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NEWSLETTER

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IPCC 96 PROGRAM: COMMUNICATION ON THE FAST TRACK

BY STEPHANIE ROSENBAUM AND LORI ANSCHUETZ

This year's IPCC program promises to be better than ever, with a "stable of specialists" presenting papers, panels, and workshops in Saratoga Springs, New York, renowned for its cultural, historical, and equine traditions.

Join the Professional Communication Society on September 18-20 and hear featured speaker Edmond Weiss, well known author of *How to Write a Usable User Manual.* Dr. Weiss' topic will be "From Talmud Pages to Web Browsers: A Brief History of Rhetorically Neutral Documents." Those who have heard him previously know that Dr. Weiss is an engaging speaker; he always leaves his audiences with exciting new ideas.

The full IPCC program features more than 50 topics in a wide variety of interest areas:

- The World Wide Web and HTML
- Usability engineering, human factors, and user-interface design
- International communication: Reports about international conferences and practices
- Case studies on corporate Web sites, CD-ROM publishing, and more
- Management issues: Reengineering, strategic planning, costs of quality
- Education and technical communication in the next millenium

Some of the program highlights include:

- A panel of speakers from IBM and RPI discussing industry-university cooperation in teaching interface design through distance learning
- Reports on the recent, highly successful Forum 95 conference in Germany, and on international communication by INTECOM members from the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and France
- An Electronic Information Hospitality Suite, providing a forum for idea exchange about electronic information
- Nine 90-minute workshops that IPCC 96 attendees can take at no extra cost
  - Transforming prose: Tools for reviewers and editors
  - How to create documentation for global markets
  - The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: Putting documentation on the Web quickly and easily
  - Creating a hypermedia storyboard
  - How to edit style: The lessons of the word hoard
  - Getting the grit out of your windows (application of human factors principles to the design of user interfaces)
  - Conducting mail and telephone surveys
  - Tinker Toys®, teamwork, and testing: A versatile project for teaching technical communication
  - The "Elevator Speech"—taking advantage of unexpected opportunities to get your point across

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FROM THE EDITOR

This is my final issue as interim editor. It's been a challenge, and fun; nevertheless, I'm very happy to introduce Donna Wicks, our new newsletter editor, who will produce the September/October and succeeding issues. She has an excellent background for piloting the newsletter.

Donna has a B.A. degree in communication from the University of Dayton and is now working on a B.S.E.E. degree at the GMI Engineering and Management Institute to enhance her technical skills. She is an engineering co-op student at Michigan State University where she is responsible for maintaining a local computer network and for establishing an Internet connection for that office.

Previously, Donna was a science editor and writer at Michigan State and Purdue Universities and a reporter in Lafayette, Indiana—work that brought her several communication awards. In total, she has considerable publications experience, much of it associated with computers.

Start thinking about your contribution to the newsletter (the next deadline is September 6) and feel free to communicate with our new editor:

Donna M. Wicks
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IPCC 96 PROGRAM

(continued from page 1)

- Authors' tables during one or more session breaks: See what books IPCC 96 speakers have written, ask the authors questions, buy or order books conveniently (how about a signed copy?)
- The traditional "Last Lecture," this year given by Mark Haselkorn, PCS president and chair of the University of Washington Department of Technical Communication

For a complete list of paper, panel, and workshop titles for IPCC 96, consult the advance program. All PCS members will receive an advance program and registration details in the mail; if you want additional copies, contact:

Roger Grice, Conference Chair
52 Doris Lane
Lake Katrine, NY 12449 USA
Phone/Fax: 914-336-0064
E-mail: *r.grice@ieee.org*

For the latest, most complete news about the IPCC 96 program, as well as the social events, travel bargains, and sightseeing ideas around Saratoga Springs, check the conference information at the PCS Web site (**http://www.ieee.org/pcs/confrnce.html**).

Eating words has never given me indigestion.
— *Winston Churchill*

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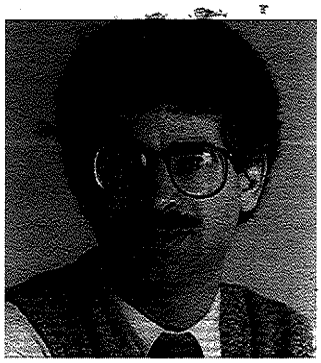
PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

PCS AND INSTITUTE CHANGE



MARK HASELKORN

PCS president is on the TAB restructuring committee.

In my last column I spoke of change within our Society, and I am pleased to find that many of you are listening and care. I've received numerous responses to the proposed name change and I will share those with you in the next issue. I am sure that out of our combined deliberations will come a stronger Society.

It is helpful to place our discussion of Society change in the context of change occurring within the IEEE. Fundamental changes in the IEEE have been discussed for a very long time but, believe it or not, those changes are about to take place. If we ignore them and their likely impact on PCS, our Society will suffer; if we understand them and respond appropriately, our Society will benefit.

First, some background. As most of you know, the IEEE is composed of a number of boards: the Awards Board, the Educational Activities Board, the Publications Board, the Regional Activities Board (RAB), the Standards Board, the Technical Activities Board (TAB), and the United States Activities Board (USAB). The 35 Societies, including PCS, and two Councils are part of the Technical Activities Board.

After long consideration of numerous plans, the IEEE Board of Directors agreed last December to take the first step toward change by launching an ad hoc committee, the IEEE Structural Reorganization Committee, charged with managing revisions to the IEEE bylaws to give the various boards more autonomy. In turn, TAB established a "Blue Ribbon Committee" responsible for formulating recommendations for restructuring TAB consistent with the IEEE reorganization effort. I have the privilege of serving on this committee.

Essentially, the IEEE bylaws will be rewritten to remove the descriptions of the structure and operation of the various boards, freeing the boards to recreate their structure and operation in their individual bylaws. TAB will use this opportunity to create a structure where, for nearly all Society issues, the "buck" stops at TAB.

While the operational phrases behind this effort are "increase efficiency" and "eliminate redundancy," there are other drivers of change that are likely to impact the future of PCS.

One major trend is a push towards market-based funding, rather than giving funds to entities simply because they exist as a part of the IEEE. For example, a petition to unbundle IEEE service fees has been initiated. This would impact all levels and types of entities. This change might actually help Societies because membership in a Society (and the fee that goes with it) already is optional (in fact, about 40 percent of IEEE members belong only to the Institute).

Many IEEE fees, however, are rolled into the basic IEEE membership fee (e.g., an assessment for regional activities). In the future, the basic membership fee is likely to decrease, with the funding of entities depending more on the conscious selection of members to subscribe to a particular service.

There are other market-based trends likely to impact PCS. For example, Societies now receive significant funding from their Transactions through the All Periodicals Package, but as the market for periodicals becomes tighter, special interest subsets of periodicals marketed to target audiences will reduce the generally distributed "pie." Even IEEE departments such as publications will be impacted by this "marketed service" trend as Societies and other groups determine if they can save money through outside publication of their *Transactions.* PCS is one of many Societies considering this change.

Another trend likely to impact PCS is a tendency to favor the efficiency of larger entities, coupled with a feeling among the larger Societies that they are not adequately represented in TAB. Toward this end they have introduced the concept of "proportional voting" based on number of members. However this discussion goes in the TAB reorganization, it seems clear that the IEEE reorganization favors a trend

Trends: autonomy and market-based funding

towards autonomy, particularly for larger entities.

PCS, too, must be prepared to function with greater independence. This does not mean that PCS will not continue to gain immeasurable benefit from being one of 35 Societies in the IEEE; rather it means that within the context of the IEEE we need to be more conscious than ever of delivering desired, affordable, self-sustaining services to our members.

This trend to favor the efficiency of larger entities has also raised discussion that TAB might take a stronger role in defining an acceptable Society. TAB already performs Society reviews, but in the future these reviews might be guided by certain minimal requirements (e.g., number of members, financial status, number of publications, etc.). Again, PCS must be prepared to compete in such an environment (even as we fight to assure that change supports the viable small Society).

A final trend is a redefinition of the relationship between the geographical side of the IEEE house (RAB, USAB) and the technical side (TAB). For a Society, this relationship focuses on Chapters; Chapters have two parents, a geographical one (the Section) and a technical one (the Society). Depending on the particular Section and Society, parents range from being extremely supportive to neglectful.

PCS currently is a parent of 14 Chapters, seven outside the U.S. To assure an active, growing membership, we need to increase our support of existing Chapters and work to create new ones. We also need to support the creation of Student Chapters—the homes of our future members.* These investments, however, must be carefully monitored to assure that there are returns in the form of new members and useful activities.

PCS members are engineers with a special interest in communication and communicators with a special interest in engineering. This audience must see PCS as an organization they want to join; they must see PCS publications as something they want and need to read; they must see PCS educational services as benefiting their careers and lives; overall, they must see PCS as relevant to new opportunities and trends in electronic communication.

Our survival as a viable IEEE Society depends upon it.

*Vishal Sharma has just been appoined PCS Coordinator of Student Activities; *vishal@spetses.ece.ucsb.edu*.

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE COMMUNICATOR!

PCS is accepting nominations for two annual awards to be presented at IPCC 96 in Saratoga Springs, New York: the *Alfred N. Goldsmith Award* and the *Emily K. Schlesinger Award*. Both awards honor people who have contributed notably to engineering communication.

The Goldsmith Award, established in 1974, emphasizes contributions to the field of technical communication. It is presented to a member of the Professional Communication Society who has made outstanding contributions to the aims of the Society. These are, primarily, to help engineers, scientists, and technical communication professionals develop skills in delivering oral and written technical information.

The Schlesinger Award, established in 1995, stresses service to the Society itself rather than to the field. It is given to a member who has performed exceptional service to the Professional Communication Society.

Nominations will be accepted until August 15, 1996. To nominate a candidate for either the Goldsmith Award or the Schlesinger Award, please fax or e-mail your nomination, with the name of the candidate, your reason for nominating him or her, and your own name and address to Cheryl Reimold, *c.reimold@ieee.org* or (516) 728-7942 fax.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PREPARING OUTSTANDING PRESENTATIONS

CHERYL REIMOLD

Cheryl teaches courses and workshops for PCS on this and other communication topics. For information, c.reimold@ieee.org.

Keep people alert.

Part 4 — The Body

Every presentation must have an introduction, a body, and a summary. Last time, I discussed the introduction, which should follow the *RAMP* (rapport, attention, main message, plan) structure. If you accepted my advice, then your introduction already contains (a) your message and (b) your key points (mentioned as part of your plan). Your job in the body, then, is simply to spell out your key points, in the same order as in the introduction.

Keep It Simple

As I discussed in part 1, the structure of your presentation must be extremely simple and transparent to everyone. This is essential because your listeners are easily confused. For the body, the best scheme is the following linear organization:

- Key point 1, followed by backup and examples
- Key point 2, followed by backup and examples
- Key point 3, followed by backup and examples

The only possible addition is an initial restatement of your main message, if you think it might not have sunk in during the introduction.

Keep It Varied — and Concrete

Most presentations are unbearably monotonous in content: They consist of some general statements followed by almost equally general subpoints, all presented with the aid of interminable bullet charts. The predictable result is a general sleepfest. To avoid this, you must build *variation* and *concrete examples* into your presentation.

As we saw in part 1, during the body the audience's natural attention is at its lowest. Therefore, your main job during this section is to make sleep as uncomfortable as possible. But don't expect continuous *total* attention — it's just not realistic. In most cases, you'll have to be content to "bump them to attention" every minute or so.

Now, the way to jolt people awake is through *change*. It's a simple psychological — and physiological — fact. As long as things stay the same, our body tells us that it's safe to sleep. So, to keep people alert, unsettle them with change. Here are three simple ways to do that:

1. *Switch between general* (statement of key point or a subpoint) *and specific* (example, anecdote, analogy). For instance, if you are proposing a computerized system for monitoring the levels in various vessels, you might switch from a general statement of improved safety to specific examples of accidents that happened when people had to climb to the top of huge vessels to check levels visually.
2. *Switch between "tell" and "show"* (a visual or a demonstration). For instance, to continue the example I just used, you could follow a general statement about delays and inaccuracies caused by the old method with a chart depicting the costs of these delays and inaccuracies.
3. *Switch between lecture and question-and-answer* (or some other interaction). For instance, in our example, you might ask some of the operators what kinds of problems *they* have experienced with the old system.

Why Do People Avoid Using Examples?

Most presenters overuse abstract statements out of *laziness:* It's hard work to come up with good examples for your points. But there is another — often subconscious — reason: *It's hard to follow abstract ideas* — which makes them difficult to falsify! In other words, when you give a concrete example of what you're talking about, people can find the weak spots in your theory immediately! So, we sometimes stay with generalities just to be safe.

However, I've never seen this trick succeed. Your listeners know exactly what you're trying to do—and they simply won't believe you until you give them a good example. For instance, in my own communication-skills workshops, I have found that people just pay much more attention when I mention some real examples of managers or employees who did something poorly or well. It's amazing how people immediately start nodding and raising hands to contribute their own examples.

So, don't let fear or laziness stop you from using strong examples. It's one of the best ways to keep the audience alert and on your side.

PCS MEMBERS ON STC PANEL

At the Society for Technical Communication's conference in Seattle in May, 15 "successful technical communicators" were invited to share their secrets of success around the theme "Don't Just Survive, Thrive!" Invitees included PCS members David Dobson, Roger Grice, JoAnn Hackos, Mark Haselkorn, William Horton, Andrew Malcolm, Judy Ramey, and Stephanie Rosenbaum. Speakers were given two minutes each before a packed ballroom of more than 500 session attendees. Following is the text from Mark Haselkorn's presentation entitled "An Image for Today's Thriving Technical Communicator."

Technical communicators must play leadership roles.

"Technical communication is not a service function—it is one of many professional fields contributing to a range of increasingly interdisciplinary activities fueled by rapid advances in information and communication technology.

"The appropriate interdisciplinary team for an activity in this area depends on the nature of the particular activity but, invariably, technical communicators are on the team, as are computer scientists, electrical engineers, and numerous other relevant specialists.

"The particular contribution of the technical communicator involves the human-centered design of information. If the primary goal of the activity is to deliver information that impacts the behavior of the user, then the technical communicator's contribution is primary.

"Examples of this type of activity include the design of (1) a Web page intended to help people download and use new software, (2) output from a power station control system intended to help operators respond to emergencies, and (3) the display of traffic conditions in an information system intended to help travelers select the best route.

"For activities like these where the success of the system depends on eliciting a successful behavior from the user, technical communicators must play leadership roles on the interdisciplinary team. After all, in these cases if everything functions perfectly except the information design, the entire effort is lost.

"It should not seem strange that in efforts like these, technical communicators will manage computer scientists, engineers, and others, just as it does not seem strange that in numerous other types of efforts, technical communicators are managed by specialists from other fields.

"Our work environment is changing rapidly, and numerous fields are meeting on equal footing with the shared mission of using information and information technology to improve people's lives. Certainly technical communication is one of those fields."

A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody has read.

— Mark Twain

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

JOAN G. NAGLE

Joan Nagle has been active in PCS since 1985. She has edited the Society's Transactions *and has served on the Editorial Board of the IEEE Press. She is currently working on her second book.*

GORDON THE GUIDED MISSILE

This is the title of what John Cleese (of late lamented Monty Python fame) says is the first story he ever remembers his mother reading to him. (Apocryphal? Probably... but no matter.)

Cleese recently gave a speech to a conference on training, in which he revealed his enchantment with Gordon.

"Gordon the Guided Missile sets off in pursuit of its target. It immediately sends out signals to discover if it is on course to hit that target. And signals come back: 'No, you are not on course. So change it—up a bit and slightly to the left.' And Gordon changes course as instructed and then, rational little fellow that he is, sends out another signal. 'Am I on course now?' And back comes the answer, 'No. But if you adjust your present course a bit further up and a bit further to the left, you will be.' ... And the guided missile, its rationality and persistence a lesson to us all, goes on and on making mistakes, and on and on listening to feedback, and on and on correcting its behavior in the light of that feedback, until it blows up the Nasty Enemy Thing."

mistakes...
feedback... revisions

All right, fantasy aside; analogy time. We're talking *document review* here. Oh, the agony of submitting one's work to management or customers or even peers for review and comment before publication. Because we're gonna get it, right in the kazoo. It has been said that the urge to change another writer's work is even stronger than the urge to eat, drink, and all that other stuff. As one who has been copiously and continually red-penciled in her lifetime, I believe it.

When we write something, we do the best job we know how. We put a large chunk of ourselves into it. And then the results come back. If we're lucky, we didn't pass the thing by some bozo whose idea of constructive review is, "This is garbage!" But, at the very least, there will be cuts and slashes and accretions, and we will bleed.

It's inevitable, sad to say. We must bear up. We must remember that different people and different groups have different, possibly conflicting, interests in the document. In a proposal, for instance, the engineering function is interested in presenting a good (workable) product; the financial function is interested in presenting a good (profitable) cost picture; the graphics or editorial function is interested in presenting a good (attractive and effective) document.

Thus, even assuming that everyone's heart is in the right place, we have here three (at least) different definitions of *good.* How do we then come up with a good document?

In a national church group with whom I have worked, the review process is called "perfecting the document." There's something about this phrase that makes the process less painful, I think, even aside from the fact that church people don't (usually) yell at one another or use nasty language. It says, "What we have here is something valid, and we can make it even better. We can 'march on toward perfection.'" (I think those were Wesley's words.)

Which brings us back to Gordon the Guided Missile. What both Gordon's and Wesley's processes suggest to us is that we are not to think of the comments and revisions that are fed back to us as pejorative. (Unless they are, in fact, nasty language; in which case we may have to sneak into the reviewer's office and trash his or her hard drive.)

Cleese terms the spots at which comments/corrections/revisions have been made "mistakes." But, he says, "There are mistakes and mistakes. There are true copper-bottomed mistakes like spelling the word rabbit with three m's, or wearing a black bra under a white blouse, or... starting a land war in Asia."

The other kind of mistake is "a reasonable try which didn't come off." As a result of making many of these mistakes, Gordon eventually succeeded in avoiding the one mistake that would really have mattered—missing the target.

(continued on page 8)

ADCOM PROFILE

KARL L. SMART

Supports collaboration between academia and industry

Although Karl's involvement in technical communication dates nearly 15 years, his association with PCS is relatively recent. Elected to the AdCom at last year's annual meeting in Savannah, he is the general conference chair for IPCC 97 to be held at Snowbird Resort outside of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Karl is an enthusiastic Utahn who is excited about bringing IPCC 97 to Utah in a unique format. Also serving as general conference chair for SIGDOC 97, he has been instrumental in arranging a linked conference where attendees of both conferences will share a joint day of sessions. Look for more information about IPCC-SIGDOC 97—Crossroads in Communication—in subsequent newsletters.

Karl brings a unique blend of academic and professional experience to PCS and to the AdCom. Currently, he is an assistant professor in the Department of Management Communication at Brigham Young University. Prior to his appointment at BYU, Karl taught at Michigan State University. He also worked as a technical writer and documentation manager at WordPerfect Corporation. Karl is a proponent of academia and industry collaboration in ways that benefit both.

His research has focused on quality issues in technical communication and on the impact of technology on communication and the workplace. In addition to his involvement in PCS and SIGDOC, Karl serves on the editorial advisory board of STC's *Technical Communication* and is contributing editor for "The Quest for Quality" column in STC's *Intercom.*

In addition to teaching, research, and professional service, Karl enjoys his four adopted children (ages 9, 8, 4, 2—two boys and two girls). He and his wife Karen have been married 16 years. Through those 16 years they have moved 13 times. They joke that their gypsy lifestyle has taken them to various parts of the United States to make their family. Two of their children were adopted while living in Florida, one while in Michigan, and one while in Utah. With their family complete, they hope that their moving has also come to an end.

In the diverse geography of Utah, Karl enjoys hiking, camping, and fishing. Whether you like pine covered mountains or red rock desert, he would be happy to give you a few pointers on fly fishing or to suggest a few great hiking or camping spots at IPCC 97. Look for more information about Utah and IPCC 97 at IPCC 96 in Saratoga Springs.

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

(continued from page 7)

What we submit as a document for review is truly a reasonable try. Reasonable in that we have presented the best information we have, in the best way we can think of. And if reviewers can give us more information, or think of even better ways to communicate it, we must be grateful. And more.

"Unless we have a tolerant... [positive] attitude toward [mistakes], we shall be behaving irrationally, unscientifically, and unsuccessfully," Cleese continues. And we will not hit the target.

So... get out the Band-Aids®. Whatever ego-loss you suffer in the review process, according to Cleese, is more than compensated for by the ego-gain in showing you're a person who wants to march on toward perfection.

But know that your colleagues have been there already, and they sympathize.

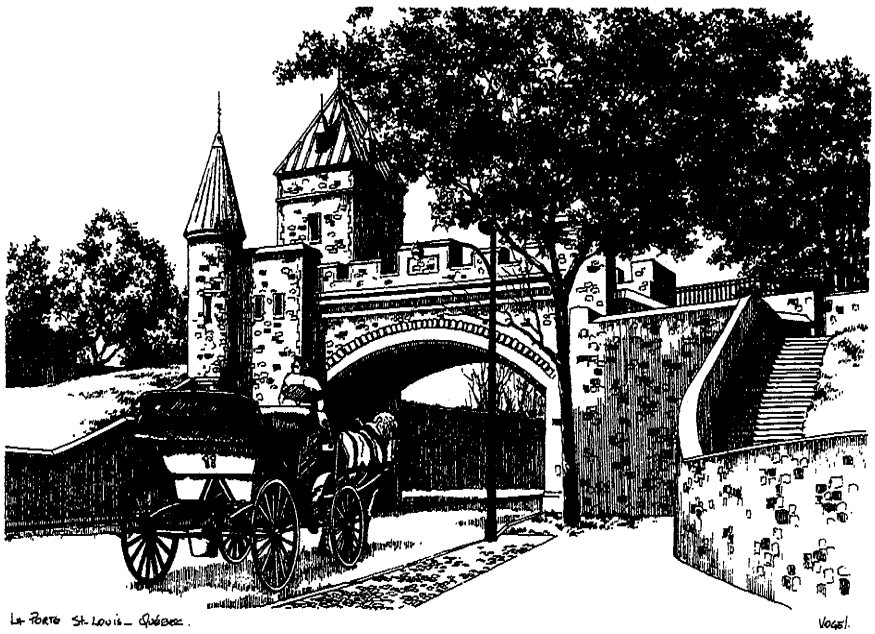
If you are sitting in an exit row and cannot understand this card or cannot see well enough to follow these instructions, please tell a crew member.

— *United Airlines Safety Card*

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY — THE HISTORY OF A PCS CONFERENCE

BY RON BLICQ

For some obscure reason—in a moment of absolute insanity!—six months ago I volunteered to chair a second PCS conference. (The first was IPCC-87 in Winnipeg, Canada.) Now that the wheels have started turning, I thought perhaps I should start documenting how my committee tackled the task, the strategies we used, what we learned, and what we realized we should have done differently.



La Porte St. Louis—One of the four entrances into Old Quebec. The etching is by Jean-Phillipe Vogel, and is reproduced with permission.

The objective: to provide newsletter readers with a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes and—probably more important—to establish a permanent record that future PCS conference organizers can use as a guide to identify what to do and what not to do.

So, here goes....

Part 1: *The Fine Art of Selecting a Conference Site*

There are two parts to selecting a conference site: choosing the general location and selecting a particular property, most often, a conference hotel. The first is relatively simple; the second can be a headache. My experience was made simpler by the tourism office of the city we chose.

Generating the Idea

At the September 1995 AdCom meeting, discussion turned to identifying future conference locations. Dave Kemp and I suggested that PCS might like to take its annual conference back to Canada and, as the previous Canadian conference (IPCC 94; Banff) had been held in the west, this time we suggested a historically renowned location in the east: the City of Quebec. The AdCom was supportive and asked us to bring a definitive proposal to the December meeting.

Three months later we were heartened by the AdCom's reaction, because our proposal received unanimous approval. The reason: We had included three important attachments:

1. Quebec's Tourism and Convention Bureau provided a superb proposal describing how they would support an IEEE conference held in their city.
2. Dr. Paul Fortier, of Laval University, provided a letter indicating that he would act as local arrangements chair and that the Quebec Section of the IEEE supported holding the conference there. (An on-the-spot local arrangements chair is an essential ingredient to effective conference planning.)
3. Even though we were planning three years in advance, we were able to list the names of the people we had recruited to form the overall conference organizing committee. These included the conference chair and the chairs for the program, publicity, and publications subcommittees.

(In September, I had assumed that Dave Kemp would act as conference chair. I didn't know then that within a month he would be Region 7 president-elect and would have to bow out. He has, however, remained an active *ad hoc* member of the conference committee.)

Bringing the Tourism and Convention Bureau into the picture early proved to be a most useful step. Our contact was Chantal Pilon, who not only prepared

Quebec City's proposal but also coordinated Paul Fortier's and my visits to hotels and local agencies that could provide conference management services.

Obtaining Cost Estimates

In March I prepared a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) for Chantal Pilon to send to hotels that could accommodate a PCS conference. Having Chantal do this ensured that hotels were aware they were preparing competitive proposals, and so should sharpen their pencils.

The RFP described the IEEE and our Society, identified how many delegates would attend, and listed the approximate number of bedrooms required per night. It also provided an estimated list of conference activities, similar to that shown in Figure 1.

To ensure that all hotels had an opportunity to bid, the RFP listed three possible sets of dates for the conference, spanning a six-week period. (The value of offering alternative dates became apparent when the proposals came in: If we had chosen a specific week, we would have eliminated two key hotels.)

The RFP asked hotels to provide definitive information on bedroom and meeting room costs (see Figure 2), and requested them to identify advantages such as free rooms that would be supplied and constraints that would affect the rates they quoted. These we would use as negotiating points.

Providing a formal RFP spelling out our specific requirements helped establish in sales managers' eyes that we had taken a carefully thought-out businesslike approach to selecting a hotel, and that we expected to receive equally well developed proposals. We realized that the IEEE is a well established and well recognized organizer of conferences and seminars, but that the Professional Communication Society—even though it operates under the IEEE banner—is a small and little known entity (particularly in Quebec, where the language is predominantly French).

Figure 1: Excerpt from RFP—Conference Room Requirements

Event No.	Day and Time	No. of Rooms Required	Type of Event	Expected No. of Delegates (No. per room)
1	Tuesday (evening)	1	Informal Reception	100-150
2	Wednesday (8:30–10 am)	1	Opening Session	175-250
3	Wednesday (am & pm)	3 or 4	Conference Sessions	175-250 (70 per room)
4	Wednesday (noon)	1	Catered Lunch	175-250
5	Thursday (am & pm)	4 or 5	Conference Sessions	200-275 (70 per room)
6	Thursday (am & pm)	1	Exhibitor Displays	15-20 Exhibitors
7	Thursday (evening)	1	Banquet	250-325
8	Friday (am & pm)	4 or 5	Conference Sessions	200-275 (70 per room)
9	Friday (noon)	1	Catered Lunch	200-275
10	Friday (am & pm)	2	Conference Sessions	75-100 (50 per room)

Selecting the Site

Before I flew to Quebec, the Tourism and Convention Bureau sent me an extensive two-day itinerary detailing Paul Fortier's and my tour of hotels, discussions with conference planners, and a guided tour of the city. I could see—and it proved to be—a tightly packed two days!

The hotels' proposals arrived two weeks before our visit. That gave me time to contact individual hotels to clarify ambiguities and to request additional information. Because the proposals ranged from six to ten pages, and were prepared in different formats and sequences, I condensed their key points into a one-page comparison chart listing the major factors we needed to consider.

I also prepared some specific questions for each hotel, plus working sheets listing common factors we wanted to examine and compare. These included:

- For the conference rooms:
  - Size and suitability (pleasantness)
  - Location and proximity to each other
  - Proximity to a central registration area
  - No room charge for the expected number of delegates
- For the bedrooms:
  - Price
  - Size and comfort
  - No-smoking floor
  - Coffee machine, iron, and hair dryer included
- For the hotel, overall:
  - Location and general appeal
  - Health facility, pool, and spa
  - Airport shuttle
  - Cost of AV equipment (and permission to use our own)
  - Cooperativeness of sales and other staff

Figure 2: Excerpt from RFP — Information Requested from Bidding Hotels

Hotels are requested to provide the following information:

1. Availability of the hotel and space for the proposed dates.
2. Cost per bedroom for each of the three suggested dates:
   - Single occupancy
   - Double occupancy

   (We are particularly interested in a same-rate room price for both single and double occupancy.)
3. The number of extra days before and after the conference that the hotel will honor these rates for delegates who wish to arrive early or stay after the conference.
4. The minimum number of rooms that must be booked to achieve these rates.
5. The number of complimentary rooms that will be granted for a certain number of booked rooms (for example, a complimentary room for every 50 booked rooms).
6. The cut-off date for holding rooms (for example, one month before the conference? two months?).
7. The cost (if any) of the conference rooms, reception room, banquet room, and exhibits hall.
8. A schedule showing current cost per person for:
   (a) Lunches on Wednesday and Friday
   (b) Banquet on Thursday evening
   (c) Daily continental breakfast
9. The PCS Administrative Committee will probably hold a two-day meeting in the selected hotel in March or June one year before the conference to tour the facilities and establish on-site requirements. There will be approximately 20-25 attendees. Please provide us with prices for:
   (a) Meeting room on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday
   (b) Accommodation rates for the attendees

We also recommend that you provide us with a paragraph or two describing why you feel your hotel is particularly suitable for the PCS conference, plus any special features about your hotel that will make it an especially attractive venue.

Please note that this is intended to be a *preliminary proposal*, prior to a visit your hotel by members of the conference committee. Before a contract is drawn up, you will be asked to prepare a definitive proposal on which the contract will be based.

The tour of each hotel lasted approximately two hours, during which we examined the conference facilities and looked at bedrooms ranging from standard to "club" or "executive" (all were of a very high standard). We were particularly interested in the arrangement of the conference rooms, their size in relation to the events we planned to hold, and their proximity to each other and to suitable areas we could set up for a registration booth and an exhibits hall.

At each hotel the sales representative invited us to join him or her for breakfast or lunch. (That this would occur was identified in the itinerary, so we knew not to eat beforehand. Nevertheless, I returned home somewhat heavier than when I left!)

The meal provided a partly social and partly business environment, during which we answered questions about PCS and the Society's history and conference requirements, and identified features of the hotel's proposal that we felt were perhaps too expensive or out of line with what other hotels were offering. For example, one hotel had included charges for meeting rooms, whereas the others had indicated that meeting rooms would be free in view of our expected attendance. This gave each hotel an opportunity to refine its proposal and deliver changes to me later.

Following each hotel visit, Paul and I took time to record our impressions on the working sheets I had brought with us. After seeing a rapid succession of bedrooms, meeting rooms, health facilities, restaurants, and banquet rooms, if you do not make notes before repeating the experience at the next property it can be difficult to remember which feature belongs to which hotel.

Sandwiched between the hotel visits were meetings with conference planners who offer registration and administration services, tours, and partner programs. They have since provided us with proposals identifying specific services we may choose to use to streamline our conference.

Our time may have been tightly packed, but in the evenings I was free to walk around Old Quebec, where the sun shone and locals and visitors alike flocked to the sidewalk cafes and narrow, cobbled streets. Personally, I was fascinated by the Norman architecture, the Martello towers built to defend the settlement in its early days, and the high granite wall that surrounds the inner town. As you can see (page 9), I couldn't resist buying an etching from the artists' alley, just below the Chateau Frontenac.

The Next Step

We have since held a telephone conference call with our organizing committee to discuss the hotels and make our choice. It was not easy, because every hotel had positive aspects. Now, final negotiations will begin with the selected hotel. And I'll write about that in my next report.

Editor's Note: Ron has offered to provide future conference chairs with copies of the RFP and evaluation sheets he and Paul Fortier used during their Quebec tour (you can contact Ron at *r.blicq@ieee.org*). His next article in the series will appear in the November/December newsletter.

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

Reply to:
Donna M. Wicks
6480 Grand Blanc Road
Swartz Creek, MI
48473-9403
810 232-7000 (o)
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dwicks@odo.gmi.edu

Contributions are welcome. Send proposals for columns to the editor.

E-mail files and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred.

Newsletter publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
Nov./Dec. 1996	6 Sep. 1996
Jan./Feb. 1997	8 Nov. 1996
Mar./Apr. 1997	10 Jan. 1997
May/June 1997	7 Mar. 1997
July/Aug. 1997	9 May 1997
Sep./Oct. 1997	3 July 1997

ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE

BY E.J. HERESNIAK

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A group of people were swapping telephone numbers at the conclusion of a meeting of a volunteer organization I am a part of when one of the members asked if we wanted her "dot com." Thankfully, nobody took it personally.

Nobody ever offered me their dot com before. It is one of those new phrases creeping into our language. Be careful about new language. Just when you figure out what is really meant, you're thrown off by new words or phrases. "Previously owned" is like that. And "diversity." Reengineering replaced downsizing pretty quickly as people found out that downsizing meant firing a bunch of people so executives could have bigger bonuses.

Dot com means an electronic mailing address. Like many computer terms, it makes no sense to regular people. It's part of the Internet thing that grew out of the Pentagon and universities spending tax money to fool around with computers and networks. All over the world computers are hooked up together. And each person using one needs an address. After all, if I want to send you a birthday card, I have to have your address. I suppose that before everybody understood what street numbers, states, and zip codes meant, regular addresses looked pretty silly too. It used to be quite simple when all you had to do was tell the Pony Express guy: "Give this to Pete over in Dodge City." Still, it seems to me that street addresses never looked as silly as computer addresses do.

Computer people like to make things complicated, even when they don't have to. They used to have to do strange things because computers were stupid. Computers are not that stupid anymore, which makes me begin to wonder about the people. Internet addresses are made up of at least three parts separated by the "@" thing and periods. First you put your name, which, because computers used to be stupid, can't even be your whole name. If your name is real tricky, you might be able to make something up with more periods or slash marks. Sometimes your name is something you can't remember, like a whole bunch of numbers and letters that mean nothing (all the cutesy names have been picked already). The @ mark separates the name you use from the place where you get your mail, say Prodigy or America Online. Then, for bureaucratic reasons, comes a period to separate your place from the kind of place it is. Kind of place means government (.gov), or a university (.edu), or a business (.com), or some group that doesn't fit elsewhere (.org). It works almost like a regular address once you figure it out. For example, "*president@whitehouse.gov*" is Bill Clinton's Internet hangout.

Just when regular people started to figure out the addresses, technical people got nervous because their knowledge wouldn't be special anymore. So they made up something more obscure: "Web address." The White House's is: "**http://www.whitehouse.gov.**" That "http://" is actually stupid instructions for a computer program. The "www" stands for the World Wide Web, a new way to put things on computers. Believe me, it's not computers that make it that way: "**http://negaduck.cc.vt.edu/dpn**" is for the Data Processing Management Association. It figures.

I'd love to tell you all about the World Wide Web and everything you might ever want to do with it. Or more important, how tough it is to get to where you can type: **http://anything**.

But I can't. All of these dot coms have given me a headache. It'll have to wait.

You can always amend a big plan, but you can never expand a little one. I don't believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation which we can't possibly foresee now.

— Harry Truman

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION HOSPITALITY SUITE AT IPCC 96: A FORUM FOR IDEA EXCHANGE

BY PAUL R. SEESING

IPCC 96 will feature an "Electronic Information Hospitality Suite" integrated with the papers, panels, and workshops. The hospitality suite will be open during several program sessions. It will provide a forum for attendees to do some interpersonal networking with colleagues who are exploring the Internet and working with electronic media. It will be less formal and more participative than the traditional IPCC panel discussions.

In the hospitality suite, a facilitator will assist attendees in connecting with colleagues who have common interests. At scheduled times, conference presenters will be available for short demonstrations and one-on-one conversations. Attendees may ask questions about the presentations or about other topics from their experience. Questions that invite discussion will be written on flip charts and posted at the hospitality suite. Throughout the conference participants may add their comments to the postings.

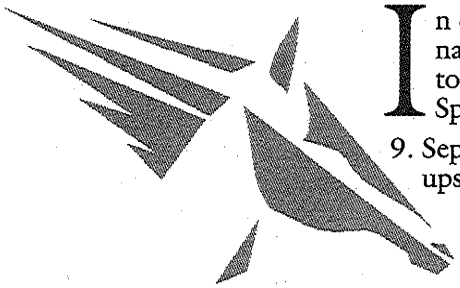
Topics for the hospitality suite might include the World Wide Web as a publishing tool, Usenet news groups, multimedia publishing, Internet services (FTP, Telnet, Gopher), and search engines. After the conference, the questions and responses will be organized into a PCS Web page.

Problem solving, philosophizing, idea exchange—the scope can be as wide as attendees choose to make it. The credo of the hospitality suite is "all of us together are smarter than any of us alone."

IPCC 96 has also scheduled a number of excellent papers, panels, and workshops on Internet-related topics (check out the IPCC 96 Web pages at **http://www.ieee.org/pcs/pcsindex.html**). I can think of no better way to upgrade your Internet skills quickly than to attend IPCC 96 and participate in the hospitality suite.

COME TO SARATOGA SPRINGS FOR IPCC 96

BY ROGER GRICE



In case the description of the preliminary conference program is not enough to entice you to come to Saratoga Springs, we offer:

9. September is a beautiful time to visit upstate New York. Spectacular Fall foliage, crisp air, and a chance to relax and admire the beautiful scenery.
8. The room rate at the Saratoga Springs Sheraton is only $99 per night—single or double. Not bad at all!
7. A chance to join your fellow conference attenders for a night of harness racing in Saratoga on Thursday, September 19. Grandstand seats will be reserved for us, giving us the opportunity to stay seated or to mingle with friends.
6. A chance to visit the National Museum of Horse racing and the National Museum of Dance.
5. The Welcoming Reception on Tuesday, September 17. Get a sneak peak at IPCC 97, to be held in Snowbird, Utah.
4. The Wednesday evening reception, sponsored by RPI's Department of Language, Literature, and Communication. An opportunity to relax, discuss the day's events, and to learn what's new at Rensselaer.
3. A chance to tour the Masie Center, an exhibit of high-tech devices, gadgets, and displays; see future technologies up close and personal.
2. Opportunities to explore Saratoga and Saratoga Springs on your own—the historic Saratoga Battlefield, location of the turning-point battle of the American Revolutionary War; historic Saratoga, a charming Victorian-style city; Saratoga State Park.
1. The top reason to come to IPCC 96 in Saratoga Springs, NY: The opportunity to network with many of the key players in the field to technical and professional communication, to exchange ideas and viewpoints, and to return to your job charged up and ready to meet new challenges.

IPCC 96 • Registration Form

Saratoga Springs, New York
September 18-20, 1996

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____ Telephone (_____) _____ Fax (_____) _____

E-Mail Address _____ IEEE Member Number _____

Preferred Name on Badge _____ Amount Enclosed $ _____

Conference Fees

	Advance	Regular
❑ IEEE/PCS Member	$275.00	$350.00
❑ IEEE/PCS Member Presenter	$200.00	$350.00
❑ Non-Member	$350.00	$400.00
❑ Non-Member Presenter	$275.00	$400.00
❑ Retirees	$162.50	*
❑ Full-time Students (Proof of student status required)	$162.50	*

Please Make Checks Payable To **IPCC 96.**

Advance Registrations Must Be Postmarked By August 16, 1996.

*The $162.50 rate is for preregistrations only and will not be available at the Conference.

Save money and register early! Refunds in full will be made if cancellation is made by September 13 to Conference Treasurer, Program Chair, or General Conference Chair.

The conference fee includes technical sessions, copy of the Proceedings, three continental breakfasts, and Wednesday lunch.

Accommodations

Saratoga is the fall place to be! The Saratoga Springs Sheraton is the location for IPCC 96. The hotel is located in one of Upstate New York's most beautiful and relaxing areas. The cost for a room, double or single, is $99 per night. To make your reservation, contact the Saratoga Springs Sheraton at 1-800-325-3535 or 518-584-4000. Be sure to mention IPCC 96 to get the special rate. Rates apply from September 15 to September 23.

Airlines

Albany Municipal Airport is served by American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, United, and USAir. The hotel is about 30 minutes from the hotel by rental car.

Return Form To

Deborah Flaherty Kizer • 664 Salvia Lane • Schenectady, NY 12303 • (518) 356-0878

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION

Are you interested in helping lead the Professional Communication Society into the future? PCS is run by an Administrative Committee, or AdCom, made up of 21 members, seven of whom are elected each year.

The current AdCom will elect the new members at the PCS annual meeting on September 21 at the Sheraton Conference Center in Saratoga Springs, New York, following IPCC 96. Any PCS member may attend the meeting.

We need nominations to fill seven openings on the AdCom for terms running from 1997 through 1999. Any member of IEEE and PCS is welcome to apply. However, elected members must be at least Member grade in the IEEE before taking office. Incumbents are eligible for reelection. There are usually three AdCom meetings per year, sometimes four.

If you are interested in nominating yourself (or someone else), please contact Laurel Grove (P.O. Box 19636, Amarillo, TX 79114, or *l.grove@ieee.org*). Anyone eligible who provides the following information to Laurel by August 21 will be placed on the ballot:

- Your IEEE membership number and grade.
- A statement of who you are and what you do professionally.
- Other professional organizations to which you belong and a description of your present and past activities in them.
- How you can help PCS achieve its aims; why you should be elected to the AdCom.
- What you would like to accomplish in the next three years as a member of the AdCom.
- The committee areas that are of interest to you.
- The number of meetings per year you would be able to attend.

We look forward to having you join the leaders!

IEEE
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Send Form 3579 to: IEEE, 345 East 47th Street, New York, NY 10017