# TECH COMM SUMMIT GOALS

On 22 October 1997, representatives of five technical communication organizations met in Snowbird, Utah, during SIGDOC/IPCC 97 to discuss the future of our profession. (See "Tech Comm Leaders Meet in Snowbird," this *Newsletter*, January/February 1998). The group included:

- Kathy Haramundanis and Stephanie Rosenbaum—Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Documentation

- Sam Dragga and Karen Schriver— Association of Teachers of Technical Writing

- Stephen Bernhardt and Deborah Bosley—Council of Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication

- Mark Haselkorn and George Hayhoe— IEEE Professional Communication Society

- Saul Carliner and Janice Redish— Society for Technical Communication

During their eight-hour meeting, the participants agreed that the five organizations want to create a culture of mutual respect; they recognized their interdependence; and they endorsed active collaboration among groups that shape and serve the field of technical communication. They also acknowledged that coordinated efforts would add value to the efforts of individual organizations.

The participants then brainstormed a list of possible collaborative projects and prioritized the list. They judged the following project areas as having potential for high impact and a high level of commitment from their organizations:

1. Continued collaboration among the organizations (for example, holding joint conferences and regular summit meetings)

2. Public awareness of our profession (for example, developing a consumer's bill of rights to clear information and a brochure on how to buy information products)

3. Technical literacy (for example, developing model secondary curricula for teaching technical communication with supporting material)

4. Research in our field (for example, promoting collaboration by academics and practitioners on research projects, and expanding student and faculty internships)

After consulting with their governing bodies regarding their continued interest and the availability of funding and volunteers to pursue such projects, the group will meet again in the spring to continue the discussion and plan specific activities. Participants in the summit hope to glean ideas for future meetings from the members of their respective organizations.

Members of any of the five organizations who wish to serve on working committees that will begin to take action on the project areas (or to suggest new ones) are most welcome. Future meetings will expand the list of organizations represented to include related societies, especially groups outside North America.

## FROM THE EDITOR
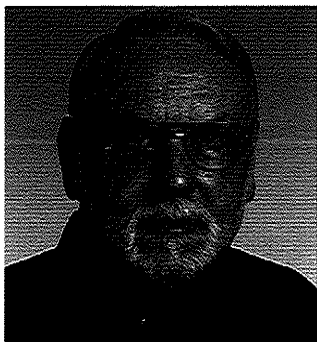
**RUDY JOENK**

**E-mail**

"I'm testing my e-mail. Did you get the 'E' I sent?" That's the question posed to Dilbert by his pointy-haired boss in a recent Scott Adams cartoon strip. Coincidentally, our PCS President, Roger Grice, chose to write about e-mail in his President's Column on the opposite page.

I love e-mail, as many of my colleagues have learned, sometimes to their annoyance. (Roger assures me, though, that I'm not his target.) I hope many of you will use e-mail to respond to Roger, or to me, about his column or about anything in this *Newsletter*. Letters to the editor have been few and far between, but they generally made interesting reading.

**A Great Deal!**

"If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't." Here's the exception that proves the rule: For their $22 annual dues, PCS members receive a subscription to the *Transactions*, which costs PCS about $26 to provide; a subscription to this *Newsletter*, which costs PCS about $13 to provide; and IEEE administration, data processing, and record keeping, which costs PCS about $8 to provide. That's at least $47 worth of goods and services for $22!

Former PCS President Mark Haselkorn alerted us to this catastrophe-leaning imbalance in his September/October 1997 President's Column in this *Newsletter*. So, new President Grice has called a two-day AdCom meeting for March 13-14 in Washington, DC. Much of this meeting will be devoted to brain-storming sessions about this and other concerns.

I'm particularly interested in solving this problem because I'm the unofficial "veep" of publications (officially, chair of the Editorial Advisory Committee), and publications are PCS's primary product and major expense. Feel free to send your suggestions to Roger *(r.grice@ieee.org)*, Treasurer Bill Kehoe *(w.kehoe@ieee.org)*, or me (address below). And check our Web site *(http://www.ieee.org/pcs/pcsindex.html)* for the location of the AdCom meeting. All members are welcome at AdCom meetings.

**Info for Authors**

One thousand words makes a nice page-and-a-half article, although longer and shorter articles may be appropriate. If you use a wp program, keep the format simple: for example, one font and one font size, headings flush left, no footnotes or reference lists; everything will go through an ASCII filter before being coded in *Newsletter* style for the publishing software.

Use e-mail for transmitting an article. Usually wp codes can be converted from one program to another but this is seldom true for the newest releases; conversion utilities are low on the manufacturer's priority list. My address is in the boilerplate at the bottom of this page.

The deadline for articles is the first or second Friday of the odd-numbered month preceding publication, and we publish in the odd-numbered months. The next year's deadlines are listed on page 17.

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### ERRATUM

The photo on page 17 of the January/February issue was misidentified as Robert Krull; it is really Donald Zimmerman of Colorado State University. My apologies to both.
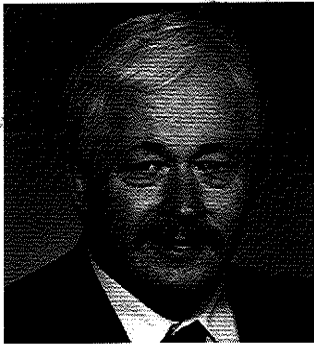
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# COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF E-MAIL

**ROGER GRICE**

*The rules of effective communication apply to e-mail.*

To paraphrase an old saw: E-mail! You can't live with it; you can't live without it!

Access to e-mail and other forms of electronic communication have transformed the way we live and work; it is probably the most widely used application of computers (excepting, perhaps, games and recreational Web surfing). I'm writing this column in the airport in Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A., and I will e-mail it to Rudy Joenk, our long-suffering *Newsletter* editor, when I get to my next stop. I'm late producing this column, of course. But I have managed (only somewhat successfully) to soothe my guilt-ridden conscience by rationalizing that because I'm sending the column by e-mail, Rudy will get it so much more quickly than if I rely on traditional mail (snail mail).

Do I really believe it's OK for me to be late? No, of course not. But I've fallen into a trap that many users of e-mail (fans and detractors alike) fall into: Because e-mail is a new communication form, the old rules do not apply. Of course. Some of the rules have changed, but we are plagued by believing some of the myths that have sprung up around e-mail and its use. I explore some of those myths in this column.

**Myth:** E-mail messages are transmitted instantly. This myth is easy to accept because very often the message is delivered within seconds of being sent. If all the network connections are working well, people can carry on extended discussions via e-mail almost as quickly as they might through a telephone conversation. But this is true only if all the links are there. If they're not (usually called "having a bad hub day"), a message can sit at a network junction for hours or days waiting to reach its destination.

People who believe that their messages arrive when they think they do can be greatly, usually unpleasantly, surprised.

**Myth:** The e-mail always goes through. Following from the first myth, this one

leads its believers to confidently assume that anything they send will reach its destination. Again, this myth is easy to accept because it is very often true. But if the message is really important, it is always worth checking to make sure it arrived.

**Myth:** If the e-mail does get through, people will surely read it. Getting an e-mail message to someone's electronic mailbox is certainly important; if it doesn't get there it can't be read. But the fact that it arrives is no guarantee that people will read it. Why? There are many possibilities. Among them:

- The message went to the wrong mailbox and the person who received it discarded it without telling the sender of the error.

- The person who receives the message is not connected to his or her mailbox (away on a trip, sick in bed, hates to check e-mail, etc.), so the mail sits there unread—often for a very long time.

- The recipient does check e-mail but overlooks a message or a group of messages for whatever reason (overwhelmed by volume of mail received, poor screen formatting, etc.). Thus, the message is unintentionally overlooked.

- You've made a pain of yourself with floods of e-mail, or annoying e-mail, and the person is intentionally overlooking your messages. (We all know that people will let the phone ring or leave the door unanswered under certain circumstances, but for some reason we find this hard to believe about e-mail.)

**Myth:** If the e-mail does get through, and the recipient reads it, the message will make sense to them. At some time (or many times) in our lives, we've all heard or studied reasons why communication fails. Although many people do not believe it, these same rules of effective communication apply to e-mail. Among the reasons why communication can fail here are:

- Lack of context or background. People are sometime brought into on-going discussions with little or no attempt to

# DIGITAL LIBRARIES, ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING EVENTS

The IEEE **Advances in Digital Libraries** Conference will be held in Santa Barbara, California, 22-24 April 1998. Content includes contributed papers, invited papers, panel discussions, and pre- and post-conference workshops and tutorials.

Example topics are the Digital Library Initiative, Application of AI Techniques, Introducing Digital Library Technology into Traditional Libraries, and Publishing in Digital Library Environments.

For information, check the Web site *http://www.alexandria.ucsb.edu/conferences/ADL98*.

A National Science Foundation-IEEE workshop on the **Socioeconomic**

**Dimensions of Electronic Publishing** will be held 23-25 April in conjunction with the ADL '98 conference.

Motivation for the workshop includes the fact that information made available on-line is not heavily used despite the growth of electronic publishing technologies. Major topics of the workshop are Obstacles to the Creation and Utilization of Electronic Documents, and Social and Technical Solutions.

For information, communicate with Dr. Christine Nielsen, (407) 646-2146, *christine.nielsen@rollins.edu*, or Dr. Joseph Herkert, (919) 515-7997, *j.herkert@ieee.org*.

# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*(continued from page 3)*

orient them to what's going on, what has been said, who the players in the dialog are, etc. We would not do this in our traditional business communication or technical communication, but many of us do it freely in e-mail discussions.

- We assume that people know as much about the subject as we do and that they also care about it as much. Often they don't, so the message makes little sense and seems of little importance

**Myth:** Manners no longer count. We hear much about the loss of manners and civility in society today. This loss is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the e-mail we receive. (Possibly in the e-mail we send?) Things that people would not say to others face to face or in standard (paper-based) communication, they sometimes feel free to say in e-mail. "Flaming" and public belittling of others is all too common in e-mail. The anger and hurt gener-

ated by such messages can block real communication and maybe hinder (or stop) future communication.

**Myth:** The more e-mail, the better. Although we are aware (or should be) that many people are suffering greatly from information overload, we often add to the overload by flooding them with extensive series of follow-ups. ("I sent you e-mail an hour ago and you haven't answered....") Rather than aiding communication, this overload can actually hinder it by burying the message in a mound of extraneous e-mail. The real message is often lost, or its impact greatly diluted.

And the bottom line? E-mail can be a great aid to communication and an excellent use of computer technology, but we need to keep in mind that with e-mail we communicate *through* computers, not with computers. Communication is, after all, a human activity, and we must remember to consider it as such.

*With e-mail we communicate through computers, not with computers.*

# HANDLING TOUGH SITUATIONS

**CHERYL REIMOLD**

*Protect yourself from your own damaging instincts.*

If you are reading this column, you must be interested in communication. You have probably spent some time and effort on improving your own skills and, thus, have developed a reasonable ability to handle ordinary situations. Unfortunately, life serves up many tough situations, too—and that's when all your skills may vanish without warning.

For example, are you sure just what to say and do in these cases?

- You need to ask an extremely busy and often unfriendly person for help, cooperation, or even just information.

- You've been in your job half a year. The boss once again assigns you a "keep busy" project, while your male colleagues get interesting, highly visible assignments. You are determined not to accept this gender bias but are afraid the boss will evade your questions and arguments as before.

- The boss yells at you for something that is your responsibility, but of which you had not been aware (say, because you were away).

- You get a totally unexpected bad performance review from a new boss.

- Somebody pulls you down in front of others, undermining your professional standing and credibility.

- Somebody asks you for help on something you feel he should do himself. (You know that, previously, he has taken full credit for achievements that others helped him with, at great expense of time.)

In this series, I will show you how to communicate effectively even in such situations. You'll learn how to protect yourself from your own damaging instincts, prepare intelligently for best results, conduct a focused discussion that leads to an agreement, and follow up to make sure any agreed-upon actions are carried out.

## Difficult People Or Difficult Situations?

Many popular books and videotapes promise to teach you how to deal with the difficult people in your life—complainers, abusers, evaders, snipers, and others. What's wrong with that? Simply this: It *stereotypes* people and encourages you to try to *manipulate* them. Would you like to be treated that way? And how long would it take you to catch on to what the other person is thinking and doing?

In my experience, people—including those you might view as difficult—usually respond well if you treat them with *honestly felt friendly respect*. Regarding them merely as predictable obstacles to your goals or comfort is not a respectful attitude at all—but it underlies most of the popular strategies of manipulation. Your tricks might succeed once or twice; in the long run, however, communication will not improve.

If you want to make real progress in your relationships and communications, forget about difficult people. Instead, learn to deal with tough situations involving basically decent people—and chances are they will respond like decent people.

## The Need for a Protective Framework

What is a "difficult situation"? Essentially, it is one that contains an element of *danger*. For instance, when you have to apologize, there is a danger of anger, accusations, or demands for restitution. When someone attacks you sarcastically in public, there is a danger of loss of reputation.

Think about that for a moment. What happens when you are plunged into danger? Your *instincts* take over! It's a great time saver, because you can short-circuit all the time-consuming higher functions of thought—but is it going to be effective?

What instincts are available to you? Usually there are just two: fight or flight. If the

enemy is smaller or the struggle central to your survival, you strike out; if the other guy looks bigger, you run. The arrangement seems to work out for survival in the jungle; however, in civilized society, a third instinct—namely, to "reason it out"—would be much more useful. Just go through your list of past communication blunders: From how many disasters would such an instinct have saved you?

Unfortunately, by some oversight, we seem to be born without that third instinct of reason. Consequently, you need a simple routine that protects you from your rash instinctual responses in tough situations.

This routine must meet two requirements: (1) It must be easy to learn and use even when you are surprised and upset, and (2) it must work in situations involving your boss and others with greater power and influence than you.

Much popular advice is either too complex or too aggressive to pass this double test.

For instance, you cannot possibly learn ten strategies for dealing with ten types of difficult people and hope to remember the right one in the heat of a sudden attack. Neither can you put a superboss firmly in his place for interrupting you with an irrelevant or sarcastic remark.

A routine for yourself, not manipulation of others, is the key to dealing with difficult situations. It focuses you on the one person over whom you do have control.

### Four Steps to Success

No one can successfully resolve a tense situation all at once. Instead, learn to break down your task into four manageable, logical phases:

1. Minimal immediate response to an unpleasant surprise, aimed at buying time

2. Realistic preparation based on a complete scenario

3. Problem-solving discussion focused on reaching an agreement

4. Follow-through to ensure that agreements are carried out

Let me illustrate the reasons for this four-step approach with an example. Imagine this scene: Four days before you are due to go on an expensive two-week vacation with your family (all tickets nonrefundable!), your boss comes into your office and declares, "Cancel your vacation! Nobody takes time off until the Xenix trial is finished!" Quick: What do you say to persuade him to leave your vacation alone and save your marriage?

You'd be a very unusual person if you came up with anything much more intelligent than "Oh, no!" or "What do you mean, cancel my vacation?" Furthermore, there is no point in my offering you strategies for generating more persuasive verbalizations; you'd be much too upset to remember them. In fact, the only safe strategy is to *think* before you speak and then say either nothing or the minimum that will let you postpone the discussion, *without agreeing or disagreeing* at this point.

You might simply say, "Hmm." Note that this verbal grunt means neither yes nor no, so you have not given anything away. And it certainly is simple enough to learn and produce!

Having gained time, you can now prepare intelligently for a fruitful discussion. The key here is to think up win-win proposals and then *anticipate likely responses* to them. How will you deal with these responses so as to walk away with some acceptable agreement?

In my example, it *might* occur to you to point out that canceling your vacation amounts to taking a $4,000 pay cut—something the boss surely would not accept for himself. When you play it out in a scenario, it might not look that good, however. The boss might just say: "Sure I would—in fact, I did more than once in my career! I don't give a hoot about your vacation—all that matters is that this project be finished as planned. It's your fault

*Think up win-win proposals and then anticipate likely responses.*

# PROLIFIC, COMMUNICATING PARADOX

BY MICHAEL BRADY

Bruno Oldani
Oslo, Norway

*Making all printed materials and designs resemble the company letterhead is tantamount to loss of face.*

Scandinavian design is as admired abroad as is the rugged beauty of its peoples. But behind the scenes, it's hardly all Scandinavian. Ten years ago, a leading Norwegian newspaper columnist lamented that in lauding the country's most famous graphic designer: "Together with Miss World, Bruno Oldani is one of the few Norwegians who has attained international status. He is Swiss." Another major daily called him "The Godfather of the Norwegian design milieu."

The truth of those views is ubiquitous in Norway today and frequent in faraway places, whether you look at book jackets, record covers, exhibition posters, reports, periodicals, postage stamps, catalogues or stationery—or consumer goods and office chairs: Oldani's products and the trends they triggered are a part of modern Scandinavian design.

That prominence, Oldani admits with impish immodesty, springs from a trilogy of tenets: craftsmanship, dedication, and internationalization. "Consider craftsmanship," he says; "there I'm Swiss. Just as a good watch needs good guts to show the right time on its face, good graphic design rests on unseen components."

In dedication, he is Scandinavian. He counts major industries among his clients, but he relishes smaller tasks to be "closer to the conscience of the country." He knows that conscience well: When it misleads, he admonishes. In early 1990, when Norwegian graphic designers lamented the poor profiling of the 1994 Winter Olympic Games to be held in Lillehammer, Oldani led the lobby for a more assured Norwegian image. But "internationalization is the glue of my approach to the graphic genre," he admits: "A society may delineate style, but sense is supernational."

He secures that sense by frequently traveling abroad and by always having one or two foreigners apprenticed to his studio staff. And he is active in international forums, from heading a recent congress of *Alliance Graphique Internationale* to

serving on a jury for the Art Directors Club of New York.

Oldani's background is as inauspicious as his work is known. Father Heinrich was one of the last stucco workers in Zurich, of a clan that hailed from Magenta, a hamlet near Milan. His mother was a shop clerk with a yen for travel; in her youth she had worked in Argentina. "If you believe in capability heritage," he remarks, "then I must have the DNA for handiwork abroad."

In school, he was a self-professed misfit. "Be an apprentice, in construction," a teacher advised the lesson-weary lad. As the Oldanis were solid working class, and construction workers were in demand in the Zurich of the mid-1950s, the teenage Bruno Oldani entered an apprenticeship. But he chose graphic design, not construction, because he "put penchant ahead of purpose."

The penchant lasted: In 1988 he was appointed professor of graphic design at Norway's National College of Arts, Crafts and Design. The purpose he forsook, the regularity of form and work in building, marked the style he evolved. As soon as he finished his apprenticeship and attendant studies in Zurich, he sought escape from what was then a coterie of stringent concepts governing Swiss design. Human warmth, he felt, was lacking. His working class background had made him a social democrat. Why not Scandinavia? Just 22 years old in 1958, he arrived in Oslo after a 36-hour train trip, carrying his mother's battered suitcase, tied together with twine. He intended to spend one year abroad.

In Oslo he found a dichotomy matching that within. He chose to live in the fashionable west side, "because like any socialist with taste, I preferred to live well." Today his studio is located just a few blocks away from the posh pension where he first stayed. Above his desk is a small sign, one of his many mandates: "I want only magnificence—I don't work for the common man." "By Giambattista Bodoni,

the 18th-century Italian printer who designed the modern typeface that bears his name," Oldani grins. The connections are there: the Italian blood, the graphic pursuit. And so is the apparent contradiction: Oldani's works are arguably elegant, yet they are often put to commonplace uses.

"Actually, there's no contradiction because the lack of creativity in design is related to a fondness for order, not to a station in a social stratum," he points out. "Finance alone cannot father flair. Consider museums," he continues, "they are zoos for art. In them, creativity is closed in, for only visitors to view. You can almost see it pacing nervously back and forth, like a wild tiger in a cage. Granted, you cannot hang masterpieces in cafes, but that's more their natural habitat, where they might have greater impact."

The line between order and originality is thin, Oldani admits. Some of his largest tasks have been devoted to bringing clarity to chaos born of misguided systematization. This is because many people mistake the need to avoid discord, arising from differences, for a need to avoid the differences themselves. "Making all printed materials and designs resemble the company letterhead is tantamount to loss of face," he contends.

Family resemblance, not clone replication, is his approach. That view has brought him coveted international tasks, such as structuring the profile program for the Nairobi-based United Nations Environment Program and designing stamps for Norway, Switzerland, and the United Nations. It has also brought him a variety of tasks in enormous volume.

With that volume over four decades, he evolved what he calls the Simple Oldani Suggestion (SOS) for all professional communications: *Graphics and text must work closely together, from the start.* "No writer should work without knowing what the designer of the final product thinks, and vice versa," he contends. He substantiates that contention by describing the common drawbacks of its converse. "Drawings and photographs are often appended, almost as an afterthought, to a text, or captions are

*No writer should work without knowing what the designer of the final product thinks, and vice versa.*

tossed in, seemingly at the last minute, to graphic displays.

"The result is always a disconcerting lack of continuity between the written and the graphic media. That's sad. They should work in concert, to put the message across to the reader or viewer. For real proof of why this is so, consider the typical user manual for a personal computer peripheral, such as a printer. However well illustrated, it's difficult to understand and follow the instructions on any one page, unless you first have read and understood the entire manual. Clarity of description is obviously not yet a top-priority concern."

Clarity of description is one of Oldani's major concerns. He works at it. Another motto tacked to the bulletin board above his desk reads: "Easy writing makes hard reading." "I'm a workaholic," he admits, "but I'm also a dilettante in almost all the arts, a lover of leisurely lunches and gourmet dinners, and a travel zealot." He manages his spectrum of activities with a ploy befitting the chief executive of a large corporation: He delegates responsibility.

In the Oldani Studio, Bruno has the authority—no work goes out unless he is pleased with it—yet everyone is responsible. Even so, Oldani gives few orders. He asks many questions, though; the expert is the first to seek expertise. Although fluent in four languages, he writes no texts. He is a highly skilled photographer, but prefers the work of professionals to his own. Loquacious, he is also a born listener who analyses both the needs of his clients and the criticism leveled by colleagues. "Know your strengths" is a personal motto often cited in conversations with colleagues and clients.

And he practices it. Unabashedly secure in his skills, he confidently comments on the quality of his own products. Yet he seldom derides the work of others or directly boasts of his own. His bravado comes more from within, from the deeper drives of a man so fascinated with his work that he enjoys all tasks, whether large or small. The reverse side of the motto implies that he should know his weaknesses, which he does. "I have two," he confesses, "I've really never mastered drawing to my satisfaction, and I'm partly colorblind."
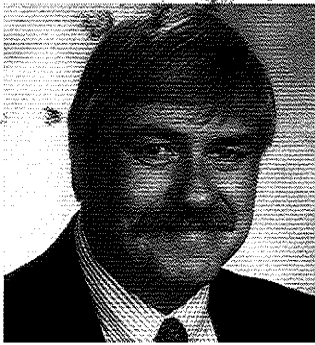
## MASTERS OF STYLE

# EDWARD TENNER'S TAKE ON A SNAPPISH TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

RONALD J. NELSON

Edward Tenner's career includes service as editor for publications at the Institute for Advanced Study at Rutgers University, as well as executive editor for physical science and history at Princeton University Press. He has also been a Guggenheim Memorial Fellow and a Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Fellow. Presently, he holds a research appointment in the Department of Geological and Geophysical Sciences at Princeton University. Besides contributions to *Harvard Magazine, Newsday, Princeton Alumni Weekly,* and *Wilson Quarterly,* Tenner has written two books: *Tech Speak: How to Tell High-Tech* (Crown, 1986) and *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintentional Consequences* (Knopf, 1996).

The latter book probes the vexing question of why technology (defined as "humankind's modification of its biological and physical surroundings") seems often to be self-defeating, despite its considerable gains. His answer—arrived at after extensive research on how technology, values, and design interact—is essentially that technology tends to convert catastrophic problems into chronic ones that are even more difficult to deal with.

In the process, people find themselves frustrated by this conversion and by the necessity to ensure safety through untiring watchfulness. As Tenner puts it, "Chronic problems almost by definition demand maintenance rather than solution; while the need for vigilance and care becomes itself a chronic irritation." Thanks to "the perversity of ordinary objects and systems," humankind is "either on its way to the stars or hurtling out a high-rise window to the street and mumbling, 'So far, so good.'"

Tenner begins his analysis with a recap of Rod Serling's 1961 story, "A Thing About Machines," in which Bartlett Finchley maliciously mishandles machinery and

*Technology tends to convert catastrophic problems into chronic ones that are even more difficult to deal with.*

abuses people (like the television repairman). He is driven from his house by the appliances and is eventually chased by his car, which has slipped its emergency brake, into his own swimming pool, where he drowns. The engine of the car "let[s] out a deep roar like some triumphant shout." At the end of the story the cemetery caretaker is shown "puzzling over why his power lawn mower has tugged him off its path to strike Finchley's tombstone."

In the chapter "Ever Since Frankenstein," Tenner gets at what is not open malice (as it is with Finchley), but rather the "repeated small episodes of frustration" brought on when changes fail to deliver "promised improvement." He distinguishes a *revenge effect* from a *side effect.* If a cancer treatment causes baldness, that is a side effect; if it causes another type of cancer, that is a revenge effect.

He also distinguishes a revenge effect from a *rearranging effect* (the shifting of heat around a city caused by air conditioning, which raises the temperature of the streets, thereby increasing discomfort out of doors) from a *repeating effect* (women who had taken clothing to the laundromat often do more washing at home) from a *recomplicating effect* (the endless telephone loop) from a *regenerating effect* (Patriot missiles in the Gulf War hitting Scuds and breaking them up into smaller projectiles that scattered debris over miles and may have caused all kinds of minor damage) from a *recongesting effect* (media channels close to bursting because of overloading; space debris cluttering the earth's orbit).

In that same chapter Tenner also explores *reverse revenge* ("stepping from office elevators into our cars and driving to health clubs to use treadmills ... and stair-climbing machines"), malignant machinery, nature's revenge (associated with punishing sin), and the history of this general phenomenon from the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818. Shelley's monster is

not a machine, nor is it a human being or an animal: It is "a kind of system ... a creature with unintended emotions."

Part of the difficulty is that tools have become systems, and tool *users* have become tool *managers*—we don't shape them, but try to direct and control them. Tenner goes on engagingly to discuss bugs, Charles Perrow's tightly and loosely coupled systems, the rise and fall of Prometheanism (drawing on Lewis Mumford and Thorstein Veblen), the origin of the phrase "Murphy's Law" (based on the activities of Captain Edward Murphy, Jr., and Major John Paul Stapp), learning from disasters like Chernobyl and the *Challenger* explosion, the compulsion toward maintenance, and finally the revenge of technology through the creation of chronic global problems resulting from our attempts to deal with local disasters.

*We will have to nourish a finer appreciation of the realities of any situation involving technology.*

The remaining chapters delve into four general areas of concern, describing gains and losses in each category: health and medicine, the environment, the office, and sports. In health, for example, people in industrialized countries have never been healthier while at the same time they are more worried as a result of rising health costs and attempts to control them, AIDS, the revival of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, and other problems.

Moreover, critics have found a distressing increase in iatrogenic (physician-caused) disease in cases like swine flu, in misreading and misdiagnosis of high-tech results, and in questionable use of drugs, treatments, and procedures. Laparoscopy—using fiber-optic light sources, cameras, and miniature instruments inserted into the body through small incisions—is neater and less traumatic than traditional surgery; however, complications can occur up to ten times as often with such procedures as a result of surgeons' inability to feel organs. They now use equipment that demands "mental and physical contortions in virtual space." And the effectiveness of such procedures as catheterization is doubtful. In addition, patients' ailments all too often elude the detecting ability of x-rays and magnetic resonance devices. In short, despite improvements in technology, chronic and degenerative diseases have increased.

Tenner's treatment of the dual nature of environmental, office, and sports advances is equally thorough and impressive. He presents thoughtful analyses of important, everyday situations involving technology. The automobile, for example, "first presented an acute problem—collisions—but its success reduced that difficulty while adding to it another, less easily soluble one—congestion. And the recent history of motoring also suggests a paradox of safety, that the better made and less dangerous motor vehicles become, the greater are the burdens on the operator." Similarly, rigid molded ski boots have helped to prevent ankle and tibia injuries, while increasing the likelihood of anterior cruciate ligament problems.

In the end, however, Tenner articulates a kind of optimism. If we finesse situations and remain vigilant to recognize warning signs early enough, we will perhaps continue to progress. But we will have to nourish a finer appreciation of the realities of any given situation involving technology.

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There is absolutely no substitute for a genuine lack of preparation.

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Vital papers will demonstrate their vitality by moving to where you can't find them.

# THAT WINDY NIGHT WHEN PLAIN ENGLISH DIED

BY JACK KISLING

You've often heard it said that American English is a colorful and descriptive tongue, but you know that's a crock. It might have been descriptive once, but it barely earns a passing grade now, and that only because the standards have sunk.

American English started losing its luster when mass communications walked in the door arm in arm with pop psychology and high technology. It lacks luster now because it overdefines everything, and this happens because everyone is trying his (or her) damndest to appear professional. Appearing professional means using more words than necessary. It has become the national pastime and the national epidemic.

Clarity of expression is tolerated only among the untrained and the unsophisticated. Nothing betrays the unprofessional person as fast as saying what he (or she — there I go again, trying to oversimplify things) means. To avoid disgrace, never use a short word if you can misappropriate a long one, and never use words one at a time if two or more will do the same job.

Only amateurs talk. Professionals communicate. Only amateurs make friends. Professionals have interactive (sometimes even proactive) experiences. Amateurs sell. Professionals employ marketing techniques. Amateurs marry. Professionals enter into meaningful relationships. Amateurs live. Professionals exist at some point in time. Amateurs drive cars. Professionals operate personal transportation systems. It rains on amateurs. Precipitation descends on professionals. Amateurs have nerves. Professionals have synaptic networks. Amateurs kill. Professionals neutralize threatening behavior. Amateurs suck. Professionals induce vacuums. Amateurs die. Professionals achieve closure, thereby inducing permanent disruption of their earning potential.

What the amateur uses, the professional utilizes; what the amateur sees, the professional perceives; and what's new to the amateur is state-of-the-art to the professional.

This plays hell with colorful language. The fallen woman who sighs, "I feel utilized," doesn't convey much pathos, although she will probably win her case (on appeal). The Star Spangled Banner would be less stirring if it began, "Oh, say can you distinguish...." Calling "New Moon" "Improved Moon" ruins the romance of it, and "Little White Lies" never would have made the Hit Parade if it had been titled "Miniature Colorless Misstatements."

Who dealt this mess? I like to believe it was triggered about 40 years ago by a radio announcer at a 500-watt station in western Nebraska. He was a guy who always wore white socks and short-sleeved drip-dry shirts. He had large pores and his fingers were stained brown from chain smoking. His private life was a hate parade of ex-wives, and in the early 1960s he was fired for drinking on the job, although by then the damage to American English had already been done.

It happened one night during the spring tornado season, when he was alone in the studio, reading the news off the UPI pony wire. He tried to stretch five seconds into six by saying "thunderstorm activity" instead of "thunderstorm." From that day on, the word thunderstorm has never been used all by itself on any radio station in the world (or as we say in American English, the physical world). If you don't believe me, turn on a radio near you.

Plain talk died that windy night in Nebraska, murdered by a worried man who was only trying to get through to the International Harvester commercial. I also like to think that after that lapse he was tormented by a guilty conscience, but that is not enough considering what he did to the language. If he is still alive, he should be tracked down, arrested, tried, convicted, taken outdoors and shot down like a dog.

*He tried to stretch five seconds into six by saying "thunderstorm activity" instead of "thunderstorm."*

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

it's not on track." What do you say then? Not much, probably—you've maneuvered yourself into a dead end, because you pushed a win-lose proposal.

Logically, the boss wins if the Xenix trial runs successfully and on schedule, and you win if you can go on your vacation. Suppose you make a few phone calls and then put together a memo showing exactly how the Xenix trial would run successfully in your absence—complete with names, responsibilities, and completion dates. You might then say: "John, I fully appreciate that you want the Xenix trial to be on track and a success. I would like to show you a plan I worked out with Bill and Linda to make this happen. I would stay in touch with them by phone and e-mail to make sure everything works as planned, and I'd also do the data analysis while on vacation. It would save me $4,000 because all my tickets and reservations are nonrefundable at this point." How might this play? It would probably go quite well, although you should anticipate some grumbling and blaming: "This project is a mess, and it's all because you let the schedule slip!" Are you ready for that one?

Yes: "It's true we are a week behind; but that's because the Fenton plant delayed phase 1 by ten days to squeeze in an extra production run for XYZ. In fact, we made

up three days. But the important thing is, we *will* get it done on time. Let me show you exactly how it's going to work out."

The point is, this kind of solution is possible only with preparation, including discussions and arrangements with other people. You could never be as persuasive if you tried to argue your case immediately to your boss. That's why we say that four steps lead to success, while a one-step strategy leads to disaster.

In the actual discussion, your job is to emerge with some agreement that advances you toward your ultimate goal. Again, the scenario-based preparation puts you in a good position to achieve this. Finally, the all important follow-through gives promises the often necessary push into reality.

Next time, we'll examine step 1, or the art of postponement, in more detail.

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

*Follow-through gives promises the often necessary push into reality.*

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One of the difficulties in the language is that all our words, from loose using, have lost their edge.

*— Ernest Hemingway*

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Silence is evidence of superb language skills.

*— Unknown*

# IEEE ITSC'97 REPORT: A GRASS-ROOTS EPIPHANY

BY EMILY SOPENSKY

It started simply enough. I wanted to learn more about Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) because I was writing about a new product being used in this emerging technology arena. Already I had tried to weave through IEEE resources and had met with responses of "Gosh, what's that?"

Then I saw a notice in this *Newsletter* about an IEEE ITS committee forming. Contact Mark Haselkorn it said. So I did. To make a long story short, I said, "Yes, I would be happy to be a member of the committee and to run the publications for the first conference."

Then, to ensure sanity for the duration, I invested in a bottle of St. John's Wort.

## Background of ITS

ITS, a relatively new industry, is the application of information and communication technology to improve the efficiency of vehicles and transportation systems. Much of this effort revolves around using improved information to impact the choices travelers make. To the average consumer, visible applications include electronic toll collection and in-vehicle car navigation. But just as important are applications involving the transport of freight and advanced traffic management systems.

The best calling card for a new technology is when it is used as the trump clue in a popular TV drama: The E-Z Pass toll tag identified the murderer in one of last year's *Law and Order* episodes.

In the IEEE, the ITS Committee was formed to gather the many overlapping interests in ITS of various IEEE Societies (PCS is a founding member), and the Committee felt a conference with a strong technical program was needed. Hence, the first IEEE conference was held in Boston in November 1997.

## Publications Chair Tasks

While I was not naive enough to think the task as Publications Chair would be a breeze, I groaned when I saw what the IEEE expects of a chair *and* what I knew had to happen to make the conference a success as far as publications were concerned.

These are the official products that are the responsibility of an IEEE conference publications committee:

    Logo
    Letterhead and envelopes
    Call for papers
    Authors' guide
    Advance and final programs
    Proceedings
    Session signs
    Luncheon and banquet menus
    Committee handbook
    Billing
    Final report

In addition, I knew that our conference had to offer the proceedings on CD-ROM and we had to have a Web site.

Despite having many IEEE Societies and other organizations sponsoring and supporting this conference, the budget was very lean. Financial restraints were significant, deadlines were tight, and, of course, everything—design, format, content— had to be developed from scratch.

Although Austin has its share of traffic problems, it has not yet made a concerted effort to deal with them as have larger metropolises in Texas. A knowledgeable volunteer support base is just not there, so the Publications Committee was a small, lean effort, composed, fortunately, of veterans of the IEEE and of attending conferences.



*ITSC'97 Publications*

### Implementation

As anyone who has worked with establishing a corporate image knows, gaining agreement on a **logo** can be time consuming and irksome. The ITSC'97 logo was no exception. It took a year to get one with which I was comfortable. The third artist to tackle the problem successfully created a logo that captured the sense of movement/transportation; that alluded to the global nature of the conference, its participants, and the technology; and that could be easily altered for the next conference.

Conference-specific **letterhead and envelopes** went by the wayside. The ITS Committee's membership of IEEE Societies kept changing as new Societies joined in supporting the committee as well as the concept of the conference. A letterhead with the IEEE logo was sufficient for corresponding about the conference— especially since much of the correspondence was via e-mail.

We printed a preliminary **call for papers** for distribution at another ITS conference and a second call that was both distributed at various Society conferences and mailed out.

*ITS is the application of information and communication technology to improve the efficiency of vehicles and transportation systems.*

With the help of a committee member in the U.K., I developed an **authors' guide** that the conference chairs all had an opportunity to review and comment on. The Program Chair sent a copy with each paper that was accepted and an electronic copy was e-mailed to those whose addresses had changed in the interim.

Instead of an advance program, we sent out an eight-page advance **registration kit** to promote the conference and to attract exhibitors. We designed it so that the files would be easy to upload to the conference Web site.

The **final program** had a three-fold purpose: First, it contained all the information necessary for a conference-goer and spouse to register for the conference, tutorials, and site tours as well as for each day's program. Second, to attract attendance and exhibitors, it was produced as a self-mailer early enough to be mailed internationally to interested parties and to potential exhibitors. Third, as with the registration kit, the program files had to be easy to upload to the conference Web site.

Although this first conference was budgeted at a modest attendance of 500-700, the six-page papers that were ultimately accepted resulted in a **proceedings** of three volumes. The trend seems to be for attendees to choose not to return home with such weight in their baggage. To avoid excessive waste, we decided to produce a **CD-ROM** of the proceedings.

Because the CD-ROM was not budgeted, we decided to support its extra cost by (1) providing conference-goers with a CD-ROM and a printed **digest** consisting of long abstracts, and (2) printing the proceedings *after* the conference. By delaying the printing, not only did we take the guesswork out of ordering, but also we added another source of revenue, and we were able to include some of the speeches in the proceedings.

After sending electronic files to the Local Arrangements Committee in Boston, my responsibility for **session signs** was completed. That committee also took care of **luncheon and banquet menus**.

To set up and support the conference **Web site**, two PCS members, Paul Seesing and Susan Picologlou, provided invaluable assistance. I'm indebted. I have no idea how many hits the site received, but I do know the ITS Committee used it to attract new interest in the conference.

I volunteered to advise on the next conference, to be held in Germany this year (and in Japan in 1999). Maybe *they* will develop a **committee handbook**; but this commit-

tee chair won't be overseeing it. Regarding **billing**, the Finance Chair and I had some great conversations, e-mail, and faxes. It's good to be on his side. The **final report** will be out by the time you read this.

### The Epiphany

The conference is over. I'm happy to report that it was a success. Interest in the post-conference proceedings was stronger than expected. As with all first-time conferences, this one now stands as a ruler by which future conferences can be measured.

Thank heaven for e-mail. I sent and received 1400 messages in regard to the conference. I can't imagine what life would have been like without such ease in communicating.

And what was my grass-roots epiphany? It was knowing that, despite the unknowns, it would all work out. I specialize in working with start-ups and with emerging technologies. I knew that starting up a new conference for an emerging technology in a new industry was not going to be an easy task.

In fact, I'm very happy to be coming out on the other side of experiencing a hot, weary summer with never enough time; of greeting various couriers at the door holding another bundle of papers from Japan or Turkey or Boston or Ohio State or wherever; of e-mailing countless authors

and committee members about a forgotten detail in their contribution; of trying to track down the Program Chair who was out of his office constantly during the summer; of proofing for the umpteenth time only to miss a typo.

That in a nutshell is one Publications Chair's report. I'd do it again—in a few years—maybe.

### Postscript

In developing the authors' guide, we discovered that although the IEEE keyword list that authors usually draw upon for consistency is extensive, it does not yet cover terms used in the ITS field. Consequently, we let the authors identify their own keywords and phrases. The resulting list is on the CD-ROM and in the post-conference proceedings.

The IEEE TAB ITS Ad Hoc Committee (new name for the original committee) would greatly appreciate the fine-tuning that a seasoned indexer could give to refine this list before it is integrated with the master list. Would any PCS member be interested in this relatively short-term assignment? If so, please contact me.

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*Volunteer indexer needed...*

# WHEN ENGLISH DIED

Behind him there should be a wall pocked by the bullets used to kill this man (yes, ladies, it was a man—bet on it) and it should be left as a grim reminder to all those who believe any noun will sound more professional if you replace it with a verb and then tack the word "system" to its hind end. Thus fool notions are turned into belief systems.

No. Wait. Shooting is too good for the likes of them. Instead, let us drive slivers

of bamboo up under their fingernails and set them afire, while describing this not as torture, but a dynamic revenge system with incremental deterrent options.

*Jack Kisling is a* Denver Post *editorial writer and columnist.*
*This article appeared in* The Denver Post *on 23 November 1997 and is reprinted with permission. Copyright 1997 by* The Denver Post; *all rights reserved.*

# DISTANCE LEARNING—IPCC 97

BY LAUREL K. GROVE

Marj Davis and Roger Grice described programs at Mercer University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), respectively. Davis and her colleagues have worked with *asynchronous* programs, teaching widely distributed students by means of videos and Web postings, with only occasional meetings. The courses require the instructor to be much more than a talking head, and student-to-student learning is as important as professor-to-student.

Although institutions may initially see distance learning projects primarily as a source of revenue, Davis notes that the demand on faculty is much greater than for a typical on-campus course. The demands on instructional support systems, especially networks, are great, as downtime can be a critical problem for a student's learning.

Grice, in contrast, described RPI's *synchronous* learning programs, in which he and his colleagues teach students on campus and off at the same time, using satellites and phone lines. The courses represent an attempt to simulate for the students the experience of all being in the same room, and the logistics of the program are more complicated than those of typical courses.

Special effort is required to ensure that off-site students feel that they get as much attention as on-site students. The instructor must exaggerate and emphasize physical movements to ensure that the camera catches them. The problems of current technology, such as delays during transmission, can cause confusion or make movements appear distractingly jerky.

On the other hand, the medium is especially good for showing materials that would have been passed around a typical class, because all students get the same view, undistracted by other discussion going on at the same time. More and more companies and schools have begun distance learning programs; an annual conference is held to discuss the issues. The evidence to date suggests that distant students do at least as well as on-campus students in these programs, although that may reflect the greater self-motivation characteristic of off-site students.

One concern raised by listeners was how exams are given. Where exams are given, they are designed to require the student to apply the knowledge obtained in the course rather than merely to look up answers. Apparently, however, most programs rely on projects rather than exams to determine grades.

Not only faculty but also students involved in distance learning were represented at the conference. Adrienne Forzese and Rob Houser from NCR in Atlanta, Georgia, and Karen Tylak from Lucent Technologies in Ohio presented work they had done together in a course on the relationship between audience and technical communication.

Forzese led off, describing parallels between electronic performance support systems (EPSS) and minimalism: Both are intended to let users start quickly with real-world tasks, ideally coordinating the system with training, providing error support, and allowing alternative approaches for different kinds of users. Both may be inadequate in that they presume a single user working on a single machine and they neglect the fact that users often prefer to get help from colleagues.

Houser, noting that technical communication is necessarily centered on users and that much research has been conducted, recommended bringing together the results of that research in a unified database. At present the information is scattered among researchers, and even the sponsors of research may hold only a portion of the information available.

Finally, Tylak described how minimalism can be subverted: When tasks are mistaken for users, form substitutes for content, and the problems of students are assumed to be the same as those of users.

> *Special effort is required to ensure that off-site students feel that they get as much attention as on-site students.*

## CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

BY JOSEPH FEITLER, IEEE LIFE SENIOR MEMBER

As chair of Chicago's Joint Chapter for Engineering Management and Professional Communication, I represented our Society at the awards dinner of the Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society (EMBS). This event took place in Chicago on 1 November 1997 where the winners of two student contests were honored. One group of undergraduate students was honored for submitting the best design report on a biomedical engineering project.

The second contest was a student paper competition on a biomedical topic that was won by Gareth Williams, a graduate student from the University of Wales in the U.K. His paper received an award from both EMBS and PCS, presented by Dr. Gerry Cote, EMBS Student Activities Coordinator, and me. Our award consisted of a special certificate and a monetary reward to help him in his educational endeavors.

This joint award represents a new type of recognition for our graduate student members who normally are not part of our mainly undergraduate IEEE Student Chapters and Student Branches. Our Society should be proud of leading this new effort to keep our graduate student members in the IEEE after their graduation, one of the major goals of the Institute for the past several years.

## MADRAS, INDIA

BY S. S. NARAYANAN

The Madras Chapter was very busy on 26 December 1997: We held two meetings with invited speakers that day.

The first meeting, held at the Madras Institute of Technology, was arranged by Dr. S. Renganathan, who is the M.I.T. IEEE Student Branch Counselor, and myself. The speaker was Dr. Kumar Balachandar from Ericsson Advanced Development and Research in the U.S., and his topic was "Innovation in Communications — Global Scenario."

More than 250 students attended.

The second meeting, held later in the day at the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers Lecture Hall, was jointly sponsored by the I.E.T.E. and the PCS Chapter. The speaker was Dr. S. Renganathan, who, in addition to being Student Branch Counselor, is a professor and department chair at the Instrumentation and Measurement Anna University. His topic was "Technical Communication." More than 50 attended this presentation.

## NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

Contributions are welcome. Send proposals for columns to the editor. E-mail and ASCII files are preferred.

| Issue | Deadline | Issue | Deadline |
|-------|----------|-------|----------|
| July/Aug. 1998 | 8 May 1998 | Jan./Feb. 1999 | 6 Nov. 1998 |
| Sep./Oct. 1998 | 10 July 1998 | Mar./Apr. 1999 | 9 Jan. 1999 |
| Nov./Dec. 1998 | 11 Sep. 1998 | May/June 1999 | 5 Mar. 1999 |

# A TASTE OF QUEBEC 3

BY CHERYL REIMOLD

The capital of the "Belle Province" boasts great restaurants in which all the delicacies of French cuisine are served in a romantic atmosphere. To further whet your appetite, PCS presents the third part of the gourmet French menu offered by Quebec chef extraordinaire, **Jean Soulard.** The appetizer and entree are in the preceding issues of this *Newsletter.*

——————— PEAR TARTS FOR FOUR ———————

**The pears**
- 6 pears
- 1 lemon
- 2 oz butter
- ¼ cup sugar
- a pinch of cinnamon
- 4 slices of puff pastry

**The strawberry sorbet**
- 8 oz frozen strawberries
- 1 oz sugar
- ½ egg white
- a few drops of lemon juice

**The decoration**
- Strawberry sauce
- Mint leaves

To make the sorbet, put the strawberries, sugar, egg white, and lemon juice in a food processor and process until the strawberries form a frozen paste. Put that into the freezer until the moment you serve the dessert.

Peel the pears, put lemon on them, cut them in half, take the seeds out, and slice them. In a non-stick pot, melt the butter. Add the sugar, the cinnamon, and the sliced pears. Cook a few minutes until the fruit becomes soft and the sugar starts to caramelize. Take the pot off the flame and let it cool. Fill four ramekins (small casseroles) with the caramelized pears.

Cut four pieces of puff pastry, already buttered, to the size of the ramekins and place them on the pears. Bake for 20 minutes at 375°F.

Turn the tart onto a plate with the pastry on the bottom. Add two dollops of sorbet. Decorate with the strawberry sauce and mint leaves.

*Bon appetit!* See you in Quebec, September 23-25.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ADCOM MEETING** | WASHINGTON DC ✦ MARCH 13-14, 1998 |
| **IPCC 98** | QUEBEC CITY, CANADA ✦ SEPTEMBER 23-25, 1998 |
| **IPCC 99** | NEW ORLEANS, LA ✦ SEPTEMBER 8-10, 1999 |
| **IPCC 2000** | CAMBRIDGE, MA ✦ SEPTEMBER 24-27, 2000 |
| **PCS WEB SITE** | http://www.ieee.org/pcs/pcsindex.html |

# MEET US IN QUEBEC FOR IPCC 98

BY CHERYL REIMOLD

From September 23 to 25, 1998, Quebec City will host IPCC 98, our annual conference which focuses this year on a Contemporary Renaissance: Changing the Way We Communicate. We invite you to come to this United Nations World Heritage site to discuss the tools and methods that are carving a new face for technical communication.

Kim Echlin, author of the recently published *Elephant Winter* (Viking-Penguin), will be our keynote speaker. A well known television personality in Canada, she has been arts producer for *The Journal*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's evening news and current affairs program.

Kim has a Ph.D. degree in English literature, she has specialized in Ojibwa mythology, she has a long-standing interest in communication and language, and she has worked with the symbolic Bliss language system designed for non-verbal children with cerebral palsy. Kim has traveled widely in Africa, where she conducted intensive research into infrasonic communication between elephants, which provided the basis for her book.

Because technical writers come from a variety of backgrounds and work in many different fields, we anticipate a wide range of conference topics relating to our theme. And, as today's work place requires many other disciplines to become involved in various aspects of technical communication, we extend our invitation to engineers, managers, academics, researchers—all who are affected by changes in the way we communicate.

How can we improve our communication in a changing world? We'll be discussing:

- Expanding the way we communicate
- Writing for an international audience
- Changing the way we perform tasks
- Dealing with information overload
- Telecommuting
- Translating documentation
- Teaching technical communication
- Using the World Wide Web to communicate ideas

*Quebec City is the birthplace of French civilization in North America.*

*Keynote speaker: Canadian television journalist and producer*

At IPCC 98 you will have the opportunity to participate in the unique Idea Market, debuting for PCS at this conference. Rather than delivering a paper in a lecture-style setting, Idea Market presenters are responsible for activating a discussion with the use of a flip chart and a few highlighted points. Both this innovative format and the more traditional presentation sessions will be used.

You will find fascinating conversations in both French and English, and you will delight in being in one of the most charming cities in the world. Quebec City has welcomed IPCC 98 with open arms, declaring the week of our conference to be International Communication Week.

Quebec City is the birthplace of French civilization in North America. In the Old City, you are transported into the past: narrow streets lined with century old slate-roofed houses, old churches and convents, and impressive ramparts and fortifications. Outside the fortifications lies the modern city with its large shopping centers, Laval University, and luxurious hotels. Outside the city walls, you will experience the foliage on fire. The bright red and yellow Quebec maple trees are truly a sight in autumn.

Quebec City offers some of the best leisure and sport activities available. Only a few minutes from the lively downtown area, beautiful wild landscapes—mountains, forests, lakes, and rivers—beckon nature lovers. There are many excellent locations for hiking, walking, jogging, mountain biking, golfing, tennis, fishing, and horse-back riding. If the weather cooperates, you may even want to try white water rafting and sailing!

Come to Quebec for the food, the wine, the French flair....

Stay for the communication. *Bienvenue!*

For online resources, point your browser at these URLs:
*engine.ieee.org/society/pcs/confrnce.html*
*www.quantumlynx.com/ipcc98*
*www.otc.cuq.qc.ca*

## PCS Transactions Goes to the OPeRA

*O*PeRA is an acronym for the On-line Periodicals and Research Area of IEEE Periodicals. Since 1996 it represents a project to make *Transactions*, *Journals*, and *Letters* publications available on line. At year-end, 10 Societies and 26 publications were included. The inclusion of magazines is being considered.

Starting with the March issue, the 1998 *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* will be available on line to members. Because our publication is essentially non-mathematical in content, we are participating as a test case in an IEEE study of user preference for HTML or PDF format. And because of the study, our participation is free this year, but the projected cost is about $12.5k per year thereafter.

The full text of the *Transactions* will be provided in both HTML and PDF formats. (Adobe Acrobat™ is needed for reading PDF documents.) On-line posting will be concurrent with the release for mailing of the printed product.

OPeRA uses an authentication program to register Society members so that publications are accessible based on each Society's customized requirements for membership, subscribing, etc. You can register by visiting the Web site *http://opera.ieee.org*. (You need your IEEE member number.) The system will then determine your eligibility for viewing various publications.

# IEEE
# Professional Communication Society
## NEWSLETTER