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THE ART OF CONVERSATION

BY CHERYL REIMOLD

Part 1: Some Conversational Sins and Solutions

"Nature has left every man a capacity of being agreeable...in company."

You're at a party where you don't know anyone...or in the cafeteria at a table with a manager you'd like to get to know better...or on the production floor trying to build a friendly relationship with a machine operator. Do you shine in these situations? Or do you agonize over a smooth conversation start and grope for ways to keep the exchange limping along?

In this series I'll look at the secrets of satisfying conversations. As you'll see, improvement takes no more than awareness of your errors, willingness to adjust your attitude, and conscious use of certain types of questions.

Swift's Thoughts on Conversational Sins

Jonathan Swift's thoughts on conversation remain among the most enlightening. Let's begin, then, with some conversational sins as observed three centuries ago by Swift. Which do *you* tend to commit? (All quotations are from *Gulliver's Travels and Other Works* by Jonathan Swift, ed. Henry Morley, New York: Dutton, 1906, pp. 371-379.)

Dominating: "...I rarely remember to have seen five people together, where some one among them has not been predominant...to the great constraint and disgust of all the rest...."

Deliberate meandering: "...the sober deliberate talker, who proceeds with much

thought and caution, makes his preface, branches out into several digressions, finds a hint that puts him in mind of another story, which he promises to tell you when this is done; ...it perhaps proves at last a story the company has heard fifty times before...."

Talking about yourself: "Some, without any ceremony, will run over the history of their lives...the hardships and injustice they have suffered.... Others...will lie on the watch to hook in their own praise: they will call a witness to remember, they always foretold what would happen in such a case, but none would believe them.... Others make a vanity of telling their faults: [for example] they cannot dissemble; they own it is a folly...."

Excluding others: "I often have observed two persons discover...that they were bred together at the same school or university; after which the rest are condemned to silence...while these two are refreshing each other's memory...."

Compulsion to be witty: "If they have opened their mouths, without endeavouring to say a witty thing, they think it is so many words lost.... They must do something extraordinary...else the standers-by may be disappointed, and be apt to think them only like the rest of mortals...."

Dwelling on things you know: "...pedantry is the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our own knowledge in common discourse...."

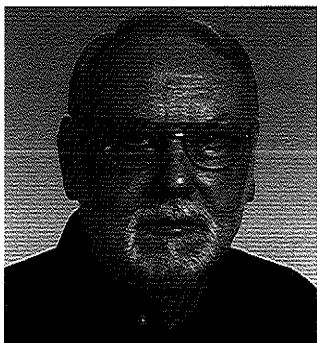
Ridicule: "It now passes for raillery to run a man down in discourse...and make him ridiculous; on all which occasions, he is obliged not to be angry, to avoid the

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FROM THE EDITOR



RUDY JOENK

Thanks

This is my tenth issue since officially becoming editor (again). I'm grateful to all our authors and especially to our dedicated columnists who make this job so enjoyable.

In this issue we welcome a new columnist, Jean-luc Doumont (see Good Intent, Poor Outcome on page 11), and I extend the possibility of "instant fame" <G> to other writers who would like to become authors: Send me a proposal.

Reporters and Photographers Wanted

This year we'd like the November/December issue to include coverage of IPCC 99. If you're headed to New Orleans September 8-10, please consider writing up your favorite sessions or photographing your favorite speakers or activities (more opportunities for instant fame). Send me a note.

Check the conference program at <http://www.ieee.org/ipcc>.

Potpourri

A pair of misused words, similar but not interchangeable: *continuous*, meaning uninterrupted in time (or space), and *continual*, meaning of regular or frequent recurrence.

Sign on an office building in Englewood, New Jersey: **This Building Is Alarmed**. Reported by E. K. Gannett, Teaneck, NJ.

Souvenir of our recent AdCom meeting near Boston: the Paul Revere virus. "This revolutionary virus does not horse around.

It warns you of impending hard disk attack: once if by LAN, twice if by C:\." From Delta Air Lines' *Sky* magazine.

AdCom Meetings

The final AdCom meeting of the year — the annual election meeting — will be September 7 in New Orleans at the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel preceding IPCC 99. Members are welcome at AdCom meetings.

The annual awards given by the AdCom — Goldsmith, Schlesinger, and best *Transactions* paper — will be presented at the conference.

Info for Authors

One thousand words makes a nice page-and-a-half article, although 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. all 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.

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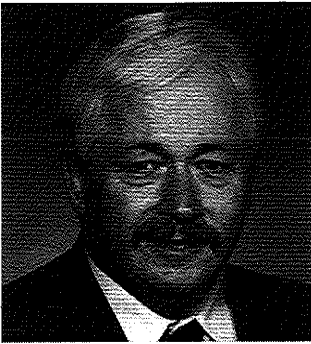
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



ROGER GRICE

COMMUNICATION ETHICS IN THE AGE OF THE WEB

Two hallmarks of professional and technical communication — of the discipline and those who practice it — are credibility and a dedication to the accuracy, completeness, and suitability of information. A good deal of thought has been given to how credibility and dedication form the basis for the ethics and professionalism of our profession as it develops and matures. But the opportunities offered by new electronic communication media — especially the World Wide Web — have challenged some of our beliefs and practices.

One basis for the strength of our profession has always been credibility. People read the manuals, proposals, and reports that we write; they read the papers that we produce for conference proceedings; they listen to the presentations we make at conferences and meetings of professional associations; and, increasingly, they read what we produce for distribution and consumption on the Web.

If people don't believe what we say, if they don't have faith in what we say, then we fail as communicators. Much of our credibility arises from our *ethos* — the appeal to our audience that we are good and honest communicators speaking the truth and that they should believe what we say and follow the instructions we supply. Without this trust on their part, we cannot be effective communicators, no matter how hard we try.

But with so much communication now taking place on the Web, the Web seems to be emerging as an authority in its own right. People quote the Web as the source of their information: "This must be true and up to date; I just got it off the Web."

Many people fail to question what they see or stop to think how much trust they should put in what they see. Who put the information there? What are their credentials for saying what they do? Are they impartial — or do they have a particular

ax to grind? Has the information been kept current — or is it months, perhaps years, out of date?

When the focus of technical and professional communication was more on the printed word, people were generally quite careful about naming their sources of information and considering — at least briefly — the credibility of those sources. This seems to be less the case today.

Consumers of information use sources randomly, not feeling particularly responsible for determining the thoroughness, accuracy, and completeness of the information they see. Authors put words and pictures on the Web as an electronic "first draft." And although they may have every good intention of fixing or enhancing what they put there, and although they may have every good intention of faithfully updating the information as needed, it is too often the case that what is put on the Web stays there — often much longer than it should.

Consumers of information blur the limits of fair use of copyrighted material. (Some people blatantly violate copyright law with no regard for ethics, but that is another matter.) When text and graphics can be downloaded so easily — after all, it's only one right-click away — people commonly have the property of others stored on their systems. And once the property is stored there, they develop a sense of ownership of that material and feel free to use it as their own. "After all," many people claim, "the whole philosophy of the Web is unlimited sharing of information."

So, although people have more access to more information than ever before, information is beginning to have less value than it once did. The ease of access and the sheer volume of information tend to make each piece of information seem less important.

Ensuring that information is still seen as the important commodity that it really is,

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Communicators must uphold the value and reliability of information.

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

(continued from page 1)

imputation of not being able to take a jest...."

Interrupting: "...an impatience to interrupt others; and the uneasiness of being interrupted ourselves.... There are some people, whose good manners will not suffer them to interrupt you; but what is almost as bad, will...lie upon the watch until you have done, because they have started something in their own thoughts...."

Storytellers: "There are some men excellent at telling a story, and provided with a plentiful stock of them, which they can draw out upon occasion in all companies; ...it is subject to two unavoidable defects, frequent repetition, and being soon exhausted; so that whoever values this gift in himself, has need of a good memory, and ought frequently to shift his company...."

Inappropriate familiarity: "There is a sort of rude familiarity, which some people, by practising among their intimates, have introduced into their general conversation, and would have it pass for innocent freedom or humour...."

Swift was prompted to write down his observations "by mere indignation...that so useful and innocent a pleasure...should be so much neglected and abused." It seems to me that nothing has changed in this respect. But fortunately, as Swift also points out, anyone can learn to improve because good conversation "requires few talents to which most men are not born, or at least may not acquire, without any great genius or study. For, nature has left every man a capacity of being agreeable, though not of shining, in company...."

Let's look at some ways to draw on that gift of nature.

Overcoming Self-consciousness

People who ask me for help with conversation usually single out self-consciousness

as their main barrier. They see conversation as an ordeal in which they are judged harshly by others. How can they get beyond this seemingly unscalable wall?

The answer is simple — and, interestingly, it's implicit in Swift's observations. It involves not some clever techniques but a radical switch in your attitude toward conversation: Instead of dreading conversation as a test or competition of some sort, appreciate it as a chance to *learn something new and share some of your own treasures*. That's enough of a job — it leaves no room for thinking about appearances.

Humans are social beings — and our social cement is conversation. It's how we get to know each other so we can stop feeling alone. The most important kind of insight we can gain from conversation, then, is knowledge about each other. Other kinds of information — say, about science, politics, nature, and foreign places — are available in books, but what the people around us are like we glean mostly through social talk.

In short, conversation is one of the finer pleasures of civilization that allows us to improve each other by sharing information that contains some personal element. To participate, you don't need brilliance but rather honesty tempered by sensitivity.

Opening Moves

Starting seems to be the stickiest part for most people. They feel that any opener they can think of sounds shallow, lame, or boring, and they're embarrassed to let such remarks out of their mouth. Besides, they can't see how such openers could possibly lead to any interesting exchanges.

Are there clever ways to start? Of course! Would I recommend them? Absolutely not!

Just listen to conversations all around you and you'll find that most of them start precisely in that conventional, low-key way you may dread: "What do you do?"

There is a strong preference for a conventional start.

*Conversation doesn't
require brilliance
but honesty tempered
by sensitivity.*

"Where are you from?" "Isn't this a gorgeous day?" "Did you enjoy that lecture?" Yet some of them manage to develop from that humble start into interesting discussions.

Why should there be such a strong preference for a conventional start? The explanation seems to be that people are instinctively on guard against unpredictable characters. If my first contribution is: "Hi— I wonder what your views on life are," then you may quickly look for other conversation partners, feeling that I might do anything— sit on your lap, tickle you, or start shouting gibberish. In our culture only children are allowed such conversational freedom.

Your first job, then, is not to find a brilliant or substantial opening but to start with the obvious and then move quickly into more personal territory. In our culture "the obvious" is *anything from our shared context, presented in a nonthreatening way*. For instance, at work your shared context includes the organization and its history and policies, recent changes, customers and products, and economic or industry developments that may affect the company.

At a wedding party the shared context is the party, the entertainment, the food, the place, the people being honored, and each guest's relationship to the bride or groom. In addition, in any situation, context includes anything the other person is doing or wearing—but watch out for specific taboos and anything that might be perceived as a negative comment.

Even when you know the other person, a conventional opener may lead to much

better insights than going back to comfortable topics. For instance, you may know that a colleague has a daughter who is suffering from anorexia and you usually end up talking about this and related topics. It's safe and comfortable and it seems highly personal—but what do you really know about this person? In effect you have developed a very narrow relationship.

Now suppose you're both at an office party. Then "Hi— how are things going at home?" will produce no new insights—but a conventional opener might. Here is how it could play out:

You: Hi— having a good time? Or don't you like these office parties?

He: Well, not my favorite thing. I guess I'm not a party animal.

You: I'm not either. It's strange, isn't it: You think you know people from working with them but then in a social situation you realize how little you really know about them. Do you think men really make any friends after high school or college?

And within ten minutes, you may have learned a lot about each other and even yourselves!

Cheryl Reimold has taught communication skills to engineers, scientists, and business-people for 15 years. Her firm, PERC Communications (6A Dickel Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583, (914) 725-1024; perccom@aol.com), offers businesses customized in-house courses on writing, presentation skills, and on-the-job communication skills.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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and that all people deal ethically with its creation, use, and dissemination, is a cause in which we, as professional communicators, must lead the battle. For if the value

and reliability of information are cheapened and degraded, there will be very little that is professional about "professional communication."

FLOCCINAUCHINIHILIPILIFICATION



BY MICHAEL BRADY

Quick! You are compiling a report for limited distribution in your company. In it you need a table published in a book on your shelf. How to include it? Just run to the photocopier and make the number of copies you need to bind with your pages?

Better yet, why not scan the table into your word processing format and rework it to conform to your layout style? Nothing wrong in either case; you are only making a few copies; you need not fear the copyright chimera lurking on the verso of the title page of the book; the holder of it cannot charge you for the few copies you made. Right?

Wrong, and more so by the day. For rightsholders (yes, it is one word) increasingly can and do collect for copies made of their copyrighted works. The very technologies you may have used to copy — the ubiquitous photocopier and the scanner — triggered the foundation of organizations that ensure such rights. They are called Reproduction Rights Organizations (RROs) and they are active in countries around the world. For instance, in the U.S. the RRO is the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC).

Some RROs, including the CCC, were founded in the 1970s. In the 1980s the RRO concept spread in response to the challenge of proliferating photocopying of scientific and cultural printed works. There now are 37 RROs, including five for musical works, in the A to Z of countries, from Australia to Zimbabwe.

Their mission is pragmatic: Combating copying is sterile, charging for it shrewd. Each RRO derives its authority from the laws of its country, from contracts with rightsholders, or from both of these. It issues licenses to organizations to make limited numbers of copies of portions of copyrighted publications against a schedule of fees for copies made. Income from fees collected is distributed to the rightshold-

ers. Most RROs have bilateral agreements with other RROs to exchange licensing authority and transfer funds.

The CCC, for instance, has bilateral agreements with RROs in 12 countries. So if you are in a CCC-licensed organization in the U.S. and you copy works copyrighted in countries as close as Canada or as far away as New Zealand, the CCC will ensure that the rightsholders in those countries receive compensation for the copies you made.

And that's news for copyrights, which have suffered disregard for at least two and a half centuries. The records of the debate of May 6, 1735, in the House of Lords of England includes the lament that "The Editions and Impressions of Such Books made and published as well in Great Britain as in Ireland and Scotland by persons who have paid no considerations for the Copy-right [*sic*] of such Books." Indeed, through triggering the foundation of RROs, the technologies that escalated abuse of copyright may have served it well.

The national RROs are linked together via the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO), which has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. The IFRRO has three goals: Encourage the founding of more RROs, facilitate agreements on behalf of its members, and increase general awareness of the role of RROs in ensuring that rightsholders are justly compensated for the use of their works.

The IFRRO and the national RROs are the fair-play referees of the world of written communication; we all should know more about them. For further details in the U.S., contact the CCC at 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, <http://www.copyright.com>. For international information and a list of all RROs, contact the IFRRO at Rue du Prince Royal 87, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium, <http://www.ifrro.org>.

*The technologies that
escalated abuse of
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TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IN BELGIUM

BY LUC BOUQUET

The Belgian Socio-Economic Situation

To understand the situation of technical communication in Belgium it is important to know some of the socio-economic basics of the country.

Belgium is a split country. There are three main regions: Flanders, Wallony, and the Brussels region. The official language in Flanders is Dutch; in Wallony it is French and, to a lesser extent, German. The capital, Brussels, is a bilingual city: French and Dutch. Located in the heart of Europe, Brussels hosts quite a few European institutions. The availability of many multilingual, highly skilled knowledge workers has also attracted the European headquarters of many multinational corporations.

This unique position is why Belgium as a whole and particularly Brussels have traditionally been a hub for the assembly and trade of technological products, rather than a center of development of new technologies. Of the whole world, Belgium is the country where the most cars are assembled per capita. Brussels, for example, is considered the center of translation and localization [customizing for a country] in Europe. These industries and services, however, do not employ many technical communicators.

Recent Evolution

Belgium is a relatively new country: It was formed in 1830. Until the '60s the motor of technology and economic development was located in Wallony with its coal mines and associated heavy industry. Since the '60s the development of technology has moved from Wallony to Flanders. More recently the economy has changed from heavy industry such as coal mines and steel factories to non-material economies such as speech technology and genetic engineer-

ing. Due to this asymmetrical evolution, Flanders and Wallony are now living apart together, the unitarian Belgian state becoming increasingly weaker.

Flanders: Technological Valleys

For more than 10 years research and development have been seen as a priority in Flanders. The region invests massively to maintain its leading role in a number of sectors.

Broadly speaking, there are two poles of research — called "valleys" — in Flanders. One is grouped around the 570-year-old university at Leuven. It has created a critical mass of some 350 digital signal processing specialists. The other pole, near the town of Ieper, is known as Flanders Language Valley. The Flemish government plans more of these valleys in the near future: Graphic Valley, Imaging Valley, and Multimedia Valley.

Companies such as Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products are pioneering multilingual products for a stunning variety of applications. Also biotechnology is represented through companies such as Innogenetics, a 250-strong team that focuses on innovative niche products. Some 90 percent of its turnover comes from abroad — another indication of the international scope of Flanders.

Wallony: Retooling the Traditional Industry

A land of iron and coal, Wallony has been the site of intense industrial activity since the Middle Ages. Iron and steel making, metal, mechanical and electrical constructions, chemistry, and glass making constituted the historical bases of its prosperity. These sectors have now been retooled with highly sophisticated computer and robotic equipment.

The technical communication business is mainly located in the Flemish part of the country and in Brussels.

Charleroi is a center of the aeronautics, computer graphics, and petrochemical industries. Mons and its University of Hainaut have specialized in developing new ceramic materials.

Louvain-la-Neuve has transformed the Walloon Brabant (located outside the influential Sambre-Meuse industrial corridor) into a breeding ground for companies, especially in the biomedical and pharmaceutical fields.

Technical Communication, Mainly a Flemish Business

The technical communication business is mainly located in the Flemish part of the country and in Brussels. It is difficult to estimate the number of technical communicators in Flanders. Only a few of them are organized so far. The Belgium Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, founded in 1996, has about 30 members; 25 of them are Flemish. Five companies offer technical communication services. Altogether they employ about 100 people. Some of these companies, however, combine technical communication with translation and localization, user interface design, technical maintenance, information mapping, and generic business communication.

Compared to its neighboring countries such as France, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Germany, few native English speakers are active as technical communicators in Belgium. This has two causes: The wages are lower than in the neighboring countries and the Flemish people are doing quite well in English. Last year, for example, a Flemish technical writer won an award in the STC France contest with an English manual.

Job Opportunities for Technical Communicators

Since Belgium is rapidly picking up new technology, the need for technical communicators is growing accordingly. A quick look at the job ads in newspapers reveals

that there is about one vacant position every week. This is a spectacular increase, given that five years ago the term "Technical Writer" or "Technical Communicator" was almost unknown. There are many "hidden" technical communicators, though — people who do technical writing only as a part of their job.

Research and Education in Technical Communication

Research and education in technical communication are less developed than in the Netherlands, Germany, and the U.K. There is no formal education for technical communicators in Belgium. However, there is a positive evolution. There are research initiatives in Antwerp and Louvain-la-Neuve. The University of Gent and the Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen plan to conduct regular courses in technical communication.

To Conclude

Compared to other western European countries, Belgium has long been more or less backward with regard to technical communication. But it is catching up very rapidly. As technological valleys are growing in Flanders, the need for technical communicators is growing accordingly. Once the need for technical communicators reaches a critical mass, various parties will become interested: industry, government, academia, etc. With its intellectual potential, its excellent language skills and central location, Belgium is very well prepared to play a leading role in technical communication and localization services.

Luc Bouquet started working as a technical communicator in 1982 for companies such as Océ-Nederland and Wang Europe. Since 1989 he is founder and director of ATEK, a technical communication agency in Gent. He is a senior member of STC, past vice-president of the France Chapter, and cofounder and past president of the Belgium Chapter; luc.bouquet@atek.be; <http://www.atek.be>.

BUCKSHOT OVER THE HEDGE

BY WEN SMITH

During my days in the military I knew a fellow who never worried about the possibility of death in combat. He was a fatalist of sorts. "If one has your name on it," he said, "you can't duck."

Since then I have applied his outlook, not to bullets but to words, especially pronouns. It's a shut-off valve that keeps me from thinking that the world revolves around me. I don't respond to shouted pronouns unless I know they "have my name on them."

I suppose that's why I didn't look up the other day in the department store when somebody shouted, "Hey, *you*!" My clerk turned to look, and so did another nearby. I couldn't buy a shirt until all the *you*'s in the place had realized that the shouter didn't mean them. The shoplifter whose name was on the shouted *you* was already out the door.

The pronouns *you*, *he*, and *she* are like buckshot. They spray meaning around so that anything within range is a possible target. No wonder paranoia flourishes as you walk down a crowded street. Overhear a conversation with *he* or *she* in it and, if the gender fits, you're convinced the pronoun has your name on it.

When that happens, there's little help for the situation other than the distinction of sex, and that doesn't always work. You can tell that *she* doesn't refer to a man or boy but you can't always be sure who the target is if several people of the female persuasion are nearby. And even *he* or *his* doesn't rule out reference to a girl or woman, as in "Everybody is entitled to *his* opinion."

Buckshot pronouns fired out of the blind into a clear sky can demolish a conversation.

Monday evening, my right-door neighbor, Doug, was trimming his hedge when I

drove up my driveway, and he seemed eager to talk. He had come out of the house and picked up the trimmer, he said, because his wife was on the phone with his mother-in-law.

"I can't stand listening to it," he said. "She says she's crazy."

There it was, the buckshot pronoun. Who was *she*? Was it the wife or the mother-in-law who said it, and which one was crazy?

"I don't think your wife is crazy," I said.

"Carol? Oh, she isn't, but she says her mother is. She likes to gossip."

"Carol likes to gossip?"

"No, my mother-in-law does. She has a lot of relatives, and when they get on the phone, she tells her they're all crazy."

I understood easily enough that she could reasonably mean either Carol or her mother, but *they* was something else.

"Who gets on the phone — all the relatives?"

"No, Carol and her mother."

"Who tells her they're all crazy? Your mother-in-law tells Carol?"

"No, Carol tells my mother-in-law. It's a shame."

It? The shame remained unspecified.

"You mean it's a shame they're all crazy?"

"No, it's a shame she gets so upset."

"Who? Your mother-in-law?"

"No, Carol. If you ask me, they really aren't that bad."

Doug's shift again to the plural *they* left me behind. I saw the conversation getting out of hand.

Pronouns spray meaning around so that anything within range is a possible target.

"Who isn't that bad?"

"My mother-in-law's relatives. Carol doesn't say that to her dad or her brother."

"She doesn't say *what*?"

"That they're crazy."

"*They*? You mean the whole family?"

"No, just her dad and her brother. They get along with her just fine."

I was still wondering who got along with whom when my wife stuck her head out our door and shouted, "How come you never do that?"

"Do what?" Doug shouted back, assuming that *you* meant him.

"I didn't mean you," my wife said. "You're trimming your hedge. Why doesn't he trim his?"

I couldn't duck. This time I knew at least one of those pronouns had my name on it.

"You want to borrow it?" Doug said.

I was about to ask what *it* meant when he pushed the trimmer toward me. Some pronouns are all too clear.

Wen Smith is a right-to-laugh activist who lives in Dana Point, California.

EURO-ENGLISH

The European Commission have just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the E.U., rather than French or German, which were other possibilities.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a five-year phase-in plan that would be known as Euro-English. In the first year "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of the "k". This should klear up konfusion and keyboards can have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with the "f". This will make words like "fotograf" 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. The government will enkorage the removal of double leters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also al wil agre that the horrible mes of the silent "e"s in the language is disgraseful and they should go away.

By the 4th year peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" wiz "v". During ze fifz yer ze unesary "o" can be dropd from vords kon-taining "ou" and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters. After zis fifz yer ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no more trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer.

Ze drem vil finali kum tru!

— Found on the Web and submitted by Luke Maki

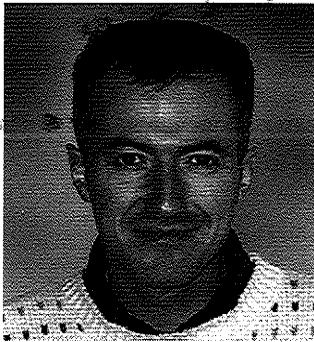
PC-related words that have entered the lexicon — but shouldn't have:

Double-click: to emphasize; for example, "I want to double-click this point."

Bandwidth: Silicon Valley slang for time; for example, to avoid a meeting say "Sorry, I don't have the bandwidth."

— Fortune

GOOD INTENT, POOR OUTCOME



JEAN-LUC DUMONT

GOING DOWN TO ANSWER THE CALL

Hallmark, if any, of scholarly writing, footnotes are loved by some and hated by others. Interestingly, writers are typically in the first category, readers in the second. Erudite as they may look, footnotes may be yet another example of a good intent with a poor outcome.

When I ask writers (such as the participants in my training programs on technical writing) why they use footnotes, they usually say they want to avoid interrupting readers with less important information, typically information that these readers may already know or may not care about in a first reading. Examples of such “less important information” are side remarks, references, and expansions of acronyms.

More generally, and though different writers may resort to footnotes for different materials, all probably aim at providing two levels of reading by separating primary from secondary information. “Secondary,” here, does not imply “less important” as much as “what comes afterwards.” Thus, comments on an existing text, possibly the more important information, comes “after” the original text—in a footnote.

Providing two levels of information, no doubt, is a worthwhile intent. Many of the managers I talk to indeed complain that the documents they must read lack contrast or emphasis. Separating primary from secondary information can be one of several ways to achieve emphasis. So what’s wrong with footnotes?

Footnotes usually backfire because they are irresistible. As Noel Coward remarked, coming across a footnote is like going downstairs to answer the doorbell while making love. There you are, happily engrossed in reading a rich, thought-provoking piece of prose, when suddenly knocks a footnote.

You could ignore it; after all, if you do not answer, it will go away when you turn the page. Alas, you cannot but wonder: Who might that be? What if it is just what you were looking for? Whether or not you go down to answer the call, you *have* been interrupted—precisely the opposite of what the writer intended.

Besides the natural curiosity of *homo sapiens*, footnotes are irresistible for at least two reasons: First, we usually have little upon which to decide whether to read a footnote; we do not know what we might be missing by not reading it. Second, we have but little effort to make to look at the footnote; we are visually tantalized. These observations suggest three possible routes for avoiding undue distraction to our readers.

1. **Convey the same type of information in all footnotes.** For example, use footnotes solely to explain acronyms. After a few footnotes, or if the convention is explained, readers will figure out that the *only* information they might be missing is the acronym expansion; if they know what the acronym stands for, they can safely ignore the footnote call.
2. **Replace footnotes by endnotes.** Endnotes, being visually remote, are less irresistible than footnotes. They are the standard way to present bibliographic references in the sciences with, as additional advantages, a better overview of the works cited and no need for lengthy or backward-pointing repetitions (as the somewhat cryptic *op. cit.* and *ibid.*, more typical of the humanities).
3. **Don’t use footnotes at all.** As a more drastic measure we might suppress all footnotes. If we deem the information important we could insert it in the text, possibly as a remark set in smaller type. If we deem it unimportant we might as well suppress it altogether.

Footnotes, of course, are largely a matter of culture. A young lawyer I was tutoring told me his Ph.D.-degree jury would not even consider reading his dissertation without numerous footnotes. Though tradition may not favor readability, Rule 1 still applies: Adapt to your audience.

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

“Coming across a footnote is like going downstairs to answer the doorbell while making love.”

PCS RUSSIA CHAPTER MEETING

BY HENRICH LANTSBERG

May 19-20, 1999, was marked by the PCS Russia Chapter meeting organized in the framework of the 54th annual meeting of the Russian Popov Society for Radioengineering, Electronics, and Communications in Moscow. The Chapter meeting was conducted in cooperation with the Popov Society's Professional Communication Section, founded in 1967, and the Association of Information Workers of Russia, founded in 1990.

The PCS Russia Chapter now has 22 members who organize several meetings, workshops, and conferences per year, often in cooperation with IEEE groups and other entities.

The May session was opened by the president of the Popov Society, Prof. Yuri Gulyaev, who is an IEEE Fellow and chair of the IEEE Russia Section. Among the guests was the dean of Russian communication and radiophysics scientists and engineers, Prof. Vladimir Kotelnikov, an IEEE Life Fellow who recently celebrated his 90th birthday. The plenary session papers included: "Conceptual approach to the decision of basic problems of digital TV development," "Remote radar Earth sensing on ultra shortwave," and "New information technology for education."

These papers were presented in the PCS session:

- "State information policy and modern information-communication technology" by Dr. Yuri Nisnevich, head of the Center for Law and Parliament Activity of Russia
- "Information industry branch activity of the State Computerized System of the Scientific-Technical System" by Dr. Vladimir Nechiporenko of the Ministry of Science and Technology

- "Information-mathematical methods, models, and tools for the control of information systems development" by Dr. Yuri Bashin of the Association of Russian Universities
- "Method of infotelecommunication forecasting" by Dr. Livon Martynov of the State Committee for Communication and Informatization

The problems and structure of a computerized information center were discussed in a paper presented by the Institute of Industrial Development. Several papers were devoted to the activities of libraries: The state scientific-technical library was represented by a paper about a new international library information-analytical center; the Library for the Natural Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences submitted papers on new information technology for the library and told about the implementation of new automation processes; Dr. Yulia Shestakova described the activity carried out by the National Electronic Library.

The participants in the meeting emphasized that the relations among our societies in the field of professional communication are very important and in many respects facilitate the continued beneficial cooperation as well as the participation of professional communicators of Russia in the world scientific community.

Dr. Lantsberg is chair of the PCS Russia Chapter, vice-chair of the IEEE Russia Section, an IEEE Senior Member, a member of the International Telecommunication Academy, and a member of the Institute of Radioengineering and Electronics of the Russian Academy of Sciences; phone (7-095) 203-4985, fax (7-095) 203-8414, e-mail h.lantsberg@ieee.org.

The Russia Section received a Regional Activities Board award for leadership and membership development.

NET NOTES



ELIZABETH MOELLER

DEVELOPING A WEB SITE—PART 2

In the previous issue I discussed how to choose a Web site designer. In this issue, I discuss the important step of choosing an Internet Service Provider (ISP). The ISP will host your Web site on their computers and, if needed, provide access to the Internet for your business or organization. In many cases, the Web designer you choose will be able to host your site or recommend a company to do this for you.

Domain Name

The first step is to decide whether you should register a domain name. The short answer is *yes*! Domain names are relatively inexpensive: \$35 per year with a two-year minimum to start. There is often a setup fee associated with this: usually \$75 to \$100. Registering your domain name is extremely important if you have a trademark you want to protect. In other cases, your domain name is your Internet address. You want to make sure it is something easy to remember and reflects your business.

Types of ISPs

ISPs offer a variety of services. Your business first needs to determine which services you need, which are nice to have, and which you can do without. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Web hosting—a place to store your Web site
- Virtual domains—your company address as a URL (*www.mycompany.com*) instead of being part of the service (*www.myisp.net/~mycompany*)
- Dial-up phone access—a way for you to access the Internet
- Telnet shell access—a way to telnet into your account to do work in the Unix shell
- SMTP—a way to integrate your electronic mail from outside with electronic mail on your local network

- Community information—special information created just for subscribers

ISPs can be local or national. Local ISPs tend to offer more personalized services and technical support, whereas national ISPs tend to offer more advanced services—sometimes for a lower cost, sometimes for much more. The best advice is to shop around. Visit their Web sites, call their sales offices, talk to their technical support people. Each ISP offers a unique set of services. You need to find one that matches your needs and business philosophy with their services and business philosophy.

Questions to Ask an ISP

Before you start shopping, make a list of everything you need in an ISP. Your designer should help you with this list. Although you have questions about how to connect your business to the Internet, the designer needs to make sure the ISP you choose can meet his or her technical needs. When you start shopping around, keep the following questions in mind. The answers will differ for each ISP so these questions will help you find the ISP that best meets your needs.

- **Does it offer all the services you require?** This is obviously the most important. If an ISP cannot meet all your required needs, it is not the right ISP for you. In addition, you want to know how many of your “really nice to have” requirements they offer as well. You may find these “really nice” services will be required down the road.
- **What is the monthly fee with a domain name registration?** Some companies offer Web hosting without a domain name and there is often a fairly significant cost difference. You want to make sure the ISP knows you are looking for “virtual domain hosting” or “Web hosting with a virtual domain.”
- **Can you register a domain name and at what cost?** Do they register the domain name for you? If so, who is listed

Owning a domain name is important for personalizing your site.

as the administrative contact? Since only the administrative contact is permitted to cancel the domain or move it to another ISP, you want to make sure that *you*, or someone trustworthy at your company, is listed as the administrative contact. If the ISP lists itself as the administrative contact, it can hold the domain name hostage if you choose to switch ISPs down the road.

- **What is the setup fee?** This varies from \$50 to \$500 or more, depending on the services provided and the ISP.
- **Is there a bandwidth surcharge?** If so, your worst nightmare will be having an extremely successful site. An average small-business Web site is less than one megabyte in size. What is their fee if you go over your allotted bandwidth? Ideally, you should find an ISP that does not charge for bandwidth.
- **Do they allow CGI scripting (using the Perl programming language) for form interpretation or online shopping?** This gives your designer a lot of flexibility for customizing your site.
- **Are they set up for special software such as FrontPage and ColdFusion?** These programs require special server extensions. If the ISP is not set up for them, a site developed using these products will not work properly. Your designer can tell you what software they plan to use to develop your site.
- **Do they have a secure server available and is there a charge to use it?** A secure server is needed if you plan on credit-card transactions or transmitting other sensitive data.
- **How much disk space is provided?** Generally, 10 to 20 megabytes is plenty. Graphically intensive or video-based sites may require more.
- **Is a dial-up account provided?** If you need access to the Internet, you'll need a dial-up account. Make sure the ISP provides a *local* number for you to call.
- **Is there FTP access to your account from any computer?** If you already have

a dial-up account with another ISP, you want to make sure that you can transfer files to your Web account via FTP. Some ISPs require that you dial them directly before transferring your files. This is not a problem if you have a local phone number to call; it can be expensive if there is no local number in your area.

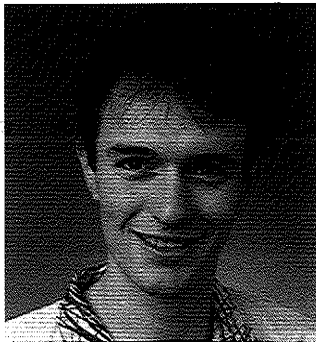
- **Do you have 24 hours per day/7 days per week access to your files?** If you'd like to make a change to a file online at 2 a.m. Sunday morning, can you do it? You may never need this feature but it's good to have.
- **Is there a delay between uploading your files and when they are available on the Web?** This is very important if you need to make quick updates. Some ISPs have you upload to a server and then it moves your files inside the firewall. If it does this, what is the update cycle? Very often it is once every two hours. This is a problem if you need a quick change and it will be two hours before it's viewable by the rest of the world.
- **What are the technical support hours?** Some ISPs, usually local ones, offer evening and weekend technical support. You also want to know if there is a charge to use technical support. Finally, check the quality of the support information on their Web site. You may never need to call them with a problem if their site is well done.

Your ISP can cost from \$25 per month for basic Web hosting to \$200 per month or more for many advanced features. In the final instalment of this series, I'll discuss what to consider during the design of your site.

Elizabeth Weise Moeller is a PCS AdCom member and chair of the Publicity & Marketing Committee. She owns Interactive Media Consulting (518-366-8765, 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.

Find an ISP whose services and business philosophy match your needs and business philosophy.

BLACK TOOLS



HANSPETER SCHMID

TO MOCK A MOCKINGBIRD

I have a good friend who is horizontally challenged and has somewhat obsolete intellectual equipment. He calls himself "fat and daft" ("Dick und Doof" in Swiss German) because this is both the truth and the German title of "Laurel and Hardy." He would probably hit you with something blunt if you called him "horizontally challenged" because that means the same as "fat" and implies that being fat is unacceptable and talking about it is taboo. I believe that political correctness is an elaborate technique that enables people to speak their mind when they should actually shut up.

While the sense or nonsense of politically correct language is open to debate, one thing is clear: It does matter how you name things because well chosen names have a great impact on an audience. Many speakers actively use terminology to get their view across in a subliminal way. This is why a speaker's intentions often become apparent from the terms he uses. Note, for example, the big difference between saying "There was collateral damage" and "We hit apartment blocks and killed innocent people."

The most effective countermeasure against Trick 12, which I call "Good Labels," is the trick itself: Just call things by their proper name, where "proper name" means, of course, the name *you* think fit. Sir Humphrey demonstrates the countermeasure in "Yes, Prime Minister!":

Sir Humphrey: Bribery?

Sir Desmond: Well, undisclosed advance commissions to foreign government officials.

Sir Humphrey: Bribery.

Sir Desmond: Yes.

Also important is the context in which something is presented. A gray spot looks white on a black surface but black on a white one.

Trick 13, "The Extreme Contrary," is to present your idea together with an exaggerated, opposing statement. This is often

done when a person having an idea talks to the person or committee who has to approve or reject it. You can avert Trick 13 if you manage to see or even expose the fact that the opposing statement is exaggerated, but that may not be easy because it is not in the proposer's interest that you see it. Again, I let Sir Humphrey clarify that for me:

Sir Humphrey: Well, if they had all the facts, they'd see all sorts of other possibilities; they might even formulate their own plans instead of choosing among the two or three that we put up.

There is another kind of discussion trick that has less to do with the discussion topic and more with the people discussing it. Trick 14 is "The Hollywood Proof": Out of the blue your opponent jumps up and shouts that you just supported or even proved his view. If you waver at that point, you have lost.

It is like playing volleyball: When the ball falls on the line, the team who has actually lost it will cheer and shout "out," hoping that the referee finds their act more convincing than what he thinks he has seen. That team will, of course, behave in exactly the same manner when the ball is really out. This trick is most dangerous when you are under time pressure, so when your opponent starts a song and dance, take your time to think.

There are also people who have the utter impudence to combine this trick with number 15, "Proof of a Paradox." If they can't prove their statement from premises both disputants accept, they make another almost correct statement seemingly in support of the first one.

If you reject that statement, they immediately show that rejecting it has absurd consequences. If, however, you take the bait and accept it, they have said something reasonable for the present and can either carry on with the next almost correct state-

Be wary of almost correct statements.

*Most tricks are better
countered when you
take time to think.*

ment or fall back on the Hollywood Proof, if they have the nerve.

We are already knee-deep in tricks that are mainly based on using the opponent's opinions for our own purposes. In its most advanced form, I call this "To Mock a Mockingbird," or Trick 16. This is to use your opponent's views and acts against him, or the views and acts of a society or sect he belongs to, or even the views of the most stupid supporters of his society.

The latter gives you endless possibilities because any halfway intelligent theory has lots of idiots among its defenders. If you are the mocked bird, just clarify what you mean and show your opponent that he is not actually attacking your view but someone else's.

Doing this can be a trick in its own right, number 17, called "Fine Distinctions." If you are driven into a corner, you can sidle away by pointing out the difference between your position and the one he attacks. It is always possible to find such a fine but seemingly relevant distinction and the only effective countermeasure is to show that the difference is actually irrelevant or simply not real.

A much easier way to get out of that corner is to "Change the Topic," Trick 18. Both trick and countermeasure are obvious here, but note that there is an important difference between an evasive topic shift and an aggressive one, which is Trick 25,

coming in the fifth instalment of this column.

The last trick for now, number 19, is to raise the level of abstraction until "Life, the Universe, and Everything" is in the scope of discussion. For example, if your opponent points out the reliability of a medical study, you start to talk about the deceptiveness of human knowledge in general.

Trick 19 can be averted only if you discuss in a context that enables you to force your opponent to stick to the point, for example, in front of a boss or committee. You cannot do it when you discuss with a member of a sect in the street. Then you can only choose between talking about something else and fighting it out on a meta-philosophical level: "You're right that all human knowledge is deceptive, but it still makes sense to accept that study as reliable, for the time being, because...."

In my next column (the fourth), I will tell you about "The Art of Making Conclusions" and the difference between making them and drawing them.

Hanspeter Schmid (h.p.schmid@ieee.org) is an analog-IC designer and Ph.D.-degree student at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Zurich) who has an untamable interest in modern philosophy of science and society. He believes that one of the best ways to get philosophical concepts across is irony and humor, which is why he loves the British TV series "Yes, Prime Minister!" so dearly.

"What do you mean we don't communicate? Just yesterday I faxed you a reply to the recorded message you left on my answering machine."

—The Wall Street Journal

"You will find it a distinct help if you know and look as if you know what you are doing."

—IRS Training Manual For Tax Auditors

"Accomplishing the impossible means only that the boss will add it to your regular duties."

—Doug Larson

MASTERS OF STYLE



RONALD J. NELSON

OF HORSES AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATORS

Joseph Conrad, through his narrator Marlow in *Lord Jim* (1900), raises a vital question for life in general and professional communicators in particular: "How to be?" How should we conduct ourselves in any given situation? Valuable perspectives on that subject can be gleaned from the horse-whispering techniques of Monty Roberts, described in *The Man Who Listens to Horses* (New York: Random House, 1996).

When we recall that we are all animals, whether human or otherwise, we take the first step toward acknowledging our kinship with the *soi-disant* "lower" animals, our fellow inhabitants of the planet. Urges like establishing and defending our territories, preparing nests, engaging in display behaviors, preening, having sex, caring for our young, communicating with our kind, and many other common activities provide abundant evidence of our animal nature. There is nothing degrading here—it is simply a fact.

Reminded of this fundamental knowledge, we can profit from a man whose ability to communicate with horses is extraordinary. Roberts' style of handling himself and of handling horses constitutes a model of behavior. Even as a 13-year-old boy he watched wild horses for hours at a time, observing their habits, learning "the language of horses," and noting their "silent body grammar."

One horse in particular, a dun mare (the matriarch of the herd), taught him much by the way she handled a young colt that had been making trouble for some foals and mares. She squared up to him, keeping her eyes on him directly, her spine rigid, and her head pointed toward him: "No longer full of himself, he knew exactly what she meant. Three hundred yards from the herd [and therefore vulnerable

to predators], the outcast would know by her body position when he could return to the fold." Only after he showed signs of penitence would she show him part of the long axis of her body—a signal that he might be allowed back.

After having to break for the night, Roberts returned the next morning to find the dun mare grooming the troublesome colt. The pariah had apparently given the appropriate signs of humility: licking, chewing, and snapping his mouth to indicate he was no longer a threat.

That process of observation, which also included watching how they held their ears and whether or not they switched their tails (indicating inner agitation), Roberts later developed into what he called "Join-Up": bringing a horse to willing, trustful cooperation without inflicting pain of any kind. As he developed his techniques, he discovered that horses are sensitive to all sorts of signs and subsigns made by hands, eyes, fingers, fists, and mouth.

We, too, as professional communicators can silently, patiently read body language (nonverbal communication) as a possible clue to people's condition at any point, seeking to understand them (not that body language is a sure-fire index of state of mind with people because they are capable of deception—although it probably always is with horses).

Roberts categorizes animals into "flight" animals (for horses, fear is the force that aids survival, so they are likely to flee when pressured) and "fight" animals (for people, the "preoccupation is with the chase, and having dominion over other creatures in order to eat them or use them for [their] own ends").

It is essential to gain the trust and willing cooperation of the horse through respect-

Both horses and people are sensitive to body language.

ing the horse's essential nature, not through forcing servitude. To that end, Roberts speaks of "starting" a horse rather than "breaking" its spirit. In the human and business worlds domineering behavior and exploitation yield only contempt. Trust and willing cooperation yield worthwhile results.

Of particular interest is Roberts' explanation of "Join-Up," given in full detail in the appendix of the book. Roberts notes that "we can do little to teach the horse; we can only create an environment in which he can learn. Likewise with people: The student who has knowledge pushed into his brain learns little, but he can absorb a great deal when he chooses to learn."

Roberts' first rule is "no pain." Hitting, kicking, jerking, pulling, tying, and restraining have no place in starting a horse. The idea is not "he must," but "you would rather that he did." Roberts uses the principle of advance and retreat, which involves looking directly at the horse (or not), body position, and direction of travel in a round pen of about 50 feet in diameter.

Pressure is applied by tossing a light, 30-foot sash behind the horse, thereby precipitating flight, then reversing direction after several revolutions. That is preparation for the question: "Would he like to stop all this work?" The inside ear (closest to the center of the pen), the position of the neck and head, and the presence of chewing and licking are all indications of his desire to have the pressure taken off, that he wants to stop.

At that point, Roberts adopts a submissive mode with eyes down and back turned to the horse at a 45-degree angle — an

invitation to come to him. The horse will normally simply follow him. Roberts then gives the horse a good rub between the eyes (not patting) and moves away in circles. The horse is likely to follow or at least move in that direction.

Then the equipment (saddle pad, saddle, bridle, etc.) is put in the center of the pen for the horse to see and the tack is gently put on one step at a time. Through this process — which Roberts generally completes within a half hour — the horse develops a sense of trust for this person who will not hurt him.

Many organizations have enlisted Roberts' services because his techniques are equally valid for professional communicators who must be observant in general, capable of reading nonverbal cues in particular, and patient yet firm with people; seek to understand why people do what they do; and persuade rather than force others to perform.

In a world that has far too much violence, we would do well to assimilate and practice Roberts' methods. We have it within us to develop a graciousness, even a nobility, in the way we carry ourselves. That is style in the true sense.

If you are interested in learning more about Monty Roberts and his techniques, his toll-free number is (888) 826-6689; his e-mail address is admin@MontyRoberts.com; and his online address is www.MontyRoberts.com.

Professor Nelson is at the Institute of Technical and Scientific Communication, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA 22807; (540) 568-3755, fax (540) 568-2983; nelsonrj@jmu.edu.

*Persuade rather
than force.*

"Whoever wrote the Ten Commandments made 'em short. They may not always be kept but they can be understood."

— Will Rogers

PROFESSOR GRAMMAR

UNHELPFUL HELP PANELS

The Professor almost missed her deadline for this month's grammar lesson because she got sidetracked trying to learn how to use a new software product. Professor Grammar got so annoyed at the new software that she feels compelled to replace this month's grammar lesson with a short lesson on the content of online help panels.

When writing help panels, writers should keep in mind that users read online help when they want *help* with something. The Professor has seen many a help panel that simply repeats the information already found on the product panel. The Professor would like to point out that the users have already seen the product panel and don't need a recap.

For example, the user sees:

Window title: Order Dinner

Radio buttons: Type
☐ Vegetarian
☐ Meat
☐ Pizza

The user has questions: What is the vegetarian meal? What is the meat meal? What do they cost? What do they come with? What's on the pizza? So the user presses the Help key and sees a window that says:

Select whether you want a vegetarian meal, a meat meal, or a pizza.

Now what? What good is this help panel to the user? Such redundant information

frustrates users, wastes their time, and serves no purpose (except to take up the space where a helpful panel should be).

OK, so a better example is in order. Suppose the user sees:

Window title: Schedule Delivery

Radio buttons: Ship
☐ Overnight
☐ Standard freight

The user presses a Help key and sees:

Select the type of delivery you want:

Overnight — Delivered by 10 a.m. the next day. Cost: \$10 + tax.

Standard freight — Delivered within 2 weeks. No charge.

This help panel actually tells the user something not found in the product window and therefore earns its name as a help panel.

Of course, we all know that in the ideal product the interface contains enough information and is so intuitive that the users won't need to check help very often. But that's another lesson.

Copyright © 1996 by IBM Corporation. Reprinted with permission. Professor Grammar is an advisor to the IBM Santa Teresa Laboratory Editing Council. Each month she sends a lesson to the technical writers at the Laboratory.

Who hasn't been the victim of an unhelpful help panel?

FROM THE EDITOR

(continued from page 2)

I prefer to receive articles by e-mail; most WordPerfect, Word, 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 September 15 for the November/December issue, November 15 for the January/February issue, etc. You won't be far off—and never late—if you observe the Ides of September, November, etc.

CANDIDATES NEEDED FOR PCS ELECTION

BY KIM SYDOW CAMPBELL

Six member-at-large seats on the Professional Communication Society's Administrative Committee (AdCom) will be filled in an election during the AdCom meeting on Tuesday, 7 September, at the Omni Royal Orleans hotel in New Orleans (site of IPCC 99).

These are exciting times to be on the PCS AdCom. The rise in visibility of electronic information and communication has meant increased opportunities for PCS, both within and outside IEEE. Examples include our experiment to improve the usability of the IEEE *Transactions* on Professional Communication, our participation in summit meetings with other TC societies to advance the profession, international expansion, increased service to members as part of the overall IEEE restructuring, increased activity in Web site design and construction, increased attention to student activities, new educational products, interaction with other IEEE entities (such as our founding-member status with the Intelligent Transportation Systems Council), and, of course, ongoing publication and conference activities.

AdCom members are selected by vote of the current AdCom members; the term for members to be elected in September begins 1 January 2000 and ends 31 December 2002. AdCom members must be willing and able to attend at least two of the three meetings held each year. This year's meetings are (or were) in Houston, TX (January), Waltham, MA (June), and New Orleans, LA (September).

In 1999 PCS will reimburse AdCom members up to \$375 per meeting attended, for a maximum of \$1125. AdCom members or their employers must be willing to pay any other travel expenses associated with the AdCom meetings.

To be eligible for election, candidates must be members of both IEEE and PCS on 1 January 2000. PCS affiliate members interested in being AdCom candidates must be eligible for IEEE membership; that is, they must apply and be elected to Institute membership prior to January 2000.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the PCS AdCom, please prepare responses to the following questions:

1. Who are you and what do you do in your career?
2. What other professional organizations do you belong to, and what are your past and present activities with them?
3. Why should you be elected or reelected to the AdCom?
4. How many meetings will you attend each year?
5. What is your current membership grade? If you are an IEEE member, what is your membership number? If you are a PCS affiliate, do you commit to applying for membership should you be elected to the AdCom?

Questions regarding potential candidacy may be directed to Kim Sydow Campbell. Submit your answers via e-mail to k.s.campbell@ieee.org. Alternatively, send your answers to Kim Sydow Campbell, Dept. of Management & Marketing, Box 870225, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0225.

Completed candidate questionnaires must be received by 15 August. Candidates' answers will be made available to the voting AdCom members prior to the election meeting.

PLANNING FOR FORUM 2000 WELL IN HAND

BY RON BLICQ

If you attended Forum 95 in Dortmund, Germany (November 1995), you know what to expect at Forum 2000, which will be held in London, England, next year. This time even more features will be included in the program.

The site is the Commonwealth Conference Centre in Knightsbridge and the dates are June 12-14, 2000. The Professional Communication Society is one of four cosponsor societies; the others are the Society for Technical Communication (STC) in the U.S., the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC) in the U.K., and Gesellschaft für technische Kommunikation e.v. (*tekom*) in Germany. PCS's role in planning and implementing Forum 2000 is conference operation and new media technology.

Forum conferences are held every five years. They are the place where member societies of INTECOM (the International Council for Technical Communication) meet, exchange ideas, and refresh international relationships.

The planning committee — with representatives from all four sponsor societies, which includes two PCS AdCom members — met in Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 16, at the site of the STC conference. High

on the discussion list were a decision to explore the feasibility of holding international video conferences, as was done at Forum 95, and to focus on evolving communication technology. As at Forum 95, Idea Markets will be the prime method of presentation (tested and proven in North America at IPCC 98 in Québec), with pro-and-con debates as a new feature.

Call for Papers

The official deadline for the call for papers was July 1, 1999. However, if when you read this you want to present an Idea Market topic or contribute to a debate, you have a little more time. If you live in the U.S. or Canada, contact Elaine Fenwick (fenwick@cyberhighway.net) and check whether she can accept another proposal. If you live outside North America, contact Peter Greenfield in the U.K. (pegre1@abbeynational.co.uk).

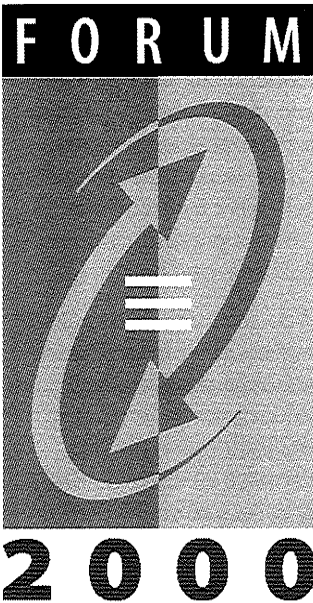
Travel/Vacation Aspects

The timing of Forum 2000 is ideal for combining the conference with a visit to the U.K. In mid-June the weather is ideal and you will be traveling before the majority of British school children break for their summer vacation (about mid-July).

There will be much to see and experience in London as we approach the new millennium. If you're concerned that accommodation will be hard to find, the conference committee is assembling a list of hotels from luxury to bed and breakfast at which space will be held and attractive prices will be negotiated for Forum 2000 participants.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Ron Blicq (rgi_ron@compuserve.com) is a long-time member of PCS and has served on the AdCom for many years. He teaches courses and presents workshops on written and oral communication. As president of INTECOM he is now involved in planning Forum 2000.



FORUM 2000 THEME

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS LEADING THE WAY!

*As we enter the new millennium,
Technical Communicators will make their mark in history.
Documenting technology is our responsibility and,
with the advancement of tools and equipment in all
aspects of life, Technical Communicators will have to seize
the opportunity to lead users in the future.*

BAD NEWS FOR TREES

Part 2: An eBook for Every Niche
[Part 1 is in the May/June 1999
Newsletter.]

In Victor Hugo's "Notre-Dame de Paris," Dom Claude Frolo points to an early printed book and to his beloved cathedral: "This will kill that. The book will kill the building." Yet the printing press killed neither religion nor architecture. In general, there are far fewer murders in the history of technology than sentimentalizing intellectuals like to make out.

The eBook is most unlikely to kill off its printed ancestor; neither will traditional books succeed in smothering all their electronic offspring at birth. There are many flavors of eBook on the way, and there will be many niches for them in the expanding market for words.

As well as the [NuovoMedia] Rocket (\$499), there is the larger-format SoftBook (\$599), to be followed by the Librius Millennium EBook (\$199). Later [this] year the Everybook (\$1500 for its top model) is due, and then the Glassbook. All have portrait screens and no scrolling; the bulky Everybook has twin color screens, mimicking a two-page spread.

All except the Librius have touch-sensitive displays that let readers search for and annotate text and (in some models) look up words in a dictionary by touching them. All these eBooks can store at least half a dozen titles, some many more. The Rocket and Librius download their content from a PC connected to the Internet; the SoftBook and Everybook connect directly to a phone line; the Glassbook promises both options.

Why this sudden torrent of toys? In addition to advances in miniaturization, screen design, and battery technology, two main things have happened. First, encryption systems have developed far enough to convince publishers that giving away one elec-

tronic copy of a book does not mean giving away the right to make more of them.

Titles for the Rocket, for example, are downloaded from *Barnesandnoble.com* in a file that can be read only by the purchaser's own Rocket. E-texts are thus protected even more strenuously than their paper equivalents. Unless I lend you my Rocket itself, I cannot lend you my e-copy of "Notre-Dame."

A second factor has been the success of hand-held electronic organizers — particularly 3Com's Palm Pilot and its variants, of which over 2m have been sold. Even though Palm models have low-contrast screens no bigger than a playing card, people have taken to reading on the things.

The MemoWare Web site, which has about 1200 out-of-copyright and donated titles formatted for hand-held devices, has served 1.3m downloads since January 1997. The Lending Library Web site, the second-largest source of such reading materials, currently serves over 34 000 downloads per month.

Reading in bed is a popular form of Palm-reading, thanks to the device's illuminated screen. Reading in the dark and on the move are two of the likeliest uses for the new eBooks, too. Travelers will be able to pack half a dozen or more e-titles in the space of one physical book. Abbreviated versions of the *Wall Street Journal* are available each day for the Rocket and are easier to read on a crowded train than the traditional broadsheet.

The makers of the SoftBook are aiming at companies first. They hope that firms will distribute updated reports and manuals to their employees' eBooks. Students' textbooks are another likely niche since they are often expensive, frequently revised, and not needed for long. There are many sorts of books that few would be sorry to see leave bookshops' shelves and migrate to the ether instead — software manuals, for

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example, which have colonized acres of shelf space and are quickly out of date.

For general reading, the success of eBooks will depend on the price and availability of content. There are thousands of out-of-copyright classics published free on the Web by the Gutenberg Project and similar electronic libraries but some of the eBooks will be unable to read the format in which they are stored. The various new devices will not even be compatible with each other, though Microsoft, many publishers, and the makers of computers and eBooks have started work on an "open eBook standard."

One challenge for the nascent eBook industry is developing marketing methods that exploit the digital medium. It might learn a trick or two from Mind's Eye Fiction, which is probably the only electronic-book publisher already in profit. Mind's Eye sells short stories that can be downloaded for reading on a PC or a hand-held device.

Customers can read the beginning of any story free. To get the rest, they choose either to pay or to watch an interactive advertisement that requires them to answer a question. Perhaps advertising in books is ripe for a comeback; once it was common. A British book from the 1890s, picked more-or-less at random from the library of a country house, plugs the virtues of Dr. Bell's Patent Voltaic Belts ("Take no more

medicine, but wear our belts"), a builders' supply store, and Hoge's Horehound Honey.

More challenges to the new reading devices wait in the wings. Companies making hand-held computers that run the Windows CE operating system want to turn their multi-purpose gadgets into book readers, too. Some of the next generation of these will have fold-back screens, making them similar in feel to the Rocket and its fellows. Sherwood Research, which studies frequent business travelers, argues that such people are likelier to buy a single gadget that combines computing and reading than a pure eBook.

Others maintain that the simplicity of dedicated eBooks will earn them a place in the briefcase. They are indeed very easy to use though a printed book or magazine still wins hands down. Look at a copy of *The Economist* through the envious eyes of a computer maker. The interface is intuitive and compatible with all earlier reading devices: Customers upgrading from Sumerian clay tablets do not need to call technical support.

Continued in the next Newsletter.

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"The trouble with using experience as a guide is that the final exam often comes first and then the lesson."

—Unknown

"In public speaking, make sure that the question you are answering is the one your audience is asking."

—Sherwin Wine

"The right to be heard does not automatically include the right to be taken seriously."

—Hubert H. Humphrey

THE PROGRAM FOR IPCC 99

Technical communication has broken geographic and temporal boundaries and has grown as a field of knowledge and practice. In fact, change in the field is so rapid that practitioners and researchers are forced to extend beyond what they know to improvise solutions to challenges. Like jazz musicians, technical communicators excel by combining rigorous training with improvised implementations. The program for IPCC 99 showcases the best of technical communication jazz.

New Tools

New challenges and new tools frame the working environment of technical communicators. Sessions will deal with the most current tools in use in the U.S. and abroad:

- Writing tools for the 21st century
- Electronic tools
- Electronic images for online display
- Multimedia to reach large audiences
- Single-source development of information
- Style in online information

The WWW World

Supplanting online information and multimedia as the dominant delivery medium is the World Wide Web. Both a novel instrument and a barely understood one, the Web requires as much improvisation as theoretically grounded practice. Conference sessions will deal with current practice and education for the future application:

- Building Web sites for intranets
- Conducting research by using the Web
- Using Adobe Acrobat for generic information display
- Using the Web for non-work tasks

Geographic and Temporal Boundaries

Technical information accompanies and sometimes precedes products across geographic boundaries. Just as New Orleans

became the center of jazz development when freed slaves from Cuba adapted their music to their new home, technical communicators need to adjust their products for disparate cultures. The conference will offer presentations about:

- Communicating across cultural boundaries
- Working in a global marketplace
- Spreading the information society around the globe
- Providing technical translations
- Working as an English speaker in a non-English country
- Learning from oral cultures to design electronic images

New Audiences

In the future, technical communicators will have to play to new audiences with their own goals, tastes, and needs. Among audience topics the conference will offer sessions on:

- Computer software that appeals to girls
- Accessibility for the visually impaired

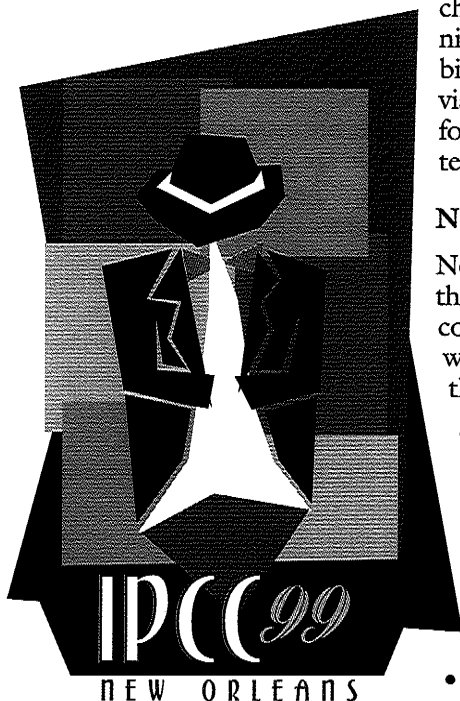
Knowledge and Practice

Like jazz musicians who need to learn a new style, technical communicators need to pick up knowledge and be able to put it into practice. TC education will be the subject of both presentations and workshops:

- Teaching technical communication at a distance
- Taking TC education out of academia and into industry
- Training industry via the Web
- Training graphics developers as well as writers
- Taking care of vendors and contractors
- Cybereducating

Structuring Information, Ethics, and the Law

Jazz improvisation works best when it emphasizes storytelling—a flowing theme that fits its context. Technical communication similarly works well when its informa-



KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT IPCC 99

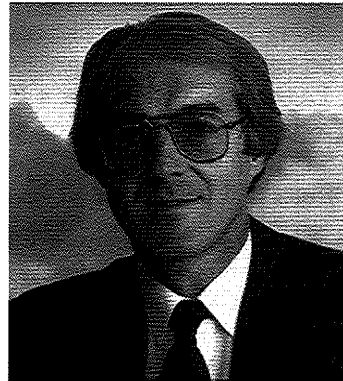
Mr. Temple joined IBM in the U.K. as a systems engineer in the banking branch helping financial establishments

develop information technology solutions. With a growing involvement in development he moved to IBM's services organization where he produced numerous application packages.

With the advent of end-user computing Tony helped launch IBM's international time-sharing service in Europe. There he led the development of application products for business professionals. He then took responsibility for the U.K. time-sharing service as well as the development of associated software.

It soon became apparent that IBM's customers were looking to use a combination of packages but with greater integration. This led to the rapid development of the first true suite of business tools for management information and decision support. That offering, named Application System

(AS), became IBM's most successful application offering, both as a service and subsequently as a program product.



*A.C. (Tony) Temple
IBM Fellow
and Vice-President,
Ease of Use
IBM Corporation*

The success with AS led to the establishment of the IBM Software Development Laboratory in Warwick, U.K., where Tony served as director. Soon after, he also took responsibility for IBM's Dublin laboratory.

During the late 1980s Tony led the design of IBM's future end-user systems, including the definition of user-interface standards. Most of this design and architecture has been adopted by the computer industry and is heavily reflected in the graphical user interface of today's personal computer systems.

Tony is the recipient of many IBM awards for innovation and technical achievement. He became a member of the IBM Academy of Technology in 1989 and was appointed an IBM Fellow in 1993. Now, as vice-president of Ease of Use, he is influencing the next revolution in personal computing.

PROGRAM FOR IPCC 99

(continued from page 24)

tion fits the audience's familiar narratives, ethical frameworks, and laws. Sessions will delve into:

- Storytelling to explain technical concepts and design documents
- Ethics in action
- Cyberlaw and intellectual property

When Problems Occur

Musicians play clinkers; melody lines collide. Neither planned nor improvised conduct always works perfectly. How do

technical communicators plan for inevitable problems? Consider these examples:

- Communication failures leading to airline disasters
- Use of the Internet in emergency response
- Pen-based computing and emergency medical services

See the full program at <http://www.ieee.org/ipcc>. Then come to New Orleans and sample the future of technical communication.

*The future of technical
communication*

Nawlins Vittles

BY LEANN KOSTEK

In recent articles we have spoken about the history and music of New Orleans and how these are key ingredients in making New Orleans like no other place on earth. The final ingredient is the food. Lagniappe is Cajun for *a little bit more*, as in a little extra service, a slightly larger portion, a touch more ambiance. It is an important part of life in New Orleans.

The city's restaurants are fanatic believers in lagniappe. As a result the city has more exceptional eateries than any city in the country, possibly even the world. Whether you prefer Italian, French, or traditional American, whether your taste buds are sophisticated or plain, you'll find that all New Orleans restaurants have one thing in common: They go out of their way to make sure you get "a little bit more" for your money.

Of course, no visit to New Orleans would be complete without sampling the native Cajun and Creole cuisine. Chef Paul Prudhomme's restaurant, K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen, is just around the corner from the Omni Royal Orleans, the conference hotel.

The city's latest culinary sensation, Emeril Lagasse, began his career at the Commander's Palace, a New Orleans landmark. He has since branched out into a culinary empire. Emeril's Restaurant is located in the Warehouse District and his latest restaurant, NOLA, is located one block north of the Omni Royal Orleans. Reservations are recommended at both restaurants.

You will also find copious oyster bars here. Fried, boiled, baked, or on the half shell, oysters are as common as hamburgers in

New Orleans, and oyster bars are as plentiful as 7-11s. Mike Anderson's, located nearby on Bourbon Street, is a local favorite. This quaint restaurant offers a great array of seafood served the Nawlins way and is one of the city's best oyster bars.

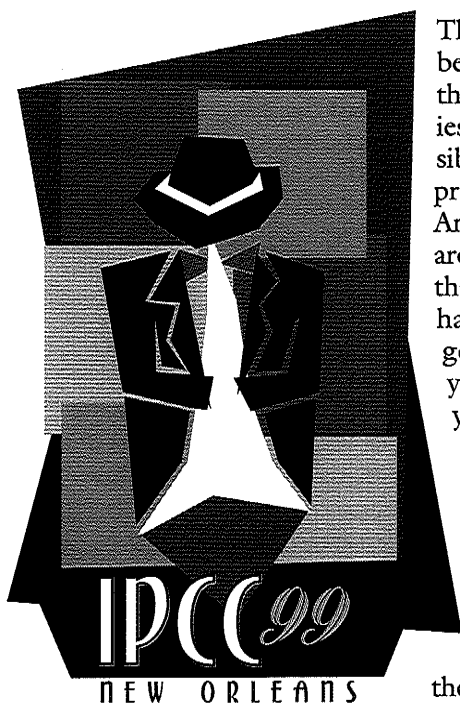
There are two basic types of rice-based dishes, jambalaya and etouffée. Both can be made with a variety of ingredients but typically shrimp and crawfish are the mainstays. The difference between the two is the sauce. The etouffée is started from a roux (white sauce). Jambalaya, on the other hand, is started from a tomato-based sauce.

Other regional favorites are red beans and rice; andouille and boudin, spicy Cajun sausages; po'boys, a stuffed submarine-like sandwich made with thick French bread and a variety of fixings; and BBQ shrimp—Watch out: They come whole with their heads still on! Delicious to eat, but what a mess they make.

If music and food are the combo you are looking for, the House of Blues is where you need to be. Shows typically begin around 9 p.m. in this famous music hall. To avoid the cover charge, plan to eat dinner late and catch the show for free. A slice of key-lime pie here is enough for two.

After dinner satisfy your sweet tooth with a beignet, a sweet, square doughnut smothered in powdered sugar. When accompanied by a steaming cup of café au lait, these treats can't be beat, especially at the Café du Monde. Pralines, super-sweet mounds of brown sugar, pecans, and other assorted ingredients, were invented in New Orleans by the Creoles and are a favorite to take back to the folks at home.

Point your browser to see the sights and hear the music at <http://www.ieee.org/ipcc>.

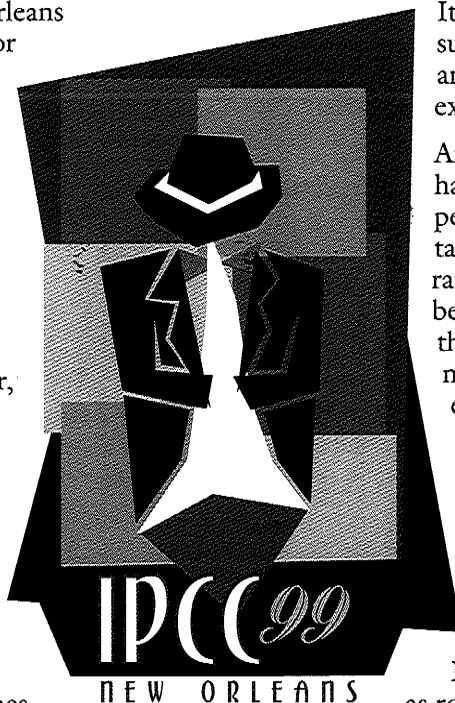


Faisons la fête!

IPCC 99 HOTEL

The Omni Royal Orleans is the host hotel for IPCC 99. It is an historic luxury hotel in the heart of the nationally known French Quarter and is as much a part of legendary New Orleans as is Dixieland jazz. Situated just one block from Bourbon Street and two blocks from the Mississippi River, steamboat sightseeing rides, the French Market, and the Café du Monde, the Omni is a portal to New Orleans at its best (after conference sessions, of course).

The Omni has been awarded Four Stars and Four Diamonds more times than any other hotel in the city.



It has 346 guest rooms and suites, 17 meeting rooms, and all the amenities you expect in a fine hotel.

And, best of all, IPCC 99 has a special rate of \$120 per night (plus applicable taxes), single or double; this rate is also good three days before and three days after the conference. So plan now to stay in the conference hotel and participate in everything IPCC 99 has to offer without the hassle of commuting.

For reservations phone (504) 529-5333 or (800) THE-OMNI. To get this rate mention

IPCC 99. Don't delay as rooms are guaranteed only through August 5.

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