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FRY'S FIX

BY MICHAEL BRADY

"Fine, but tighten it. Wire goes out at two." We were working against a tight deadline, and in those pre-PC days, rewrite meant re-type. But editor John Fry had spoken; deadlines, like a ship in a storm, require action, not explanation. The captain's—or the editor's—word is law.

Though skilled at being the rhetorical captain, Fry is the first to admit that editors spend so much of their time trying to catch errors in other people's manuscripts that they sometimes fail to see the flaws of their own performance. He spotlights five nigh classic mistakes that editors regrettably make more often than they should:

- **Being blindsided:** Some editors apparently believe that a high position on a masthead means that they always have something to say. Often they do not. It's the writers who fill magazines. The editor's task is to listen, not speak.
- **Time oblivion:** In the rush to be current, some editors will disrupt a publication to fit in the latest stuff. But magazines and journals always have time delays in their production. What's important now may not be important when the readers see it.
- **Taking columnists for granted:** Regular columnists (even this one in the PCS *Newsletter*) are an editor's crutch. The copy comes in on time; the names are known. But is the copy fresh, new, crisp? No writer or columnist should escape editorial scrutiny.
- **Ignoring new readers:** All magazines and journals turn over their readership. The litmus test of whether a publication is sensitive to the needs of new readers is a review of its use of jargon. The more acronyms the reader sees, the less inviting—or even intelligible—the publication.
- **Excessive alteration:** Enthusiastic editors, bubbling over with new ideas, are an undeniable asset. But the editor who continually strikes out in new directions, such as by creating innumerable special, bigger-than-usual issues, may be doing the readers a disservice. What happens when the publication retreats to its former size? Change, yes, but remember that the reader must see continuity.

However skilled an editor, no magazine or journal can take itself for granted, as TV programming and, now, online media are invading the bailiwick of print. There are two ways to fight off the invader: Be more like TV, and promote print's unique advantages. Both should be used.

Being more like TV amounts to admitting that attention spans are falling. That leads to the first of four strategies:

1. **Break it out:** A 2500-word article arguably will not be read, so chop it into bits consisting of call-outs, sidebars, and blocks. Another approach is to avoid 2500-word articles.
2. **Coordinate text and graphics:** Integrate any assignment of copy and artwork; insist that submissions be integrated. Remember, the words and pictures of TV are inextricably bound to each other.
3. **Enrich the writing:** Describe people interviewed and scenes observed. Put in words what you would see were it on TV.

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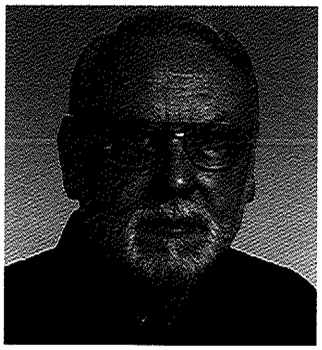
FROM THE EDITOR



RUDY JOENK

Reminder: Member Survey

Please take time to answer the 20 questions on the back page of the March/April *Newsletter* or complete the survey online at *http://www.ieee.org/pcs/survey.html*. The deadline is June 1. Results will be published here as soon as possible.

Letter to the Editor

Wen Smith (*Newsletter*, vol. 43, no. 2) wrote to show the need for an "explanation point" and to announce a reward of two dollars for suggesting one. For the advancement of communication, I hereby propose the following symbol: ? (a question mark with two dots rather than one).

It is to be used in pairs: one when the explanation starts and the other when the explanation ends. The first dot symbolizes that a question could be raised at this point; the other indicates that the author will give an explanation. Rules have to be developed to determine when to use the new symbol and when to use symbols such as asterisks and parentheses; such undertaking will cost more than two dollars.

—*Ahmad Ibrahim*
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Response

Dr. Ibrahim wins honors as the first to send in a real suggestion for a symbol to serve as the explanation point, a mark that explains any piece of discourse it attaches to. Alas, as I tried to explain, what looks like a question mark would suggest only a questionable explanation at best. Still, Dr. Ibrahim may have a point.

Are not all explanations really questionable? Is a puzzlement. His two dots beneath the curly thing (or above it or beside it) are ingenious. They may create a sort of "double-dot com" URL. I personally am experimenting with the "greater than" and "less than" symbols (> and <) to discover any potential they may have as explanation marks or parts thereof; < : (and > :) may prove useful. I wish I could explain this.

— *Wen Smith*
Dana Point, California

Emphasis on Editors

In this issue we have a cluster of three articles dealing with the work of editors: "Fry's Fix" by Michael Brady, "The Editor-Author Relationship" by Dan Hirschhorn, and "'Zippergate'..." by Tom van Loon; see also item 27 in "Masters of Style III" by Ron Nelson. And, if you have access to it, the DILBERT comic strip for Easter Sunday, April 4.

Potpourri

Despite negative publicity last year, the IRS Form 1040 1998 tax-return envelope still contained the message, "If you are filing electronically, do not use this envelope."

Have you noticed that the word *under* has become a metaphor for a small coin? For example, "Under $100" typically means "$99.95."

Sign on an office building in Boulder, Colorado: This Is A Non Smoking Building.

(continued on page 5)

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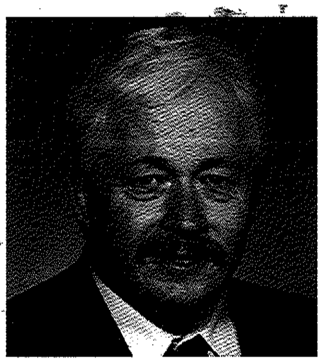
PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



ROGER GRICE

IEEE's Image—An Initiative on "Branding"

One of the most valuable assets of an organization—a good organization, that is—is its identity, its "brand value." People learn to trust particular brands, to identify with them, and to purchase and use products and services identified by that brand. The visual identity of brands can be one of the most powerful characteristics of a product.

For example, when I go grocery shopping, I'm usually able to pick up the right brands of products for my family laundry detergent, bread, soap, and tomato sauce. But I could not tell you the name of each brand. My method is to stand in front of the display shelves and find the products that look familiar; my reasoning is that the products look familiar because I've seen them around my home.

Dave Kemp heads a committee to "rebrand" the IEEE.

Now, you're probably saying to yourself, "That is not the hallmark of the knowledgeable shopper." And if you said that, you'd be correct. But logic notwithstanding, I do manage to pick up the right products in the right sizes just by brand recognition.

The same recognition factor holds for the IEEE.

There has been concern within the IEEE that our visual image—our logo—is outdated, that it no longer conveys meaning to a large portion of our membership or potential membership. Those who studied electrical engineering in "my day" recognize the arrow and circular curve in our logo as "the right-hand rule" and think of the outline shape as either "a four-cusped hypercycloid" from Calculus II or Ben Franklin's kite. We also appreciate the difference between "electrical" and "electronics" in "Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers." Many of our younger members, however, do not.

As we move into the next millennium, the IEEE will be looking at ways to keep up with—and even ahead of—the times. More efficient ways of making decisions; better, more effective ways of using funds and other resources; and ways to make IEEE products and services instantly recognizable.

Toward this latter goal, the IEEE has formed a committee on "branding," chaired by PCS's Dave Kemp, to help determine how IEEE members perceive the IEEE, what they want it to become, and what techniques will help them most easily recognize IEEE products and services (conferences, transactions, books, etc.). The challenge is to move ahead and establish an IEEE brand that is recognizable and meaningful without losing the brand-recognition value that the IEEE already has.

Keep an eye out for changes. If you have comments and suggestions on branding, what the IEEE does and should represent, or other issues of identity, please let me know *(r.grice@ieee.org)*.

PCS Member Honored by French Society

Dr. JoAnn T. Hackos, PCS affiliate member, was made an honorary member of the French technical communication society, Conseil des Rédacteurs Techniques, at its annual general assembly in Paris, January 30, 1999. She was cited for her research in technical documentation methods and management.

FRY'S FIX

(continued from page 1)

4. **Feature the writer:** From street reporter to anchorman, TV puts the interviewer into the scene. Play up your writers.

Promoting print's unique advantages amounts to knowing the limitations of TV. Though TV is a visual medium, the quality of its image is worse than the most coarsely screened photo in a periodical. This may be why successful publishers have upgraded magazines and journals so that readers are treated to fine color reproduction on high-quality papers.

Magazines and journals should be intellectually stimulating.

Video simply cannot compete with this high-quality hard copy as evidenced by comparison with the occasional video frame reproduced in a magazine or newspaper; graphic reproduction is about the quality of 1950s TV, which is no way to compete. Well illustrated maps, charts, and diagrams are visual alternatives that print can offer and should exploit.

Moreover, magazines and journals should be intellectually stimulating. That may sound antiquated or effete in the age of TV but it capsules the role of a periodical as opposed to that of TV. A magazine or journal is about a topic, so its primary role is to convey information about that topic to readers who seek it.

Fry's views on editing are not theoretical; they are proven in the unforgiving world of the marketplace. He was the founding editor of *Snow Country* magazine, which deals with mountain sports and living and in 1991 was named by the Acres of Diamonds Awards as one of America's best new magazines. It was an invader in a

JAY REID GOULD

Jay Reid Gould, a pioneer in the field of technical communication and founder of the first academic program in technical communication, died in Troy, New York, February 8, 1999, following a short illness.

Jay was recognized widely for his efforts and successes in promoting technical communication as a professional discipline. He established the world's first master's degree program in technical communication at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1953; in the late 1960s he helped establish the first Ph.D. degree program in communication and rhetoric in the country, also at Rensselaer. He founded the annual Technical Writers' Institute, a popular and widely attended summer writing conference held at Rensselaer from the early 1950s through the late 1990s.

He co-wrote two of the early classic textbooks in the field and more than 50 published articles. He was founding editor of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* and founding editor of Baywood Publishers' book series in technical communication.

Jay was a founding member of the Society for Technical Communication, which elected him fellow in 1965 and honored him with the President's Award at the 1992 annual conference. STC now gives an annual Jay R. Gould Award for excellence in teaching. Jay was also a fellow of the American Business Writing Association, recipient of the IEEE Professional Communication Society's Award of Distinction in 1989, and recipient of a Certificate of Appreciation from the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing.

Jay leaves behind a daughter, Emily West Gould; a son, Lee Potter Gould; and a daughter-in-law, Jeanne P. Dross. Interment is in St. Mary's Anglican Church, Auburn, Nova Scotia. Contributions may be made in his memory to St. Paul's Episcopal Church Memorial Fund, Third and State Street, Troy, NY 12180; or to the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Sort 8400, 1275 York Avenue, New York, NY 10131.

Prepared by Roger Grice

sector ruled by two well established magazines. Yet within six years *Snow Country* had surpassed them both, in circulation and advertising income, the measures of commercial magazine success.

In the mid-1990s Fry used the recipe elsewhere as editor of new magazine development for the New York Times Company Magazine Group (sports and leisure trends magazines). Earlier he held the same post at Times Mirror Magazines after serving as that company's editorial director of *Ski, Golf,* and *Outdoor Life* magazines.

Many of his views of his calling were, Fry admits, triggered early on when he edited a daily newspaper about ferrous and non-ferrous metal markets (he's one of our kin). He saw the precise written communication of technology as a small tail on a big dog and predicted that the wagging of the tail would become increasingly important to the dog.

And indeed it has, far beyond his expectations. What writer does not tap at a keyboard, using word processing, after first cursing its haphazardly written manual? And don't we all now use e-mail addresses as casually as the Lost Generation of writers used telephones? At that John Fry undoubtedly smiles from his consultancy office in Katonah, New York. There's still much to do. To paraphrase Walt Whitman: "O Editor! my Editor! our fearful trip is *not* done...."

From the Editor

(continued from page 2)

At the largest physics meeting in history—attendance of 10 000 at the 100th anniversary meeting of the American Physical Society in Atlanta, Georgia, in late March—an entertainer provided an updating of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend": "A lithium dose just might cure your depression. But carbon is a girl's best friend." (Pardon the personal wandering, but I'm a lapsed physicist.)

AdCom Meetings

The next meeting is June 26-27 in the Boston area at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Waltham, Massachusetts. After that the final AdCom meeting of the year, which is the annual election meeting, will be September 7 in New Orleans preceding IPCC 99. 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. Proposals for periodic columns are also welcome.

If you use a wp program, keep the format simple; multiple fonts and sizes, customized paragraphing and line spacing, personalized styles, etc. have to be filtered out before being recoded in *Newsletter* style for the publishing software. Some wp codes can be converted from one program to another but headers, footers, and tables lead the casualty list. **Embed only enough specialized formatting and highlighting—boldface, italics, bullets—to show me your preferences.**

Use e-mail for transmitting an article or postal mail for sending a diskette. My addresses are in the boilerplate at the bottom of page 2.

Deadlines

The 15th day of each odd-numbered month is the deadline for publication in the succeeding odd-numbered month. For example, the deadline is July 15 for the September/October issue, September 15 for the November/December issue, etc. You won't be far off—and never late—if you observe the Ides of July, September, November, etc.

THE EDITOR-AUTHOR RELATIONSHIP

BY DAN HIRSCHHORN

Almost any document is, in essence, an advertisement for an author's mind. But some great minds, engineers and computer scientists included, just don't like to write and haven't had much experience writing; they are not especially good with words. So working relationships between authors and editors are delicate because of the importance of written products for the organization and issues associated with pride of authorship.

Authors should "count to ten" and seek a calm discussion with their editors.

Authors and their editors must share a common goal: the publication of the author's work in its clearest and most excellent form. Although each party has an acknowledged role and responsibilities, each also has needs and expectations that can intrude on a professional relationship.

Mutual Benefits

For editors the benefit is helping present ideas that make the editor and author proud of the work. More pragmatically, without authors, editors lose their raison d'être (and their income).

For authors it's about looking good. An author never knows when a weak document will come hauntingly back. The result on many efforts in business is one or more written deliverables. Those products must be good—great if one wants to advance one's career.

Conflict Between Editor and Author

Courtesy and common sense must prevail in dealings between authors and editors. Authors must avoid immediately responding to an edit of their work by becoming defensive, flustered, or aggressive. Remaining poised and thoughtful, they can obtain great benefits from an interested editor—and even enjoy the brainstorming that accompanies the review effort.

Difficult Authors

After a few experiences with an editor, most authors are glad to have them—some ecstatic. However, some authors resist any change to their work. Some are simply embarrassed that their marginal work requires so much improvement; others think the editor does not know what he or she is talking about; still others know the editor is right but must resist to somehow prove the editor wrong. Those authors sometimes spread the word that the editor is no good—a preemptive strike.

Difficult Editors

The attitudes and personalities of editors vary. Authors may be annoyed by three types: editors who use the work as a forum for their own views and egos, ones who are simply incompetent, and ones who hammer the work because they are doing a great job. The latter can only be hoped for; after all, quality is *not* free (or painless)!

Possibly worse than the self-indulged editor (who may, as it turns out, offer value) is the editor just "doing his job." The latter is slow and lacks inventiveness but might be a soft touch; he adds little value. Many authors like him because he essentially offers a free seal of approval.

Conflict-Avoidance Techniques

For Authors

Realize the benefits. If one perceives the editor to be doing his or her best job, author acceptance increases from the start. Think about it: The role of the editor is to probe for flaws. He or she is the devil's advocate—but better the editor than the client.

An author should not (overtly anyway) react negatively or show frustration, anger, disgust, irritation, disappointment, panic, or any of the other things that whip through one's mind when the text is dripping with red ink.

Take some time to carefully read the editor's points and queries. Set up a meeting to discuss them when you are ready to brainstorm. If you must respond quickly or feel you are heading toward disagreement, try the following responses to the editor (sound sincere even if you are not):

- "I appreciate your concern" (possibly meaning "I hate you"). This is just opposite to the response that most people expect. Most people immediately try to argue the opposing person out of their point of view. *Start* by agreeing with the editor.
- "As I understand your requirements, you want A, B, C, etc. done; is that correct?" Seeking clarification is intelligent and shows that the editor's remarks have been carefully reviewed. Essentially, you are flattering the editor, who now thinks that you, contrary to many others, see value in his or her work.
- "How can my writing improve?" This shows the editor that you recognize the importance of writing well and are willing to do something about it. Perhaps some formal on-the-job training or coaching, even from the editor, is feasible.

Another tip:

- Seek advice and review from colleagues before submitting a manuscript to an editor. Consider, with an open mind, comments from such reviewers.

Editors should respect authors' concerns and let them make their own fixes.

For Editors

Some suggestions that will help build a good working relationship with an author are:

- Warn the author of the time needed to get the job done. Work quickly—authors are almost always running against the clock by the time they visit an editor.
- Don't keep calling the author to ask questions unless you can't proceed without certain information.
- Never intentionally change meaning or silence an author's voice. But be bold and aggressive in the edits if you need to be—the company comes first.
- Query points you don't understand and explain clearly how changes would improve the manuscript. Keep comments in the margins concise, neatly written, and easy to understand.
- Use a civil, respectful tone when questioning an author. Be tactful and avoid sarcasm.
- Resist the temptation to be a schoolteacher. Be a coach only if the author is interested.
- Don't edit according to your personal prejudices or preferences. Don't get carried away with political correctness.
- Don't dwell on a point, particularly a peripheral one.
- Make sure that the changes suggested are consistent throughout the manuscript.
- Offer *some* positive feedback. Don't forget that the author usually has worked hard to produce the manuscript. He had to start with a blank page.
- Respect the author's concerns about changes you recommend and be flexible and judicious about implementing them. Don't be afraid to let the author rewrite some text. The manuscript is the author's work, and the author may know best how to fix it.

Mr. Hirschhorn holds an M.S. degree in business and a B.A. degree in English from Johns Hopkins University. He has worked for the Logistics Management Institute (LMI) for the past seven years as a senior editor, and at the International Monetary Fund and several private consulting firms as an editor, technical writer, and analyst. He edits and rewrites policy-related research reports, manuals, proposals, brochures, Web pages, capabilities statements, and other complex communications. He can be reached at hirschhorn1@juno.com.

"Any order that can be misunderstood has been misunderstood."

—*The Army Axiom*

"ZIPPERGATE" SHOULD LEAD TO AN ETHICAL CODE IN EDITING

BY TOM VAN LOON

Much has been written about the ethics of writing, editing, and publishing scientific and technical texts. "Zippergate" recently raised an entirely new aspect: The submission date of a manuscript can have ethical implications. Editors should not be blamed for the unethical behavior of authors, and they should be backed by an ethical code dealing with this aspect.

The Lewinsky affair had so many unethical aspects that almost everyone was glad when the resulting impeachment procedure against President Clinton was over. The unpleasant aspects weren't over, however, for many editors, among them certainly George Lundberg, considering the deep scars that the affair may leave in the community involved with the transfer of technical and scientific information. Lundberg, who was editor of one of the world's four top medical journals, the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, was fired because he was held responsible for the publication of an article whose contents might influence the outcome of the then-ongoing impeachment procedure.

Authors may undermine the integrity of science by submitting manuscripts for political reasons.

The 1999 article *(Would you say you "had sex" if...?)* analyzed the answers of 599 midwest college students—given during a *1991* 102-question investigation with a much wider scope to whether they considered "oral sex" as "sex." The article was published in the 20 January issue and its political sensitivity was immediately recognized. The sensational impact had apparently been expected because Lunberg, who had been working for the journal for 17 years, was fired five days before (!) the official publication date.

A Useless Debate

The journal commented officially upon this decision in the 3 February issue. The main reason given for firing Lundberg was that Lundberg had endangered the journal's integrity. This official point of view expressed by the leaders of the American Medical Association was, however, not shared by the other editors and the members of the editorial board of the journal: In the same issue, they reacted, together with their colleagues from the AMA *Archives...* journals, in a furious way. This with great success, for they were soon backed by articles, editorials, and comments of colleagues from numerous other medical journals, both in the U.S. and in Europe.

Lundberg had a strong argument for not withholding the manuscript until the impeachment procedure was over. If he had done so, he would, obviously, have been blamed for withholding relevant data, probably for political reasons. This implies that Lundberg would have been blamed anyway, irrespective of his decision.

The council of the American Medical Association should have recognized this, and should, consequently, not have suspended him. Moreover, the council's decision was inconsistent because their action itself was a politically induced interference in the editorial process. Such a form of censorship is incompatible with science and with free information transfer in a democracy.

Ethical Code Needed

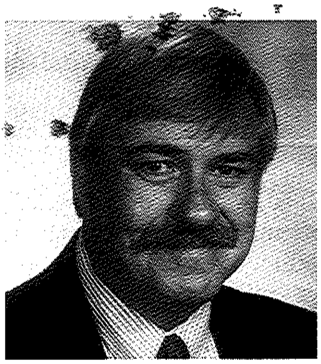
The lesson to be learned from this affair is that *authors* should realize that they can undermine the integrity of science by submitting a manuscript at a date chosen for political reasons—and they must have done so in this case because there is no other explanation for the submission of a manuscript discussing just one aspect of a 102-topic investigation not less than eight years after the research was carried out.

It is thus the authors rather than the editor who should be blamed. The future may see more politically induced submissions so it seems worthwhile considering an ethics

(continued on page 10)

MASTERS OF STYLE

THE QUALITIES OF A MASTER OF STYLE III



RONALD J. NELSON

Here is the third installment in the series of skills, concerns, and strategies that can be regarded as constituting the qualities of a master of style. Part I is in the November/December 1998 *Newsletter* (vol. 42, no. 6) and part II is in the January/February 1999 issue (vol. 43, no. 1). If you have others that you think of as important and would like to share with readers, please send them to me at *nelsonrj@jmu.edu*.

23. Metaphor

Present the subject in a new way using the poetic technique, metaphor (a striking way to identify one object with another, essentially $x=y$). How, for example, would you depict metaphorically the destruction of a building that has outlived its usefulness? The beginning of Sean Smith's poem "Demolition" achieves the task very well: "The wrecking ball/is an iron period to an era" (from Michael Smith's book *Writing Dangerous Poetry* [NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 1999]).

The metaphor "period" strengthened by the adjective "iron" equals "ball" powerfully qualified by "wrecking"—conveying an absolutely relentless and inflexible destructive force intent on putting an end to an "era." The reader can almost envision the pendulum swinging with its suggestion of the passage of time, as well as the moment of impact of the very large period that ends the sentence as it ends the history of the building. In geological time, of course, there may be several periods in an era, so the metaphor extends the implications of the action over time, making it virtually timeless.

24. Analogy

At the start of his collection of essays entitled *Hugging the Shore* (Vintage Books, 1983), John Updike writes, "Writing criticism is to writing fiction and poetry as hugging the shore is to sailing in the open sea." Sometimes the writer must venture into uncharted waters using the techniques of creative writing to make a point with the reader. Such an activity is risky because the writer can fail miserably if the analogy (or other strategy) does not work (hold true).

25. Surprise

Work to surprise the reader occasionally. That is a kind of reward to the reader for careful attention. In Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (Harper Perennial, 1993) Victor's father, an Indian, weeps because he has no money for Christmas gifts. Then Alexie provides this powerful passage: "Victor imagined that his father's tears could have frozen solid in the severe reservation winters and shattered when they hit the floor. Sent millions of icy knives through the air, each specific and beautiful. Each dangerous and random" (p.5). Why do such words as "shattered" have an impact? What human dimensions are touched?

26. The Totality of the Situation

Try to envision the totality of the situation you're describing or reporting. In item 25 Alexie seems to have taken into consideration the human situation very well, including the father's feelings and Victor's complex reaction, which involves attraction and repulsion.

27. Mensch

Be a mensch (a human being) in whatever you write. Remember that another human being is going to be reading what you write. Envision the scenario of the other person's reading your message. What do you foresee the person's reaction(s) to be? As my adviser, Walter F. Wright, once mentioned to me regarding reviewing manuscripts (especially bad ones), "Let them down gently." It is important to write with an understanding of the human condition. How and what we write reflects our personalities, our values. Firmness and grace, incidentally, are not mutually exclusive traits.

28. Tradition

It is important to convey a sense of familiarity with a situation—the history, background, or tradition behind any situation. The reader is likely to feel that the writer knows what he or she is talking about.

Enthusiasm is a positive force likely to engage the innate curiosity of the reader.

29. Honesty

Rather than weakening one's writing, admitting that something did not work out the way it was planned is a sign of strength. To do so reveals integrity and an analytical ability to assess strengths and weaknesses. The best example I know is Sheldon Kopp's *Rock, Paper, Scissors* (CompCare Publishers, 1989), a book that instills the feeling that the author is thoroughly trustworthy since he reports both successes and failures in dealing with his patients. There is nothing self-serving in his writing.

30. Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is a positive force that is likely to engage the innate curiosity of the reader, whereas dry writing is likely to disengage the reader.

31. Form and Content

The best writing blends form (structure of sentence, etc.) and content (meaning) so inextricably that one cannot find the seam. William Butler Yeats said that "a poem comes right with a click like a closing box." So, too, with writing of any kind that has been carefully crafted.

32. Standards

Establish standards of excellence and make sure that each document reflects those standards. To produce impressive documents is rewarding for its own sake as well as for its contribution to others' well-being.

33. Document Design

Be aware of and execute the various elements of document design, including type font, type size, white space, bulleted lists, sidebars, chunking of information, headings and subheadings, graphics, bolding and italics, and other features that make a document effective or not. Remember that every feature either wins the reader over or turns the reader away—in minor or major ways. The goal is to have the reader emerge from a document and have the person say something like, "I gained valuable information from this document, and it was a pleasure to do so."

I hope these 33 suggestions prove useful as reminders of strategies that improve the quality not only of professional writing but also of any writing.

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

"ZIPPERGATE"

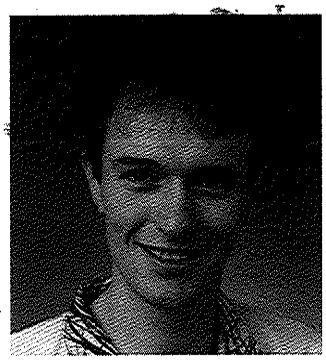
(continued from page 8)

code or statement. The simplest one might be: A manuscript is *never* considered for publication if it is submitted at a time when it may have political implications. Or is this too simple?

Tom van Loon (tom.van.loon@wxs.nl) *is the first European AdCom member of PCS. While attending his first AdCom meeting he was in the U.S. for two weeks during the impeachment procedure against President Clinton. Tom is also a council member of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) and president of the Netherlands Association of Science Editors (WERK). He has his own his own firm, R&D Text Consulting, in Oosterbeek, the Netherlands (tel. +31-26-3390908; fax +31-26-3390783;* r-d.text.consulting@wxs.nl).

BLACK TOOLS

PART 2: SALAMI TACTICS



HANSPETER SCHMID

Did you know that any decision of the Swiss government can be reversed by a public referendum if someone can prove that the people are interested? Since doing that is not very difficult, we have votes on almost any topic ranging from whether the speed limit on motorways should be 120 or 130 km/h (75 or 81 mph) to whether the air force may spend 1.5 billion Swiss francs (just over U.S.$1 billion) on new fighter planes.

That makes Switzerland the country of "Salami Tactics." Rather than put forward a SFr1.5 billion project, the government cuts it into five seemingly uncorrelated slices at SFr400 million each to reduce the probability that a referendum will be held or even succeed. (The additional SFr100 million per slice is required to pay the overhead that makes everything look uncorrelated.)

A similar trick plays a paramount role in many discussions where momentous decisions have to be made. To convince someone of something he wouldn't like, make him accept it in the form of thin, easily digestible slices and hide your intentions until it's too late for him to turn the tables.

This "Stealth Salami" is Trick 4 of the 38 discussion tricks and countermeasures I am presenting in this column. It has become infamous through its use in courts where the lawyers ask seemingly harmless questions beginning with, "Is it true that...," and the witnesses often admit enough slices that the lawyer can make up a very large and particularly indigestible salami. A countermeasure is to be very wary of this trick or to directly ask your opponent what he is getting at (as judges often do with lawyers).

Leading to "yes..."

Another trick to get enough premises for drawing your conclusions is Trick 5, the "Gambit." If you believe in two-valued (true-false) logic, you must also accept that any true or false statement can be derived from false premises. This was explained nicely in the British TV comedy "Yes, Prime Minister!":

Sir Humphrey (Cabinet Secretary): Statistics? (laughs) You can prove anything using statistics!

Jim Hacker (Prime Minister): Yes, even the truth.

Although there are many other systems of logic, most people firmly believe in two-valued logic as *the* conveyor of truth. However, no one's world view is consistent in true-false logic, meaning that everyone believes in something that contradicts some other of his beliefs. So, if you know a person well enough and are creative enough, you can prove virtually anything to him.

A gambit is a risky kind of chess opening. I chose this name because like a chess move, reasoning in a discussion is correct unless the opponent sees that it is not. To counter a Gambit, you must be prepared to adjust some of your views or, better still, not to think in terms of absolute truth and falsehood in the first place.

Trick 6, the "Hidden Postulation," is yet another stealth trick. Postulate what you should prove in a different form and then proceed as if you would actually reach a conclusion. This is a common trick; it can be done on purpose or unwittingly. It is even used in scientific research, as Douglas Adams describes in *Last Chance to See:* "See first, think later, then test. But always see first, or you will only see what you were expecting."

Although these tricks are already quite efficient, they can be enhanced by "Asking Questions" (Trick 7) to which a simple yes or no answer is impossible. You can then use your opponent's answers or parts thereof as premises for your reasoning. This gives you lots of material to use toward your own ends.

Socrates used this trick all the time, but nowadays it is mostly used to convince audiences of something. Only an educated, creative, and well trained person can play this trick on his opponent. If you ever talk to such a person (for example a news reporter), keep in mind the advice Hacker gave in "Yes, Prime Minister!":

Hacker: If someone asks you a question, say nothing or, better still, say "That's not the question. I think the real question is…," and make a statement of your own.

Related to Trick 7 is Trick 9, "Stealth Questions," which really is nothing other than the Stealth Salami in question form. If you ask lots of questions in seemingly random order and draw your conclusions quickly, you sometimes can make your opponent believe that he actually said what you just repeated. Often your opponent will underestimate you because you are only asking harmless questions. There is no real defense against this trick but to be very wary of it and never think that your opponent is stupid.

Statistics and logic can be twisted to strange ends.

There is another way of using pre-drawn conclusions: Trick 11, "Proof by Induction." It is often applied by politicians who demonstrate several examples of an opponent's failures and then proceed as if his complete incompetence were already proven. Although you cannot actually draw generally valid conclusions from any number of examples, this trick normally works well because examples are much more impressive than general statements (a six-year-old girl dying of cancer evokes much more interest than an attempted genocide). The countermeasure against Trick 11 is simply to give a counterexample.

I saved Tricks 8 and 10 'til now because they deal with the opponent's emotions, regardless of the topic of discussion.

Trick 8, "Evoking Anger," is a deliberate action to weaken the opponent. Since an angry person can't think straight, make your opponent angry by harassing him and being impudent. If someone does that to you, ignore it or even tell him not to play this silly trick on you. But beware, you must know whether he is using Trick 8, a purely tactical move, or whether he is attacking you personally out of despair (the Last Trick in my preceding article).

Finally, some people (and many children) can be so stubborn that they will say no just because you expect them to say yes. Then you can "Dig Their Heels Out" by using Trick 10: Don't tell them what you want or even ask them for the contrary. This is the one trick against which I do not even attempt to propose a countermeasure. If you are so childishly stubborn that Trick 10 can be applied against you, you deserve it.

This is all for now. I hope you have started to notice how frequently people around you are applying these tricks. In my next column I will show you the "Proof of a Paradox" and seven more tricks.

Hanspeter Schmid (h.p.schmid@ieee.org) *is an analog-IC designer and Ph.D.-degree student at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Zurich) who has an untamable interest in modern philosophy of science and society. His need to know and avert dirty communication tricks follows naturally from his belief that a philosopher who never disputes with people is like a boxer who never goes into the ring.*

"The discipline of the writer is to learn to be still and listen to what his subject has to tell him."

—*Rachel Carlson*

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

—*Sherwin Wine*

NET NOTES

DEVELOPING A WEB SITE—PART 1

ELIZABETH MOELLER

In the last issue I asked whether you really need a Web site. Let's say the answer is yes, you need a Web site. Now what? This column addresses some of the mechanics of a Web site and the first major step—choosing a Web site designer. In my next column I'll address choosing an Internet service provider to host your Web site, and in the final installment I'll address the actual design of the site.

The Mechanics

To exist, a Web site needs content, a person to convert that content into a Web site, and some way to place that site on the World Wide Web for the rest of the world to see. You will provide the content. Before meeting with a designer, you need to determine what you want on this site. The size of the site often dictates the final cost, so it is important to know what you want to accomplish and how you plan to do this.

The next step is to find a way to place your site on the WWW. Web sites are hosted by Internet service providers (ISPs) or, if your company is large enough, your own Internet servers. The average small- to medium-sized business will need an ISP that offers Web hosting. This means that your Web site is stored on your ISP's computer, providing the world with 24-hours-a-day/7-days-a-week access to your site. ISPs have the bandwidth necessary to accommodate multiple simultaneous visitors to your site.

Your Web site is a gateway to your business.

Your initial costs will be a one-time fee to the designer, a setup fee to the ISP, and a domain-name registration charge. Your ongoing costs will be your ISP's monthly charge for hosting your site and any maintenance agreement you enter into with your designer.

Choosing a Designer

Your choice of designer is critical. This person or company will create your Web site for the world to see. The designer is responsible for the look and feel, navigation, usability, graphics, any special features, and placing the content. You want a site in which users can quickly and easily find the information they need.

Cost is always an issue—but keep in mind that your Web site is a gateway to your business. It is a person's first impression of your business. Therefore, you need a designer who understands usability and the WWW, graphic design, and HTML programming, just to name a few requirements.

There are a couple of routes you can take to choose a designer: Do it yourself or hire a design firm. Designing it yourself is the least expensive option. If you have the expertise in usability and graphic design, go ahead and have fun. If you do not, think seriously about this.

Web-site creation software (e.g., Adobe PageMill or Microsoft FrontPage) is only as good as the person using it. The software may be able to help you with your look and feel with a prepackaged theme, but it cannot help with content or navigation.

Hiring a design firm is more expensive but will probably be worth it in the long run. Start by checking with friends and colleagues who have Web sites you like; find out who designed them. Many ISPs also design Web sites or have a list of local designers with whom they have worked. Meet with a few designers—not just one. Each design firm has its own approach to quoting and creating Web sites.

Be wary of package deals (e.g., 2K of text, four photos, and two hyperlinks for $199). Although these deals may work for some businesses, they do not work for many. Your business is unique and your designer should create a custom site that meets your needs. Contrary to what some computer industry publications have reported, a Web site does not need to cost $5 000 to $10 000. However, be prepared to spend at least $500 for the initial basic design. The size and complexity of your site should dictate any additional costs.

Questions to Ask a Designer

- *Can you see their electronic portfolio?* You want to see their Web sites in action—not just pictures of them. You need to see how well the links work, how long graphics take to load, how the navigation works, and so forth.
- *What is their experience in this field?* Pay more attention to overall subject knowledge and less to tool expertise. Ask how they got into Web design. Ask about their credentials, degrees, certificates, and so forth. Experience from fields such as technical communication, computer programming, and usability engineering translates well into the world of Web site design.
- *Who will be working on your Web site?* Do they work in-house or do they subcontract? What is the experience of the people who will be working on your site. Specifically ask to see Web sites they have worked on.
- *What do they use to create your site?* Do they use site-creation software? Are they able to go in and tweak the code by hand when necessary? Do they hand-code your site (e.g., in HTML using a text editor)? Either is fine. Hand-coding generally produces quality code but often takes longer. Creation software takes less time but sometimes produces extraneous code.
- *Do they design for the "lowest common denominator"* (640 x 480 screen resolution with 256 colors and any browser)? Designing for the latest and greatest resolution only works when you can guarantee that everyone in your primary audience has the latest and greatest.
- *What information do you need to provide and in what form?* For example, some designers accept printouts of content material but most prefer to receive it electronically.
- *What are their review schedules?* Make sure that you can review the site mid-design at least once. Ideally there should be at least three review points: at the initial "look and feel" stage, after all content has been placed but before going "live," and after the site has been live for a couple of weeks.
- *Have they ever worked with your ISP* (or the ones you are considering)? You want to find a designer flexible enough to work with whomever you choose. Keep in mind that many designers receive referral bonuses from ISPs. If your designer is pushing you toward a specific ISP (or steering you away), ask why and ask about referral bonuses.
- *How do they work with you?* Do they do all the work and upload the files to your Web account? If you are required to do some of the work, do they train you?
- *Do they put your site in search engines?* If so, which ones? Do they know of local or regional search engines or directories in addition to the national ones?
- *What about maintenance and training?* Some companies feel that once they design a Web site, only they can update it. Other companies offer flexible maintenance plans and still others train you to update your site yourself. Choose the plan that is right for your business.
- *Do they offer fixed-rate quotes?* Ask for a fixed-rate quote instead of an hourly rate quote. Established designers should be able to provide this for you without any difficulty. Be wary of hourly estimates. Actual work can very quickly go beyond the original estimate.

Your business is unique and your designer should create a custom site that meets your needs.

These are the more important questions to ask your designer. If all designers stack up equally in cost and experience, hire the one you feel most comfortable with. This will be an ongoing relationship, so you need to hire someone you can work with.

Elizabeth Weise Moeller is a PCS AdCom member and chair of the Publicity & Marketing Committee. She owns Interactive Media Consulting (518-366-8765, beth@imediaconsult.com), *a World Wide Web and Internet training firm in Saratoga Springs, New York, which provides Web-site design and Internet training for businesses in the northeast.*

PROFESSOR GRAMMAR

THAT VS. WHICH

Do you know which that is?

She had a large document, which she wanted edited.

She had a large document that she wanted edited.

The Professor feels compelled to address a topic that is a persistent problem, even though it seems simple to cure. The sentences above show correct usage of *that* and *which*. What is not obvious, perhaps, is the fact that there is a difference in the meaning of the sentences because of the use of *that* and *which* and accompanying punctuation.

In the first sentence the main point is that the writer has a large document. Oh, and by the way, she wants to have it edited.

In the second sentence the main point is more complex. The writer has a large document, and she wants it edited.

Proper construction of clauses can prevent ambiguous interpretations.

Now we're going to get into some technical terminology:

- In the first sentence the clause starting with *which* is a *non*restrictive clause. That means the sentence can get its point across without that clause. A nonrestrictive clause should always be set off from the main clause with a comma.
- The second sentence contains a restrictive clause. Never separate a restrictive clause from the main clause with punctuation.

Furthermore, *that* belongs with the restrictive clause, no punctuation; *which* belongs with the nonrestrictive clause, with punctuation.

Now, does the following sentence appear awkward? (Hint: Yes)

The document which she wanted edited was quite large.

Depending on the point you want to convey, this sentence would be correct in either of the following ways:

The document that she wanted edited was quite large.

The document, which she wanted edited, was quite large.

In the first sentence the fact that she wants the document edited helps identify the particular document. In the second sentence the fact that she wants the document edited is not critical to the meaning of the sentence. This sentence merely points out that it's a large document.

There are many many places in our technical writing where we use restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses. And frequently they are used improperly, conveying an incorrect meaning. Often the careful reader can understand the correct meaning. However, consider the fact that most of our technical information is either translated or read by users who are not native English speakers. The careful writer will consider all types of readers.

 Professor Grammar is an advisor to the IBM Santa Teresa Laboratory Editing Council. Each month she sends a lesson to the technical writers at the Laboratory.

"The first rule of holes: When you're in one, stop digging."
—*Molly Ivins*

"Basic research is what I'm doing when I don't know what I'm doing."
—*Wernher Von Braun*

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

BY RON BLICQ

Editor's Note: This is the third and final article in this series. Part 1 is in the July/August 1996 *Newsletter* (vol. 40, no. 4) and part 2 is in the November/December 1997 issue (vol. 41, no. 6). The author is reporting progressively on his experience as general chair of IPCC 98, which was held in Québec City, Canada, in September 1998. He was also directly involved in organizing IPCC 87 (Winnipeg, MB), IPCC 94 (Banff, AB), PCS's 1991 colloquium in Moscow, Russia, and Forum 95 in Dortmund, Germany. As president of INTECOM he is now involved in planning Forum 2000 in London, England.

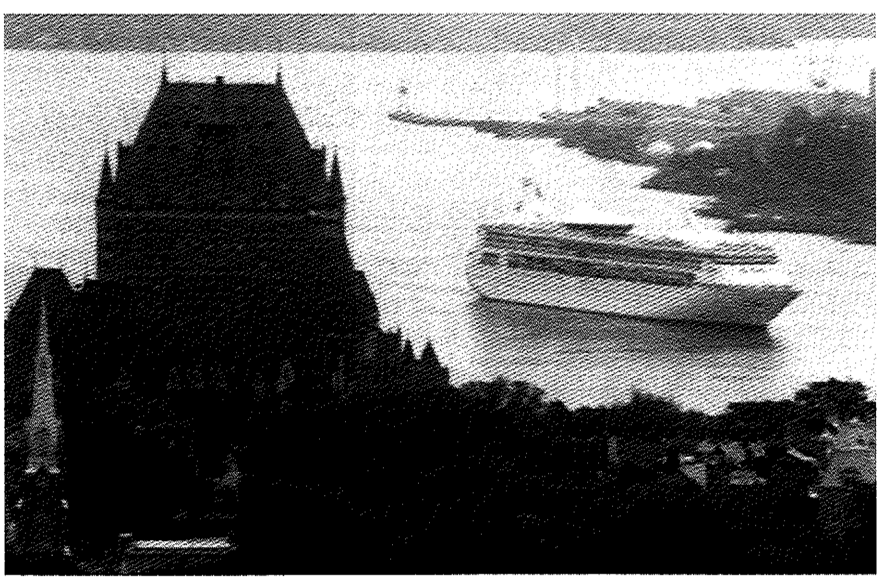
Part 3: *Watching It All Happen*

I titled this part "Watching It All Happen" because, if the front-end work has been done thoroughly, you—as a conference organizer—really do have the opportunity to be an observer. Sure, there still will be some glitches that need on-the-spot correction but if you have set the scene properly they will remain transparent to the conference delegates; only you and other members of the organizing committee will know what has happened.

Setting the Scene

It was late 1997 when I last wrote about preparing for IPCC 98 and then we were about two-thirds of our way through the conference planning. In the following months the program committee finalized the program, the publications committee put the two-volume proceedings together, the on-site administrator made local arrangements, the marketing committee gave a final push to their advertising plans, and the registration committee set up their arrangements. Here I describe and comment on some of these arrangements.

A view of Old Town Québec.



Prepare the Conference Site. The site may be a conference facility or a hotel. I write about a hotel because that is where most IEEE conferences are held; the same guidelines apply to a conference facility, however.

Re-establishing the conference rooms is extremely important. We like to think we are its prime customer but often a conference hotel deals with several clients simultaneously. So, although you may have selected your conference rooms two years early, you need to re-establish that those rooms still are assigned to you. (Sometimes a hotel reassigns conference rooms to meet the needs of new customers. If you were first on the scene—i.e., you made arrangements with the hotel three years before the conference—you have the right to demand that your requirements are met first.)

Keep in touch with the hotel every couple of months and let your contact know immediately of any arrangements that change. For example, in our recent conference we had expected to have four parallel stems, but eight weeks before the conference several speakers withdrew and the program committee had to combine some sessions to close the gap. Informing the hotel early that your requirements are lower permits the hotel to reschedule the vacant rooms to an alternative client.

Today's computer screens are designed for watching, not reading.

landscape orientation (i.e., they are wider than they are tall). Most printed and written reading materials are portrait-oriented (taller than they are wide). Experiments by Stanley Wearden at Kent State University's Information Design Laboratory in 1997 and 1998 showed a strong preference for portrait orientation and for two-page spreads. Intriguingly, this preference may reflect more than just the fact that people are used to books. People have chosen to make their reading materials portrait-shaped for the past 3000 years. Even Egyptian hieroglyphics were commonly organized in vertical columns.

The immediate ancestor of today's book is the codex, a pile of pages stitched together, which replaced rolled-up scrolls around the 4th century A.D. The fathers of the church were early adopters of codex technology and their enthusiasm for the format did much to ensure its success. Codices could be flipped through or opened to any point in the text without laborious unrolling. And they were more compact. A scroll could not hold much more than St. Matthew's Gospel; an early codex could contain all four Gospels plus the Acts of the Apostles. The upgrade from scroll to codex thus had clear technical advantages —which computers have largely thrown away by demanding that their users return to scrolling.

Tomorrow's digital reading devices, however, will be different. The first such gadget aimed at consumers, NuvoMedia's Rocket eBook, went on sale in November 1998. It is to all intents and purposes an electronic codex. It is the size and weight of a largish paperback, with a portrait-shaped screen and no scrolling text. The display is close to paper-white and has a higher resolution than most computers (106 pixels per inch). It can be read from almost as many angles as paper so it can be used with equal ease while walking, lying on a sofa, sitting at a desk, or on the proverbial lavatory. Readers turn whole pages at a time with thumb-buttons beside the screen.

At least some of the hurdles to electronic reading have thus been cleared. But this is not the beginning of the end for paper.

Continued in the next Newsletter.

How To Rite Good

BY SALLY BULFORD *(found circulating on the Internet)*

1. Avoid alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren't necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
11. One should never generalize.
12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
13. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. Be more or less specific.
15. Understatement is always best.
16. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
17. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
18. The passive voice is to be avoided.
19. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
20. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
21. Who needs rhetorical questions?
22. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

BAD NEWS FOR TREES

Despite the advent of electronic books, ever more information will go on meaning ever more paper, as the editor of our Web edition discovers.

Remember the paperless office? Of all the technological revolutions that have so far refused to happen, that 20-year-old mirage is perhaps the most spectacular. The use of paper for writing and printing has soared in the past ten years—in Britain it is up by 65 percent per head. The fastest growth this century came in the 1980s, just as the personal computer was spreading. In the past five years, while the Internet has bloomed, the production of printing and writing paper in North America has grown by over 13 percent. Worldwide it has doubled since 1982.

Junk mail, bloated newspapers, and proliferating magazines have played a part in this torrent of ink. But so too have electronic devices in homes and offices. Hewlett-Packard estimates that around 860 billion pages were spewed out of copiers, fax machines, and computer printers in America in 1996. The Internet is behind much of this automated logorrhea; by distributing ever more information cheaply and easily, it provides more things to print out.

Lots of people still prefer papers and books to liquid crystals and "documents."

Several hundred million e-mails are exchanged each day in America alone, and most recipients keep hard copies of some of the more important ones. About 200m pages of the *New York Times, Washington Post,* and *Wall Street Journal* are viewed on the Web each month, and though nobody can say how often they are printed out, sites increasingly provide "printer friendly" versions of their pages formatted for easier reading on paper. About 40 percent of the subscribers to *Slate*, a Web-based magazine owned by Microsoft, choose to receive its articles in formats primarily designed for the printed page.

Books, too, have done famously well out of the Internet. The best known retailer on the Web, Amazon.com, has sold old-fashioned bound pages to over 4.5m people. Others have pioneered the paradoxical art of selling books by giving them away. Rough Guides, a British travel-book company, has seen sales jump since it started putting some guides up free on the Web. The Starr report, available free on dozens of Web sites, went straight to number one on the bestseller lists of both Amazon.com and its main rival, Barnes and Noble. Everyone who paid for the report from those bookshops already had access to its entire contents for nothing. Were they all mad?

From Codices to Coprocessors

Plainly not. Customers bought what they wanted, in this case a book of smut rather than a case of eye strain. In general, it seems, lots of people still prefer papers and books to liquid crystals and "documents." There are good reasons for this.

Some are obvious. Desktop screens must be read sitting up in a fixed position. Even laptop displays are not nearly as portable as paper and their viewing angles are limited. Some other factors are less obvious, such as the contrast, brightness, and resolution of text on a screen. Most people think that the text on a reasonable computer is clear enough to be perfectly readable, at least under good conditions. In fact it is not, which is part of the reason why people often choose to read on paper instead.

Experiments by John Gould and his colleagues at IBM in the 1980s showed that reading from paper was up to 30 percent faster than reading from screens, and that the lower resolution of text on a screen is largely why. Expert opinions vary about how sharp a screen needs to be in order to make reading as easy as from paper. But the consensus is that a display needs a resolution of at least 150 pixels—the tiny dots which make up the picture—per inch (60 pixels per centimeter). That is nearly double the resolution of most screens today and 25 percent more than the very best. Others say at least 200 pixels per inch would be needed to match paper.

Not only are today's computer screens too fuzzy, they are also the wrong shape. They are designed for watching, not reading; they are descendants of television sets, not books. That is why their displays have a

Establish who can sign for food and equipment and change the arrangements, such as room assignments and audiovisual equipment. Try to limit this to two people; we chose the general conference chair and the program chair.

Ask for a hotel telephone to be placed beside the registration desk and establish whom you are to call if a problem occurs. Check that *there will always be someone at the location you are calling* and that whoever answers has the power to take immediate action. At Loews Le Concorde Hotel where we held IPCC 98 we never waited more than three minutes for a hotel representative to appear, and every time the person was able to respond to our request *without having to defer to anyone else.* Frankly, I was impressed!

Glitches should be transparent to conference delegates.

Select the Meal Menus. Discuss your meal plans with the hotel six months before the conference:

- Select a menu that will appeal to most delegates and balance your choices if you are providing more than one meal.
- For each meal quote an approximate number of delegates who will be present and then agree on a date when you will give a firm number (usually 48 hours before the meal). For the final figure choose a number slightly lower than the total you expect, to allow for no-shows. A hotel can handle about 8-10 extra meals if more people turn up than you expect and then will charge you for the actual number of meals served. However, the hotel will still charge you for the total you quoted if fewer than those you guaranteed turn up.
- Ask the hotel to provide 10 percent special-diet meals, such as vegetarian or non-lactose. Include a space on the registration form for delegates to state if they have special-diet requests.
- Remember that the price per person the hotel quotes does *not* include federal and state or provincial taxes and gratuity. Those can increase your meal costs between 22 and 30 percent.

Finalize Registration Arrangements. Decide where the registration table will be, who will staff it, and the times it will be open. In addition plan to:

- Place a notice board (possibly a flip chart) beside the registration table announcing registration times and leave it there throughout the conference.
- Position a second notice board beside the registration table to be used as a message board.
- Have the registrar print a list of delegate names with their addresses and, particularly, e-mail addresses to hand out with the registration kits. This is often overlooked and equally as often asked for by delegates.

Finalize Arrangements for Audio-Visual Aids. Only recently audio-visual aids were primarily an overhead projector and a slide projector. Today most presenters use PowerPoint or Astound to prepare their slides and they expect much more sophisticated equipment to be available.

For a short while, "more sophisticated equipment" proved to be a high-power overhead projector with an LCD panel laid on top of it. However, presenters soon expressed dissatisfaction with such equipment because the image was not bright enough and light levels in the presentation room had to be lowered too much. Today presenters expect an LCD projector with a built-in light source.

This has three impacts on your conference arrangements. You need to ensure that:

1. Local suppliers can provide the requisite equipment.
2. The presenters know what you are supplying so they can ensure their computer is compatible with it.
3. You insert enough funds in your conference budget to cover the rental cost of LCD presentation equipment (which is considerably higher than for LCD panels).

Finalize Exhibit Arrangements. The local arrangements chair needs to coordinate closely between the hotel and the exhibitors to ensure there are no glitches when the exhibitors come in to set up their stands. This means clearly identifying:

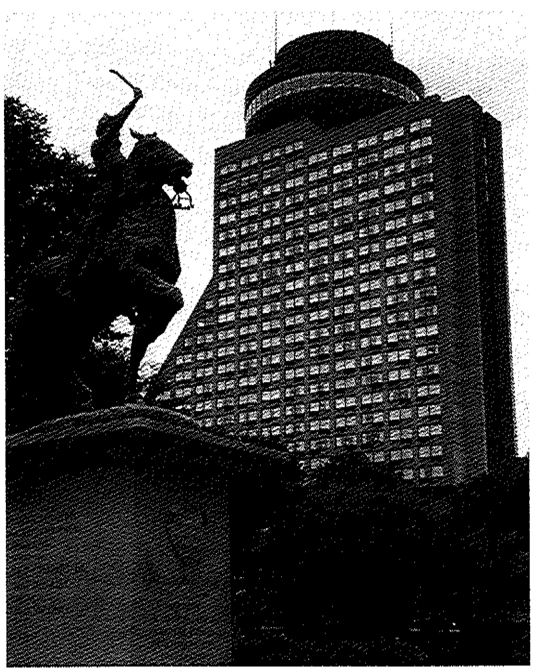
- Exhibitors' special needs (e.g., telephone hookups, power)

- Location and space for each exhibitor
- Where display equipment is to be shipped and on what dates the hotel will accept the shipments
- Exhibit hours
- When the exhibitors are to set up their displays
- When the displays are to be dismantled and moved from the hotel.

A site representative should always be within "hailing" distance.

Personalize a Greeting for Each Delegate. When delegates check in at the hotel, most are strangers to the area. There are several things you can do to make them feel more welcome and their stay more pleasant:

- Have the conference chair write a personal greeting welcoming each delegate to the conference. This can be a form letter printed with a blue-ink signature. Ideally, leave them at the conference registration desk to be handed to each delegate as he or she checks in.
- With the letter include lists of nearby restaurants, places to shop, art galleries, museums, and places of special interest, and a local map. (This is particularly for registrants who arrive early and are seeking things to do.)



The site of the conference was the Loews Le Concorde Hotel.

- Provide special badges in a distinctive color for the conference steering committee and announce (both in print and at the opening session) that delegates should seek out these people if they have questions or need help during the conference. This means that some of the steering committee must be available near the registration desk all the time.

Running the Conference

Have the conference committee arrive at least one day before the conference and meet with key members of the hotel staff so that both will know whom to talk to for each conference activity or event. (Arrangements for this meeting should be set up several weeks in advance.) During the meeting:

- Re-establish who has signing authority.
- Go through all the activities one step at a time so that every point is covered and understood by both groups.
- Revisit the menus and establish firm attendance numbers for the meals.
- Provide the hotel staff with signs identifying what is happening in each room and determine who is to set them up.

Now all you have to do is let the conference run itself. I have spoken to some conference committees who tell me they don't remember much about the conference because they seemed to spend their time "putting out fires." I have spoken to others—those who created a well planned, carefully coordinated event—who say they actually enjoyed the experience. I hope you fall into the latter category.

And remember: Delegates who experience a well planned, invigorating experience at your event will be much more likely to sign up for next year's conference than those who experience only a mediocre event. Help keep the ball rolling.

Ron Blicq (rgi_ron@compuserve.com) *is a long-time member of PCS and has served on the AdCom for many years. He teaches courses and presents workshops on written and oral communication.*

The Orals from Hell

By Tim Whalen

Advice: Practice speaking extemporaneously and develop a company "response" book.

If your work in 1998 included oral presentations to help your employer win federal contracts, you will no doubt be alarmed that those orals are becoming sharply pop-quiz oriented. Take as an example recent federal request-for-proposal (RFP) language that "The only people in the evaluation room will be the key person being evaluated, our contracting officer, our technical panel, and selected employees of our agency. We will give the contractor person 5 minutes of preparation time per question. There will be 3 questions."

The upside of this format (if there is one) is that the contractor is allotted 15 minutes cloistered alone to prepare what to say. However, each answer will be videotaped live, on the spot, and cannot exceed five minutes per question. Answers beyond five minutes will be cut off and, to aid the evaluators of course, "The content of the offerer's responses will be evaluated with respect to succinctness, accuracy, and thoroughness, as well as for presentation organization."

It would appear that Toastmasters groups around the nation have their work cut out for them in training people to speak extemporaneously, the type of talk where the would-be orator draws a topic out of a hat and goes forth bravely, with (one hopes) facts, knowledge, and experience, all in the right proportion.

Another tool for pop-quiz orals is a company-generated "red book" of practice questions covering all the elements of an agency's particular RFP interests, compartmentalized into four-to-five-minute responses, with highlights expounded, and ready to rehearse on-camera, just like the sessions the government evaluators will hold.

Tim Whalen is author of Holbrook & Kellogg's 1997 book Winning Oral Presentations: A Management and Sales Approach.

PCS Offers Boston-Area Courses

The PCS Education Committee, in conjunction with the IEEE Boston Section, is offering two special courses for engineers in the Boston area:

Where: Wyndham Garden Hotel, Waltham, MA

Date: Friday, June 25, 1999

Time: 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Topics: *Morning:* Clear and Effective Technical Communication
Muriel Zimmerman, University of California at Santa Barbara

Afternoon: Presenting Technical Subjects to Non-Technical Audiences
Cheryl Reimold, PERC Communications, Scarsdale, New York

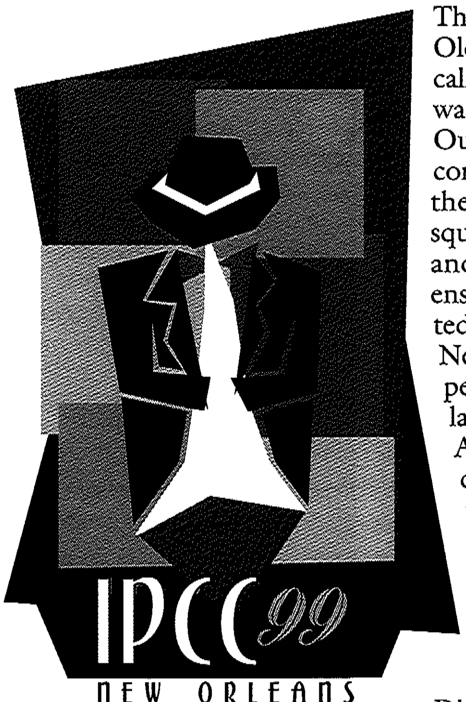
Cost:	Registration Thru June 11	Registration After June 11
IEEE Members	$125 for one workshop	$150 for one workshop
	$175 for both workshops	$200 for both workshops
Nonmembers	$150 for one workshop	$200 for one workshop
	$200 for both workshops	$250 for both workshops

These workshops are in conjunction with the PCS Administrative Committee (AdCom) meeting at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, June 26-27. Similar courses can be arranged when and where other AdCom meetings are held, and at other times and places. For more information: Lisa Moretto, PCS education chair, *rgi_lisa@compuserve.com.*

Let the Good Times Roll

By Leann Kostek

Jazz, rhythm and blues, Cajun, and zydeco all find their roots in the rich and colorful history of New Orleans. Jazz, America's most popular indigenous art form, is a celebration of African and Caribbean syncopation and French and Spanish melodic structures.



The birthplace of jazz is said to be Old Congo Square in what is now called Louis Armstrong Park. It was here in the early 1780s that the Oumas Indians celebrated their corn feasts. As New Orleans grew, the field also grew into a public square. On weekend nights, music and dance were performed by enslaved Africans who were permitted to celebrate their cultures. Old New Orleans was the only city that permitted slaves to sing in African languages and perform with African instruments, notably the drums and a string instrument that became today's banjo.

By the turn of the century both whites and Creoles were picking up the beat. The first band to export the sounds out of the city was Tom Brown's white Dixieland Band, who played to audiences in Chicago. The audience loved the tempo. However, the local musicians' union coined the phrase "jass" as a slur against the musicians who played the up-tempo Dixieland sound. Nevertheless, by 1917 Nick LaRocca's Original Dixieland Band successfully recorded the sound, with several of their songs selling over a million copies.

Dance to IPCC 99 in New Orleans' French Quarter, September 7-10 (http://www.ieee.org/ipcc).

Buddy Bolden (1878-1931) is said to be the chef who threw all of the city's ingredients into a large pot and stirred. The resulting sound and beat have been uniquely New Orleans ever since. Others who helped refine the sound were Freddie Keppard, leader of the Original Creole Orchestra; Jelly Roll Morton, who was the first notable jazz composer; and ragtime pianist Steve Lewis. Spencer Williams and Manual Manetta introduced this music to vaudeville halls.

During the 1940s, in the small smoke-filled bars of the French Quarter, the locals coined the phrase rhythm and blues to describe the fusion of soul and jazz. *Variety* picked up the term to describe a new category on their Hit Parade. The R&B rage was led by Henry Roland Byrd, better known as Professor Longhair. He created a whirlwind with his blend of rhumba, calypso, jazz, and blues.

The "Fess" had great influence on the styles of Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew. The late 1970s saw a renaissance of the jazz age with young acts like the Neville Brothers and Wynton and Bradford Marsalis hitting the stage. These native sons once again put New Orleans in the center of the musical scene.

Jazz is not the only sound in Louisiana. Cajun and zydeco are also indigenous art forms. Often likened to American bluegrass music, Cajun music finds its roots in Arcadian folk music, the accordion, home-made percussion instruments, and the French language. (Arcadians were displaced French descendants from Nova Scotia who came to Louisiana to escape British rule in 18th century.)

A night of feasting on crawfish and dancing the fais do-do is typical in the Arcadian parishes of Louisiana. The fiddle is core to the two-steppin' beat of Cajun music. Zydeco adds the African beat to the traditional Cajun sound. Traditional instruments like the saxophone and accordions are paired with electric guitars to give the music an enticing beat that is hard not to dance to.

The beat is everywhere. You cannot escape the sounds of a jamming zydeco band, the rhythmic beat of a jazz quartet, or the lone sax player, New Orleans has sound and beat for everyone. Check out *http://neworleansonline.com/rfno.htm* to hear the sounds of the Big Easy.

IPCC 99 Conference Registration Form

Secured online registration is available on our website at:
www.ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs/ipcc99

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IPCC 99 Conference Fee	$350.00	$425.00*	$175.00	
SIGDOC 99	$200.00	$200.00	$150.00	

Registration Fees	AFTER August 6, 1999			
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Full registration includes: access to all sessions, one copy of the proceedings and two lunches. *Includes a $25.00 credit towards IEEE / PCS or PCS 2000 Membership. Details at membership desk during conference.

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An Invitation to IPCC 99

Make plans now for what promises to be one of the most exciting gatherings of communication professionals in a long time. The place for the conference—New Orleans—is like none other in the world. And the conference venue—the Omni Royal Orleans—is world class by any standard.

It is the program that is so exciting! The program committee has assembled panels, speakers, workshops, and Idea Market sessions from the proposals received in response to the call for papers. In keeping with the international theme of the conference, presenters are coming from all over the world to New Orleans.

Our keynote speaker, Tony Temple, was appointed an IBM Fellow in 1993 and he has some valuable insights to share with us from his experiences as vice-president of Ease of Use. Join Tony and others as we explore the global forces influencing the next revolution in technical communication.

It is my pleasure to invite you to be part of IPCC 99 and to seize the opportunity to meet your colleagues in one of the best convention cities on the globe.

See you in Nawlins,

—*Michael B. Goodman*
General Chair, IPCC 99

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