

## REFLECTIONS ON IPCC/SIGDOC 2000

BY JOAN NAGLE

### Keynote Address

**Walter Bender**, interim executive director of the MIT Media Lab, presented the keynote address. A few attendees thought that Media Lab work is pretty far removed from what PCS and SIGDOC members do, but it can be said that, in some way, some of what's going on there is likely to affect the lives of all of us.

Herewith assorted quotes in support of that hypothesis:

- Life is more questions than answers, more about exploration than destinations.

- One of the Media Lab employees is a full-time composer of operas. That's what he does. Think about it: Opera is the ultimate in multimedia experience.

- "200 000 acres of farmland": Even if I, as a native speaker of English, know the meaning of each of the words here, the phrase has no meaning to me. What does "200 000 acres" look like or compare to? Is that the size of Cambridge, Massachusetts, or the state of Rhode Island?

- Studies in *granularity* have led to "rearchitected" news programs. We're commingling those things machines

can do well (computation) with things people do well; for instance, a series of experts annotating text. Some of this has led to the news industry's thinking a little differently about what it does.

- The reason the Web took off boils down to the fact that it reveals the structure of content as well as the content itself.
- "The truth well told" is the corporate motto of McCann-Ericson, one of our corporate sponsors. That *well told* part is what we're about.

Well, it's what we're about too, isn't it?

### Curmudgeon's Corner\* Revisited (a.k.a. Issues in Teamwork, Session 1)

When I attended my first IPCC, in 1985 I think, I had no idea what those people were talking about. When I attended what is likely to be my last, this year, again I hadn't a clue. How did it happen that in the intervening 15 years I got smart enough and productive enough to earn a Third Millennium Medal?

I guess the answer is that this field is an incredibly fast-moving train, and I was lucky to catch a ride on it for a time. Then when I hopped off at a station called Retirement, it went on without me. As it should!

But some things never change. In this session, **Luc Chamberland** of IBM Canada (a writer who has miraculously transmogrified into a product development manager) talked about the writer's role, in the context of the development team. "What do

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Walter Bender

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\* Joan provided the Curmudgeon's Corner column for this Newsletter from January 1990 through September 1997.

FROM THE EDITOR



RUDY JOENK

Letter to the Editor

Ron Blicq's "Guidelines..." (September/October, pp. 23-26) is an impressive piece of opinion research, but I believe he's barking up the wrong branch of the rhetorical tree, for two reasons:

First, setting standards, or even guidelines, does not contribute to progress in or increased comprehension of a language. Witness the case of French, in which rigid standards set by an academic committee appointed by the government arguably helped trigger the demise of French as an international language. It is lack of standards that helped push English onto the center stage; Bill Bryson has explored the matter well in *The Mother Tongue* (Morrow, 1990).

Second, spelling is not a principal issue. Moreover, opinion on spelling varies far more than Blicq's compilations suggest. For instance, the current 10th edition of the *Oxford Concise English Dictionary* (desk edition) lists "recognize" (with a z) as first choice, and "-ise" as second. But leading U.K. publications, including *The Economist* and *The Times*, ignore that choice and use "-ise" only. An "s" instead of a "z," or the other way round, does not dilute comprehension and arguably slows reading only slightly.

No; spelling is appearance, like the color of a car. Besides, you can quickly change it with a spell checker. Variations in vocabulary and syntax comprise the real differences between the conventions of the major English-speaking countries.

— *Michael Brady*  
*Asker, Norway*

The author replies:

On reading Michael Brady's comments, my immediate reaction was to say: "True; I agree." However, on reflection, I have to remember that INTECOM's reason for developing guidelines is to help technical writers who normally write in another language but for international documentation have to write in English. The variances that occur confuse them and they are asking for help. They are not looking for standards (that's a "given"), but they do want some guidelines so they can make informed decisions. In the very situation that Brady describes (the British -ise/-ize choice), they have neither the background nor the range of information to make what they feel will be the correct decision. We plan to offer suggestions so they will feel more confident when they have to make a choice.

— *Ron Blicq*  
*Winnipeg, Canada*

Instant Fame!

Six volunteer reporters and photographers at IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 are hereby granted heaps of Instant Fame for their work that appeared in the previous *Newsletter* (about the awards presented at the conference) and in this issue about many of the individual presentations: George Hayhoe, Miki Magyar, Luke Maki, Terrance Malkinson, Joan Nagle, and Muriel Zimmerman. Maybe it will be your turn next year. We'd like to be able to report on even more of the presentations.

AdCom

The first Administrative Committee meeting of 2001 will be experimental sessions

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COMMUNICATION  
SOCIETY

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



GEORGE HAYHOE

## PURSuing OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

It has been nearly a year since the Professional Communication Society began work on a five-year strategic plan. At our meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, last September the PCS Administrative Committee approved an implementation schedule for the strategic plan that defines when we will work on the strategies, programs, and activities that we approved at our meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, last May.

I'd like to review with you some of the items that we have already undertaken and others that we are due to implement in the coming year.

### Build Awareness of PCS

During the past year we've devoted a lot of our energy to making PCS more visible in both the engineering and the professional technical communication communities. We've sent our booth and copies of our publications to a number of conferences, and members attending those conferences talked to large numbers of potential members who stopped by our booth. At one conference, we received 35 completed membership forms with payment from attendees who were impressed with what they had learned about PCS and its activities.

Along with the other societies in Division VI, we hosted a hospitality suite at the IEEE Professional Development Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, last September and offered a free one-year PCS membership to all GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) members who wanted to add our society to their IEEE membership.

We have also advertised extensively in the publications of the Society for Technical Communication and we plan to undertake an advertising blitz about our organization in the newsletters of other IEEE organizations during the year ahead.

Perhaps most important, we commissioned a new PCS logo, which debuted at our conference in Cambridge. This logo is the focal point of our new graphic identity and is featured in the revised PCS brochure. It will also be incorporated into our *Newsletter*, our *Transactions*, and our Web site during 2001.

### Develop Membership

One of the major focuses of our strategic plan is to build our membership, which has been declining in recent years. An important foundation for future membership development is to determine the most significant benefits of membership in PCS for engineers and professional communicators and then to compare the benefits to those of similar organizations. With that information in hand we can determine the competitive advantage of membership in PCS.

Another strategic activity on our agenda this year is to identify trends in the field of technical communication, identify how those trends fit with our society's objectives and strengths, and then integrate those trends with our strengths. We anticipate that the results will include feature articles in our publications and in special program stems or streams at our and other conferences.

Furthermore, we are aware that we need to account for the steady decline in membership over the past five years. We need to know why members decide—or decide not—to renew their PCS membership. We also need to know what others outside PCS, whether IEEE members or not, think about our society.

To this end, we will survey or interview a sample of current and former members of PCS, members of other IEEE societies, IEEE members not joining a society, and others outside IEEE. On the basis of the data we collect, we will be able to address

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*Major focuses are to increase membership and strengthen finances.*

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*At one conference  
we received 35 paid  
membership applications.*

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problems and capitalize on our strengths in getting out the word about PCS.

**Increase Financial Stability**

In recent years PCS revenues have come primarily from membership fees, sales of our publications, registration fees for our conferences, and income from our long-term investments. Because our funding sources are so limited, we are particularly vulnerable to shortfalls that could result from a bad year in the stock market, a smaller-than-anticipated conference surplus, or changes in the way the IEEE allocates income from its periodical and conference-record sales programs.

To address these problems we will examine both current and potential revenue streams, as well as the costs of producing such income. The next step will be to identify vendors who will enable us to deliver high quality products at the lowest possible prices. We will also establish rational unit pricing for current and potential products.

As a result we should be able to budget with greater confidence in the accuracy of the income and expenses that we project.

**Beyond 2001**

Although this is an ambitious set of tasks for the year ahead, I am confident that we will be able to complete them all. It's important to realize, however, that the entire strategic plan will not be executed until 2005. And in pursuing this strategic direction, we should not assume that once all these tasks are completed, we are finished with strategic planning. Indeed, such planning is a continual process, and even this plan is a "living organism" that will need to be adjusted continually over the next five years.

The important point is that we have a plan, we have started to execute it, and we are aware of the need to adjust that plan in response to future reality. Follow our activity at <http://www.ieee pcs.org/plan.htm>.

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## PCS MEMBERS ELEVATED TO SENIOR STATUS

Congratulations to these Professional Communication Society members who achieved IEEE Senior Member status in 2000:

**REGIONS 1-6 (U.S.)**

Joseph H. Bellefueille  
David C. Leonard  
Bernadette C. Longo  
Larry J. Paden

**REGION 8**

Sorin Hurdubetiu (Romania)

**REGION 9**

Evaristo A. Santos (Panama)

If you have 10 years or more of professional communication experience you can apply for IEEE Senior Member status. The forms are available on the Web: <http://www.ieee.org/organizations/rab/md/smforms.htm>. For more information or help in completing the forms contact (PCS) [marj.davis@ieee.org](mailto:marj.davis@ieee.org).

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Why English presents problems in learning:

- I shed a tear when I saw the tear in my clothes.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?
- I spent last evening evening out a pile of dirt.
- A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.

## GOOD INTENT, POOR OUTCOME



JEAN-LUC DOUMONT

## HOW BORING!

Life is full of surprises...and so are engineers. Just when clichés would make you believe they are the most boring communicators in the world, engineers turn out to resist elementary principles of consistent writing, precisely on the argument that *creative variety* is the way to keep readers interested. Who would have thought that of them?

In essence, consistent writing simply recognizes the fact that we, human beings, derive meaning from similarity and difference. Intuitively, whatever looks the same is the same. Conversely, any difference carries potential meaning. Meaningless differences waste our mental processing power at best and mislead us at worst.

Consistency issues in written documents commonly affect both the semantics and the syntax of both the verbal and the non-verbal components (inasmuch as one can define graphical semantics and syntax). All of them have already been challenged by clients or participants of my training programs (not all of whom are engineers), who argue for more creativity in written documents.

Professional communicators, by contrast, know the importance of always using the same term to designate the same thing (and, as a corollary, of using different terms to designate different things)—an issue of verbal semantics. If a document is first called a “report,” they consistently refer to it afterwards as a “report,” not as a “memo” or a “note,” lest readers wonder whether they mean the same document.

Careful writers worry equally much about consistent syntax, for example in bullet lists. They show that items in a list belong together by expressing them all in the same grammatical form: all noun phrases, all adjectives, all sentence fragments, etc. and, of course, all a grammatically correct continuation of the introductory phrase, if any.

“How boring!” And I sometimes hear: “Varying the style makes the list so much more interesting for the reader.” Does it?

Algebraic analogies show how consistency favors readability. How would you feel about designating a given entity with different symbols within the same text, such as  $a$  in one equation and  $b$  in another? Or how about writing the terms of a summation in different ways for the sake of variety, as in  $3ax + 5ya + za$ ? Does it communicate better than  $3ax + 5ay + 7az$ ?

The fear of being boring, of course, is a legitimate but largely separate issue. It raises two comments:

- First, creative variety can hardly rescue boring content. Stylistic effects may get some readers interested by drawing attention onto themselves, but they cannot turn uninteresting content into interesting content.
- Second, consistent vocabulary and grammatical constructs, when applied thoughtlessly, may indeed lead to boring prose because of introducing needless repetition. Fortunately, language provides means to avoid such repetition, for example, pronouns—in some sense the equivalent of  $a(3x + 5y + 7z)$ .

Because nonverbal displays, such as a page layout, are much more intuitive than verbal constructs, resistance to consistency is typically less frequent or less pronounced. Still, I see many thoughtless uses of colors; for example, to decorate, not communicate. (“Why did you set this word in blue?” “Well, I thought it looked pretty.”)

Not all variety is ineffective, of course. Using a synonym may just be the way to clarify or enrich a concept by presenting a different view of it. But this variety is about being clear, not about being original.

*Dr. Jean-luc Doumont teaches and provides advice on professional speaking, writing, and graphing. Over the last 15 years he has helped audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and nationalities structure their thoughts and construct their communication (<http://www.JLConsulting.be>).*

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*Meaningless differences waste our mental processing power at best and mislead us at worst.*

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*Consistency is a  
characteristic of  
good lists.*

## GRAMMATICAL PARALLELISM IN LISTS

**D**aunting topic? Actually, it's quite simple to deal with, and it's one of the Professor's pet peeves, so stay with us here.

We technical writers are quite fond of using lists. We use them to present a series of items more clearly than in a sentence. Lists also help break up text on a page and show some much-valued white space.

There are rules for using lists, however. You can't just take a sentence that has too many commas in it and turn it into a list by splitting it at the commas. A list is:

*An item-by-item printed or written series of things of a specified nature or category, often arranged in a particular order.*

Let's take a look at the part of the definition that says "of a specified nature or category." In our writing, we specify the nature or category either explicitly or implicitly by providing a lead-in to the list. Consider the following example:

You can use any of these graphic file types:

- Encapsulated Postscript (EPS)
- Graphics interchange (GIF)
- Targa (TGA)
- Tagged image file format (TIF)

What we have here is a nicely constructed list of parallel items. The lead-in sentence gives the category (graphic file types) and the items in the list are all of an expected, similar form.

Now consider the type of list that makes the Professor's fuzzy gray head spin:

If the name of the new file duplicates that of an existing file, you can:

- Specify the REPLACE option to replace the existing file.
- Give the file a new name (RENAME option).
- By indicating IGNORE, stop processing the file.

Whew! OK, now that the room is stationary again, let's address what's wrong with this list. First, the lead-in sentence leaves us hanging: It's not a complete sentence and

it expects the list items to complete its thought. That is acceptable in some situations, but it isn't implemented properly here. Another problem with this lead-in is that it gives us an indication that we've got actions to choose from, but the actions aren't all that clear from the list.

And worst of all, the list items do not show any kind of *consistency*. The first two items start with the imperative (good), the third item starts with a prepositional phrase and hides the imperative (bad). There's some indication that we're being told about options available to us but the hodgepodge method of presenting them confuses us as to what to do with this information (not to mention the potential for poor retrievability should we ever want to find this information again).

Here is a much better way to present the information in the previous example:

If the name of the new file duplicates that of an existing file, specify an option:

- REPLACE to replace the existing file
- RENAME to give the existing file a new name
- IGNORE to stop processing the new file

Ah yes, the Professor feels much calmer after reading that list.

We urge you to be scrupulous in your use of lists:

- Ensure that all list items are grammatically parallel: If one item starts with a verb, they should all start with a verb; if one item is a complete sentence, they should all be complete sentences.
- Provide a clear and specific lead-in sentence. If you know what the purpose of the list is, this should be easy to do. If you're listing items that don't really belong together, you'll have a hard time writing a proper lead-in. Let this be a clue to try a different structure.
- When writing a lead-in sentence that presents a condition (such as *if*), specify whether the list items are mutually exclusive (*or*) or inclusive (*and*).

- Use unordered lists to present items of the same category or nature; do not try to combine unlike items in the same list. This should be simple if you follow the first two rules.

*Copyright 1995 by IBM Corporation. Used with permission. Professor Grammar is an advisor to the IBM Santa Teresa Laboratory*

*Editing Council. Each month she sends a lesson to the technical writers at the Laboratory. The Council recently authored the Prentice-Hall book Developing Quality Technical Information: A Handbook for Writers and Editors. Many of the Professor's lessons are based on tenets described in this Handbook.*

## FROM THE EDITOR

*(continued from page 2)*

online in late January and early February. The second meeting will be 27-28 April in Troy, New York, and the third will be 27-28 October in Santa Fe, New Mexico, just after IPCC 01. PCS members will be welcome at the face-to-face meetings.

### Potpourri

*Broker with a sense of humor:* Phone +1 800 888 3999 for National Discount Brokers and listen carefully to the seventh recorded choice; then press 7. Claire Martin in *The Denver Post*.

*Back to school:* Has anyone ever said that you should be a doctor because of your bad handwriting? A 1999 study by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences said that illegible writing on prescriptions contributed to about one-fourth of the 98 000 deaths the previous year due to medical errors, so several medical organizations are now running handwriting classes and seminars for their staffs. Jacqueline Urgo, Knight Ridder News Service.

*Slightly late:* What do you call Santa's helpers? Subordinate Clauses. The Internet.

*B.C.* (by Johnny Hart) characterizes "free gift" as the ultimate redundancy.

### Information for Authors

One thousand words makes a nice page-and-a-half article, though longer and shorter articles may be appropriate.

Proposals for periodic columns are also welcome.

If you use a wp program, **keep your formatting simple**; multiple fonts and sizes, customized paragraphing and line spacing, personalized styles, etc. have to be filtered out before being recoded in *Newsletter* style. Headers, footers, and tables lead the casualty list. **Embed only enough specialized formatting and highlighting (bold-face, italics, bullets) to show me your preferences.**

If you borrow text—more than a fair-use sentence or two—from previously published material, you are responsible for obtaining written permission for its use. Ditto for graphics. Always give credit to the author or artist.

The *Newsletter* issues on our Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/pub.html>) can be used as examples.

I prefer to receive articles by e-mail; most WordPerfect, MS Word, RTF, and ASCII files are acceptable. My addresses are in the boilerplate at the bottom of page 2.

### Deadlines

The 15th day of each odd-numbered month is the deadline for publication in the succeeding odd-numbered month. For example, the deadline is 15 March for the May/June issue, 15 May for the July/August issue, etc. You won't be far off (and never late) if you observe the Ides of March, May, July, and so on.

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*Keep your  
formatting simple!*

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE

# HOW TO BRIGHTEN YOUR STYLE



PETER REIMOLD AND  
CHERYL REIMOLD

## Part 1: Word Choice

One of the questions we are most frequently asked is, “How can I simplify my style without making it boring or grade-school level writing?” In this new series of columns we offer suggestions to brighten your style, beginning with the atom of language: the *word*.

### What Makes a Good Word?

Here are some features of a strong word:

**Necessity** adds new, useful information as concisely as possible. (*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?* vs. *Would it be advantageous and appropriate to attempt a comparison between the object of my attentions and a salubrious estival quotidian period?*)

**Immediacy** instantly transmits the picture, action, or idea in the writer’s mind. (*To be, or not to be; that is the question* vs. *The problem of pursuing continued if somewhat undesirable existence or, by contrast, endorsing the imminent possibility of concluding that existence remains the issue to be considered.*)

**Honesty** doesn’t hide meanings or try to sound impressive. (*Help!* vs. *Immediate succor would be inestimably appreciated.*)

**Sound appeal** makes words easy and pleasant to say and forms a rhythm with other words around it. (*A thing of beauty is a joy forever* vs. *An object of considerable aesthetic qualities may be said to elicit satisfaction for an immeasurable period.*)

### The Criteria Applied

Using these criteria we can quickly change some unattractive, hard-to-read statements into pieces of good writing. For instance, consider this original statement:

The data presented in Table 2 clearly show the nondependence of the optimum sulfidity on the chemical concentration of the liquor.

Let’s see if any words here violate the principles of necessity, immediacy, honesty, and sound appeal. *Necessity*: Is every word here necessary? Does it add new, useful information? Two jump out for dismissal:

*presented* and *clearly*. They add nothing valuable. Result:

The data in Table 2 show the nondependence of the optimum sulfidity on the chemical concentration of the liquor.

*Immediacy*: Does each word present an immediate picture, action, or idea, or do we have to translate it into other words to get the message? *Nondependence* fails that test. You can’t see a nondependence. Yet the previous words (“The data in Table 2 show...”) point toward an event or action; the data must show something happening. To get the message, we have to translate the negative, abstract word *nondependence* into a positive statement of an action. What do the data show?

The data in Table 2 show that optimum sulfidity does not depend on the chemical concentration of the liquor.

Now we get the picture immediately. The sentence works; we can move on. Let’s look at another statement:

To mitigate these incipient problems, a misguided effort by the production improvement team resulted in certain precipitate remedial actions.

Whew! This sentence has an almost total lack of immediacy, honesty, and sound appeal. We do not get the message immediately. To approach it, we have to remove at least four words (*mitigate*, *incipient*, *precipitate*, and *remedial*) or translate them into expressions with clear meanings. These words do not feel honest. They are long, rarely used words that suggest a pompous screen behind which the writer is trying to hide his message. Finally, they sound terrible; we can hardly say them.

Once we refuse to use these words, the sentence changes. It turns into something like this:

In its efforts to solve these problems, the production improvement team took some rash actions.

Try applying these four principles to the words you write. Are all the words in your document *necessary*? Do they *immediately*

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*Strong words are rooted in necessity, immediacy, honesty, and sound appeal.*

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## NET NOTES



ELIZABETH MOELLER

## So, How Does That Web Site Work?

During the past year I've written about what the user sees in the browser and how to design for that. It's time to look behind the scenes to see how things work on the server side. Since this topic is covered in literally hundreds of books, I'm simply providing a brief overview, just enough to give you an idea of what goes into creating the interactivity of a Web site. There are varying levels of interactivity: static pages, form interpretation, creation on the fly, and total enterprise solutions.

### Static Pages

Within a Web site, static pages are defined as those with content hard-coded in an HTML document. This type of page accounts for a majority of what is seen on the Web. Such pages are created using straight HTML and are interpreted by your Web browser (e.g., Netscape or Internet Explorer). Content on this type of page changes when the Webmaster goes in and types new content into the HTML document. With so many HTML editors available, such as FrontPage, Dreamweaver, and Homesite, this is not a difficult or time-consuming task.

Within a static page, you often find dynamic elements such as a pop-up window, buttons that change when moused over, or the current time and date. These dynamic elements are created using a scripting language such as Java applets (little programs) or Javascript or JScript that are interpreted by the browser for the desired effect.

### Form Interpretation

The next level of interactivity is form interpretation. What happens when you click that Submit button? Once a user fills in all the fields and clicks the Submit button, some form of script takes over. This is usually a common gateway interface (CGI) script done in Perl or an active server page (ASP) done in ActiveX. The script takes the data, translates it to something usable,

and can do many things. Sometimes the data are e-mailed, sometimes the data are stored in a file for later use, and sometimes a new Web page is returned to the user based on the information entered. If a user is entering information on a secure Web page, the data are encrypted before traveling over the Internet from the user's computer to the server.

### On-the-Fly Creation

Creating Web pages on the fly is a very user-friendly level of interactivity. This type of page is created based on user requests, needs, or preferences. A great example is the Dell Computer product configurator ([http://www.dell.com/html/us/segments/bsd/choose\\_dimen\\_4100.htm](http://www.dell.com/html/us/segments/bsd/choose_dimen_4100.htm)). On that page users start with a base-model computer and then add or remove options until they have their ideal computer system. When they click the Configure This System button, they are given an updated price and a chance to order the system.

Other examples require users to log in to a Web site for their preferences to take effect. For example, a client of mine provides a lot of customer-specific, confidential data to their customers. When customers log in, they are provided with a list of their specific information and any global options they can view based on the service contract they have signed. These pages are generated based on the customer login ID and preferences that have been set by the Webmaster. Web sites created on the fly like these are most often done in Perl, Javascript, or ASP.

### Enterprise Solutions

This is the ultimate level of Web-site interactivity and back-end programming. "Enterprise solutions" is one of the latest buzzwords in the Web industry. It essentially is a complete customer management, inventory control, and online shopping system that often uses cookies (small data packets stored on the user's computer) to

*(continued on page 11)*

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*Web designers  
may need widely  
different skills.*

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## AUDIENCE QUEST



VICKI HILL

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*“A writer who has studied and thought most deeply about a subject... is likely to have the most interesting things to say about it.”*

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## WRITE THE WORK WELL

In these columns I explore audience reactions to a variety of written works. I've analyzed why a writer's appeal to audiences seemed successful or unsuccessful, and then drawn some conclusions about productive things that writers can do to attract audiences. I've frequently advised “jazzing up” pieces with imagery and structural clues, as Web and magazine designers do. In the preceding column I analyzed a magazine piece that led me to some conclusions about how true and serious information can be conveyed with power and relevance. A couple's search for an apartment in old New York a hundred years ago, described in a novel, seemed as fresh and real as today's Lifestyle section of the newspaper. This column continues in the same direction. I happened across a thought-provoking examination of Proust's paradoxical appeal to today's readers and then went back to a basic, but very useful, definition of “theme” to help me figure out Proust's appeal and what it all has to do with us.

**Illustrative Tale 6**

According to Sven Birkerts (“Master of Reveries: Why Proust? And why now?” *Atlantic Unbound*, 7 September 2000 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/crosscurrents/cc2000-09-07.htm>), there seems to be a “Proust boomlet,” and that's paradoxical. As Birkerts asks, “What strange counterintuitive flowerings of sensibility the times encourage—that the master of reverie should be finding new readers in this era of hurtling signals?” I thought vaguely of my own pleasant impressions of Proustian magic (enchanting Jeremy Irons movie, nineteenth-century French art and culture), but then focused on the words “Why Proust? And why now?”

That's what these Audience Quest columns are all about: Why do readers respond to a piece of writing? And what can we learn from their responses for our own writing?

Birkerts begins with all the obvious reasons, such as short attention spans and information overload, that Marcel Proust, the famous author of *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927), should logically not be attracting modern-day readers. But then Birkerts zeroes

in on his analysis of why Proust and why now. Among the reasons discussed for the boomlet are nostalgia for a vanished leisurely age and the current obsession with relationships and memoirs. There is a fascinating comparison of Proust's work to Everest: Many readers have conquered it, it may take a long time, it is still there to be conquered. A good observation, but something more was needed, and for me that something more was supplied by the following definition, really a small discourse on the topic of the theme of a work:

“The theme of a work is likely to involve the writer's view about society, nature, or some other system of relationships. A writer who has studied and thought most deeply about a subject and who has felt it most intensely is likely to have the most interesting things to say about it. Even if your wish to communicate a theme is the reason you start writing, your job is to write the work well. Don't push the theme; it will get in” (*Creative Writer's Handbook*, 2nd ed., Philip K. Jason and Allan B. Lefcowitz, United States Naval Academy, 1994, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ).

Most people with even a passing knowledge of Proust know that he not only thought deeply about time and the past but also devoted his entire life to exploring his society and the significance and reality of time in his own life. His thoughts and actions are recorded in detail in a stream-of-consciousness style. Despite the length of his world-famous novel, despite the remoteness of his time and lifestyle, his theme emerges, and has persisted, and calls out to readers, even today. Without precalculated formulas for appealing to readers, Proust communicated his themes across barriers of time, place, sensibility, background, language, and many other barriers that could be mentioned. Proust wrote intensely and persistently, memorializing his views about his society and relationships. And most important, he wrote the work well.

A primary preoccupation of writers is often the search for a theme that will appeal to readers. Maybe a helpful watchword is WWPD (What would Proust do?). The way I translate this is: Keep at it, keep writing, stay on subjects that have deep significance for you. Like Proust, if you write the work well, your themes needn't be forced or precalculated. Your themes will emerge because you are concentrating on the

essence of your message, and because of your intensity and persistence.

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*software life-cycle processes, and telecommunications applications. Special interests include the presentation of complex technical information, the magazine scene, biographies, films, and Web surfing.*

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

*(continued from page 8)*

transmit pictures or events? Are they *honest* and unpretentious? Do they *sound good* when you say them aloud? If so, you have made a good choice of words.

Next time we'll see how to put them together.

*Cheryl and Peter Reimold (telephone +1 914 725 1024, e-mail perccom@aol.com) have taught communication skills to engineers, scientists, and businesspeople for 18 years. Visit their new educational web site at <http://www.allaboutcommunication.com>.*

## NET NOTES

*(continued from page 9)*

identify users when they arrive at the site. Users who have chosen to turn off cookie access must log in every time they arrive at the site. An example of this type of site is Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com>).

When I arrive at Amazon.com, the first thing I see is "Hello, Beth" and then a list of book recommendations based on previous purchases. It's somewhat entertaining to see what they recommend each time because I purchase computer and Web-site design books for my business, novels and nonfiction works for myself and as gifts, and picture books for my three-year-old son.

What is nice about these systems is that they are tied to the company's inventory control system, which is especially useful for a company like eToys (<http://www.etoys.com>) or Toys "Я" Us (<http://www.toysrus.com>) during the holiday season. Amazon estimates shipping dates instead of providing stock availability. Either way, this gives the user a chance to back out of a purchase if the item will not be available in time.

On another level, Lands' End has introduced its virtual model (<http://www.landsend.com>). You enter your body measurements, hair color, eye color, face shape, and other identifying features to help create a model of yourself. Then Lands' End gives you the ability to try their clothes on

your model—a chance to try before you buy without actually being there.

The back-end programming for these systems is all custom work, often done with a combination of tools and programming languages.

### Summary

When you take a look at the amount of work done in back-end systems, you can see how people with widely different skills can call themselves Web designers. Static pages are easy to create, and programs like FrontPage and Dreamweaver often provide options for users to include some dynamic elements without any programming. Form interpretation and creation on the fly require some programming skills, but still can be completed by smaller firms. Enterprise solutions require a whole team of programmers and developers to keep the site current and in good working order.

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*The level of programming determines the level of interactivity of a Web site.*

## MASTERS OF STYLE



RONALD J. NELSON

## DIXIELAND FOR THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR

As style comes in many forms, so masters of style deliver in many media. Among the possibilities that document masters' work—writing, sculpting, dancing, painting, creating music—jazz can be, well, instrumental in assisting professional communicators to assimilate stylistic principles. In particular, Dixieland jazz (or just Dixieland) can do so in an especially rewarding way. Purists distinguish between “New Orleans jazz” or “traditional jazz” and Dixieland, the latter sometimes being regarded as hokey and commercial. If it's done well, however, it can be exhilarating.

Specifically, I want to direct readers to the sophisticated Dixieland of the Crescent City Rhythm and Jazz Band, which lamentably has only one CD available to date: *The World of Dixieland: 20 Great Dixieland Hits* (a Canadian CD, #0400342, produced by Trace Trading). The meager identifying information and scant liner notes list only the tunes and playing times with no mention of the personnel or history of the group.

When I chanced to see the CD, I noticed many old saws of Dixieland, like “Swanee River,” “Down by the Riverside,” “When the Saints Go Marching In,” “Tiger Rag,” and (horror of horrors) “Clementine,” among others. Being somewhat jaded on this form of music (having played it rather poorly on trumpet for many years and having heard countless takes of these tunes from my record, tape, and CD collection), I was reluctant to buy any more in the genre. But, thankfully, I let my curiosity prevail. Here were tunes that I had never heard of: “Bix's Tune,” “The Axe,” “Darton Stomp,” “Buddy Bolden's Blues,” and “Blues for Brian.” So I bought the CD. I have never spent a better \$9.99. Serendipity happens.

What can professional communicators learn from this CD? To begin with, we can welcome chance encounters rather than dismiss them arbitrarily because they appear to be merely further instances of

what we already know or think we know. Therein may be opportunities to enrich life by indulging our curiosity and following new threads wherever they may lead. Curiosity must be kept alive for our own well being as well as that of our coworkers. It is advantageous to encourage the pursuit of curiosity because it provides a sense of freshness and adventure that may well be converted into enthusiasm for working on projects (to say nothing of the probability of its fostering new ideas). We probably should trust our instincts much more than we do.

Known-new analysis—before presenting new information, we must touch on what the reader is already likely to know—is stimulated by this remarkable music group as well, thrillingly. Even old standards come alive because of the innovative phrasing of the band. In each case, the melody is instantly recognizable, but members of the band improvise by playing a single surprising note, a few unexpected notes or combinations of notes, or a cataract of them. According to a *Time Magazine* article (5 July 1976), “...jazz continues to flower cumulatively, taking on and transforming the new without ever abandoning the old. It is a fugue with a life of its own, endlessly recapitulating itself.” And the great jazz cornetist Ruby Braff says that what interests him is the attempt “to superimpose a new melody on the original, to build on layers.”

Normally, of course, our writing must reflect standard phrasing and usage, but we can creatively insert an unexpected word or two (like “thrillingly”) that would provide newness to a sentence or even tinker with the syntax, perhaps reversing the order of the words entirely. That approach leads to writing that gets its teeth into the reader and won't let go (the Stanislavsky approach).

The essence of this music is its contrapuntal nature, as it is of madrigals (a few unaccompanied voices singing one melodic or harmonic line off against another, popular

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*When people engage in collaborative writing, they must be willing to check their egos at the door.*

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from the 15th to the 17th century). It is exhilarating to have one voice or instrument playing off against the others, collectively improvising toward resolution, a phenomenon that owes much to the quodlibet (a fanciful arrangement of tunes in polyphonic relationship).

Typically, the Dixieland group is small, with no more than seven instruments. The trumpet often has the lead, while trombone, clarinet, bass, banjo, piano, and drums play off against the lead, each taking its part. As with madrigals, the instruments often enter the discourse at different times. The result is an interaction in which each player's contributions are vital to the effectiveness of the group. There is no waste and no chance to hide. Occasionally, deliberate disharmonies are played, but the result is a harmonious whole.

The CD of the Crescent City Rhythm and Jazz Band is a delicious jambalaya of the old and the new; of driving, measured stomps; of tinkling pianos; of snarling trumpets; of smeared, bent, blue notes; of offbeat rhythms; of smashing jams; of trombone slides up and down; of crying and soaring clarinets; of dazzling runs of five notes where a person expects only one;

of drum work that smacks of spoon playing; of jazz breaks or pauses; of rags a la Scott Joplin; of slow drags; of light and tender melodies; of unexpected instrumentation; of not playing a phrase the same way twice. The more a person listens to the tape, the more the person becomes familiar with the songs and realizes what brilliant and satisfying moments are occurring. Like all great works of art,

this CD invites the listener to learn something new with each visit to it. In short, to become familiar with this CD is a lofty and gratifying experience.

Clearly, a parallel exists between a Dixieland group and a group of people in the workplace. Like musicians, writers and editors must be secure in fundamental skills and must be able to articulate their abilities so as to execute a solid performance. Moreover, they must know the melody (the subject) before they can improvise (innovate). As there must be freedom to improvise in Dixieland, so too must there be freedom to innovate in the workplace. When people engage in the discourse community of collaborative writing, they must be willing to check their egos at the door in the interests of the greater good of the final product.

People can, of course, still shine (solo) from time to time within the group. Ultimately, though, harmony must prevail, even if there are occasional discords. The drummer must keep a steady beat or pace, as must the project manager. Of course, there may be different rhythms at various points in the song, as there are people who work at different rates, but all must stay within the schedule and other constraints of the project. Moreover, there must be a predictable structure to serve as a frame for the colorful musical picture created, as there must be an organization to projects.

As Michel Legrand puts it, "Jazz is the best of all nourishments. It feeds the creative spirit like nothing else can. It is a fantastic adventure, an exciting game of giving and taking and exchanging musical ideas with brothers and friends. When the conditions are right, it is possible to achieve a level of rapport that is nowhere else to be found in music or, for that matter, in art" (in Nat Shapiro's *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1977, p. 288). We can move toward nurturing such an environment in the workplace, I believe, by listening to and appreciating this extraordinary CD. To do so is sheer joy.

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*We probably should trust our instincts much more than we do.*

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*The Original Dukes of Dixieland. Copyright 1967, 1978, 1984 by Louisiana State University Press. Used with permission.*



## WORKING FREELANCE



JULIA LAND

## SPECIFICATIONS: PROTECTION FOR THE FREELANCER AND THE CLIENT

The last Working Freelance column (September/October, p. 21) discussed setting rates. I talked about charging clients by units of time, such as by the hour or the day, or by project components, such as by the word or the page. I also talked briefly about setting project rates: one price that covers all the work needed to complete a particular project for a client.

Project rates can be attractive to both clients and freelancers. The client knows from the beginning how much the project is going to cost, so it is easier to budget. The freelancer knows exactly how much he is going to earn for the project. Project rates can also be scary to both. Project fees can often be quite large, and the client may not be certain of what she will get for the money. The freelancer knows that the maximum that can be earned is already set. If the freelancer has underestimated the time required to complete the work, then he may have to work a lot harder and longer than originally intended to earn the fee.

Thorough job specifications can help both the freelancer and the client be comfortable with project-based fees. The client knows exactly what the finished product will be. There is a standard against which to measure the completed work.

Specifications help protect the freelancer from project creep: those little extras the client may want the freelancer to do but that were not mentioned in the original negotiation. With clear specifications, the freelancer has the ability to renegotiate a price when the work itself changes.

Tom van Loon reports, "I learned... that project fees can be misused by clients by adding material in the course of the project, or by demanding more personal meetings, or by adding new target groups, or by...(name it). I have found that the only solution is a clear (written) definition [of] what the work is, on the basis of what material, and for whom it is meant."

Although specifications are critical for project fees, in most cases, no matter what the fee structure, some sort of project specification is needed for the contract between a freelancer and a client. Even if the freelancer is billing the client by the hour, the specifications help ensure the freelancer is working on what the client wants. Further, the client usually wants an estimate of how many hours will be required to complete the work, and clear specifications help the freelancer make a reasonable estimate.

At their most basic, the specifications answer many questions for the freelancer:

- What am I supposed to be doing? How will I know when I'm done? Writing the specification is largely a process of answering questions about the work product and the process to be used to develop it.
- What is the product? It might be a brochure, a training seminar, a Web page for a business, a software user manual.
- What is the delivery format? A printed draft? Camera-ready art? A thousand copies of the finished document? A compiled help system or the authoring tool's native files that the client can later compile for herself?

Jean-luc Doumont describes his specifications as follows: "Typically, my training specifications include four pages: a one-page summary, a page on the overall training approach, a page with the program (contents, activities, timing), and a page with practical information (price, dates)."

- What topics is the product to cover? How long is it going to be? The answers to these two questions depend on each other. Sometimes the number of topics determines the length. For example, the length of a software user manual depends in large part on how many topics are to be covered. Other times, the length will limit the number of topics. A marketing brochure, for example, will

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*There always should be the flexibility to modify the specifications if the project changes.*

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usually have a predetermined length and the number of topics is determined by what will fit in the available space. The number of pages is an important element in the specifications for any printed project, as are the number and type of graphics.

The topics may be broadly defined; for example, “an installation guide for the specified software.” Or they may be defined very specifically by including a table of contents for the finished document.

- What process will be used to create and review the document? How many drafts will there be? Who at the client’s office will review and approve drafts? Some freelancers feel that to limit the number of review cycles frightens their clients, who think the freelancer will provide a less than perfect product. Others believe that if the client does a careful job of reviewing the first draft, the subsequent drafts should have few, if any errors.
- How much research time will be needed? What information and support will the client provide? This category may include things like access to project engineers or, for a software user manual, a working copy of the software to be documented.

Some industries and some larger companies have their own standard contract conditions that can be attached to the contract.

Sometimes specifications can be too rigid. There always should be the flexibility to modify the specifications if the project changes. Mick Harney once “worked on a project where my clients wrote an extremely detailed and specific contract with the client for whom they were working. The purpose of this contract was to absolutely define what was to be done and to eliminate doing more. It didn’t work. Instead, when held to the agreement in the face of changing circumstances, the ultimate client became disillusioned, distrustful, and aggressive.”

Kim Shaw makes her specifications as specific as possible, but she also tries “to anticipate extras the client may add and include a quoted fee for them in the proposal.”

This helps give her the ability to respond to the changing needs of her clients.

Often specifications take the form of proposals to clients. Clients may have a general idea of what they want, and they want the freelancer to tell them how much it will cost. To determine the cost, the freelancer must figure out exactly what the client wants to be done.

Developing such proposals can be time consuming. Some freelancers consider this a cost of doing business and include it in their overhead. Others, like Karen Steele, may charge their clients for this service:

“Analyzing the effort required is dicey, especially if the requirements haven’t been firmly established. I call that activity a ‘study’ or ‘business analysis’ [and] I charge them for it. . . . I produce a statement of work to be done (scope statement), establish milestones, and create a projected project schedule. Since the client pays me for this effort, they own it when I’m done and are free to hire someone else to do the work.”

Translating the scope of work into an estimate of the time required to complete it will be the topic of the next Working Freelance column.

As always, I cannot do this by myself. Several other freelancers have helped by telling how they deal with the issues in their city or country. Many thanks to Jane Aronovitch, Ian Blythe, Michael Brady, Jean-luc Doumont, Carrie Estill, Nigel Greenwood, Mick Harney, Ruben Oren, Kim Shaw, Karen Steele, and Tom van Loon. Together, we have lived and worked in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. If you would like to participate in these discussions, please send e-mail to [julia\\_land@ieee.org](mailto:julia_land@ieee.org).

*The author has been a freelance technical writer for seven years and a member of PCS for five. She lives and works in Houston, Texas, and would especially like to hear from freelancers working in Asia and along the Pacific Rim.*

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*Sometimes the  
freelancer must figure  
out exactly what the  
client wants to be done.*

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## SANCHO

BY MICHAEL BRADY

Words in a text are like ingredients in a recipe: Getting them right is the first step on the way to a digestible concoction. Yet, just as in cookery, minor flaws often go undetected. You may write *gaur* (a wild ox of south-eastern Asia) when you mean *guar* (the forage crop from whose seed guar gum is made), and only readers who know the animal, the plant, or Hindi, from whence the words came, will notice your error. From there, the peril of misuse increases, arguably up to the level of the rhetorical equivalent of using salt instead of sugar.

Nonetheless, though few opt for salt in their coffee or sugar on their eggs, solecism is escalating, and misused words blemish the texts of our time. There are myriad pedantic studies, as well as wild guesses, as to why this is so. Among them, and for the technical texts that are the bread and butter for us of the Professional Communication Society, two orthographic onslaughts stand out. First, the impact of software “newspeak” may be greater than popularly supposed. New words (*Internet*) and new uses for old words (*mouse*) enrich the language. But misuse, such as the transmogrification of the *heading* of a column in a printed table to *label* in spreadsheet programs, dilutes it.

Second and more debilitating, legions of business and management gurus, trained in the modern equivalent of Victorian girls finishing schools, have invaded the technological sectors, perhaps because that’s where their learned manners of manipulating money are most easily displayed. As DILBERT reminds us, ignorance of their new bailiwick is a nigh universal prerequisite to their conquest of it. Likewise, lack of familiarity with technical terminology seems not to hinder the use of it.

The result is slaughter of scientific precision, as differing terms, such as *energy* and *power*, are used indiscriminately. Even across the ever more pervasive fields of electronics, computers, and telecommuni-

cations, the general misuse batting average (MBA) is on the upswing. Even concise concepts, such as *communication* and *information*, sometimes are set adrift. No matter that in the complete second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* the definition of *communication* runs over three columns and the definition of *information* over seven, or that in 1949 Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver accurately defined both terms in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, their misuses are commonplace. One prevalent aberration, apparently originating at some expensive seminar where high-MBA statements filled the air, is that the difference between the two words is that *information* is unilateral, whereas *communication* is bilateral. Even in the Shannon sense, where *information* need not have meaning, that’s nonsense.

Is there a defense against such dilution? Fortunately, yes. Long a promulgator of concise definitions, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has now published a telecommunications terms and definitions database on a single CD-ROM. Named *SANCHO\** (ITU-T Sector Abbreviations and Definitions for a telecommunications HESAUARUS Oriented database) the CD-ROM supersedes the last printed version in the CCITT Blue Book of 1991 and vastly expands the range of definitions and the ease with which they can be accessed.

The main on-screen menu is a model of simplicity. There are two search dialog boxes, one for definitions and one for abbreviations, each with two search options. The result of a search is a list of definitions and references to the current ITU-T recommendations in which they appear. The definitions are short, straight-

(continued on page 19)

\**SANCHO*, ITU-T Sector Terms and Definitions Database, Geneva, ITU, 1st edition, September 1999, article no. 16169, ISBN 92-61-08171-1, in English, French, and Spanish editions; CHF 125 single user price with multipliers for multiusers; order from Sales and Marketing Service, ITU, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, telefax: +41 227 305 194, e-mail: [sales@itu.net](mailto:sales@itu.net), Web site: [www.itu.int/publications/](http://www.itu.int/publications/).

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*Lack of familiarity  
with technical  
terminology seems not  
to hinder the use of it.*

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## SANTA FE 2001: COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS

It is easy to think of technical communication as having dimensions, such as breadth and depth of coverage. But there are more dimensions—many more—in this complex endeavor.

There is a dimension of time; that is, life-cycle information management. We deal with the time dimension within a hall of mirrors as product versions proliferate, multiple media must be generated from a single source, and globalization requires localization. And then there is an audience dimension that can extend from beginners to subject-matter experts.

At the 2001 International Professional Communication Conference (IPCC 01), we will explore these dimensions in a place as complex and subtle as our profession: Santa Fe, New Mexico. The conference will begin Wednesday, 24 October, with a keynote luncheon, and continue through 26 October, followed by Saturday post-conference workshops. Now is the time to think about what you could contribute to the program.

We're counting on you, our potential speakers, to help with one of our greatest challenges: making attendees want to be in the meeting rooms rather than on the Plaza or in the galleries and museums. Long a center of the arts and culture as well as of government, and one of America's most eminently walkable cities besides, Santa Fe will tempt us all at every turn. But with your experience at the leading edge of a profession that is making exciting progress, we trust that you will be up to the task.

*To get your thoughts started, consider the broad overlapping categories that will organize the program:*

### ***The Technological Dimension***

Technology is our circumstance as well as our subject matter. To get the most from the media in which we convey our messages—or, for that matter, to use the

strengths and avoid the weaknesses of our own tools—let's share expertise.

### ***The Professional Dimension***

Let's discuss designing a curriculum, recruiting in a tight job market, reading our moral compass in ambiguous ethical situations, giving our employees the combination of guidelines and freedom that lets them do their best work, and getting back in touch with the joy and challenge that led us to this profession.

### ***The Human Dimension***

Our subjects and often our media are highly technical, but they exist to help people meet human needs. Explore the theoretical and practical aspects of how words and pictures and structures lead to comprehension and correct action.

### ***The Communication Dimension***

Everyone complains about bad technical communication. We are the ones who do something about it—who design, draft, test, and revise to meet the needs of the audience. Show us how you are doing it better.

Those thoughts are offered as idea seeds, not as boundaries. We welcome your topics. For more information and ideas, see the call for papers at <http://www.ieee pcs.org/2001/> and watch for our mailings.

Send proposals for papers and workshops by **15 March** to:

Roger Grice, IPCC 01 Program Chair  
52 Doris Lane  
Lake Katrine, NY 12449 U.S.A.  
[gricer@rpi.edu](mailto:gricer@rpi.edu)

Notes of acceptance will be mailed by 15 April.

Your proposal should be a page or two (a few hundred words) long, including the following elements:

- A brief (25-50 word) description that we can use in program materials
- The intended session type (individual talk, panel discussion, in-conference

*(continued on page 19)*

*Neither mandates  
nor boundaries,  
but idea seeds*



**IPCC 01**  
COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS

## NOW! A CONTENT-BASED SOLUTION FOR YOUR NEXT SPARE MINUTES!

BY DAN DANBOM

I take it as either an indicator of great insight or advancing imbecility that I no longer think of what I do as “writing” and instead think of it as “providing blank-page solutions.”

I came to this conclusion after reading the ads in just one issue of *Business Week* and discovering that 35 of the full-page ads use the word “solution” at least once. One used it five times in the same ad. Another used it in three different ads. American businesses have all sorts of stripes, but all seem to be selling the same thing: solutions. But what a variety of solutions they sell!

SAS Institute sells “integrated financial management solutions.” Brio Technology sells “business intelligence solutions.” Lucent, no slackard, sells “solutions at all levels.” NTT Mobile Communications discretely offers “private solutions.” CDW is into “computing solutions,” while AppNet trumpets a “single-source solution.” Count on IBM for “technology-based solutions” and know that Big Blue promises that “the solution you want is the solution you get,” which in itself is a big solution.

ValueAmerica.com has found a niche of “affordable technology solutions.” Compaq has “a better business solution.” Theirs is the “solution that’s all business.” GTE promises “innovative solutions” that are probably hard to differentiate from Comdial’s “communications solutions” and “reliable communications solutions.” If those fail, Hewlett-Packard has “backup solutions,” which are no relation to (again) Compaq’s “docking solutions.” Just to play it safe, you may want to look into Trend Micro’s “security solution.”

Sybase’s “reliable data movement solutions” are not to be confused with Digex’s “hosting solutions,” which undoubtedly rely on Intel’s “long-term solution” for your “e-business solution,” which is, in fact, a “new solution,” because no one wants to be stuck using old solutions. It is hard to get much newer than Williams

Communications Solutions Year 2000, although Savin says that its “document solutions” are pretty much the newest solutions available.

Of course, anyone knows that there are stand-alone solutions, but you may not know that Motorola has “embedded solutions” that are not necessarily synonymous with USinternetworking’s “end-to-end solution.”

Lockheed Martin says it has (tee-hee) “proven solutions,” one of which presumably is how to smash into Mars. StorageTek naturally has a “storage area network solution” that pales in comparison to Texas Instruments’ “optimal solution,” which is really a “microprocessor-based solution.”

Metaphase is your company if you really need a “web-centric data management solution,” but if your solutions become too numerous and difficult to manage, you will certainly and ultimately be a candidate for Tivoli’s “integrated management solution.”

Now when I think of “solutions,” I ask myself, “Why do we need solutions?” and I answer, though not aloud, “Because we must have *problems*.” If you then theorize that every solution addresses a problem, but also that there are undoubtedly more problems than there are solutions, I think we can fairly conclude that the 35 “solutions” ads point to at least 35 problems, and probably many more. Further, it seems obvious that the number of top-performing companies selling solutions means that the real foundation for our vibrant economy is problems, because you certainly wouldn’t need non-problem-based solutions any more than you would need corrective lenses if your vision were 20/20.

Our problem-based economy extends far beyond the technological problems that technological solutions were invented to solve. For instance, I notice that the United States Postal Service now offers

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*Solutions imply  
problems.*

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“shipping solutions,” which an unsophisticated person might mistake for “mail.” The Postal Service makes it sound as if physicists have long wrestled with the problem of packaging, sealing, addressing, and routing, say, glass, but that teams of research scientists in Postal Service Labs finally found the solution, and it wasn’t, as everyone thought, a potent combination of insurance and bubble wrap.

I noticed, too, that when my neighbors moved out (as all inevitably do), the mov-

ing company van said that the company specialized in “moving solutions.” Naturally, moving solutions were devised to address the old problem of immobility. Based on my observations, these solutions include a large truck, large men, and lots of boxes.

And so, there you have it: My deadline solution.

*Copyright 2000 by Dan Danbom. Used with permission. Mr. Danbom is a Denver writer. E-mail him at danboms@qwest.net.*

## IN SEARCH OF BOOKS

A good place to find books online is the Internet Public Library (<http://www.ipl.org>) run by librarians at the University of Michigan School of Information. The site sifts through the dreck and suggests places

to find useful information. In addition to exhaustive reference materials, it has links to more than 7700 books online, featuring the full text of classic and contemporary fiction and nonfiction, plus links to resources for youth and teens.

— *The Boston Globe*

## FLOCCINAUCHINIHLIPILIFICATION

*(continued from page 16)*

forward, and international. For instance, the definition of *communication* is referenced to recommendation B.13 and contains the caveat that the word has extended

meanings in French and Spanish. For anyone dealing with texts on telecommunications and allied fields, this CD-ROM is as indispensable as a desk dictionary.

## SANTA FE 2001

*(continued from page 17)*

workshop the length of a traditional session, or half- or full-day postconference workshop)

- Identification of the intended audience
- **Goals of the session and how you plan to achieve them (this is the main body of the proposal)**
- Concise statement of your background and qualifications
- Your name and affiliation as you wish them to appear in the program materials

General questions, thoughts on how the conference can best meet your needs, and discussion of opportunities for sponsorship by your company or institution, can be addressed to:

Joe Chew, IPCC 01 General Chair  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory  
1 Cyclotron Road, Mailstop 50-4049  
Berkeley, CA 94720 U.S.A.  
[jtchew@lbl.gov](mailto:jtchew@lbl.gov)

We look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you in Santa Fe.

IPCC/SIGDOC 2000

# REFLECTIONS

Boston and Cambridge served to combine communication with history for IPCC/SIGDOC 2000.

Special thanks to Terrance Malkinson and Luke Maki for their photographic contributions on these pages.



Pamela Kostur



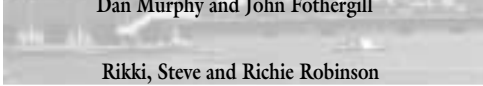
Herb Michaelson, Jean Michaelson,  
Roger Grice



Susan Feinberg



Dan Murphy and John Fothergill



Rikki, Steve and Richie Robinson



Ceri  
Williams



Valerie Haus and Sue



Mary Walsh,  
Henrich Lantsberg,  
Amy Propen



Debbie Hysell



Jim Kipa Trio



Deb Lewis  
Tip House



Stephanie Rosenbaum, Rudy Joenk



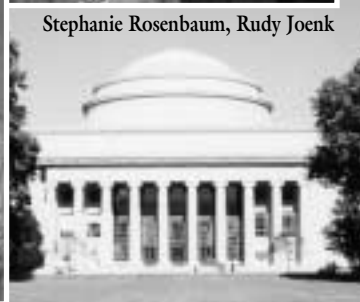
Robin Green



Helen Grady



Joe  
Chew



Henrich Lantsberg

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Heather McNay



Michael Steehouder and Janis Ramey



Marian Barchilon



Erik Berglund

Tom Moran



Stan Dicks

Susanna Dyer



Emilie Gould



Robert Krull

R. M. Newman

Jeffrey Moreland and Christine Boese



Angela Graveline, Jason Swartz, Cheryl Geisler



Kurt Nørmark



Kim Campbell  
Roger Grice



Brad Mehlenbacher



Walter Bender



Jack Hakim, David Novick,  
Susan Brown



Charles Blackwell



Edward Barrett



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Judy Rice



Mark Zachry



Nizanne Kruihof



Michael Steehouder

David Sonnenschein



Carl Stieren



Kim Gee



Judith Weise



Lisa Moretto



Steve Robinson, Beth Payer, Kathy Haramundanis



Kendall Scott



Awaiting the Awards



Phil Rubens



Doug Sery



Don Zimmerman

Carol Barnum



Felix Gatzemeier

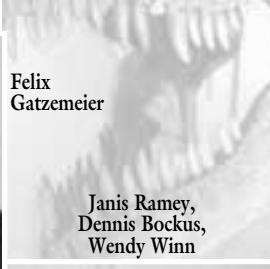


Tiffany Means-Zachry

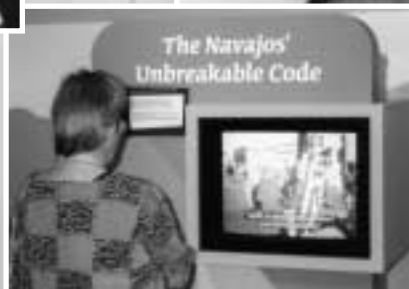
Clay Spinuzzi



Marcia Ruthford



Janis Ramey, Dennis Bockus, Wendy Winn



Alix Stoddard



Brenda Rubens

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REFLECTIONS

(continued from page 1)

writers fret about?” he asked. The same old things, it seems:

- Poor specifications or direction at the outset of the writing task
- Inadequately reviewed documents. Does the writer have an opportunity to see and discuss reviewers’ comments—that is, before it’s too late to address them properly?
- Too much work, not enough time
- Inadequate tools
- And this forevermore complaint: not enough respect

In what Chamberland called the *service model* of the writer’s role, developers are at the core and provide information to the writer. The writer provides service according to the requirements of the core team. Ease-of-use concerns—that is, the customers’ requirements—are often ignored. (He says this is when writers retreat to subsidiary issues, like format.)

In his *development model*, writers are part of the core team; they are able to understand task flows, ease-of-use issues.

Chamberland found that the writers themselves are often responsible for not getting the respect they want. On a technically difficult project a former boss told him,

“You should ask more questions, Luc!” Writers who arm themselves with the necessary technological tools—that is, seek to understand the product and how customers will use it—get the big picture, the cross-functional view. This is the right way to get respect, as opposed to fancy titles and uppity business cards.

Well, he’s right. My late husband was always amused by my belonging to IEEE when, he said, “You can barely change a light bulb!” True. (How many technical writers does it take to change a light bulb? Four: one to actually change the bulb, one to write a manual for the procedure, and two to argue about the hyphenation of burnt out/burnt-out. Or should it be burned out?)

Almost by definition, curmudgeons would rather bitch than study technical issues. IEEE-USA developed *Today’s Engineer* magazine to cover nontechnical issues for engineers. But a friend of mine told me the concept was doomed to failure because, he said, “To engineers there are no non-technical issues!” That’s about right. (Oh, maybe salary.) If I were going at this career business again (heaven forbid!), I’d still be a writer, but I’d get an engineering degree first.

But then what would I have had to curmudgeon about?



Luc Chamberland

George Hayhoe,  
Kim Campbell, and  
Stan Dicks



T. Malkinson

### Journals in Professional, Technical, and Scientific Communication: Where Are We Now, and Where Are We Going? (Session II)

People who leave a concert during the last number, and they are legion, miss not only the closing bars of that number but also any encores that might be played. I don't think anyone left early from the session conducted by journal editors **Kim Campbell, Stan Dicks, and George Hayhoe**, but if they had they would have missed the best part: a fascinating discussion of the pros and cons of online publishing for their periodicals.

(George edits the STC quarterly *Technical Communication* and Kim the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*. As newly appointed editor of the ACM SIGDOC journal, Stan acknowledged that he came to the session "largely unburdened by any factual information.")

Each of the editors talked about moving their journals to the Internet, and what that means. What it means for students, and researchers in all scientific fields, is *timely access*. Online publication allows immediate connection with newly published material. Attendee Gene Hoffnagle, who publishes technical journals for IBM, pointed out that this is especially significant for those living or working outside the United States and Canada, in areas where print publications can arrive weeks or even months late. On the other hand, online access equipment may be—certainly is—severely limited in developing countries. Even in Great Britain, where computers are widely used in industry and academe, home computers are rare.

ACM SIGDOC president Kathy Haramundanis asked, "What's the future of print publications?"

George said that when online publication of his journal was announced, many people

said, "Oh, you're not going to take away the paper journal, are you?"

The median age of *Technical Communication* readers is 44, he continued. "Older readers are probably more comfortable with paper." Kim added, "I don't think print is going to go away soon... maybe 20 years from now."

Reading online can be pretty painful, it was agreed, especially for dense technical material. Resolution is an issue, along with portability. You can't take your computer to bed, or to the beach, or on a train. Well, you can if you've got a laptop or "personal digital assistant" (PDA), but "You don't read those like you read a newspaper," noted an audience member. ("I'm not designing for PDAs!" Kim huffed.)

George pointed out that, surprisingly, libraries are very opposed to online-only publication. Why? The almost guaranteed obsolescence of file formats. "Look at all the 5¼-inch disks that were produced just a few years ago, to say nothing of punched tape and reel-to-reel recordings."

However, online publication has been found to increase the net audience for the print version. People see the journal online and want to get it physically into their hands.

There are copyright issues here. And economic ones. "The cost of paper today is obscene!" George said. Transportation costs are enormous (especially compared to the Internet). Also environmental issues: Paper comes from trees; printer's ink is made with petroleum. And the lead in computers makes their disposal an environmental issue as well. Someone suggested a note for online publications:

"This message is made entirely of recycled electrons."

So what do *you* think? I'm guessing that the editor of this *Newsletter* would welcome your comments.

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*Online publication has been found to increase the net audience for the print version.*

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“Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.”

— Mark Twain



## REFLECTIONS CONTINUED

BY GEORGE HAYHOE

Sometimes when I attend a conference, I choose sessions on a range of topics of interest to me rather than concentrate on only one or two topics. IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 provided a particularly rich program for this kind of conference browsing. As a result I found myself in sessions that addressed subjects ranging from single sourcing to Web-site architecture to hypermedia modules for teaching Anglo-Saxon poetry. I'd like to share some insights derived from some of the presentations I attended that I found especially interesting.

### Greater Expectations (a.k.a. Issues in Technical Communication Education, Session 3)

In many technical communication programs, faculty find themselves teaching courses for majors as well as service courses for students in engineering, computer science, agriculture, and many other subjects. Two presentations dealt with the challenges posed by this dual focus.

**Marjorie T. Davis's** presentation, "Technical Communication Degrees in the 21st Century," focused on the problem that teachers in technical communication degree programs experience trying to stay current with a constantly changing field. Davis explained that the location of most such programs in English departments, academic reward systems, and lack of faculty experience with technology and best industry practices cause academic programs to lag behind practice. She provided



*Marj Davis*

suggestions for ways that those in academe can address these problems.

Many of Davis's insights were gained from exit interviews with graduates of the Mercer University bachelor degree program in technical communication, which she chairs. The students made it clear that most expect to enter a profession with a variety of career tracks, not simply the writing and editing that dominated the field just a few years ago. It is clear that university faculty and degree programs need to close the gaps between academe and industry and assume responsibility for keeping up with the changes in the field, if students are going to get the education they deserve.

In "Transformations in Technical Communication Pedagogy: Engineering, Writing, and the ABET Engineering Criteria 2000," **Julia Williams** examined the important role that communication skills play in the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology Engineering Criteria 2000, the standard against which engineering programs in the U.S. are now being measured to obtain and maintain



*Julia Williams*

and understanding professional and ethical responsibility. What is especially important is that the new ABET criteria cannot be

accreditation. Interestingly, of the 11 skill areas that the ABET criteria examine, only five relate to technical areas. The remaining six focus on "soft skills" such as effective communication, ability to function on multidisciplinary teams,

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*"Soft skills" such as effective communication are heavily weighted in ABET criteria.*

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Roger Grice

satisfied simply by pointing to the courses that a program requires students to take: a course in technical communication, for example, and others in engineering methodology, applied mathematics, or physics.

Instead, the criteria require the program to demonstrate and document student learning outcomes throughout the entire curriculum. Satisfying this requirement means that engineering departments need to be able to show assessment teams that students have been challenged to communicate effectively throughout their engineering curriculum, not just in the required course in technical communication, and they must provide evidence that students have mastered the concepts and skills specified in the 11 criteria. Thus, assessment teams need to spend much of their time reviewing student portfolios and interviewing faculty and students to ensure that students have indeed demonstrated the required learning outcomes.

The ABET Engineering Criteria 2000 requirements mean that technical communication faculty will assume more visible and important roles in colleges of engineering than may have been the case previously, to help develop new curricula, train faculty to teach communication across the engineering curriculum, and help design assessment protocols to measure learning outcomes in communication.

**Games People Play (a.k.a. Navigating New Media, Session 24)**

In "Learning and Building Strategies with Computer Games," **Roger Grice** and **Larry Strianese** shared preliminary results of their research that has explored what computer game interfaces contribute to learning and to building strategies that help players be successful. People usually learn to play games very easily without the need for lengthy manuals or training courses. People also develop strategies that allow them to become increasingly successful. Because neither of these qualities is typical of other types of software, Grice and Strianese thought that it would be useful to study these characteristics of games to see how the findings might be applied to the user interfaces of business software and to distance learning environments.

Using two experimental designs, Grice and Strianese tested a number of hypotheses, including:

- The more complex the game, the more difficult it is to develop strategies
- Certain elements of an interface make it easier (or more difficult) for people to learn and succeed

The preliminary results that the authors reported in their presentation confirmed some expectations but also revealed the need for more testing before definitive conclusions can be drawn. At the end of their study, Grice and Strianese will provide specific suggestions for improving user interfaces.

**Remembrance of Things Past (a.k.a. Information Migration, Session 27)**

**David Hailey's** presentation, "A Case for Monster Media," focused on how companies and government agencies can stave off the evaporation of knowledge that occurs constantly as employees retire, move to new jobs, or pass away. This problem is especially significant when the knowledge in question is highly specialized, is of a high degree of importance, and has been the province of a relatively small number of employees.

For example, Hailey points out that the single remaining employee at Sandia National Laboratories who knows how to pack the parachutes for certain nuclear weapons will be retiring in just a few years. To prevent the loss of such persons' unique knowledge, companies and agencies can archive processes using what Hailey calls "monster media," multiple megabytes of video, sound, text, and still graphics that capture irreplaceable knowledge before it "walks out the door." This approach offers a significant opportunity for technical communicators, especially those who are adept at leveraging the capabilities of multiple media.

The resulting product resembles online help files, procedures, and textbooks but is different from all of those genres. It relies on a computer with large storage capacity, fast processor, and good video and sound cards, as well as professional quality video cameras.



Larry Strianese



David Hailey

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# REFLECTIONS CONTINUED

BY MIKI MAGYAR

## Rigo Award Speaker: Issues of Usability

**Barbara Mirel** spoke about how an organization can sustain and support breakthrough design that incorporates usability. She asked, "What's needed to sustain breakthrough design?" and answered with "Both technology and organization are needed to build in usability." The social context dictates what will or won't be addressed, and breakthrough or innovative thinking generates stress around issues of architecture, scope and features, and implementation. To sustain this process you need a corporate culture that offers open debate, a place for safe disagreement, tolerance for tension, and shared power or judicious and open power. Trust is essential. In this kind of task-oriented and strongly cooperative environment, usability can be embedded in the whole process.



*Barbara Mirel*

## Goldsmith Award Speaker: Trends

**JoAnn Hackos** talked about the trend from technical writing as a cottage industry to collaborative teams in the business. Instead of being an isolated craftsperson, the technical writer is now expected to be expert in the customers' world, to be their advocate, and to be expert in the technology because developers have less time to explain.



*JoAnn Hackos*

A coherent user-centered design uses information modeling to assess workflow functions and user tasks. Structured writing uses standard information types to simplify and rationalize organ-

ization. A minimalist approach uses fewer words and pages, and provides just enough of what's needed so the users can accomplish their tasks. The trend is also toward facilitating "roll your own" documentation, where the writer facilitates the capability for the users to create their own information.

## Testing Documentation with "Low Tech" Simulation (Session 2)

**David G. Novick** emphasized the critical need for good design in his example interface, where one failure per billion operations is the standard for cockpit software.



*David G. Novick*

He also talked about the need to test the interface, procedures, and documentation all at the same time. His graphics showed clearly how his prototyping process works and how it makes change easy in the early stages

of design. He also offered several good resources for learning more about simple prototyping, and stressed its limitations. As he said, if it's important to do, you should put it in the interface so that the user can not avoid, ignore, or forget it.

## Writing as Software Development: Making Meaning Before, After, and Of the Code (Session 12)

**Rahul Mehrotra** and **Scott Lockhart** told us that documentation can, and should be, prescriptive as well as descriptive. They offered some new metaphors: blueprint, map, and trip guide. They suggested that technical writers can help with software

IPCC/SIGDOC 2000

definition, the interface, and improving productivity, and they can use their expertise to provide real-world context.



*Rahul Mehrotra and Scott Lockhart*

Documentation can help refine, clarify, and distill software specifications. We can make sure that the interface doesn't get in the way of doing the tasks, help make the right action intuitive, and make sure that error messages are helpful.

**I Have a Little List: The Ten Indispensables (Session 14)**

**Miki Magyar** quickly reviewed her paper and showed some examples of how lists can be created and used as management tools. Then she asked for a sample problem from the audience and used that to walk through the process of understanding what

questions need to be answered, what kind of list will do the job, and how to format and use the list for several purposes.



*Miki Magyar*

**Automating Software Documentation: A Case Study (Session 25)**

After a brief review of her paper to set the background, **Miki Magyar** showed how the software development process is

evolving. As is usual with an R&D project, the design has changed since the initial concept. But since a good process was in place, there has been very little backtracking or false starts. Delays have been primarily due to difficulties in implementing the requirements and lack of personnel. She also discussed how this kind of process can be useful for other software documentation projects.

**REFLECTIONS CONTINUED**

BY ELIZABETH WEISE MOELLER

**W**rap-up  
 What started as an idea between two sister societies ended very well this past September in Cambridge, Massachusetts. For the last few years, PCS and SIGDOC have been running back-to-back conferences in the same city, overlapped by a day, providing crossover registration opportunities. Back in 1997 the two organizations decided to try a joint conference—and we meant truly joint. In 2000 we shared programming, expenses, mailings, and overall responsibility for the conference. While it's still too early to tell if the joint conference idea will be repeated,

we definitely know that both the attendees and the sponsoring organizations were winners in Cambridge.

We have heard from many people that they felt this was the strongest program ever.



*Kathy Haramundanis, SIGDOC president*

*A strong program and new sponsors fueled success.*

IPCC/SIGDOC 2000

We were in the enviable position of receiving significantly more proposals than we had space for, which gave our program committee a very tough job. We received 110 proposals, 74 of which were accepted. We had space for about 67 proposals, but felt there would be some attrition based on previous experience. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, we had little attrition—leading to a *very* full program. Many thanks go to our program committee, led by Bernadette Longo for PCS and Michael Priestley for SIGDOC. Daniel Murphy led an excellent tutorial program.



Dan Murphy

Bernadette Longo and Michael Priestley

Beth Moeller and Susan Jones



Due to a family emergency, Nicholas Negroponete, our scheduled keynote speaker, had to pull out of the conference. In his place, the MIT Media Lab asked Walter Bender, interim executive director, to step in. His presentation was very well received, equally for its content and the tools he used to present it. PowerPoint will have the challenge of its life when Mr. Bender's technology reaches the marketplace. We appreciate his time and effort for stepping in at the last minute.

We also thank our sponsors. This year we were able to secure sponsorships from several organizations to assist with our expenses. IBM Toronto sponsored our conference bags; Compaq helped sponsor the awards banquet; the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* and IPCC 01 sponsored receptions; and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, SevenSteps.com, Mercer University, and the Center for E-Business at Brigham Young University all sponsored breaks. Their financial assistance made it possible for us to provide memorable experiences for our attendees.

As I looked back on the two years of planning, I found very little that I would have changed. The true success of this conference is due to a team that worked very hard and very well together, and had a great time doing it. I think we all went through a little conference-call withdrawal when it was over.

*Beth Moeller was cochair with Susan Jones of IPCC/SIGDOC 2000 and is vice president of the Professional Communication Society.*

## JOIN US IN RUSSIA!

Have you ever dreamed of standing in Red Square with the colorful domes of St. Basil's Cathedral beside you and the Kremlin in front of you? Or how about walking the halls of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg? Now's your chance to create lifetime memories and share your technical communication experience and knowledge with international colleagues.



The Professional Communication Society is co-organizing the International Colloquium on Professional Communication in Suzdal, Russia, on 15-16 August 2001. Suzdal is approximately 200 km northeast of Moscow. A travel agent has been assigned to work with delegates who wish to extend their stay and enjoy the culture and sights of Russia. Economical land-only excursions are available to Moscow and St. Petersburg.

One visitor, returning from Moscow, described the city as "having the architecture of London, the warmth of the people in Rome, and the energy of the streets of Nairobi." It truly is a city worth experiencing and here's your opportunity to see it and to meet with like-minded professionals.

We still have openings for presenters. The suggested topics include information design, Web site development, education in professional communication, teaching technical communication, and electronic libraries. Although the registration details have not yet been determined, the expenses will be considerably less than comparable conferences held in the U.S.

Because of visa requirements and other paperwork we need to have a definite list of attendees by **31 January**. **The deadline on the call for papers has been extended** to that date (see the facing page). For other information about the colloquium and Suzdal, visit the Web site at <http://www.ieeepcs.org/suzdal/> or e-mail Lisa Moretto at [RGI\\_Lisa@compuserve.com](mailto:RGI_Lisa@compuserve.com) or phone +1 716 461 3617.

## EARLY MEMBER OF PCS RETIRES

Andrew Malcolm, long-time PCS member and IEEE life member, has entered the Rochester [New York] Institute of Technology "retirement transition" program after working for 28 years at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, one of the seven colleges of R.I.T. He will work 60 percent in the 2000-2001 academic year and then fully retire.

Before joining R.I.T. in 1971, Malcolm was an electronics technician and design engineer (1950-59) and technical writer (1960-70). Last year he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first college grad-

uation and of having worked 50 years. Malcolm joined the Institute of Radio Engineers in 1954 and was a member of PCS's predecessor, the IRE Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech. He served PCS in a number of roles including general chair of the 1983 IPCC in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He also served the IEEE in a number of capacities including general manager of the *Indian River Engineer* (the newsletter of the IEEE Kennedy Space-flight Section) and editor for USAB [now IEEE-USA] Technical Policy. Malcolm is a fellow of the Society for Technical Communication.

"Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes."

— Oscar Wilde

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION  
 PROBLEMS, TECHNOLOGY, AND SERVICES

SUZDAL, RUSSIA • 15-16 AUGUST 2001

Be part of a dynamic gathering of scientists, engineers, and professional technical communicators from around the world to discuss current and future techniques of professional communication. We will particularly explore the problems with and trends of modern communication. Participants will include representatives from research institutes, information centers and libraries, educational institutions, and industry.

The organizing committee suggests the following topics for papers and presentations (and additional topics will be considered):

- Information Design
- Information Resources
- Information Systems and Databases
- Intersociety Cooperation
- Internet: Technology and Services
- Web-site Development
- The Art of Communication
- Technical and Business Communication
- Teaching Technical Communication
- Education in Professional Communication
- Electronic Libraries: Technology and Services

THE GOLDEN RING OF RUSSIA

LOCATION

Like a necklace northeast of Moscow, the Golden Ring comprises 11 ancient Russian towns with 12th-to-17th-century architecture. One of these is Suzdal, about 200 km from Moscow, with architecture from the early years of the Russian Empire. The conference facilities. Suzdal is to be

ITINERARY

Moscow, 12-13 August 2001  
 Travel and settle in there, 14 August  
 Presentations, 15-16 August  
 Return to Moscow, 17 August  
 Leave Moscow, 18-20 August

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TO  
 31 JANUARY 2001**

Additional information and

regularly on our Web site: <http://www.ieeepcs.org/Suzdal/>.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Proposals are due by 15 December 2000 and response will be given by 30 January 2001.

For more information about the program or to submit a proposal contact:

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**Ms. Lisa Moretto** Phone: +1 716 461 3617  
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 E-mail: [rgi\\_lisa@compuserve.com](mailto:rgi_lisa@compuserve.com)

Dr. Lantsberg is a member of the executive board of the Russian Popov Society, vice chair of the IEEE Russia Section, and chair of the PCS Russia Chapter.

Ms. Moretto is a senior consultant with RGI International, a member of the administrative committee of PCS, and chair of the PCS education committee.

Contributed papers will be published in a contemporary colloquium proceedings and a select few papers will be included in a later issue of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*.

If you are interested—that is, if there’s at least a 50-50 chance you’ll go (no commitment yet)—send an e-mail message to [r.joenk@ieee.org](mailto:r.joenk@ieee.org) and we’ll include you on a distribution list for further information as it develops. An early indication of interest will help drive the planning forward.

THIS INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM IS BEING ORGANIZED BY

- IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS) and its Russia Chapter
- IEEE Russia Section
- Professional Communication Section of the Russian Popov Society for Radio Engineering, Electronics, and Communications
- All-Russia Institute for Scientific and Technical Information of the Russian Academy of Sciences
- International Center for Scientific and Technical Information (Moscow)

The colloquium will mark the 10th anniversary of IEEE PCS and Popov Society cooperation.

## ALIAS THE AdCOM

The Administrative Committee (AdCom) invites comment from PCS members about any of the Society's activities. All the AdCom members have an electronic alias at the IEEE that automatically forwards e-mail to the member's actual electronic address.

You can address the whole AdCom at *adcom-pcs@ieee.org*, or any of the members individually at the addresses listed in the table. The year in parentheses marks the end of the member's term.

If you would like to obtain (or update) an alias of your own, go to the IEEE Web

page, <http://elecomm.ieee.org/personal-aliases.shtml>, and follow the procedure there (you will need your IEEE membership number).

Members are always welcome at AdCom meetings. See the notice of meetings in the editor's column.

In addition, ex officio members of the AdCom are: Laurel Grove, *l.grove@ieee.org*, chair of IPCC 02; Rudy Joenk, *r.joenk@ieee.org*, Newsletter editor; Steve Robinson, *s.robinson@ieee.org*, treasurer; and Larry Strianese, *lstrianese@ieee.org*, Webmaster.

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PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER