IEEE Professional Communication Society NEWSLETTER
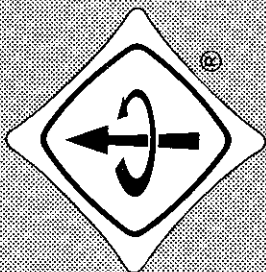
STP for No-Warning Presentations

by John Gear

There you are: late one Friday and you find out that there's been another management "realignment". The new VP wants a presentation on all pending projects so "judicious mid-course corrections can be made where appropriate." Your boss wants you to prepare a presentation on her pet project for 11:00 a.m. Monday morning. You have plans for the weekend not involving work.

Or there you are again: you've been suggesting a new approach to an old problem for some time. Your boss tells you "I'm going out of town tonight. If you give me a one-pager on it, I'll read it this week, and we'll talk about it when I get back."

Do these situations frustrate you and leave you feeling demoralized about life, corporate dysfunction, and crisis management? Probably. Nevertheless, there is a simple scheme that can help you put together a sharp, focused presentation or proposal on very little notice. And though it is almost pathetically simple, I have used it successfully on several occasions when I did not have time to prepare a well-researched pitch.

The scheme is simple: Situation/ Target/Proposal, or STP. In fact, STP is so simple that I was never actually taught to use it; I just learned it the hard way, after making a poor presentation. That presentation was typical for me then, overlong and overblown, full of details about the relative advantages and disadvantages of my pet idea and all of the competing proposals. In the aftermath of my talk, as I glumly collected my elaborate handouts (which

were scattered like leaves, testimony to their impact), I saw some crabbed handwriting on one of my most detailed sheets. It said "Not clear. What is STP (Situation, Target, Proposal)?"

It was a real moment of enlightenment for me: I didn't have to overwhelm the audience with my ideas, just explain them in a format useful for people trying to make a decision. Now I use STP as the starting point for any presentation in which I have to advance an idea for acceptance by others and I don't have much time to prepare.

To use STP, just take a pad, divide a page into three sections, and label one with S, one with T, and one with P. Start anywhere. Just imagine yourself talking each part through, clearly explaining each concept (S, T, or P) in turn. Some introductory phrases you can use to collect your thoughts:

Situation
    We have to act now because . . .
    If things continue as they are
        now . . .
    We are here: . . .
    Our current results are . . .
    The situation is this: . . .

INSIDE

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Deborah Flaherty Kizer

PCS had many accomplishments during 1994 of which we can be proud. We successfully started our PCS chapter in Moscow, Russia. Clearly, PCS is a leader in the area of international outreach. Much thanks to Dave Kemp for his efforts.

Our Awards Committee, chaired in 1994 by Cheryl Reimold, recommended that a service award be established to recognize individuals in PCS. I'm pleased to announce that at the November TAB meeting, TAB approved our proposal to establish the PCS Emily K. Schlesinger Award. This award will recognize outstanding service to the Society by individuals who have actively furthered technical and professional communication through their continued contribution to PCS.

More information on this award will follow.

I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that these successes would not have been realized without the dedication, support, and volunteer efforts of many individuals. We all have many commitments pulling us in seemingly thousands of directions, and I am continually amazed by the support and dedication of our members. I know that 1995 will present many challenges as well, but we have a great AdCom and support team established to address them.

Looking at IEEE as a whole, I'm pleased to report that in 1994 I saw a shift towards TAB aggressively working to include small societies in key decision. For example, a small society retreat was held in which issues and concerns related to small societies were surfaced and referred to the appropriate IEEE organization. Also, I was elected as a small society representative to attend the IEEE Organizational Improvement Retreat to be held in January.

Finally, I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dr. Dan Rosich. Dan, a former president of PCS, was a great asset to our team and a wonderful mentor. He will be sorely missed. ◀

Daniel Rosich

Dr. Daniel Rosich, former president of the Professional Communication Society, died at his home in Sharon, Connecticut, on 31 October 1994. An IEEE Senior Member, Dr. Rosich served in many volunteer positions with both the United States Activities Board and the Technical Activities Board. He was president of PCS from 1982 to 1985. He chaired the IEEE-USA's Communications Committee in 1992 and 1993 and served as editor-in-chief of *Professional Perspective* from 1989 to 1991.

Dr. Rosich was professor of information systems at Pace University in Pleasantville, New York. He had previously taught at City University of New York, Hofstra University, and the University of Connecticut. He was a Distinguished Fellow of the American Board of Master Educators and a member of the American Mathematical Society, the American Society for Engineering Education, the Association for Computing Machinery, the Institute of Industrial Engineers, and the Instrument Society of America. ◀

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

by Cheryl Reimold

A - C - T N - O - W, A Six-Step Response to Disaster (Continued)

Step 4: Note Your Next Steps

The crisis has occurred. You have taken the necessary immediate actions—caring for the injured and their families and telling the press and public what you know. Now, you can move backstage to prepare for the upcoming, perhaps longlasting, dialogue with the world.

Organize centers of information. People will not hold their calls until you are ready to answer them. Remember, if you don't provide the answers, rumors will rush in to fill the vacuum. Therefore, your first step must be to arrange for centers of information.

You will need one central crisis information manager. This person will seek to get all updated information possible and route it to the centers of information. The centers will also give the crisis information manager any news they receive, for relay to the other centers.

How you organize your centers of information depends on the size of a) your scope of responsibility, b) the company, and c) the crisis. The centers may be single people

or groups. Ideally, you should have an information center for each group affected by the crisis. These might include a technical center to give technical details and updates, a public relations center to give information to the media, a center in personnel to answer employees' questions, a financial information center for anxious investors, and a customer service center to keep customers informed of the status of the product and their orders. You may also decide to set up a special "800" number to answer crisis-related calls.

However you arrange your centers, remember two key points:

• All centers must give the same message. To this end, as soon as one center gets new information, that center must immediately relay it to the crisis information manager for relay to the other centers.

• The people staffing the centers must be proactive, not just reactive. Their job is both to seek and to disseminate information.

If you don't provide the answers, rumors will rush in.

Get expert information and advice. The success of this act depends a great deal on effective anticipation of a crisis (step 1 for A-C-T N-O-W). When a specific disaster hits, you should know whom to call.

Your experts must include a wide range of respected, objective professionals from outside the corporation. Depending on the problem, they may be physicians, scientists, engineers, financial people, or other specialists. Different specialists may give you different opinions on the problem; to avoid serious errors in judgment, you must consider all the possible viewpoints. Witness Dow Corning's

public image problems with the silicone-gel breast implants. Some crisis management experts say a contributing factor may have been the company's over-reliance on the analyses of plastic surgeons, who wanted the implants to be declared safe.

Give the experts all your information and get their analyses and advice. Their input may well be the most useful and credible information you can secure.

Form a crisis team. The members of the team will depend on the nature of the crisis. In addition to the crisis information manager, you will usually want representatives of senior management, finance, the legal department, public relations, human resources, and the technical area(s) affected. The team must meet frequently, at any member's request, to review developments and respond effectively as a group.

Plan for interviews and press releases. As you prepare to present your position to the public, keep in mind three essential rules:

1. Public perception is your reality and will determine your company's future.

2. The public will not forgive insensitivity, evasion, or irresponsibility.

3. The public will listen to experts' opinions—whoever reports them.

Next time, we will see how to prepare specifically for different types of questions and media contacts.

Cheryl Reimold is a member of the PCS Administrative Committee and the author of more than 200 articles and several books, including How to Write a Million-Dollar Memo, Being a Boss, *and* The Language of Business. *She is President of PERC Communications— 6A Dickel Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583; (914) 725-1024—which offers businesses in-house workshops and courses in writing, presentations, and on-the-job communication skills.* ◀

Photo Bits From Banff, IPCC 1994
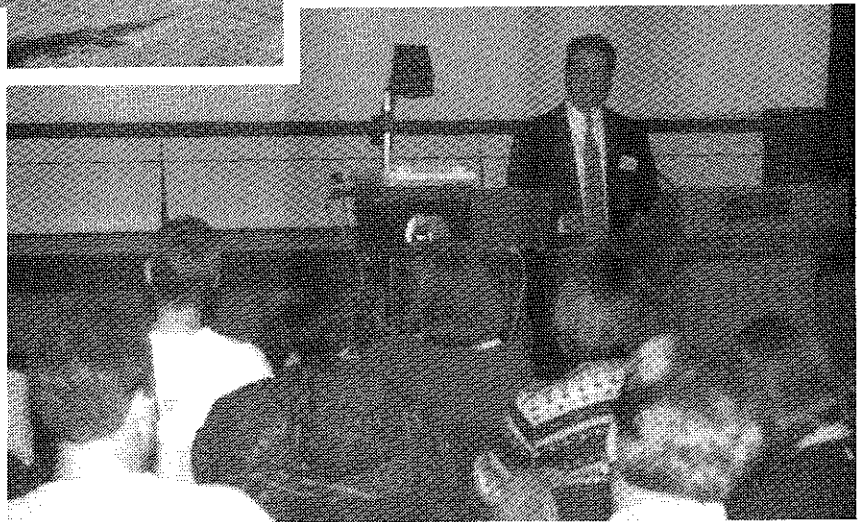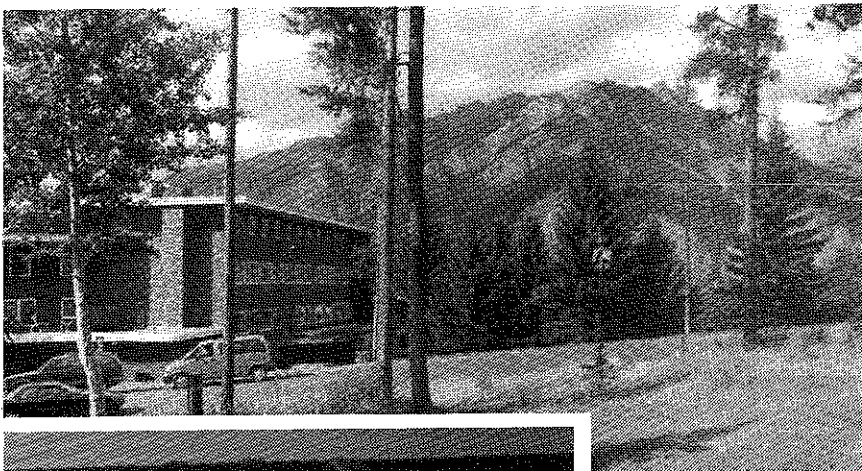
CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

by Joan G. Nagle

The Editor as Curmudgeon

Let's clean off the desk here, as a start for the new year.

What has been making such a mess (along with Christmas cookie recipes, medical insurance claim forms, shopping lists, and reminders for the cat's booster shots) is a collection of *things* saved for future curmudgeonly columns. If there is a common theme among them, it is curmudgeonliness itself, so that's the sermon topic for the day.

Speaking of sermon topics, a seminary class was told by their homiletics professor that a good sermon title was one which, viewed on the church's outdoor sign, would make people want to get off a passing bus. For his next assignment, one student turned in the following title: "Your Bus Is on Fire."

Now down to business. A recent *Reader's Digest* humor column reported that the 8-year-old daughter of two professional writers was hugely affronted by a friend. Searching for an appropriate opprobrium, she finally came up with, "You . . . you . . . you *editor!*"

If you have ever been edited yourself, you can appreciate this. It can only be compared with events like being measured for a custom-made suit ("Is your left shoulder always this droopy?") or sending your child to dancing class ("I'm afraid Amelia is deficient in gross motor skills. Also social skills, if the truth were known.") or inviting an interior designer to one's house for tea. Don't do any of these things if you can help it. Being edited, unfortunately, is not always preventable.

But editors have a few things to say about, if not often to, writers. In *Language on a Leash*, (Editorial Experts, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia, 1988), Bruce Boston says that he doesn't know very many editors, if any, who have what you would call a sweet disposition.

"I called a few of them to check this out and was mostly rewarded with either 'Are you crazy? In this business?' or 'Don't you have anything better to do than bother me? Get a job!'

"Editors are drawn to the curmudgeonly way of life, I think, because it suits not their personalities but the profession. . . . Editors get that way because they are mostly paid skeptics. They are in the business of assuming that there is something wrong with what they're looking at, and it is their job to find it. They see too much pomposity, hypocrisy, and double-dealing to remain trusting—or sweet-tempered—for long. Their only real masters, the clock and calendar, are absolutely heartless, and the editors respond in kind.

"Becoming a curmudgeon is simply a way of coping, a way of making the editorial bed of thorns a little easier to lie on."

And speaking of pomposity provides a slot for the following quotation from George Bernard Shaw: "In literature the ambition of the novice is to acquire the literary language; the struggle of the adept is to get rid of it." Amen from the technical editing department.

"It is a strange thing," Turgenev said. "A composer studies harmony and theory of musical forms; a painter doesn't paint a picture without knowing something about colors and design; architecture requires basic schooling. Only when somebody makes a decision to start writing, he believes that he doesn't need to learn anything and that anybody who has learned to put words on paper can be a writer."

Are these two positions contradictory? I think not. The need to, and ways to, get rid of literary language is part of what good writers learn when they learn their trade. Good—that is, trained—editors learn to recognize it when they see it and replace it with the simple and direct . . . while cussing profoundly in the mode Boston called "Lou Grant as an H.L. Mencken knockoff."

Mencken described his editorial philosophy at *The Smart Set* as "nothing uplifting". (Hey, guys, if you haven't read anything by Mencken, please do. Anyone who has come this far down the road with an amateur curmudgeon will adore him.)

And speaking of clocks and calendars, you'll love this. *Forbes* magazine recently published survey results showing the professions which were most sought-after by college students. Technical writing/editing came in 17th! (When I was a college student, I didn't even know there were such jobs. Of course there weren't then, not very many.) But the kicker is *why* they wanted to get into this mess: because it's a job where there isn't any pressure.

Final quote: "The denunciation of young people is a necessary part of the hygiene of older people and greatly assists in the circulation of the blood." (Logan Pearsall Smith).   ◀

No–Warning Presentations

(continued from page 1)

Target

Our goal is to ...
We'd like to be ...
Our mission is ...
The fiscal-year plan
requires ...
However, the customer
demands ...
We are committed to ...

Proposal

Therefore, ...

Therefore is the only word that makes sense to me for the proposal section. This section is the point of the presentation. If you've done your job well in the first two steps, this is what the audience expects and wants to know: how you think "now-reality" can be changed to the desired reality.

When you get the internal monologue going, just take notes. Use bullets or some other non-hierarchical symbol to separate the points. (Numbers and letters seem to impose a rank on your thoughts that can be impossible to remove, even though the first thought you had was just the most obvious, not necessarily the best or most important.)

Refine the list only *after* you run dry. Combine similar ideas and split out distinct ones that ran together. You will probably have a reasonable number of entries for each key section, each entry being the kernel of a presentation idea or a sentence in a memo. At this point, you can polish to your heart's content . . . or, more likely, until your time's up. My experience is that you are best off *not* polishing at this point. Get the thing into whatever basic form you will finally present it (slides or memo) and stop. If you understand the proposal and believe in it, your unpolished responses to the STP prompts are probably as

strong as any. Quit now and let it go for at least a night; your subconscious will work on the problem for you. Your editing will be much more perceptive the next day or Monday morning.

That's it. It's not the key to wealth, fame, or instant promotion, but it is a usable heuristic for generating focused presentations quickly. Like all heuristics, STP has limitations. Compared to a crafted, rehearsed, and revised presentation, an STP presentation or memo almost certainly lacks some grace, and if your audience needs and expects a review of all the options, STP just doesn't deliver.

STP: Situation, Target, Proposal

Yet within its domain, STP works well enough because it makes you address three questions that management wants answers to when faced with a proposal to do something:

1. Even if we're gonna do something, do we have to do it now?

2. Okay, we have to do something soon. Do you understand our (my) goals?

3. Okay, we have to do something soon and you seem to understand where we should go. How do we get there?

Each of these questions, expressed or not, is a powerful idea-slayer in its own right. In combination they can be overwhelming. (While managers rarely verbalize these, whenever I bring them out in the open there is enough nervous laughter to convince me that they hold true in many organizations.)

Given a high-pressure, short-deadline environment, the best way to deal with these questions

is to face them head on. The standard formats for presentations and proposals:

Here are the alternatives we considered, the pros and cons of each, and our recommendation, along with forecast returns.

may be better . . . if you have the time. But if you don't, and you want a high-probability technique for preparing a presentation that can influence the decision-making process positively, try STP sometime.

John Gear, principal of Catalyst Consulting Services in Vancouver, Washington, founded Catalyst to help business and government agencies get results through decisive management and communications. ◀

Newsletter Schedule

The *Newsletter* publication and deadline schedule is:

Issue	Deadline
March/April	3 February 1995
May/June	7 April 1995
July/August	2 June 1995

Contributions are welcome; ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred. Please send them to:

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Only ambitious nonentities and hearty mediocrities exhibit their rough drafts. It is like passing around samples of one's sputum.
Vladimir Nabokov

as quoted in
The Macmillan Treasury of Revelvant Quotations, E.F. Murphy, 1978.

The Taste of PBJs and Technical Writing

by Nancy Shepard

Last year I had an opportunity to speak to my son's first grade class about my job. It was Career Week at the elementary school and several parents had volunteered to talk about what we do for a living.

Knowing that technical writing for a first grader could bring yawns and sighs, I tried to perk up my presentation with lots of show-and-tell. After all, I was up against a police detective and fireman in the next room. I brought the fanciest-looking books that I had written, especially the ones with pictures. I also brought my portable PC to show them some desktop publishing.

When I "magically" changed a word from 12 points to 48 points, they were appropriately impressed. But my books were greeted with "Where are the colored pictures?" and "What else do you have to show?" It was then that I decided to give them a taste of the real thing.

I divided the class into two teams and gave each a jar of peanut butter, a jar of grape jelly, two slices of bread, and a knife. Their assignment: "An alien has landed on Earth who knows nothing about what Earthlings eat. Your job as a team of technical writers is to write the directions for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich so that the alien will know exactly how to make one himself."

With squeals of excitement the teams dove in. Nothing like a hand-on challenge to wake up the doubtful, I thought. I watched as they appointed scribes and shouted, "The first step is to grab the jar of peanut butter" and "What if an alien doesn't know what a jar is?" and "What if he doesn't have hands and can't hold it?"

And so it went for half an hour. When the young authors finished, we did some sophisticated usability testing. Each team exchanged directions with the other team and tried to follow the instructions. As the sandwiches were built, there was plenty of laughter and poking fun at each team's set of instructions. The tests ended with the test by-product promptly eaten. (Don't ask how eight kids divided one PBJ sandwich.)

As I drove out of the school parking lot, I received an unexpected bonus from my presentation. Having reduced my entire job of task analysis, planning, negotiating, document design, writing, rewriting, editing, desktop publishing, and printing everything down to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I saw my work through the eyes of a first grader. My work had been distilled to a level of simplicity I had somehow lost sight of. Simple communication. Team-work. Having a good time. All that other stuff seemed so insignificant. It was the closest I've ever come to having a spiritual experience with my career.

Take advantage of the opportunities to share your work with young people. I can't guarantee any mystic revelations, but who knows, you may help to elevate our profession to another level, that of the commonly known: fireman, doctor, technical communicator.

Nancy Shepard is President of the Rocky Mountain chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. This article was reprinted, with permission, from Technicalities, *the chapter newsletter.* ◀

Worth Reading

Miller, M.J. Editors in an Electronic World. *PC Magazine* 13(15): 79-80 (13 September 1994). Some emerging difficulties in the role of the editor are discussed in this column, as are the problems posed by the volume of information available and the number and quality of the sources of that information.

Godfrey, P.M. Type and Content. *Aldus Magazine* 5(7): 51, 54, 56, 58 (September/October 1994). A brief treatment of basic typographic choices and their consequences, including bold vs. italic, the use of hyphens and dashes, indentation, and headings. In a sidebar, the author questions the wisdom of equal interword and intersentence spacing.

Boschman, M.C. and Roufs, J.A.J. Reading and screen flicker. *Nature* 372: 137 (10 November 1994). A note reporting no difference between 100-Hz and 50-Hz displays in terms of hampering the reading process on a video screen. However, subjects preferred the quality of the 100-Hz display.

Levine, A. The great debate revisited. *Atlantic Monthly* 274(6): 38, 40-44 (December 1994). A short discussion of the state of conflict between the "meaning first" vs. "phonics first" approaches to teaching reading. ◀

Engineering-Writing Contest Winner Repeats in 1994

The third annual Engineering-Writing Contest for IEEE Students in the Philadelphia Section had nine papers entered (there were three in 1992 and eight in 1993). The First Place winner was Marc Rieffel of Swarthmore College, for "An inexpensive virtual reality system"; Marc was the First Place winner in 1992 and 1993. Andrew S. Brown of Swarthmore took Second Place for "Techniques for optical character recognition". Tied for third were Ann U. Tran of Swarthmore for "Spectrally resolved characteristics of semi-conductor lasers" and Joseph R. Shryock, David L. Armor, and Christopher J. Matarazzo of Temple University for "Structure and implementation of an automatic fault identification and recovery control system".

All six authors received framed certificates and cash prizes ($150 for first, $100 for second, and a total of $50 for third) at the annual Student Night Dinner held at Drexel University on 12 April 1994. The keynote speaker at that dinner was Merrill W. Buckley, Jr., the 1992 IEEE President and a Philadelphia Section stalwart. All awards were contributed by the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

Two of the six judges were the co-chairmen of the Student Activities Committee: Dr. Barney Adler and Dr. Pritpal Singh. The other four were from the Professional Communication Chapter: Edwin J. Podell (Chairman), Jack Friedman, Janet Rochester, and John Schanely.

The abstract of the first-place paper is as follows: "This paper describes a virtual reality (VR) system that was designed and built from scratch by students, and was assembled from readily available parts, the total cost of which is only a few hundred dollars (excluding computers). The design incorporates an ultrasonic tracking system to determine, with sub-centimeter accuracy, the three-dimensional position and orientation of a helmet, [and] possesses an update rate of better than 15 Hz. The graphics portion of the project uses PEX/X-Windows on a UNIX workstation, and should prove sufficient for interesting demonstrations and future student research." ◀

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Your *Newsletter* comes to my attention regularly. I once served as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee back when the group was first founded. We were having fun planning symposia for Boston, Washington, and even Lansing, Michigan. Then, one day, we planned a dual symposium on the East and West coast simultaneously. AND NOW, you are even in Russia!

Your request for a new name has been a perennial one. We argued THAT issue back in the 50's when we first began. I have always believed that the mission of the PCS is different from that of the other such groups of IEEE. Whereas the other groups are largely sharing specific technical information to a group already "in-the-know", the PCS group is for all comers and is not so much a body of technical information as a guiding force on how to present information. In other words, every other group can use these services including the group itself. Sort of introspection squared.

But I send you another idea. I happen to be an organbuilder. We have a society, the International Society of Organbuilders. The ISO has been issuing technical journals for many years in multilanguage form. I enclose two pages from an issue of 1987 [not reproduced here; Ed.]. Notice that we have it in German and English. If you had written your paper in Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, or any other language, there would have been three columns with the original language in the center and the German and English version on each side.

What I am asking is, if such a small and close-knit society as organbuilders can offer their technical publications in a multilingual format, why can't the bigger and much more significant technologies also provide multilanguage publications? Physics, mathematics, electrical engineering, chemistry!!

Maybe, the PCS should do some encouraging along these lines to promote greater interchange among the several language groups.

Best wishes for your continued success.

Joe Chapline
Newbury, New Hampshire   ◀

Technical Writing Course Offered via Satellite

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is offering the third course in its series on technical writing leading towards a certificate for the package of four courses. The courses are all delivered via satellite with both video and audio return via telephone lines. Video compression allows students at distant sites to see one another during classes.

The first two courses were Communication Research I (usability testing) and Typography and Document Layout. The fall '94 course is User Documentation and Interface Design. The course scheduled for spring '95 is the Document Production Process.

This fall students are enrolled from IBM at sites in the United States and Canada and from Perkin-Elmer in Connecticut. Though students are separated by distance, international borders and several time zones, class discussion is lively. Students are able to show their class work to others either via compressed video or by faxing work to Rensselaer for display via satellite. Students are also able to communicate with professors by e-mail and will be able to correspond with each other by e-mail once the class directory of student e-mail addresses is complete.

Students on- and off-campus are able to review course material prior to examinations by watching videotapes of classes. This is of particular benefit to on-campus students who would not have this resource with typical classes. Professors are supported in their instruction by a staff which runs video cameras and generates high-quality graphics and, in some cases, animated illustrations of course concepts.

Rensselaer is considering expanding its course offerings to support a full satellite-delivered master's in technical communication and to offer courses in conjunction with other universities. The satellite technical communications certificate is one of several educational programs offered by Rensselaer. Rensselaer also offers graduate degrees in engineering and management by satellite.

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Say Again?

This headline caught my eye in *Nature* just after I returned from Banff.

> Discord over IPCC meeting reopens climate dispute
>
> *Nature*, 371: 467
> (6 October 1994)

It took me a few seconds to realize that others use "IPCC" besides PCS; in this case, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
—*D.E.N.*

Proverbs for Proofreading

by Peggy Smith

Love is nearsighted. When you are the writer, editor, typist, or type-setter, proofreading your own work, you will almost surely suffer from myopia. You are too close to see all the errors. Get help.

Familiarity breeds content. When you see the same copy again and again through different stages of production and revision, you may well miss new errors. Fresh eyes are needed.

If it's as plain as the nose on your face, everybody can see it but you. Where is the reader most likely to notice errors? In a headline; in a title; in the first line, first paragraph, or first page of copy; and in the top lines of a new page. These are precisely the places where editors and proofreaders are most likely to miss errors. Take extra care at every beginning.

Mistakery loves company. Errors often cluster. When you find one, look hard for others nearby.

When you change horses in midstream, you can get wet. It's easy to overlook an error set in type that is different from the text face you are reading. Watch out when type changes to all caps, italics, bold-face, small sizes, and large sizes. Watch out when underlines appear in typewritten copy.

Glass houses invite stones. Beware of copy that discusses errors. When the subject is typo-graphical quality, the copy must be typographically perfect. When the topic is errors in grammar or spelling, the copy must be error-free. Keep alert for words like

typographical or *proofreading.* Double check and triple check.

The footbone conneckit to the kneebone? Numerical and alpha-betical sequences often go awry. Check for omissions and duplica-tions in page numbers, footnote numbers, or notations in outlines and lists. Check any numeration, anything in alphabetical order, and everything sequential (such as the path of arrows in a flow-chart).

It takes two to boogie. An open-ing parenthesis needs a closing parenthesis. Brackets, quotation marks, and sometimes dashes, belong in pairs. Catch the bache-lors.

Every yoohoo deserves a yoohoo back. A footnote reference mark or a first reference to a table or an illustration is termed a call-out. Be sure a footnote begins on the same page as its callout. Be sure a table or illustration fol-lows its callout as soon as possi-ble.

Numbers can speak louder than words. Misprints in numerals (figures) can be catastrophic. Take extraordinary care with dol-lar figures and numbers in dates, statistics, tables, or technical text. Read all numerals character by character; for example, read "1979" as "one nine seven nine". Be sure any figures in your hand-writing are unmistakable.

Two plus two is twenty-two. The simplest math can go wrong. Do not trust figures giving percent-ages and fractions or the "total" lines in tables. Watch for mis-placed decimal points. Use your calculator.

Above all, never assume that all is well. As the saying goes, ass-u-me makes an ass out of u and me.

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Quailty Control

From a facsimile cover page (names changed to protect them and us):

SMITICKS, INC.
FORMALLY BUILDATRON

No, they don't have a casual and a formal name; they just used to be called "Buildatron"

—D.E.N.

forum95

Disappearing Borders
International conference for technical communicators
to be held
November 13–15, 1995
Westfalenhallen Dortmund, Germany

Forum 95 will examine current trends concerning

Writers/Designers/Media–Specialists in Communication
Language and Culture
Producer and User
Research and Industry Practice

CALL FOR ACTIVATORS

"HURRY" "HURRY" "HURRY"

To date 50 topics have been received for consideration.

If you want to participate *actively* in Forum 95 we invite you to send in a proposal **before February 1st, 1995.** By being an activator you gain from being able to choose your own subject – a subject which others are going to help you develop! You will also have an extra day before the conference to meet the other activators (at no extra cost) and to get acquainted with the conference methods to be used. Proposals are welcomed for all sorts of subjects sketched below:

Manuals	Professional Aspects
Production	Visual Aspects
New Media	Production
International Aspects	Other Fields

Proposals should contain the full name and address of the author(s), including phone and fax number and, if possible, E-mail address. It should have a title or an indication of the topic, as well as an indication of the sort of activity it is referring to. It should contain an abstract (for papers), a description (for exhibition participants), or an explanation (for Idea Market or brainstorming sessions proposals) of approximately 500 to 800 words (1 to 2 pages).

All proposals will be reviewed by the program committee. Those who submit a proposal will receive a reaction before March 1st 1995.

Please consider the possibility to propose more than one activity!

PROGRAM

Forum 95 is a conference for:

> Technical communicators
> Communication researchers
> Industrial trainers
> Communication managers

The central theme of Forum 95 will be:

Disappearing Borders

This theme reflects the central aim of the organising parties to fill the gaps between

- technical communication in different countries and cultures
- producers and consumers of technical artifacts
- writers and other disciplines related to technical communication
- researchers and practitioners in the field of technical communication

The program will include traditional Forum–aspects

- Idea Market
- Brainstorming sessions
- Sort-and-build groups
- discussion groups, network lunches, production groups, workshops, etc.

as well as conventional congress activities

- plenary lectures (keynote speakers)
- paper presentations

MARKET PLACE

CALL FOR EXHIBITORS

Two types of exhibitions will be provided:

1 Consultants in technical communication show their services. This exhibition gives the opportunity to be informed about the market situation, to establish contacts, and to get advice.

2 Producers of software and hardware related to technical communication show their products. Conference participants can get an overview of existing systems that have been designed to ease their job, and they can compare and test them.

If you are interested in being an exhibitor, please contact the Forum 95 office in Stuttgart for further details.

Prices are from 220DM per square metre (minimum 6-square metres, maximum 20 square metres). Only 150 square metres remain available.

REGISTRATION/INFORMATION

For further information or submission of proposal complete the form below.

Forum 95 is jointly organised by the societies for technical communication from:

IEEE	ISTC Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators	stic	tekom Gesellschaft für technische Kommunikation e.V.
USA/Canada	United Kingdom	The Netherlands	Germany

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Interacting Communication Conference
Dortmund, Germany
13–15 November 1995

Yes, please keep me informed about Forum 95

☐ I am considering presenting a paper
  Possible topic (optional) _____

☐ I will likely just attend the conference

☐ I'm not sure that I will be able to attend, but please keep me informed

Name _____
Institute or Organisation _____
Address _____

Country _____
Post Code _____
Tel (___) _____

Fax to:
Germany
+711 650767

Mail to:
tekom (Forum 95)
Markelstr.34
D–70193
Stuttgart 1
Germany

Calendar 1995

23–26 April

**Society for Technical Communication
42nd Annual Conference**
Washington Sheraton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
For information, call (703) 522-4114

6–9 May

Council of Biology Editors 39th Annual Meeting
Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, Missouri
For information, call (312) 201-0101

6–9 June

43rd Technical Writers' Institute
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Contact: Elizabeth Keyes
Dept. of Language, Literature &
   Communication, Sage Labs
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, NY 12180-3590
Phone: (518) 276-2828
E-mail: Elizabeth_Keyes@mts.rpi.edu

9–13 July

**Eighth International Conference
   of the International Federation of
   Science Editors**
School of Biology, University of Barcelona
For information: IFSE-8 Secretariat,
Apartado 16009 K–08080,
Barcelona, Spain
Phone/facs: +34 3-448 2373
E-mail: guerrero@porthos.bio.ub.es

13–15 November

**FORUM 95 International
   Communication Conference**
Dortmund, Germany
For Information: Brigitte Beuttenmüeller,
Markelstrasse 34,
D–70193 Stuttgart 1, Germany
Phone: +711 65 42 35
Facs: +711 65 07 67

IEEE Professional Communication Society
NEWSLETTER
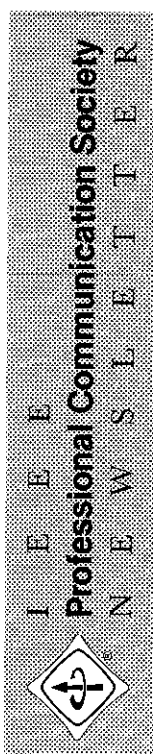
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