

Inside

From the Editor	2
President's Column	3
AdCom Election	4
Highlights of April AdCom Meeting	5
Chapter News	10
Flocci...pilation	11
Good Intent, Poor Outcome	12
Net Notes	13
Tools of the Trade	15
David C. Leonard Obituary	16
How to Communicate with SMEs	17
The Writer-Editor Relationship	19
History	21
Forum 2003 Call for Presenters	23
IPCC 2002 Keynote Speaker	24

Mehr Licht: The Photographs of O. Winston Link

By Ron Nelson

On his deathbed, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) is said to have uttered "*Mehr Licht*" ("more light").* Whether he was only calling for more light to be able to see as his visual powers were in decline or foreseeing a heavenly radiance is unclear. What *is* clear, though, is that the idea of providing more light on any given subject is important in every field of endeavor. O. Winston Link understood that point profoundly and used that knowledge to create memorable photographs of Norfolk and Western trains, mostly in black and white. Professional communicators also need to grasp that idea when putting black on white in the form of documents intended to inform readers of meaningful content. Among other tactics, they can use the light of well chosen words to direct readers' attention to what is important, thereby fulfilling the potential of the documents.

What O. Winston Link—he liked his father's acronym for him: OWL—did with a camera, professional communicators can do with words. Key concepts, sensitivities, and skills can be developed as the writer becomes more and more adept at assessing situations and drawing on inner resources to illuminate subject matter. Indeed, professional communicators can learn much about directing words to shed light advantageously by doing a brief warm-up exercise before launching into subject matter and by studying Link's remarkable photographs, which leave an indelible impression on the viewer.

The exercise that will help provide focus by ensuring unity and coherence in documents is simply to think of the subject matter of the document (or of a subcategory) and, on a piece of paper, put as many words related to the topic as possible. Then, in the writing process, the writer can draw on the list from time to time, thereby keeping the mind concentrated on the subject, and incorporate some of the words as she or he attempts to enlighten (that word is no accident) the reader on the subject. To illustrate the technique, I deliberately interweave a few words related to trains (after preparing my list of words for potential inclusion), since O. Winston Link was famous for his train photographs. Words like "engine," "wheel," "derail," "couple," "steam," "headlight," "timetable," "station," and "engineer" could be strategically inserted on occasion.

It is prudent to intersperse the words inconspicuously—one does not, for example, want to draw attention to direct elements of coherence with quotation marks—so as to maintain a natural feel to the column. For that matter, a writer does not want to overdo any single technique, because to do so would convey artificiality. Ideally, a

* According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3rd ed., p. 230, Goethe actually said, "*Macht doch den zweiten Fensterladen auch auf, damit mehr Licht hereinkomme*" (Open the second shutter so that more light can come in).



Rudy Joenk

Anniversary

This is PCS's 45th year. In this year's *Newsletter* issues I am extending by five years the lists of historic data that first appeared throughout the issues of 1997, which marked our 40th anniversary. On page 21 is an extended list of PCS award winners. If you'd like to contribute or suggest a recollection, please send a note to rjoenk@ieee.org.

Instant Fame

Maybe you thought I'd given up on this but I was just giving you a rest (there were two conferences last year). This is how we get coverage of our IPCCs for the *Newsletter*.

IPCC 2002 is drawing near, 17-20 September, and I offer **INSTANT FAME** to volunteer authors who write just a paragraph or two about some of the presentations they attend. The idea is to capture a point of view, Q&A, discussion, etc. that isn't in the proceedings. Photographers, too, are eligible for this award. Up-close shots are best. If all of you reporters and picture takers work *fast* right after (or during) the conference, we might get the fruit of your labors

into the November/December issue rather than waiting until January.

AdCom

Please read the notice of the new election process on page 4. If you can't access our Web site to participate, you can request hard copy from the member named in the notice.

The next meetings are online on 27 July and at IPCC 2002 in Portland, Oregon, on 20 and 21 September. Check the Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/>) for details.

Note that the May/June *Newsletter* on our Web site as a PDF file has active e-mail and Web links. Issues are now being posted approximately one month after distribution of the print version. Table of contents links also will be active when this issue is posted.

Potpourri

Empathetic thoughts in an unexpected place: Sharon Korbeck, editor of *Antique Trader*, in her 13 March editorial decried "the linguistic

jungle of our [her] industry," and concluded, "it's a mess."... "Seems everything is 'rare,' 'antique,' or 'scarce.'" Dealers sell antique clock's and *Hot Wheel's*. How about some Depression glass? People in the industry need to "brush up on English 101. Why is this so important? Believability and reputation."

Deadlines are the 15th of the odd-numbered months.

Ms. Korbeck's words evidently struck a responsive chord. Succeeding issues of *Antique Trader* contained many supportive letters to the editor. For example,

"I see so many items listed as 'perfect' ...except for the small chip on the lid." "Outrageous and unbelievable sales tags, auction listings, and signs: 'chester drawers,' 'etta jay,' 'framed pitcher,' 'art nuvoo,' 'art decko.'" "We Buy and Sale."

"Whether it is a lack of education or a 'don't care' attitude, the written word speaks volumes about the writer." Sound familiar?

Banished words and phrases on Lake Superior State University's annual list, with comment by Claire Martin in *The Denver Post*:

(continued on page 7)

IEEE Professional Communication Society

Officers

Beth Moeller, President
Ed Clark, Vice President
Jean-luc Doumont, Secretary
Steve Robinson, Treasurer

Staff

Rudy Joenk, Editor

- **PCS IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter** is published bimonthly by the Professional Communication Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., 3 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016. One dollar per member per year is included in the society fee for each member of the Professional Communication Society. Printed in U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices.
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- **Postmaster:** Send address changes to IEEE Professional Communication Society Newsletter, IEEE, 445 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08855.
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Elizabeth Weise Moeller

Reinventing PCS

The administrative committee (AdCom) of PCS held a very productive meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, 12 and 13 April. The primary focus could have been finances, but after a brief discussion of the situation, we decided instead to focus on the positive—what we do well and what we can improve upon. The results were interesting.

The process was fairly simple. After each committee report, we spent time in breakout groups discussing what works well, what we see others doing well, and what we can do to improve in this area. The breakout groups reported to the whole group at the end of the session and we created a list of things to do.

What We Do Well

There are three things that immediately jump out as PCS strengths: the *Transactions on Professional Communication*, the *Newsletter*, and our annual conferences. Even though we do these well, we found ways to improve upon them.

Transactions

We have a consistently strong *Transactions* and the Interface feature is starting to pick up steam. Editor Kim Sydow Campbell and AdCom member Mike Bridgwood are researching adding a tutorials section. Some other IEEE transactions offer sections like this and we feel this addition would be beneficial to our members. Watch the *Transactions* and *Newsletter* for more information if we choose to add this section.

Newsletter

We know from past research that most of our members read the *Newsletter* cover to cover when it arrives. We also know that many people save back issues and use them for reference regularly. Unfortunately, the *Newsletter* has no revenue stream of its own. The circulation is too small for most advertisers. We are going to research three avenues: cost reduction, conversion to a magazine, and sales to nonmembers. Since the AdCom meeting, we have already identified almost USD 4000 in annual savings.

The magazine conversion discussion will be a year-long process. If you are interested in helping with this committee, please complete the volunteer form on our Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/volunteer.html>) and indicate that you want to help with the magazine conversion discussion. This is only in the discussion phase right now—no decision will be made for some time.

Conferences

The annual International Professional Communication Conference (17-20 September in Portland, Oregon, this year) has always been one of our highlights. Conferences are well run and often provide a surplus to assist with society operations, such as helping subsidize the *Newsletter*. Historically, conferences have focused on topics of interest to technical communicators and technical communication educators (e.g., single sourcing, Web-based

education, usability, and writing techniques). We are planning to add new specialty conferences that focus more on what engineers need to help them communicate in their day-to-day activities.

Volunteer
...vote

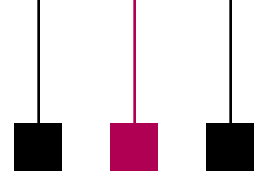
These conferences could be one or two days in length and could be tailored to the needs of a specific region. Topics could range from writing proposals to creating Web pages to presentation skills or any other topic within the realm of professional communication. PCS members are needed here to identify topics of interest and to help organize for a region. We already have a network of people to help with finances, location negotiation, and speaker identification. The rest would be up to a volunteer in a region to identify the needs and target market for advertising purposes. If you have found topics that interest you in the past, this is your chance to help bring that meeting to a location near you.

What We Can Improve Upon

Member services was the area that could most use improvement. To that end, the AdCom identified three new services: Web education, an improved Web site, and new publications.

Web Education

Nancy Coppola's ad hoc Web education committee is putting together a short demonstration Web-education product for our Web site. This would be offered free to members. Other topics of interest will be developed and these will be offered to PCS



members for a nominal fee (and we really mean nominal), IEEE members (who are not PCS members) for a slightly larger fee, and non-IEEE/non-PCS members for an even larger fee. Again, we can always use topic suggestions.

Improved Web Site

Our current Web site serves everyone, but we have a very diverse membership. New architecture of the Web site will help people find information more quickly. There will be areas of interest for engineers, areas for technical communicators, areas for members only, and information for non-members. The members-only areas will contain useful references. The goal is to turn the Web site into a portal from which our members can find just about anything they need.

First, however, we need content. We need topics; the first suggestion is an acronym dictionary. What other reference material would you like to see on the PCS Web site? As the content is created, we will start rebuilding the site. PCS members are needed to help create the content. Please volunteer to help with this project.

New Publications

I have already mentioned the possibility of converting the *Newsletter*

into a magazine. We are also gathering e-mail addresses for an online newsletter. The frequency would be at least monthly and the content would include new resources on the Web site, abstracts of tutorials or articles from the *Transactions*, and timely information for our members. There will also be new advertisements, new brochures, and documentation bundles that travel with the PCS trade show booth.



To-do list

What You Can Do

Help. IEEE societies are volunteer driven.

There are no stipends and PCS does not have any administrative help. Everything is done through volunteers. If you would like to see these projects move forward, please consider helping out. Let us know what project you are interested in and how much time you have to help—it can be as little as an hour a week. Committees are forming and tasks are being assigned. Members of the administrative committee really need help to get these projects off the ground.

Reminder: Don't forget to vote! By the time you read this, the electronic voting booths will be open for next year's AdCom.

AdCom Election Notice

The Professional Communication Society constitution and bylaws were amended recently (see notice in the January/February 2002 *Newsletter*) to provide direct election of three administrative committee (AdCom) members each year by members of the society at large. (Three others are to be elected annually by the current AdCom.)

The AdCom is composed of 18 volunteers who work to assure that our society serves its members, the IEEE, and the field of technical and professional communication. The society Web site contains information about candidates standing for election to the 2003-2005 term (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/candidates>).

Members of PCS should cast their votes for the candidates of their choice by 1 September at <http://www.ieeepcs.org/voting.php3>. If you cannot access information on the Web site, please request* a hard copy ballot and information about candidates from:

Kim Sydow Campbell
Box 870225
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0225 USA

* Requests must be postmarked by 1 August and return ballots must be postmarked by 1 September.

“On a clear disk you can seek forever.”
—P. Denning

Highlights of the April AdCom Meeting

By Jean-luc Doumont

If Atlanta, Georgia, suggests year-round sunshine to you, think again. For its spring meeting on 12 and 13 April, the Professional Communication Society administrative committee (AdCom) had to face the full spectrum of wet weather, from fog and drizzle to thunderstorm and down-pour. Our membership chair, Marj Davis, who had secured meeting space on the campus of Mercer University, insisted she had nothing to do with it. Anyway, it hardly mattered, for we did not go south on vacation; those of us on the AdCom have a job to do and we know it.

If you read the president's column in any of the last few issues of this *Newsletter*, you can easily guess the main theme of our April meeting: yes, indeed, PCS's difficult financial situation. You probably also know that PCS was doing fine, but that the IEEE was not. There lies our frustration, given that the IEEE can draw arbitrarily from our accounts and reserves. Still, our president, Beth Moeller, set the tone as soon as she called the meeting to order. Let us not waste two days complaining about a situation we cannot change; instead, let us rethink the way we do business, always with the same objective in mind: to serve our members well.



The art of note taking

If you want to improve an organization's financial situation, the recipe is simple: Increase revenues, decrease expenses. That is exactly what we aimed at in our brainstormings. Of course, we had to consider the balance between revenues and expenses in the short, medium, and long terms, lest today's cost cutting jeopardize tomorrow's revenue streams.

Membership

Perhaps the most difficult question we repeatedly faced is that of membership, for two reasons:

First, it is unclear how the size of our membership affects revenues and costs.

Clearly, the dues you pay do not cover the costs of the benefits you get, even after an unavoidable dues increase from USD 25 to 30 planned for 2003. At the same time, without members, there simply is no society. While a large membership is no objective per se (we know many of our members appreciate the conviviality of PCS compared to other, much larger societies), it influences our revenues indirectly: For example, more members probably mean more numerous and more successful conferences, although conferences also attract many nonmembers.

Second, as Marj Davis nicely put it, we are "intentionally schizophrenic":

We serve both professional communicators and communicating professionals, in particular, technically minded ones such as engineers. These two communities have different needs that we should attend to. In the future, and in addition to our annual conferences, we plan to organize *specialty conferences*, probably targeting technical communicators, and *workshops*, targeting engineers. We also plan to differentiate the two communities better in our marketing and recruiting efforts.

Publications

Among the benefits of belonging to PCS—and certainly not the least—are our two publications: the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* and this *Newsletter*.

The *Transactions* has the advantages and drawbacks of a scholarly journal:

It is not read as much as is the *Newsletter*, but it does generate revenue through the IEEE all-society periodicals package (ASPP). To expand readership of the *Transactions*, we could include abstracts or pointers to selected articles in an e-mail news-

letter (still to be created). And to attract more content and thus increase ASPP revenue, we could include tutorials, encourage submissions by engineers, and publish or rework proceedings articles from other conferences.

The *Newsletter* does not generate direct revenue, but it certainly gener-

Specialty conferences...
workshops...
e-mail newsletter...
IPCC in Ireland...
magazine...?

ates praise. Perhaps we can reduce costs by moving to an external printer or working in one color instead of two on some pages. Or perhaps we can generate revenue—and serve our members better, too—by evolving the *Newsletter* into a magazine over several years, while developing an e-mail newsletter with a different focus at the same time. Are we dreaming here? Perhaps, but we have decided that this dream is at least worth a feasibility study.

International Outreach

To serve our members well we should recognize that about 40 percent of them are outside North America. Among other efforts we set up a committee for international outreach and services and we are planning our 2005 conference in Ireland. We also want to support a subgroup of our members in India, who might want to set up a national conference there.

Michael Bridgwood

Future Meetings

The AdCom will convene again twice in 2002: by conference call on 27 July and in conjunction with IPCC 2002 in Portland, Oregon, on 20-21 September.

As for 2003, we will convene by conference call on 25-26 January; in Dallas, Texas, on 17-18 May; and in conjunction with IPCC 2003 in Orlando, Florida, on 20-21 September.

All PCS members are welcome to attend AdCom meetings. Interested in seeing the workings of PCS from the inside? Just get in touch with the PCS secretary for practical arrangements.

Jean-luc Doumont is PCS secretary.



From left: *George Hayhoe, Ed Clark, Jean-luc Doumont, Kim Campbell, Beth Moeller*



Luke Maki



From left: *Kim Campbell, Julia Williams, Bernadette Longo*



Marj Davis



Mark Haselkorn, Sherry Steward

From the Editor

(continued from page 2)

Forewarn: But if not, then warn afterward.

Possible choices: No need to include the impossible choices.

Rename it something else: Be sure not to rename it the same.

Sworn affidavit: If it's not sworn, it's not an affidavit.

Unprecedented new: Not to be confused with the unprecedented old.

When you have lots of time for data entry to set the stage, try zipping (with PKZIP or WinZip or whatever compression program is on your computer) the same text in multiple languages or texts by the same author or texts by several authors. A group of Italian physicists reported in *Physical Review Letters* that they could use the zipping programs to distinguish among authors and languages.

The *Washington Post* annually asks readers to modify dictionary words by one letter and to supply a definition for the result:

Dopeler Effect: Tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.

Giraffiti: Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.

Glibido: All talk and no action.

Hipatitis: Terminal coolness.

Intoxication: Euphoria at getting a tax refund.

"Please Confirm: Are you sure you don't want to cease the abort process?" A Windows dialog submit-

ted to the Backspace feature in *PC Magazine*.

"Every country in the Western world uses more paper today, on a per-capita basis, than it did ten years ago." Malcolm Gladwell in *The New Yorker*.

Reinvented job title: Writers are "literature service providers." David Pogue in *The Denver Post*.

Sign in a shop window on London's High Street: "All the items in this window are not for sale." *World Wide Words*.

"These days a 'lingua franca' is any language that is borrowed to let people communicate who otherwise don't have a tongue in common. The original Lingua Franca (the 'Frankish Tongue') was a pidgin or trade language used by merchants who traded in the Levant and then later along the Barbary Coast. It contains elements of Italian with French, Greek, Arabic, and Spanish. It is the oldest pidgin known, with written records from the latter part of the 14th century. Alan D. Corré has put his book *A Glossary of Lingua Franca* online at <http://www.uwm.edu/~corre/franca/go.html> together with a history and introduction." Michael Quinion in *World Wide Words*.

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 (boldface, 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 can be used as examples (<http://www.ieee pcs.org/newsletter.html>).

I prefer to receive articles by e-mail; most WordPerfect, Word (except XP), RTF (rich text format), 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 September for the November/December issue, 15 November for the January/February 2003 issue, etc. You won't be far off (and never late) if you observe the Ides of September, November, January, and so on.

Mehr Licht

(continued from page 1)

writer wants the reader to say silently something like, “Oh, I see. These words connect and the writer is working to ensure continuity.”

That observation, of course, could be rephrased: “Each sentence is like a boxcar with information inside. Each boxcar is coupled with every other one. If there is no coupling device or link between sentences, the reader will be unable to follow the writer’s train of thought. The reader will be off track, the message derailed.” Notice how the rephrasing is far too heavy handed. A smoother version would be: “Oh, I see. These words connect and the writer is working to keep me on track.”

Many of O. Winston Link’s photographs are immortalized in two fine hardback books, each of which sells for the amazingly low price of USD 19.98: (I) *Steam, Steel & Stars*

(text by Tim Hensley, afterword by Thomas H. Garver, 1987; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998) and (II) *The Last Steam Railroad in America* (text by Thomas H. Garver, 1995; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000).

Since Ogle Winston Link’s personality was an integral part of his photographs (visual documents), it is important to know a few facts about his background and life. The maternal side of his family was prestigious: Both Alexander Ogle and John Winston Jones were members of the U.S. House of Representatives in the mid-19th century, Jones serving as Speaker of the House during the 28th Congress. That excellence is reflected in Link’s deep commitment to quality in his work. OWL’s father was especially influential in that he taught his son how to work with wood and

tools, encouraged in him a wry sense of humor, and took him to many places so that he would have a wide variety of experiences.

Link’s affable nature is suggested by the fact that he was class president all four years he was enrolled at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. His ability to get along with people served him well, especially when enlisting local people to be in his photographs. Link graduated from college in 1937 with a degree in civil engineering. But it was his theatrical bent—he freely admits that he was a “clown” (II, p. 135), which emerged in his imitating professors and telling stories—that landed him a job. When performing at an annual newspaper banquet, he was spotted by George Hammond, an executive for Carl Byoir and Associates, one of the



Fig. 1: “Ole Maud” curtsies to her iron counterpart. From *Steam, Steel & Stars*, ©1987 O. Winston Link. Published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Fig. 2: Link’s special touch illuminates both the locomotive and the station. From *The Last Steam Railroad in America*, ©1995 O. Winston Link. Published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

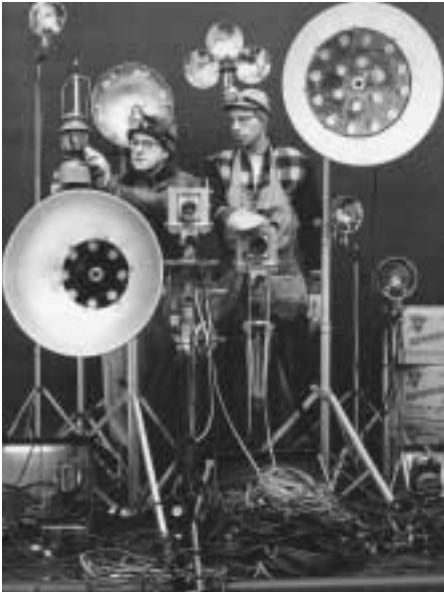


Fig. 3: *Photographic storyteller Link (left) with an assistant and some of their equipment.*

From Steam, Steel & Stars, ©1987 O. Winston Link. Published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

largest public relations firms in the country. He was offered a job as a commercial photographer, and his career was launched. That job required photography with a flair, a sense of drama—traits on which Link thrived. As Thomas Garver says of Link’s public relations photos, they had to be “instructional and informational. They had to tell a story, no matter how far-fetched it might seem, and they had to have visual excitement and drama” (II, p. 138).

Link’s railroad photographs are effective because they capture a rich content in an instant in time—as of

course every document should do—and they do so dramatically. The photographs almost always eschew “the wedge shot”: “the undramatic three-quarter view of a train made by a photographer standing at a 30- to 45-degree angle to the tracks. In these images the front and side of the locomotive were most prominent, with the rest of the train tapering like a wedge to a distant vanishing point” (II, p. 38). Link was uninterested in such shots; rather he tried to put the locomotive and train into a context. Since tracks often went by houses, sometimes down main streets of towns, sometimes by swimming pools, Link strove to place the train in a living environment, which often involved not only physical setting but also local people.

He was particularly adept at conveying the interaction of technology and humanity. In one shot he shows Engine 382 passing a line of laundry drying outside a house, the engineer reducing the smoke to avoid soiling the laundry (II, p. 72). In another photograph (Fig. 1), a horse is lowering his head as if in obeisance to the iron horse approaching the Green Cove station (I, p. 126). Another shot at a railroad crossing shows lights that almost appear to be eyes watching the scene (I, p. 54). For that photograph, which won first prize in the professional class of the 1957 Graflex International Photo Contest, Link strung over a third of a mile of wire to set off 36 flash bulbs. In yet

another, a couple stands in a gazebo with their backs to the camera as they watch a Norfolk and Western Class J pull the last steam train to Bristol on 31 December 1957 (I, p. 92). And in one of Link’s most famous photographs, a train goes by a track-side swimming pool, as three girls flirt with the photographer’s nephew, who sits poolside (I, pp. 122-123).

His photos of the Norfolk and Western Train No. 2 at Waynesboro, Virginia (II, pp. 18-19), provide an excellent glimpse of Link’s commitment to his profession. He took his first photograph for this five-year project on 21 January 1955. The photograph is good, but not as good as the one he took of the same scene three months later. The earlier shot has some lighting but leaves the interior of the station dark and the building in the background nondescript, as a lone person is about to transfer a message to the engineer; the later shot (Fig. 2) has lighting within the station, lights playing on the second story of the building in the background, people waiting on the platform, and lights down low to accentuate the wheels of the locomotive and put its front into greater contrast. The angle of the light to the far left reflects off the empty doorway in the earlier shot; in the later shot, it plays slightly to the left of the corner of the building, thereby throwing dramatic glancing shadows. In the second photograph there is even a horizontal dimension to the lights that lead the

Use the light of well chosen words to direct readers’ attention to what is important.

Philadelphia

By John R. Schanely

In April the PCS Philadelphia chapter held its annual student writing contest for Delaware Valley area college students. First prize went to

Suor Kim of Swarthmore College for "Analog Filter Design in Hardware Using Evolutionary Computation." Second prize went to Aditya

Chaubal of Rowan University for "Design of a Customizable Low Cost Digital Storage Oscilloscope." Aditya went on to submit his paper to the region 2 student paper contest, held at the University of Scranton, and took third prize in that contest. In the Philadelphia chapter, third prize went to Laura A. Zager of Swarthmore College for "Designing an ECG Receiver-Transmitter." Laura also went on to the region 2 contest and received honorable mention for her entry.



John Schanely, chair of the Philadelphia chapter; Suor Kim; Aditya Chaubal; Laura A. Zager; Barney Adler, chair of student activities

This annual event encourages development of writing skills in engineering students. About 65 percent of the judging criteria address communication aspects of the papers. Certificates and awards of USD 200, 150, and 100 are given for first, second, and third place winners, respectively.

Mehr Licht

(continued from page 9)

viewer's eyes directly to the headlight of the engine, paralleling the horizontality of the train itself.

Professional communicators can benefit from studying Link's photographs in several ways. We can:

1. Be reminded of the value of having a genial nature, a trait that should be an integral part of oral and scribal communication.
2. Decide what is important for the viewer or reader to see and focus on; then fit these perspectives into a frame.
3. Be thorough about planning a document, including paying close attention to detail.
4. Put information into an environment or context that has a fullness about it, rather than simply relate information or data as if in isolation.
5. Envision the final product as the result of a multiplicity of factors, a vital element of which is the deliberate playing of carefully chosen, relevant words on subject matter, thereby highlighting its important aspects.
6. Check the setup (Fig. 3), making sure there is sufficient backup, whether Sylvania Blue Dot No. 2s, proper wiring, extra cameras, and power sources, or examples, data, evidence, and research to establish one's case. Professional communicators can, in short, gather enough fuel to enable the embodiment of their train of thought to arrive on schedule at its destination.

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What, Standard?

By Michael Brady

Correctness arguably is the principal focus of technical communication as practiced by PCS members. Correctness of content is straightforward: The rhetorical maps we draw should agree with the technical and scientific terrain they describe. Correctness of our medium, the English language, is another matter. There is no standard for assessing it.

Or is there? What about “standard English”? There are academic committees that promote it, such as PROSE (PROMotion of standard English) of the National University of Singapore (NUS). In the U.S. and in other English-speaking countries, educationists, such as the Illinois Philological Association, lobby for its being taught in schools on a par with foreign-language immersion programs, to enhance the communication skills of students speaking “nonstandard English.” Sellers of software programs in countries with other national languages invariably offer two versions of each program package, one in the native language and one in standard English, sometimes called “International English,” abbreviated INT in catalog listings. But can standard English be concisely defined; does it really exist?

Certainly, standard English must exist, because it has a host of enemies. Academics of Marxist persuasion argue that standard English actually is a class-based dialect, which in the mid-19th century was touted by elitists as a means of

keeping the masses in their place. Growing up with a language socially ranked as inferior imprints the acceptance of a lower station in society. Academic liberals profess “linguistic equality,” in which any language is said to be as good as any other, and all languages can accommodate all concepts, given the inclination and time needed to change. In academia and in professional publications, including this *Newsletter*, arguments rage as to the differences

Efficient communication is a tool of empowerment.

between varieties of English, most famously between American and British English. And some linguistic experts claim superiority of various dialects of English for their users over standard English.

“Rubbish,” says Professor John Honey, in a book* that has become the hot potato of the standard English controversy. In the first paragraph of chapter one he sets forth a simple definition: Standard English is “the language in which this book is written, which is essentially the same form of English used in books and newspapers all over the world.” Aside from clues offered by differences in spelling, verb tenses, use of prepositions, and names for some things, there’s no indelible stamp that sets works in standard English apart from each other. The basics of standard English are centuries old, and it grew unregulated.

* John Honey, *Language Is Power, The Story of Standard English and Its Enemies*, London and Boston, Faber and Faber, 1997, ISBN 0-571-19047-2 paperback.

In recent history, some languages, such as Hebrew, have been expanded to include new vocabulary but, in general, the infusion of new concepts into a language takes generations. These days, whenever small languages are faced with extensive change, they are swamped, and their young speakers turn to more powerful languages like English. Even within the English-speaking world there are trends toward a common denominator: In the U.K., “program,” the American English spelling, now is used in preference to “programme” when speaking of a computer program.

Though persuasive, is Honey right? What’s wrong with a statement in any one of the nine varieties of English selectable in the international release of Microsoft Word 97: Australian, Canadian, Caribbean, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, South Africa, U.K., U.S. or, for that matter, in any current dialect of the language? Why shouldn’t *The Economist*, the benchmark periodical of British English, continue in its style? Should there be a standard and, if so, should it define what’s right for all users? Perhaps not. Nonetheless, like it or not, efficient communication is a tool of empowerment. And Honey shares the blueprint of that tool, as the first three words of the book title infer. That alone recommends the book for us professional communicators, who can profit from knowing the blueprint of the tool we increasingly use, wherever we live, whatever dialect we may speak.



Jean-luc Doumont

Harry Potter and the Secondary Audience

Adapting to our audience—a fundamental principle of professional communication—is easy, as long as we have but one. At least, it is easy in theory; in practice, we probably all know subject matter experts who seem incapable of addressing a lay audience in intelligible terms. Still, this endeavor is nothing compared to that of addressing a double audience: for example, one consisting of both specialists and lay people. How can we keep everyone interested at all times, without including information that specialists might find boring or skipping information that lay people might very much need?

A preliminary question, of course, is whether we *should* keep everyone interested. Sometimes, only part of the audience matters for our purpose and we can decide to focus on them. Ph.D. degree students, for example, would be well advised to gear their dissertation orals toward the jury of specialists, not toward the nonspecialist friends who came to show moral support.

For written documents, however, matters are less clear-cut, especially when we analyze the audience in terms of their familiarity, not with the content, but with the context. Readers *here and now*, who can be assumed to know the context, form a primary audience, whereas readers farther away in space or in time form a secondary one. If our documents are archived to safeguard corporate memory, secondary readers do matter, even if they seem unimportant for our more immediate purpose.

Participants of my training programs have difficulty addressing both primary and secondary readers in the same document. They typically err in two extremes, each time with good intentions but unsatisfactory outcome: Either they bring their primary readers directly to the point and thus provide too little context for secondary readers to get any point at all, or they first explain the context with the details that secondary readers might need and thus fail to interest their primary readers. Any compromise, they fear, would lose *both* audiences.

To address two audiences, we must balance information that is new to all and information that is new to some. One way to keep everyone interested is simply to ensure that each sentence states an interesting idea—that is, an idea that is interesting to all—while including information that may or may not be

new to all. As an example, consider the sentence, *The AdCom met in Atlanta in April*. For readers who may not know what the AdCom is, we might be tempted to explain it first: *The AdCom is the leadership of PCS. It met in Atlanta in April*. For readers who do know what the AdCom is, however, the first sentence is not exactly catchy. A single sentence works better: *The AdCom, which is the leadership of PCS, met in Atlanta in April*.

The solution, in other words, often involves complex (but not complicated) sentences, stating the “new to all” in the main clause and including the “new to some” in a subordinate one.

Adventures narrated in installments, as in a series of novels, face a similar double-audience problem. Each novel in the series would advantageously stand on its own (for commercial reasons, among others). At the same time, it must not give readers of previous installments an unpleasant feeling of *déjà vu*.

Among recent novels, the now famous *Harry Potter* series certainly meets the challenge through subtle redundancy; one can thus enjoy any volume in isolation or all volumes in sequence. For example, volume one establishes at some length how Harry got a scar shaped like a bolt of lightning on his forehead; volume four introduces the scar with the sentence, *The old scar on his forehead, which was shaped like a bolt of lightning, was burning beneath his fingers...* If you knew that Harry had such a scar, you nevertheless learn the interesting fact that it was burning. If you did not know about Harry’s scar, now you do.

Including secondary readers without turning off primary ones is not the only quality of J. K. Rowling’s novels, but it is certainly a striking one—one found, alas, in precious few professional documents. And yet you don’t have to be a wizard to put that simple idea into practice.

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

If you did not know about Harry’s scar, now you do.

Search Engine Positioning—It’s a Whole New Ball Game

By Elizabeth Weise Moeller

I’ve discussed search engine positioning in the past. It used to be that clearly defining keywords, putting them in your META tags, and carefully wording title bars and home page content was enough to guarantee you good placement in search engines. Now, though, with so many Web sites out there competing for the same audience, and search engine profitability in question, the search engines and directories have moved to new business models. With these new models come new opportunities for businesses to advertise and better position their Web sites.

The Update

About a year ago I discussed the mergers, acquisitions, and pay-for-inclusion models we were seeing. In the past year things seem to have settled down on that front. The merged companies have had time to settle into new routines and the pay-for-inclusion sites have had a chance to see whether their new business model works for them.

Merger Update

The strongest search engine/directory to come out of the merger mania of 2000 is Google (<http://www.google.com>). In fact, the word “google” is starting to appear in American English. A recent episode of *The West Wing* television show featured two characters discussing an issue with one of them asking if the other had “googled” the topic. Since that episode I have noticed more and more people saying they were going to “google” something—meaning

they would go to Google.com to search for Web sites on their topic.

MSN, Netscape, and AOL Search all continue to have strong followings due to the built-in clientele they have from subscribers to their online services.

Pay-for-Inclusion Update

The two big players in the pay-for-inclusion model last year were Yahoo’s Business-to-Business category and LookSmart. Yahoo has since moved from a one-time fee of USD 199 for a listing to a yearly fee of USD 299. Some industry experts, including veteran technology journalist Hal Plotkin (<http://www.halplotkin.com>), feel that these fees are the beginning of the end for search engines and directories. It’s still too soon to tell how that change will affect their listings, however.

Meanwhile, LookSmart moved from a one-time USD 199 fee to a one-time USD 299 fee to a recurring monthly fee to USD 0.15 every time someone clicks on a listing. Businesses that had paid the USD 199 or 299 were given USD 15 per month credit for the first year. LookSmart also added features that help businesses with their listings but charges USD 49 to update a listing to include those features. This is for small businesses only. Although LookSmart doesn’t define small business or medium-to-large business, the implication is that the line is drawn on

ability to pay. Medium-to-large businesses are expected to commit to a minimum of USD 2500 per month to be listed. Their listings are distinguished from the rest, but that is still a very hefty price to pay for search engine listings.

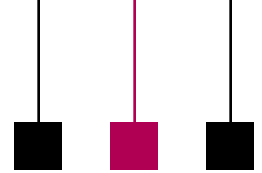
The New Players

Clickthrough becomes a very important concept with the new players. Clickthrough is defined as when someone clicks on your link in a search engine to get to your Web site. Originally, search engine advertising was expensive and limited to banner ads. Researchers quickly found those banner ads to have clickthrough rates of 0.1 percent or less. Though the advertisement of choice for a while, banner ads are no longer pulling in large advertising dollars.

Search engines typically drive only 10 percent of the traffic.

With the tightened economy and advertising dollars’ being specifically targeted, many companies started to move toward targeted keyword advertising—meaning their ad would appear when a specific keyword or phrase was entered in a search engine. This was initially very expensive to create and maintain. However, in the past year Google and Overture (<http://www.overture.com>) have implemented targeted keyword advertising affordable for large and small budgets alike.

Google’s program is called AdWords Select. With it, advertisers create an ad targeted to specific keywords. They then bid on those keywords with other advertisers for top posi-



tion. The more an advertiser is willing to pay per click, the higher their ad appears in the list. Advertisers bid against each other's clickthrough price.

For example, Capacitors 'R' Us might bid USD 0.10 per click, meaning they are willing to pay 10 cents every time someone clicks on their ad. Along comes Capacitor World, which is willing to pay 15 cents per click. Capacitor World now has the top spot in the advertisement listings until someone comes along and outbids them.

What is nice about Google's program is the ability to set limits and budgets. Google will only charge the top advertisers one cent more than the nearest bidder. In the example, Capacitor World would be charged only 11 cents per click until someone bids more. In this case, advertisers are essentially setting the maximum they are willing to pay to participate in the program. Our clients are seeing an average clickthrough rate of around one percent, which is significantly better than the 0.1 percent clickthrough rate that banner ads are receiving.

Overture's program is created specifically to supply ads to other search engines. The concept is very similar to Google's, with the exception that it provides advertisements for other search engines. Overture's targeted advertisements appear in Yahoo, AltaVista, AskJeeves, Net-

scape, MSN, and InfoSpace. Our clients are seeing about a 0.4 percent clickthrough rate here, but there is more competition in Overture's market.

What To Do

The first step is to continue submitting Web sites to traditional search engines that do not charge a fee. Participation in programs such as AdWords Select and Overture can help maximize exposure without breaking the bank.

Search engines started as advertiser-supported business models. With the dot-com bust and the downturn in the economy, advertising budgets have been slashed, providing less money. To stay in business, search engines

and directories needed to start charging for premium listing space.

Through all of this, though, there is one thing to remember. Look at server logs to see where Web-site hits are coming from. For most businesses, search engines typically drive only 10 percent of the traffic. The rest comes through name recognition, other advertising media, and linking from related sites. Organizations that rely on *just* search engines to drive their traffic will have problems down the road.

Elizabeth Weise Moeller is president of PCS. She owns Interactive Media Consulting, LLC (+1 518 587 5107, beth@imediaconsult.com), a World Wide Web and Internet training firm in Saratoga Springs, New York, which provides Web-site design and Internet training for businesses in the northeast.

Clickthrough is an important concept with new players.

IEEE Virtual Museum

The IEEE Virtual Museum is a Web site (<http://www.ieee.org/museum>) that explores the history of technology, explains how different technologies work, and examines the societal and cultural impact of technology. It is supported by the IEEE Foundation, the IEEE Life Members, and the Trustees of the IEEE History Center.

Designed for educators, pre-college students, and the general public, the

virtual museum debuted with two exhibits containing audio and video clips and interactive features: Socket to Me! How Electricity Came to Be, and The Beat Goes On: How Sounds are Recorded and Played. Three more exhibits are in production and are scheduled for release by third quarter 2002. These will explore the applications of microwaves, the works of Thomas Edison, and contributions women have made to electrical and information technologies.



Peter Reimold and Cheryl Reimold

How to Write Readable Reports and Winning Proposals

Part 2: Structure Your Reports to Please Your Reader

One of the most daunting tasks of report writing is organization. How can you shape weeks of work into a single document? The key is to aim for ease of reading. The structure of your report should enable readers to get what they want as quickly and completely as possible. Here are two ways to do that.

Scientific Format	Management Format
Summary	Summary
Introduction	Introduction
Approach/Method	Conclusions
Discussion	Recommendations
Results	Results
Conclusions	Discussion
Recommendations	Approach/Method
Acknowledgments	Acknowledgments
Appendixes	Appendixes

The *scientific format* is good if you are addressing peers who may want to evaluate the validity of your approach. It follows a logical progression, from an overview (summary) to the background (introduction), to your method, to a discussion of anything interesting that occurred, and then to your results. The conclusions and recommendations grow directly out of the results.

The *management format* uses the same categories but rearranges them to allow general management readers to get the information they want in the beginning, without having to read detailed sections.

You may not always need a section on method; this depends on the

nature of your work and your readership. You may decide to give a more specific title to the discussion section if it covers only one topic. Otherwise, these sections work for most technical reports.

The *summary* provides the essence of your report, preferably in non-technical terms. It should give general answers to all your readers' most urgent questions, but the primary reader here is usually the executive. Think broad brush strokes. A good outline for the opening summary is the *PAW*: Purpose, Achievement, What Next. For a discussion of the *PAW*, see the first column in this series (May/June 2002 *Newsletter*, p. 10).

The *introduction* explains what led to the work you did. It is an amplification of the purpose stated in the summary. To keep your introduction brief and interesting, consider your readers. How much background do they *want* and *need*? Tell them only that.

The *approach/method* opens with a summary of the key points of the method—points that could interest both management and technical readers. The rest of the section tells your technical readers how you proceeded.

The *discussion* requires informative subheadings. Use a clear subhead for each topic you explore. Open each topic with a summary paragraph that states your main message.

Then consider which readers will be most interested in that topic. Note what questions they would have and try to answer them. If you have more to tell, state it *after* you have answered their questions, or put it in an appendix.

The *results* state simply what you found. It is best to present them as a bulleted list. (This stops you from adding long interpretations, which don't belong here.) For example:

- The five-pound roast was no longer on the counter.
- The dog was under the table, looking unwell.

A well structured report presents the information readers want in the order in which they want it.

The *conclusions* are your deductions from the results. They, too, work well as a bulleted list. They should grow clearly out of the results. For example:

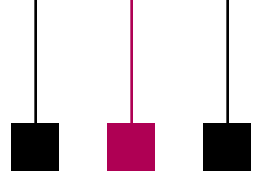
- The dog ate five pounds of raw beef.

The *recommendations* state what to do next. They should grow directly out of your conclusions. For example:

- When preparing roast beef, close the kitchen door, making sure the dog is outside the kitchen.

The *appendixes* consist of material that is not critical for understanding your report but might be useful in the future. Make sure that each page has enough information on it to make it self-explanatory.

Finally, here are two points that apply to all sections:



DAVID C. LEONARD

David C. Leonard, Ph.D., died 4 March 2002 after an extended battle with cancer; he was 49. Dr. Leonard was a senior member of the IEEE and the Professional Communication Society. He was associate professor of technical communication at Mercer University, Macon and Atlanta, Georgia. He was program director for the master of science degree in technical communication management, instrumental in both designing the innovative program and leading the transition to distance learning.

In 1983 Dr. Leonard founded Information Design Corporation and worked with more than 150 Fortune 500 companies on such issues as online information and interactive multimedia. He coauthored books on multimedia (*Multimedia and the Web from A to Z*, Oryx, 1998) and on cognitive learning (soon to be released by Oryx Press). He was also a leader in the Society for Technical Communication, serving as president of the Atlanta chapter for two years. Dr. Leonard was beloved by students, colleagues, and

friends for his intelligence, his irrepressible wit, and his genuine love of people and his profession.

He is survived by his wife Linda, son Christian, and daughter Emily. A technical communication scholarship in his memory is being established at Mercer University. Contributions may be so designated and sent to University Advancement, 1400 Coleman Avenue, Macon, Georgia 31207.

Prepared by Marj Davis

Tools of the Trade

(continued from page 15)

1. In each section and subsection, move from the most to the least important information, unless some other logical scheme (e.g., chronology, left to right, top to bottom, causal sequence) clearly makes the section easier to understand.
2. Once you introduce several items

in a certain order, stick to that order in the rest of the report.

Follow these simple rules, and your readers will thank you for making your report easily accessible and readable.

Cheryl and Peter Reimold have been teaching communication skills to

engineers, scientists, and business people for 20 years. Their firm, PERC Communications (+1 914 725 1024, perccom@aol.com), offers businesses consulting and writing services, as well as customized in-house courses on writing, presentation skills, and on-the-job communication skills. Visit their Web site at <http://www.allaboutcommunication.com>.

How To Communicate With SMEs

By Debbie Davy

Lately it has become fashionable among technical communicators to denigrate themselves as not worthy of communication with subject matter experts (or SMEs, pronounced smees). SMEs know so much about their field, some say, and they don't respect the role and experience of technical communicators. I know only technical communication, another says, I don't have an advanced degree in astrophysics or neurophysiology so how can I possibly write about this topic? And Dr. Smee just doesn't respect me!

This article is not another apology piece on why technical communicators are sometimes deemed unworthy of an audience with an SME. Instead, expect a tongue-in-cheek discussion of effective methods of communication that can be applied to all members of project teams, whether they are SMEs or not.

A subject matter expert is someone with advanced knowledge or expertise in a particular field. By this definition, technical communicators are experts in a particular field and are therefore SMEs in their own right. The stereotyped image of the SME as a haughty, unapproachable intellectual who believes that there are only a handful of people on a planet of six billion who understand his or her work, and that you are not one of these, demeans everyone. In this enlightened technical age, it behooves us to have communication techniques at our disposal to accomplish our work

as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. When this involves working with SMEs, there are five main rules we must all follow to get along.

1. Be Prepared

Before embarking on an SME interview, or any other meeting, be as prepared as possible. Know something of your SME's subject area, such as key industry or scientific terminology, the latest trends and developments, and the SME's *raison d'être*. Having this information at your disposal helps you appear confident and knowledgeable and will help you identify new information.

A general rule is to have a written set of questions with you; if this is not possible you should still take a

few minutes to go over in your mind what you want to ask. And you should also have an idea of what you hope to take away from the meeting. Ask yourself what

you want to accomplish by meeting the SME. Do you need background material for an article? Do you need to clarify some aspect of the technology? Can you get the information some other way? Even if there is another way to get the information, it may still be worth while meeting with the SME. Never underestimate the power of the soft sell, for that is what you would be doing in this case: soft selling technical communicators to the SME as highly professional, prepared people who are interested in the SME's work.

Never pretend to know more than you do.

2. Schedule a Convenient Time

Though it may seem superfluous to write an instruction to schedule a convenient time, it is surprising how many people just pop in to someone's office for a 30-second chat that turns into a one-hour discussion at generally the most inconvenient time.

Before the meeting contact the SME by his preferred mode of contact (this information can be obtained from the SME's administrative and support staff or someone else within the group by asking politely). Explain in a few words who you are, why you wish to meet with him or her, and especially how long a meeting you desire. A "7/20"—an introductory statement taking seven seconds to deliver and consisting of approximately 20 words—has an ideal application here (e.g., I am Debbie Davy, a science writer with Ernst & Young's SR&ED team. May I talk to you about your epilepsy project?).

3. Establish Constraints

Be sure that the SME is aware of your deadlines or constraints. If you have only a short time allotted to you in your project schedule, establish the level of information to be discussed at the outset of the meeting. Indicate that you are seeking a high-level synopsis of the SME's work rather than a detailed discussion, if that is the case.

4. Listen

Listening cannot be a too highly rated skill. We all like it when someone asks us about our work. It makes us feel good to talk about what we do

and it demonstrates to us that someone cares about us. Even the most secure and confident individuals welcome an audience. And when they feel they are being listened to, SMEs often tell us more than we need to know. That is not always a good thing, but as you have established a time constraint for the meeting, it should not be burdensome.

You can also watch for nonverbal clues that will help you determine the direction of the interview. If you observe the SME turning red at the mention of a fellow researcher's name, consider politely suggesting that his diatribe on how that researcher is trashing his work in the scientific press be postponed to another meeting.

5. Say "Thank You"

The SME has done you a favor in clearing her schedule for the meeting and you need to thank her before

you leave. It is also a good idea to follow up with e-mail or a quick note about how much you enjoyed the discussion. This will help smooth the way for a subsequent conversation to follow up on any items you may have missed.

But what should you do if you are faced with an unresponsive or hostile SME? These people, though a small minority, can be openly or passively hostile and may undermine your work and your credibility. Sometimes their diffidence or apparent shyness hides underlying frustration. If faced with this type of person, try to identify yourself as the solution to his frustration. Why not offer yourself as a buffer against whatever is causing his grief?

Last, never apologize for your own lack of knowledge about a subject.

If you don't know something, say so, and never pretend to know more than you do. *Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses* (translation: If you'd kept quiet we might have thought you were clever).

Know what you want to take away from a meeting with an SME.

Debbie Davy is an award-winning science and technology writer with Ernst & Young's Canadian Scientific Research and Experimental Development Tax Credit

Team. She has been writing the technical portion of SR&ED claims since 1986 and her technology articles have appeared in major industry publications. In addition to SR&ED, Debbie has written process manuals and documentation for nickel vapor deposition plants, neurodiagnostic devices, large-scale medical data capture programs, and an aircraft engine bleed air facility. Contact her at debbie.davy@ca.eyi.org or +1 905 882 3367.

Keynote Speaker

(continued from page 24)

whose primary communication channels are e-mail, Web conferencing, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing

- Reflections on the Bleeding Edge: Designing and Evaluating the Usability of Small-Screen Interfaces
- Creating a technical document in English, then producing its foreign language equivalent

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Speakers are coming from Australia, Belgium, China, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, as well as from Canada and the United States. They represent at least 28 universities and companies ranging in size from one-person consulting entities to national laboratories with large staffs of technical communication professionals.



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Part 2: Rhetorical Edits

By Eliza Drewa

Part 1 (in the May/June *Newsletter*) established that writers sometimes don't view editors favorably: Editors may make arbitrary changes, often-times don't have knowledge of the technical field, and generally interfere. However, good editors do exist and can establish ethos—trust, credibility—with writers by providing them with recommendations for strengthening their documents, recommendations that justify why certain changes should be made and offer specific examples of possible revisions.

Because the purpose of this three-part series is (1) to provide writers with the necessary information about editing processes and possibilities to strategically interact with editors and (2) to stimulate editors to consciously reflect on their own practices and the ways they interact with writers, this article discusses the following issues:

- How editors with backgrounds in the arts are able to provide comprehensive, or rhetorical, edits
- What a rhetorical edit is
- What it means to edit for readability and usability

True, editors without the specific technical background cannot provide technical reviews for writers. However, editors are not intended for this purpose; rather, ensuring technical accuracy is up to the writer, who should have subject matter experts review technical information. What

editors can do for writers is evaluate the information within a document for rhetorical concerns. That is, they can ensure that a writer's argument (message) is clear, that the message is accessible to the intended audience (e.g., by evaluating word choice, use of first vs. second vs. third person), and that the document is structured for its intended purpose (e.g., a user's manual should incorporate an easy-to-reference design).

Writers who have editors capable of providing rhetorical edits can expect recommendations for including, excluding, or reorganizing information in all portions of a document. For example, good editors understand the conventions for writing an abstract and are able to analyze what information should and should not be included and what type of language (e.g., word choice, person, voice) should be used based on the type of document, the message, and who needs to get that message.

Editors can be extremely useful for understanding how documents will be used, provided they know who will read or use them (editors should ask writers for this information if writers do not provide it), and anticipating readers' reactions and needs. Anticipation is integrally linked with the issue of usability. Oftentimes, writers are so closely tied to their writing that it is difficult to step out-

side the way they view these texts to consider how useful they will be to others. Editors are "outside" people and, if trained as rhetoricians, are able to offer recommendations for designing text as well as using language that engages the readers.

Consider this example from a document that would ultimately become a user's manual:

Original

The basic window is what appears to the users when they select the create a meteorological profile option from the model inputs profile menu.

Although this sentence likely contains all the information a user needs, an editor should make recommendations for revision. Consider the following two:

Oftentimes it is difficult for writers to step outside the way they view their writing to consider how useful it will be to others.

Recommendation 1

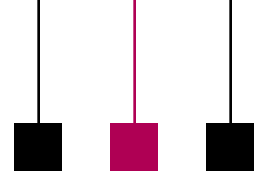
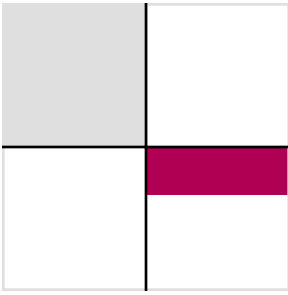
When you select Create a Meteorological Profile from the Model Inputs Profile menu, the basic window appears.

Recommendation 2

Select Create a Meteorological Profile from the Model Inputs Profile menu.

- The basic window appears.

Notice that the original *tells the reader* what will happen in the third person and is structured as regular paragraphed text. Recommendation 1 is also structured as regular text but *engages the user* by speaking directly



to him or her in the second person. Recommendation 2 takes another, but similar, approach by engaging an implied user through the second person imperative. The way text is designed considers how users can reference information most easily. The next step should be to consider inserting graphics that *show* users in addition to telling them.

Thus, rhetorical edits can benefit writers in many ways. Instead of abiding by the conventional rules that have writers submitting documents for editing after they're completely written, writers should consider consulting an editor during the planning stage or writing stage or both to elicit ideas about how to communicate their message in the most effective way possible, considering tone, style, organization, and design. For example, many writers would likely be interested in how to use passive and active voice strategically and perhaps, too, the rules that dictate tense when discussing past research and current analysis at the same time. Writers who prefer to wait until they've completed an entire draft before communicating with an editor, could—instead of waiting to see what an editor will recommend—specifically ask an editor to evaluate tone and style and make recommendations for a more effective design.

In a similar way, editors should encourage writers to consult them during the early writing stages. And if writers don't ask for attention to

specific issues within their documents, simply engaging them in a general dialogue about that document will likely (1) reveal their concerns or (2) give editors an idea of what message writers are trying to send to whom for what purpose, and they can use that information when conducting a rhetorical evaluation.

The author has an M.A. in English and five years of combined experience as technical editor, writer, writing consultant, and researcher. Her expertise includes planning, developing, creating, analyzing, and revising written materials and editing processes. She can be contacted at pedrewa@yahoo.com.

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The PCS Blicq Award

The first Ronald S. Blicq Award was presented in 2001. It recognizes innovative educators who have influenced the ways that technical communication is taught. In naming this award for Ron Blicq, PCS acknowledged his extraordinary impact on technical communication education through several generations of teaching, course development, textbook writing, and workshop and video production. Ron joined PCS soon after its beginning, when it was known as the IRE Professional Group on Engineering Writing and Speech. In 2000 he received an IEEE Third Millennium Medal for service to the Institute.

2001 Ann A. Laster

Ann Appleton Laster began her professional career as a high school English and Latin teacher and librarian, teaching grades 10-12 over a seven-year period. She then moved

to Hinds Community College where she enjoyed a rewarding 36 years of teaching composition, technical communication, and British literature; she also taught in the honors program. Among her publications, a signal accomplishment is *Technical English: Writing, Reading, and Speaking*, 8th ed. (with Nell Ann Pickett and later Katherine Staples; Longman, 2001). Her teaching and her contributions to technical communication education have been recognized by numerous professional groups

2002 Mary M. Lay

Mary M. Lay is professor of rhetoric in the scientific and technical communication program and faculty fellow in the law school at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. She served as director of graduate studies in the rhetoric department from 1997 to 2001 and

directed the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies from 1994 to 1997. She is the former chair of the department of technical communication at Clarkson University where she taught from 1976 to 1991. She is coauthor of *Technical Communication* (McGraw-Hill, 2nd ed., 2000), coeditor of *Collaborative Writing in Industry: Investigations in Theory and Practice* (Baywood Press, 1991), author of *The Rhetoric of Midwifery: Power, Knowledge, and Gender* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), which won the NCTE award for best book in scientific and technical communication, and coeditor of *Body Talk: Rhetoric, Technology, and Reproduction* (Wisconsin University Press, 2000). She is coeditor of *Technical Communication Quarterly*, the journal of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, and is a fellow and past president of the ATTW.

The PCS Goldsmith Award

This award for outstanding achievement in engineering communication was named in honor of Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, a founder of the IRE in 1912 and of the forerunner of PCS in 1957. He was vice president and general manager of engineering at RCA and editor of the *Proceedings of the IRE* from 1912 until 1954. He also held a lifelong appointment as associate professor of electrical engineering at the City College of New York. The first Goldsmith award was presented in 1975; see

the May/June 1997 issue of this *Newsletter* for a summary of recipients through 1996.

1997 Robert Krull

Robert Krull is director of the M.S. degree programs in communication and professor of communication at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He conducts research and teaches courses in computer documentation and user interface design. He also has worked in performance support for physical skills and the effects of educational

television. He has won best-article awards from the Society for Technical Communication and from PCS. His research has been supported by the National Institute for Mental Health and by several multinational corporations. Dr. Krull has been associate dean for graduate programs and research in humanities and social sciences at RPI; he has been on the PCS AdCom and was codirector of the Technical Writer's Institute. He taught RPI's first distance education course in technical communication

and one of RPI's first two video streaming distance courses.

1998 Stephanie L. Rosenbaum

Stephanie Rosenbaum is founder and president of Tec-Ed, Inc., a 15-person firm specializing in usability research and information design. An IEEE senior member, Stephanie was one of the 11 PCS members honored with an IEEE Third Millennium Medal in 2000. She served on the PCS AdCom 1992-99 and was instrumental in developing the new *Transactions* format, which debuted in June 1997. She is a member of the Usability Professionals Association, ACM SIGCHI, and the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, as well as being a fellow and Exemplar of the Society for Technical Communication. She is a past vice chair of ACM SIGDOC and headed the STC research grants committee for five years. Stephanie recently contributed a chapter to the Copenhagen Business School Press volume, *Software Design and Usability*. Her research background includes anthropology studies at Columbia University and experimental psychology research for the University of California at Berkeley.

1999 Ulf-L Andersson

Ulf-L Andersson, educated in electronics, psychology, and journalism, started 1957 as a technical communicator in the Swedish Air Force. Since 1962 he has worked as consultant and educator. In 1964 he cofounded the Swedish Society on Technical Communication and later

actively participated in forming INTECOM. He arranged the first INTECOM Forum conference and introduced the Idea Market concept in 1975. In English he has published the book *Humanware—Practical Usability Engineering*.

2000 JoAnn T. Hackos

Dr. JoAnn Hackos is president of Comtech Services, a content-management and information-design firm based in Denver, Colorado, which she founded in 1978. She also directs the Center for Information-Development Management, a membership organization focused on content-management and information-development best practices. Dr. Hackos and colleagues are called upon by corporate executives worldwide to consult on related strategies. For more than 25 years, she has addressed audiences internationally on subjects ranging from content management, project management, effective interfaces and information, minimal information products, usability testing, online and Web-based information to managing the information design and development process. She authored *Content Management for Dynamic Web Delivery* (John Wiley & Sons, 2002) and *Managing Documentation Projects* (Wiley, 1994), and coauthored *Standards for Online Communication* (Wiley, 1997) and *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design* (Wiley, 1998). JoAnn is a fellow and past president of the international Society for Technical Communication.

2001 Janice C. Redish

Dr. Janice (Ginny) Redish has been helping colleagues and clients communicate clearly for more than 20 years. Ginny was the founder and director of the Document Design Center at the American Institutes for Research, where she and her colleagues studied the problems people have with workplace documents and found solutions to those problems. Since 1992 Ginny has been an independent consultant focusing on issues of usability in documents, software, and Web sites. She is coauthor of three books and has written numerous book chapters and articles on document design and usability. Ginny is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and holds a Ph.D. degree in linguistics from Harvard University.

2002 Edward R. Tufte

Edward Tufte has written seven books, including *Visual Explanations*, *Envisioning Information*, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, and *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. He writes, designs, and self-publishes his books on information design, which have received more than 40 awards for content and design. He is professor emeritus at Yale University, where he taught courses in statistical evidence, information design, and interface design. His current work includes digital video, sculpture, printmaking, and a new book called *Beautiful Evidence*. Mr. Tufte was columnist Ron Nelson's Master of Style in the July/August 1997 *Newsletter*.

The 7th International Conference for Technical Communicators

Call for Presenters

Forum 2003

Milan, Italy
30 June – 2 July 2003

You are invited to be a presenter at Forum 2003, where technical communicators from around the world will meet to share ideas and take part in multifaceted discussions of how technical communication techniques and applications are changing—and changing rapidly. The theme of *Meeting the Cross-Cultural Challenge* reflects the importance now placed on working within a global community. Forum 2003 offers an ideal opportunity to present your ideas and to hear what other professionals are doing and thinking.

Forum conferences are unique because they foster two-way communication, so that all participants can actively exchange information and ideas. In a Forum conference there are numerous and continuing opportunities not only to question the presenters but also to become part of the presentations.

THREE PRESENTATION STYLES

Idea Markets are the primary form of presentation. Several presenters are positioned around a large room and present their ideas to, and invite input from, the conference delegates who gather around them.

Discussion Sessions comprise several presenters who present different views on a similar topic and then discuss their views with audience participation.

Information Sessions include presenters who describe or demonstrate a best practice—an approach or activity they have developed that is of interest to other technical communicators.

THE CONFERENCE SITE

Forum 2003 will be held at the Hotel Palazzo Delle Stelline in central Milan within easy walking distance of major tourist sites, shops, and restaurants. We chose Milan because it:

- Is easily accessible by air or rail
- Has an ideal climate in late June and early July
- Has a significant range of attractions, such as the Cathedral (Il Duomo), the La Scala Theatre, and many museums and art galleries
- Is centrally located, making travel to additional mid-Europe and Mediterranean destinations fast and easy



Hotel Palazzo Delle Stelline

TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

We invite you to submit a proposal on a topic of your choice for an Idea Market presentation, a Discussion Session, or a best practice Information Session. Although ideally your proposal will fit within the conference theme of *Meeting the Cross-Cultural Challenge*, you are welcome to send in a proposal on another technical communication topic.



Go to the INTECOM Web site <http://www.intecom.org>, click on Forum 2003 Call for Presenters, and then follow the instructions for downloading, completing, and submitting the application form. The deadline is **20 August 2002**.

If you are unable to copy or download the form, e-mail the following information to program chair Ron Blicq at forum@rgilearning.com:

- The title of your presentation
- Whether you want to take part in an Idea Market, a Discussion Session, or an Information Session
- A 200-300 word summary of your key points
- A 50-100 word personal biography
- Your name and postal address
- Employer name (if applicable)
- Your telephone number
- Your e-mail address
- Whether you have presented previously at a Forum conference



Thom Haller Is Keynote Speaker for IPCC 2002

The program for IPCC 2002 promises to live up to the conference theme, *Reflections on Communication*, as highlighted by the keynote speaker, Thom Haller, on Wednesday, 18 September at 4 p.m. Thom is a teacher, speaker, writer, and user-advocate, who founded Info.Design (<http://www.infodn.com/index.shtml>), a Washington, DC, information architecture consultancy and think tank, to apply the science of information architecture in the workplace.

Sharing our knowledge is the common thread among the IPCC 2002 sessions. Topics include traditional academic programs, developing corporate training, favored ways to use new tools, and new reasons to use old tools. Speakers are eager to talk about the results of current research and to examine the ethical implica-

tions of globalization and corporate communication. More than 40 papers will be presented in sessions on Web site usability, technology, and learning; online training design; the writing process; education; and more.

Panel Discussions

- Current research projects at the University of Washington that represent the boundaries of the technical communication field
- Mercer University practitioners discussing the thesis that technical communication programs should build the habits and skills of reflecting on practice
- Reflecting on shifting paradigms for international technical communication by a University of Minnesota team

- Another University of Washington team exploring the effect of content, organization, and navigation features of Web-based medical information on readers of informational Web sites



- Reflections by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute faculty on research and pedagogy in developing distance education courses in technical communication and human-computer interaction

Workshops

- From Technical Writer to Usability Professional: Transitioning from the Known into the Unknown
- Working Together When You Can't Be Face to Face—techniques to facilitate good decisions and productive conflicts for team members

(continued on page 18)

