1994 Calendar

24–28 April
European Association of Science Editors 5th General Assembly and Congress, Budapest, Hungary. Contact Mave O’Connor, EASE, 49 Rosendale Way, London NW1 0XB, U.K., Tel.: +44 (0) 71-388-9668; faxes: 383-3092

14–16 May
Council of Biology Editors 38th Annual Meeting, Quebec City, Canada. Contact CBE, 11 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60603-1210. Tel: (312) 201-0101; faxes: (312) 201-0214

15–18 May
Society for Technical Communication 41st Annual Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Contact STC, 901 N. Stuart St., Suite 3-4, Arlington, VA 22203-1822. Tel: (703) 522-4114

7–10 June
42nd Technical Writers’ Institute, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY. Contact the Office of Continuing Education, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY 12180-3590. Tel: (518) 276-8351

15–17 June
Communicating Technical Information (Writing and Editing), James Paradis, director. Contact MIT Summer Session Office, E19-356, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Tel: (617) 253-2101; faxes: (617) 253-8042; e-mail: summer-professional-programs@mit.edu

28–30 September
IPCC 94, Banff, Alberta, Canada. Contact Ron S. Blicq, RGI International, 569 Oxford St., Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3M 3J2. Tel: (204) 488-7060; faxes: (204) 488-7294; e-mail: r.blicq@compmail.com

New PCS Officers

As of 1 January 1994, some officers and Administrative Committee (AdCom) members of the Professional Communication Society (PCS) changed. Deborah Flaherty Kizer has taken over the office of President from Richie Robinson, and Mark Haselkorn has replaced Deborah as Vice President. Frank Ortolani and Bill Kehoe continue to serve as PCS Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Deborah Flaherty Kizer is a Product Manager with AT&T in Morristown, New Jersey. In her current position, she manages the four P’s—product, price, promotion, and place—for AT&T's International Dedicated Services to the European Region.

Deborah holds a B.A. in French and chemistry from Regis College, an M.S. in technical writing from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and an M.B.A. in international business/marketing from New York University. Deborah, a member of the IEEE Professional Communication Society AdCom, served as PCS Vice President in 1992 and 1993. She was also editor of this Newsletter for five years and has served as PCS Secretary. She has published many articles on technical communications and is a co-author of the PCS Commaguide on presentations.

In 1984, Ms. Kizer received the IEEE Key to the Future Award, and in 1991 she received the IEEE PCS Alfred N. Goldsmith Award. Deborah is married and has two very active toddlers. In her spare time, she enjoys riding her horse, Poco, and competing in local dressage shows. [As the father of one very active two-year-old, I look forward to a future guest column by Deb on how she manages to have spare time.—D.E.N.]

Mark Haselkorn is a Professor and Chairman of the Department of Technical Communication, College of Engineering, at the University of Washington. Mark has a B.A. and an M.A. in English, an M.A. in computational linguistics, and a Ph.D. in English language. Mark has been a senior member of the IEEE since 1987. In 1992, he organized the Seattle Chapter of the Professional Communication Society, which he has been chairing since its first meeting in December 1992. Mark has written over 60 articles, book chapters, technical reports, and papers. Among Mark’s awards is the Best Paper at the IEEE International Professional Communication Conference in 1986.

In addition to his teaching duties, Mark has an active research career. He has led projects involving real-time traveler information systems, interactive video for education and training, computer-assisted communication, and natural user interface languages and smart documentation. Since 1987, Mark has received over $2 million for research in Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems (IVHS). He and his colleagues have concentrated on traffic-related research, including two major projects to develop (a) an advanced traveler information system that delivers graphical, interactive travel information to commuters in real time and (b) a traveler information

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE

by Cheryl Reimold

How To Get Started

And should I then presume? And how should I begin?

-J. J. Elliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

If you have ever had trouble beginning a letter, memo, or report—take heart. You are not alone. Most people find getting started the hardest part, and for good reason. The first words often determine the fate of the piece. To a great extent they establish whether or not the reader will go on reading, for the reader tends to judge the value of the rest of the piece by its opening words.

Accepting that your first paragraph is the most important one need not lead you to imply paralysis. On the contrary, this knowledge can be the first step to a good start.

Begin by deciding what you want that crucial paragraph to accomplish. Do you want it to tell readers something or sell them on something? That is, do you want it to give the readers some important information or inspire them to action? Your answer will lead you to the right start.

The "sell" start

Try this when you want the first paragraph to give the reader new information. Here, you will focus on presenting new facts and explaining their significance to the reader, all in the broadest terms. The structure is usually one of INFORMATION followed by MEANING.

Imagine your reader(s) asking you these two questions:

One: What do you want to tell me?
Two: So what?

Answer each question conversationally, on paper: Your answers will form your opening paragraph.

For example, suppose you are responding to a request for an analysis of a faulty product. You can generate your first paragraph this way:

Answer to question 1: Our analysis of sample A shows traces of X and Y.
Answer to question 2: X can cause weakness in bonding, leading to cracks in the final product. Y, even in small amounts, can produce the discoloration you observed.

Accepting that your first paragraph is the most important one need not lead you to instant paralysis. (Disturbing fact) Last year, 20 boxes of X in Storage Room 13 were damaged by the leak in the roof above that room. (Disturbing fact) Two weeks ago, a package containing samples of our chief competitor's product was soaked through. (Disturbing fact) Yesterday, John Reynolds slipped on the wet floor under the leak and broke his wrist. (Call for action) To avoid further injury or loss, we must get the leak repaired immediately.

The "help" start

Sometimes, you will find that you know what you want the first paragraph to do, but you haven't a clue how to do it. Don't despair. Here's a "help" start.

Start in the middle of your piece. Determine what you will write in the first paragraph, later when you have got several ideas and facts on paper. Write down anything you can think of about your subject. There is only one rule: you must write something. You will find it much easier to draw your first paragraph from ideas on paper than from disjointed thoughts flying through an increasingly worried brain.

Say you want your first paragraph of a progress report to give the reader the highlights of your team's latest research. You know you need a "sell" start, but you're not sure which findings are really the "highlights":

Start in the middle. Write down one finding, describe it, and show the significance. Then go on to another. Once you start to see the relationship of your facts and their relative significance, you can go on to the "sell" start.

Or, suppose you want to alert your boss to the need for more regular informal communication between managers and staff in the department. You know this needs a "sell" start, but you don't know how to get your boss's attention without offending him.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Deborah Flaherty Kizer

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be serving you as PCS President this year. I'm proud to be associated with PCS and look forward to an exciting year.

I would like to see PCS accomplish three things in 1994:

- Ensure the financial integrity and stability of the Society
- Increase membership in and awareness of PCS, and
- Continue progress in our globalization efforts.

First, we need a strong financial base to continue and expand our many programs. We have excellent conferences, educational programs, and publications, but we need a solid financial foundation if we are to expand internationally and exceed our reach. We need to first, however, understand the IEEE budgeting and allocation process while improving on PCS's annual budgeting process. Our Treasurer, Bill Kehoe, and his team will play a major role in helping us understand and improve these processes.

Second, concerning membership, I believe we can significantly increase membership both in the United States and internationally. Professional communication should be an area of interest and concern to all engineers. PCS, I believe, is in a unique position to meet the needs of all IEEE members. Our Education Committee has developed and delivered high-quality workshops and seminars. Our books are among the IEEE Press's best sellers. We certainly, as a Society, have added value to an engineer at all stages in his or her career. The challenge, I believe, is in more effectively marketing the Society.

Third, I can't think of an area more suited to PCS than globalization. It is through communication that ideas get shared and understood and that different cultures can successfully work with each other. We should continue and expand the many efforts underway to increase understanding, communication, and knowledge among our colleagues worldwide.

Finally, I welcome your thoughts and ideas on how to improve PCS. I challenge you, however, to get involved—in the section, your chapter, or IPC 94.

Give Your Career a Boost with PCS CommuGuides

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

These misses come by e-mail and facsimile, but all will be "letters" hereafter. Electronic Messages and Facsimile Communications to the Editor” just doesn’t work.—D.E.N.

Notes on quotes
I concur with your preference for the British system of punctuating commas and periods adjacent to quotes. I recall having read some- where that the American convention was instituted by letterpress printers so they could prevent the narrow periodic marks from falling over and being lost from the ends of their hand-set lines of type.

The alternative was to set the type the way I was taught, with an adjacent comma and period at the end of each line. That is easier when they didn’t like to set it that way seems obvious to me. It shortens the length of the lines that can be handled in a given-sized press.

—John Ortel

And another thing! Read your editorial today! I don’t place a high degree of punctuation via a vis observation marks. You invited them as hard feelings to respond, and I do! (It’s endemic among curmudges, strong feelings.)

When I first got into this weird business and someone told me that commas and periods are always placed inside quotes, and I quoted why, I got the answer, "It’s a typographic convention. It makes a little more sense than the answers you got ("Because that’s the way we do it.")"

And, I’m pretty sure this is correct, that type- graphers put this convention in place because the little period or comma just looks terrible hanging there by itself. I agree with what you said about commas after codes in quotes, but how often is this likely to come up?

What do you do with the comma in this case if there are no quotes? (I am curious about the use of quotation marks, having once had a professor who railed against their use “when nothing is, in fact, being quoted.” (Is this a subject for a column, I wonder?))

At my last place of employment, the British usage was the rule, and I never used it. It would have been a stupid thing to get fired over, but principle is principle! And I am a very crotchety old lady, hard to change.

Well, we each have our own principles, and you’re the editor. I still think it looks terrible, though.

I wonder what Rudy Jankoel will say? (He shared a lot of strong feelings with me when I was editing the Transactions ... and I always ignored them.)

Carry on regardless. Best ... —Joan Nagle, Aiken, South Carolina

January/February is a great issue! You handled the punctuation situation very well but I still prefer to see it the U.S. way.

—Rudy Jankoel, Boulder, Colorado

I grew up with the British convention for punctuation for quotation marks and have had to struggle to adjust to the American convention. As you correctly point out, the British convention requires thought on the part of the writer, but the writer should know where the punctuation belongs. The American convention requires thought on the part of the reader, who does not have the source material and is therefore laced to rely on the context of the writing to determine where the punctuation belongs.

Communication is enhanced when the writer does not leave such decisions up to the reader. I applaud your decision and hope that many others will follow your example.

—Janet Rochester, Moorestown, New Jersey

I would like to applaud your initiative in making the Newsletter logical with commas and periods adjacent to the inside-or outside punctuation as appropriate to the meaning. I have always tried to do so, but the publications specialists do strange things between final proofs and actual printing!

—Roger L. Boyley

One source of the explanation for the U.S. style that Mr. Ortel cites is The Handbook of Good English, by Edward D. Johnson, Washington Square Press, 1983. Thanks to Joe Harman for passing this information on.—D.E.N.

Comments on quality
I received my PCS Newsletter yesterday, and just an hour ago I completed a quick read-through, first with Nagle’s and Rembold’s columns and then your “Does any one know where editing is going?”

I don’t know if your selection of this particular topic was a coincidence, but I recently corresponded with Nagle on this very same matter. I would like to take a few minutes to tell you of my experiences with several cursory examinations of recently released books.

During November of ’93, I found out about a new book on amateur radio. Being a radio amateur, I was curious and requested a copy for personal examination.

With a cursory glance at a few pages, I noticed some errors of such magnitude that I continued with a morbid fascination, anticipating I would find many more errors of increasing stupidity. I wasn’t disappointed! Some errors were non-technical (IEEE defined as “In- stitute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers”) and others were such that they would be recognized by an EE undergraduate. When I finished, I had seven pages of about 35 identified errors, each having an issues and theory only briefly, these books are Building Productive Teams (with Action Guide and Resource Book by Glenn H. Varney (Jossey-Bass, 1989); Self-Directed Work Teams: A New American Challenge by Jack D. Osburn, Linda Moran, Ed Musselwhite, and John H. Zenger (McGraw-Hill, One Irwin, 1990); and Team-Based Organizations: Developing A Successful Team Environment by James H. Shonk (Business One Irwin, 1992). Although each of these books emphasis the practical, I’ve been most attracted to Varney’s book because of his manifest interest in the communication issues arising from both verbal and nonverbal communication messages, particularly in sections on recognizing positive and productive teams and diagnosing causes of team problems.

Osburn et al. provide perhaps the most complete, self-contained, “hands-on” discussion of team- building I know of in Part 3 of their book.

Of central interest to those who must ultimately manage the process of developing a team or converting to a team-based work environment is Chapter 5, “Guiding supervisors and middle managers through the transition to work teams.”

If your organizational role involves planning at the macro level, you might want to take a close look at Shonk’s book, which articulates what he calls an “evolutionary” method of designing a team-based organization (e.g., your first activity might involve a design team’s analysis of a “technical system to understand how work flows through the organization and to determine where variances occur from expected outcomes”).

Taken together, these three books provide a considerable database. When William G. Dryer’s Team Building: Issues and Alternatives (2nd ed., Addison-Wesley, October 1987), which documents the emergence of the team idea and shares with readers the entire progression involved in what he calls preparing a team building program. Dryer’s work proceeds from an organizational development (OD) perspective, in which the team builder (facilitator) stresses above all a ‘commitment to engage in the process’ in preparing a team building, a human process that cannot be measured on a commitment scale. Team building, for Dryer, involves human feelings, attitudes, and agreed-on actions, things people must attempt to accomplish by themselves: “You cannot substitute high-paid consultants, complex designs, or fancy resorts for human making a mutual commitment to try to work together more effectively.”

This brings us to Pat Riley’s The Winner Within: A Life Plan for Team Players (G. P. Putnam’s, 1993). If you’ve been following professional basketball during the past decade or so, you know that Riley knows a thing or two about teams and teamwork. His book is a pretty good read and his counsel—his Riley’s Rules—might serve any of us as a good introduction to teams and leading a team building on various “court where we find ourselves playing”. Here’s one of Riley’s Rules: “Remember there is no manager for us; we would do well to internalize: “Avoiding the solution of a tough, measurable, volatile problem is not discretion. It is cowardice. And it is robbery. Because as long as a serious problem goes unsolved, no team, no person can inexpit its full potential. Any coach who doesn’t kick the complacent ass on his team will end up kicking his own brow over.”


Say Again!
While taking an order for motorcycle insurance, a service representative asked the insured if the cycle had a headlight. "No," replied the insured, "but it does have a kickstand."
—H.J. Scheiber is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Managerial/Technical Communication at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. He is a member of the Editorial Board for the IEEE Professional Communication Society. Book Notes will appear periodically in the PCS Newsletter.

No matter what happens, there is always someone who knew it—Unknown

I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated—Paul Alderson

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Newsletter Schedule
The Newsletter publication and deadline schedules are:
Issue Deadline
July/August 3 June 1994
Sept./Oct. 5 August 1994
Nov./Dec. 7 September 1994
Jan./Feb. 2 December 1994
March/April 3 February 1995
May/June 7 April 1995

Contributions are welcome: ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred. Please send them to:
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IEEE Professional Communication Society

March/April 1994
I've picked out seven (yes, seven) new books from the veritable mass available as part of this "roundup". What follows are a few brief notes, or what I'll call "Book Bytes", on the subject.

In Team Players and Teamwork (Josses-Bass, 1990), Glenn M. Parker argues that we need to make the use of teams a routine, a "practical business strategy", in order to enhance our productivity, ensure efficient communication and problem solving, streamline our decision processes, and simply make the daily life in our organizations. Parker reviews a variety of essential issues that have grown out of the teamwork concept and team-based (as well as leadership) research:

- why teams increasingly matter and are now central to organizational performance;
- why the performance of groups varies (incorporating a discussion of teams and non-teams, what successful team leaders do, and why the discipline and structures become even more important when teams get stuck); and
- how senior-level management can extract the most performance potential from teams across the organization.

If, however, you'd rather just focus on one vital (however sticky) question—"What makes the difference between a team that performs and one that doesn't?"—see Katzenbach and Smith's article entitled "The Discipline of Teams" in the Harvard Business Review (March-April 1993, pp. 111-120).

We are now recognizing the efficacy, utility—perhaps even the utter essentiality— of teams and teamwork in business and industry and, certainly, in all shapes of organizational communication (technical and corporate).

Fortunately, a substantial body of both theory-filled and "how-to" books seems to be emerging, from which you can learn:

- how to get more team play in your organization (division, department, workgroup, whatever);
- what a team is and does;
- how to become a team player, and
- how to design, implement, and participate effectively in a team-oriented work environment.


Substituted "Creating the High-Performance Organization", the book covers some of the same territory explored by Parker; however, Katzenbach and Smith's text is suffused with examples and stories illustrating how teams outperform individuals. They share with readers both "common sense" findings (e.g., "The disciplined application of team basics is often overlooked.") and "common sense" findings (e.g., "Companies with strong performance standards...to spawn more "real teams" than companies that promote teams per se."). Thus, they submit, the "wisdom of teams" itself "lies in the disciplined pursuit of performance".

In three major sections, they examine:

1. why teams increasingly matter and are now central to organizational performance;
2. why the performance of groups varies (incorporating a discussion of teams and non-teams, what successful team leaders do, and why the discipline and structures become even more important when teams get stuck); and
3. how senior-level management can extract the most performance potential from teams across the organization.

If, however, you'd rather just focus on one vital (however sticky) question—"What makes the difference between a team that performs and one that doesn't?"—see Katzenbach and Smith's article entitled "The Discipline of Teams" in the Harvard Business Review (March-April 1993, pp. 111-120).

If you're interested in guidelines, blueprints, and resources, you might consider three additional books. Written predominantly in the "how-to" vein, discussing accompanying explanation, correction, and reference.

Another book on electronics, now in its 5th edition, contains an unacceptable number of stupid mistakes such as totally inappropriate capacitance misnomers and names, and incorrect terminology. For example, the dictionary has an entry "Polarized filter" when "polarizing filter" is the correct term. In conclusion, I confirm your experience of three years ago, this time concerning books on electronics. It appears that publishers consider profits more important than their readers need for quality books and things won't change until the publisher's profits are affected. Perhaps if the names of these book publishers and the awful errors they permit to appear in print were brought to the attention of the Canadian PCC's Newsletter, the embarrassment would be sufficient to cause them to substantially improve their editorial practices. What do you think?

Ed Weiberbald, Annapolis, Maryland

My very first copy of NEWSLETTER (Jan.-Feb. 1994) has just arrived and I have read it with great interest. It provides me with the satisfaction that this seems to be my type of Society.

I would like to mention my agreement with your article questioning the direction of editing standards. "Does Anyone Know Where Editing Is Going?" I am, presently, coordinating a technical publication project that highlights your concern, and thought that you would be interested in some unbelievable details.

A three-volume set of engineering manuals for a large military aerospace system, published in the USA by a major aerospace company, became the basis for the Canadian system publications. The system was in use, in its original form, more than ten years ago, and the publications have been subjected to the usual amendment process. Recently, I was contracted to coordinate the bilingualization of these manuals knowing that, (a) the American DOD and the Canadian DND had been validating them for more than ten years, and (b) the system manufacturer was required to rework the English manuscript to a Canadian format—a draft of this manuscript was then, formally, validated by the Canadian customer.

Therefore, one would not be surprised if, after such a history, the translation contract did not contain funds for English editing. In fact, it wasn't until the translators and the French engineers began their task that the standard of the English manuscript came into serious question. For example, the conversion of units of measurement were completely wrong; the introduction contained incorrect theoretical details that could be noticed by any student reading an ordinary encyclopedia, the grammatical inaccuracies and typos were innumerable, etc.

So, are high standards passé? Not if I have anything to do with them! More profits more important? No, future profits will be related to long term. The answer, and how often has this been said, is to educate senior management. How? Sorry, but that's the $64,000 question (my fee will be less!). Perhaps, this NEWSLETTER could publish excerpts of the most appealing cases and name the publisher.

Yours, here to stay,

-Bernard McCann, Ottawa, Ontario

Oops! I find it rather amusing that in an issue of the Newsletter containing an article about alphabet soup, I encountered no fewer than three instances of initials or acronyms that were not defined. (1) The announcement of the Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication, listed, as one of the topics to be focused on, "TQM and communication." (2) The article "The Career of James W. Souther" said that he was "a member of STWP's board of directors." (3) There was an announcement of an international conference identified merely as "ICSC's International Conference..." It would have been nice to have known what these things stand for. I can make reasonable guesses at STWP and ICSC, but I have no way of knowing how near right I am. And I shouldn't have to guess!

Yours truly,

—George L. Trigg

TQM is total quality management, a popular business buzzword; STWP is Society of Technical Writers and Publishers, a predecessor to today's Society for Technical Communication, ICSC is International Conference on Satellite Communication. As I work further into the job of editor, I expect I will become more familiar with our readers and what can be expected to be common knowledge.—D.E.N.
ON MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

Michael B. Goodman

This column on management communication appears regularly in the ICS Newsletter. It focuses on topics related to the technical, cultural, financial, and political environment that characterizes contemporary business. The discussions concern communication among technical and business disciplines, technical marketing, crisis and emergency communication, and communicating technology to the public. Send in suggestions for topics that interest you.

I. Have you ever heard someone in your organization explain a strange decision or event with, "That was just political?" You might have shrugged and gone off shaking your head thinking you were one of the few who could see the real world. Well, Thomas Davenport, Robert Eccles, and Laurence Prusak think you can do a great deal. In their "StoM Management Review" article, "Information politics," (Fall 1992: 53-65) they describe five political models that help explain an organization's approach to information.

Technocratic utopianism, anarchism, feudalism, monarchy, and federalism. Technocratic utopianism is an approach to information management stressing categorization and modeling of an organization's full information assets, with heavy reliance on emerging technologies. In such organizations, both IS (information systems) professionals and users work under the assumption that technology can solve all the problems. Issues that might be considered political or organizational are ignored because they are either unrecognized as a force, or are considered unmanageable and therefore disregarded. Instead of focusing on the information content and its use in the organization, people in technocratic utopias concentrate on the technologies used to manipulate information.

Anarchism can be used to describe organizations that have no overall information management policy. People in such organizations are on their own to gather and manage their information. Few firms set out to achieve such a state; rather, anarchism develops in the wake of a breakdown in centralized information management, or in the absence of a key executive who considers common, shared information important to the health of the organization. Technology such as the personal computer makes this state of anarchy possible. Anyone can create and manage a database to generate a customized report in record time and at minimal cost. In the long term, such a state leads to redundancy and information discrepancies. Most organizations cannot function for long in a state of information anarchism.

Feudalism (like in the Middle Ages) can organize organizations in which business units or functional units define their own information needs and report or allow access to limited information for the rest of the corporation. The central authority is weak, and the divisions have considerable strength through their autonomous "baron" (division executive) decides what, when, and how to report to the "king" (CEO). Each develops an idiolect and the effect is fragmentation of the organization. In some cases this breaks on lines between feudal lords, or sometimes the leaders "arrange a marriage" for mutual benefit.

Monarchy helps explain corporations with well defined information categories and reporting structures. These leaders may or may not share the information after it is collected. The "king" (CEO) or someone so empowered by him dictates information doctrine. Since power is central, each division has little control over information content. The monarch may vary from an "enlightened despot" who decrees a policy of common information, to a "constitutional monarch" complete with a written information "Charta Magna" to establish rules and enforcement processes. However, this monarch is subject to the mortality of the king. "The king is dead, long live the king" (the U.K.). In most organizations, the transfer of power after a CEO steps down is one of the nine crises of business right up there with a drop in stock price or market share.

Federalism is an approach to information content negotiation and consensus concerning the critical information needs and requirements. As a business environment, this information state is desirable for most organizations. This model acknowledges the importance of politics. In contrast, technocratic utopianism imposes politics, anarchism is political anark, feudalism involves destructive politics, and monarchy attempts to eliminate politics through strong central authority.

II. What is Technical Communication? by mark Hasselkor

At a recent retreat, the faculty of the Department of Technical Communication at the University of Washington attempted to come up with a description of the academic field of technical communication. The result of the (very) difficult attempts follows.

Technical communication is the study of the principles and applica-
tions of discourse and graphics with some emphasis on interpersonal communication transmitted via various communication media and delivered through various display media. Technical communicators work at the inter-
face, either between people and technology or between specialists and their audiences. The field, therefore, is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on contributions from such disciplines as rhetoric and composition, cognitive science, computer science, instructional design, linguistics, psychology, human factors, organizational behavior, information science, and technology assessment. Technical communication has roots going back to the ancient Greeks, but the field in its present form is relatively new, gaining its first strong impetus from the massive effort during World War II to introduce new technology to the armed services.

Approximately 170 colleges and universities offer programs in technical communication, all but three in the United States. This figure is misleading, however, as it includes everything from extension certificate programs in two-year community colleges to bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs at top research institutions. At approximately 35 programs in the U.S. offer degrees beyond a bachelor's. Of these, the majority are housed within English departments, where the focus tends more towards technical "writing" than the full range of issues in technical communication. In addition to technical writing and editing, other technical communication issues involve information and interface design, cognitive psychology, communication, the impact of communication and display media, usability testing, management of organizational communication, computer documentation and other special documents (e.g., environmental impact statements), communication and information policy, information systems, and publication and project management. In addition, developments in communication technology and in education continue to raise new issues as the field focuses on communication for current engineering and interna-
tional technical communication.

I wonder what other Newsletter readers think of this description?

Mark's address is Department of Scientific and Technical Communication, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195; e-mail is mark@wtec.washington.edu

for the first time in India). Third, his testing and review of a large computer-based instructional package. And fourth, the extensive literature research he has been doing.

Looking into the future

Pradeep is working toward what he calls "computer-based engineering." According to this approach, a user interface and user documentation are developed together and appropriately integrated into the software lifecycle. This approach will ensure the proper mix of interface ele-
ments, messages, online documentation, and printed documentation. Moreover, it will ensure consistency, minimize errors, maximize information reuse, and improve overall product usability.

Pradeep can be reached at 54, Second Street, Secretariat Colony, Kilpauk, Madras 600 010. India or by facsimile at 0091-44-4627312.
Profile of a Distinguished Professional Communicator
by Rajesh Nambiar

This is the third article in this series to appear in the PCS Newsletter, and the first to be written by Rajesh Nambiar. An IEEE member in Madras, India. We want to continue the series, but we need to identify other distinguished communicators. If you know of such a person (and they are out there), please drop me a note indicating why they should be described in these pages. Or better yet—write the article yourself. But a reminder: the intent of this column is not to laud existing, well-known PCs members, but to seek out and draw attention to other people that PCs members should know about. My address: RGI International, 60 Oxford Street, Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3M 3J2. —Ron Blicy, Series Editor

Pradeep Henry

Pradeep Henry has taken up the challenge of publishing in areas not well known in India—a country that produces world-class technical professionals, but which has neither academic programs nor many good practitioners in technical communication. Through continuous learning and innovation, Pradeep has been producing one first after another in India.

Corporate training programs
Since he joined TCS in May 1989, Pradeep has conceived, crafted, and conducted no less than eight corporate training programs in the technical communication and user interface design areas. Firsts in India, these programs are for a range of audiences including software project managers, programmers, writers, and technical editors. Each course a different training objective and uses different techniques, including self-study.

In December 1989, Pradeep launched a two-day Technical Writing workshop for programmers. The workshop addressed user documentation for the first time and covered topics such as how programmers write, user interface proposals and how to write effective computer consulting reports. Some of India's best technical editors have been trained through The Education-for-Editors Program that Pradeep designed and organized in 1992 for all the technical editors at TCS's various offices. While inaugurating the program, Dr. H. N. Mahabub, professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (the country's premier engineering institution), expressed his excitement at such a course being launched. In September 1992, Pradeep conducted a Facult Development Program for all these editors, to help them conduct user documentation programs at their offices.

Pradeep has already conducted these programs for over 600 participants. His command of the focus on change agents and communica- tions; the impact of technology on communication; ethics, diversity; the process of communication; managing crisis communications; global communications issues; communication and the process of change", on the first day. On the second day, Fairleigh Dickin- son's Schering Plough Distinguished Professor, Sandy Suleri of DD8 Needham Worldwide, will examine changes in the marketplace in his address, "While you were looking for the other way." The best papers from the conference, relevant to IEEE members, will appear in the March 1995 issue of the Transactions.

II. The Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication
The Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication

III. Coming up...
In the next "On Management Communication", a look at "Change in the corporation: communicating the metaphors of change." If your organ- ization is downsizing, reinventing, restructuring, reengineering, or beginning a quality journey, you'll want to know about the metaphors of change and how to use them effectively.

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Technical Communication Courses by Satellite

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Students at three U.S. IBM installations took part in the course, either live via satellite or via tape-delay. Students from IBM Toronto were added to the student roster for the spring 1994 course in graphics. Toronto students see the course via satellite and can themselves be seen by other students at other locations by means of video pictures sent by telephone lines.

Information about Rensselaer's satellite program can be obtained from:

Robert Krull, Program Coordinator
4302 Sage Building
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, N.Y. 12180-5590
e-mail: Robert_Krull@rpi.edu
Telephone: (518) 276-8260

I've always believed in writing without a collaborator, because when two people are writing the same book, each believes he gets all the worries and only half the royalties.

Agatha Christie

Technical Communication Courses by Satellite
CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

by Joan G. Nagle

Shibui and Elegance in Writing

While writing some stuff on the design of engineering documentation for an audience of engineers, I got stuck trying to define "elegance." Elegance is not, on the face of it, the kind of thing engineers care much about, if it refers to beauty and grace and dignity. But my word processing program gave me some synonyms for elegance: polish, finish, refinement.

Maybe we have something here. An elegant document may be thought of as resembling a person who has gone out of his way to do something which has received special "polish" and "refinement" so that it will fit in the circles in which it is expected to move.

An elegant computer program is one which accomplishes its purposes with the highest degree of simplicity, moving from point A to point B in a straight line rather than a series of loops and switchbacks. A sleek car is elegant if it is simple, logical, and navigable.

An inelegant program, on the other hand, may work all right, most of the time. But heaven help anyone who has to get below the surface, to make what should be an easy fix or add new functions. Same with documents.

Scott Sanders, recent editor of the IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, once said, "A mathematical proof may be elegant, a computer program may be elegant, and a piece of technical communication may be elegant. These elegant statements share this quality: They powerfully express the information they convey, using a pleasing and effective economy. Aristotle would say that they have beginnings, middles, and endings; Plato would add that they are whole with no extraneous matter appended in unnatural places."

Design elegance, in documents as in computer software, relates to future use of the document, the way it will fit in the circles, the applications it will move in. Is this work likely to be revised, soon or frequently? Added to? Used as boilerplate? A simple computer program can be turned into what software engineers call spaghetti through multiple changes made by multiple programmers.

Shibui: astringent (in taste); plain but of good taste (of dress, works of art).

We can usually avoid spaghetti thinking ahead in document design. This may involve creating nodes or "intersections" where future extensions of the information highway can connect. Or changing slightly a uniformly arranged format to facilitate insertions (and deletions). For instance, it's generally advisable to put figures and tables as close as possible to the text they amplify. However, if we're creating boilerplate that will be used frequently for major proposals, we may want to group them at the end of each section. This makes it more likely that future iterations will keep all the numbers in sequence, and that the flow will look logical. That is, as Plato said, "no extraneous matter appended in unnatural places!"

While I pondered these considerations during a bout with insomnia, the Japanese word shibui popped into my head. I don't know where I learned it, or in what contexts. Perhaps, because I have studied with design elegance, I was just thinking. Some library research was called for. Now the local library is no great shakes, as libraries go. In a search of the curmudgeon is wont to say, "I went to the library, but the book was out.") However, I did find a definition, in Vocabulary of Common Japanese Words (Arthur Rose-Innes, Yale University, 1994): astringent (in taste); plain but of good taste (of dress, works of art).

I like shibui. It means tightened up, austere. Plain is nice too, in regard to technical writing. And I found a magazine article, on interior decorating, that took the concept a little further. Written by McCull's (November 1992), Alexand- dra Stoddard said, "The masters of the uncluttered look are the Japa- nese. Their decorative tradition emphasizes the fine art of editing." Well, you know what we've come full circle, from interior decorating to editing! She describes waxes an Oriental bench that she uses as a coffee table. When it was moved for the wax job, instead, she just added a vase with one yellow tulip, slightly off center. "Such public beauty," she concluded, "is shibui." (Anybody know where I can find one yellow tulip for February?)

Editing documents is making them shibui. Making them pared down, simple, functional, logically organized ... this is making them eleg- ant. To the editor and writer, this quality of elegance and shibui is indeed the equivalent of understanding. Laurence J. Peter said, "Competence, like truth, beauty, and contact lenses in the eye of the beholder." Elegance might be hard to explain to engineers, but professional communicators know it when they see it.

New PCS Officers (continued from page 1)

center that provides alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle commuting. She has also published a number of articles about editing, cross-cultural communication, and research design. (If you'd like to get a feel for Laurel's work, try "Winning respect throughout the organization." Grove, Lundgren, and Hays, Technical Communication 39(3): 384–393 (Aug. 1992). This is one of the best and most practically useful articles I've read in the techcomm literature.— D.E.N.)

At the PCS AdCom Meeting in Philadelphia following IPCC 93, Mike Goodman, Rudy Joens, Bill Kehoe, Dave Kemp, and Cheryl Reimold were reelected to new terms as members of the Administrative Committee. Also elected were two new AdCom members, Laurel Kay Grove and George Hayhoe.

Laurel Kay Grove is a senior member of IEEE's technical communication specialist at Battelle, Pacific Northwest Laborato- ries in Richland, Washington (on the desert side of the mountains). She came to communication from anthropological archeology, and after more than eight years still en- joyes the relief of entering a field in which being a bit of a dilettante is not only acceptable, but beneficial. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a master's degree from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Her background in anthropology doesn't go to waste. Among other things, it gave her a broad view of the world and an understanding which makes her recognize that the way she sees things is by no means the only way, a valuable trait in a communicator. In addition, in her career as an archeologist, she learned about the various dis- ciplines that impinged on her work, not just geomorphology and linguistics, but also statistics, chemical analysis (of minerals, to identify where stone used for tools came from), cartography, and simulation modeling.

Laurel works primarily as an editor for researchers in environmental science, but she has also published a number of articles about editing, cross-cultural communication, and research design. (If you'd like to get a feel for Laurel's work, try "Winning respect throughout the organization." Grove, Lundgren, and Hays, Technical Communication 39(3): 384–393 (Aug. 1992). This is one of the best and most practically useful articles I've read in the techcomm literature.— D.E.N.) She is excited about being on the program committee for IPCC 94 because of the oppor- tunity to get a wide perspective on what people are doing throughout the field of professional communication. Becoming a member of the AdCom team, offers her great chance to learn more and share her perspective on the profession.

George F. Hayhoe, a senior member of IEEE and the PCS, is the project leader of a software documentation team for Westhouse Savannah River Company at Aiken, South Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in English from the Univer- sity of South Carolina and previ- ously served as Assistant Director of the writing program and Direc- tor of the writing lab at Virginia Tech. In the circa George in Philadelphia last fall walking back to our hotel from IPCC 95. He said he was from Savannah River and, knowing the name of only one person there, I immediately asked "Wasn't that the department I worked at? I wasn't... still is... D.E.N."

George received the best paper award for his presentation "No desktop is an island: groupware needs of publications depart- ments" at the IPCC in 1989. He is general manager for IPCC 1995, which will be held in Savannah, Georgia. He is also a senior member of the South Carolina chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, currently serves as International Secretary of STC, and is a nominee for Second Vice President in its spring 1994 elections. George was the principal author of a white paper on the future of academic programs in technical communication. The white paper, which grew out of a joint workshop of industry and academic representatives with STC's Board of Directors, appeared as a guest editorial in the first quarter 1994 issue of Technical Communication. George's professional interests include online documentation, quality and productivity issues, and software user interface design.

QUALITY CONTROL

Headline of an ad touting the benefits of advertising in a local newspaper. My business literally EXPLODED in 1990. Which just goes to show that it's important to budget for furnace maintenance as well as for advertising.

Professional jargon is unpleasant. Translating it into English is a bore. I narrow-mindedly out- lazed the word "unique". Practically every press release contains it. Practically nothing ever is. Fred Fishinger

It is one test of a fully developed writer that he reminds us of no one but himself. Melvin Maddock
CUMMUDGEON'S CORNER

by Joan G. Nagle

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In December 1989, Pradeep launched a two-day Technical Writing workshop for programmers. The workshop introduced user documentation for the first time and also covered topics such as management of information, proposal writing, and the goal of effective computing. A consultant from the company commented on the training course. Some of India’s best technical editors have been trained through The Education-for-Editors Program that Pradeep designed and organized in May 1990. For all the technical editors at TCS’s various offices, he inaugurated the program. Dr. H. N. Mahabala, professor and director at the Indian Institute of Technology (the country’s premier engineering institution), expressed his excitement at such a course being launched. In September 1992, Pradeep conducted a Faculty Development Program for all these editors, to help them conduct user documentation programs at their offices.

II. The Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication

The Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication was held the 25th May to Thursday, 26th May 1994

The marketplace, as well as evolving the metrics and national ideologies, has focused on change. Communication processes and products have not only created the environment of change but have also fueled the rapid rate of change. Understanding these forces and the people involved with them is a necessary first step in dealing with this change. The Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication—devoted to exploring communication and change—will be held 25 and 26 May 1994. Panels of corporate executives and university scholars will focus on change agents and communicators; the impact of technology on communication; ethics; diversity; the process of communication; managing crisis communications; global communications issues; communication and the media; and video. Bruce Nutting of Unisys Corporation will deliver the keynote address.

III. Coming up...

In the next “On Management Communication,” a look at “Change in the corporation: communicating the metaphors of change.” If your organization is downsizing, reinventing, restructuring, reengineering, or beginning a quality journey, you’ll want to know about the metaphors of change and how to use them effectively.

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Robert Krull, Program Coordinator 4302 Sage Building Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Troy, NY 12180-3950 e-mail: Robert_Krull@rpi.edu Telephone: (518) 276-8260

I’ve always believed in writing without a collaborator, because when two people are writing the same book, each believes he gets all the worries and only half the royalties.

Agatha Christie
ON MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

Michael B. Goodman

This column on management commun-
ication appears regularly in the ICS News-
erlet. It covers topics related to the tech-
nical, cultural, financial, and political environ-
ment that character-
ize contemporary business. The dis-
cussions concern communication among technical and business dis-
ciplines, technical marketing, crisis and emergency communication; and communicat-
ing technology to the public. Send in suggestions for topics that interest you.

1. Have you ever heard someone in your organization explain a strange decision or event with the comment, "That was just political?" You might have shrugged and gone off shaking your head thinking you had nothing further to say. Well, Thomas Davenport, Robert Eccles, and Laurence Prusak think you can do a great deal. In their "Stem Management Review" article, "Information politics," (Fall 1992: 53-65) they describe five political models that help explain an organi-
ization's approach to information. Technocratic utopianism, anarchism, feudalism, monarchism, and federalism are the five models described. The technocratic utopian model suggests that technology can and should be used to solve all the problems. Issues that might be considered political or organizational are ignored because they are either unrecognized as a force, or are considered unman-
ageable, and therefore disregarded.

Instead of focusing on the informa-
tion content and its use in the or-
ganization, people in technocratic utopianism concentrate on the tech-
nologies used to manipulate infor-

Anarchy can be used to describe organi-
zations that have no overall information management policy. People in such organizations are on their own to gather and manage their information. Few firms set out to achieve such a state; rather anarchy develops in the wake of a breakdown in centralized informa-
tion management, or in the absence of a key executive who considers common, shared information impor-
tant to the health of the organi-

Monarchy helps explain corpora-
tions with hierarchy, infor-

tion categories and reporting structures. These leaders may or may not share the information after it is collected. The king (CEO) or someone so empowered by him dictates information flows. Since power is central, each divi-
sion has little control over informa-
tion policy. The monarch may vary from an "enlightened despot" who decrees a policy of common information to a "constitutio-
nal monarch" complete with a written information "Magnifi Castra" to estab-
lish rules and enforcement processes. However, this model is subject to the mortality of the king. The "king is dead, long live the king." In the U.S., in most organizations, the transfer of power after a CEO steps down is one of the nine crises of business right up there with a drop in stock price or market share.

Federalism is an approach to infor-
mation that relies on negotiation and consensus concern-
ing the critical information needs and resources. In a business environment, this informa-
tion state is desirable for most organizations. This model empha-
sizes the importance of politics. In contrast, technocratic utopianism ignores politics, anarchism is polit-
ics ran amok, feudalism involves destructive politics, and monarchy attempts to eliminate politics through strong central authority.

Anarchy leads to redundancy and information discrepancies. Most organiza-
cions cannot function for long in a state of information anarchy.

What is Technical Communication?
by Mark Haselkorn
At a recent retreat, the faculty of the Department of Technical Com-
munication at the University of Washington attempted to come up with a description of the academic field of technical communication. The result of the effort follows.

Technical communication is the study of the principles and applica-
tions of discourse and graphics with written or spoken context that is transmitted via various communica-
tion media and delivered through various display media. Technical communicators work at the inter-
face, either between people and technology or between specialists and their audiences. The field, therefore, is inherently interdisciplinary, mediates across such disciplines as rhetoric and composition, cognitive science, computer science, instructional design, linguistics, psychology, human factors, organizational, be-
havior, information science, and technology assessment. Technical communication has roots going back to the ancient Greeks. The field in its present form is relatively new, getting its first strong impetus from the efforts during World War II to introduce new technology to the armed services.

Approximately 170 colleges and universities offer programs in tech-
nical communication, all but three in the United States. This figure is misleading, however, as it in-
cludes everything from extension certificate programs in two-year community colleges, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree pro-
grams at top research institutions. Approximately 35 programs in the U.S. offer degrees beyond a bachelor's. Of these, the majority are housed within English depart-
ments, where the focus tends more towards technical "writing" than the full range of issues in technical communication. In addition to technical writing and editing, other technical communication issues involve information and interface design, documentation and publication, the impact of communication and display media, usability testing, management of organizational com-
munication, computer documentation and other special documents (e.g., environmental impact state-
ments), communication and informa-
tion policy, information systems, and publication and project man-
agement. In addition, developments in communication technology and in emerging practices can continually raise such new issues as the recent focus on communication for con-
current engineering and interna-
tional technical communication.

I wonder what other Newsletter readers think of this description?
[Mark's address is Department of Scien-
tific and Technical Communication, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195; e-mail is mark@wtec.washington.edu]
I’ve picked out seven (yes, seven) new books from the veritable mass available as part of this “roundup”. What follows are a few brief notes, or what I’ll call “Book Bytes”, on the subject.

In Team Players and Teamwork (Jossey-Bass, 1990), Glenn M. Parker argues that we need to make the use of teams a routine, a “practical business strategy”, in order to enhance our productivity, ensure efficient communication and problem solving, streamline our decision processes, and simply make the daily life in our organizations. Parker reviews a variety of essential issues that have grown out of the teamwork concept and team-based (as well as leadership) research: we are now recognizing the efficacy, utility—perhaps even the utter essentiality—of teams and teamwork in business and industry and, certainly, in all forms of organizational communication (technical and corporate).

Fortunately, a substantial body of both theory-filled and “how-to” books seems to be emerging, from which you can learn:

• how to get more team play in your organization (division, department, section…);
• what a team player is and does;
• how to become a team player, and
• how to design, implement, and participate effectively in a team-oriented work environment.

Submitted “Creating the High-Performance Organization”, the book covers some of the same territory explored by Parker; however, Katzenbach and Smith’s text is suffused with examples and stories illustrating how teams outperform individuals. They share with readers both “commonsense findings” (e.g. “The disciplined application of ‘team basics’ is often overlooked.”) and “uncommonsense findings” (e.g. “Companies with strong performance standards is to spawn more ‘real teams’ than companies that promote teams per se.”). Thus, they submit, the “wisdom of teams” itself lies in the disciplined pursuit of performance. In three major sections, they examine:

1. why teams increasingly matter and are now central to organizational performance;
2. why the performance of groups varies (incorporating a discussion of teams and non-teams, what successful team leaders do, and why teams and disciplines and structures become even more important as teams get stuck); and
3. how senior-level management can extract the most performance potential from teams across the organization.

If, however, you’d rather just focus on one vital (however sticky) question—“What makes the difference between a team that performs and one that doesn’t?”—see Katzenbach and Smith’s article entitled “The discipline of teams” in the Harvard Business Review (March-April 1993, pp. 111-120).

If you’re interested in guidelines, blueprints, and resources, you might consider three additional books. Written predominantly in the “how-to” vein, discussing accompanying explanation, correction, and reference.

Another book on electronics, now in its 5th edition, contains an unacceptable number of stupid mistakes such as totally inappropriate capacitance and resistance values, and incorrect terminology. For example, the dictionary has an entry “Polarized filter” when “polarizing filter” is the correct term used. In conclusion, I confirm your experience of three years ago, this time concerning books on electronics. It appears that publishers consider profits more important than their reader’s need for quality books and things won’t change until the publisher’s profits are affected. Perhaps if the names of these book publishers and the awful errors they permit to appear in print were brought to the attention of the readers, the PSE NewsLetter the embarrassment would be sufficient to cause them to substantially improve their editorial practices.

What do you think?

—Ed. Wetherhold, Anchorage, Maryland

My very first copy of NEWSLETTER (Jan.-Feb. 1994) has just arrived and I have read it with great interest. It provides me with the satisfaction that this seems to be my type of Society.

I would like to mention my agreement with your article questioning the direction of editing standards, “Does Anyone Know Where Editing Is Going?” I am, presently, coordinating a technical publication project that highlights your concern, and thought that you would be interested in some unbelievable details.

A three-volume set of engineering manuals for a major military aerospace system, published in the USA by a major aerospace company, became the basis for the Canadian system publications. The system contained ideas, inferences, and information more than ten years ago, and the publications have been subjected to the usual amendment process. Recently, I was contracted to coordinate the bilingualization of these manuals knowing that, (a) the American DOD and the Canadian DND had been validating these for more than ten years, and, (b) the system manufacturer was required to render the English management of a Canadian format—a draft of this manuscript was then, formally, validated by the Canadian customer.

Therefore, one would not be surprised if, after such a history, the translation contract did not contain funds for English editing. In fact, it wasn’t until the translators and the French engineers began their task that the standard of the English manuscript came into serious question. For example, the conversion of units of measurement were completely wrong; the introduction contained incorrect theoretical details that could be noticed by any student reading an ordinary encyclopedia, the grammatical inaccuracies and typo’s were innumerable, etc.

So, are high standards paranoia? Not if I have anything to do with it. Are profits more important? No, but future profits will be related to low standards. The answer, however, as often has been this said, is to educate senior management. Sorry, but that’s the $64,000 question (my fee will be less). Perhaps, this NEWSLETTER could publish effects of the most appealing cases and name the publisher?

Yours, here to stay.

—Bernard McCann, Ottawa, Ontario

Oppo! I find it rather amusing that in an issue of the Newsletter containing an article about alphabet soup, I encountered no fewer than three instances of initials or acronyms that were not defined. (1) The announcement of the Seventh Conference on Corporate Communication listed, as one of the topics to be focused on, “TQM and communication.” (2) The article “The Career of James W. Souther” said that he was “a member of STWP’s board of directors.” (3) There was an announcement of an international conference identified merely as “ICSC’s International Conference.” It would have been nice to have known what these things stand for. I can make reasonable guesses at STWP and ICSC, but I have no way of knowing how near right I am. And I shouldn’t have to guess! Yours truly,

—George L. Trigg

TQM is total quality management, a buzzword that everyone in the health care business is talking about these days. However, we need to develop some standards for how TQM is to be implemented. There are two approaches that I have seen: one is the topdown approach, in which everyone is told what to do and how to do it. The other is the bottom up approach, in which everyone is encouraged to participate in making decisions. I think that both of these approaches have their merits, but they also have their drawbacks. I believe that the best approach is a combination of the two, where we start with the basic principles of TQM and then apply them in a way that is appropriate for each situation.

—John Smith

Say Again? From a newspaper article on pigeon racing.

There were two races Saturday, with release times simultaneously about two hours apart.

Times have changed since a certain author was executed for murdering his publisher. They say that when the author was on the scaffold he said good-bye to the minister and to the reporters, and then he saw some publishers sitting in the front row below, and to them he did not say good-bye. He said instead, "I see you again."
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

These misses come by e-mail and facsimile, but all will be "letters" hereafter. "Electronic Messages and Postcard Communications to the Editor" just doesn't work. —D.E.N.

Notes on quotes

I concur with your preference for the British system of punctuating commas and periods adjacent to quotes. I recall having read somewhere that the American convention was instituted by letterpress printers so they could prevent the narrow period from falling over and being lost from the ends of their hand-set lines of type. The alternative was to set the type the way I was taught, with an unattached period at the end of each line. The reason why they didn't like it seemed obvious to me. It shortened the length of the lines that could be handled in a given-sized press...

—Johns Ortel

And another thing! Read your editorial today and the placement of punctuation vis-a-vis quotation marks. You invited them as had strong feelings to respond, and I do! (It's endemic among cummages, strong feelings.)

When I first got into this weird business and someone told me that commas and periods are always placed inside quotes, and quoted why, I got the answer, "It's a typographic convention ..."

I grew up with the British convention for punctuation for quotation marks and have had to struggle to adjust to the American convention. As you correctly point out, the British convention requires thought on the part of the writer, but the reader should know where the punctuation belongs. The American convention requires thought on the part of the reader, who does not have the source material and is therefore expected to rely on the context of the writing to determine where the punctuation belongs.

Communication is enhanced when the writer does not leave such decisions up to the reader. I applaud your decision and hope that many others will follow your example.

—Janet Rochester, Moorestown, New Jersey

I want to applaud your initiative in making the Newsletter logical: with commas (and use of punctuation) inside OR outside quotation marks as appropriate to the meaning. I have always tried to do so, but the publications specialists do strange things between final proofs and actual printing!

—Roger L. Boyell

One source of the explanation for the U.S. style that Mr. Ortel cites is The Handbook of Good English, by Edward D. Johnson, Washington Square Press, 1983. Thanks to Joe Harman for pointing this information out! —D.E.N.

Comments on quality

I received my PCS Newsletter yesterday, and just an hour ago I completed a quick read-through, first with Nagle’s and Rembold’s column and then your “Does anyone know where editing is going?”

I don’t know if your selection of this particular topic was a coincidence, but I recently corresponded with Nagle on this very same matter, and I would like to take a few minutes to tell you of my experiences with several cursory examinations of recently released books.

During November ’93, I found out about a new book on amateur radio. Being a radio amateur, I was curious and requested a copy for my personal collection.

With a cursory glance at a few pages, I noticed some errors of such magnitude that I continued with a more thorough reading, anticipating I would find many more errors of increasing stupidity. I wasn’t disappointed! Some errors were non-technical (IEEE defined as “Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers”) and others were such that they would be recognized by an EE undergraduate. When I finished, I had seven pages of about 35 identified errors, each having an

issues and theory only briefly, these books are Building Productive Teams with Other Action Guide and Resource Book by Glenn H. Varney (Jossey-Bass, 1989); Self-Directed Work Teams: A Guide to New American Challenge by Jack D. Orsborn, Linda Moran, Ed Musselwhite, and Jane E. Zenger (One Irwin, 1990); and Team-Based Organizations: Developing a Successful Team Environment by James H. Shonk (Business One Irwin, 1992). Although each of these books emphasizes the practical, I’ve been most attracted to Varney’s book because of his manifest interest in the communicative aspects, both verbal and nonverbal communication messages, particularly in sections on recognizing productive and diagnosing causes of team problems.

Orsborn et al. provide perhaps the most complete, self-contained, “hands-on” discussion of team building. I know of In Part 3 of their book. Of central interest to those who must ultimately manage the process of developing a team or converting to a team-based work environment is Chapter 5, “Guiding supervisors and middle managers through the transition to work teams.”

If your organizational role involves planning at the macro level, you might want to take a close look at Shonk’s book, which articulates what he calls an “evolutionary” method of designing a team-based organization (e.g., your first activity might involve a design team’s analysis of a “technical system to understand how work flows through the organization and to determine where variances occur from expected outcomes”).

Taken together, three books seem to go a considerable depth. William G. Dryer’s Team Building: Issues and Alternatives (2nd ed., Addison-Wesley, 1987), which documents the emergence of the team idea and shares with readers the entire progression involved in what he calls preparing a team building program. Dryer’s work proceeds from an organizational development (OD) perspective, in which the team building facilitator stresses above all a “commitment to engage in the process” of building a good building, a human process that cannot be measured on a commitment scale. Team building, for Dryer, involves human feelings, attitudes, and agreed-on actions, things people must attempt to accomplish by themselves, “You cannot substitute high-paid consultants, complex designs, or fancy resorts for human making a mutual commitment to try to work together more effectively.”

This brings us to Pat Riley’s The Winner’s Within: A Life Plan for Team Players (G. P. Putnam’s, 1993). If you’ve been following professional basketball during the past decade or so, you know that Riley knows a thing or two about teams and teamwork. His book is a pretty good read and his counsel—his Riley’s Rules—might serve any of us as a good introduction to teams and the building on virtual any “court where we find ourselves playing”. Here’s one of Riley’s Rules: “If you hire any manager you would do well to internalize: “Avoiding the solution of a tough, measurable, volatile problem is not discretion. It is cowardice. And it is robbery. Because as long as a serious problem goes unsolved, no team, no person can exploit its full potential. Any coach who doesn’t kick his complacent ass on his team will end up kicking his own ass instead.”


In the past, I have written that "no insurance, but it does have a kickstand." I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you look at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated. —Paul Alderson

Newsletter Schedule

The Newsletter publication and deadline schedule is:

July/ August 3 June 1994
Sept./ Oct. 3 1994
Nov./ Dec. 3 1994
Jan./ Feb. 2 December 1994
March/April 3 February 1995
May/June 7 April 1995

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

David E. Nadszijka
6009 Osage Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60516

Tel: (708) 252-3019
Fax: (708) 252-3387

Say Again?

While taking an order for motorcycle insurance, a service representative asked the insured if the cycle had a kicklighter. No, replied the insured, "but it does have a kickstand."
TOols of the Trade

by Cheryl Reimold

How To Get Started

And should I then presume? And how should I begin?
—T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

If you have ever had trouble beginning a letter, memo, or report—take heart. You are not alone. Most people find getting started the hardest part, and for good reason. The first words often determine the fate of the piece. To a great extent they establish whether or not the reader will go on reading, for the reader tends to judge the value of the rest of the piece by its opening words.

Accepting that your first paragraph is the most important one need not lead you to paralysis. On the contrary, this knowledge can be the first step to a good start.

Begin by deciding what you want that crucial paragraph to accomplish. Do you want it to tell your readers something or sell them on something? That is, do you want it to give the readers some important information or inspire them to action? Your answer will lead you to the right start.

The "sell" start

Try this when you want the first paragraph to give the reader new information. Here, you will focus on presenting facts and explaining their significance to the reader, all in the broadest terms. The structure is usually one of INFORMATION followed by MEANING.

Imagine your reader(s) asking you these two questions:

One: "What do you want to tell me?"

Two: "So what?"

Answer each question conversationally, on paper. Your answers will form your opening paragraph. For example, suppose you are responding to a request for an analysis of a faulty product. You can generate your first paragraph this way:

Answer to question 1:
Our analysis of Sample A shows traces of X and Y.

Answer to question 2:
X can cause weakness in bonding, leading to cracks in the final product. Y, even in small amounts, can produce the discoloration you observed.

Accepting that your first paragraph is the most important one need not lead you to instant paralysis.

(Disturbing fact) Last year, 20 boxes of X in Storage Room 13 were damaged by the leak in the roof above that room. (Disturbing fact) Two weeks ago, a package containing samples of our chief competitor's product was soaked through. (Disturbing fact) Yesterday, John Reynolds slipped on the wet floor under the leak and broke his wrist. (Call for action) To avoid further injury or loss, we must get the leak repaired immediately.

The "help" start

Sometimes, you will find that you know what you want the first paragraph to do, but you haven't a clue how to do it. Don't despair. Here's a "help" start.

Start in the middle of your piece. Determine that you will write the first paragraph later, when you have got several ideas and facts on paper. Write down anything you can think of about your subject. There is only one rule: you must write something. You will find it much easier to draw your first paragraph from ideas on paper than from disjointed thoughts flying through an increasingly wroth brain.

Say you want your first paragraph of a progress report to give the reader the highlights of your team's latest research. You know you need a "sell" start, but you're not sure which findings are really the "highlights":

Start in the middle. Write down one finding, describe it, and show the significance. Then go on to another. Once you start to see the relationship of your facts and their relative significance, you can go on to the "sell" start.

Or, suppose you want to alert your boss to the need for more regular informal communication between managers and staff in the department. You know this needs a "sell" start, but you don't know how to get your boss's attention without offending him.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Deborah Flaberry Rizer

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be serving you as PCS President this year. I'm proud to be associated with PCS and look forward to an exciting year.

I would like to see PCS accomplish three things in 1994:

1. Ensure the financial integrity and stability of the Society.
2. Increase membership in and awareness of PCS, and
3. Continue progress in our globalization efforts.

First, we need a strong financial base to continue and expand our many programs. We have excellent conferences, educational programs, and publications, but we need a solid financial foundation if we are to expand internationally and excel in each of our programs. Therefore, understand the IEEE budgeting and allocation process while improving on PCS's annual budgeting process. Our Treasurer, Bill Hetche, and his team will play a major role in helping us understand and improve these processes.

Second, concerning membership, I believe we can significantly increase membership both in the United States and internationally. Professional communication should be an area of interest and concern to all engineers. PCS, I believe, is in a unique position to meet the needs of all IEEE members. Our Education Committee has developed and delivered high-quality workshops and seminars. Our books are among the IEEE Press' best sellers. We, certainly, as a Society, have added value to an engineer at all stages in his or her career. The challenge, I believe, is in more effectively marketing the Society.

Third, I can't think of an area more suited to PCS than globalization. It is through communication that ideas get shared and understood and that different cultures can successfully work with each other. We should continue and expand the many efforts underway to increase understanding, communication, and knowledge among our colleagues worldwide.

Finally, I welcome your thoughts and ideas on how to improve PCS. I challenge you, however, to get involved—in the section, your chapter, or IPPC 94.

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Sure, your technical expertise is important—that's what makes you a great engineer. But to be truly successful, you've got to be able to communicate your achievements. That's what the IEEE Professional Communication Society's CommuGuide series is designed to do. Each of these handy booklets is crammed full of practical advice, how-to tips, and lists that you can use right now to enhance your communication, performance, and your career. And the price can't be beat. Inset in yourself today—buy one or more CommuGuides!

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5. Volume 38, Number 2

IEEE Professional Communication Society NEWSLETTER
March/April 1994
FROM THE EDITOR

The January/February issue brought a welcome response from readers commenting on my choice of British-style punctuation of quotations (see “Letters to the editor”, p. 4). Both sides of the issue are represented.

There is also a pair of letters commenting on the article about quality of editing. Both bring up the question of whether the Newsletter might start reporting, by title and parser, examples of poor editing in the original article. Well, don’t believe in hiding or ignoring examples of poor work, but this Newsletter probably isn’t the right forum for general critiques of consistency in writing. Any letters to the publisher or author detailing the errors and problems would doubtless be included in the next issue of having an effect than mention here. The Transactions, of course, has a book reviews column, and I’d expect that reviews of new books on communication from anyone willing to write them would be welcomed there.

This suggestion does bring to my mind the question of how the field of technical communication improves itself. In 1990, a Chemtech article (November, p. 653) by Goeff Dolbear mentioned his attempt to gain permission from the American Chemical Society to use a paragraph from an ACS journal article in a booklet he was preparing on technical writing. His request was refused, the reason that ACS was afraid that the author could be identified by a full-text search on an electronic database. It’s going to be a problem for us as teachers and communication specialists to improve the quality of technical communication if the viewpoint of publishers is that you can’t use anything they print to show that the problem exists and how to correct it.

The actuality is that short passages from a published work can be used for critical reviews attributed under the fair use provision of copyright law. There is probably little reason to identify the author of bad examples, but such examples can be taken from the literature, and I’ve found that technical examples can make much better teaching tools in the technical writing classroom than do sample sentences from English texts.

On reflection, perhaps the two-letter-writers are right. Beyond writing book reviews and using examples from technical literature, perhaps something more is needed to provide some impetus for improving technical communication. Something along the line of the “Dear Dressel Celebrities of 19xx” list that is published every year? Hmm-m-m.

D.E.N.

Worth Reading

Samuelson, P. Copyright’s fair use doctrine and digital data. Communications of the ACM, 37(1): 21-27 (Jan. 1994). The first part of this article reviews the concept of fair use and three recent copyright cases involving print products. Following this is a discussion of electronic data issues such as posting to electronic bulletin boards, digital editing of images, and hyper-text links. The article provides food for thought, not solutions.

Matthews, R., and T. Merriam. A bard by any other name. New Scientist, 141: 23-27 (22 Jan. 1994). The use of computer-based language analysis to identify authors, focusing on efforts to determine the authorship of newly discovered works by Shakespeare, is the subject of this article. The analysis is interesting aspects of Shakespeare’s rare works in a text or the common ones (are, in, no, of, the) provide the best discriminant of authorship. But the value of the evidence it provides was, from this article, unclear.

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IEEE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SOCIETY Newsletter

Volume 38, Number 2
March/April 1994
IEEE Professional Communication Society NEWSLETTER

CHAPTER NEWS

Los Angeles

Peter McGreggor of Executive Quest kicked off the 1994 meeting series with his presentation on job search cycle. The joint EMS/PC/EdS Chapter enjoyed this rare opportunity to go out from the headhunter’s purview. Featured in the 19 January talk was McGreggor’s eight-step cycle for job search and placement as well as tips for writing the perfect resume.

For now, all meetings are held at the Jolly Roger in Anaheim. Chapter officers meet at 6 p.m. Thirty minutes are then allocated for socializing and networking. The meetings are usually held midway priced batter at 7 p.m. Chapter business and the featured talk commence at eight o’clock.

In February, we’ll have a little different spin on a popular saying. “If you build it, will they come?” features Tom Miller, a business and technology counselor at the Accelerate Technology Small Business Development Center. He’ll describe the importance of marketing to entrepreneurship.

The first quarter talks conclude with John Dowdy’s presentation on 16 March. Dowdy, of McKinsey and Company, will provide a perspective on the role of technology in the evolution of America’s business future. He plans to comment on the key challenges and opportunities in the area. He will also identify the roles that business, government, and academia should play to yield a more positive future. With this topic and speakers like these, and one of the best professional meeting buffet deals offered anywhere, it’s no wonder that meeting attendance is steadily climbing. Members who haven’t yet attended a Chapter meeting are encouraged to join us. Meeting details are included in each issue of the Los Angeles IEEE Bulletin.

—Terry E. Lutwien, PE Chapter Publicity Chair

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—Terry E. Lutwien, PE Chapter Publicity Chair

Vancouver

The Vancouver, British Columbia, Chapter of the Engineering Management Society (50 members locally) has formally formed a joint meeting with the Professional Communications Society (15 members locally, and growing). At the moment there are two officers: Adam Creery, Chapter Chairman, and Greg Miller, Vice Chairman. At present, 100 members are expected to attend.

Two well attended 1993 Chapter meeting presentations were ‘Efective team building’ by Gary Robinson and ‘Motivational techniques’ by Les Pasko. Some of the talks scheduled for 1994 meetings are ‘Quality management system for suppliers’, ‘Persuasive proposal writing’, and ‘An introduction to e-mail communication.’

The Vancouver IEEE section consists of approximately 1500 members, with active chapters of the Computer Society, Industry Applications Society, EMS/PC/Comms, Communications Society, Power Engineering Society, Joint Electronics Society, and the Control Systems Society. We established an e-mail committee that is in the process of setting up a bulletin board service for the local members. This will enable all members to have access to listservs (at least the e-mail services).

—Adam Creery, Chapter Chairman

Russia Chapter

Notable scientists and leading professionals in the Russia Section have petitioned to form a new chapter of the Professional Communication Society. Lead by Dr. Henri L. Langer of the Institute of Radiogoniage & Electronics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 22 individuals signed the petition to form a chapter, including Prof. Yuri Gulyayev, who is Director, Institute of Radiogoniage & Electronics, and Chairman of the IEEE Russia Section.

The impetus for this chapter was begun when then-President Rudy Joseph of the Society of Microwave leaders visited the Moscow in 1990. Chapter formation efforts were furthered during the visits of Dr. Langer and Dr. Yury Gornostaev in the 1991 International Microwave Symposium in Orlando. Dr. Langer is Vice Chairman of the IEEE Russia Section and, and Dr. Gornostaev is Head of the Computer Department, International Center for Scientific and Technical Information in Moscow.

—Dave Kemp, Chapter Coordinator

Washington, DC

Let’s put Washington DC back on the MAP in ’94!

There has been considerable interest in restarting the DC Chapter of the PESC. Anyone interested in participating or helping with the restart should contact Nancy Corbin at (703) 754-9502 or (703) 567-6015. Suggestions for dates, meeting places, and discussion topics are also welcomed.

—Adam Creery, Chapter Chairman
1994 Calendar

24-28 April
European Association of Science Editors 5th General Assembly and Congress, Budapest, Hungary. Contact Maeve O’Connor, EASE, 49 Rosendale Way, London NW1 0XB, U.K. Tel: +44 (0) 71-388-9668; faxes: 383-3092

14-16 May
Council of Biology Editors 38th Annual Meeting, Quebec City, Canada. Contact CBE, 11 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60603-1210. Tel: (312) 201-0101; faxes: (312) 201-0214

15-18 May
Society for Technical Communication 41st Annual Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Contact STC, 901 N. Stuart St., Suite 3-4, Arlington, VA 22203-1822. Tel: (703) 522-4114

7-10 June
42nd Technical Writers’ Institute, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY. Contact the Office of Continuing Education, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY 12180-3590. Tel: (518) 276-8351

15-17 June
Communicating Technical Information (Writing and Editing), James Paradis, director. Contact MIT Summer Session Office, E19-356, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139. Tel: (617) 253-2101; faxes: (617) 253-8042; e-mail: summer-professional-programs@mit.edu

28-30 September
IPCC 94, Banff, Alberta, Canada. Contact Ron S. Blicq, RGI International, 569 Oxford St., Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3M 3J2. Tel: (204) 488-7060; faxes: (204) 488-7294; e-mail: r.blicq@complaymail.com

New PCS Officers

As of 1 January 1994, some officers and Administrative Committee (AdCom) members of the Professional Communication Society (PCS) changed. Deborah Flaherty Kizer has taken over the office of President from Richie Robinson, and Mark Haselkorn has replaced Deborah as Vice President. Frank Ortolani and Bill Kehoe continue to serve as PCS Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Deborah Flaherty Kizer is a Product Manager with AT&T in Morristown, New Jersey. In her current position, she manages the four P’s—product, price, promotion, and place—for AT&T’s International Dedicated Services to the European Region.

Deborah holds a B.A. in French and chemistry from Regis College, an M.A. in technical writing from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a M.B.A. in international business/marketing from New York University. Deborah, a member of the IEEE Professional Communication Society AdCom, served as PCS Vice President in 1992 and 1993. She was also editor of this Newsletter for five years and has served as PCS Secretary. She has published many articles on technical communications and is a co-author of the PCS Communication on presentances.

In 1984, Ms. Kizer received the IEEE Key to the Future Award, and in 1991 she received the IEEE PCS Alfred N. Goldsmith Award. Deborah is married and has two very active toddlers. In her spare time, she enjoys riding her horse, Poco, and competing in local dressage shows. [As the father of one very active two-year-old, I look forward to a future guest column by Deb on how she manages to have spare time—D.E.N.]

Mark Haselkorn is a Professor and Chairman of the Department of Technical Communication, College of Engineering, at the University of Washington. Mark has a B.A. and an M.A. in English, an M.A. in computational linguistics, and a Ph.D. in English language. Mark has been a senior member of the IEEE since 1987. In 1992, he organized the Seattle Chapter of the Professional Communication Society, which he has been chairing since its first meeting in December 1992. Mark has written over 60 articles, book chapters, technical reports, and papers. Among Mark’s awards is the Best Paper at the IEEE International Professional Communication Conference in 1986.

In addition to his teaching duties, Mark has an active research career. He has led projects involving real-time traveler information systems, interactive video for education and training, computer-assisted communication, and natural user interface languages and smart documentation. Since 1987, Mark has received over $2 million for research in Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems (IVHS). He and his colleagues have concentrated on traffic-related research, including two major projects to develop (a) an advanced traveler information system that delivers graphical, interactive travel information to commuters in real time and (b) a traveler information ...