery, and role-playing.

Advocates claim that, by using suggestology, students can master in two weeks the entire content of standard semester courses--absorb it more effectively and remember it longer.

A few schools in California, New Mexico, Texas, Iowa, Kansas and Illinois have experimented with the method. Researchers in Iowa found improved classroom achievement in only a small majority of cases studied, although these aroused much enthusiasm. Teachers must volunteer to use suggestology; once selected, they receive up to 120 hours of special training.

Fincher wonders if the "success" of such a multifaceted approach should be attributed to one or more single aspects or to their combination. He also asks "What about student motivation, teacher dedication, or some critical mass of mutual enthusiasm?"

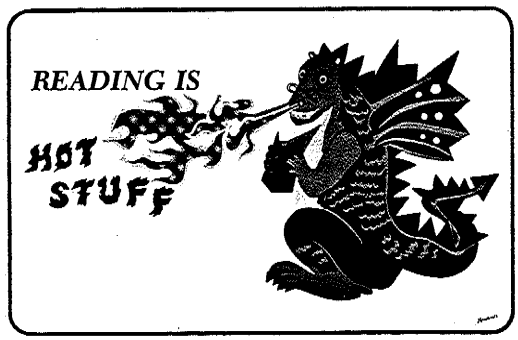
Is suggestology the ultimate antidote or a ritualized truism? Suggestologists cannot yet tease out the vital truths, says Fincher, warning that "Until they can, all their claimssshould be take with a grain of S-A-L-T."

"Oh, the Diffident to Me"

In the "Front Runners" feature of Saturday Review for April 1, 1978, an item headed "Bad Show on Fleet Street" begins as follows (p. 3):

> 'Britain's city desk editors now have official proof of what they've suspected all along--that British schools aren't teaching students the queen's English. Recently, a journalism council tested 572 eighteen-year-old would-be journalists to check on their command of the language. Only one in six passed the test. When asked to use the word "diffident" in a sentence, one hopeful came up with,"Mr. Marx, the leading Soviet diffident, was arrested today." Another produced this sparkler: "The shareholders are angry that the diffident is so low."'

One editor remarked, "A journalist who cannot understand words is like a bricklayer who cannot mix cement." On-the-job teaching of remedial English may be necessary.



If you know that "worm" was an old name for dragons, you will recognize this picture as the likeness of a book-worm. The Arizona State Council of the International Reading Association publishes the yellow, red, and green creature as a poster ($2.25 each). Send orders with payment before July 1 to Dr. Amelia Melnick, Department of Reading, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 85721.

--From Reading Today (March 1978), newsletter of the International Reading Society.

Twins' Talk

The magazine US (February 21, 1978) contains an article by Susan Price-Root about seven-year-old twins, Grace and Virginia Kennedy of San Diego (California), who have a unique and private language of their own. When they speak, no one but they knows what they are saying.

They understand English (their parents' language), German (the language of the grandmother who lives with them), and Spanish (the language of their Hispanic classmates), but they use only the words of their own language. Some of these words seem to be English with various sounds omitted, interchanged, or distorted, but their parents and speech therapists cannot recognize the origin of more than 50% of the girls' vocabulary.

Grace and Virginia appear intelligent and animated. They chatter gaily when together and communicate successfully, it seems, even when they cannot see each other. But for five years, until they were put in separate, special classes, they refused to speak any language but their own.

After several months of speech therapy, however, they have begun to use short English sentences in "conversation" with their parents. The therapists, who can now interpret 50 to 75 percent of the twins' remarks to each other, "hope that the girls won't completely forget their special language just because the outside world doesn't understand it."

Practicum I

In addition to our home-study course and writing workshop, PC offers the two-day Practicum--another opportunity for sharpening communication skills.

PC's Practicum in Communication is something new in continuing education--a learn-by-doing combination of cooperating in interactive exercises and receiving "hands on" instruction. Special activities have been designed by experienced teachers to strengthen the personal and professional talents of engineers and technicians as communicators.

Classes are limited to 15, so that each individual can be advised by professionals, encouraged by his peers, and improved by personal effort. Everyone receives three hours of guided participation in each of four types of communicative activity:

Speaking--in and to a group

Writing/Editing--requesting, drafting, and composing reports; "correcting" one's own reports and those submitted for approval

Interviewing--to apply for a job, fill a position, analyze a function

Meeting--informal and formal introductions, planning, presiding, presenting, participating

Practicum II

PC's Education Committee offers the Practicum in Communication to stimulate interest in writing and speaking as both art and science.

Engineers and technicians are not only objective thinkers and serious problem solvers but also enthusiasts. Sometimes, however, they feel insecure about expressing their ideas in formal reports and presentations.

PC's Practicum in Communication has been carefully planned to counteract such feelings of inadequacy. It increases the confidence of participants in their ability to communicate and improves their knowledge of available techniques.

Practicum III

PC's Practicum in Communication helps technical people "get into" writing and public speaking. It enables them to

--see personal communication as a manageable way of getting ideas carried out,

--understand that communication techniques can be learned,

--concentrate briefly but intensely on these techniques of communication rather than on the facts of the material communicated,

--overcome the feelings of inadequacy and awkwardness that often arise when reports or speeches are called for.

Practicum IV

PC's Practicum in Communication is available for groups of no less than 12 and no more than 60 participants. The cost of enrollment varies from $100 to $150, depending on the number of those in attendance. The course can be given for any sponsoring group that has facilities for meeting and teaching.

To find out how your IEEE Group/Society or Section, your company, department, or other organization can take advantage of this new and unique opportunity, write to

Ron Blicq
Box 181, Station C
Winnipeg, Manitoba
CANADA R3M 3S7

or telephone him at 204/632-2292 (day)
204/452-6480 (evening).

PC's Practicum in Communication is available for groups of no less than 12 and no more than 60 participants. The cost of enrollment varies from $75 to $95, depending on the number of those in attendance. The course can be given for any sponsoring group that has facilities for meeting and teaching.

To find out how your IEEE Group/Society or Section, your company, department, or other organization can take advantage of this unique opportunity, write to

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Daffynitions

Back talk: Football language

Lawsuit: Policeman's uniform

Sawbucks: Carpenter's wages

Confetti: Fly paper

Inexpensive colognes: Common scents

Boy Scouts: The have-knots

Mirror: Looking utensil

Sleet: Slip cover

Gossip column: Happy hinting ground

Masseur: Man who kneads customers

Diplomacy: The art of letting someone have your way

Superlative

Most commonly used words in English	Most beautiful words in English	Worst-sounding words in English
the	chimes	cacophony
of	dawn	crunch
and	golden	flatulent
a	hush	gripe
to	lullaby	jazz
in	luminous	phlegmatic
is	melody	plump
you	mist	plutocrat
that	murmuring	sap
it	tranquil	treachery
hm!	aaah!	yuch!

--From u&lc, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1977

Write Better

Technically--Write!, the Professional Communication Society's Home-Study Course is still being offered. This correspondence course features personal interaction. Students mail completed assignments to individual instructors, who appraise the work and return practical comments. Specific attention and easy-paced teaching help those with undeveloped writing skills to advance from a partial grasp to confident control of communication techniques.

Eleven "packages" cover such topics as occurence and field-trip reports, letter writing, job descriptions, resumés, and technical articles. Students learn how to recognize communications that may be ignored or misinterpreted, and how to write messages that get desired attention and action. The course can be completed in about 3 1/2 months.

IEEE members may enroll for $80 (give membership number); non-IEEE members, for $105. Include $2 for handling and delivery. Send inquiry or check to

IEEE Continuing Education
445 Hoes Lane
Piscataway, NJ 08854

Plan Better

Report Construction, by Mary Fran Buehler, may be obtained from

IEEE--PC
6411 Chillum Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012

Prices are as follows: 1 to 10 copies, $2.00 each; 11 to 25 copies, $1.90 each; 26 or more, $1.75 each. Send check with order; at these prices, we cannot afford to bill.

This is a clear, concise, practical guide--not on how to write, but on how to "build" a structure for conveying technical information.

Talk Better

Guide for Better Technical Presentations, by Robert M. Woelfle, may be obtained from

IEEE Press
345 E. 47th Street
New York, NY 10017

Prices are as follows: Paperbound, $7.95, to IEEE members only; clothbound, $11.95 to IEEE members, $15.95 to others. Send check with order.

This is an excellent collection of reprinted articles about how to present technical material to an audience --planning for effectiveness, perfecting delivery, using visual aids, etc.

Writing Workshop

PC's Workshop, Communication and Report Writing, can be given in the United States or Canada to any group of 20 to 25 persons who request it.

Students work on typical writing problems of scientists, engineers, technicians, and their supervisors. Major topics covered are as follows:

First Day--style, organization, preparation of letters and informal reports.

Second Day--preparation of minutes and formal reports, and, according to demand, problems of editing and formatting, and the writing of such documents as procedures, job descriptions, performance appraisals, and briefing notes.

The textbook is Ron Blicq's Technically--Write! Participants are asked to do pre-workshop reading and writing. During the workshop, they write practice exercises and evaluate sample reports. IEEE members pay $125; non-members, $160. Arrangements may be made by individuals, companies, or IEEE Groups/Societies and Sections. For information, write to

Ron Blicq
Box 181, Station C
Winnipeg, Manitoba
CANADA R3M 3S7

Letter to the Editor

This will suggest to your readers a universal formula for writing letters.

The formula is

First paragraph--State the purpose.

Second paragraph--Deliver the message.

Third paragraph--Add necessary details.

Fourth paragraph--Ask for action.

Letters structured in this way are easy to write, easy to read, brief. The formula works for business and personal correspondence.

Try it.

--C. W. Farr in PC's Newsletter for August 1970. [Note that the letter does exactly what it advises.]

25th ITCC

The 25th International Technical Communication Conference, sponsored by the Society for Technical Communication, will be held at North Park Inn, Dallas, Texas, May 10-13, 1978. More than a hundred speakers, consultants, and sales representatives will present technical papers, discussions, workshops, and exhibits.

The Conference will be organized in four Program Stems: Writing and Editing, Graphics and Production, Management, Development and Education.

Winning entries in the Society's International Art and Publications Competition will be displayed, and such products as binder systems, phototypesetting, training programs, and word-processing equipment will be demonstrated.

Registration for STC members is $80; for non-STC members, $120; for students, $12. The student fee includes neither meals nor the Conference Proceedings. For further information, write to STC, 1010 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC, 20005.

Conference on Ethics

Conference on Engineering Ethics, ed. Jesse Mock, is the 114-page, paperbound, edited-from-tape transcript of a meeting held in Baltimore, May 18-19, 1975, under joint sponsorship of seven American engineering societies--ACS, AICHE, AIMMPE, ASCE, ASME, IEEE and NSPE.

In a scholarly review (Technology and Society for June, 1977) Stephen Unger cited seven references and called Conference "an excellent and concise introduction to engineering ethics...and a source of new ideas and information for those already in the field."

Although the Conference was held three years ago, the transcript of proceedings seems to be still worth reading. PC-ers may obtain it for $3.00 by sending name, address, and IEEE membership number with a request to ASCE, 345 E. 47th Street, New York, NY, 10017 (non-IEEE members should send $6.00).

Computer Programs

The Education Group of IEEE is sponsoring an Educational Software Directory. This book will list all available computer programs that pertain to electrical engineering education. In order to be listed, the program must be

* written in a "standard" high-level language such as ANSI FORTRAN,

* available within a reasonable time either free or at a charge to anyone who requests it, and

* of interest to electrical engineering educators and/or students.

As a preliminary to compiling this directory, the sponsors want to hear from anyone who would like to have a program listed. Please put on one page a short description of the program, including length, media availability, and a statement as to conformance with the three criteria listed above, and send this information to

Dr. E. Della Torre
Department of Electrical Engineering
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4L7

IEEE Dictionary

The Second Edition of the IEEE Standard Dictionary of Electrical and Electronics Terms is now available at the special introductory prices of $22.45 for IEEE members and $24.95 for non-members (1/3 off the list price, $33.75/$37.50, which will be charged after June 30, 1978).

Pertinent statistics:

20,254	definitions
896	pages
10,000	acronyms
7,000	new terms (i.e., added or revised since the 1972 edition)

Included are such helps as cross-indexing, coding of source and field of first usage, identification of preferred usage, and explanatory notes.

To order, send price plus $2.00 for shipping (plus membership number if applicable) to IEEE Service Center, 445 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ, 08854.

Typing Guide

A helpful brochure, Typing Guide for Mathematical Expressions, by Barbara A. Simmons, is now available as a working tool for authors, editors, and manuscript typists. This Guide shows preferred spatial relationships among the elements of mathematical expressions and equations. Superscripts, subscripts, summations, products, integral and radical signs, matrices, determinants, and ellipses in a mathematical series--all are discussed and illustrated. The 31-page Guide also has a chart of horizontal and vertical spacing in equations and a bibliography. Send $2 to Society for Technical Communication, 1010 Vermont Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20005.

Degree in Electronics

If you have wanted to earn a degree in Electronics but can't fit professional or personal plans to a classroom schedule there is a way.

An Associate in Specialized Technology Degree (AST) in Electronics Technology through independent study is now available. There is no need to attend classes--study schedule and pace depend on the individual. At the end of each semester the student sits for proctored exams, given at any selected convenient location. And, for those without equivalent documentable, practical experience in Electronics there is a 2-week lab residency session at Lafayette College, Easton, Pa., which rounds out the program.

The Electronics Technology Program is in a 2-year, 4-semester degree format. It has been designed to provide men and women with the theoretical and practical knowledge required for careers in Electronics Technology. The balanced curriculum includes studies in mathematics, physical science, circuitry and electronics, together with related instruction in applied communication skills and elementary computer programming.

Emphasis is on practical applications. Test instruments provided include an oscilloscope and VOM. A digital-logic trainer, and other learning aids are also supplied for hands-on experiments.

Graduates will have the academic training necessary to understand and operate various types of electrical and electronic measuring equipment, perform tests, act as a troubleshooter, and do calculations on communications, digital and other types of electronic equipment; and assist design and development engineers in test setup and in prototype and production tests.

Typical entry-level positions for which the graduates will be academically qualified include: Electronics Technician, Development-Instrumentation Technician, Electronics Communications Technician, Computer Laboratory Technician, Electronics Research Technician, Engineering Aid, and Field and Customer Service Engineer.

The Electronics program is offered by Intext, Inc. of Scranton, Pennsylvania, through its Center for Degree Studies which is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

For further information, request Electronics Technology AST Brochure, from Center for Degree Studies. Oak St., Scranton, PA 18515, or telephone (717) 342-7701.

Films

R. R. Bowker (New York) has published the Educational Film Locator, a catalog which lists and describes all the films held by 50 member institutions of the Consortium of University Film Centers. Consortium members share films with each other and rent to others.

In the Locator, 45,000 films are arranged alphabetically by title, with annotation and complete bibliographic information. Titles are cross-referenced from alternative titles, earlier titles, or other versions of the film.

The price is $45.00, or ask at your library.

Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass.

--Paul J. Meyer, founder and president of Success Motivation Institute, a personal development organization with headquarters in Waco, TX.
